

THE IRON BRIGADE

*A Story of the Army of
the Potomac*

BY

General CHARLES KING


AUTHOR OF

"NORMAN HOLT," "THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER,"
"FORT FRAYNE," ETC.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY R. F. ZOGBAUM

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THE IRON BRIGADE

CHAPTER I

DAMON AND PYTHIAS

They were paddling idly down the stream—two young men and a girl. She lay luxuriously back upon the cushions in the stern sheets, the tiller ropes hanging loosely from her slender white hands, her soft blue eyes fixed tenderly upon the fine face of the oarsman nearest her—a youth whose lithe, agile form swayed slowly to and fro in harmony with the swing of the long, light sculls. The wooded shores, the rural beauty of the scene, passed unnoticed. Something of absorbing interest kept “all eyes in the boat.” Stroke and bow were in animated if not actually heated discussion, and the dark brown eyes that earlier in the afternoon seemed ever seeking those of liquid blue before him, were now turned, sometimes to port, sometimes to starboard, sometimes over the squared shoulders, flashing on the man in front—a young athlete with eyes as blue and hair and skin well-nigh as fair as those of the girl at the helm. He of the stroke sculls, on the contrary, was tawny, almost, as a son of the tropics.

the cold and distant North, and the head and front of their offending had been that Ladue, senior, owner of the finest bookstore on the Gulf coast, stood charged with having sold to an old customer one copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and when the store was searched by wrathful, slave-holding fellow citizens, three more copies were found on a far back shelf, "secreted," said the committee, "under a stack of bound volumes." No law had been violated. The book was poison—a blow at their "peculiar institution," and that was enough. The business it had taken Ladue nearly a quarter of a century to build up was ruined in a day.

Nor could the sympathy and cordial welcome of his new fellow citizens begin to compensate for the loss. Ladue was shy and reserved, his wife a semi-invalid and Paul a sensitive plant. The lad was sent to the best school where, so soon as his story was known, the other youngsters gradually ceased from troubling, and sought in crude, clumsy, boyish fashion to give him comfort. It was long before he seemed to thaw out at all, but Fred Benton, a near neighbor when they passed into the high school, was the youth he finally tied to, and then this strangely assorted pair joined forces, apparently, for good and all. Damon and Pythias they called them; for, after the first six months of shyness on Ladue's part, they became inseparable. One was rarely seen without the other, yet were they utterly unlike. High school finished, Ladue was needed as assistant in his father's growing business. Benton had begun the study

of law in the office of the famous old firm of which his father was the head. But before either had cast his first vote the long-heralded conflict between the North and South—the slaveholders' rebellion, so-called—had burst upon the startled land. Sumter had fallen. The President had called, first for seventy-five thousand men to defend the Capital, then for five hundred thousand volunteers to prosecute the war.

For a moment there came no answer to Benton's tentative. Heightened color, compressed lips and a quick glance at the flushing face of the girl before him told, however, that Ladue was deeply moved. They were nearing the little boathouse now, and Benton in turn, bending to his sculls, sent their light craft shooting through the mirrorlike waters. Already he repented him of his words, yet there was something he longed to know. For upwards of three years there had been no secret between him and his chosen friend. Then came the election of Abraham Lincoln, then the secession of State after State, then the inauguration of our great Westerner as President, then Sumter and the call to arms. And now Paul Ladue, who had hitherto held no communication with his native State, was writing frequent letters thither and feverishly, furtively, perhaps, awaiting reply. What did it portend?

A wave of patriotic fervor had swept over the West. On every hand men were quitting the desk, the plough or the tools of their trade, and flocking to the recruiting offices. Benton's name had been sent to the Governor

for a commission in one of the new regiments. Mass meetings were being held almost every night, and energetic citizens were passing subscription papers from desk to desk that a fund might be raised for the benefit of the families of the rapidly enlisting husbands and fathers. One of these papers was brought to Ladue, senior. He colored, coughed, looked embarrassed, took out his check-book, thought a moment, returned it, and then going to his cash drawer found some twenty dollars in currency and gave it to the collector. "No," said he, when asked to write his name, "I prefer following the precepts of the Scriptures—let not my left hand know what my right hand is doing." The committee looked queer when they heard the story. "He is willing to give, but—dreads its being known," said the mayor. "His heart is still with the South."

Yet Ladue gave again and gave gladly. "How could I do otherwise?" said he. "You and these kind people bade me welcome when life was at its blackest. I am a Southerner. I cannot fight against mine own people no matter what they did to me. I cannot support them, however, in their revolt against the Government which shields and protects me. I will not refuse to contribute toward the support of the wives and children of those who so kindly welcomed my wife and children. I and mine are grateful."

"But what is Paul going to do?" was the question that startled him, one fair May morning. "He would not enlist with the boys here and he's writing letter

after letter to somebody there. It isn't possible he would fight for the people who broke his father's heart."

It had never occurred to Ladue. It was high time he interposed. Paul was barely twenty, and, therefore, still subject to his father's will. It was a soft, warm evening at the very verge of June as the trio came silently back from their up-river row—Paul and Elinor side by side, Fred, scull-laden, some distance in rear. They looked up at the aging Southerner, seated on his narrow porch, and smiled and nodded as they passed, but Fred propped his sculls against the tree box, and after a lingering gaze at the two wandering slowly and sorrowfully along the almost deserted street, let himself in at the gate for a few minutes of earnest talk. It was indeed time somebody in authority sought to dissuade the young man if it should prove that he were seeking service with the Alabama troops and, since Paul could not be induced to talk, Fred determined to appeal to the father.

Meantime the two young people had gone on toward the Benton homestead. The soft twilight still lingered over roof and spire. The bells in the cathedral tower had just rung out the stroke of eight. Away down town, somewhere, a military band was playing stirring march music, and there came the sound of distant cheering, for another mass meeting was being held in Market Square and a gifted orator from Chicago was being presented to the throng. Up here near the bluffs overlooking the great inland sea, all was still. The street lamps

were only just being lighted. Some houses seemed to show no lights at all, as though all the inmates had gone to listen to the speaker of the evening. Elinor Benton looked warily within as they reached the gate in front of the quaint colonial house that had been her home since babyhood. Voices, in low-toned chat, floated out to her from the broad veranda, and with hardly a shadow of hesitation the girl turned and followed when her partner said, "Let us go back to the bluff a little while." Before she fully realized it she found herself leaning on his arm and yet, no further word had been spoken. He had simply possessed himself of her pretty, slender white hand, passed it within his elbow and then clasped, or rather clamped, it there. For a few minutes neither seemed to care to speak. When they reached the edge of the bluff Ladue flung open the shawl he was carrying, spread a double thickness on the sod and begged her to sit. Silently she obeyed. Then he turned to her and his voice trembled as he asked,

"You heard Fred's question?"

An almost inaudible "Yes," was the sole response.

"What—do you think I—ought to do?" he wistfully, slowly asked. For a moment she could not reply. When the words came—for she was only seventeen, and the position most trying—her clear young voice had a pathetic, tremulous undertone.

"How can I judge? Almost any one would say your duty was here—yet—I know—your heart—is there." And as she spoke the heart in her own pure young bosom

was throbbing hard. For another little while there was silence, broken only by the sound of distant cheering from the center of the town—by the rhythmical, soothing splash of the wavelets on the pebbly beach beneath them. Far in the eastern firmament the spangled sky was bathed in silvery light, growing every moment more brilliant, and now, at the edge of the placid waters a glistening point appeared, spreading swiftly into a tiny segment of liquid fire that rose with slow, majestic grace at the dim horizon, gaining in bulk and brilliancy with every second and sending toward them along the flawless sheen of the waters a long, radiant, tapering stream of dazzling light, as, only just beyond her full, the sweet May moon began her star circled flight to the zenith. Then Elinor, uplifting her face, looked upon the clear-cut features of the slender youth at her side and saw that the dark eyes were filled with sadness and trouble unspeakable, saw that the soft lips, just shaded by the silken fringe of the boy mustache, were twitching and trembling with uncontrollable emotion, and her young heart brimmed over, as in sympathy and tenderness that for the moment overmastered her, she impulsively bent forward, and with slender, tapering fingers touched his shoulder as though to turn him toward her, while with almost a sob in her voice she murmured—

“What is it, Paul? Tell me!”

And then the lad, throwing himself on his face, seized in both his the trembling little hand that had braved the shyness of maidenhood, the conventions of society, and

bathed it in burning kisses and in scalding tears. "My heart is not there!" he sobbed. "You know well where it is, but—my duty—." Affrighted now, she sought to draw away her hand, but he clung to it. "No, Nell, no!" he cried. "It's the first time I ever dared! It's the last time I ever may! I'm going, Nell; I've got to go, but remember, my heart isn't there. It's here—it's here with you!"

And then on a sudden he sprang to his feet, dashed away the tears and stood with head uplifted, like that of a challenging stag, a picture of youthful grace and beauty in the silvery light of the gleaming disk now spurning the limpid waters, for voices, close at hand, broke the silence of the summerlike evening. Some one was climbing the pathway up the height. An instant of listening and Elinor, too, sprang to her feet, and the sweet face that but a moment before was all mantled with the blush of girlish joy and love, went suddenly white as the dainty gown she wore, and her eyes, as they turned on the youth by her side, filled with alarm.

"If you know he's going to join the rebel army and can prove it, why, that's enough," panted the first speaker. "The trouble is to prove it. Otherwise there's no law to hold him."

"Prove it! By heaven, Curtis, you make me swear!" was the vehement answer. "If our postmaster would only do his duty we could prove far more—that he's in the rebel service at this minute—that he's here a spy

in our midst—sending notes of all our preparations and forces and numbers, and, just as André was hung on the Hudson eighty years ago, so should that young scoundrel hang here now. The laws of war the world over will tell you so.”

And then scrambling to the crest, full in the light of the unclouded moon, the two climbers straightened up and stood face to face with the man of whom they were speaking, Elinor Benson clinging, trembling, yet in speechless indignation at his side.

For a moment there was awkward silence. Paul Ladue, with gleaming eyes stood squarely confronting the foremost, a portly man of perhaps thirty years, who was still breathing hard as the result of his climb. His companion, tall and spare and a few years older, slowly ranged himself alongside his friend and looked to him to speak. The stout man stared for a few seconds at the silent twain, partly to recover breath, partly to recover wits. Finally he lamely said, “Oho!”

Then finding the steadfast gaze of Ladue’s burning brown eyes rather hard to bear, he turned to his companion. “Rather a—coincidence, isn’t it?” said he. This remark, too, fell flat, for no response followed. It became necessary to say something more to relieve the situation, and obviously the gentleman knew not what to say. If there lived in this Western community a man Paul Ladue held in especial disfavor, it was George McKinnon, junior partner in the firm of Benton, Gray & McKinnon, attorneys and counselors at law, and it

was George McKinnon who stood there in the flesh and who, but a moment before, had denounced him as deserving the fate of the spy. Ample reason had he to hate McKinnon for, ever since Elinor's return the previous autumn from a visit to relatives in the East, that energetic practitioner had been a constant caller at the Benton homestead, and despite the fact that Elinor had not yet finished her school days, was persistent in attentions that showed to all society he had become infatuated with her radiant beauty—that the man of thirty eagerly sought the girl of seventeen as his wife. On the other hand, McKinnon had noted with jealousy unspeakable, that the frank, joyous, boy and girl friendship that had existed throughout the lad's school days had given place to the half shy, half hesitant, yet strangely sweet relationship of early love, pure yet passionate. McKinnon was a keen student, a rising man at the bar, a brilliant "jury" lawyer and just the one needed to strengthen the somewhat slow and ponderous combination of the old firm. Benton, a lawyer of the old school, held his young partner in high esteem if not, indeed, in a certain awe, due to the daring and successful methods that had distinguished him ever since his call to the bar. On the other hand, he was not too well pleased with his son's choice of an intimate. Paul Ladue was a dreamer, an idler, a poet perhaps—a youth to write sonnets and sing sentimental ballads (he did play the guitar delightfully and was no mean performer on the banjo) he was what the stern, hard-headed old

delver in facts and figures called "a lapdog sort of fellow"—just the last kind of intimate for a young man starting in the law. It was his gentle, tender-hearted wife who yearned over the sad-faced young exile and made him welcome to their fireside. It was the squire's love for her, the wife of his youth, that prompted him to follow her lead and be kind and hospitable to Paul Ladue, but he could hardly brook it either in Paul or his aging, breaking father that they who had suffered so much and so unjustly at the hands of the South, should now seem to cling so tenaciously to all the ideals and traditions of their earlier days and persist in calling Alabama "home." Time and again he forcefully rebuked them both. Ladue, senior, would listen in submissive silence until challenged to reply, and then would merely say, "I dare say you're right, sir, but—they were my people nearly three score years. My eldest son lies buried there under the magnolias, and, sometimes I think my heart is, too." Ladue, junior, would sit with flushing cheek and downcast eyes and say nothing at all. It was Fred who would take up the case for him in vehement debate. It was Elinor who would look volumes and who declared it good to see how faithful a boy could be to all the old home ties and associations. It was Mrs. Benton who had been his best and most powerful advocate for two long years, and then, it is hard to say which of the two lads more bitterly mourned her, for, the year before our story opens, the gentle lady had been borne to her last resting place. And now the

war had come. The flag had been lowered in defeat at Sumter. The men of Massachusetts had been mobbed in the streets of Baltimore. The first levies in the far West had clashed with the enemy in Missouri, and hostile armies were arrayed upon the sacred soil of Virginia. Now when the young men of the Badger State were flocking to the recruiting offices, and companies and regiments were being filled to overflowing, when Damon, brimming with patriotic zeal and energy, was seeking a commission in the Union volunteers, Pythias, Paul Ladue, was known to be writing frequently, doubtless urgently, to his native State—the State that had banished and impoverished him, yet could not banish from his soul the old time loyalty and love. It had amazed and offended many of these, his Northern friends who had welcomed and cheered him in the hour of his adversity. It had scandalized one man who had never shown him sympathy at all—the man now standing uneasily before him, unable to face the stern glitter in his speaking eyes. It was finally Paul who spoke:

“You say the postmaster should do his duty, Mr. McKinnon,” said he, contempt and hot hatred in his trembling voice. “By opening my letters, do you mean? Somebody has been doing that already, and I believe you know—who!”

CHAPTER II

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS

June the first came in with the radiant sunshine blazing on a wealth of bunting. From staff and spire, roof and tower, window and balcony the stars and stripes were flung to the breeze, and by thousands the citizens had thronged the broad thoroughfares to give a parting cheer to the second Badger regiment marching away to the war. The dusk and the dew came settling down as the tail lights of the last section of the troop train drew slowly away along the sweeping curve to the south, and then the dense throngs that had shouted themselves hoarse as the big battalion rolled away, were easily marshalled into an impromptu mass meeting. The Governor and the Mayor were to speak, and brief addresses, so said the handbills, might be expected from such brilliant orators as the Honorable George McKinnon and others equally well known. The cathedral bells had chimed the hour of nine of the long June evening, as a roar of cheers about the temporary stage on Market Square greeted the executive of the State when he made his bow to the assembled multitude—a roar distinctly heard far up along the bluffs and on the narrow portico of the modest home, where, leaning back in an easy,

chair, Paul Ladue, looking pale and weak, sat with his slim hand clasped in that of his faithful friend, Fred Benton.

They had been in earnest talk. Events had crowded thick in the life of young Ladue since that untoward meeting on the bluffs. The long suspected and slumbering enmity of McKinnon had burst at last into furious flame, and the younger man found himself suddenly involved in a whirl of trouble. First and most serious, the elder Benton, after a conference with his junior partner, had been moved to say to Elinor that he forbade her receiving or being seen with Paul Ladue. He would not ask her, he said, if there had been love making between them, he knew it, and as she was but a school girl and Ladue a feather-brained boy, he demanded that it end then and there. To Ladue he wrote a cold, cutting letter, accusing him of having taken advantage of his intimacy in the household to seek the love and destroy the peace of mind of his daughter, when, if all signs and only some of the stories were true, he deserved neither home nor harbor in their midst, and ended by forbidding him the house. Then one or two stinging articles had found their way into an evening paper, plainly pointing to Ladue as a rebel sympathizer and one holding treasonable correspondence with the enemy. Then certain creditors had made a combined onslaught on his failing, heart-sore father. Ladue had gradually built up a very fair business and had won the kindly regard of the community. All on a

sudden his store was shunned, save by collectors, and one night, after a meeting at which McKinnon was the principal speaker, the front windows were smashed in by half a dozen drunken patriots and Paul, seated at a desk over the books of the firm, was struck in the temple and felled by a stone. A cry of shame had gone up from the lips of a few lookers-on, who drove the roughs away and carried the stricken lad to his home. The incident brought about a temporary revulsion of feeling among right-thinking people and Fred Benton had found and soundly thrashed one of the gang of assailants. But little substantial comfort could come to the Ladues, for the old man had lost his nerve. He seemed broken and bewildered. It cut him to the heart to find that at this critical time in his career, the firm to present and press the claim of his creditors was that of Benton, Gray & McKinnon. He had the shattered windows boarded up and refused at first to reopen his store. The men who had been his best friends and advisers, as luck would have it, had already gone to the front as officers of volunteers. He was crushed and sorely hurt and stung, and the well meant words of sympathy spoken by a few neighbors failed to reassure him.

It was then that Fred Benton had his first difference with his father.

"The whole outrage, sir," said he, "is the direct result of your partner's efforts. I hold George McKinnon responsible for every misfortune that has befallen the

Ladues in this town, and the only reason I don't thrash him as I did that blackguard Irishman is that he is your partner."

It had startled and then angered the elder man, so loyal and devoted had his son ever been in the past. Well he knew that, though some letters had passed in April between Paul Ladue and persons in Alabama, it was impossible to prove that he was planning to join the Southern army, much less that he was furnishing information, or "aid and comfort to the enemy." Since the first of May the worst that could be said of him was that he had sent three letters to a certain address in St. Louis, and that three missives had come to him bearing the St. Louis postmark. Everybody knew that St. Louis was infested with Southern sympathizers who had means of communication with friends beyond the line, and it was these letters McKinnon referred to when he dared to suggest that it was the postmaster's duty to open them and learn their contents. Not yet had the North reached the point of violating the sanctity of personal mail.

"So far from its being McKinnon's fault," the elder Benton answered, as soon as he could control his voice, "I hold your friend Paul solely responsible. McKinnon is an intensely loyal man, and he and I both are indignant that any man should be living here in our midst and holding treasonable correspondence with the enemy. You will do well, sir, if you hope for a commission, to hold aloof from so dangerous an association."

But Fred would not hold aloof. For three days he was constantly at the Ladues, comforting Paul as best he could, and on this evening of the third day, after ruefully, enviously bidding adieu to many a friend who had marched away with the Second, he had cut loose from the crowd and returned to his labor of love. Entering the shaded gateway he had been surprised to see a vision in white seated close to Paul's reclining chair, and confounded and troubled to find that it was Elinor. Bravely she had risen and faced him:—

“It seems that it is not enough that Paul should be forbidden our house,” said she, with strangely calm and controlled manner, “but this afternoon father bade me pack my trunk and be ready to go to Aunt Margaret to-morrow. I have obeyed him, and to-night I shall tell him that I came here to bid Paul good-by.” Then, waiting no reply she turned swiftly to the invalid. “And now I must go, for father will be home to tea. Thank you again for your promise, Paul. Be sure I shall make it known, and then you will see how quickly everybody will turn again to you, and I'll write to you—through Fred, and—and God bless you, Paul!” Then both the white hands went out to him one second and with bowed head she hurried away.

“What was the promise, Paul?” asked Benton, after a moment of silence.

The lad looked up, his dark face thinned and sad and pale, yet there was a soft, tender glow in the deep brown eyes. “I told Elinor and I tell you, Fred, that if I had

any idea that duty demanded my going back to the land of my birth—it is ended. If people will only let me stay in peace—my place is here.”

“Good God, Paul!” was the almost exultant answer. “What a load you’ve lifted from my mind! What a facer this will be to McKinnon!”

And so perhaps it might have been had it become known to him and to the public that evening before he had finished his impassioned speech and had exhibited a certain letter, but even as they sat there, hand in hand, stalwart Fred Benton and fragile looking Paul Ladue, the sound of cheering grew fierce and frequent. Somebody with a gift of oratory and the power to move men’s souls was evidently swaying that meeting at will. Elinor, who had gone home to give her father his tea, was hardly surprised to find him still away, and the evening wore on without him. In the dark shadows of the broad veranda she sat, looking at the dim light up the street where dwelt the Ladues, and listening to the cheering that told unerringly the stirring effect of the speaker’s words. Ten o’clock had come and gone, and still she sat there and still no one appeared who could say what was going on at the Square. It must have been half after ten when a final and prolonged burst of cheering seemed to announce the close of the orator’s speech and presumably the breaking up of the meeting, and then far down the street there came the sound of swift running footsteps, and presently, panting and excited, a young man, a near neighbor, darted into view

under the glare of the nearest gas lamp and rushed on toward the lake. Hurrying down to the front gate, Elinor heard rather than saw him speeding eastward until nearly opposite the Ladues, then he went bounding across the broad, unpaved and, in places, grass-grown street, and faintly she could hear the challenge of manly young voices. What did this portend?

Away to the west, down in the valley of the river, a confused murmur rose upon the night—a murmur rapidly augmenting in depth and volume as it seemed to be drawing nearer and nearer. Then to her amaze came Fred to the front gate, half lifting, half leading a slim-built, reluctant youth whose voice she knew on the instant, whose form she knew at a glance. "You must, Paul," she heard Fred saying, low and stern. "I can't lick a thousand fellow citizens. The only thing is to get you in some safe harbor until this blows over. Yes, I know father forbade you the house, but he never dreamed of this, and were he home he would act exactly as I am acting."

So saying he had half lifted, half run the helpless young Southerner into the forbidden grounds. Then, opening the cellar door, he plunged his unwilling prisoner into the dark depths, took him a candle from the kitchen and bounded back to the front gate just in time to see a throng of men, covering the street from curb to curb, sweeping silently up the wide thoroughfare, passing him by with hardly a gleam of recognition, and

finally halting nearly two blocks away in front of the little homestead of the Ladues.

Just then the Squire appeared, springing from a hack that had driven swiftly on the trail of the crowd, and started at sight of his son, standing there like sentry at the gate. The elder's face was pale and beads of sweat were starting from his brow. "Is Elinor home?" was his first question.

"I am here, father," came the answer, clear, yet low, and with slow, deliberate step the girl came forward down the gravel walk.

"I—I wish you to go to your room, child. There—there may be trouble here presently. The people are—over excited."

"Trouble for whom, father?" was the calm question as, apparently ignoring his injunction, Elinor came straight onward until she stood by her brother's side. The strong arm on which she laid her little white hand was trembling, partly the result of recent exertion, partly from intense excitement.

"You may as well know," was the half hesitant reply. "Just as I foresaw, young Ladue yonder has got to face the music. They have evidence to prove that he is in the rebel service."

"It's a lie!" swore Fred Benton, between his clinched teeth.

"It's the miserable truth," said his father. "Listen!" Somebody was again haranguing the crowd, now completely filling the street from block to block only four

hundred yards away, while men and boys, jabbering excitedly, were still hurrying by the Bentons to join the throng. Presently the voice rose higher and clearer, and they recognized it at once. "Your committee have searched the house, fellow citizens, and have failed to find this misguided young man. Moreover, I have the assurance of his aged and unhappy father that his erring son is not here—that, warned by his own conscience or some still deluded friend, he fled full half an hour ago. It is not conceivable that he would remain here over night. Already he is probably beyond the suburbs. Banishment from our midst was what you demanded, and the sentence is self-executed. Let me urge you, therefore, in the interests of law and order, to quietly disperse. Let me——"

But here the speaker's voice was drowned in shouts of wrath and impatience, and before he could again make himself heard a mighty bass was uplifted over the clamor and in tones that could be heard four blocks away these words were bellowed on the startled ear of night:—

"They tarred and feathered and rode our teachers on a rail for no cause whatever. I move, by God! that before we let Paul Ladue wear a rebel coat we give *him* one of tar and feathers. I know where to find him."

It was the riff raff of the city, let it be remembered, that made up the bulk of the crowd,—the idler, the loafer, the saloon hanger-on, the same class precisely that six

weeks before had mobbed the men of Massachusetts in the streets of Baltimore—a gang ever ready for rapine and outrage, the counterpart of the human wolves that seventy years earlier had drenched the streets of Paris with the blood of the gentlest, noblest born of the fair land of France. Of the thousand shouting and swaying there in the dim light of the city lamps probably not fifty men were tax-payers or respectable citizens, and, all too late, George McKinnon began to realize that he was now powerless to quench the train his vehement oratory had fired. A new leader had sprung to the front, a giant blacksmith, a man whose sledge hammer had beaten in the jail doors barely four years previous, and rescued from the hands of the Federal authorities a luckless fugitive slave who had been caught when almost in sight of freedom and Canadian soil and meekly surrendered to the agent of his owners in deference to the hateful laws of the day. Madly they cheered him, breaking a way westward through their midst until the open street lay before him. Then, facing his excited followers a moment, he shouted, "You who are with me, come on!" turned and went striding down the street.

"My God," cried Mr. Benton. "They are coming here!"

Running toward them along the sidewalk, distancing the crowd, pale now and trembling, came McKinnon. "Quick!" he cried. "Let me take Miss Elinor round to Judge Meredith's. She's safe there. Come—come, Elinor," he pleaded, with outstretched hand. But the

blue eyes looked him over with utter indifference. She would not even vouchsafe reply.

"What in heaven's name have you done, McKinnon?" cried the father. "Surely you ought to have known it was playing with fire to arouse these ruffians. But they shall not touch me or mine! They shall not enter this gate! Go in doors, child," he continued, turning suddenly to her. But now it was McKinnon who detained.

"Stop! You must see," said he. "Here is what came for him this very night. *Now* do you believe?"

Benton took the heavy envelope extended to him: It bore the St. Louis postmark. It had been sliced open with a knife. It was addressed to "Paul Ladue, Esq., Bookseller and Stationer, East Water Street, ———, and it contained another envelope still sealed and unbroken, addressed in round, clerkly hand to First Lieutenant Paul Ladue, Eleventh Alabama Infantry, and bore at the upper left hand corner the letters so often used in the old days of the old army, O. P. S. (on public service), instead of the later shibboleth of the War Department, "Official Business."

"It is fatal," said the veteran lawyer, with a gasp of dismay.

"It is a forgery!" said Fred, his son, whereat McKinnon started as though stung. And now the mob, headed by Hugh Gale, came swarming to their gate, and their spokesman, in his resounding basso, addressed himself to the master.

"Squire Benton, it is my belief that the man we want is hidden here on your premises. Your son has long been his most intimate friend. Mr. Ladue invited our committee to enter and search. Will you do the same? Or are you going to shelter rebel spies and traitors?"

"You are not going to enter and search," answered Benton, sturdily. "This city has been my home since it was a mere village. For twenty years I have worked with it and for it and no man, woman or child in this community can point to a wrong done to one of your number by me or mine. This is my home, and by the Eternal, you shall not violate it!"

"Hear me, fellow citizens," cried McKinnon, clambering on the gate and grasping the boughs of the mountain ash trees that stood close on either hand. "Hear me one minute!"

"Shut up!" yelled the crowd. "Go ahead, Gale. We're with you," and suiting action to word a score of the populace began climbing the old-fashioned white picket fence and striving to burst a way through the thick hedge of rose bushes and sturdy young trees that stretched from flank to flank along the front of the lot. Others, running round to the west, swarmed to the flat-topped fence bounding the yard on that side, and two of their number, truculent and daring, leaped down upon the flower-beds and came lunging out across the grass plot. In an instant Fred Benton, breaking from Elinor's restraining hands, sprang to confront them, and without a word, sent his clinched fist square at the leader's jaw

and tumbled him, crashing and cursing, among the pansies. His fellows recoiled to the fence, and a howl of mingled wrath and admiration went up from the mob. Then somebody picked up a huge clod from a pile of soft, fresh-cut sod that stood by the tree box at the edge of the gutter, and with practiced hand hurled it at McKinnon. It took that portly counselor 'twixt midriff and gorge, just as a bulky vegetable, hurtling through gaslit space, landed full on his distended cheek. The combined impact proved too much for his equilibrium and, to the shrill delight of the masses, down he went, ripping out a branch of mountain ash and a gasp of mingled protest and profanity. For an instant the onward impulse of the crowd was stayed, and Gale again began to rumble in dramatic speech when of a sudden there arose from the throats of the mob a yell of triumph and rejoicing, for there, at the head of the steps, bareheaded in the soft moonlight, between the white columns of the portico, stood Paul Ladue, facing them with flashing eyes and without a tremor. Another instant and before Fred could interpose, light and agile, he bounded down the steps, across the lawn and vaulted to the flat-topped fence at the corner, lighting like a cat on his feet, and confronted them with uplifted hand as though demanding to be heard.

For a moment the yells and shouts continued, and there was a rush of the crowd to the side street. Then curiosity prevailed, and between cries of "Silence!" "Dry up!" "Listen, fellers, let's hear what he has to

say," and some vigorous hissing, comparative quiet was restored, and in ringing, silvery tones, quivering, perhaps with excitement, but never a sign of fear, Ladue addressed them.

"Who accuses me—and of what am I accused?" he cried.

"You're a damned spy—" "Rebel—" "Traitor—" "Here, give us that letter, Squire," were the yells from the crowd. And then big Gale, the blacksmith, tore a way round to the side and waved under the pale, quivering face McKinnon's contribution to the evening's disturbance—the letter he would now have been glad to withdraw. "What have you to say to this, Mr. Lieutenant Paul Ladue, Eleventh Alabama?"

"I say it's a forgery and a lie!" was the ringing answer.

"Any man would, fixed as you are," boomed the blacksmith. "Do you deny corresponding with your rebel crowd in Alabama, too?"

"No, and you can see their letters any time you wish."

"Damn their letters!" shouted Gale. Then facing the crowd. "Fellow citizens, what shall we do with him?"

Up went a chorus of curses and yells, in the midst of which Fred Benton sprang to the fence beside his friend, and his father vainly shouted, begging to be heard. "You be quiet, Squire," answered the nearest. "We don't want you—you're all right." Fred was felled by

a stone that struck him full in the forehead. Paul Ladue's legs were jerked from under him and he was dragged, struggling and striking at every face within reach, and borne away, the vortex of a whirlpool of raging humanity whose hoarse shoutings gradually died to distant roar as they surged onward down the slope to Market Square, Benton and McKinnon vainly following, imploring and protesting. Then one level-headed lad ran like a deer to the quarters of a cadet company across the river, and while Elinor knelt there by her stricken brother, chafing his hand and bathing his discolored brow, the court-house bell in rapid clang, pealed out the alarm of fire.

An hour later, limp and exhausted, in the care of a physician, and escorted to the pier by Benton and certain city officials, the victim of mob fury was borne to a stateroom on the "Northern Light" and so on to Chicago.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST UNIFORM

And then for many a week there came no word from Paul Ladue. At the little frame cottage near the lake a sad-eyed, submissive, broken man sat long hours each day in a worn old rocking-chair, apathetic, uncomplaining, yet looking wistfully into the faces of the few who came to see him as though imploring news of his now doubly banished boy. The children—Nina, a fond little daughter of fourteen, and Alphonse, a merry-eyed lad of ten, sought vainly to rouse him. There was not business enough at the shop to call him thither. People had no time for books in the war days. They read only the papers, and, many of them, only the news and rumors from the front. Through the efforts of Squire Benton a reliable, if not over bright, young man was found to take charge of what was left of the stock in trade, and to supply the casual wants of school children in search of sponges and slate pencils, or elders in need of stationery with which to write to the boys now in camp by thousands along the line of the Potomac and the Ohio. Weak eyes and legs had led to his rejection when surging patriotism prompted him to throw up the charge of a ward school and present himself as food for pow-

der, and in sore disappointment he meekly took the tendered place. At least it would give him abundant time to read and study.

In still other ways did the Squire seek to aid the needy household and, all unrebuked now, Elinor went day after day to see Ladue and the fragile woman, his wife, who never left her room. Womanfully did she strive to cheer the aging and to guide the young, and rarely did she go empty handed. All through the long, hot summer of '61 she was ever slipping over to the cottage and ever coming back with pathetic sadness in her sweet blue eyes. There was still no further news from Paul—Paul who after rude mauling and manhandling, had escaped the threatened tar and feathering only because the gas works and the tar were far away, the fire department and two companies of young State troops close at hand. The firemen manned their brakes, and the powerful streams of cold water cast a damper on the enthusiasm of the mob. The soldiers fixed their bayonets, enabling the mayor and certain leading men to bore a way to the midst of the throng, to rescue the exhausted lad, and later to bear him out of harm's way, but that ill-born effort to crush and outrage the high spirited fellow had turned the scale. In one brief letter from St. Louis, Paul had announced his intention of making his way to Mobile. After that—who could say?

And Fred, too, Elinor's stanch ally and supporter, was gone. Denied a commission in the earlier regiments of his native State, for the reason that the men

demanded the right to elect their officers from among these enlisting with them, a course which his father had forbidden, he had found life well nigh unbearable after the almost tragic events of that night in June, and so boldly wrote a long, urgent, appealing letter to a general officer—an old soldier of the Old Army—who, since before the days of the Mexican War and until recalled to active service in the spring of '61, had made the Badger State his home, and that vehement, vigorous letter the General took and laid before the President himself.

This was before the first serious eye-opener—the battle of Bull Run, and the tall, ungainly son of the West was still able to see the whimsical side of things, untinged by the infinite sadness and suffering of the days to come.

“Wants to be a soldier and to sink the law, does he?” said the President, stretching his long, lean legs underneath the table and running his huge hand through the crop of bristling hair that crowned his forehead like a hedgerow, “and the Squire won’t let him enlist,—I met Benton once at Rice’s caravanseraï there in Chicago—and the boys won’t have anybody that doesn’t start even with them? Well, General, I see only one way out of this fix—that is to make him a second lieutenant of regulars, unless,” he continued, with a twitch about the corners of his broad mouth, “unless I appoint him a brigadier-general. According to some of the papers I may have done worse. Which shall it be?”

"The second lieutenancy will appeal to him, I think, sir," said the General, "and then I can appoint him aide-de-camp and teach him practical soldiering so that he won't be utterly a novice when he goes to his regiment. I know the lad and am under many an obligation to his father."

"So be it," said the President. And so it happened that two days later there came to Fred a wire from Washington bidding him join his General there forthwith, and within another forty-eight hours he was gone, eager, ambitious and full of intense zeal and resolution, determined to make a name for himself. For a few days in mid July he was home again as aide to the General, who had been ordered thither to help the State authorities in the organization of still more regiments. Very tall and stiff and "swagger" he looked in his Eastern-made uniform, a vivid contrast to many an old school friend whose first blue frock coat seemed more like an off-color edition of some clerical garment than the garb of a soldier. Fearfully and wonderfully were they made—those uniforms of our Western volunteers, and much did they of the great army about Washington marvel and make merry at the sight of the officers of the few regiments from Badger and Hoosierdom chosen to represent their States on the "sacred soil" of Eastern Virginia. Yet were they little more ungainly than those worn by the new-made *militaires* from Maine and New Hampshire. Fred Benton, however, had been taken in hand by a soldier nephew of his General—a young New

Yorker, long time of the Seventh and now, like Fred, of the regular infantry, and a famous old army tailor had taken his measure, his orders and his promptly tendered cash with all alacrity, to the end that when he appeared with his chief on the familiar streets at home, all that bustling young metropolis marvelled at the change that had come over him. A fine stalwart specimen of Saxon manhood when he went toward the end of June, he had returned to them in mid July erect, soldierly and stunningly clad, the admiration of every girl in town—almost the adoration of his sister.

And about the first thing Fred Benton had done on his return was to snub, if not actually insult, his father's junior partner, between whom and that father relations were already severely strained.

Never yet had George McKinnon been able to satisfactorily explain how that letter addressed to Paul Ladue had come into his possession. Important as it doubtless was held to be, as evidence of Ladue's active sympathy with the Rebellion, there were not a few responsible citizens who declared the postmaster gravely culpable for surrendering it to any but the lawful owner. Whereat the postmaster on hearing of the cry against him came out with a card in the "Watchman," insisting that the letter had been placed by the distributing clerk in the Ladue box, which was at least six feet from the general delivery window, and that neither he nor any one of the employes had subsequently touched it except, possibly, when handing out the little packet of mail

called for by Paul Ladue in person. Whether Mr. McKinnon got that letter by fair means or foul it was after it had passed from the postoffice into the hands of the addressee, for since Ladue senior's illness only to Paul had their mail been delivered up to the very day of his sudden and enforced departure. This complicated the problem, and there was now no Paul to explain how he came to lose or part with it.

Moreover the postmaster, being exceeding wroth at McKinnon, told several prominent citizens that no less than thrice had McKinnon called on him at the office and endeavored to persuade him that it was his bounden duty to open any letter that came from St. Louis or the South for Paul Ladue and to ascertain the contents. On the first occasion McKinnon clearly showed that he had been keeping watch on Ladue's mail by saying "There's a big letter in his box from St. Louis now," and the postmaster admitted having gone with McKinnon to the box, having taken the letter out and "hefted" it, as he said, and studied the handwriting and superscription and having allowed McKinnon to do the same, but it was not opened by either of them. He would never allow that. Questioned further, the postmaster admitted that one day toward the end of May young Ladue had come to him "mad clear through," and declared that some one had been tampering with his mail and showed him one of those big, bulky missives in the long official envelope that had been sliced open with a sharp knife—must have been in that condition when

handed to him, said Paul, although he did not discover it until he reached the store. Every clerk in the office protested his innocence and the postmaster had not the ghost of an idea who was the culprit.

Naturally matters looked squally for McKinnon. He had been popular, but the better class of people felt that Paul Ladue had been harshly, even outrageously, dealt with, and that McKinnon's insidious, if not fiery speeches were the direct cause. Moreover, there were many in the community who scouted the story told regarding the letter. He found it, he declared, lying on his desk on the morning of the great meeting, with a card bearing only the words, "See within." The envelope was slit smoothly open, and, never stopping to note the address thereon, he was amazed to find within another envelope, sealed, and the superscription was of such startling importance that he deemed it his duty to exhibit it to friends, in fact to everybody, that they might know a traitor—a spy—was in their midst. He might have erred, but as a loyal American he conceived that nothing less could he do.

But a revulsion of feeling had set in. Before leaving for Washington there had been ample time for Fred Benton to spread abroad Ladue's declaration that nothing would persuade him to cast his lot with the South, provided he could be permitted to remain here in peace. He felt that his duty was with his aging father. Elinor, too, with flushing cheeks and flashing eyes, had told the tale from house to house. The physician employed by

Benton and others to go with Paul to Chicago came back full of sympathy for his patient and wrath at the populace. Such was the state of feeling that Gale, the would-be heroic leader of public sentiment, awoke to the fact that it might be wise for him to cross the Lake and visit kith and kin among the Wolverines, for city officials had come and asked ugly questions, and there was talk of arrest and indictment for inciting riot. He swore that no violence had been offered Ladue, that he had simply "led him along by the scruff of the neck," and that Ladue's exhaustion was due to his own frantic struggles. But the leading journals, morning and evening, denounced the whole affair—McKinnon, who had been the Democratic candidate for city attorney at the spring election, coming in for an especial scoring from the Republican press, and finding no defenders among the papers of his own political persuasion.

McKinnon called at the Bentons and asked to see Miss Elinor, and Miss Elinor asked to be excused. Then he wrote to her—a long letter, full of argument, explanation and regret, and she answered in a short note, saying that she trusted he fully realized the wrong he had done, hoped that his regret was sincere and that he would find means to make amends, and that was all she would say. Benton, senior, quite approved her conduct at the time, for there had been words between the partners—unpleasant words. Impartial listeners were compelled to say, however, that the words were Benton's own, for McKinnon hardly opened his lips ex-

cept in restrained and respectful protest. It must be owned that no sooner was poor Paul well out of the way than McKinnon's words and deeds became almost saint-like—so meek, so forgiving and tolerant did he become. He had even gone to the Ladues and talked to the unhappy old father and dilated on his efforts to turn the heart of the crowd and protect Paul from indignity or violence. He declared that it was due to him that the troops were called out and that the firemen came and drenched the frantic crowd. He chose the hour when he knew Elinor was visiting the stricken mother, and he hung about until long after dinner time, expecting her to come down and be waylaid. Keen was his chagrin when pert little Nina danced in and announced that if he were waiting for Elinor Benton he was wasting his time. She had slipped out the back way nearly an hour before.

Then McKinnon ordered supplies of various kinds sent to the Ladues—some choice claret and dainties in the way of fruit, but Mrs. Ladue could not be induced to touch either. Ladue himself was a total abstainer. The wine lay neglected in the cellar. The children gorged themselves with the fruit, and no good was done by the gifts.

Then came the General with aide-de-camp Fred, and the former responded to McKinnon's greeting with cold and distant civility. The latter asked him what he had done with Ladue's letter and refused his proffered hand. It was lucky the General had to take his young staff

officer to the State capital, whence they were recalled to Washington just in time to meet the demoralized wreck of McDowell's raw, untaught regiments, drifting in from the disaster of First Bull Run.

And then the nation woke up in earnest to a realization of the fact that the South had men as brave as the best in the land and leaders more skillful than those we had yet sent afield. Then it became apparent that not until it was thoroughly organized, drilled and disciplined could a Northern army hope to subdue the array of the South. With them there seemed to be but one heart, one thought, one purpose. They were a people united in their determination to effect a divorce from the old Government and to set up for themselves a republic with that peculiar institution, human slavery, guaranteed for all time. With us there was wide division of sentiment, and many a worthy citizen could not be made to see that the success of the South meant the wreck and ruin of what promised to be the grandest republic, the most enlightened and powerful nation on the face of the globe. What made the task of that God-given, heaven-inspired President phenomenal in magnitude and difficulty was the fact that, strong and skillful as was the army that menaced the Capital from the front, there was another enemy, equally strong in point of numbers, and skillful in argument, debate and intrigue, that sorely hampered his herculean task, attacking him from the rear. The war was not a fortnight old before the hiss of the Copperhead was heard

throughout the land. Only one man before him in the history of our national life had had to encounter such widespread, insidious, treacherous opposition at the hands of the very people he was so grandly serving, and only that man, George Washington, was great enough, strong enough, to rise superior to every personal slight, Congressional cabal or political calumny and subordinate everything, as later did our immortal Lincoln, to the glorious end in view—the establishment and maintenance of that government of the people, by the people and for the people that should not perish from the face of the earth.

But the rugged features had already begun to take on a shade of anxiety. The lines were digging farther in about the sombre eyes and the broad humorous mouth by the time the tall, gaunt President, in the abnormally tall top hat—the fashion of the day—took to driving out to Kalorama in the August evenings, Mr. Secretary Seward dwarfing at his side—to take the air and look at the one Western brigade of all the commands then being moulded by General McClellan into what was to become the grand Army of the Potomac. While at first Massachusetts, New York and even Pennsylvania had been represented in the huge command assigned to Fred Benton's General, with one exception all Eastern regiments were transferred to other divisions as more Badgers arrived, and finally, when the first frosts of October had turned the Virginia shores to fire and, strongly entrenched, the Union army covered the long

front from Alexandria to beyond the Chain Bridge, it was as a brigade of four strong, stalwart regiments, three from Wisconsin and one from Indiana, not an Eastern or Middle State represented in their array, that this compact command was designated, of all others, to encamp upon the beautiful Arlington estate, and the General and his staff were directed to occupy as headquarters the fine old mansion, long the seat of a famous family. The Badger brigadier moved in and took possession of the homestead of his old-time friend and associate in the Corps of Engineers, when as junior officers they were building Fort Monroe, and four thousand men of the West pitched their white tents on the lands of Virginia's knightly soldier—Robert E. Lee.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT WAS FOUND AT MANASSAS

Dark and dreary the winter of the first year of the war closed in on the camps about the Capital. Between the Long Bridge and the heights of Arlington lay a sea of mud. Dull red, the Virginia roads were gullied deep by the wheels of cannon, ambulance and army wagon that sank now to the very hubs in sticky mire, and time and again stalled the needed supplies almost within sight of their destination. In vain the darky drivers doubled their teams and plied lash and blasphemy. Hour after hour the order would ring through the swarming streets of the nearest camp: "Turn out, boys—more wagons stuck in the mud!" and by whole companies, regulars or volunteers, the men would wade knee-deep to the scene, and with fence rails as levers and drag ropes over the brawny shoulders, prying, pushing, hauling and shouting they would "yank" the heavy rolling stock, one by one, from the slough of their despond and tide them over to the next camp beyond, and so, from slough to slough, pass them on their final destination.

But while the roads and flats were quagmires, up along the wooded heights the ground was fairly dry and well drained, and there the four regiments, three of

which had drilled through August on the broad, level plateau of Kalorama, and much of the early fall about Chain Bridge, were now kept from morn till night busily at their soldier task. The General held that the less time soldiers had to kill the happier and heartier they were, and determined was he that the splendid material confided to his charge should be moulded into equally splendid, soldierly shape—that the one exclusively Western brigade of the now well-organized army should be second to none in point of instruction, discipline and efficiency. To this end, drills by squad, company and battalion, all three, were of daily occurrence, followed by dress parade at sundown, and all this supplemented by long, searching inspections every Sunday morning. Presently, too, he was able, by a mile march through the woods, to reach an open plain out toward Ball's Cross Roads, and there have brigade evolutions twice a week. Then the full uniform of the regulars had been drawn for the entire command, the Indiana boys shedding the semi-Zouave garb of gray in favor of the army blue, as had certain of their Wisconsin comrades at Chain Bridge as early as September. One Badger regiment, the Second, whose men lorded it somewhat over their fellows because they had been all through Bull Run and, despite fairly heavy losses, retired in good order—had even obtained the quaint, stiff, Kossuth hat, looped up on one side and garnished with cord and brasses and feathers—the headgear of the regulars at the time—and were dubbed the "Black Hats" by envi-

ous comrades of other commands. Their original field officers had disappeared somewhere about the time of that initial battle, and in their place had come a stocky little black-bearded West Pointer as colonel, with a most soldierly ex-captain of State militia as his second, and then the whole brigade had to be fitted out with white gloves, and some nearby regulars were detailed to show them how best to polish their belts and boxes, and great was the competition among the four regiments to win the honor of headquarters guard and orderlies.

Then, as freezing weather set in with December and it became possible for carriages to come bumping and swaying over the icy boulders and ridges into which the almost liquid mud had been transformed, many generals of rank, and statesmen by the score, and even the President himself, began paying visits to Arlington and bringing curious and distinguished foreigners with them, and salutes and reviews innumerable became the vogue in front of the colonnaded porch of that stately old mansion. Not very far away Phil. Kearny's fine brigade of Jersey Blues was in camp, and the rivalry between these and the men of the West was keen and continuous. But Arlington lay nearer the city, and so it happened that the "hoith" of the visitors, as their one "exclusively Irish" company put it, were ever to be found at the Badger camps, and Fred Benton was learning how much time it took—and money—to provide entertainment for the men of mark swarming in Washington and the lines across the Potomac that first winter of the war.

But there was one visitor who cost them nothing, who brought them cheer and delight, and who could not come too often. He came, however, only twice or thrice. He never left his carriage, but sat there lounging comfortably on the back seat, usually with Secretary Seward by his side, just as he used to come to nearer Kalorama, and, after he had chatted with the General a while, he would drive through the regimental camps to receive the tumultuous greeting or "the boys," to wave his hat and smile at them, and sometimes, when they crowded about him, to stop and shake hands with the nearest, and once or twice to tell some whimsical story that would set his hearers shouting with glee. The President seemed to find himself thoroughly at home among those lads from the far West.

But if the rugged features beamed with kindness and sympathy early in the December days and had ever a smile in return for the greeting of the shouting boys in blue, senior officers who best knew him became aware of a growing anxiety and impatience on his part ere the joyous Christmastide came in, and the crowded camps were jubilant with feasting and good cheer. The beloved little commanding general had been taken ill of a fever and confined to his bed. The President to whom he owed his appointment had as yet no information as to that general's plans, and, strange as it may seem, the two or three men in his, McClellan's, confidence were strangers at the White House and the departments. When, in his anxiety and sympathy, the President called

in person at the invalid's house, he was neither asked to the bedside nor given information as to when the general would be able to resume duty. As a consequence the President had to turn to other sources, and Fred's division commander, McDowell, was the first he sought. He was forever asking questions as to the condition of the roads, the possibility of moving guns and trains, and showing not a little eagerness when told that through January, at least, they ought to be hard and firm, but rough. Then they who read the leading papers of the great North could not but note the clamor for an immediate advance upon the enemy, a sweeping, overwhelming victory over "the insolent foe" that should wipe out the memory of Bull Run and restore confidence and hope throughout the loyal States. It was pointed out that under the vigilant eye of that famous organizer, the army had for five long months been drilling, drilling, drilling until in point of precision in the evolutions of the battalion or brigade, regulars and volunteers could hardly be distinguished one from the other—that the men were presumably hardened and strengthened—that they were amply nourished, armed, uniformed and equipped, and that now, barring the possibility of soft weather, there was no earthly reason why the army should not advance and deal to the triumphant Confederates, boastfully awaiting them behind their formidable field works, a decisive and stunning blow at the very scene of our recent humiliation on the plains of Manassas and along the wooded banks of Bull Run.

Day after day throughout the autumn had "Little Mac," followed by a brilliant retinue, ridden from camp to camp, inspecting, reviewing, commanding, criticising, and, long ago as mid September, after the spirited skirmish near Lewinsville, he had thrilled the listening thousands, Fred and his Badger comrades among them, by the ringing words in which he had assured them the war should be short, sharp and decisive, and for hours the bands had pealed exultant music, "the boys" cheered themselves hoarse in glorification over his stirring declaration: "We have had our last defeat—we have made our last retreat," and the mingled appeal and pledge that followed: "You stand by me and I'll stand by you." Stand by him? Stand by Little Mac? Such was the faith and love and devotion that burned for him throughout that magnificent command that as the late autumn rolled by and the promise of speedy action fluttered from camp to camp there was hardly an officer or man from division commanders down to drummer boys that would not willingly have died for him! Never in the days of his most splendid achievement, surrounded by the marshals of his empire and supported by the Imperial Guard, did Napoleon himself receive from the hearts of his soldiers a love more spontaneous, from their lips a greeting more thrilling, than did George McClellan as he rode the lines of the new-born Army of the Potomac, practically his own creation, for it was but raw material when confided to his hands.

And yet, save for more drills, more grand reviews

and ceremonies, and in spite of the clamor of the nation, the press and the Government, it moved not, and the fine weather of December was gone and January came, and with it the fogs and soft skies and seas of mud again, and stories went from fire to fire to the effect that the President and the people had become irritated at the long delay, and that Little Mac was being urged and importuned and even blamed. "Let Little Mac alone," said the boys. "He knows what he's about"; for even in their impatience nothing could shake their loyalty.

At last, as is well remembered, the President, in the exercise of his prerogative, took the law into his hands and issued his first order directing the advance of an army in the field. And at last, its corps organization completed now—though with generals not of McClellan's choice—to the glorious music of the innumerable bands, in splendid weather and in splendid spirits, the long blue columns filed out from the shelter of the circling fortifications and took the road to Centreville.

Promotion had by this time carried Fred's division commander to the head of a corps and his brigade commander to the head of the fine division, in which until now the wild Westerners had been numbered as the First Brigade. Now they became the Third, and were both astonished and disgusted to find that their numerical designation depended not, as they were inclined to say, on their soldierly superiority, but upon the relative rank of the brigade commander. It galled them, to tell

the truth, to find that the promotion to division rank of the West Point soldier who had organized, drilled and taught them from the start, involved a corresponding setback for themselves. Some Badgers took the matter so much to heart as to declare that the General should have declined promotion—let somebody else step up to the command of the division rather than see his old comrades moved from the right to the left of the line, from front to rear of the column. In vain were they assured that it really made no earthly difference, that the brigade would take turns at the head of the column on the march, and, as for the line of battle, they would get just as much fighting on the left as on the right. It is strange to see what little things will start a big sensation among young soldiers. Badger and Hoosier the brigade had a mild case of sulks when it found that its comrade commands, made up of New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians, each headed by a West Point general, were now its seniors in soldier rank, because the best they could boast for brigade headquarters was one of their own colonels. Senators and representatives, egged on by letters from "the boys," flocked to the White House and the War Department to "see about this" and have it rectified, and came away reconciled from the one and ruffled from the other. The new war secretary was as like Cameron as cactus is like the cowslip. Even then, at the outset of his career, he was all spines and bristles. The patient President, however—was ever man more patient?—listened without interruption

to the somewhat vehement words of the Badger statesmen who had assured the boys, "Black Hats" and all, that they would see them righted. With downcast eyes, his shaggy head on one side, his long, bony, muscular hands extended, finger-tips touching over the right knee, his wide mouth twitching sometimes into a semblance of whimsical smile, Mr. Lincoln waited until his callers had finished, then passed a hand through his bristling hair, then clasped both hands behind his big black-brown head and threw it upon their support and gazed aloft as though for inspiration, then straightened up, and with the sunshine breaking through the sombre lines about his deep-set eyes, began:—

"As I understand it," said he, "the boys want to go back to head the procession as they did when McDowell commanded the division. Now, to do that I've either got to pull their own general down a peg—set him back from the head of the three brigades to that of one—or else find some brigadier who ranks such fellows as Augur and Patrick, take him away from the brigade he has been licking into shape, and set him over our friends and neighbors from Wisconsin and Indiana—that, too, gentlemen," and here he reached out and picked up a bundle of papers from his desk, "when at least a dozen smart young West Point captains and all the four colonels are being pushed by their friends as the right man to succeed to the command of that particular brigade. You see they appreciate the stuff our Western lads are made of. Now I can't reduce your Western

general, and the boys wouldn't thank me for sending them a total stranger. You just say to them for me that I'll send them a brigadier presently who'll see to it that they get everything in creation they are entitled to, fighting, feasting or fun, and I'll warrant they'll be satisfied."

"You wouldn't care to give us his name, Mr. President," suggested the ambassadors.

"I shouldn't care, if I knew for certain—but Stanton might. You see we've got a new housekeeper in the War Department now, and we mustn't do anything without consulting that authority." And with that he rose and cordially clasped the hands of his Western visitors, and the gentlemen had to go, convinced, if not satisfied.

As for the brigade, it strode away most vigorously on the march to Manassas, was one of the first to reach the storied stream that wound along at the foot of the heights, was one of the most disgusted to find the "impregnable system of powerful works", held only by Quaker guns and abandoned impedimenta, but to Fred Benton and his general there came a lively sensation in the report from the lips of the bearded colonel of the "Black Hats." His men had stumbled on a lot of letters and luggage unaccountably left behind even in the calm deliberation of the Confederate withdrawal—the property of certain officers of the 11th Alabama.

CHAPTER V

A STARTLING RESEMBLANCE

Most skillfully and leisurely had "Joe" Johnston, the Confederate commander, withdrawn his army to the line of the upper Rappahannock. Placidly had he waited, even after being furnished with copies of the President's war order calling for an advance on February 22d, until it should be apparent that McClellan was beginning to break camp, and when the first of the Union troops, some cavalry under Averell, came twinkling into view along the heights of Centreville, the last of Johnston's fifty thousand—all he had to face McClellan's field force of probably double that number—was reluctantly riding away from Manassas. More for exercise and the name of the thing than with the idea of a fight, "Little Mac" had sent his big corps forward to the scene of McDowell's defeat of the previous July, and for a whole day Fred Benton and his Badger comrades wandered about the Junction, the Henry house, the Warrenton pike and the old Stone Bridge, gathering relics and information, and it was while so occupied that a squad of busy searchers had stumbled on two or three boxes in an abandoned hut—boxes that when burst open were found to contain letters, papers and clothing belonging

to a prominent captain of the 11th Alabama, and, as luck would have it, to First Lieutenant Paul Ladue.

"Now, what have you got to say?" demanded officers of the Montgomery Guard, a home company, as one of them shook under Benton's paling face an open letter addressed to Ladue. "Will you own up that he was a reb all the time?"

"No," said Benton, sadly. "He would have remained there taking care of his old father if it hadn't been for that mob, and more than one of your men was in it, Captain O'Kane, as you very well know."

"I'm prayin' my boys can meet him, that's all," said the Hibernian leader.

"Some of them will be past praying for when they do," returned Benton hotly, for his heart was sore, and a new anxiety had come to him. What if some of the letters should prove to be Elinor's—his sister's?

For Benton knew that at last a letter had reached her from Paul Ladue, forwarded under cover from St. Louis. She had frankly written and told him of its coming—told him, moreover, that she had taken it to their father and asked him to read it, and, so far from showing anger or disapprobation, the Squire had stood irresolute a moment and then taken her in his arms and kissed her and returned her the letter, unread. "But you must know what he says," wrote Elinor to her brother, "for he speaks so beautifully of you and the regard in which he holds you and the regret he feels that writing either to you or to me is impossible, because it

might injure us—you with your superiors and comrades, me with the neighbors here. Yet every fortnight, now that poor Mrs. Ladue is too feeble to leave her bed and Mr. Ladue too apathetic to write, I write for them both—sending the letter under cover to a firm in St. Louis, and every month there has come something through the same channel for his father or mother. My letter came in hers.”

It was a manful letter. The poor lad seemed to realize that they were almost hopelessly parted now and that he had no right whatsoever to stand between her and the possibility of a happier fortune. A portion of his letter read as follows:

“Mother’s few lines, written so slowly and painfully, have told me what an angel of goodness you have been to her, to my father and the children. God only knows how grateful I am to you—you whom I dare not hope ever to see again. The die was cast when they drove me away, dear Elinor, and now my fate is bound irrevocably with that of my oldest friends, my father’s people and my State. I do not seek to further explain or defend my action. It is done.

“But if the idea still prevail that within a few months the North can crush with overwhelming force these soldiers of the South, tell your people it is impossible. Every family is represented in the field. Our best and bravest are all in arms, and it will take years to kill us off. Meantime, what may not *we* be doing? Why, Elinor, one of our most distinguished officers in the regiment tells me he is own cousin to Fred’s general—that he owed his appointment as a cadet long years ago to the influence the general brought to bear. You see we are all in it, every family, every name. We have no dissenters as you have. We are a united, enthusiastic people who mean to be utterly free.

“And so—and this is the hardest thing I ever thought to have to write—it *has* to be good-by. Try to think kindly, forgivingly of me if you can. I cannot, and I have no right to, tell you what this costs me. May God in heaven bless and guard you—always.”

Early in December had that letter reached her, and the copy been sent to Fred. No wonder she wished her father to see it, thought he. It showed Paul Ladue in so different a light. Already, however, had the Squire begun to realize that there was far more principle in that fragile-looking dreamer than among his defamers, and hot words had passed between the senior and junior partner again, leading late in the fall to open rupture and a withdrawal of McKinnon from the firm.

Nor did it surprise either Benton or Gray to find within the month that McKinnon had allied himself with their keenest rivals—that those astute practitioners, indeed, had sought the allegiance of the younger man, this, too, in spite of the cloud that had hung over his good name ever since the postmaster's published statement. Eight months had passed and the matter of that purloined letter was as deep a mystery as ever, and now here at Manassas, and, of all others, to the men of the Badger Brigade had come confirmation of the statement insisted on by McKenna and denounced as a lie and forgery by Paul Ladue—that the fiery young Southerner was actually an officer of the 11th Alabama. The absent are ever in the wrong, and with sad heart poor Fred listened to the chorus of denunciation that followed the discovery. He knew that within forty-eight hours a dozen letters would be flying homeward with the exciting news, so what was the use of attempting to suppress it?

By his general's advice he wrote to his father forth-

with, telling him of the finding of letters and luggage belonging to Paul, the letters all tending to show that he was now an officer of the 11th Alabama—but that he, Fred, still believed Paul's statement to the effect that he had accepted neither commission nor appointment up to the time he was banished from his Northern home. The General added some words of his own, and then as a courier was to start for Washington from McDowell's headquarters that evening, Fred was given leave to ride thither, and thereby assure their letters going ahead of the others.

It was an unusually bright and beautiful afternoon, as, followed by his orderly, the young officer took the Sudley Springs road and trotted away northward in search of the corps commander. Already some of the comrade divisions, strung out along the Warrenton Turnpike, had been faced about and started back for Fairfax Courthouse, and it was apparent that beyond Manassas, in search of Johnston, McClellan did not care to go. Averell's cavalry, pushing out southwestward, had spent a day or two in scouting without seeing anything worthy of mention, and then had drifted back to Manassas for forage and supplies.

Here and there through the wooded, winding lanes that crossed his path, Fred caught sight of little squads of explorers from his own division, but these became less numerous as he came in view of the now famous Henry house and the cleared fields up the slope to the right. It lacked still two hours to sunset. He was

now barely a mile from the Warrenton pike and, with abundant time to spare, he decided to ride to the crest and have a look at the battle ground of the previous year. War with us had not then become the hell described by Sherman two years later. We still handled both the enemy and the musket with gloves. Each in his turn, McDowell and McClellan had declared that the houses of home-keeping Virginians should be held inviolate, that property of every kind should be protected. Even when, of its own motion, it sought the shelter of the Union camps, the law demanded its restoration to the master coming with whip and hounds in search of his chattel. Safeguards were still posted at the gates and doorways and over the pens, roosts, smoke-houses and cellars of the complacent households whose sires, sons, and brothers were doubtless with the gray-clad army across the Rappahannock. Benton could see the glint of the sentry's bayonet among the tall shrubbery in front of the Henry house, and a corporal, with a squad of blue-coated guardians, lounged at the gateway ahead of him. But other forces, less heedful of personal rights, perhaps, had been there before, and the fence was but a ruin through one of whose numerous gaps he sent his powerful bay and then jogged on up the hillside. Accustomed to the saddle from early boyhood, Fred was a horseman whose easy mastery over the most intractable "mounts" submitted to him for subjugation had won the admiration of such experts as Bayard and Custer, young officers of the regular cavalry

frequently visiting division headquarters during the winter. A keen observer, he had studied the carriage and manners of the professional soldiers with whom his staff duties so frequently brought him in contact. McClellan, McDowell and Fitz John Porter were his models of soldierly bearing, dignity and deportment, Phil Kearny his ideal of the *preux chevalier*, while among the few cavalry commands and the famous light batteries of the regulars rode younger soldiers whom he never tired of watching, Gibbon with the guns of his old brigade, Griffin with the West Point battery. Weed, Ayres, Ames (still crippled and scarred from First Bull Run), Kirby and Hazlett and a dozen jaunty boy gunners, while Bayard, "Joe" Taylor, Audenried, Sanders and McQuesten, and the dashing troopers of their set were ever the objects of our young Badger's scrutiny. He had profited by his observation and study, and no aide-de-camp in McDowell's big corps, as the spring came on, better adorned his position than did the tall, sinewy Westerner, not yet twenty-two.

Small wonder was it, therefore, that the few sentries scattered about the house and gardens gazed admiringly at the slender, soldierly figure in the trim-fitting, well-cut uniform. Every detail of his equipment—horse furniture, boots, spurs, belt, sash, sword and gauntlets, holsters and field-glasses—was all of the best that experts could choose or money buy, for the Squire had not stinted his only son. A stirring picture they made as they halted on the heights, horse and rider silhouetted

of Virginia land-
 mer clothed
 fore him
 hori-



In front of him stood the old
 Virginia homestead.—Page 67.



against the sky, and a grand picture of Virginia landscape—a beautiful picture when the summer clothed the forest in verdure—was that outspread before him as he gazed away northwestward. Spanning the horizon to his left, eight miles or so away, the long, low range of the Bull Run mountains—the easternmost parallel of the Blue Ridge—stretched from near Warrenton until lost in the hazy distance toward the Potomac opposite Point of Rocks. North and westward the ground fell away before him, criss-crossed with farm fences and country roads, dotted with little hamlets and darkened here and there by copse and grove and forest—while, beyond the road by which he came a barren crest, bursting out above abrupt, sloping sides, fringed with scrub oak and cedar, partially hid the view of tangled woodland that seemed to spread for several miles to and beyond the twisting line of the railway toward that low notch in the Bull Run range—the height known as Bald Hill, and a vital point in the summer months soon to come—the notch, destined to be the gateway through which the Southern hosts were so soon to swarm upon our rear,—already known as Thoroughfare Gap. In front of him, a hundred yards away, stood the old Virginia homestead about whose walls the battle raged that hot July Sunday of the year gone by—beneath whose shattered roof the poor mother died, stricken by whirring fragments of shell. Riding thither and skirting the enclosure, he passed on, unchecked by silent, saluting guardsmen, and as he rode something

prompted him to glance toward the house again, and there at a jagged shell hole, just under the eaves, peering at him between the shattered clapboards, his keen eyes caught an instant glimpse of a haggard face—a face that, at his glance, was instantly withdrawn.

Three minutes later, out on the northward edge of the plateau, he unslung his field-glass to study the country outspread before him and stretching away in alternate field and forest, to the dim, white walls of Vienna. Just beneath him, at the foot of the slope and across the shining ribbon of a little stream and the broader, dull red gash of the Warrenton pike, stood the stone house—the historic stone house of the by-gone year; just to his right, at the edge of the plateau, the relics of the Robinson homestead, and there in the low ground of the middle distance, the wooded banks of the winding Bull Run. Still thinking of the face at that jagged hole, some sudden impulse prompted him to quickly turn in saddle, to bring the powerful lenses to bear on a little window under the peak of the roof of the Henry house, and there was the face again, furtive, frightened, he could swear, and again, instantly it popped out of sight.

But his heart had given leap as sudden as the sight, and now was hammering within his breast. Replacing the glass in its leathern case, he whirled his horse to the left about and rode straight for the rear entrance to the garden. Another moment and, dismounting, he rapped loudly at the door. A tall, slim man of middle age ap-

peared and, with grave courtesy but without welcome in his tones, asked the purpose of his coming.

"I am Lieutenant Benton, sir—aide-de-camp to the general commanding the division guarding your premises, and I have a question to ask as to the occupant of your garret."

Instantly there came from just within the doorway to an inner room a half stifled cry—a gasp—a rustle of skirts. The tall man turned thither a quick glance of warning and rebuke, then, visibly paler, again faced his caller.

"You see the condition of my house, sir. It is a mere wreck as the result of the cannonading it sustained—from both sides—in the battle of last July. We have been trying to make it habitable, and have given succor here to sick neighbors or friends who had no roofs left to cover them—only to the sick, sir."

Benton paused, irresolute. The tall Virginian spoke with so much dignity and sadness. The house, as he said, seemed barely habitable. The garret, especially, was little better than a ruin. The face at that peephole on the eastern side and at the little window away up under the gable eaves at the north might well have been that of some of the household, yet, even at the distance and at the first glance there was a something about it that caused his heart that leap of sudden joy and that kept it bounding still. And then—if it should be true—if what he hoped—and feared—were really so, what would be his duty to his general—to his country?

"Against all enemies or opposers whomsoever"—the words of his oath of office came ringing to his ears—blazing before his eyes in letters of fire—and without further ado he briefly said, "I am sorry to intrude, sir, but what I saw at that window makes it necessary that I should see the garret. Will you lead the way?"

For a moment the Virginian hesitated, then, lifting his hat stepped backward to admit his unwelcome visitor. "We are in your hands, sir," was his half reproachful answer. "Enter if you will."

But then came sudden barrier to his further progress. Quickly there stepped into view and stood confronting him at the doorway to the inner room the tall and slender form of a young girl. Eighteen she might have been, not more, though anxiety and grief had paled her pretty face. But her great, glorious dark eyes were all ablaze as she folded her slender arms and looking the young officer squarely in the face, said, "This is my room, sir, and not subject to search."

Slowly Fred Benton's gauntleted hand went up to the visor and the natty forage cap was uplifted. The kindly, yet kindling eyes of blue gazed one moment into the unflinching, unmelting eyes of deep, deep brown, then turning deliberately the aide-de-camp inquired:—

"Is there another way to reach the stair?"

"Only by going round the house to the other door, sir," was the Virginian's reply; whereat Mr. Benton, with bow as ceremonious as though he, too, hailed from the shores of the James, the York or Rappahannock

instead of the bustling, pragmatic Northwest, looked once more long at the lovely oval face, now surely blushing before him, then turned and left the room.

Three minutes later he had searched both garret and the upper story and not a sign of occupant was there.

CHAPTER VI

A STRANGER WITHIN OUR GATES

When Lieutenant Benton rode away from the Henry house that sunshiny evening the long shadows were slanting across the levels, and the dazzling shield of the day god was well down at the west. Shadows, too, had fallen on the blithe spirits that had been his in the earlier hours. Surely he could not have been mistaken about that face, thinned and haggard as though from recent illness, and livid with the consciousness of imminent peril; and, if he had not been mistaken, just as surely he had been tricked—tricked in all probability by that defiant and yet most attractive Virginia girl. Virginian he believed her to be, partly because her accent so resembled that of the very palpable Virginian, the owner, and partly because that courteous and well-mannered native, in answer to somewhat imperious question, said "The young lady, suh, is a daughter of old Doctor Chilton, of Charlottesville."

To the very natural question that followed, "What was Miss Chilton doing there?" the Virginian had answer equally prompt and dignified. Her brother, a lieutenant in Stuart's cavalry, had been accidentally shot by the pickets the dark night of March 4th, had been left

with an attendant at the Thornton place across Bull Run, too badly wounded to be moved when Johnston fell back from Manassas, had bribed his friends to send him away in a cart when he heard of the Union advance, and cart and contents had been run down by other troopers—Averell's—before they reached Manassas. The wounded boy, delirious with fever, was even now lying in the room his sister guarded. Dr. Alexander, of General McDowell's staff, had twice been to see him. Dr. Chilton had come, bringing his devoted daughter, and then gone on to Fairfax in hopes of obtaining from General McClellan permission to take his son on parole, by slow stages, to Charlottesville, and Miss Chilton meanwhile remained there under what was left of a roof, and what he, Mr. Henry, could offer by way of care and protection. Indeed, there could be little doubt of the presence of a sorely sick man, for fevered moans, mingling with the gentle, soothing, appealing words of the fair nurse could be heard in the adjoining room. Moreover, brief conference with the guard without did much to confirm Benton in his faith in the truth of the statement. They assured him that if anybody else was harbored or hidden there he could not escape, for they were ordered to prevent the occupants from leaving, as well as to protect the premises from harm.

At five o'clock, therefore, the young aide-de-camp went his way, not fully satisfied by any means, but content to seek explanation at corps headquarters and to investigate further on his return. In point of fact he was

doubtful as to his duties and prerogatives in the matter and needed his general's advice. He meant to tell him just what he feared or suspected—that Paul Ladue himself, in some unaccountable manner, had become separated from his regiment, possibly through illness or wounds, and was concealed within the shattered walls of the old Virginia farmhouse. But, just at the time when he most needed the instructions of his own division chief, he was destined to be cut off from him—and for many a day.

It was after sundown, and long after, when at last, riding some miles at swift trot, he overtook the corps commander with his staff on the road beyond Centreville. "Ah," said that soldierly leader, "the General is prompt. What time did he start?"

"Start, sir?" said Benton, his heart beating quick and hard again. "I don't know. I was instructed to deliver this letter and to ask to have these others sent on to Washington by your courier to-night, but I thought to find you west of Centreville, not on the march, sir."

"Then my orders had not arrived when you left? Why, what hour *did* you leave, sir?" and McDowell's face reddened as it would when he was annoyed.

"About four o'clock, General, but——"

"Four o'clock, sir! Then where on earth have you been all this time?"

"I came by way of the Henry house to look at the old battle-field, General. We had no idea of your mov-

ing, and there was plenty of time before dark," answered poor Fred, noting with much concern the ominous silence of the listening staff and orderlies.

"You must have stayed an unconscionable time there," grumbled the general, who had not yet ceased to feel touchy at any mention of Bull Run the First. ("Longer than *he* did last July," laughed O'Kane, of the Montgomery's, when told of it.) "Ah, I remember. That pretty daughter of old Chilton's is there. You saw her, I suppose?"

"I suppose I did, General," was the rueful answer, "though she in no wise sought to detain me. Quite the contrary."

"Well, Mr. Benton, your division is doubtless following us by this time, and should be across the Run. My compliments to the general and say I will have his letters forwarded. Now, don't get lost in the woods on your way back."

And thus summarily was the brief interview ended, and the corps commander with his staff rode on.

Now here was a plight for an aide-de-camp! His tent and all his belongings were with those of division headquarters and would doubtless be taken care of by the staff quartermaster, but where was he to find his general—and how? Well he knew the division in marching to follow or overtake the others of the corps—and Kearny's Jersey brigade was just striding by him at the moment—would probably take the shortest road from the camps about Manassas, would follow the wind-

ing wood roads and cross Bull Run at Blackburn's or Mitchell's Ford, taking the hypotenuse of the triangle instead of the long way around—the two adjacent sides formed by the Sudley Springs and Warrenton roads. Yet he had fully intended to be back at the Henry house before this hour that found him still in saddle and crowded off the highway—he and his orderly both beginning to get hungry and their horses showing signs of hard riding. It ended in his picking a way past the flank of the marching column, every now and then narrowly shaving some straggler along the dilapidated stone wall that skirted the pike, and after half an hour's groping, finding himself once more at Centreville as the rear of Franklin's fine division was clearing it.

On the westward rise of the roadway, just beyond the old stone church in Centreville, the wagons of this—the First Division—in double column blocked the way, as only one by one could they cross the ramshackle wooden bridge over the dry wash or shallow water course at the east end of the hamlet, and here he was able to coax a few quarts of oats from a complaisant teamster, and while Burns, his orderly, set to work to rub down the horses in the fenceless yard of the first big house to the right of the road, Benton banged at the door in quest of supper. Those were still the early—the “velvet” days of the war when almost anything but a square fight could be had for money, and the aide was in no wise surprised to find half a dozen field and

staff officers eating heartily in the kitchen, and rather loudly and coarsely, yet not really ill-naturedly, chaffing an elderly, gray-haired man who, seated by himself at a little table, answered their crude sallies with imperturbable dignity and patience. One of the number knew Benton and jovially hailed him by name:—

“What ho, thou limb of the West! Fred Benton, by all that’s lucky! Well met, my bold Badger, for we’re well nigh dead broke. Our Boniface here wants a dollar apiece for our supper and five dollars for the demijohn of peach brandy he’d been saving for Joe Johnston. We can manage the tax for the victuals, Fred. It’s the peach that staggers us.” And there was unconscious truth in the statement, for the entire party showed symptoms of undue exhilaration.

“I’ll stake you, provided you’ve left enough supper for me and my orderly,” laughed Benton. “Otherwise I’ll see you hanged first. How is it, friend? What can you give me?” and he turned to the man of the house, and he in turn to the tall, unkempt creature in faded calico, hair and complexion, just entering from the “leanto” at the eastward side. A shrug of the scraggy shoulders was the significant reply, supplemented by the brief word “Nuthin’.”

Somewhere out on the pike a cavalry trumpet sounded “Mount,” and the sextette started. “By Jove! There goes the escort, so we must move,” cried a burly major. “Come, Benton, fork over and we’ll have a stirrup cup.” With that he lugged the demijohn from

underneath the table, slung it by a deft turn of the wrist, camp fashion, across his right forearm, and proceeded to pour a liberal shot into the glasses and cups held forth to him. Then the devil of over stimulation sent him lunging across the narrow floor to the table where sat the lonely Virginian. "Come, old chap," he cried, "you're all right. We've been a little free, perhaps. Soldiers will be soldiers, you know. You're a gentleman. Join us in a drink, sir, and a toast. Hey, fellows, let's have a toast."

"Forward!" rang the trumpets on the soft night wind, and the rumble of wheels gave way to the clack and clatter of countless hoofs.

"Come on, major!" shouted Captain Cranston, he who had accosted Benton, and by this time had readily effected the needed loan—with unneeded increment. "Come on! Don't bother the gentleman. We must be off."

But the major was bent on another drink and having the gray-haired stranger share it despite the latter's plea to be excused.

"One toast—just one!" shouted he of the demijohn. "Here's to Little Mac, by Jupiter, the best general—the best gentleman in the whole army! Ain't he, old chap?"

And to the surprise of all, even in the midst of the boisterous talk and confusion as the party searched for discarded sabres and gauntlets, the elderly stranger arose, held forth his glass and courteously said: "Give

me a thimbleful, sir. I'll join you in that with infinite pleasure."

"Bully for you, old boy!" cried the major, who had gulped a stiff three fingers whereas the Virginian had merely sipped at his glass. "Now, 'scuse me—just two drops more. One more toast. Here's confusion to the Confederacy—an' everything c'nnected with it—an', an'——"

"Oh, come out of this, Mullen!" growled a comrade, grasping him by the arm. "Come out or I'll——"

"Not till I've had a st'rrup cup with this gen'leman—not till he drinks my toasht—I've drunk his. Ready, sir? Here's confush'n to the Confederacy an' everybody— What! You won't drink that? You a damned reb'l, too?" and before his friends could interpose the half crazed fellow had lunged threateningly forward at the pallid stranger, who, having set down his glass untouched, stood facing them, one hand uplifted in silent protest. It was Benton who sprang between them and with apparently laughing ease, whirled the major about, and with his powerful hands on the burly shoulders sent him struggling and swearing to the doorway where the others closed about and bore him away, one of their number, a young staff captain, running back to say a word of apology. Then Fred and the stranger found themselves for the moment alone.

"You have done me a kindness, suh," said the latter. "Did I catch the name a-right? Lieutenant Fred Benton, of—of Wisconsin?"

"Benton, yes," was the wary answer, for though the word Badger had been spoken, Wisconsin had not. Somebody had talked to this man of him before and now light flashed suddenly upon the situation.

"Are you—pardon me—Doctor Chilton, of Charlottesville?" asked Benton.

"The same, suh, at your suhvice. I have been to General McClellan for permission to take my son, wounded and paroled, back home, suh. He treated me like the courteous gentleman he is, so I drank his health. Now, pardon me, you have not eaten," and with that Dr. Chilton arose, and followed the whispering Darby and Joan into the lean-to, and when he returned it was with an air of mild triumph.

"You shall be suhved, suh, in a very few moments, also your orderly" (he called it "ohdly"). "You ride on to Fairfax?"

"No," said Benton, "I look to meet my division somewhere about here. They come by way of the lower fords, as I am told."

"Then they are retiring from the Junction, too?" asked the veteran, an eager light in his eye.

"I cannot say," answered Benton, coldly now, for the sudden question put him on his guard.

"Pardon me, suh, if I seem over pleased. I have no reason to rejoice. I am too old to serve, even if my people had not opposed the ordinance of secession, and no enemy could be so courteous and considerate as General McClellan and the officers of your own divi-

sion. My son, suh,—and any other Virginia boy would do the same, I reckon—went with his State, went with Jeb Stuart, suh, who is his second cousin, and it is hard to say which is the more distressed over his being shot—my son, because it was a Southern not a Northern bullet that did the business, or the unhappy fellow who gave the order to fire.”

“Who was that?” inquired Benton, thinking more and more of the face he had seen at the window.

“Mr. Ladue, suh—Lieutenant Paul Ladue, of the 11th Alabama. He was on picket duty that night.”

But Benton, with eager eyes, was rising from his chair, unmindful even of the smoking supper the host was dishing from the stove. Voices and the trampling of horses' feet were heard without. One voice that he knew well rang out clearly over all other sounds.

“You look to it, Captain, and find Benton. The rest of us will ride ahead after General McDowell.”

In no time at all Fred was hurrying round to the front, but already the general and the few staff officers and orderlies with him had disappeared in the eastward darkness, riding at spanking trot, leaving to represent them only a captain and one trooper—a captain who gave a shout of joy and relief when he heard Benton's glad hail and caught a glimpse of his face.

“The Lord be praised!” he cried. “I feared you had gone back the way you came. If so you might run slap into the rebel lines, for—they must have heard of the fall-back orders—Stuart's cavalry are already up

from Warrenton and his advance has been skirmishing against our rear-guard toward Bristoe ever since five o'clock. I was sent to warn our guards and sentries at the Henry and Robinson houses, and found them all in a state of excitement—that pretty Miss Chilton disappeared during the hour between seven and eight, just after it grew dark.”

CHAPTER VII

A WOMAN'S DARING

Ten o'clock of the still, starlit night and, entering the sleepy old hamlet of Centreville by the road from Mitchell's Ford and passing through without halt or pause, a long dense column in dusty blue went trudging away to Fairfax by the broad, stone-ribbed pike. In compact order the leading brigade of the Third Division had just cleared the village and the general commanding the second in column had turned out to the left to observe the march when Captain Carver of the division staff, striding up from the westward, stood at salute and bade the brigadier good evening.

"The very man I wish to see!" said the general. "Some of my people ran foul of an old F. F. V. about a mile down the road. He had McClellan's own pass to the Henry house and beyond, and safe conduct for a wounded son to Charlottesville. He claimed that he had lost his way. Now is it likely a Virginian could lose the broad pike and get into a wood road a night like this? I sent an orderly to show him through the fields to Cub Run bridge—there's a wood road just wide enough for his old ambulance—but I've been thinking

over it ever since. Why should he be trying to go to the lower fords?"

"I know all about him, General," was Carver's prompt reply. "I found him back here in the village. He'd just got Benton a bite to eat when I came along with the news that his pretty daughter had disappeared from the Henry house—Meredith's men were on guard there and sent a courier to us at the gallop. The news upset him completely."

"Did you say Benton was here—in Centreville? Then where's the General?"

"Way ahead, sir. General McDowell sent word for him to come forward and join him and leave Meredith to look after the rear-guard, etc. It may change the plan when he hears that Stuart is following us up. Yes, sir, Benton was there, but my horse is lame and I got him to ride back to stone bridge. One regiment at least will have to come that way, and I'll wait for him here. He will bring word when Meredith's rear-guard is safe across Bull Run."

"How long before Benton did Dr. Chilton start?" asked the general, after a moment of reflection.

"Half an hour or more, sir. It may be that he knew his daughter had friends at Lewis's, or perhaps at the Junction, but it stampeded him to think of her being out alone with stragglers in those interminable wood paths."

The general shuddered. "I'm glad Benton has gone back," said he. "I know those Chiltons—they are blue

bloods all of them. God help the man that lays hand on that girl—if I catch him! Let me hear what Benton reports, will you, Carver?" and with that they parted.

Long into that eventful night, impatient, anxious and finally in deep distress did Carver wait, but no Benton came. At midnight the head of Meredith's column came swinging through from Mitchell's Ford, but no word reached him from the westward road—that by the stone bridge to Groveton, Gainesville and beyond—that along which he had sent Fred Benton, who for his part had been most eager to go. At two in the morning the first tidings reached him: Major May with four stout companies of Hoosiers—Meredith's own—halted at the edge of the village and were bidden to lie down and rest until the remainder of the regiment appeared. Carver plied the officers with questions. Certainly they had met Benton, but it was beyond the bridge. He had an old Virginia doctor in tow, with a rickety ambulance, and was going to the Henry house to gather up a wounded Reb officer. Yes, the sentries there were to be withdrawn as soon as the rear-guard fell back from the railway. Averell's men had been skirmishing with Stuart's fellows until dark, and Meredith was in a fit about some girl that had been spirited away from the Henry house. What they feared was that she had been abducted, and Benton and his doctor friend couldn't rest till they found out. What time was this? Oh, somewhere about ten o'clock! And with this meagre news had Carver to be content until nearly

dawn when the last of the Indianas came tramping up the pike from the lowlands to the west, and they had a story to tell of adventurous, gray-jacketed, black-plumed troopers who, just as the last guards were leaving the plateau in the direction of the Lewis house, or Portici, came galloping across Young's Branch from the northwest, right under Henry house hill, and scrimmaging with some fellows down on the pike at the crossing of the Sudley lane. The whole gang was off and away toward Groveton long before a battalion could be gathered up and marched back to the scene.

Not until weeks after could Fred Benton's own story be told, but it was a strange and thrilling one. With infinite sympathy he and the orderlies had aided Dr. Chilton to harness his horses to the old-fashioned, side-seated, half 'bus, half ambulance he had brought with him from Warrenton—borrowed, probably, from the hotel, or possibly some field hospital, as the best available vehicle in which to convey his wounded boy. The doctor was tremulous with dread and distress on account of his beloved daughter, and utterly unable to account for her strange disappearance.

She had been left there under the care of Mr. Henry to nurse and soothe her fevered brother until the father's return. Dr. Alexander had been there early that morning before Chilton started in quest of General McClellan, in fact the two came away at the same time, and Alexander had left abundant medicine and the prophecy that by evening the patient would sleep, and

that was what was very much needed. Chilton could think of no reason whatever for her wandering beyond sight of the sentries, and surely they would not dare——

He drove away, with all speed toward stone bridge, pass and papers in his outer pocket, so as to be able to promptly show his credentials to any sentries or patrols, and Benton was trying, half an hour later, to satisfactorily account for what he had heard and thought he had seen that day, when Carver came for him to say his horse was dead lame. He had been directed to remain behind and to see the last detachments across the Run, then to rejoin the chief as soon as he had found Benton. This, therefore, was Benton's chance and he begged.

"Let me go back," said he, "and you take your orderly's horse, if you can't get another, and report to the general in the morning."

And so about ten o'clock Fred had reached the stone bridge, found it held by a small guard, and with that guard was a young officer who had been at the Robinson and Henry houses two hours before and had heard all about the circumstances connected with Miss Chilton's disappearance—had indeed been there for some time and had seen her. She had come to the rear door with Mr. Henry about half past five o'clock, and very sweetly and smilingly had told the guards her brother was sleeping at last and that she needed a little fresh air. Lieutenant Ferguson was in command of the guard, "And you know what an eye for a pretty girl Ferguson has," and he begged her to consider the pre-

mises hers, and probably wanted to walk with her, but for twenty minutes she tripped about the old, dismantled garden, going all around it as though interested in what was left of the hollyhocks and sunflowers, and, about six, Lewis came and called her and said supper was ready, and she seemed reluctant to go in, but finally yielded, telling Ferguson that if there were no objections she would finish her walk later. It might be dark and chilly, but she knew the garden now and would throw a shawl over her head. Ferguson said, "By all means," and sure enough, right after dark, out she came again, slim and fragile-looking, but well wrapped up, and Henry begged her not to stay out long. We saw her flitting about in the dim light of the camp-fire and lanterns a moment or two, then she seemed to take to the outer edge of the enclosure, and then, by Jove, she disappeared totally. They hunted everywhere, and while they were hunting Captain Carver rode up with orders for Ferguson and was told what had happened. He was compelled to leave at once, but the search continued. "It is a perfect mystery," said the lieutenant, removing his cap and wiping his brow.

Then while they were talking, the sentries challenged at the bridge, and, to the amaze of Benton, who should appear but old Dr. Chilton with his country omnibus and the strange explanation that he had lost the road—got way south toward the lower fords and had been turned back by no less a personage than General Augur, whom he had met at Washington several years before

when the general was a captain of regulars. Benton's guarantee to the guard was sufficient, and they let the doctor go on his westward way and Benton went with him, that he might give the anxious father these further particulars as they trotted along the dim, shadowy vista of the famous old thoroughfare. At Young's Branch crossing not a mile beyond stone bridge they had met May's battalion, and after five minutes' talk with the officers, again pushed on, while the Hoosiers tramped for Centreville. Benton had determined now to revisit the Henry house and make still further investigation.

But he never reached it. Pushing westward along the pike they noted that all was darkness about the old Robinson place on the rise to the south, and then were surprised to see lights flitting about the stone house, close to the road on the right hand side. Then voices in excited tones were heard within. Two or three were harsh and threatening, one was uplifted in mingled plea and protest, and then, from the direction of the Sudley road, only a few yards away, came shadowy forms, just visible under the starlight. "Halt!" was the instant order from Benton's lips, low, yet commanding, and his revolver seemed to leap from the holster. "Who are you?"

"Patrol—Nineteenth Indiana," was the prompt answer. "Is that you, Lieutenant Benton? Three of our fellows strayed away, and the captain ordered me down here to look 'em up. They've called in the guard at the Henry house—where you were this afternoon."

“Your men are here—in this house, and you’re just in time, I fancy,” for now there were sounds of scuffle and violence. Benton was off his horse in a second and, followed by the sergeant and two or three men, hurled himself at the door, which gave way before his impetuous rush, and in another moment he had sprung through one dismantled room into another at the rear of the house, and there came upon a sight that explained the whole situation—a demijohn—the mate to the one he had seen at Centreville—stood on a rude sideboard, with only one civilian to defend it against three sturdy lads in full marching order who had evidently just had enough “peach” to be mad for more. One of them had grappled with the owner, the other two were watching a chance for a leap at the prize when Benton and the sergeant burst in upon them.

Shame-stricken, caught in the act, the three marauders faced the rescuing party and sheepishly, foolishly, furtively glanced about them, from the tall staff officer to the grinning comrades at his back.

“Are these your missing men, sergeant?” demanded Benton.

“They are, sir.”

“What do they owe you, sir?” demanded the aide, turning to the elderly man at the sideboard who was nursing a bruised throat, yet looking infinitely thankful.

“They don’t owe me—’cept for a few drinks of peach—I’d a given them that gladly if they’d said they were

dry and hadn't any money, but when it came to takin' the demijohn I 'lowed it was robbery."

"How dare you men break in here?" demanded Benton, sternly. "You know the orders against plundering. Take their names, sergeant, and turn them over to the guard when you overtake the regiment. Major May's battalion is only a mile or so ahead of you."

"May I say a word, sir?" asked one of the trio, stepping forward, with a shifty salute, for all three seemed sobered by their plight.

"Say on."

"We didn't break in, sir. The door was open, the light in the window. We were down here before eight o'clock with the sergeant, trying to find news of the young lady, and this fellow can tell about her and won't tell. It was that we came to see about. He set up the peach to keep us from 'peaching,'" and the scamp had the impudence to grin over his own conceit.

"Take those men outside," ordered Benton, implacably, "and ask Dr. Chilton to step in here a moment. I'm afraid you're hurt," he continued, for the man had turned pale and was leaning against the sideboard for support. At sound of the name "Chilton" he started and glared. Obediently the sergeant marched his prisoners to the outer air, and, presently, in came the doctor. One quick glance passed between him and the pallid Virginian.

"You here now, Jennings!" cried the newcomer; "and hurt? How did it happen? When did you get

here? Have you seen—do you know anything of Rosalie?” and by this time his practised finger was at the other’s pulse—the other who for all reply glanced significantly, warningly toward Benton, and seemed striving to bid his friend be silent. But the doctor was all impatience.

“Speak man! This gentleman is a friend—a friend in need. You have seen her. Is she safe? Is she harmed?”

“Safe,” was the sententious answer, with still another significant look, disregarded as before by Chilton.

“But what does it mean? Why should she leave Henry’s? She was to take care of her brother till I returned. Had anybody dared—affront her—there? Where is she, Jennings? Answer me, man!”

But despite the almost agonized appeal, despite the assurance that Benton, though in the garb of the enemy was yet a friend, the Virginian could not reply. “Wait, doctor—wait till you see Judge Armistead. He’ll tell you the hull story. He’s coming over from Hopewell this evening——”

“Judge Armistead—here? And she went with him, do you mean—and left my boy? Why, Jennings, I can’t believe it.”

And then the Hoosier sergeant again came to the door.

“Sharp firing, Lieutenant, south of us! Shall I follow Major May or turn after the guard toward the Lewis place?”

Leaving the two Virginians Benton stepped outside. The moon was just peeping above the trees toward the distant heights of Centreville and near by objects were become more readily visible in the faint and mystic light. Somewhere to the south—toward the Junction—Stuart's venturesome troopers had come in view of slowly retiring parties of the Western brigade and a fairly brisk fusilade was the result. For a moment the officer listened to the spiteful crackle of carbine and rifle, then answered the question. "Better follow the major—and lively, too. I'll catch you before you've gone quarter of a mile."

He felt that it was now unsafe to return to the Henry house. The guard was gone. The chances were that within a few minutes Stuart's troopers would be coming up the Sudley road from the south. He would say a word of farewell to Dr. Chilton, then follow his men. Leaving the horses with the orderly in front, he once more turned, and as he entered the rear room, stopping a most excited conversation, he was amazed to see the back door which had been shut and barred three minutes before, swiftly closing behind a slender figure in the trim frock coat of gray—the uniform of the Confederate service. He caught the merest fraction of a glimpse of a pallid, oval face, framed in a mass of dark, waving hair under a cavalier hat of felt—a glimpse of the gleam of buttons and gold lace. He saw the same form flash by the northward window, and instead of pursuing, whirled about, sprang through the front

door again and round to the westward side of the house just missing collision with a panting corporal who cried, "Reb officer ran down this way from the Henry house. Me and Hinks followed." All in an instant then his suspicions were confirmed. All in a second's time, it seemed, he had hurled himself on a dim, lithe, yet fragile form and, clasping it in his arms, strained it, despite furious struggles, to his breast. "Paul—Paul!" he cried. "Don't you know me?—Fred? Surrender, you blessed boy Reb, surrender. Heavens, man, don't scratch!" for two furious little hands were tearing at his cheeks. "Speak, you sinner. Haven't I known since five o'clock 'twas you I saw at the window?"

But so far from speaking, only panting incoherencies escaped the lips of his captive. Straining, squirming, heaving, struggling, the slender, sinewy form writhed and palpitated in his clasp, a heart was throbbing like mad against his, and while he still clung with one arm to his prize, he seized and captured with the other hand a long, slim-fingered, sharp-nailed little member that was bent, apparently, on tearing out his eyes, and then, swaying and staggering, Benton bore his prize into the moonlit space beyond just as the doctor and the Virginian, lantern-bearing, came stumbling out into the night. The yellow gleam fell full on a beautiful, dark, flushing face, framed in masses of dusky hair tumbling about the sloping shoulders and down the slender back—for the natty slouch hat had been lost

somewhere in the scuffle—fell upon glowing, indignant, magnificent eyes, upon flashing white teeth, upon lovely, ruddy, parted lips, and in amaze, yet still clinging to his lovely captive, Benton stammered:—

“Not Paul, but, whoever you are—my prisoner!”

“Not Paul—nor your prisoner!” was the sudden, exultant answer, in a voice that ever since early evening had been ringing in his ears. “Not your prisoner. You’re ours! Do you hear?” And out of the silence of the night there burst the thunder of galloping hoofs, close upon them, sweeping like a tornado over the open fields to the northwest, and then there came, whirling into view and surging all about them a swarm of shouting, jubilant cavaliers—Stuart’s Virginians in all their early glory.

CHAPTER VIII

A BADGER IN THE TOILS

The rest of that night was long a blank in Benton's mind. He had vague recollection of a furious struggle, of trampling horses, of shining, whirling sabre blades, of a leap to saddle and frantic effort to cut his way through circling foes, of riders' shouts, a woman's scream, a crushing blow that nearly split his skull, and then—oblivion until morning; and the face bending fondly, anxiously over him, as he opened his eyes, was that of Paul Ladue, and the first words that faltered from his lips were: "Paul, poor old boy! How sick you must have been!" for, white and haggard and distressed, the winsome features of the year gone by—the dream face of his chosen friend, seemed aged and worn almost beyond recognition.

Then there were hours of trundling over rough, half frozen roads, with a racking pain in his fevered head and incessant thirst. Bearded faces came and peered at him from time to time, not in enmity or hate, but almost in soldier sympathy, and one young fellow in a gray jacket and cap three sizes too big for him, perched on the back step of the ambulance in which he rode and gave him frequently cool water from his canteen. The

letters U. S. in black were on the white canvas cover, and the letters C. S. in gilt on the clumsy gray forage cap, and Fred dreamily sought to reconcile the discrepancy until his boy attendant divined his thoughts and with an embarrassed laugh explained that this was "one of the wheeled things left behind at stone bridge last July." From time to time, too, Dr. Chilton came and ministered to and comforted him. "It's the fotune of wah, my deah suh," said he. "Yes'dy my boy, my daughter and young Ladue yahnduh were all in your hands. Now it's just the other way. Be patient, suh. Once across the Rappahannock we'll take to the cyahs. This side the river the railway is all ripped up."

Four patients had Chilton to care for now, it seems, and by General Johnston's orders, fast as they could possibly be transported, he was conveying them under cavalry escort beyond the river. In very serious plight was his own gallant boy, the lieutenant of the First Virginia Cavalry, to rescue whom his comrades had made that wide detour and sudden and surprising swoop from the northward side of the pike. Consciousness had returned to him after the long sleep of the previous evening, and now the tossing of the light, springy ambulance over the rough, rutted pike gave him torment unspeakable. Reclining in the second ambulance throughout the morning hours was Miss Chilton, suffering both from shock and partial collapse, for she had been knocked down by a rushing, riderless horse in the midst of the melée in front of the stone house and se-

verely bruised and shaken. Yet was that young woman brimming over with indignation at her father because he would not let her rise and nurse her brother, and at every halt for rest or repairs, food or water, her voice could be heard in emphatic protest and appeal. Third on the list of invalids, but insisting on remaining in saddle, was Lieutenant Paul Ladue—the unhappiest man in the party, worn down with grief and anxiety. Fourth and last was Fred Benton, with a bandaged skull and a broken arm—captured in the moment of supposed victory.

In the gray of the dawn that followed the fight Stuart's troopers had been able to bring forward three ambulances, to give the doctor and his party a soldier breakfast and start them westward along the pike. At Gainesville they had been joined by Judge Armistead, an honored and beloved neighbor, who since the outbreak of the unhappy war had retired to his old country home near Hopewell Gap, and with the judge, or rather in one of the houses of the little hamlet at the forks of the great highway, was Lieutenant Paul Ladue, self-incarcerated until he could exchange the garb in which he had made his escape from the Henry house the previous evening, for the stunning regimentals still in possession of Rosalie Chilton.

Already the story of that romantic and stirring episode was going from bearded lip to lip among the riders of Stuart's Horse, and before the second sunset following Fred Benton's capture he had heard almost every

word of it, so what was so widely known may just as well be told here. The dark night of the fourth of March had been a sorry one for Paul Ladue. Ever since the previous week he and his comrades had been looking for the second coming of the Yankee columns from the forts in front of Washington. Day after day, armed with field-glasses, in belfry, tree or steeple, Johnston's lookouts watched for the first sight of screening cavalry. Night after night, eastward along the pike toward Fairfax and northward along the wood-roads, Stuart's patrols scoured the approaches, eager for a chance to show their mettle and gather in the venturesome advance-guard of the Union force. They were all "green" at such work, North and South both. Already had the Northern volunteers, marching by night, on converging roads, twice opened fire and killed or wounded several in each party before discovering their blunder. It was all nervous business for new and inexperienced officers and, as luck would have it, Paul Ladue, only just up from a debilitating fever, found himself commanding an infantry outpost north of Bull Run, heard afar out at the front the neigh of horses and presently the dull tramping of hoofs. He was at the moment accompanied only by a little picket guard of a corporal and three men. The skies were overcast, the gloom intense, and the wind at intervals was swaying the bows and rustling the dead leaves in the thickets by the roadside. No cavalry had been in their front at sunset. None had passed out that way, and when at

brisk trot, all ignorant of their proximity to the pickets, the troopers came surging down the lane, never hearing, probably, and certainly never heeding the order to halt, Ladue shouted fire and, sorely wounded, young Chilton fell from his horse.

Five seconds more and the error was discovered. Chilton and his platoon had taken the wrong road somewhere south of Chantilly and, instead of rejoining their squadron, had stumbled on the pickets. There was more or less soldier recrimination, but, quickly as possible, the wounded officer was borne in a blanket to a neighboring farmhouse, and a trooper galloped to Gainesville for a surgeon. Ladue spent a sleepless and miserable night, was exonerated by his division commander and Stuart when the matter was investigated next day, but was so utterly broken up over the affair that permission was given him to go back again and remain with Chilton until he could be moved. It had developed that during Paul's illness he had been for three weeks at Charlottesville, constantly attended by Dr. Chilton and frequently visited, nursed, read to and otherwise entertained by Dr. Chilton's most winsome daughter—as enthusiastic a little Southron and rebel as her father had been conservative and Union loving. Ladue left them full of gratitude, full of promise to find the gallant young trooper of whom they talked incessantly, full of project to make much of him in every way, and the very first duty his evil star had assigned to him was that in the course of which he had shot his bene-

factor's only son—sweet Rosalie Chilton's beloved brother.

No wonder Ladue, with his high-strung, hypersensitive organization, was nearly mad with misery, yet he had managed for two days to be very helpful and a great comfort to the stricken lad and was hopefully awaiting the coming of an ambulance on the third day when his patient suddenly took a turn for the worse. The division surgeon said it would be a serious matter to take him that long ride back to Warrenton and suggested Ladue's going over to the home of Judge Armistead at Hopewell and arranging to have the lad moved thither. This was on the eighth of March, and up to noon they had no sign of soldiers coming from the east or north, although for three days Johnston had been sending sick, wounded and supplies to the Rappahannock and was now following with his whole command. At Hopewell, said the surgeon, Lieutenant Chilton would be in comfort, far out of the line of Yankee invasion, and the judge and his fair daughter Lucy would do everything possible to promote his recovery. Ladue could be with him, too, and if Yankee cavalry should come scouting up there in the Bull Run range, why, Ladue could hide and Chilton give his parole until regularly exchanged.

So Paul had gone, never counting on Chilton's taking the bit in his teeth. And when late at night he returned to Thornton, weak and weary, he was aghast to learn that with only his body servant and a trooper

nurse, Chilton had started southward that evening by the Sudley road, bent on escaping from the now heralded advance of the Union blue. Despite fatigue and failing strength, Ladue followed, caught them at the Henry house, and was within that historic wreck, consulting the owner as to the best roads to follow while the farm wagon, with its solitary escort was toiling up the slope from the crossing of the pike, when all on a sudden there came a cloud of blue-jacketed, yellow-trimmed troopers sweeping across the field from the southeast, and Mr. Henry had barely time to hide his visitor under the flooring in the garret when they were dismounting by the dozen and jovially swarming all over the premises.

Another moment, too, and they had surrounded the wagon with its helpless load. Then Averell himself had ridden up to investigate, and one of his first orders was that the Henry house and grounds were to be protected against all possibility of pillage or vandalism.

Again must it be remembered that we were still at a sentimental stage of the war—the United States holding long, as it has in dealing with savage and semi-civilized foe, mob, Modoc or Malay, to the theory that courtesy and forbearance are weapons more potent than shot and steel, for turning the heart of the enemy and leading him to the light. Sad experience long since had taught the soldier the futility of such practice, even when dealing with our brethren of the South. But the statesmen most in evidence and power when such mat-

ters are under discussion at the Capitol speak beautifully, eloquently from the viewpoint of a section geographically over the furthest removed from the seat of conflict and impervious, therefore, to the rule "*experientia docet.*" We went into that war with the South hailed as vandals, hirelings, mudsills and the like and stood guard over the teeming storehouses and cellars of scores of families whose sons and sires were fighting us at the front and whose mothers, wives and daughters too often reviled or ridiculed their very guardians. It is the way of the enlightened, the merciful and the impractical, but it is the way to prolong and protract a war and make it cost vastly more in blood and treasure at the far distant end than had it been fought, without gloves, from the start.

The Henry house had been for a time the vortex of furious fight that July Sunday of '61. The aged, bed-ridden mother, as has been said, had died under her own roof-tree, riddled by shell and spherical case shot. Everybody sympathized with the unhappy family, and it was but natural that both sides, having done the damage, should seek to repay it by subsequent care and kindness. Within those guarded walls, therefore, poor young Chilton, racked with pain, was borne and given stimulant; and when later the infantry of McDowell's Corps relieved the cavalry, and the black-bearded division commander rode over to see the place, the orders to permit no intrusion or plunder were emphasized, and from his own stores the general sent wine and food to

the wounded captive and much appreciated supplies to the man of the house.

But while none save officers of rank or their representatives might enter, none of the inmates, even officers, might now go out save by express sanction of the senior general along that front. It wouldn't do to have Mr. Henry or Black Dan, his henchman, or Chilton's body servant Fabius (originally Scipio, but changed while young marse was pursuing his classical studies at the university, because of a manifest tendency on the darkey's part to delay even in waiting) skipping away with information as to the numbers, plans, etc., of the Yankees about Manassas, and so it had happened that for two days Paul Ladue lay concealed within the Henry house—once when the guard was changed hearing voices he recognized as those of men he well knew in his Western home. Will he ever forget the afternoon that brought the division commander to the spot? Dr. Alexander was gently examining his new and sore-stricken patient; Henry was smoking his corn-cob pipe at the back steps, describing to a knot of Sixth Wisconsin men the battle in which their comrades of the Second had been so conspicuous, when the word was passed from the sentries at the front: "Here comes the general!" and while the guard sprang to their stacked arms, Paul Ladue, crouching sadly in the little garret, crept to the westward side and peered through a crevice at the coming cavalcade.

All in the uniform of their rank, in frock coats, belts

and sashes, gauntlets and forage caps, with regulation horse equipments, for, thus early in the campaign men cared more for style than they did after ceaseless marching to and fro, in sun and dust and mud and rain, had taught them the vanity of all pomp and circumstance in war—the general and his little staff made gallant show as they breasted the slope. There were only five in all, with three orderlies and no escort, but in three of the five Ladue saw the faces of men whom he had looked up to, honored and esteemed, while the face of the fourth was that of the faithful and devoted friend whom he had loved as David loved Jonathan. Only a few moments did they remain, the general, in his courteous, kindly tone talking with Mr. Henry, then they turned and rode away, and Ladue threw himself upon the floor, face downward, so weak, so broken, so sick at heart that it was a relief to sob like homesick child.

And so Henry found him, when in his stocking feet, a little later, he climbed the ladder to the loft with wondrous news. Dr. Chilton and his daughter were coming—were even then on their way from Warrenton.

Much of the early morning of the following day he spent with Rosalie by the side of the wounded boy. Now that Dr. Chilton had gone on in search of the commanding general, hopeful of permission to take his crippled soldier home, the vital question arose, What was to become of Paul? He had no excuse for parole. He had not been grievously wounded. He was there of his own volition, undiscovered, within the hostile

lines, and, though wearing his new and natty uniform and in no sense a spy, still, the lot of Southern prisoner in Northern hands was a problem yet unsolved. The South might well refuse, even while yet exchanges were possible, to ask for the return of an officer as inconspicuous and unlucky as he. Shy and sensitive as ever, the poor lad believed he had lost caste among his fellows, and that if captured it would be regarded as an act of self-surrender—a well planned move on his part to escape the imminent perils of the war now opening in good earnest. The thought was maddening, and Rosalie Chilton saw it, and the daring, quick-witted girl it was who planned the escape so successfully effected.

Little luggage had she brought with her on that hurried journey, but, soon as it was dusk, she doffed the gown and skirt she wore—even the crinoline, at that period of our national life regarded as indispensable to the wardrobe of the gentlewoman—then donned a soft wrapper, and ten minutes later, Paul Ladue, shorn of his new uniform, was attiring himself aloft in the traveling dress of a Virginia belle. He well-nigh ruined the whole plan—and crinoline—by putting his foot through the flimsy cage as he reached the stairway, but from the floor below came ominous “Hush-sh-sh!” in Rosalie’s tragic tones, and she shook him almost savagely while giving some finishing touches to his toilet. “How dare you be so careless with my best hoop-skirt, sir? Don’t you know that’s almost the very last one in Virginia?” Then, duly informed as to the paths in the

garden and the exits through the fence, with her shawl over his head and a prayer on her trembling lips she sent him forth, and Jim Ferguson, officer of the guard, bowed to her representative with killing grace—and let him go.

Half an hour later Paul had shed his skirts at the stone house, had had a whispered word with Jennings—he of the subsequent demijohn—and, in some old clothes of that worthy and with a note to a farmer friend back of Groveton, was away *en route* to Hopewell. By nine he was in saddle, with a horse borrowed of the farmer friend; by ten he had learned that Judge Armistead was at Gainesville, having reached the Thornton farm too late, and there were they both—judge and lieutenant—when the little ambulance train came along in the morning.

Such was the story of Ladue's escape from within the Union lines. But the story that agitated at least three men was that of Rosalie Chilton. Why should she have essayed her perilous masquerade? Why should she have left her brother and, in the dress of a Confederate officer, before the last of the Yankees were clear of the plateau, before Stuart's fellows were sure of the Sudley road—why should she have dared that night dash down to the pike? Even in his battered condition Fred Benton found himself pondering over the problem, for he had heard her father urging her to explain—had heard her implore that father not to press the question now.

CHAPTER IX

ESCAPE POSSIBLE

It is by no means a far cry from Manassas to Charlottesville as one takes the swift flight in the cosey parlor car of to-day, shooting over stream after stream that bears historic name, and smoothly rounding the beautiful wooded heights that loom up south of the Rapidan, but it was a different thing in '61, bumping, banging, jarring behind some wheezy old wood-burner, in ramshackle coach or open platform car, yet it was almost heavenly, after two days' tossing and tumbling over the ruts of the Virginia roadways and the period of enforced rest at Warrenton Junction—to be drawn away on comparatively even keel, with light and air and sunshine and the fragrance of budding orchard and bursting leaf sweeping through the open windows of the car and gladdening the senses of the half score of invalids, homeward bound from the front. Two or three, like young Chilton and our captured Badger, had been wounded in cavalry clash or some affair of outpost, but mostly were they fever victims, weak, apathetic and somnolent. Yet even these seemed to wake and stir and brighten as Rosalie Chilton passed among them and bent and spoke, as she did to one and all.

It was a soft spring morning that saw the genial doctor's little party entrained at the Rappahannock. Scores of sympathetic fellows in Confederate gray surrounded the car to which Lieutenant Chilton was borne and into which Fred Benton, his arm in a sling and his head still in bandages, was carefully guided. For reasons not then made known to his Yankee patient, the doctor persisted in treating his case as far more serious than conditions seemed to warrant. Constantly he strove to impress upon Benton the necessity of lying still and speaking as little as possible. Rosalie, too, was forever holding up a tapering finger in warning and pursing her soft, rosy lips in very significant "hush" when he ventured to ask questions or show a disposition to stir. Otherwise she had but little to say to him, and our wounded Badger boy had enjoyed the doubtful bliss of watching her hour after hour during the long wait at the Junction, hanging about her suffering brother, or with softly flushing cheek, talking in low, eager tone to Paul Ladue, whose melancholy eyes fairly brightened and whose sallow, solemn face beamed with something like awakened hope. Except when she was thus cheering him, the young soldier's depression seemed ever present. He hated to leave Benton's side. He dreaded the reception awaiting him at his regiment, yet was feverishly, nervously anxious to rejoin, and mad for opportunity to prove himself something better than the dolt they probably deemed him. It had been settled that he should leave them at Gordonsville and return to the

front, but at the Rappahannock his own colonel had boarded the train and, noticing at once how ill and worn he looked, had talked with him kindly, sympathetically, awhile, had had brief conference with Dr. Chilton and, leaving Rosalie surrounded three deep by young gallants, late of the university, but now gay, dashing, devil-may-care, mustachioed warriors of the South, had gone off to see their division general, soon to be so famous as a corps commander, whose tent was pitched near by, and in ten minutes they were both there, the one—tall, martial, and with his long, flowing beard looking more like a hero of Norseland or warrior of Aiminius than a soldier of the cavalier South—destined to live long in song and story and to return to the love of the old flag. The other, a type of chivalric bearing and breeding, within ten weeks fated to

“find a soldier's resting place, beneath a soldier's blow,”

leading his heroic regiment at Seven Pines. Paul's sal-low face flushed at sight of the famous soldier who had to stoop to enter the low-roofed, old-fashioned car, and it was good to see how quickly the chat and laughter hushed in the group of young officers, how they faced their honored general with prompt salute or uncovered heads. Rosalie, herself, with glistening eyes and a brave rush of color in her soft cheek, came forward to greet him, fast as the fashion of the day would permit, for in that narrow aisle the balloon skirt was vastly a hindrance. Even then, before the wrinkles and crows' feet

had dug deep about the outer corners of Longstreet's eyes, queer little lines would play about them and his bearded lips when humorous fancy struck him, and kindly humor seemed never to be far from that genial face until the bitter day that cost him Pickett's grand and devoted division in Hancock's front at Gettysburg.

"I looked to see you in uniform, Miss Chilton," said he, "and I have yet to learn by what authority you have discarded the gray. And this, I believe, is the young gentleman you were personating?" whereat he shook hands very kindly with the shrinking subaltern and thought to himself how very near alike they were in stature. "Colonel Moore tells me you are far too ill to resume duty just yet, Mr. Ladue, so I am going to take the responsibility of bidding you go back to Charlottesville for a week of Miss Chilton's care. Ah, Doctor, I'm glad to see you." And then two very distinguished Virginians were shaking hands; but all Fred Benton could see of it was the back of Longstreet's head towering above his fellows, and the backs of subordinate officers clustered about him. They went presently and spoke with young Chilton lying on his mattress along the tops of the seats, then came straight to the lonely officer—the only one in blue, reclining toward the rear end of the long vehicle, the object of much silent curiosity but no intrusion whatsoever, and to the prisoner Longstreet spoke as courteously as to the princess holding her little court in mid car, bidding him be of good cheer.

“Dr. Chilton has told us, sir, of your protecting him from indignity at Centreville, and of all the kindness you did him that night, resulting in your capture. We cannot afford,” and here the blue-gray eyes twinkled and the half-hidden lips twitched whimsically, “to let so good a soldier get right back to business. Neither can we send so chivalric a foe to Libby—at least so long as he is wounded as you are. Therefore, Dr. Chilton, you will see to his having hospital accommodations, and now, we must have a suitable guard.” And here the tall general straightened up, studied earnestly the circle of soldier faces about him until the twinkling eyes rested on the very sweet and rosy features of the one damsel present. Then briefly and in official tone, he finished. “Miss Chilton, I appoint you, until further orders, custodian of Lieutenant and Aide-de-Camp Benton, of the Federal Army.”

Verily, as Benton wrote at the time, these were the halcyon days of the war, before ever it had become the grim and deadly earnest they were to know so bitterly and so very soon. The car was cleared of all save passengers, the train was started before he could find words with which to thank the courtly Southern general, and the doctor, bending over him, was saying, “You must not discredit my report, suh, by looking so much alive as you do at this moment. I represented your case, suh, as one requiring constant attention, otherwise you might have had to go to Richmond.”

And so for a day or two these pleasantries—these

courtesies of war prevailed. Then all of Johnston's men remaining north of the Rappahannock came drifting in before a new forward move of the Union force along the railway. Howard's strong division of Sumner's Corps swept out in reconnaissance, even as the bulk of McClellan's army was being directed on Alexandria for the now inevitable swing to the Peninsula between the York and the James—full details of the gathering of every kind of bay and river craft reaching Johnston quite as speedily as they did New York. So that skilled soldier withdrew still further to the line of the Rapidan where he could be nearer Richmond in case of need.

Then when Banks should have come down from the Shenandoah and "covered" Washington, up sprang that restless, watchful, prayerful Virginia leader, Jackson, and so stirred the situation in the valley that Banks and his men had to hurry back through the mountain passes, and further delays and complications arose before April set in and McClellan could sail for Fortress Monroe, and in all the bustle and excitement, the rumors flying hither and yon, the marching to and fro of cavalry and fleet-footed infantry, it happened that for full a fortnight Dr. Chilton and his patients, nurse, guard and all, had settled down to something like peace and physical comfort at cosey, homelike old Charlottesville, and no man sought seriously to hamper or disturb them. From Gainesville Dr. Chilton had penned a letter to be sent through the lines, notifying the commanding general of the Union force along Bull Run of Benton's capture

after gallant effort to cut his way through, in the course of which he was quite painfully though not dangerously wounded—that he was in good hands and would be well cared for, and this news—a great relief—was promptly transmitted to Fred's general and by him telegraphed to the far Western home. The Squire was both proud and distressed, but Elinor, his fair daughter, never dreaming that Paul Ladue was one of the little corps of faithful friends and attendants, could find no comfort whatsoever. What would she have thought could her straining eyes have pierced the intervening mountain ranges, the long sweep of rolling hills beyond the Ohio, the wooded flats and boundless prairies, and peeped in from the shores of Michigan upon that vine-covered trellis, among the blossoms and buds now bursting into view on every side and rejoicing in the warm April sunshine of far Virginia?

On a well-made stretcher lay the central figure of household and local interest, Lieutenant Jack Chilton, slowly but surely mending of his serious wounds and gaining health, strength, and spirits with every day. And who wouldn't under similar influences?—for two fair young daughters of the old commonwealth vied with each other in assiduous effort to “entertain” the trooper invalid—two bonny, winsome lassies in their teens, both brimming over with hero worship and enthusiastic faith and love for every Virginian to be found afield. Lovely were they both, these cousins of the blood, and most carefully had they been chosen for this

special duty by their acknowledged leader, chief of the little clan of kinswomen that dwelt among the wooded hills of Albemarle and Fluvanna. Brilliant, beautiful and daring, who of their brave Order could lay claim to leadership so long as Rosalie cared to hold it? They followed and obeyed her eagerly, loyally, though in years she was but eighteen, and five, at least, of the Sacred Band were her seniors. Ever since the days of short dresses, braids and pinafores, she had been dominant among them, fearless in act and speech—a little tyrant of the fireside, ruling her father almost as with a rod of iron, domineering over the colored retinue of the kitchen, stable and household, and alternately laughing, coaxing, storming and wheedling out of every effort at restraint, or self-assertion, the gentle-mannered Virginia dame—the doctor's only sister—who, almost ever since the year of Rosalie's birth, had striven to supply the place of the sweet young mother, who drooped and died before her babe had learned to lisp the word she so longed to hear. Tomboy had they called Rosalie at ten, for she could ride any horse within miles of Charlottesville, and preferred walking stilts, flying kites or running races to the customary allurements of girlhood. She had one envy, one champion, one idol—her brother, barely two years her senior—and apparently but one sorrow—that she could not do everything that Jack could, and not for lack of trying.

Then as they both grew older, and other girls' brothers began showing hitherto unsuspected fondness for Jack's

society, and coming to see him at all hours of the day, and other girls themselves began making eyes at Jack, her indifference to the first and her fury at the second were comical to see. Jack, for his part, took it not amiss that Kate Falconer and Georgia Scott and Belle Brinton should show appreciation of his physical gifts and graces, and could not understand it in Rosalie that she should become so suddenly discursive about Kate's freckles and red hair, Georgia's dumpy figure, and Belle's multitudinous affectations. She was forever finding excuse to ride over to the 'varsity after Jack's matriculation—not, as other girls declared, that she might see and be seen by other youths, but simply from longing for Jack—and then, when the war came on and Virginia sprang to arms and Jack to saddle and his first commission in Jeb Stuart's famous First Cavalry, she was all afire with fervor and patriotism on the one hand and of mad jealousy of Maud Pelham on the other, for on Maud had Jack cast favoring eyes.

And so, when she brought her brother home to nurse and pet and coddle to her heart's content, while she was all soothing sweetness on the side that showed to him, she fairly bristled on the other—that which all well-favored feminine callers, inquirers and friends must needs encounter when they came and asked to see him. She established a regular roster book and told off the list of the Sacred Band,—her henchwomen, into four "reliefs" of two girls each—one relief only to be on duty each day and no outsiders to be admitted. Need-

less to say Maud Pelham was not of the elect, and Jack speedily showed he wished it were otherwise.

And so this sweet April morning, with a soft, languorous air playing about the wooded, sun-kissed heights, she had two such awfully nice young girls to cheer him, while she herself turned dutifully to another wounded officer, a youth in dark blue and gold who had been for over an hour a silent watcher of the merriment about Chilton's cot, while he, Fred Benton, sat lonely and longing to get far away.

It was not that they were cold, constrained or inconsiderate when speaking to him, but, the doctor had to be much away now; Lieutenant Jack was always surrounded by his fair bodyguard; the one man Benton loved, his boon companion Paul, had gone to rejoin his regiment, and the one woman who could have made Benton's stay a world of strange, sweet, witching delight was beginning day after day to show less inclination to approach him at all. A fortnight of watching that beautiful dark face, that slender, willowy form, and listening to that silvery voice—alternately pleading, cajoling, caressing, commanding, while to him it was only coldly courteous—had done its work. Fred Benton was mending in body, but not in mind, for doubly now was he a prisoner.

And this fair April morning the news he heard had made him all the more restless and troubled. The Federals were landing in force and marching on Yorktown, and Longstreet's whole command had been sent away,

with others, to meet them. He doubted not that his old comrades of McDowell's Corps would be in action ere ever he could reach them, and the thought drove his pulses up to fever heat again, and Rosalie Chilton, without seeming to look, saw it in the flush of his anxious face, and came to him instanter.

"You will be having fever again, Mr. Benton," said she, and the cool, white hand that at first had arranged the bandages of his head and arm, or tested his pulses without a sign of hesitancy, seemed now to falter and shrink as though it had to be forced to an unwilling task. It stung Benton sore, for, man-like, he could read only one interpretation. How different had she been with Ladue when, for three days, he was feverish and headachy. Why, she had bathed his hot forehead time and again within an hour, and smoothed back his ruffled hair, and she could hardly have treated her own brother more affectionately. Once—Fred could almost swear to it—Paul had seized and kissed her pretty hand, a thing that, were he to attempt, his instinct told him it would be furiously resented and not entirely because he was a Yankee. With shame and contrition did Benton admit to himself that he was now not sorry to see Paul go, yet what would he not give to recall him?

For several days after his capture it had been Benton's belief that Paul was concealed in the room Rosalie declared hers at the Henry house—the room sacred to her stricken brother—and not until after their coming to Charlottesville was he undeceived. There, one after-

noon, the week before he went away, the young Confederate was moved to refer to the matter mainly by seeing that it was a subject of which Benton fought shy.

"I had been with Miss Chilton and poor Jack some hours that morning," said he, "for the guard never came in the front part of the house, but she had ordered me to go and get some sleep in the afternoon, it having been fully determined that I should make the attempt to escape that night. Lying there in a sort of cat nap toward five o'clock, I heard the soldiers speak your name and could not resist the longing to see you. Then when you turned back I knew you had come to search and had plenty of time to flatten out between the joists and pull my section of the floor over me. You stamped on my nose with your spurred boot-heel, Fred, and I never winced."

So that ghost was laid, at least as far as Rosalie was concerned! But how about the other—the far more significant and now mysterious freak of clothing herself in Paul's uniform and slipping through the darkness of night to the stone house? For whose sake—for what purpose—had she so carefully disguised, yet recklessly exposed, herself? Not even her father had been told as yet. He had so confided to Benton only a day or two after Paul's departure, and now, with her growing shyness, aversion, or whatever it might be toward him, little likelihood was there, thought Benton, of his learning the secret from her lips, and that, too, when he was beginning to feel that he *must* know.

Every day of late, for hours, he could pace up and down the pretty, homelike garden, listening to the low chatter in the arbor, the tinkle of guitar, the soft bubbling laughter or the murmur of reading aloud when "Jack's girls"—Rosalie's approved—were there. What comical little ceremonies had there been in the successive presentation of their Yankee captive to these their Virginia neighbors. Of course the story of all his kindness to the doctor had been told, otherwise his presence would have been insupportable. But some one had said he was very handsome, very silent, very interesting, and that he couldn't keep his big blue eyes off Rosalie, and so there was much curiosity mingling with the stately little curtseys each in turn accorded him. Hour after hour as they watched they could see that his eyes were ever following Rosalie, coming and going, for she had assumed all house-keeping cares of late, and was forever busy about the homestead. Yet, as the evening shadows grew long and the sun began to sink, she was sure to appear with Pomp and Peter to bear the lieutenant, stretcher and all, to his bedroom, and at the same time Prisoner Benton was bidden to return to his delightful cell, overlooking the garden and giving him views of the neighborhood denied him when below stairs.

And this April evening as, obediently, he returned to his quarters and sat at the window awaiting the doctor's coming to look at his arm before tea-time, his eyes were attracted by the sight of a certain broad-brimmed drab felt hat that he had noted more than once before that

day, passing along the fence at the side of the house where the hedge was so thick and high that, only at the gateway, now nearly boarded up, could it be seen from the arbor at all. Now, from the commanding height of the chamber window, Fred Benton saw distinctly not only the hat, but much of the form and some of the face beneath it, and face and form were those of a young and slender girl. Even while he was wondering why a young lady should be patrolling that side street so close to the garden wall, she lifted up her eyes—tilting back the hat—and looked full at the captive Yankee; then stopped short, glanced hastily about her; took from the bosom of her gown a little white note; held it high that he should see it; turned and walked back to the gateway. One moment she held her note aloft again, then lowered her hand as though working vigorously at the bricks, and when a second time she uplifted the hand the note was gone. Another moment and—so was she. Obviously, however, that girl wished him to mark the spot, then come down and get that note.

Not until the following morning came there opportunity. Then, while Jack in his latticed, vine-covered arbor was listening to the chatter of the new relief of his fair bodyguard, Benton stepped quickly to the gateway, and, after brief search, hauled aside a loose brick or two and found a tiny billet folded three-cornered, that when opened said:

“Be alert. Orders coming send you to Libby. Watch every morning and evening for further warning. Escape possible.

CHAPTER X

LIBBY OR LIBERTY

Then came three days of rain, as rain it will—sheets and torrents—in the sweet springtide in old Virginia. And while McClellan's men were wallowing in the mud of the lower Peninsula, held by the elements, not by the enemy—for Magruder's little force at Yorktown could not have stopped two divisions when led by a later day general of the Army of the Potomac—here about Charlottesville the wooded heights were draped in filmy mist, the mountain streams ran bank full, and Jack Chilton's bodyguard came on duty with blooming, rain-kissed cheeks, emerging from waterproof hoods and mantles that, like the antique coaches, coachmen and horses that brought them, were beginning to show many a pathetic sign of wear and tear. The arbor and the garden were perforce deserted, and Jack held court in the roomy old hall, while the doctor made his rounds heedless of weather or accounts alike unsettled. Scattered over a range of country within twenty-five miles radius of his office were the homesteads of some hundreds of families, not one of whom could later recall that "endurin' ob de wah" he ever presented a bill or neglected a case. And, while he was ministering abroad, it fell to Rosa-

lie's lot to look after everything and everybody at home—invalided aunt, wounded brother, unbalanced domestics, already beginning to prate of life and luxury without work and freedom without knowledge, and last, yet not least, that now fast-mending prisoner in the second floor back room, where he was becoming rude enough to prefer to stay, sit by the window and rock and read the old masters beloved of the South—Scott, Sims and Cooper—and the speeches of the famous Virginian whose beautiful Monticello gleamed white among the grand old forest trees so close at hand, and whose broadly democratic theories, instilled in the immature minds of the student body, had well-nigh wrecked at its very launching the dearest project of his declining years.

Rosalie, secretly disturbed about her captive, as the girls called him, professed to think Mr. Benton ought to be glad to come down-stairs and watch Brother Jack being worshipped—"It ought to make any man better to see how Virginia girls honor a Virginia soldier stricken while battling for his native State." Bull Run victims were few and far between now—either were they dead or again on duty—and Virginia girls by the hundred were longing to lavish smiles and sweetness and soothing potions, all in one, on Virginia lads shot or sabred in their defence. Time was soon, and far too soon, to come when every house and every room should be filled with the sore stricken, and there could be nowhere near enough girls to go around; but just now, in April, Charlottesville had but three wounded Southrons and one

"Yank," and to the foremost of these Southrons all but a *corps d'élite* of Miss Chilton's choosing were denied admission. As to the Yank, no one of their number dare let another know how gladly would her charity have been extended—even to him. Of course, however, that was merely through curiosity.

No. Fred Benton was chafing, restless and unhappy, and, even now that Paul was gone, again suffering the pangs of jealousy. A tall Confederate officer, a very distinguished looking major of the staff, had called thrice in two days, and had had long conversation with the little lady of the house—one, in fact, behind closed doors after Jack had been "toted" to his room. Fred heard the colored house of commons discussing the pros and cons as to that indication, and in like manner ascertained that the officer was Major Lounsberry—long a resident of Albemarle and now of the staff—the Inspector's Department of the Confederate Army, and Fred could have sworn his pretty jailor was in tears when she came hurrying up from one interview, for he went out in hopes of a word with her, but she saw or suspected and darted to her room without heeding his hail. Morning and evening both had he watched for the return of the lady of the broad-brimmed felt, but the rain or something had been too much for her, and she failed to reappear. Major Lounsberry's deep voice, however, was heard in the broad lower hall three hours after his long afternoon interview with Miss Chilton, and the doctor came briskly forth from his study to

greet and welcome the distinguished representative of the war office—the son of an old familiar friend. There was good news from Yorktown, it seems, and small Pomp brought it in with a little pitcher of cool buttermilk and some “cohn pone” for Marse Benton—“De Yankees done got licked agin down by Yohktown.” “Marse Lounsberry” had so told the doctor, and Fred went down to Jack’s room, his arm still slung, to wish him good-night and learn what he knew, and Rosalie departed and left them to each other, and it happened that as the doctor was ushering his martial visitor from his study to the door full fifteen minutes later, and long before Benton’s usual hour for retiring, the door to Jack’s room opened and the Yankee lieutenant came forth, looking very tall, erect and by no means broken down.

The doctor gave a start—an unmistakable glance of warning. A crouching bundle of femininity near the head of the stairs, out of Lounsberry’s sight but plainly in Benton’s view, frantically signalled with both impetuous hands—with wild eyes and wide-opening mouth gasping dismay—the imperious order to go back at once, but obtusely Benton stood his ground and faced, half defiantly, this new visitor, who in turn stopped short and calmly, even somewhat insolently, surveyed him. The major was the first to speak.

“Lieutenant Benton, I presume,” said he, “and looking vastly better than I had been led to—hope.” How near he there came to saying “believe”!

"*Looking* quite well, my dear major," hastily interposed the doctor, "yet, I assure you, but the ghost of the fine young fellow who rescued me that night at Centreville. It will be months before he can handle a sabre again."

"How about a pen?" asked Lounsberry, significantly, his eyes burning into Benton's gaze as though striving to read his innermost thoughts.

"Mr. Benton has certainly managed to write three home letters—left-handed," answered Dr. Chilton, speaking for his captive guest, yet glancing nervously toward him. "They were duly forwarded to Richmond to be censored. Was it there you saw them, Major Lounsberry?"

"I had reference to possibilities, Doctor, though I am not unacquainted with the lieutenant's left hand-writing. It would be injudicious, for instance, not to say ungrateful to those who have shielded him, were he to answer the letter he found at the old side gate of the garden, Monday evening!"

The hot blood leaped to Benton's face. Lounsberry had spoken with the cool deliberation of one absolutely sure of his ground. The doctor turned and stood gazing at his guest as though expecting him promptly to deny the imputation. From the stairway came the sound of faint rustle as though Rosalie shrank still further away, and Benton felt, rather than saw—for under the major's stern, relentless, searching gaze he dare not look in the lead of his heart—that her eyes were fixed

upon him in mingled scrutiny and indignation. The silence was painful and Benton broke it.

“There was nothing new in the note, Doctor,” said he, purposely ignoring the staff officer. “It was to tell me—what I already suspected and, since this gentleman’s arrival, have felt sure of—that I was to be sent to Richmond. Do not let it worry you. I have been preparing for it, and now I am quite ready to go.”

For the life of him as the sentence closed he could not avoid shooting one swift glance at the stairway to note the effect of his words. The major saw, turned and finding that from where he stood the landing and stairway were hidden from view, stepped quickly forward. Benton instantly did the same, and almost breast to breast they met there in the middle of the room—the blue and the gray—the fire flashing in the eyes of each. There was the sound of whisking drapery, a soft swish along stair and balcony rail, and in an instant Rosalie had darted to the landing and out of sight. A half smile, contemptuous and cutting, played about the Confederate’s lips. He gave no sign whatever that he had heard. He addressed himself to Benton :

“I presume you have burned that note, sir, and therefore have nothing with which to back your statement, but I take you at your word. You are ready to go, you say; be ready to start then at six in the morning.”

“My dear Major!” broke in Dr. Chilton. “Surely you——”

"Those are my orders, doctor. I have no volition," answered Lounsberry, coldly. "And now if I may say adieu to Jack I'll leave you to such preparation as may be necessary. The guard will call for Mr. Benton at six. I go myself to Gordonsville to-night."

With that Major Lounsberry turned haughtily—there is no other word for it—away, as though the possibility of further talk with a Federal prisoner was something intolerable to an officer of his rank and station. The doctor, stunned and silent, looked helplessly from one to the other, and again it was Benton who spoke a reassuring word. Cordially he held forth his one free hand.

"It's all right, Doctor," said he. "You and Miss Chilton have pulled me round famously. I can stand Libby diet now just as well as anybody, and I'm betting on speedy exchange. Then—our fellows will be doing something now," he added, with significant smile. "Who knows but they may gather in game as big as that!" with a laughing nod toward the resplendent major. "Or, is he, like so many of our staff, only for duty at the rear?" And Benton meant that Lounsberry should hear, and hear he did and flushed red under the taunt.

"Do not judge our methods by the little you know of yours, Mr. Benton," he retorted, albeit with admirable self-control. Then, as though again determined to ignore the Northerner, "May I be permitted a word with Lieutenant Chilton, Doctor?" a question which

seemed to recall the doctor to himself and left Benton to his own devices. Without another glance at the unwelcome visitor, the latter turned and ascended the stairs to the second story, and there, in the dim light of a night lamp, by the eastward window, stood the girl he longed to see and speak with, and she who had avoided, now came half timidly forward as though to meet him.

The broad hallway of the lower story, extending from the colonnaded portico in front to the wide veranda in rear, was virtually repeated aloft by as broad a "landing" from which opened four bedrooms in the main building and passageways leading to the wings. India matting covered the floor. Couches, divans and easy reclining chairs were scattered about. Several portraits in oil of famous connections of the family—Cabell, Custis or Stuart—and many a good engraving hung about the walls. Two windows, heavily curtained, opened to the east; two others, draped in dimity, looked out over the fine old-fashioned garden, over a few Virginia homesteads peeping from the midst of oaks and maples, with the roofs and cupola of the university in the distance, and beyond them the tumbling outline of the Ragged Mountains, rising against the backbone barrier to the great valley, the beautiful Blue Ridge. It was away from the neighborhood of her aunt's door and her own, and close to the westward windows that Rosalie Chilton silently led her captive soldier, and then turned, her face pale and sorrow stricken, her great dark eyes fill-

ing with unshed tears. For days she had been distant, repellent almost, in manner that relented not one whit even when she saw it stung and grieved him. Tonight she seemed suddenly to have determined on making amends. Without, the skies had been covered with heavily charged masses of clouds that poured their torrents on the thirsting earth, but now a vigorous young moon was peeping through the thinning veil and throwing a vague, ghostly light upon garden, village street and vine-clad arbor and tracing marvellous pattern of fretwork on the India matting. Within, just in like manner, Rosalie's almost perfect face had been darkened by clouds Fred could neither banish nor fathom, but now a new, soft, tender light seemed shimmering through. What could it mean? he asked, with beating heart, for there was a moment in which neither spoke.

"I have a confession to make, Mr. Benton," said she, at length. "Do you think—it's easy for a girl to say—she's glad to find that she was wrong?"

"Something has seemed to me very wrong of late," answered Benton, "so much so I was glad to get away on any terms, even to Libby. For what have I been punished?"

"I shall tell you—frankly," she answered, standing with downcast eyes before him, her white hands loosely clasping. "Do you know, I thought—I heard—that you were plotting with people outside to escape, and, father being responsible for you, it seemed ungrateful—indeed dishonorable——"

"But what on earth have I said or done to warrant the belief? I have talked with no one, communicated with no one, except that, after I had noted your cold and distant manner, there came this little unsigned note, saying that I was to be sent to Richmond. I have never answered it. I haven't an idea who sent it."

"But the note——" and now she looked up eagerly, "you have it—still?"

"Burned it to ashes the hour it came!" he answered.

"But you saw who brought it—or who left it?"

"I saw—," he impulsively began, then stopped short. What right had he, a Union soldier, to give information against some possible Union lover in their midst, one who was seeking to be of service to him at that?

"Oh, you needn't say!" cried Miss Chilton, with a curl of her lip. "We know—at least I know—the girl! What we heard, or at least I heard, a week ago was that you—that they, that—oh, I can't explain—I can't go on!" she said, and now burning blushes, to his amaze, suffused her face and she covered it with her hands.

Then voices were heard below stairs—the doctor showing the major from Jack's room to the door, ceremonious and courtly even when aggrieved.

"He will wish to see me—perhaps you, too—at once," suddenly exclaimed Miss Chilton, starting impulsively forward. "I just want to know that—that what I now believe is true, and to be able to say so

confidently to father and perhaps to—to others. You had not thought of trying to escape so long as you were with us?" And for an instant the dark, glorious eyes looked full into his face, then fell before the intensity of his.

"On my word, Miss Chilton—no!"

"Then—then," she vehemently cried, "I don't care how soon you do try—now!" and with that she darted past him to her own room and presently the doctor's slow step was heard ascending the stairs.

It was late that night and the moon had dipped beyond the Blue Ridge when, after a family talk in Jack's room, they separated. Not another chance had Benton to speak to Rosalie, but for good and sufficient reason he had found her actions of most unusual interest. Pale and silent, absorbed in thought, she had taken little part in the conference. Twice she stole softly to the window, drew aside the curtain and peered through to outer darkness; then, while her father was earnestly talking, she seated herself close to the curtains, and Benton, watching her with devouring eyes, saw that she was listening intently for sounds, signals, something from without and paying little heed to what was said within. Then, he could not be mistaken, there came a low tap, tap on the pane. Rosalie quickly, silently drew the shade aside enough to enable her to give one answering tap, and a moment later she stole quietly out of the room, while the doctor was still talking, and, when she

returned nearly half an hour later, there were drops of water on her rippling hair.

By this time between the Chiltons, father and son, it had been determined that every influence should at once be brought to bear at Richmond to bring about Benton's exchange—Fred himself agreeing to write urgent letters to friends in front of Washington. Already quite a number of officers and men had been returned from Libby, the first small boat-load having gone to the Capital and been welcomed by the President himself before the winter's snows were swept entirely from the Virginia mountains. "Just one thing I fear," said the doctor, "that the same influence that dogged you here and led to the order for your delivery there, may pursue you at Richmond."

"And will you tell me what that is and why it should be so bitter?" asked Benton.

The doctor glanced uncertainly at the thinned face, flushing faintly even through the pallor of this long confinement, then turned to Rosalie. Quickly she again left her chair, hurried to the window and threw open the curtain as though to look forth into the night where all was apparently dark as Erebus.

"It is a family—jah, suh. I hardly understand it myself. But I'm bound to say that Major Lounsberry has fohfeited any claim he may have had upon my friendship. Now I must look to that bandage again before you retiah, suh." And thus closed the conference.

Not half an hour later young Pomp was nervously

fidgitting about the room, on the customary plea of helping Marse Benton undress, when he rolled his big eyes thrice to the west window and finally said, with a chuckle:

“Marse Jack never thought nuthin’ of swingin’ out of that winder when dis was his room ’fo’ de wah.”

“Rather a high jump for a heavy man,” suggested Benton, wondering to what this conversation might lead.

“Lawd, Marse Benton, you done fo’got de lightnin’ rawd!”

Stepping to the window the lieutenant peered forth into the moist and windy night. The clouds were sailing swiftly overhead, alternately hiding and revealing the few peeping stars. A warm wet breeze was swaying the boughs of the big oak at the back of the garden and the branches of the locusts along the unpaved side street. Not a glimmer of light came from any of the scattered houses; not a sound was heard save the sweep and rustle of the gentle gale. A few heavy drops still pattered from the eaves and splashed upon the sill beside him—drops such as shone on Rosalie’s wavy hair. Putting forth his hand he could feel, just to the left of the window, the stout, thick iron rod that Pomp had described—Jack’s means of egress in wild university days not so long gone by.

Slowly, thoughtfully he closed the shade and returned to the dressing-table where stood the single candle. Pomp had vanished, but there, pinned to the cushion

was the mate to the strange little billet he had found at the gate. Even the handwriting was the same.

"Horses, guide and everything you need waiting back of the barn. Lose not a moment! Choose between the mountains for a day or two or Libby for the rest of the war. Burn this, too."

CHAPTER XI

QUEEN ROSALIE

For ten minutes after reading that strange missive Benton stood absorbed in deep, even painful, thought. The alternative presented was a trying one. From what Dr. Chilton had said in the course of the evening's conference the prospect of long imprisonment seemed assured. Lounsberry was a man of influence, even a power, at Richmond, and he could be relied on to exert it against Benton because—"because," said the doctor, as he was rearranging the bandages on Benton's arm, "he is no longer kindly disposed toward my—household, suh," and Fred reasoned that Rosalie could, if she would, give further and more explicit information.

"I have been fearing this for several days, suh," said Chilton. "Several of my patients, who are loyal Virginians and fully in accord with the stand of their State, suh, have nevertheless been loyal in their friendship to me. They believe in fair play. They honor a chivalric enemy, and they know how you protected and aided me. From three or four sources, therefore, these warnings came, and—and other stories that I prefer not to mention. I refused to believe all until Major Lounsberry practically confirmed the truth—that is—the truth of

those referring to him, to-day. But I shall write to Longstreet to-night, suh, and to Jeb Stuart and to General Lee. They will have influence with the President, Mr. Benton, and meanwhile," here both the kindly voice and the gentle hand seemed to tremble, "I—I would give almost anything I own to—to stop your being sent to Libby, suh, but, I see no way—I see no way."

And soon thereafter, leaving young Pomp to assist his soldier patient, the doctor had withdrawn to his study on the ground floor, promising to be with him again about five.

It was just after eleven o'clock by Benton's watch as he roused himself from the spell of anxious thought and looked about him. There was significance in Pomp's disappearance. It was evident that the youngster had been carefully "coached" to point out the lightning rod as the best means to leave the house unseen, unheard. That Benton was confidently expected to make the attempt was obvious. Otherwise Pomp would have remained to help him off with his boots and uniform. Even to his watch, purse, spurs and boots not an item of his personal equipment had been taken by his captors. His sword had been stricken from his hand during the *mêlée* at the stone house and his revolver was gone, but that was all. A year later everything would have become legitimate spoil of war.

Peering from his window Benton saw, or fancied he saw, the dim light as of a lantern flitting about the barn.

Evidently they were even then waiting for him. Evidently he was expected to "lose not a moment." Yet who were they? Surely not his venerable host and helper—for Dr. Chilton could not lend himself to any scheme for the escape of the prisoner without breaking faith with the Confederate Government. Surely not Jack, his wounded son, for court-martial and dismissal in disgrace would follow even circumstantial evidence that he had aided or suggested the escape. Surely not Rosalie! She had shown such deep abhorrence of the plot to speed his going that, even after her impulsive outbreak early in the evening, he could not but feel it would be treachery to her and to those she held dear, were he now to make the attempt, notwithstanding the fact that transfer to Libby stared him in the face.

Pomp's complicity it was easy to explain. The negroes, as a rule, were glad to help the "Lincum soldiers," and, where they were hesitant, a bribe soon settled the matter. Then Pomp's suggestion of the lightning rod was still further proof that outsiders, not Chiltons, were at the bottom of the plan, for, did the household favor it, they would never have sent a one-armed man swinging into space when the back stairs and the back door were unguarded, and guards or sentries of any kind there had been none, so sacred was the word of a Chilton. No; as he still pondered over the question, the hands of his watch crept to half-past eleven, and a horse, somewhere out in what appeared to be a lane or alley behind the barn, neighed impa-

tiently; and, surely as he could hear the tick of his watch, the beating of his own heart, Benton caught the sound of a low, gruff voice almost directly underneath his window, and then the dull, sudden tramp of hoofs on rain-soaked sod. Then—then there were two horses—or two parties—one in the dark lane, one here almost at his feet.

“Lose not a moment,” said the note he had crumpled in his hand, yet here had he lost twenty in childish hesitancy. Again he read the clearly pencilled lines. Again he recalled Rosalie’s eagerness to see the previous note, and her contemptuous confidence as to its authorship. “Burn this, too,” said the second missive; and, in honor, was he not bound to shield one who so eagerly, unselfishly sought to aid or rescue him? Yet Rosalie wished to see, and—good God, how he longed once more to see her and satisfy himself that she would approve, condone, forgive if he seized this chance of escape!—to satisfy himself, moreover, that she no longer held him as she had—in rank disfavor, that possibly—possibly—— But that thought was madness!

And then, though his door stood a trifle ajar and he had been listening, listening for any sound that would tell of her presence near him—that he might, even at so late an hour, have one word with her; though not the whisper of a foofall had reached his ears, something, light as down and barely audible even to him, was softly, stealthily tapping on the panel.

Marvelling, he tiptoed to the door, and a little scrap of

paper waved before his eyes. Not a finger even was visible. He took the paper with his one unfettered hand; threw open the door by a quick twist of the foot, and something with long, dusky masses of hair trailing behind it sped away in the dim light from the lower hall. A board or two creaked. There was a faint swish of skirts, a whiff of fragrance like that of the wild violet, but that was all. On the floor below the hall lamp still burned, and the doctor, busy in his sanctum, hemmed loudly and stirred as though to hail or speak. A door closed across the wide landing—her door as Benton could judge by the sound,—and then he was alone with this second note.

Bearing it to the dressing-table, he read:

“Precious time wasted! Go—or it may be too late. Rely implicitly on first guide you find.”

And this, at least, was *not* from the hand that pencilled the others!

Again that sound of horses' hoofs beneath the window, and low-toned, rebukeful, yet almost imploring remonstrance. A darkey's voice surely.

“Cain't yo' keep him still?” it asked, and Benton crept to the open window and peered down into the dim depths below, and then came the soft hail in tones he felt sure he knew—Black Dan's—Dan whom he had heard singing and doing chores about the sheds and gardens for days past: “Fo' Gawd, Marse Benton, 'f you doan come quick dis horse'll spile de whole business.”

Then another voice—a mere whisper, half drowned by the sweep of the wind in the trees—Pomp's quavering tenor. "Yo doan need fotch nawthin', Marse Benton. We've got everythin' hyuh."

And then he heard the doctor closing his study door and tramping across the lower hall to take a good-night look at his boy, after which he would doubtless retire to his own room adjoining the study and well away from the garden side of the house. It was high time—it was good time—to be moving, still Benton hung irresolute, persuading himself that his longing for one look at that lovely face, for five words from those exquisite lips, was really reluctance to take a step that might compromise this generous and hospitable household—even while in his hand he still held the words that bade him go.

Then came a sudden scurry without, for, midway to the barn a soft, low whistle sounded, and almost instantly Benton heard the sound of hoofs again. They were hurriedly leading a horse—or two horses—away. A lantern swung impatiently at the corner of the barn. Somebody was surely signalling. Something prompted him by way of answer to blow out his candle, to thrust the notes—both scraps of paper—into a convenient pocket, then to kneel by the window and watch and listen.

Almost instantly the lantern disappeared, and there were five minutes of silence. Then, as he knelt and watched and waited and all was still without and his darkey aides-de-camp made no further hail, suddenly he

heard the creak behind him of door cautiously opening, and, looking over his shoulder in the dim ghostly light sifting through the balustrade from the floor below, he was able to discern a tall, slender form coming noiselessly, cautiously, straight to his now wide-open door. Rosalie beyond a doubt, and she believed him gone!

Go then he must! Athlete that he had been, ever since boyhood, it was no trick at all to swing, even one-handed, on so thick a rod. His heavy gauntlet was already on, and, just as he reached forth to grasp the iron, his practised ear caught the stealthy tread of spurred boots on the path below—coming from the back gate—the way to the barn. Another moment and, distinctly, in a sudden lull of the breeze, he heard a low, cautious voice in half murmur, half whisper. Words were indistinguishable, but he knew the tones—Lounsberry beyond question, and Lounsberry hailing in expectation of finding there an accomplice.

Not a second could he lose now! To go would be to meet the death of escaping prisoner—or, at best, justifiable imprisonment behind the bars. To stay where he was might involve her—might at least so startle as to force from her a cry of alarm. Quick, light and lithe as a panther he sprang to his feet and met her just outside the door. No time for explanation!

“Silence!” he whispered, almost savagely. “Lounsberry is there,” and then, defiant even of her wrath, he wrapped that one strong arm about her, for (this at

least, long after, was his one excuse) he thought she would fall, so sudden was the shock and start, so wildly beat the little heart once more fluttering on his breast. For a moment she was too dazed to use her strength, then, through her set teeth, savagely as he had spoken, she hissed at him, while slender fingers tore at his muscular hand:

“ Let me go, instantly! ”

And when he had released her, she again seemed like to fall, and he again essayed to hold her, but now with clinching little fists she fairly beat him off. Then, springing past him, reeling a bit, but desperate and determined, flew to the window, knelt and listened, leaving him faltering one moment at the door. Only a moment, though; for, casting aside all scruple, he followed and knelt beside her. Shrinking from him, with her white hands pressed to her temples; amaze, indignation, then triumph in her face, though he could not see it, she seemed listening absorbed. Again it was Lounsberry's voice, and Lounsberry had found his fellow spy, and with amazing confidence and fluency was Pomp replying. Oh, what glibness of guile!

“ Ye-as, suh. I don' tole him so. He cum down the back stayuhs an' outen de back do' mos' an hour ago, an' fo' we could show him de way, suh, Miss Rosalie come tay'in after him, an' draw'd him back into de house again! ”

Benton could feel, although only a fold of her gown touched his knee, that the girl beside him was fairly

quivering at that bare-faced whopper, but quivering with wrath or delight he knew not which.

"You imp of hell! If you are lying I'll skin you alive! Whose horses were those in the side lot as I came up?" demanded Lounsberry.

"Fo' Gawd, Captain, I do' know! Dey wasn't ouhs—ouhs is in de bahn, suh. Take de key and see fo' yo'-self. Hyuh's the dochtuh now, suh!"

A stream of mellow light had shot suddenly forth as a door in the north wing was thrown open, and, lantern in hand, out came the head of the house, angering, bare-headed.

"What are you doing here at this hour, you black rascal, and with whom are you talking? Major Lounsberry!" and with amaze and dismay in his voice the old Virginian faced his unlooked-for visitor.

"I do not wonder at your surprise, Doctor," promptly replied the staff officer, stepping forward into the little circle of light. "I had thought to be at Gordonsville before this, but—strange things are happening, strange stories are afloat. It came to my ears while on the way that your servants had been bribed to enable Lieutenant Benton to escape this night. I returned at once, and two of my escort declare that two horsemen rode away from your side yard yonder barely ten minutes ago. You can hear their story, or satisfy yourself and me, if you will, that—that our prisoner is still here."

"Still here, Major Lounsberry," answered the doctor, with grave dignity. "Though I warn you now that

since your order was issued remanding him to Libby I no longer assume responsibility. I know that he is still here, but—do you prefer to search in person, suh?"

In an instant Rosalie was on her feet. Only a second or two she stood there, quivering with excitement, then seized him by the arm. "Quick! Follow me," she whispered. Out into the broad landing she rushed, and to Benton's amaze, struck a light, threw open the lid of an old colonial desk that stood with its back against the wall between the doors of her own and her aunt's room, plumped him down into a chair, and scattered paper and envelopes in front of him. "Be writing your letters," she whispered command. Then away she sped, closed her door behind her just as the doctor's voice was again heard in the hall below.

Two minutes later, lantern bearing, the master of the house came slowly up the stairs, followed by the clinking boots of Major Lounsberry. Feigning surprise at such interruption, the Union officer rose deliberately from his seat and confronted the two. They stopped short, and for a moment were speechless; then—

"As I told you, suh," said Dr. Chilton, with a bow of mock deference, to his unwelcome follower.

"As I—should have known," said Major Lounsberry, in prompt though unpalatable acceptance of the situation.

"The major, suh," said Dr. Chilton, to his guest, in pardonably magniloquent enjoyment of the situation,

“required ocular demonstration that you had not taken unto yourself wings. I rejoice that we didn’t have to disturb you in bed. Are you satisfied now, Major Lounsberry?”

“Perfectly, Dr. Chilton.” Then to Benton: “Since you do not care to sleep, sir, perhaps it will not incommode you to start at five.”

“It would incommode the household, not me,” answered Benton, calmly, yet wondering what he would do if ordered searched at the moment, for both those little tell-tale notes were now crumpled together in his hand. “Breakfast is ordered at five-thirty, but—I am entirely at your service.” Then placidly he turned and resumed his seat and pen. Once more the doctor ushered his visitor to the front door, ceremoniously bowed him out, regretting, he said, inability to offer him the hospitalities of his roof, for every room was taken, and then, tremulous with wrath, returned to Benton.

“I cannot fathom this, suh,” said he. “That man gave me to understand he would be at Gawd’nsville to-night, and here at midnight comes prowling around my place like he was layin’ a trap, suh. Mr. Benton, if there were any way in my power, suh, to get you out of that fella’s clutches, I believe I’d do it—hyuh an’ now!” and the gray-haired physician sank into a chair.

“You can best serve me, Doctor, by getting to bed and resting,” was Benton’s reply. “You need it, sir.” And then, to the surprise of both, Rosalie’s door opened and forth she came, candle in hand, her lustrous hair fall-

ing in ebony waves all down her back, her face pale but beautiful, and with quiet force she led the passive doctor from his seat to the stairway; escorted him to his room; talked with him quietly, soothingly a moment, and then, bidding him affectionate good night, came tripping lightly up the stairs.

But it was a transmogrified face that now met Benton's gaze. Flushed, eager, brimful of wrath and determination, she came straight to his side, for one moment too excited to speak, again the girl who had dared every peril the night she donned Confederate uniform for the sake of—what?

"I owe everything to your quickness of wit," Benton began. "I should never have thought of this. I was going to jump into my blankets."

"And spoil everything!" said she, in deep disdain of such stupidity. "He would have seen and suspected at once. You, with your boots—in bed! Listen, now. They are riding away," and as she spoke the clanking of sabres and the squashing of hoofs in the soft, muddy side street told that Lounsberry's aggressive party was really on the move. She ran to a window and glanced out after them. Then, when they were surely out of earshot and the sound had died away on the night, once more she came to him, her eyes ablaze, her cheeks afire.

"And now if I had any compunction," she murmured fast, "it is gone! Of course I had striven that you should never suspect we aided you; and, had you gone at once, you never could have known. No, don't!"

For here, with protestation on his lips and eager, outstretched hand, he stepped impulsively forward. "No—no! Listen, for there is no second to spare. The horses—your horses—will be back in a moment. Go without question! You should have been miles up toward the mountains now. I simply took a leaf out of that man's book. He planned to lure you to attempt to escape, with creatures of his own waiting back of the barn. Then he was to overtake and arrest you, or they might have shot—I do not know. But they would have been badly fooled. They bribed Pomp to bring you his—her note, and he had to give it first to me. They were to wait beyond the barn, but we had horses right under your window. Then you delayed. They became impatient. Pomp gave warning in time to get the horses away. You know the rest. Now, are you ready?" And the brave eyes looked one instant gloriously into his.

"Ready?" he cried. "Ready but for one thing," and again and with burning eagerness and longing he sprang forward, and again she recoiled, her hand uplifted; but he would not be denied. "You *shall* hear me, Rosalie," he murmured, hoarsely. "You *must* hear!" and one strong hand had seized the white, slender wrist. "I bless you and thank you, but more than all I love——"

"Hush! Silence!" she cried, adding imperative stamp of her little foot.

From the window of his room there came a pleading

voice. In the soft glow of the candle light two rolling eyeballs and a double row of gleaming teeth were seen. It was Pomp, simian-like scaler of the lightning "rawd." "Miss Rosalie," he panted, "the horses is hyuh! The sojers done gone!"

"Now, Lieutenant Benton," she cried, though her voice—her very form—was shaking. "If you mean to make a try for freedom, it's now or *never!*"

And when at dawn Lounsberry's guard came hammering at the door, they came too late—the bird had flown.

CHAPTER XII

"IN THE TEETH OF THE BRIGADE"

Once more the Badger-Hoosier brigade was swinging away southwestward. For the sixth time in less than a year the men of the "Black Hats" at the head of column had picked their way over the stone-ribbed pike, saying opprobrious things of Virginia path-masters. An impudent lot were these fellows in the imitation "Kosuths." Marvellously snappy and precise in drill, steady on parade, enduring on the march and reasonably respectful toward their own officers (who were the only ones in the division to don and habitually wear the full-dress headgear of the regular service), the rank and file were blessed with not a little soldier skepticism as to the value or stability of other commands in and out of the brigade, and a calmly critical attitude toward officers other than those of their selection. They had not been over well content with their original field and staff, and, for lack of leaders of that rank, had become somewhat split up at first Bull Run, fighting sturdily all the same by company or squad to the fag end, and never knowing they were whipped when finally "herded" off the field. Now, however, they had men at their head—colonel, lieutenant-colonel and major—by

whom they positively swore and on whose skill and valor they would have banked their last cent. Yet, with all their regard for these, their honored leaders, it must be owned the Black Hats gave them lots of trouble. They *would* guy the rest of the brigade and lord it generally over the whole division, only one other regiment of which had as yet faced the foe in battle. They had a curious defect of vision when "outside" officers happened along, and were forever being complained of as failing to "render honors," whereat they were heard on more than one occasion unblushingly to declare they saw, but didn't suppose the strangers *could* be officers. They were preternaturally keen sighted as sentries toward men of other regiments "running guard" or smuggling contraband of war, and were correspondingly blind when the culprit was of their own complexion. They prided themselves on their regimental knowledge of guard duty, and had won widespread fame and deserved malediction by the exploit of relieving every mother's son of the sentries of one of Baldy Smith's pet regiments, replacing each in turn by a duly authenticated yet entirely unauthorized guardsman of their own choosing, who promptly deserted post and sneaked off home, while the luckless relief itself was headed away through the darkness, a ship without a rudder, a squad of twelve without a commander, and left to its own devices to pitch and flounder and curse through ditches until brought up standing by a stone wall and the discovery that there was no corporal.

Preceding, as did these Badgers, the regular relief by only five minutes and provided with the same countersign, dress and equipment, there was really nothing particularly brilliant or hazardous in their accomplishment of this feat. It was the sublime impudence of the thing that made it remarkable. They were probably the best drilled and positively the worst hated regiment in the whole division—and relished one distinction quite as much as the other—when they were marching this third time on Manassas, and the little West Pointer in saddle at their head thanked God that at last he had them where, with work against a common foe, there was possibility of keeping them out of mischief.

Centreville had been passed, Bull Run recrossed, and Bristoe reached—a point beyond their previous explorations. Then back had they to go to meet a threatened raid on their railway communications, and, that matter settled, again were they trudging through the well-remembered wood roads when, as a turn of the way brought their foremost company in full view of the fine sweep of country off to the west, the gray-bearded colonel, for the time commanding the brigade, reined out to the right for a look at his men, and his tall, born-soldier of an adjutant rode alongside the black-bearded, dark-featured, stocky little leader of the Black Hats, pointed with his gauntleted hand to the blue curtain of the Bull Run range and remarked: "I'd give a good deal to know just what that fellow Jackson's doing behind that screen to-day."

"Why so?" asked O'Connor, shortly. "Shields licked him well at Kernstown. Banks has turned his whole force back there. Blenker's big division has gone to reinforce them. Why, we've got enough men there to eat 'em alive—Jackson and all."

"First catch your rabbit," said the adjutant, musingly. "Old Stonewall knows every footpath in the valley—every path through the mountains. He'll trick Banks and Fremont, sure's your born, colonel. Then *we'll* have a shy at him."

"May the Lord grant it," was the pious answer, as the colonel looked wistfully away toward the little rift in the dark ridge where, ten miles distant, lay Thoroughfare Gap, the best and shortest route to the Shenandoah—the Gap through which four months later this same much-discussed and as yet little-known Jackson was with such fatal effect to pour his columns on the Union flank and rear. How little the speaker dreamed what that day was to bring forth!

It was a moist afternoon. The sun at intervals streamed hotly on the spongy earth. Little wreaths of vapor here and there drifted slowly into space. The men in the marching column, heavily burdened with bulging knapsack and double blanket and the long Springfield over their burly shoulders, whipped off their hats and swept the coat-sleeve over their dripping brows, peering curiously at the old colonel sitting sturdily in saddle and watching their array. He had but scant retinue, this acting brigadier, and had sent his

right bower ahead to show the Black Hats where to camp for the night, while he studied the wearying regiments as they issued from the wood. The march had been long and heavy. The men, despite much recent tramping to and fro, were still a trifle soft from the months of comparative inaction. He had seen fellows in better physical trim in the Mexican War days, but none that gave better promise of splendid work when once they settled down to business. A grim smile stole over his grizzled face as his own old battalion came striding forth in the wake of the "Scoffing Second." Then the kindly eyes clouded with something like displeasure at sight of a tall, rather lanky civilian on a decrepit gray, riding with the lieutenant-colonel commanding. He had seen the man before many a mile from the spot and more than a week away. "How came you here?" he asked, as the civilian ambled out of the column and touched his worn hat-brim.

"My place is just over yahnduh, Colonel. P'haps you doan' remember my comin' to you with a pass, back o' Fairfax," and the tall stranger looked confidently into the grizzled, sun-burned face. "Been in to Alexandria, yo' know, for supplies. Wagon went sho'ht cut by stone bridge."

"I know," said the colonel, gloomily, "and that's the way you should have gone. What are you doing here at Manassas?"

"Mo' supplies, Colonel," grinned he of the gray mount. "The commissary gave me'n ohdah for sugah and cof-

fee from hyuh. I was just passing the time o' day with the colonel when I caught sight o' you, suh," and conciliation beamed in the native's artless face.

"Then you'll be asking for somebody to help you 'tote' it over to the stone house, I suppose. You told me that was your place," growled the colonel, in manifest dissatisfaction."

"Oh, no, Colonel! We ain't stoppin' there now. Th' old place is too leaky for one thing, an' we're livin' way over near Hopewell so long's this fightin's goin' on. I reckon I'll stop hyuh at the Junction to-night an' go on to-mawrrow."

"I reckon that's just what you'll have to do, sir," said the colonel, shortly, "as this brigade camps here, and you'd get into trouble with our pickets if you rode out."

"Lawd love you, Colonel! I'd just as lief spend a week with you if t'want that I'd promised to get a lot of truck over to old Judge Armistead at Hopewell." Then keenly studying the veteran's face, he suddenly added: "Ain't Colonel Bayard's cavalry out there?"

"Ask me no questions, my friend, and I'll tell you no lies," was the wary answer. "General McDowell's pass compels me to let you ride along with the column, but doesn't require me to post you as to our movements. You know too much now to be travelling toward Jackson's people, and—have you shown that pass to the division commander?"

"Why, it was he who got it for me," answered the Virginian, placidly. "It was I that took him Lieu-

tenant Benton's pistol and told him of his capture. What's more, I'm 'specting to get further news of the lieutenant. Why, hyuh comes the general now, and 'f you don't mind, Colonel, I reckon I'll ride with him a piece."

Graybeard glanced half angrily over his shoulder. A few yards north of the road there was a barren little eminence, on the crest of which there had suddenly appeared the division commander with two of his staff. Unslinging their field-glasses, they seemed for a moment studying the westward lowlands, then came trotting swiftly toward the column. With soldierly salute, the colonel faced the party as though he knew that orders were in the wind, and his intuition proved correct.

"Colonel, there are scattered parties of cavalry out there coming swift this way, too—out north of Bristoe—between that and Gainesville. They don't seem to be watching the column either. Send one regiment out along the Gainesville road as far as Bethlehem Church and let them throw out skirmishers. Halt the rest of the brigade here. Good afternoon, Mr. Jennings," he continued, in civil acknowledgment of the Virginian's salutation. "I thought you were home by this time."

"I sent the wagon that way, General," was the prompt answer, "but I looked to see some kinsfolk hereabouts, and—the wagon won't go beyond Groveton if there's trouble ahead. Those niggers are more scared

o' s'footin' than they are of ghosts. Yet, I'd hoped to reach Judge Armistead's to-night."

"Better think twice! If those troopers are some of Stuart's—scouting—they might hold you for examination." But the general's eyes were following the column as he spoke. Evidently he was more interested in the choice of the regiment to be sent to the right front than in the fortunes of the Virginian. A smile crossed his face as a moment later the Sixth turned out of column, and silently he reined his horse to the right and, followed by a party of six, all told, including orderlies, rode away on the flank. Jennings, finding himself unhindered, ambled in their tracks until, half a mile out, they reached the fork of the road. Northward lay the dun colored route to the stone house and Sudley Springs; westward, or a little north of west, the winding roadway to Gainesville and the Gaps. For a moment the tall civilian sat irresolute, then clapped his heels into his lean charger's ribs and went sputtering after the chief.

"General," said he, coming alongside, "I want to say one thing, suh, and it's this—that young gentleman of your staff was so kind to Dr. Chilton that it completely staggered the doctor to have him knocked down and captured. He's bound to take the best of cayuh of him till he's well enough to take cayuh of himself—an' then——"

"Well, and then, Mr. Jennings?" asked the general, impatiently, for he was eager to get on ahead.

"You look out for his turning up any day! If he ain't exchanged, I'm bettin' somethin' else will happen."

"My understanding is that Dr. Chilton has made himself personally responsible for Mr. Benton's safe-keeping so long as he's allowed to remain with him——"

"That's true, I reckon," answered Jennings. "But," and here his lantern jaws relaxed in whimsical grin, "the doctor ain't the only brainy one in that family, General. The girl that planned young Ladue's escape from your fellows at Henry house may play it on Ewell's folks at Gawd'nsville just as easy."

"So you know Ewell's at Gordonville!" said the general, whirling suddenly on the speaker. "And you know the lady who got Mr. Ferguson into his scrape, do you?"

"Gettin' another fella out o' one—yes, suh," answered Jennings, unflinchingly. "And she made a big play that night to get still another out of a bad fix—'less I'm mistaken. Why, General, you jus' ought to heuh Judge Armistead talk about that girl. He says half the men in Albemarle, university and all, were in love with her when the war broke out, and the judge has a mighty pretty daughter of his own, too. I rather hoped some of our cavalry might be pushin' out toward Hopewell to-night. Ain't Colonel Bayard somewhere out that way? Hullo! There's a shot!"

Not one shot alone, but two, three, in quick succession. Somewhere ahead among the patches and thick-

ets of scrub oak and pine the scattering advance-guard had suddenly met swift galloping lads in gray. Then came the distant sound of half a dozen shots,—carbines,—and the answering sputter of a ragged volley. At long range, as yet, Badger afoot and Virginian in saddle, were saluting each other, and the men, trudging by fours along the winding roadway, threw up their heads and picked up their heels, a thrill of excitement quivering through the column. Well out to the front a bugle sounded some lively call, and, spurring full gallop from the rear, the tall adjutant went bending and twisting away among the trees until out of sight ahead, and then his powerful voice came ringing back: "This way, Captain—lively! Double quick!"

Evidently Haskell had sighted some of the quarry and closer at hand than those ahead along the roadway, for there came a crackle of shots,—the bark of the cavalry weapon, the saucy pop of a revolver somewhere among the thickets to the left of the column; then a shrill burst of cheers from the deploying blue-coats on the westward flank. All on a sudden, scrambling through the bushes they had tumbled over a little squad of troopers in gray, making heroic effort to carry off a helpless comrade. The general and his aides had spurred in with the skirmishers, and were just in time to see two riderless horses tearing away among the trees across an open glade, while half a dozen daring, devoted fellows in saddle were stoutly interposing between the forward rush of the excited Badgers and

three of their number surrounding and supporting a tall officer who had been lifted sideways to the back of a plunging, snorting, frightened steed, but who seemed fainting and powerless to help himself—or them. “Halt!” “Halt!” “Dismount!” “Surrender!” rang the hoarse shouts of the dozen bluecoats, dashing in pursuit. Bang! Bang! came the defiant response of the few defenders. Bang! Bang! bellowed a brace of Springfields in reply, ill aimed, God be praised, in the thrilling excitement of the moment. It seemed cruel—savage to shoot down such gallant fellows in their hopeless deed of devotion. “Don’t shoot!” “Hold your fire!” yelled the general. “Don’t shoot!” “Don’t shoot!” echoed the staff, for the luckless cavalier, reeling in his seat, went sliding into the arms of his loyal followers, while the devil of a horse whirled round, tugging, straining at the reins and striving to break away. “Dismount!” “Down with you!” “Off with you!” cried the pursuers, officer and man, as another terrified horse tore, wildly neighing, in chase of the foremost. It was a desperate effort on part of the grays. Their comrade troopers were too far off to help them, even could they drive through the stout skirmish line already far flung across the field beyond. With a last wave of his white hand, the officer seemed ordering his defenders to save themselves, and those in saddle, with parting shots and defiant yells—one of them even hurling in rage his emptied revolver at the tall adjutant, the foremost man in the rush—darted away, bending

low over the streaming manes, with the bullets of half a score of Springfields whizzing past their ears, and only a sad-faced, silent little trio knelt about the fallen soldier as, panting and triumphant, the boys in blue came thronging round them.

The adjutant was off his big, raw-boned bay in an instant and, bending over the fainting man, unscrewed the cap of his flask and held it to the pale lips beneath the sweeping mustache. "A major, hey?" he said, as he noted the brilliant braids of gold lace on the handsome uniform frock. "What is a major doing out here with only a squad of you boys?" and something like pity shone in his kindling eyes, as he looked up at the beardless, clear-cut, young face of the captured trooper nearest him. Two of the three could not have been more than seventeen, but never a word of complaint did they utter—not a syllable did either speak in reply.

"What have you, Haskell?" inquired the black-bearded general, riding in through the group of eager, almost sympathetic soldier faces.

"Don't know yet, General," was the answer, as a faint quiver ran through the prostrate form. "He can't speak for himself, and these young—veterans won't."

"Is he wounded?" asked the chief. "Surely you can tell us that," he added, presently, as he glanced at the two silent striplings in gray. Then at last one of them faced the commander.

"Horse fell, suh—rolled on him—broke his leg," said

he, with a salute that told unerringly of soldier teaching; so, too, did the speaker's pose. Instinctively he was standing at attention. He knew the rank betrayed by that yellow sash.

"Give this young gentleman a sip from your flask, Haskell; I fear he's—— Why, my lad, you're wounded! Look to him, some of you!" cried the general, for the boy had grown ashen pale and was reeling when strong arms caught and lowered him.

"Sure, General. He's shot through the breast," said a bearded soldier, tearing aside the trooper's jacket and displaying a blood-wet shirt beneath.

"And wouldn't show it," answered the general. "That's the way with them. Send for a surgeon, Captain." And then the general, too, was off his horse and bending over the stricken lad. "Do you know his name—and home?" he asked of the pale-faced young Virginian, standing trembling a bit with excitement beside him. The lad flushed, looked distressed, embarrassed, but seemed to believe it his soldier duty to give no information whatever to the enemy. It was Jennings who spoke, his voice breaking harshly, somehow, on the silence of the surrounding group, as he elbowed a way through the curious circle and caught sight of the swooning boy.

"I know him, General. He's one of our best, suh," and now Jennings, too, had thrown himself upon his knees. "It's Floyd Pelham, suh, of Charlottesville. It'll break his mother's heaht, suh, if he's done for."

The wail in the Virginian's voice seemed to catch the ear and rouse the faculties of the reviving officer.

"Who's that—done for?" he faintly asked. "Not Floyd Pelham?" And bracing his hands upon the turf, he struggled to a sitting posture, while Jennings sprang to his feet and stared.

"Major Lounsberry! Good God, suh, you wounded, too? Why, I'd no idea——"

"No idea, I suppose," interposed the major, with cutting, sarcastic emphasis, "that your friends, the Chiltons, had turned that Yankee lieutenant loose. Well, you needn't rejoice, gentlemen, we've got him again—and right in the teeth of his own brigade!"

CHAPTER XIII

RIVANNA TO RAPIDAN

Long as he lives Fred Benton will never forget that night ride from the Chiltons and the thrilling days that followed. Imperiously had Queen Rosalie dismissed him. Impulsively had she turned away, refusing further look, touch or word. Her door closed behind her, and he well knew she meant her mandate to be final. "Not a second to lose!" Even now he should have been far up toward the mountains. Yet the doctor was again stirring uneasily about his room below. The light burned dimly in the lower hall. Pomp had disappeared from the window—small task was it for that agile imp to climb a lightning "rawd"! But, groping back to his room, Benton heard again the stamp of hoofs beneath the window and muttered words and a sound as of straining over some unresponsive, inanimate burden. Then something heaved up through the dim starlight and lightly tapped against the clapboards below the sill, and something black came "swarming" up the other something—Pomp again, and Pomp chuckled at sound of Benton's whispered hail.

"We've got a ladder dis time, suh. Didn't dass try it befo' wid dem sojus at de bahn," and by ladder, not by

lightning rod, was the descent accomplished. Dusky hands helped the crippled soldier into saddle. Dusky hands waved him good-by and good luck. Darky voices muttered blessings for the astonishing feel of gold in dusky palms—for Benton would not ride until he had rewarded—and then, never knowing until long, long after what chattel it was that aided Pomp in aiding him to mount, never seeking to know until the dawn whose was the dusky hand that took his bridle rein and led him cautiously away through the darkness, Benton lifted up his brave heart in brief, silent prayer for heaven's blessing on those that dwelt within that house, for heaven's guidance on his way, and gave himself unquestioning to him whom she, his imperious queen, had appointed as his guide, and together they rode forth into the murmuring night.

Through leafy lanes, until clear of the village, across a broad high-road into dark depths beyond, over a sloping pasture where, studying the stars on high, Benton first took note that they were heading westward again, twisting and turning through winding woodpath, ever accompanied by the clamor of watch-dogs not yet reconciled to night patrols. Twice compelled to let down bars and squeeze through half-opened barnyard gates, his silent conductor led on and Benton followed, until even the dogs of the suburbs were left behind and they, the fugitives, had found the open country. Then at last his escort turned and said: "Kin you stand a little canter, Marstuh?" and Benton recognized the voice of Dusky

Dan, and "stood" accordingly. They forded, somewhere toward two o'clock, a little branch, a tributary of the rushing Rivanna, and were still heading westward when Fred's darky guide left him with both horses at the edge of a grove, while he went forward afoot and reconnoitred. Presently he came back rejoiciful. "Dey ain't a soul a lookin' out fo' de bridge, suh. Dey's all over Gawd'nsville way. We save nigh onto five miles hyuh," and so led on again, the hoof-beats sounding hollow on the planking of some old-time truss across a swift, exuberant mountain stream, running bank full and, far and near, said Dan, unfordable. Still on through whispering aisles of forest trees, through squashy cross-country bridle paths, far from pike or toll road; only at rare intervals, now, stirring the challenge of some farmer's dog, and never seeing habitation of any kind until, just as the dawn was faintly lighting the placid eastern sky, clean swept of every cloud, old Daniel led his soldier charge from the beaten track, and turning square to the left began a tortuous climb that brought them presently into an open pasture, half way up a line of wooded heights, and there, faintly visible at the upper side of the clearing, were two little cabins with an outlying shed and some ramshackle fences, and here, while Benton was made comfortable in his blanket with his feet to a fire, Dan held converse with other unseen occupants, giving explicit directions, faintly audible in the hiss of frying bacon and the bubble of boiling coffee. Benton heard vaguely, drowsily, the words

"Swift Run Gap, Sperryville, Ohleans, Hedgman River" and when he roused himself in response to vigorous yet regretful prodding, he knew not how long thereafter, a new voice sounded on his sleepy senses. Another guardian bent over him in the shape of a negro with wrinkled face and gray-white, kinky hair, but a world of sympathy and interest in his sombre eyes. Marstuh's breakfast was spoiling and it was time that they were moving. Where was Daniel? "Daniel had to go back to Marse Chilton's. Miss Rosalie done fixed all dat."

And so, while Benton drank a huge tin of steaming coffee and ate hungrily at the rashers and "aigs" provided for him, his new attendant explained the situation. For years he had belonged to Marse Chilton, but when he married a lass on the Lounsberry place, and by and by the chil'luns began to grow, Marse Chilton found him of less use than ever and swapped him off. And then he'd been Marse Lounsberry's coachman, and then was put in charge of Marse Pelham's "stawk," and finally he and his ole woman were moved up here into the mountains to take care of the cattle of certain fanciers who had prudently shifted their Jerseys and Ayrshires to the hills rather than see them requisitioned by a commissariat that already had begun to find its limitations in the matter of fresh beef. His big boy Hector was "groomin' hawses," and from this point would lead him on up the east face of the range until near the Hedgman. He knew that country well, whereas old

Dan did not, and the latter had to hurry home so that he might show about the Chilton place as usual. Miss Rosalie had ordered that, too. They would do anything in the world for her—or for the doctor.

But Mars'r ought to have been beyond the Gap road—Swift Run Gap—before sun-up and now 'twas long after, but Hector knew the Ridge and a host of places to hide if need be. Hector had a sweetheart on the Hazel whom he greatly longed to see—for whose sake more than thrice had he run the gauntlet to her welcoming arms, and so, once more, but in broad daylight now, and well up along the heights, with magnificent vistas of eastward Virginia almost every hour, they came at last in view of the twisting mountain road that pierced the range—Jackson's runway from the Shenandoah down to Gordonsville—and here again Fred lurked in hiding, while Hector scrambled down afoot to try the pass.

Thus far the danger had been slight. Between Rockfish and Swift Run Gaps there lay few roads through which scouting parties would be apt to come. Brown's and Powell's Gaps were then but little used. The Blue Ridge served as a screen or barrier to their left. The line of communication of the Southern army was far over along the railway to the east. Jackson and his nimble-footed brigades were still some distance down the Shenandoah to the north, but Hector had heard "old Stonewall" was retiring before overwhelming numbers, and that a lot of his soldiers were already at

work over on the west side, throwing up fortifications, and couriers kept coming and going between him and "Marse" Ewell down at "Gawd'nsville." Benton still wore the uniform coat and riding breeches in which he had been captured, though a sleeve was slit and a shoulder-strap had been ripped off. His forage cap, too, a jaunty affair of the McClellan type, had been missing since the fight at the stone house, and he was sporting a black, broad-brimmed felt hat that had done duty in Jack Chilton's university days. Horse, horse equipments, Grimsley valise, and all items attached to the saddle, of course, were gone, but he still had his field-glass. A pair of the doctor's old saddle-bags slung on his horse seemed bulging with sundries he had not yet had time to inspect. A blanket and poncho, "treasure trove" of Manassas the First, were strapped on the spare horse, together with a canteen marked U. S., and that canteen Hector had replenished at a mountain brook only an hour ago. With their bits slipped and their fore feet hopped, the horses were placidly browsing among the bushes close at hand, and there for over an hour this sunshiny April morning the lonely Union soldier watched and waited, and over and again marvelled at the generalship of the girl who had managed every detail connected with his escape. Only that one evening did she have in which to prepare, yet saddle-bags were secured and packed, blanket and poncho provided, horses "borrowed" by Black Dan, with the connivance of a colored retainer, from the Pelham pasture

within pistol shot of the 'varsity grounds (to take their own would have lent too much color to the theory that the doctor connived), their very route mapped out and determined, and all this by a Virginia maid yet in her teens, already the planner of Paul Ladue's escape—already the heroine of a perilous midnight masquerade the object of which was still wrapped in tormenting mystery.

If she would but condescend—if he could but induce her to account for that, what might it not mean to Benton! Only once had he ventured to begin to suggest that explanation was something due to herself, when she lifted up her eyes and then her queenly little head, and just looked at him, and that ended further questioning.

Ten o'clock had come, so said his watch, before Hector reappeared, big-eyed, panting. There were two hundred soldiers to the west of the Gap digging forts, a squad in every farmhouse along the road, and about as much chance of a Yankee officer crossing in daylight as there was "of a needle's eye a-gittin' into heaven." Hector had been piously taught at some time in his life—and now he looked at the blue and the brass buttons in dismay.

Benton thought it over. The guard were to come for him at six, and long ere this had discovered his escape. Pursuit and search would of course be made. "Anybody own bloodhounds around Charlottesville?" he asked, and Hector said "No." Still Dan had gone back, Dan might be lashed and tortured until he re-

vealed what he knew—such things had happened—and the sooner Benton reached the upper waters of the Rappahannock and secure hiding places back of Warrenton, known to Hector, the better it would be for him—for all. He doubted not that by noon couriers would come galloping out from Gordonsville telling of his escape and ordering guards and sentries on the lookout everywhere along the Gap.

“Not a second to lose!” He sprang to the saddlebags and began a search. What had occurred to him would probably have occurred to her, and it was Miss Rosalie, Dan affirmed, who packed them. With eager hands Benton pulled at the contents of the nearest—a flask of brandy from the doctor’s store, towel, handkerchiefs, sponge, soap, comb and brush, socks, shirt and underwear—Jack’s, of course, and probably a tight fit; small tin boxes containing ground coffee, sugar and other things—no time to examine now! an extra sling and bandage for his arm; *boot hooks!* Think of a woman who would think of them! Then came a shout from Hector, rummaging on the other side, and over the broad back of Marse Pelham’s old Pyramus came a worn gray sack coat and waistcoat, of Richmond make, and pinned to the lapel a scrap of paper on which in pencil appeared in Roman characters, not script, these words: “Map and spectacles in coat pocket. Small pistol also. Look out for Federals about Warrenton. Strip gold cord.”

Gold cord? Why, yes, that meant the narrow gold

braid worn in the war days on the seam of the trousers by general and staff officers. Small compliment to him was it that she should think it necessary to remind him of that. Yet, how sweet—how sweet it was to see how she planned and thought for him!

In less than half an hour, a tall, pale-faced, studious-looking young man in spectacles, slouch hat and worn sack coat of gray—thrown loosely over a slung right arm—with a dark-brown horse, a doctor's saddle-bags and a darky follower on a nondescript nag, turned deliberately from a mountain path and took the highway to the eastward, for all the world as though he were bound for Stanardsville or beyond. A few rods further the road twisted to the left and brought him in view of a mountain cabin, close to a watering trough where a squad of soldiers in queer-looking frock coats of dingy gray were filling their canteens. Another of their number, sick and dejected, was squatting on the steps, his sallow face the picture of woe. "Gawt any physic that will cure the cawlic, dawktuh?" drawled a sun-tanned young fellow in sergeant's stripes, and the doctor reined in, studied the patient attentively one moment, then swung out of saddle and stepped to his side. Asking no questions, he gravely felt the pulse and glanced at the coated tongue, smiled quietly to himself and, while Hector held the horses, fumbled a minute at the saddle-bags, stirred a compound into a stone china cup that stood by the trough—a compound whereof powdered sugar, spring water and Spiritus Vini Gallici were the sole in-

redients, and in three minutes had the satisfaction of seeing the light of reviving interest in life in the dull eyes of the invalid and receiving the plaudits of half a dozen would-be patients. Gladly would they have held him, though from no hostile intent, as, with apparent serenity yet with thumping heart, he rode away. He had heard enough to make it expedient that he should move at once.

"You're the first dawktuh we've seen since we left home, 'cept those in the army, suh," said the young sergeant. "Guess they need 'em all."

"You're not Virginian, then," hazarded Benton, as he was mounting.

"No, suh—Fifteenth Alabama, Trimble's brigade, suh. We b'long down at Gawd'nsville, but they sent a few companies out this way last night."

"Know any of the Eleventh?" queried Benton, rashly, yet thinking it not unwise to display some knowledge of the Southern service—"Lieutenant Ladue, of Mobile?" he continued at a venture.

"Not many, suh. They're all with General Longstreet and Anderson down toward Yohktown."

"Lieutenant Ladue ain't!" said the sick man, uplifting his sallow face. "He's on General Ewell's staff—made me ride his hawse this mornin' an' he ain't a mile away this minute."

CHAPTER XIV

THROUGH THE MESH OF THE FOE

Late that evening two tired steeds were painfully struggling up a stony, winding pathway among the heights at the headwaters of the Hazel. Dodging hamlets and settlements, fording branch after branch of the Rapidan, keeping ever to the wood-path and by-ways, Fred's black guide at last had landed him in a sheltered nook among the hills, just as darkness settled down over the wild beauty of the woodland scenery, and the twinkling stars came peeping into the eastward sky. Here in a little amphitheatre of rock and cedar and stunted pine, Hector sprang from his dejected beast, whose drooping head and jaded withers told of the trials of the day, helped Benton to alight, whipped off the saddles and set to work to build a little fire in a blackened corner, evidently often put to similar use in the past. The beasts had had their fill of water when they forded the Hazel and were soon rolling in infinite relief on the scanty turf. Then the battered tin was filled from the canteen and set to boil for coffee. Some pine boughs were shaken down, and Fred's blanket spread. Then away went Hector to refill the canteen and get such news as he could. It was late, near nine o'clock, when he came back laden

—oats for the horses, corn dodgers for their riders and big news for Fred. The Yankees were pushing forward in heavy columns along the Rappahannock, moving perhaps on Culpeper. Yankee troopers had been scouting that morning about Fauquier Springs and Waterloo, barely fifteen miles away. If all went well and the horses weren't lame in the morning, they could be off at dawn and feel their way round back of the Cross Roads and Washington Coht House, cross the North Fork—the Hedgman—way up among the hills, and then work eastward until they fell in with the Yankee cavalry that ought to be out on the right flank of McDowell's advance. Hector had a friend who could "baw" a mule and meet them at the ford of the Thornton back of Sperryville, and show a way to the Hedgman. After that if Hector was to go back, Benton would have to shift for himself.

If only Stuart's fellows, now, or some other Southern cavalry weren't scouting the lower fords and wood-roads, interposing between them and the Yankee outposts at Warrenton, all might go well.

And so, wearied yet refreshed and full of hope, Fred Benton slept until aroused by the din of dogs among the farms below them. It was just at the chill of the earliest dawn. A whip-poor-will was piping his weird chant in the thickets on the northward side, and from that day until long years thereafter he could never hear the harmless, mournful plaint without a thrill of anxiety, if not dismay, for from far down among the scattered

settlements there came floating to him on the still, morning air, quick, stirring and spirited the soft trumpet notes of the cavalry reveille, played just as he had heard it played four successive mornings on that ambulance journey to the railway, and he knew these were not the blue-jackets of Bayard, but beyond doubt the grays. The plumes of Stuart might have been wafted away to meet the new danger along the York, but Benton had heard enough at the Chiltons' to know that skilled leaders of horse, with hosts of daring fellows, were still close at hand,—Turner Ashby in the Valley or Beverly Robertson in front of Ewell at Gordonsville. Now, what could this mean but that the squadron had bivouacked far out on their flank, far north, too, of the Confederate positions below the Rapidan, and was scouting these mountain by-paths, perhaps in search of him? To Robertson and men of his rank the game might not be worth the candle, but there was that strangely vindictive fellow Lounsberry, armed with power to order hither and yon. The dawn came in with rose and gold and royal purple, but the day looked dark for Benton.

Rousing Hector, who still slept the sleep of the just and the weary, he told him of the new danger, and the darky's eyes bulged in their sockets. He was up and well scared in less than no time and, taking Benton's glass, disappeared among the rocks and trees up the hillside to the west. There was a lookout, he said, in the branches of an oak, from which much of the country

could be seen to the southeast. It was full twenty minutes later and just after Benton had heard the distant signal "boots and saddles" from the same trumpet, when he came scrambling down. No time for coffee, no time for feeding or rubbing the horses, he said. Like as not these troopers would be out searching every by-path. He had seen them doing that after the first Bull Run when a dozen Yankee prisoners broke away from the cars at night and skipped for the mountains. They had all but two of them back inside of twelve hours. Hurriedly saddling, Hector then aided his charge to mount; then again led the way, crooked and devious, through all manner of scrub and tangle; threading ravines, skirting clearings and creeping ever higher toward the crest until the foothills at last were left far below, and by the edge of a little brook that furnished cool and abundant water for man and beast they stopped for breakfast—coffee, cold corn dodgers, and slices of bacon frizzled on the point of a stick for the masters and the last of the oats for the four-footed slaves. Then on again northward, and, so tortuous was their way, so many were the halts, making on a bee line little more than a mile an hour, they bored through the wilderness until, late in the afternoon, from a bare projecting ledge, they obtained their first unimpeded view to the eastward, and saw the North Fork, the Hedgman, like a silver thread, winding away southeastward through copses and clearings, and among the wooded heights toward Warrenton, and all the lovely rural landscape of Fau-

quier spread before them like a map. Who now were masters there—the Blue or the Gray?

That night the moon, half full but brilliant, stood high toward the zenith as the whip-poor-wills began their vesper Miserere. By midnight it would sink behind the Blue Ridge, and Benton ordered "forward" while the faint light lasted, despite Hector's demurrer. He didn't know the Hedgman fords, he said, and they'd find cavalry everywhere along the stream. They wouldn't waste so many horsemen looking for one man, said Benton, but Hector could tell the time when as many as two hundred were out after one poor nigger, though he failed to say what the fugitive had done to make him so generally sought. Hector declared they "might treat Marse Benton decent enough if they cotched him," but what concerned Hector most, and not unnaturally, was the treatment that would be meted out to Benton's colored guide and helper. Hector had heard terrific tales of what had befallen certain of his color and condition that had aided Ossawatomie Brown at Harper's Ferry—exaggerated tales, no doubt, yet not contradicted because it might be just as well to let the darkies know the penalty of lending aid to the enemy. "Dey'd flog me to death, suh, or burn my eyes out," he pleaded. But Benton was firm. They must try to cross the Hedgman while the moon served, then hide in the woods on the further shore until the dawn of another day.

A scrambly ride was that to the lowlands, but toward

ten o'clock they struck a wood-path, and began to stir the dogs of scattered homesteads in the foot-hills. No main travelled roads were to be found in this region, but even the bridle paths might be guarded by cavalry, and, just as the moon was sinking behind the ridge and they fancied they could hear the soothing murmur of swift waters, a sudden turn of the path brought them to the edge of a cleared field and in view of a scattered shed or two. Then came double challenge. First the impudent snarl and dash of a brace of back country mongrels; then the stern "Halt thar! Dismount!" of a cavalry vedette, starting from the shadow of a clump of stunted trees, not fifty feet away.

Before Hector, limp and trembling, could slip to earth in obedience to the order, Benton's hand was on his arm, lugging him back into saddle, while his heels made vigorous play. "Stoop low, you fool, and follow!" he swore between his set teeth as he whirled his horse about and at plunging gallop tore westward again by the way they came. A shot rang out on the night. A bullet went whizzing into the shrubbery, but before the solitary sentry could reload, or the men from the picket reach him, Benton and Hector were four hundred yards away back along the wood-path and heading through the darkness for the higher refuge of the hills. Unwittingly they struck a northward-bending path at an unseen fork, and there, as no sound of pursuit reached them, Benton bade Hector cease his terrific heeling of his horse's ribs, and gladly enough the half-blown beasts

came down to heaving walk. The ill luck that had led them into the maw of the outermost picket of the Confederate force turned to blessing when, near midnight, they found themselves at an unguarded reach of this far-away branch of the Rappahannock, and the thirsting horses, eager for drink, found their own ford to the other shore.

Then came a night of broken sleep; then a long day of cautious prowling toward the line of heights to the eastward—the Bull Run mountains, as Benton's map declared them. They did not faint or starve, for scattered field hands brought them pone and "poke" and buttermilk at sight of Hector's silver. Some of them had not seen a dime since Christmas of a year gone by. They brought them further tidings of Yankee horsemen in blue, hundreds of them, scouting all round here two days ago, and then riding away to Warrenton, and then of small parties of gray-coated gentlemen the very next day popping across the Hedgman at every ford and bridge, picking up Yankee stragglers and running them off to Gawd'nsville, and of a tall, fine-looking gentleman, with lots of buttons and gold lace and beautiful sword and sash and spurs—"didn't look lak he'd been doin' any hahd fightin'"—and he and his people were asking everywhere for such a gentleman as this with Hector. Then Lounsberry was still between him and the Union lines!

That night they slept, or rather waked, in a barn some distance south of Salem, hidden by friendly darkies, for

now Hector feared to return. He felt sure that his connection with Benton's escape was known, and that dire punishment awaited him. He would unite his fortunes with those of his new master, and be his groom and hostler for the rest of his days. Union cavalry had been trotting to and fro on the pike between the two Gaps, Manassas and Thoroughfare, until yesterday, whispered their darky entertainers—who stole cheerfully from larder and kitchen of the nearest farmers in order to minister to their wants—but now, unaccountably, it was all “Secesh” again, though there were only a few. A young negro promised to fetch a mule at four in the morning and guide them over the hills toward New Baltimore, eastward,—they dare not try the roads, or Thoroughfare Gap—and from New Baltimore, once across the Warrenton Pike, Benton hoped to be able to reach the Union lines. True to his word and his hopes of reward, the young fellow roused them an hour before the dawn and had them clear of the valley roads before sun-up. Then from the heights back of the Warrenton pike Benton scoured the low ground toward Manassas with his glasses, and only far south of Broad Run could he see sign of cavalry of any kind, and so, bidding their latest guide adieu, he and his faithful Hector rode hopefully—yet slowly, for the beasts were leg weary—down from the wooded range toward the long seam through the open country, the once well-travelled high-road to the lovely old county seat of Fauquier. They were looking for abandoned shack, cabin or barn where they could

hide until twilight, then, with fairly level country to traverse and the moon to light the way, they might cross the pike unseen and, skirting Broad Run for a distance, reach the pickets about Bristoe or Manassas before another sun.

And so, while still well up above the level of the lowlands, they were baiting their horses and having a frugal lunch in an old cowshed, when toward noon their startled ears caught the sound of hoof-beats on the hillside, and there came shambling into sight a wild-eyed negro, one of their friends of the night before, on a remonstrant mule. "Run, Marse!" he cried, at sight of Benton. "Run, fo' Gawd's sake! Dey's a hundred sojers huntin' every house an' bahn just over the hill, suh, and comin' dis way!" There was nothing for it now but mount and away—a stern chase was a long one, anyhow.

Then came a ride almost for life. Down through winding lanes to the farms below, out to the pike itself, with many a backward glance at the low line of heights behind them and expectant ever of seeing gray-jacketed horsemen heading them off in front, they trotted on until they came in view of some mill buildings, a mile before them—Buckland's, doubtless, said Benton, after a glance at his map, and more than likely there would be cavalry there if anywhere east of the Bull Run range. They turned into a lane leading away southeastward between desolate fields; halted to "blow" their panting, reeking horses at a little clump of trees near a south-

ward sweep of the mill stream—Broad Run—then Benton unslung his glass and took deliberate survey of the distant mills, then of the country over which they had come, and, spurring like mad down a slope of the heights, barely three miles back of them, came a dozen gray horsemen. "They've seen us," said he, as quietly as he could, and Hector's trembling hands helped him again to mount. Then away dashed the pair for the first ford of the stream, only to see as they rode out dripping on the opposite bank that the distant fringe of the Manassas woods looked far away as ever. Oh, for a sight of Union flankers now!

A long half hour they rode, fast as jaded steed could bear them, but Hector's horse was nearly done. The spare oak openings, the scattered copses, now were only half a mile ahead, but southward, cutting them off from Bristoe, galloped a jaunty half dozen, following the lead of a dashing rider. Behind them, still beyond carbine range but slowly gaining, full twenty troopers were spreading out over the open fields, "turning" them, as it were, from the left. The soil was growing loose and soft and spongy now that they had left the lanes, and every now and then they plunged through holes, deep and treacherous, but still they lashed ahead, Hector's poor brute groaning—staggering with every stride. Presently the ground began slowly rising and the woods grew thick. If only they could reach them! Surely the Union pickets must be close at hand, and now, as they drove in among the clumps of stunted trees, they lost

sight of the troopers to the south. Now the yells of those in rear became exultant, and still there came no shot. Then, as they struggled through a boggy slough, with sickening groan Hector's exhausted horse went down and floundered helpless in the mud, his wretched rider dragging himself from underneath, and, limping to the foot of a tree, fell gasping and terrified. "Oh, Gawd, don't leave me, Marse Benton!" he pleaded in agony. "Doan' leave me or dey'll kill me, suah." With one glance at the cheering chase, one longing look at the eastward slopes, Benton sprang from saddle, and with firm-set lips and flashing eyes, with only one arm, one weapon, to oppose to these thronging and exultant foes, proud, protecting and defiant, he planted himself between the yelling troopers and the prostrate, helpless, humble friend, and like gentleman and soldier stood to his ground, looking fate in the face.

Bursting through the trees, the foremost riders drove straight at him. "Down with that pistol!" shouted a voice in stern command. "Don't shoot, men; he's wounded! Drop your pistol, suh. We're ten to one!" And realizing the hopelessness of fight, Fred Benton tossed his puny weapon away.

But what meant that sudden shot to the southward?—what that sputtering volley, that burst of cheers? "The major!" "The Yanks!" "Come on, come on!" were the shouts. Away darted half the mud-spattered group, and then, sudden as the shot, in spurred a breathless young officer. "Mount, suh, instantly! Help him,

corporal. Up with you, suh! We haven't a moment." Rough, powerful hands fairly lifted him into saddle. Another hand seized the reins of his horse. "Come on now, lively!" was the order. "Get him back out o' range. We've run slap into a brigade, general and all. Off with you—to Buckland, you two! The rest of you come with me to the major. What'll we do with the nigguh? Damn the nigguh—we've no time to bother with him!"

Daring and devoted, away went the young gallants to the support of their chief, only to meet the riderless horses tearing through the glade, only to see a disciplined skirmish line come dancing out into the open, the slanting sunbeams flashing on their glistening rifles, only to see that their major was beyond all possibility of rescue, only to realize that the ardor of the chase had carried him and them very much too far, for, as though riding to the sound of the shots, there came galloping into line platoon after platoon of a blue-jacketted squadron, the first of a column issuing from the southward woods, and now the tables turned in desperate earnest, for, with blown and exhausted mounts, what hope had they of escape? "Charge as foragers," rang the distant trumpets, as the leader's eyes swept over the scene and saw the pitiful few in his front, and, with a wild burst of cheers, and sabres flashing on high, the long line sprang forward, fan-like; then, every man for himself, came tearing northward across the field.

An hour later, defiant and superbly disdainful of his surroundings, Major Lounsberry was being interrogated by Captain Carver of the division staff, while three or four other officers in blue hovered about the little frame farmhouse to which the prisoner had been conducted.

"You may spare yourself the trouble of questioning me, suh," said he with appropriate hauteur. "I decline to answer. Wait till you see Dr. Chilton," he added, with sneering triumph, "if he isn't already hanged for a traitor. You've seen the last of your friend Benton, I reckon. Perhaps he could have told you."

"I reckon he could," said Carver imperturbably, as he glanced toward the door at Lounsberry's back. "How is it, Benton, is Ewell at Gordonsville?"

CHAPTER XV

LINCOLN'S DILEMMA

"The President desires to see Lieutenant Benton of your staff," wrote the adjutant general, three weeks later, to the division commander and, just at a time when he hated to go, for there seemed a prospect of a forward dash on Gordonsville, the aide-de-camp found himself en route from the Stafford heights opposite Fredericksburg to the steamer landing on the Potomac. The big division had made a sudden swoop from Catlett's on the Orange railway down to the lower Rappahannock. A Confederate cavalry picket had been cut off and captured. Another young gallant, painfully wounded, had been brought in, and now, in charge of Benton, was being escorted to Washington. He had refused parole. He would rather share the fate of Lounsberry, said he, if his wounds speedily healed, or of poor Floyd Pelham, still languishing in hospital, if the wounds proved baffling. He knew both gentlemen, it seems, and had served with one of the detachments in pursuit of Benton. It was strange, indeed, to find himself now a prisoner in the hands of the recently pursued, and, with no little curiosity in his eyes, had he watched the stalwart aide who had come each day to

the field hospital at Falmouth to talk with and cheer him. Distant and offish in manner at first, as he and his comrades had considered it their rôle to appear, this young soldier had melted under the kindness shown him by the enemy. "We heard stories that led us to expect the opposite," said he, and so, before the doctor declared him well enough to be sent further to the rear, had told of things of vivid interest to him who so lately had himself been prisoner within the hostile lines. How much those fellows seemed to know of everything transpiring within the Union divisions! Just what had been done with Lounsberry and Pelham—just where they were confined and everything connected with their capture was all told at Charlottesville almost as soon as at Washington. How little, until long weeks after, as a rule, did our generals know of the daily doings beyond the picket posts along the front! With sorrow and anxiety inexpressible Benton heard that in spite of Dr. Chilton's long years of kindness and generosity among his townfolk—in spite of Rosalie's acknowledged queendom, an almost bitter feeling now existed, and there was talk of arrest and incarceration at Richmond. Not until he had studied Benton for several days did young Winston admit all this—and more. He had heard it through officers at Robertson's headquarters. He had known the Chiltons well when he was a junior at the 'varsity. He had often seen Lounsberry and had heard much of his standing and influence—had heard, moreover, that he had been a devotee of Miss

Rosalie's. "However," with a quick glance at Benton's face, which colored instantly, even under its coat of tan and sunburn, "Lounsberry didn't seem to find favor." There was some trouble, he didn't know what, and Maud Pelham had "had a flare up" with Rosalie, and that was something people didn't understand, for Jack Chilton was as much smitten with her as Lounsberry had been with Miss Chilton. "Don't s'pose you heard much about it," said he in the confidence bred of the unlooked-for kindness with which he had been treated, but adding, with an apologetic laugh, "they do say at Charlottesville that Miss Rosalie just ruled everybody about her like she was a bohn queen." And then did Mr. Winston admit that possibly something of the bitterness now displayed was due to this fact, and to the envy or malice of those who had felt her imperious sway in the past. At all events, and here was what so troubled Benton, it was held that the doctor, or at least Miss Rosalie, had taken active part in Benton's escape and had thereby been false to the cause of Virginia and the South. The doctor contented himself with saying the escape was all a surprise to him, though he would not say that he deplored it. He frankly owned his obligation to his former captive and his rejoicing that the young fellow was spared the fate of a prisoner at Libby. As for Miss Rosalie, "she was too proud to say a word," said Winston. It was Jack who really suffered most, for he had incurred the suspicion of war-office magnates, who had sent surgeons to ex-

amine and say whether, if exchanged, he would be fit to resume duty—a proceeding that set him back six weeks on the road to recovery, so ugly was the fever into which he fretted himself. Indeed, Jack was critically ill, said Winston, when last he heard of him. Then Lounsberry's people wouldn't speak to Dr. Chilton. Squire Pelham had publicly denounced him as the cause of the desperate plight of his own brave boy. Old Black Dan had been arrested by soldiers sent by Ewell, and taken to Gordonsville, and as for Pomp, he had totally disappeared. All this had Lieutenant Winston heard just before he rode forth on his latest scout and had been pounced upon, while his horses were unsaddled and feeding, by a troop of the "Harris Light"—Kilpatrick's boasted command—and so swept in to the division camp opposite quaint old Fredericksburg.

Therefore was Benton at this moment most unwilling to leave the front, for there were indications of brisk work and a forward movement that might relieve the situation. Letters from home had showered him with blessings and congratulations on his escape. The squire was now full of a scheme to come on to Washington, bringing Elinor with him, but, much as she longed to see her brother, the girl was now loth to leave home—Mrs. Ladue was swiftly failing and seemed to need her gentle nurse more and more with every day. Mr. Ladue, more and more apathetic and resigned, seemed to do nothing but sit long hours in an easy rocking-chair, watching the gambols of the children's kittens and tak-

ing little heed of other mundane matters. McKinnon, wrote certain townsfolk to Fred's general, had so lost caste in the community that he had determined on a war record to rehabilitate himself, and was now seeking the lieutenant-colonelcy of a new regiment being raised in their midst. The general urged at once, and instead, that the field officers of such new regiments should be chosen from those officers who, with a year's experience at the front, had demonstrated their fitness for command. "There are candidates right here in the brigade," said he, but what influence have soldiers at the front as compared with that of State senators at the rear?

When the President said he wished to see an officer, however, it meant that the officer indicated must stand not upon the order of his going, and Fred in saddle, with young Winston in the ambulance and Hector in a broad grin on the steps thereof, set out from Falmouth on a mild May morning just about the time that Jackson was beginning those wondrous cross-country dashes of his in the Shenandoah, scattering our already scattered divisions in astonishing style. What with bad news from Schenck and Milroy, falling back on Fremont after a thrashing at the Bull Pasture, a deep disappointment over McClellan's being held an entire month in front of Yorktown and a feeling that we were getting rather the worst of the grapple on the Peninsula, the atmosphere about the War Department was gloomy enough the day the young officer arrived. He had had no time to replace, as yet, the handsome equipments

sacrificed in his escape. (What had Queen Rosalie done, for instance, with that beautiful soft silken sash that he left in his room?) He had hoped to do so before reporting, but at the hospital where he left his prisoner, with a lingering hand clasp and promise of a later call, there awaited him a note saying the adjutant-general, despite the early hour, desired his presence without delay. There in the ante-room, with officers, orderlies and messengers grouped about or coming and going, sat the long, lanky and phenomenally solemn Virginian he had first seen that night at the stone house on the Warrenton pike. Jennings knew the newcomer at a glance and, springing up, shook him effusively by the hand. A moment later an officer appeared at another door and beckoned Benton to enter. "What do you know about that man?" was the very first question propounded the instant the door closed behind him.

"Nothing," said Benton, "except that he was at the stone house, in trouble with some of our brigade the first time I saw him—seemed to be well known to Dr. Chilton and other Virginians, and later he was with the Sixth Wisconsin the afternoon they captured Major Lounsberry."

"But—how about papers—information—concerning our forces that he received that night? You were captured while grappling with the cavalry officer who brought them."

"I?" cried Benton. "Good heavens!" And then stood dumb, for all on a sudden it flashed over him.

Rosalie! Rosalie, who had so inexplicably donned Ladue's uniform, ventured down through the darkness to the pike, seeking some one at the stone house. Rosalie, who had refused to tell what influence prompted that apparently reckless escapade! Papers? Information concerning our movements? Why, what sense was there in her taking all that risk when at that very moment our pickets were falling back before Stuart's triumphant advance—when all but a few of the guard had already disappeared from the Henry place—when by midnight or at the latest at dawn she was almost sure to be again in touch with her own friends and kindred? Aye, but did she know that? Might it not be that there had been papers—maps—memoranda in the pockets of Ladue's uniform that she deemed of vital importance to the cause she loved, and so had sought what she deemed the surest, quickest way to get them to him? Ladue was to go, if possible, to Hopewell and the Armisteads. Jennings, if at the stone house, could take the packet thither. At all events it would then be in safe hands if it proved, indeed, of value—safe beyond possibility of being taken by the Union soldiers and used to the injury of her wounded brother. Perhaps that was why she had fought so furiously when he grappled with that supple, slender form. Perhaps after his capture she had given it to Jennings. All this and more flashed through his mind as he stood there in the dark little office, with his interrogator impatiently facing him, and two other officials looking up at him from a paper-

littered table, much impressed, evidently, by the significance of his silence and embarrassment.

"Yes," sharply repeated the first speaker, "papers and, doubtless, valuable information. You saw them pass to Jennings, as he calls himself, did you not?"

"I saw nothing of the kind!" answered Benton, inexpressibly relieved that as yet, at least, he had had no occasion to speak of her—to reveal the fact that the daring young Southerner with whom he had grappled was no officer at all, yet what a soldier! What a leader of men! What a conqueror and commander! "Indeed," he went on eagerly, "I was too busy trying to get out of the scrape to think of Jennings at all. I made a jump for my horse and was in a hand-to-hand fight in two seconds. I never knew what became of Jennings."

"You remember Sergeant Miller, do you not?"

"I remember a sergeant—an Indiana sergeant, and a very keen one who was there, but I feared he and his party were killed or captured."

"Some of them were," said the examining officer grimly, "but Miller dove into the bushes, made his way through the darkness and escaped. He declares he saw the young rebel officer toss the packet to Jennings and heard him cry, 'For General Armistead—to-night—sure!' And now here is Jennings begging to be allowed to see two prisoners—Major Lounsberry and the young Virginian, Pelham, who was wounded protecting him the day you were rescued. He brings a note from

the President. Look here!" and taking a scrap of paper from his desk the staff officer held it forth for Benton's inspection. It was brief and to the point:

"The bearer, Mr. Jennings, has been of service and asks to see two friends—prisoners—Major Lounsberry and Trooper Pelham. I shall be glad if opportunity can be given him.

(Signed) "A. LINCOLN."

Benton read and looked up inquiringly. "I, too should like to see them—Lounsberry, at least," said he, with eyes that kindled and lips that set, "but not as a prisoner. I have a score to settle with that gentleman. When does Mr. Jennings go?"

"Can't say. The Secretary said no emphatically—not until matters were explained. It was thought you might settle it one way or another before we questioned him." And the officer was manifestly disappointed, and still he persisted. "You heard nothing about him?—Dr. Chilton never spoke of him while you were at Charlottesville?"

"I cannot recall his ever doing so—except casually. But Judge Armistead, not the general, was there at Gainesville. My belief is that General Armistead was not near Manassas when I was taken. Miller must have misunderstood."

Yet how could Miller misunderstand those clear, vibrant tones? The very thought of them thrilled Benton to the heart. And how could he now, her lover, her infinite debtor, drag her name into the investigation so long as there was no need? As yet no one at the

War Department seemed to know of Rosalie Chilton's share in that stirring night's adventure. What good end would be attained by the telling of it?

"Well," said the officer, finally, "I'm sorry we had to trouble you, but the Secretary thought you would know more of this suspected stranger. General McDowell trusted him, we fear, too much, and as you are to see the President we thought you might open his eyes if the fellow were playing a double game. I dare say you know people sometimes impose on the President," and here the captain smiled, whimsically, "and that's why when he could issue these things as an order, he won't. He thinks it wiser to let the Secretary handle matters of the kind. Now, your general, Mr. Benton, is being accused of having Southern leanings because he has been protecting Southern property there about Fredericksburg."

"Some defenceless women, left all alone, asked for guards and got them," answered Benton, stoutly. "I shouldn't wonder if their lords and masters *are* secesh, but we're not warring on women, I take it."

"As yet—no," was the thoughtful reply, "and may God forbid our having to come to it. But, my young friend, if you knew half that we know,—and we don't begin to know half that those brainy, daring, scheming, smiling Southern women are doing all around us,—you might think the time close at hand when they, too, would have to be made amenable to the laws of war. It isn't a week since one of them ran off with one of our

prisoners here, and you know what a trick was played by—Dr. Chilton's daughter."

And now indeed did Benton's face begin to burn, a thing the captain and the silent listeners were quick to note.

"You have your receipt for your prisoner, I presume. Then I'll not detain you further, only—come this way. We've got to question your friend Jennings next," and so saying the captain led his visitor through a second room where at crowded desks a score of clerks were writing. "When do you go to the White House?" he suddenly asked.

"I don't know. I expected to learn here. But I hoped to have time to get freshened up a bit, and I need new——"

"Nonsense! You look as though you'd just stepped out of a bandbox in that uniform. Ask Mr. Stone to come here," he added, to a statuesque soldier at the door.

"The uniform may be all right, but what I need is sash and side arms," said Benton, still weighted with the traditions of his "regular" regiment.

"Never mind them! The President never notices what a man wears or knows what he himself has on. I suppose he wants to hear what you saw and heard—and something about the Chiltons, for they seem to be in hot water. Ah, Mr. Stone, what time was Mr. Benton to report to the White House?"

"I was to bring him over as soon as he arrived, sir.

Is this the gentleman?" And a young man in civilian garb bowed courteously. Then, with a promise to return, as there were matters on which General Thomas wished to question him, Benton hurried away.

It was not yet nine o'clock, but already half a dozen carriages were halted along the semi-circular drive in front of the mansion, and a number of pallid, anxious women and grave-visaged men were gathered about the beautiful, colonnaded portico. Through the waiting group the messenger swiftly led his charge; through the massive doorway and up the stairs to the left, past officers chatting in low tones along the broad corridor, past the desks of badgered secretaries, striving to answer the questions of a dozen importunates at once. Many glanced up curiously, at the tall young soldier, striding in the wake of his well-known guide, and many a man questioned, "Who is that?" as, with a whispered word to a door-keeper, the two disappeared beyond green baize portals that swung quickly shut—through another large, airy room from whose windows one saw a lovely vista of the placid river and wooded Virginia shores, and even here some half a dozen elders, gray-haired, important-looking men—privileged characters, evidently—were awaiting the coming of the great head of an anxious and distracted people. Through still another doorway they passed and into a smaller room, where stood a long table in the middle and smaller desks at the sides, whereat two silent secretaries were writing. One of these looked up, nodded and pointed with the tip of his

pen to a door across the little room. Mr. Stone led Benton to a long window facing the river and the heights of Arlington beyond, left him there and disappeared. A moment or two later that door opened, and the two secretaries did not even rise or discontinue their work. A tall, bony, black-robed, black-haired and bearded man, with deep-set, black-browed eyes and brown, sunken cheeks came striding in, one great hand grasping a batch of papers, the other being grasped by both the sturdy paws of a merry-eyed, ruddy-cheeked urchin who, lifting his booted feet clear of the carpet, was being swung through space like some animated hopper at the end of the traversing jib of tall, traveling crane. Benton knew them at a glance—the chief magistrate of a mighty nation and the darling of the father's great, fond, over-burdened heart—little Tad.

Down went the batch of papers on the table; out stretched the freed hand to greet the young soldier at the window; a winsome, welcoming smile shone like sunbeam through wintry cloud, illumining the kind, homely face. "Glad to see you, Lieutenant," said he, with cordial hand-clasp, as the little scamp, still swinging at his side, now encircled the black-garbed lower limbs with his own sturdy legs. "Tad, my boy, this is Lieutenant Benton—just back from Dixie. Now, *he's* got a darky worth having in your show. Take a chair, Lieutenant," and the lean, sinewy arm, long accustomed to the sweep of a Mississippi trading scow, or the long-handled axe of the rail-splitter, whirled the nearest chair

round toward the window. Then, switching his tangling coat tails out of the way with that same brawny hand and, never striving to pull loose from the determined grasp of the youngster now straddling his knee, the President unhinged somewhere about the middle and dropped on the edge of the table. "You see," he continued, "in these busy times I have to do several things at once. McClellan wants forty thousand more men for a side-show and Tad four boys for a nigger minstrel performance——"

"You promised!" burst in Tad, emphasizing his demand with strenuous thumps at the parental ribs.

"That's what McClellan says," whimsically responded the President, "and, Mr. Benton, it begins to look as though we couldn't get down to business until both are supplied. We have a session in the cabinet room on the first issue in five minutes and have been at odds on the second since before I was out of bed. In both cases there are objections on part of the—the house-keeper, but, Mr. Stone, will you go with this young showman and arrange the matter with his mother? I surrender!"

Whereupon did Tad, in a rapture, tear away to tell of the victory, and the President, laying that long, lean hand on Benton's knee, bent earnestly toward him. "I need to know all you can tell me about Dr. Chilton and his family," said he. "Some of our vehement, war-to-the-hilt people are practically demanding the arrest of a Southern family here to be dealt with in precisely the

same way certain Virginians propose to deal with the doctor and that spirited daughter of his. No harm as yet," for here the young soldier's face had blanched and his eyes filled with dread and anguish. "No harm, that is—— Have we further news this morning?" he turned and asked the busy secretary at the nearest desk, tilting the while one long leg over the other and clasping the bony knee with both hands. "Your general gave us the particulars of your escape so far as you had told him, and it is noted that you in no way reveal the names of those who aided you, but now—— What is it, Mr. Nicolay?" for with solemn face, the confidential secretary, holding an open letter in his hand, now stood at the President's elbow. Mr. Lincoln took the paper, knitted his brows and began to read.

"It came from the secret service, Mr. President, not ten minutes ago," said the secretary. "Colonel Baker, I believe, is in the ante-room."

Benton felt himself gripping the arms of his chair, for the room seemed swimming as the President looked quickly up. "Not so bad," said he, "if we can only take care of them here. They have simply banished them—father and daughter, both."

CHAPTER XVI

"STONEWALL" IN AMBUSH

From Arlington to Bull Run, from Bull Run to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Catlett's, from Catlett's to Falmouth, from Falmouth to Guiney's, from Guiney's to Belle Plaine, from Belle Plaine to Front Royal—one hundred miles up and one hundred miles down, from Stafford to Culpeper, then back to the Hedgman, with Jackson and Longstreet prodding the march, through dust and heat, through mud and rain, through storm and sunshine, through ford and field, through May and June, July and August, hither and yon, to and fro, no wonder they called it the "Pendulum Division" by the time that arch-optimist of the war days, the new commander of the newly named Army of Virginia, John Pope, of blessed memory, recoiled from his victory at Cedar Mountain, drawing the shattered foe after him "on to Manassas" (from the other side) and a meeting with those other victorious corps reshipped from the Peninsula to the succor of Washington. Resting from his ill-starred Chickahominy campaign, McClellan watched with presumably sympathetic eyes the stirring exploits of his rival, who, halting a bit for breath at the Hedgman and greeting with scant courtesy the first aid to

reach him from the Army of the Potomac, sent our friends of the Pendulum—four brigades now—up stream to watch Jackson at Sulphur Springs when that agile leader was already crossing still farther west, and, with Benton's old friends, the Bull Run Mountains, for a screen, was sprinting round our right flank, only to come bursting through the very gap the swarthy little colonel of the "Black Hats" and the tall adjutant of the comrade Sixth had studied with their glasses that April afternoon, little dreaming it was to afford the grand *entrée* of the rebel host in August.

The next heard of "Old Jack" he was at Manassas Junction—square between the headquarters in the saddle and those on the steamboat—between Pope at Warrenton and Mac at Alexandria—between the victorious retreat of the Army of Virginia and the half-hearted, half-halting advance of that of the Potomac, twenty-five thousand with him, probably two hundred thousand encompassing him round about, and there, despite his perilous position did he linger long enough to refit, re-clothe, re-shoe large share of his ragged, whole-souled, half-soled followers and to feast them all at Uncle Sam's expense. Then, burning the thousands of barrels and bales that he couldn't use, retired by night toward Washington while Pope, facing about, advanced—advanced behind, as before—to "bag the whole crowd," to sprinkle salt on the tail of a swift, to batter a flea with a flail.

A hot, yet sweet and placid August afternoon spent

Jackson and most of his wiry men (did ever one suspect our languid Southern brethren of such phenomenal powers of self-propulsion?) snoozing in the leafy woods behind the screen of that unfinished railway embankment, their left at Sudley Springs, their right reaching to a point a little northwest of Groveton, yet curving gently back, well clear of the pike and thinning out into mere scattered squads of Stuart's troopers, keeping touch, as it were, with Longstreet's coming host just bristling through the gaps of Thoroughfare and Hopewell beyond, making John Buford, with his handful of horse, show his teeth at the lower gap, while Ricketts, sore wounded the previous year on Henry house hill and a prisoner perforce long months at Libby, deploy his brigades 'cross country to compel Longstreet to do likewise, and so delay his march until the rest of the army should encircle Manassas from south, southwest, west, northwest and north, make but a mouthful of Jack and his saucy divisions—his famous Foot Cavalry—and so, sleep with satisfied stomachs on the choicest game of the season.

But, as had said that far-sighted adjutant that April afternoon when, not a mile from the now ruined, smoking, devastated supply depot at the Junction, "first catch your hare." The plan was a gem, the bag was a big one, the feast was a joy if only the hare had consented to stay. When Pope reached the spot of his prospective banquet the quarry had vanished, no man could say where.

In bivouac the night before beyond Buckland Mills, Benton had again told to his general and some of the staff the story of his ride across the Bull Run Mountains, and the dash for life and liberty to the distant woods about Manassas. Hector, too, had his circle of eager listeners, but all men were too wearied from incessant marching to care to go exploring beyond that western range, even had daylight lasted. True to the traditions of the War Department, no cavalry could be had to scout for the corps commander. John Buford, with a puny brigade, had felt his way through Thoroughfare the evening previous, but there was no one to reach out westward on McDowell's left and learn the actual truth that Longstreet's whole corps was trudging swiftly northward, turning east at Salem on the trail of Jackson and making, doubtless, for that famous Gap. The division commander, worn with days and nights of sleepless vigil and still suffering from illness, had gone early to his blankets on the bare ground, while Benton and Carver, sitting by their little fire, puffed at their pipes and chatted of the strange vicissitudes of fortune that had befallen those with whom the young soldier's life had been so closely linked. The Ladues—what sorrowful fate had not been theirs?—the mother, sleeping peacefully at last beneath the shades of Forest Home; the father living a second childhood, bereft of all its buoyancy; the children the care of kindly neighbors; Paul serving somewhere, if still alive, with Ewell's division, perhaps at that moment visiting the

outposts over yonder in those dark woods beyond which the dull glow in the skies told of the havoc wrought by Jackson's men. Would they meet him on the morrow? was the thought in Benton's breast.

Then there were the Chilton's, his other Southern friends—the gentle-natured sire, the gallant son and that daring, wilful, imperious girl—what had been their fortune? Ostracised at home by some, at least, of those he had longest loved, the doctor had accepted almost as a release the mandate of a citizens' committee bidding him and his to leave Charlottesville forthwith. Richmond was in a turmoil at the time, but the doctor would go there, hoping to redress his wrongs, and wearing himself out, body and soul, with nervous anxiety and sense of utter injustice. Not for a day would Rosalie leave him, though Jack was now a stricken lad indeed, in rough field hospital at Gordonsville.

McClellan's guns were thundering almost at the gates of the Confederate capital when sorrowing, sympathetic kinsfolk took the Chiltons to their hearth and home and strove to soothe the wrathful old man. The city filled up fast with wounded. Every house was a hospital, and then, when by his devotion and professional skill, the good doctor might soon have rehabilitated himself, he was taken sorely ill. When he was well enough, or at least so pronounced, to move at all, the crisis at the capital was over. McClellan was gone. The seat of war had shifted to the north. Jack, exchanged and released, was again in saddle, and, how it was arranged

Fred never heard until long after, father and daughter had been sent to Newport News with the wounded and exchanged, and thence had gone to the roof of the doctor's devoted sister in Washington. Once again had the great-hearted President sent for the general's aide-de-camp, and this time bade him go, meet the Chiltons and see them safely to their destination.

But that meeting had not made our Badger boy too happy. The doctor was aging fast and apparently breaking. Rosalie was stern and strange. Squire Benton, with Elinor, as he had long planned, hastened on to Washington when notified by wire that Fred had a week's leave from the front, and Fred's earnest, yet almost humble plea that he should be allowed to bring his father to see Dr. Chilton—his sister to see her—Rosalie had almost curtly refused. Then she had fairly stunned him by saying, "If you really wish to do me a favor, Mr. Benton, there is one man I'd like to meet, and that is—Major Lounsberry." Benton should have known by the flash in her eye, the fire in her manner, the fury in her tone that for no sweet assurance did she so desire to see that distinguished Virginian, now every moment expectant of exchange, but in her nervous, fitful, wrathful state when not needed at her father's side, Rosalie's wondrous face had an almost unearthly beauty, and in Benton's deep and passionate, yet seemingly helpless, hopeless love, he was consumed with unreasoning jealousy, and went back to the front sore-hearted. Yet it was through his planning, after all,

that they met—the blue-eyed sister who so surely had read her brother's secret—the dark-eyed, chafing, fitful, fuming Virginia beauty who so surely held it. Women at least will know with what veiled scrutiny they searched each other's faces, studied each other's every point and pose and gesture, and they had ample time, for sea air had been ordered for Dr. Chilton; Washington was torrid and unwholesome; and just before Fred hurried back to the division he had brief conference with his father. The Chiltons would surely need money, said he, and as surely refuse it if tendered by them. Neither the doctor nor Rosalie began to know until long months thereafter that the ample means so readily supplied by the doctor's widowed sister came (as she did not know—not too readily) from that hard-headed, hard-fisted Western lawyer who, though well-to-do, had earned his wealth but slowly, and whose next move was to Cape May with Elinor: there was little he could now deny that boy of whom the President himself had so highly spoken (proud indeed was Fred of that!), and there were they still recuperating at the Atlantic seaboard, the fathers already friends, the daughters still "on guard" at the very moment when Jack Chilton, scouting with the advance of FitzHugh Lee's brigade, and Paul Ladue, riding the dim picket lines of Ewell's grim veterans, and Fred Benton, here at Buckland's, closing in with that strong, disciplined division, were dreaming not ten miles apart of what the morrow might bring forth.

Not until the shadows grew long across the stubble fields that lovely August evening came the first fierce grapple of that devoted brigade. Marching at dawn through Buckland's, they found the pike toward Gainesville crowded with Sigel's trains and teamsters (brought along, said McDowell, in spite of orders), through which they slowly forced a way, for, far in the eastward distance little snowball puffs, bursting sudden into view above the treetops, then drifting into vaporous nothing, told the shells were flying fast ahead, while similar, fleecy cloudlets against the dark background of the Bull Run Range told equally of other fighting to their left and rear. 'Twas there that Buford strove to bar the road, and soldierly McDowell, looking thither with anxious eyes, turned Ricketts out of column, and sent him back with his whole division to hold that pass. Reynolds, with his "decimated relic" of the Pennsylvania Reserves, had gone on ahead in the wake of Sigel's Corps, but all were out of sight and touch when the corps commander, with his one division, dove into the winding wood roads toward Manassas until brought up standing after two P.M. by disconcerting news from Pope—that the hare had not waited for the bag, that swift-footed Jackson had given them the slip, and wasn't where they looked for him at all. In point of fact, having no cavalry to do his looking for him, Pope didn't know where Jackson was.

It is three hours later when, bidding his biggest division obey its new orders, just received, McDowell,

deep laden with that commodity which paves so many squares of Sheol—the best intentions in the world—rides away to find his chieftain Pope and show him the field. Thereby he loses Pope, loses touch with his divisions, loses all chance of usefulness in the battle that is to close the day—loses, in fact, himself, for he cannot find his way to his own command over the field he knew so well the year before, even when signalled by the guiding thunder of the heaviest cannonade, the sullen crashing of the fiercest volleying, those tangled woods have ever heard. At five or thereabouts comes staff officer from Pope with these astounding tidings: Jackson is located. Jackson has dared to cross Bull Run and march in the teeth of the coming corps of the Army of the Potomac. Reno and Kearny have followed his rear guard—Hill's Light Division—straight to Centerville. Where is General McDowell? Here! Well, General Pope's orders are for this, McDowell's Corps, to retrace its steps to the Warrenton Pike, then turn eastward and march forthwith on Centerville, whither Jackson, with all hands, has shifted his colors, and where Pope now proposes to apply the sack. Further orders will meet the corps on the way.

Now there is but one division to obey the order, but loud ring the bugles through the leafy woods. Up spring the men of the old brigade, refreshed by three hours' rest, with coffee and hardtack to comfort them ere starting, and, as the heads of columns reach the Pike again and turn sturdily away eastward, some level-

headed band leader signals to his men, and the Black Hats set up a shout as the woods ring to the rollicking strains of "Ain't I glad to git out o' de Wilderness!" Four brigades in solid column they swing along the broad, dry thoroughfare, full six thousand boys in blue. Those in the lead, at least—those now under Hatch and Gibbon who have been long in the division—are stanch and seasoned men; those that follow under Doubleday, three Eastern regiments, for some reason not understood, seem straggling and dispirited. The colonel commanding the Seventy-sixth New York ruefully says he can muster only one hundred and eighty men with the colors, the rest having fallen out, "exhausted by the severity of the march." Doubleday's brigade seems, therefore, little bigger than one of Gibbon's stalwart Western regiments. Rearmost of all, far back toward Gainesville, comes Patrick, with his presumably well-conditioned command, but he and they enter not into what follows, their leader claiming later that he "had no orders," and so contented himself with looking on when by pitching in on the exposed flank he could have rolled the Confederate line upon itself and turned the struggle into splendid victory.

But if Jackson's real movements are unknown to our generals, rest you sure the eyes of his army have not been left behind. Early that very morning Old Jack has had that enterprising young brigade commander, Bradley Johnson, scouting out toward Gainesville, and Johnson sends young Gaither with his gray-clad troop spier-

ing still further, dodging Sigel and Reynolds, interposing betwixt them and McDowell, and when our confident courier comes galloping along with McDowell's despatch to these others—to Sigel and Reynolds—telling them just what is planned for the day, Gaither gathers him in, sends the much-appreciated programme to Johnson, who grins with delight, and passes it on to Old Jack himself, away off toward Sudley Springs, snoozing with his division commanders Ewell and Taliaferro, on their soldier pillows—saddles—in the snake-fence corner, and Jackson wakes to read and to sudden rejoicing. Here is the chance of a lifetime! Sigel has already gone on through Groveton and off over Henry house hill. Reynolds, sparring awhile with Bradley Johnson, has dived into the woods, going southward from Groveton. Somewhere, therefore, still to the west, must be two of McDowell's divisions, alone. And, even while he is rousing his right and left bowers, Ewell and Taliaferro, there comes word from Stuart that Ricketts has gone out to Thoroughfare, and McDowell, with one isolated division is marching eastward from Gainesville. Now, "Up guards and at 'em!" Up Ewell and Taliaferro! Up guns and brigades—batteries three and brigades just five—for Johnson has done his share for the day, and away they go at the edge of the sheltering woods until nearly three miles out to the southwest, and there they halt and the skirmish lines are thrown forward, half across the open fields toward the Pike, and the dusty, grimy, gray bri-

gades, that have fought and won all over eastward Virginia, lie down in massed double columns and wait for the coming of that devoted division. Famous fellows are these, the younger Taliaferro commanding what is eventually the right brigade—the men of Alabama and Virginia—then Baylor, with the unrivalled “Stonewall,” Jackson’s own—all Virginian; then Stark with his Pelicans, the lads from Louisiana; then Lawton with his Georgians, and finally, farthest east, our old Gordonsville acquaintance Trimble, with five regiments from various States. Between them and on the eastward flank are the guns of Poague, Wooding and Carpenter, and now crouching, confident, devil-may-care these pets of Old Jack, though their battalions average not more than two hundred and fifty, under leaders true and tried, sprawl in the shelter of the trees—they, the veterans of a score of hard-fought fields, wherein they have seldom been denied, waiting to pounce upon a Yankee command only two of whose regiments have yet been in battle. No wonder Ewell grins at the prospect and Taliaferro smiles with confidence. These are the fellows that thrashed Schenck and Milroy in the valley, sent Banks spinning out of it, sickened Fremont of his command, swooped down from the Shenandoah to the Chickahominy when McClellan seemed sure of the capital, trounced FitzJohn Porter soundly at Gaines’s Mill, drove the Union army from the York to the James and hurled themselves with fruitless daring on the guns at Malvern Hill. Then, as McClellan

took to his boats, turned again in their tracks away to the Rapidan, pounded Banks once more at Cedar Mountain, doubled Pope on the Rappahannock, and now, with serene confidence in the result, prepare to swallow with their supper that Pendulum Division of McDowell's Corps.

Off to the right front, half-way to that westward grove is a cosey farm-house with shaded lawn and dotting fruit trees and promise of eggs and butter, even of buttermilk and apple-jack, and Ewell lets his wide-awakes go sampling, and signifies approval and takes a hearty sip, as a dark-eyed young aide-de-camp rides up with a dripping canteen of the soothing white fluid. "Thanks, Mr. Ladue," says he. "That's most refreshing. By the way, you know some of these fellows we're expecting out yonder, don't you?" and the general points southward, to where the line of the pike stretches from the little hamlet of Groveton in the hollow of Young's Branch, up over higher ground, hidden here and there by groves that cover half a dozen acres each, but is generally in full view almost all the way to Gainesville, lying in the low ground to the west. Ladue follows the gesture of his commander, and then, his eyes, dark, mournful and apprehensive, fix upon that vehement soldier face. "Wisconsin?" he falters. "I felt—I knew it must come—sometime."

"Yes, sir, and John Gibbon commands that brigade now, they say. I've known him years. To think of his being there—and he a Tar Heel!" And here his

kindling eyes turn to where Trimble's men are stretched upon the turf—North Carolina closed on Alabama.

Even as Paul Ladue, dismounting, is wondering if after all it should be the will of the god of battles that David should meet Jonathan, Damon be arrayed against Pythias, he and Fred Benton brought face to face in the opposing lines, there is sound of stir and excitement down toward the right. "Coming!" "They're coming!" "See!" are the excited whispers, and young officers spring forward and peer over the low crest in front. Poague, that year-old, yet veteran, gunner, has flipped a hand to his bugler, and low and muffled "Attention!" is sounded. Low and muffled, it is repeated still more faintly farther off to the east, where the horses of Wooding and Carpenter are grazing on the scanty turf, and drivers and cannoneers spring to their posts. Officers and sergeants swing into saddle. No need of such precaution, though. From far over to the southwest, where the almost horizontal rays of the setting sun flash on thick sheaves of gleaming, slanting, dancing gun-barrels—they can't be anything else—there come floating over the open fields the merry strains of a fine brass band, ringing out the jolly notes of a popular soldier song, and here and there in the sprawling ranks bearded men or laughing boys take up the jovial chorus:

"Johnny stole a ha-a-am
And didn't care a da-a-a-m:"

and then, triumphantly, and all together :

" Ain't I glad to git out o' de Wilderness—
Down in Alaba-a-a-m."

"Down in Alabam, indeed!" grins Ewell. "There's more than a few of you'll be on the way there to-night, or I'm no prophet," and then, for the last time in many a day, he mounts his ready horse. He will never stand on two feet again.

But Old Jack gives no sign. He, too, is waiting and watching. He, too, is there in saddle at the edge of the trees, indistinguishable in the gathering gloom from across the more than mile-wide stretch of open, undulating fields. He waits until the leading brigade of the long column is clear of the eastward of the two groves. He lets it go until it drops into the low ground about Groveton—until its advance is at the Sudley Springs road, well to the eastward—until the head of the second brigade in column, marching in splendid order, with full and well-closed ranks, comes swinging out behind that now famous patch of timber, then nods to Ewell and—the ball begins. Out on a sudden from the left of the massed lines, Poague's lean horses and gaunt, sinewy gunners spring to their work. Six black-muzzled barkers are whirled round in battery. The iron-shod "trails" drop with sullen thud on the turf. The loosened limbers, with dragging traces, circle back in position. The rammers whirl in air and there is a wheeze at the vents as the sponge heads slide home, a low

thump, thumping as the cartridge bags are rammed to the base. There is a moment of sighting and squinting and low-muttered orders, then a leaping aside, and one—two—three,—quick bellowing, with vengeful spit of flame and sulphur smoke, the nearest battery hurls its screaming challenge across the field, and in spite and fury the black shells burst in whistling hail over the startled heads of the second brigade. Out beyond the first battery trot Wooding and Carpenter, forming "action front" on the slope a little to the northwest of Groveton, and so three batteries are suddenly hurling their swift fire upon the now halted column. "Now see 'em take to cover!" shout the seasoned ones by the gun-side, as the left half battery echoes the right, and all the front of Starke's Brigade is now covered by flashing guns, bellowing in chorus, the men, leaping in and out to reload, dimly seen through the billowing battery smoke, and still, screaming and shrieking the shells sail high across the rolling earth sea. "See 'em take to cover," indeed! Well might they do so, for just beyond the pike the woods lie thick and unbroken, but, sudden as the shot, each regiment has "fronted" to its left. The steel ramrods of the foremost are seen flashing in air. The shrill voice of Old Graybeard, spurring back to his colors, has yelled the order to load at will, and not until they've bitten and poured and rammed and capped does he follow that with "Lie down!" The right of their line is flat on its belly at the edge of the field,

while spurring, lashing and bounding, cannoneers racing alongside like mad, a well-handled battery—Gibbon's own, as Poague and Ewell more than suspect—the beloved of the brigade, comes thundering up the pike, comes galloping out on the field, comes "front into line" at a breakneck pace, whirls without halting its bronze beauties about, and in another moment the loud-ringing "light twelves" are out-bellowing the trio of batteries blazing there northwest of Groveton, sweeping their sections with "spherical case." Five, ten, fifteen minutes the duel of death goes on. Gibbon's gunners are all regulars, lords of their trade, and old Ewell sees it and knows it. "Limber up, Poague! Back all of you! They are too heavy for our guns!" is the order, and Paul Ladue spurs to carry it. Out of the way, gentlemen gunners! It's our time now, goes the word from Starke's eager ranks, and so on down the long line. Into their saddles leap field, staff and commanders. The sun has gone down; the dusk is at hand; the night must not come until that stubborn brigade has been swept from the earth. Who shall do it, Ewell or Taliaferro?

From the westward now, from the far right flank, a daring battery whips out on the field and unlimbers where its guns can enfilade Gibbon's triumphant boomers, and young Taliaferro's little brigade, till now held in rear, goes striding off behind its fellows, and so on to the extreme right as though in support. And still it is a battle of guns and gunners, for Jackson holds his

hounds in leash, "down charged" at heel, crouched at the edge of the woods.

And then comes the surprise of the day, the event of the hour, the marvel of the campaign. Even as Ewell and Taliaferro are deciding that the moment has come for attack, lo! to the amaze of the men of the Stonewall Brigade, still the extreme right of the line, there is a glint of steel in the opposite grove and a dark column bursts from the depths of the wood. Nimbly a swarm of skirmishers leap from their covert and come dancing out over the sward. Straight for the guns drives the daring blue line, backed by eight solid companies, closed on the colors and marching abreast. Fancy the canary defying the cat! Fancy the terrier bearding the tiger! Fancy the lamb assailing the butcher, and you have the sensation that thrills the waiting divisions as a grizzled Georgia colonel slaps down his field-glass and turns to his men with delight in his eye and five words on his tongue: "The Black Hats—by Goad!"

CHAPTER XVII

HOW THE BRIGADE WINS ITS NAME

Over at the southwest, half way to that second grove in the shelter of which the rearmost brigade has halted, stand that little orchard and nearby farm-house, a barn or two, with some fences and a decrepit wall of jagged rocks. Half way to this one peaceful spot, to the right front of these crouching, staring, incredulous lads of the "Stonewall," the threatened guns are thundering, the gray cannoneers leaping in and out through the billowing clouds of sulphur smoke. Half way toward that eastward grove, which conceals most of the second in column of the blue brigades, this solitary battalion in the feathered black hats and the wake of its skirmishers, is jauntily proceeding to show its comrades back on the pike how Bull Run veterans take a battery. Half way between the two groves, halted in the road and watching the scene are Doubleday's three battalions, all three not as strong as a fair-sized regiment. Gibbon, chief of the second brigade, has led the Black Hats through the wood, then, halting at the edge has bid them go in, their swarthy little colonel waving his hand in glad acceptance of the trust—the last salute of his soldier

life. Almost all of the blue division can be seen from the north by the men of the South; almost nothing of the gray divisions can be seen from the south by the men of the North. Gazing through their binoculars, the Union commander and staff note not a sign of the foe, save these venturesome batteries, the one here directly to the north, the others slowly trotting off to the northeast beyond the range of Gibbon's guns. Yet there are a few mounted officers or orderlies spurring swiftly along that far-away skirt of woods, and one of these horsemen carries the order from Taliaferro, chief of division, to Taliaferro, chief of brigade, to move into line on the right of Baylor—the "Stonewall." Others are darting from Old Jack to Ewell and Taliaferro, both, with the word to pitch in.

And one of these riders, galloping down the line, is little Ladue, brought face to face, as he dreamed, here on the field of battle with the men he had known as a lad in the West, and though his heart is throbbing hard, his dark eyes are burning with excitement, his "soul in arms and eager for the fray," something like soldier sympathy and sorrow stirs him to the core, as with laughing confidence, the men of the "Stonewall" spring to their feet, the little red battle flags are lifted on high, and forward goes the brigade, sweeping in three slender lines to the low crest in front, as their far-forward skirmishers leap from the grass and volley their challenge at the coming foe. Then Georgia and Louisiana and the men at the guns hold their breath and watch to see

Virginia send those impudent Yanks whirling back to the woods, or else——

Then, wonder of wonders! So far from scurrying at sight of the "Stonewall," the flower of Virginia, the boast of the South, that sombre, black-crested line halts short at sudden word of command; the rifle-butts leap to the shoulders; a crashing volley, driving point blank up the gentle rise, sends its storm of murderous lead square in the "Stonewall's" face. Down go two battle flags. Down goes Neff, colonel commanding the Thirty-Third. Down go dozens in the foremost rank, and to the amaze of Starke and Lawton, the "Stonewall" fairly staggers. "Forward!" is one hoarse-shouted order, "Fire!" another; and with the skirmishers crouching, crawling, rolling away to right and left, Virginia blazes at Wisconsin now ramming fresh cartridges into the smoking tubes, and with never a thought of retreat. So far from sweeping the field the "Stonewall" is brought to a halt and gets another fierce volley, followed by rasping fire by file that is far more effective than the downward aim of the command, schooled rather to charge than to shoot. For some unfathomed reason the Virginians stand and fire instead of advancing at the double, perhaps because so many leaders are felled by the first deadly volleys of those insolent Badgers, fighting alone and doubtless unconscious of the unseen odds against them. Taliaferro, division chief, spurs angrily forward and through the thick haze of the battle smoke his voice can be heard ordering Starke into line with Baylor, for, off to the



The rifle-butts leap to the shoulders.—Page 222.



right and left, beyond the dense veil through which the red fires are spitting, men shout of the coming of other blue lines. Sol Meredith's Hoosiers, cheering with long-pent enthusiasm, in full double rank aligned on their colors, are sweeping at double quick straight from the pike at the west of the grove. Arms at the trail, at the shoulder or anyhow, all eyes to the front, all hearts on the jump, Indiana is heading straight for the left of Wisconsin, and in five minutes more its long front is hidden in its own fire-flashing cloud, and it is high time for young Taliaferro, rushing his Third brigadesmen round the right rear of the "Stonewall" to make a try for that farm-house. Another five minutes and he and Meredith are clinched at the corner; another brigade is in line for the South, another battalion for the Union, and still not a man has thought of retreat—save only the thick stream of wounded hobbling painfully back for the rear. Then Starke, too, comes swiftly, buoyantly striding over the low rolling plain and dips into the smoke bank that floats from the west, ranging alongside the "Stonewall" just as a third Yankee regiment, filing from the woods, fronts to its left and, with machine-like precision, "playing at parade at the edge of the grave," says Ewell, comes forward, guide centre, its color-bearer out to the front, its right and left general guides on the line, its captains sprung to the outer flanks of their companies, for all the world as though they were calmly doing battalion drill at Belle Plaine. Its "dandy" lieutenant-colonel is in command, he of

the famous name, for already its colonel and major have been helped to the rear, shot almost as they issued from the wood. Already little O'Connor, heroic leader of the Black Hats, mortally stricken, is lying gasping in rear of his wrathful, swift-thinning ranks. Then gallant May, major of the cheering Hoosiers, he whom we saw the dark night at Centerville, drops from his wounded horse to the arms of his men, his soldier spirit flitting away with the close of the day. Already, far on the right, old Graybeard Cutler marches the Sixth straight forward past Gibbon's smoking guns, halts his companies on the line with Hamilton's stalwart Seventh, and, all four regiments now, the men of the West are blazing red against the black background of the distant woods, for night and hell seem to come down together. In the fiercest attack of the hot campaign, Ewell and Taliaferro, five to one in point of brigades, two to one in point of numbers, one to one in point of result, bear down on the ranks of that gallant command, supple as steel as it leaps to the fight, rigid as rock as it counters the blow, yielding never a foot to that splendid advance.

"Shall iron break the Northern iron—or steel?" mutters Old Jack, in the words of the prophet, his eyes filled with trouble, his teeth firm set as once again the cheering, banner-waving, fire-flashing ranks of his devoted battalions sweep down the gentle slope until almost lost in the smoke of the opposite lines, then slowly settle to a halt, astounded, for though full half of its left wing seems shot out of line, and the Hoosiers and Black Hats

are shrunk to half their original strength; there, shoulder to shoulder, daring, defiant, indomitable stands the brigade, the swart faces of the men lit by the flash of their guns, and Ewell, grim old soldier, borne to the rear with a shattered thigh, groans to his mournful aides that at last the division has met its match.

Jackson's pale face is rigid as he himself bends over his loyal second in command, and his lips move in prayer, never in imprecation, ere they issue their next order, "Try again." And this time, Trimble, too, drives in with Lawton, only to see that machinelike regiment to the east of the Black Hats, despite the numbers dropping in their tracks and dribbling away from the extreme right under the deluge of shrapnel from the Southern guns, doing more fancy drill in front of the foe, changing front forward by company under command of that gamecock of a lieutenant-colonel, and then pouring withering fire into the left of the Louisiana men. "Try again," says Jack, and try they do, manfully, loyally—but heavens, what can human valor win against iron resolution? Two of Doubleday's battalions, one a mere skeleton like most of those of Baylor's and Taliaferro's, have ranged up in the gaps of the Union brigade, a shadowy fabric now, visible only in the flash of the guns, but as Paul Ladue trots through the groups where surgeons and stretchermen are trying to care for the vast numbers of wounded, he looks in vain for a division commander to whom to deliver Jackson's last order and the news that Ewell is down. Talia-

ferro, too, has been borne to the rear, and Ladue rides on after Starke to bid him take command. Gods, what a sight, what a shambles, he finds at the rear of that line!—dead, dying and crippled by scores of the “Stonewalls.” Three colonels, Neff, Grisby and Botts have been shot from their steeds, two of them straight to their graves; four majors are down of the Virginia command, and Walker, colonel of Taliaferro’s Tenth. Full half the fighting force of the Second and Fourth Virginia are stretched on the field, as, for the last time, they close in on the centre in front of the now almost invisible line of their foes, and with strength, cartridges, hope all spent and gone, they drop their useless rifle butts to earth and lean exhausted on the hot, black muzzles. At least they hold the ground.

So, too, does that stern, silent, iron command across those fifty yards of smoking void, “with obstinate determination,” writes Old Jack, in rueful admission of the stubborn valor of his foe. And after all what has he accomplished? What has he not done this night but blunder? All he had to do was to remain there in concealment beyond that unfinished railway grade, resting in the shady woods, and, all unconscious of his presence, the Union brigades would have passed him by. The division commander had no cavalry to scout for him. The few flankers thrown out to the north by Hatch found nothing, until, looking back from the low ground about Groveton, they saw the batteries trot out on the open slope. Left unmolested to obey its orders that

fine division would have gone clear on to Centreville, leaving Ricketts far in rear to be cut off, crushed or captured. But the sight of six thousand Yankees marching along almost parallel to his front, all unsupported, was too much for even such piety as Jackson's. Ordinarily he had done wonders with a dozen regiments nearly as small as these. To-night he sends in twice that number to assail a smaller force, and is fought to a stand within the hour. He has gained nothing. He has lost one-third of his best and bravest—his Virginians. He has betrayed his position to the enemy, for Sigel, away to the southeast, has heard the sound of battle, and McLean, brave leader of one of his few American brigades, watches the desperate struggle from Ladue's old lookout at the Henry house, and Pope, skillfully directing his diverging columns to trap Jackson at Centreville, hears over the left shoulder, far over Bull Run, the furious cannonade a long league behind him, the storm of a battle that only dies out at nine, but that tells him the tale of one more trick of Jackson's—the time-honored tale of the Irishman's flea.

But it opens Pope's otherwise blinded eyes, changes in toto his plans for the morrow, and bids him turn his columns on Groveton. Jackson's blunder has taken much from his own fame, added much to those of another, and given the Badgers and Hoosiers the title they rejoice in ever thereafter—the name of the Iron Brigade.

Sore times are these, this black, moonless night, as, within hailing distance of each other, officers and men of the opposing forces go groping about with glimmering lights, looking for friends among the slain. Sad hearts are these beating in the bosoms of the group of Union generals in the fence corner back of the moaning wood, for it is full of wounded. The regimental commanders are slowly withdrawing their wearied men to the line of the pike, leaving strong pickets to protect the surgeons and their stretcher-bearers at the front. It is a dramatic scene when that dark-eyed soldier, commander of the Seventh, rides in to report to his brigade chief concerning the regiment that caustic "regular" has sometimes misjudged. "What do you think of the Seventh now?" is the irrepressible question just before the colonel slips, fainting, from his saddle, and then and not until then permits it to be known that all the time as he held his men to their desperate work, he sat his horse, pierced through both thighs by Enfield bullet, his boots running over with blood. Old Graybeard of the Sixth, too, is shot through the leg, and Gibbon has borrowed his right-hand man, the tall, brainy adjutant, and the Sixth feels bereft, though it, too, falls into soldier hands. But the Black Hats and Hoosiers have lost more than all.

At nine o'clock, as the last scattering shots are fired out to the northwest, where some of Stuart's fellows have stumbled on the Hoosier pickets in the darkness, the division general sends an aide with brief note to

Ricketts, telling him of the battle, and saying he means to hold the ground despite the fact that prisoners report old Stonewall sixty thousand strong. He sends other staff officers in search of McDowell, his corps commander, with similar report and the request that Ricketts be ordered to close in and support him. McDowell's own engineer officer is with him, a deeply interested witness, coming up with Hatch's brigade, which, hurriedly recalled, had faced about and marched eagerly back, hoping to be of use, but reaching the field only as darkness settled on the line. So the engineer stays to hear the reports and views of the various commanders before going himself in search of his chief, stays long enough to give his opinion that the division must move off the pike to the right or suffer demolition at dawn, and this, too, is the opinion of Hatch and Gibbon, sitting with their division commander, and it is urgently given by both.

Four hours longer they watch and wait, hoping for tidings from Pope or McDowell, looking for the coming of Ricketts from the west, but nothing comes, not a line, not a word from superior authority, only a hint from superior force, for a daring, dashing Virginia captain, riding blindly into a Badger picket north of the grove, is dragged from under his dying horse—he had striven to dash away—and he laughs at our missing a much bigger prize—Old Jackson himself, not a moment before, was with him just in front of that very point, he says, and Longstreet is coming at dawn. Ricketts,

driven in before his overwhelming advance, is halted at Gainesville, while Stuart's patrols sweep the fields to the north and keep up touch between these two wing commanders. There is nothing for it then, urge the brigadiers, but slip off southeastward in hopes of support, and Fred Benton, riding out to the left front with orders to bring in the pickets, finds those venturesome Hoosiers crawling forward on hands and knees, beyond the original line

"There was a horse battery came out there just before dusk," explains a young sergeant, "and it just rained shrapnel on us. Some of Stuart's fellows galloped down to slice off our left. We gave 'em a hot volley and they sheered away, but tried it twice again after dark. We've sent in all our wounded, but our boys swear they hear faint cries for help out yonder."

They are right! Presently they come drifting in, four wearied soldiers, bearing a wounded trooper on a blanket. Benton is busy giving orders to the subaltern in charge and does not hear at first the words of the sergeant. "He says he was carrying orders and his horse fell and rolled on him. His leg's broken, I think, but he'd never have whimpered only he thought we were friends."

"What'll we do with him if I'm to fall back?" asks the lieutenant. "He's an officer."

Benton turns to the dim group, slowly bearing their burden with them.

“Better carry him to the grove,” he says. “Take him where your wounded officers are.” Whereupon he in the blanket feebly pipes, “Hello, Benton! Got a mouthful of drink?”

“Good God, Chilton! Have we caught you—again?”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE HEART OF LINCOLN

Solemn days are these that follow. Losing over a third of its force engaged in this furious initial battle, the brigade shares the lot of the rest of the army and, after two days more of fruitless fighting is ordered to fall back on Washington. Many of the wounded officers have been sent in ahead, without discrimination as to friend or foe, and Benton's general, broken down by illness and exhaustion, is borne by ambulance to the capital, and bids Fred go in search of his prisoner friend. How the tables of war are turned! Four months ago that young Virginian lay in clover at Charlottesville, petted and soothed by the prettiest girls to be found in the court of Queen Rosalie, while Benton, a prisoner patient, moped in huffy dignity and merited semi-neglect. Now the Virginian lies in splints and a stuffy room in parboiled Washington, far from the pretty girls of Albemarle, yet assiduously cared for by their Queen. Washington is now one vast hospital, whose walls echo night and day the moan of fevered sufferer, the dull thunder of distant guns, the rumble of rolling cannon, the tramp of soldier hosts, for Lee has leaped the Potomac and gone careering northward to-

ward the Pennsylvania line. Pope, McDowell and Sigel have retired in favor of McClellan, Hooker and Porter, the little chief again called to the fore, while the manager of the sack campaign sits down to figure out the twistings, turnings and doublings of the hare that wouldn't be caught until there were hares enough to smother the hounds. Many and ingenious are the explanations of failure:—generals ordered to march who chose rather to sleep,—of generals ordered to find the corps of Jackson who couldn't find their own,—generals ordered to stand who never got the order, and who would have been crushed if they had,—generals ordered to bar Jackson's retreat when he never thought of retreating,—generals ordered to bar Longstreet's joining when he had already joined,—orders sent by staff officers who never could thereafter be found,—orders declared sent to division generals, since admitted sent not at all. It is a fortnight of fruitless recrimination, of pushing for place and not for the foe, of intrigue and slander, of loyal victims and disloyal triumph. It is a fortnight in which the fortunes of the Union seem drifting to the lowest ebb, with all the mud and slime and wreckage and putrescence hitherto hidden in the surging tide of the campaign, now revealed to public gaze, a stench to public nostrils. It is a fortnight of funerals. Ah, what hundreds of gallant boys have we to mourn, what scores of noble names on both sides! Wrung to the uttermost is the great, lonely, pitying heart of him now day and night striving to bring order out of

chaos, hope out of the slough of despond, victory from dire and persistent defeat. Small wonder is it that in the contemplation of the tremendous peril that confronts the nation, Lincoln can find little time to listen to innumerable personal appeals, to individual claims presented by insistent senators, to the stories of self-seeking, self-sufficient patriots demanding the doing of this, the undoing of that. It is a fortnight in which Stanton, at the war office, is overwhelmed with work and worry, and grows even more testy and imperious. It is a fortnight in which, despite orders and precautions, swarms of officers who should be with their commands are buzzing about Congress and the caravanserais, when every man is needed at the front and thousands are skulking at the rear, when the regiments of the Army of the Potomac and of Virginia that marched forth in the springtide in such splendid array, with such crowded ranks, are silently, shabbily slipping through the outskirts, mere ragged shadows of their former selves, yet to their everlasting credit be it said, loyal and subordinate still, and confident in their faith that they can yet whip Lee. It is a fortnight in which many and many a sad-faced soldier comes away from the War Department, even from the White House, denied a favor that at any other time would have been accorded as by right, and one September evening, Benton and the Squire, summoned to accompany their senator to the President, are witnesses to a scene that wrings their very hearts.

The Squire has been long enough near Washington

to become an ardent administration man. Only twice in the past has he seen the plain, unassuming Western lawyer, the humorous M. C. who had not reputation enough to command an audience when in '59 he came to speak at the Squire's home city, but later, when they met at the Tremont in Chicago, was the rival of the little giant, Douglas, in joint debate. Now, just as Douglas had held the hat of the victorious Lincoln during his inaugural address, so would Squire Benton go to any length to back this inspired, and, as Benton is now beginning to believe, God-given leader. More troops must be had without delay is the burden of what the senator says. Will Benton go West at once and use his utmost influence? Benton will. He has only come, he says, to assure himself that Fred is safe—to see Elinor, now scorning the sea-breezes of Cape May and insisting on her right to be useful as a nurse among the hospitals. Then the Squire will start within the day. Meantime, says the senator, we must see the President, and then there is a further muttered conversation that Fred cannot hear, nor does he care to. His one thought, after seeing that Jack Chilton lacks nothing—after one little word, perhaps, with Jack's no longer imperious sister—is to rejoin the division as it comes through with the now reorganizing corps. But, meanwhile, it is the senator's wish they should both go with him to the White House, and there, amidst the throng of importunates in the ante-room, Fred is startled to see the colonel of a regiment in the First Brigade holding

low-toned conversation with a portly, dignified man in black swallow-tailed coat, high stock and silken waist-coat, to whom their Western statesman bows with deference and then whispers to them his name. Then the colonel turns and Benton is more startled to see how sad, sorrow-stricken and haggard he looks. The matter is soon explained, though the colonel speaks with choking voice. His son, a lieutenant in the Fifth New York—Duryea's Zouaves—had been down with Chickahominy fever at Newport News, so ill that the mother had hastened thither, nursed him through and then stayed and cared for dozens of poor boys whose mothers could not possibly reach them, and so, sapped her own strength and finally succumbed, and now—her cofined body lies here at the wharf. Their sympathetic general had given the bereaved soldier permission to turn over the command of the regiment temporarily and to seek at Stanton's hands a four days' leave—just time enough to take the beloved and honored dust back to the home where weeping younger children await it. Then, the last sad rites performed, though the wife of his youth, his manhood, his maturer years, the love of his heart and life is laid away, he will return instantly to his duty, his command. Impossible will it be for them to catch Lee within that time. No battle can occur that will involve the old division, but Stanton sternly says no; bids him ship the remains that night if need be, but re-join his regiment before the morning.

“The brigade is marching through this moment,”

says the colonel, with quivering lips, "but the Senator brought me here—to the President. I have telegraphed to a brother to come if I—must go," and the haggard eyes look in dumb appeal across the room where looms the equally haggard face of Lincoln, now turned in mute patience toward an impetuous, persistent little woman, who, backed by certain friends at court, is demanding that the President reverse the decision of the adjutant-general and send a soldier son to duty nearer home than with Butler in New Orleans where surely he'll catch the yellow fever and die. The whole room can hear her. The President is the only man, not of her immediate retinue, that does not show impatience. It may be here and now he thinks of the famous story he tells at another time,—the story of the good old lady who, when the St. Lawrence steamer was shooting the Lachine rapids and the captain stood absorbed in the duty of guiding his ship and living cargo safely through, startled every one by a cry of "Stop, and lower a boat—my little boy's lost his apple." Not for worlds will even that worn, heart-wrung, nerve-racked leader say the word to wound a mother. But, oh, the infinite sadness of the smile with which he speaks,—his voice so low and gentle only those about him can hear, and she is finally led away with a card to the "house-keeper,"—the best the President can do, he says, "for I don't seem to have much influence with this administration." Then he gives hand and greeting to the great senator from New York, another to the colonel, hurriedly presented, and

inclines that ever-patient ear to both, as again the sad, pathetic tale is told. Oh, the pity and sorrow and sympathy in the deep-set, sombre eyes, the anguish in the rugged features as he hears the final words, "Stanton says no, because the brigade is marching through this moment."

For an instant the strong hands are clenched and uplifted almost as though in appeal to heaven, but though the deep voice breaks and trembles, though the pallid lips twitch with pain, the answer comes inflexibly:

"And no it must be! Not a man, not a musket, can we spare. It may be the very crisis of the war, and I should be false to my trust if I did not hold myself and every soldier to the duty of the hour. Let the dead bury their dead. I cannot rob a regiment of its leader at such a time."

And the two men, the sorely grieving colonel, the sorely-tried commander-in-chief, look one instant into each other's swimming eyes. There is a soldier salute—but utter silence, and the colonel turns away.

"You don't need me here," gulps Fred a moment later. "I am going to see if I can help the colonel. There's no one with him. I'll come to you, father, later—at Willard's."

And so it happens that, riding at the earliest dawn to catch the division, Benton passes a carriage at the outskirts of Georgetown, preceded by a cavalry sergeant who speaks a word to sentries or patrols of the provost guard to the end that the vehicle, with its attendant

brace of troopers, meets no detention, whereas he, an aide-de-camp going on duty, has to account for himself every few blocks. "Some belated general," thinks he as, once clear of the streets, he spurs swiftly up the Rockville pike. He has had his few cheering words with Jack. He has found Elinor, his sister, vying with Rosalie, his queen, in attention to the captive. He could wish that sister elsewhere, for not a word has he alone with the girl who holds his heart. (It is doubtful if he would have had other luck had Elinor been away.) So, perhaps, like the girls at Charlottesville, his sister had fallen under the sway of the stronger nature. He has been with that silent, grief-stricken soldier colonel until, between them, they have seen the coffined relics safely stored in a sexton's charge. Then, with long hand clasp he leaves him with his dead and goes to say farewell to his father. It is long past midnight now, but Washington still wakes, and finally, just as the pallid light is creeping into the eastward sky Benton reins in at the challenge of a sentry and the sight of a tented field. Behind him, in the lower ground, feebly glow the night lights of Georgetown. Beyond them lies the great, straggling city. Here, close at hand, a sentry paces slowly by the roadway, recognizes the aide-de-camp at once and bids him advance. A dim light burns in a nearby wall tent. "Yes, sir, the colonel got back soon after three," is the answer to his question, as, swinging out of saddle, Benton throws the reins over a fence post and scratches at the tent flap.

“ ’Tis I, Colonel—only Benton. I stopped to see——”

But the tent flap is thrown back from within and a voice bids him enter. “ I’ve been writing to—my poor motherless babies,” chokes the colonel, and then at last breaks down, bows his humbled head upon his arm on the rude camp table that shakes with the sobs wrung from an almost bursting heart. Who can picture, much less soothe, a grief like this? Benton has seen him time and again, ever alert, ready, vigorous on the march, cheery and cordial in all manner of wind and weather, inspiring, commanding, magnificent in battle, God-like, almost, in his superb dominion over men. But it is the strong and soldierly and virile that love the deepest and that suffer most when robbed of the heart’s idol and delight. “ The bravest are the tenderest. The loving are the daring.” And in wordless sympathy Benton can only lay his hand upon the massive shoulder while the teardrops well from his own brimming eyes.

And then there are voices, low and deep, without the tent, and then a footfall close at hand, and a tall, dark form, enveloped in a cloak, looms between them and the gathering dawn, and Benton, staring and only half credulous, stammers the question, “ Who is it?” Then both men stand erect and face the newcomer at the first sound of his deep yet trembling voice.

“ It is I—Abraham Lincoln.” (Can it ever be written save in reverence?) “ I—I have come to you because— all night long since you left—I could think of nothing else. I have not slept. I have been pacing the floor

until I could stand it no longer. You came to me last night in your bitter sorrow, and I—treated you like a dog. That noble woman died after giving new life to a host of stricken soldiers, after giving back to the nation scores of sorely needed men, and now, when it pleases God to call her home to him I forbid the poor honor of escort to the man she most loved. Forgive me, colonel. Go to her. Take her back to your children, and when you have laid her away and comforted them,—then return to us. Go, sir—it is my order,” and, wringing the soldier’s hands, the President turns again to the cares and trials, the cruel anxieties of another day, but the deep-lined face, uplifted to the glory of the dawn, shines transfigured with a radiance indescribable,—with who can say what infinite cheer and comfort and blessing from on High.

CHAPTER XIX

KILLED IN FRONT OF THE GUNS

“How are the mighty fallen!” at least in point of numbers. Still under the leadership of sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued Gibbon, the brigade has trudged away to South Mountain, conscious that it is now the observed of many observers, and feeling not a little cocky in its new name. Manfully again has it grasped the hot end of the poker, being sent into the very jaws of Turner’s Gap with Colquitt and his Georgians directly confronting it, and Evans raking the doubled line from the hill on the right. Again does the Seventh catch it hard from the flank, losing more than a third of its men. Again do the Black Hats sail in with their accustomed saucy vim and vigor, tying the Hoosiers in the total of losses. Again are the big “Napoleons,” the pets of Battery “B,” lugged into line, side by side with the “Foot,” and mightily do they bellow and roar in this resounding amphitheatre—the eastward slope of the ridge. It is the second fierce fight in which these powerful guns, manned by picked men from the brigade, take their share of hard knocks with the four battalions; but a fiercer fight is yet to follow—only three days away—one which welds the battery still more firmly to its sup-

ports. On the far right flank, in front of Sharpsburg, across the sleepy Antietam, it comes in for its hardest pounding of all the stirring campaign.

But by this time, mid September, as Lee's daring, determined followers halt on the heights of the old Maryland town, with the Potomac encircling them from northwest to south, the winding Antietam protecting their front, how cruelly are they, too, reduced in numbers! Our old opponents, the "Stonewalls," in their entire array can barely muster five hundred men. Regiments are commanded by captains, companies by sergeants, and as it is with Jackson so it is with Longstreet, whose brigades, like those of Kemper and Pickett, are cut to shreds, while some battalions are reduced to the front of a platoon. Yet these are the fellows, less than forty thousand all told, who, backed up to the great river, with all their trains and all their wounded to care for, still confidently look to Lee and serenely face McClellan, whose force in men and guns is more than twice their own.

With what intensity of interest and anxiety do we in Washington await the result of that inevitable grapple beyond the Blue Ridge. Hopeful tales we hear of captured despatches that betray the plans of those confederates of Confederates—the army and corps commanders of the South—yet it has cost McClellan heavily to force a way through the Gaps. What may it not cost to assault in a chosen position so plucky an adversary! **The old division, now first in the new First Corps, goes**

in under its third commander in three weeks, for Fred's old general has been sent home on sick leave. Hatch, his gallant second, is severely wounded at South Mountain. Doubleday it is who now takes the lead and, crossing the Antietam on the afternoon of the sixteenth, bears down from the extreme flank upon the silent, waiting foe.

First in column as it circles the front, the old division moves in to the morning attack at the right of Hooker's embattled line, and right of the line of the old division is the doubled rank of the old—the Iron—brigade. It is the dawn of a dreadful day.

In their front as they issue from the sheltering wood, not a mile away and to the west of the broad turnpike, gleam, at the crest of a gradual rise, the white walls of the old Dunker church, outlined against the foliage of a thick grove—the West Wood. Over that gentle slope extends a great broad cornfield, its ungarnered crop ripe and yellowing, the brown tassels stirring in the morning breeze that drifts downward from the lofty heights across the Maryland stream. Another cornfield, not so large, stretches westward from the highway opposite the northward end of the first. A farm-house in a shaded enclosure stands on the east of the pike between the advancing blue lines and the yellow green of the waving corn. A barn and out-buildings face it on the opposite side of the pike. Other groves bound the cornfields toward the Potomac, backed by a ridge where Stuart's restless horsemen and Pelham's ready guns are lurking,

hidden from our view. So are the crouching guardians of the groves and fields to the south. Again is the great organizer shoving his infantry in to the attack of an army in position, over ground unsearched by cavalry, though cavalry are with him in abundance, eager to be of service, but he knows not how to use them. East of the big cornfield, to their left front as they march, is still another grove, the East Wood, and in long, thin line, at right angles to the pike, stretching through the woods, through the cornfield, silently awaiting their coming foe, are aligned the very men they fought so savagely at sunset of that August evening barely three weeks back. Then as the sun went down behind the Bull Run range, Badger and Hoosier were clinched in deadly grapple with Virginia, Louisiana and Georgia. Now, ere the sun comes peeping over the Blue Ridge to the east, Badger and Hoosier, side by side, are striding straight up to the waiting lines of the same old commands. Ewell and Taliaferro, as we have seen, were shot out of saddle in the previous clinch. Lawton and Jones now lead in their stead, destined further to follow their lead ere half the day is done. Strange fatality it is, indeed, that of all the fifty brigades of McClellan's fighting force within range at the dawn of the day, it is the Iron Brigade, the one exclusively Western brigade, that is to again encounter the flower of the Southern array, the "Stonewall" and its comrade brigades of Jackson's heroic corps.

And, just as before, not a man of the hostile line is

seen when the guns begin the battle. Off to the left front, near the East Wood, a Southern battery spies the blue battalions issuing from the skirt of the northward wood nearly a mile away, dressed on their waving colors, the skirmishers trotting well out to the front. Then loud bellow the guns and shriek the shells as line upon line, brigade on brigade, Hooker sends his new command, the new-born First Corps, in to its bloody baptism. The Confederate flank is covered by Stuart and his dashing horse batteries, and there is abundant room and more than abundant need for similar troops between Doubleday's right and the river, but not so much as a squadron rides where it may be of such infinite service. McClellan holds his horses east of the dividing stream, for again, as on the Peninsula, are his forces thus bestowed. Watching the scene from the Pry house, beyond the Antietam, with his telescope trained on the Miller fields a good two miles away, Little Mac observes from an easy chair. 'Tis the army that goes in a-straddle.

Full five hundred yards, almost due south, march the doubled lines in blue, Meade's little division of Pennsylvanians alongside and east of Doubleday's. Hatch's old brigade is on the left of Gibbon's, Patrick in its rear, in support, and for a time the Sixth Wisconsin, at the post of honor, has the Hagerstown road on its right for a guide. But now comes a thin patch of woods and a turn—only a slight turn—in the line of the pike, and here, little by little, through pressure from the centre, the

first company begins to edge out over the highway, the second follows, and by the time they are bursting through the barnyards and farm enclosures at Miller's, and the shells have changed to shrapnel and men are dropping fast, the entire right wing of the Sixth is across the pike and wading through that westward field, tall, many of them, as the waving corn, and despite the vicious spatter of lead, just about as unbending. Still southward goes the long line of the corps, four brigades in the foremost rank, four coming up in their rear, and still those bellowing batteries alone appear in front. No infantry is visible. Then up the pike, just as at Gainesville, comes galloping Battery "B," and into the farmyard it turns, and there, whirling the guns in line to the south, delivers its resonant answer. Telling talkers are these boomers of Campbell's in this fiery debate. The infantry lines are well forward now, the left just breasting the cornfield, so that the "spherical case" goes whistling over their heads and bursting among the Southern guns. The Sixth is just striding out from the cornfield and into the woods to the west of the road when, sudden as a thunderbolt, there bursts on the ear the crash of an infantry volley, and from front and right flank, so close that the smoke jets forth in their faces, a low-aimed lead storm shrieks through their ranks and down goes half the wing,—many, too many, biting the dust. Then blaze the whole West Wood and the hedge-row south of the cornfield, and all from an unseen foe! **Flesh and blood cannot stand such a gale in the open.**

Ducking, bending double, rolling, crawling, but turning to fire fast as they can reload, the survivors swing back to the highway, rallying instantly at the edge of the field, and there, flat on their faces, they, too, take vigorous hand in the fight, while Patrick's men, close at their heels, rush in to prolong the line to the right and fill the gaps at the front. Five minutes—and both woods, east and west, and the intervening cornfields are in dense clouds of sulphur smoke, for Ricketts, too, has come up with his division on the left of the corps, and a battle of giants is on.

But vain are the efforts of Hooker's brave men. Three fine, disciplined divisions he has led to the field, thinking to turn an exposed left flank, while Mansfield, with his new Twelfth Corps, supports the attack, and the main army, advancing in force from the line of the Antietam, covers and holds the long Confederate front extending far to the south of the town. Just whom to blame nobody will say, but, not until Hooker's right division is swept by lapping fires and flattened out by the fierce storm of lead; not until Meade and Ricketts, farther to the east, have charged again in line with Doubleday's left; not until the cornfields are slashed as though with giant sickle and leveled to earth, and strewn thick with the dead and the dying; not until Doubleday, not whipped, but brought to a stand, is fairly battling for breath, do the brigades of Mansfield appear at the east, coming late into action, and even then by no means prepared. Closed in mass and with

crowded intervals, they stride from the woods and strive to deploy. But many battalions are new and unskilled, and before the brigade can be brought into line, gallant, gray-headed old Mansfield drops dying from his horse. Williams succeeds to command; but before Hooker half finishes giving his orders, he, too, commanding all troops at that moment west of the stream, is stricken and borne from the field, stripping it thereby of both corps commanders, and leaving the right to the care of men ignorant of McClellan's plans, and confronted by the best fighters in the Southern host.

Oh the pity of it! Half the horses of Battery "B" are stretched on the field in front of the farm-house. Full a third of the gunners are down. Campbell, the captain, is shot from his saddle. Half the right wing of the Sixth is gone. Half the commanders are now killed or wounded. Not a lieutenant-colonel is left in the Iron Brigade. Allen, Bragg and Bachman are borne from the line, the last named to his soldier grave. The lone effort is fruitless, save for its glories and the fierce punishment given the foemen in front. There, indeed, is destruction equal to this in the cornfields and along the Hagerstown pike. No wonder Old Jack bows his head in grief and supplication. Again he has lost both division commanders, Lawton and Jones being wounded. Again, as at Gainesville, has Starke taken command when his chief is borne to the rear, and now dies at his post in less than the hour, shot through by three bullets. So, too, falls Douglas, heading Lawton's brigade, and

with almost breaking heart Jackson sends word to his beloved general that half the commands of Lawton and Hays and fully one-third of Trimble's are killed or wounded, as are all regimental commanders but two. Thank God, 'tis their last fight with the Iron Brigade!

With the rest of the battle we have nothing to do. Before breakfast is over at the Pry house, where sit Little Mac and the big staff, Hooker's fight on the right flank is over and done. Then another is started in front of the East Wood, and later others occur along the line to the south, and wherever a corps is sent in to attack, Lee scrapes up a corps to meet and repell it. Concerted action might have given the Union a needed, a much needed, victory, but concert there is none. One splendid and disciplined corps has been held in reserve, and when toward the last the serene young general-in-chief, never excited or hurried, never able to see flaw in his own dispositions, seemed yielding to pressure and about sending them in, he hearkens to the words of their brilliant commander, so said veteran regulars at the time: "Remember, General, I command the last reserve of the Army of the Potomac."

And so night settles down and Lee's little army, superbly led, has beaten back in succession the scattered attacks of McClellan's overwhelming force, sent in, so many at a time, to the end that, in spite of hard fighting and devoted courage on part of officers and men, the day is a failure and the field something fearful to see. All through the hours of darkness the surgeons

are at work with the thousands of wounded. All through the following day Lee waits for renewal of the battle, but McClellan has had enough. With the coming of another night, therefore, gathering up his wounded and prisoners, sending his trains ahead, the great Virginian silently moves his columns down to the fords of the Potomac, and by dawn of the nineteenth all are safely across. Lee has slipped away.

No wonder the President's sombre eyes are clouded as he sadly studies the dread list of the slain. No wonder he scans the bearded faces of the generals summoned to meet him the day he closes his memorable visit to the field. Is there none among them who can take this splendid army and *do* something with it against these skilled fencers of the South? Men in overwhelming number, guns the best that money can buy, supplies in abundance of every kind, all these have been lavished on our leaders and to what end! No wonder, as he drives away, his face lined with care.

There is significance in the greeting accorded the little soldier still in supreme command when he rides his lines a day after the battle. The corps of Porter, held throughout the combat in safe reserve, swings its caps and cheers with great enthusiasm. The corps of Sumner shouts with modified rejoicing. The men of Mansfield rise and salute in silence. The thinned battalions of the First Corps make no sign whatever.

Witnessing this sight, Fred Benton contrasts it with another which it was his privilege to note the previous

day. Still serving at division headquarters, acting as inspector-general, he and other officers had been sent under flag of truce within the picket lines of the Southern army, to seek the wounded and to render aid. All about the barn and buildings of the Miller farm, where the brigade had rallied and hung so long, lay scores of stricken men for whom the surgeons were doing their best, but so very many seemed past help. Along the pike the Georgians, too, lay thick, and gray uniformed officers moved to and fro among them, or conversed in low tones, curiously scanning from time to time the two or three staff officials in blue who followed the surgeons, pencil and notebook in hand. Suddenly the talking ceased, for, issuing from a narrow roadway that trended westward from the pike, there came a tall, commanding-looking officer, gray-bearded, yet alert, a soldier who acknowledged with grave courtesy the salutes that greeted him on every hand. Men sprang to their feet and gazed at him almost in adoration. Even the wounded strove to rise. Some few hailed him with feeble, childish voices. As for Benton and his two associates, they needed not the little group of staff and orderlies to confirm them in their belief. They knew him at a glance—the great Virginia leader—and Benton, instantly, the others following, stepped forward and stood at salute. Lee saw it, and turning so as to half face the Northerners, with punctilious courtesy lifted his hat, then quickly reined back as a dust-covered, battle-stained battery came jingling out from the lane and,

turning into the highway, pulled wearily on to where the spires of the Maryland town pierced the blue beyond the southward wood. Jaded and worn were the horses, black and powder-stained the men, and of a sudden one of these, a slender stripling, jogging along beside his gun, caught sight of the group of horsemen, darted from his place to where the commanding general, the picture of the soldier and the gentleman, sat in saddle at the roadside, and there, with boyish laugh, held forth a grimy hand. "It's Bob," he cried. "Don't you know me, father?" And Lee, the cavalier, bent low and with love and tenderness, with who can say what pride and rejoicing, clasped the hand of the private soldier in the Rockbridge Artillery, his gallant younger son. In what other army would one see the like of that!

Then the general rode on toward the Dunker church, where still the men of Jackson lay in readiness, and then uprose rank after rank with mighty shout that marked his onward going adown the weary yet intensely loyal line until lost within the distant walls of Sharpsburg. Despite the dire carnage of the day of battle, there beat no soldier heart in all the Southern host that was not true to Lee.

Presently, as the time accorded for their sad mission had well nigh expired, Benton was aware of a young officer, in the uniform of the horse artillery, who had been chatting with comrades across the way, and now,

dismounting, stepped briskly toward him, lifting a jaunty forage cap.

"Your pardon, sir," he courteously spoke. "Is this Captain Benton who—visited Charlottesville not long ago? My name is Pelham," and there was just the suspicion of a smile in the keen young face.

"Captive, but not captain," answered Benton, with responsive grin, though the mention of the name was something that put him on his guard. What was it young Winston had said about Maud Pelham and Rosalie? This must be the boy captain of the name, of whom he had heard so much—Jeb Stuart's crack light gunner.

"Yes, I have cousins there," continued Pelham, as though reading Benton's thoughts. "But it is long since we met. You are the man, as I happen to know, who showed so much courtesy to Lieutenant Winston, as well as to Jack Chilton. Now you can do me a favor if you should see Dr. Chilton, and that is, tell him for me that the men at the front utterly disapprove the doings of that self-styled citizens' committee at the rear. Those people," he went on disdainfully, "are too old or too feeble-minded to fight like men. They stab like women."

"It will comfort them—or rather the doctor—to get such a message from you, Captain Pelham," answered Benton, almost eagerly, "and I shall see that he does get it. I shall write at once. You can do me a favor, too, if you will. An old school friend of mine, Paul

Ladue, is a staff officer in Ewell's division. Give him a greeting for me, will you?"

"Ladue," said Pelham, his fine features clouding instantly. "I fear—I heard— Oh, Captain Lamar," he called, "what Lieutenant Ladue was it brought that note Wednesday morning to General Stuart?"

"Paul Ladue, Eleventh Alabama," was the prompt answer. "Killed right here in front of the battery not half an hour afterwards."

CHAPTER XX

A CRY FROM THE AMBULANCE

The autumn, the wasted autumn has gone, "the winter of our discontent" indeed has come. For weeks the army hangs there inert and chafing along the Potomac, while Lee and his bronzed veterans saunter away through the Shenandoah, "feeding on the fat of the land." Marveling at the inaction of McClellan, Stuart rides back with some eighteen hundred horse and two light guns and, of course, Pelham; and, just as he did a few months earlier down on the Peninsula, jogs contemptuously clear round the bewildered and indignant divisions, laughing at the effort of Pleasanton to catch or others to head him. McClellan says his cavalry is too wearied and broken down to accomplish anything, and the President mildly asks what it has been doing to so fatigue it. Another correspondence of complaints begins, and finally ends at Warrenton, when the order comes early in November that severs once and for all McClellan's connection with the Army of the Potomac. He had done much to make it, God knows. He was great as an organizer and instructor. He had the faith and regard of most of the officers and the love of all the

men. It was in battle and campaign that he failed them, not they him, for mortal man had never deeper devotion than was accorded Little Mac until he took the field. Even now, this sad November day, there are scores of officers and soldiers whose faces are furrowed with tears as they see him ride away. There are many commands that would gladly recall him. There are regiments that could not be made to cheer him after Antietam that mourn his going now, even in the hard-used First Corps. There are men right here in the Iron Brigade who deplore the ordered separation, but there is a higher power, a higher duty still, and, no matter what may be the sorrow of this parting, the Army of the Potomac would be faithless to McClellan and his teachings were it not loyal to the commander-in-chief, the President of the United States. Even in the bitterness of heart that must accompany submission to his soldier fate, McClellan himself strikes the keynote of that undimmed, unshaken spirit of loyalty above all things when he bids his old comrades farewell, and, in so doing, bids them be as true to his successor as they had ever been to him.

Changes, too, have occurred in many a minor grade. The Fifth Corps mourns the loss of the brilliant, gifted, handsome soldier whose head is demanded as one result of the woful mismancœuvres about Manassas. Old names appear at the head of grand divisions, as Burnside calls the doubled corps. New names, comparatively, appear at corps headquarters. New brigadiers, a full crop, ride up from the roster of field officers, and

not so many now hail from the ranks of influential but unskilled civilians. New regiments have been grafted on old brigades; new blood injected into old and toughening veins. It is high time our friends of the Iron name had reinforcement, for, despite Wisconsin's praiseworthy course of recruiting veteran commands as well as raising new ones, their ranks are woefully thin; so, as neither Badger nor Hoosier regiment comes to swell the Army of the Potomac, there is assigned to the old brigade, thereby assuring its distinctive Western character, a brand new, ambitious and, as it turns out, most pugnacious and fightful array of Wolverines, "all teeth and toe-nails," say the Badgers, who take them under advisement, and so the much-vaunted menagerie is complete again.

Changes, too, have come to the staff, and, to Benton's blushing delight, he is called upon at Catlett's to "wet" a new commission, recommended by his old general and heartily approved by the new. It is Captain Benton, additional aide-de-camp now, and he rides for the time being with a division commander famous for staying qualities, if not for urbanity, a man who is of the fight-to-a-finish mold, and would hang every rebel from Maine to Mexico. He is a fighter who knows neither fear nor forgiveness and who takes it amiss that one of his staff should mourn much over the fate of a rebel in arms, especially one who serves that arch-rebel Ewell and has no earthly excuse for fighting at all. We have had few as yet of these vehement patriots in high places.

We have had far too many, storms Stanton in Washington, of those who would handle treason with gloves, furnish guards for the homesteads of hard-fighting chiefs on the Southern side, hold commerce and communion through flags of truce with former comrades across the lines. "We must stop it, by heaven!" says Stanton, splitting a table top with one blow of his fist. "We must drumhead and shoot 'em," says Fred's new commander, "and I'll hang the first man of my staff that I catch." It must be owned that the general fights hard as he swears, which is saying a good deal, and means no doubt very much of what he says. He has heard much of Benton as a gallant staff officer, eager, reliable, tireless, a fellow that never wears out. The one thing against him is his training under "that soft-sided senior of his" (Fred's original chief), and his own known weakness for certain folks in rebellion. "He ought to be thankful Ladue's dead and buried," says this new leader of an old division. "And as for his Charlottesville friends, he'd better steer clear of 'em all if he doesn't court trouble with *me*."

"The winter of our discontent" indeed! With gloomy heart and sad anticipation Benton rides away through the leafless woods to the old familiar scenes about Fredericksburg. Word from Washington has brought him little comfort. Rumor of his commander's sayings has filled him with foreboding. Dr. Chilton, to whom he had written on almost any provocation and who had gratefully and promptly answered his Sharpsburg mis-

sive, giving young Pelham's message, now wrote not at all. "He seems sad and brooding," said Jack, in the one letter that young gentleman had managed to send through since his incarceration. Jack was well enough to resume duty and most eager for exchange, but negotiations hung fire unaccountably, so said he, and Benton thought he knew the reason why. Lounsberry had been back again in Richmond over six weeks now, exchanged and restored to his old and influential post in the War Department. Lounsberry could be counted on to lose no chance to injure the Chiltons, father or son, and so long as it was possible he would block all plan to exchange Jack Chilton, thereby lending color to the stories spread abroad in Virginia that poor Jack rather tried to be caught and to stay caught, such hard fighting as his fellow Virginians had to do being little to his taste. It would have burned his heart out with fury had he known it, but few of us begin to realize the half of what is whispered to our detriment, else there would be deportation of sensitive souls or deserved destruction in the army of detractors. Jack was nearly mad with misery when told of Stuart's impudent dash at Chambersburg and the second circling of the Army of the Potomac. He was then just beginning to stump around quite comfortably. Elinor and the Squire had returned to the West, the former with red-rimmed eyes and pallid cheeks. No one knew how she had sorrowed over the sad news about Ladue. It was that, though, that seemed to break the ice of Rosalie's reserve, for

now, for the first time, the Virginia girl read the secret of her Wisconsin would-be friend, and melted to her instantly. It was that, though they rarely spoke his name, that led to the letters now passing frequently between them. It was through that correspondence the sisterhood began that, despite trial and trouble, proved eventually so sure an alliance in time of need.

But though Elinor wrote in many a page of her brother, and in only a few referred to Paul—and then only as “he” or “him”—Rosalie would write only of the latter. Ordinarily this would have led to resentment and a breach. Now it did not, for what Rosalie had to say was stirring new hope into the sombre current of the Western girl’s monotonous life. Rosalie had amazed and rejoiced her, about the end of October, by the assurance that she believed Captain Lamar to be totally mistaken. It was true, she admitted, that Paul Ladue had not been seen with Ewell’s division, but neither had Ewell, as yet—for the latter had not become accustomed to a cork leg—yet she had tidings from “friends”—who, she would not say—that Paul Ladue was still alive when borne from the awful front of Gibbon’s guns, then belching canister in double rounds. “More dead than alive he looked,” said her informant, but while she had no tidings of his present whereabouts, neither was there any record of his death.

All this was presently sent to Fred on the Rappahannock, and made him the more eager to communicate with some one across that modern Rubicon—some one

who could speak advisedly. But though there were places near the fords up stream where the cavalry vedettes sat long hours in saddle, facing, and often within hailing distance of each other, the orders against communication of any kind had become exacting, for it was evident that Burnside was marshaling his grand divisions for a move.

In the early summer time, when he hated to leave the front and longed to push on to Richmond or Charlottesville, Benton had been summoned to Washington. Now, when he longed to go to Washington, there was prospect of a midwinter dash across the Rappahannock. News of the Chiltons was sorely disquieting. Rosalie would not write. Jack, in prison camp, could not, except to kindred, and the doctor evidently shrank from writing. It was a winter of courts-martial at the Capital, and several such tribunals were in session, trying officers of various grades. Many new regiments had come and were held about the city until suitably drilled and disciplined. As a consequence the avenues again were alive with uniforms, the hotels crowded, and many thrifty households were "coining" money taking boarders. Mention has been made of Dr. Chilton's sister, with whom they were again dwelling after their return from the summer at the seashore. Being only moderately well-to-do, and besieged with applications, she had yielded to pressure and let two of her rooms to officers sojourning in the city. Then one of these, ordered West, begged leave to present a successor, a

major of a new regiment, who, being a "smart" lawyer, had been assigned to duty as judge advocate of a court for the trial of officers of rank in the volunteers. When the Squire wrote that McKinnon had been appointed major of a newly raised regiment and ordered with it to Annapolis, Fred Benton felt, so great was his antipathy, a vague sensation of annoyance and chagrin. Three weeks later when Colonel Goff, of the ——teenth, came down to pay the Iron Brigade a two-days' visit, the young staff officer was confounded to hear that Major McKinnon had just found domicile under the same roof that shielded Dr. Chilton and the lady of his love. It meant mischief and Benton knew it. Yet, how could McKinnon, though he hated his former partner, the Squire, hated Elinor for her scorn of him, hated Ladue for the preference she had ever shown that dreamy, sweet-natured fellow, and presumably hated him, Fred,—how could McKinnon injure him or those he loved?

A strange, uncanny freak of fortune, he tried to teach himself to regard it, and nothing more, but stranger still were the freaks not yet unfolded. Fred Benton was by no means the first nor by any manner of means the last soldier to learn that the presence of a secret and insidious foe, whether in camp or court, in the department of love or that of war, works untold injury to the absent, and there is no foe more bitter than he who deals the original wrong.

One bleak December morning Benton had ridden with his general down the river bank on the Stafford side

and sat watching the work of the engineers. The pontoon wagons were being run to the front, and many an officer and man looked at the heavy, ungainly boats and the long loads of balk and chess, then studied the distant line of heights across the stream, saying little but thinking much. Whoever sought to storm that crest had a precious job on hand, was an expurgation of the way in which the average veteran expressed his individual views. Most of the generals and the staff were comparatively strange to our Badger regular. Most of them were Eastern men, and not quite so ready as he to think the Western brigade the peer of any in the army. He had kept his views to himself, as a rule, but had felt bound on a few occasions to take up the cudgels in defense of his comrades when he found them the butts for little shafts of malice or mischief at camp fire or mess table. The social atmosphere was far from being as congenial as in the little military family with which he entered service. He sorely missed the companionship and guidance of Carver, especially. He sometimes sat in silence, marveling much at the contrast between the tone of talk in the old staff and this in the new. Under his own general, as he still thought of him, there was no such thing as criticism of superiors or condemnation of equals. Here in his new environment there was little else. The new division commander, to whose service he was assigned, had confidence, apparently, in the skill and judgment of but few men above him in grade, and of none that gave promise

of rising to equal or higher rank. He fairly suffered at the sound of a word of praise for other generals' deeds or methods, and Benton had enthusiastic liking for as many as ten, and this exceeded his commander's list by nine exactly. Brave, bumptious and vain, the chief was forever sneering or swearing at his fellows, and scowling on such of his staff as presumed to even favorably mention another leader. It had caused more than one unpleasantness at table. It had intensified the general's faint dislike for Benton; for, unlike the rest of the staff, the young fellow would not sit and swallow whole the chieftain's scathing comments on other chiefs whom he had known, and thereby Benton showed how easy it was, with greater knowledge to have less wisdom. In fine, "the winter of our discontent" was wearing on our young staff officer in a dozen different ways, and one that hurt him much was that, when he most longed to spend his leisure hours with old friends of the Iron Brigade, he could not, because it seemed to irritate the chief. Then they in turn seemed to feel the consequent defection, and twitted him with neglect of them because he'd "got so high." Take it all in all, thought Benton, promotion had brought him anything but bliss; and now, when he would have given worlds to get to Washington, not for worlds could he ask for even a week of leave. Burnside was planning an assault in force. Those pontoon trains, at half a dozen hidden points along the Stafford shore, unerringly told the story.

And while seated in saddle, shivering a bit in the raw

wind blowing from the distant Chesapeake, and wishing the chief would quit his comments on the orders of the corps commander and trot home to dinner, Benton caught sight of a little column of cavalry riding dejectedly in from the far left flank. Horses looked jaded, men disgusted, and three or four prisoners in their wake looked worst of all. "Where d'ye s'pose those damfools have come from?" asked the general, cheerfully. "Captain," he cried, hailing the officer in command, "what you got there?"

The officer touched his cap, turned out of column, so as not to halt the methodical march, rode up toward the general and said: "Prisoners, sir, taken by one of our scouting parties a few miles down, and sent in by us, for most of these horses with me have to be shod."

By this time the greater part of the troop, in their ugly light blue overcoats, had plodded by, and the squad of prisoners came footing it wearily after. Foremost of these a tall, thin-faced, ungainly specimen, dressed in one of those self-same cavalry overcoats, glanced curiously at the general from under his broad-brimmed slouch hat; threw a look over the blue-nosed, watery-eyed pair of orderlies at his back, and then on Benton and a brother aide, sitting a few yards aside; then instantly a flash of recognition shot over his face, and he called aloud:

"There, Captain. There's a gentleman who will vouch for what I say. Ask Captain Benton."

It was our friend Jennings, he of the stone house and the Warrenton pike, and Jennings would not be denied. He plunged into a voluble story to the listening chief, despite the efforts of an Irish trooper to prod him forward.

"D'you know him?" asked the general, shortly, as he turned to Benton. "He says you do."

"I *saw* him once or twice, sir," was the guarded answer. "I do not know him further than that he held General McDowell's pass and went in and out of our lines at will last summer."

"And I'm just as loyal as I was then," protested Jennings, "only they caught me down here trying to help some folks of mine that were sick and nigh starving——"

But the general shut him off impatiently. He was giving ear to the words of the captain, who had ridden closer.

"Colonel Hammond ordered his arrest, sir, because of papers in his possession, showing he was mixed up in the aiding of Confederates—officers—across the Potomac. They got one of 'em too weak to ride. He's in that ambulance yonder," and the dragoon pointed to the yellow-painted vehicle coming bouncing among the ruts and ridges of the frozen roadway. A faint moan issued from beneath the canvas cover as the driver reined up, and Benton, moved by compassion, urged his horse past the silent, passive column and peered in

through the opening at the back. The next instant he was out of saddle, and the rear spring bent under his weight as he leaped upon the steps. Then they heard his voice in tones of mingled grief, joy and amaze: "Paul! Paul! Dear old boy, don't you know me?"

CHAPTER XXI

BEARDING THE LION IN HIS DEN

Over the useless slaughter of the field of Fredericksburg it were best to draw the veil. Far down at the left flank the old brigade groped its way through dripping fog and lay in line of battle, having little to do but wait orders, and catching only occasional shots from the Southern guns along the heights. Old hands under fire, the veterans—officers and men—lay close and kept still. Their rifles could effect nothing against an enemy uphill and behind entrenchments. New hands, not yet used to battle, were not so quiet, and the gallant colonel of the great battalion of Wolverines, big almost as the rest of the brigade, thought it necessary to ride up and down his line, exhorting his men to steadiness in loud and powerful voice. "It lets 'em know I'm here," said he, to the expostulant commander of the next door regiment. "I see," said the latter, as a volley flashed down from Early's fellows along the crest, "and it also lets the enemy. Your men will be steadier without the telling," which reasoning the colonel pondered over and accepted. He and his thoroughbreds were spoiling for a chance to show their neighbors from the adjoining States that they were quite as valiant as the vaunted

old brigade. "Give us half a chance," said he, "and then—you look out for the Wolverines."

But neither Fredericksburg, nor Chancellorsville, nor Virginia, nor even Maryland afforded the longed-for opportunity. Not until the desperate clinch far up on Pennsylvania soil—not until the midsummer morning of the first day at Gettysburg—did their time come, but when it came it proved a test the like of which had never been met before, even in that hard-fighting, hard-hammered command.

Meanwhile, what had not befallen other actors in our story—notably the Damon and Pythias of the antebellum days, Benton and Paul Ladue.

"Seems to have 'bout as many friends among the rebs as he has on our side of the line," had the division commander remarked of Benton, though in a moment of exaggerated biliousness, the day after the retreat from the Southern shore. Everybody was in evil temper at the time. The repeated assaults on that entrenched and commanding line had cost fearfully. The army had fought and bled with all its old hopeless devotion. Even Burnside's fiercest critics had battled bravely for him on the field, but he had heard the hard things said of him by some, at least, of their number, and the army was to have another shaking up in consequence. Then Fred's new general had come in for a rasping from the corps commander, because the leading brigade took the wrong road in the rain and darkness, going back to the pontoon bridge, and so delayed matters over an hour.

It happened that Benton had guided the division to its first position on the field; that he had been sent to find General Franklin; that when he returned with a message from this latter officer, the division was in motion, and the commander had ridden off to speak with Gibbon or somebody else, and Benton followed, of course, in search of his chief, instead of staying with the head of column. Finding himself rebuked, the general reprimanded Benton in the presence and hearing of officers and men. Benton's heart and temper being both sore and tried, he had replied with much spirit, if not subordination, to the effect that the message he was charged to deliver admitted of no delay; that if the general had been where he belonged there would have been no delay; and that sooner than submit to such injustice he would ask to be relieved from staff duty forthwith, and wrote that very night to his old friend and general, then a member of an important military tribunal at Washington, begging his advice and intervention, and telling him, of course, the story of poor Ladue.

But, being coupled with another, that story was now almost an old one at the capital, for thither had the poor lad been sent and Jennings with him; Paul looking, indeed, "more dead than alive," for a strange, eventful history had been his ever since the dreadful morning north of Sharpsburg that stretched him senseless in front of Gibbon's furious guns. "Killed," said Lamar and other officers who saw him borne away in a blanket. "Mortally wounded," said the hospital at-

tendants who first ministered to him, back of the Dunker church, where reigned confusion inexpressible owing to the appalling number of those needing surgical aid. How he got there or beyond, Paul never knew until long thereafter. Stunned, as General Jones had been, by the explosion of a shell just over his head, and gashed across the breast by a whirling fragment of iron, Ladue only recovered consciousness four days after the fight, when they told him he was in safe hands and the house of a farmer not three miles out of Shepherdstown. The ambulance team, frightened by a bursting shell, had toppled the driver out of his seat and run away, capsizing the crazy vehicle and distributing the human load along a country lane. That was the last of Paul Ladue for six long weeks, and when he came to the verge of recovery his comrades had gone long miles away. Union soldiers were on every side. Tender-hearted Virginians had carried him to their loft and there concealed and cared for him until he was well enough to move about, and in November, when he begged to be aided to rejoin his comrades, every pass and road southward was held and guarded. Odd as it may seem, the easiest, most practicable way for Southern soldier to go from the Potomac to his own people was by way of the North. The young men of the family were in Jackson's Corps. The old father was permitted to go to and fro, marketing at Martinsburg nearby, or Hagerstown over in Maryland. His wife and her younger sister, whose husband rode with Stuart, had relatives at Chambers-

burg and Baltimore. Through these kind souls, civilian clothing was bought for their interesting captive, in whose welfare they had now an almost sentimental interest, and by mid November Paul was safely under the roof of a well-to-do and most active Southern sympathizer in the Monumental City. He and his were only too proud and happy to serve an officer of the Eleventh Alabama, and royally they entertained him and most skilfully planned his further movements, for go he would to resume duty; this, too, despite the pallor and lassitude that told he was still far from strong.

These were details which Ladue could not reveal at the time. He had revived sufficiently to recognize Benton and to speak feebly a few moments; but that very night, in the fog and darkness, was begun the building of the bridges, the crossing of the left grand division, and Fred could only leave his poor friend with the surgeons and hasten back to his duty. Four days later, when he would have ridden to the hospital camp in search of him, it was too late. Urgent orders had come from Stanton himself, the great and growing War Secretary, to send the prisoner patient thither as soon as he could be moved. Jennings had already gone under strong guard, and all Benton could learn at the moment was that there had been a break from prison camp; that, aided by residents of Baltimore and of Charles County, some Confederate officers had escaped to the Potomac; and, while some of the party had succeeded in crossing, one boat had been fired on and swamped. Two of

the officers had been captured, one being poor Paul, who had been nearly drowned, and was found in a fisherman's hut not far from Mathias Point. Two of the party were still at large. Arrests of suspected civilians had been made, both in Washington and Baltimore, and certain secret service officials had been summarily discharged by order of the Secretary, as being unworthy to hold positions of such trust and responsibility.

"Stanton is a terror," said Fred's informant, a staff officer just from Washington. "He insisted on shutting out McClellan, just as Little Mac was getting a good hold and learning how to fight. He insisted on putting in Burnside, who loved McClellan and didn't want the command—didn't think himself fit for it. He insisted on Burnside fighting, and Burnside bumped us up against a stone wall where we butted our brains out, and things have gone crooked every which way. God help the man that has to bump up against Stanton just now!"

This was the Wednesday following the furious storm of that Monday night of mid December, under cover of which the honest, loyal, but almost broken-hearted soldier had withdrawn his silent army across the stream, with twelve thousand of its number sacrificed to the insane demand to fight and satisfy the people that the Army of the Potomac *could* fight. It was now some thirty-six hours after Fred's serious difference with his division commander. He had sent the morning previous that urgent appeal to his old general to be set free from further contact with these things he almost loathed.

He looked for answer within the week, and, taking advantage of the permission, coldly accorded him by the chief of staff, to be absent over night, he had gone, heavy-hearted, to his old friends of the Iron Brigade, and sought at their hands the sympathy and consolation to be expected of men who had themselves felt that the official atmosphere was frigid where once it had been so fair. And it was here, on Thursday morning, while breakfasting with the genial commander of the Black Hats and listening to his philosophic advice to "take things coolly" and that "all would come right," he was surprised by the coming of a cavalry orderly, splashed with mud, who bore a missive addressed by the adjutant-general of the division and marked "Immediate." With a word of apology to Colonel Fairchild and his officers, Benton tore it open, and two papers fell out. One read:

"CAPTAIN BENTON: Enclosed just received. The general says you better come this way where the necessary orders will meet you, and you can get what luggage you need. There will be steamers going all the evening.

" [Signed] BREWSTER, A. A. G."

The second was a telegram to the Commanding General, —th Division, —th Corps, and bore singular resemblance to one received on almost the same ground some seven months previous:

"Secretary of War desires to see Captain Benton of your staff at once. Take first boat. Intermediate commanders notified. No delay.

" L. THOMAS, *Adjutant-General.*"

"Well, well," said the colonel, "they *have* been prompt! You can get to Acquia by noon, can't you?"

"Not if he goes back by way of Old Scoffer's," remarked a field officer, thoughtfully. "Fred, don't you imagine the chief wants to smooth things a bit before you tell Stanton all about it?"

"Don't go back, Benton. Just let him sweat. It'll make him more civil another time," began an impetuous comrade, but stopped short at sight of the cloud in Benton's eyes, the anxious look in the colonel's fine, clear-cut, soldierly face. It was the latter who spoke again, and without interruption, for already he had won the faith of even such martial iconoclasts as the Black Hats. "This means something more than a mere difference due to ill temper," said he. "You are wanted for a purpose, Benton. Is it—about Ladue, do you think?"

Fred had already risen. "I shouldn't be surprised," he answered, thinking uncontrollably of the words of his Washington informant, "God help the man that has to bump up against Stanton just now!"

Yet he rode back to headquarters and, surely enough, found his chief there, chafing and suspicious. "What's Stanton want of you?" he blurted out. "You haven't—you didn't—make a row about what I said Monday night, did you? We were all cross-grained then, and I didn't happen to think you had to look me up and so—got lost."

"I have certainly written to a friend at Washington asking for other duty, sir," said Benton firmly, though his anger had vanished and given place to sadness and anxiety. "I did not get lost, however. I obeyed or-

ders, and under similar circumstances should do so again."

"I've told you I didn't understand the matter at the time or I shouldn't have said, perhaps, what I did," broke in Old Scoffer, both hurt and troubled. "If you're going to start in on your army career with the idea that you're never going to get hauled over the coals, you've mistaken your profession." Scoffer knew he had been in the wrong. He wanted to undo the wrong. He simply didn't know how, and Benton wouldn't help him.

"You say 'perhaps,' General, and that implies a lingering doubt. So long as you think there was the slightest justification for your reprimand, there is not the slightest use of my trying to serve you." And so they parted enemies, if anything, and, preceded by the story of Old Scoffer's vehement assertion, enlarged, of course, in transit, that he "had more friends in the South than in the army," and without having taken the first boat or having opportunity to take counsel with his former chief, Benton reported the following day at the War Department, and, after an hour's wait and worry, was shown into the presence of the angering Secretary.

It was a dull December morning. The rain had been pattering for hours. The streets were deep in mud. The flags hung limp and lifeless. The fog wreaths clung to roof and cornice and drifted low about the crowded portico without, and followed the splashed and dripping

men, boring their insistent way into the depths of the dingy old edifice. It was a day of gloom and despond. It followed close on the heels of dire disaster; and, with the stories rushing in upon him of contention, disloyalty, and disruption at the front, the Iron Secretary was stung and goaded by the evidences of triumphant plot and treason all about him and among the cities safeguarded at the rear. Two prominent households within easy rifle-shot of his desk were now shown to have been in constant correspondence with leaders of the rebel cause at Richmond. Two families in Baltimore, hitherto unwatched, were found to have been connected with the recent escape of closely-guarded Confederate officers from a prison camp almost within sight of the flag at Federal Hill. One gallant staff officer, scion of a well-known and loyal supporter of the administration, stood accused of intimate acquaintance with several of the parties to the plot and of further knowledge of their designs, and the heart of the Secretary was hot within him and hardened against this young staff officer of a fighting corps, who, ushered into the severe and repellent presence, stood silently at guard, glanced one instant at the grave, bearded faces of the three officers in attendance, and then, blue and unflinching, his eyes fixed almost in challenge on the massive, spectacled, glowering front of the great patriot and statesman—the forceful, dominant, War Democrat, Stanton.

For a moment each studied the other, and the menace in Stanton's frown roused the spirit of fight in Benton's

not too pacific temperament. "What business has a man to look at me as though he thought I ought to be hanged, no matter if he is War Secretary?" was the question uppermost in the Badger's mind. His father, the Squire, had once trounced a brother-in-law for less. The bump of insubordination was rising even before the Secretary's first question.

"How came you so late, sir?"

And the bump was in his throat, as, flushing to the brows, the Badger answered:

"Possibly because I was kept waiting an hour outside, sir."

Stanton's veins seemed to swell to thrice their natural size, and his strong face, fringed by the iron-gray beard, turned almost purple.

"You will be wise to keep your temper, young sir, if you wish to keep your commission. You owe your escape from rebel hands, I am told, to certain members of Dr. Chilton's family, of Charlottesville."

No answer.

"It is so, is it not?"

"*One* member only, sir."

"Lieutenant Ladue was your intimate friend at home, I believe." Stanton was tapping the desk with a long ruler now—an ominous sign, said they who knew him.

"He was, sir."

"Was it to square accounts with the Chiltons you sought to shield him?"

"I have had to shield him in no way, sir. He had been brought here before I could see him again."

Stanton actually smiled, but the smile was grim as any scowl.

"Then it was by helping young Chilton, was it?" And the professional cross-examiner tapped more swiftly on the table, and his eyes fairly blazed through the spectacles.

Benton was boiling over now.

"I never heard until an hour ago that he had got away, sir. I'm g——"

"Glad, I dare say," said the Secretary, with sarcastic force. "We heard as much of you—and more." Then, sudden as a steel trap, "What did you do with the papers you received from Ladue?"

This time there was no mistaking Benton's start of amaze. He was kneeling by poor Paul's side in the hospital tent, when with feeble, nerveless hand the boy had passed a little packet to him and faintly whispered his request.

"What did you do with them?" demanded Stanton, and now the officers standing at the side of the room seemed to hold their breath.

"Nothing, as yet," was the unlooked for reply.

"Then you still have those papers?" and Stanton seemed rising from his chair.

"Yes, sir," and Benton seemed ready to spring to meet him, with fight in every line of his face.

"Here?" and Stanton had dropped the ruler and gripped the arm of his chair.

"Here," and Benton had the "touch-if-you-dare" look of a bull-dog watching a bone.

"You may deliver them to Major Thorpe," said Stanton, as though the matter were settled, and the major accordingly, but uncertainly, advanced a step or two. He was fifty years of age, and Benton was barely half his years, but the elder little liked the look of the younger's eyes.

"I may not, Mr. Secretary," and despite his wrath, something almost like a smile of amusement played about the corners of Benton's firm set lips. "Those letters concern only two people on earth, Ladue and—my sister. You may have my resignation this minute, but not her letters."

CHAPTER XXII

"CAPTAIN BENTON, YOU'RE A COWARD!"

"A spy in camp," was what the brigade said, when it heard the story that came from Washington, and "hopping mad" was the brigade. Its fur had been rubbed the wrong way by the little flings of rivals, prompted by the pitiable envy that seems inseparable from any profession whose reward is mainly reputation. Its sense of subordination, too, had been tried by tales of sneering remarks made by General This or Colonel That, and it firmly believed that much of Fred Benton's present trouble was due to the fact that he wouldn't stand hearing them abused, belittled, or maligned. In greatly exaggerated form, the rumor of his disagreements with his fellow staff officers and his "row with Old Scoffer" had gone the round of the regiments, to the end that Fred was now looked upon as a hero and a champion, even by the Black Hats, who rarely saw heroism in anybody, who scouted the idea of needing a champion and who pronounced one general of the Army of the Potomac, at least, a consummate ass. They were mad clear through when told he had declared Benton disloyal—"had more friends in the South than in the army." Only a few weeks previous they had been pulling Ben-

ton to pieces among themselves, because of his apparent neglect of them and preference for his new associates. Now they were all afire at the idea of any one abusing him, and there was wrath and wonder in camp when it was learned that by order of Stanton himself Fred Benton was held in close arrest, with the prospect, said rumor, of being sent to that so-called Bastille of the war days—Fort Lafayette.

Why not? Was not a gallant general officer who had organized the first defense of the National Capital already there, vainly pleading to be heard against the accusations of unknown, even anonymous, foes?—stripped of command and mured in that Chateau d'If of the New York Narrows, because there had been a disaster, and some "pipe-inspired" private told a newspaper tale of having seen the general communing with rebels the day previous? Were not commissioned officers of the regular army who had fought superbly in battle after battle, suddenly and summarily dismissed the service by that imperious will, without so much as a chance to confront and confound the accuser, because of some story brought to the secretarial ear that roused the secretarial ire? Small comfort was it to the victim that the order of dismissal was later revoked. There to this day stands the unmerited blot on the record to the end that, long years after, it could be truthfully said by a journal desirous of creating adverse feeling, "This officer was summarily dismissed the service in 186—."

And if generals and graduates could be thus con-

demned and confined without trial or hearing, what could a lone lieutenant expect, who had confessedly been the intimate friend of one Confederate officer, held to be a spy because caught in civilian dress after long weeks of domicile; who had visited that officer, held private converse with him, received important papers at his hands and refused to surrender them; who had, furthermore, confessed that he had given material aid and comfort to another enemy, Lieutenant J. Bankhead Chilton, when a prisoner in his charge after the affair of Gainesville; who had previously aided to escape one Dr. Chilton, father of the same, a resident of Charlottesville and supporter of the rebellion, then in possession of valuable information as to our forces and movements (no mention here, of course, of McDowell's authority); and who, having spent much time as a guest of the Chilton family at Charlottesville, had been by them, through their influence at Richmond, sent back to our lines in order, doubtless, that he might obtain and furnish more treasonable information.

Oh, a beautiful case was this worked up against Captain Fred Benton, A. D. C., if the rumors from the rear could be believed, and strange it was, indeed, that in the midst of all the wrath and despond in all ranks, there should appear at the camps of the Iron Brigade, shaking hands with brother officers and soldiers, that very able talker and genial fellow-citizen, Major McKinnon, and Mac had lots to tell. Growlers—and most men were growlers that woful Christmas-

tide along the Stafford Heights—who asked him why he wasn't with his regiment, were told that he was still on court-martial duty, but court had adjourned over Christmas. Growlers at first only growled when McKinnon tentatively began to talk about Benton and Ladue, but later they listened—most men will—and when he returned three days later to his court at the Capital and made report to certain confidential officers at the Department, it must be admitted that, though he took back with him far less of compromising character concerning Benton than he expected and hoped, he left a lot behind him.

But then came the "mud march" in which even the elements joined forces with the disaffected of the generals, as well as the enemy, against that most unhappy soldier at the head of the army, and in the overwhelming slough of despond, McKinnon's mud slinging might have been forgotten. The weather had been fine up to the moment Burnside essayed his move; then came the deluge; and when the old brigade got back to its camps and scraped off the tons of sacred soil still clinging to its boots, there was no one having other weight who could go to Washington and tell the great War Secretary he was utterly mistaken as to Benton. For far less than that temerity had men been exiled to Santa Rosa or Ship Island. Fred's first general was a stranger to Stanton, and his appeal for speedy justice for his former aide-de-camp was ignored, as coming, so McKinnon said, from the man that guarded rebel property and

abandoned positions that he was bidden to hold. McKinnon, of course, could not be expected to know the real truth—or to tell it if he did.

And all this time there lay at the Old Capitol prison, awaiting needed evidence to prove him a spy, a very luckless young soldier, Paul Ladue. All this time there fumed and chafed, confined in arrest to the limits of Greble Barracks and the adjoining square in which were the officers' quarters, Captain Fred Benton, A. D. C., forbidden to see Ladue, and well-nigh forbidden to be seen by anybody save secret service specimens detailed for the purpose. All this time, persisted the brigade in saying, there must have been a spy on Benton's words and deeds while with the division, and who could be the spy? All this time there came no tidings of that other escaped prisoner of war, Jack Chilton. All this time not once did Dr. Chilton and his devoted and sorrowing daughter step forth for air or sunshine that they were not "shadowed." All this time there was a man that could have thrown light on the situation, but most unaccountably had he disappeared—Jennings, he of the old stone house, captured by cavalry near Mathias Point in the act of succoring or aiding escaping prisoners, and sent, with Ladue, almost in shackles, to Washington. Jennings was again at large, and the Department declared it knew not whither he had gone. He had been released, was the explanation—well—because it would appear that he had only done what humanity dictated—

helped and nursed a half drowned, half fever-burned, half dying man.

Then the Squire came out from the West, and that lusty patriot happened to be at odds with State officials over some regimental appointment. A hot correspondence had led to a coldness between him and a certain senator. The great President was now confronted by new and direful problems—Burnside had demanded the dismissal of several of his generals or else his own. A new chief of the army had to be chosen at this crisis of its history. A great corps commander, McClellan's staunchest friend and supporter, had been sentenced by court-martial of his peers to be cashiered and forever disqualified. Two others, inimical to Burnside, the President was asked to disgrace, together with generals of minor grade. The very climax of Lincoln's cares seemed to have come. No wonder the mighty captain could not anchor his craft in the rush of the rapids, and lower a boat for the little boy's apple. No wonder he had no time to personally investigate the case of Benton's beloved son. "The new housekeeper," he said, "would quit without notice rather than submit to interference." With sorrowing, suffering, anxious heart he let Burnside go, and set Burnside's fiercest critic, himself to lose his head a few weeks later, in Burnside's place, and then the great, loyal, triple-tried army went in again, with overwhelming numbers, to round up that thin gray line along the southward heights. Again the fords were ribboned with the pale blue columns, as a dozen great

divisions circled the Confederate left. Again did Jackson dare to drop everything at the front, swing clear round the outermost line and come crushing in on an astonished and bewildered flank. "Never," say the Confederates, and God knows they know, "did the Yanks fight harder than at Chancellorsville"—that is, those who fought at all, for only a fourth of their entire array were given a chance, but again "Back to the fords!" was the order, and, cursing their luck and praying for a fair fight and no favor, back the fourth time went the army. Then came the summer, the race for the Potomac, and the rush at last to the high-water mark of rebellion on the shores of the Susquehanna.

But meantime there had been a scene or two at Washington, never mentioned in the chronicles of the day and in the midst of alarms and distractions such as Washington had never known before. Such matters as the public cowhiding of an army officer almost in front of the White House would be "scare-headed" from Maine to Manila to-day, but the papers had no space for it then. Squire Benton had touched up McKinnon's new uniform to the tune of thirty lashes before the police could step in and spoil the sport, and only in a local journal and one or two in the far West was the affair referred to.

Paul Ladue, convalescent, had been twice subjected to rigid questioning with the hope of establishing the guilty connivance in his escape of a certain Baltimore household, as well as a certain Union officer, and with the result of establishing nothing beyond the fact that even

in his weakness he had more strength and "sand" than the prosecution. Then he was tendered release on parole, for long investigation had failed to unearth a thing to warrant detention as a spy.

A romantic turn in the tide of affairs had come when a certain senator called on the Secretary and offered to show that the incriminating papers which Benton had refused to surrender and which Miss Benton now would be willing to show, if necessary to save the prisoner's life, were personal letters and nothing more. Stanton knew this, probably, as well as the senator, but was wroth that any one else should know it, and furious that an officer should dare refuse to surrender them, no matter what or whose they were. Then Ladue's Baltimore friends had sent word across the line that Ladue was to be tried as a spy and hanged whether convicted or not, and an Alabama brigade declared in reply that they would hang the first Yankee lieutenant they caught if a hair of Paul's head were injured.

One thing, it was said, that had made Stanton so forceful a prosecutor in the past was the ease with which he could always persuade himself of a prisoner's guilt, the jury following as the night the day. Something had to be done, he had said, to stop this wholesale transmission of state and military secrets to the enemy, and a victim was demanded. He had mured this Confederate officer, caught in civilian dress, in Old Capitol prison, and if he wasn't a spy, then he "must have neglected his opportunities and deserved

to be hanged." What made Stanton so hot against Ladue was that so many women, clergymen, church people, and others took to pleading for the lad. Then it was that McKinnon began to find favor at the War Department. Then it was that Captain Benton's limits were restricted instead of being enlarged. Then it was that soft-hearted surgeons at the Old Capitol hospital were replaced by men of sterner stuff. Then it was that the Chiltons were notified that they must leave Washington forthwith, and the Squire, bursting with wrath at being forbidden to see the doctor and his daughter, had had brief conference with Fred, now almost fretting his heart out at the barracks; had learned through an officer of rank in the regular service that beyond possibility of doubt Major McKinnon was at the bottom of all these new and most oppressive orders; had gone to the White House with a demand to see the President; had been promised an opportunity immediately after cabinet meeting that afternoon; had met McKinnon sauntering down the avenue in company with a fellow soldier-lawyer, and had hurled himself upon him then and there, to the end that the major was picked up and carried to Willard's, the Squire escorted to the police station, and the interview didn't come off. It is recorded of the President that when told of the incident that evening, his sad face brightened for the first time in a week. "I wonder if the Squire would let me make him a general," said he. "At least he fights."

That night a soldier of the regular service did a thing that, had Stanton known it at the time—and it's a wonder he didn't—would doubtless have sent that soldier to close arrest, if not to a cell. He was an officer of rank, a gentleman of gentlemen, and a fellow beloved of his fellow men. Entrusted with an order to see that Dr. Chilton and daughter were safely sent to the steamer for Old Point Comfort, a suitable guard going with them, he had called on the kindly old Virginian late in the afternoon. He knew something of the Chiltons and much of their story, and was not the man Stanton would have sent to work his will. Already their few preparations were complete. The order for their removal had been sent the previous day. A revulsion of feeling, such as young Pelham had predicted after Antietam, had surely set in at Charlottesville, for many a wounded lad from the front had had his say against the croakers and scandal-mongers at home, and it was believed that now the doctor would be glad to go. Moreover, it was known to just two officers at Greble Barracks, not three squares from the modest roof that had given shelter to the doctor and his fair, sad-faced daughter, that a sum in gold sufficient for their needs had been placed in the doctor's hands through the sister already mentioned. But, so far from being glad to go, both doctor and daughter had shown grave embarrassment at the tidings, and this despite evident effort. There could be but one explanation of that—Jack Chilton was still North, unable possibly to travel, and concealed by faith-

ful friends. So long, therefore, as he was this side of the now closely-patrolled Potomac, the Chiltons could not bear to go.

There had been a brief, courteous talk. The officer deeply regretted, he said, to have to be the means of carrying out the order, but he would call with a carriage at 8.30. Was there anything he or his wife could do for Miss Chilton?

"There is, sir," answered a voice at the folding doors, behind which two voices—women's—had been heard in earnest, almost excited conversation, and with cheeks flushing through their pallor and eyes that flashed despite evidence of recent tears, Rosalie Chilton swept quickly into the room. "We hear that Mr. Benton—Squire Benton—too, has been arrested and—my aunt will not admit of anything—but I feel that it is to him we are indebted for most generous aid. Major, I wish to see him, to thank him, to—tell him something—as his daughter is not here. Can that be arranged before we go?"

"If a possible thing," said the major, well knowing the Squire was out on bail by this time, and would certainly come in person. All the same, he told his wife at dinner of Miss Chilton's request and, what had not that keen-witted army woman already known or surmised?

"He cannot leave barracks," said she, on the spot, "but you can invite him here to your quarters; then

bring them here on the way to the boat and leave the rest to me."

"He cannot leave! Why, my dear, he isn't in barracks. The police——" begins the major, obtusely.

"Major! You ask Captain Benton here and—and—no questions," interposes madame with severe and superior wisdom. "Then bring—*her* to me." And light begins to dawn on the master—and he obeys.

That evening—it was late in winter and keen—a carriage whirled past the guarded gateway of the barrack square and drew up at the quarters of the commanding officer, a rented, furnished house across the street. The major stepped forth, tendered his hand to an agile, slender girl who stopped one instant to kiss the gray-haired gentleman beside her, then followed her soldier escort to the doorway, where, with eyes that shone and cheeks that colored and lips that puckered and hands that clasped in sympathy and compassion unspeakable, a warm-hearted wife and mother met the motherless girl and drew her in. The major went back to the doctor; the lady led her guest to the parlor door and ushered her into the dimly-lighted, cosily-warmed and closely-curtained room; then vanished, and, for the first time since that night at Charlottesville, Fred Benton stood face to face, alone, with the girl he so fondly and so sadly loved.

And when he, in infinite yearning and love, stepped eagerly toward her, his eyes shining, his hands outstretched, the furred hood fell back from her flushing

face, revealing it in all its dark and queenly beauty. Her eyes, too, flashed, as in amaze, and then in anger unspeakable she recoiled. One instant she glared at him, then spoke :

“ Captain Benton, you—you’re a coward! ”

CHAPTER XXIII

GETTYSBURG

The spring had come and gone, the flowers were in blossom and bloom, but the voice of the turtle had not yet been heard in the land. The sword of Lee led again to the border. The spirit of Jackson had fled to the skies. Grimmer than ever, old Ewell now ruled at the head of the famous "Foot Cavalry" Corps, foremost in the dash for the Susquehanna. All Washington, as so frequently happened, was in turmoil, all Richmond in transports of joy. Under the same tried and trusted leaders, save that Jackson was gone, the arms of the South swept on to invasion. Under the new, sore-tried and little-trusted leaders the arms of the North were reversed in pursuit. Hooker had quit, as he said, in disgust, declaring no man could plan and fight with a string to his shirt-tail and Stanton and Halleck a-pull at the string. Reynolds, calm and sagacious, soldier and fighter, had been tendered command, and politely declined. Meade, his subordinate, stepped over his head, since Reynolds would none of it, and with prayer and misgiving picked up the reins dropped by Hooker in sight of the Maryland shore. And the same hard fighting, hard marching, hard swearing, hard used old

army hove in sight of the stream that had given it its name, and one corps, at least, had lost nothing by the change. The First Corps, the fellows now wearing the ball on their caps, were well content with their leaders. With Reynolds to command them, and the men they best knew at the head of divisions and brigades, they asked no favor beyond a fair fight, and none were more eager, hopeful, urgent than they of the First Brigade of the First Division—they who wore the red disk—and of these were our impudent friends of the Black Hats, still topped by the feathered felt and breeched with the dark blue and ready as ever to pick a fight with the foe or flaws in the armor of less favored battalions.

A shout had gone up one day on the Rappahannock when the word went the rounds that Fred Benton was back. Suddenly had he appeared in their midst just before Chancellorsville, and royal was the welcome they gave him. Sad, pale, careworn, aged as he looked, he was there, "on deck" again, and they hailed him as one who had stood their friend and defender, who had suffered much on their account, and most magnanimously did they agree to forget that they had ever maligned him—not so easy a thing to do as it may appear at first sight, it being a frailty of the average post-adamite to feel bound to make good a calumny.

But Benton had changed, said they, as a result of the first week of watching. He had grown silent and stern, if not sour. He seemed filled with restless, feverish energy, and no sooner was the main army back from

Hooker's first essay as chief in command, than he sought and obtained permission to go scouting with a small force of cavalry among the by-roads and lanes of the down-stream counties. More than the limit of the law, the prescribed forty days, had the orders of the War Secretary held him in limbo, all the time clamoring for a hearing, a trial by court-martial—anything to enable him to face his accusers and put an end to that military *lettre de cachet* business then, and sometimes thereafter, the resort of the powers martial when witnesses weakened. Released and ordered to resume duty with that military modification of the Scotch verdict, "Not guilty, but—don't do it again," Benton came back to the front, burning with wrath at the foe at the rear—a foe personal, official and professional, whom he felt must be McKinnon. He was not allowed to know at the time, nor to see until long after, the extent of McKinnon's intrigue against him or of its reaction on McKinnon himself. Only one officer witnessed the scene, a week after the Chiltons, father and daughter, had been returned to the Southern lines, when Stanton demanded of the major that he prove his case or thereafter hold his peace. He had "fooled away a whole month," said the Secretary, "filled it with vague charges and failed on the specifications." They sent him away, ostensibly to straighten out a legal tangle in Kentucky, not yet blessed with the benefits of martial law; then, when McKinnon was beyond reach, sent for Benton. Of course he did not see the Secretary. A placid,

baa-lamb, soft-spoken staff officer had been told what to say. Benton's associations had been—ah—unfortunately compromising, and, while his conduct on duty had not been called into question, at a time of such public peril the Department held that its officers should be ah—be above suspicion, or at least show a disposition to relieve themselves from blame, and Captain Benton's—ah—refusal to surrender papers confessedly given him by a Confederate officer had added much to the gravity of the case against him. "What case?" demanded Benton, fiercely. "Well, perhaps that was putting it rather—ah—strenuously," said the officer. "What is meant——" "Oh, damn it!" burst in Benton, most improperly, "what is meant is that you know I've been accused without rhyme and reason—that you dare not let me meet my accusers, and you won't give me fair hearing," and for this inappropriate outburst he declined to apologize. For another week, therefore, it looked as though, after all, he might get a trial; but it ended in his being ordered to quit Washington forthwith, and to report for duty to his old general at Yorktown, where he fumed and fretted till April, when sent to Annapolis with prisoners. Then, a battle being imminent, he was permitted to report to the general commanding the Army of the Potomac, and thither he went, and, so far as the battle was concerned, might better have stayed and fought it out in the rear, for his corps was held in leash, had little to do, and that left Benton more savage than ever.

In heart, in pride, in spirit he had been sorely hurt. In heart by Rosalie Chilton's astounding accusation and the impossibility of getting the faintest explanation. After her impetuous outburst she had whirled about and rushed to the waiting carriage, demanding of the astonished major that he take her at once to the boat and, even in captivity, it seems, her imperial highness was wont be obeyed. From that day to this no word had come from her, even through Elinor, now mournfully writing that poor Mr. Ladue seemed lapsing into passive imbecility, happily indifferent to any fate that might befall his son, and Elinor was grieving her heart out, though she would not say it, at thought of Paul still mured in military prison.

In pride, professionally, Benton had been stung to the quick; for in spite of the fact that so much of his heart had gone to the South, his duty, his sword, his spirit, mind and will were all sworn to the service of the Union, and most faithfully, even brilliantly at times, had he discharged himself of every detail entrusted to him. It was his old general at Yorktown who strove to set him right, who had urgently written in his behalf to officers at court, and, when there seemed no prospect of stirring service in that neighborhood, had suggested his transfer to the staff of a fighting division at the front. In this way had the order been obtained; and then, on his joining at army headquarters, Benton, at his own request, had been sent to duty with the latest commander of the old division, which was how he again got in touch

with the Black Hats, and came to be with the grand old brigade the day they "had the time of their lives" in almost desperate battle over their beloved boomers, the guns of Battery "B." Then and there, most heartily, was the right to full fellowship with their veteran comrades accorded the Michigan men. Most gloriously was it won. From this time on Badger and Wolverine stood on the same plane.

O what a day was that first of July!—warm, soft, sunshiny, the roads still puddly in places as from recent rains—no dust to choke the hurrying columns, no thick clay mud to clog the wheels or load the worn brogans. Through the radiant, smiling, peaceful Pennsylvania country side, so deep a contrast to battle-scarred Virginia, along graded roads, past pretty cottage homesteads and wide slopes of ripened grain and tempting orchards and cattle-dotted fields and fallows; past running brooks and rock-bedded streams, whence the canteens were lifted brimming and sparkling with fluid seldom seen in the runs and branches that gully the "Sacred Soil," past cool spring houses and darksome wells where—the one black feature of the stirring march—thrifty, low Dutch farmers stood scowling, exacting tribute of a dime a dipper from the thirsting men, and so fattening on the need of their defenders. Halting now only for catnaps by the roadside, with their brave, brilliant Reynolds ever spurring on in the lead, they of the First Corps swept northward in the wake of the cavalry, listening eagerly for the distant booming that should

tell that Buford had fanged the quarry and was holding on till they, the hunters, should come to give the *coup de grace*.

Even before the earliest sunbeams came glinting through the eastward wood, Reynolds had called on his men; and, rousing from their bivouacs along the Emmittsburg pike, they rolled their blankets; swallowed their steaming, soldier coffee; formed ranks along the roadside, and presently went tramping away northward between moist, smiling fields and orchards, heading for the distant towers and steeples of the quaint, placid little Pennsylvania town, nestling between the wooded hills that seemed to hem it in. Somewhere up that charming valley their leaders knew John Buford to be, for he and his sun-tanned troopers had been thrown ahead to cover the advance and find the army of Lee, well known by this time to be concentrating to meet them.

Years and experience have taught the leaders of the Army of the Potomac something of the true use of cavalry, and there is no more of the blind groping of the old days. They know that Longstreet's whole corps is camping about Chambersburg, across the South Mountain range to the west. They know that Hill is between him and Cashtown, the first village of importance to the west of Gettysburg. They know that Ewell's foremost divisions have struck the line of the Susquehanna, only to be recalled to meet the spirited northward sweep of Meade's far-spreading corps. They know that these

men of Reynolds lead the van of the main army, and will doubtless be the first to reach and back the cavalry when those searching horsemen find and tackle the foe. What they do not know is, that from west, northwest, north and northeast these converging columns are all headed for that same little Pennsylvania town, marching to concentrate on Gettysburg, and that this, the First Corps of the Army of the Potomac, is destined within three hours to be thrust square in between those swift-closing jaws, and compelled, as Buford says to his own men, to "fight like the devil" until the rest of the army can reach it in support. The Eleventh Corps is not far behind them; the Twelfth is away, over a dozen miles to the eastward, along the Baltimore pike; the Fifth and Sixth still farther to the southeast, a long day's march at least; the Third is down by Taneytown, ten miles behind. It is to be a First Corps fight, then, unless the Eleventh can help, if they happen to run foul of Johnny Reb this July morning, and that Johnny is near they learn from Buford's couriers, galloping back with news for Meade. A whole swarm of shoe-hunting Confederates had come through Cashtown the day before, bound for a raid on the Gettysburg shops, but fell back at sight of an apparition in the valley to the south—strong squadrons of Union Horse trotting up the Emmittsburg pike, bent on being first at the fair. Pettigrew, Confederate commander, knows his slim ranks are no match in point of numbers for Buford's sturdy dragoons, backed by their batteries of horse artillery, the

pride of the cavalry corps, and wisely he waits for morning and the support of Heth's whole division. Then they'll give the troopers a whirl that will remind them of a year back in Virginia.

In far better fettle and discipline is Lee's brave army than when it tried the conversion of Maryland ten months before. Only in two points is it less to be feared—Stonewall Jackson is dead and Stuart's cavalry is as good, or bad, as lost. For once in his life that brilliant and daring leader of Horse is of no use to his commander. Through some error of judgment he has gone far to the east and has been cut off from communication. When he reaches the Susquehanna he finds Ewell has fled, so pushes on to Carlisle in the Cumberland valley, and thus for two long days, the first two days of the great and decisive battle of the war, he and his hard-riding troopers are lost to Lee. For once the Army of the Potomac has its eyes and its wits at the front when the eyes, at least, of the Army of Virginia are away to the rear. At breakfast time in Gettysburg, this morn of the first of July, Heth's division of A. P. Hill's corps of the Army of the South comes "bulging" ahead, without the accustomed screen of cavalry skirmishers, and is brought up standing by the challenge of Calef's light guns, planted squarely in the middle of the Cashtown pike, and the simultaneous uprising of squadron on squadron north and south of the road—Devin's and Gamble's gallant brigades of famous John Buford's division,—and there, like a bull dog Buford holds them two mortal hours,

until Reynolds, with his foremost men, comes spurring up the eastward face of the ridge, joins Buford at the old Lutheran Seminary, and notes that the main lines of Heth's Division, north and south of the pike, are just forming for advance to the attack in force,—all that preceded having been the work of strong skirmish lines;—and now begins in grim earnest the greatest and most momentous battle of American history.

First to reach the field in support of Buford's hard-fighting Horse is the First Division of the First Corps of the old Army of the Potomac, and the first brigade to come swarming up the slope is led by old graybeard Cutler, whom we saw at the head of the Sixth Wisconsin in its maiden battle on the Warrenton pike, while, following close at the heels of the foremost and, obedient to Reynold's orders, breasting the height to the south of the Seminary, stride the five battalions of the Iron Brigade, the biggest not quite five hundred, the others barely three hundred strong. White-haired Wadsworth rides at the head of the little division. That's all there is of it,—these two brigades, led by those two far Western brigadiers, barring the batteries that ever go with them—but the blue-blooded old Gothamite in command swears he wouldn't swap it, small as it is, for the strongest division in the whole army—and he means it.

It is a sight never to be forgotten, that which greets their eyes as the Black Hats come popping up over the ridge. The seminary grounds and the farm enclosures along the line of heights are quite thickly wooded, but, to the west of them, the fields are cleared and cultivated.

Another ridge, not quite so distinct, rises in front of them, perhaps five hundred yards away, and the two ridges seem to converge at a wooded cone to the north, Oak Hill they call it, while beyond that low rise to the west the ground falls away rapidly into the valley of a swift little stream, Willoughby Run, bordered on the east, squarely in front of the Iron Brigade, by a grove of sturdy young trees, the only screen between their swift advance and the long line of forest half a mile away to the west, stretching north, almost to the Cashtown pike, and south to the Hagerstown road, and that westward forest is all alive with flashing bayonets aligned on the little red battle flags, the division of Heth in battle array, reaching almost from pike to pike, with one brigade thrown out "in the air" to the north, and pushing daringly forward to sweep the stubborn troopers, fighting dismounted, out of the way. It is barely quarter past ten, as Reynolds for the last time looks at his watch; bids Doubleday, who has galloped forward for orders, to "back" Wadsworth at the seminary and extend his line to the right; then, calling on Meredith, points to that forward grove at the brook side, "Seize it," he says, "before the rebels can reach it!" Then with the Sixth in reserve, with a full-lunged shout in its throat and fire in its eye, the old brigade breaks into a run, Fairchild with the Black Hats in the van—a five-hundred-yard race for the goal—field, staff and commanders cheering them on, and Reynolds—noble Reynolds—spurring swift in the lead, riding down to his soldier fate.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FIGHT FOR THE GUNS

Of Heth's division, we have said, are these at the front—fellows that never yet have happened to "sample" this Western command—Heth's division, with the brigades of Archer and Davis in the foremost line. The former has started his Tennesseans down the slope, Alabama supporting, and is feeling his way to the front, for that wood looks ominous. Skirmishers say Gamble's dismounted troopers, who have held it two hours against their best shooting, are strengthened now by infantry, thrown forward by old Cutler's first line, which can be seen stretching out over the pike, relieving Devin's worn men, and letting them scurry back to their waiting horses. But Archer sees that in so doing, Cutler has thrust its right flank "into the air,"—that Davis, with his Mississippi battalions, is sweeping upon and around it, and is already in turn far in advance of his own fellows; so, most eagerly, Archer orders forward, forward, and the gray lines leap at the word. Beautifully the battle opens for the cause of the South. Cutler's men, in their eagerness to relieve Buford's thinned and wearied defense, have rushed full six hundred yards out into the open, and Davis catches them in flank with

his yelling Southerners; wheels his Mississippians to their right,—Cutler barely having time to slip his skirmishers out of the clutch,—then onward come the Johnnies, full tilt for the guns of Hall, unlimbered in place of Calef, on the Cashtown pike. Then two wonderful things happen and two new feathers go to the cap of the Iron Brigade.

It is Fred Benton's luck this day of days to be riding with Reynolds as the corps commander spurs to the front. His own staff is scattered all over the field, some gone to hurry up Howard and Sickles, some to lead Doubleday's brigade through the tangle of lanes at the foot of the ridge, some out to the right where Cutler's New Yorkers are most sensibly falling back toward the ridge at the rear. So Reynolds has borrowed an aide, and Benton, burning with joy and excitement, rides after him into the grove, just in time to see Archer's foremost line come gallantly sweeping down the opposite slope, straight at the shivering wood, for under their volleys leaves and twigs are showering the heads of the few defenders, and these latter are nervously squinting about them in search of supports. "Hang on, men! Keep up your fire! Meredith's right behind you!" shouts Reynolds, as he darts swiftly in among the trees. "Hang on, men!" goes the word from center to flank, but things look risky out there to the right where Cutler's ranks are drifting back, and the crash of Mississippi volleys, enfiling the front, and the shells shrieking from the slope of Oak Hill echo the volleys of Archer's

quick-firing, fast-coming lines. Through the thick veil of sulphur smoke, pierced by red flashes, grim faces are peering square into the wood, and eager young captains are urging onward their men, and in all the crackle of shots and the hoarse-shouted commands, no wonder they hear not the dull, muffled sound of the dancing foot-falls, as, fourteen hundred strong, the charging ranks of the Iron Brigade come on with a rush. The east edge of the wood is reached by the leaders on the right of the line, just as the Southern force bursts through the battle smoke and into the brook; but even as these latter reach the wood, and Archer is cheering them forward, he is amazed to see his wing reeling back, and a blue-capped, blue-bodied human wave curving round the southward end of the straggling timber, rolling over, engulfing, sweeping before it in amaze and confusion—by tens, twenties, and then all together—the right of the line. Before he can issue an order or strengthen a single battalion, Fairchild and the Black Hats have burst through the sheltering grove in his front, and sprung like tigers on his halted and astonished line; while Badger, Hoosier and Wolverine, swinging round him from the south, complete the demolition of the brigade. He and his men are swamped in a twinkling. He and half his force, six hundred at least, are prisoners of war, while the rest are chased to the rear by Meredith's men. First facer for Heth as he glares from the opposite woods, where Pettigrew and Brockenbrough are aligned in support. For him, however, there is comfort to the north of the pike,

for there has Davis swept the field and is bearing down on the Union guns. Now is the time to support him, but Wadsworth is too quick. Archer disposed of; the Iron Brigade halted and reforming under Reynolds's own eyes—in grim business fashion, too, as though the gathering in of six hundred Johnnies was not much of an exploit—with Meredith fronted now to stand off Heth, should his second line sweep to the aid of the first, the general commanding turns to succor the right. He has seen the trouble in a single glance; has seen, too, the way out of it; and as Fowler, with the old Brooklyn Fourteenth,—they that kept up with the cavalry on the first forced march to Fredericksburg,—now changes front under fierce fire and faces the new attack from the north, Fred Benton, all a thrill with excitement, goes spurring over to where the Sixth Wisconsin stands in reserve, and in another minute, obedient to orders, that stalwart battalion, at his charger's heels, is "double-quicking" away over the fields to its right in support of the men from the City of Churches, now in sore need, for those lank Mississippians have swept forward into the long cut of the unfinished railway, and, flat on their bellies against the southward slope, are pouring their fire into Fowler's men, hoping to crush them as they have well nigh exterminated Harney's New Yorkers—the 147th—before help can come.

A fatally good place is a railway cut to shelter a line, when the foe stands fast and contents himself simply with shooting. A fatally bad place it is when the foe

won't stand at bay, but comes charging full tilt in spite of the fire, and that, to the amaze of Davis, is just what these infamous Badgers are doing this day. With an onward rush no mere muzzle loaders can possibly check when firing "oblique," the Sixth comes sprinting down the slope from the southeast, its right companies swinging out, so as to sweep the cut from end to end, taking the Mississippians in turn square in the flank, its left striking at the eastward half of the line, and between them, almost in a twinkling, doubling up and driving together, huddled, helpless, sheep-like, one astonished battalion. Then, what with blazing down from the southward bank, charging home from the eastward mouth, driving in with butt, bayonet and brawny arms, while the Brooklynites rush, cheering, to finish the work to the west, Davis's fighters are fairly trapped. Down go the red battle-flags. Down go the rifles in answer to shouts of surrender. There's nothing else left them. They can't fight where they are. They can't force their way out of the cut. Some dozen, perhaps, bending double and ducking, manage to scurry off to the west. Some few crawl back to their fellow battalions to the north, but General Joe Davis has lost two of his colors and all but a few men of two misguided regiments; and here, too, has the Iron Brigade done more than its full share. Wadsworth is almost weeping with joy at the sudden stem of the torrent and the magnificent stand of his little division, while Doubleday, seldom given to praise, is wringing that veteran's hand in hearty,

fashion, as he reins in a moment at the west front of the seminary. Doubleday's own men now are fast hurrying up in support of the First Division, Rowley and Roy Stone sending in their brigades straight for the halted line and the rescued guns to the north and along the smoking fringe of wood, and there is soldier triumph mingled with no little anxiety, as these war-tried leaders scan the westward fields and note through their glasses the long columns in gray stretching far back toward the horizon and along the Cashtown pike, all telling the coming of supporting thousands. Gladly they welcome the sight of the waving colors of Howard's corps, pressing northward in the valley behind them, and Doubleday laughingly greets his fellow West Pointer, the crest-fallen Archer, just brought back under guard, and Roy Stone's jubilant voice rings out the watchword of the Second Division, "We've come to stay, boys!" in answer to the shout of the Iron Brigade, "Hold the woods to the last? Where'll you find men to do it, if we can't?" and Private Pat Maloney, "G" Company, of the Black Hats, who had personally nabbed the Confederate brigadier, gets his own word of commendation ere he goes back to his own gallant death. And all seems hopeful, brave and buoyant despite the heavy losses of the foremost regiments upon the field, when a cavalry officer comes galloping in from the right, whither Devin's brigade has been sent to guard the flank of the line. "Where is General Reynolds?" he asks. "Whole divisions are coming there to the north!" Where, in-

deed, is General Reynolds? An aide-de-camp is spurting at swift trot through the maze of unlimbering batteries. His face is white, his lips are pale beneath the grimy mustache. Men cease their excited chatter at sight of him, but he has word for none until, reaching the little group where stand the division commanders, he springs from his saddle, turns loose his wearied horse, and they read ill news in his haggard eyes ere, with soldier salute, he briefly says: "General Doubleday, you command, sir—General Reynolds is dead."

Dead! Shot down in the moment of triumph and victory! picked off by a sharpshooter bent on avenging the facer to Heth; falling stark in his tracks, without sign or sound; killed instantly, never knowing probably whence came the blow,—there in the McPherson wood lies the hero of heroes of this first day's fight, his grief-stricken officers gathering about the senseless clay. Dazed for the moment, they can only kneel, these men of his sorrowing staff, and lift the grand head from the ground and gaze imploringly into the sightless eyes. All effort vain! In the lull of the fight that follows the catastrophe of the day, they bear the honored body sadly to the rear and place it in the waiting ambulance at the Seminary. Then some one says that Howard must be told—that he is the senior general up with the army—and Doubleday orders one of his own aides to go in search of him. At 10.30 all was triumph and rejoicing in the gallant line of the First Division. Cutler's men, far out on the right, were cheering "Tommy"

Devin's troopers, and being cheered in return. Down by the Run, Black Hats and Hoosiers were swapping chaff and congratulation with the Wolverines, but a pall has dropped on the smoking field. With the death of their heroic leader comes the turn of the tide.

Short hours of respite have the men of the West. Heth has had quite enough for the present. With four brigades at the front he has been hurled back by two, and wisely he waits for the coming of comrade divisions, now deploying far to his rear and slowly advancing to restore the day. Nine fresh brigades are these thus sighted, as the midday sun beats hotly down on Doubleday's lines, and he hasn't a man to send in support.

And now, far out to the right and rear, while two brigades of Robinson's Division prolong Cutler's line toward Oak Hill, the boom of cannon grows incessant, and signal men in the Seminary tower are flagging desperately. More men are needed! More men are needed! Howard's corps, the Eleventh, is once more, at one o'clock, facing the very same veterans that swept it from the field at Chancellorsville, and that seem bent on doing the same thing here. Leaving Von Steinwehr with his little division to occupy as a "rallying point" the heights to the south of the town—and Howard seems to have felt it in his bones that such a point would be needed—the one-armed general has pushed on through Gettysburg, sent Schurz and Barlow out to the north, with orders to hold Ewell in check—Ewell, who is bearing down upon them from northwest, north and

north, Ramseur, Rodes and O'Neal, with a triumphant host of yelling Confederates, have doubled Robinson's desperately battling division; have broken it back and swept its fragments away; and, with despair in his heart, Howard realizes that the day is lost, that only by the fiercest fighting and the best of luck can he hope to save the remnant of Reynolds's left wing that all the morning held so grandly, and so spurs away to Steinwehr to halt and reform the broken Eleventh at that natural line of defense on the heights to the south of the town, leaving to Doubleday the stern duty of drawing off his men.

Then it is that the Iron Brigade, still clinging to the McPherson wood, gets the word to fall back to its right rear, covering the Cashtown pike. There it is that their blessed boomers have been unlimbered, and under "old man Stewart's" eye are still blazing defiance at the swinging battle-flags coming triumphantly forward down the road. There it is that they find their comrades of the Sixth Wisconsin sternly facing the coming storm despite the fact that everything seems sweeping away beyond them; and Dawes, their acting colonel, pointing backward into the low ground, shows to the brigade commander's astonished gaze that even Gettysburg is practically lost, and through that town lies their line of retreat—the only way to save those precious guns.

Four o'clock, and still the batteries of Hall and Stewart, with three hard-pounded brigades, hold their ground

on the ridge, while the valley behind them is fast filling with Ewell's madly exultant men, driving Howard's beaten divisions before them. To hang on longer is simply madness. Beginning at the right, therefore, stern and silent, the devoted brigades give ground slowly, still facing the foe, still firing low and well. There is no shaking the nerve or discipline of these fellows of Doubleday. The crush comes as the streams of wounded thicken at the outskirts of the town, merging with the fugitives of the Eleventh Corps, and the roads and streets are blocked by batteries, ambulances, stray caissons and ammunition wagons, all in full retreat. The pinch of the fight, the crowning hour of the day, the bloodiest battle of all the forty hours of thrilling combat, is here on the slope to the north of the Seminary, where, from the teeth of the foe, from the midst of their slaughtered horses, the men of the West essay to drag and save their pets, their comrades in every fight and field, the black-mouthed, smoking, heated, still thundering guns of Battery "B."

"Limber to the rear!" rings the order at last, when half the horses, at least, are shot. "Limber to the rear!" echoes the order along the pike, where three of Hall's guns are dismounted, where Stewart, "the oft distinguished," as Doubleday calls him, has replaced these by three of his own under his junior lieutenant Davison; but Davison, after sweeping with canister Scales's charging "Tarheels," is shot from his horse and borne from the field. It's all up with those guns if the Badgers

can't save them! Two caissons are smashed; one is blown into flinders, and as many brigades as Stewart has guns are coming, yelling and crowding and volleying up the slope. Scales is hurling his North Carolinians on Morrow's bleeding Wolverines, and Morrow himself, while waving the colors, wrenched from the dying grasp of the seventh bearer shot down, is himself knocked in the head by whizzing bullet and dragged, raging, from the thick of the fight. Davis and Daniel, —two fighting Southern brigadiers they,—are riding madly among their powder-stained men; driving them on in the face of those stubborn wild Westerners; pointing their swords at the crippled guns, where men are straining at the wheels and slashing at the harness of the slaughtered horses. "Get those guns!" shriek the leaders. "Square accounts for the battle-flags lost in the cut!" But, between the surging rush of Carolina, Mississippi and Georgia, with the supporting Virginians of Brockenbrough at their back, and that battle-scarred battery limping slowly away down the pike, there still interposes that stern, indomitable, magnificent line in blue—all that is left of the Iron Brigade—as, front to the foe, closing ever on its colors, volleying steadily, defiantly, unflinchingly into the very face of its outnumbering, yet respectful, pursuers, it backs away over the ridge, leaving over a third of its membership strewing its tracks, another third having already been borne bleeding away toward the town, and so, as the sun goes down on the tremendous day, so, slowly, steadily,

wrapped in clouds of its own battle smoke, the Western brigade descends to the plain, the Sixth last to halt in the streets of the town and to cheer to the echo the cause of the flag, while the guns once more unlimber, on the rise of Cemetery Hill, as though daring the foe-men to come on and take them. No wonder the Badgers grip hands with the Wolverines, they that remain. Almost five hundred the Michigan men went into the fight by the side of the veterans. Only one hundred are left in line when at last the day is done. Fully three hundred have been shot down on the field; some few have been captured. In officers alone their dead outnumber those of the rest of the brigade. Of the Black Hats surviving there stand now but seventy.

“And they might have cut you off entirely,” says Doubleday, as he rides among the remnants, halting along the wooded hillside, east of their rescued guns. “Buford saw, what you couldn’t see through the smoke, that two brigades were sweeping down south of the Seminary to intercept you. He formed his squadrons to charge. They saw it, by Jove! and halted and formed squares to resist him, and that saved you. Captain Benton, I wish you would ride over and present my compliments and thanks to General Buford. He’s just moving off past that stone farm-house yonder down in the valley.” And so ended the day.

CHAPTER XXV

LADUE'S LAST RETREAT

In the two great days that followed there was little to do for the little left of the Iron Brigade. Planted by Wadsworth at the point of Culp's Hill, it grimly watched the movements of Ewell's men, its old-time antagonists, and when these gentry ventured forth to feel their opponents, they were received with due military honors and sent back satisfied that the weak point of the line was not there. Sore-hearted over the loss of so many cherished comrades, yet confident that their valor had not been vain, the survivors hung silently to their assigned position, and awaited developments. Many,—most of them, indeed,—slept through that summer night like wearied children, while the scattered corps, far to the south and southeast, were toiling through the soft moonlight, straining every nerve to reach the field in time to meet the foe on the morrow.

And, when that morrow came, Benton was early in saddle and away to the left of the line in hopes of tidings of their headquarters wagon—gone astray, as such wagons so often would, with the mess and camp kits of the general and the staff, and as Hancock's Second Corps came trudging in past the Round Tops after their

all-night march, it was his good fortune to meet two old-time comrades, soldiers he swore by,—Carver, now serving with Hancock, “the superb,” and Haskell, that prince of adjutants, now chief of division staff—and through them he heard news that even in the excitement of the afternoon and the tremendous doings of the following day, kept him perturbed in mind and sorely troubled. He had never been reconciled to his treatment at the hands of the Secretary. He had never ceased chafing in spirit over the wrongs and aspersions, as he persisted in regarding them, to which he had been subjected. He realized that under existing conditions nothing more than half-hearted acknowledgment of error could be looked for, but he had determined that the moment things settled down and the Department had time to attend to something besides the momentous affairs of the nation, he would demand justice or, as he was spunky enough to say, “give them something to pay for the punishment already given” to him. Meantime he meant so to conduct himself in the field that there, at least, he should stand above suspicion. Then through men of weight he might secure attention to his case. And now both Wadsworth and Doubleday had spoken in heartiest praise of his behavior throughout that heroic battle of the first day. So far so good. What he longed for, on one hand, was a chance to square accounts with McKinnon. What he hoped for, on another, was opportunity to teach that disdainful girl how deeply she had wronged, as well as affronted, him. Pas-

sionately in love as he had been, it was a new experience; or he could never have persuaded himself in his pride and anger that her power over him was ended—that her queendom was gone.

He would have known better had he had time to analyze the chagrin and pain and jealousy which possessed him all the long hours that followed his morning talk with these staff comrades of the Second Corps. It seems that three days before, on the 29th of June, while they of the Second were pushing cautiously northward through Maryland, on the right flank of the army, they were made aware that a column of cavalry was passing around them from the south,—passing between them and Washington,—and that while they were swinging through Uniontown, across a little branch of the Monocacy, the cavalry were trotting through Westminster, only five miles from their flank. “Gregg’s Division, of course,” said they who saw through glasses the far-distant column. “Gregg, not much!” said Haskell, who had ridden out toward Union Mills on a scout of his own. “It’s Jeb Stuart with his whole outfit and not a little of ours. He must have been helping himself every mile of his way from the Potomac.” And this, indeed, proved to be the case; for, as they lay in the fields about Uniontown that night, there reached them a rueful, crestfallen little party of officers, gathered in by Stuart at the crossing of the Baltimore pike. Two were field officers who from convalescent hospital were striving to overtake their regiments; the third was

Major McKinnon, ordered to report without delay to the commanding general, Army of the Potomac; and McKinnon, it seems, had also been convalescing in Baltimore, but not from wounds. These three, with their light luggage, had been pounced upon at a wayside tavern by a roistering troop of Stuart's flankers, and dragged before this cavalry commander, who, seated on the porch of a pretty homestead in the heart of the village, was watching his booty-laden columns as they jogged on northward, and receiving the reports of his scouts. One of these parties presented the three captured officers just as another, represented by an eager subaltern, was finishing his description of the Union force about Uniontown. At a gesture from Stuart, the young officer ceased and stood in silence as, very courteously, Stuart invited his captives to be seated while an aide took their names, regiments, etc., and as McKinnon gave his there was sudden sensation. The young cavalryman sprang forward, seized McKinnon's hand, shook it effusively, and, to the amaze of every one present, exclaimed: "General Stuart, I am sure, sir, you will treat this gentleman with every possible consideration. It was he, sir, who so nobly defended my father at Washington when Secretary Stanton would have sent him to Fort Warren—and Rosalie, too, for that matter. It was Major McKinnon, sir, who pleaded their cause with the Secretary and had them returned to Charlottesville. It was he, sir, who in other ways most generously aided them."

"I am glad to hear it, Jack," said the bearded general, evidently warming toward the Westerner who had so befriended his kith and kin. "Of course you're—sure of it?"

"Sure of it, sir?—I had it from father and Rosalie both! They had supposed that they were indebted—or rather that their helper was a very different person, a man whom they had befriended; but that all turned out to be an error." And the upshot of it all was, said Haskell, "that Stuart sent the three to our lines, escorted by Captain Winston, the two other officers paroled until exchanged, but McKinnon, by Jove, released with Stuart's compliments, and it's my candid belief, damn him, that Mac would a heap rather be in Washington on parole than out here on duty. Shouldn't wonder if Stuart took his measure before he let him slide." Manifestly Haskell didn't fancy McKinnon.

One thing for Benton to ponder over, therefore, was the question how on earth had McKinnon in so short a time been able, even though he had the run of the house, to persuade that usually clear-sighted girl to the belief that he had used such powerful influence in their behalf, and was really their lavish benefactor.

But there was still another thing to add to his chagrin and perplexity. There had been little conference between McKinnon and the two Badger staff officers—both knew and neither trusted him—but Colonel Kennard, one of the paroled pair, talked frankly with them, told all he had seen of Stuart and his devil-may-care

command, and much about this young Confederate officer—Chilton, "Because," said Kennard, "I heard Chilton say to McKinnon he was praying that he might yet meet Captain Benton. *There* was a Union man he'd shoot on sight! And Winston said Amen!" "Now, Fred," said Haskell, as he called for his horse, "I've got to ride the lines and get the reports; but, we've got McKinnon up with the army at last, and soon as we're through with this business, we'll nail him." But evidently it was business first in Haskell's eyes.

So between being in Stanton's bad books and those of these young Virginia gallants and of Rosalie herself, it must be admitted that Fred Benton felt all the fates were against him. He had two burning desires as, toward nine o'clock, he threaded his way through the swarm of arriving batteries,—men and horses looking worn and haggard after the all-night march,—and rode slowly back to Wadsworth: one was to meet McKinnon and brand him as the author of the slanders that had so marred his prospects, personal and professional; the other was in some way to wring from Chilton an explanation of his violent threat. It would certainly throw light on the cause of Rosalie's furious denunciation. Little did he dream how soon he should be spared the need—and through what sad, strange circumstance.

All America knows the main story of that second day's grapple when, but for Warren's generalship and the heroism of Weed, Vincent and their fellows of the Fifth Corps, the fierce fighters of Hood would have

gained their lodgment on the Round Tops and the enfilade of the Union line. That, like Pickett's tremendous assault on the third day, overshadowed everything occurring at the flanks. But for this there were deeds done along the stony, wooded, northward slope of Culp's, and far out in the open fields beyond Wolf Hill, that would be ringing in song and story to this very day, for Ewell made desperate attempt to gain the heights and the Baltimore pike behind them; and Stuart, missing until after sundown of the second day, strove as hard to make up for lost time in his splendidly conceived cavalry dash on our right and rear, just as Pickett led his mighty Virginians to wedge the Union center—the grand crowning effort of the closing day. Had Ewell won the heights, Gettysburg would have been written in the catalogue of disaster. Had Stuart swept in among the ammunition trains, battery wagons, field hospitals and reserves at the rear while Pickett was piercing the front, nothing could have restored the field. But again the tide had turned. Ewell left scores of his best and bravest under the muzzles of the Springfields along the boulder-strewn slope. Stuart was snared and trapped, engulfed, overwhelmed, and finally swept bodily from the field, never again to charge on Northern soil.

Between the twilight of the second of July that witnessed Ewell's bloody assault and the dawning of that black Friday of the Lost Cause—the third day—something had happened to give new heart to Jackson's old men. The "Stonewall" brigade was there still, almost

at the extreme point of the long fish-hook of the Confederate line, lurking in the woods down in the low ground between the rocky point, where crouched the survivors of Wadsworth's division, and the forest-covered heights off to the eastward, where cavalry guidons—Union cavalry—had been flashing in the last rays of the setting sun. Somewhere out in the dim fields to the north and northeast there was stir and excitement even in the wearied bivouacs of Ewell; and, under the starlight, eager to satisfy his general's restless desire to know what it all meant, Fred Benton had crept out to the front, taking a leaf from Haskell's primer, and hoping for a side scout of his own. But everywhere he found the same conditions: whispering officers, commanding the foremost line, pointed out that they were bent back like a hoop, connecting with the left of Greene's division of the Twelfth Corps, and that, as though in a ring, the defenders of the hill were utterly hemmed in, save to the southwest, by lines of unseen, wary, vigilant Johnnies, for every man that ventured down in hopes of filling his canteen at the running stream at the foot of the slope, had failed to return. They were nearly surrounded, yet safe so long as they stayed where they were. Early was planning, evidently, an assault at dawn.

By half-past ten, however, comparative silence reigned at the right flank. The famous conference—Meade with his corps commanders—had been held in the Leisler farm-house in rear of the center. The word had gone

the rounds, to the joy of every soldier heart, that the new commander meant to stand and fight, and if Lee could muster no more men than these already thrown in, he might hammer the lines in vain. They did not know, perhaps, that, away over in the woods back of Willoughby Run, Heth's whole division was still nursing the wounds received in the first day's battle but would be ready on the morrow, and that Pickett's magnificent command of Virginians would all be there to strengthen the lines to the west. Now, if only Stuart and his pet brigades would but stay lost, so that no fear need be felt for the far right flank, all would indeed be well!

But would Stuart stay lost? Could he have got so far away as not to be found and by this time returned to the army; and when he came, would it not be from the north, and thus bring him in on the very flank they were now defending? Tired as he was Benton could not sleep for thinking of the disclosures made through Haskell. Twice he had crawled from his grassy bed, underneath an ambulance, and gone out along the front, crouching among the watchful pickets. There was no change in conditions, they whispered. The slopes were still covered with the lurking enemy, though no moving thing could be seen. Toward half-past two a staff officer from Meade stumbled in and roused the general—wanted to know if anything had been heard of large bodies of cavalry out to the north, and Wadsworth was

compelled to report that it had been found impossible to ascertain.

But, when the aide left, Benton could stand it no longer. Alone and afoot, after a word with his gray-haired chief, he slipped out of the circle and away to the Baltimore pike. This he followed southeasterly nearly half a mile, greeted occasionally by low-toned challenge of sentry; but other officers were hurrying swiftly to and fro, and there was little detention. As early as three o'clock he found himself following a patrol down a rocky pathway toward the creek, and, learning from outlying sentry there that no force seemed to be in his immediate front—only a few pickets,—Benton explained that he wished to crawl out far enough to be beyond the sound of trampling hoof and rumbling wheel at the pike, that he might listen the better. The sentries demurred, but finally decided to take the chances and let him go. And, creeping from bush to bush to avoid the moonlit spaces, less than half an hour before the dawn he had succeeded in gaining fully four hundred yards out toward the northeast, and there low voices warned him to lie still and listen. He was either on or within the Confederate picket line, and had much to learn and little time.

And then, hardly breathing, as he crouched close to the trunk of a spreading tree, somewhere among the leafy shades along the slopes of Wolf Hill a whip-poor-will began his farewell hymn to the flitting night and, just as on that April morning among the heights of the Hedgeman, faint and sweet, soft yet stirring, so far out

to the north that the performer doubtless thought it beyond the range of inimical ears, a cavalry trumpet began to sound the martial reveille, stilling the mournful plaint of the feathered herald of the dawn, and stirring some nearby watcher to instant, even profane, remonstrance. "Damn that infernal dash-dashed idiot," stormed a low, half-choked voice. "He'll tell the whole dash-dashed Yankee army our fellows have come! Go back there, sergeant, and tell our trumpeter if he dares to toot a horn I'll murder him."

Then somebody rustled off through the bushes, and somebody else spoke. "Some of Hampton's crowd, I reckon. How long'd the general want us to stay out hyuh?"

"Till Ewell attacks at dawn. Then we'll mount and look out for Gregg. His people are out here to the east of us. Stuart'll get after them, you bet, as soon as it's light."

"We haven't got a horse that can more'n stagger. All worn out, I tell you," protested the second voice.

"No more'n theirs are. Jennings met us back there on the Hanover pike, and I heard him tell Fitz Lee Gregg's horses were all played out——"

"Jennings be damned!" broke in a third voice, impetuously, and Benton started at the sound. It was Chilton's beyond shadow of a doubt. Chilton again with his old regiment, and these with him were doubtless officers of Fitz Lee's brigade, scouting, probably, well in front of the cavalry lines, yet proving that Stuart

was there at last, and could be counted on to make things lively in the morning. And Jack disapproved of Jennings, did he? Small blame to him! And Jennings was way up here in Pennsylvania, playing informant for both forces again, and doubtless getting big pay from ours! It was high time to slip back and give warning, but getting back was slow and tedious,—even perilous work. The dawn was breaking when, in bedraggled garb, Benton made his way across the plateau to the farm-house on the Taneytown road, where officers and orderlies were thickly grouped, and where he found his own gray-headed general in the circle about the commander. Before Benton had time to whisper half his explanation, Wadsworth's tired eyes flamed with eager light.

"Here's the very news to prove it, General!" he cried. "Captain Benton, of my staff, is just in from that front. Stuart is there and Ewell means to attack——"

"How do you know Stuart is there?" demanded Meade, whirling sharply on the young officer. The most courteous and polished of gentlemen at other times, Meade was irascible in the extreme in battle.

"I heard voices, sir,—one that I well knew, an officer of the First Virginia,—heard them say that Fitz Lee was there, and that Stuart would settle Gregg, and that Ewell would attack at dawn——" But even as he spoke came confirmation of his words. In the dim light of the dawn, the guns of Green and Geary had suddenly

opened on shadowy gray lines, issuing from the opposite woods, and Wadsworth sprang for his horse. But the commander signalled Benton to remain. "You have done a gallant deed, Captain, and have brought me most valuable information," were his words a moment later; "It shall not be forgotten."

Yet Benton was surprised late that afternoon when, after the din of the most terrific cannonade ever heard on this continent, and, after daring and determined attack, Pickett, Ewell and Stuart all had been repulsed,—Pickett with dreadful loss,—there came a message summoning the aide-de-camp to Meade's headquarters. He was faint with the fearsome sights encountered on the way, for all the field was one vast hospital. A sympathetic staff officer gave him a nip from his flask, and then pointed to where a little group of prisoners were gathered back of the farm-house. Several were slightly wounded. All were sad and weary, but there was none he knew. An orderly led him toward a rude wagonshed beneath which knelt four officers, surrounding a prostrate figure. "He asked for you," said a surgeon, briefly, and one glance at the face of the stricken soldier was enough. Never heeding the others of the group,—never even seeing them,—with a cry, half stifled, of mingled anguish and amaze, Benton threw himself on his knees, and clasped the cold, nerveless hand, feebly lifted to greet him. The failing eyes lighted up one moment in love, recognition and relief, then closed in agony, as a spasm of dreadful torment seized the fragile



Benton thrust his left arm
under the fallen head.—Page 333.

form. "Paul—Paul—my God!" was all that Benton could murmur, for a great sob choked his utterance, and a surgeon hurriedly brushed before him and held a little silver cup to the twitching lips of his patient. "Mortal, yes," was his whisper, as the poor lad, exhausted, lay for a moment in a deathlike swoon. Then the stimulant seemed to revive him a bit. The dark eyes slowly opened and fixed on Benton's quivering face. A flicker of setting sunbeam, breaking through the smoke still drifting over the field, threw for an instant almost a halo of rosy light about the dark, damp hair, and gave a touch of warmth to the sweet, yet piteous little smile that played, oh, so short a moment, about the almost girlish lips, and then they moved: "Bless you, old boy!"—and every whisper seemed to come with a gasp—"I heard—I knew—you'd never give up her letters. Where's—McKinnon?" And here the poor lad seemed drifting away again. Benton thrust his left arm under the fallen head and strove to raise it, while once more the surgeon placed the cup to the parted lips; and, noting the name, a staff officer turned quickly and said a word to a waiting soldier. It was another minute before the swooning lad reopened his eyes. The end was swift coming, for their light had fled. Two other forms had joined the silent group, uncovering in the awful presence. But Benton saw nothing but the loved face—heard nothing but the labored breathing of his friend and comrade whose young life had known such cruel sorrows, whose early death was

so surely due to the malign influences that had turned him, all unwilling, against the flag that once at least he had loved so loyally. And now, in spite of soldier resolution, big tears fell from Benton's brimming eyes and plashed on the fragile hand still fondly clasped in his own. It seemed to rouse the dying boy. He looked yearningly up into the face of his sorrowing friend, just as somewhere down the field to the south, noting the disappearing sun, some bugler had softly begun to play, slowly and solemnly, the vesper hymn of the army, the salute to the departing day, the soldier signal to repair to quarters and to set the watchers for the night—the stately call known the wide world over as the “retreat.”

One moment poor Paul seemed to listen, his breath coming fast and painfully; then some one, well meaning, yet mistaken, bent and questioned: “You asked for Major McKinnon. Did you wish to speak——”

“McKinnon!” whispered Paul. “McKinnon?” and now a shudder seemed to seize the wasting form. “Tell him for me I know he stole my letters. Tell him I told Rosalie—every word he said of you was a cowardly—lie.”

And not until the dead hand in his was cold and stiffening did Benton know what caused the strange movement and sensation in that silent, awe-stricken group as Ladue's last words were spoken. Almost inaudible, they had reached the straining ears of four who bent to listen, and of one who, standing, would gladly have been deaf to them.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHAT A LETTER REVEALED

Once again had Lee's valiant army slowly retired to the Potomac and leisurely recrossed, superb even in defeat. Just as after Antietam, the cabinet, the committee on the conduct of the war (that remarkable annex to our military system) and countless critics all over the North, stormed at the Army of the Potomac because it seemed to follow at respectful distance, content to let the erring brethren go in peace. The man who felt it most that the beaten enemy should again succeed in getting away was the one who said the least—Lincoln had no rebuke for Meade who, smarting and sensitive under the lash of Halleck and Stanton, asked in his turn to be relieved of that vexatious command, but could not be accommodated. "The plum was so ripe," was all that the patient President could say, "it seemed a pity not to seize it." But no one save those that tried it knew the cost of seizing Confederate plums. Stern and defiant the disciplined ranks in gray turned and faced every essay to molest them, and another winter closed in on the armies in Virginia, with the same old stream—the Rappahannock—for their dividing line.

For a time the tide of war swept to other fields, and

all eyes were focused on the West. Matters in the immediate front of Washington seemed to stagnate, while within they seethed. A curious state of affairs existed, a condition of divided responsibilities that resulted in Lee's being allowed to detach a third of his force under Longstreet to help crush the Army of the Cumberland at Chickamauga, and so set us back another six months on the road to victory. Then came the final resolution of the great War President, that as he and Halleck and Stanton had long tried, without success, the business of "bossing" armies in the field, it was time to turn the whole thing over to a single stage manager. Then came Grant and the beginning of the end.

Meantime, how fared it with Fred Benton and his fellow workers in the war drama? Gettysburg, with all its solemn triumph, had left them sore at heart. The old brigade had trudged back to its former fields along the Rappahannock, bereft of many a loved and honored comrade, and in the relic of one regiment, at least, there was genuine sorrow over the death of him who wore the gray. There was comfort in the Sixth that it was in front of Geary's line, not theirs, that Ewell's fated young aide-de-camp should meet his mortal wounds. There were eyes that blinked beneath the worn visors of the caps of faded blue, in sympathy with the grief in Benton's haggard face. All that was mortal of Paul Ladue they laid away on the bank of the little stream by which he fell,—soldiers of the Sixth his pall-bearers, officers and men his mourners, and the Montgomerys from the

old home city, his funeral escort, though they could hardly muster a squad. The few papers and memoranda in his possession, his watch and forage-cap and sword, were placed in Benton's charge—Benton who had stooped and kissed the peaceful, up-turned face ere they lowered it from sight of all, and had reverently clipped away a lock of the dark, wavy hair for that anxious-hearted girl at home, praying, all unconscious of her new sorrow. The three volleys flashed over the slender, wasted form. No soldier honors were omitted because of the garb he wore. They knew well that but for the treachery of one, and the unreasoning violence of others of their own people, this might never have been, and, whether or no, it was all ended now:—rancor, enmity and strife forgotten in the contemplation of the wrongs dealt his name both North and South. Yet only to a limited few was it told that, after all, that soldier death was mercy. The doctors said it saved him from long months of suffering—that he could hardly have lived another year. Distress of mind, confinement and illness had so racked the fragile body that he was a doomed man the day they sent him back, exchanged, to Newport News, to rejoin his one-legged old division leader in time for his last essay on Northern soil.

And there at Gettysburg he slept, awaiting the ending of the war, while the clouds lowered thicker and thicker about the heads of those whom he had so loved. Fred Benton, twice named in official reports for most gallant conduct on the field, and recommended for the brevet

of major, found himself again summoned to Washington, this time a witness before a military commission for the trial of one Peter Jennings, civilian, for whose apprehension with a whole skin the First Virginia Cavalry stood ready to pay a round sum and the "Stone-wall" to supplement it with another, each claiming prior right to perforate or sear that skin at sight. The Virginians swore he was a double-dyed traitor, informer and spy—that he sold information to the Federals, and had betrayed Ladue of the Eleventh Alabama into their hands, even while Stanton and others at the War Department were ready to swear the tall Virginian's life away to the charge of giving information to the rebels of the plans, movements and numbers of the Union forces. Now, what, asked Benton, could they want of him?

Among the papers in poor Ladue's possession was the original draft of the report he had written the commanding officer of the Eleventh Alabama of his flight across the Potomac and capture by Union cavalry near Mathias Point. Not until he reached a certain farmhouse near Port Tobacco did he know who were the officers escaped from prison camp near Annapolis, and his joy was great when Jack Chilton appeared among them—Chilton mad with eagerness to make the crossing, the others disappointed that the boats provided were so pitifully small—Ladue, suffering from some kind of ague, with remittent fever, now almost too weak and ill to make the attempt at all, yet determined to go

on. He and Chilton were ferried over on a dark, wintry night, and landed at a fisherman's house three miles below the Point, and there, to his infinite concern, Paul found that he had lost his pocket memorandum book, well nigh filled with notes concerning the troops about Shepherdstown, Hagerstown, Chambersburg and so on round to Baktimore, also certain sketch maps of field fortifications and the like, all of which he felt confident would be of value to General Lee. Then there were private papers in the book of vast importance to him if to no one else. A racking chill had come on as the result of exposure to the raw night wind, and Jack and the fisherman secreted him in a barn, rolled blankets about him and poured Virginia peach brandy down his throat. Then Chilton deliberately went back to Maryland in search of the missing property, sorely against his better judgment, but he could not permit Paul to go in his weakened state, and going himself seemed the only way. Thereby he escaped capture by the cavalry piloted by Jennings, as they since had grown to believe, though, sanctimonious and sorrowful, the long Virginian had arrived an hour ahead of them and, claiming to be a doctor, was taken to Ladue's sanctuary in the hayloft, and was there captured (?) with him. When searched, Ladue was found to have no incriminating papers about him—a disappointment to his captors and obviously a puzzle to Jennings—for Ladue heard him whispering with the officer in command. The last Paul had seen of Chilton was that December night, but later

he learned that he had been compelled to remain in hiding many weeks in Charles County before the vigilance of the Federals was again relaxed and he could finally effect his escape. Ladue never dreamed they were again within hailing distance of each other just before the last sunrise of his own dreamy, gentle, sorrow-laden life. Then there was a letter, unfinished, for Elinor, which Fred had sealed and sent to her, and it was through her, four weeks later, that he learned that Paul well knew he had not long to live, and had really hoped to meet a soldier's death in front of the charging line. One longing he had, he owned, that would probably never be gratified—that of branding McKinnon as a liar and a thief, for young Larry O'Toole, he that used to sweep out and sprinkle the store and had enlisted as a drummer in the Montgomerys after Paul's banishment, had strayed in search of forbidden luxuries just before Chancellorsville, his pockets filled with poker winnings, and Stuart's men had nabbed him and run him off to Richmond where Ladue was sent to tell the story of his experiences, and here was favored with O'Toole's account of McKinnon's bribing him to purloin those St. Louis letters. With this confirmation of his theories burning within him, Paul had gone to Charlottesville, spending one day with the Chiltons and hearing from the doctor a strange story of McKinnon's generosity to them and kindness to the imperiled son. Rosalie had listened in silent acquiescence until Paul burst in with vehement denunciation of the whole story—told them

of McKinnon's treachery to him and his hatred of the Bentons,—told them of Fred's devoted friendship, and then came a strange part of the letter. Elinor copied it verbatim:—

“ Miss Chilton grew more and more excited as I talked, and finally whirled on me with ‘How can you speak of devoted friendship on part of a man who planned to capture you both and was only balked by—by Jack's going back for your old note book!’ Then she rushed out of the room, and I had to go right on to Gordonsville and could only write to her that, that too, was probably one of McKinnon's slanders, and there wasn't a word of truth in it—that no one was more amazed than Fred when they brought me in. I've not yet heard from her, but I shall, and Jack shall know the moment I can find him.”

“ Was it not strange that that same old notebook, which she risked so much to send to me that night Fred caught her at the stone house, should later have been the means of saving Jack? She found it in the breast pocket of my new uniform coat at Henry's, and glancing through the pages saw the sketches and memoranda I had even then been making; supposed it was of vast importance,—something that we ought to have and, fearing it would fall into the enemy's hands, bethought her of Jennings and Judge Armistead; slipped into my uniform, and Fred has probably told you the rest.”

So there it was at last:—the story of her daring and devotion—unnecessary, perhaps, and misdirected, but daring none the less—and Benton, had he but opened his heart to Paul in the few days they were together at the Chiltons, might have known it all! There then was that mystery solved, and McKinnon, furthermore, had been unmasked, and was even more of a black-guard than they had deemed him. Now, at least, must Rosalie know how utterly in her wrath she had wronged the man whose devotion to her she surely could not fail to realize, yet not a line from her had found its way to

Elinor. There was some comfort in the belief that now she knew, but—how he longed to get at McKinnon for further comfort! That, however, was out of the question. Major McKinnon had gone with the Twelfth Corps to Chattanooga; had indeed left the Army of the Potomac with despatches, it was said, and certainly with despatch, within two hours of Ladue's dying accusation. It was no place for him about Meade's headquarters after that.

And now that queer customer, Jennings, was also under the ban, was he? And they needed Benton's evidence—Benton whose brevet hung fire for reasons he could not understand—Benton who didn't love the war office and who well knew he had found no favor in the grim, deep-set eyes behind those comprehensive spectacles. There was little he could really tell of Jennings, though he had never forgotten that story about the Indiana sergeant seeing Rosalie toss the packet to him in the rush and excitement at the stone house. If that story were true she must have thought him faithful at the time at least. That fateful notebook, filled with Paul's clever topographical sketches and his daily memoranda—what had not Rosalie dared in her effort to send it to safe hands! What sacrifice had not Chilton made in recrossing the Potomac that wintry night in hopes of recovering it! Yet, had not that very crossing prevented, not procured, his recapture? That notebook, as Ladue had written, had really been "the means of saving Jack." Where was it now? thought

Benton, as once again he caught sight of the unfinished dome of the great white capitol. A very valuable bit of property the little volume might be to Southern chieftain again invading Maryland with an army at his back—and a very dangerous one for Southern officer to be caught with—if alone!

CHAPTER XXVII

LOUNSBERRY'S LAST STING

Gettysburg had thinned the grand old First Corps into the proportions of a small division. Consolidation became the watchword, and, with Reynolds dead and his successors devoid of influence, it had none in power to preserve its autonomy. The Second, Fifth and Sixth Corps retained their badges and their name. The Eleventh and Twelfth, sent to the West, were "telescoped" and called the Twentieth. The Third had lost its grip, with Sickles's leg, at Gettysburg,—its way, with French's head, at Mine Run, and finally its place and name,—being distributed to fill the gaps in other organizations. As for what was left of the First, most of it, under gray-headed Wadsworth, went as the Fourth Division to the Fifth Corps, our old friends of the Iron Brigade ruefully shedding the blood-red disk and decking their caps with the Maltese cross. And so, faithful to the end, they hewed their way through the Wilderness, hard hit many a time, but ever landing, catlike, on their feet, even though so many of the old leaders were gone. Brave, silver-haired Wadsworth, after heroic effort against Longstreet, died at their head in the crash of the sixth of May,—Cutler taking the division, and

Bragg, another graduate of the Sixth, the brigade,—and holding it longest of all. Few they were when they reached the James, mourning with all their hearts for Haskell, killed in command of his new Badger regiment in the awful attack at Cold Harbor. With Warren they rounded the gray line at Five Forks,—Hallon Richardson, heading the Seventh, receiving the shot meant for their major general,—and finally, bursting from the southward woods below Appomattox, they helped to bar the last gateway of Lee's beaten army. Then they marched back to droop their riddled, crape-laden colors for the last time before the head of the nation in the grand review at Washington and, with final handclasp from Hoosiers and Wolverines at the parting of the ways, went home to lay those tattered flags within the walls of their own white capitol, with never a stain or shadow on the record of their defenders.

But the story of several who set forth with them was still unfinished. Fred Benton, who had ridden with their battling line on many a bloody day, came not homeward with the few survivors. A strange fortune had been his after Wadsworth fell. There had been many a reason, as has been told, for believing that the tall Virginian, Jennings, had played a double game from first to last—that he had served the purposes of several officers of the Confederate government even while receiving the pay and protection of the United States; and, though it was he that revealed to the secret service the fact that two young officers, Chilton and Ladue of

the Confederate Army, could be captured by sending cavalry to the fisher's hut below Mathias Point, and though it was through this information that Ladue had been caught, Stanton had abundant ground for suspecting the guide, had had him watched and later arrested. Benton's evidence had little helped the prosecution, however, and when the young officer was again summoned to the War Department and again questioned as to his relations with the Chiltons, he finally "fired up," as the President himself expressed it later, and declared the line of inquiry a reflection on his loyalty and integrity. Stanton so hated the rebellion that he seemed to hold no officer above suspicion who did not hate everything connected with it, and Benton could not be made to hate the Chiltons—any of them—or to look with anything less than love on the memory of Paul Ladue.

So he came back from Washington in time for the Mine Run affair, boiling over again with wrath at the way he had been badgered. Stanton as much as intimated that Benton knew Jennings to be false to his obligations, and was shielding him as he had striven to defend the Chiltons and Ladue. "No man can serve two masters, young sir," said the stern Secretary, "and you can't properly serve your country and shield those in rebellion against it. I've seen too much of this disposition on your part, and if I see any more of it—I'll break you!"

Words were these to be well remembered in the light of later events.

No wonder Benton was aflame with indignation, and narrowly did he escape court-martial for the hot wrath of his reply. He demanded a court of inquiry but to no purpose. There was little evidence but his own. He continued to serve with Wadsworth, who, from having been more than half inclined at one time to share Stanton's views, had now reasons of his own for differing radically with that Tremendous Power, and took up the cudgels for Fred in his vehement fashion, and might have gotten into serious trouble of his own had it not been for the shot that ended it all that bitter day in the Wilderness. Then Benton was transferred for a time to the headquarters of the cavalry corps, and rode with Sheridan to Yellow Tavern, where the plumes of Stuart went down at last, and the brilliant leader of the Southern Horse was borne away to die within the walls of the weeping city, and here it was, after Yellow Tavern, Fred Benton had one of the oddest, yet most opportune, meetings of the war.

It was a soft, moonlit night in May. The dead and wounded still lay in numbers on the field of the stirring fight. The lines had surged hither and yon during the late afternoon. Three Confederate officers, unhorsed and captured, had been brought to Sheridan's camp fire near the Richmond road, and in one of these Benton instantly recognized young Winston, wearing now the braid of a major of cavalry. The recognition was mu-

tual, and Benton's well-filled flask was brought into requisition at the instant. Soldiers sink their enmity at such a time. The blue and the gray were soon in cordial chat, but Benton saw the Virginian was in deep chagrin. A question as to Lounsberry's whereabouts was all that was needed, and Winston launched at once into a tirade. There never was such infernal luck, he said. For months three men had been hounding that fellow to get an accounting from him on a matter that—that—well, Pelham's sister had been engaged—at least believed herself engaged—to Lounsberry ever since early in the war, yet in January came the announcement of his approaching marriage to a widow of wealth and social position in Charleston. He had tricked Maud most damnably, said Winston, and Floyd Pelham, the very young fellow who was so nearly killed trying to save Lounsberry out there near Gainesville, a captain now and only twenty, had been trying to get a fight out of him, and so had Jack Chilton, but Floyd had the best claim, and now Lounsberry had actually been nailed. He had come to Stuart with despatches and Pelham had slashed him in the face with his gauntlet. A meeting had been arranged for to-morrow morning. He, Winston, was Pelham's second, and would almost give his parole, were such a thing possible to an officer of Stuart's cavalry, to get back to the Confederate lines and bring that fellow to book.

"You owe him a grudge as well as Maud Pelham's kinsmen," said he. "Sooner or later he's got to fight

or funk. I can't be there to second Pelham, and now there's no telling when any of us can get at him."

"Why not Chilton?" asked Fred.

"Chilton!" and Winston flushed with embarrassment. "Chilton has just been sent away on—other duty."

"With his wounded leader and kinsman—to Richmond?" hazarded Fred.

"No—o," was the halting reply. In fact Winston could not say whither he had gone.

It seemed long indeed before any of those who owed Lounsberry a grudge were enabled to "get at him." But there came a time, and not to those that wore the gray, but to Benton, still serving with Sheridan, still wearing the blue, still praying for a break in the straining lines that circled the still defiant Capital,—a break that would permit him to ride again to Charlottesville where he had left the silken sash, to say nothing of his heart, in the hands of that proud, impulsive Virginia girl. Even through Elinor, neither word nor sign had come from her in all these long months.

Grant had crossed the James and invested Petersburg, when to shake him loose, if possible, by the old device of scaring Washington, Early was sent down the Shenandoah Valley, with twelve thousand men and orders to stir up Maryland. Stir accordingly he did, until the arrival of the Sixth Corps from the James and the approach of the Nineteenth warned him he could not too soon drop it all and scurry back. He had come close

enough to sight the spires of the Capital City and put Stanton into a fume. He had displayed remarkable knowledge of all our works and ways, and had found time to substantially reward certain farm people near Shepherdstown and to shake hands with not a few enthusiastic sympathizers who came flocking out from Baltimore to meet him. No wonder Stanton was wroth! Then Early harked back, leaving just a few of his men cut off by a sudden rush of Union cavalry, one of these a young captain of his own staff, an almost invaluable officer. It seems that he had dared to ride too far to visit and thank certain people who had won his gratitude on a previous and more extended visit. This time it was not so easy to get away across the Potomac. He was still in hiding when Grant sent Sheridan to put a stop to further use of the Shenandoah Valley as the highroad to invasion of the North. Stanton growled at the order. Sheridan was too young, said he, for so important a command, but the President had seen enough of the policy of interference at the rear with the fighters at the front. Grant's choice was sustained, and speedily justified itself. With Sheridan went Fred Benton.

The Sixth Corps had followed Early across and fought him sharply in the Blue Ridge. Some of the wounded were still lying in farm-houses, and sorrowful women were busily caring for these as best they could, for most of their medical men had gone with the army. One warm August evening, as Benton came riding down

from a scout among the beautiful heights that border the valley on the east, he stopped to water his horse at the public trough in front of a village tavern, and while his half dozen troopers were resetting saddles and exchanging laughing, low-toned comment over the disfavor in the few feminine faces visible, his quick eye caught a glimpse of three forms that, coming suddenly from a leafy side street, had stopped short at sight of the blue-jackets and, after a moment's hesitation, had turned back the way they came. One, an elderly clergyman, gave his arm to a gentlewoman, evidently bowed with care and sorrow. The third form was that of a girl, slender, graceful, and in her walk there was something vaguely familiar to Benton's eyes, even before he noted that she wore a drab felt hat, broad-brimmed and feathered. There seemed no houses in the little hamlet that warranted the presence of people of such evident station, and Benton followed to the corner, saw the trio hold brief conference, saw the young lady bow her head as though in acquiescence, then enter the gateway of an unpretentious little home, while the other two walked slowly on. He had seen just enough to rouse both memory and interest. Quickly he crossed the street, followed along a hedge of rose bushes, turned sharply through the gate, and face to face at the trellised porch met the girl whom he had first seen sauntering along that leafy side street at Charlottesville in the spring of '62. Bearded, bronzed and stalwart as he was to-day, she saw nothing to remind her of the pallid prisoner

of the Chiltons, and only indignation at his intrusion blazed in her cheeks and eyes, but, in spite of gallant effort, she struck her colors at his very first word, when, with uplifted forage-cap he bowed and calmly addressed her:—

“Miss Pelham, I believe, whom I had the pleasure of seeing at Charlottesville. I hope your brother is not wounded—and here.”

Then he repented him of his cruelty when he saw her sway and stretch forth her hand for the support of the railing at the steps. “Pardon me,” he continued, his blue eyes fixed on her almost ashen face, “but nothing less could have brought you here, and, pardon me again, but I must enter,” and he moved as though to pass her by. Instantly, almost in terror, she grasped his arm.

“No! Oh, no!” she cried. “I give you my word! My brother is not here!”

“Then I am more than glad,” said Benton, for it all seemed to flash over him in the instant, and, despite her clinging hands and almost frantic appeal, he sprang up the steps and into the open doorway. There was a simple little country parlor, furnished with round center table and horsehair sofa and chairs, with those old-fashioned worsted mats upon the table and the little mantel-shelf, supporting ornaments of painted china and a gothic wooden clock. Beyond this parlor lay a little inner room, a bedroom, as he could easily see, with a window opening on the vines and berry bushes in the

back yard, and on the bed, gaunt, fever-stricken, and gazing up at the startled, colored mammy, acting as nurse, and then into the face of the blue-uniformed intruder, lay the wreck of the one personal enemy Fred Benton was aware of in all Virginia—all that was left of Scott Lounsberry.

And as the soldier paused there at the doorway, in utter silence the eyes of the two men met, Benton's blazing blue fire, Lounsberry's glaring with fever and hate. Then, throwing aside her feathered hat and the light wrap that she carried on her arm, Maud Pelham sprang past the Union officer and stood almost defiantly facing him.

"You shall not take him—touch him!" she cried, in tones intense and low. "He is terribly wounded. He has done you no wrong!"

Benton looked upon her in blended wonderment and pity. If what Winston said were true, what was she doing here? Instinctively he had removed his cap and stood before her bare-headed. At least she had been Rosalie's friend and playmate in the days before those cruel complications had arisen—before this now stricken man, actuated by who knows what passion of pique and longing for revenge, had broken up that friendship. Almost in sadness Benton began to speak.

"He tried hard to harm me and he made you the instrument," he said. "Did you not know that note was meant to lure me into a trap? Did you not know that his men were waiting there to seize or possibly to kill me?"

From the bed there came a feeble yet almost fiendish cackle of horrid laughter, and the girl's wild, dilated eyes that at Benton's words were staring at him, turned in sudden anguish and alarm to the fevered man, whose voice quavered in a sneer of mingled hate and triumph.

"You got away, thanks to her, and her meddling, but he won't—by God—he won't! They've got Jack Chilton hard and fast this time—a spy with a hatful of information and they'll hang him within the week!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

SURRENDER

The fever that followed the serious wounds received by Major Lounsberry was in itself sufficient to end the earthly career of even a stronger man. Two days after Benton found him that fever was gone, but so was the last atom of his strength. Those two days he tossed in delirium, watched by one unhappy, but devoted girl and that faithful old Mammy, and visited at such intervals as her own failing strength would permit by his heart-broken mother. Word of his peril had reached Charlottesville soon after the sharp fight at Snicker's Gap. Early's retreating force had striven to bring him along, but, between the torment caused him by the jolting of the ambulance and the persistent attacks of Union cavalry, they had had to leave him by the way. Mrs. Lounsberry and the venerable rector of their church started within six hours of the receipt of the news, by which time all Charlottesville had heard of it, and almost the first to come to the stricken mother was the girl her son had wronged. A strange meeting was that, and stranger still was one but half an hour later when Rosalie Chilton appeared, and two Virginia girls who had not exchanged a word since the first days of the

war, and neither of whom had been a visitor at the Lounsberrys' for many a moon, buried their differences with that sorrow-laden mother, and set their own quarrel aside that they might be of service to her and to a soldier of the South in the hour of such affliction. Moreover it was in Dr. Chilton's old carriage, with Dr. Chilton's old horses and driven by Black Dan, that the journey to the distant front was made. This was no time to speak of the cruel things said by the Lounsberrys of Dr. Chilton and Rosalie after Benton's escape. The grave had closed over the proud, impetuous head of that now doubly bereaved household. Ill fortune had followed the father's death, and much of his little estate had been sold under the hammer. Small comfort had the handsome prodigal proved himself at that or any other time, but much had he promised as the result of his approaching marriage. There had been a memorable interview between the mother and that wronged and trusting girl when at last Maud Pelham's forebodings were realized. There had in fact been a violent scene, for Mrs. Lounsberry had sought to shield her son and at Maud's expense. But that, too, was all ignored now. The other engagement had been broken summarily two weeks after Yellow Tavern, for one of Wade Hampton's staff, sent home wounded, had told at Charleston how Floyd Pelham had struck Lounsberry and why. There had been weeks in which Maud Pelham would have met Lounsberry only with scorn and contempt, but that was before his comrades sent him

to Coventry, and never again after news of his serious wound. Though all Charlottesville knew that he had been false to her, she went to his mother the instant she heard the tidings, and with her on the anxious journey that followed.

They were searching the impoverished little village under the heights, hoping somewhere to find ice to allay that burning fever, when the sight of blue-jacket cavalry sent them back and Benton followed. They, who over and again had forgotten and forgiven the sins of the stricken man, were amazed when, early next morning, a Federal officer drove over from the distant camps beyond the foaming Shenandoah and unloaded at their humble doorway, not the expected and hated guards, but a box of ice, packed in sawdust, and certain supplies from the commissariat. Then, while a brace of soldiers were attending to these, a gifted young physician on Sheridan's staff was gravely studying the tossing patient. Nor did charity end here—but details are unnecessary. The mother accepted all with wondering and tearful gratitude, the almost hopeless girl with humbled and sorrowing spirit, and even the doomed soldier himself, when consciousness returned, was too weak to resent or to refuse, and so childlike and broken that he could only bury his haggard face in the poor mother's breast and sob out the story of his shame and contrition.

It was through Sheridan's lines and Benton's help they bore him away to his last resting place when the

solemn struggle was over. It was at Charlottesville again that Maud Pelham and Rosalie met beside the grave, and that later, on her knees, her face buried in the lap of the once imperious queen, a poor, humbled, heart-broken girl sobbed out in turn her own sad story and Lounsberry's confession, little dreaming that it would send still another to her knees, praying not alone for mercy for the repentant dead, not alone for the rescue, the safety, of a beloved brother, but even for heaven's blessing on an enemy to Virginia and the sacred cause—the soldier she had so cruelly wronged.

“He's past prayin' for, bedad!” said the captain of the Montgomerys, of Benton, about this time,—the captain and most of his men being at home on veteran furlough. “Ould Stanton's got the devil's own grudge agin him fur turnin' up in time to spoil a hangin'—all on account av Ladue that's dead.” It was hardly a felicitious, yet surely a concise, way of settling the story. At no time during his incumbency was the great War Secretary in so evil a mood as during that summer of '64. Grant and Sherman had both pushed southward in the face of furious fighting, yet gold had soared to flights hitherto unknown,—so had the list of casualties,—and a great political party, having pronounced the war a failure, set perhaps the greatest failure of the war at the head of their ticket and started a campaign to down the President beloved of the people. Then the conduct of affairs in the field had slipped from Stanton's hands. A greater than Halleck or he was now in calm, masterful, imper-

turbable control, while the head of the Department of War had perforce to be content with managing matters at the rear, where, it must be owned, enemies were almost as active as over the line. Many a military head he hit that summer and fall—summarily dismissing even regulars without the form of a trial—sometimes imprisoning “suspects” without sign of a warrant, sometimes sending whole families into exile, and at all times being as overcharged with explosive shock as a bulging thundercloud sailing in search of object at which to launch a bolt. The illimitable humor and patience of the President, coupled with the unalterable conviction of the Secretary himself that ruin would follow were he to resign, stood between the latter and open rupture with his incomparable chief. He would have hanged Jack Chilton before the end of the August moon if it had not been for Lincoln’s restraining hand. Proof? What more proof was wanting? Had he not a second time—and both times in disguise—visited notorious Southern sympathizers within our lines? Was not the notebook found in his possession filled with memoranda, sketches, etc., of our field works and forces in Maryland? What if he did say he never penciled a line of them? Anybody would say that! The President, said he, was “soft-hearted as a summer squash in September.” The President wanted to see young Benton again, did he? What was this story about Benton’s appealing to Sheridan for safe conduct through the lines for rebel families with rebel dead? Stanton was quite

in the mood to carry out his threat of "breaking" Benton then and there, but rather ruefully was he realizing that he would have to take back another order, dismissing summarily a most gallant young regular, and Stanton hated to take back anything, right or wrong. However, he refused to order Benton to Washington, saying that a battle was imminent, that Sheridan needed every man of his staff, and meekly the President succumbed till the fight was over—and then it was Sheridan, not Stanton, who sent in our aide-de-camp, with hearty praise for his pluck and a shot through the shoulder. Winchester settled the matter for good and all. The President shook the other hand of the tall, bearded Badger and offered him two weeks' leave and a chance to go home until his arm was out of the sling. Benton begged instead for a chance to see Chilton, and the charges against him, and that very day drove Stanton to the verge of apoplexy, for when shown the fatal note-book he said he knew it well and could swear it was all the work of Paul Ladue and not that of Jack Chilton. Benton could not lift the gate of Lafayette, whither poor Jack had been sent, but he shattered all chance of their lifting the prisoner at the loop of a rope, and this news, too, went by devious, but still speedy ways to Charlottesville, where again, on her knees, by her father's bedside, with her arms about that father's neck, Rosalie Chilton thanked God for his mercies, and then found it harder than ever to begin the letter she had long meant

to write to Elinor Benton, even though now the sending of it might be impossible.

One more ride had Benton near the Iron Brigade, after long months of separation from them, after many and many a day and night in saddle, mud and rain, in sleet and snow, up the Shenandoah, down the James River Canal, around Richmond, and then, amidst volleys of chaff and catcalls, around the rear of the entrenched Army of the Potomac and out into the dripping woods about Dinwiddie. One vehement, relentless, resistless day and night ride there followed, along a tormented flank, and then, that soft, sunshiny April morning, after the weeks of gloom and rain, the curtaining cavalry drew aside, revealing to the now hopeless eyes of the great Confederate leader the barrier ranks of the Fifth Corps—the Iron Brigade in their midst. And then, the historic surrender ended, while the blue columns tramped leisurely northward past the scenes of their fiercest endeavor, one command, following the line of the old Virginia Central, found itself, late in April, marching sturdily into Gordonsville, long time the abiding place of grim, unrepentant old wardog Ewell and their veteran antagonists of Jackson's famous corps. Some of these fellows, in worn gray uniforms, were at the station even now, two of them shaking hands with a tall staff officer in blue. "We hoped to have Jack here by this time, Major," said Winston. "His release was ordered soon as General Grant got back to Washington, but he had to stay because of—other matters," and

a flush of deep embarrassment burned on the Southerner's cheek. Even then they could not without grief and shame refer to the great tragedy that stilled even the joy of dawning peace, and hushed forever the voice of him who, with malice toward none, had never failed in boundless charity for all. Jack, though given his liberty, found himself still in need of War Department clearance papers that, in all the horror of those mid April days and the excitement of the chase for fugitives, were possibly inadvertently withheld. And so it happened that, with other sorrow-stricken Virginians, he was still under detention at Washington, while every nook of the river counties was being searched, and that it should be his lot to encounter still further annoy. A steamer from down the Potomac brought in three wounded men, victims of a possibly avoidable affray between a searching party and certain fisher people whose huts and sheds had been too suddenly visited in the darkness that precedes the dawn. Shots had been exchanged, due, it was claimed, to the confusion and excitement; but the tall, lank, woe-begone civilian who guided the party and got three serious wounds as his share of the casualties, swore he had been singled out for vengeance because he had been the means of breaking up more than one well-planned escape of Confederate prisoners. It was Jennings, and Jennings before breathing his last wished to see Captain Chilton, who swallowed his repugnance and went; for, in common with most of his people he believed the stricken man a two-faced spy and the seller

of information—which he probably was, yet hoped to play his game to the last and induce Chilton now to believe it was the dead and defenseless Lounsberry that threw the cavalry on Ladue that night below Mathias.

It was Southern lead, however, that ended Jennings's career, and he, at least, had he lived, could never have set foot again on Virginia soil.

These things they told Fred Benton that soft April evening on the way up to Charlottesville, as the sun was sinking behind the Ragged Mountains, and the Rivanna, bank full, came rushing and foaming down from the beautiful Blue Ridge. They led him from the wreck of a railway, through bowered streets, to the gate of an old Virginia homestead, where leafy trees clung thick and protecting about the columned portico and the wide-spreading eaves. There these two war-trained young cavaliers, still wearing their uniforms of gray, left him for a brief hour, and went their way to answer many a question, doubtless, from the lips of loved ones, not so entirely absorbed in their own bliss as to feel no interest in the possibilities of another affair. Every girl in Charlottesville had at least one lover in the war. Some had many more than one. Some, alas, had lost the only one. Was it like that Queen Rosalie should care for none? Queen Rosalie she was again in the hearts of many of her old coterie, but imperious, wilful, domineering no longer—changed to one and all, as all could see.

The trees and shrubbery were ringing with a riot of melody as Benton softly closed the gate behind him and

stood a moment, waiting for his heart to cease the violence of its throbbing. Blue birds, wrens and orioles were piping in final frolic before the close of day. The hedge rows and the lofty boughs alike seemed thrilling with life and ecstasy and song. Only the old white mansion was still. The broad doorway to the lower hall stood invitingly open. An easy chair, cushioned, stood close beside it, and other chairs, with a footstool or hassock, an old gray traveling shawl and a book or two were scattered about. A venerable horse, wheezy and sedate, was cropping the grass and switching at gnats under the blossoming fruit trees on the southward side. The locusts drooped over the old fence along the cross street, where that feathered, drab felt hat first caught Benton's weary eyes. But on this lovely, breathless evening no human form appeared, no human voice was heard in concert with the vesper hymn of the myriad songsters of the air. Purposely had Benton given no hint of his coming. Indeed, to whom should he send word? Why should he send to any one? Why, indeed, should he have come at all?

Three years before, this very month, he had escaped in the darkness of midnight from these surroundings, and it was Rosalie who pointed the way. Two years before, this very month, she had driven him forth from her presence, or turned from him in a fury of disdain, with insult on her lips, with wrath and contempt in her flashing eyes. Surely, encouragement he had none; yet, the moment military duty would permit, here again he

stood, the knight, the champion, the lover she had spurned, and never again even by faintest sign had summoned.

He wished her not to know of his coming. Men who deeply love and deeply long for answering symptom throw to the winds their every chance in coming heralded, for the fondest woman, given time and warning, is a consummate dissembler. The warmest heart will coat itself with ice impenetrable. No, he meant to take her by surprise as completely as Gordon's fellows had amazed the men of the Eighth Corps that dark dawn under the shadows of old Massanutten, and only to Winston at Richmond had he spoken of the possibility of his stopping over a day at Charlottesville. Half a dozen girls, however, knew of the presence of the invader before Rosalie Chilton, but none learned it in just such a way.

A few minutes Benton stood there in silent reconnoissance. He might have seized the old-fashioned brass knocker at the door and brought somebody in answer to the summons, but that would have spoiled the surprise. He bethought him of that old arbor in the garden, and wondered if he could pass the windows and the kitchen without attracting notice. Then, looking about him, and drawing closer to the shelter of the vine-shaded portico, he saw that the placidly grazing horse had uplifted his venerable head, and, with ears on end, was regarding, evidently, some approaching object ; then, with low and welcoming whinney, moved slowly

through the fruit trees as though to meet some one still beyond the field of the soldier's vision. Then it was that Benton for the first time realized that this was old Pyramus, the horse that three years before had safely borne him through the woods and by-roads to the mountain cabin, thence on to the gaps of the Blue Ridge, on from Rivanna to the Rapidan, and again to Bucklands and the final rescue north of Bristoe, only to be turned loose and abandoned to the pursuing gray-coats when poor Hector sank exhausted, crippled, and begging not to be left to the vengeance of the foe. Pelham's friends must have restored the old horse to his owners, yet now the veteran was being made at home here at the Chiltons'. How came that?

Fred would have gone instantly to renew acquaintance and reward his old four-footed friend with caress and praise, but someone else was crossing the lawn, with a white hand extended, palm uppermost, before her—some one in white dimity, though Benton didn't know it from damask, and cared nothing what it was, save that the waist, at least, clung to the queenly form he was so thrilled to see. The voluminous skirt was doing its best to balloon without the aid of a "skeleton"; for crinoline, being the height of fashion, was contraband of war, scarce in the South as cinchona; but these were details of which Benton took no note. There had been a time when he fully intended that, not so much for what she had said in her wrath as for what she must have believed of him, this proud, imperious, wilful girl should

be made to feel that he, too, could rebuke, but at sight of her and the weariness and lassitude with which she moved, all this seemed vanished into the air. All that he now saw,—heard,—felt,—knew,—was that it was she, Rosalie, who, only half a dozen rods away, lovely as ever in her dark beauty, yet pathetically changed, had thrown one arm about that scrawny, grizzled, equine neck, and stood softly stroking the lean old head, softly murmuring to the unheeding ear and nestling the warm velvet of her cheek upon that unresponsive jowl—all that sweetness thrown away upon a superannuated steed that, ignoring sweets incomparable, nuzzled about her rounded neck and arms in quest of lump sugar, long since a forgotten luxury. Rosalie's back was toward the intruder in blue, as, no longer hesitant, he went striding under the trees until almost within arms' length of her, Pyramus, the while, regarding him with mute and placid curiosity, with neither hope nor fear. And here the soldier stood and looked on hungrily a moment at priceless caresses, for any touch of which he could almost sell his soul, and listening to low, murmurous words of tenderness and affection that, lavished on him, would have turned grief or suffering to instant ecstasy. The sight thrilled him, even while it fired his soul with envious greed. And then,—and then came further murmured words, at sound of which his heart stormed at its heaving bars, and fairly leaped in mad delight and passionate, rejoicing love. Gracious heaven, could he believe his senses!

“Dear old fellow—dear old fellow! Did anybody think I’d let *him* be sold to strangers, after all he’d done for me—and mine? Good old Pyramus! Good old boy!” And all this with petting, patting hands, with that soft cheek still nestled against the long, brown, bony muzzle. “He’d do it all over again, wouldn’t he? He’d bring him back—back to me—if only—I hadn’t—” And then both white arms were clasped about that preposterous neck, and the dark tresses of the girl were bowed against and mingled with the grizzled, tangled mane of her one confidant. The lovely face was hidden from the worshipping eyes of blue, but only for an instant. In daring and delight and overmastering love, with caution thrown to the winds, and pride and resolution totally forgotten, Benton sprang forward, one low cry of “Rosalie” on his lips; seized; tore loose the clasp of the clinging arms, and, despite amaze and struggle and breathless protest, just as on that wondrous night at the old stone house, he strained the slender, panting, swaying form to his breast; and just as he did not then do, rained kiss after kiss on the velvet of that flushed, tear-wet, astonished cheek; yes, dared even in his strength and glory and delight to turn the now furiously resisting head upon his breast until the wild, dilated eyes were staring into his; until the rosy, panting mouth was so close to his quivering lips that denial seemed utterly in vain; then down he swooped upon the prize. But with one superb, supreme effort, she tore herself from his embrace; stood one instant, panting, speechless, with

hands uplifted against him, waving him back; with eyes that flashed and commanded and refused to melt even at sight of the passion and pleading and bewilderment in his face.

"I *could* not help it," he began. "You *must* know how I love you, and when I heard——"

"Heard!" and up went the hands in impotent wrath and protest. "How dare you—listen? Oh! Don't I *know* what—" but then the torrent of her words was stemmed by the sight of the changing light in the deep blue eyes, and all in a second she saw them clouding again as in pain and amaze they had clouded the bitter night of her impetuous, inexcusable attack two years ago. Yes, and his face was paling, his lips setting. He was seeing her again as time and again in mind's eye he must have seen her—unjust, ungrateful, unreasoning, in face of all that he had done and endured for her and for those she loved. And then—O heaven! with pain, disappointment, yet with conviction—conviction that she was after all not the Rosalie he had loved and worshiped in spite of herself, but the Rosalie she really was—proud, passionate, ungrateful, unjust; yes, utterly unworthy—he had dropped his strong hands and was slowly turning—surely turning away. Now he would go and never know how she had suffered for the sin. Now he would go and never dream how she had prayed for forgiveness and for him and for the time when she could tell him all. And now he he had come all unannounced and had startled and

stunned her, and heard—heard her weak, unmaidenly words, and, ah, *there* was the rub! would think, would surely think that she knew he was there, and so was only acting a part to lure him back. Oh, the shame, the bitter shame of it! But none the less was he going, and this time it might be for good and all. It was more than she could bear. It was the last and cruelest stroke of the evil fate that had so long hounded and pursued her. It broke the last prop of her stubborn womanly pride, her long-tried, failing strength, and for the first time in her daring, fearless, resolute life, Queen Rosalie threw out nerveless, groping hands for aid, and, sudden as the stroke of heaven, went crashing down.

O blessed sun that sank behind the Ridge and would not see! O blessed songsters that, trilling their last good-night, would suffer no other sound. O wise old Pyramus to wander off beneath the blossoming trees and give place to him who sprang, too late to seize; who knelt and, defiant of hygienic laws, lifted the bonnie, swooning head; clasped again the now pliant, yielding form, pressed kiss after kiss upon the soft, unresponsive but unresenting lips, and plead and prayed and called on heaven and on her until, with faint sigh, the fluttering breath returned, and then the dark eyes slowly opened, and one moment seemed ready again to blaze with the battle fire of the South, but that presently took refuge beneath the white flag of their own, long-lashed lids, and

with another sigh, with a soft glow stealing slowly up over rounded throat and cheek and even to the snowy brow, the beautiful, humbled face turned fairly toward him and buried itself in the blue of the broad shoulder. Like that of Appomattox, it was the surrender of utter exhaustion.

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They were standing two hours later in the dusk of the old portico. There had been a blessed, yet almost solemn, meeting at the bedside of the aging father, and all the story of that lamentable month two years earlier, with many a tear had been told. With the Squire and Elinor returned to the West there was no one to warn them against McKinnon, who from the very first had seemed to gain the guileless doctor's confidence. It was Chilton's childlike belief that every well-mannered man was a gentleman until proved otherwise, and it was not long before McKinnon knew all about them and all about Jack. It had been Rosalie's growing belief that her aunt must have had help, and that Squire Benton or his son was the helper; but at the last her father amazed her with the admission that he had given his personal note to McKinnon for money to be sent to Jack, and for other needs. Little by little her intuitive aversion to the man had given way before his apparently unobtrusive courtesies. He had never hinted at such a thing as a quarrel with the Bentons, father or son. He never referred to them except guardedly until Lade's recapture and Jack's narrow escape. Then he

had told her aunt, to whom he had been kindness and helpfulness itself, that the plan was known to the Secret Service, that Benton and Ladue had been still in covert correspondence; that Ladue wished to make it appear that he was striving to rejoin his regiment, while in point of fact he planned to be again captured and confined where he could escape the dangers of the battlefield, and the expedition to capture him and Jack was guided by information furnished by Benton himself—Benton, who had been under a cloud and hoped by the capture of Confederate officers to win his way back to favor. Rosalie had indignantly refused to believe at first; had even had a fierce verbal affray with the major, who brought the Virginian, Jennings, to prove a truth that, as McKinnon put it, he “never thought could reach her ears or it should never have escaped these lips.” An eloquent man was McKinnon, and music was in his voice and mischief in his soul. Benton had planned, he said, to capture Jack, and Jennings there stood ready to swear to it. Then, before she had time to recover herself, she had been ushered into that cosey parlor, and had come face to face with the man who filled her thoughts. It all looked like design on his part, and in her wrath and doubt and bitter trouble, she had hurled her accusation and fled. But, long before Ladue’s visit to Charlottesville, she had begun to suspect both McKinnon and Jennings. After his coming she had known no moment of peace, yet, how could she write or tell him whom she had so outraged? Of what

use was it? He would forget it—and her—in course of time——

“Does this look like it?” asked Benton.

They were standing by the open doorway. She had brought down to him the beautiful sash he had left with her when he rode away, for this very night he must return to Gordonsville and join his chief for the morning's march. Meantime he had been winding it about her, the silken folds clinging to the dainty white dimity, and now, having thrown the tasseled ends over his arm, had seized her soft hands and was looking down fondly, wonderingly, in that almost unrealizing, unbelieving bliss of newly requited love.

“Does this look like it—that for two years I should have been making every effort to reach you, only to be stormed at as if I had sinned past pardon in having clasped you—here?” and raising her little hands he held them firmly upon his breast, the creamy white upon the dusky blue. Then, one hand being quite big enough for that purpose, he stole his right arm round her and drew her closer. The sound of slow, measured footfalls and soft voices could be faintly heard along the shaded street. Some of her coterie were surely coming to scout the approaches if not actually to seek the presence of their erstwhile queen. Not that they would interrupt for worlds! They only wished to see. And through the summerlike stillness of the night, afar down at the railway station, the sputtering hiss of steam told that the iron horse was waiting im-

patient for the start. "It may be weeks before I can hope to reach you again," he murmured, "and— isn't that Georgia Scott's voice?" A swift upward glance of the soft, dark eyes said yes, and though for an instant they fell again, it was but for an instant; there was something so compelling in the glow of his.

"Then—" said he, speaking and bending lower.

"Then—what?" she murmured, persistingly insistent on being told, though her head drooped again.

"Then—it's time for some—token of surrender, is it not?" And now, loosing the little hands, leaving them self-clasping on his breast, he wound the other arm about and drew her closer still.

"I don't—quite—" she dimpled, her soft cheek sinking on her own hands, her tiny ear catching the loud beating of his heart, a vagrant tress fluttering in the breath from her parted lips.

"You do, I think," he answered, half smiling. "When a soldier surrenders he gives up his sword. When a girl surrenders she should give up—her lips," and holding her more firmly, he bent yet lower, seeking with wordless eagerness the sweet symbol that he craved. But she nestled closer still where he could not see her glowing face, and the answer came, half stifled, after a moment of shy silence:

"You're not magnanimous like your commander. He would not *touch* the sword of General Lee."

"I see!"—and this very slowly, "and—you prefer that I should be—like General Grant?"

No answer, verbal at least. Even queens are women and would be wooed. He should be made to know this, even when both heart and lips said yield. But the fates were against her. Silvery laughter and soft voices sounded close at hand now. Ah, some were happy, even in the shadow of the great surrender, since there were still loved ones left for the sweet home-coming.

"It is Georgia," whispered Benton, "and, as I live, Kate Falconer! They'll be here in a minute and I'll be gone. Rosalie, do you remember that night three years ago when you said 'now or never'?"

One moment of fluttering heartbeat—of latent, still smouldering rebellion, then at last—surrender. Slowly and with down-cast eyes the queenly head was raised. One swift look into his glowing face, and the white arms stole about his neck; the rosy mouth uplifted and, meeting the fervent pressure of those bearded, eager lips, in its own sweet way, gave answer.

L'ENVOI

Three years later, in the early spring of '68, we were steaming back through Mississippi Sound, *en route* for New Orleans by way of the Rigolets. It was an exquisite morning, and the land breeze was laden with the fragrance of the magnolias and soft with the balsam of the Southern pine. The steamer darted swiftly through the placid blue waters, bearing among other passengers a little party of officers and ladies, returning from a brief

visit to Mobile. Carver was there, captain and brevet lieutenant-colonel in the regular service, and still with Hancock, who was then commanding the Department of the Gulf. Benton was there, holding like rank with his old friend of the staff; and with Benton, seated on the upper deck, was Rosalie, looking fondly into his face at times, then again, with earnest interest, on another pair, talking in low tone together at the bows. It had been a solemn pilgrimage, this mission to Mobile. They had gone thither to lay away all that was mortal of Paul Ladue, transferred from the rocky banks of the little stream in far-away Pennsylvania to the shady nook where, all night long in the moonlight, the mocking bird sang in this land of his boyhood and his devoted love. Gathered about his final resting place were few indeed of his kith and kin, but the tempered sunshine fell on fair women and brave men of both North and South—the blue and the gray—all enmity stilled, please God, forever. And of those who stood with tear-dimmed eyes, as a bugler of the old Eleventh Alabama sounded the soldier's lullaby over the fresh-heaped mound, Elinor Benton had laid a little spray of lilies of the valley on the lowering casket. It was a gray-sleeved arm, for the old uniform was seen on one or two veterans, that drew her gently away and led her, bowed and reverent, from the burial of her earliest love. It was the same arm on which she was leaning now, as she stood gazing down upon the dancing waters under the forefoot, and it was on these two, Elinor and brother Jack, that

Queen Rosalie looked with brimming eyes ; then, questioning, up into her stalwart husband's face.

But for whom did not Queen Rosalie scheme and plan? Was it not she who, when the Pelhams had to part with old Pyramus, sold a precious ring to buy him? Was it not she who found place after place among the officers for young Pomp, well nigh spoiled in the exaltation of being his own master? Was it not she who pleaded for Hector, faithful to her husband through many scenes, yet sometimes lax in duty through the fascinations of New Orleans? The old home at Charlottesville had gone to other hands after the doctor's peaceful death in '66. Jack had previously settled down to hard work in New Orleans and, like many another manful young Southron, was winning his own way in the paths of peace. Life seemed vested with new interest to him, however, since the coming, early in the winter, of Aunt Elinor to stand sponsor on a very interesting occasion, and if Rosalie Benton had a wish still ungratified it was one that bade fair soon to be numbered with others of the past. Her soldier Fred was proud and happy in his profession, a success, despite all prophecies of Stanton to the contrary and all pleadings of the Squire to quit and learn the law. Her baby boy had no peer in army circles in the South. Her brother, after one serious illness during the yellow fever the previous autumn, was in the best of health and the height of hope and spirits. Always a frequent visitor at their bright army home at the old barracks, he had become

practically a day boarder, as he expressed it, since the advent of Aunt Elinor. The war, that left its scars on so many a soldier frame, seemed to have bequeathed no bitterness to the men who battled in the field. They that fought so manfully in the smoke-shrouded ranks, either blue or gray, had no stomach for the post-bellum warfare waged in Congress and convention by unterrified orators of the McKinnon type—men so seldom heard of on the fighting line that only when the war was over did we begin to realize the valorous zeal that burned unquenchable in their breasts. McKinnon had gone no more to the old home city. He scored brilliantly a while in Georgia after the war,—prominent in the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees and Abandoned Lands,—then went to Congress on the carpet-bag ticket, but only for a term. We heard of him in Mexico in '69, head of some colonization scheme that soon dwindled into smoke, then lost track of him entirely.

As for the old brigade, the few remaining forms are bent; the beards are thinned and grizzled; the old and honored leaders have almost all been gathered to their fathers; only one or two of those that, rising with it, won and wore the star of command, still move and have their being. But as year follows year, the few survivors gather to tell again the tales of Gainesville, Gettysburg and the awful Wilderness, and to crown with love and loyalty the names of those that made them and led and lived with them through all that heroic struggle for national life, there rings ever a sentiment second

only to the faith and fealty they owe the Flag:—Boundless is their belief in the men that wore the blue; boundless, also, is their soldier admiration for the men that wore the gray.

THE END

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