ANNIE RANDALL WHITE

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

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The Blue and The Gray / Or, The Civil War as Seen by a Boy:

Содержание

A. R. White
The Blue and The Gray / Or, The Civil War as Seen by a Boy

TO THE SONS AND THE DAUGHTERS OF THE VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR;

TO THOSE WHO FOUGHT ITS BATTLES AND LIVED TO INSTIL ITS LESSONS OF PATRIOTISM IN THE HEARTS OF THEIR CHILDREN; TO THOSE OF ALL CLIMES WHO LOVE LIBERTY AND THE NOBLE LAND WHERE FREEDOM HAD HER BIRTH; TO THE MEMORY OF THE HEROES OF NORTH AND SOUTH WHO FELL IN BATTLE; TO ONE UNITED COUNTRY,

BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH, FOREVER ONE IN ALL NOBLE AND LOFTY PURPOSES AND AIMS; TO THE HOMES OF AMERICA; THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED BY YOURS SINCERELY

THE AUTHOR.

CALEB B. SMITH, Secretary of Interior.
EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of Navy.
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.
EDWARD BATES, Attorney-General.
SIMON P. CHASE, Secretary of Treasury.
MONTGOMERY BLAIR, Postmaster-General.
JUDAH P. BENJAMIN, Attorney-General, War, State.
ROBERT TOOMBS, Secretary of State.
LEROY P. WALKER, Secretary of War.
STEPHEN R. MALLORY, Secretary of the Navy.
CHRISTOPHER G. MEMMINGER. Secretary of Treasury.
JOHN H. REAGAN, Postmaster-General.

THE scenes of the war, related by a boy who followed the flag from the beginning to the end of the war, must carry with them a sense of accuracy, for they are the recollections of actual service. Those books which have been written upon the war have, with very few exceptions, been penned from the standpoint of mature opinions and experiences. In this work the views and struggles of a boy who went into the army, from an honest desire to do right, are portrayed. To fight was abhorrent to his nature, but there was a call for men who were willing to defend the institutions of his beloved land. And that defense was only possible through bloodshed and conflict. Tenderly instructed by a loving and gentle mother, whose early home was in the South, it was almost a wrenching of her cherished opinions, to give him up to fight against her kindred. But her boy did not enter the contest with a thought of conquering his fellow-beings, but as a

duty which, though painful, must be performed. How that dear mother gave him to his country, how he marched, and fought, and endured hardships, are here set forth in the colors of truth, for it is a true story.

And that the boys and girls of to-day and their fathers and mothers may follow the varying fortunes of the boy of our story, thus ushered into the conflict, with pleasure and profit, is the heartfelt hope of

The Author.

INTRODUCTION

BOOKS without number have been written upon the Civil War. There will probably be many more, for it is a fruitful theme. Many of them are faithful and accurate presentations of the great deeds done in that war. But whether large or small, they are all imbued with a desire to perpetuate that love of our country which should become one of the absorbing passions of the soul. It is a truth worth remembering—that the man who is a traitor to his country will be a traitor to all the relations of life.

Our land, young as it is, has received an awful baptism of fire and blood. It sprang into being amid the anguish of the Revolution, and before it had achieved a century of freedom, it was plunged into one of the saddest conflicts which ever desolated a nation—the conflict between brothers, speaking the same tongue, living under the same government, and enjoying the same great privileges. But from that terrible ordeal it has emerged, and we are once more one in aim and purpose, and have taken our stand among the proudest nations of the earth, their equal in intelligent achievements, religion and progress.

The little book we offer our young readers is the simple story, told in plain language, of a boy who was really in the army—one who left a pleasant home, as did thousands of others, a mere lad, loving his native land, knowing her need of strong hands and willing hearts to defend her. His purpose was noble, his

mind fresh and ready for impressions; the scenes of those days are as ineffaceable as though written on marble, and not even the corroding touch of time can eat them away. So the present volume has been penned, that the boys and girls who read its pages may know of the hardships and self-sacrifice of the boys of those days—how cheerfully they enlisted to uphold the "starry flag," whose folds shall ever "float o'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave."

There are other lessons to be taught, as well as that of courage alone; the lessons of patriotism, of sacrifice, of respect for a government that offers to all its protection so long as they obey its just and equitable laws. No one doubts the courage of our boys, but they must remember that there is a higher quality than mere bravery—regard for human life, that' it be not destroyed wantonly, a respect for others' rights and opinions, a readiness to submit to discipline, a willingness to yield up life when honor and duty demand it. All these thoughts were impressed upon the boy of our story, and made him a grander man for their lessons, when the pursuits of peace claimed him.

To the boys and girls whose fathers and friends fought that a great principle should live, to those whose dear ones fell in battle, or died of wounds, to all who read this true history of one boy's life in the army, we send forth this picture, the type of a true soldier, who did not love war for its noise and glitter, but who conscientiously fought the battles of his country because he revered her beneficent institutions. It was there that he was

taught what true freedom meant, and through all his trials, his privations, he kept his faith in God and humanity undimmed.

Such was our boy, and of such material heroes are made.

The Publishers

THE CIVIL WAR AS SEEN BY A BOY

CHAPTER I. THE BEGINNING OF WAR

THE early spring days of 1861 were dreams of beauty. The skies smiled blandly upon the earth, and every heart was glad that the long winter was over, and the charms of outdoor life could be enjoyed once more. Surely nature had done her part in making men happy.

A spirit of unrest and uncertainty, however, brooded in the air. The long conflict between opposing ideas, which had waged so long and bitterly in politics and churches, and through the columns of the press, had come to a focus, and dread murmurs were abroad, of an impending war, and its attendant horrors. Men looked in each other's faces, and asked, with sad forebodings—"What is coming next?"

The South made ample preparations to seize two South Carolina forts, Moultrie and Sumter, as early as December, 1860.

Lieutenant-Colonel Gardner was the commander of Fort Moultrie, and, loyal to the government, he sent to Washington

asking for reinforcements to help him hold that fort. This request offended the Southern members of Congress, who construed it into an insult, and demanded his removal. This demand was acceded to by Secretary of War Floyd, and Major Robert Anderson of Kentucky was appointed to supersede Colonel Gardner.

Major Anderson, faithful to the trust reposed in him by the government, soon decided that Fort Moultrie could not be held against a vigorous assault, and he moved his garrison secretly to Sumter, a fortress across the harbor. This fort could not be approached by land, and, consequently, from this fact, was deemed more secure against any opposing force. The undertaking was a dangerous one. The harbor was full of guard boats, vigilant and watchful, and only their supposition that the little rowboats containing Major Anderson and his men were laborers going to the other fort to work on it, prevented their detection and arrest.

Moultrie's guns had been trained to protect this transfer in case the Major's intention was discovered, and the fort, whose defense rendered the gallant Anderson immortal, was occupied by his troops at only twenty minutes' notice! We think that was the quickest "moving time" on record.

A siege gun which was turned upon Fort Sumter is shown on page 20. Its carriage is broken, and it was thus rendered useless by the Confederates, when they abandoned the fort in 1864.

France and England would not acknowledge the South as

an independent nation, but the Confederate government did all possible to bring this about by sending Messrs. James M. Mason of Virginia and John Slidell of Louisiana to London and Paris with the hope that their claims would be recognized. Henry Ward Beecher, when in the height of his fame, afterward went to England, addressing immense audiences, and setting forth the true condition of American affairs.

The hope of the Southerners was that the government would allow a peaceable withdrawal of the dissatisfied States, and that no bloodshed would be necessary, but as time went by and the most active preparations for keeping them in the Union were made by the general government, they commenced hostilities, and the first gun of the war was fired by the Confederates under General Beauregard on the morning of April 12, and while the officers and men within the fort were eating their breakfast, a perpetual bursting of shells and shot kept them awake to the fact that the peace had been broken, and war had begun.

After breakfast the force was divided up into firing parties and the first reply on the part of the Union was made by Captain Abner Doubleday. But their guns were very light.

A bombardment followed, and on the 14th of April, 1861, General Robert Anderson evacuated the fort.

Blockade running was so common it became necessary to fit out out an expedition to close the most valuable of the openings, Hatteras Inlet. The first expedition projected for this purpuse was fitted out near Fortress Monroe and was under the command

of Flag Officer Silas H. Stringham. The engagement lasted three hours with a complete victory for Stringham, and several blockade runners entered the inlet and were captured.

The news fell like a pall upon the North. It was impossible so many and old man urged, that Americans, our own people could be so disloyal. Why had they done it? What did it mean? And when, in consequence of this act, President Lincoln ordered them to disperse within twenty days, and called for 75,000 men from the various States, to enlist to "suppress this combination against the laws," the response came swiftly.

In every town and village the patriotic fires were kindled, and boys and old men pressed on, side by side, willing to give their lives, if need be, to uphold their country's flag.

Many a smooth-cheeked lad, loved dearly and tenderly reared, went forth from his home, never again to enter its portal. Alas, for those sad days!

Recruiting went swiftly on. Speech-making and passionate appeals to the people were heard in every quarter of the North.

Women could not fight, but they could organize sewing societies, and work untiringly for those who had gone to the front. Many an article found its way to the army that was useful, and when blood had been spilled, these same patient and tearful women sent lint, and bandages, and medicines, for the sick and wounded.

As the call for soldiers awoke the boys and men of the North, so did a like summons from their leaders arouse the spirit of the

South. They had orators in their midst, whose tones swayed them, and they, too, enlisted to form an army which should repel the "encroachments" of those whom they deemed their enemies.

Boys went forth from luxurious homes, and stood shoulder to shoulder with the humblest, clad in the gray, all equally ready to sacrifice life and home to their idea of duty.

One lad, in his Western home, a dreamer thus far, the light of his widowed mother's life, heard the war cry, and the blood tingled in his veins as he listened to stirring arguments day by day, and saw one after another of his companions leave their homes to join the forces that were being hurried forward to headquarters.

He felt that he must go with them. Why not? His eye was as keen, his brain as clear, his arm as strong to do whatever his country required of him, as were theirs.

This longing haunted him by day and night, until it became unbearable. He went to his mother, and with earnest words begged her to send him. Alas, that mother was not equal to the task. She was loving, gentle and shrinking, and when he urged her to let him go, her answer was—"Ralph, you know not what you ask. Do you forget that I am a Southern woman, whose childhoods days were spent in that beautiful country? All my people are there. Would you have me send my boy away to fight those I love, and whose feelings I must share? You are asking too great a sacrifice at my hands."

"Mother, it is true that you were born and educated there. But did you not love my father so dearly that you left your home

and all your friends to come to the North with him, where I was born?"

A tender smile flitted across her still beautiful face. "Yes, I did love him," she said softly to herself, "and I honor his memory. What shall I do?—I cannot forget my dear childhood's home. It is too hard a question for me to decide."

"Let me decide for you, mother. You surely love your Northern home and friends. The people of the South have fired upon our forts in Charleston harbor, and driven the garrison away. I, too, am a Southerner in many ways. Are you not my mother, and do you not know I honor every thought or wish of yours?"

"There must be some other way to bring them back, rather than by fighting. War is a cruel and unnatural alternative. Why, they will be firing upon their own people—like brothers in one family falling out, and seeking to do each other deadly harm."

Ralph was silent. His heart burned with patriotic fire, and it seemed to him that it was his duty to help swell the numbers of those who were ready to respond to the President's call. But he also knew that his mother loved her early home, and that it seemed to her unnatural for him to be so ready to take up arms against "her people," and he respected her too deeply to wound her willingly. That mother had been gently born, and when she met the young Northern lawyer, she had loved him from the first, and cheerfully shared his humble but peaceful home. She was now left alone in the world, with her three girls and this boy, the

youngest. The fortunes of war were too varying. She might never see him again, and how could she live without him?

To Ralph was presented a problem that he was called unexpectedly to solve. He pondered over it in the silence of night, and in the busy hours of day. Was it right to fly in the face of his beloved mother's prejudices by joining the Federal forces? On the one hand he felt that he, too, was Southern in feeling and in birth. His father was a Northern man, and he would uphold the old flag; but which side it was his duty to join, he could not determine. He was resolved to go into one of the two armies. In the crisis that had come, it was clearly every one's duty to come to the front.

The boy talked with every one whom he could interest. He was not able to study out the problem alone. One of his schoolmates had the proud distinction of having an uncle who was a commissioned officer, and he took the bold step of meeting him one day when he was walking past his home.

"Sir," he said timidly, "may I speak to you?"

"Certainly," the officer replied. And then and there he poured forth his doubts, his desire to do what was right, his mother's objections—all, he told the waiting gentleman whose opinion he so desired.

The officer laid his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder.

"Your wish does you credit. The fortunes of war are too varying for me to decide for you. Try and work out the proper answer yourself, and may you be helped to make a wise

decision."

Alas, the question was too hard for a boy like him to answer. He was humbly trying to see where his duty lay, and then he was ready to enlist on whichever side called him. On one hand was his mother and her early teachings, on the other his dead father, with all his views. "What side would *he* choose were he here?" was the ever-recurring thought in his anxious brain.

But after weeks of this long, weary struggle, he decided to join the Union army. His mother saw that he believed he was shirking a duty, and that he longed for action.

She thought she would make one more effort to change his purpose. She said to him suddenly one day, when she saw his troubled face: "Ralph, you are only seventeen. You have never been away from your home, and know nothing about hardships and privations. Do you think you could face a cannon, and know that its deadly mouth might lay you low on the field, mangled and torn?"

"Oh, mother, I never think of such things. If I enlist, I must take my chances with the rest. I want to go with the other boys. Eddie Downing and George Martin have and are going into camp to-morrow, at Readville."

"But will the government accept you? Eddie and George are three or four years older than you. There are plenty of men, without taking a boy who is his mother's chief comfort."

"I am strong and well. When I come back, you will be the proudest mother in the land, to think you sent your boy away. I

may go with your blessing, may I not? That will protect me."

The boy's eyes were moist with emotion. His mother, with a sigh, gave her reluctant consent, and though many a bitter tear was shed in the loneliness of her room, she bravely hid them from the boy she loved.

Now that the decision was final, she made every preparation for the comfort of the boy who was to leave them so soon. His sisters wept continually—not a very cheerful parting, but Ralph was the idol of his home.

"Mother," he said to her a day or two after she had given her consent, "do not worry about me. I shall do my duty. This war *can't* last long. Then I'll come back to you, and stay at home as long as I live, depend on that."

His beaming face half reassured her, and she began to share his enthusiasm. He was enrolled as a soldier. Although his youth was at first objected to, his earnestness carried the day, and he was told to report at Camp Hale at once.

He was a real soldier at last! A genuine soldier, who must fight. He did not belong to the would-be soldiers, such as they used to call the "militia," who simply paraded on the open green, or turned out on dress occasions, with the curious for an audience, who would watch and be astonished at their evolutions and their showy uniforms, when the Fourth of July or kindred days made their demands upon them.

In his neat-fitting suit of blue, the cap setting jauntily upon his head, his musket in hand, and his belt with its bayonet buckled

around him, he looked so manly that a thrill of pride flashed o'er his mothers face, as she looked at her boy, her Ralph, in his "soldier clothes."

But when the day came for him to leave the only home he had ever known, and he turned to take a last look at its plain walls, his heart almost failed him. His beloved mother stood in the doorway, her hands pressed over her face, while she strove to keep back the choking sobs, as she bade her boy—"Good-bye, and may God bless and protect you." Those solemn words came back to Ralph in many a lonely hour, and brought him consolation and support.

Thus, in many homes, both North and South, were the heartstrings torn, as mothers and sisters bade farewell to the boys in blue and gray, who went to the front, to lay down their lives for duty's sake.

Ralph was a proud boy when he joined his companions in camp, wearing the blue uniform, with its shining buttons bearing the U. S. stamp upon them.

He was naturally retiring, but now he felt as if the eyes of the world were upon him. He had taken an important step, and he would show his friends and that great big world that he knew exactly what he was doing.

Camp life was one continual drill—so it seemed to him. Readville was a quiet little town, but its people were ablaze with patriotism, and the "boys in blue" were the recipients of perpetual admiration. Every move they made was noticed and

approved, and it is not to be wondered at if some of them did greedily swallow considerable flattery, which led them to assume quite lofty airs.

The sameness of life in camp soon wearied, and Ralph longed for something more stirring. When the bugle call rang out, every man sprang up, and, after a hasty ablution, at a second call they made a charge upon their breakfast with vehemence, and tin cups and plates rattled in a most discordant fashion. Then the drill began; first with musket and rifle, and then with the bayonet. A bayonet charge was a fierce reminder of the real thing. When men meet the enemy with fixed bayonets, a dreadful slaughter may always be counted on. This drilling was kept up at intervals, all through the day; first in squads and companies, and then the entire regiment would take part in the use of these weapons, and the various evolutions that the drill-master taught.

Ralph was very anxious to become proficient in their use, and while many of the older men grumbled at this work, he kept on, learning at each repetition something more of their actual value.

"You'll have to know all about this," said Lieutenant Hopkins to them, or you'll be in a nice hole when you're caught out in the field. "We don't know how soon we may be sent to the front, and then there won't be much time for this sort of practice. It'll be march and fight then."

Way down in his heart this quiet stripling, hitherto jealously guarded from a knowledge of the world by a fond mother and sisters, had his own dreams of fame burning brightly and steadily.

What if he could plan or assist in some grand sortie, and be mentioned in the dispatches as "the gallant private of Company K– Mass. Volunteers, whose valor turned the tide and carried the day?" Then probably he would be summoned before the commanding officer, and honors would be thrust upon him. Perhaps, if he kept on, he might be a general! What would the dear ones at home say then? The picture was too brilliant; his head fairly grew dizzy at the prospect.

"I'll tell you," he said to a comrade, "we are in no danger of starving here in camp, at any rate, if we don't have much variety."

"That's so. What's the matter with pork, beans, soup, bread, molasses (here he made a wry face), rice and hard tack? If we get enough of these, we'll pull through all right," his companion responded cheerfully.

"And we sleep as sound as kittens in our wooden bunks, with plenty of straw for a bed, and our big army blankets over us," continued Ralph.

"The pillows might be a little softer," said Harvey Phillips. "Overcoats doubled up ain't quite as easy shook up as feathers."

"No, but our captain tells me that we are living in clover just at present. Wait till we go into a battle. Perhaps we'll come out without any heads, then we won't need any pillows," laughed Ralph.

"That's true. Your easy times are right here just now," said a "vet," who had been in many a battle in the far West with the red men, and had "smelt powder" to his heart's content. "War looks

very pretty on paper, with the big fellows at Washington moving the men like they're at a chessboard, but wait till the guns speak up on the field, and men to men are hurled against each other, to fight like demons. The real thing ain't so romantic, let me tell you youngsters."

"You can't frighten us," said Harvey. "We are no three months' men. We enlisted for the war and we propose to see the war out."

"Boys, I tell you war aren't no pastime. It means work, and hardest kind of work, at that. It's a great thing to organize an army, and keep its various parts in trim. We don't usually go out to fight the enemy with only a flask of powder, and a knapsack filled with soda crackers. There are men and horses and ammunition to carry along."

"Who takes care of all these matters?" asked Ralph.

"The quartermaster. He looks after the rations, the ammunition, in fact, all the supplies—blankets for the men, medicines for the sick and transportation for the baggage. He is usually a captain or a lieutenant. The government appoints him."

"Does he fight?"

"Oh, no. He's got no time for that. He has to look after the fellows who do the fighting. The quartermasters have excitement and danger enough, however, in protecting their stores They ain't like the sutlers."

"What is a sutler?"

"He's a chap that gets permission from the government to carry things to sell to the soldiers. He furnishes them at his own

expense, and then trades and sells them to the boys."

"Is he a soldier?"

"Not much. You don't see him in the battlefield. He takes good care not to interfere in any skirmishes going on. Somehow, the smell of powder don't agree with him."

"Then he goes to war to make money?"

"That's just what he does. He oftener loses it, though, and then his friends don't cry nor take up a collection for him. Still, he's generally a good sort of a fellow. He's obliging and always willing to trust a man. Often the boys help themselves to his goods without his leave, and then he's out that much. He has his ups and downs like the rest of us."

CHAPTER II. ORDERED TO WASHINGTON

CAMP life was pleasant, aside from the perpetual drilling, marching and countermarching. Friends had access to the boys at stated times, little gifts and pledges were exchanged, and the time passed swiftly. One day there was great excitement. Coffee was swallowed hastily, knapsacks were packed in a hurry, arms were brightened up, ammunition was dealt out, and the word ran through the camp—"We are ordered to report at Washington."

"Now I shall know something of what is going on. Poor mother, she will grieve over her absent boy, and fancy me in a thousand dangers. But I will write to her often, that will cheer her up."

And he did. Many a line he scribbled on his knee with a bit of pencil or a blackened stick, telling her of his safety and health. These short but welcome missives were read over and over, and fondly kissed, the dear little messengers of love and hope.

The war cloud was growing darker. The government arsenal at Harper's Ferry had been burned by Lieutenant Jones, who knew it would lessen its value to the Southern forces, who were marching upon the town. The latter, however, saved considerable of the government property, and next seized the bridge at Point of Rocks, thus circumventing General Butler, who was near Baltimore. They also took possession of several trains, which

they side-tracked into Strasburg, a measure which helped the Confederate train service in Virginia very perceptibly.

The ride of the boys in blue to Washington lay through the mountains of West Virginia, where nature revels in grand surprises. Many a little cabin perched far up the hillside was the home of those who had shed tears when old John Brown was led forth to die. Poor and scanty though their daily fare was, they were loyal and true, and the spirit of defiance to the old flag found no echoes in their breasts.

To Ralph the scenery appealed with deep solemnity. He was born in the West, where the green seas of the prairies seemed to know no limit. To him hills and valleys, with their somber shadows, were objects of awe. He noted the beautiful homes of wealth and taste as he was whirled swiftly by on the train. He saw the black faces of slaves working in garden or field, and heard their voices as they talked.

"Fore de Lawd!" he heard a grizzled old darkey say, as they drew into a small station for water, "pears like dey look jess like de white folks do down here!"

"You 'spected dey had horns, didn't you? Well, I knowed better. I'se been Norf wid Massa too many times to take in dat *idee*."

Washington, the capital of the nation, was reached. As they steamed into the depot, and began to unload, Ralph, for the first time since leaving home, felt lonely. He saw throngs of people, but all was strange and new to him, and his heart sank. The city

was full of soldiers waiting for orders, so full that it was a puzzle where to quarter them.

The Government buildings were full to overflowing, they "bunked" every-where, and wild pranks these boys played, their love of fun leading them into many a mad frolic. The city was too small for their mischievous natures, and it was no uncommon thing to make a trip into the surrounding territory, bent on extorting all the sport they might out of what most of them regarded as a sort of a gala time. "But we are ready whenever we are called upon," was their unanimous cry. The shooting of Colonel Ellsworth at Alexandria, because he tore down a secession flag, so short a time previous, and his prompt avenging, as you remember, had roused them to a sense of the hostility which was felt by those who sought to divide the North and South. Then the attack of the mob of Baltimore upon the Sixth Massachusetts, while being transported from one depot to another, was another proof that their brothers of the South had trampled friendly feelings beneath their feet, and that the fires of sectional jealousy were burning fiercely.

Their journey lay through a hostile State, and sober faces succeeded the jokes and laughter of the past few weeks. The South was plainly up in arms, and that "rebellion," which the whole North at first thought but the task of a few weeks to crush, began to assume the appearance and proportions of a long and cruel conflict.

General Butler was in command of the military department

of Virginia.

"Wonder if that means fight?" soliloquized Ralph. "The lads say he is a smart lawyer, but I don't know as that proves him to be a good fighter."

Ralph wrote often to that dear mother who was praying for her boy. "We move to the front to-morrow," so his letter ran. "I know how fond you are of your boy. I am going to do my duty, I believe. But is it not an awful thought that it is no foreign foe we shall meet, but our own people?—that is the sting in it to me."

The night before the battle the boys slept as calmly as if they were at home. At dawn they were called to march, and after an attack upon their rations, they began the advance into Virginia. Raw and undisciplined, they did not accept the gravity of the situation. They marched along, light-hearted and gay, enjoying the change from quiet camp life with all the zest of school boys. Many of them fell out of the ranks and picked the luscious berries growing thickly by the wayside, while others wastefully tossed out the water in their canteens and filled them with fresh every time they came to one of the springs which abounded in that beautiful and fertile region.

"This isn't hard work," Ralph thought. "We are having more fun than ever."

A halt had been called for a few moments' rest. A few rods from the road a dark stream ran slowly by, whose depths no one knew. A swim in its cool waters was proposed at any hazard, and, quickly disrobing, some of the younger ones plunged in, and were

having a merry time, when the roll of the drum was heard and the marching was resumed. Here was a fix! The army began to move, and a dozen soldiers were still in the stream, who snatched up the first garments they saw and hastened to dress. In their confusion they had almost to a man seized the wrong clothes, and the fit of some of them was ludicrous. But changes were quickly made, and after much good-natured "chaffing" they fell into line, and were as sedate and soldierlike as any "vet" among them.

The cry, "On to Richmond!" sounded throughout the land.

Officers and soldiers had been massed near Washington long enough, and the people, as well as the boys in blue, were impatient tor some results, now that an army had been called into being. The soldiers pined for action; the people were anxious to know what would be the outcome.

"Who commands the Southerners?" Ralph asked old "Bill" Elliott, a soldier who had taken quite a fancy to the boy, and was ready to answer his questions at all times.

"Beauregard, the same chap who opened fire on Fort Sumter."

"And what does he propose doing now?"

"Well, as I am not in his confidence, I can't just tell you, but I 'low we're not going to be in the dark long, neither are we likely to be the gainers by any move he makes if he can help it. He's got some thirty thousand men with him, and we'll have a lively time soon, you bet."

"The men want a brush, I think, from what they say. They're becoming tired of waiting."

"And so does the country; but they don't know how much easier it is to talk war than to be in it. What does the man who stays at home know about the dangers and trials of a soldier's life? How is he capable of judging whether it is time to fight or where it is best to strike, or how many odds a general of an army has against him? We'll have war enough before long—they needn't fear."

"Well, I suppose we'll some of us be in it soon, and who knows how many of us will come out?"

"Why, boy, you're not showing the white feather, I hope!' and Bill peered anxiously into the lad's troubled face.

"No, sir, I am not, but I can't help thinking of my poor mother, and, besides, you know I am going to fight her people. My mother is a Virginian."

"Is that so? I know, then, she must feel bad have you in our army. I can't blame her, nuther.

"But she's loyal to our flag, Bill," the boy hastened to add. "It would break her heart, though, if anything should happen to me."

"Cheer up! You'll get through all right. I can feel it in my bones."

Ralph laughed. "Why, of course I shall. It seems to me this war won't be a very long one."

"Perhaps not—you can't tell. But McClellan taught the Johnnies a lesson at the 'races' the other day."

"The 'races?'" Ralph's eyes opened wide.

"Yes, the 'Philippi races,'" Bill went on. "The Confeds ran so

fast from our boys at that battle that they dubbed their retreat the 'Philippi races,' in honor of the speed they showed. He has been made a general, and given the Ohio troops to command. He crossed the Ohio with four regiments and banged after the enemy. He found it hard work, for they say Colonel Porterfield burned all the bridges. He wasn't long in putting them in order, though, and getting over some big reinforcements. He routed them at Philippi and at Rich Mountain. Government ought to remember him, I tell you."

And it did, for "Little Mac," as he was called, was made commander-in-chief of the Army of the Potomac.

CHAPTER III. RALPH'S FIRST BATTLE

AT Washington all sorts of rumors were plenty. It was generally known, however, that General Beauregard was making for Bull Run, where the stream presented a natural barrier. General McDowell left Washington with a force, whose accompaniments of civilians, following the marching columns on foot, reporters, congressmen and idle sight-seers in carriages, was a motley and curious sight. Everyone declared this to be the battle which was to close out the rebellion, and all were jubilant at the prospect.

On the army pressed under the brave McDowell, who was planning to execute a flank movement upon the Confederates' left. A two hours' engagement routed the Rebels, who fled before the Union charge.

The victory seemed to the Federal troops an easy one, but Generals Johnston and Beauregard took the field in person, and, planting their artillery in a piece of woods, they held the open plateau across which the Federals were advancing, wholly at their mercy. General McDowell could see nothing of this, owing to the shape of the ground, only by mounting to the top of the Henry House, where they took their stand, and where the attack was resumed in the afternoon.

The men on both sides were raw troops; they had not become

the machines that after fighting made them. This was to most of them their first encounter, and as shot and shell flew rapidly by them, as the Union men advanced over the open ground upon the enemy, who were concealed within the woods, only to be picked off, one by one, by the Confederate sharpshooters, who took the gunners at their batteries, they became disheartened.

The fight in the forenoon had exhausted them, and they were unprepared for the work still to be done.

The battle was fierce; men were falling like hail, in all the agonies of death. Here a drummer boy was lying face downward, his stiff hand clutching the stick whose strokes would never wake the echoes again. There an officer, his uniform dyed with blood, lay prostrate on the ground, his horse half across his stiffening body, while at every turn the wounded were huddled together, in the positions in which they fell.

Ralph's heart turned sick, as he saw the brave fellows who manned the batteries tumbling over each other, many of them shot through the heart, as the Confederates, tempted by their success, stole nearer to the guns.

Captain Griffin, who made the sad mistake of thinking the troops were his own men coming to his aid, permitted the nearer approach of the Confederates. He discovered his error when a volley of musketry took nearly every gunner and stretched Lieutenant Ramsay low in death, as the rebels rushed in and seized the guns.

The fighting went pluckily on; both sides were in deadly

earnest. The batteries seemed to be the coveted prize, and they were taken and retaken, first by one army, and then the other.

Worn and harassed, in the confusion that ensued, regiments and companies became mixed, and thousands of men lost track of their companies and wandered about, not knowing where they belonged.

In the dense smoke that covered the battle ground, Ralph became lost, and, making a short turn, found a clump of trees with a thick growth of underbrush. He heard voices, and threw himself flat upon the ground, determined not to be taken prisoner.

"Wonder what General Beauregard's next move will be?" The tones were low and even.

"Well, Lieutenant, we cannot know at present, but it is certain we have taught the Yanks a lesson this day. They'll never forget Johnston's brigade. They were so sure of whipping us. It was a hot battle, and three or four times I thought we had lost. Those fellows fight well, but they're no match for the South. What's the matter over there? See, our men are retreating. Don't they know we've won the day?"

It was true. So many times had the victory changed hands, that it was hard to tell who had won finally and it looked as if the Confederate line was breaking.

Jeff Davis' heart sank as he came up from Manassas and found that hundreds of Confederates, under the impulse of fear, were fleeing to the rear. He kept on, only to find that the Northern

army was in full retreat, and the battle of Bull Run was a bitter defeat for the Federals.

Ralph lay there in ambush, pale with dread. He feared capture more than death. He rose quickly as the two officers galloped away, to stay their men, and looked upon the scene. Lines of men in blue and gray stretched away in the distance, while the noise of the guns, the neighing of wounded, horses, the huzzas of the victors, drowning the groans of the wounded, made him faint with horror, and his cheeks grew white as he saw men lying on their backs, their glassy eyes staring up to the sky, their faces ghastly and white, and peaceful, or else distorted with pain. Here a wounded soldier would half raise himself on one arm, and beg for water, while others, bleeding and dying, lay uncomplainingly, their eyes fixed on the blue sky, which nevermore would greet their waking vision.

In the dim light he saw all this, and knew not where to go. The terrible sights and hideous silence which succeeded the noise of conflict sickened him, and Ralph, the brave soldier boy, actually fainted.

"What's this? Why, it's Ralph! Is he killed?"

The tones sounded, to the boy's benumbed senses, far away, as a heavily bearded man knelt down and placed his hand upon his heart. He saw it was Bill, and the flush of mortification mounted to his brow, as he tried to rise.

"I was weak—dizzy—and I—"

"I know all about it!" good-humoredly laughed Bill Elliott, for

he it was. "This is your first appearance, and you had a sort of a stage fright."

Ralph bit his lips with vexation.

"Oh, that's nothing. You'll make a better showing next time. You'll live to be a brigadier-general. But I was kinder rattled myself when I saw you so still. I didn't know but some fellow had tuk good aim at you!"

"I'm not hurt in the least, Bill."

"Well, boy, come on. We've been whipped bad, and are most unpleasantly nigh those fellows with the guns over thar, and as I'm pretty tall, they might choose me for a mark, just to keep their hands in."

The Federal army, broken and defeated, straggled back to Washington, footsore, dirty and hungry. No battle during the war was fought with more desperation, and bravery was shown by both sides—the Union and the Confederate.

And though the defeat of General McDowell's forces was a blow to the pride of the North, it carried a valuable lesson; that the South would not be persuaded back to its old allegiance.

To the boys of this generation slavery is almost a myth. But when the Civil War broke out the blacks were held in bondage to masters who had acquired them by purchase or inheritance, and thus they represented property or wealth.

The South bitterly resented any interference with an institution which many of them honestly regarded as divine. In the North opinion was divided, some believing slavery to be

wrong, but that it would gradually die out. All classes were unwilling that it should be extended into new territory.

This difference of opinion led to the conflict which caused brave men to take up arms and arrayed brother against brother, in defense of what each believed to be just and fair.

CHAPTER IV. RALPH DOES PICKET DUTY

OLD Bill was a little fearful, spite of Ralph's protestations, lest his boy, as he dubbed him, was going to show the white feather, after all, and so he kept him well under his eye.

"I don't want the tarnal little rascal skipping, for it 'ud go hard with him to be caught. They'd shoot him sure."

But he didn't know the true mettle of the boy. He was no coward, if he did turn sick at the scenes of his first battle, and he was a lad of honor, and would have died before he would leave his post.

So he felt a little down-hearted when orders came for a detail from Company K to turn out for picket duty. The men themselves felt rather blue at this news, for they were worn out and disheartened by their late tussle, but they didn't expect their wishes would be considered in the matter. Ralph's eyes gleamed with joy, for he longed for adventure.

"Bill, I believe you think I am cowardly. You'll change your mind soon, I know."

That individual grimly responded: "Picket duty is a very cheerful way of passing one's time, but I guess you'll do."

The picket line was twelve miles distant, and as the men got into line, the air and the excitement infused courage into Ralph's breast. They had been ordered out to relieve a regiment which

had seen some hard work, and who were anxious to get into shelter.

The newcomers were told what spots needed the most watching, and as soon as they were stationed at their posts and received the necessary instructions, they settled down to the importance of the duty assigned them.

The woods lay behind them, and each picket sought their friendly shelter, well aware that any "change of base" on their part would be an invitation to the enemy to pick them off.

Memories of home filled Ralph's breast. The night was dark and starless. A strong wind blew at intervals, now howling dismally through the trees, and then shifting its course, rushing down the bank, as if it would rend the earth and the tall grass in its anger.

"I wonder if mother thinks of her soldier boy," he pondered.

When does a mother ever cease to think of and pray for her children?

The night wore on. Perfect quiet reigned, and Ralph began to consider picket duty not half so risky as Old Bill called it, after all. But as he kept his eyes on the opposite bank, where the "Johnnies" were, he fancied he saw a small dark object creeping through the grass down to the river, where it seemed to be looking up and down its shore. His heart beat fiercely. What was it? he asked himself. Was it a man or some animal hiding in the grass? If it were a reb, he would be shot dead, at the least move on his part—that he well knew.

I am afraid you will not think my boy was much of a hero, but the truth is, he was very much in love with life, as all young people should be, and, though willing to do his whole duty, he could not help feeling a trifle nervous about his surroundings, so he stooped quickly down behind a tall bush that appeared to be growing there just for his benefit.

The object on which his gaze was fixed seemed so small that he almost laughed aloud at his own fears.

"Why, it's only a dog that's strayed into camp," he said.

"Wonder if they fatten him on hard tack."

His gaze was riveted upon the dark mass, and his surprise nearly found vent in a low whistle, which he speedily checked, as he saw a man or a boy steal noiselessly along the bank, till he came to a place where the grass was tangled and thick, and stooping down he pulled a wide board from its hiding-place, and picking up a long piece of wood which lay there, he stepped on the plank and commenced to paddle across the stream.

Ralph lay in the grass behind the bush, breathlessly watching the approaching figure. Suddenly a dog began to bark on the opposite shore, and the man on the plank gave utterance to a low, angry exclamation. The dog stopped barking, and the stranger came slowly on, till his novel craft touched the shore within five feet of Ralph.

He saw to his amazement that it was a boy, even younger than himself, it seemed in the dim light, and he waited breathlessly till he came closer, and was halted by Ralph's gun, which he brought

sharply against the other's breast, while his own was on fire with excitement, as he cried aloud—"Halt—you are my prisoner!"

For a moment these two boys faced each other; then the stranger threw his head proudly back, and, with a gesture of impatience, replied:

"I will not be made a prisoner—I am merely going about my own business."

"And that business is to spy upon our lines!" Ralph said hotly.

"Take me to your superior officer. I can soon convince him that I am doing no harm," answered the boy.

A stir ran through the picket lines, as the news was passed on that a rebel spy had been captured, and soon the lad, whose proud carriage and haughty face involuntarily commanded attention, was at headquarters, where to all questioning he remained dumb, after telling an apparently truthful story that he was crossing the river to visit an old uncle, and knew nothing of the movements of either army.

"This 'old uncle' is one I fancy we'd better try to unearth," said Colonel Tuttle. "His acquaintance would be worth cultivating."

The boy would give no further account of himself. His frank, boyish face and manly bearing impressed the officer of the day favorably, and he muttered to himself—"Wonder if he is a spy. If all the Johnnies are as brave and resolute as this youth we'll have to work hard to conquer them."

An opinion which he found cause to verify often.

CHAPTER V. RALPH AT HEADQUARTERS

"YOU'RE in luck, my boy," and Bill Elliott's face showed genuine pleasure as he shook hands with Ralph. "You are to show yourself at headquarters and receive your reward, as the good boys in story books always do."

An orderly came up to Ralph, and said:—"You are wanted at headquarters."

Ralph proceeded to the officers' tent. For the first time he stood in the presence of his commanding officers, and as he saluted respectfully, a tall, kindly-faced man looked at him with some surprise.

"How old are you?" was the abrupt query, as the officer looked in the beardless face of the boy.

"Nearly eighteen, sir."

"Have you seen any service yet?"

"I was at Bull Run."

The fine face clouded with sadness. "That was hard and tedious fighting. You brought in a prisoner last night, whom we have strong reasons to believe is a rebel spy. You have shown two qualities befitting a soldier—pluck and forgetfulness of self. Your captain commends you to me, and I have thought proper to make you a corporal."

Ralph's heart beat loud and fast. What had he done to deserve

this honor?

"Your warrant will be handed to you, and you are expected to attend strictly to all its requirements."

To a general or a colonel the promotion would not seem very exalted; but to this boy, who could not realize why he had been selected, it was as if he had suddenly been lifted into the seventh heaven To be sure, it only meant two stripes on his jacket sleeve, and a trifle of authority, but it also meant encouragement and notice from his superiors, He could not answer, but, bowing low, he left the tent.

"A board of inquiry must be appointed at once, and we'll see what this lad whom Corporal Gregory brought in is doing within our lines."

The boy was marched before them, but he parried all their questions, and maintained a resolute and fearless mien.

"I have told you the truth," he said proudly.

"I was going to make a visit when I was seized. You see I have no weapons."

"Spies do not always carry arms. Papers are more to their taste. You say you came to see an uncle. Where does he live? Why did you visit him at night?"

"I knew that the enemy lay near us, and I didn't want to be taken prisoner."

"Where is this uncle?"

"He lives back of the bluff, on the right hand side of the road."

"We'll invite him into our camp, and see if he'll own the

relationship."

The boy's face flushed with wounded pride, as he answered scornfully:

"We call our old servants uncle and aunt. He is an old colored man, and lives on this side of the river—one of our old slaves, whom my father freed."

"We'll send you to the guard-house until more is known about you," was the stern retort.

The boy was removed to the guard-house. To Ralph he was an object of much interest. His sympathies went out to him and he longed to say something comforting.

And so when his turn to act as corporal of the guard, with the abrupt frankness of youth, he blurted out:

"What were you doing over here the other night?"

"I have given an account of myself to your superiors."

"Don't be so lofty. I don't mean to be inquisitive, but I thought you might like to know that I am awful sorry I brought you into this trouble."

The boys face softened.

"I don't know as you could do anything else under the circumstances. I suppose, in fact, I know, I'd have done just as you did. Perhaps worse," he muttered. "I might have shot you."

"Then you don't hold any grudge against me?"

"Well, I can't pretend that I'm grateful to you for my detention in this hole, but I can't blame you, either."

"Were you really going to see the old slave you told the colonel

about?"

An indescribable expression flitted across the boy's features. "I said so once. My word is usually taken, where I am known. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, from curiosity, I suppose. You look too young to be very dangerous."

"I'm as old as you are. You look too young to be carrying arms against your countrymen."

"Oh, I'm going to help put down this rebellion."

"A hard job you've selected. It is not a rebellion; it's an uprising against meddlesome Yankee interference."

Ralph's eyes flashed fire. "You don't mean to say that you justify the South, do you?"

"I not only justify it, but am proud to belong to a people who can never be subdued. Your people are trying to force us to give up our rights, but we won't be driven. We have thousands of men in the field, who do not know how to fear. And when their places are vacant, more are waiting to fill them. We despise the North, and want to be a separate people."

"You despise a government that has always protected you in all your rights. You have no cause for wishing to be disunited. How dare you talk so to me?"

"'Dare?' Am I not your equal? Why should I not speak when I am insulted?"

"Don't talk treason to me again, then."

"I am a prisoner," the boy said, sadly, "innocent of any crime,

surrounded by foes and powerless. Were it not so you would not give me a defiance."

Ralph's conscience smote him. It did appear as if the odds were on his side, and with the quick generosity of youth he said—

"I am sorry for you. We will not quarrel."

Not to be outdone in generosity, the other replied—"I believe you; but we had better not talk about it any more, for we can never agree, and we are both hot-headed. You see affairs in a different light from what I do, that is all."

The next day the youth was rigidly examined. He gave his name as Charles Arlington, stated that he was merely crossing the river to look after the old slave; that he had chosen the night-time as he heard the Union pickets were thrown out, and he did not think, with his knowledge of the stream, that he would be captured in the darkness. Meantime, the soldiers had been searching, and had found an old half imbecile negro in a little cabin half a mile back from the river, whom they brought into camp, shaking with fear.

"Old man," one of the soldiers said, "do you know this boy?"

"Yas, honey. I knows him well. I'se old Marsa Thomas' boy. I bin on his old plantation since he was a baby. His mud-der was one of de–"

"Say, we don't care who his mother was. What do you know about the boy standing there?"

"Yas, yas, I knows lots. Why, he was de littlest pickaninny of de hull lot, and his father he say to me, 'Jim'—I was young and

strong den—'Jim, dis yere boy's gwine to be your young mastah some day, if he ebber grows big enuff. And I tole him de sweetest posies were always small, like de vi'lets and lilies ob de valley, and—"

"You black rascal, we don't want a dissertation on flowers. Tell us about the young man standing there."

"Yas, marsa, but you tole me to tell you all 'bout him, and doan't I hab to begin at the beginning?"

"Well, go on," the Colonel interposed.

"Dat ar chile dere was de idle of Massa Thomas' heart. My old woman, Easter, who's dun been dead dese free years, nussed him. And when she died she cried mo' for leabing him alone in dis cold world dan she did fer me. You see de boy's mudder was put under de roses when he was only a few days in de world, and Easter she lubbed him mo' fer dat. Oh, de old times kaint come back no mo'. Marsa Thomas is in de war wid Gineral Johnston, and 'fore he went he say to me—'Jim, you'se been a faiful old servant, and I gibs you yo freedom.' 'I doan't want it, Marsa,' I say. 'Let me lib and die wid you,' 'Yo neber shall want,' he kep' on, 'go lib in de little cabin toder side ob de ribber. You know he owns bof sides ob dis yere big plantation. 'Go lib dar, and de chilluns will look arter you.' An' bress dere hearts, dey all does care for po' old Jim. But I fell sick wid some sort ob a feber, and de rest ob 'em got a little scared like, all but dis yere chile. He neber left me till I done got well and able to hoe my leetle truck patch. And now he's tuk a prisoner, fer being kind to de po' ole

man, who won't lib many years longer, to git him into trubble."

The old man's withered features shone with a light that was beautiful; his utterance was choked, and the tears rolled down his black cheeks as his simple eloquence found its way to the hearts of those who heard him.

"Sergeant, release the boy and let him go home. And while we stay here, see that the old man is not molested."

"Praise de Lawd! Bress you for yore kindness."

The boy bowed courteously to the Colonel, and with a look of gratitude he passed out of the officer's tent, with the old man hobbling after him. As he approached Ralph he said, "Goodbye. We may meet again."

It was not all danger and dread with the boys in the army. Weeks passed swiftly, and fun reigned in camp. The gypsy life held charms for them such as no indoor employment could offer. The men were hardy and strong, and with light hearts talked of the battles yet in store for them. And when jests were exchanged, often after having come from a scene of carnage, it would be hard to believe that these same men were ready to respond at any moment if summoned by the long roll of the drum into action.

In the early part of the war many little conveniences were provided for the rank and file, among them being tents for shelter, which did not keep out the cold, however, and many a man died from disease who would have lived to fight, had he been properly housed. The second winter, however, many huts were put up, rough enough, but better calculated to withstand the

cold than canvas.

Each company had a "cook tent" and a cook, generally selected from the men, the officers boasting a "cullered individual" who was always, according to his own account, a "perfeshunal." The culinary department was ever a point of interest to the men, whose appetites were never so dainty that they failed to enjoy their daily rations. No soldier, no matter from what part of the North he came, ever turned up his nose at the beans, which were cooked in holes dug in the earth, and filled with hot embers, in which the iron pot containing them was buried and kept there all night.

To Bill Elliott fell the task of ministering to the hungry ones of his company, and many were the compliments he received.

"You can broil a chicken as good as any French cook," a man would coaxingly declare.

"Not a boughten one," Bill replied; "somehow those kind of chickens the sutler has on hand don't have the genooine flavor."

The hint was always taken, and alas, for the poor farmer who had a nice hen-roost, or a young porker in the sty. They had no regard for property rights, and though they were not supposed to forage, except under orders, yet the temptation was too strong to be resisted.

At such times the cackling of the fowls, whose quiet was disturbed, the melodious grunting of the pigs, who often led them a hard chase, and the laughter and shouting of the pursuing soldiers, made a scene of wild merriment never forgotten.

But Ralph could not see the funny side of these depredations. To him it was a clear wrong to take what did not belong to them. He never would join them in these expeditions, a course which exposed him to much ridicule for his "pious notions," but which had no effect upon him.

Often their zeal in this direction brought its own punishment. On one of these forays a long-legged, awkward fellow, who could outrun the fastest chicken, chased an anxious hen into a thicket, where the grass was long and rank. As he peered round for his game he spied a dozen or so eggs shining in the sun. "Ah," he said, "my lady hen is stealing a nest. Well, they look white and fresh, and I'll just confiscate them." His pockets were full of sweet potatoes, he had a brace ot chickens slung over his shoulders, he had lost his handkerchief, if he ever owned one, and the problem was how to hold possession of the coveted prize.

"I know how I'll fix it. I'll put them in my cap. I can carry them all right."

The eggs were tenderly deposited therein, and he started for camp. He heard the boys who were still engaged in the chase laughing boisterously, and saw Rob Douglass, one of the new recruits, with a rope tied to one of the hind legs of a monstrous pig, who was jerking him right and left, in quite an unmilitary fashion. Now he was nearly on the animal's back, and next he was measuring his length on the ground, but he never once released the rope, while the shouts and cheers of the boys who were watching the contest made Rob more determined than ever to

land his prize at the cook's tent.

Zach Smith joined in the merriment and began to chaff Rob, whose face was grimy with perspiration, while his dust-covered clothes looked as though a good brushing and a few stitches would improve them materially.

Seeing Zach he called to him to help haul in the "critter." The latter started toward him, but Mrs. Piggie was of the same mind, for she turned quickly and ran between his legs. Zach lost his balance and fell, and as he instinctively shot out his hands to save his eggs his head struck them squarely, while the liquid streaming down his face and neck sent forth such an odor that the men, who had inhaled many strange ones since leaving home, voted unanimously that that particular one "beat anything on record."

Zach made his way back to his tent, followed by the jibes of his comrades, as he bade Rob, in very strong language, to settle the pig as best he could while he attended to disinfecting himself.

CHAPTER VI. ANOTHER BATTLE

"BOYS," said Lieutenant Graves, "we have our orders to turn out and show what we are made of. You know General McClellan has command of the Army of Virginia, and he thinks we've been rusting here long enough; so we're to help General Stone in drawing out the enemy. They've so far kept in hiding, and we've got to force them out into a square and open fight."

"The General thinks we're spoiling for a battle, doesn't he?"

"I suppose so. Anyway, we are to cross the Potomac at Conrad's Ferry and wake 'em up. General McCall has his hands full watching the river crossings, and we must help him do it." This was good news to most of the men, who had grown tired of inaction. The long summer had worn away, and Ralph had often slipped away from camp and run into the negro cabins near by, where he was sure of a nice piece of hoe cake, baked on the hearth. The garrulous darkeys liked to see Ralph coming, and many a question they put to him which he could scarcely answer, so little did he know of the true state of affairs.

There are few idle moments in camp, for the duties of the soldier are too numerous to afford him that leisure which permits of homesickness. He has letters to write home, old ones to read; then, too, his spare time is occupied in looking for something to eat which his knapsack doesn't hold—not because his rations are scanty, or he is hungry, but he grows tired of the regular diet. He

is always doing duty, police or fatigue, and the perpetual drilling, all keep him busy.

Mending clothes became quite an art among the soldiers, and the manner in which some of them darned their stockings would reflect credit upon many a housewife who has the reputation of being an ex pert seamstress.

Wash day in camp was as important an occasion as it is at home, and preparations were made with as much regard to convenience as the surroundings would permit.

Ralph was very fond of running into old "Aunt Judah's" cabin, for her "pones" were especially toothsome. The old negress was not handsome—her black skin was shriveled and seamed with age; she was nearly blind, but she was an admirable cook.

"Massa," she said to Ralph one day, when she had filled his knapsack with smoking hot pone and luscious sweet potatoes, whose pulp was as golden as the sunflower's petals,—"I'se been pondering in my own min' and I kaint see what you all is fighting 'bout. Clar to goodness I kaint."

"We are fighting to make the Southerners come back into the Union."

"De Union? What you mean by dat?"

"The Union—the States. There are thirty-five States, and how many slabes does he own?"

"None at all. We don't have slaves up North."

"Don't hab slabes? Who totes your water and picks de cotton and hoes de fields?"

"We don't grow any cotton, and all our work is done by people whom we hire and pay money to."

The old slave's eyes opened wide with curiosity.

"And when dey gets sassy, does de oberseer whip 'em?" Ralph laughed heartily as he thought of the suit for assault and battery whipping a servant up North would bring about. Here was an old colored woman as ignorant of her relationship to the great tide of humanity as a child. Born in the West in a little village where no negroes were to be found, he had seldom met one.

The old woman seemed to be talking to herself.

"It pears to me dey must be dissbedient and sassy sumtimes. All niggers are. Wonder how dey makes dem mind. When dey runs across a right smart uppish cullered pusson how do dey settle wid him? Did you say, massa, dey neber whip dem?"

"No, auntie, they never do."

Aunt Judah shook her head doubtingly. "Massa."

"The one man governs the whole of them. Your old masters didn't like the man who was chosen, and so they said they wouldn't stay in the Union to be governed by him."

"Is dat man a big man? Does he b'long to a good family?"

I was plain to her the difference between servants North and South? To him slavery was a mere name. He knew nothing of its blighting understand how dreary and hopeless the life of a "chattel" broke out suddenly, "dey flogs dem down here; dey has to, sumtimes. I neber was struck a blow. I was a house servant, but my man worked on de plantation. 'Diamond Joe,' dey called

him; he was lashed ebery now and den, and I tink it made him ugly. He was a likely boy. Wy, massa used to 'clar if he wan't so stubbon, jess like one of our plantation mules, he wouldn't take de price of two boys for him, for he could hoe and pick mo' cotton dan any 'mount of boys. His skin was as shiny as de satin in Missus' dress, and dark, and he was tall like de poplar trees, and strong and big. Joe lubbed me in dose days."

Ralph looked at her wonderingly. Here was a new thought. Did those uncouth black folks care for each other as white people did? Were they capable of attachments? She was almost hideous —had she ever been young?

A tear rolled down Aunt Judah's withered cheek, and she seemed to be looking far away. She was silent so long that Ralph began to be impatient to get back to camp with his knapsack full of good things.

"Well, auntie, where is Joe now? He must be pretty old by this time."

A solemn look stole over her features, and looking up to where the blue sky showed through the chinks in the little cabin roof, she said—

"In Heben, I b'leeve. Oh, honey, it makes my heart heaby eben now, and offen and offen de tears dey makes my old eyes burn. Many a day I'se asked my hebenly Fader whar on dis big yarth my Joe was, but it must hab been wicked fur me to ask de Great King anyting 'bout a po' cullered boy, fur I neber had any answer. But Joe was a powerful hansum boy, de best one on de plantation."

"How did he die?"

"Die? I didn't 'spress my 'pinion dat he *was* dead. I has looked long for Joe, and I 'mos knows he must be gone up above, for he lubbed me and he lubbed de little missie—de little daisy, Missie Flossie. She was de only one who could bring him out of his tantarums, fer po' Joe did hab spells, when he was ugly. Massa Steve—he owned us bof—I 'members dat day well; it was a sunshiny day, de yarth was all carpeted wid de short, green grass, and de flowers filled de whole land wid deir sweetness. It was so bright my heart was singing a song, and Missus Flora wanted to be druv to town to buy some nice tings for de little missie's birfday party. Massa say 'Joe, Dicks got a sick hoss to 'tend you hitch up de big black team, and take your mistress to town.' Joe, he whispered to me—I had tuk de little lady out on de lawn—dat he cudn't dribe dem speerited critters, fur he had burnt his hands roasting corn in de ashes de night afore. 'Don't stan dar, you brack rascal,' massa said, fur he seed him talking to me. 'Massa, I'se dead anxious to go, but I hab a bery bad hand—caint Dick go dis time wid de missus?'

"Then massa, he got as white as a sheet wif temper, and his voice was like thunder—'No! go as I told you. Do you want anoder flogging?'

"I felt way down all fru me, sumfing was gwine to happen, for Joe he looked so wicked, and he kep' muttering and muttering, and I was scared, fur I knowed sumfing was about to break, when Joe 'muned wid his-self. But oh, massa, I shall neber forget de

awful night dat fell, and no Joe, nor no missus, nor no carridge and hosses cumd home. Massa was wild. He tore up and down de lawn, running here and shouting dar, and sending fust one nigger, den anudder, to the neighbors' plantations to see if missie had dun gone visiting at any ob dem. Den he called fur Dick and his white hoss, and was jess jumping on his back when de hans' set up a holler ing and de carridge cum taring onto de lawn, and fust dey 'lowed Missus Flora was dead, fur she was cuddled up in a heap, as white as snow. Wen dey got her to cum to she tole Massa Steve how Joe had dun gone to town wid her and den wen she wanted to cum home he had rode 'em off, way off inter de woods, and way inter de midst of de fick trees, and gibing de hosses a terrible lashing he started dem, heads toward home; den dey runned all de way ober sticks and limbs of trees till dey foun' de open road, wen dey went so fas' Missus lost her breff and cudn't see any mo'.

"You should have seen massa den! He swore so loud it made my ears ache, and all de time he was looking right at me. He said Joe had run away and he'd hab de young black debil's hide off when he kotched him, and if he was shore any ob de slabes knew he was going it ud be wuss for dem; he'd sell 'em to de very next trader dat cumd along, and dey'd be toted down Souf, whar dey'd be showed how to work. He swore he had nuffing but a pack of lazy niggers roun' him, who didn't desarve to hab a good master. And, honey, fore de Lawd, Massa Steve was a kind master, only he wud swar and cuss at us once in awhile."

"What became of Joe? Did they catch him?" asked Ralph, who was so deeply interested in her story that he had forgotten all about the boys in camp who were waiting for that hot corn bread.

"Yes, massa, I seen him dragged in de next day, after dey had hunted all night wid de dogs. Dey had torn his clothes in tatters, and his han's and face was all red wid de blood whar he fought wid dem. De master he was so mad he made de slaves all come outen deir cabins, to see how dey sarbed a runaway. I can see it now"—and she covered her eyes with her wrinkled black hands —"I can see it all. Oh, Joe, I neber forgits dat day. And when de cruel 'black snake' cut his back ebery time it hit him he neber said a word, but he kind o' shibered all over and set his teeth hard, but I screamed out 'Po' Joe! Will nobody pity po' Joe?' and fell down on de grass all cold as a stone. My breff was gone, and I fought de angel ob de Lord had done called me home and jess den Massa Steve say—'Go to your quarters, Joe.' My Joe, he walk off as proud as a king. Missus she was bery sorry for me, and was allus bery kind to me, but Joe neber sing in de field any mo'. He would fix his eyes on me so terrible I was almos' afraid of him, and he would mutter dat de avenger was on de white man's track. 'I'm gwine to be free. Neber no more will dey lash Joe.' I used to tink de walls would hear him and tell de massa. But dey didn't, and one night wen ebery libing soul 'cept de watch dogs were in deir beds, de hosses 'gan to stamp and kick in deir boxes, and de dogs were howling, and den we heard de white folks screaming, louder and louder, and fas' as we could, we ran outen our cabins, and

dar up on de little knoll-whar de house stood, we saw de black smoke pouring out ob de windows and rolling up to de sky, and den turning redder and redder, and we could 'stinguish Massa Steve and Missus Flora out on de lawn jess as dey jumped from deir beds.

"De oberseer was fighting de flames and he tole us to get all de buckets we could, and fotch de water from de well in dem, and he jumped on a hoss and galloped to de nearest plantation for help, and dey all turned out, white people and slabes, and brought water, and soon de fire wasn't red no mo', but de house—you can see de walls now ober dar, whar dey stand to 'min' me ebery day ob de dear massa and missie and de little lamb, Flossie—was no house any more, all de insides gone, and de black outside standing up in de summer air."

She paused to wipe away the hot tears that blinded her.

"What became of your master and his family?"

"Massa and missus were presarbed, but de little white blos-whose birfday had been so bright, dey didn't know whar to look for her, and her mudder was screeching 'My baby—my baby!' and going out o' one faint into anoder, and her pa trying to rush inter de smoking house and calling for his Flossie—oh, it was enuff to make de har turn gray!

"She muss hab been frightened so when de smoke got in her pretty blue eyes dat she didn't know how to fin' de way out, fer she was crouched down behind de front stairs, and dat's de spot whar Dick found her, wid her night-dress all on fire, but de light

tole him whar to look.

"When he put de little precious chile in my-arms she put her baby fingers on my black face and she said, 'Judah, tell mamma —I am not hurt—but I caint see!' Honey, de nex' day she shut dem po' little eyes on dis world, and missie, whose heart broke den, followed her lamb to de hebenly pastures whar de good Lawd 'tends to all deir wants."

"What became of your master?"

"Massa Steve? He went ober de sea, and he died in anoder country. De plantation and all de slabes went to his brudder, who had de big house yo' sees ober dar on de road put up. No one eber goes near de old place, fer dey say its hanted."

"But the old home and Joe? You don't think he had anything to do with setting it on fire?"

"Massa, de good Book tells de po' creatures dat dey musn't form no 'pinion to hurt deir neighbors. It goes agin me to say dat he did, but yo' didn't know Joe, and I did."

"Did they suspect him?"

"I neber could look dem in de face to know, but Joe neber was seen after de house was burned, and dat's many years in de past."

Ralph drew a long breath, and bidding the old negress goodbye, he went back to camp with a sad heart. When he entered the camp he found the men gathered in knots, discussing the news they had just received of a coming engagement.

"What are we going out for?" asked a new man.

"So as to give the rebs a chance to lay us out, or be laid out

themselves. What do you suppose we go to war for?"

Old Bill's gruff tones nettled the man.

"It don't hurt you to answer a civil question, does it?"

"Well, not exactly. You see General McCall has had an advance guard out reconnoitering, but he can't persuade the boys over on the Virginia side to show up on open ground. They say there's a big force of Confeds at Leesburg, five miles or so back from the river."

"This will be my first battle," the new recruit said, with a sigh, "but I don't expect it'll be my last."

"That's right—never say die. The man who is a little chicken-hearted at first, often turns out to be the most courageous soldier."

"I remember reading once," Ralph interposed, "that at some charge on a battery in one of the battles Napoleon fought when the odds were greatly against him, his attention was called by one of his officers to the cowardice of one poor fellow who was pressing on, up to the cannon's mouth. His knees were shaking, his eyes bulged out, and he gave every evidence of being terror-stricken. But his gaze was fixed on the coveted point, his teeth were set hard, and he kept resolutely on. 'That man is not a coward,' said the great general; 'he sees that his life is in danger, and still he does not shrink from his duty, but faces death like a man. He will be shot before he yields."

"But the soldier was not wounded. He lived to become an officer in the very regiment which one would have expected to

see disgraced by his cowardice, and won great fame through his heroic bravery in after engagements."

"Boys," said Old Bill, who was always the spokesman for the party, "the 'Little Corporal'—that's Napoleon Bonaparte," he continued in an aside to the new man, who made a wry face at being singled out for an explanation—"was right. It's agin human nature not to feel a little shaky when you are going into your first battle. It's how you do your duty that settles your standing. If you attend to that no one can blame you for having a leetle private fear of your own."

CHAPTER VII. THE DISASTER AT BALL'S BLUFF

A HASTY breakfast, with a rigid inspection of their muskets, and a hurried packing of knapsacks, preceded the long role of the drum, the signal to be up and doing. The sight of a body of soldiers with their glittering arms and tasty uniforms is inspiriting, and dull and cold must be the bosom that does not leap quicker at the thought that he belongs to this grand whole. Ralph felt a thrill of exultation as he realized that he was a part and parcel of the men who were massed on the bank of the Potomac that bright October day. There were Ralph's regiment of Massachusetts men, the Forty-second New York, Seventy-first Pennsylvania and a Rhode Island battery, counting, in all, some 2,000 men, watching for a chance to cross at an island which lay there.

The day was beautiful—the sun poured down his warm beams, for in that region the winter is late. Many were the openly spoken murmurs of impatience, however, on the part of the men.

"We shall never get across till doomsday," Bill Elliott said to Ralph. "Look at our men, over 2,000 of them, and we've only got two or three old boats to carry us over. With all due respect to General McClellan, I think he's made a great big mistake, as General Stone will find to his cost before we're over. The Johnnies can see all we're doing and get all ready for us. Why,

it'll be dead easy for them to receive us in fine shape."

"They are having hard work with that battery, getting it up the bluff. See how they slip at every step."

And as Ralph watched the battery being dragged up with prodigious exertion his heart felt heavy, and he, too, began to fear there was an oversight somewhere.

At the top of the bluff lay a broad field of about ten acres, hemmed in on all sides by thick woods, so dense that neither infantry nor artillery could penetrate them in line. Colonel Baker was given entire command of all the troops. Then began a desperate and gallant attempt, which the Confederates met, dashing out from the timber, and though the Federals fired round after round from their battery, it was a hopeless conflict, for the rebel sharpshooters picked off their gunners, one after another, and the pieces were left useless.

Still on the Union forces pressed, to be met by a heavy body of infantry, whose hot fire cut them down. For two hours they stood their ground gallantly, and returned the fire with spirit. Suddenly an officer riding a splendid horse, whose snowy sides were covered with foam, dashed out of the woods, and coming toward them, waving his sword over his head, he beckoned the Union forces forward.

Colonel Baker took new courage; he thought he recognized General Johnston in the horseman, and wildly cheering to his command to follow, he pressed forward, hoping at last he should meet the enemy in an open fight. But he was met by a fierce

onset of the Confederates, who came on with tremendous force. Like a solid wall they met the Federals, and as part of the latter's columns charged, Colonel Baker received the whole contents of a revolver in the hands of one of the rebels, and fell dead.

His body was rescued through the bravery of Captain Beiral and his company, who fought their way back through the thickest of the opposing force, and with desperate courage rescued the body of their dead commander, and conveyed it to the island. At once the rout began, and the Union forces were driven back, down the steep clay bluffs, one hundred feet high, falling, jumping down, pushed by the Confederates, who followed at their heels, killing and taking prisoners.

It was an awful spectacle. Men whose courage could not be doubted, were panic-stricken, and throwing away coats, muskets, and everything that could impede them, plunged into the river, whose rapid current overwhelmed them, and to their shrieks as they drowned, was added the rapid firing of the Confederates on the cliff above, the roar of the artillery, the cries of the wounded, making a scene of horror which cannot be described. The imagination alone can fill in the picture.

Among the incidents of this day may be mentioned a desertion of one of the regiments by its colonel, who swam the river on horseback, thus making his escape. Many took to a boat, which was quickly filled, and as quickly sunk with every soul. A captain in the Fifteenth Massachusetts came to the rescue of the fleeing Federals, with two companies, and charged up the hill, only to

see how little help he could give, and a few moments decided him to wave his handkerchief, and surrender to the Confederates.

Dispirited and weary, the remnant of the troops moved back to camp. Their loss had been heavy. Over five hundred soldiers had been captured by the Confederates, Colonel Baker had been shot, and they had lost arms, ammunition and clothing.

Corporal Ralph Gregory had shown coolness and clearheaded courage, equal to the oldest and bravest. When the battle began, the color-sergeant had received a ball in the breast, and had fallen dead. Seizing the flag from his stiffening fingers, Ralph rushed to the front, and held it manfully, through the storm of bullets that riddled its folds, and clinging desperately to it, he carried it proudly and safely, soiled and torn, but not disgraced.

But his strength was not equal to his courage, and handing it to a stalwart comrade whose arm was more powerful, he bade him to "protect it from capture." The colors went back to camp, and with them, went the story of the boy's bravery.

Ralph was weak, his nerves were unstrung. His ears still echoed the noise and confusion of the battle that had not yet died away. Still the Union men were fleeing, pursued closely by their enemy, who wounded them with muskets and swords, as they ran. The agonized shrieks of those who met their death in the swift-flowing stream rang in his ears with fearful distinctness, and he vaguely wondered if he would ever cease to hear them.

He was unnerved. It was not cowardice, but the reaction that so often follows times of great excitement. Exhaustion, complete

and unavoidable, had taken possession of him. He reeled like a drunken man. Making a frantic effort to recover himself, he sank on the earth amid a clump of leaves and brush, that half hid him from observation. How long he lay in this stupor he could not tell, but when he became conscious of the dreadful place he was in, he slowly struggled to his feet, half-dazed and bewildered. His first thought was to wonder where Bill was. He recollected that he had fled in hot haste with the others, and the last glimpse of him which he had, was when the plucky Massachusetts captain made his stand, but was compelled to surrender. He was sure that he had been wounded, for he saw blood streaming down Bill's face, as he ran.

"Could he have escaped, or is he among the dead lying here?" he thought. "I must search for him."

And as he threaded his way among the dead and wounded as best he could in the twilight, he stumbled over the body of a boy. Kneeling down, he turned the lad's face upward, and in the dim light he knew him.

"It is Charlie Arlington!—he is surely dead!"

The boy opened his eyes, and seeing Ralph, he assured him that he was not wounded, but he feared his ankle was sprained. "I told you," he said, with a smile, "that we should meet again."

"You did, but I did not think it would be so soon. Are you injured?"

"Only by my horse, who stumbled and threw me with such force against that old stump that I fainted with pain. Do you think

my leg is broken?"

"Let me examine it. No, I don't think it is. How are you going to ride, however? Where is your horse?"

"Oh, he ran away after serving me that mean trick. But why are you here? Don't you know you are my prisoner now?" he continued, smiling broadly.

"How's that?" Ralph spoke sharp and loud.

"Hush!" the other cautioned. "You'll have a dozen soldiers after you. They're coming back to bury the dead. Of course you're my prisoner. You're on our field—were you not routed?"

This fact rather staggered Ralph. It had not come home to him till then; he looked anxiously toward the river's bank.

The boy divined his thought.

"It's no use to try to swim that stream here. The current's too strong."

"It seems I'm your prisoner, then." Ralph's sad tones spoke volumes. The horrors of captivity stared him in the face. He thought at that instant, of his mother, sisters and the dear old home, and his heart was heavy as lead.

Charlie appeared to be enjoying the advantage he had over Ralph, for he never removed his gaze.

"I've but to raise my voice and you'd be surrounded in an instant."

"But how is it you are here now; I thought you knew nothing about the army," said Ralph.

"I didn't when I last saw you, but I joined the Southern army

the next week. I am in the cavalry service."

Ralph's curiosity would never be silenced. "Do you like it?" he asked.

"Yes, and no. I have been in several engagements, but the hardest blow I had was when they carried my father home dead, and I asked for a furlough, to go home to see him once more, and was refused."

Here the boy nearly broke down. Ralph's sympathies were aroused at once. He knew not what to say. But Charlie recovered himself soon, and continued—"You see how I'm placed now. I shall *have* to take you into our camp."

"I wish Bill were here!" Ralph blurted out. "He wouldn't see me taken prisoner so easily."

To him Bill represented the sum total of all knowledge, and he felt confident of his ability to rescue him, even in the face of the danger that now menaced him.

A low whistle startled both boys. A few feet from them, stretched lengthwise of a fallen tree, lay Bill, who raised his head, which was bleeding freely.,

"I've a good mind to take you both prisoners!" he said, jocosely. "What are you exchanging courtesies for? The boy's right. Unless we can get away in a very big hurry, he can land us both in the rebel camp, and then it'll be all over with us. You'd better be planning each other's escape, and then you'll both be likely to be court-martialed!"

"It's my luck, isn't it? I can't blame Charlie if he does take me.

But I haven't got anything against him."

"Neither has any of us got anything against any of the Johnnies. This is not a personal affair, at all. But just the same we've got to fight 'em because they're agin the government."

Ralph looked closer at Bill. "You're wounded, and will be carried to prison, too! Oh, Bill, what will become of you?"

"It's nothing but a scratch. I lay here awhile till those fellows' guns gave out, for I felt a little dizzy, and didn't care to get up till the smoke cleared away, and I could make out my bearings."

A groan from their companion recalled them to their position. Ralph was in a fever of anxiety. War was a brutalizing affair, he pondered. "You mustn't have any feelings at all, Bill, if you want to be a good soldier."

"Nary a feeling. Humanity don't cut no figger in a battle. Why, boy, I've stood in the ranks and seen father on one side, and son on the other, blazing away with hate and bitterness in their eyes. And all on account of a mere difference of opinion." Ralph shuddered. "It is dreadful; but war shall never make me so hardened and indifferent to suffering that I will not do all I can in honor to relieve it. I intend to fulfill all my duties as a soldier, but do not see why I should hesitate to show mercy to an injured foe."

"He's the right sort," Bill chuckled to himself.

With that thought in his mind, Ralph went nearer to Charlie, and said—"Give me your handkerchief, and I will bandage your ankle." In a few moments he had finished binding it on, tightly and skillfully, while the boy looked his gratitude.

"It feels a little easier," he said, "the pain was intense." Bill watched them both narrowly. In his heart he admired "the little rebel cuss," but he wished him a thousand miles away, for he saw that it was impossible to make their escape, as Charlie had only to raise his voice as he had suggested, and the enemy would be upon them.

It was a moment of anxiety for the man and his companion. Charlie was the most indifferent of the three. "I'd rather have been killed than have to go to their prison, for who knows how long it may be before I am exchanged?" thought Bill.

The firing had ceased, and darkness had settled o'er the earth. Suddenly Charlie seemed to recollect something, for he whispered—"Go—you must go, at once. The detail will soon be here, to bury our poor boys, and they will have you, sure. Go down the bluff as still as you can; don't loosen a pebble even, for there are sharp ears near. Keep close to the river bank, and about half a mile down you'll see an old tree standing that has been struck by lightning. Two rods north of the tree a little skiff is hid in the tall weeds. Take it and row across. Go quick, and, above all, make no noise. My life, as well as yours, is in danger. They'd shoot me in a minute, if they knew I helped you escape."

"You're a brick—you are!" broke out Bill, admiringly. Ralph wrung his hand. "What will you do? You can't lie here all night."

"They'll find me all right and carry me off to the hospital. I can talk, if I can't walk, and I'll soon let them know where I am. But you haven't a second to waste. Go!"

The hint, so urgently given, was acted upon, and none too speedily, for a moment after, the men appeared, and Charlie was suddenly seized with a violent fit of coughing, so loud and boisterous, it was well calculated to cover any noise which Ralph and Bill might unintentionally make. He was placed on a litter and borne away.

Bill scarce drew a breath until his feet touched the bottom of the boat. Charlie's violent cough had served them well, for though they stole noiselessly down the bluff, the night was so still that a breath almost could be detected. They were soon across the noble river, and their hearts beat tumultuously when they found themselves safe within the Union lines.

Bill's wound was not serious, so he declared. He even objected to the few days in the hospital which the surgeon prescribed. His good nature never left him.

"Sick men may go and lay up, but you cain't kill Old Bill. I'm presarved for something better than to stop a bullet. I've been through too many hard sieges to give in for a little blow like that was."

"You've got another invite to see the Colonel," a grizzled old soldier said to Ralph a day or two after the engagement. "He desires the pleasure of your company in his tent. Leastwise, that's what it amounts to, though that ain't the language he made use of. Wonder why I don't be asked once in awhile? He don't know what he's losing by not consulting me. But hurry up—'tain't perlite to keep him waiting."

Ralph trembled visibly, and every drop of blood turned to ice. He knew something must be wrong. Perhaps he ought not to have helped Charlie, but what else could he do? He walked briskly toward the tent of the officer.

Colonel Hopkins was a stern, battle-scarred old soldier, who wasted no words. His keen vision could discover merit, however, and as he looked steadily at Ralph, he took his measure at once.

"Your captain tells me you saved the colors of the regiment, in the late engagement?"

"I did, Colonel."

"And you risked your life in so doing."

"Why should I not? I am a soldier, sir!" and the boy's "I will, with the help of Heaven!" was Ralph's fervent utterance, as he followed the orderly from the Colonel's tent.

One of the most brilliant affaire of the war was the charge of a body of cavalry under Fremont. This was a fine and choice array of cavalry, known as "Fremont's Body Guard," whose exploits were famous. It was commanded by Major Charles Zagonyi, a Hungarian, whose military record had been made in Europe.

This dashing and fiery soldier, with a band of 160 men, charged upon a Confederate force of 2,000, who were drawn up in a hollow square. He rode across the field, unheeding the firing of the skirmishers, but charged into the midst of the Confederates, and with pistols and sabers, scattered them like dry leaves in the autumn wind. Not content with this, the daring Major chased them into the streets of Springfield, and fought

them hand to hand.

After this daring and unequaled achievement, he hoisted the National flag upon the courthouse at Springfield, sent a guard to care for the wounded, and then went quietly back to Bolivar.

CHAPTER VIII. THE ARMY IN WINTER QUARTERS

WINTER so far had brought them much suffering and privation. To Ralph it was peculiarly dreary. With the prospect of a period of inactivity, it was strange that so little provision was made to protect them from the cold, raw winds that were so frequent. Many of the soldiers put up rude huts, made from the fine timber which grew so plentiful in that region, and those who were independent and enterprising enough to build for themselves, often fashioned a very snug, cozy little house. The rough stone fireplace, put together with Virginia mud, was never wanting. What though it was neither symmetrical nor artistic? The warmth and cheer compensated for the absence of both these features.

In some of these huts—they surely deserved a better title—the men threw themselves down at night on the ground, which was covered with blankets, rubber coats, and any material the jovial occupants could find to keep out the dampness. Some, more pretentious, constructed bunks or boxes round the sides, which were as comfortable as a spring bed would be at home. It was quite common to find home-made chairs, benches and tables, round which they gathered when off duty, and told stories or discussed the situation. The walls were papered with illustrations cut from newspapers, which added to the charms of the dwelling.

But the greater number shivered under canvas tents, feeling keenly the light snows and rains, followed by days of thaw and sunshine, which were so frequent. To add to the dreariness of their surroundings, the funeral dirge was often heard, as the dead were carried out from hospital, who had succumbed to that apparently simple disease, the measles, but which leaves its victim feeble, exhausted, and unable to rally.

To a new recruit, or to one who is full of sensibility, as Ralph was, these sights were particularly depressing.

A snowstorm during the day had been succeeded by a windy, cold night. Ralph had been writing to his mother, and while he took care to make every word as cheerful as he could, and never to mention his discomforts, vet the mother heart between the lines, and knew her boy was homesick, pining for her, as she, alas! was longing for the loving caress and the sound of his voice.

As he pushed back the stool which had answered for a writing desk, the wind gave a sudden whirl and lifted the canvas, sending a shower of sleet over him which made him shiver.

"The winter here is full as cold and disagreeable as up North!" he said. "I thought this was a land of perpetual sunshine and flowers!"

He peered out at the sentry, who hugged his great coat closer, as he paced to and fro. He fancied he saw in the gloom a man and horse, and heard the sharp challenge—

"Halt! Who goes there?"

The horseman drew up, and replied promptly—

"A messenger from General Shields, with dispatches for Colonel Hopkins. I must deliver them at once."

The sentinel called—"Sergeant of the guard—post number five—a message from headquarters!"

The words were passed along the line of guards, until it reached the sergeant, who came instantly.

He carried the papers to his colonel, who read them hastily, and signed each one, handing them back to the orderly, who rode swiftly away.

Ralph was by this time outside his tent, unmindful of the sleet which tore his flesh like sharp-pointed arrows. He longed to know what those dispatches signified, but his curiosity had to remain unsatisfied, and he went back to his tent to try to sleep, as well as he could, for the biting wind that forced its way into every crevice.

He seated himself on the side of his bed, and tried to think. He wondered when General McClellan was going to take Richmond. The cry "All Quiet on the Potomac" was heard continually, and weary men and weeping women all over the land were longing for the dawn of peace which should bring back to them fathers, husbands and sons. But ah, that peace was far distant. The boy reasoned that he had no right to criticise the men who held trusted positions in the army. But surely the boys in camp and field were doing all they could, under orders, to hasten the end of these troublous times. Would the conflict ever cease?

Perplexed and worn out in trying to solve the problem

agitating so many of the most patriotic and the most far-seeing, all over the land, Ralph at last fell asleep, to be roused by the reveille. He sprang up, sure that he must be dreaming, for he had just been sleeping but a moment—a mere "cat nap," and this couldn't be a summons to leave his comfortable bed. He had neither time nor right to object, however; his sole duty was to obey orders, and he hastened to dress. Outside, the soldiers were hurrying about, most of those who were called on glad of any break in the monotony of their first winter in camp.

"Breakfast at two, march at half-past," was the captain's peremptory order.

"What an unearthly hour," was Ralph's comment. "Where, are we bound? And why march at night?"

"Can't say," a comrade ventured, "unless it's so we won't have to march by day!"

They were not long in suspense.

A portion of their regiment was ordered to assist a force of Ohio and Indiana men under Colonel Dunning, in routing a body of Confederates who were posted near Romney, Va., at a point called Blue Gap.

The wind had died away, the stars were out, and the moon shone brilliantly. The cutting sleet had turned to snow, and the soft carpet lay white and pure, muffling the sound of their footsteps. It was a weird sight—that mass of men tramping along with steady steps, while their shadows falling on the ground danced and flickered in the moonbeams with startling vividness.

Blue Gap was a natural opening between hills, and was well defended by howitzers and rifle pits. As they approached the Gap, Ralph's keen eye detected a dozen men piling up limbs, straw, and other inflammable material, against the bridge that spanned a stream running through the Gap.

"Captain," he said, "some of those fellows have left the lines, and are fixing things nice to burn that bridge."

"We'll block that game, instanter. We need that bridge more than they do."

A dash was made for the bridge, led by the captain, who opened fire upon them, and thus ended that attempt. On the hills the entrenchments were held manfully, but the Confederates had scarce time to pour forth their fire, before the two Ohio regiments dashed upon them, and captured two pieces of artillery. The surprise was so complete and the attack so overwhelming, that defense was vain.

The hills were swarming with Federals, fighting hand to hand, and forcing their opponents back. The houses on the other shore were filled with sharpshooters, whose constant firing harassed the Federals, and brought down a soldier at nearly every shot.

A score of men sprang into a large boat lying at the bank, and with a storm of bullets hissing and rattling about them, they crossed to the shore where the sharpshooters were hidden. Death menaced them, but with a huzza that would have put life into a stone, they rowed fast, and sprang out of the boat. Dashing up the hill, to the houses which the enemy had used for vantage ground,

they found them vacated.

"They didn't wait to make our acquaintance," Ralph said.

"No, but those sharpshooters introduced themselves to us in fine style. Why, a man went down at nearly every shot."

Bill said not a word, but leaned heavily over the side of the boat. No one paid him attention, for their hearts were filled with a longing for revenge.

"Boys, we have missed the rebs ensconced in these houses, but we can prevent their using them again. We will burn them to the ground, and take good care that not a timber stands, after we have done with them. They have picked off some of our best men, and we won't leave a roof to shelter them."

A dozen pairs of willing hands were at work in an instant gathering wood and brush, which they piled around the dwellings. With faces grimy and soiled, these resolute men touched the pile with a match, while they stood ready to shoot the first man who dared to show himself to protest, and soon the flames leaped upward, crackling, sputtering and curling round doors no and windows, licking up every object within reach, till naught but the charred and blackened timbers stood to mark the spot where the sharpshooters had dealt their deadly work.

The skirmish was brief. It was an easy victory, and no loss had been sustained by the Federals, save those who were shot in the boats. But the Confederate loss was greater. Forty soldiers were lying dead in the grass and weeds, and as many more were carried back to camp, prisoners.

Even while the houses were being consumed, Ralph went back to assist those who had received the bullets of the sharpshooters. Some had fallen overboard, and sunk in the stream. Others were lying as they had fallen, their cold hands still grasping their weapons, which they would never use again. One poor fellow was kneeling in the bottom of the boat, his finger on the trigger of his musket, and his staring eyes fixed on the shore. Ralph shuddered. Could he ever become inured to these dreadful sights?

Bill Elliott was leaning over the side of the boat, in a half-stupor. The wound in his head had opened afresh, and the red stream was running down his face, staining its ghastly whiteness crimson. His arm hung useless by his side, shattered by a bullet. Opening his eyes at the sound of Ralph's voice, he whispered faintly: "I thought you'd come arter me. They've fixed me this time, sure," and he relapsed into unconsciousness.

A litter was soon hurried together, and Old Bill was placed in hospital.

CHAPTER IX. FAIR OAKS

THE Johnnies are busy these times, aren't they?' "And so are we, chasing them up. I don't see that we are any nearer Richmond than we were a month or so ago."

"Nor we won't be," broke in another man, "if General McClellan repeats his Yorktown tactics. Perhaps, by the time we get to Richmond, we'll find some 'Quaker guns' there."

"It must have been kind of disheartening to the boys after lying 'round a place a month to have the rebs move out just as they were getting ready to go in, and find they had left a lot of wooden guns behind."

All the next day the soldiers were working on the redoubts, and wholly unaware of the surprise in store for them. May 31st dawned, and while they were still fortifying their position, a tremor ran through the line. "The Confederates are upon us!" was the cry, and as they tossed aside the shovels, the Confederates charged upon them with their well-known "yell" that so often echoed and re-echoed on the battle-field.

But they found brave men ready to repel their assault. The Chickahominy had swollen to such a height that bridges were carried away in its mad rush. General McClellan had thrown the left wing of his forces across the stream, but it was impossible to get reinforcements to their help.

Both sides showed unexampled bravery. General Johnston

moved on toward Richmond, six miles away, where he halted, for the purpose of striking the detached wing of the Union forces. The rise of the river had hampered the movements of the latter, and it seemed as if capture was certain.

The half-finished redoubts had been occupied by General Casey's division of Keys' corps, and although they rallied several times, it was in vain. The rebels, made a detour, and stole upon their rear, and they could no longer hold them. Their line was in danger.

Meanwhile General Johnston's evident intention was to bring up a heavy flanking force between General Casey and the river whose banks had risen so unluckily for the Federals, cutting off all hopes of reinforcements.

And now a magnificent exhibition of courage was shown by Sumner. He expected orders to go to the rescue, and his men were drawn up in line ready for the summons. One bridge alone remained with which to cross the river, and its approaches were under water. Some of its supports were gone, and as the soldiers stepped upon it, the frail structure swayed to and fro, mid the rushing waters, but they passed over as speedily and safely as though it were a solid piece of masonry.

General Sumner's appearance was most opportune. He met the flank attack, and was victorious. The slaughter was fearful. In this battle 12,000 men gave up their lives—5,000 Northern men, and 7,000 Southern.

General Johnston fell, a Federal shot having taken effect.

He was carried off the field, and at first it was feared by the Confederates that his wound was mortal, but after some months of suffering and enforced retirement he recovered, and a year after assumed command of the Confederate forces of the Mississippi.

Ralph was sent with one of the details to bury the dead and bring in the wounded. Trenches were dug, and the dead piled in them. Many were left where the last shot had struck them down, and earth was heaped upon them. The ground was literally blood-soaked. The dead were everywhere—the battle-field was one vast graveyard, with its tenants left unburied.

Ralph entered a little log house in a pasture near the railroad, and seated himself on a bench for a moment's rest. Just outside the door, he found the dead and the wounded packed so close that he could scarcely avoid stepping on them. To distinguish them was a hard task, for the wounded lay there so quiet and motionless, fast in that silent resignation born of despair, that, save for the dull blackness that covered the faces of those from whom life had fled, it would be easy to mistake the living for the dead.

All sorts and ages were there, in one mass—the boy, who had gone from home, ardent and hopeful, the old man who had left the record of an honorable life behind him; officers who had cheered their commands on to victory, privates who had fought fearlessly—all lay there, while horses had fallen dead across their riders, or were struggling in agony. The picture was horrible! He

was r e minded of h is duty by the voice of an old man, who came into the room where he was musing.

"This is a cruel war, sir!" he said to Ralph. "I've been raised here, man and boy, nigh onto seventy years, and I never thought, when I played in these fields, that I should ever live to see them desecrated with human blood."

Ralph raised his head, and looked at him earnestly.

"No," the old man continued, "I have looked for the coming of the Lord' these many years, but I never thought He would come in blood and smoke, and the noise of battle."

"What do you mean?" the boy asked, breathlessly. "How has the Lord come?"

"Has He not come to set human beings free? Is not the black man's bondage nearly over? Is not slavery doomed? Then the only blot upon the fair name of America will be wiped out. The North and South will become brothers again, and go hand in hand in all worthy undertakings. Thus, as one family again, they will march on, to a grand and glorious destiny."

"If my mother could hear him talk!" his listener thought. "What does he mean by the blacks being set free?" For the Proclamation of Emancipation had not yet been given to the world, and the position of the slaves during hostilities had not been settled.

"Are you a Northerner?" he asked the old man.

"No, I am a Southerner," with a tinge of pride in his tones. "How do you dare say such things?".

"I am an old man, and they call me childish and silly. But I love my country, and I want to see her truly great."

"Have you always talked in this way?" queried Ralph, puzzled at the old man's language and manners.

"Always. Oh, I have paid dearly for my opinions. I have had my house torn down over my head, I have suffered in my young days; but I have lost all I ever loved, and they pity me now. I know I shall live to see my prayer answered—that we may become a free and united country. Then I shall be ready to die. Yes, it comes to that with old and young. We must all be ready to die at any moment."

With a courteous nod to Ralph, he passed out of the door, and the boy was left alone.

"We must be ready to die at any moment!" The words sounded like a knell to Ralph. Was *he* ready to die? He had, been carefully nurtured by that blessing to a child, a praying mother, and his boyish days were spent in the Sabbath school. Like all in the springtime of life, death seemed afar off, something that would not approach him for many years. Death was the expected portion of the old, but he had always resolutely put aside all thoughts of a future that did not belong to this life.

Now these words came home like a shock. Was he ready? He had never been a bad boy, in any sense, but still he was not ready or willing to die. At that possibility his courage forsook him; memory went swiftly back to many a childish piece of wrong-doing, which, under the fear of death, he magnified into black

and unpardonable sins. Filled with sorrow and repentance he fell on his knees on the hard floor of that little cabin, with the dead so near him, and cried—"Help, O Lord, or I perish!"

A wave of tender feeling swept over his soul, and his mother's favorite psalm, the 118th which she had read to him so often, came to his remembrance, and one verse was as music to him, —"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do unto me?" He rose to his feet, refreshed and made strong.

CHAPTER X. CAMP FUN

THAT time should not hang heavy on their hands, much inventive genius was brought into play, and no schoolboys, famous for their ability in making up games, could equal these grown men in originating sports to fill in the hours that otherwise would have been exceedingly dull. Some such safety-valve was necessary, or else many would have broken down with memories of the dear ones at home, and the depressing sights of war, and its hardships.

The camp echoed often with the songs so dear to all who can be moved by tender thoughts. Many of the men were the possessors of rich, melodious voices, that brought many a thrill of delight to their listeners, in their tones.

Ralph had a fine voice, and to please his comrades he often sang the sweet old songs of childhood, while they listened with an enthusiasm and rounds of applause that many a prima donna could not have inspired. Throwing themselves around the blazing camp fire whose ruddy sparks flew heavenward, the whole company would join him in singing the melodies with hearty goodwill, and at those moments care and danger were forgotten. Now he would give them a plaintive, gentle ditty that would make the eyes of those brown-faced soldiers moist with emotion, as home pictures started into life before them, and then a stirring song of patriotism and victory would ring out, until the blood

would leap in their veins, and each man there was ready to attack any foe single-handed.

But the boy's heart was heavy, even while his humble efforts in the musical line were giving pleasure to his comrades. His constant prayer was that some decisive move might be made, by which the war might be brought to a speedy close. He was lonely, too, for "Old Bill," as he always called himself, had been in the hospital for some time, and he missed his cheery ways.

One afternoon as he sat in his tent reading, he heard peals of boisterous laughter ringing out upon the air. Going to the opening, he saw a group of soldiers gathered round some object, and heard them chaffing some one whom he could not see.

"What is the excitement, Harry?" he asked a companion who had evidently come from the scene of action.

"I just came for you to pile out and see the fun. They've got one of our boys, and are amusing themselves at his expense. Come on, or you'll be too late. The performance will be over." Ralph hurried after Harry, who was off like a deer, and going straight up to the group, he saw a crowd of men tossing another one up in the air, and letting him fall into a blanket, amid screams of laughter, and cries of "Send him up higher!"

"Pickle him in his own salt!"

"Head him up in a barrel, and send him to the cook!"

"We'll make a high private in the rear rank of him!"

"Gently, boys," the victim panted. "You don't want to be too hard on a poor fellow for having a little joke of his own."

"Who is it—what has he done?" inquired Ralph, who didn't enjoy such rough sport, and was really concerned lest they might carry it so far as to injure the man.

"It's Corporal Fred Greene, the funny fellow of Co. H,"

Tim Mackey responded. "It's his birthday, and we re celebrating it. And he's having a high time."

Fred was a mischievous young fellow, who had just seen his twenty-third birthday. If there was any chance for a joke on any member of the company, he never lost the opportunity of making the most he could out of it.

In order to impress the fact that he had a birthday, he had invited a score of his comrades to a "small spread" in his tent. The colored cook was in the secret, and through his connivance, and the help of a few cracker boxes draped with bunting, and some tin cans, he had succeeded in making quite a tasty looking table. Before the banquet began, he made a short speech of welcome, which was responded to in good faith by Franklin Field, who was deputed to do the speaking on all occasions, as he had quite a gift of extempore oratory.

Without further ceremony, Fred cordially pressed all of them to "fall to." Just at this interesting moment, the cook, a loose-jointed, wrinkled old darkey, whose huge mouth looked as if it was always ready to utter a guffaw, entered the tent, and scraping and bowing to the "gemmens," broke out with—"Sorry to put back your 'joyment, Massa Fred, but youse wanted outside, bad."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.