

**JOHN
MCELROY**

SIKLEGG,
BOOK 6

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John McElroy
Si Klegg, Book 6 / Si and Shorty, with Their
Boy Recruits, Enter on the Atlanta Campaign

PREFACE

"Si Klegg, of the 200th Ind., and Shorty, his Partner," were born years ago in the brain of John McElroy, Editor of The National Tribune.

These sketches are the original ones published in The National Tribune, revised and enlarged somewhat by the author. How true they are to nature every veteran can abundantly testify from his own service. Really, only the name of the regiment was invented. There is no doubt that there were several men of the name of Josiah Klegg in the Union Army, and who did valiant service for the Government. They had experiences akin to, if not identical with, those narrated here, and substantially every man who faithfully and bravely carried a musket in defense of the best Government on earth had sometimes, if not often, experiences of which those of Si Klegg are a strong reminder.

The Publishers.

CHAPTER I. SHORTY BEGINS BEING A FATHER TO PETE SKIDMORE

"Come, my boy," Si said kindly. "Don't cry. You're a soldier now, and soldiers don't cry. Stop it."

"Dod darn it," blubbered Pete, "I ain't cryin' bekase Pm skeered. I'm cryin' bekase I'm afeared you'll lose me. I know durned well you'll lose me yit, with all this foolin' around."

"No, we won't," Si assured him. "You just keep with us and you'll be all right."

"Here, you blim-blammed, moon-eyed suckers, git offen that 'ere crossin'," yelled at them a fireman whose engine came tearing down toward the middle of the squad. "Hain't you got no more sense than to stand on a crossin'?"

He hurled a chunk of coal at the squad, which hastily followed Si to the other side of the track.

"Hello, there; where are you goin', you chuckle-headed clodhoppers?" yelled the men on another train rushing down from a different direction. "This ain't no hayfield. Go back home and drive cows, and git out o' the way o' men who're at work."

There was more scurrying, and when at last Si reached a clear space, he had only a portion of his squad with him, while Shorty was vowing he would not go a step farther until he had licked a railroad man. But the engines continued to whirl back and forth in apparently purposeless confusion, and the moment that he fixed upon any particular victim of his wrath, he was sure to be compelled to jump out of the way of a locomotive clanging up from an unexpected direction and interposing a train of freight cars between him and the man he was after.

Si was too deeply exercised about getting his squad together to pay attention to Shorty or the jeering, taunting railroaders. He became very fearful that some of them had been caught and badly hurt, probably killed, by the remorseless locomotives.

"This's wuss'n a battle," he remarked to the boys around him. "I'd ruther take you out on the skirmish-line than through them trains agin."

However, he had come to get some comprehension of the lay of the ground and the movements of the trains by this time, and by careful watching succeeded in gathering in his boys, one after another, until he had them all but little Pete Skidmore. The opinion grew among them that Pete had unwisely tried to keep up with the bigger boys, who had jumped across the track in front of a locomotive, and had been caught and crushed beneath the wheels. He had been seen up to a certain time, and then those who were last with him had been so busy getting out of the way that they had forgotten to look for him. Si calmed Shorty down enough to get him to forget the trainmen for awhile and take charge of the squad while he went to look for Pete. He had become so bewildered that he could not tell the direction whence they had come, or where the tragedy was likely to have happened. The farther he went in attempting to penetrate the maze of moving trains, the more hopeless the quest seemed. Finally he went over to the engineer of a locomotive that was standing still and inquired if he had heard of any accident to a boy soldier during the day.

"Seems to me that I did hear some o' the boys talkin' about No. 47 or 63 havin' run over a boy, or something," answered the engineer carelessly, without removing his pipe from his mouth. "I didn't pay no attention to it. Them things happen every day. Sometimes it's my engine, sometimes it's some other man's. But I hain't run over nobody for nigh a month now."

"Confound it," said Si savagely; "you talk about runnin' over men as if it was part o' your business."

"No," said the engineer languidly, as he reached up for his bell-rope. "'Tain't, so to speak, part o' our regler business. But the yard's awfully crowded, old Sherman's makin' it do five times the work

it was calculated for, trains has got to be run on the dot, and men must keep off the track if they don't want to git hurt. Stand clear, there, yourself, for I'm goin' to start."

Si returned dejectedly to the place where he had left his squad. The expression of his face told the news before he had spoken a word. It was now getting dark, and he and Shorty decided that it was the best thing to go into bivouac where they were and wait till morning before attempting to penetrate the maze beyond in search of their regiment. They gathered up some wood, built fires, made coffee and ate the remainder of their rations. They were all horribly depressed by little Pete Skidmore's fate, and Si and Shorty, accustomed as they were to violent deaths, could not free themselves from responsibility however much they tried to reason it out as an unavoidable accident. They could not talk to one another, but each wrapped himself up in his blanket and sat moodily, a little distance from the fires, chewing the cud of bitter fancies. Neither could bear the thought of reporting to their regiment that they had been unable to take care of the smallest boy in their squad. Si's mind went back to Peter Skidmore's home, and his mother, whose heart would break over the news.

The clanging and whistling of the trains kept up unabated, and Si thought they made the most hateful din that ever assailed his ears.

Presently one of the trains stopped opposite them and a voice called from the locomotive:

"Do you men know of a squad of Injianny recruits commanded by Serg't Klegg?"

"Yes, here they are," said Si, springing up. "I'm Serg't Klegg."

"That's him," piped out Pete Skidmore's voice from the engine, with a very noticeable blubber of joy. "He's the same durned old-fool that I kept tellin' all the time he'd lose me if he wasn't careful, and he went and done it all the same."

"Well, here's your boy," continued the first voice. "Be mighty glad you've got him back and see that you take care o' him after this. My fireman run down on the cow-ketcher and snatched him up just in the nick o' time. A second more and he'd bin mince-meat. Men what can't take better care o' boys oughtn't to be allowed to have charge of 'em. But the Government gits all sorts o' damn fools for \$13 a month."

Si was so delighted at getting Pete back unhurt that he did not have the heart to reply to the engineer's gibes.

CHAPTER II. SI AND SHORTY COME VERY NEAR LOSING THEIR BOYS

ALL healthy boys have a strong tincture of the savage in them. The savage alternately worships his gods with blind, unreasoning idolatry, or treats them with measureless contumely.

Boys do the same with their heroes. It is either fervent admiration, or profound distrust, merging into actual contempt. After the successful little skirmish with the guerrillas the boys were wild in their enthusiasm over Si and Shorty. They could not be made to believe that Gens. Grant, Sherman or Thomas could conduct a battle better. But the moment that Si and Shorty seemed dazed by the multitude into which they were launched, a revulsion of feeling developed, which soon threatened to be ruinous to the partners' ascendancy.

During the uncomfortable, wakeful night the prestige of the partners still further diminished. In their absence the army had been turned topsy-turvy and reorganized in a most bewildering way. The old familiar guide-marks had disappeared. Two of the great corps had been abolished—consolidated into one, with a new number and a strange commander. Two corps of strange troops had come in from the Army of the Potomac, and had been consolidated into one, taking an old corps' number. Divisions, brigades and regiments had been totally changed in commanders, formation and position. Then the Army of the Tennessee had come in, to complicate the seeming muddle, and the more that Si and Shorty cross-questioned such stragglers as came by the clearer it seemed to the boys that they were hopelessly bewildered, and the more depressed the youngsters became.

The morning brought no relief. Si and Shorty talked together, standing apart from the squad, and casting anxious glances over the swirling mass of army activity, which the boys did not fail to note and read with dismal forebodings.

"I do believe they're lost," whimpered little Pete Skidmore. "What in goodness will ever become of us, if we're lost in this awful wilderness?"

The rest shuddered and grew pale at this horrible prospect.

"That looks like a brigade headquarters over there," said Si, pointing to the left. "And I believe that's our old brigade flag. I'm goin' over there to see."

"I don't believe that's any brigade headquarters at all," said Shorty. "Up there, to the right, looks ever so much more like a brigade headquarters. I'm goin' up there to see. You boys stay right there, and don't move off the ground till I come back. I won't be gone long."

As he left, the boys began to feel more lonely and hopeless than ever, and little Pete Skidmore had hard work to restrain his tears.

A large, heavy-jowled man, with a mass of black whiskers, and wearing a showy but nondescript uniform, appeared.

"That must be one o' the big Generals," said Harry Joslyn. "Looks like the pictures o' Grant. Git into line, boys, and salute."

"No, it ain't Grant, neither," said Gid Mackall. "Too big. Must be Gen. Thomas."

The awed boys made an effort to form a line and receive him properly.

"Who are you, boys?" said the newcomer, after gravely returning the salute.

"We're recruits for the 200th Injianny Volunteer Infantry," answered Harry Joslyn. "Kin you tell us where the rijimint is? We're lost."

"Used to know sich a regiment. In fact, I used to be Lieutenant-Colonel of it. But I hain't heard of it for a long time. Think it's petered out."

"Petered out!" gasped the boys.

"Yes. It was mauled and mummixed to death. There's plenty o' mismanagement all around the army, but the 200th Injianny had the worst luck of all. It got into awful bad hands. I quit it just as

soon's I see how things was a-going. They begun to plant the men just as soon's they crossed the Ohio, and their graves are strung all the way from Louisville to Chickamauga. The others got tired o' being mauled around, and starved, and tyrannized over, and o' fighting for the nigger, and they skipped for home like sensible men."

The boys shuddered at the doleful picture.

"Who brung you here?" continued the newcomer.

"Sarjint Klegg and Corpril Elliott," answered Harry.

"Holy smoke," said the newcomer with a look of disgust. "They've made non-commish out o' them sapsuckers. Why, I wouldn't let them do nothin' but dig ditches when I was in command o' the regiment. But they probably had to take them. All the decent material was gone. How much bounty'd you get?"

"We got \$27.50 apiece," answered Harry. "But we didn't care nothin' for the bounty. We—"

"Only \$27.50 apiece. Holy smoke! They're payin' 10 times that in some places."

"I tell you, we didn't enlist for the bounty," reiterated Harry.

"All the same, you don't want to be robbed o' what's yours. You don't want to be skinned out o' your money by a gang o' snoozers who're gittin' rich off of green boys like you. Where's this Sarjint Klegg and Corpril Elliott that brung you here?"

"They've gone to look for the rijimint."

"Gone to look for the regiment. Much they've gone to look for the regiment. They've gone to look out for their scalawag selves. When you see 'em agin, you'll know 'em, that's all."

Little Pete Skidmore began to whimper.

"Say, boys," continued the newcomer, "you'd better drop all idee of that 200th Injianny and come with me. If there is any sich a regiment any more, and you get to it, you'd be sorry for it as long as you live. I know a man over here who's got a nice regiment, and wants a few more boys like you to fill it up. He'll treat you white and give you twice as much bounty as you'll git anywhere's else, and he's goin' to keep his regiment back in the fortifications, where there won't be no fightin', and hard marches, and starvation—"

"But we enlisted to fight and march, and—" interjected Harry.

"Well, you want a good breakfast just now, more'n anything else, judgin' from appearances. Come along with me and I'll git you something to eat."

"But we waz enlisted for the 200th Injianny Volunteer Infantry, and must go to that rijimint," protested Monty Scruggs.

"Well, what's that got to do with your havin' a good breakfast?" said the newcomer plausibly. "You need that right off. Then we kin talk about your regiment. As a matter of fact, you're only enlisted in the Army of the United States and have the right to go to any regiment you please. Tyrannical as the officers may be, they can't take that privilege of an American freeman away from you. Come along and git breakfast first."

The man's appearance was so impressive, his words and confident manner so convincing, and the boys so hungry that their scruples vanished, and all followed the late Lieut.-Col. Billings, as he gave the word, and started off through the mazes of the camp with an air of confident knowledge that completed his conquest of them.

Ex-Lieut.-Col. Billings strode blithely along, feeling the gladsome exuberance of a man who had "struck a good thing," and turning over in his mind as to where he had best market his batch of lively recruits, how he could get around the facts of their previous enlistment, and how much he ought to realize per head. He felt that he could afford to give the boys a good breakfast, and that that would be fine policy. Accordingly, he led the way to one of the numerous large eating houses, established by enterprising sutlers, to their own great profit and the shrinkage of the pay of the volunteers. He lined the boys up in front of the long shelf which served for a table and ordered the keeper:

"Now, give each of these boys a good breakfast of ham and eggs and trimmings and I'll settle for it."

"Good mornin', Kunnel. When 'd you git down here?" said a voice at his elbow.

"Hello, Groundhog, is that you?" said Billings, turning around. "Just the man I wanted to see. Finish your breakfast and come out here. I want to talk to you."

"Well," answered Groundhog, wiping his mouth, "I'm through. The feller that runs this shebang ain't made nothin' offen me, I kin tell you. It's the first square meal I've had for a week, and I've et until there ain't a crack left inside o' me that a skeeter could git his bill in. I laid out to git the wuth o' my money, and I done it. What're you doin' down here in this hole? Ain't Injianny good enough for you?"

"Injianny's good enough on general principles, but just now there's too much Abolition malaria there for me. The Lincoln satraps 've got the swing on me, and I thought I'd take a change of air. I've come down here to see if there weren't some chances to make a good turn, and I've done very well so far. I've done a little in cattle and got some cotton through the lines—enough at least to pay my board and railroad fare. But I think the biggest thing is in recruits, and I've got a scheme which I may let you into. You know there are a lot of agents down here from the New England States trying to git niggers to fill up their quotas, and they are paying big money for recruits. Can't you go out and gether up a lot o' niggers that we kin sell 'em?"

"Sure," said Groundhog confidently. "Kin git all you want, if you'll pay for 'em. But what's this gang you've got with you?"

"O, they're a batch for that blasted Abolition outfit, the 200th Injianny. Them two ornery galoots, Si and Shorty, whose necks I ought've broke when I was with the regiment, have brung 'em down. They're not goin' to git to the 200th Injianny if I kin help it, though. First place, it'll give old McBiddle, that Abolition varmint, enough to git him mustered as Colonel. He helped oust me, and I have it in for him. He was recommended for promotion for gittin' his arm shot off at Chickamauga. Wisht it'd bin his cussed head."

"But what're you goin' to do with the gang?" Groundhog inquired.

"O, there are two or three men around here that I kin sell 'em to for big money. I ought to make a clean thousand off 'em if I make a cent."

"How much'll I git out o' that?" inquired Groundhog anxiously.

"Well, you ain't entitled to nothin' by rights. I've hived this crowd all by myself, and kin work 'em all right. But if you'll come along and make any affidavits that we may need, I'll give you a sawbuck. But on the nigger lay I'll stand in even with you, half and half. You run 'em in and I'll place 'em and we'll whack up."

"'Tain't enough," answered Groundhog angrily. "Look here, Jeff Billings, I know you of old. You've played off on me before, and I won't stand no more of it. Jest bekase you've bin a Lieutenant-Colonel and me only a teamster you've played the high and mighty with me. I'm jest as good as you are any day. I wouldn't give a howl in the infernal regions for your promises. You come down now with \$100 in greenbacks and I'll go along and help you all I kin. If you don't—"

"If I don't what'll you do, you lowlived whelp?" said Billings, in his usual brow-beating manner. "I only let you into this as a favor, because I've knowed you before. You hain't brains enough to make a picayune yourself, and hain't no gratitude when someone else makes it for you. Git out o' here; I'm ashamed to be seen speakin' to a mangy hound like you. Git out o' here before I kick you out. Don't you dare speak to one o' them boys, or ever to me agin. If you do I'll mash you. Git out."

Si and Shorty's dismay when they returned and found their squad entirely disappeared was overwhelming. They stood and gazed at one another for a minute in speechless alarm and wonderment.

"Great goodness," gasped Si at length, "they can't have gone far. They must be somewhere around."

"Don't know about that," said Shorty despairingly. "We've bin gone some little time and they're quick-footed little rascals."

"What fools we wuz to both go off and leave 'em," murmured Si in deep contrition. "What fools we wuz."

"No use o' cryin' over spilt milk," answered Shorty. "The thing to do now is to find 'em, which is very much like huntin' a needle in a haystack. You stay here, on the chance o' them comin' back, and I'll take a circle around there to the left and look for 'em. If I don't find 'em I'll come back and we'll go down to the Provo-Marshal's."

"Goodness, I'd rather be shot than go back to the rijimint without 'em," groaned Si. "How kin I ever face the Colonel and the rest o' the boys?"

Leaving Si gazing anxiously in every direction for some clew to his missing youngsters, Shorty rushed off in the direction of the sutler's shanties, where instinct told him he was most likely to find the runaways.

He ran up against Groundhog.

"Where are you goin' in sich a devil of a hurry?" the teamster asked. "Smell a distillery somewhere?"

"Hello, Groundhog, is that you? Ain't you dead yit? Say, have you seen a squad o' recruits around here—all boys, with new uniforms, and no letters or numbers on their caps?"

"Lots and gobs of 'em. Camp's full of 'em. More comin' in by every train."

"But these wuz all Injianny boys, most of 'em little. Not an old man among 'em."

"Shorty, I know where your boys are. What'll you give me to tell you?"

Shorty knew his man of old, and just the basis on which to open negotiations.

"Groundhog, I've just had my canteen filled with first-class whisky—none o' your commissary rotgut, but old rye, hand-made, fire-distilled. I got it to take out to the boys o' the rijimint to celebrate my comin' back. Le' me have just one drink out of it, and I'll give it to you if you'll tell."

Groundhog wavered an instant. "I wuz offered \$10 on the other side."

Shorty was desperate. "I'll give you the whisky and \$10."

"Le' me see your money and taste your licker."

"Here's the money," said Shorty, showing a bill. "I ain't goin' to trust you with the canteen, but I'll pour out this big spoon full, which'll be enough for you to taste." Shorty drew a spoon from his haversack and filled it level full.

"It's certainly boss licker," said Groundhog, after he had drunk it, and prudently hefted the canteen to see if it was full. "I'll take your offer. You're to have just one swig out o' it, and no more, and not a hog-swaller neither. I know you. You'd drink that hull canteenful at one gulp, if you had to. You'll let me put my thumb on your throat?"

"Yes, and I'll give you the canteen now and the money after we find the boys."

"All right. Go ahead. Drink quick, for you must go on the jump, or you'll lose your boys."

Shorty lifted the canteen to his lips and Groundhog clasped his throat with his thumb on Adam's apple. When Shorty got his breath he sputtered:

"Great Jehosephat, you didn't let me git more'n a spoonful. But where are the boys?"

"Old Jeff Billings's got 'em down at Zeke Wiggins's hash-foundry feedin' 'em, so's he kin toll 'em off into another rijimint."

"Old Billings agin," shouted Shorty in a rage. "Where's the place? Show it to me. But wait a minute till I run back and git my pardner."

"Gi' me that licker fust," shouted Groundhog, but Shorty was already running back for Si. When he returned with him he threw the canteen to Groundhog with the order, "Go ahead and show us the place."

By the time they came in sight of the sutler's shanty the boys had finished their breakfast and were moving off after Billings.

"There's your man and there's your boys," said Groundhog, pointing to them. "Now gi' me that 'ere sawbuck. You'll have to excuse me havin' anything to do with old Billings. He's licked me twice already."

Shorty shoved the bill into his hand, and rushed down in front of Billings.

"Here, you black-whiskered old roustabout, where 're you takin' them boys?" he demanded.

"Git out o' my way, you red-headed snipe," answered Billings, making a motion as if to brush him away.

"If you don't go off and leave them boys alone I'll belt you over the head with my gun," said Si, raising his musket.

"You drunken maverick," answered Billings, trying to brave it out. "I'll have you shot for insultin' and threatenin' your sooperior officer. Skip out o' here before the Provo comes up and ketches you. Let me go on about my business. Forward, boys."

"Officer nothin'. You can't play that on us," said Si. "Halt, there, boys, and stand fast."

A crowd of teamsters, sutlers' men and other camp followers gathered around. A tall, sandybearded man with keen, gray eyes and a rugged, stony face rode up. He wore a shabby slouch hat, his coat was old and weather-stained, but he rode a spirited horse.

"Here, what's all this row about?" he asked in quick, sharp tones.

"Keep out o' this mix," said Shorty, without looking around. "'Tain't none o' your business. This is our party." With that he made a snatch at Billings's collar to jerk him out of the way.

"What, you rascal, would you assault an officer?" said the newcomer, spurring his horse through the crowd to get at Shorty.

"He ain't no officer, General," said Si, catching sight of two dim stars on the man's shoulders. "He's tryin' to steal our recruits from us."

"Yes, I am an officer," said Billings, avoiding Shorty's clutch. "These men are assaultin' me while I'm on duty. I want them arrested and punished."

"Fall back there, both of you," said the General severely, as Si and Shorty came to a present arms. "Sergeant, who are you, and where do you belong?"

"I'm Serg't Klegg, sir, of Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteer Infantry."

"Who are you, Corporal?"

"I'm Corp'l Elliott, sir, of Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteer Infantry."

"Now, officer, who are you?"

"I'm Lieut.-Col. Billings, sir."

"Where's your shoulder-straps?"

"I had 'em taken off this coat to git fixed. They were torn."

"Where's your sword?"

"I left it in my quarters."

"Fine officer, to go on duty that way. Where do you belong?"

Billings hesitated an instant, but he felt sure that the General did not belong to the Army of the Cumberland, and he answered:

"I belong to the 200th Ind."

"That ain't true, General," Si protested. "He was fired out of the regiment a year ago. He's a citizen."

"Silence, Sergeant. Billings? Billings? The name of the Lieutenant-Colonel of the 200th Ind. happens to be McBiddle—one-armed man, good soldier. Billings? Billings? T. J. Billings? Is that your name?"

"Yes, sir," answered Billings, beginning to look very uncomfortable.

"Didn't you have some trouble about a bunch of cattle you sold to the Quartermaster-General?"

"Well, there was little difference of opinion, but—"

"That'll do, sir. That'll do for the present. I begin to get you placed. I thought I knew the name Billings as soon as you spoke it, but I couldn't remember any officer in my army of that name. Now, Sergeant, tell me your story."

"General, me and my pardner here," began Si, "have bin home on wounded furlough. Wounded at Chickamauga and promoted. We got orders to bring on this squad o' recruits from Jeffersonville for our rijimint. We got in last night and this mornin' me and my pardner started out to see if we could find someone to direct us to the rijimint, leavin' the squad alone for a few minutes. While we wuz gone this feller, who's bin fired out of our rijimint and another one that he was in, come along and tolled our boys off, intendin' to sneak 'em into another rijimint and git pay for 'em. By great good luck we ketched him in time, just before you come up. You kin ask the boys themselves if I hain't told you the truth."

"Good idea," said the General, in his quick, peremptory way. "You three (indicating Si, Shorty and Billings) march off there 25 paces, while I talk to the boys."

Gen. Sherman, for it was the Commander of the Military Division of the Mississippi, who, with his usual impetuous, thorough way, would investigate even the most insignificant affair in his camps, when the humor seized him, now sprang from his horse, and began a sharp, nervous cross-questioning of the boys as to their names, residence, ages, how they came there and whither they were bound.

"You came down with this Sergeant and Corporal, did you? You were recruited for the 200th Ind., were you? You were put under the charge of those men to be taken to your regiment?" he asked Pete Skidmore, at the end of the line.

"Yes, sir," blubbered Pete. "And they are always losin' us, particularly me, durn 'em. Spite of all I kin say to 'em they'll lose me, durn their skins."

"No, my boy, you sha'n't be lost," said the General kindly, as he remounted. "Stick to our command and you'll come through all right. Billings, you thorough-paced rascal, I want you to get to the other side of the Ohio River as quickly as the trains will carry you. I haven't time to deal with you as you deserve, but if I have occasion to speak to you again you'll rue it as long as you live. There's a train getting ready to go out. If you are wise, you'll take it. Serg't Klegg and Corp'l Elliott, you deserve to lose your stripes for both of you leaving your squad at the same time. See that you don't do it again. You'll find the 200th Ind. in camp on the east side of Mission Ridge, about a mile south of Rossville Gap. Go out this road until you pass old John Ross's house about a half a mile. You'll find several roads leading off to the right, but don't take any of them till you come to one that turns off by a sweet gum and a honey-locust standing together on the banks of a creek. Understand? A sweet gum and a honey-locust standing together on the banks of a creek. Turn off there, go across the mountain and you'll find your camp. Move promptly now."

"I declare," said a big Wagonmaster, as the General galloped off, "if that old Gump Sherman don't beat the world. He not only knows where every regiment in his whole army is located, but I believe he knows every man in it. He's a far-reacher, I tell you."

"Great Jehosephat," gasped Shorty, "was that Gen. Tecumseh Sherman?"

"As sure 's you're a foot high," replied the Wagonmaster.

"And I told him to mind his own business," stammered Shorty.

"Yes, and if it hadn't bin for him you'd 'a' lost us, durn it," ejaculated little Pete Skidmore.

CHAPTER III. THE PARTNERS GET BACK TO THEIR REGIMENT AT LAST

WITH ALL THEIR RECRUITS

SI AND SHORTY were too glad to get their boys back, and too eager to find their regiment, to waste any time in scolding the derelicts.

"Now that you boys have had a good breakfast," Si remarked with an accent of cutting sarcasm, "at the expense of that kind-hearted gentleman, Mr. Billings, I'm goin' to give you a pleasant little exercise in the shape of a forced march. If you don't make the distance between here and the other side o' Rossville Gap quicker'n ary squad has ever made it I'm much mistaken. Shorty, put yourself on the left and bring up the rear."

"You bet," answered Shorty, "and I'll take durned good care I don't lose little Pete Skidmore."

"Now," commanded Si, getting a good lay of the ground toward the gap, "Attention. All ready? Forward, march."

He led off with the long march stride of the veteran, and began threading his way through the maze of teams, batteries, herds, and marching men and stragglers with the ease and certainty born of long acquaintance with crowded camps. He dodged around a regiment here, avoided a train there, and slipped through a marching battery at the next place with a swift, unresting progress that quickly took away the boys' wind and made them pant with the exertion of keeping up.

In the rear was the relentless Shorty.

"Close up, there! Close up!" he kept shouting to those in front. "Don't allow no gaps between you. Keep marchin' distance—19 inches from back to breast. Come along, Pete. I ain't a-goin' to lose you, no matter what happens."

"Sarjint," gasped flarry Joslyn, after they had gone a couple of miles, "don't you call this purty fast marchin'?"

"Naah," said Si contemptuously. "We're just crawlin' along. Wait till we git where it's a little clear, and then we'll go. Here, cut acrost ahead o' that battery that's comin' up a-trot."

There was a rush for another mile or two, when there was a momentary halt to allow a regiment of cavalry to go by at a quick walk.

"Goodness," murmured Gid Mackall, as he set down the carpet-sack which he would persist in carrying, "are they always in a hurry? I s'posed that when soldiers wuzzent marchin' or fightin' they lay around camp and played cards and stole chickens, and wrote letters home, but everybody 'round here seems on the dead rush."

"Don't seem to be nobody pic-nickin' as far's I kin see," responded Si, "but we hain't no time to talk about it now. We must git to the rijimint. Forward!"

Another swift push of two or three miles brought them toward the foot of Mission Ridge, and near the little, unpainted frame house which had once been the home of John Ross, the chief of the Cherokees.

"Boys, there's the shebang or palace of the big Injun who used to be king of all these mountains and valleys," said Si, stopping the squad to give them a much needed rest. "He run this whole country, and had Injuns to burn, though he generally preferred to burn them that didn't belong to his church."

"Roasted his neighbors instid o' his friends in a heathen sort of a way," continued Shorty.

"What was his name?" inquired Monty Scruggs.

"John Ross."

"Humph, not much of a name," said Monty in a disappointed tone, for he had been an assiduous reader of dime novels. "'Tain't anything like as fine as Tecumseh, and Osceola, and Powhatan, and Jibbeninosay, and Man-Afraid-of-Gettin'-His-Neck-Broke. Wasn't much of a big Injun."

"Deed he was," answered Si. "He and his fathers before him run' this whole neck o' woods accordin' to the big Injun taste, and give the Army o' the United States all they wanted to do. Used to knock all the other Injuns around here about like ten-pins. The Rosses were bosses from the word go."

"Don't sound right, though," said Monty regretfully. "And such a shack as that don't look like the wigwam of a great chief. 'Tain't any different from the hired men's houses on the farms in Injianny."

"Well, all the same, it's got to go for the scene of a cord o' dime novels," said Shorty. "We've brung in civilization and modern improvements and killed more men around here in a hour o' working time than the ignorant, screechin' Injuns killed since the flood."

"Do them rijimints look like the 200th Injianny?" anxiously inquired Harry Joslyn, pointing to some camps on the mountain-side, where the men were drilling and engaged in other soldierly duties.

"Them," snorted Shorty contemptuously. "Them's only recruits that ain't got licked into shape yet. When you see the 200th Injianny you'll see a rijimint, I tell you. Best one in the army. You ought to be mighty proud you got a chanst to git into sich a rijimint."

"We are; we are," the boys assured him. "But we're awful anxious to see jest what it's like."

"Well, you'll see in a little while the boss lot o' boys. Every one of 'em fightin' cocks, thoroughbred—not a dunghill feather or strain in the lot. Weeded 'em all out long ago. All straight-cut gentlemen. They'll welcome you like brothers and skin you out of every cent o' your bounty, if you play cards with 'em. They're a dandy crowd when it comes to fingerin' the pasteboards. They'll be regler fathers to you, but you don't want to play no cards with 'em."

"I thought you said they wuz all gentlemen and would be regler brothers to us," said Harry Joslyn.

"So they will—so they will. But your brother's the feller that you've got to watch closest when he's settin' in front o' you with one little pair. He's the feller that's most likely to know all you know about the cards and what he knows besides. They've bin skinnin' one another so long that they'll be as anxious to git at your fresh young blood as a New Orleans skeeter is to sink into a man just from the North."

"Didn't think they'd allow gambling in so good a regiment as the 200th Ind.," remarked Alf Russell, who was a devoted attendant on Sunday school.

"Don't allow it. It's strictly prohibited."

"But I thought that in the army you carried out orders, if you had to kill men."

"Well, there's orders and orders," said Shorty, philosophically. "Most of 'em you obey to the last curl on the letter R, and do it with a jump. Some of 'em you obey only when you have to, and take your chances at improving the State o' Tennessee by buildin' roads and diggin' up stumps in the parade ground if you're ketched not mindin'. Of them kind is the orders agin gamblin'."

"Shorty, stop talkin' to the boys about gamblin'. I won't have it," commanded Si. "Boys, you mustn't play cards on no account, especially with older men. It's strictly agin orders, besides which I'll break any o' your necks that I ketch at it. You must take care o' your money and send it home. Forward, march."

They went up the road from the John Ross house until they came to that turning off to the right by a sweet gum and a sycamore, as indicated by Gen. Sherman, and then began a labored climbing of the rough, stony way across Mission Ridge. Si's and Shorty's eagerness to get to the regiment increased so with their nearness to it that they went at a terrific pace in spite of all obstacles.

"Please, Sarjint," begged Gid Mackall, as they halted for an instant near a large rock, "need we go quite so fast? We're awfully anxious to git to the regiment, too, but I feel like as if I'd stove two inches offen my legs already against them blamed rocks."

"I can't keep up. I can't keep up at all," whimpered little Pete Skidmore. "You are just dead certain to lose me."

"Pull out just a little more, boys," Si said pleasantly. "We must be almost there. It can't be but a little ways now."

"Close up there in front!" commanded Shorty. "Keep marchin' distance—19 inches from back to breast. Come on, Pete. Gi' me your hand; I'll help you along."

"I ain't no kid, to be led along by the hand," answered Pete sturdily, refusing the offer. "I'll keep up somehow. But you can't expect my short legs to cover as much ground as them telegraph poles o' your'n."

The summit of the ridge was crossed and a number of camps appeared along the slope.

"Wonder which one o' them is the 200th Injianny's?" said Si to Shorty.

"I thought the 200th Injianny was so much finer rijimint than any other that you'd know it at sight," said Harry Joslyn, with a shade of disappointment in his voice.

"I would know it if I was sure I was lookin' at it," answered Shorty. "But they seem to have picked out all the best rijimints in the army to go into camp here this side o' Mission Ridge. Mebbe they want to make the best show to the enemy."

"That looks like the camp o' the 200th Injianny over there," said Si, pointing to the right, after scanning the mountain-side. "See all them red shirts hangin' out to dry? That's Co. A; they run to red flannel shirts like a nigger barber to striped pants."

"No," answered Shorty; "that's that Ohio rijimint, made up o' rollin' mill men and molders. They all wear red flannel shirts. There's the 200th Injianny just down there to the left, with all them men on extra duty on the parade ground. I know just the gang. Same old crowd; I kin almost tell their faces. They've bin runnin' guard, as usual, and comin' back full o' apple-jack and bad language and desire to give the camp a heavy coat o' red paint. Old McBiddle has tried to convince 'em that he was still runnin' the rijimint, and his idees wuz better 'n theirs, and there they are. There's Jim Monaghan handlin' that pick as if he was in the last stages o' consumption. There's Barney' Maguire, pickin' up three twigs 'bout as big as lead pencils, and solemnly carryin' 'em off the parade ground as if they wuz fence-rails. I'll just bet a month's pay that's Denny Murphy marchin' up and down there with his knapsack filled with Tennessee dornicks. Denny's done that feather-weight knapsack trick so often that his shoulders have corns and windgalls on 'em, and they always keep a knapsack packed for him at the guard-house ready for one of his Donnybrook fair songs and dances. Mighty good boy, Denny, but he kin git up a red-hotter riot on his share of a canteen of apple-jack than any three men in the rijimint. That feller tied to a tree is Tony Wilson. He's refused to dig trenches agin. O, I tell you, they're a daisy lot."

"Shorty," admonished Si. "You mustn't talk that way before the boys. What'll they think o' the rijimint?"

"Think of it?" said Shorty, recovering himself. "They've got to think of it as the very best rijimint that ever stood in line-of-battle. I'll punch the head of any man that says anything to the contrary. Every man in it is a high-toned, Christian gentleman. Mind that, now, every one of you brats, and don't you allow nobody to say otherwise."

"No," said Si, after further study of the camps, "neither o' them 's the 200th Injianny. They've both got brass bands. Must be new rijimints."

"Say," said Shorty, "there's a royal lookin' rooster standin' up in front of that little house there. Looks as if the house was headquarters for some highroller, and him doin' Orderly duty. If he knows as much as he's got style, he knows more'n old Sherman himself. Go up and ask him."

It was the first time in all their service that either of them had seen a soldier in the full dress prescribed by the United States Army regulations, and this man had clearly won the coveted detail of Orderly by competition with his comrades as being the neatest, best-dressed man in the squad. He was a tall, fine-looking young man, wearing white gloves and a paper collar, with a spotless dress

coat buttoned to the chin, his shoes shining like mirrors, his buttons and belt-plates like new gold, and his regulation hat caught up on the left side with a feather and a gilt eagle. The front of his hat was a mass of gilt letters and figures and a bugle, indicating his company, regiment and State. On his breast was a large, red star.

"Jehosephat," sighed Shorty. "I wish I had as many dollars as he has style. Must be one of old Abe's body guards, sent out here with Grant's commission as Lieutenant-General. Expect that red star passes him on the railroads and at the hotels. I'd like to play him two games out o' three, cut-throat, for it. I could use it in my business."

"No," said the Orderly to Si, with a strong Yankee twang, "I don't know a mite about the 200th Ind. Leastwise, I don't remember it. Everybody down here's from Indiana, Ohio or Illinois. It's one eternal mix, like Uncle Jed Stover's fish—couldn't tell shad, herring nor sprat from one another. It seems to me more like a 'tarnal big town-meeting than an army. All talk alike, and have got just as much to say; all act alike. Can't tell where an Indiana regiment leaves off and Ohio one begins; can't tell officer from private, everybody dresses as he pleases, and half of them don't wear anything to tell where they belong. There wasn't a corps badge in the whole army when we come here."

"Corps badges—what's them?" asked Si.

"Corps badges? Why this is one," said the man, tapping his red star. "This shows I belong to the Twelfth Corps—best corps in the Army of the Potomac, and the First Division—best division in the corps. We have to wear them so's to show our General which are his men, and where they be. Haven't you no corps badges?"

"Our General don't have to tag us," said Shorty, who had come up and listened. "He knows all of us that's worth knowin', and that we'll go wherever he orders us, and stay there till he pulls us off. Our corps badge's a full haversack and Springfield rifle sighted up to 1,200 yards."

"Well, you do fight in a most amazing way," said the Orderly, cordially. "We never believed it of such rag-tag and bobtail until we saw you go up over Mission Ridge. You were all straggling then, but you were straggling toward the enemy. Never saw such a mob, but it made the rebels sick."

"Well, if you'd seen us bustin' your old friend Long-street at Snodgrass Hill, you'd seen some hefightin'. We learned him that he wasn't monkeyin' with the Army o' the Potomac, but with fellers that wuz down there for business, and not to wear paper collars and shine their buttons. He come at us seven times before we could git that little fact through his head, and we piled up his dead like cordwood."

"Well, you didn't do any better than we did with Early's men at Gulp's Hill, if we do wear paper collars," returned the other proudly. "After we got through with Johnston's Division you couldn't see the ground in front for the dead and wounded. And none of your men got up on Lookout Mountain any quicker'n we did. Paper collars and red stars showed you the way right along."

"My pardner's only envious because he hain't no paper collars nor fine clothes," said Si, conciliatorily. "I've often told him that if he'd leave chuck-a-luck alone and save his money he'd be able to dress better'n Gen. Grant."

"Gen. Grant's no great shakes as a dresser," returned the other. "I was never so surprised in my life as one day when I was Orderly at Division Headquarters, and a short man with a red beard, and his clothes spattered with mud, rode up, followed by one Orderly, and said, 'Orderly, tell the General that Gen. Grant would like to see him.' By looking hard I managed to make out three stars on his shoulder. Why, if Gen. McClellan had been coming you'd have seen him for a mile before he got there."

"If Gen. Grant put on as much style in proportion to what he done as McClellan, you could see him as far as the moon," ventured Shorty.

"Well, we're not gettin' to the rijimint," said the impatient Si. "Le's rack on. So long, Orderly. Come and see us in the 200th Injianny and we'll treat you white. Forward, march!"

"There's a couple of boys comin' up the road. Probably they kin tell us where the rijimint is," suggested Shorty.

The two boys were evidently recruits of some months' standing, but not yet considered seasoned soldiers.

"No," they said, "there is no 200th Ind. here now. It was here yesterday, and was camped right over there, where you see that old camp, but before noon came an order to march with three days' rations and 40 rounds. It went out the Lafayette Road, and the boys seemed to think they wuz goin' out to Pigeon Mountain to begin the general advance o' the army, and wuz mightily tickled over it."

"Gone away," said Si, scanning the abandoned camp sadly; "everybody couldn't have gone. They must've left somebody behind that wasn't able to travel, and somebody to take care o' 'em. They must've left some rijimintal stuff behind and a guard over it."

"No," the boys assured him. "They broke up camp completely. All that wasn't able to march was sent to the hospital in Chattynoogy. Every mite of stuff was loaded into wagons and hauled off with 'em. They never expected to come back."

"That camp ground don't look as it'd bin occupied for two weeks," said Shorty. "See the ruts made by the rain in the parade ground and the general look o' things. I don't believe the rijimint only left there yisterday. It don't look as if the 200th Injianny ever had sich a camp. It's more like one o' the camps o' them slack-twisted Kaintucky and Tennessee rijimints."

"If Oi didn't belave that Si Klegg and Sharty was did intoirely, and up home in Injianny, Oi'd be sure that was their v'ices," said a voice from the thicket by the side of the road. The next instant a redheaded man, with a very distinct map of Ireland in his face, leaped out, shouting:

"Si and Sharty, ye thieves of the worruld, whin did ye get back, and how are yez? Howly saints, but Oi'm glad to see yez."

"Jim Monaghan, you old Erin-go-bragh," said Shorty, putting his arm around the man's neck, "may I never see the back o' my neck, but I'm glad to see you. I was just talkin' about you. I thought I recognized you over there in one of the camps, at your favorite occupation of extry dooty, cleanin' up the parade ground."

"No; Oi've not bin on extry doty for narely two wakes now, but it's about due. But here comes Barney Maguire and Con Taylor, Tony Wilson and the rest iv the gang. Lord love yez, but they'll be surely glad to see yez."

The others came up with a tumultuous welcome to both.

"Where's the camp?" asked Si.

"Jist bey ant—jist bey ant them cedars there—not a musket-shot away," answered Jim, pointing to the place.

"What'd you mean, you infernal liars, by tellin' us that the rijimint was gone?" said Shorty, wrathfully to the men whom he had met, and who were still standing near, looking puzzled at the demonstrations.

"Aisy, now, aisyy," said Jim. "We're to blame for that, so we are. Ye say, we wint over by Rossville last night and had a bit av a shindy and cleaned out a sutler's shop. We brought away some av the most illegant whisky that iver wet a man's lips, and hid it down there in the gulch, where we had jist come back for it. We sane you comin' and thought yez was the provo-guard after us. Ye say ye stopped there and talked to that peacock at the Provo-Marshal's quarters, and we thought yez was gittin' instructions. We sint these rookies out, who we thought nobody'd know, to give you a little fairy story about the rijimint being gone, to throw you off the scint, until we could finish the liquor."

"Yes, I know," laughed Shorty, "after you'd got the budge down you didn't care what happened. You're the same old brick-topped Connaught Ranger."

"You and Si come down into the gulch and jine us."

"Can't think of it for a minute," said Shorty with great self-denial. "Don't speak so loud before these boys. They're recruits for the rijimint. We must take 'em into camp. We'll see you later."

CHAPTER IV. THE RECRUITS ARE ASSIGNED TO COMPANIES

THE strangest feeling possessed Si and Shorty when once in the camp of their old regiment, and after the first hearty welcome of their comrades was over.

There was a strangeness about everything that they could not comprehend.

It was their regiment—the 200th Ind.; it was made up of the same companies, with the great majority of the men the same, but it was very far from being the 200th Ind. which crossed the Ohio River in September, 1862.

Marvelous changes had been wrought by 18 months' tuition in the iron school of war, in the 10 separate herds of undisciplined farmer boys which originally constituted the regiment. Yellow, downy beards appeared on faces which had been of boyish smoothness when the river was crossed, but this was only one of the minor changes. There was an alertness, a sureness, a self-confidence shining from eyes which was even more marked. Every one carried himself as if he knew precisely what he was there for, and intended doing it. There was enough merriment around camp, but it was very different from the noisy rollicking of the earlier days. The men who had something to do were doing it with systematic earnestness; the men who had nothing to do were getting as much solid comfort and fun as the situation afforded. The frothy element among officers and men had been rigorously weeded out or repressed. All that remained were soldiers in the truest sense of the word. The change had been very great even since the regiment had lined up for the fearful ordeal of Chickamauga.

"Did you ever see a gang o' half-baked kids get to be men as quick as these boys?" Si asked Shorty. "Think o' the awkward squads that used to be continually fallin' over their own feet, and stabbing themselves with their own bayonets."

"Seems so," answered Shorty, "but I don't know that they've growed any faster'n we have. Walt Slusser, who's bin Orderly at Headquarters, says that he heard Capt. McGillicuddy tell Col. McBiddle that he'd never seen men come out as me and you had, and he thought we'd make very effective noncommish."

"Probably we've all growed," Si assented thoughtfully. "Just think o' McBiddle as Lieutenant-Colonel, in place o' old Billings. Remember the first time we saw McBiddle to know him? That time he was Sergeant o' the Guard before Perryville, and was so gentle and soft-spoken that lots o' the boys fooled themselves with the idee that he lacked sand. Same fellers thought that old bellerin' bull Billings was a great fightin' man. What chumps we all wuz that we stood Billings a week."

"Wonder if I'm ever goin' to have a chanst for a little private sociable with Billings? Just as I think I'm goin' to have it, something interferes. That feller's bin so long ripe for a lickin' that I'm afraid he'll be completely spiled before my chanst comes."

"But I can't git over missin' so many familiar voices in command, and hearin' others in their places," said Si. "That battalion drill they wuz havin' as we come in didn't sound like our rijimint at all. I could always tell which was our rijimint drillin' half a mile away by the sound of the voices. What a ringin' voice Capt. Scudder had. It beat the bugle. You could hear him sing out, 'Co. C, on right, into line! Forward, guide right—March!' farther'n you could the bugle. The last time I heard him wuz as we wuz' going up Snodgrass Hill. A rebel bullet went through his head just as he said, 'March!' Now, Lieut. Scripps is in command o' Co. C, and he's got a penny-whistle voice that I can't git used to."

"Lieut. Scripps's a mighty good man. He'll take Co. C as far as Capt. Scudder would."

"I know that Scripps's all right. No discount on him. But it don't seem natural, that's all. Every one o' the companies except ours has a new man in command, and in ours Capt. McGillicuddy's voice has got a different ring to it than before Chickamaugy."

"Practicin' to command the battalion," suggested Shorty. "You know he'll be Major if McBiddle's made a full Kurnel."

"That reminds me," said Shorty, "that our squad o' recruits'll probably fill up the rijimint so's to give McBiddle his eagle. They'll be 'round presently to divide up the squad and assign 'em to companies. As all the companies is about equally strong, they'll divide 'em equally—that'll make six and one-half boys to each company. Capt. McGillicuddy bein' the senior Captain, is to have first choice. We want to pick out the best six and one-half for our company and put 'em in one squad at the right or left, and give the Captain the wink to choose 'em."

"If we do it's got to be done mighty slick," said Si. "They're all mighty good boys, and spunky. They'll all want to go with us, and if they find out we've made any choice they'll never forgive us. I'd a'most as soon have one six boys as another, yit if I had to pick out six I believe I'd take Harry Joslyn, Gid Mackall, Alf Russell, Monty Scruggs, Jim Humphreys and Sandy Baker."

"And Pete Skidmore," added Shorty. "We've got to take special care o' that little rat. Besides, I want to. Somehow I've took quite a fancy to the brat."

"Yes, we must take little Pete," assented Si. "The proportion's six and one-half to a company. He 'll pass for the half man. But it won't do to let him know it. He thinks he's as big as any man in the rijimint. But how're we goin' to fix it not to let the other boys know that we've picked 'em out?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Shorty, the man of many wiles. "When the boys are drawed up in line and Capt. McGillicuddy goes down it to pick 'em out, you stand at attention, two paces in front, facin' 'em and lookin' as severe and impartial as a judge on the bench. I'll stand behind you with my leg against your'n, this way, and apparently fixing my gun-lock. When Cap comes in front o' one that we want, yo give me a little hunch with your leg, and I'll make the lock click."

"Splendid idee," said Si. "I'll go and post the Cap while you git the boys into line."

When Shorty returned to the squad he found them in feverish excitement about the distribution to the different companies. As he and Si had apprehended, all were exceedingly anxious to go with them into Co. Q, which Si and Shorty had unwittingly impressed upon them was the crack company of the regiment, and contained the very cream of the men. To be assigned to any other company seemed to them, if not an actual misfortune, a lack of good luck.

"Nonsense," Shorty replied to their eager entreaties; "all the companies in the 200th Injianny is good, prime, first-class—better'n the companies in ary other rijimint. You're playin' in great luck to git into any one o' 'em, I tell you. You might've got into one o' 'em rijimints that're back there at Nashville guardin' fortifications, or one o' 'em that lost their colors at Chickamaugy. I'd ruther be the tail end o' the 200th Injianny, than the Drum Major o' any other."

"That's all right," they shouted. "We're glad we're in the 200th Injianny, but we want to be in Co. Q."

"Well, you can't all be in Co. Q. Only six and one-half of you. The rest's got to go to other companies."

"Say, Corpril," spoke up Harry Joslyn, "you'll see that I git in, won't you? You know I shot that rebel at the burnt bridge."

"And didn't I shoot one, too?" put in Gid Mackall. "Just as much as you did. They want tall men in the company, don't they, Corpril? Not little runts."

"And didn't I watch the crossing down there at the burnt bridge?" pleaded Jim Humphreys.

"And git scared to death by a nigger huntin' coons," laughed the others.

"Who kept the rebel from gittin' back to the train and settin' it on fire, but me and Sandy Baker?" piped up little Pete Skidmore. "Who got lost, and nearly killed by a locomotive. Don't that count for nothin'?"

"Boys," said Shorty, leaning on his musket, and speaking with the utmost gravity, "this's a great military dooty and must be performed without fear, favor nor affection. I'd like to have you all in Co. Q, but this's a thing 'bout which I hain't got no say. There's a great many things in the army 'bout

which a Corpril hain't as much infloence as he orter have, as you'll find out later on. Here comes the Captain o' Co. Q, who, because o' his rank, has the first pick o' the recruits. He's never seen you before, and don't know one o' you from Adam's off-ox. He has his own ideas as to who he wants in the company, and what he says goes. It may be that the color o' your hair'll decide him, mebbe the look in your eyes, mebbe the shape o' your noses. 'Tention! Right dress! Front! Saloot!"

Capt. McGillicuddy came down at the head of the company officers of the regiment, and took a comprehensive survey of the squad.

"Fine-looking lot of youngsters," he remarked. "They'll make good soldiers."

"Every one o' them true-blue, all wool and a yard wide. Captain," said Si.

"You'll play fair, now, Captain, won't you, and choose for yourself?" said Capt. Scripps. "I've no doubt they're all good boys, but there's a choice in good boys, and that Sergeant of yours has learned where the choice is. You let him stay back, while you go down the line yourself."

"Certainly," replied Capt. McGillicuddy. "Serg't Klegg, stay where you are."

Si saluted and took his position, facing the line, with a look of calm impartiality upon his face. Shorty turned around and backed up to him so that the calves of their legs touched, and began intently studying his gunlock.

Capt. McGillicuddy stepped over to the right of the line stopped in front of Harry Joslyn and Gid Mackall. Shorty full-cocked his gun with two sharp clicks.

"You two step forward one pace," said Capt. McGillicuddy to the two radiant boys, who obeyed with a jump. The Captain walked on down the line, carefully scrutinizing each one, but did not stop until Shorty's gun clicked twice, when he was in front of Alf Russell and Monty Scruggs.

"Step forward one pace," he commanded.

He proceeded on down the line until he came in front of Jim Humphreys and Sandy Baker, when Shorty's gun clicked again.

"You two step forward one pace," he commanded. "Gentleman, I've got my six. The rest are yours."

"But you hain't got me. You've lost me," screamed Pete Skidmore, dismayed at being separated from Sandy Baker. Shorty's gun clicked again.

"I believe that there is a fraction of a half a man to be distributed around," the Captain said, turning to the other officers. "We agreed to draw cuts for that choice. But as that's the smallest boy in the lot I'll take him for my fraction. I think that's fair. Step forward, there, you boy on the left."

"All right Captain," laughed Capt. Scripps. "You've got the pick of the men, and I'm glad of it."

"I know you have, for I've been watching that Corporal of yours. I know him of old. I've played cards too often with Shorty not to keep my eye on him whenever he is around. I saw through that gun-lock trick."

"The trouble with you fellows," responded Capt. McGillicuddy, "is that you are constantly hunting around for some reason rather than the real one for Co. Q being always ahead of you. It isn't my fault that Co. Q is the best company in the regiment. It simply comes natural to the men that make up the company. You gentlemen divide up the rest among you, and then come down to the sutler's and we'll talk the matter over. Serg't Klegg, take these men down to the company and have the Orderly provide for them."

"Hello, awful glad to see you back—and you, too, Shorty," said the busy Orderly-Sergeant, speaking in his usual short, snappy sentences, without using any more words than absolutely necessary. "We need you. Short of non-commish. Two Sergeants off on detached duty and two Corporals in hospital. Being worked for all we're worth. Both of you look fine. Had a nice, long rest. In great shape for work. Pitch in, now, and help me. First, let's get the names of these kids on the roll. Humphreys—we've got two other Humphreys, so you'll answer to Humphreys, 3d.

"But I don't want to be with the Humphreys, sir," broke in Jim. "Me and Monty Scruggs—"

"Hold your tongue," said the Orderly sharply. "Don't interrupt me. If you speak when you're spoken to you'll do all the talking expected of you.

"Joslyn, you're after Jones, 3d. M—M—Mackall, you come after Lawrence."

"But you've put me after Joslyn," protested Gid. "He's never ahead of me."

"Shut up," answered the Orderly. "I do the talking for this company. Russell, Scruggs, Skidmore; there, I've got 'em all down. Si, go down toward Co. A and find Bill Stiles and walk him up to the guard-tent and leave him there to cool off. He's got his hide full of coffin varnish somewhere, and of course wants to settle an old score with that Co. A man, who'll likely knock his head off if he catches him. Shorty, go back there to the cook tent and shake up those cooks. Give it to them, for they're getting lazier every day. I want supper ready as soon's we come off dress parade. Here, you boys, trot along after me to the Quartermaster's tent, and draw your blankets, tents, haversacks and canteens. Shorty, as soon's you're through with the cooks, go to the left of the company and start to fixing up a place for these boys' tents. Si, get back as soon's you can, for I want you to take the squad down after rations. Then you'll have to relieve Jake Warder as Sergeant of the Guard, for Jake's hardly able to be around."

The Orderly strode off toward the Quartermaster's tent at such a pace that it gave the boys all they could do to keep up with him. Arriving there he called out sharply to the Quartermaster-Sergeant:

"Wes, give me seven blankets."

That official responded by tossing the required number, one after another, counting them as he did so. As the Orderly caught them he tossed them to the boys, calling their names. Gid Mackall happened to be looking at a battery of artillery when his name was called, and received the blanket on the back of his neck, knocking him over.

"Tend to your business, there; don't be gawking around," said the Orderly sternly. "Now, Wes, seven halves of pup-tents."

These were tossed and counted the same way. Then followed canteens, haversacks and tin plates and cups.

"Now, boys, there's your kits. Give you your guns tomorrow. Hurry back to the company street and set up those tents on railroad time, for it's going to rain. Jump, now."

When they reached Shorty he hustled them around to pitch their tents, but he was not fast enough to please the Orderly, who presently appeared, with the remark:

"Cesar's ghost. Shorty, how slow you are. Are you going to be all night getting up two or three tents? Get a move on you, now, for there's a rain coming up, and besides I want you for something else as soon's you're through with this?"

"Who is that man, Corpril?" asked Monty Scruggs, as the Orderly left.

"That's the Orderly-Sergeant of Co. Q."

"Orderly-Sergeant?" repeated Monty dubiously. "Who's he? I've heard of Captains, Majors, Colonels and Generals, but never of Orderly-Sergeants, and yit he seems to be bigger'n all of 'em. He has more to say, and does more orderin' around than all of 'em put together. He even orders you and Sarjint Klegg. Is he the biggest man in the army?"

"Well, SO far's you're concerned and to all general purposes he is. You needn't pay no partickler attention as a rule to nobody else, but when the Orderly speaks, you jump, and the quicker you jump the better it'll be for you. He don't draw as much salary, nor put on as many frills as the bigger fellers, but you hain't nothin' to do with that. You kin find fault with the Captain, criticize the Kurnel, and lampoon the General, but you don't want to give the Orderly no slack. He's not to be fooled with. Russell, run up there and snatch that spade to dig ditches around these tents."

"When I enlisted," Monty confided to Alf Russell, "I thought I'd do my best to become a Captain or a General. Now, I'm dead anxious to be an Orderly-Sarjint."

CHAPTER V. THE YOUNG RECRUITS

ARE GIVEN AN INITIATION INTO ARMY LIFE

BY the time Shorty had gotten the boys fairly tented, he was ordered to take a squad and guard some stores at the Division Quartermaster's. Si, instead of going on camp-guard, had to go out to the grand guard. When he came back the next morning the Orderly-Sergeant said to him:

"See here, Si, you've got to take that squad of kids you brung into your particular charge, and lick 'em into shape. They need an awful sight of it, and I hain't got any time to give 'em. I've something else to do besides teaching an infant class. I never was good at bringing children up by hand, anyway. I ain't built that way. I want you to go for them young roosters at once, and get 'em into shape in short meter. Marching orders may come any day, and then we want everybody up and dressed. There'll be no time for foolishness. Those dratted little rats were all over camp last night, and into more kinds of devilment than so many pet crows. I've been hearing about nothing else this morning."

"Why," said Si, "I supposed that they was too tired to do anything but lay down and go to sleep. What'd they do?"

"Better ask what they didn't do," replied the Orderly. "They done everything that a passel o' impish school boys could think of, and what they couldn't think of them smart Alecks down in the company put 'em up to. I'm going to put some o' them smarties through a course o' sprouts. I like to see boys in good spirits, and I can enjoy a joke with the next man, but there's such a thing as being too funny. I think a few hours o' extry fatigue duty will reduce their fever for fun."

"Why, what'd they do?" repeated Si.

"Well, in the first place, they got that Joslyn and Mackall to mark a big number 79 on their tents, and then put the same, with their names, on a sheet of paper, and take it up to the Captain's tent.

"The Captain was having a life-and-death rattle with Cap Summerville over their eternal chess, when he's crosser'n two sticks, and liable to snap your head off if you interrupt him. 'Hello, what do you want? What's this?' says he, taking the paper."

"'Them's our names and addresses,' says the brats, cool as cucumbers. Thought we ought to give 'em to you, so's you'd know where to find us, in case you wanted us in a hurry, say, at night.'

"The blazes it is,' says Cap, and Cap Summerville roared. 'You get back to your quarters quick as you can run. Don't worry about my not finding you when I want you. It's my business to find you, and I've got men to help me do it. I'll find you sometime in a way that'll make your hair stand up. Get out, now, and never come around my tent with any such blamed nonsense as that.'

"And Cap Somerville took advantage of the break to snap up Cap's queen, which made him hotter'n ever.

"When the boys got back they found them smart Alecks, Bob Walsh and Andy Sweeney, waiting for 'em, and they consoled 'em, saying, That's just the way with that old bull-head. Never'll take no good advice from nobody about running' the company. Thinks he knows it all. You see how he runs the company. He haint got the addresses o' half his men this minnit, and don't know where they are. That's the reason so many o' our letters from home, and the good things they send us, never reach us. He ought to keep a regler directory, same as in the other companies."

"Then some o' them smarties found out that Scruggs was stuck on his spouting. Seems that he was the star declaimer in his school. They laid it in to him that I was soft on hearing poetry spouted, especially after night, when the moon was up, and everything quiet in camp, and that I was particularly tender on 'Bingen on the Rhine.' You know that if there is anything I'm dead sore on it's that sniveling rot. There used to be a pasty-faced boy in school that'd wail that out, and set all

the girls to bawling. Then they gave us an entertainment just before we left, and all the girls were there, and Pasty-Face he must be the star attraction. He wailed out his condemned old There-was-a-soldier-of-the Legion—laying-i-n-Algiers, and all the girls looked at us as if we were already dead, and they'd better look out for new beaux. My own particular geranium did not lose any time, but married another feller before we got to Stone River. That made me hate the blasted caterwaul worse'n ever. Then that white-eyed, moon-struck Alfonso used to be yowling it at every chance, until he went to the hospital, and he got all the rest so that they were sputtering rags and tags of it. But I've been sorer than a bile on the condemned sick calfiness ever since I brung my chum Jim Bridgewater off the field at Chickamauga, and watched him die as the moon rose, back there at McFarland Gap. Well, what do these smarties do but fill up Scruggs with the idea that the best way to make himself forever solid with me was to stroll down close to my tent and casually let off 'Bingen on the Rhine' in his best style. I'd just got down to work on them pesky pay-rolls, having kept Monaghan two days in the guard-house, so's to be sure that he'd be sober enough to help me—and you know Monaghan's lightning with the pen when he's sober—when that possessed sap-sucker Scruggs began blating out 'Bingen on the Rhine' till you could hear him down to the Colonel's quarters. It made me so mad that I knocked over the ink as I jumped up, and spoiled the triplicate rolls that we'd got about half made out. I snatched up a club to simply mash the bawling brat, but they got him away before I could reach 'im. They explained to Scruggs afterward that I was subject to fits whenever the moon was in her last quarter, and they'd forgotten to look at the almanac that evening. O, but I'll soak 'em for that yet."

"Trouble is," said Si, laughing, "the boys've bin layin' around doin' nothin' too long. They're fuller o' devilment than a dog is of fleas."

"But I haint told you half," continued the Orderly-Sergeant. "Them smarties were quick to find out that Alf Russell and Jim Humphreys leaned strongly toward religion, and they filled 'em with the idea that Cap McGillicuddy was a very devout man, and held family devotions every evening in his tent, in which his company joined."

"Great goodness," gasped Si. "They never heard Cap's remarks when we balked on a right wheel in company column."

"Well," continued the Orderly, "Cap had been waxed by Cap Summerville two games hand-running, and they were nip-and-tuck on the third, and just as impatient and cross as they always are when they're neck-and-neck in the last heat. The tent-flap raised, and in walked Russell and Humphreys soft and quietlike, as if they were going into the sitting-room for evening prayers. They had their caps in their hands, and didn't say anything but brushed their hair back and took their seats in the first place they could find, which happened to be Cap's cot. Cap didn't notice 'em till after Cap Summerville had caught his queen and then checkmated him in two moves. You know how redhot Cap gets when he loses a game of chess, particularly to Cap Summerville, who rubs it in on him without mercy.

"Cap looked at the boys in astonishment, and then snapped out: 'Well, what do you boys want?' 'We've just come in for evening prayers,' says they, mild as skimmed milk. 'Evening what?' roared the Cap. 'Evening prayers,' says they. 'Don't you have family devotion every evening? Cap Summerville couldn't hold in any longer, and just roared, and the fellers outside, who'd had their ears against the canvas listening to every word, they roared too. Cap was madder'n a July hornet, and cussed till the ridgepole shook. Then he took the two boys by the ears and marched 'em out and says: 'You two brats go back to your tents and stay there. When I want you to come to my tent I'll send for you, and you'll wish I hadn't. You'll do praying enough if you're on hand when the church call's sounded. You'll be mightily different from the rest of my company if you don't prefer going on guard to church. Get, now!'"

"Now the Captain oughtn't to say that about the company," protested Si. "I for one go to church every chance I get."

"O, yes, you do," sneered the Orderly-Sergeant. "Who was it, I'd like to know, that sent word back to the boys in the rear to steal the Chaplain's horse, and keep him hid for a day or two so's he couldn't get up and hold services, because you boys wanted to go fishing in the Tennessee River?"

"Yes, I did," Si confessed; "but it was because the boys begged me to. We'd just got there, and it looked as if the biting was good, and we probably wouldn't stay there longer'n over Sunday."

"Well, I ain't done yet," continued the Orderly-Sergeant. "That little snipe, Pete Skidmore—"

"Good gracious, he wasn't lost again, was he?" gasped Si.

"That's just what he was, the little runt, and we had the devil's own time finding him. What in Sam Hill did the Captain take him for, I'd like to know? Co. Q aint no nursery. Well, the bugler up at Brigade Headquarters blowed some sort of a call, and Skidmore wanted to know what it meant. They told him that it was an order for the youngest man in each company to come up there and get some milk for his coffee tomorrow morning, and butter for his bread. There was only enough issued for the youngest boys, and if he wanted his share he'd have to get a big hustle on him, for the feller whose nose he'd put out o' joint 'd try hard to get there ahead o' him, and get his share. So Skidmore went off at a dead run toward the sound of the bugle, with the boys looking after him and snickering. But he didn't come back at roll-call, nor at tattoo, and the smart Alecks begun to get scared, and abuse each other for setting up a job on a poor, innocent little boy. Osc Brewster and Ol Perry, who had been foremost in the trick had a fight as to which had been to blame. Taps come, and he didn't get back, and then we all became scared. I'd sent Jim Hunter over to Brigade Headquarters to look for him, but he came back, and said they hadn't seen anything of him there. Then I turned out the whole company to look for him. Of course, them too-awfully smart galoots of Co. A had to get very funny over our trouble. They asked why we didn't get the right kind of nurses for our company, that wouldn't let the members stray out of their sight? Why we didn't call the children in when the chickens went to roost, undress 'em, and tuck 'em in their little beds, and sing to 'em after they'd said 'Now I lay me down to sleep?' I stood it all until that big, hulking Pete Nasmith came down with a camp-kettle, which he was making ring like a bell, as he yelled out, 'Child lost! Child lost!' Behind him was Tub Rawlings singing, 'Empty's the cradle, baby's gone.' Then I pulled off my blouse and slung it into my tent, and told 'em there went my chevrons, and I was simply Scott Ralston, and able to lick any man in Co. A. One o' their Lieutenants came out and ordered them back to their quarters, and I deployed the company in a skirmish-line, and started 'em through the brush toward Brigade Headquarters. About three-quarters o' the way Osc Brewster and Ol Perry, when going through a thicket, heard a boy boo-hooing. They made their way to him, and there was little Skidmore sitting on a stump, completely confused and fagged out. He'd lost his way, and the more he tried to find it the worse he got turned around. They called out to him, and he blubbered out: 'Yes, it's me; little Pete Skidmore. Them doddurned fools in my company 've lost me, just as I've bin tellin' 'em right along they would, durn 'em.' Osc and Ol were so tickled at finding him that they gathered him up, and come whooping back to camp, carrying him every step of the way."

"Well, I declare to gracious," ejaculated Si. "But there's one left yet. Didn't anything happen to Sandy Baker?"

"O, yes," groaned the Orderly. "He had to be in it, too. He took advantage of the tumult to fall into the company well. We didn't know anything about it till we come back from hunting Skidmore. By that time he was so chilled that he could hardly holler any more, and his teeth chattered like a nigger minstrel's bones. I'd got a can of brandied peaches down at the sutler's, and it took all the brandy to bring him around, and I had nothing left but the peaches. Now, while I like a little variety in camp-life as well as the next man, I don't want no more ructions like last night's. I'll put you in charge of those kids, and hold you responsible for 'em. I don't care what you do with 'em, so long's you keep 'em quiet, and don't disturb the company. Kill 'em, if you want to, but keep 'em quiet. I've got to finish up them pay-rolls tonight."

"You bet me and Shorty'll stop these smart Alecks from imposin' on the poor little greenies," asserted Si.

CHAPTER VI. SI KLEGG PUTS HIS AWKWARD SQUAD THROUGH ITS FIRST DRILL

"I GUESS," thought Si, as he left the Orderly-Sergeant, and walked down the company street to the left, "that the best way to begin is to get them little whelps into an awkward squad, and give 'em an hour or two o' sharp drillin'. That'll introduce 'em to the realities o' soljerin'."

It was a warm, bright March day, with the North Georgia mountains rapidly robing themselves in fresh green, to welcome the coming Spring. The effervescent boys had entirely forgotten the worries of the previous night, and were frolicking in the bright sunshine as if "out-at-recess" from school.

Mackall, Joslyn, Humphreys and Baker had gotten hold of a ball, and were having a game of "two-cornered cat," with noise enough for a whole school play-ground. Russell and Scruggs were running a foot-race, for the entertainment of a squad of cooks and teamsters, and little Pete Skidmore was giving an exhibition before the same audience of his ability to stand on his head, and turn somersaults.

"Little thought they have of the seriousness of war," thought Si, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he yelled out:

"Come, boys, fall in here."

When the boys had first come under Si's command they regarded him as one of the greatest men in the army. In their shadowy notions of military matters they rather thought that he stood next to the great Generals whose names filled all mouths. These ideas had been toppled into dust by their arrival in camp, and seeing so many different men order him around. They felt ashamed of themselves that they had ever mistaken him for a great man, and put him up on a pedestal. That is the way with boys. They resent nothing more sharply than the thought of their having been deceived into honoring somebody or something unworthy of honor. They can stand anything better than a reflection upon their shrewdness and judgment.

"Hear Klegg a-calling?" said Joslyn, pausing for an instant, with the ball in his hand.

"Let him call," said Mackall, indifferently, finishing his run to base. "He ain't big boss no more. He's only the lowest Sergeant in the company. Throw the ball, Harry. You must do better'n you've been doing. We're getting away with you."

"Fall in here, boys, I tell you," said Si so sternly that Pete Skidmore stopped in his handspring, but seeing the bigger boys making no move to obey, decided that it would be improper for him to show any signs of weakness, and he executed his flip-flap.

"Here, you're out, Gid. Gi' me the bat," shouted Harry Joslyn, as he caught the ball which Mackall had vainly struck at.

Si strode over to the group, snatched the bat from Harry's hand, spanked him with it, and started for the others of the group.

"Say, you musn't hit that boy," exclaimed Gid, jumping on Si's back. Gid was as ready to fight for Harry as to fight with him. The others rushed up, school boy like, to defend their companion against "the man," and little Pete Skidmore picked up a stone and adjusted it for throwing.

"Why, you little scamps you," gasped Si in amazement. "What'd you mean? Ain't you goin' to obey my orders?"

"You haint no right to give us orders no more," asserted Humphreys, flourishing his bat defiantly. "You're only an enlisted man, same as the rest o' us. They told us so, last night, and that we mustn't let you impose on us, as you'd bin doin'. Only the Captain and the Colonel command us. We've bin posted. And if you dare hit any o' us we'll all jump on you and maul your head offen you."

The rest looked approval of Jim's brave words.

"We're goin' to strike for our altars and our fires. Strike for the green graves of our sires. God and our native land," declaimed Monty Scruggs.

The waspish little mutiny was so amusing that Si had to smile in spite of himself. With a quick, unexpected movement he snatched the bat from Jim Humphreys' hand, and said good-humoredly:

"Now, boys, you mustn't make fools of yourselves agin'. Stop this nonsense at once, I tell you. I'm just as much your commandin' officer as I ever was."

"How can you be a commanding officer, when everybody else bosses you about?" persisted the argumentative Monty Scruggs. "Everybody that comes near you orders you around, just the same as you used to us, and you mind 'em. That ain't no way for a commanding officer. We don't want anybody bossing us that everybody else bosses."

"Well, that's the way o' the army," Si explained patiently, "and you've got to git used to it. 'Most everybody bosses somebody else. The President tells Gen. Grant what he wants done. Gen. Grant orders Gen. Thomas to do it. Gen. Thomas orders a Major-General. The Major-General orders a Brigadier-General. The Brigadier-General orders our Colonel. Our Colonel orders Cap McGillicuddy. Cap McGillicuddy orders the Orderly-Sarjint, the Orderly-Sarjint orders me, and I command you."

"Why, it's worse'n 'The-House-That-Jack-Built,'" said Monty Scruggs.

"Well, you needn't learn all of it," said Si. "It's enough for you to know that I command you. That's the A B C of the business, and all you need know. A man in the army gits into trouble offen by knowin' too much. You git it well into your craws that I command you, and that you've got to do just as I say, and I'll do the rest o' the knowin' that you need.—"

"But how're we to know that you're right every time," argued Monty Scruggs.

"Well," explained the patient Si, "if you've any doubts, go to the Orderly-Sarjint. If he don't satisfy you, go to the Captain. If you have doubts about him, carry it to the Colonel. If you're still in doubt, refer it to the Brigadier-General, then to the Major-General, to Gen. Thomas, Gen. Grant, and lastly to the President of the United States."

"Great goodness!" they gasped.

"But the less you bother your heads with Captains and Curnels and Generals the better you'll git along. The feller that's right over you—in arm's length o' you all the time—is the feller that you've got to look out for sharply. I'm him. Now I want you to form in two ranks quicker'n scat, and 'tend to business. I'm goin' to drill you. Gid Mackall, take your place there. Harry Joslyn, stand behind him."

The old squabbles as to precedence immediately broke out between Gid and Harry, which Si impatiently ended by snatching Harry by the collar and yanking him behind Gid, with the wrathful Harry protesting that he intended carrying the matter up through the whole military hierarchy, even to the President of the United States, if necessary. He did not come into the army to be run over.

"You came into the army to do just as I tell you, and you'll do it. Silence in the ranks," commanded Si. "Humphreys, stand next to Mackall. Scruggs, stand behind Humphreys."

"Why do you put one man behind another?" queried Monty Scruggs. "I don't think that's right. —Jim's big head'll be forever in my way, so's I can't see anything. Why don't you put us out in one line, like a class in school? Then everybody's got the same show."

"I didn't make the tactics. Git into your places," snapped Si.

"Well, I don't think much of a teacher that can't explain what he's teaching," mumbled Monty, as he reluctantly obeyed.

"Now, Russell, stand next to Humphreys; Baker, stand behind Russell; Skidmore, stand next to Russell."

"Goody, I'm in the front rank," giggled little Pete, and Harry Joslyn looked as if here was another case of favoritism that he would have to call the President's attention to.

"Now," commanded Si, "put your heels together, turn your toes out, stand erect, draw your stomachs in—"

"Look here, Jim Humphreys," grumbled Monty Scruggs, "when he told you to draw your stomach in he didn't mean for you to stick your hips out till you bumped me over into the next Township. I've got to have room to stand here, as well as you."

"Silence in the ranks," commanded Si. "Draw your stomachs in, put your little fingers down to the seams of your pantaloons—"

"You mean the middle finger, don't you?" queried Monty Scruggs. "That's more natural way of standing."

"No, I mean the little finger," asserted Si.

"But the middle finger is more natural," persisted Monty. "You can't stand straight with your little finger at the seam. See here."

"Scruggs, do as I say, without no words," said Si, and then Monty's face took on an expression of determination to carry the matter to a higher court.

"Now, keep your faces straight to the front, and at the command 'Right dress!' turn your eyes, without moving your heads, until you kin see the buttons on the breast of the second man to the right. 'Right dress!'"

"There's no man on my right for me to look toward. What 'm I to do?" complained Gid Mackall.

"There, you see what come o' putting him in front," exulted Harry Joslyn. "Now, if I'd bin—"

"Say, I can't see up to Jim Humphreys' big breast without twistin' my neck nearly off," murmured little Pete Skidmore. "Can't you make him scrooch a little? Jest see him swell up."

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