

**JOHN
MCELROY**

SIKLEGG,
BOOK 2

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John McElroy
Si Klegg, Book 2 / Thru the
Stone River Campaign and in
Winter Quarters at Murfreesboro

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 some what 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 some times, if not often, experiences of which those of Si Klegg are a strong reminder.

THE PUBLISHERS. THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO THE RANK AND FILE OF THE GRANDEST ARMY EVER MUSTERED FOR WAR.

CHAPTER I. THROUGH MUD AND MIRE

DUTY'S PATH LEADS THE 200TH IND. SOUTHWARD FROM NASHVILLE

"SHORTY" said Si Klegg, the morning after Christmas, 1862, as the 200th Ind. sullenly plunged along through the mud and rain, over the roads leading southward from Nashville, "they say that this is to be a sure-enough battle and end the war."

"Your granny's night-cap they do," answered Shorty crossly, as he turned his cap around backward to stop the icy current from chasing down his backbone. "How many thousand times 's that bin stuffed into your ears? This is the forty-thousandth mile we've marched to find that battle that was goin' to end the war. And I'll bet we'll march 40,000 more. This war ain't goin' to end till we've scuffed the top off all the roads in Kentucky and Tennessee, and wore out God's patience and all the sole-leather in the North. I believe it's the shoe-makers that's runnin' this war in the interest o' their business."

The cold, soaking rain had reduced the most of the 200th Ind. to a mood when they would have disputed the Ten Commandments and quarreled with their mothers.

"There's no use bein' crosser'n a saw-buck, if you are wet, Shorty," said Si, walking to the side of the road and scraping off his generous-sized brogans several pounds of stiff, red mud. "They say this new General with a Dutch name is a fighter from Wayback, an' he always licks the rebels right out of their boots. I'm sure, I hope it's so. I like huntin' ez well ez anybody, an' I'll walk ez fur ez the next man to find something to shoot. But I think walkin' over two States, backward and forward, is altogether too much huntin' for so little shootin'. Don't you?"

"Don't worry," snapped Shorty. "You'll git all the shootin' you want before your three years are up. It'll keep."

"But why keep it so long?" persisted Si. "If it can be done up in three months, an' we kin git back home, why dribble it out over three years? That ain't the way we do work back home on the Wabash."

"Confound back home on the Wabash," roared Shorty. "I don't hear nothin' else, day and night, but 'back home on the Wabash.' I've bin on the Wabash, an' I don't want to never see the measly, muddy, agery ditch agin'. Why, they have the ager so bad out there that it shakes the buttons off a man's clothes, the teeth out of his head, the horns off the cows. An' as for milk-sickness."

"Shorty!" thundered Si, "stop right there. If you wasn't my pardner I'd fight you this minute. I kin join in jawin' about the officers an' the Government. A great deal of your slack that I can't agree with I kin put up with, but you mustn't say nothin' against my home in the Wabash Valley. That I won't stand from no man. For fear that I may lose my temper I'm goin' away from you till you're in better humor."

With that Si strode on ahead, feeling as cross and uncomfortable internally as he was ill-at-ease externally. He hated above all things to quarrel with Shorty, but the Wabash Valley, that gardenspot of earth, that place where lived his parents, and sister, and Annabel but the subject was too sore to think about.

Presently an Aid came galloping along the middle of the road, calling upon the men to make way for him. His horse's hoofs threw the mud in every direction, and Si caught a heavy spatter directly in his face.

"Confound them snips of Aids," said he angrily, as he wiped the mud off. "Put on more airs than if they was old Gen. Scott himself. Always pretend to be in such a powerful hurry. Everybody must hustle out of their way. I think that fool jest did that on purpose."

The rain kept pouring down with tormenting persistence. Wherever Si looked were drenched, de pressed-looking men; melancholy, steaming horses; sodden, gloomy fields; yellow, rushing streams, and boundless mud that thousands of passing feet were churning into the consistency of building-mortar.

Si had seen many rainy days since he had been in the army, but this was the first real Winter rain he had been out in.

Jabe Belcher, the most disagreeable man in Co. Q, was just ahead of him. He stepped into a mudpuddle, slipped, threw the mud and water over Si, and his gun, which he flung in the effort to save himself, struck Si on the shoulder.

"Clumsy lunkhead!" roared Si, as ill-tempered now as anybody. "Couldn't you see that puddle and keep out of it? You'd walk right into the Cumberland River if it was in front of you. Never saw such a bat-eyed looney in my life."

"If the Captain wasn't lookin'," retorted Belcher, "I'd shut up both of them dead-mackerel eyes o' your'n, you backwoods yearlin'. I'll settle with you after we git into camp. Your stripes won't save you."

"Never mind about my stripes, old Stringhalt. I kin take them off long enough to wallop you."

Si was in such a frame of mind that his usual open-eyedness was gone. The company was wading across a creek, and Si plunged in without a thought. He stepped on a smooth stone, his feet went from under him and he sat 'down hard and waist-deep in much the coldest water that he ever remembered.

"O, Greenland's icy mountains," was all that he could think to say.

The other boys yelled:

"Come on to camp, Si. That's no place to sit down."

"Feet hurt, Si, and goin' to rest a little?"

"This your day for taking a bath, Si?"

"Thinks this is a political meetin', and he's to take the chair."

"Place Rest!"

"When I sit down, I prefer a log or a rail; but some men's different."

"See a big bass there, Si, an' try to ketch him by settin' down on him?"

"Git up, Si; git up, an' give your seat to some lady."

Si was too angry to notice their jibes. He felt around in the icy water for his gun, and clambered out on the bank. He first poured the water out of his gun-barrel and wiped the mud off. His next thought was the three days' rations he had drawn that morning. He opened his haversack, and poured out the water it had caught. With it went his sugar, coffee and salt. His hardtack was a pasty mess; his meat covered with sand and dirt. He turned the haversack inside out, and swashed it out in the stream.

Back came Capt. McGillicuddy, with water streaming from the down-turned rim of his hat, and his humor bad. He was ignorant of Si's mishap.

"Corporal Klegg, what are you doing back here? Why aren't you in your place? I've been looking all around for you. The company wagon's stalled back somewhere. That spavin-brained teamster's at his old tricks. I want you to take five men off the rear of the company, go back and find that wagon, and bring it up. Be smart about it."

"Captain," remonstrated Si, "I'm wetter'n a drowned rat!"

"Well, who in thunder ain't?" exploded the Captain. "Do I look as dry as a basket of chips? Am I walking around in a Panama and linen clothes? Did you expect to keep from getting your feet wet when you came into the army? I want none of your belly-aching or sore-toeing. You take five men and bring up that wagon in a hurry. Do you hear me?"

And the Captain splashed off through the red mud to make somebody else still more miserable.

Si picked up his wet gun from the rain-soaked sod, put it under his streaming overcoat, ordered the five drenched, dripping, dejected boys near him to follow, and plunged back into the creek, which had by this time risen above his knees. He was past the stage of anger now. He simply wished that he

was dead and out of the whole business. A nice, dry grave on a sunny hillock in Posey County, with a good roof over it to keep out the rain, would be a welcome retreat.

In gloomy silence he and his squad plodded back through the eternal mud and the steady downpour, through the miry fields, through the swirling yellow floods in the brooks and branches, in search of the laggard company wagon.

Two or three miles back they came upon it, stuck fast in a deep mud-hole. The enraged teamster was pounding the mules over the head with the butt of his blacksnake whip, not in the expectation of getting any further effort out of them he knew better than that but as a relief to his overcharged heart.

"Stop beatin' them mules over the head," shouted Si, as they came up. Not that he cared a fig about the mules, but that he wanted to "jump" somebody.

"Go to brimstone blazes, you freckle-faced Posey County refugee," responded Groundhog, the teamster, in the same fraternal spirit. "I'm drivin' this here team." He gave the nigh-swing mule a "welt" that would have knocked down anything else than a swing mule.

"If you don't stop beatin' them mules, by thunder, I'll make you."

"Make's a good word," responded Groundhog, giving the off-swing mule a wicked "biff." "I never see anything come out of Posey County that could make me do what I didn't want to."

Si struck at him awkwardly. He was so hampered by his weight of soggy clothes that there was little force or direction to his blow. The soaked teamster returned the blow with equal clumsiness.

The other boys came up and pulled them apart.

"We ain't no time for sich blamed nonsense," they growled. "We've got to git this here wagon up to the company, an' we'll have the devil's own time doin' it. Quit skylarkin' an' git to work."

They looked around for something with which to make pries. Every rail and stick within a quarter of a mile of the road was gone. They had been used up the previous Summer, when both armies had passed over the road.

There was nothing to do but plod off through mud and rain to the top of a hill in the distance, where there was a fence still standing. A half an hour later each of the six came back with a heavy rail on his shoulder. They pried the wagon out and got it started, only to sink again in another quagmire a few hundred yards further on.

Si and the boys went back to get their rails, but found that they had been carried off by another squad that had a wagon in trouble. There was nothing to do but to make another toilsome journey to the fence for more rails.

After helping the wagon out they concluded it would be wiser to carry their rails with them a little way to see if they would be needed again.

They were many times that afternoon. As dark ness came on Si, who had the crowning virtue of hopefulness when he fully recognized the unutterable badness of things, tried to cheer the other boys up with assertions that they would soon get into camp, where they would find bright, warm fires with which to dry their clothes, and plenty of hot coffee to thaw them out inside.

The quick-coming darkness added enormously to the misery of their work. For hours they struggled along the bottomless road, in the midst of a ruck of played-out mules and unutterably tired, disgusted men, laboring as they were to get wagons ahead.

Finally they came up to their brigade, which had turned off the road and gone into line-of-battle in an old cotton-field, where the mud was deeper, if possible, than in the road.

"Where's the 200th Ind.?" called out Si.

"Here, Si," Shorty's voice answered.

"Where's the fires, Shorty," asked Si, with sinking heart.

"Ain't allowed none," answered his partner gloomily. "There's a rebel battery on that hill there, and they shoot every time a match is lighted. What've you got there, a rail? By George, that's lucky! We'll have something to keep us out of the mud."

They laid down the rail and sat upon it.

"Shorty," said Si, as he tried to arrange his aching bones to some comfort on the rail, "I got mad at you for cussin' the Wabash this morning. I ain't a fluid talker such as you are, an' I can't find words to say what I think. But I jest wisht you would begin right here and cuss everybody from Abe Lincoln down to Corporal Si Klegg, and everything from the Wabash in Injianny down to the Cumberland in Tennessee. I'd like to listen to you."

CHAPTER II. SECOND DAY'S MARCH

THE LONG COLUMN CRAWLS THROUGH RAIN AND COLD TO MURFREESBORO

SI KLEGG was generous with his rail, as he was with all things among his comrades. He selected the softest part, in the center, for him self and Shorty, and then invited the other boys to share its hospitalities. They crowded up close to him and Shorty on either side, and there seemed to come a little warmth and dryness from the close contact of their bodies.

Si was so mortally tired that it seemed a great relief just to sit still and rest, though the rain continued to pour down.

Shorty fished some hardtack and fried pork out of his haversack, and also gave him a handful of ground coffee. Si munched the crackers and meat, with an occasional nip at the coffee. His spirits began to rise just a trifle. He was too healthy in body and mind to be totally downcast for long.

"'Tis n't much of a supper," he said to himself, "but it beats nothin' at all miles and miles. Besides, I was mighty lucky in gettin' the biggest rail. Some that the other boys has are no good at all. They'll let 'em right down in the mud. And most o' the boys has no rails at all. I'm awfully sorry for 'em."

Then he began to wonder if they were not overcautious about the nearness of the enemy. He had been in the army just long enough to have contempt for the stories that were always current with a certain class about the proximity and strength of the enemy. Shorty was not of that kind; but, then, Shorty was as liable to be imposed upon as anybody.

"How do you know there's a rebel battery on the hill out there?" he finally asked Shorty.

"They belted into the Oshkosh Terrors, out there to our right, killed a mule, scared two teamsters to death, and knocked over three or four kittles of coffee. It was awful unlucky about the coffee," answered Shorty.

"How long ago was that?"

"O, several hours ago. Just after we turned into the field, and long before you come up."

"Mebbe they've gone off now. Mebbe, if they're there yet, their ammynition's so soaked that they can't shoot. What do you say to startin' a little fire? It'd be an immense comfort. Unless we can dry out a little we'll be soaked into such mush before morning that we can't keep our shape, and they'll have to ladle us up with dippers."

"It's strictly against orders."

"You mean it was against orders several hours ago. I can't see nothin' on that hill over there. I've been watchin' for half an hour. There's nothin' movin'. Mebbe the orders has been changed, an' you haint heard about it," persisted Si. "Mebbe the Orderly that was bringing 'em 's stuck in the mud. Mebbe the rain's soaked 'em so's they can't be read. If anybody's got any dry matches I'm goin' to chance it."

Word was passed along the rail, and at length one of the boys was found to have some matches in a tin box which was proof against the rain.

Si got out his knife and whittled down a corner of the rail until he came to the dry part, and got off some shavings. Splinters were contributed by the others, and after several failures a small flame was started.

"Here, what in the world are you men doing there?" came in the stentorian tones of the Colonel, who it startled Si to discover was sitting a short distance behind him. "Put that light out this instant."

Even before the command could be obeyed, four great flashes burned out like lightning in the murky darkness on the hill-top. Four cannon roared, and four shells screeched toward Si and his companions, who instinctively toppled over backward into the mud. One of the shells struck in the mud a few yards in front, burst with a deafening report, and sent over them a deluge of very wet Tennessee real estate.

"The battery's out there yit, Si," said Shorty, as they gathered themselves up and carefully stamped out every spark of fire.

"It's 'tendin' strictly to business," remarked Wes Williams.

"Its ammynition don't seem to be a mite wet," added Jim Hutchinson.

"There, you see, now," said the Colonel sternly. "I'll tie up by the thumbs the next man that dares scratch a match."

"You jest kin if I do," muttered Si, scraping off some of the superabundant mud, and resuming his seat on the rail. "This dog's cured of suckin' eggs." He set the butt of his gun down in front of him, clasped his hands around the barrel, leaned his head on them, and went to sleep.

He was so tired that he could have slept anywhere and in any position. He was dimly conscious during the night that the rain ceased and that it turned bitter cold. He was not going to wake up for trifles like that, though. When Si went to sleep he devoted himself entirely to that and nothing else. It was one thing that he never allowed any interference with.

But with the first gray streaks of dawn in the east some uneasy, meddlesome spirit in the 200th Ind. happened to be awake, and he awakened the Adjutant, who cuffed and shook the headquarters drummer until he awakened and beat the reveille. This aroused the weary Orderly-Sergeants, who started upon the task of getting up the bone-wracked, aching-muscled men. In 10 minutes there was enough discontent and bitter grumbling in the 200th Ind. to have furnished forth a new political party.

The awakening process finally reached those of Co. Q who had roosted on Si's rail all night.

Si vigorously insisted on being let alone; that he hadn't been asleep five minutes, and that, anyhow, it was not his turn to go on guard. But the Orderly-Sergeant of Co. Q was a persistent fellow, and would not be denied.

When Si finally tried to rise he found that, in addition to the protests of his stiff legs, he was pinned firmly down. Feeling around to ascertain the cause, he discovered that the tail of his overcoat and his shoes had become deeply imbedded in the mud, and frozen solidly there. Shorty was in the same fix.

"Got to shuck yourself out o' your overcoat, and leave them gunboats anchored where they are," remarked Shorty, doing as he said, and falling in for roll-call in his stocking feet.

After roll-call Si got a hatchet from one of the boys and chopped his and Shorty's shoes out. The overcoats were left for subsequent effort, for the first thing was to get some wood and water and cook breakfast.

The morning was bitter cold and the sky overcast, but Si felt that this was a thousand times better than the cheerless rain, which seemed to soak his very life out of him.

He pounded most of the frozen mud off his shoes, picked up the camp-kettle, and started off for wood and water, broke the ice on the creek, took a good wash, and presently came back with a load of dry pine and a kettle full of water.

"My joints feel like I think an old wagon does after it's gone about a year without greasing," he remarked to Shorty, who had a good fire going; "but I think that after I get about a quart o' hot coffee, inside of me, with a few pounds o' pork and crackers, I'll be nearly as good as new again. My, how good that grub does smell! An' did you ever see such a nice fire?"

He chopped his and Shorty's overcoats out while Shorty was cooking breakfast, and when at last he sat down on one end of his rail and ate enough toasted hard bread and crisp fried side-meat to feed a small family for a week, washing it down with something near a quart of black coffee sweetened with coarse brown sugar, life began again to have some charms for him.

"You're sure that dumb battery's gone that shot at us last night, are you, Shorty?" he said, as he drained his cup, fastened it again to the strap of his haversack, and studied the top of the hill with a critical eye.

"They say it is," said Shorty, between bites. "While you was down at the crick a man come over from the camp o' the Oshkosh Terrors, and said two o' their companies 'd been onto the hill, and the rebels had gone."

"I wish them Oshkosh fellers'd mind their own business," said Si, irritably, as he picked up his gun and began rubbing the mud and rust off. "They're entirely too fresh for a new regiment. That battery was none of theirs. It was ours, right in our front, an' if they'd let it alone till after breakfast we'd gone up and taken it. It was just the right size for the 200th Ind., and we wanted a chance at it. But now they've had to stick in and run it off."

"Don't worry," said Shorty, fishing out another cracker; "it hasn't gone too far. 'Taint lost. You'll have a chance at it some other time. Mebbe to-day yet."

The army began to move out very promptly, and soon the 200th Ind. was called to take its place in the long column that crawled over the hills and across the valleys toward Murfreesboro, like some gigantic blue serpent moving toward his prey.

Miles ahead of the 200th Ind.'s place in the column the rebels were offering annoying disputation of farther progress. Lines as brown as the dried leaves on the oak trees would form on the hilltops, batteries would gallop into position, and there would be sharp bangs by the cannon and a sputter of musketry-fire.

Then the long, blue serpent would wriggle out of the road into the fields, as if coiling to strike. Union batteries would rush on to hilltops and fire across valleys at the rebel cannon, and a sputter of musketry would answer that from the leaf-brown ranks on the hilltops, which would dissolve and march back to the next hilltop, where the thing would be gone over again. The 200th Ind. would occasionally see one of these performances as it marched over and down one of the hills.

As the afternoon was wearing away the 200th Ind. kept nearing the front, where this was going on. Finally, when the dull day was shading into dusk, and the brigade ahead of it was forming in the field at the foot of a hill to open a bickering fire against the dun line at the top, the 200th Ind. was taken off the road and marched away over to the left, where it was put into line in front of a dense grove of cedars.

"Capt. McGillicuddy," commanded the Colonel to the Captain of Co. Q, "advance your company as skirmishers to the edge of the cedars, and send a Corporal and five men into the thicket to see if there is anything there."

"Corporal Klegg," said the Captain, "take five men off the left of the company and go in and see what's in there."

Si was instantly fired with the importance of the duty assigned him. He sent two of his men to the left, two to the right, while he and Shorty, a little distance apart, struck for the heart of the thicket. They made their way with difficulty through the dense chaparral for some minute's, and then stopped, as they heard voices and the crashing of branches in front.

Si's heart thumped against his ribs. He looked over to his left, and saw Shorty standing there peering earnestly into the brush, with his gun cocked and ready to fire. He ran over to him and whispered:

"What do you see, Shorty?"

"Nothin' yit, but I expect to every minute," replied Shorty, without turning his intent eyes. Si's gun was already cocked, and he bent his head forward eagerly, to get a better view. But he could see nothing, except that the tops of the bushes were shaking.

"Shall we skip back an' report?" asked Si.

"I ain't goin' till I see something," said Shorty, stoutly.

"Nor me," echoed Si, rather ashamed that he had suggested it.

"Steady, there; steady, on the right! Come forward with that left company," called out a stern voice in front.

"Must be a full regiment in there," whispered Si, craning his neck still farther. The tramping and crashing increased.

"Steady, men, I tell you! Steady! Press on the center," commanded the unseen Colonel. "Forward! Forward!"

In spite of his perturbation, Si noticed that the sounds did not seem to be coming any nearer.

"We must get a squint at 'em," he said, desperately, to Shorty. "Let's git down an' crawl forward. There must be an openin' somewhere."

They got down on their hands and knees, so as to avoid as many as possible of the thickly-interlaced branches. Soon they came to a rift which led to an opening of some rods in circumference. Raising their heads cautiously above a moss-covered log, they saw in the opening a stalwart Sergeant with five or six men. The Sergeant was standing there with his eyes fixed on the tops of the trees, apparently thinking of the next series of commands he was to give, while the men were busy breaking limbs off the cedars.

Si and Shorty immediately grasped the situation.

"Forward, Co. Q!" yelled Si at the top of his lungs. "Surrender, you consarned rebels, or we'll blow your heads off," he added, as he and Shorty jumped forward into the opening and leveled their guns on the squad.

"What'n thunder was you fellers makin' all that racket fur," Si asked the Sergeant as he was marching him back to the skirmish-line.

"Ouah Cunnel," explained the Sergeant, "wuz afeared you'ns 'd try to flank us through the thicket, and sent me down to make a rumpus and hold you back while he fit you in front. But whar's your company?"

"We'll come to it soon," said Si.

CHAPTER III. STILL ON THE MARCH

SI AND SHORTY STOP ON THE WAY LONG ENOUGH TO BAG SIX REBS

SI CALLED out to the other boys by name to come up and join him.

The rebel Sergeant mentally tallied off each name as it was called. A flush of shame and anger mounted to his face as Si concluded.

"Gol darn hit," he said, "you'uns hain't got ez many ez we'uns; they hain't nigh ez good men ez we'uns, an' they'uns ain't heah. We'uns air Tennesseans, an' you'uns hain't."

"We've got enough, an' they're good enough," said Si sententiously. "Injianny turns out better men than Tennessee ever dreamed o' doing."

"I don't believe hit a mite," said the Sergeant, stooping down and picking up a piece of cedar, which made a formidable club. "We'uns is not a-gwine back with yo'uns nary a step. By rights, we'uns orter take yo'uns back with we'uns. But I'm willin' to call hit off, and let yo'uns go ef yo'uns 'll let we'uns go. Is hit a bargain?"

"Not by 40 rows o' apple trees it ain't," said Si, stepping back a little to get a better range, and fixing his bayonet. "I've set my heart on takin' you back to Co. Q, an' back to Co. Q you'll go, if Si Klegg knows himself."

"And you'll go in a hurry, too," said Shorty. "It's gettin' late, and I'm always afraid to be out after dark. Mosey, now!"

The other rebels were picking up clubs similar to the Sergeant's and casting their eyes on him for the signal to attack.

"See here," said Si desperately, cocking his gun. "Don't waste no more time in words. This hain't a debatin' society. You're goin' back to Co. Q or going somewhere else thunderin' quick. Sergeant, if you make a move agin me I'll surely blow your head off en you, an' jab my bayonet through the next man. My partner, Shorty, is a worse man than I am, an' I can't tell how many of you he'll kill. He's awful quick-tempered, too, towards evening, an' liable to begin shooting any minute without warnin'. It'll save several lives if you start right off on the jump, straight toward the rear, an' keep it up, with out looking to the right or left, until you reach Co. Q. You'll find the trail we made comin' in. Take it this minute."

The rebel Sergeant's eyes looked directly into the dark muzzle of Si's gun. They glanced along the barrel, and met one eye looking directly through the sights, while the other was closed, in the act of taking deliberate aim. He decided with great promptness that there were many reasons why he should prefer to be a live rebel in a Yankee prison, rather than a badly-disfigured dead one in a lonely cedar thicket. He dropped his club, turned around, and made his way along the path over which Si had come. The rest followed, with Si and Shorty a few paces in the rear.

Palpitating with pride, Si marched his prisoners up to the company, who gave him three cheers. The Captain ordered him to report with his prisoners to the Colonel.

The Colonel praised him with words that made his blood tingle.

The skirmishing off to the right had now ceased. The rebels had fallen back to the next hilltop, and the 200th Ind. was ordered to go into camp where it stood.

It was a fine place for a camp. The mud of the day before was frozen into stony hardness. The wagons had no difficulty in coming up. There was wood and water in abundance, and it seemed that the command "Break ranks March!" had hardly been uttered when great, bright, comfort-giving fires of fragrant cedar rails flashed up all along the line.

Si and Shorty found several cedar stumps and logs, which they rolled together, and made a splendid fire. They cooked themselves an ample supper of fried pork, toasted hardtack, and strong, fragrant coffee, which they devoured with an appetite and a keen enjoyment only possible to healthy young men who have had a day of active maneuvering and marching in the crisp, chill air of December.

Then they gathered a lot of cedar branches, and made a thick mattress of them near the fire, upon which to spread their blankets for the night.

This was a new suggestion by Shorty, and an amazing success.

"I declare, Shorty," said Si, as he lay down on the bed to try it, "I often wonder where you get all your ideas. For a man who wasn't raised on the Wabash you know an awful sight. Mebbe, if you'd actually been born in Posey County you'd a-knowed enough to be a Jigadier-Brindle. Then I'd a lost you for a pard. This's a great invention. Why, it's softer and comfortabler than one of mother's feather beds. When I get out of the army, I'm going to sleep on nothin' but cedar boughs."

"There, you're at it again the Wabash forever," returned Shorty, good-humoredly. "They raise the finest corn and cattle in the world on the Wabash, I'll admit, and some fairly good soldiers. But where'll you get any cedars there to make beds with? You'll have to go back to sleepin' on wheat straw and corn husks, with chicken-feather pillers. But after the way you stood up to that rebel Sergeant to-day I'll never say another word about ager and milk-sick en the Wabash, and I'll lick any other feller that does. There wasn't a speck of ager in your gizzard when you ordered him forward, or you'd blow his Southern Confederacy head off."

"There was more ager there than you thought, Shorty," Si admitted softly. "I was awfully scared, for there was six to us two, and if that feller 'd had the right kind of sand he'd a-jumped me at once, before I could get my gun up. The moment he began to palaver I knowed I had him. But I'd 'a' died in my tracks before I'd let him go, and I knowed you would, too. You're the best pard a feller ever had."

And he reached over and took Shorty's rough hand and squeezed it affectionately.

"I can bet on you every time, even when I don't think it's quite safe to bet on myself. And, Shorty," he continued, with his eyes kindling, "it was worth all that we've gone through since we've been in the army, even all that time in the rain, to have the Colonel speak as he did to us before the rest of the boys. I'd be willing to enlist three years more if father and mother and sisters, and and Annabel could have heard him. I tell you, war has some glorious things in it, after all."

He sat there on his bed before the fire, with his feet curled up under him in the comfortable way that it takes months of field service to acquire, and gazed steadily into the bank of glowing coals. They suffused his face and body with their generous warmth, and helped lift his soul toward the skies.

He was much happier than he had ever been before in his life. The trials of the day before were hardly more than a far-away dream. The fears and anxieties of the coming battle were forgotten. The ruddy embers became a radiant vista, which Pride and Hope and Joy filled with all that he wanted to see. He saw there the dear old home on the Wabash, his father seated by the evening lamp reading the paper, while his mother knit on the other side of the table. His sisters were busy with some feminine trifles, and Annabel had come in to learn the news. They would hear what he had done, and of the Colonel's words of praise before the regiment, and his father's heart would glow with pride and his mother's eyes suffuse with tears. And Annabel but it passed words, passed thought, almost, what she would say and think.

Just then tattoo rang out clear and musical on the chill night air. The rattling military "good night" had never before had any special charms for Si. But now he thought it an unusually sweet composition.

"I declare," he said to Shorty, "that sheepskin band of our'n is improving. They're getting to play real well. But I ought to write a few lines home before taps. Got any paper. Shorty?"

"Much paper you'll find in this regiment after that rain," said Shorty contemptuously, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and started to fall in for roll-call. "Every mite of paper anybody has was soaked to spitwads. But mebbe the Orderly might have a sheet."

After roll-call Si went to the Orderly-Sergeant.

Nothing in reason could then be refused Si, and the Orderly tore a couple of leaves out of the back of his treasured diary, which had escaped the rain, and handed them to him. Si fished his stub of a pencil out of his blouse-pocket, laid the paper on the back of a tin plate, and began:

"Somewhere in Tennessee,
December the 27th, 1862.

"Dere Annabel: We're movin' on Murphysboro, where we expect a big fite. There's bin fitin' goin' on ever since we left Nashville, but the 200th Ind. hain't had no hand in it so far, except this after noon me and Shorty"

He stopped, stuck his pencil in his mouth, and began to study just what words he should use to describe the occurrence. He wanted to tell her all that was bubbling in his heart, and yet he was afraid she would think him an intolerable boaster, if he told it in just the words that came to him. He was more afraid of that little country girl's disapproval than of all the rebels in Murfreesboro.

There were yells, the rattling of chains, and the sound of galloping hoofs coming toward him.

"Hi, there; stop them condemned mules!" shouted the voice of a teamster.

Si jumped to his feet, for the mules were charging directly for his fire, and were almost upon him. He dropped paper, pan and pencil, and jumped to one side, just in time to avoid a rush which scattered his fire, his carefully-prepared bed, and all his belongings under 24 flying, hard-pounding hoofs.

"Blast mules, anyhow," said the driver, coming up with his whip in his hand. "I didn't hev nothin' for them to eat but a cottonwood pole that I cut down in the bottom. But they must have smelt fodder over there somewhere, and they broke for it like the devil beatin' tanbark. Hope you weren't hurt, pard."

Si and Shorty fixed up their fire again, rearranged their scattered cedar boughs, and did the best they could with their torn blankets.

Si found that a mule's hoof had landed squarely on his tin plate, mashed all future usefulness out of it, and stamped his letter to Annabel into unrecognizability.

He threw the rent fragments into the fire, sighed deeply, and crawled under the blankets with Shorty, just as three sounding taps on the bass-drum commanded silence and lights out in the camp.

CHAPTER IV. THE SUNSHINE OF LIFE

SI FEELS ONCE MORE THAT LIFE IS REALLY WORTH LIVING

THERE come times in every man's life when he feels himself part of the sunshine that illumines and warms the earth:

The lover, after he has won his best girl's consent.

The candidate, after he has been elected by a big majority.

The valedictorian, after his address has been received with bursts of ringing applause.

The clerk, after he has been admitted into partnership.

The next morning the camp of the 200th Ind. seemed to Si Klegg one of the most delightful places on earth.

The sun shone brightly and cheerily through the crisp December air. The fires of cedar rails sent up a pungent, grateful fragrance. Hardtack, pork and coffee tasted better than he had ever known them.

Everybody noticed him and spoke pleasantly to him. The other boys of Co. Q called out cheerily to him from their fires. Those from other companies would stroll over to take a look at him and Shorty, and his comrades would point them out proudly as fair specimens of Co. Q, and what it was capable of doing when called upon in an emergency.

The Captain spoke very cordially to him and Shorty, the busy Adjutant stopped and greeted them smilingly, and even the grave Colonel singled them out for a pleasant "Good morning" and an inquiry as to whether they had everything they wanted. It did not seem to Si that there was anything more on earth just then for which he could ask.

The 200th Ind. having been at the head of the column when it halted, was to take the rear for that day's march, and so remained in camp for a while to let the rest pass on.

After getting things ready for the march Si and Shorty took a stroll through the camp to see what was to be seen. They came across their prisoners seated around a fire, under guard.

How different they looked from what they did the evening before, when the two partners encountered them in the depths of the cedar brake. Then they seemed like fierce giants, capable of terrible things, such as would make the heart quail. Now, powerless of harm, and awed by the presence of multitudes of armed men in blue filling the country in every direction that they looked, they appeared very commonplace, ignorant, rough men, long-haired, staring-eyed, and poorly-clad in coarse, butternut-dyed homespun, frayed and tattered.

"Father gits better men than them to work on the farm for \$8 a month," Si remarked to Shorty, after a lengthened survey of them.

"Eight dollars a month is Congressman's wages to what they git for fightin' for the Southern Confederacy," answered Shorty. "I don't s'pose any one of 'em ever had eight real dollars in his pocket in his life. They say they're fightin' to keep us from takin' their niggers away from 'em, and yit if niggers wuz sellin' for \$1 a-piece not one of 'em could buy a six-months'-old baby. Let's go up and talk to 'em."

"I don't know 'bout that," said Si, doubtfully. "Seems to me I wouldn't be particularly anxious to see men who'd taken me prisoner and talked very cross about blowin' my blamed head off."

"O, that's all right," answered Shorty confidently. "Words spoken in the heat of debate, and so on. They won't lay them up agin us. If they do, and want any satisfaction, we can give it to 'em. I kin lick any man in that crowd with my fists, and so kin you. We'll jest invite 'em to a little argyment with nature's weepens, without no interference by the guard. Come on."

The prisoners returned their greetings rather pleasantly. They were so dazed by the host of strange faces that Si and Shorty seemed, in a measure, like old acquaintances.

"Had plenty to eat, boys," asked Shorty, familiarly, seating himself on a log beside them and passing his pipe and tobacco to the Sergeant.

"Plenty, thankee," said the Sergeant, taking the pipe and filling it. "More'n we'uns 've had sence we left home, an' mouty good vittles, too. You Yanks sartinly live well, ef yo'uns don't do nothin' else."

"Yes," said Shorty, with a glance at his mud-stained garments, "we're bound to live high and dress well, even if we don't lay up a cent."

"You sartinly do have good cloze, too," said the Sergeant, surveying the stout blue uniforms with admiration. "Yo'uns' common soldiers 've better cloze than our officers. We'uns got hold o' some o' yo'uns' overcoats, and they wear like leather."

"There's leather in 'em," said Shorty unblushingly. "I tell you, old Abe Lincoln's a very smart man. He saw that this war was costin' a heap of money, especially for clothes. He got a bright idee that by soaking the clothes when they were new and green in the tan-vats, jest after the leather wuz taken out, they'd take up the strength o' the leather out o' the juice, and wear always. The idee worked bully, and now old Abe goes every morning to where they're makin' clothes and sees that every stitch is put to soak."

"Nobody but a Yankee'd thought o' that," said the rebel reflectively.

"You bet," assented Shorty. "Jeff Davis'd never think of it if he lived to be as old as Methuselah. But that's only the beginnin' of Abe Lincoln's smartness."

"He's a durned sight smarter man than we'uns thought he wuz when we begun the war," admitted the Sergeant. "But we'uns 'll wollop him yit, in spite of his smartness."

"We kin tell more about that a few months later," returned Shorty. "It's never safe to count the game until the last hand's played. We hain't fairly begun to lead trumps yit. But what are you fellers fighting for, anyhow?"

"We'uns foutin' for our liberty, and t' keep yo'uns from takin' our niggers away."

The reply that came to Shorty's lips was that they seemed to be losing a great deal of liberty rather than gaining it, but he checked this by the fear that it would be construed as an ungentlemanly boast of their capture. He said, instead:

"I never knowed as any of us wanted your niggers—me particularly. I wouldn't take a wagon load of 'em, even if the freight was prepaid. But, let me ask you, Sergeant, how many niggers do you own?"

"I don't own nary one."

"Does your father own any?"

"No, he don't."

"Does your mother, or brothers, uncles, aunts, or cousins own any?" persisted Shorty.

"No, thar ain't nary one owned in the hull family."

"Seems to me," said Shorty, "you're doin' a great deal of fightin' to keep us from takin' away from you something that we don't want and you hain't got. That's the way it looks to a man from north o' the Ohio River. Mebbe there's something in the Tennessee air that makes him see differently. I'll admit that I've changed my mind about a good many things since we crossed the river."

"I've alluz said," spoke another of the prisoners, "that this wuz a rich man's wah and a pore man's fout."

"Well," said Shorty, philosophically, "for folks that like that sort o' fightin', that's the sort o' fightin' they like. I'm different. I don't. When I fight it's for something that I've got an interest in."

While the discussion was going on Si had been studying the appearance of the prisoners. In spite of their being enemies his heart was touched by their comfortless condition. Not one of them had an overcoat or blanket. The Sergeant and a couple of others had over their shoulders pieces of the State House carpet, which had been cut up into lengths and sewed together for blankets. Another

had what had once been a gaudy calico counterpane, with the pattern "Rose of Sharon" wrought out in flaming colors. It was now a sadly-bedraggled substitute for a blanket. The others had webs of jeans sewed to gether.

The buttons were gone from their garments in many essential places, and replaced by strings, nails, skewers and thorns. Worst of all, almost every one of them was nearly shoeless. A sudden impulse seized Si.

"Shorty," said he, "these men are going up where the weather is very cold. I wish I was able to give each of them a warm suit of clothes and a blanket. I ain't though. But I tell you what I will do; I'll go down to the Quartermaster and see if he'll issue me a pair of shoes for each of 'em, and charge it to my clothin' account."

"Bully idee," ejaculated Shorty. "I'll go you halves. Mebbe if they git their understandin' into Yankee leather it'll help git some Yankee idee into their understandin'. See?"

And Shorty was so delighted with his little joke that he laughed over it all the way to the Quartermaster's wagon, and then rehearsed it for that officer's entertainment.

Fortunately, the Quartermaster had a box of shoes that he could get at without much trouble, and he was in sufficiently good humor to grant Si's request.

They added a warm pair of socks to each pair of shoes, and so wrought up the A. Q. M.'s sympathies that he threw in some damaged overcoats, and other articles, which he said he could report "lost in action."

They came back loaded with stuff, which they dumped down on the ground before the prisoners, with the brief remark:

"Them's, all yours. Put 'em on."

The prisoners were overwhelmed by this generosity on the part of their foes and captors.

"I alluz thought," said the Sergeant, "that you Yankees wuz not half so bad ez I believed that yo'uns wuz. Yo'uns is white men, if yo'uns do want to take away our niggers."

"Gosh," said the man who had uttered the opinion that it was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight, "I'd give all my interest in every nigger in Tennessee for that ere one pa'r o' shoes. They're beauties, I tell you. I never had so good a pa'r afore in all my life."

CHAPTER V. LINING UP FOR BATTLE

THE 200TH IND. GUARDS THE WAGON TRAIN, AND DEFEATS AN ATTACK

"RAIN agin to-day," said Shorty, disgustedly, as, on the morning of Dec. 30, 1862, he crawled out of the shelter which he and Si had constructed by laying a pole in the crotches of two young cedars, and stretching their ponchos and pup-tents over it. "Doggoned if I don't believe Tennessee was left out in the flood, and they've been tryin' to make up for it ever since. I'd rather have the flood at once, and be done with it, for then I'd join the navy instead of paddlin' 'round in this dirty glue that they call mud." "Never saw such a grumbler, Shorty," said Si cheerily, as he punched the soaked embers together to start a blaze to boil their coffee by. "Last Summer the dust and dry weather didn't suit you. Do you want to do your soldierin' in heaven?"

"Hurry up with your grub, boys," said the Orderly-Sergeant, who came spattering through the muck of leaves and mud into which the camping-ground had been trampled. "The regiment's to move in 15 minutes. The 200th Ind. guards wagon-trains to-day. Yesterday Wheeler's cavalry got in among our wagons and raised thunder—burnt about a mile of 'em."

Shorty grumbled: "That means a tough day's work pryin' wagons out of the mud, and restin' ourselves between times runnin' after a lot o' skippin', cavortin' cavalry that's about as easy to ketch as a half-bushel o' fleas. Anything I hate it's rebel cavalry all tear-around and yell, and when you git ready to shoot they're on the other side o' the hill."

"Well," said Si, removing a slab of sizzling fat pork from the end of his rammer, laying it on his hardtack, and taking a generous bite, "we mustn't allow them to take no wagons away from the 200th Ind., slosh around as they may. We want all that grub ourselves."

"Well, hump yourselves," said the Orderly-Sergeant, as he spattered on; "fall in promptly when assembly blows. Got plenty o' cartridges?"

Two or three hours later every man in the 200th Ind., wet to the skin, and with enough mud on him to be assessable as real estate, was in a temper to have sassed his gentle old grandmother and whipped his best friend. He believed that if there was any thing under heavens meaner than Tennessee weather it was an army mule; the teamsters had even less sense and more contrariness than the mules; the army wagon was a disheartening device of the devil, and Tennessee roads had been especially contrived by Jeff Davis to break the hearts of Union soldiers.

The rain came down with a steady pelt that drove right through to the body. The wagon wheels sank into every mud-hole and made it deeper. Prying out the leading ones seemed only to make it worse for the next. The discouraged mules would settle back in the breech ings, and not pull an ounce at the most critical moments. The drivers would become blundering idiots, driveling futile profanity. In spite of all the mud the striving, pushing, pulling, prying, lifting, shouting 200th Ind. gathered up on their hands and clothes, it increased momentarily in the road.

The train had strung out over a mile or more of rocky ledges and abysses of mire. Around each wagon was a squad who felt deeply injured by the certainty that their infernal luck had given them the heaviest wagon, the worst mules, and the most exasperating driver in the whole division.

"I couldn't 've made a doggoneder fool than Groundhog, that teamster," said Shorty, laying down his rail for a minute's rest, "if I'd 'a' had Thompson's colt before my eyes for a pattern. That feller was born addled, on Friday, in the dark of the moon."

"Them mules," dolefully corroborated Si, scraping an acre, more or less, of red Tennessee soil from his overcoat with a stick, "need to be broke again with a saw-log. Luck for old Job that the devil didn't think o' settin' him to drive mules. He'd 'a-bin a-goner in less'n an hour."

"Doggone it, here they come," said Shorty, snatching up his gun.

Si looked in the direction of Shorty's glance. Out of the cedars, a mile or more away, burst a regiment of rebel cavalry, riding straight for the front of the train.

With his tribe's keen apprehension of danger, Groundhog had jumped from his saddle, nervously unhitched his mule, and sprung into the saddle again, ready for instant fight.

"Get off and hook that mule up agin," commanded Si sternly. "Now get on your mule and go to the head of your team, take the leaders by the bridles, and stay there."

"If you ain't standing there holding your mules when we come back I'll break your worthless neck."

The bugle sounded "Rally on the right flank," and Si and Shorty joined the others in a lumbering rush over the miry fields toward the right. Their soaked clothes hung about them like lead. They had not a spoonful of breath left when they got to where, half-a-mile away, Co. A had taken a position in the briars behind a rail fence, and had opened a long-ranged fire on the cavalry, which was manuvering as if trying to discover a way to take the company in flank. Another fence ran at right angles away to the right of Co. A's position. The cavalry started for that.

"Capt. McGillicuddy," shouted the Colonel, "take your company back to that fence as quick as you can, run along back of it, and try to keep those fellows on the other side."

Away the panting company rushed for the fence. The field was overgrown with those pests of the Southern plowman, called locally "devil's shoe strings," which stretch from furrow-ridge to furrow-ridge, and are snares to any careless walker. The excited Indianians were constantly tripped on these, and fell headlong in the mud. Down Si and Shorty went several times, to the great damage of their tempers. But in spite of all rain, mud, lack of breath and devil's shoe-strings the company got to the fence in advance of the cavalry, and opened a scattering fire as each man could get his damp gun to go off. Si and Shorty ran back a little to a hillock, from which they could get long-distance shots on where the cavalry would probably try to tear down the fence.

"It's all of 600 yards, Si," said Shorty, as he leaned against a young oak, got his breath back in long gulps, and studied the ground. "We kin make it, though, with our Springfields, if they'll give us time to cool down and git our breaths. I declare I want a whole Township of fresh air every second. That last time I fell knocked enough breath out o' me to fill a balloon."

"There, they're sendin' out a squad now to go for the fence," said Si, putting his sight up to 600 yards. "I'll line on that little persimmon tree and shoot as they pass it. I'll take the fellow on the clay bank horse, who seems to be an officer. You take the next one on the spotted bay."

"Better shoot at the hoss," said Shorty, fixing his sight. "Bigger mark; and if you git the hoss you git the man."

The squad made a rush for the fence, but as the leader crossed the line Si had drawn on the persimmon tree through his sights, his musket cracked, and the horse reared and fell over in the mud. Shorty broke the shoulder of the next horse, and the rider had to jump off.

"Bully shots, boys. Do it again," shouted the Captain of Co. Q, hurrying some men farther to the right, to concentrate a fire upon the exposed point.

Si and Shorty hastily reloaded, and fired again at the rebels, who had pressed on toward the fence, in spite of the fall of their leader. But not having an object in line to sight on, Si and Shorty did not succeed in bringing anybody down. But as they looked to see the effect, they also saw a cannon-flash from a hill away off behind the cavalry, and the same instant its rifled shot took the top off the young oak about six feet above Si's head.

Shorty was the first to recover his wits and tongue. "Doggoned if somebody else hain't been drawin' a bead on trees," he said, looking into Si's startled face. "Knows how to shoot, too."

"I didn't notice that measly gun come up there. Did you, Shorty?" said Si, trying to get his heart back out of his mouth, so that he could speak plainly.

"No. I didn't. But it's there all the same, and the fellers with it have blood in their eyes. Le's run over to where the other boys are. I'm a private citizen. I don't like so much public notice."

They joined the squad which was driving back the rebels who had started out to break the fence.

Presently the cavalry wheeled about and disappeared in the woods. The rear was scarcely out of sight, and the 200th Ind. was just beginning to feel a sense of relief, when there was a sputter of shots and a chorus of yells away off to the extreme left.

"Just as I expected," grumbled Shorty. "They are jumping the rear of the train now."

Leaving Co. A to watch the head of the train, the rest of the regiment bolted off on the double-quick for the rear. They did not get there a moment too soon. Not soon enough, in fact. As they came over the crest of the hill they saw Co. B, which had been with the rear, having more than it could attend to with a horde of yelling, galloping rebels, who filled the little valley. Co. B's boys were standing up manfully to their work, and popping away at the rebels from behind fences and rocks, but the latter had already gotten away from them a wagon which had been far to the rear, had cut loose the mules and run them off, and were plundering the wagon, and trying to start a fire under it.

The fusillade which the regiment opened as the men grained the crest of the hill, put a different complexion on the affair. The rebels recognized the force of circumstances, and speedily rode back out of range, and then out of sight. As the last of them disappeared over the hill the wearied regiment dropped down all around to rest.

"We can't rest long, boys," said the sympathetic Colonel; "we've got to start these wagons along."

Presently he gave the order:

"Go back to your wagons, now, and get them out as quickly as you can."

Si and Shorty took a circuit to the left to get on some sod which had not been trampled into mortar. They heard a volley of profanity coming from a cedar brake still farther to the left, and recognized the voice of their teamster. They went thither, and found Groundhog, who had fled from the scene, after the manner of his race, at the first sound of firing, but had been too scared to fasten up his traces when he unhitched his saddle mule. These had flapped around, as he urged his steed forward, and the hooks had caught so firmly into the cedars when he plunged into the thicket that he was having a desperate time getting them loose.

"You dumbed, measly coward," said Si. "I told you I'd blow your head offen you if you didn't stay by them mules. I ought to do it."

"Don't, Si," said Shorty. "He deserves it, and we kin do it some other time. But we need him now in our business. He hain't much of a head, but it's all that he's got and he can't drive without it. Le's git the mule loose first."

They got the mule out and turned him around toward the wagons.

"Now," said Shorty, addressing Groundhog, "you white-livered son-in-law of a jackass, git back to that wagon as fast as you kin, if you don't want me to run this bayonet through you."

There was more straining and prying in the dreary rain and fathomless mud to get the wagons started.

"Shorty," said Si, as they plodded alongside the road, with a rail on one shoulder and a gun on the other, "I really believe that this is the toughest day we've had yet. What d'you s'pose father and mother'd say if they could see us?"

"They'd probably say we wuz earning our \$13 a month, with \$100 bounty at the end o' three years.," snapped Shorty, who was in no mood for irrelevant conversation.

So the long, arduous day went. When they were not pulling, pushing, prying, and yelling, to get the wagons out of mudholes, they were rushing over the clogging, plowed fields to stand off the nagging rebel cavalry, which seemed to fill the country as full as the rain, the mud, the rocks and the sweeping cedars did. As night drew on they came up to lines of fires where the different divisions were

going into line-of-battle along the banks of Stone River. The mud became deeper than ever, from the trampling of tens of thousands of men and animals, but they at least did not have the aggravating rebel cavalry to bother them. They found their division at last in an old cottonfield, and were instantly surrounded by a crowd of hungry, angry men.

"Where in blazes have you fellers bin all day?" they shouted. "You ought to've got up here hours ago. We're about starved."

"Go to thunder, you ungrateful whelps," said Si. "You kin git your own wagons up after this. I'll never help guard another wagon-train as long as I'm in the army."

CHAPTER VI. BATTLE OF STONE RIVER

THE 200TH IND. IS PRAISED FOR BRAVERY

THE fagged-out 200th Ind. was put in reserve to the brigade, which lay in the line-of-battle. After having got the train safely into camp, the regiment felt that it was incapable of moving another foot.

While their coffee was boiling Si and Shorty broke off a few cedar branches to lay under them, and keep out the mud. The rain still drizzled, cold, searching and depressing, but they were too utterly tired to do anything more than spread their over coats on the branches, lay their blankets and ponchos over, and crawl in between.

In the few minutes which they allowed to elapse between getting into camp and going to sleep they saw and heard something of the preparations going on around them for the mighty battle, but body and brain were too weary to properly "sense" these. They hardly cared what might happen to-morrow. Rest for to-day was everything. They were too weary to worry about anything in the future.

"It certainly looks, Shorty," said Si, as he crawled in, "like as if the circus was in town, and the big show'd come off to-morrow, without regard to the weather."

"Let it come and be blamed to it," snorted Shorty. "They can't git up nothin' wuss'n we've bin havin' to-day, let them try their durndest. But I tell you, Mr. Si Klegg, I want you to lay mighty still to-night. If you git to rollin' around in your usual animated style and tanglin' up the bedclothes, I'll kick you out into the rain, and make you stay there. Do you hear me?"

"You bet I'll lay quiet," said Si, as together they gave the skillful little kick only known to veteran campaigners by which they brought the blankets snugly up around their feet. "You could sooner wake up a fence-rail than me. I want to tell you, too, not to git to dreamin' of pryin' wagons out of the mud, and chasin' rebel cavalry. I won't have it."

The reveille the next morning would have promptly awakened even more tired sleepers than Si and Shorty. Even before the dull, damp drums began rolling and the fifes shrieking the air of enforced gaiety along the sinuous line of blue which stretched for miles through red, muddy cottonfields and cedar tangles wet as bath-room sponges, there came from far away on the extreme right a deepening roll of musketry, punctuated with angry cannon-shots and the faint echo of yells and answering cheers.

"That's McCook opening the battle," said the officers, answering the anxious looks of the men. "He's to hold the rebels out there, while Crittenden sweeps around on the left, captures Murfreesboro, and takes them in the rear."

Miles away to the left came the sound of musketry and cannons, as if to confirm this. But the firing there died down, while that to the right increased with regular, crashing volleys from muskets and artillery.

The 200th Ind. was in that exceedingly trying position for soldiers, where they can hear everything but see nothing. The cedar thicket in which they stood shut off the view in every direction. The Colonel kept officers and men standing strictly in place, ready for any contingency. Si and Shorty leaned on their muskets and anxiously watched the regimental commander as he sat rigidly in his saddle, with his fixed gaze bent in the direction of the awful tumult. The Adjutant had ridden forward a little ways to where he could get a better view. The other officers stood stiffly in their places, with the points of their drawn swords resting on the ground, and their hands clasped on the hilts, and watched the Colonel intently. Sometimes they would whisper a few words to those standing near them. The Captain of Co. Q drew geometric figures in the mud with the point of his sword.

Constantly the deafening crash came nearer, and crept around farther to the right.

Si gave a swift glance at Shorty. His partner's teeth were set, his face drawn and bloodless, his eyes fixed immovably on the Colonel.

"Awful fightin' goin' on out there, Shorty," said Si, in hushed voice. "I'm afraid they're lickin' our fellers."

"Confound it!" snorted Shorty, "why in thunder don't they move us out, and give us something to do? This is hell standin' here listenin'."

A teamster, hatless and coatless, with his hair standing up, came tearing through the brush, mounted on his saddle-mule.

A chorus of yells and curses greeted his appearance. It was immense relief for the men to have something to swear at.

"Run, you egg-sucking hound.

"Run, you scald-headed dominie.

"Somebody busted a cap in your neighborhood, old white-liver."

"Seen the ghost of a dead rebel, Pilgarlic?"

"Pull back your eyes, you infernal mulewhacker. A limb'll brush 'em off."

"Look at his hair standin' up stiffer'n bristles on a boar's back."

"Your mules got more sand 'n you. They're standing where you left 'em."

"Of course, you're whipped and all cut to pieces. You was that when you heard the first gun crack."

"Get out of the way, and let him run himself to death. That's all he's fit for."

"You've no business in men's clothes. Put on petticoats."

"Go it, rabbit; go it, cotton-tail you've heard a dog bark."

"Chickee chickee skip for the barn. Hawk's in the air."

"Let him alone. He's in a hurry to get back and pay his sutler's bill."

The teamster gasped out:

"You'd better all git out o' here as fast as the Lord'll let you. Johnson's Division's cut all to pieces and runnin'. There'll be a million rebels on top o' you in another minnit."

"Capt. McGillicuddy," said the Colonel sternly, but without turning his head, "either bayonet that cowardly rascal or gag him and tie him to a tree."

The Captain turned to give the order to Corp'l Klegg, but the teamster struck his mule with his whip, and went tearing on through the brush before the order could be given.

Some severely-wounded men came slowly pushing their way through the chaparral.

"It's awful hot out there," they said. "The rebels got the start of us, and caught our battery horses off to water. They outflanked us bad, but the boys are standin' up to 'em and they're gettin' help, an 'll lick the stuffin' out of 'em yet."

The regiment gave the plucky fellows a cheer.

A riderless horse, frantic from his wounds and the terrific noise, tore through the brush, and threatened to dash over Co. Q. Si and Shorty saw the danger, and before the Captain could give an order they sprang forward, and, at considerable risk, succeeded in getting hold of the reins and partially calming the poor brute. The eagles on the saddle cloth showed that he belonged to a Colonel. He was led to the rear, and securely haltered to a young cedar. The incident served a purpose in distracting for awhile the attention of the regiment.

The noise in front and to the right swept farther away for a little while, and the men's hearts rose with a cheer.

"Now the reinforcements are getting in. Why in the world don't they send us forward?" they said.

The Colonel still sat rigidly, with his face straight to the front.

Then the noise began to roll nearer again, and the men's hearts to sink.

The wounded men coming back became a continuous procession. They spoke less confidently, and were anxious to know what was taking place on other parts of the line.

"The whole infernal Southern Confederacy's out there," said one boy, who was holding his shattered right hand in his left, with his thumb pressed hard on the artery, to stanch the blood, "in three lines-of-battle, stretching from daybreak to sunset. The boys have been standing them off bully, though, but I don't know how long they can keep it up. Thomas and Crittenden ought to be walking right over every thing, for there can't be anybody in front of them. They're all out there."

Two musicians came laboring through, carrying a stretcher on which was an officer with part of his face shot away. Si felt himself growing white around the mouth and sick at the stomach, but he looked the other way, and drew in a long, full breath.

The storm now seemed to be rolling toward them at railroad speed. Suddenly the woods became alive with men running back, some with their guns in their hands, many without. Some were white with fear, and silent; some were in a delirium of rage, and yelling curses. Officers, bareheaded, and wildly excited, were waving their swords, and calling regiments and companies by name to halt and rally.

The Adjutant came galloping back, his horse knocking the fugitives right and left. He shouted, to make himself heard in the din:

"The whole division is broken and going back. Our brigade is trying to hold the rebels. They need us at once."

The Colonel turned calmly in his saddle, and his voice rang out clear, distinct, and measured, as if on parade:

"Attention, 200th Indiana!"

"Load at will LOAD!"

A windrow of bright ramrods flashed and weaved in the air. A wave of sharp, metallic clicks ran from one end of the line to the other.

"Shoulder ARMS!"

"Right FACE!"

"Forward MARCH!"

What happened immediately after emerging from the cedars Si could never afterward distinctly recall. He could only vaguely remember as one does the impression of a delirium seeing, as the regiment swung from column into line, a surging sea of brown men dashing forward against a bank of blue running along a rail fence, and from which rose incessant flashes of fire and clouds of white smoke. The 200th Ind. rushed down to the fence, to the right of the others; the fierce flashes flared along its front; the white smoke curled upward from it. He did not remember any order to begin firing; did not remember when he began. He only remembered presently feeling his gun-barrel so hot that it burned his hand, but this made him go on firing more rapidly than before. He was dimly conscious of his comrades dropping around him, but this did not affect him. He also remembered catching sight of Shorty's face, and noticing that it was as black as that of a negro, but this did not seem strange.

He felt nothing, except a consuming rage to shoot into and destroy those billows of brown fiends surging incessantly toward him. Consciousness only came back to him after the billows had surged back ward into the woods, leaving the red mud of the field splotched with brown lumps which had lately been men.

As his mind cleared his hand flinched from the hot gun-barrel, and he looked down curiously to see the rain-drops turn into steam as they struck it. His throat was afire from the terrible powder thirst. He lifted his canteen to his lips and almost drained it. He drew a long breath, and looked around to see what had happened since they left the cedars. Shorty was by his side, and unhurt. He now understood why his face was so black. He could feel the thick incrustation of powder and sweat on his own. Several of Co. Q were groaning on the ground, and the Captain was detailing men to

carry them back to where the Surgeon had established himself. Two were past all surgery, staring with soulless eyes into the lowering clouds.

"Poor Bill and Ebe," said Si, gazing sorrowfully at the bodies. "Co. Q will miss them. What good boys they—"

"Were" stuck in his throat. That those strong, active, ever-ready comrades of a few minutes before now merely "were" was unspeakable.

His thoughts were distracted by a rebel battery on the hill sending a volley of shells at the fence. Some went over, and tore gaps in the cedars beyond. One struck the corner of the fence near him, and set the rails to flying.

"I like fence-rails in their place as well as any man," said Shorty, as they dodged around; "but a fence-rail's got no business sailin' 'round in the air like a bird."

An Aid rode up to the Colonel.

"The General's compliments, Colonel. He directs me to express to you his highest compliments on the splendid manner in which you have defended your position. You and your men have done nobly. But we are outflanked, and it will be necessary to retire to a new position about a half-mile to the rear. You will withdraw your regiment by companies, so as to attract as little attention from the enemy as possible. As soon as they are under cover of the cedars you will move rapidly to the new position."

"Very well," said the Colonel, saluting. "You will be good enough to say to the General that my men and myself appreciate highly his praise. We are proud to receive it, and shall try to deserve it in the future. His orders shall be immediately obeyed."

"They call this a civil war," said Shorty, as an other volley of shells tore around. "Seems to me sometimes that it's too durned civil. If we're goin' to git out of here, we might save compliments for a quieter time."

One by one the companies filed back into the cedars, Co. Q being last. Just as they started the rebels on the opposite hill discovered the movement, raised a yell, and started across the field.

"Halt Front!" commanded the Captain. "Those fellows are too tumultuous and premature. We must check them up a little. Wait till they come to that little branch, then everybody pick his man and let him have it. Aim below the belt."

The frenzy of the first struggle was now gone from Si's mind; instead had come a deadly determination to make every shot tell.

"I'm goin' to fetch that mounted officer on their right," he said to Shorty and those around him.

"Very well," said Shorty. "I'll take that Captain near him who's wavin' his sword and yellin'. The rest o' you fellers pick out different men."

The rebel line was in the weeds which bordered the branch when the Captain gave the order to fire.

When the smoke arose the mounted officer and the yelling Captain were down.

"If somebody else didn't get them, we did," said Shorty, as they turned and rushed back into the cedars.

The rebels were only checked momentarily. They soon came swarming on, and as Co. Q crashed through the cedars the rebels were yelling close behind. Fortunately, they could not do any effective firing, on account of the brush. But when they came to the edge of the thicket there was a long run across a furrowed, muddy cottonfield, to reach the knoll on which the brigade was re-forming. The battery was already in action there, throwing shells over the heads of Co. Q at the rebels swarming out of the cedars in pursuit.

Si and Shorty threw away overcoats, blankets, haversacks and canteens everything which would impede their running, except their guns and cartridge-boxes. Their caps were gone, and Si had lost one shoe in the mud. They all sat down on the ground for a minute and panted to get their breath.

The rebels were checked, but only temporarily. They were thronging out in countless multitudes, lining up into regiments and brigades, preparatory to a rush across the field upon the brigade. Away to the right of the brigade rebel batteries had been concentrated, which were shelling it and the ground to the rear, to prevent any assistance being sent it.

"Captain," said the Colonel, riding up to Co. Q, "the General says that we have got to stay here and hold those fellows back until the new line can be formed along the pike. We haven't ammunition enough for another fight. You'll have to send a Corporal and a squad back to the pike to bring up some more. Pick out men that'll be sure to come back, and in a hurry."

"Corp'l Klegg," said the Captain, without an instant's hesitation, "you hear what's to be done. Take five men and go."

Si looked around to see if there was someone he could borrow a shoe from. But that was hardly a time when men were likely to lend shoes. He picked Shorty and four others. They flung down their guns and started on a run for the pike.

The batteries were sweeping the fields with shells, but they were so intent on their errand that they paid no attention to the demoniac shrieks of the hurtling pieces of iron.

They gained the other side of the field, but as they entered the welcome shelter of the woods they encountered an officer with a drawn sword, commanding a line of men.

"Stop there, you infernal, cowardly rascals," he yelled. "Pick up those guns there, and get into line, or I'll shoot you. You, Corporal, ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"We're after ammunition for the 200th Ind.," gasped Si. "We must have it right away. Where's the division ammunition train?"

"That ammunition story's played. Can't work it on me. Where's your regiment? Where's your caps? Where's your shoes? Where's your guns? You're rattled out of your senses. Stop here and cool off. Pick up guns there and fall into line."

"Name o' God, Lieutenant," said Shorty excitedly. "This's no time for any foolishness. Our regiment's out there on the hill without any ammunition. The rebels are gittin' ready to jump it, four or five to one. Don't fool, for heaven's sake. There's not a minute to waste. Come with us and help us git the ammunition. That's a blame sight more important than stoppin' these here runaways, who're no good when they are stopped. Come along, for God's sake."

His earnestness impressed the Lieutenant.

"Lieut. Evans," he called out, "take command of the line while I go back with these men to the ammunition-train. I can get it quicker for them than they can. Your Colonel should have sent a commissioned officer with you."

"The Colonel needs all the officers he has left with him," panted Shorty, running ahead of the rest. "Everybody back there's got all he can attend to, and we couldn't really be spared."

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