

**JOHN  
MCELROY**

SIKLEGG,  
BOOK 4

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**John McElroy**  
**Si Klegg, Book 4 / Experiences of Si and**  
**Shorty on the Great Tullahoma 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 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 Govern ment. 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. THE TULLAHOMA CAMPAIGN ON TO DUCK RIVER

### "ONLY 25 MILES TO SHELBYVILLE."

JUNE 23, 1863, ended the Army of the Cumberland's six months of wearisome inaction around Murfreesboro its half-year of tiresome fort-building, drilling, picketing and scouting.

Then its 60,000 eager, impatient men swept forward in combinations of masterful strategy, and in a brief, wonderfully brilliant campaign of nine days of drenching rain drove Bragg out of his strong fortifications in the rugged hills of Duck River, and compelled him to seek refuge in the fastnesses of the Cumberland Mountains, beyond the Tennessee River.

"Now," said Shorty, as they stood in line, waiting the order to move, "as Old Rosy has clearly waked up to business, I hope to gracious that Mr. Bragg will be found at home ready for callers. We've wasted six months waiting for him to get good and ready, and he certainly ought to be in trim to transact any little business we may have with him."

"I think you needn't trouble yourself about that, Shorty," said Capt. McGillicuddy. "All the news is that Bragg is down there in Shelbyville in force, and with blood in his eye. Somebody is going to be terribly whipped before the end of the week, and I'm pretty sure it won't be the Army of the Cumberland."

"Well, let's have it over and done with," said Si. "It's got to be fought out some time, and the sooner the better. I wish the whole thing could be fought to a finish to-morrow. Then I'd know at once whether I'm to live through this war."

"I don't think you'll be kept long in suspense," replied Capt. McGillicuddy. "Shelbyville is only 25 miles away. We can't go forward many hours with out forcing a collision as to the right of way. If we can whip Bragg behind the works he has been building for the last six months, we'll settle the whole business for the Southern Confederacy in the West. Grant will take Vicksburg, and then we'll have peace."

"Only 25 miles," repeated Shorty. "We ought to be squarely up against them not later than to-morrow night and one or two days' lively pounding ought to make Mr. Bragg holler enough."

"Rosenbaum is as certain as he is of his life," said Si to the Captain and the rest, "that Bragg has the bulk of his army at Shelbyville, which, as you say, is but 25 miles from here, and that he will draw the rest in and fight us behind the awfully big forts that he has been building for the last six months from Shelbyville to War Trace. Rosenbaum says that he knows it for a fact that 3,000 negroes have been worked on the forts ever since Bragg retreated there last January."

"Well, 25 miles isn't far to go for a fight," returned Shorty. "All that I ask is that the 200th Ind. be given the advance. We'll make schedule time to ward Shelbyville, and bring on the fight before early candle-lightin' to-morrow evening."

"I guess you'll have your wish, Shorty," returned Capt. McGillicuddy. "We lead the brigade to-day, anyway, and we'll try to keep the lead clear through."

Then the rain poured down so violently that all the conversation was suspended, except more or less profane interjections upon the luck of the Army of the Cumberland in never failing to bring on a deluge when it started to march.

In the midst of this the bugles sounded "For ward!" and the 200th Ind. swung out on the Shelby ville Pike, and set its face sternly southward. After it trailed the rest of the brigade, then the ambulances and wagons, and then the rest of the division.

At times the rain was actually blinding, but the men plodded on doggedly and silently. They had exhausted their epithets at the start, and now settled down to stolid endurance.

"We've only got to go 25 miles, boys," Si would occasionally say, by way of encouragement. "This rain can't last forever at this rate. It'll probably clear up bright just as we reach Shelbyville tomorrow, and give us sunshine to do our work in."

But when the column halted briefly at noon, for dinner for the men and mules, it was raining harder and steadier than ever. It was difficult to start fires with the soaked rails and chunks, all were wet to the skin, and rivulets of water ran from them as they stood or walked. The horses of the officers seemed shrunken and drawn-up, and the mud was getting deeper every minute.

"Lucky we had the advance," said the optimistic Si. "We have churned the roads into a mortar-bed, and them that comes after us will have hard pullin'. I wonder how many miles we've made of them 25?"

"I feel that we've already gone full 25," said Shorty. "But Tennessee miles's made o' injy-rubber, and stretch awfully."

They were too ill-humored to talk much, but stood around and sipped their hot coffee and munched sodden crackers and fried pork in silence. Pork fried in the morning in a half-canteen, and carried for hours in a dripping haversack, which reduced the crackers to a tasteless mush, is not an appetizing viand; but the hunger of hard exercise in the open air makes it "go."

Again the bugles sounded "Forward," and they plodded on more stolidly than ever.

Increasing evidences of the enemy's presence began to stimulate them. Through the sheets of rain they saw a squad of rebel cavalry close to them. There was much snapping of damp gun-caps on both sides, a few unavailing shots were actually fired, and they caught glimpses between the rain-gusts of the rebel horsemen galloping up the muddy road to ward the rising hills.

They pushed forward with more spirit now. They came to insignificant brooks which were now raging torrents, through which they waded waist deep, first placing their treasured ammunition on their shoulders or heads.

As they were crossing one of these, Si unluckily stepped into a deep hole, which took him in over his head. His foot struck a stone, which rolled, and down he went. Shorty saw him disappear, made a frantic clutch for him, and went down himself. For a brief tumultuous instant they bobbed around against the legs of the other boys, who went down like tenpins. Nearly the whole of Co. Q was at once floundering in the muddy torrent, with the Captain, who had succeeded in crossing, looking back in dismay at the disaster. The Orderly-Sergeant and a few others at the head of the company rushed in and pulled out by the collars such of the boys as they could grab. Si and Shorty came to the bank a little ways down, blowing and sputtering, and both very angry.

"All your infernal clumsiness," shouted Shorty. "You never will look where you're goin'. No more sense than a blind hoss."

"Shut up," said Si, wrathfully. "Don't you talk about clumsiness. It was them splay feet o' your'n that tripped me, and then you downed the rest o' the boys. Every mite of our grub and ammunition's gone."

How far the quarrel would have gone cannot be told, for at that instant a regiment of rebels, which had been pushed out in advance, tried to open a fire upon the 200th Ind. from behind a rail fence at the bottom of the hill. Only enough of their wet guns could be gotten off to announce their presence. The Colonel of the 200th Ind. yelled:

"Companies left into line!"

The soggy men promptly swung around.

"Fix bayonets! Forward, double-quick!" shouted the Colonel.

It was a sorry "double-quick," through the pelting rain, the entangling weeds and briars, and over the rushing streams which flooded the field, but it was enough to discourage the rebels, who

at once went back in a heavy-footed run to the works on the hill, and the rebel cannon boomed out to cover their retreat.

"Lie down!" shouted the Colonel, as they reached the fence, and a shell struck a little in advance, filling the air with mud and moist fragments of vegetation.

As they lay there and recovered their breath there was much splashing and splattering of mud, much running to and fro, much galloping of Aids in their rear. The 200th Ind. was ordered to hold its place, and be ready for a charge upon the hill when it received orders. The brigade's battery was rushed up to a hill in the rear, and opened a fire on the rebel guns. The other regiments were deployed to the right and left to outflank the rebel position.

Si and Shorty and the rest of Co. Q put in the time trying to get their guns dry and borrowing ammunition from the men of the other companies. Both were jobs of difficulty and doubtful success. There could be no proper drying of guns in that incessant drench, and nobody wanted to open up his stock of cartridges in such a rain.

In the intervals between the heavier showers glimpses could be had of the "Kankakee Suckers" and the "Maumee Muskrats" working their way as fast as they could around toward the rebel flanks. The rebel artillery, seeing most danger from them, began throwing shells in their direction as they could be caught sight of through the rain and the opening in the trees.

"Why don't they order us forward with the bayonets?" fretted Si. "We can scatter them. Their guns ain't in no better shape than ours. If they hold us here, the Illinoy and Ohio fellers 'll git all the credit."

"The Colonel's orders are explicit," said the Adjutant, who happened to be near, "not to move until the head of one of the other regiments can be seen on the hills to the right or left. Then we're all to go forward together."

"Yes," grumbled Shorty, "and we'll jest git there in time to see them Illinoy Suckers hog everything. You kin see 'em limberin' up and preparing to git. Just our dumb luck."

It turned out just as Shorty had predicted. The rebel commander had kept a wary eye on the other regiments, and as he saw them gain the point of vantage in the open, where they could make a rush upon him, he ordered a quick retreat. The other regiments raised a yell and charged straight home. By the time the 200th Ind. could reach the gap the other regiments were in full possession, and the rebels out of musket-shot in the valley beyond.

"I told you so," snorted the irate Shorty. "Now we've lost the advance. To-morrow we'll have to take them other fellers' mud, and pry their teams out o' the holes."

"I wonder how many o' them 25 miles toward Shelbyville we've made to-day?" asked Si.

"I heard the Adjutant say," said one of his comrades, "that we'd come just six miles."

"Jewhillikins," said Shorty sorrowfully.

Thus ended the first day of the Tullahoma campaign.

## CHAPTER II. THE BALKY MULES

### SUGGESTIONS GALORE "SHELBYVILLE ONLY 18 MILES AWAY."

NEVER was there so wild a storm but there was a wilder one; never such a downpour of rain but there could be a greater deluge.

"Seemed to me yesterday," said Si, on the morning of June 25, as he vainly tried to peer through the dashing drench and locate some of the other regiments of the division, "that they was givin' us one of Noah's Deluge days that they'd happened to have left over. Seemed that it couldn't be no worse, but this beats it. I don't think that standin' under Niagara Falls could be no worse. Howsomever, this can't last long. There ain't water enough in the United States to keep this up a great while."

"Don't be so sure o' that," said Shorty, handing Si the end of a blanket, that he might help wring it out. "I believe the Lord sometimes thinks that He didn't divide the land and water jest right in the first place, and that He'd better 've made a big lake o' Tennessee instead o' these old clay knobs for rebels and niggers to roost on, and He starts in to carry out that idee. I wish He'd finish the job at once, and turn the whole blasted region over to the navy. It looks as if He had that in mind now."

"Well," said the ever-hopeful Si, "the Bible says that the rain falls on the just and unjust alike. If it's tough on us, it's jest as tough on them. Their guns wouldn't go off any better'n ours yesterday. If that regiment in front of us could've shot like they can on a dry day they'd 've made a sick time for us."

About 60,000 Union soldiers and 45,000 rebels struggled through the deluges of rain, the torrential streams and fathomless mud those June days, when it seemed that every water-gate of the heavens was wide open as it had never been before.

The calamity that Si and Shorty had foreseen came about. The 200th Ind. lost the advance of the brigade and brought up the rear, which meant a long day of muscle-straining, temper-wrecking struggles with stalling wagons, discouraged mules and stupid teamsters. And as Co. Q was the left of the regiment, it caught the worst of all.

The 200th Ind. had scarcely pulled out of camp when its troubles became acute. At the foot of the hill which had been carried the day before ran a brook, ordinarily quite a modest stream, but now raging like a mill-race. The two other regiments of the brigade and all of the 200th Ind. but Co. Q had managed to get across by means of trees which had been felled over the stream at various places. Co. Q was left behind to see that the teams got over, while the rest of the 200th Ind. was halted on the farther bank, to watch the operation and give help if needed. Si, with a squad in which was Shorty, was ordered to take the first team, which it happened Groundhog drove, down into the stream and start it across.

"Now, be very careful with that wagon," called the Adjutant across the stream. "That has the Headquarters' things and papers. Don't let any water get into the bed. Cross at the shallowest place."

Si and Shorty found some poles, and prodded around as well as they were able in the crossing to find the shallowest place. If there was a part so shallow that the bed could be kept above water it was very narrow, and would require exceedingly skillful driving to keep on it. The whole regiment stood around, like a barnyard full of turkeys on a wet day, and looked on with an air of sappy melancholy.

"Groundhog," said Si, approaching that function ary, "was you watchin' carefully while me and Shorty was pickin' out the shallow places?"

"Naw," answered he, insolently; "wasn't watchin' nothin' but my mules. Got enough to do takin' keer o' them, without watchin' a couple o' fools projeckin' around with poles in a mud-hole. No sense in it, nohow. We never kin git acrost that 'ere tail-race. Only thing to do is to go back into camp till it quits rainin' and the water runs out."

"Groundhog," said Si resolutely, "you're not goin' back to camp; you're not goin' to wait till it stops rainin'. You're goin' right over now, as sure as my name's Si Klegg, or I'll break every bone in your karkiss."

"I can't go over," persisted Groundhog. "I ain't no fool. I know better what kin be done with an army wagon and six mules than any Injianny galoot that ever wore stripes or shoulder-straps. You simply can't git a wagon acrost that branch, and I ain't goin' to try."

"Groundhog," said Shorty, "you've bin itchin' to be killed for at least a year, that I know of probably as long as you've lived. You ought've had a stone tied to your neck and bin flung into the crick as soon's you was born. I've promised myself a good many times that I'd about murder you when ever I had time, but something's always made me neglect it. I'm in the killin' mood to-day, and I'd like to begin on you. I certainly will unless you drive that team straight acrost, and don't git a drop o' water in the bed o' the wagon."

"Come, hurry up, over there," shouted the Adjutant. "We can't wait all day. What's the matter with you? Get a move on you."

"All right, sir; we'll start at once, sir," said Si with ostentatious alacrity.

Shorty slapped his bayonet on, and brought the point very near Groundhog's abdomen. "I'll jab this thing clean through you in a holy minute, you pusillanimous basswood cullin'; you pestiferous pile o' pizen, rotten punk," he said savagely. "Git on your wheel-mule and gether up the lines."

Impelled by this, and the vigorous clutch of Si upon his collar, Groundhog climbed clumsily into the saddle and sullenly brandished his whip.

The mules made a start and went down the bank, but at the edge of the turbid torrent the leaders set their legs as stiffly as if they were the supports of a sawhorse. They did not make a sound, but somehow the other four understood, with electric suddenness, and their legs set like posts.

"Jest as I expected," said Groundhog, with a grunt of satisfaction; "they've balked for all day, an' you can't git 'em to move another foot if you killed 'em. They're as solid as if they'd growed there."

With an air of having encountered the irresistible, he started to get out of his saddle.

"Stay in there, confound you," said Shorty, prodding him with his bayonet. "Lick them mules. Make 'em start."

"'Bout as much use in lickin' a white-oak stump," said Groundhog, plying the whip viciously as a relief to his feelings. "You kin lick every inch of skin off 'em, and they won't move no more'n a gravestone."

"Start those mules along. Stop fooling," said the Adjutant impatiently.

"We can't start 'em. They're balkin', sir," said Si desperately.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said the Adjutant. "Come ahead. Don't you see you're stopping the Second Brigade and all its teams?"

The men of the Second Brigade were already swarming across on the logs, while looking backward Si and Shorty could see the road filling up with teams. They ran down to the lead mules and caught them by the bridles and tried to pull them ahead. They might as well have pulled at the giant sycamore trees growing along the banks.

Everybody now began to take an interest in the affair. It is one of the delightful peculiarities of human nature that everybody knows better how to manage a balky horse or mule than the unfortunate man who is trying to.

"Stop whippin' them mules. You only make them wuss," shouted one man authoritatively. "Tie stones to their tails."

"Tie a string around their ears," shouted another. "That'll be sure to start 'em."

"Bite their ears, you fools. Don't you know nothin' about mules? Bite their ears, I tell you," shouted a man from Indianapolis.

"Throw some hot water on 'em."

"Tie their feet and tails together with a string."

"Build a fire under 'em."

"Turn the harness around the other way on 'em."

"Blindfold 'em."

Then the regimental humorists began to get in their work:

"Sing 'em the 'Battle Cry o' Freedom.'"

"They've struck for more grub. Promise 'em double rations till we get to Shelbyville."

"Stop swearin', there, you fellers. You've frozen 'em stiff with your bad language. Pray with 'em."

"Read them the Emancipation Proclamation."

"Call 'em pet names. You can do anything with kindness. Even a mule has, a heart."

"Bring up the band and serenade 'em."

Shorty was raging around the team, kicking and striking first at one mule and then at another, and swearing like a pirate, alternately at the team and then at the jeering crowds. Si was following suit to the best of his ability, but his pious education had left him out of sight of Shorty when it came to using language that the occasion seemed to justify. He had, however, yanked Groundhog out of the saddle and driven him up the bank, where he sat down and grinned at the confusion which had overtaken his enemies.

Setting a man at the head of each mule to coax and encourage him, and the rest of the company to pushing and prying on the wagon, Si had mounted the wheel-mule himself and put forth his mule-knowledge in one feverish effort, which was as futile as it was desperate, for the mules did not seem to change their positions for a rest, even, when the wagon was forced forward on them.

A very dapper young Aid, fresh from West Point, and with that high appreciation for himself that can only be acquired at the United States Military Academy, galloped up, sternly ordering everybody to make way for him, and,

"Present the compliments of the Major-General commanding the division, and what the h—'s the matter?"

"Capt. McGillicuddy, to whom the young gentle man had been referred as in charge, said quietly:

"You see: A mule-team has balked and stopped everything. We're doing our best to start them, but so far without success."

"So we all perceive," said the young man superciliously. "Why are you not down there directing them?"

"The men that I have down there thoroughly understand mules, and are doing their very utmost. They are having, as you can see, a superfluity of advice which is not helping them. I can best help by letting them alone to work it out their own way. They will do all that men can."

"I shall report the case to the General," said the Aid, with scarcely-concealed insolence. "Just like these confounded volunteers," he said as he turned away, taking no pains to keep the Captain from overhearing. "Never will be genuine soldiers in the world. Here, my men," continued he, riding over to the wagon, "stir yourselves lively, now, and start these wagons along. I want no more fooling, and won't have it. Start, now."

Shorty had the usual volunteer dislike to young West Pointers; like the rest of the men he cordially hated and ridiculed the young and airy staff officers, whether from West Point or not. It irritated him to see the youngster's treatment of his Captain. Saying snappy things at and about the Captain was a privilege jealously reserved to members of the company. To have anybody outside abuse the Captain was an insult to be resented. Above all, his American soul rose in wrath at the patronizing "my men." He would not have been at all offended at one of his own rough-and-ready officers jumping in and distributing curses on all hands, but "my men" was too much for him.

Without appearing to notice the presence of the Aid, Shorty walked up to the lead-mule, gave him a tremendous kick in the ribs, and sung out in a tone loud enough to be heard across the roaring branch:

"You pernickety pile o' poll-evil; you hee-hawin' graduate o' West Point; you pin-feathered, taller-faced, pop-eyed, lantern-jawed, loud-mouthed Second Lieutenant, you, won't you git up?"

The other boys began to catch on and grin. The Aid's face flushed, but Shorty continued his loud objurgations at the mule:

"You misbegotten pill o' perdition; you pompous, puddin'-headed staff officer; you miserable errand-boy for the General, puttin' on more airs than the General; you half-hatched officer, runnin' around yit with the shell on your head, and pretendin' to be cock-o'-the-walk, won't you git up?"

Even the Aid began to understand the drift of Shorty's remarks by this time, and Capt. McGillicuddy called out warningly:

"Shorty! Shorty!"

Si looked in amazement at this new development of his partner's genius. The officers and men on the other side of the branch seemed to have forgotten for the moment the annoyance of the balked team in enjoyment of Shorty's outburst.

"Why under heaven they put such murrain cattle as you in the army I can't tell," he continued with another savage kick in the mule's side. "You only take up room from your betters. You don't fight, you only strut like a turkey-cock, and eat and he-haw. Now, will you git up?"

The Aid could not fail to understand now. He burst out in a torrent of rage: "You infernal scoundrel," he shouted, forcing his horse up to Shorty; "I'll have you shot for insubordination, for insulting and mutinous language to your superior officer."

"I wasn't sayin' nothin' to you," said Shorty, looking up with an air of surprise. "I hain't had nothin' to do with you. I was cussin' this other piebald pilgarlic from West Point; this other pig headed pickaninny o' the Regular Army; this Brevet-Second Lieutenant o' the Quartermaster's Department, and Aid on the staff o' Gen. Groundhog. You ain't my superior officer, nohow."

"Corporal," shouted the Aid to Si, "take this rascal up there on the bank and buck-and-gag him. Do it at once."

"I don't believe you have the right to give me orders, sir," said Si respectfully. "I am under Capt. McGillicuddy's orders."

"You are right, Corporal," said Capt. McGillicuddy, stepping forward. "Lieutenant, you cannot order one of my men to be punished. You have no right to command here. You are merely to convey the General's orders to those who are in command."

"I have the right to give orders. I represent the General, and speak in his name, and I order that man to be bucked-and-gagged," reiterated the Aid in a flame of anger. "I'll see that it is done. I shall not be so insulted before the whole army. It will destroy all discipline."

"Fortunately, the discipline of the army does not depend on the respect shown Second Lieutenants," Capt. McGillicuddy could not help saying. "If you have any complaint to make against one of my men, state it to me, their Captain, or to the Colonel of the regiment. We are the persons, not you, to deal with them."

The men around understood; nothing pleased them better than to see a bumptious young Aid sat down upon, and they were outspoken in their delight.

"I shall report you to the General, and have you court-martialed," said the Aid, shaking his fist at Capt. McGillicuddy. "I shall!"

"Mr. Farwell," said the Chief of Staff, riding up, "why haven't you reported to the General as to the trouble here? We've been waiting for you."

"Here," came the clear-cut tones of the Colonel across the branch; "no use of wasting any more time on those mules. They're there to stay. Unhitch them, fasten on a picket-rope, and we'll pull the wagon across from this side."

Everybody sprang to execute this order, but Si and Shorty's hands had not reached the traces when an idea seemed to shoot simultaneously through each of the six mules, and with one impulse they plunged ahead, directly into the swollen waters.

Si and Shorty sprang back toward their heads to guide them over the narrow crossing. But the mules seemed to take the right course by instinct, and landed the wagon safely on the other side, without a particle of water entering the bed. Everybody cheered, and Si and Shorty looked as if their minds had been relieved of a terrible load.

"Si," said Shorty, with a tinge of weariness in his tone, "they say it is about 18 miles from here to Shelbyville."

"Somethin' like that," answered Si.

"I think there are about three o' these cricks to every mile. Do you really suppose we'll be able to git there before our three years is up?"

"All depends on the mules," answered Si cheerily. "If this sudden spell o' goodness holds out we may get there before evening."

## CHAPTER III. THIRD DAY OF THE DELUGE

### TOILSOME PLODDING, AND "SHELBYVILLE ONLY 15 MILES AWAY."

IT SEEMS impossible, but the third day's rain was even worse than that of the two preceding. The drops seemed much larger, to follow each other faster, and with less interval between the downpours.

"Does it always rain this way in June down here?" Si asked a patriarch, who was sitting on his porch by the roadside in a split-bottomed rocking-chair, resting his bony hands on a cane, the head of which was a ram's horn, smoking a corn-cob pipe and watching the passing column with lack-luster eyes.

"Sah," said the sage, poking down the ashes in his pipe with his little finger, "I've done lived in the Duck River Valley ever sence Captin Jimmy Madison wuz elected President the fust time, and I never seed sich a wet spell as this afore. I reckon hit's all along o' the wah. We allers have a powerful sight o' rain in wah times. Hit rained powerful when Jinerul Jackson wuz foutin' the Injuns down at Hoss Shoe Bend, and the Summers durin' the Mexican war wuz mouty wet, but they didn't hold a candle to what we're havin' this yeah. Hit's the shootin' and bangin', I reckon, that jostles the clouds so's they can't hold in."

"How far is it to Shelbyville, Gran'pap?" asked Shorty.

"Don't call me yer gran-pap," piped out the old man in angry falsetto, and shaking his cane. "I won't stand hit. I won't stand everything. I've had enough ter stand from you Yankees already. You've stole my chickens an' robbed my smoke-house, an' run off my stock, an' I've done stood hit, but I won't stan' bein' called gran'pap by ye. I've some mouty mean grandsons, some that orter be in the penitentiary, but I hain't none mean enough t' be in the Yankee army."

"We didn't mean no offense, sir," said Si placatingly. "We really don't want you for a gran'father. We've got gran'fathers o' our own, and they're very nice old men, that we wouldn't trade off for anything ever raised in Tennessee. Have you anything to eat that you'll sell us? We'll pay you for it."

"No, I haint got nothin' nary mite," quavered the old man. "Your men an' our men have stole everything I have stock, cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, meat an' meal everything, except my bare land an' my hope o' heaven. Thank God, none on ye kin steal them from me."

"Don't be too blamed sure about that, old feller," said Shorty. "Better hide 'em. The Maumee Muskrats are jest behind us. They're the worst thieves in the whole army. Don't let 'em know anything about your land or your hope o' salvation, or they'll have it in their haversacks before you kin wink."

"You haint told us yit how far it is to Shelbyville," said Si.

"Young man," said the sage oracularly, "that altogether depends. Sometimes Shelbyville is mouty fur off, an' sometimes she is right here. On bright, cl'ar days, when the roads is good, hit's only a few steps over thar jest two sees an' a holler."

"What's that?" said Si. "Two sees an' a holler? How far is that?"

"He means," explained Shorty, "that you go as far as you kin see from the highest hilltop to the next highest hill-top twice, and then it's only about as much farther as your voice will reach."

"Jest so," asserted the patriarch. "I kin saddle my ole nag arter dinner, rack over an' do some tradin', an' rack back agin in time for supper. But 'when we have sich sorry weather as this, Shelbyville seems on t' other side o' nowhar. You've got t' pull through the mud an' swim every branch and crick, an' you're mouty lucky if you git thar in a week."

"Why don't you build bridges over the creeks?" asked Si.

"Can't do hit when hit's rainin' an' they're runnin' over thar banks."

"But why don't you do it when the weather's good?"

"What's the use? You kin git over all right then."

"Sir," said the Brigadier-General, riding up and addressing the old man, "where does the Shakerag road come into the Bellbuckle road?"

Instantly the old man felt that he was being asked to give "aid and information to the enemy," and his old eyes grew hard and his wrinkled face set. "I don't know, sah."

"Yes, you do," said the Brigadier-General impatiently, "and I want you to tell me."

"I don't know, sah," repeated the old man.

"Are there any works thrown up and any men out there on the Shakerag road?" asked the Brigadier.

"I don't know, sah."

"Did a large body of rebels go past your house yesterday, and which road did they take at the forks?" inquired the Brigadier.

"I don't know, sah."

The Brigadier-General was not in the best of humor, and he chafed visibly at the old man's answers.

"Does not Goober Creek run down there about a mile in that direction?" he again inquired, pointing with his field-glasses.

"I don't know, sah."

"How long have you lived here?" asked the Brigadier savagely.

"Nigh on to 55 year, sah."

"And you don't know where Goober Creek is, and which way it runs?" asked the Brigadier, losing all patience.

"No, sah," responded the imperturbable old man.

"Well," said the Brigadier-General grimly, "it is high time that you discovered that interesting stream. You might die without seeing it. Men (to Si and Shorty) take him down that road about a mile, where you will find a considerable body of water which I'm given to understand is called Goober Creek. You'll show it to him in all its magnificence and beauty. Geography is a very interesting study, old man, and it is not too late for you to begin getting acquainted with your own country."

The bitter humor of taking a man through the mud and pouring rain to see a creek that he had seen nearly every day of his life for a half-century was such that all the men were in a mood to appreciate. Si and Shorty entered into the affair with zest. They put a blanket on the old man's shoulders, to shelter him from the rain. Such a thing as an umbrella had never been in his house. Even the women would have looked upon it as a piece of luxurious effeminacy.

The old fellow grumbled, expostulated, and protested, but if Si and Shorty had had no other motive, orders direct from the Brigadier-General would have been executed at any cost. It was the first time that they had ever received orders from anybody higher than the Colonel, and the effect upon them was extraordinary.

"What in the everlastin' kingdom," grumbled he, "kin your niggah-lovin' Yankees expect t' gain by draggin' me out when hit's a-rainin' cats and dogs?"

"Don't know nothin' about it," answered Si, catching him by the shoulder to hurry him up. "'Tain't our business to know. We ain't paid for knowin' anything more than orders, and hardly enough for that. A man can't know much for \$13 a month."

"'Twon't help yer niggeh-stealin' army a mite t' pi'nt out Goober Crick t' me. I ain't gwine t' tote ye over nor show ye the fords."

"Don't care nothin' about that neither," replied Shorty, as they pushed the old man along through the blinding 'rain. "Our orders is merely to show you Goober Crick. 'Tain't none o' our business what the General wants you to see it for. Mebbe he thinks it 'll improve your mind to gaze on the beauties o' nature. Mebbe he thinks you need exercise. Mebbe he thinks a shower-bath'd do you good."

The column had been checked by some difficulty in front, and as the boys conveyed their charge through the ranks of waiting men it seemed that everybody understood what they were doing, and volleys of sarcasm were flung at their prisoner. There were inquiries as to how he liked the study of geography as far as he had gotten; whether he would continue it in more favorable weather, and whether this primary lesson would be followed by others on the road to the mill, the path to the stable, and the way to the spring. If the old man had not already been as angry as he could be, his temper would have risen.

After a lot of toilsome plodding through the rain and mud which the passing wagons had made fathomless, they came to the top of a high hill, from which they could look down on a turbid sweep of yellow water, about half a mile away, which filled nearly the whole valley.

The reason of delay was at once apparent. The insignificant stream had suddenly become an almost impassable obstacle. Men were riding carefully across the submerged bottom land, prodding with poles, to pick out crossings. Others were digging down approaches to what seemed promising crossings, and making rude bridges across gullies and smaller streams that intervened.

It seemed that the fresh young Aid with whom the boys had the encounter the day before had in some mysterious way gained charge of the advance. He had graduated into the Engineer Corps from West Point, and here was an opportunity to display his immense knowledge to the glory of himself and the Engineers and the astonishment of those inferior persons who were merely officers of cavalry, infantry and artillery. Now he would show off the shrewd expedients and devices which have embellished the history of military engineering since the days of Hannibal and Julius Cesar.

That everybody might know who was doing all this, the Aid was riding back and forward, loudly commanding parties engaged in various efforts over more than a quarter of a mile of front. He had brought up the pontoon-train, and the pontoniers were having a hard time trying to advance the boats into the rushing waters. It was all that the men could do to hold them against the swift current. If a pole slipped or went down in a deep hole the men holding it would slip and probably fall overboard, the boat would whirl around and drift far out of its place, requiring great labor to bring it back again, and bringing down a torrent of curses from the young Lieutenant on the clumsiness of "the Stoughton bottles" who were pretending to be soldiers and pontoniers. He was feeling that every word of this kind showed off his superior knowledge to those around. Some of the men were standing waist-deep in the water, trying to fasten lines to trees, to hold in place the boats already stationed and being held there by arms straining at the poles. Everywhere those engaged in the work were tumbling down in the water or being carried off their feet by the current and rescued again with difficulty, to be hauled out on the bank, exhausted, soaked to the skin and covered with slimy mud.

For awhile this had seemed funny to the troops waiting to cross, and they had yelled and laughed themselves hoarse at the mishaps of their comrades. Now the fun had all evaporated and everybody was morose, with a strong tendency to outbreaks of profanity.

The old man surveyed the scene with evident satisfaction. "Yo' Yankees will git over thar about the middle o' July," he chuckled. "Now, I reckon that's Goober Crick, an' as I have done seed hit you'll let me go back home, I s'pose, won't ye?"

"That's probably Goober Crick, or at least Goober Crick is somewhere under that muddy freshet," acquiesced Shorty. "But I'm not at all sure that it's the crick. Looks more like a misplaced chunk out o' the Mizzoori River. I'm not sure, either, that your eyes kin see that distance. We'll have to walk you till we find a section of the crick somewhere that kin be recognized by the naked eyes. Come along, and step lively."

The old man groaned, but there was no hope for him from these relentless executants of orders. For a half hour more they plodded on. The mud grew deeper at every step, but the boys mercilessly forced the old man through the worst of it, that they might reach some point where they could actually see Goober Crick. He could not palm off on them any common old mud freshet for a creek that had a regular place on the map.

Finally they came near the pontoons, and saw one almost capsize, throwing everybody in it into the water, while another whirled madly away toward the center of the current, with but one man in, who was frantically trying to stop it and save himself.

"Yes, he'll stop it, much," said Shorty, looking after him. "If he gits ashore before he reaches the Mississippi I'll be surprised. Say, Si, it'll be easier lookin' for Goober Crick in a boat than wading through the mud. Let's git in one o' them boats."

This terrified the old man till he was ready to yield.

"I begin t' know the place," he admitted. "If we take this path through the woods t' the left hit'll bring us out whar yo' kin see Goober Crick for sartin, an' no mistake. Hit's allers above high-water thar."

The boys followed. A very short walk through a curtain of deep woods brought them on to much higher ground, where Goober Creek roared through a narrow channel it had cut in the rocks. As they stood on the banks, Si and Shorty's eyes met in a quick comprehension of the advantages of the place. They looked backward through the woods to see a depression in the hills, which promised a short and comparatively easy cut-off to the road in the rear, where the 200th Ind. lay.

"Yes, this is Goober Crick," said the old man, with an air of recalling an old acquaintance. "I'm sure of hit. Now, you'll let me go home, won't yer? I hain't got a dry thread left on me, an' I know I'll jest fairly die o' rheumatiz."

"Yes, you can go," said Shorty, who was filling his eyes with the lay of the ground, and the chances it offered of getting the 200th Ind. across ahead of the others and gaining the coveted head of the column. "I've no doubt you're awful wet, but mebbe you know more'n you did a couple of hours ago. Skip!"

The old man moved off with alacrity scarcely to be expected of him, and the boys saw that it was wisest to follow him, for he was taking a bee-line through the woods and brush for his home, and that they knew was near where they had left their regiment.

Soon Co. Q, crouching under the cedars and ponchos spread over fence corners, hovering around struggling fires, and sullenly making the best of a very poor prospect, was electrified by Si and Shorty appearing on as near a run as they could put up with their weight-soaked garments.

"Capt. McGillicuddy," gasped Si, "we've found a bully place to cross. Tell the Colonel quick. Let the boys git all the axes and shovels they kin, and come with us. We'll have a crossin' ready by the time the Colonel comes up with the regiment, and we kin git the advance agin."

Si had gained that enviable position in the regiment where he could always have plenty of followers to anything that he proposed. The sullen despondency passed into active alertness as soon as he began speaking, and before he was done some of them were rummaging around the wagons for axes and shovels. Two or three of these implements were found in the old man's yard.

"Go ahead," said the Captain. "I'll speak to the Colonel, and we'll follow you with the regiment. You can get the teams across, too?"

"Certain," said Si, as he handed his gun, cartridge-box, haversack, blanket-roll and overcoat to another boy to carry for him, shouldered his ax and started off at a run, the others following.

They came back to the spot whither the old man had led them. Si's experienced eye quickly selected two tall hickories, which could be felled directly across the stream and form the stringers for his bridge. The next instant the damp air was ringing with the strokes of eight as skillful axmen as there were in the army, Si leading on one tree and Shorty on the other. They could not keep up the feverish pace they had set for many minutes, but the instant their blows relaxed eight other men snatched the axes, and in a few minutes the trees toppled and fell just in the right position. Co. Q was now coming up, followed by the rest of the regiment, and they gave a cheer to echo the crash of the falling trees. Instantly hundreds of men and officers were at work clearing a road and completing the bridge. Some cut down other trees to furnish filling for the approaches, or to split into flooring for the bridge. Some dug down the bank and carried the clay to cover the brush and chunks. In an

incredibly short time a bridge was completed, over which the regiment was marched, and the wagons pulled by the men, after the mules had been detached and walked over.

Every fresh success was announced by tremendous cheering, which carried information to the rest of the brigade that the 200th Ind. was doing something unusual. News as to what this was at last reached the ears of the Lieutenant of Engineers, who was continuing his struggle with the pontoons with a persistence worthy of better luck.

He rode up just in time to see Capt. McGillicuddy looking with elation at the passage of the last wagon.

"Why was I not informed as to what you were doing here, sir?" he asked angrily.

"Probably because we were too busy doing it to be talking about it. If you had known of it you would probably have tried to apply the 47th problem of Euclid to the case, and we wouldn't 've got ten over for a week. Eventually, sir, I expect you will find out that there are several things in the world that are not learned at West Point. Having accomplished all that we want with the bridge, I now have the pleasure of turning it over to the Engineer Department, and I wish that you may find it very useful," continued the Captain, as with a mocking smile and salute he followed the last of the regiment across the creek.

"Adjutant," said Si, saluting that official with great respect, "we've now got the advance agin, hain't we?"

"You're right we have, you bully boy with a glass eye," said the Adjutant, slapping him on the shoulder with a familiarity that would have given the young Engineer Lieutenant a spasm and caused a strong report on the discipline of the 200th Ind. "And you can just bet we'll keep it, too. You ought to see the Colonel's eye. We'll lead the procession into Shelbyville, which is only 15 miles away."

## CHAPTER IV. THE FOURTH DAY OF THE TULLAHOMA CAMPAIGN

### "SHELBYVILLE ONLY 10 MILES AWAY."

AND it rained the fourth day rained as if there had been months of drouth, during which it had been saving up water and gathering its energies for an astonishing, overwhelming, make-up-for-lost-time effort.

"Great goodness," said Si, as he and Shorty were again wringing their blankets out to lighten the load they would start with; "seems to me they're tryin' to move Lake Superior down here, and dumping the water by train-loads."

"Old Rosey ought to set us to buildin' arks," grumbled Shorty. "We'll need 'em as bad as Noah did."

There was an alleviation to the weather and mud in the good news that came from all parts of the long front of 75 miles, on which the 60,000 men of the Army of the Cumberland were pressing forward against their enemies in spite of the apparent league of the same with the powers of the air against them. Away off on the extreme right Gen. Mitchel's cavalry had driven the enemy from Triune, Eagleville, Rover, and Unionville; Gordon Granger's and Crittenden's infantry were sweeping forward through Salem, Christiana, and Bradyville; grand old Pap Thomas, in his usual place in the center, had swept forward with his accustomed exhibition of well-ordered, calmly-moving, resistless power, and pushed the enemy out of his frowning strongholds at Hoover's Gap; McCook, whose advance had that splendid leader, John F. Miller, had struck success fully at Liberty Gap, and far to our left the dash ing Wilder had led his "Lightning Brigade" against the enemy's right and turned it. The higher officers were highly elated at the success of Gen. Rosecrans's brilliant strategy in forcing the very formidable outer line of the enemy without a repulse any where. Their keen satisfaction was communicated to the rank and file, and aroused an enthusiasm that was superior to the frightful weather. Every body was eager to push forward and bring Bragg to decisive battle, no matter how strong his laboriously-constructed works were.

"Old Rosey may be a little slow to start," Shorty held forth oracularly to the group crouching over the fire, "but when he does start, great Scott, but he's a goer. I'll put every cent I may have for the next 10 years on him, even though he's handicapped by a Noah's deluge for 40 days and 40 nights. And when it comes to playin' big checkers, with a whole State for a board, and brigades and divisions for men, he kin skunk old Bragg every time, without half tryin'. He's busted his front row all to pieces, and is now goin' for his king-row. We'll have Bragg before Grant gits Pemberton, and then switch around, take Lee in the rear, capture Richmond, end the war, and march up Pennsylvania Avenue before Old Abe, with the scalps o' the whole Southern Confederacy hangin' at our belts."

"Wish to Heaven," sighed Si, "Old Rosey'd thought to bring along a lot of Ohio River coal scows and Wabash canal-boats to make our campaign in. What fun it'd be jest to float down to Shelbyville and fight those fellers with 100 rough-and-ready gunboats. Then, I'd like awfully to know once more what it feels like to have dry feet. Seems to me my feet are swelling out like the bottom of a swamp-oak."

"Hope not, Si," said Shorty. "If they git any bigger there won't be room enough for anybody else on the same road, and you'll have to march in the rear o' the regiment. Tires me nearly to death now to walk around 'em."

"There goes the bugle. Fall in, Co. Q," shouted the Orderly-Sergeant.

As the 200th Ind. had the advance, and could leave the bothersome problems of getting the wagons across the creeks to the unlucky regiment in the rear, the men stepped off blithely through the swishing showers, eager to find the enemy and emulate the achievements on previous days by their comrades on other parts of the line.

Being as wet as they could be, they did not waste any time about crossing streams. The field officers spread out and rode squarely at the most promising crossings in sight. The men watched their progress, and took the best they found. If the water did not get above the middle of the sides of the Colonel's medium-sized horse, they took off their haversacks and unbuckled their cartridge-boxes, and plunged in after him, the shorter men pairing off with the taller men, and clinging to them.

So eager was their advance that by the time they halted at noon for a rest and a cup of coffee, they were miles ahead of the rest of the brigade, and beginning to look forward to catching glimpses of Shelbyville.

They had encountered no opposition except long-taw shots from rebel cavalry watching them from the opposite sides of the yellow floods, and who would scurry away as soon as they began to cross.

The young Aid again appeared upon the scene.

"Colonel," he said, saluting, "the General presents his compliments, and directs that you advance to that next creek, and halt there for the night and observe it."

"What did that young man remark?" said Shorty in an undertone; "that we wuz to advance to that crick and observe it? What in the thunder have we bin doin' for the past four days but observe cricks, an' cross the nasty, wet things?"

"He means, Shorty," said Capt. McGillicuddy, "that we are to go as near as we can to the bank, and watch, that the rebels do not come across, and wait there until the rest of the division get in supporting distance."

"I guessed that was what his West Point lingo meant, if he has brains enough to mean anything. Why didn't he say in plain United States: 'Git down to the edge o' that there crick, watch for a chance to jump the rebels, and keep your eye peeled that the rebels don't jump you?' That'd be plain Methodist-Episcopal, that everybody could under stand."

"I'll see that you are appointed Professor of Military Language and Orders at West Point when you are discharged," said the Captain, laughing.

The regiment advanced to the edge of the swollen flood and made themselves as comfortable as possible under shelters improvised from rails, cedar boughs, pieces of driftwood, etc. A considerable force of rebels appeared on the opposite bank, whose business seemed to be to "observe" the Yankees.

The restless Si and Shorty started out on a private reconnoissance. They discovered that the shore opposite the left of the regiment was really an island, separated by some hundreds of yards of rushing water from them, but the main current ran on the other side of the island.

"We can't observe the crick through that mass o' willers and cottonwoods," said Shorty. "That's certain. No tellin' what devilment the rebels are up to on the bank over there. They may be gittin' up a flank movement over there, with pontoons and flatboats, to bust the whole army wide open."

"That's so," assented Si. "The orders are to observe this crick, and we can't do it if we can't see the other bank. We ought to git over to that island."

They went back and reported to Capt. McGillicuddy, and told him what they thought. He at once agreed with them, and sanctioned their proposal to go over to the island, if they could find means of crossing.

After a diligent search they came across an old canoe hollowed out of a tulip-tree log. It was a cranky affair, and likely to turn over if their hair was not parted exactly in the middle; but both of the boys were used to canoe management, and they decided to risk the thing.

It was ticklish business crossing the current, but they succeeded in reaching the island, which extended a foot or more above the level of the flood, and was covered with a thicket of willows and

cottonwoods about the size of hoe-handles. They pushed their way through these and came in sight of the opposite banks. There was apparently some thing important going on over there. Quite a number of rebels could be seen moving about through the rain and mud, there was great deal of chopping going on, several flatboats, canoes and rafts were lying at the bank, wagons were passing, and the boys thought they could make out a cannon or two.

"I can't make out what in the world they're up to," said Si. "But I'm certain the Colonel ought to know it. Suppose you take the canoe, Shorty, and paddle over and report, and I'll stay here and watch."

"All right," answered Shorty, starting back for the canoe.

He reported to Capt. McGillicuddy, who took him up to the Colonel.

"It don't seem possible that they can be doing anything to threaten us," said the Colonel; "though they may know of some practicable crossing higher up the stream, which will let them in on our flank. Still, they ought to be watched. I'll inform the General at once. You had better station a picket on the island, Captain, if you can do so safely."

"Me and my pardner 'll look out for them, Colonel, if you think necessary," said Shorty, proud to be of service under the Colonel's direction.

"Very good," said the Colonel briefly. "I'll entrust the lookout to you boys. Let me know at once if anything important develops."

The young Aid had been standing nigh during this conversation.

"Your men, Colonel," he said patronizingly, "are excellent soldiers, in their way, but they lack the intelligence necessary to comprehend the movements of the enemy on the opposite bank. I think I shall go over there myself, take a personal observation, and determine precisely what the meaning of the movements may be."

"As you like," said the Colonel stiffly. "As for myself, I don't think it is necessary for me to go. I'd trust those boys' eyes as quick as I would my own. They are as good soldiers as ever breathed; they are as keen as a brier, with not a particle of nonsense about them. They are as truthful as the day. When they tell me anything that they have seen with their own eyes I can trust it as absolutely as if I had seen it myself; and their judgment can not be beat."

"No enlisted man can possibly see anything so well as an officer who has been educated," said the Aid.

"That is a matter of opinion," said the Colonel dryly.

"Anyway, I'm going over to see for myself," said the Aid. And he called after Shorty:

"Here, my man, I'm going along with you."

Shorty muttered some very warm words under his breath, but discipline asserted itself, and he answered respectfully:

"Very good, sir."

He halted until the Aid came alongside, and then started to walk beside him as he would have done with one of his own officers when out alone with him.

"Fall two paces behind," commanded the Aid sternly

Shorty said to himself some very hotly-disparaging things about pretentious young snips of Regular officers. They reached the canoe, and the Lieutenant calmly seated himself in the stern. This was another aggravation. If Shorty had gone out with one of his own officers, even the Colonel, he would have shown a deep interest in everything and wanted to do his share toward getting the canoe safely over. This young fellow calmly seated himself, and threw all the responsibility and work on Shorty.

"Now, you set right in the center, there," said Shorty, as he picked up the paddle and loosened the rope, "and keep mighty still."

"My man," said the Lieutenant, frowning, "when I want your advice I'll ask it. It is for me to give you directions, not you me. You paddle out, now, and head straight for that island. Paddle briskly, and get me over there as quick as possible."

Shorty was tempted to tip the canoe over then and there, but he restrained himself, and bent his strong arms to the hard task of propelling the canoe across the strong current, avoiding the driftwood, maintaining his balance, and keeping the bow pointed toward the place where he wanted to land.

The Lieutenant had sense enough to sit very still, and as he naturally had been drilled into bolt-up-rightness, Shorty had little trouble with him until they were nearing the shore. Then the canoe ran into a swirl which threw its bow around. Forgetting his dignified pose, the Lieutenant made a grab for some overhanging willows.

"Let them alone, blast you; I'll bring her around all right," Shorty started to yell, but too late. Before the words were out of his mouth the cranky canoe went over. Shorty with the quickness of a cat jumped clear, caught some branches with one hand, and made a grab for the canoe with the other. But he saw the Lieutenant go down head foremost, with fancy boots disappearing last. He let the canoe go, to make a grab for the boots. He missed them, but presently the Lieutenant's head appeared, and he gasped and sputtered:

"Save me, my good man. I can't swim a stroke."

Shorty plunged out, succeeded in catching the Lieutenant by the collar, and after a vicious struggle with the current, grabbed with his right hand a pole that Si thrust out to him, while with his left he dragged the Lieutenant ashore, "wetter'n a blamed drowned West Point muskrat," as he after ward expressed it.

"My good man, you saved my life, and I thank you for it," said the Lieutenant when he recovered his breath. "I shall mention you in my report."

"If you don't stop calling me your 'good man' I'll chuck you into the drink again, you wasp-waisted, stiff-backed, half-baked West Point brevet Second Lieutenant," said Shorty wrathfully. "If you'd had the sense of a six-months'-old goslin' you'd 'a' set still, as I told you, and let me manage that canoe. But you never kin learn a West Pointer nothin'. He'd try to give God Almighty points if he got a chance. Now we've lost our canoe, and we're in a devil of a fix. I feel like throwin' you back in the crick."

"Take care, my good" and then the Lieutenant caught the glare of Shorty's eye. "Take care, sir. You're on the verge of mutiny. I may have you court-martialed and shot, if you're not careful."

"Court-martial and be blamed," said Si, who was as angry as Shorty. "You've lost our canoe, and we may be drowned before we can git off this island. It's got so dark they can't see us from the shore, the water's steadily rising, these trees are too small to climb, and the Lord knows how we're goin' to git off."

"Corporal, I'll see that you're reduced to the ranks for disrespect to me. I had intended to recommend this man for promotion on account of his great service to the army in saving my life. Now I shall see that you are both punished for insubordination."

"Insubordination be damned, and you with it," said Shorty. "You'd better be thinking how we're to git off this island. The water's bin raisin' about a foot a minute. I've bin watchin' while we wuz talkin'."

The Lieutenant stood, dazed, while the boys were canvassing plans for saving themselves.

"I'll tell you, Shorty," said Si suddenly. "Le's ketch one o' them big saw-logs that's comin' down, straddle it, and let it carry us somewhere. It may take us into our own lines. Anything's better than drowndin'. Here comes one in the eddy now."

Shorty caught the log with a long pole, and dexterously steered it up close to the shore in comparatively still water. Si threw a grapevine over it and held it.

"Now, all git on," said Shorty. "Be careful not to push it away."

"Let me get on ahead," said the Lieutenant, still mindful of his rank, "and you two get on behind, the Corporal next to me."

"Not much, Mary Ann," jeered Shorty. "We want a man of sense ahead, to steer. I'll git on first, then you, and then Si, to bring up the rear and manage the hind end of the log."

The Lieutenant had to comply. They all got safely on, and Shorty pushed off, saying:  
"Here, sit straight, both of you. Here goes mebbe for New Orleans, mebbe for Libby Prison,  
mebbe for the camp of the 200th Ind.  
"We're out on the ocean sailin'."

## CHAPTER V. AFLOAT ON A LOG

### SI, SHORTY AND THE WEST-POINTER HAVE AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY

THE log swept out into the yellow swirl, bobbing up and down in the turbulent current.

"Bobs like a buckin' broncho," said Shorty. "Make you seasick, Si?"

"Not yet," answered his partner. "I ain't so much afraid o' that as I am that some big alligator-gar 'll come along and take his dinner off my leg."

"Bah," said Shorty, contemptuously; "no alligator-gar is goin' to come up into this mud-freshet. He'd ruther hunt dogs and nigger-babies further down the river. Likes 'em better. He ain't goin' to gnaw at them old Wabash sycamore legs o' yourn when he kin git a bite at them fat shoats we saw sailin' down stream awhile ago."

"The belief in alligator-gar is a vulgar and absurd superstition," said the Lieutenant, breaking silence for the first time. "There, isn't anywhere in fresh water a fish capable of eating anything bigger than a bull-frog."

"Hullo; did West Point learn you that?" said Shorty. "You know just about as much about it as you do about gittin' over cricks an' paddlin' a canoe. Have you ever bin interduced to a Mississippi catfish? Have you ever seen an alligator-gar at home in the Lower Mississippi? Naw! You don't know no more about them than a baby does about a catamount. I have heard tell of an alligator-gar that was longer'n a fence-rail, and sort of king of a little bayou down in the Teche country. He got mad because they run a little stern-wheel steamboat up into his alley to git their cotton off, an' he made up his mind to stop it. He'd circle 'round the boat to git a good headway and pick out his man. Then he'd take a run-and-jump, leap clean across the boat, knock off the man he'd picked out, an' tow him off under a log an' eat him. He intended to take the Captain fust, but his appetite got the better of him. He saw a big, fat, juicy buck nigger of a deck-hand, an' couldn't stand the temptation. He fetched him easy. Next he took a nice, tender little cabin-boy. Then he fetched the big old Mate, but found him so full o' terbacker, whisky and bad language that he couldn't eat him nohow, an' turned him over to the mudturtles, what'll eat anything. The Captain then got scared an' quit. He didn't care a hat for the Mate, for he was glad to git rid of him; but he liked the cabin-boy an' he had to pay the owner o' the nigger \$1,200 for him, an' that made runnin' up the Teche onprofitable."

"Oh, Shorty," Si gasped. He thought he was acquainted with his partner's brilliant talents for romance, but this was a meteoric flight that he had not expected.

"But that wasn't nothin'," Shorty continued, "to a he catfish that a man told me about down near Helena, Ark. He used to swim around in a little chute near a house-cabin in which lived a man with a mighty good-lookin' young wife. The man was awful jealous of his woman, an' used to beat her. The ole he catfish had a fine eye for purty women, and used to cavort around near the cabin whenever his business would permit. The woman noticed him, and it tickled him greatly. She'd throw him hunks o' bread, chunks o' cold meat, and so on. The man'd come out and slap her, and fling clubs and knots at him. One day the man put his wife in a basswood canoe, and started to take her across the river. He hadn't got a rod from the shore when the old he catfish ups and bites the canoe in two, then nips the man's hand so's he didn't git over it for months, and then puts his nose under the woman's arm, and helps her ashore as polite as you please."

"Shorty," gasped Si, "if you tell any more such stories as that this log'll certainly sink. See it how it wobbles now."

"I consider such stuff very discourteous to your officer," said the Lieutenant stiffly. "I shall make a note of it for consideration at some future time."

"Halt! Who goes thar?" rang out sharply from the bank.

"Hush; don't breathe," said Shorty. They were in an eddy, which was sweeping them close to the rebel bank.

"Who air yo' haltin'?" said a second voice.

"I see some men in a canoe out thar. I heared their voices fust," said the first voice.

"Whar' yo see any men in a canoe?" asked the second incredulously.

"Right over thar. You kin see 'em. They're comin' right this-a-way. I'm a gwine t' halt 'em agin an' then shoot."

"Stuff," said the other. "You're allers seein' shadders an' ghostses. That 'er's only an ole tree with three limbs stickin' up. Don't yo' shoot an' skeer the whole camp. They'll have the grand laugh on yo', an' mebbe buck-an'-gag yo'."

"Tain't stuff," persisted the other. "Thar never wuz a tree that ever growed that had three as big limbs as that all on one side. You're moon blind."

"A man mout well be rain blind in sich a storm as this, but I tell yo' that's nothin' but an ole sycamore drift log. If yo' shoot the boys'll never git tired o' damnin' yo', an' jest as likely as not the ossifers'll make yo' tote a rail through the mud termorrer."

The boys were so near that every word could be distinctly heard, and they were floating nearer every moment.

The suspense was thrilling. If the man fired at that distance he could not help hitting one of them and discovering the others. They scarcely breathed, and certainly did not move a muscle, as the log floated steadily in-shore in the comparatively stiller waters of the eddy. The rain was coming down persistently yet, but with a sullen quietness, so that the silence was not broken by the splashing of the drops.

A water-moccasin deadliest of snakes crawled up onto the log and coiled himself in front of Si, with that indifference to companionship which seems to possess all animals in flood-times. Si shuddered as he saw it, but did not dare make a motion against it.

The dialog on the bank continued.

"Thar, you kin see thar air men in a canoe," said the first voice.

"I can't see nothin' o' the kind," replied the other.

"If hit ain't a log with three dead limbs, hit's a piece o' barn-timber with the j'ists a-stickin' up."

"I don't believe hit nary mite. Hit's men, an' I'm a-gwine t' shoot."

"No, yo' hain't gwine t' make a durned fool o' yourself. Wait a minute. Hit's a-comin' nigher, an' soon you kin hit it with a rock. I'll jest do hit t' show yo' how skeery yo' air. Le'me look around an' find a good rock t' throw. If I kin find jest the right kind I kin hit a yallerhammer at that distance."

This prospect was hardly more reassuring than that of being fired at, but there was nothing to do but to take whatever might come. To make it more aggravating, the current had slowed down, until the motion of their log was very languid. They were about 100 feet from the shore when they heard the second voice say:

"Heah, I've got jest the right kind o' a dornick. Now jest keep yer eye peeled an' fixed on that center limb, an' yo'll hear it chunk when I plunk hit an' show hit's nothin' but a stick o' wood."

Si thought he saw the Lieutenant crouch a little, but was not sure.

The stone came whistling through the air, struck the top of the Lieutenant's cap and knocked it off into the water.

"Thar," said the second voice triumphantly; "yo' see hit ain't no men. Jest as I done tole yo'. I knocked the bark offen the end o' one o' the sticks."

The log moved slowly on, and presently catching in a stronger current, swept out into the stream again. It seemed so like deliverance, that Si made a quick blow and knocked the snake off into the water, and Shorty could not help shouting triumphantly:

"Good-by, Johnnies! Sorry we can't stay with you longer. Got other engagements down the crick. Ta-ta! See you later."

The chagrined sentry fired an angry shot, but they were already behind a clump of willows.

"Lootenant," said Shorty, "you put on a whole lot of unnecessary frills, but you've got good stuff in you after all. You went through that little affair like a man. I'll back you after this."

"When I desire your opinion, sir, as to my conduct," replied the Lieutenant, "I shall ask you for it. Until then keep it to yourself. It is for me to speak of your conduct, not you of mine."

But again they "had hollered before they were out o' the woods," as Shorty afterward expressed it. The gunfire and the sound of their voices so near shore had stirred up the rebels. A canoe with three men in it had pushed out, and, struggling with the current, had made its way toward them, guided by their own voices. The top of a floating tree had hidden it from their sight until it suddenly came around the mass of leafage, and a man standing up in the bow leveling a revolver at them ordered instant surrender. The other two men were sitting in the middle and stern with paddles, and having all they could do to maintain the course of the canoe.

Si and Shorty were so startled that for an instant they made no response to the demand. The Lieutenant was the first to speak:

"Are you a commissioned officer?" he inquired.

"No," was the answer.

"Then I refuse to surrender. I'll surrender to no one inferior to me in rank."

"Sorry we'uns can't obleege yo', nohow," said the man with the revolver, in a sneer; "but we'uns'll have t' be good enough commissioned ossifers for yo' jist now, an' yo'll have t' done hold up yo'uns hands. We'uns hain't no time t' send ashore for a Lootenant."

The other two chuckled as they struggled with the current, and forced the canoe up close to the log. Shorty made a motion as if throwing up his hands, and called out in a submissive way:

"Here, le'me git hold o' the bow, and I kin help you. It's awful hard paddlin' in this current."

Without thinking the men threw the bow in so close that Shorty could clutch it with his long hand. The grab shook the ticklish craft, so that the man with the revolver could scarcely keep his feet.

"Heah," he yelled at the other two. "Keep the dugout stiddy. What air yo'uns doin'? Hold her off, I tell yo'uns."

Then to the Lieutenant:

"Heah, yo'uns surrender to wonst, or I'll blow yo' heads offen yo'uns."

The Lieutenant started a further remonstrance, but Shorty had in the meantime got the other hand on the canoe, and he gave it such a wrench that the man with the pistol lost his footing and fell across the log, where he was grabbed by Shorty and his pistol-hand secured. The stern of the canoe had swung around until Si had been able to catch it with one hand, while with the other he grabbed the man in the stern, who, seeing the sudden assumption of hostilities, had raised his paddle to strike.

Si and Shorty had somewhat the advantage in position. By holding on to the log with their legs they had a comparatively firm, base, while the canoe was a very ticklish foundation for a fight.

The middle man also raised his paddle to strike, but the Lieutenant caught it and tried to wrest it away. This held the canoe and the log close together while Si and Shorty were struggling. Si saw this, and letting go, devoted both hands to this man, whom he pulled over into the water about the same time that Shorty possessed himself of the other man's pistol and dragged him out of the canoe.

"Hold fast in the center there, Lieutenant," he called out, as he dropped the pistol into his bosom and took in the situation with a quick glance. "You two Johnnies hold on to the log like grim death to a dead nigger, and you won't drown."

He carefully worked himself from the log into the canoe, and then Si did the same. They had come to a part where the water spread out in a broad and tolerably calm lake over the valley, but there was a gorge at the further end through which it was rushing with a roar. Log and canoe were drifting in that direction, and while the changes were being made the canoe drifted away from the log.

"Hold on, men," shouted the Lieutenant; "you are certainly not going to abandon your officer?"

"Certainly not," said Shorty. "How could you imagine such a thing? But just how to trade you off for this rebel passenger presents difficulties. If we try to throw him overboard we shall certainly tip the canoe over. And I'm afraid he's not the man to give up peaceably a dry seat in the canoe for your berth on the log."

"I order you to come back here at once and take me in that boat," said the Lieutenant imperatively.

"We are comin' back all right," said Shorty; "but we're not goin' to let you tip this canoe over for 40 Second Lieutenants. We'll git you out o' the scrape somehow. Don't fret."

"Hello, thar! Help! Help!" came across the waters in agonized tones, which at the same time had some thing familiar in them.

"Hello, yourself!" responded Shorty, making out, a little distance away, a "jo-boat," that is, a rude, clumsy square-bottomed, square-ended sort of a skiff in which was one man. "What's wanted?"

"I'm out here adrift without no oars," came in the now-distinctly recognizable voice of Jeff Hackberry. "Won't yo' please tow me ashore?"

"Le's go out there and git him," said Shorty to Si. "We kin put all these fellers in that jo-boat and save 'em."

A few strokes of their paddles brought them alongside.

"How in the world did you come here, Hackberry," asked Shorty.

"O, that ole woman that I wanted so bad that I couldn't rest till I got her wuz red-hot t' git rid o' me," whined Hackberry. "She tried half-a-dozen ways puttin' wild parsnip in my likker, giving me pokeberry bitters, and so on, but nothin' fetched me. Finally she deviled me to carry her acrost the crick to the Confederit lines. I found this ole jo-boat at last, an' we got in. Suddenly, quick as lightning she picked up the oars, an' give the boat a kick which sent hit away out into the current. I floated away, yellin' at her, an' she standin' on the bank grinnin' at me and cussin'. I've been havin' the awfulest day floatin' down the freset, expectin' every minute t' be drowned, an' both sides pluggin' away at me whenever they ketched sight o' me. I wuz willin' t' surrender t' either one that'd save me from being drowned, but none of 'em seemed t' care a durn about my drowndin'; they only wanted t' plug me."

"Please save me, Mister," begged Jeff, "an' I'll do anything under the shinin' sun for yo'; I'll jine the Yankee army; I'll lead you' to whar thar's nests o' the pizenest bushwhackers. I'll do anything yo' kin ax me. Only save me from being drowned. Right down thar's the big falls, an' if I go over them, nothin' kin same me from drowndin'." And he began a doleful blubbering.

"On general principles, I think that'd be the best thing that could happen," remarked Shorty. "But I haven't time to discuss that now. Will you do just what we want, if we save your life?"

"Yes; yes," responded he eagerly.

"Well, if you don't, at the very minute I tell you, I'll plug you for certain with this," said Shorty, showing the revolver. "Mind, I'll not speak twice. I'll give you no warnin'. You do what I tell you on the jump, or I'll be worse to you than Mrs. Bolster. First place, take this man in with you. And you (to the rebel in the canoe) mind how you git into that boat. Don't you dare, on your life, kick the canoe over as you crawl out. If I find it rocks the least bit as you leave I'll bust your cocoanut as the last act of my military career. Now crawl out."

The rebel crawled over the gunwale into the boat as cautiously as if there were torpedoes under him.

"Now," said Shorty, with a sigh of relief, as the man was at last out of the canoe, "we'll paddle around here and pick up some pieces of boards for you to use as oars. Then you bring the boat over to that log."

This was done, and the Lieutenant and the two rebels clinging to the log were transferred to the jo-boat. The moment the Lieutenant felt himself in the comparative security of the jo-boat his desire for command asserted itself.

"Now, men," said he, authoritatively, "pull away for the other side, pointing up stream. That glow over there is our campfires. Make for it."

"All right, Lootenant," said Shorty. "You command that boat. You've got your revolver with you, and kin make 'em mind. We'll pick up some more boards, so as to have oars for all o' 'em. They'd better use 'em lively, for it ain't a great ways t' the suck. If you git into that you'll go to Davy Jones's as sure as the Lord made little apples. Paddle, now, if you value your lives. Me and Si are goin' back to look for that galoot that shot at us. We want to make a present of him to our Colonel, who's after information from the other side. We want his gun and another one to make up for the two that we had to leave on the island. We'll join you before you git across."

The Lieutenant lifted up his voice in remonstrance against the desperate undertaking, but Si and Shorty paddled swiftly away, leaving him and his squad to struggle over the muddy lake in their clumsy bateau.

Though the boys were sadly worn by the day's exciting adventures, yet they were animated by the hope of doing something that would signally retrieve their earlier misfortunes. Both were adepts at canoe navigation, the canoe was light and easily managed with but two in it, and they had gotten the lay of the shore so well in mind that they felt sure that they could slip around and come in on the man who had fired upon them. The drizzle of the rain helped curtain them; they pushed the canoe through the top of a paw-paw thicket that rose but a little way above the flood, Shorty sprang out, and in a few steps came up behind the two pickets, who were crouching over a little fire they had built behind the cover of some dense weeds.

"Was this the post that fired on men in a canoe a little while ago?" he asked, as if a rebel officer out on a tour of investigation.

"Yes," the men stammered, as soon as they could recover from the startle of his sudden appearance.

"Which man fired?" asked Shorty.

"Me," answered one.

"Well, I want you and both your guns," said Shorty, thrusting his revolver against the man's face. "Pick up them guns and go right ahead there."

The man meekly did as bid, and in a few minutes was landed into the canoe, into which Shorty jumped and pushed off. When nearly across they came upon the jo-boat, with the Lieutenant standing erect with drawn revolver, while the men were laboring hard to propel it to shore. The boys fastened its painter to the stern of the canoe and helped by towing.

They headed for a large fire burning brightly on the bank, indicating that it was the headquarters of the pickets. In response to the sharp challenge, the Lieutenant responded:

"Friends, without the countersign."

Quite a number of officers and men thronged to the water's edge to see what could be coming from that unexpected quarter. The Lieutenant ordered the boys to fall to the rear with their canoe, that he might be the first to land, and as his bateau labored close to the shore he recognized the Colonel in command of the picket line, and said in a loud voice:

"Sir, I have the honor to report that I have been across the creek reconnoitering the enemy's lines. I have with me five prisoners four soldiers and one guerrilla."

## CHAPTER VI. DISTRESSING ENEMIES

### OTHER THAN THE REBELS AND RAIN, MUD, AND SWOLLEN STREAMS

SI WOKE up early the next morning with a savage exclamation.

"I declare, I'm all on fire," he said. "Some thing's just eating me up. I believe I've got a million graybacks on me."

"Same here, Si," said Shorty. "Never knowed 'em to be so bad. Seem to 've just got in from a march, and are chawin' three days' rations out o' me every minute. I'd 'a' thought they'd all 've bin drowned from the duckin' they've bin havin' for the past five days, but it only seems to 've sharpened their teeth and whetted their appetites. They've all come to dinner, and invited their friends."

"Where in the world could they have all come from?" meditated Si. "We wuz certainly clean of 'em when we started out six days ago."

"O, the rebels skipped out in sich a hurry," explained Shorty, "that they even dropped their house hold pets, which we inherited as we follered 'em up. I wish this infernal rain'd let up long enough for us to do some skirmishin' and bile our clothes. Or if the sun'd only come out an hour or two, we could find an ant-hill, an' lay our clothes on it. I don't know any little thing that I enjoy more on a pleasant day when we've bin a long march and got mighty 'crumby, than to pull off my shirt and lay it on a lively ant-hill, and light my pipe and set there and watch the busy ants collar its inhabitants and carry 'em off to fill up their smoke-houses with Winter meat."

He put his hand meditatively into his bosom as he spoke. As he withdrew it he looked down and exclaimed:

"Jehosephat, it's fleas, too. Just look there. I'm alive with fleas."

"Same here," ejaculated Si, who had made a similar discovery. "Just look at 'em, hoppin' out every where. The rebels have not only set their grayback infantry on to us, but are jumping us with their flea cavalry."

"If you call the graybacks infantry and the fleas cavalry, what in the world do you call these, Si?" said Shorty, who had made still another discovery, and was pointing to his wrists and ankles, where rows of gorged ticks, looking like drops of fresh blood, encircled his limbs.

"Them's heavy artillery," answered Si; "and, Great Scott, I've got more of 'em on me than you have. And there's some just back of your ears, Shorty. Be careful, Shorty. Don't touch 'em. Le' me work 'em off. Be awful careful. If you break their heads off they'll stay in and make a sore that'll almost never get well."

They looked down the lines of men who, like themselves, had been rudely awakened from their slumber on wet beds by "the pestilence that walketh by night." There were howls, yells, oaths and imprecations from everybody. Officers forgot their carefully-maintained dignity, and were as vociferous and profane as the men.

Many were stripped, and trying to singe their wet clothes over the smoldering fires. Many were even trying to subdue the pests by thrashing their garments in the cold water of the creek.

"'Bout as much use as a General Order from Army Headquarters would be agin the varmints," said Shorty, as he watched their futile labors. "Say, you fellers," he called out to them; "why don't you repeat the Ten Commandments to 'em? Or sing the doxology? It'll do just as much good as sloshing your duds around in the water. The water only makes 'em savager'n ever. You ought to know that from experience."

By the happy thought of gently touching the gorged wood-ticks with the point of a pin Si and Shorty had gotten rid of those plagues, heads and all, so as to leave no apprehension as to future

sores. They communicated this method to their afflicted comrades, and then turned their attention to the other parasites.

"I guess I'll just go down to the Surgeon's tent and git a pound of angwintum," said Shorty, "and rub myself from head to foot with it. That's the only thing I know of that'll do the least good."

"Mustn't do that," objected Si. "Put angwintum on you and get wet, and you'll be salivated. You ought to know that."

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