

**JOHN
MCELROY**

SI KLEGG,
BOOK 5

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*Si Klegg, Book 5 / The Deacon's Adventures at Chattanooga in Caring for the
Boys:*

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John McElroy Si Klegg, Book 5 / The Deacon's Adventures at Chattanooga in Caring for the Boys

PREFACE

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

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

of which those of Si Klegg are a strong reminder.'

The Publishers.

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

CHAPTER I. THE DEACON PROVIDES

RESORTS TO HIGHWAY ROBBERY AND HORSE STEALING

THE Deacon was repaid seventyfold by Si's and Shorty's enjoyment of the stew he had prepared for them, and the extraordinary good it had seemed to do them as they lay wounded in the hospital at Chattanooga, to which place the Deacon had gone as soon as he learned that Si was hurt in the battle.

"I won't go back on mother for a minute," said Si, with brightened eyes and stronger voice, after he had drained the last precious drop of the broth, and was sucking luxuriously on the bones; "she kin cook chickens better'n any woman that ever lived. All the same, I never knowed how good chicken could taste before."

"Jehosephat, the way that does take the wrinkles out down here," said Shorty, rubbing appreciatively the front of his pantaloons. "I feel as smooth as if I'd bin starched and ironed, and there's new life clear down to my toe-nails. If me and Si could only have a chicken a day for the next 10 days we'd feel like goin' up there on the Ridge and bootin' old Bragg off the

hill. Wouldn't we, Si?"

"Guess so," acceded Si cheerily, "if every one made us feel as much better as this one has. How in the world did you git the chicken, Pap?"

"Little boys should eat what's set before 'em, and ask no questions," said the father, coloring. "It's bad manners to be pryin' around the kitchen to find out where the vittles come from."

"Well, I've got to take off my hat to you as a forager," said Shorty. "A man that kin find a chicken in Chattanooga now, and hold on to it long enough to git it in the pot, kin give me lessons in the art. When I git strong enough to travel agin I want you to learn me the trick."

The Deacon did not reply to the raillery. He was pondering anxiously about the preservation of his four remaining chickens. The good results manifest from cooking the first only made him more solicitous about the others. Several half-famished dogs had come prowling around, from no one knew where. He dared not kill them in daylight. He knew that probably some, if not all, of them had masters, and the worse and more dangerous a dog is the more bitterly his owner resents any attack upon him. Then, even hungrier looking men with keen eyes and alert noses wandered near, with inquiry in every motion. He would have liked to take Shorty into his confidence, but he feared that the ravenous appetite of convalescence would prove too much for that gentleman's continence.

He kept thinking about it while engaged in what he called "doin' up the chores," that is, making Si and Shorty comfortable for the day, before he lay down to take a much-needed rest. He had never been so puzzled in all his life. He thought of burying them in the ground, but dismissed that because he would be seen digging the hole and putting them in, and if he should escape observation, the dogs would be pretty certain to nose them out and dig them up. Sinking them in the creek suggested itself, but had to be dismissed for various reasons, one being fear that the ravenous catfish would devour them.

"If I only had a balloon," he murmured to himself, "I might send 'em up in that. That's the only safe way I kin think of. Yes, there's another way. I've intended to put a stone foundation under that crib, and daub it well, so's to stop the drafts. It orter be done, but it's a hard day's work, even with help, and I'm mortal tired. But I s'pose it's the only way, and I've got to put in stones so big that a dog can't pull 'em out."

He secured a couple of negroes, at prices which would have paid for highly-skilled labor in Indiana, to roll up enough large stones to fill in the space under the crib, and then he filled all the crevices with smaller ones, and daubed over the whole with clay.

"There," he said, as he washed the clay from his hands, "I think them chickens are safe for to-night from the dogs, and probably from the men. Think of all that trouble for four footy chickens not worth more'n four bits in Injianny. They're as much bother as a drove o' steer'd be. I think I kin now lay down and take a

wink o' sleep."

He was soon sleeping as soundly as only a thoroughly-tired man can, and would have slept no one knows how long, had not Shorty succeeded in waking him towards morning, after a shaking which exhausted the latter's strength.

"Wake up, Mister Klegg," said Shorty; "it must 've bin rainin' dogs, and they're tryin' to tear the shanty down."

The Deacon rubbed his eyes and hastened a moment to the clamor outside. It seemed as if there were a thousand curs surrounding them, barking, howling, snarling, fighting, and scratching. He snatched up a club and sprang out, while Shorty tottered after. He ran into the midst of the pack, and began laying about with his strong arms. He broke the backs of some, brained others, and sent the others yelping with pain and fright, except two particularly vicious ones, who were so frenzied with hunger that they attacked him, and bit him pretty severely before he succeeded in killing them. Then he went around to the end of the crib nearest his precious hoard, and found that the hungry brutes had torn away his clay and even the larger of the stones, and nothing but their fighting among themselves had prevented the loss of his chickens. "What in tarnation set the beasts onto us," inquired Shorty wonderingly. "They were wuss'n cats around catnip, rats after aniseed, or cattle about a spot o' blood. I've felt that me and Si wuz in shape to bring the crows and buzzards around, but didn't expect to start the dogs up this way."

"I've got four chickens hid under the underpinnin' there for

you and Si," confessed the Deacon. "The dogs seemed to 've smelled 'em out and wuz after 'em."

He went to the hiding place and pulled out the fowls one after another. "They are all here," he said; "but how in the world am I goin' to keep 'em through another night?"

"You ain't a-goin' to keep 'em through another night, are you?" asked Shorty anxiously, as he gloated over the sight. "Le's eat 'em to-day."

"And starve to-morrer?" said the thrifty Deacon rebukingly. "I don't know where any more is comin' from. It was hard enough work gittin' these. I had calculated on cookin' one a day for you and Si. That'd make 'em provide for four more days. After that only the Lord knows what we'll do."

"Inasmuch as we'll have to trust to the Lord at last, anyway," said Shorty, with a return of his old spirit, "why not go the whole gamut? A day or two more or less won't make no difference to Him. I feel as if I could eat 'em all myself without Si's help."

"I tell you what I'll do," said the Deacon, after a little consideration. "I feel as if both Si and you kin stand a little more'n you had yesterday. I'll cook two to-day. We'll send a big cupful over to Capt. McGillicuddy. That'll leave us two for to-morrer. After that we'll have to trust to Providence."

"If ever there was a time when He could use His ravens to advantage," said the irreverent Shorty, "it's about now. They carried bread and meat to that old prophet. There's a lot o' mighty good men down here in this valley now in terrible want of grub,

and nothin' but birds kin git over the roads to the rear very well."

"Don't speak lightly o' the Lord and His ways, Shorty," said the Deacon severely.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace.
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smilin' face,'

as the hymn says. Here, take these chickens in one hand and this pistol in the other, and guard 'em while I go down to the branch and wash and git some water. Then I'll cook your breakfast."

Again the savory smell of the boiling chickens attracted sick boys, who begged for a little of the precious food. Having double the quantity, the Deacon was a little more liberal, but he had to restrain Shorty, who, despite his own great and gnawing hunger, would have given away the bigger part of the broth to those who so desperately needed it.

"No, Shorty," said the prudent Deacon. "Our first duty is to ourselves. We kin help them by gittin' you and Si on your feet. We can't feed the whole Army o' the Cumberland, though I'd like to."

A generous cupful was set aside for Capt. McGillicuddy, which his servant received with gratitude and glowing reports of the good the former supply had done him.

With the daylight came the usual shells from the rebel guns

on Lookout Mountain. Even the Deacon was getting used to this noisy salutation to the morn, and he watched the shells strike harmlessly in the distance with little tremor of his nerves. As the firing ceased, amid the derisive yells of the army, he said quietly:

"That last shell's saved me a good deal o' work diggin'. It, tore out a hole that'll just do to bury the carcasses of these dogs."

Accordingly, he dragged the carcasses over after breakfast, and threw the dirt back in the hole upon them.

The two remaining chickens were stowed in a haversack, and during the day hung outside from the ridge-pole of the crib, where they were constantly under the eye of either the Deacon or Shorty, who took turns watching them. That night the Deacon slept with them under his head, though they were beginning to turn a little, and their increasing gameness brought a still larger herd of dogs about. But the Deacon had securely fastened the door, and he let them rage around as they pleased.

When they were cooked and eaten the next morning the Deacon became oppressed with anxious thought. Where were the next to come from? The boys had improved so remarkably that he was doubly anxious to continue the nourishing diet, which he felt was necessary to secure their speedy recovery. Without it they would probably relapse.

He could think of nothing but to go back again to the valley where he got the chickens, and this seemed a most desperate chance, for the moment that either of the old couple set eyes on him he or she would give the alarm. He went to sleep thinking

about the matter, and when he rose up in the morning, and had nothing to offer his boys but the coarse and uninviting hardtack, pork and coffee, he made up his mind to take the chances, whatever they might be. He set out again immediately after breakfast, and by cutting across the mountain came to the entrance to the valley a little after noon. Keeping close under cover of the woods, he approached within sight of the house, and carefully scanned it. What to do he had scarcely planned. He was only determined to have some fresh meat to take back to camp. He was going to get it as honestly and fairly as he could, but fresh meat he must have.

He could see no other house anywhere in the distance, and probably if he went farther he would run into rebel bushwhackers and guerrillas, who were watching from the high ridges. So long as he kept under cover of the woods he would feel all right, for he was as skilled in woodcraft as any of them, and could take care of himself. But if he should come out into the open fields and road to cross the valley they would have him at an advantage. He was confirmed in this fear by seeing several little clouds of smoke rise up above the tops of the trees on the ridge.

"There's a gang of rebels in camp over there," said he to himself, with a woodman's quick reading of every sign. "That smoke's from their fires. 'Tain't enough of it to be clearin' ground; people ain't clearin' up at this time o' year; that ground over there ain't the kind they'd clear up for anything. 'Twouldn't raise white beans if it was cleared; and you don't hear nobody choppin'."

He looked again at the house. Everything was very quiet and peaceful around it. There was no stock in the barnyard or fields, and the only signs of life were the smoke rising from one of the great stone chimneys, the chickens picking and scratching in the garden, a couple of negresses, who occasionally passed back and forth between the main house and another cabin apparently used as a kitchen.

The Deacon had almost made up his mind to march boldly down to the house, snatch up a few of the chickens, and make his way back to the woods again, before the old couple could summon assistance. Suddenly his quick eyes caught a glimpse of something at a point where the road from the ridge came down out of the woods. Then that something developed into a man on horseback, who rode forward to a little rise, stopped, and surveyed the landscape cautiously, and then rode forward toward the house.

He dismounted and entered the house. In a few minutes there appeared unusual bustle and activity, during which the man rode back again, munching as he went at a piece of cornpone and one of meat, which he had gotten at the house, and held in either hand, while his reins lay on his horse's neck.

The old woman came out into the yard with some meat in her hand, and the shrill note of her orders to the negresses reached the Deacon's ears, though he could not make out the words. But he saw one of them go to the spring and bring water, which she poured in a wash-kettle set up in the yard, while the old woman

prepared the beef and put it in, the other negress started a fire, and the old man chopped and split wood to put around the kettle and fill the stone oven near by.

"They're cookin' vittels for them rebels on the ridge." The Deacon correctly diagnosed the situation. "By-and-by they'll come for 'em, or take 'em to 'em. Mebbe I kin find some way to collar some of 'em. It's a slim chance, but no other seems to show up just now. If no more'n one man comes for that grub I'm goin' to jump him."

The Deacon looked at the caps on his revolver and began laying plans for a strategic advance under the cover of the sumachs to a point where he could command the road to the house.

His cheek paled for an instant as the thought obtruded that the man might resist and he have to really shoot him.

"I don't want to shoot nobody," he communed with himself, "and it won't 'be necessary if the other fellow is only sensible and sees, that I've got the drop on him, which I will have before I say a word. Anyway, I want that grub for a work of necessity and mercy, which justifies many things, and as a loyal man I ought to keep it from goin' to rebels. If I've got to put a bullet into another feller, why, the Lord'll hold me guiltless and blame the other feller. I ain't no Free Will Baptist. I believe things 've bin foreordained. Wisht I knowed that it was foreordained that I was to git that grub back to Si and Shorty."

Presently he saw the old man come out and take a path into

the woods. He cautiously circled around to where he could follow and watch him. He saw him make his way to a secluded little cove, where there was a corn-crib partially filled and a rude shelter, under which were a buckboard and fairly-good young horse. The old man began putting the clumsy harness of ropes, chains and patched leather on the horse and hitching him to the buckboard.

"Good, the old man's goin' to take the grub out to 'em himself," thought the Deacon with relief. "He'll be easy to manage. No need o' shootin' him."

He hurried back to his covert, and then shpped unseen down to where he had selected for his ambush. The old man drove the buckboard around to the front of the house, and the negresses, obeying the shrill orders of the old woman, brought out pones of smoking cornbread, and buckets, tin pans and crocks containing the meat, potatoes, turnips and other food, and loaded them on to the buckboard. The fragrance of the food reached the Deacon's nostrils, and made his mouth water and fond anticipations rise as to the good it would do the boys.

"I'll have that grub, and the boys shall have it," he determined, "or there'll be an Injianny Deacon pretty badly used up."

The old man mounted into the seat, gathered up the rope lines, and chirruped to the horse to start.

When he came opposite, the Deacon jumped out, seized the reins, and pointing his revolver at him, commanded sternly:

"Git down from there, and git down quick."

The old man dropped the lines, and for an instant gazed at him with scared eyes.

"Why, yo' robber, what d'yo' mean?" he gasped.

"Git down from there, and git down quick!" repeated the Deacon.

"Why, this is highway robbery, threats, puttin' in bodily fear, attempted murder, hoss-stealin'."

"Hain't no time to argy law with you," said the Deacon impatiently. "This ain't no court-room. You ain't in session now. Git down, and git down quick!"

"Help! help! murder! robbery! thieves!" shouted the old man, at the top of his voice.

The negresses, who had been watching their master depart, set to screaming, and the old woman rushed back into the house and blew the horn. The Deacon thrust his revolver back into the holster, caught the old man with his sinewy hand, tore him from the seat, and flung him into the fence-corner. He sprang into the seat, turned the horse's head toward Chattanooga, and hit him a sharp cut with a switch that lay in the wagon.

"I've got about three miles the start," he said as he rattled off. "This horse's young and fresh, while their's probably run down. The road from here to the main road's tollably good, and I think I kin git there before they kin overtake me."

At the top of the hill he looked back, and saw the rebels coming out. Apparently they had not understood what had happened. They had seen no Yankees and could not have seen

the Deacon's tussle with the old man. They supposed that the holler simply meant for them to come in and get their dinner, instead of having it taken out to them. All this passed through the Deacon's mind, and he chuckled over the additional start it would give him.

"They won't find out nothin' till they git clean to the house," he said. "By that time I'll be mighty nigh the main road. My, but wouldn't I like to have as many dollars as they'll be mad when they find the Yankee trick that's bin played on 'em, with their dinner hauled off into the Union camp."

He rattled ahead sharply for some time, looking back at each top of a hill for his pursuers. They did not come in sight, but the main road to Chattanooga did, and then a new trouble suggested itself.

"I won't never dare haul this load uncovered through camp," he said to himself. "The first gang o' roustabout teamsters that I meet'll take every spoonful of the vittles, and I'd be lucky if I have the horse and wagon left. I must hide it some way. How? That's a puzzler."

At length a happy idea occurred to him. He stopped by a cedar thicket, and with his jack-knife cut a big load of cedar boughs, which he piled on until every bit of food was thoroughly concealed. This took much time, and as he was finishing he heard a yell on the hill behind, and saw a squad of rebels riding down toward him. He sprang to the seat, whipped up his horse, and as he reached the main road was rejoiced to see a squad of Union

cavalry approaching.

"Here, old man," said the Lieutenant in command; "who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"I'm a nurse in the hospital," answered the Deacon unhesitatingly. "I was sent out here to get some cedar boughs to make beds in the hospital. Say, there's some rebels out there, comin' down the hill. They saw me and tuk after me. You'll find 'em right over the hill."

"That's a pretty slick horse you're driving," said the Lieutenant. "Looks entirely too slick to belong to Chattanooga. It's a much better horse than mine. I've a notion—"

"Say, them rebels are just over the hill, I tell you," said the Deacon in a fever of apprehension of losing his steed. "They'll be on top of you in a minute if you don't look out."

"Right over the hill, did you say?" said the Lieutenant, forgetting for the moment the horse. "Attention, there, boys. Look out for the rebels. Advance carbines—Forward—trot! I'll come back directly and take another look at that horse."

The squad trotted up the hill in the direction the Deacon had pointed, and as he drove off as fast as he could he heard the spatter of exchanging shots.

Late in the evening, as he drove off the pontoon into Chattanooga and turned to the right toward his corn-crib he muttered over to himself:

"They say that when a man starts down the path of sin and crime the road seems greased for his swift progress. The other

day I begun with petty larceny and chicken stealin'. To-day it's bin highway robbery, premeditated murder, horse stealin', grand larceny, and tellin' a deliberate lie. What'll I be doin' this time next week? I must git that old man's horse and buckboard back to him somehow, and pay him for his vittles. But how'm I goin' to do it? The army's terribly demoralizin'. I must git Si back home soon, or I won't be fit to associate with anybody outside the penitentiary. How kin I ever go to the communion table agin?"

CHAPTER II. THE DEACON ATTEMPTED RESTITUTION

TRIED TO RETURN THE HORSE TO HIS OWNER

SI AND SHORTY were on the anxious lookout for the Deacon when he arrived, and not a little worried lest something might have befallen him.

Si's weakness made him peevish and fretful, and Shorty was not a great deal better.

"It's an awful risk to have an old man and a civilian come down here into camp," Si complained. "And he oughtn't to go about alone. He's always been used to mingling with the quiet, honest, respectable people. Up home the people are as honest as the day is long. They're religious and peaceable, and Pap's never knowed no other kind. He wouldn't harm nobody for the world, and none o' them'd harm him. He's only a child among these toughs down here. I wisht one of us was able to be with him all the time."

"That father o' yours is certainly quite an innocent old party," Shorty answered, consolingly, "and the things he don't know about army life'd make more'n a pamphlet. But he has a way of wakin' up to the situation that is sometimes very surprisin'. I wisht

I was able to go about with him, but I think he's fully able to take care o' himself around in camp. There's always somebody about who won't see an old man and a citizen imposed on. But what I'm afraid of is that he's wandered out in the country, huntin' for somethin' for us to eat, and the guerrillas've got him."

And he and Si shuddered at the thought of that good old man in the hands of the merciless scoundrels who infested the mountains and woods beyond the camps.

"Yes," mourned Si, "Pap's likely to mosey out into the country, jest like he would on Bean Blossom Crick, and stop at the first house he come to, and set down with 'em on the porch, and talk about the weather, and the crops, and the measles in the neighborhood, and the revivals, and the price o' pork and corn, and whether they'd better hold their wheat till Spring, and who was comin' up for office, and all the time the bushwhackers'd be sneakin' up on him, an' him know no more 'bout it than where the blackbirds was roostin'. He's jest that innocent and unsuspectin'like."

"If they've ketched him," said Shorty fiercely, "we'll find out about it, and when we git able, we'll go out there and kill and burn everything for five miles around. I'll do it, if I have to spend the rest o' my life at hard labor on the Dry Tortugas."

They heard the rattle of light wheels on the frozen ground outside, and the hoof-beats of a quickly-moving horse.

"Buggy or spring-wagon," muttered Si with a farmer boy's instinctive interpretation of such sounds. "What's it doin' in

camp? Strange horse. In better condition than any around here."

The vehicle stopped in front of the corn-crib at the Deacon's command, "Whoa!"

"Gracious—there's Pap now," ejaculated Si, with whom memory went in a bound to the many times he had listened for his father's coming and heard that order.

"Hello, boys," called out the Deacon. "How are you? Shorty, come out here."

Shorty sprang up with something of his old-time alacrity, and Si made an effort to rise, but was too weak.

"Throw a piece o' that fat pine on the fire. Shorty," said the Deacon, "and let's see what I've got."

By the light of the blazing pine, the Deacon pulled off the cedar boughs and developed his store. The boughs had kept in the heat, so that the food was not yet quite cold, though it had a resinous flavor, from its covering. The Deacon broke one of the cornpones in two and gave half of it to Shorty, with as much as he thought he should have of the meat and vegetables. Then he fed Si, who relished the new diet almost as much as he had relished the chicken broth. The Deacon made a hearty supper himself, and then stored away the rest in his "cellar" under the crib, rolling up some more large stones as an additional precaution.

"Well, you beat me," said Shorty admiringly, as he studied over the Deacon's booty. "I used to think I was as slick a forager as there was in the army, but I simply ain't in the same class with a man that kin go out in this Sahara Desert o' starvation

and bring in a four-year-old horse and a wagon-load o' cooked vittles. I'd never even see the distance pole runnin' with him. Gen. Rosecrans ought to know you. He'd appoint you Commissary-General o' the army at once. When I get a little stronger I want you to take me out and learn me the ABC's o' foragin'. To think that me and Si wuz grievin' about your being ketched by the guerrillas. What fools we wuz. It wuz lucky for the guerrillas that you didn't run acrost 'em, for you'd a ketched 'em, instid o' 'em you."

"That's what I come purty nigh doin'," chuckled the Deacon. "But what in the world 'm I goin' to do with that hoss and buckboard? I must hunt around and find that poor beast some corn for tonight. He's bin driven purty sharp, and he needs his supper jest as bad as I did mine, and I won't feel right unless he has it. Then I must try to git him back to his owner termorrer."

"If he's here to-morrer," said Shorty, looking at the animal carefully, "it'll be a miracle. That's too good a hoss to be kept in this camp by anybody lower'n a Brigadier-General. The boys'll steal him, the Captains take him, the Colonels seize him, and the Brigadier-Generals appropriate him for the Government's service. They'll call it by different names, but the horse goes all the same. I don't see how you're goin' to keep him till mornin'. You can't put him in your cellar. If they don't steal him, it's because it's too dark to see him. I'm sorry to say there's an awful lot o' thieves in the Army o' the Cumberland."

And Shorty looked very grieved over the deplorable lack of

regard in the army for the rights of property. He seemed to mourn this way for several minutes, and then broke out with:

"Say, Mr. Klegg, I've an idee. That Quartermaster o' the Maumee Muskrats is a sport from way back. He'd give his vary eyes for a good hoss—one that kin beat everybody else's. The way the horses are run down now this one kin carry a heavy handicap, and beat any one in camp. I'll bet I kin take this hoss over to him and git \$150 in greenbacks for him, for he kin win a bushel o' money with him the very first day."

"Shorty," said the Deacon, in a tone that made that worthy start, "necessity and the stress o' circumstances may force me to do many things which are agin my conscience, and for which I shall repent in sackcloth and ashes, if needs be, but I hain't yit bin reduced to sellin' stolen property. The Lord save me from that. That hoss and wagon's got to go back to the owner, if I risk my life in takin' 'em."

Shorty wisely kept his reply to himself, but he thought how absurd it was to have men about the army who were too old and set in their ideas to learn army ways. He muttered to himself:

"If he succeeds in gittin' that hoss outen camp agin, I'll expect to see the back o' my neck, or something else quite as wonderful."

The Deacon finally succeeded in getting a couple of ears of corn and a handful of fodder for the horse's supper, and it was decided that Shorty should watch him the first part of the night, and the Deacon from thence till morning.

As the Deacon pondered over the matter in the early morning

hours, he saw that his only chance of getting the horse back was to start with him before daylight revealed him to the men in camp.

"I'll drive him well outside our lines, and as near to the house as I think it prudent to go, and then turn him loose," he said to himself. "If he's got the sense o' the horses up North he'll go straight home, and then my conscience will be clear. If he don't, I'll have done all I could. The Lord don't ask unreasonable things of us, even in atonement."

So he cooked as good a breakfast for the boys as he could prepare from his materials, woke up Shorty and put him in charge, and an hour before daybreak turned the horse's head toward the pontoon bridge, and started him on a lively trot.

He had only fairly started when a stern voice called out to him from a large tent:

"Here, you, stop that trotting. What do you mean? Don't you know that it's strictly against orders to trot horses in their present condition?"

"Excuse me. Captain," said the Deacon. "I"

"Blank your Captain," roared the voice; "I'm no Captain."

"Major," said the Deacon deprecatingly.

"To thunder with your Majors, you ignorant fool. You"

"I beg your pardon, Colonel. I was"

"What's the matter with you, you ignoramus?" roared the voice, more indignantly than ever. "Don't you know Brigade Headquarters when you see them? Don't you know your own

officers when you hear their voices?"

"Rayly, General," said the Deacon, much disturbed, "I didn't mean to insult you. I'm only a citizen, and a stranger in the camp, and—"

"A citizen and a stranger," echoed the voice. "What are you doing in here, anyway? Orderly, bring that man in here till I see him."

The Orderly started to obey, when a regiment which had been ordered to report at Headquarters came up at quick step, halted, and ordered arms with much clatter. The frightened horse bounded off down the road, with the Deacon sawing on the lines and trying to stop him.

He only slowed down when he came up near a corral of other horses, to which he turned for companionship and sympathy.

"Frosty mornin' makes that hoss purty frisky," said the Deacon, as he readjusted his hat, and got himself in shape after his jolting. "Lucky, though. I didn't like that old General's voice. I'm afraid he had it in for me, and would 've made me trouble for lowerin' his dignity by callin' him Captain. Big officers are awfully tetchy."

"Here, who are you? And what are you doin' out there?" came the stem inquiry from the dark depths of one of the sheds.

"Excuse me. General," answered the Deacon hastily, "I"

"General? Who are you callin' General, you fool? Don't try to be funny with me. You know I'm no General."

"I meant Colonel," the Deacon started to explain.

"The blazes you did. You expect Colonels to run hoss-corrals, and manage mule boarding-houses, do you? stop your blimmed nonsense and answer my questions."

"Major, I was tryin' to say"

"I'll Major you when I git my boots on and git out there. Don't think to shut my eye up callin' me big titles."

"But, Captain."

"I'm no Captain, neither. I'm plain Jim Crimmins, Quartermaster-Sergeant, in charge o' this corral, that you're stealin' around. I'm comin' out there to break every bone in your body. You infernal sneaks 've pestered the life out o' me stealin' my corn and my mules, even. I've bin watchin' you piroutin' around in the dark for a long time. I'm goin' to stop this business if I've got to kill every thievin' varmint in the Army o' the Cumberland. Don't you dare move till I come out, or I'll put a bullet through you. Do you hear?"

"I don't believe I've got any more time to waste on that bellerin' bull-calf," said the Deacon to himself. He gathered up the lines, turned the horse's head toward the road, and gave him a lick with a switch, and he dashed off, followed by a couple of shots from Mr. Crimmins, to give color and confirmation to the story that worthy related later in the day of a particularly audacious attempt on the part of sneak thieves to get away with his mules and corn, and which was frustrated by his vigilance and daring.

As the horse slowed down to a walk again a Sergeant of the Guard at the head of a squad stepped out and took him by the

reins.

"Here, who are you, and where are you going so early in the morning?" he inquired.

"My name's Josiah Klegg, sir," said the Deacon, prudently ignoring titles. "I'm from Injianny, and am down here 'tendin' to my son, who belongs to Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteers, and who was shot at Chickamaugy. I borried this hoss and wagon from a man out in the country to bring in some vittles for him and his pardner, and some boughs for 'em to sleep on, and I'm takin' 'em back to him."

"Well, that story may be true, and it mayn't. Probably it ain't. Men don't get up before daybreak to take back borrowed horses. You're up to some devilment; probably taking information or contraband out to the rebels. I haven't time now to investigate. I'll put you under guard until I have. As for the horse, we've got use for him. McCook's Cavalry needs about a thousand such as he. We're out lookin' for horses now. Unhitch him, boys."

The Deacon started to make an earnest protest, but at that moment the rebels on Lookout Mountain made their usual daylight salute to the camp. The size of the squad had attracted their attention, and a shell shrieked over and struck quite near. This was too much for the nervous horse. He made a convulsive leap, which scattered the guards around him and almost threw the Deacon out of the seat. When the latter recovered himself, and got the horse under control again the guards were far away, and he was at the approach to the pontoon bridge.

"I'll be plagued," mused the Deacon, as the horse moved over the bridge at a slow walk, and gave him time to think, "the army's a terrible place. I had no sort o' trouble when I was doin' something that mebbe I oughtn't to have done, but the minute I start out to do a right thing I meet no end o' difficulties. But these are the obstacles that Satan always puts in the way of the righteous. I'm goin' to git this boss 'back to its owner, or know the reason why. Git up, there."

He soon came to a piece of the road which was in full view of the rebels on Lookout Mountain. They had been preparing the day before to stop all travel by that route, and the Deacon's was the first vehicle that had appeared since they had got their guns planted. They waited until he was fairly out into the open, and sent a shell which struck a panel of the fence off to the left, burst with a crash, and sent rails, chunks, stones and pieces of brush flying through the air. The horse became frantic, and tore up the hill at such a rate the buckboard and harness speedily went to pieces, and the Deacon was flung in the ditch, while the horse galloped wildly over the hill.

The Union artillerymen on Moccasin Point had evidently anticipated just such an attempt on the part of the rebels. Instantly a score of guns which had been placed to cover that spot thundered out, and their shells could be seen striking and tearing up the ground all around where the shot came from. Other rebel guns came to the assistance of the first one; the Union batteries within reach started in to help their side, and in a minute the

whole country was shaking with the uproar.

"Well, I'll be dumbbed," muttered the Deacon, crawling out of the ditch, shaking himself together again, cleaning off the mud, and trying to comprehend what was happening. "Did anybody ever see sich a commotion kicked up over one four-year-old hoss, and not a particularly good hoss at that? 't'd take a mighty smart man to git as much as \$100 for him up in Posey County. Nobody but a Methodist Elder could do it. I've sold a better hoss than that for \$80, and got all he was worth."

He stood for a few minutes and looked at the grand display until the Union batteries, satisfied that they had finally quashed the impudent rebel, ceased firing, and then he looked around.

"Well, that buckboard's done for. I can't take it back. It's only good for kindlin' wood now. But I may ketch the hoss and take him back."

He went up on top of the hill, and saw the horse standing under a tree, apparently pondering over what had happened, and wondering whether he should run farther or remain where he was.

The horse gave him a glad whinney of recognition, as if congratulating him on escaping from the crash of matter.

"Yes, you beast," snorted the Deacon; "I'm safe, but no thanks to you. You done your best to kick my brains out. Twice your condemned heels jest grazed my eyebrows. All the thanks I git for tryin' to save you from being starved to death there in Chattanooga, and git you back home. But you go back home all

the same."

He led the horse to a rock, mounted him, and started up the road. He reached the point where the road to the house turned off, and was debating whether he should go farther or turn the horse loose there, when he saw a company of cavalry coming up the main road from the other direction—that toward Bridgeport. Though they wore blue overcoats, he had learned enough about army life to not trust this implicitly, so he prudently rode into the woods to watch them until he could make sure. The company came up to where the roads parted, and he overheard a man who rode by the Captain at the head, and who wore a semi-soldier costume and seemed to be a scout or guide, tell the Captain:

"Their camp's right over there on that ridge (pointing to the crest on which the Deacon had seen the smoke). They're probably on the lookout for us, and we'll have to be very careful if we get near enough to jump them. I thought I saw one of their lookouts about here when we came up. Yes, there he is in there."

The Deacon had started to ride boldly toward them when he was sure they were Union troops, and a couple of the men, who in their dealings with bushwhackers had learned that it is best to shoot first and ask questions afterward, had promptly fired, and cut twigs uncomfortably near the Deacon's head. His horse plunged, but he kept him in hand and called out:

"Hold on! Hello! Don't do that. I'm a friend. I'm from Injianny."

"You're a devil of a way from home, and in a bad

neighborhood," said one of the men who had fired, as he slipped another cartridge into his Sharpe's.

The Captain interrogated him as to who he was and what he was doing out there, while the scout fidgeted in his saddle over the time that was being wasted.

"Captain," said the scout finally, "we must hustle if we're going to strike those fellers before dark. We can't go down here, but I'll have to make a long circuit around, so they won't see us."

"That's so," said the Captain, adjusting himself to start.

"Captain," said one of the men, "my horse can't go any farther. He's been in bad shape, and he fell and broke his knee coming up the hill."

"Well, here, take that citizen's horse. Old man, get off, and let this man have that horse."

The Deacon started to protest, but the man was in a hurry, and almost pulled him off, and slapped his own saddle on in a flash.

"But what am I do to?" asked the Deacon bewildered.

"Do? Do as you please," laughed the Captain. "You are as well off here as anywhere. When a man's away from home one place's the same's another to him. Here, I'll tell you what you can do. See that cow back there? The boys have been trailing her along, in hopes to get her into Chattanooga and make beef of her. We've got to leave her now, for we are going on the jump. We'll make you a present of her and this broken-down horse. That'll start you in business. A horse and a cow's a big start for any man. Good-by. Attention, company! Forward, head of column right—March!"

"Well, I've done all I could," said the Deacon, going back and picking up the rope which was tied to the cow's horns. "The Lord knows I've tried hard enough to git that hoss back. The cow looks as if she's a good milker. A little milk'll do the boys good. Then, they kin have fresh beef. Come along, Bos."

Late at night he tied the cow to the corn-crib and went to his weary bed.

CHAPTER III. A COW IN CAMP

THE DEACON HAS SOME EXPERIENCES WITH THE QUADRUPED

IT DID not seem that so many dangers beset the possession of a cow as of a horse, yet the Deacon prudently rose while it was yet dark to look after the animal.

He was none too soon, for there were getting to be thousands of very hungry men in Chattanooga who remembered the axiom about the early bird catching the worm, and thought the best time for "snatching" something was in the dark just before reveille. If they could find nothing better, and too often they did not, they would rob the mules of their scanty rations of corn, and soon a mule's feed-box had to be as carefully guarded as the commissary tent of the Headquarters mess.

These morning prowlers were as cunning as rats in finding their prey, and the only security that a man had of keeping his rations till morning was to eat them up before he went to bed. Their sharp eyes had not failed to notice the signs of unusual plenty about the Deacon's corn-crib, and they gave it earnest attention.

The Deacon had slipped out very quietly, and taken a little

turn around the end of the crib, to see that his other provisions had not been disturbed, before he approached the cow. As he did so he saw a figure squatted beside her, and heard a low voice say:

"So, Bos! H'ist, Lady! H'ist up, you measly heifer!"

"Well, I declare to goodness," gasped the Deacon. "How could they've found her out so soon?"

He walked quietly up to the milker, and remarked:

"Purty early in the mornin' to do your milkin'. Didn't used to git up so early when you was at home, did you?"

"Sh—sh—sh!" whispered the other. "Don't speak so loud. You'll wake up that old galoot inside. Keep quiet till I fill my cup, and then I'll let you have a chance. There'll be plenty for you."

"Purty good milker, is she?" inquired the Deacon with interest.

"Naw!" whispered the other. "She's got her bag full, but she won't give down worth a cent."

"Better let me try my hand," said the Deacon. "You've bin away from the farm for so long you've probably lost the knack. I'm a famous milker."

"You'll play fair?" said the milker doubtfully.

"Yes; just hold her till I go inside and git my bucket, and I'll milk your cup clean full," answered the Deacon, starting inside the corn-crib.

"Well, you're a cool one," gasped the milker, realizing the situation. "But I'll hold you to your bargain, and I'll play fair with you."

The Deacon came back with his bucket, and after filling the man's cup as full as it would hold, handed it to him, and then began drawing the rest into his own bucket.

Careful milker that he was, he did not stop until he had stripped the last drop, and the cow, knowing at once that a master hand was at her udder, willingly yielded all her store.

"There," said the Deacon, "if anybody gits any more out o' her till evenin' he's welcome to it."

Two or three other men had come up in the meanwhile with their cups, and they started, without so much as asking, to dip their cups in.

"Hold on!" commanded the first-comer sternly. "Stop that! This old man's a friend o' mine, and I won't see him imposed on. Go somewhere else and git your milk."

A wordy war ensued, but the first-comer was stalwart and determined. The row waked up Shorty, who appeared with an ax.

"All right," said one of the men, looking at the ax; "keep your durned old milk, if you're so stingy toward hungry soldiers. It'll give you milk-sick, anyway. There's lots o' milk-sick 'round here. All the cows have it. That cow has it bad. I kin tell by her looks. We had lots o' milk-sick in our neighborhood, and I got real well-acquainted with it. I kin tell a milk-sick cow as fur as I kin see her, and if that cow hasn't it, no one ever had it."

He made a furtive attempt to kick the bucket over, which was frustrated by the Deacon's watchfulness.

"Better do something with that cow right off," advised the

first-comer, as he walked off. "You can't keep her in camp all day. Somebody'll git her away from you if they have to take her by main force."

"Are you willin' to risk the milk-sick?" asked the Deacon, handing Shorty a cupful of the milk, together with a piece of cornpone.

"Yum—yum, I should say so," mumbled that longlegged gentleman. "I'll make the milk sicker'in it kin me, you bet. Jest bring along all the milk-sick you've got on hand, and I'll keep it from hurtin' anybody else. That's the kind of a philanthropist I am."

"I see you've got a cow here," said a large man wearing a dingy blue coat with a Captain's faded shoulder-straps. "I'm a Commissary, and it's my duty to take her."

He walked over and in a businesslike way began unfastening the rope. The Deacon shuddered, for he had too much respect for shoulder-straps to think of resisting. Shorty looked up from his breakfast, scanned the newcomer, and said:

"Look here. Bill Wiggins, you go back and take off that Captain's coat as quick as you kin, or I'll have you arrested for playin' officer. None o' you Maumee Muskrats kin play that little game on the 200th Injianny. We know you too well. And let me advise you, Mr. Wiggins, the next time you go out masqueradin' to make up clean through. That private's cap and pantaloons burned around the back, and them Government cow-hides give you dead away, if your mug didn't. If they wuz givin'

commissions away you wouldn't be a brevet Corporal. Skip out, now, for here comes the Provost-Guard, and you'd better not let him catch you wearin' an officer's coat unless you want to put in some extra time on the breastworks."

Mr. Wiggins made off at once, but he had scarcely gotten out of sight when a mounted officer, attracted by the strange sight of a cow in camp, rode up and inquired whence she came and to whom she belonged.

The Deacon was inside the crib taking care of Si, and the burden of the conversation fell upon Shorty.

"Me any my pardner sent out into the country and bought that cow," he said, "with three \$10 gold pieces we've bin savin' up ever since we've bin in the service. We wouldn't give 'em for anything else in the world. But we wuz jest starved for a drink o' fresh milk. Never felt so hungry for anything else in our lives. Felt that if we could jest git a fillin' o' fresh milk it'd make us well agin."

"Paid \$30 in gold for her," said the officer, examining the cow critically. "Pretty high price for that kind of a cow."

"Well, I don't know about that," answered Shorty argumentatively, and scenting a possible purchaser. "Good fresh cows are mighty scarce anywhere at this time o' year, and particularly in this region. Next Spring they'll be much cheaper. But not this, one. That's no ordinary cow. If you'll look carefully at her you'll see that she's a thoroughbred. I'm a boss judge o' stock myself, and I know. Look at her horns, her bag, and her

lines. She's full three-quarters Jersey."

"What's the other quarter," asked the officer, much amused.

"Jest—jest—jest—cow," answered Shorty, momentarily stumped for once in his volubility. And then he went on more garrulously than ever, to make amends. "She's as gentle as a lamb, will live on two ears o' corn and a kind word a day, and give two gallons o' milk, nearly all cream. Me and my pardner wouldn't take \$10.0 in gold for that cow. We're goin' to send her up home as soon as the lines are open, to start our stock-farm with."

"Where did you say you got her?" said the officer, getting off his horse and going up closer to examine the animal.

"O, we bought her from a man named Wilson over in the Sequatchie Valley. You must've heard of him. We've knowed him a long time—before he moved down here from Injianny. Runs a fine stockfarm. Cried like a baby when he parted with his cow. Wouldn't have done it, but he had to have the money to buy provisions for his family."

"Let me see," said the officer, looking at him. "Seems to me I ought to know you. Where do you belong?"

"Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteers."

"I thought so. I do know you. You are Shorty. I don't want to say anything against your honesty or your veracity, but if Gen. Rosecrans was to order me to get him the smartest forager and smoothest liar in the Army of the Cumberland, I think I should order you to report at Headquarters."

"You do me proud," said Shorty with a grin, but an inward

feeling that trouble was impending.

"Now, tell me the truth. Where did you get that cow?"

"I have bin tellin' you the truth," protested Shorty with an injured air. "Why should I tell you a lie about a little thing like a cow?"

"You are not within a mile of the truth. I know it. Look here: I believe that is Gen. Rosecrans's own cow. She's gone, and I got an order to look around for her. I've never seen her, but from the description given me I believe that's she. Who brought her here?"

"Great Jehosephat, he's after the Deacon," thought Shorty with a shudder. "I mustn't let him git him." Then he spoke out boldly:

"I brung her here."

"Shorty," said the officer with a smile, "I admire your talents for prevarication more than I can express. As a good, off-hand, free-going, single-gaited liar you have few equals and no superiors. Your lies usually have so much probability in them that they seem better than the truth—for your purposes. But this has no probability whatever in it. I doubt if you are able to walk to Headquarters. If you were well and strong, I should believe you quite capable not only of stealing the cow from Army Headquarters, but President Lincoln's cow from his back-door of the White House. But you are good now because you haven't strength enough to be up to any devilment. Now, tell me, who brought that cow here?"

"I brung her here myself, I tell you. I felt unusually peart last

night. Felt that I had to snatch something jest to keep my hand in, like. Couldn't find nothin' else on four legs worth takin', and couldn't take nothin' that couldn't walk. So I took her. You kin send me to the guard-house if you want to. I expect I deserve it."

And Shorty tried to look contrite and penitent.

"Yes; you're in nice shape to send to the guardhouse. I'd sent you there quick enough if you were well, for telling me such a preposterous lie. You've usually paid more respect to my intelligence by telling me stories that I could believe if I wanted to, as I usually wanted do; but this is too much."

As the conversation began the Deacon had passed out with a bucket to go to the creek for water for the cow. He now came back, set the bucket down in front of the cow, and began, from force of long habit in caring for his stock, to pick off some burs, and otherwise groom her.

"Say, my friend," said the officer, "who brought that cow in?"

Shorty had been frantically trying to catch the Deacon's eye, and was making all manner of winks and warning gestures without avail, for the Deacon answered frankly:

"I brung her in."

"You're just the man I'm looking for," returned the officer. Then turning to a Sergeant who had just come up at the end of a squad, he said:

"Here, Sergeant, take charge of this citizen and this cow, and bring them both up to Army Headquarters. Don't let that citizen get away from you. He's a slick one."

As they moved off. Shorty bolted into the crib and shouted:

"Great Jehosephat, Si, that dad of your'n 's a goner! He's got nerve that looms up like Lookout Mountain! He's a genius! He's got git-up and git to spare! What do you think he done last night? Walked up to Gen. Rosecrans's Headquarters, and stole the General's cow right from under the noses o' the Headquarters Guards, and brung her down here and milked her. Did you ever hear o' sich snap? I only wisht that me and you was half the man that he is, old as he is. The only trouble is that he isn't as good a hider as he is on the take. They've dropped on to him, and they're now takin' him up to Headquarters. But he'll find some way to git off. There's no end to that man. And to think that we've bin playin' him right along for a hayseed."

And Shorty groaned in derision of his own acumen.

"Pop stole Gen. Rosecrans's cow from Headquarters? They've arrested him and are taking him up there?" ejaculated Si in amazement. "I don't believe a word of it."

"Well, the cow was here. He brung her here last night, and owned up to it. He milked her, and you drunk some of the milk. The Provost-Guard's now walkin' the cow and him up to Headquarters. These are early mornin' facts. You kin believe what you dumbled please."

"Pap arrested and taken to Army Headquarters," groaned Si, in deepest anxiety. "What in the world will they do with him?"

"O, don't worry," said Shorty cheerfully.

"Your dad ain't as green as you are, if he has lived all his life

on the Wabash. He's as fly as you make 'em. He's fixin' up some story as he goes along that'll git him out of the scrape slick as a whistle. Trust him."

"Shorty," said Si severely, "my father don't fix up stories. Understand that. He's got some explanation for this. Depend upon it."

"They call it explanation when it gits a feller out, and blamed lie when it don't," muttered Shorty to himself, as he went out again, to follow the squad as far as he could with his eyes. "Anyway, I'll bet on the Deacon."

The squad arrived before Headquarters, and the officer dismounted and went in. Early as it was he found the indefatigable Rosecrans at work with his staff and clerks.

"General, I've found your cow, and got the man who took her," said the officer.

"Good," said the General joyfully. "Now we'll have some fresh milk again. I can give up anything cheerfully, rather than fresh milk. Say you've got the thief, too?" continued the General, relapsing into one of his testy moods. "Put the rascal at the hardest labor you can find. I'll give him a lesson that stealing from Headquarters don't pay. The rascals in my army seem to think that I and everything I have belongs to them as much as it does to me. But I'll draw the line at my cow and my horses. They can steal everything else but them. Hold on a minute. I'll go out and see if it's really my cow."

"Yes, that is she; glad to see you back, Missy," said the

General, patting the cow on the back. "Take her back and give her a good feed, if you can find it, for probably she's pretty hungry."

Then turning to the Deacon:

"You old rascal, you'll steal the General's cow, will you? Fond of thorbred stock, are you? And a citizen, too. Well, I'll see whether a month of hard work on the fortifications won't cure you of your fancy for blooded cattle."

"Look here, Gen. Rosecrans," said the Deacon firmly, "I didn't steal your cow, and I won't allow you nor no other man to say so. I'm an honest man, or at least I've always passed for one at home. I was out over the river yesterday, tryin' to git a hoss back to his owner, and a Captain of a cavalry company come along and took my hoss away, and give me this cow in exchange. He said his men'd got the cow down the road apiece, and that's all I know of her."

"A very likely story," sneered several of the staff.

"Let me see," said the General, who prided himself on remembering names and faces. "Haven't I met you before? Aren't you from Indiana?"

"Yes, sir; from Posey County."

"And you've got a son in one of the regiments?"

"Yes, sir. Corporal Si Klegg, Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteers. Him and his partner Shorty wuz badly wounded, and I come down here to take care of 'em. I've bin moseyin' around out in the country tryin' to find something for 'em to eat, and the other day I—borryed a hoss, which I was tryin' to take back,

when this cavalry Captain come along, and tuk the hoss away from me and give me this cow instid. I hadn't no idee where he got her, and he didn't give me time to ask, for he started on the jump after some guerrillas."

"I shouldn't wonder if his story is true, General," said a member of the staff. "You see, your cow has been gone really two days. Day before yesterday we sent Blue Jim out into the country with her. She needed it awfully. We laid the law down to Blue Jim about being very careful with her and keep her near the road. It seems that he found a good piece of meadow, and turned her loose in it, but then, nigger like, he forgot all that we had told him about staying light alongside of her, and wandered off to gather persimmons, and afterward fell asleep in a fence-corner. When he woke up the cow was gone, and he was scared nearly to death. He hunted around for her all day, and came in last night nearly starved to death, and whimpering and blubbering. We told him that you would order him shot as soon as you found out. He has been to see the Chaplain twice, to prepare for death."

"So?" said the General, smiling. "Well, Mr.— Mr.— I did know your name once—"

"Klegg, Josiah Klegg," answered the Deacon promptly.

"Yes; how stupid of me to forget it. Well, Mr. Klegg, I'm very much obliged to you for finding my cow and bringing her home. You've got a very fine son—splendid soldier. How is he getting along?"

"Tollably well, General, thank you. Look here, General,

please let me take those boys home. If you will, I'll send 'em back to you in a few weeks good as new. All they need is mother's cookin' and mother's nursin' to bring 'em right out. And I want to go home, too. The army is demoralizin' me. I guess I'm gittin' old, and 'm not as strong to resist sin and the suggestions of sin as I once was. I'm gittin' scared of myself down here."

"It's pretty hard work getting back now," said the General. "Do you think you can do it, if I give you leave?"

"O, yes. Jest give the order, and I'll get the boys and myself back home, sure's you're livin'."

"Very well," said the General; "you shall have the chance." He turned to one of his staff and said:

"Look into this matter. If the Surgeon thinks they can be moved, have furloughs and transportation made out for them and the father. Good-by, Mr. Klegg. Take good care of those boys, and send them back to me as soon as they are well."

CHAPTER IV. THE DEACON'S PLAN

DEALING WITH AN OBSTRUCTION TO THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY

THE Surgeon, who had conceived quite a good opinion of the Deacon's ability, readily certified that the boys could be safely taken home, since they would have the benefit of his care and attention, and the necessary papers came down from Headquarters that day. The Deacon had the good luck to find his old friend, the Herd-Boss, who took a deep interest in the matter. He offered to have as good a team as he had at the crib the next morning, with the wagon-bed filled with cedar-boughs, to make as easy a couch as possible for the rough ride over the mountains.

With his heart full of hope and joy, the Deacon bustled around to make every possible preparation for the journey.

"It's a long way back home, I know," he said to himself, "and the road's rough and difficult as that to the New Jerusalem; but Faith and Hope, and the blessin' o' God'll accomplish wonders. If I kin only hold the souls in them boys' bodies till I kin git 'em back to Bean Blossom Crick, I'll trust Mother Klegg's nursin' to do the rest. If there ever was a woman who could stand off the

Destroyin' Angel by good nursin' that woman's Mother Klegg, bless her soul."

The next morning he was up betimes, and cooked the boys as good a breakfast as he could out of the remainder of his store and what he could get from the hospital, and then gave what was left to whoever came. The comfortable crib, which had cost the Deacon so much labor, had been pre-empted by the Surgeon for some of his weakest patients.

The news had reached the 200th Ind. that the boys were going home, and they came over in a body to say "Good-by."

The sight of them pained the Deacon's good heart. Instead of the hundreds of well-fed, well-clothed, comfortable-looking young men he had seen at Murfreesboro a few months before, he now saw a shrunken band of gaunt, unkempt men, their clothing ragged and patched, many of them almost shoeless, many of them with pieces of blankets bound around their feet instead of shoes, many of them with bandages about their still unhealed wounds, but still keeping their places bravely with their comrades, and stubbornly refusing to count themselves among the sick and disabled, though it required all their will-power to do their share of the duty. But all of them were brimming over with unconquerable cheerfulness and pluck. They made light of their wounds and disabilities, jested at one another's ragged clothes, laughed at their hunger, teased one another about stealing corn from mules, jeered at the rebel shells from Lookout Mountain, yelled derisively at the rebel pickets across the creek,

and promised them to soon come out and run Bragg's army off the face of the earth.

All were eager to do something toward the comfort of their departing comrades. They scanned the arrangement of the boughs in the wagon with critical eyes, and picked them over and rearranged them, so as to avoid every chance of uncomfortable knots and lumps. They contributed blankets from their own scanty supply, to make sure that there would be plenty, and so many were eager to help carry Si out and put him in the wagon, that the Orderly-Sergeant of Co. Q had to take charge of the matter and make a detail. The teamster was given strong admonitions as to careful driving, and fearful warning as to what would happen to him in case of an accident.

"Hain't anything to send back home with you, boys, this time, but our love," said one of them. "That's the only thing that's safe now-a-days from bein' stole, because no one kin eat or wear it. Tell the folks to pay no attention to what the paper says. No danger o' bein' run out o' Chattanooga. Tell 'em that we're all fat, ragged and sassy, and only waitin' the word from Gen. Rosecrans to fall on old Bragg like a thousand o' brick and mash the lights outen him."

"Yes," joined another, "tell 'em we've got plenty to eat, sich as it is, and good enough, what there is of it. Don't worry about us. We're only blowin' up our muscle to git a good lick at old Bragg."

"Your muscle," said Shorty, satirically. "You've got about as much muscle now as a musketo. But you're good stuff all the

same, and you're goin' to everlastingly lick the rebels when the time comes. I only wisht I was here to help you do it. I don't think I'll go any further than Nashville. I'll be well enough to come back by that time. I'll see Si and his father off safely, and then gether up a crowd of other convalescents, and come back and clean the rebels off your cracker line."

"Good-by, boys," piped out Si. "I'll be back soon. Don't bring on the big battle till I do. I want to help. Just skirmish around and push the rebels back into the woods while I'm gone, and hive 'em up for a good lickin' by the time I git back."

As the wagon moved off the 200th Ind. gave three cheers, and the regimental soloist struck up the "Battle Cry of Freedom," in which they all joined with so much energy as to attract the attention of the rebel artillerist on Lookout Mountain, who favored them with a shell intended for their express benefit. It was no better directed than any of its many predecessors had been, and was greeted with yells of derision, in which all the camp joined.

Having done all possible for the boys' comfort, the Deacon had lighted his pipe and taken his seat on a board laid over the front, where he could oversee the road and the teamster, and take a parting look at the animated scenery. The wagon pulled into the line of those moving out toward Bridgeport, and jogged along slowly for some hours until it was nearing the top of one of the hills that jutted out close to the Tennessee River, at the base of Lookout Mountain. The Deacon saw, with a little nervousness,

that they were approaching the open space in which he had had his experience with the horse and buckboard, and he anxiously scanned the Craven House slope for signs of a rebel cannon. He saw that his apprehensions were shared by the drivers of the three or four teams just ahead. They were whipping up, and yelling at their teams to get past the danger point as quick as possible.

They had need of anxiety. A scattering volley of shots came from the bushes and the rocks on the opposite side of the Tennessee River and one of the leaders in the team just ahead of him dropped dead in his tracks. The teams in front were whipped up still harder, and succeeded in getting away. The shots were answered from a line of our own men on this side of the river, who fired at the smoke they saw rising.

The Deacon's own teamster sprang from his saddle, and prudently got in the shelter of the wagon until the affair would be over. The teamster next ahead ran forward, and began cutting the fallen mule loose, but while he was doing so another shot laid the other mule low. The teamster fell fiat on the ground, and lay there for a minute. Then he cautiously arose, and began cutting that mule loose, when a shot struck the near-swing mule in the head, and he dropped. The Deacon kept that solid old head of his throughout the commotion, and surveyed the scene with cool observance.

"There's one feller somewhere over there doin' all that devilment," he said to Shorty, who was pushing his head eagerly out of the front of the wagon to find out what was going on.

"He's a sharpshooter from way back. You kin see he's droppin' them mules jest about as fast as he kin load his gun. Them other fellers over there are jest putterin' away, makin' a noise. You kin see their shots strikin' down the hill there, and everywhere, where they ain't doin' nothin'. But that feller's out for business. I've bin tryin' to locate him. He's somewhere closter than any o' the others. Their bullets don't quite reach, while his goes home every time. See there."

The off-swing mule dropped this time. "Land's sakes," ejaculated the Deacon, "he's costin' Uncle Sam \$150 every time his gun cracks. It's jest sinful to be destroyin' property that way. Shorty, kin you reach me that gun o' Si's out o' the wagon? I believe I'll slip down toward the bank and see if I can't find that feller. I've bin watchin' the willers along the aidge o' the water, and I believe he's in there."

"Don't go, Pap," pleaded Si. "Some of the boys on the skirmish-line 'll find him soon, and settle him. Don't expose yourself. Stay behind the wagon."

"Yes, stay back under cover, Deacon," joined in Shorty. "Let the boys down there 'tend to him. They're gittin' \$16 a month for it, and don't want nobody else to interfere in their job." Just then the near wheel mule dropped. "Gi' me that gun at onct," said the Deacon sternly. Shorty handed him the Springfield and its cartridge-box without another word. The Deacon looked over the rifle, "hefted" it, and tried it at his shoulder to get its poise, critically examined its sights by aiming at various objects, and

then wiped out its barrel, as he would that of his trusty hunting-rifle at home. All of his old deer-hunting instincts revived. He took out several cartridges, turned them over in his hand, and carefully selected one, tore open the paper, poured the powder in, removed the paper from the ball, and carefully rammed it home, struck the butt of the gun on the ground to make sure of its priming, and put on the cap.

"Hold her about a foot under. Pap, at 400 yards," said Si, who had rolled over to the side of the wagon, and was watching him from under the cover, which was raised up a little. "Put your sights up to the 400 mark, and then draw the top o' the bead down fine into that notch, and she'll put it right where you hold her."

By this time the sharpshooter had finished up the mules on the team ahead, and begun on that of the Deacon. The firing was furious all along both sides of the river, and the teamsters in the rear were showing signs of stampeding. The Wagonmaster was storming up and down to hold them in place, and the officers in command of the line along the river bank were raging at their men for not suppressing the fire from over the stream.

"Old man, you'd better not go down there," said a Captain as the Deacon came walking down, looking very grim and determined. "It's getting hotter down there every minute. The rebels seem determined to stick to their work, and I've had three men wounded already."

"Look out for your own men, my son," answered the Deacon, in whom the fire of battle was burning. "I'll look out for myself."

If I'm hit the Gover'nment won't lose nothin'. I'm only a citizen."

He had kept his eye on the clump of willows, and was sure that his man was in there, though the smoke hung around so confusingly that he could not always make out where a fresh shot came from. He got down to where an occasional bullet struck in his neighborhood, but that did not disturb him. He began to feel that thrill of man-hunting which when it seizes a man is an overpowering passion.

"I'm goin' to stop him killin' mules," he said to himself. "I rayly hope I won't kill him, but that's a secondary matter. Providence'll settle that. It's my duty to stop him. That's clear. If his time's come Providence'll put the bullet where it'll kill him. If it ain't, it won't. That's all. Providence indicates my duty to me. The responsibility for the rest is with Providence, who doeth all things well."

He reached the firing-line, strung along the ragged bluffs, and hiding behind trees, stumps and stones.

"Lay down, there, old man; grab a root; keep under cover, or you'll git hit," some of them called out to him, noticing him as they turned to load. "The air is so full o' bullets you kin ketch your hat full if you only hold it up."

"All right, boys, I'll lay low. I've come down here to help you," answered the Deacon.

"Bully for you; we need it."

The Deacon took his position behind a big black walnut, while he reconnoitered the situation, and got his bearings on the clump

of willows. He felt surer than ever of his man, for he actually saw a puff of smoke come from it, and saw that right behind the puff stood a willow that had grown to the proportions of a small tree, and had its bark rubbed off by the chafing of driftwood against it.

"He's right behind that peeled wilier," the Deacon said, "and takes a rest agin it. Three inches to the left o' that, and three foot from the ground'll take him square in the breast, as he is probably kneeling down."

Before him he noticed a deep gully cut in the bank, by which he could get down to the water's edge where there was a clump of paw-paws projecting out toward the willows. If he went down there it would make his shot surer, but there was much danger that he would be noticed and fired at on his way.

"I'm goin' down there," he said, after a moment's deliberation. "Providence has sent me on this job, and intends I shall do it right, which I kin by goin' down there. Providence'll take care o' me while I'm goin'. Same time, Providence expects me to show gumption, by not exposin' myself any more'n possible."

Therefore he cut a young, thick-branched cedar and held it in front of him as he crouched and made his way to the gully and down it.

He had nearly reached the cover of the paw-paws, and was beginning to congratulate himself that his cedar screen and the turmoil on the bank above had enabled him to escape attention, when a bullet struck a stone to his left, and threw it against him with such force as to almost knock all the breath out of his body.

He fell to the ground, but retained coolness enough to understand that this was to his advantage, and he crawled slowly forward until he was safely behind the bushes.

"That come from that hound in the willers," said he to himself. "He's a sharp one. He got on to me somehow, and now it's me and him fur it. Anyhow, he didn't kill a mule worth \$150 with that bullet. But it'll take as much as six bits' worth o' porous plaster to take the swellin' out o' my side where that rock welted me."

He hitched forward cautiously a little farther, to where he could peer through the bushes, being exceedingly wary not to repeat his opponent's mistake, and set their tops in motion. A rock protruding through the ground in front of him made an opening through which he could see, and also afforded a rest for his musket. He looked sharply, and at length was rewarded by seeing the gun-barrel come out by the side of the barked willow, rested on a bare limb, and apparently aimed at the hill beyond. He took a long breath to steady his nerves, stretched out his legs to make himself more at ease, pushed his musket forward until he got exactly the right poise, aimed about nine inches below the level of his opponent's gun-barrel, and a little to the left, drew his bead down to a hair's nicety in the hind sight, and pulled the trigger just as the rebel sharpshooter did the same. Both muskets seemed to flash at the same moment. The rebel sprang up through the willows and fell forward on his face.

The Deacon picked up his gun and walked back up the bank. The Union skirmishers had seen the man fall and raised a yell,

which they changed to cheers as they saw the Deacon coming up the bank.

The Captain in command came up and said:

"Sir, I congratulate you. That was splendidly done. I was just getting on to that fellow when you went down. I watched you through my glass, and saw you fetch him. You are entitled to all our thanks."

"No thanks to me, sir. I only done the dooty Providence marked out for me. I hope the man ain't killed. If he is, it's because Providence had fixed the number of his days. I only wanted to stop his killin' mules, and destroyin' Gover'ment property, and let us go on our journey in peace."

"Well, I wish you'd stay here and help us with some more of those fellows over there. I'm sure their time has come, but my men don't seem to be quite as good in carrying out the decrees of Providence as you are."

"Thankee, sir," said the Deacon. "But I must go back and 'tend to my boys. We've got a long ways to go yet to-day."

He went back to the road and reported to the Wagonmaster:

"Now you kin clear away them dead mules and go ahead. You won't scarcely be bothered any more for awhile at least."

CHAPTER V. TROUBLE ENCOUNTERED

THE BOYS MEET AN OLD FRIEND AND ARE TAKEN HOME IN A HURRY

IT WAS not until late the next afternoon that the wagon-train finally reached Bridgeport, and the weak, wornout mules had at last a respite from straining through the mud, under the incessant nagging of the teamsters' whips and their volleyed blasphemy.

The Deacon's merciful heart had been moved by the sufferings of the poor beasts. He had done all that he could on the journey to lighten the labor of those attached to his own wagon. He had restrained as much as possible the St. Vitus Dance of the teamster's keen whip, uselessly remonstrated with him against his profanity, carried a rail to help pry the wheels out of the mudholes, and got behind and pushed going up the steep hills. At the journey's end when the exhausted brutes stood motionless, with their ears drooping and their eyes looking unutterable disgust at everything connected with the army and war, the Deacon helped the teamster take their harness off, and carry them as much corn and hay as the Forage-Master could be persuaded to dole out to them.

The Deacon's next solicitude was to get the boys aboard a train that would start out soon. This was a sore perplexity. All was rush and bustle about the railroad yard. Trains were coming, being switched hither and yon, unloaded, and reloaded, and going, in a way that was simply bewildering to the plain farmer. Men in uniform and men in plain clothes were giving orders, and these were obeyed, and everybody seemed too busy to answer questions or give information.

"Naw; git out. Don't bother me with no questions, I tell you," impatiently said a man in citizen's clothes, who with arms outspread was signalling the switching engines. "'Tain't my business to give information to people. Got all I kin do to furnish brains for them bull-headed engineers. Go to that Quartermaster you see over there in uniform. The Government pays him for knowin' things. It don't me."

"I don't know anything about the different cars, my friend," said the Quartermaster haughtily. "That's the business of the railroad people. I simply order them to make up the trains for me, and they do the rest. There's a Yard-Master over there. Go ask him."

"Blazes and brimstone," exploded the Yard-Master; "how in the devil's name do you suppose I can tell anything about the trains going out? I'm just pestered to death by such fool questions, while the life's being worried out of me by these snoozers with sardine-labels on their shoulders, who strut around and give orders, and don't know enough about railroading to tell

a baggage-check from a danger-signal. If they'd only let me alone I'd have all these trains running in and out like shuttles in a loom. But as soon's I get one arranged down comes a shoulderstrap and orders something different. Go off and ask somebody that wears brass buttons and a basswood head. Don't bother me. Get out of the way of that engine there."

In despair, the Deacon turned to a man who wore a Major's shoulder-straps.

"No," he answered; "I'm sorry to say that I cannot give you any information. I'm only in command of the guards here. I haven't anything to do with the trains. The Quartermasters run them, and they run them as they run everything they have anything to do with—like the old man and woman run their fulling mill on the Kankakee—that is, like—

"Dumb this mixin' o' military and civilian," said the irritated Deacon, "It's worse'n mixin' religion and politics, and preachin' and tavern-keepin'. Down there in camp everything was straight and systematic. Every feller what don't have nothin' in his shoulder-straps bosses all the fellers what hain't no shoulder-straps at all. The feller what has one bar in his shoulder-straps bosses all the fellers what hain't nothin' in theirs, and the feller what has two bars bosses the fellers with but one; the feller with leaves gives orders to the fellers with bars; the feller with an eagle lays clear over him, and the man with a star jest makes everybody jump when he talks. Out at the depot on Bean Blossom Crick Sol Pringle has the say about everything. He knows when the trains

come and when they go, and what goes into 'em. This seems to be a betwixt and between place, neither pork nor bacon, I don't like it at all, I always want things straight—either one thing or t'other—reg'ler close communion, total-immersion Babtist, or free-for-all, shoutin' Methodist."

"I think I can help you, 'Squire," said a big, goodnatured-looking civilian railroad man, who had become interested in the Deacon's troubles. "I've bin around with the Assistant Yard-Boss pickin' out a lot o' empties to hustle back to Nashville for grub. That's one o' them over there, on the furthest switch—X634. See? It's got a chalk mark on it. I'll help you carry your boys into it, and fix 'em comfortable, and you'll go back with it all right."

The Deacon turned gladly to him. The man summoned some of his friends, who speedily transferred Si and Shorty, with their belongings, cedar boughs and all, to the car, and made them as comfortable as possible, and added some little offerings of their own to contribute to the ease of the journey. They bestired themselves to find something to eat that the boys would relish, and brought out from somewhere a can of peaches and one of tomatoes, which proved very acceptable. The Deacon was overwhelmed with gratitude.

"I want every one of you to come up to my house, whenever you git a chance," he said, "and make a long visit. You shall have the very best that there is on my farm, and if you don't live well it won't be Maria Klegg's fault. She'll jest lay herself out to be good to men who's bin good to her son, and when she lays herself

out to git up a dinner the Burnett House in Cincinnati takes a back seat."

Feeling entirely at ease, he climbed into the car, with a copy of the Cincinnati Gazette, which he had bought of a newsboy, lighted his pipe, put on his spectacles, and settled down to a labored, but thorough perusal of the paper, beginning at the head-lines on the upper left-hand corner, and taking in every word, advertisements and all, as systematically as he would weed a garden-bed or milk a cow. The Deacon never did anything slipshod, especially when he had to pay 10 cents for a copy of the Cincinnati Gazette. He was going to get his full money's worth, and if it was not in the news and editorials, he would take it out of the advertisements and patent medicine testimonials. He was just going through a convincing testimonial to the manifold virtues of Spalding's Prepared Glue, when there was a bump, the sound of coupling, and his car began to move off.

"Glory, we're goin' home!" shouted the Deacon, waving his paper exultingly to the railroad men who had been so helpful. But he exulted prematurely. The engine rattled ahead sharply for a few hundred yards, and then began backing to opposite the spot where it had started from.

"That's all right," said his railroads friends encouragingly. "She's just run back on the other switch to take up a couple more cars. She'll go ahead all right presently."

"I hope it is all right," said the Deacon, a little abashed; "but I never had any use for a hoss that went back more'n he did

forrard."

But this was only the first of many similar experiences, which occupied the rest of the day.

"Good gracious, do they want to wear the track and wheels and injines clean out?" grumbled the Deacon. "No wonder they're all out o' order. If I jammed my wagon back and forrard this way it wouldn't last a month. No wonder war-taxes are high, with everybody doin' all they kin to waste and destroy property. I've a great mind to write to Gen. Rosecrans or President Lincoln callin' attention to the way their hired men monkey around, and waste time, and don't accomplish nothin'."

Some time after dark, and after the Deacon's patience had become well-nigh exhausted, the railroad men came around with a lantern, and told him that at last it was settled, and the train would move out very soon. There had been conflicting orders during the day, but now the Chief Quartermaster at Nashville had ordered the train forward. Sure enough, the train pulled out presently, and went rattling up toward Shelbyville. Again the Deacon's heart bounded high, and after watching the phantom-like roadside for awhile, he grew very sleepy, and crawled in alongside of Si. He waked up at daylight, and went at once to the car-door hopefully expecting to recognize the outskirts of Nashville, or at least Murfreesboro. To his dismay, he saw the same sutler's shanty, mule-corral, pile of baled-hay, and the embalmer's sign on a tree which had been opposite them while standing on the track at Bridgeport.

Shorty swore volubly, and for once the Deacon did not check him, but was sinfully conscious in his heart of approving the profanity.

"Swearin's awful wicked and low," he said to himself. "A sensible man can get along without it ordinarily, by the grace o' God and hard tryin', though I've knowed a yoke o' dumbed steers in a stumpy field to purty nigh overcome me. But the army's no common experience, and I s'pose a man's justified in bustin' out in a time like this. Old Job was lucky that he didn't have to ride on an army railroad."

His railroad friend again came up with some hot coffee and broiled meat, and explained that after the train had reached a station some miles out it got orders to run back and clear the track for some trains of troops from the Army of the Potomac which were being rushed through. The Deacon's heart almost sank in despair, but he took the coffee and meat, and helped the boys to it. As they were all eating they heard a voice outside which struck on the chords of their memories:

"Where is that Yard-Boss? Where is that Yard-Boss? Find him and send him to me, immediately."

"That sounds like Levi Rosenbaum," said Shorty.

Si nodded affirmatively.

The Deacon looked out, and recognized Levi dressed in the height of fashion. On his jetty curls sat a glossy silk hat, his clothes looked as if just taken from the tailor's shop, and they fitted him to perfection. A large diamond flashed from his scarfpin, and

another gleamed in a ring on his right hand as he waved it in giving orders to the men around. Every eye was fixed on him, and when he spoke there was hastening to obey. The Yard-Boss was coming at a run.

"Why are those cotton-cars still standing there this morning, after the orders I gave you yesterday?" asked Levi, in tones of severest reprehension, as that official came up.

"Why, Mr. Rosenbaum," said that official apologetically—he was the same man who had so severely snubbed the Deacon the day before—"you see I had the train made up and all ready to start, when there came orders—"

"Whose orders?" demanded Levi. "Who dares give orders that over-ride mine? You go at once and have an engine—the best one you have—hitched on. Couple on my car, and be ready to start in 15 minutes. Fifteen minutes I give you," continued he, looking at his watch. "Tell the Train Dispatcher to clear everything into switches until we get to Murfreesboro, and have the operator at Murfreesboro lay by everything till we get to Nashville."

The Yard-Boss rushed off to execute the order.

"Great Jehosephat, what's come over Levi?" muttered Shorty. "Has he become the High-muk-a-muk of the whole army? Have they put him in Gen. Rosecrans's place?"

"Will I dare to speak to such a high-flyer?" said the Deacon, doubtfully.

Levi's eyes, flashed from one point to another, rested on the Deacon for a moment, and the latter wreathed his face with a

grin of recognition. Then Levi's stern countenance relaxed with a still broader grin.

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