

ALTSHELER JOSEPH ALEXANDER

THE GUNS OF BULL RUN:
A STORY OF THE CIVIL
WAR'S EVE

Joseph Altsheler

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CHAPTER I

NEWS FROM CHARLESTON

It would soon be Christmas and Harry Kenton, at his desk in the Pendleton Academy, saw the snow falling heavily outside. The school stood on the skirt of the town, and the forest came down to the edge of the playing field. The great trees, oak and ash and elm, were clothed in white, and they stood out a vast and glittering tracery against the somber sky.

The desk was of the old kind, intended for two, and Harry's comrade in it was his cousin, Dick Mason, of his own years and size. They would graduate in June, and both were large and powerful for their age. There was a strong family resemblance and yet a difference. Harry's face was the more sensitive and at times the blood leaped like quicksilver in his veins. Dick's features indicated a quieter and more stubborn temper. They were equal favorites with teachers and pupils.

Dick's eyes followed Harry's, and he, too, looked at the falling snow and the white forest. Both were thinking of Christmas and the holiday season so near at hand. It was a rich section of Kentucky, and they were the sons of prosperous parents. The snow was fitting at such a time, and many joyous hours would be passed before they returned to school.

The clouds darkened and the snow fell faster. A wind rose and drove it against the panes. The boys heard the blast roaring outside and the comfort of the warm room was heightened by the contrast. Harry's eyes turned reluctantly back to his Tacitus and the customs and manners of the ancient Germans. The curriculum of the Pendleton Academy was simple, like most others at that time. After the primary grades it consisted chiefly of the classics and mathematics. Harry led in the classics and Dick in the mathematics.

Bob Turner, the free colored man, who was janitor of the academy, brought in the morning mail, a dozen letters and three or four newspapers, gave it to Dr. Russell and withdrew on silent feet.

The Doctor was principal of Pendleton Academy, and he always presided over the room in which sat the larger boys, nearly fifty in number. His desk and chair were on a low dais and he sat facing the pupils. He was a large man, with a ruddy face, and thick hair as white as the snow that was falling outside. He had been a teacher fifty years, and three generations in Pendleton owed to him most of the learning that is obtained from books. He opened his letters one by one, and read them slowly.

Harry moved far away into the German forest with old Tacitus. He was proud of his Latin and he did not mean to lose his place as first in the class. The other boys also were absorbed in their books. It was seldom that all were studious at the same time, but this was one of the rare moments. There was no shuffling of feet, and fifty heads were bent over their desks.

It was a full half hour before Harry looked up from his Tacitus. His first glance was at the window. The snow was driving hard, and the forest had become a white blur. He looked next at the Doctor and he saw that the ruddy face had turned white. The old man was gazing intently at an open letter in his hand. Two or three others had fallen to the floor. He read the letter again, folded it carefully, and put it in his pocket. Then he broke the wrapper on one of the newspapers and rapidly read its columns. The whiteness of his face deepened into pallor.

The slight tearing sound caused most of the boys to look up, and they noticed the change in the principal's face. They had never seen him look like that before. It was as if he had received some

sudden and deadly stroke. Yet he sat stiffly upright and there was no sound in the room but the rustling of the newspaper as he turned its pages.

Harry became conscious of some strange and subtle influence that had crept into the very air, and his pulse began to leap. The others felt it, too. There was a tense feeling in the room and they became so still that the soft beat of the snow on the windows could be heard.

Not a single eye was turned to a book now. All were intent upon the Doctor, who still read the newspaper, his face without a trace of color, and his strong white hands trembling. He folded the paper presently, but still held it in his hand. As he looked up, he became conscious of the silence in the room, and of the concentrated gaze of fifty pairs of eyes bent upon him. A little color returned to his cheeks, and his hands ceased to tremble. He stood up, took the letter from his pocket, and opened it again.

Dr. Russell was a striking figure, belonging to a classic type found at its best in the border states. A tall man, he held himself erect, despite his years, and the color continued to flow back into the face, which was shaped in a fine strong mold.

"Boys," he said, in a firm, full voice, although it showed emotion, "I have received news which I must announce to you. As I tell it, I beg that you will restrain yourselves, and make little comment here. Its character is such that you are not likely ever to hear anything of more importance."

No one spoke, but a thrill of excitement ran through the room. Harry became conscious that the strange and subtle influence had increased. The pulses in both temples were beating hard. He and Dick leaned forward, their elbows upon the desk, their lips parted a little in attention.

"You know," continued Dr. Russell in the full voice that trembled slightly, "of the troubles that have arisen between the states, North and South, troubles that the best Americans, with our own great Henry Clay at the head, have striven to avert. You know of the election of Lincoln, and how this beloved state of ours, seeking peace, voted for neither Lincoln nor Breckinridge, both of whom are its sons."

The trembling of his voice increased and he paused again. It was obvious that he was stirred by deep emotion and it communicated itself to the boys. Harry was conscious that the thrill, longer and stronger than before, ran again through the room.

"I have just received a letter from an old friend in Charleston," continued Dr. Russell in a shaking voice, "and he tells me that on the twentieth, three days ago, the state of South Carolina seceded from the Union. He also sends me copies of two of the Charleston newspapers of the day following. In both of these papers all despatches from the other states are put under the head, 'Foreign News.' With the Abolitionists of New England pouring abuse upon all who do not agree with them, and the hot heads of South Carolina rushing into violence, God alone knows what will happen to this distracted country that all of us love so well."

He turned anew to his correspondence. But Harry saw that he was trembling all over. An excited murmur arose. The boys began to talk about the news, and the principal, his thoughts far away, did not call them to order.

"I suppose since South Carolina has gone out that other southern states will do the same," said Harry to his cousin, "and that two republics will stand where but one stood before."

"I don't know that the second result will follow the first," replied Dick Mason.

Harry glanced at him. He was conscious of a certain cold tenacity in Dick's voice. He felt that a veil of antagonism had suddenly been drawn between these two who were the sons of sisters and who had been close comrades all their lives. His heart swelled suddenly. As if by inspiration, he saw ahead long and terrible years. He said no more, but gazed again at the pages of his Tacitus, although the letters only swam before his eyes.

The great buzz subsided at last, although there was not one among the boys who was not still thinking of the secession of South Carolina. They had shared in the excitement of the previous year.

A few had studied the causes, but most were swayed by propinquity and kinship, which with youth are more potent factors than logic.

The afternoon passed slowly. Dr. Russell, who always heard the recitations of the seniors in Latin, did not call the class. Harry was so much absorbed in other thoughts that he did not notice the fact. Outside, the clouds still gathered and the soft beat of the snow on the window panes never ceased. The hour of dismissal came at last and the older boys, putting on their overcoats, went silently out. Harry did not dream that he had passed the doors of Pendleton Academy for the last time, as a student.

While the seniors were quiet, there was no lack of noise from the younger lads. Snowballs flew and the ends of red comforters, dancing in the wind, touched the white world with glowing bits of color. Harry looked at them with a sort of pity. The magnified emotions of youth had suddenly made him feel very old and very responsible. When a snowball struck him under the ear he paid no attention to it, a mark of great abstraction in him.

He and his cousin walked gravely on, and left the shouting crowd behind them. Three or four hundred yards further, they came upon the main street of Pendleton, a town of fifteen hundred people, important in its section as a market, and as a financial and political center. It had two banks as solid as stone, and it was the proud boast of its inhabitants that, excepting Louisville and Lexington, its bar was of unequalled talent in the state. Other towns made the same claim, but no matter. Pendleton knew that they were wrong. Lawyers stood very high, especially when they were fluent speakers.

It was a singular fact that the two boys, usually full of talk, after the manner of youth, did not speak until they came to the parting of their ways. Then Harry, the more emotional of the two, and conscious that the veil of antagonism was still between them, thrust out his hand suddenly and said:

"Whatever happens, Dick, you and I must not quarrel over it. Let's pledge our word here and now that, being of the same blood and having grown up together, we will always be friends."

The color in the cheeks of the other boy deepened. A slight moisture appeared in his eyes. He was, on the whole, more reserved than Harry, but he, too, was stirred. He took the outstretched hand and gave it a strong clasp.

"Always, Harry," he replied. "We don't think alike, maybe, about the things that are coming, but you and I can't quarrel."

He released the hand quickly, because he hated any show of emotion, and hurried down a side street to his home. Harry walked on into the heart of the town, as he lived farther away on the other side. He soon had plenty of evidence that the news of South Carolina's secession had preceded him here. There had been no such stir in Pendleton since they heard of Buena Vista, where fifty of her sons fought and half of them fell.

Despite the snow, the streets about the central square were full of people. Many of the men were reading newspapers. It was fifteen miles to the nearest railroad station, and the mail had come in at noon, bringing the first printed accounts of South Carolina's action. In this border state, which was a divided house from first to last, men still guarded their speech. They had grown up together, and they were all of blood kin, near or remote.

"What will it mean?" said Harry to old Judge Kendrick.

"War, perhaps, my son," replied the old man sadly. "The violence of New England in speech and the violence of South Carolina in action may start a flood. But Kentucky must keep out of it. I shall raise my voice against the fury of both factions, and thank God, our people have never refused to hear me."

He spoke in a somewhat rhetorical fashion, natural to time and place, but he was in great earnest. Harry went on, and entered the office of the Pendleton News, the little weekly newspaper which dispensed the news, mostly personal, within a radius of fifty miles. He knew that the News would appear on the following day, and he was anxious to learn what Mr. Gardner, the editor, a friend of his, would have to say in his columns.

He walked up the dusty stairway and entered the room, where the editor sat amid piles of newspapers. Mr. Gardner was a youngish man, high-colored and with longish hair. He was absorbed so deeply in a copy of the Louisville Journal that he did not hear Harry's step or notice his coming until the boy stood beside him. Then he looked up and said dryly:

"Too many sparks make a blaze at last. If people keep on quarreling there's bound to be a fight some time or other. I suppose you've heard that South Carolina has seceded."

"Dr. Russell announced it at the school. Are you telling, Mr. Gardner, what the News will have to say about it?"

"I don't mind," replied the editor, who was fond of Harry, and who liked his alert mind. "If it comes to a breach, I'm going with my people. It's hard to tell what's right or wrong, but my ancestors belonged to the South and so do I."

"That's just the way I feel!" exclaimed Harry vehemently.

The editor smiled.

"But I don't intend to say so in the News tomorrow," he continued. "I shall try to pour oil upon the waters, although I won't be able to hide my Southern leanings. The Colonel, your father, Harry, will not seek to conceal his."

"No," said Harry. "He will not. What was that?"

The sound of a shot came from the street. The two ran hurriedly down the stairway. Three men were holding a fourth who struggled with them violently. One had wrenched from his hand a pistol still smoking at the muzzle. About twenty feet away was another man standing between two who held him tightly, although he made no effort to release himself.

Harry looked at the two captives. They made a striking contrast. The one who fought was of powerful build, and dressed roughly. His whole appearance indicated the primitive human being, and Harry knew immediately that he was one of the mountaineers who came long distances to trade or carouse in Pendleton.

The man who faced the mountaineer, standing quietly between those who held him, was young and slender, though tall. His longish black hair was brushed carefully. The natural dead whiteness of his face was accentuated by his black mustache, which turned up at the ends like that of a duelist. He was dressed in black broadcloth, the long coat buttoned closely about his body, but revealing a full and ruffled shirt bosom as white as snow. His face expressed no emotion, but the mountaineer cursed violently.

"I can read the story at once," said the editor, shrugging his shoulders. "I know the mountaineer. He's Bill Skelly, a rough man, prone to reach for the trigger, especially when he's full of bad whiskey as he is now, and the other, Arthur Travers, is no stranger to you. Skelly is for the abolition of slavery. All the mountaineers are. Maybe it's because they have no slaves themselves and hate the more prosperous and more civilized lowlanders who do have them. Harry, my boy, as you grow older you'll find that reason and logic seldom control men's lives."

"Skelly was excited over the news from South Carolina," said Harry, continuing the story, which he, too, had read, as an Indian reads a trail, "and he began to drink. He met Travers and cursed the slave-holders. Travers replied with a sneer, which the mountaineer could not understand, except that it hurt. Skelly snatched out his pistol and fired wildly. Travers drew his and would have fired, although not so wildly, but friends seized him. Meanwhile, others overpowered Skelly and Travers is not excited at all, although he watches every movement of his enemy, while seeming to be indifferent."

"You read truly, Harry," said Gardner. "It was a fortunate thing for Skelly that he was overpowered. Somehow, those two men facing each other seem, in a way, to typify conditions in this part of the country at least."

Harry was now watching Travers, who always aroused his interest. A lawyer, twenty-seven or eight years of age, he had little practice, and seemed to wish little. He had a wonderful reputation for

dexterity with cards and the pistol. A native of Pendleton, he was the son of parents from one of the Gulf States, and Harry could never quite feel that he was one of their own Kentucky blood and breed.

"You can release me," said Travers quietly to the young men who stood on either side of him holding his arms. "I think the time has come to hunt bigger game than a fool there like Skelly. He is safe from me."

He spoke with a supercilious scorn which impressed Harry, but which he did not wholly admire. Travers seemed to him to have the quiet deadliness of the cobra. There was something about him that repelled. The men released him. He straightened his long black coat, smoothed the full ruffles of his shirt and walked away, as if nothing had happened.

Skelly ceased to struggle. The aspect of the crowd, which was largely hostile, sobered him. Steve Allison, the town constable, appeared and, putting his hand heavily upon the mountaineer's shoulder, said:

"You come with me, Skelly."

But old Judge Kendrick intervened.

"Let him go, Steve," he said. "Send him back to the mountains."

"But he tried to kill a man, Judge."

"I know, but extraordinary times demand extraordinary methods. A great and troubled period has come into all our lives. Maybe we're about to face some terrible crisis. Isn't that so?"

"Yes," replied the crowd.

"Then we must not hurry it or make it worse by sudden action. If Skelly is punished, the mountaineers will say it is political. I appeal to you, Dr. Russell, to sustain me."

The white head of the principal showed above the crowd.

"Judge Kendrick is right," he said. "Skelly must be permitted to go. His action, in fact, was due to the strained conditions that have long prevailed among us, and was precipitated by the alarming message that has come today. For the sake of peace, we must let him go."

"All right, then," said Allison, "but he goes without his pistol."

Skelly was put upon his mountain pony, and he rode willingly away amid the snow and the coming dusk, carrying, despite his release, a bitter heart into the mountains, and a tale that would inflame the jealousy with which upland regarded lowland.

The crowd dispersed. Gardner returned to his office, and Harry went home. He lived in the best house in or about Pendleton and his father was its wealthiest citizen. George Kenton, having inherited much land in Kentucky, and two or three plantations further south had added to his property by good management. A strong supporter of slavery, actual contact with the institution on a large scale in the Gulf States had not pleased him, and he had sold his property there, reinvesting the money in his native and, as he believed, more solid state. His title of colonel was real. A graduate of West Point, he had fought bravely with Scott in all the battles in the Valley of Mexico, but now retired and a widower, he lived in Pendleton with Harry, his only child.

Harry approached the house slowly. He knew that his father was a man of strong temper and he wondered how he would take the news from Charleston. All the associations of Colonel Kenton were with the extreme Southern wing, and his influence upon his son was powerful.

But the Pendleton home, standing just beyond the town, gave forth only brightness and welcome. The house itself, large and low, built massively of red brick, stood on the crest of a gentle slope in two acres of ground. The clipped cones of pine trees adorned the slopes, and made parallel rows along the brick walk, leading to the white portico that formed the entrance to the house. Light shone from a half dozen windows.

It seemed fine and glowing to Harry. His father loved his home, and so did he. The twilight had now darkened into night and the snow still drove, but the house stood solid and square to wind and winter, and the flame from its windows made broad bands of red and gold across the snow. Harry went briskly up the walk and then stood for a few moments in the portico, shaking the snow off his

overcoat and looking back at the town, which lay in a warm cluster in the hollow below. Many lights twinkled there, and it occurred to Harry that they would twinkle later than usual that night.

He opened the door, hung his hat and overcoat in the hall, and entered the large apartment which his father and he habitually used as a reading and sitting room. It was more than twenty feet square, with a lofty ceiling. A home-made carpet, thick, closely woven, and rich in colors covered the floor. Around the walls were cases containing books, mostly in rich bindings and nearly all English classics. American work was scarcely represented at all. The books read most often by Colonel Kenton were the novels of Walter Scott, whom he preferred greatly to Dickens. Scott always wrote about gentlemen. A great fire of hickory logs blazed on the wide hearth.

Colonel Kenton was alone in the room. He stood at the edge of the hearth, with his back to the fire and his hands crossed behind him. His tanned face was slightly pale, and Harry saw that he had been subjected to great nervous excitement, which had not yet wholly abated.

The colonel was a tall man, broad of chest, but lean and muscular. He regarded his son attentively, and his eyes seemed to ask a question.

"Yes," said Harry, although his father had not spoken a word. "I've heard of it, and I've already seen one of its results."

"What is that?" asked Colonel Kenton quickly.

"As I came through town Bill Skelly, a mountaineer, shot at Arthur Travers. It came out of hot words over the news from Charleston. Nobody was hurt, and they've sent Skelly on his pony toward his mountains."

Colonel Kenton's face clouded.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I fear that Travers will be much too free with stinging remarks. It's a time when men should control their tongues. Do you be careful with yours. You're a youth in years, but you're a man in size, and you should be a man in thought, too. You and I have been close together, and I have trusted you, even when you were a little boy."

"It's so, father," replied Harry, with affection and gratitude.

"And I'm going to trust you yet further. It may be that I shall give you a task requiring great skill and energy."

The colonel looked closely at his son, and he gave silent approval to the tall, well-knit form, and the alert, eager face.

"We'll have supper presently," he said, "and then we will talk with visitors. Some you know and some you don't. One of them, who has come far, is already in the house."

Harry's eyes showed surprise, but he knew better than to ask questions. The colonel had carried his military training into private life.

"He is a distant relative of ours, very distant, but a relative still," continued Colonel Kenton. "You will meet him at supper. Be ready in a half hour."

The dinner of city life was still called supper in the South, and Harry hastened to his room to prepare. His heart began to throb with excitement. Now they were to have visitors at night and a mysterious stranger was there. He felt dimly the advance of great events.

Harry Kenton was a normal and healthy boy, but the discussions, the debates, and the passions sweeping over the Union throughout the year had sifted into Pendleton also. The news today had merely struck fire to tinder prepared already, and, infused with the spirit of youth, he felt much excitement but no depression. Making a careful toilet he descended to the drawing room a little before the regular time. Although he was early, his father was there before him, standing in his customary attitude with his back to the hearth, and his hands clasped behind him.

"Our guest will be down in a few minutes," said Colonel Kenton. "He comes from Charleston and his name is Raymond Louis Bertrand. I will explain how he is related to us."

He gave a chain of cousins extending on either side from the Kenton family and the Bertrand family until they joined in the middle. It was a slender tie of kinship, but it sufficed in the South. As he

finished, Bertrand himself came in, and was introduced formally to his Kentucky cousin. Harry would have taken him for a Frenchman, and he was, in very truth, largely of French blood. His black eyes and hair, his swarthy complexion, gleaming white teeth and quick, volatile manner showed a descendant of France who had come from the ancient soil by way of Hayti, and the great negro rebellion to the coast of South Carolina. He seemed strange and foreign to Harry, and yet he liked him.

"And this is my young cousin, the one who is likely to be so zealous for our cause," he said, smiling at Harry with flashing black eyes. "You are a stalwart lad. They grow bigger and stronger here than on our warm Carolina coast."

"Raymond arrived only three hours ago," said Colonel Kenton in explanation. "He came directly from Charleston, leaving only three hours after the resolution in favor of secession was adopted."

"And a rough journey it was," said Bertrand vivaciously. "I was rattled and shaken by the trains, and I made some of the connections by horseback over the wild hills. Then it was a long ride through the snow to your hospitable home here, my good cousin, Colonel Kenton. But I had minute directions, and no one noticed the stranger who came so quietly around the town, and then entered your house."

Harry said nothing but watched him intently. Bertrand spoke with a rapid lightness and grace and an abundance of gesture, to which he was not used in Kentucky. He ate plentifully, and, although his manners were delicate, Harry felt to an increasing degree his foreign aspect and spirit. He did not wonder at it when he learned later that Bertrand, besides being chiefly of French blood, had also been educated in Paris.

"Was there much enthusiasm in South Carolina when the state seceded, Raymond?" asked Colonel Kenton.

"I saw the greatest joy and confidence everywhere," he replied, the color flaming through his olive face. "The whole state is ablaze. Charleston is the heart and soul of our new alliance. Rhett and Yancey of Alabama, and the great orators make the souls of men leap. Ah, sir, if you could only have been in Charleston in the course of recent months! If you could have heard the speakers! If you could have seen how the great and righteous Calhoun's influence lives after him! And then the writers! That able newspaper, the Mercury, has thundered daily for our cause. Simms, the novelist, and Timrod and Hayne, the poets have written for it. Let the cities of the North boast of their size and wealth, but they cannot match Charleston in culture and spirit and vivacity!"

Harry saw that Bertrand felt and believed every word he said, and his enthusiasm was communicated to the colonel, whose face flushed, and to Harry, too, whose own heart was beating faster.

"It was a great deed!" exclaimed Colonel Kenton. "South Carolina has always dared to speak her mind, but here in Kentucky some of the cold North's blood flows in our veins and we pause to calculate and consider. We must hasten events. Now, Raymond, we will go into the library. Our friends will be here in a half hour. Harry, you are to stay with us. I told you that you are to be trusted."

They left the table, and went into the great room where the fire had been built anew and was casting a ruddy welcome through the windows. The two men sat down before the blaze and each fell silent, engrossed in his thoughts. Harry felt a pleased excitement. Here was a great and mysterious affair, but he was going to have admittance to the heart of it. He walked to the window, lifted the curtain and looked out. A slender erect figure was already coming up the walk, and he recognized Travers.

Travers knocked at the door and was received cordially. Colonel Kenton introduced Bertrand, saying:

"The messenger from the South."

Travers shook hands and nodded also to signify that he understood. Then came Culver, the state senator from the district, a man of middle years, bulky, smooth shaven, and oratorical. He was followed soon by Bracken, a tobacco farmer on a great scale, Judge Kendrick, Reid and Wayne, both

lawyers, and several others, all of wealth or of influence in that region. Besides Harry, there were ten in the room.

"I believe that we are all here now," said Colonel Kenton. "I keep my son with us because, for reasons that I will explain later, I shall nominate him for the task that is needed."

"We do not question your judgment, colonel," said Senator Culver. "He is a strong and likely lad. But I suggest that we go at once to business. Mr. Bertrand, you will inform us what further steps are to be taken by South Carolina and her neighboring states. South Carolina may set an example, but if the others do not follow, she will merely be a sacrifice."

Bertrand smiled. His smile always lighted up his olive face in a wonderful way. It was a smile, too, of supreme confidence.

"Do not fear," he said. "Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana are ready. We have word from them all. It is only a matter of a few days until every state in the lower south goes out, but we want also and we need greatly those on the border, famous states like your Kentucky and Virginia. Do you not see how you are threatened? With the triumph of the rail-splitter, Lincoln, the seat of power is transferred to the North. It is not alone a question of slavery. The balance of the Union is destroyed. The South loses leadership. Her population is not increasing rapidly, and hereafter she will merely hold the stirrup while the North sits in the saddle."

A murmur arose from the men. More than one clenched his hands, until the nails pressed into the flesh. Harry, still standing by the window, felt the influence of the South Carolinian's words more deeply perhaps than any other. The North appeared to him cold, jealous, and vengeful.

"You are right about Kentucky and Virginia," said Senator Culver. "The secession of two such strong states would strike terror in the North. It would influence the outside world, and we would be in a far better position for war, if it should come. Governor Magoffin will have to call a special session of the legislature, and I think there will be enough of us in both Senate and House to take Kentucky out."

Bertrand's dark face glowed.

"You must do it! You must do it!" he exclaimed. "And if you do our cause is won!"

There was a thoughtful silence, broken at last by Colonel Kenton, who turned an inquiring eye upon Bertrand.

"I wish to ask you about the Knights of the Golden Circle," he said. "I hear that they are making great headway in the Gulf States."

Raymond hesitated a moment. It seemed that he, too, felt for the first time a difference between himself and these men about him who were so much less demonstrative than he. But he recovered his poise quickly.

"I speak to you frankly," he replied. "When our new confederation is formed, it is likely to expand. A hostile union will lie across our northern border, but to the south the way is open. There is our field. Spain grows weak and the great island of Cuba will fall from her grasp. Mexico is torn by one civil war after another. It is a grand country, and it would prosper mightily in strong hands. Beyond lie the unstable states of Central America, also awaiting good rulers."

Colonel Kenton frowned and the lawyers looked doubtful.

"I can't say that I like your prospect," the colonel said. "It seems to me that your knights of the Golden Circle meditate a great slave empire which will eat its way even into South America. Slavery is not wholly popular here. Henry Clay long ago wished it to be abolished, and his is a mighty name among us. It would be best to say little in Kentucky of the Knights of the Golden Circle. Our climate is a little too cold for such a project."

Bertrand bit his lip. Swift and volatile, he showed disappointment, but, still swift and volatile, he recovered quickly.

"I have no doubt that you are right, Colonel Kenton," he said, in the tone of one who conforms gracefully, "and I shall be careful when I go to Frankfort with Senator Culver to say nothing about it."

But Harry, who watched him all the time, read tenacity and purpose in his eyes. This man would not relinquish his great southern dream, a dream of vast dominion, and he had a powerful society behind him.

"What news, then, will you send to Charleston?" asked Bertrand at length. "Will you tell her that Kentucky, the state of great names, will stand beside her?"

"Such a message shall be carried to her," replied Colonel Kenton, speaking for them all, "and I propose that my son Harry be the messenger. These are troubled times, gentlemen, and full of peril. We dare not trust to the mails, and a lad, carrying letters, would arouse the least suspicion. He is strong and resourceful. I, his father, should know best and I am willing to devote him to the cause."

Harry started when he heard the words of his father, and his heart gave a great leap of mingled surprise and joy. Such a journey, such an enterprise, made an instant appeal to his impulsive and daring spirit. But he did not speak, waiting upon the words of his elders. All of them looked at him, and it seemed to Harry that they were measuring him, both body and mind.

"I have known your boy since his birth," said Senator Culver, "and he is all that you say. There is none stronger and better. The choice is good."

"Good! Aye, good indeed!" said the impetuous Bertrand. "How they will welcome him in Charleston!"

"Then, gentlemen," said Colonel Kenton, very soberly, "you are all agreed that my son shall carry to South Carolina the message that Kentucky will follow her out of the Union?"

"We are," they said, all together.

"I shall be glad and proud to go," said Harry, speaking for the first time.

"I knew it without asking you," said Colonel Kenton. "I suggest to you, friends, that he start before dawn, and that he go to Winton instead of the nearest station. We wish to avoid observation and suspicion. The fewer questions he has to answer, the better it will be for all of us."

They agreed with him again, and, in order that he might be fresh and strong for his journey, Harry was sent to his bedroom. Everything would be made ready for him, and Colonel Kenton would call him at the appointed hour. As he withdrew he bade them in turn good night, and they returned his courtesy gravely.

It was one thing to go to his room, but it was another to sleep. He undressed and sat on the edge of the bed. Only when he was alone did he realize the tremendous change that had come into his life. Nor into his life alone, but into the lives of all he knew, and of millions more.

It had ceased snowing and the wind was still. The earth was clothed in deep and quiet white, and the pines stood up, rows of white cones, silvered by the moonlight. Nothing moved out there. No sound came. He felt awed by the world of night, and the mysterious future which must be full of strange and great events.

He lay down between the covers and, although sleep was long in coming, it came at last and it was without dreams.

CHAPTER II

A COURIER TO THE SOUTH

Harry was awakened by his father shaking his shoulder. It was yet dark outside, but a small lamp burned on his table.

"It is time for you to go, Harry," said Colonel Kenton, somewhat unsteadily. "Your horse, bridle and saddle on, is waiting. Your breakfast has been cooked for you, and everything else is ready."

Harry dressed rapidly in his heaviest and warmest clothing. He and his father ate breakfast by lamplight, and when he finished it was not yet dawn. Then the Colonel himself brought him his overcoat, comforter, overshoes, and fur cap.

"The saddlebags are already on your horse," he said, "and they are filled with the things you will need. In this pocket-book you will find five hundred dollars, and here is, also, an order on a bank in Charleston for more. See that you keep both money and order safely. I trust to you to spend the money in the proper manner."

Harry put both in an inside pocket of his waistcoat, and then his father handed him a heavy sealed letter.

"This you must guard with your life," he said. "It is not addressed to anybody, but you can give it to Senator Yancey, who is probably in Charleston, or Governor Pickens, of South Carolina, or General Beauregard, who, I understand, is coming to command the troops there, and whom I knew in former days, or to General Ripley. It contains Kentucky's promise to South Carolina, and it is signed by many of us. And now, Harry, let prudence watch over action. It is no common errand upon which you ride."

The colonel walked with him to the gate where the horse stood. Harry did not know who had brought the animal there, but he believed that his father had done so with his own hand. The boy sprang into the saddle, Colonel Kenton gave him a strong grasp of the hand, undertook to say something but, as he did so, the words choked in his throat, and he walked hastily toward the house.

Harry spoke to his horse, but a hundred yards away, before he came to the first curve in the road, he stopped and looked back. Colonel Kenton was standing in the doorway, his figure made bright in the moonlight. Harry waved his hand and a hand was waved in return. Tears arose to his own eyes, but he was youth in the saddle, with the world before him, and the mist was gone quickly.

The snow was six or eight inches deep, and lay unbroken in the road. But the horse was powerful, shod carefully for snow and ice, and Harry had been almost from infancy an expert rider. His spirits rose. He had no fear of the stillness and the dark. But one could scarcely call it the dark, since brilliant stars rode high in a bright blue heaven, and the forest on either side of him was a vast and intricate tracery of white touched with silver.

He examined his saddle bags, and found in them a silver-mounted pistol and cartridges which he transferred to his belt. The line of the mountains lay near the road, and he remembered Bill Skelly and those like him. The weapon gave him new strength. Skelly and his comrades might come on any pretext they chose.

The road lay straight toward the south, edged on either side by forest. Now and then he passed a silent farm house, set back among the trees, and once a dog barked, but there was no sound, save the tread of the horse's feet in the snow, and his occasional puff when he blew the steam from his nostrils. Harry did not feel the cold. The heavy overcoat protected his body, and the strong action of the heart, pouring the blood in a full tide through his veins, kept him warm.

The east whitened. Dawn came. Thin spires of smoke began to rise from distant houses in the woods or fields. Harry was already many miles from Pendleton, and then something rose in his throat again. He remembered his father standing in the portico, and, strangely enough, the Tacitus lying in

his locked desk at the academy. But he crushed it down. His abounding youth made him consider as weak and unworthy, an emotion which a man would merely have reckoned as natural.

The station at Winton was a full twenty miles from Pendleton and, with such heavy snow, Harry did not expect to arrive until late in the afternoon. Nor would there be any need for him to get there earlier, as no train for Nashville reached that place until half past six in the evening. His horse showed no signs of weariness, but he checked his speed, and went on at an easy walk.

The road curved nearer to a line of blue hills, which sloped gradually upward for scores of miles, until they became mountains. All were clothed with forest, and every tree was heavy with snow. A line between the trees showed where a path turned off from the main road and entered the hills. As Harry approached it, he heard the crunching of horses' hoofs in the snow. A warning instinct caused him to urge his own horse forward, just as four riders came into view.

He saw that the men in the saddles, who were forty or fifty yards away, were mountaineers, like Skelly. They wore fur caps; heavy blanket shawls were drooped about their shoulders and every one carried a rifle. As soon as they saw the boy they shouted to him to halt.

Harry's alert senses took alarm. They must have gained some knowledge of his errand and its nature. Perhaps word had been sent from Pendleton by those who were arraying themselves on the other side that he be intercepted. When they cried to him to stop, he struck his horse sharply, shouted to him, and bent far over against his neck. Colonel Kenton had chosen well. The horse responded instantly. He seemed to gather his whole powerful frame compactly together, and shot forward. The nearest mountaineer fired, but the bullet merely whistled where the horse and rider had been, and sent snow flying from the bushes on the other side of the road. A second rifle cracked but it, too, missed the flying target, and the mountaineers, turning into the main road, gave pursuit.

Harry felt a cold shiver along his spine when the leading man pulled trigger. It was the first time in his life that any one had ever fired upon him, and the shiver returned with the second shot. And since they had missed, confidence came. He knew that they could not overtake him, and they would not dare to pursue him long. He glanced back. They were a full hundred yards in the rear, riding all four abreast. He remembered his own pistol, and, drawing it from his belt, he sent a bullet toward the pursuit. It was too long a range for serious work, but he intended it as a warning that he, too, was armed and would fight.

The road still ran through the forest with the hills close on the left. Up went the sun, casting a golden glory over the white earth. Harry beheld afar only a single spire of smoke. The houses were few in that region, and he might go four or five miles without seeing a single human being, save those who pursued. But he was not afraid. His confidence lay chiefly in the powerful animal that he rode, and he saw the distance between him and the four men lengthen from a hundred to two hundred yards. One of them fired another shot at him, but it only shook the snow from a tree fifteen feet away. He could not keep from sending back a taunting cry.

On went the sun up the curve of the heavens, and the brilliant light grew. The forest thinned away. The line of hills retreated, and before him lay fields, extending to both right and left. The eye ranged over a great distance and he counted the smoke of five farm houses. He believed that the men would not pursue him into the open country, but he urged his horse to greater speed, and did not turn in his saddle for a quarter of an hour. When he finally looked back the mountaineers were gone. He could see clearly a half-mile, and he knew now that his surmise had come true. They dared to pursue only in the forest, and having failed, they would withdraw into the hills.

He drew his horse down to a walk, patted his shoulder, and spoke to him words of approval. He was not sorry now that he had passed through the adventure. It would harden him to risks and dangers to come. He made up his mind, also, to say nothing about it. He could send a warning back from Winton, but the men in Pendleton knew how to protect themselves, and the message might fall into wrong hands.

His journey continued in such peace that it was hard to believe men had fired upon him, and in the middle of the afternoon he reached Winton. He left his horse, saddle and bridle at a livery stable, stating that they would be called for by Colonel Kenton, who was known throughout the region, and sought food at the crude little wooden hotel. He was glad that he saw no one whom he knew, because, after the fashion of the country, they would ask him many questions, and he felt relief, too, when the train arrived.

Dark had already come when Harry entered the car. There were no coaches for sleepers, and he must make himself comfortable as best he could on the red plush seat, sprinkled thickly with ashes and cinders from the engine. Fortunately, he had the seat alone, although there were many people in the car.

The train, pouring out a huge volume of black smoke, pulled out of the station with a great clatter that never ceased. Now Harry felt an ebb of the spirits and melancholy. He was leaving behind Pendleton and all that he had known. In the day the excitement, the cold air, and the free world about him had kept him up. Now the swaying and jarring of the train, crude like most others in that early time of railways, gave him a sense of illness. The window at his elbow rattled incessantly, and the ashes and cinders sifted in, blackening his face and hands. Three or four smoking lamps, hung from the ceiling, lighted the car dimly, and disclosed but partly the faces of the people around him. Some were asleep already. Others ate their suppers from baskets. Harry felt of his pockets at intervals to see that his money and letters were safe, and he kept his saddle bags closely on the seat beside him.

The nausea created by the motion of the train passed away soon. He put his face against the dusty window pane and tried to see the country. But he could catch only glimpses of snowy woods and fields, and, once or twice, flashes of water as they crossed rivers. The effort yielded little, and he turned his attention to the people. He noted only one who differed in aspect from the ordinary country passenger.

A man of middle years sat rigidly erect at the far end of the car. He wore a black hat, broad of brim, and all his clothing was black and precise. His face was shaven smoothly, save for a long gray mustache with an upward curve. While the people about him talked in a miscellaneous fashion, he did not join them, and his manner did not invite approach even in those easy times.

Harry was interested greatly. The stranger presently opened a valise, took out some food and ate delicately. Then he drew a small silver cup from the same valise, filled it at the drinking stand, drank and returned it to the valise. Without a crumb having fallen on clothing or floor, he resumed his seat and gazed straight before him.

Harry's interest in the stranger increased. He had a fine face, cut clearly, and of a somewhat severe and melancholy cast. Always he gazed straight before him, and his mind seemed to be far from the people in the car. It was obvious that he was not the ordinary traveler, and the boy spent some time in trying to guess his identity. Then he gave it up, because he was growing sleepy.

Excitement and the long physical strain were now telling upon Harry. He leaned his head against the corner of the seat and the wall, drew his overcoat as a blanket about his body and shoulders, and let his eyelids droop. The dim train grew dimmer, and he slept.

The train was due at Nashville between midnight and morning, and Harry was awakened by the conductor a half hour before he reached the city. He shook himself, put on his overcoat that he had used as a blanket, and tried to look through the window. He saw only darkness rushing past, but he knew that he had left Kentucky behind, and it seemed to him that he had come into an alien land, a land of future friends, no doubt, but as yet, the land of the stranger.

All the people in the train were awakening, and were gathering their baggage sleepily about them. But the stranger, who drank from the silver cup, seemed not to have been asleep at all. He still sat rigidly erect, and his melancholy look had not abated. His valise lay on the seat beside him. Harry noticed that it was large and strong, with metal clasps at the corners.

The engine was whistling already for Nashville, and Harry threw his saddle bags over his arm. He was fully awake now, alert and eager. This town of Nashville was full of promise. It had been the home of the great Andrew Jackson, and it was one of the important cities of the South, where cities were measured by influence rather than population, because all, except New Orleans, were small.

As the train slowed down, Harry arose and stood in the aisle. The stranger also stood up, and Harry noticed that his bearing was military. He looked around, his eyes met Harry's—perhaps he had been observing him in the night—and he smiled. It was a rare, illuminating smile that made him wonderfully attractive, and Harry smiled back. He did not know it, but he was growing lonely, with the loneliness of youth, and he wanted a friend.

"You are stopping in Nashville?" said the man with the friendliness of the time.

"For a day only. I am then going further south."

Harry had answered without hesitation. He did not believe it possible that this man could be planning anything against him or his errand. The tall stranger looked upon him with approval.

"I noticed you in the train last night when you slept," he said, speaking in the soft, musical accents of the seaboard South. "Your sleep was very deep, almost like collapse. You showed that you had been through great physical and mental strain, and even before you fell asleep your anxious look indicated that you rode on an errand of importance."

Harry gazed at him in surprise, mingled with a little alarm. The strange man laughed musically and with satisfaction.

"I am neither a detective nor a conspirator," he said. "These are times when men travel upon anxious journeys. I go upon one myself, but since we are in Tennessee, well south of the Mason and Dixon line, I make no secret of it. I am Leonidas Talbot, of South Carolina, until a week ago a colonel in the American army, but now bound for my home in Charleston. You boarded this train at a station in Kentucky, either the nearest or among the nearest to Pendleton. A resemblance, real or fancied, has caused me to notice you closely."

The man was looking at him with frank blue eyes set well apart, and Harry saw no need of concealing his identity.

"My name is Kenton, Henry Kenton—though people generally call me Harry—and I live at Pendleton in Kentucky," he replied.

Now the smile of Leonidas Talbot, late colonel U. S. A., became rarely sweet.

"I should have guessed it," he said. "The place where you joined us and the strong resemblance should have made me know. You must be the son of Colonel George Kenton."

"Yes," said Harry.

"Then, young sir, let me shake your hand."

His manner seemed so warm and natural that Harry held out his hand, and Colonel Talbot gave it a strong clasp.

"Your father and I have served together," he said. "We were in the same class at West Point, and we fought in the same command against the Indians on the plains. I saw him again at Cerro Gordo, and we were side by side at Contreras, Molino del Rey, and the storming of Chapultepec. He left the service some time after we came back from Mexico, but I remained in it, until—recent events. It is fitting that I should meet his son here, when we go upon errands which are, perhaps, similar in nature. I infer that your destination is Charleston!"

"Yes," said Harry impulsively, and he was not sorry that he had obeyed the impulse.

"Then we shall go together," said Colonel Talbot. "I take it that many other people are now on their way to this same city of Charleston, which since the secession of South Carolina has become the most famous in the Union."

"I shall be glad if you will take me with you," said Harry. "I know little of Charleston and the lower South, and I need company."

"Then we will go to a hotel," said Colonel Talbot. "On a journey like this two together are better than one alone. I know Nashville fairly well, and while it is of the undoubted South, it will be best for us, while we are here, to keep quiet tongues in our heads. We cannot get a train out of the city until the afternoon."

They were now in the station and everybody was going out. It was not much past midnight, and a cold wind blowing across the hills and the Cumberland River made Harry shiver in his overcoat. Once more he was glad of his new comradeship with a man so much his superior in years and worldly wisdom.

Snow lay on the ground, but not so deep as in Kentucky. Houses, mostly of wood, and low, showed dimly through the dusk. No carriages met the train, and the people were melting away already to their destinations.

"I'll lead the way," said Colonel Talbot. "I know the best hotel, and for travelers who need rest the best is always none too good."

He led briskly through the silent and lonely streets, until they came to a large brick building with several lights shining from the wide and open door. They entered the lobby of the hotel, one carrying his saddle bags, the other his valise, and registered in the book that the sleepy clerk shoved toward them. Several loungers still sat in cane-bottomed chairs along the wall, and they cast curious glances at Harry and the colonel.

The hotel was crowded, the clerk said. People had been crowding into town in the last few days, as there was a great stir in the country owing to the news from Charleston. He could give them only one room, but it had two beds.

"It will do," said the colonel, in his soft but positive voice. "My young friend and I have been traveling hard and we need rest."

Harry would have preferred a room alone, but his trust in Colonel Talbot had already become absolute. This man must be what he claimed to be. There was no trace of deceit about him. His heart had never before warmed so much to a stranger.

Colonel Talbot closed and locked the door of their room. It was a large bare apartment with two windows overlooking the town, and two small beds against opposite walls. The colonel put his valise at the foot of one bed, and walked to the window. The night had lightened somewhat and he saw the roofs of buildings, the dim line of the yellow river, and the dusky haze of hills beyond. He turned his head and looked steadily in the direction in which lay Charleston. A look of ineffable sadness overspread his face.

The light on the table was none too bright, but Harry saw Colonel Talbot's melancholy eyes, and he could not refrain from asking:

"What's the trouble, colonel?"

The South Carolinian turned from the window, sat down on the edge of the bed and smiled. It was an illuminating smile, almost the smile of youth.

"I'm afraid that everything's the matter, Harry, boy," he said. "South Carolina, the state that I love even more than the Union to which it belongs, or belonged, has gone out, and, Harry, because I'm a son of South Carolina I must go with it—and I don't want to go. But I've been a soldier all my life. I know little of politics. I have grown up with the feeling that I must stay with my people through all things. I must be kin by blood to half the white people in Charleston. How could I desert them?"

"You couldn't," said Harry emphatically.

Colonel Leonidas Talbot smiled. It is possible that, at the moment, he wished for the sanguine decision of youth, which could choose a side and find only wrong in the other.

"In my heart," he continued, "I do not wish to see the Union broken up, although the violence of New England orators and the raid of John Brown has appalled me. But, Harry, pay good heed to me when I say it is not a mere matter of going out of the Union. It may not be possible for South Carolina and the states that follow her to stay out."

"I don't understand you," said the boy.

"It means war! It means war, as surely as the rising of the sun in the morning. Many think that it does not; that the new republic will be formed in peace, but I know better. A great and terrible war is coming. Many of our colored people in Charleston and along the Carolina coast came by the way of the West Indies. They have strange superstitions. They believe that some of their number have the gift of second sight. In my childhood I knew two old women who claimed the power, and they gave apparent proofs that were extraordinary. I feel just now as if I had the gift myself, and I tell you, Harry, although you can see only a dark horizon from the window, I see one that is blood red all the way to the zenith. Alas, our poor country!"

Harry stared at him in amazement. The colonel, although he had called his name, seemed to have forgotten his presence. A vivid and powerful imagination had carried him not only from the room, but far into the future. He recovered himself with an abrupt little shrug of the shoulders.

"I am too old a man to be talking such foolishness to a boy," he said, briskly. "To bed, Harry! To bed! Your sleep on the train was brief and you need more! So do I!"

Harry undressed quickly, and put himself under the covers, and the colonel also retired, although somewhat more leisurely. The boy could not sleep for some time. One vision was present in his mind, that of Charleston, the famous city to which they were going. The effect of Colonel Talbot's ominous words had worn off. He would soon see the city which had been so long a leader in Southern thought and action, and he would see, too, the men who had so boldly taken matters in their own hands. He admired their courage and daring.

It was late when Harry awoke, and the colonel was already up and dressed. But the man waited quietly until the boy was dressed also, and they went down to breakfast together. Despite the lateness of the hour the dining-room was still crowded, and the room buzzed with animated talk. Harry knew very well that Charleston was the absorbing topic, just as it had been the one great thought in his own mind. The people about him seemed to be wholly of Southern sympathies, and he knew very well that Tennessee, although she might take her own time about it, would follow South Carolina out of the Union.

They found two vacant seats at a table, where three men already sat. One was a member of the Legislature, who talked somewhat loudly; the second was a country merchant of middle age, and the third was a young man of twenty-five, who had very little to say. The legislator, whose name was Ramsay, soon learned Colonel Talbot's identity, and he would have proclaimed it to everybody about him, had not the colonel begged him not to do so.

"But you will at least permit me to shake your hand, Colonel Talbot," he said. "One who can give up his commission in the army and come back to us as you have done is the kind of man we need."

Colonel Talbot gave a reluctant hand.

"I am proud to have felt the grasp of one who will win many honors in the coming war," said Ramsay.

"Or more likely fill a grave," said Colonel Talbot, dryly.

The silent young man across the table looked at the South Carolinian with interest, and Harry in his turn examined this stranger. He was built well, shaven smoothly, and did not look like a Tennessean. His thin lips, often pressed closely together, seemed to indicate a capacity for silence, but when he saw Harry looking at him he smiled and said:

"I gather from your conversation that you are going to Charleston. All southern roads seem to lead to that town, and I, too, am going there. My name is Shepard, William J. Shepard, of St. Louis."

Colonel Talbot turned a measuring look upon him. It was so intent and comprehensive that the young man flushed slightly, and moved a little in his seat.

"So you are from St. Louis?" said the colonel. "That is a great city, and you must know something about the feeling there. Can you tell me whether Missouri will go out?"

"I cannot," replied Shepard. "No man can. But many of us are at work."

"What do you think?" persisted Colonel Talbot.

"I am hoping. Missouri is really a Southern state, the daughter of Kentucky, and she ought to join her Southern sisters. As the others go out one by one, I think she will follow. The North will not fight, and we will form a peaceful Southern republic."

Colonel Leonidas Talbot of South Carolina swept him once more with that intent and comprehensive gaze.

"The North will fight," he said. "As I told my young friend here last night, a great and terrible war is coming."

"Do you think so?" asked Shepard, and it seemed to Harry that his tone had become one of overwhelming interest. "Then Charleston, as its center and origin, ought to be ready. How are they prepared there for defense?"

Colonel Talbot's eyes never left Shepard's face and a faint pink tint appeared again in the young man's cheeks.

"There are the forts—Sumter, Moultrie, Johnson and Pinckney," replied the South Carolinian, "and I heard to-day that they are building earthworks, also. All are helping and it is said that Toutant Beauregard is going there to take command."

"A good officer," said Shepard, musingly. "I believe you said you were leaving for Charleston this afternoon?"

"No, I did not say when," replied Colonel Talbot, somewhat sharply. "It is possible that Harry and I may linger a while in Nashville. They do not need us yet in Charleston, although their tempers are pretty warm. There has been so much fiery talk, cumulative for so many years, that they regard northern men with extremely hostile eyes. It would not take much to cause trouble."

Colonel Talbot continued to gaze steadily at Shepard, but the Missourian looked down into his plate. It seemed to Harry that there was some sort of play between them, or rather a thread of suspicion, a fine thread in truth, but strong enough to sustain something. He could see, too, that Colonel Talbot was giving Shepard a warning, a warning, veiled and vague, but nevertheless a warning. But the boy liked Shepard. His face seemed to him frank and honest, and he would have trusted him.

They rose presently and went into the lobby, where the colonel evaded Shepard, as the place was now crowded. More news had come from Charleston and evidently it was to their liking. There was a great amount of talk. Many of the older men sprinkled their words with expressive oaths. The oaths came so naturally that it seemed to be a habit with them. They chewed tobacco freely, and now and then their white shirt fronts were stained with it. All those who seemed to be of prominence wore long black coats, waistcoats cut low, and trousers of a lighter color.

Near the wall stood a man of heavy build with a great shaggy head and thick black hair all over his face. He was dressed in a suit of rough gray jeans, with his trousers stuffed into high boots. He carried in his right hand a short, thick riding whip, with which he occasionally switched the tops of his own boots.

Harry spoke to him civilly, after the custom of the time and place. He took him for a mountaineer, and he judged by the heavy whip he carried, that he was a horse or cattle trader.

"They talk of Charleston," said Harry.

"Yes, they talk an' talk," said the man, biting his words, "an' they do nothin'."

"You think they ought to take Tennessee out right away?"

"No, I'm ag'in it. I don't want to bust up this here Union. But I reckon Tennessee is goin' out, an' most all the other Southern states will go out, too. I 'low the South will get whipped like all tarnation, but if she does I'm a Southerner myself, an' I'll have to git whipped along with her. But talkin' don't do no good fur nobody. If the South goes out, it's hittin' that'll count, an' them that hits fastest, hardest, truest an' longest will win."

The man was rough in appearance and illiterate in speech, but his manner impressed Harry in an extraordinary manner. It was direct and wonderfully convincing. The boy recognized at once a mind that would steer straight through things toward its goal.

"My name is Harry Kenton," he said politely. "I'm from Kentucky, and my father used to be a colonel in the army."

"Mine," said the mountaineer, "is Nat Forrest, Nathan Bedford Forrest for full and long. I'm a trader in live stock, an' I thought I'd look in here at Nashville an' see what the smart folks was doin'. I'd tell 'em not to let Tennessee go out of the Union, but they wouldn't pay any 'tention to a hoss-tradin' mountaineer, who his neighbors say can't write his name."

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Forrest," said Harry, "but I'm afraid we're on different sides of the question."

"Mebbe we are 'til things come to a head," said the mountaineer, laughing, "but, as I said, if Tennessee goes out, I reckon I'll go with her. It's hard to go ag'in your own gang. Leastways, 't ain't in me to do it. Now I've had enough of this gab, an' I'm goin' to skip out. Good-bye, young feller. I wish you well."

Bringing his whip once more, and sharply this time, across the tops of his own boots, he strode out of the hotel. His walk was like his talk, straight and decisive. Harry saw Shepard in the lobby making friends, but, imitating his older comrade, he avoided him, and late that afternoon Colonel Talbot and he left for Charleston.

CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF REBELLION

Harry, with his friend Colonel Leonidas Talbot, approached Charleston on Christmas morning. It was a most momentous day to him. As he came nearer, the place looked greater and greater. He had read much about it in the books in his father's house—old tales of the Revolution and stories of its famous families—and now its name was in the mouths of all men.

He had felt a change in his own Kentucky atmosphere at Nashville, but it had become complete when he drew near to Charleston. It was a different world, different alike in appearance and in thought. The contrast made the thrill all the keener and longer. Colonel Talbot, also, was swayed by emotion, but his was that of one who was coming home.

"I was born here, and I passed my boyhood here," he said. "I could not keep from loving it if I would, and I would not if I could. Look how the cold North melts away. See the great magnolias, the live oaks, and the masses of shrubbery! Harry, I promise you that you shall have a good time in this Charleston of ours."

They had left the railroad some distance back, and had come in by stage. The day was warm and pleasant. Two odors, one of flowers and foliage, and the other of the salt sea, reached Harry. He found both good. He felt for the thousandth time of his pocket-book and papers to see that they were safe, and he was glad that he had come, glad that he had been chosen for such an important errand.

The colonel asked the driver to stop the stage at a cross road, and he pointed out to Harry a low, white house with green blinds, standing on a knoll among magnificent live oaks.

"That is my house, Harry," he said, "and this is Christmas Day. Come and spend it with me there."

Harry felt to the full the kindness of Colonel Leonidas Talbot, for whom he had formed a strong affection. The colonel seemed to him so simple, so honest and, in a way, so unworldly, that he had won his heart almost at once. But he felt that he should decline, as his message must be delivered as soon as he arrived in Charleston.

"I suppose you are right," said the colonel, when the boy had explained why he could not accept. "You take your letters to the gentlemen who are going to make the war, and then you and I and others like us, ranging from your age to mine, will have to fight it."

But Harry was not to be discouraged. He could not see things in a gray light on that brilliant Christmas morning. Here was Charleston before him and in a few hours he would be in the thick of great events. A thrill of keen anticipation ran through all his veins. The colonel and he stood by the roadside while the obliging driver waited. He offered his hand, saying good-bye.

"It's only for a day," said Colonel Leonidas Talbot, as he gave the hand a strong clasp. "I shall be in Charleston tomorrow, and I shall certainly see you."

Harry sprang back to his place and the stage rolled joyously into Charleston. Harry saw at once that the city was even more crowded than Nashville had been. Its population had increased greatly in a few weeks, and he could feel the quiver of excitement in the air. Citizen soldiers were drilling in open places, and other men were throwing up earthworks.

He left the stage and carried over his arm his baggage, which still consisted only of a pair of saddle bags. He walked to an old-fashioned hotel which Colonel Talbot had selected for him as quiet and good, and as he went he looked at everything with a keen and eager interest. The deep, mellow chiming of bells, from one point and then from another, came to his ears. He knew that they were the bells of St. Philip's and St. Michael's, and he looked up in admiration at their lofty spires. He had often heard, in far Kentucky, of these famous churches and their silver chimes.

It seemed to Harry that the tension and excitement of the people in the streets were of a rather pleasant kind. They had done a great deed, and, keyed to a high pitch by their orators and newspapers, they did not fear the consequences. The crowd seemed foreign to him in many aspects, Gallic rather than American, but very likeable.

He reached his hotel, a brick building behind a high iron fence, kept by a woman of olive complexion, middle years, and pleasant manners, Madame Josephine Delaunay. She looked at him at first with a little doubt, because it was a time in Charleston when one must inspect strangers, but when he mentioned Colonel Leonidas Talbot she broke into a series of smiles.

"Ah, the good colonel!" she exclaimed. "We were children at school together, but since he became a soldier he has gone far from here. And has he returned to fight for his great mother, South Carolina?"

"He has come back. He has resigned from the army, and he is here to do South Carolina's bidding."

"It is like him," said Madame Delaunay. "Ah, that Leonidas, he has a great soul!"

"I travelled with him from Nashville to Charleston," said Harry, "and I learned to like and admire him."

He had established himself at once in the good graces of Madame Delaunay and she gave him a fine room overlooking a garden, which in season was filled with roses and oranges. Even now, pleasant aromatic odors came to him through the open window. He had been scarcely an hour in Charleston but he liked it already. The old city breathed with an ease and grace to which he was unused. The best name that he knew for it was fragrance.

He had a suit of fresh clothing in his saddle bags, and he arrayed himself with the utmost neatness and care. He felt that he must do so. He could not present himself in rough guise to a people who had every right to be fastidious. He would also obtain further clothing out of the abundant store of money, as his father had wished him to make a good appearance and associate with the best.

He descended, and found Madame Delaunay in the garden, where she gave him welcome, with grave courtesy. She seemed to him in manner and bearing a woman of wealth and position, and not the keeper of an inn, doing most of the work with her own hands. He learned later that the two could go together in Charleston, and he learned also, that she was the grand-daughter of a great Haytian sugar planter, who had fled from the island, leaving everything to the followers of Toussaint l'Ouverture, glad to reach the shores of South Carolina in safety.

Madame Delaunay looked with admiration at the young Kentuckian, so tall and powerful for his age. To her, Kentucky was a part of the cold North.

"Can you tell me where I am likely to find Senator Yancey?" asked Harry. "I have letters which I must deliver to him, and I have heard that he is in Charleston."

"There is to be a meeting of the leaders this afternoon in St. Anthony's Hall in Broad street. You will surely find him there, but you must have your luncheon first. I think you must have travelled far."

"From Kentucky," replied Harry, and then he added impulsively: "I've come to join your people, Madame Delaunay. South Carolina has many and powerful friends in the Upper South."

"She will need them," said Madame Delaunay, but with no tone of apprehension. "This, however, is a city that has withstood much fire and blood and it can withstand much more. Now I'll leave you here in the garden. Come to luncheon at one, and you shall meet my other guests."

Harry sat down on a little wooden bench beneath a magnolia. Here in the garden the odor of grass and foliage was keen, and thrillingly sweet. This was the South, the real South, and its warm passions leaped up in his blood. Much of the talk that he had been hearing recently from those older than he passed through his mind. The Southern states did have a right to go if they chose, and they were being attacked because their prominence aroused jealousy. Slavery was a side issue, a mere pretext. If it were not convenient to hand, some other excuse would be used. Here in Charleston,

the first home of secession, among people who were charming in manner and kind, the feeling was very strong upon him.

He left the house after luncheon, and, following Madame Delaunay's instructions, came very quickly to St. Andrew's hall in Broad street, where five days before, the Legislature of South Carolina, after adjourning from Columbia, had passed the ordinance of secession.

Two soldiers in the Palmetto uniform were on guard, but they quickly let him pass when he showed his letters to Senator Yancey. Inside, a young man, a boy, in fact, not more than a year older than himself, met him. He was slender, dark and tall, dressed precisely, and his manner had that easy grace which, as Harry had noticed already, seemed to be the characteristic of Charleston.

"My name is Arthur St. Clair," he said, "and I'm a sort of improvised secretary for our leaders who are in council here."

"Mine," said Harry, "is Henry Kenton. I'm a son of Colonel George Kenton, of Kentucky, late a colonel in the United States Army, and I've come with important messages from him, Senator Culver and other Southern leaders in Kentucky."

"Then you will be truly welcome. Wait a moment and I'll see if they are ready to receive you."

He returned almost instantly, and asked Harry to go in with him. They entered a large room, with a dais at the center of the far wall, and a number of heavy gilt chairs covered with velvet ranged on either side of it. Over the dais hung a large portrait of Queen Victoria as a girl in her coronation robes. A Scotch society had occupied this room, but the people of Charleston had always taken part in their festivities. In those very velvet chairs the chaperons had sat while the dancing had gone on in the hall. Then the leaders of secession had occupied them, when they put through their measure, and now they were sitting there again, deliberating.

A man of middle years and of quick, eager countenance arose when young St. Clair came in with Harry.

"Mr. Yancey," said St. Clair, "this is Henry Kenton, the son of Colonel George Kenton, who has come from Kentucky with important letters."

Yancey gave him his hand and a welcome, and Harry looked with intense interest at the famous Alabama orator, who, with Slidell, of South Carolina, and Toombs of Georgia, had matched the New England leaders in vehemence and denunciation. Mr. Slidell, an older man, was present and so was Mr. Jamison, of Barnwell, who had presided when secession was carried. There were more present, some prominent, others destined to become so, and Harry was introduced to them one by one.

He gave his letters to Yancey and retired with young St. Clair to the other end of the room, while the leaders read what had been written from Kentucky. Harry was learning to become a good observer, and he watched them closely as they read. He saw a look of pleasure come on the face of every one, and presently Yancey beckoned to him.

"These are fine assurances," said the orator, "and they have been brought by the worthy son of a worthy father. Colonel Kenton, Senator Culver and others, have no doubt that Kentucky will go out with us. Now you are a boy, but boys sometimes see and hear more than men, and you are old enough to think; that is, to think in the real sense. Tell us, what is your own opinion?"

Harry flushed, and paused in embarrassment.

"Go on," said Mr. Yancey, persuasively.

"I do not know much," said Harry slowly, wishing not to speak, but feeling that he was compelled by Mr. Yancey to do so, "but as far as I have seen, Kentucky is sorely divided. The people on the other side are perhaps not as strong and influential as ours, but they are more numerous."

A shade passed over the face of Yancey, but he quickly recovered his good humor.

"You have done right to tell us the truth as you see it," he said, "but we need Kentucky badly. We must have the state and we will get it. Did you hear anything before you left, of one Raymond Bertrand, a South Carolinian?"

"He was at my father's house before I came away. I think it was his intention to go from there to Frankfort with some of our own people, and assist in taking out the state."

Yancey smiled.

"Faithful to his errand," he said. "Raymond Bertrand is a good lad. He has visions, perhaps, but they are great ones, and he foresees a mighty republic for us extending far south of our present border. But now that you have accomplished your task, what do you mean to do, Mr. Kenton?"

"I want to stay here," replied Harry eagerly. "This is the head and center of all things. I think my father would wish me to do so. I'll enlist with the South Carolina troops and wait for what happens."

"Even if what happens should be war?"

"Most of all if it should be war. Then I shall be one of those who will be needed most."

"A right and proper spirit," said Mr. Jamison, of Barnwell. "When we can command such enthusiasm we are unconquerable. Now, we'll not keep you longer, Mr. Kenton. This is Christmas Day, and one as young as you are is entitled to a share of the hilarity. Look after him, St. Clair."

Harry went out with young St. Clair, whom he was now calling by his first name, Arthur. He, too, was staying with Madame Delaunay, who was a distant relative.

Harry ate Christmas dinner that evening with twenty people, many of types new to him. It made a deep impression upon him then, and one yet greater afterward, because he beheld the spirit of the Old South in its inmost shrine, Charleston. It seemed to him in later days that he had looked upon it as it passed.

They sat in a great dining-room upon a floor level with the ground. The magnolias and live oaks and the shrubs in the garden moved in the gentle wind. Fresh crisp air came through the windows, opened partly, and brought with it, as Harry thought, an aroma of flowers blooming in the farther south. He sat with young St. Clair—the two were already old friends—and Madame Delaunay was at the head of the table, looking more like a great lady who was entertaining her friends than the keeper of an inn.

Madame Delaunay wore a flowing white dress that draped itself in folds, and a lace scarf was thrown about her shoulders. Her heavy hair, intensely black, was bound with a gold fillet, after a fashion that has returned a half century later. A single diamond sparkled upon her finger. She seemed to Harry foreign, handsome, and very distinguished.

About half the people in the room were of French blood, most of whom Harry surmised were descendants of people who had fled from Hayti or Santo Domingo. One, Hector St. Hilaire, almost sixty, but a major in the militia of South Carolina, soon proved that the boy's surmise was right. Lemonade and a mild drink called claret-sanger was served to the boys, but the real claret was served to the major, as to the other elders, and the mellowness of Christmas pervaded his spirit. He drank a toast to Madame Delaunay, and the others drank it with him, standing. Madame Delaunay responded prettily, and, in a few words, she asked protection and good fortune for this South Carolina which they all loved, and which had been a refuge to the ancestors of so many of them. As she sat down she looked up at the wall and Harry's glance followed hers. It was a long dining-room, and he saw there great portraits in massive gilt frames. They were of people French in look, handsome, and dressed with great care and elaboration. The men were in gay coats and knee breeches, silk stockings and buckled shoes. Small swords were at their sides. The women were even more gorgeous in velvet or heavy satin, with their hair drawn high upon their heads and powdered. One had a beauty patch upon her cheek.

Major St. Hilaire saw Harry's look as it sped along the wall. He smiled a little sadly and then, a little cheerfully:

"Those are the ancestors of Madame Delaunay," he said, "and some, I may mention in passing, are my own, also. Our gracious hostess and myself are more or less distantly related—less, I fear—but I boast of it, nevertheless, on every possible occasion. They were great people in a great island, once the richest colony of France, the richest colony in all the world. All those people whom you

see upon the walls were educated in Paris or other cities of France, and they returned to a life upon the magnificent plantations of Hayti. What has become of that brightness and glory? Gone like snow under a summer sun. 'Tis nothing but the flower of fancy now. The free black savage has made a wilderness of Hayti, and our enemies in the North would make the same of South Carolina."

A murmur of applause ran around the table. Major St. Hilaire had spoken with rhetorical effect and a certain undoubted pathos. Every face flushed, and Harry saw the tears glistening in the eyes of Madame Delaunay who, despite her fifty years, looked very handsome indeed in her white dress, with the glittering gold fillet about her great masses of hair.

The boy was stirred powerfully. His sensitive spirit responded at once to the fervid atmosphere about him, to the color, the glow, the intensity of a South far warmer than the one he had known. Their passions were his passions, and having seen the black and savage Hayti of which Major St. Hilaire had drawn such a vivid picture, he shuddered lest South Carolina and other states, too, should fall in the same way to destruction.

"It can never happen!" he exclaimed, carried away by impulse. "Kentucky and Virginia and the big states of the Upper South will stand beside her and fight with her!"

The murmur of applause ran around the table again, and Harry, blushing, made himself as small as he could in his chair.

"Don't regret a good impulse. Mr. Kenton," said a neighbor, a young man named James McDonald—Harry had noticed that Scotch names seemed to be as numerous as French in South Carolina—"the words that all of us believe to be true leaped from your heart."

Harry did not speak again, unless he was addressed directly, but he listened closely, while the others talked of the great crisis that was so obviously approaching. His interest did not make him neglect the dinner, as he was a strong and hearty youth. There were sweets for which he did not care much, many vegetables, a great turkey, and venison for which he did care, finishing with an ice and coffee that seemed to him very black and bitter.

It was past eight o'clock when they rose and any lingering doubts that Harry may have felt were swept away. He was heart and soul with the South Carolinians. Those people in the far north seemed very cold and hard to him. They could not possibly understand. One must be here among the South Carolinians themselves to see and to know.

Harry went to his room, after a polite good-night to all the others. He was not used to long and heavy dinners, and he felt the wish to rest and take the measure of his situation. He threw back the green blinds and opened the window a little. Once more the easy wind brought him that odor of the far south, whether reality or fancy he could not say. But he turned to another window and looked toward the north. Away from the others and away from a subtle persuasiveness that had been in the air, some of his doubts returned. It would not all be so easy. What were they doing in the far states beyond the Ohio?

He heard footsteps in the hail and a voice that seemed familiar. He had left his door partly open, and, when he turned, he caught a glimpse of a face that he knew. It was young Shepard, whom he and Major Talbot had met in Nashville. Shepard saw Harry also, and saluted him cheerfully.

"I've just arrived," he said, "and through letters from friends in St. Louis, members of one of the old French families there, I've been lucky enough to secure a room at Madame Delaunay's inn."

"Fortune has been with us both," said Harry, somewhat doubtfully, but not knowing what else to say.

"It certainly has," said Shepard, with easy good humor. "I'll see you again in the morning and we'll talk of what we've been through, both of us."

He walked briskly on and Harry heard his firm step ringing on the floor. The boy retired to his own room again and locked the door. He had liked Shepard from the first. He had seemed to him frank and open and no one could deny his right to come to Charleston if he pleased. And yet Colonel Talbot, a man of a delicate and sensitive mind, which quickly registered true impressions,

had distrusted him. He had even given Harry a vague warning, which he felt that he could not ignore. He made up his mind that he would not see Shepard in the morning. He would make it a point to rise so early that he could avoid him.

His conclusion formed, he slept soundly until the first sunlight poured in at the window that he had left open. Then, remembering that he intended to avoid Shepard, he jumped out of bed, dressed quickly and went down to breakfast, which he had been told he could get as early as he pleased.

Madame Delaunay was already there, still looking smooth and fresh in the morning air. But St. Clair was the only guest who was as early as Harry. Both greeted him pleasantly and hoped that he had slept well. Their courtesy, although Harry had no doubt of its warmth, was slightly more ornate and formal than that to which he had been used at home. He recognized here an older society, one very ancient for the New World.

The breakfast was also different from the solid one that he always ate at home. It consisted of fruits, eggs, bread and coffee. There was no meat. But he fared very well, nevertheless. St. Clair, he now learned, was a bank clerk, but after office hours he was drilling steadily in one of the Charleston companies.

"If you enlist, come with me," he said to Harry. "I can get you a place on the staff, and that will suit you."

Harry accepted his offer gladly, although he felt that he could not take up his new duties for a few days. Matters of money and other things were to be arranged.

"All right," said St. Clair. "Take your time. I don't think there's any need to hurry."

Harry left Madame Delaunay's house immediately after breakfast, still firm in his purpose to avoid Shepard, and went to the bank, on which he held drafts properly attested. Not knowing what the future held, and inspired perhaps by some counsel of caution, he drew half of it in gold, intending to keep it about his person, risking the chance of robbery. Then he went toward the bay, anxious to see the sea and those famous forts, Sumter, Moultrie and the others, of which he had heard so much.

It was a fine, crisp morning, one to make the heart of youth leap, and he soon noticed that nearly the whole population of the city was going with him toward the harbor. St. Clair, who had departed for his bank, overtook him, and it was evident to Harry that his friend was not thinking much now of banks.

"What is it, Arthur?" asked Harry.

"They stole a march on us yesterday," replied St. Clair. "See that dark and grim mass rising up sixty feet or more near the center of the harbor, the one with the Stars and Stripes flying so defiantly over it? That's Fort Sumter. Yesterday, while we were enjoying our Christmas dinner and talking of the things that we would do, Major Anderson, who commanded the United States garrison in Fort Moultrie, quietly moved it over to Sumter, which is far stronger. The wives and children of the soldiers and officers have been landed in the city with the request that we send them to their homes in the states, which, of course, we will do. But Major Anderson, who holds the fort in the name of the United States, refuses to give it up to South Carolina, which claims it."

Harry felt an extraordinary thrill, a thrill that was, in many ways, most painful. Talk was one thing, action was another. Here stood South Carolina and the Union face to face, looking at each other through the muzzles of cannon. Sumter had one hundred and forty guns, most of which commanded the city, and the people of Charleston had thrown up great earthworks, mounting many cannon.

Boy as he was, Harry was old enough to see that here were all the elements of a great conflagration. It merely remained for somebody to touch fire to the tow. He was not one to sentimentalize, but the sight of the defiant flag, the most beautiful in all the world, stirred him in every fiber. It was the flag under which both his father and Colonel Talbot had fought.

"It has to be, Harry," said St. Clair, who was watching him closely. "If it comes to a crisis we must fire upon it. If we don't, the South will be enslaved and black ignorance and savagery will be enthroned upon our necks."

"I suppose so," said Harry. "But look how the people gather!"

The Battery and all the harbor were now lined with the men, women and children of Charleston. Harry saw soldiers moving about Sumter, but no demonstration of any kind occurred there. He had not thought hitherto about the garrison of the forts in Charleston harbor. He recognized for the first time that they might not share the opinions of Charleston, and this name of Anderson was full of significance for him. Major Anderson was a Kentuckian. He had heard his father speak of him; they had served together, but it was now evident to Harry that Anderson would not go with South Carolina.

"You'll see a small boat coming soon from Sumter," said St. Clair. "Some of our people have gone over there to confer with Major Anderson and demand that he give up the fort."

"I don't believe he'll do it," said Harry impulsively. Some one touched him upon the shoulder, and turning quickly he saw Colonel Leonidas Talbot. He shook the colonel's hand with vigor, and introduced him to young St. Clair.

"I have just come into the city," said the colonel, "and I heard only a few minutes ago that Major Anderson had removed his garrison from Moultrie to Sumter."

"It is true," said St. Clair. "He is defiant. He says that he will hold the fort for the Union."

"I had hoped that he would give up," said Colonel Talbot. "It might help the way to a composition."

He pulled his long mustache and looked somberly at the flag. The wind had risen a little, and it whipped about the staff. Its fluttering motions seemed to Harry more significant than ever of defiance. He understood the melancholy ring in Colonel Talbot's voice. He, too, like the boy's father, had fought under that flag, the same flag that had led him up the flame-swept slopes of Cerro Gordo and Chapultepec.

"Here they come," exclaimed St. Clair, "and I know already the answer that they bring!"

The small boat that he had predicted put out from Sumter and quickly landed at the Battery. It contained three commissioners, prominent men of Charleston who had been sent to treat with Major Anderson, and his answer was quickly known to all the crowd. Sumter was the property of the United States, not of South Carolina, and he would hold it for the Union. At that moment the wind strengthened, and the flag stood straight out over the lofty walls of Sumter.

"I knew it would be so," said Colonel Talbot, with a sigh. "Anderson is that kind of a man. Come, boys, we will go back into the city. I am to help in building the fortifications, and as I am about to make a tour of inspection I will take you with me."

Harry found that, although secession was only a few days old, the work of offense and defense was already far advanced. The planters were pouring into Charleston, bringing their slaves with them, and white and black labored together at the earthworks. Rich men, who had never soiled their hands with toil before now, wielded pick and spade by the side of their black slaves. And it was rumored that Toutant Beauregard, a great engineer officer, now commander at the West Point Military Academy, would speedily resign, and come south to take command of the forces in Charleston.

Strong works were going up along the mainland. The South Carolina forces had also seized Sullivan's Island, Morris Island, and James Island and were mounting guns upon them all. Circling batteries would soon threaten Sumter, and, however defiantly the flag there might snap in the breeze, it must come down.

As they were leaving the last of the batteries Harry noticed the broad, strong back and erect figure of a young man who stood with his hands in his pockets. He knew by his rigid attitude that he was looking intently at the battery and he knew, moreover, that it was Shepard. He wished to avoid him, and he wished also that his companion would not see him. He started to draw Colonel Talbot away, but it was too late. Shepard turned at that moment, and the colonel caught sight of his face.

"That man here among our batteries!" he exclaimed in a menacing tone.

"Come away, colonel!" said Harry hastily. "We don't know anything against him!"

But Shepard himself acted first. He came forward quickly, his hand extended, and his eyes expressing pleasure.

"I missed you this morning, Mr. Kenton," he said. "You were too early for me, but we meet, nevertheless, in a place of the greatest interest. And here is Colonel Talbot, too!"

Harry took the outstretched hand—he could not keep from liking Shepard—but Colonel Talbot, by turning slightly, avoided it without giving the appearance of brusqueness. His courtesy, concerning which the South Carolinians of his type were so particular, would not fail him, and, while he avoided the hand, he promptly introduced Shepard and St. Clair.

"I did not expect to find events so far advanced in Charleston," said Shepard. "With the Federal garrison concentrated in Sumter and the batteries going up everywhere, matters begin to look dangerous."

"I suppose that you have made a careful examination of all the batteries," said Colonel Talbot dryly.

"Casual, not careful," returned Shepard, in his usual cheerful tones. "It is impossible, at such a time, to keep from looking at Sumter, the batteries and all the other preparations. We would not be human if we didn't do it, and I've seen enough to know that the Yankees will have a hot welcome if they undertake to interfere with Charleston."

"You see truly," said Colonel Talbot, with some emphasis.

"A happy chance has put me at the same place as Mr. Kenton," continued Shepard easily. "I have letters which admitted me to the inn of Madame Delaunay, and I met him there last night. We are likely to see much of each other."

Colonel Leonidas Talbot raised his eyebrows. When they walked a little further he excused himself, saying that he was going to meet a committee of defense at St. Andrew's Hall, and Harry and Arthur, after talking a little longer with Shepard, left him near one of the batteries.

"I'm going to my bank," said St. Clair. "I'm already long overdue, but it will be forgiven at such a time as this. And I must say, Harry, that Colonel Talbot does not seem to like your acquaintance, Mr. Shepard."

"It is true, he doesn't, although I don't know just why," said Harry.

He saw Shepard at a distance three more times in the course of the day, but he sedulously avoided a meeting. He noticed that Shepard was always near the batteries and earthworks, but hundreds of others were near them, too. He did not return to Madame Delaunay's until evening, when it was time for dinner, where he found all the guests gathered, with the addition of Shepard.

Madame Delaunay assigned the new man to a seat near the foot of the table and the talk ran on much as it had done at the Christmas dinner, Major St. Hilaire leading, which Harry surmised was his custom. Shepard, who had been introduced to the others by Madame Delaunay, did not have much to say, nor did the South Carolinians warm to him as they had to Harry. A slight air of constraint appeared and Harry was glad when the dinner was over. Then he and St. Clair slipped away and spent the evening roaming about the city, looking at the old historic places, the fine churches, the homes of the wealthy and again at the earthworks and the harbor forts. The last thing Harry saw as he turned back toward Madame Delaunay's was that defiant flag of the Union, still waving above the dark and looming mass of old Sumter.

He was unlocking the door to his room when Shepard came briskly down the hall, carrying his candle in his hand.

"I want to tell you good-bye, Mr. Kenton," he said, "I thought we were to be together here at the inn for some time, but it is not to be so."

"What has happened?"

"It appears that my room had been engaged already by another man, beginning tomorrow morning. I was not informed of it when I came here, but Madame Delaunay has recalled the fact and

I cannot doubt the word of a Charleston lady. It appears also that no other room is vacant, owing to the great number of people who have come into the city in the last week or two. So, I go."

He did not seem at all discouraged, his tone being as cheerful as ever, and he held out his hand. Harry liked this man, although it seemed that others did not, and when he released the hand he said:

"Take good care of yourself, Mr. Shepard. As I see it, the people of Charleston are not taking to you, and we do not know what is going to happen."

"Both statements are true," said Shepard with a laugh as he vanished down the hail. Nothing yet had been able to disturb his poise.

Harry went into his own room, and, throwing open his front window to let in fresh air, he heard the hum of voices. He looked down into a piazza and he saw two figures there, a man and a woman. They were Colonel Talbot and Madame Delaunay. He closed the blind promptly, feeling that unconsciously he had touched upon something hallowed, the thread of an old romance, a thread which, though slender, was nevertheless yet strong. Nor did he doubt that the suggestion of Colonel Leonidas Talbot had caused the speedy withdrawal of Shepard.

Several more days passed. Harry found that he was taken into the city's heart, and its spell was very strong upon him. He knew that much of his welcome was due to the powerful influence of Colonel Leonidas Talbot and to the warm friendship of Arthur St. Clair, who apparently was related to everybody. A letter came from his father, to whom he had written at once of his purpose, giving his approval, and sending him more money. Colonel Kenton wrote that he would come South himself, but he was needed in Kentucky, where a powerful faction was opposing their plans. He said that Harry's cousin, Dick Mason, had joined the home guards, raised in the interests of the old Union, and was drilling zealously.

The letter made the boy very thoughtful. The news about his cousin opened his eyes. The line of cleavage between North and South was widening into a gulf. But his spirits rose when he enlisted in the Palmetto Guards, and began to see active service. His quickness and zeal caused him to be used as a messenger, and he was continually passing back and forth among the Confederate leaders in Charleston. He also came into contact with the Union officers in Fort Sumter.

The relations of the town and the garrison were yet on a friendly basis. Men were allowed to come ashore and to buy fresh meat, vegetables, and other provisions. Strict orders kept anyone from offering violence or insult to them. Harry saw Anderson once, but he did not give him his name, deeming it best, because of the stand that he had taken, that no talk should pass between them.

He picked up a copy of the Mercury one morning and saw that a steamer, the Star of the West, was on its way to Charleston from a northern port with supplies for the garrison in Fort Sumter. He read the brief account, threw down the paper and rushed out for his friend, St. Clair. He knew that the coming of this vessel would fire the Charleston heart, and he was eager to be upon the scene.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST CAPITAL

Harry and Arthur stood two days later upon the sea wall of Charleston. Sumter rose up black and menacing in the clear wintry air. The muzzles of the cannon seemed to point into the very heart of the city, and over it, as ever, flew the defiant flag, the red and blue burning in vivid colors in the thin January sunshine. The heart of Charleston, that most intense of all Southern cities, had given forth a great throb. The Star of the West was coming from the North with provisions for the garrison of beleaguered Sumter. They would see her hull on the horizon in another hour.

Both Harry and Arthur were trembling with excitement. They were not on duty themselves, but they knew that all the South Carolina earthworks and batteries were manned. What would happen? It still seemed almost incredible to Harry that the people of the Union—at least of the Union that was—should fire upon one another, and his pulse beat hard and strong, while he waited with his comrade.

As they stood there gazing out to sea, looking for the black speck that should mark the first smoke of the Star of the West, Harry became conscious that another man was standing almost at his elbow. He glanced up and saw Shepard, who nodded to him.

"I did not know that I was standing by you until I had been here some time," said Shepard, as if he sought to indicate that he had not been seeking Harry and his comrade.

"I thought you had left Charleston," said Harry, who had not seen him for a week.

"Not at such a time," said Shepard, quietly. "So much of overwhelming interest is happening here that nobody who is alive can go away."

He put a pair of powerful glasses to his eyes and scanned the sea's rim. He looked a long time, and then his face showed excitement.

"It comes! It comes!" he exclaimed, more to himself than to Harry and Arthur.

"Is it the steamer? Is it the Star of the West?" exclaimed Harry forgetting all doubts of Shepard in the thrill of the moment.

"Yes, the Star of the West! It can be no other!" replied Shepard. "It can be no other! Take the glasses and see for yourself!"

When Harry looked he saw, where sea and sky joined, a black dot that gradually lengthened out into a small plume. It was not possible to recognize any ship at that distance, but he felt instinctively that it was the Star of the West. He passed the glasses to Arthur, who also took a look, and then drew a deep breath. Harry handed the glasses back to Shepard, saying:

"I see the ship, and I've no doubt that it's the Star of the West. Do you know anything about this vessel, Mr. Shepard?"

"I've heard that she's only a small steamer, totally unfitted for offense or defense."

"If the batteries fire upon her she's bound to go back."

"You put it right."

"Then, in effect, this is a test, and it rests with us whether or not to fire the first shot."

"I think you're right again."

Others also saw the growing black plume of smoke rising from the steamer's funnel, and a deep thrilling murmur ran through the crowd gathered on the sea walls. To many the vessel, steaming toward the harbor, was foreign, carrying a foreign flag, but to many others it was not and could never be so.

Shepard passed the glasses to the boy again, and he looked a second time at the ship, which was now taking shape and rising fast upon the water. Then he examined the walls of Sumter and saw men in blue moving there. They, too, were watching the coming steamer with the deepest anxiety.

Arthur took his second look also, and Shepard watched through the glasses a little longer. Then he put them in the case which he hung over his shoulder. Glasses were no longer needed. They could now see with the naked eye what was about to happen—if anything happened at all.

"It will soon be decided," said Shepard, and Harry noticed that his voice trembled. "If the Star of the West comes without interference up to the walls of Sumter there will be no war. The minds of men on both sides will cool. But if she is stopped, then—"

He broke off. Something seemed to choke in his throat. Harry and Arthur remained silent.

The ship rose higher and higher. Behind her hung the long black trail of her smoke. Soon, she would be in the range of the batteries. A deep shuddering sigh ran through the crowd, and then came moments of intense, painful silence. The little blue figures lining the walls of Sumter were motionless. The sea moved slowly and sleepily, its waters drenched in wintry sunshine.

On came the Star of the West, straight toward the harbor mouth.

"They will not fire! They dare not!" cried Shepard in a tense, strained whisper.

As the last word left his lips there was a heavy crash. A tongue of fire leaped from one of the batteries, followed by a gush of smoke, and a round shot whistled over the Star of the West. A tremendous shout came from the crowd, then it was silent, while that tongue of flame leaped a second time from the mouth of a cannon. Harry saw the water spring up, a spire of white foam, near the steamer, and a moment later a third shot clipped the water close by. He did not know whether the gunners were firing directly at the vessel or merely meant to warn her that she came nearer at her peril, but in any event, the effect was the same. South Carolina with her cannon was warning a foreign ship, the ship of an enemy, to keep away.

The Star of the West slowed down and stopped. Then another shout, more tremendous than ever, a shout of triumph, came from the crowd, but Harry felt a chill strike to his heart. Young St. Clair, too, was silent and Harry saw a shadow on his face. He looked for Shepard, but he was gone and the boy had not heard him go.

"It is all over," said St. Clair, with the certainty of prophecy. "The cannon have spoken and it is war. Why, where is Shepard?"

"I don't know. He seems to have slipped away after the first two or three shots."

"I suppose he considered the two or three enough. Look, Harry! The ship is turning! The cannon have driven her off!"

He was right. The Star of the West, a small steamer, unable to face heavy guns, had curved about and was making for the open sea. There was another tremendous shout from the crowd, and then silence. Smoke from the cannon drifted lazily over the town, and, caught by a contrary breeze, was blown out over the sea in the track of the retreating steamer, where it met the black trail left by that vessel's own funnel. The crowd, not cheering much now, but talking in rather subdued tones, dispersed.

Harry felt the chill down his spine again. These were great matters. He had looked upon no light event in the harbor of Charleston that day. He and Arthur lingered on the wall, watching that trailing black dot on the horizon, until it died away and was gone forever. The blue figures on the walls of Sumter had disappeared within, and the fortress stood up, grim and silent. Beyond lay the blue sea, shimmering and peaceful in the wintry sunshine.

"I suppose there is nothing to do but go back to Madame Delaunay's," said Harry.

"Nothing now," replied St. Clair, "but I fancy that later on we'll have all we can do."

"If not more."

"Yes, if not more."

Both boys were very grave and thoughtful as they walked to Madame Delaunay's most excellent inn. They realized that as yet South Carolina stood alone, but in the evening their spirits took a leap. News came that Mississippi also had gone out. Then other planting states followed fast. Florida was but a day behind Mississippi, Alabama went out the next day after Florida, Georgia eight days later,

and Louisiana a week after Georgia. Exultation rose high in Charleston. All the Gulf and South Atlantic States were now sure, but the great border states still hung fire. There was a clamor for Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri, and, though the promises from them came thick and fast, they did not go out. But the fiery energy of Charleston and the lower South was moving forward over all obstacles. Already arrangements had been made for a great convention at Montgomery in Alabama, and a new government would be formed differing but little from that of the old Union.

Now Harry began to hear much of a man, of whom he had heard his father speak, but who had slipped entirely from his mind. It was Jefferson Davis, a native of Kentucky like Abraham Lincoln. He had been a brave and gallant soldier at Buena Vista. It was said that he had saved the day against the overwhelming odds of Santa Anna. He had been Secretary of War in the old Union, now dissolved forever, according to the Charleston talk. Other names, too, began to grow familiar in Harry's ears. Much was said about the bluff Bob Toombs of Georgia, who feared no man and who would call the roll of his slaves at the foot of Bunker Hill monument. And there was little weazened Stephens, also of Georgia, a great intellect in a shrunken frame, and Benjamin of the oldest race, who had inherited the wisdom of ages. There would be no lack of numbers and courage and penetration when the great gathering met at Montgomery.

These were busy and on the whole happy days for Harry and St. Clair. Harry drilled with his comrade in the Palmetto Guards now, and, in due time, they were going to Montgomery to assist at the inauguration of the new president, whoever he might be. No vessel had come in place of the *Star of the West*. The North seemed supine, and Sumter, grim and dark though she might be, was alone. The flag of the Stars and Stripes still floated above it. Everywhere else the Palmetto flag waved defiance. But there was still no passage of arms between Sumter and its hostile neighbors. Small boats passed between the fort and the city, carrying provisions to the garrison, and also the news. The Charlestonians told Major Anderson of the states that went out, one by one, and the brave Kentuckian, eating his heart out, looked vainly toward the open sea for the help that never came.

Exultation still rose in Charleston. The ball was rolling finely. It was even gathering more speed and force than the most sanguine had expected. Every day brought the news of some new accession to the cause, some new triumph. The Alabama militia had seized the forts, Morgan and Gaines; Georgia had occupied Pulaski and Jackson; North Carolina troops had taken possession of the arsenal at Fayetteville, and those of Florida on the same day had taken the one at Chattahoochee. Everywhere the South was accumulating arms, ammunition and supplies for use—if they should be needed. The leaders had good cause for rejoicing. They were disappointed in nothing, save that northern tier of border states which still hesitated or refused.

Harry in these days wondered that so little seemed to happen in the North. His strong connections and his own good manners had made him a favorite in Charleston. He went everywhere, perhaps most often to the office of the *Mercury*, controlled by the powerful Rhett family, among the most fiery of the Southern leaders. Exchanges still came there from the northern cities, but he read little in them about preparations for war. Many attacked Buchanan, the present President, for weakness, and few expected anything better from the uncouth western figure, Lincoln, who would soon succeed him.

Meanwhile the Confederate convention at Montgomery was acting. In those days apathy and delay seemed to be characteristic of the North, courage and energy of the South. The new government was being formed with speed and decision. Jefferson Davis, it was said, would be President, and Stephens of Georgia would be Vice-President.

The time for departure to Montgomery drew near. Harry and Arthur were in fine gray uniforms as members of the Palmetto Guards. Arthur, light, volatile, was full of pleased excitement. Harry also felt the thrill of curiosity and anticipation, but he had been in Charleston nearly six weeks now, and while six weeks are short, they had been long enough in such a tense time to make vital changes in his character. He was growing older fast. He was more of a man, and he weighed and measured

things more. He recognized that Charleston, while the second city of the South in size and the first in leadership, was only Charleston, after all, far inferior in weight and numbers to the great cities of the North. Often he looked toward the North over the vast, intervening space and tried to reckon what forces lay there.

The evening before their departure they sat on the wide piazza that swept along the entire front of the inn of Madame Delaunay. Colonel Leonidas Talbot and Major Hector St. Hilaire sat with them. They, too, were going to Montgomery. Mid-February had passed, and the day had been one of unusual warmth for that time of the year, like a day in full spring. The wind from the south was keen with the odor of fresh foliage and of roses, and of faint far perfumes, unknown but thrilling. A sky of molten silver clothed city, bay, and forts in enchantment. Nothing seemed further away than war, yet they had to walk but a little distance to see the defiant flag over Sumter, and the hostile Palmetto flags waving not far away.

Madame Delaunay appeared in the doorway. She was dressed as usual in white and her shining black hair was bound with the slender gold fillet.

"We are going away tomorrow, Madame," said Colonel Talbot, "and I know that we cannot find in Montgomery any such pleasant entertainment as my young friends have enjoyed here."

Harry was confirmed in his belief that the thread of an old romance still formed a firm tie between them.

"But you will come back," said Madame Delaunay. "You will come back very soon. Surely, they will not try to keep us from going our ways in peace."

A sudden thrill of passion and feeling had appeared in her voice.

"That no one can tell, Julie," said Colonel Talbot very gravely—it was the first time that Harry had ever heard him call her by her first name—"but it seems to me that I should tell what I think. A Union such as ours has been formed amid so much suffering and hardship, courage and danger, that it is not to be broken in a day. We may come back soon from Montgomery, Julie, but I see war, a great and terrible war, a war, by the side of which those we have had, will dwindle to mere skirmishes. I shut my eyes, but it makes no difference. I see it close at hand, just the same."

Madame Delaunay sighed.

"And you, Major St. Hilaire?" she said.

"There may be a great war, Madame Delaunay," he said, "I fear that Colonel Talbot is right, but we shall win it."

Colonel Talbot said nothing more, nor did Madame Delaunay. Presently she went back into the house. After a long silence the colonel said:

"If I were not sure that our friend Shepard had left Charleston long since, I should say that the figure now passing in the street is his."

A small lawn filled with shrubbery stretched before the house, but from the piazza they could see into the street. Harry, too, caught a glimpse of a passing figure, and like the colonel he was sure that it was Shepard.

"It is certainly he!" he exclaimed.

"After him!" cried Colonel Talbot, instantly all action. "As sure as we live that man is a spy, drawing maps of our fortifications, and I should have warned the Government before."

The four sprang from the piazza and ran into the street. Harry, although he had originally felt no desire to seize Shepard, was carried along by the impetus. It was the first man-hunt in which he had ever shared, and soon he caught the thrill from the others. The colonel, no doubt, was right. Shepard was a spy and should be taken. He ran as fast as any of them.

Shepard, if Shepard it was, heard the swift footsteps behind him, glanced back and then ran.

"After him!" cried Major St. Hilaire, his volatile blood leaping high. "His flight shows that he's a spy!"

But the fugitive was a man of strength and resource. He ran swiftly into a cross street, and when they followed him there he leaped over the low fence of a lawn, surrounding a great house, darted into the shrubbery, and the four, although they were joined by others, brought by the alarm, sought for him in vain.

"After all, I'm not sorry he got away," said Colonel Talbot, as they walked back to Madame Delaunay's. "There is no war, and hence, in a military sense, there can be no spies. I doubt whether we should have known what to do with him had we caught him, but I am certain that he has complete maps of all our defenses."

Harry, with Arthur and many others whom he knew, started the next day for Montgomery. Jefferson Davis had already been chosen President, and Alexander H. Stephens Vice-President, and Davis was on his way from his Mississippi home to the same town to be inaugurated. In the excitement over the great event, so near at hand, Harry forgot all about Shepard and his doubts. He bade a regretful farewell to Charleston, which had taken him to its heart, and turned his face to this new place, much smaller, and, as yet, without fame.

Harry, Arthur, and their older friends began the momentous journey across the land of King Cotton, passing through the very heart of the lower South, as they went from Charleston to Montgomery. Davis and Stephens would be inaugurated on the 17th of that month, which was February. But the Palmetto Guards would arrive at Montgomery before Davis himself, who had left his home and who would cross Mississippi, Alabama, and a corner of Georgia before he reached the new capital to receive the chief honor.

Trains were slow and halting, and Harry had ample opportunity to see the land and the people who crowded to the stations to bring news or to hear it. He crossed a low, rolling country with many rivers, great and small. He saw large houses, with white-pillared porticos, sitting back among the trees, and swarms of negro cabins. Much of the region was yet dead and brown from the touch of winter, but in the valleys the green was appearing. Spring was in the air, and the spirits of the Palmetto Guards, nearly all of whom were very young, were rising with it.

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