

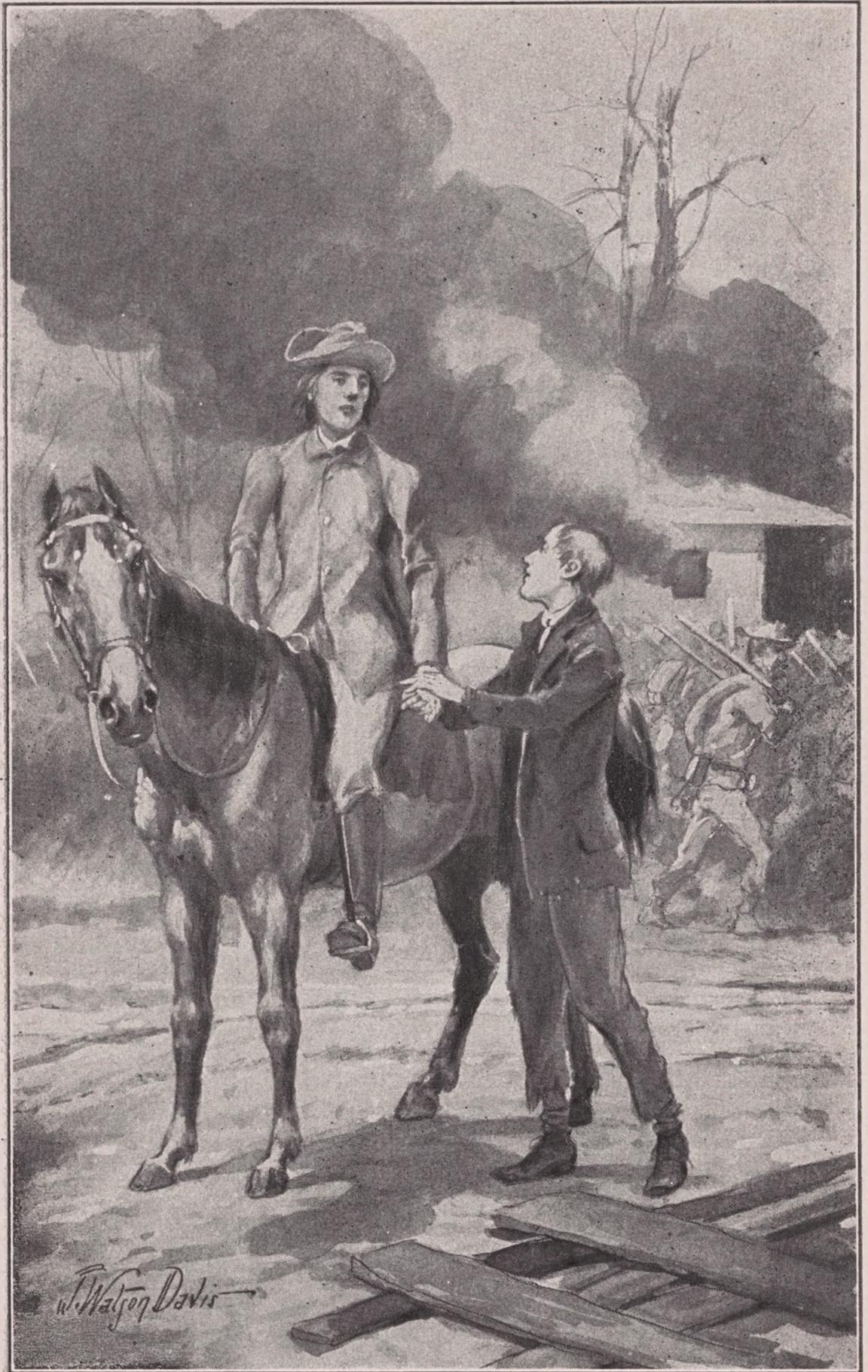
WITH GRANT *at* VICKSBURG

JAMES OTIS









“ We won’t make it ‘ good-bye,’ ” said Bob, as I clasped his hand in parting. Page 159.

Frontispiece.

— *With Grant at Vicksburg.*

WITH GRANT AT VICKSBURG

A Boy's Story of the Siege of Vicksburg

BY JAMES OTIS

Kaler

Author of "Across the Delaware," "At the Siege of Havana,"
"A Cruise With Paul Jones," "A Traitor's Escape,"
"With Washington at Monmouth," Etc.



With Four Illustrations By
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WITH GRANT AT VICKSBURG
By James Otis



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With Grant at Vicksburg.

FOREWORD.

It is not with any intention of writing what may be called a story, that I am setting down that certain portion of my life history which to this day stands out more vividly than any other.

My grandchildren know, because of a faded blue cap, ragged coat and rusty canteen, which hang in my library, that I took part in that wonderfully great struggle between the men in blue and the men in gray, and many a winter's evening have I spent telling them of this amusing incident, or that thrilling adventure, which came to me on one side or the other of the imaginary line which marked the division between North and South. Yet I have never before attempted to set down in proper sequence my experience as a very young, and very small, soldier in the army of the North, and because of what has seemed to me good and sufficient reasons.

Since that happy day in '65, when the dove of peace flew across the country after having been banished during so many weary years, hundreds of men, some of them but remotely connected with either army, have deemed it necessary to write a so-called history

of that struggle between brothers, and in the main those same works have been exceedingly dry reading.

That, at least, is one of the reasons why I have never attempted to add to the so-called "war literature," nor do I intend to at this time, therefore have I set it down at the beginning, that what is here written does not purport to be a story; but simply a portion of my own experience, written out for the benefit of my grandchildren, sturdy boys, who when danger again threatens this fair land will be foremost in going forth to defend it.

It is not given to privates to know the meaning of this strategic movement, or of that sudden change of base, neither do they learn of all the results until news comes by way of the printed papers, or camp gossip, for, mark you, if your soldier be doing his duty it is a very small portion of the army that he comes in contact with, and therefore can it be understood how little I, a drummer boy, who enlisted in the State of Maine, having just turned fifteen years of age, should know of military movements even though I was one of the units of the force engaged.

Therefore it is, I repeat again, that this is not a story. I do not intend to go into details of how I succeeded in gaining my parents' consent to enlist, nor to set down the difficulties which beset me when I offered my supposedly valuable services to the country; but shall simply commence with that por-

tion of my life as a half-fledged soldier when I was used as one of the pawns in the "grim game."

There is naught set down here which is untrue, neither have I departed from the literal facts in order to make of myself more of a hero, or less of a coward, than actually was the case. There are doubtless many details forgotten, for one's memory does not readily hark back nearly forty-five years, but such as I have recalled to mind are given, as nearly as possible, in the coloring which I then saw them.

WITH GRANT AT VICKSBURG.

CHAPTER I.

THE "HENRY CLAY."

It's a tomfool trick, whoever ordered it, an' that I'd lay claim to if Grant himself stood alongside of me on this 'ere imitation of a steamboat!"

It was Reuben Smart, "Uncle Rube" they called him, Corporal of Company G, 46th Maine, who said this to me when we were on board the transport Henry Clay, just below the Yazoo Pass, in the early summer of 1863.

"What is it, Uncle Rube?" I asked, not understanding why we were sent aboard this steamer on the sides of which were lashed bales of cotton and of hay as protection against the enemy's shot.

"It's nothin' more nor less, lad, than a pig-headed scheme to run past the Vicksburg batteries, and if ever a lot of well-meanin' men were crowded together so they could be killed handy like, we're that 'ere collection! Run past the batteries? Why, they could shoot this boat into kindlin' wood before we were opposite the first bluff."

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“There are steamers enough here to make quite a fight of it, Uncle Rube,” I ventured to say, looking around on the fleet which was moored by the banks of the river, where the shadows of evening were beginning to hide them partially from view.

There were eight vessels which were protected by armor plates, and each of these had lashed, on the port side, a coal barge; three transports—the river steamers protected by cotton and hay bales, as I have said, and a small tug made fast alongside the flagship Benton, forming the fleet which I, in my ignorance, had believed was destined for another expedition up the Yazoo.

Every steamer carried more than a full complement of men; the transports were thronged with soldiers whose work would probably be to make a land attack in case this hazardous venture was successful, and every one of us, I dare venture to say, from Admiral Porter to myself, who was the youngest and most insignificant, being only the drummer boy of Company G, 46th Maine regiment, was literally quivering with excitement when the nature of the work in hand had been made known.

How Uncle Rube learned of what was to be done I cannot even guess; certain it was, however, that he had the correct information, and for the first time since I left the State of Maine did I find it all I could do to prevent the cowardly feeling which assailed me, from being apparent on my face.

We who made up in a greater or less degree the army under General Grant, had for many days talked of nothing save Vicksburg, except when we were speaking of home and those whom we hoped to see once more; we had thought of little else save the taking of that seemingly impregnable city, and whenever a movement was made, had speculated as to what bearing it might have on the capture of the stronghold which our general had made up his mind to effect at whatever cost of blood.

Therefore it is little wonder that our nerves were tense with suspense and excitement, and when the plans, admirably mapped out as they were, are brought to mind, I may surely stand excused for being weak-kneed.

Uncle Rube was one of those soldiers who believed that the act of enlistment gave him every right to grumble at any and all times, and he never failed to take advantage of the opportunity.

On this night, however, he was outdoing himself, and those of his cronies who, as a rule, believed they knew better than the commander what should be done to bring the war to a speedy close, joined with him in crying out against the venture which it seemed must surely end in the death of all of us, until a person not accustomed to the ways of the 46th would have said we were in a fine state of mutiny, with more than one officer bearing us company.

Fortunately, so far as the game of war is con-

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cerned, the grumbling of a few moss-backed privates does not interfere in any way with the movements, and we on board the Henry Clay understood that, despite all complaints and forebodings, at the appointed time we would be steaming down the river until we met with that storm of shot and shell which all knew very well would be hurled at us.

We had two days' rations in our haversacks, therefore, as the night advanced, the chronic grumblers of the 46th were silenced for a short time while they munchedhardtack with as good a relish as was possible, since they were not allowed fires by which to make coffee or fry bacon.

When this rather unsatisfactory meal came to an end, we had nothing to do save wait with the best semblance of patience which could be assumed, until the venture was begun, and this we understood—I know not from whence came the news—was to be an hour before midnight.

I know now from Admiral Porter's report that orders "had been given that the coal in the furnaces should be well ignited, so as to show no smoke, that low steam should be carried, that not a wheel was to turn save to keep the vessel's bow down river, and to drift past the enemy's works fifty yards apart."

There is no good reason why I should attempt to set down, even if it were possible, all that was said by the members of the 46th during those long, dreary hours of suspense. Suffice it to say that about the

time which I understood had been decided upon between the admiral and the commander-in-chief, the descent of the river was begun

We saw vessel after vessel start off into the darkness like some evil shadow, with never a glimmer of light, save now and then the faintest glow from the smoke-stacks.

One by one they departed, silently swallowed up in the deep shadows almost immediately after the hawser had been cast off, and then came our turn.

We were running the regulation distance behind the Mound City, and it seemed to me we were no more than well under way, when I saw in the distance a fiery globe coming from the first bluff, followed by a dull report, telling that the enemy had sighted the foremost of our fleet.

In a twinkling the river in advance of us was lighted up by the flashing of the guns, and while I asked myself if it were possible that any of the craft could pass the first battery, the railway station on the right bank suddenly burst into flames, while immediately afterward bonfires were kindled here, there, and apparently everywhere, telling that the tar barrels which we had heard were placed in positions for just such an illumination, had been lighted.

Even though we had been expecting it, I screamed with surprise and fear when the blaze of light first streamed out, illuminating the long stretch of that black river, and then came a sense of sickening

horror, which was voiced by the booming of the heavy guns.

Now was the time when I expected Uncle Rube and his grumbling companions would cry out most loudly against this hazardous, apparently impossible, venture; but instead, the only word which I heard from the old soldier was:

“She’s broke loose!”

Then I think he, like myself, stood silent and motionless with a fear which came upon us—the fear of going down into those rays of light, amid the bursting shells and whistling shot.

I wish it were possible I could with words so paint the picture that it might be seen in the mind’s eye; but it cannot be, because I question if it is within my power to describe what, even while beholding, I did not really see.

There was the glare of light; the thunder of guns from the bluffs, as well as from the fleet, all making such a bewildering turmoil, that, when accompanied by a knowledge of the danger which threatened, prevented one from seeing the details—from realizing anything save that we on board the transport, who were debarred from the excitement of giving battle, must soon be in the very midst of the fury.

Then, and it came suddenly to me even though we had been bearing down upon it many moments, we also were under fire, and I heard Uncle Rube cry as if the fact gave him pleasure:

“The sharpshooters in the rifle pits on the levee are at work, an’ I reckon we can take a hand in pitching lead!”

Whether or not an order was given for our men to open fire I cannot say; but it was to me as if each member of the 46th set about doing what he could on his own responsibility, and at his own sweet will, for, strange though it may seem, it was a relief to be able to discharge one’s musket.

Having no weapon, and eager to be doing something, other than watch the work of destruction, which I expected would soon be apparent on our steamer, I beat my drum, and the men cheered as if I was doing a wonderfully brave thing.

I can well fancy now that they welcomed my tiny portion of the din, as something to stop from their ears the more horrible noises of the conflict.

Whether we were exposed to this withering fire an hour, or only five minutes, I could not then have said; there was no thought in my mind as to the flight of time. I knew that more than one heavy shot had struck our bulwarks of cotton and hay; that many bullets had come aboard, and that there were ominous red stains on the white planks, which told that this or that member of the 46th would not respond at roll-call next morning.

Then when, as I afterward came to know, we had sailed, steamed, or drifted a mile through that shower of missiles, the transport reeled and quivered

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as if she had struck a ledge; there was a mighty roar following the shock, and fragments of iron sang among us until it was as if we were in the midst of a swarm of hornets.

“What is it?” I screamed to Uncle Rube as I clutched him frantically by the arm, almost beside myself with fear.

“I reckon the Johnnies have found us with one of their shells, an’——There’s Jim Nason down, Dick; it’s for you an’ me to look after the poor chap, else he’ll never see Malden again.”

Uncle Rube ran to our comrade, whose parents lived next door to mine at home, and I followed; but we were not in time to render any aid, for he was already enrolled in the ranks of the silent army.

My grief at his death was so great that for a moment I forgot everything else—gave no attention to the fact that a shell had, after plowing its way through one end of a cotton bale, burst, scattering fire in every direction, but I was speedily made aware of the fact when Uncle Rube clutched my arm, drawing me back from Jim Nason’s mangled body as he cried:

“It looks like it might be a case of takin’ to the water, lad, an’ I’ll allow that ain’t a very healthy place just this minute; but it’s likely to be better than aboard one of these ’ere tinder boxes at such a time.”

Already were the flames bursting, as it seemed to

me, out from every portion of the steamer, and I heard some one shout that she was being headed for the shore opposite the city.

“Come with me well up front, lad, for while she’s movin’ through the water the fire’ll work aft instead of for’ard,” and Uncle Rube literally dragged me toward the steamer’s bow, forcing his way amid a crowd of frightened men, each intent on saving only his own life.

One was in more danger of being crushed to death than of being overtaken by the flames, and even in the dumb agony of the few seconds which elapsed I said to myself that if a shot came aboard at the stern, plowing its way forward, the 46th was likely to be wiped out of existence before it could be burned or drowned.

We were a struggling, fighting mob. This one cursed, and that one prayed. I heard a man singing “Rock of Ages” as he struck with the butt of his musket at a comrade in front of him, hoping thereby to gain a few inches more on what he hoped would be the road to safety, and another, whose white lips quivered, was vainly trying to whistle “Annie Laurie”.

Can you describe such a scene as that?

Uncle Rube was giving more heed to me than to himself. I knew that he had set his back against our comrades, trying to force his way forward as he held me with both hands to prevent me from being

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crushed to death, and while he was making his mightiest efforts there was another shock.

I heard above the roar of the guns and the crackle of the musketry, the splintering of wood, and on the instant, as it were, the Henry Clay settled to port so sharply as to throw us violently against the rail, which, giving away under the pressure, sent an hundred men or more to their last account.

“She’s sinking!” some one cried, and then the crowd surged to and fro as if undecided whether to go forward or back, and all the while behind us leaped the great tongues of flame as if eager to accomplish that which the enemy’s missiles had left undone.

“She’s sinkin’!” Uncle Rube cried in my ear, and I looked up at him helplessly, for it seemed to me that if one was not drowned offhand when the steamer went down, he must perforce be killed by shot or shell within a very few seconds, for the jets of water that spouted up here, there and everywhere told how rapidly and accurately the Johnnies were firing.

It seemed as if the merest fraction of time elapsed after the shot struck us in the hull, before the Henry Clay had settled until her main deck was flush with the water, and only then did our people think of casting off the bales of cotton that they might be used as rafts.

Perhaps something could have been done in this

direction had the work been begun sooner, but as it was I believe no more than three bales were set adrift before Uncle Rube cried in my ear as he forced me toward the starboard rail:

“It’s a case of our jumpin’, lad, an’ that mighty quick! Strike out as far as you can from the steamer, for when she sinks she’ll suck down everything that’s near her.”

“But we’ll be shot!” I cried, trying in vain to hold back, even though I knew death awaited me if I remained on board.

Uncle Rube, although slow in speech, was decidedly quick in action at critical moments, and without waiting to argue the question he picked me up bodily.

I felt myself flung to and fro for a moment, in order that greater impetus might be given, and then I was shot through the air like a human missile.

I have heard it said that at the supreme moment when one feels the chill from the wings of the angel of death, all the senses are quickened, and he sees before him the past.

That may be true in some cases, but surely I was as near death at that moment as I ever shall be until the final moment comes, and yet there was in my mind only the thought of self-preservation.

My senses were so far quickened that I realized I must necessarily sink deep in the water before it would be possible to rise, because of the force with

which Uncle Rube had thrown me, and I understood that all the while the current would be carrying me down stream.

I speculated, if it is possible for one to do so at such a time, as to whether I would come up within range of the enemy's guns, and then suddenly a great light burst upon me. I was deafened once more by the thunderous din; I saw the shells sail across the sky and burst like rockets; I was conscious of being carried swiftly by the current, and whirled around and around by the eddies.

The one thought in my mind was to gain the shore opposite the batteries, for I realized that there was quite as much danger of being run down by those vessels of our fleet in the rear, as there was of being struck by shot or shell, and said to myself, even amid all the peril—for now it was that I looked upon myself as an important factor in that terrible scene,—that there was no longer a question of taking the city, or of running our steamers past the batteries; but simply of saving the life of one Richard J. Studley, who counted himself a member of the 46th Maine.

More than once a shell struck within a few feet of me, sending up a great column of water; but by this time I was so filled with the horror of the scene and a frantic desire to save myself, that I gave no heed to the new danger so near at hand.

Then I saw that one of our transports—the Forest Queen, I believe it was—had been disabled, drifting

down broadside on directly toward me, and as I put forth all my strength, a gunboat, turning in the line, steamed swiftly up to aid the helpless steamer.

I was between the two crafts, and it is probable that, becoming bewildered, I turned around without being aware of it, thus heading for the enemy's shore instead of the right bank of the river, where I might possibly have found safety.

Certain it is, however, that I swam as I never had before, and my feet absolutely grazed the side of the gunboat as she dashed past me.

I could not expect any assistance from those on board the vessels; even had an hundred men been struggling in the water they must have continued on the voyage down the river, for human life is cheap when war broods over the land.

I fancied that here and there I saw the head of some swimmer like myself, who was struggling to gain a place of safety.

A short distance down the stream floated a cotton bale, and during a moment or two I strove to overtake it, desisting from my efforts, however, when I realized that once astride it I would present a better target for the enemy's sharpshooters.

All the while I was being rapidly carried down the river, and it seemed to me I had passed the batteries, when I found myself so near the bank that it would be possible, by making one desperate effort, to gain it.

Once more I put all my strength into the strokes, and there was a hymn of thanksgiving in my heart when I clutched a timber which projected from the shore at a point where the bluff rose up from the water in a gradual ascent.

I had saved myself from death by drowning; but at the very moment of exultation my heart became heavy as lead, for I discovered I had landed on that side of the river where is situated the city, and but a short distance below it.

The Mississippi would not now claim me as a victim; but there was no chance I could escape being made prisoner, for I knew from what our people had said that the Confederate line was drawn very closely around the water-front.

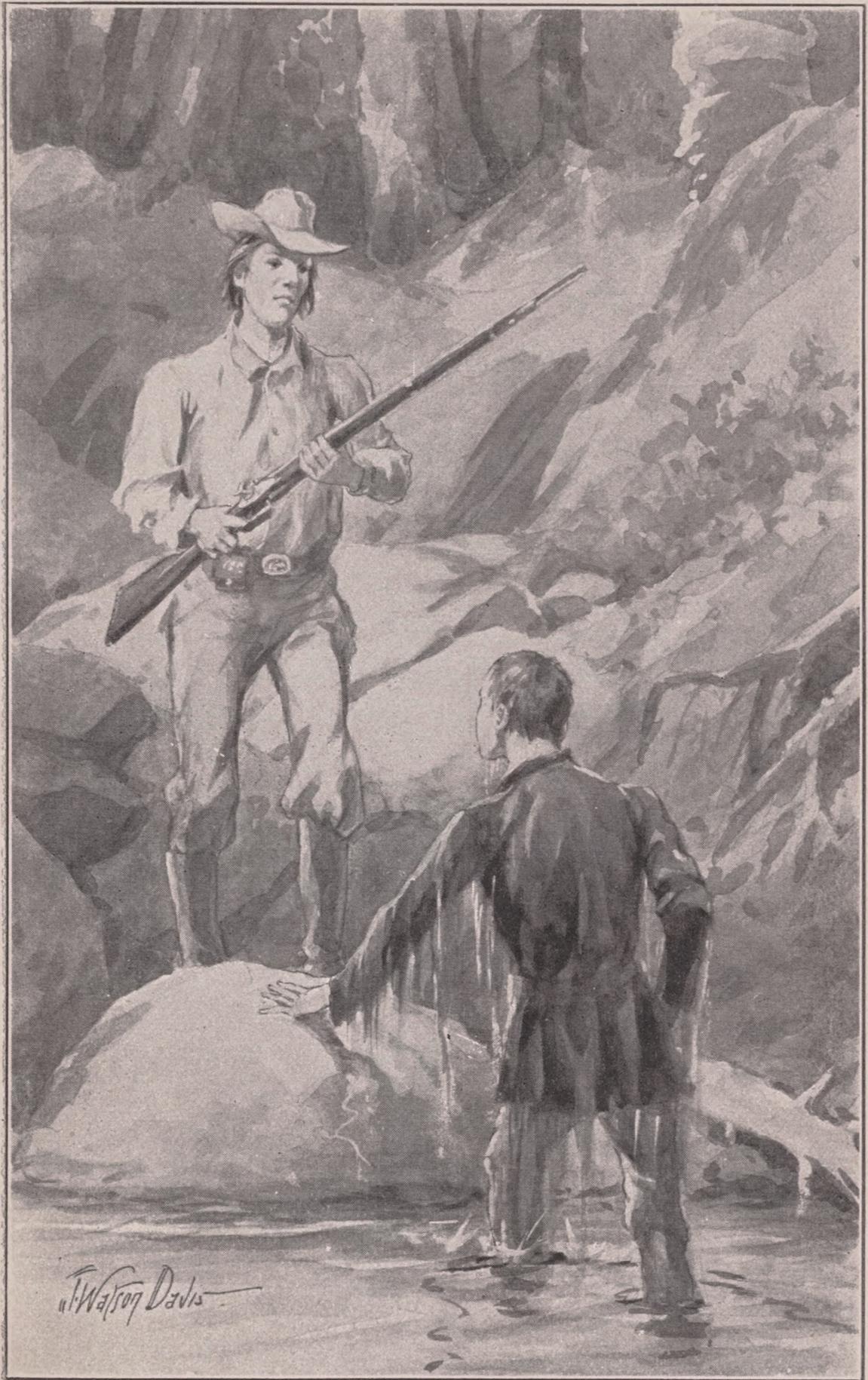
There was little time in which to speculate upon what might happen, for I was hardly more than well out of the river when, from the shadows of a small ravine, appeared a form with a musket leveled full upon me.

“Who are you?” came the question, and from the tone I understood that it was a boy who had spoken.

He could have killed me as well as if he had been a man of forty; but yet it seemed as if I was in less danger than from an older person, and I answered almost cheerily:

“I belong to the 46th Maine, just come ashore from the transport Henry Clay.”

“Was that the vessel we set on fire?”



“Who are you?” “I’m Bob Yardley, and I live here in Vicksburg.” Page 17.

—With Grant at Vicksburg.

“ I reckon you’ve burned her all right, an’ it was a tight squeeze to get here. Thought I was heading for the other bank all the time.”

“ Are you an enlisted man ? ”

“ I’m an enlisted boy. Drummer, of Company G. Who are you ? ”

“ I’m Bob Yardley, and I live here in Vicksburg—or try to.”

“ Are you in the army ? ”

“ No, not regularly, but all of us here have been doing military duty for quite a spell.”

“ What are you goin’ to do with me ? ”

“ That’s just what I don’t know. I did reckon I could get the credit of carrying in a prisoner, but it seems kind of hard to turn a boy into the pens, even if he is a Yank.”

“ You might let me swim across the river.”

“ You wouldn’t live to get there. Come up here a bit, and we’ll talk it over.”

CHAPTER II.

VICKSBURG.

It wasn't a bit like being made prisoner, as I had pictured it, this walking up the ravine with Bob Yardley, who, as I soon came to know, was less than a year older than myself, and he was not at all what I pictured a Johnnie to be.

He was eager to learn all I could tell concerning this move of running past the batteries; but he gained precious little information for the very good reason that I had none to give. I told him in answer to his questions how it was I came to enlist, of the time spent in camp at Bangor, of the journey west and southward, and of our arriving at the mouth of the Yazoo only two weeks previous.

Then I gave him to understand, as nearly as I could, what had occurred on board the Henry Clay from the time we embarked until Uncle Rube threw me over the rail, and it seems that he knew very much more about this famous "passage past the batteries" than I did.

According to his story, several gunboats had steamed swiftly up or down the river during the previous year, but no one had believed an ordinary

steamboat could do such a thing successfully. He said that two of our fleet had been partially disabled, and five or six barges were sunk while the Henry Clay, instead of going to the bottom as Rube supposed would be the case, had drifted along the bank and was then burning fiercely.

By the time our stories were thus exchanged we had arrived at the top of the bluff not very far from the city, and come upon a line of pickets.

Yardley advanced promptly, as might have been expected, giving the countersign, and speaking a few words which I did not hear, to the sentinel, whereupon we were allowed to pass.

When we were beyond earshot of the soldiers, still going toward the city, I asked laughingly:

“Have you got many Yanks in Vicksburg?”

“None to speak of, just now. We swap 'em off as fast as our people gobble up any.”

“Where do you keep 'em when you do have a stock on hand?”

“Look here, Dick Studley,” Bob said in a most friendly tone, “I'm not allowing to turn you over as a prisoner. You don't act or talk like a Yank, and I'm not certain but that we two will get along right comfortably together.”

I stopped short and looked at him in surprise. He was the first Johnnie I had ever spoken with, and it almost bewildered me that he should be so nearly like a fellow from the North.

“Do you mean that I am to go free?” I cried.

“Well, I’m not certain you can call it going free,” he said laughing heartily. “You Yanks have kept us in here pretty well for the past six months; but I’m allowin’ to let you have the same show I get. You must keep a close tongue in your head, though, else it’ll give you away.”

“If that’s all which is needed to keep me out of prison, you can be pretty certain I won’t talk very much; but I’ll have to find some place in which to sleep.”

“You can share my quarters. Mother left the city a year ago, and father’s with Johnson.”

“Do you live right in Vicksburg?”

“No, my hole is well back, near the Jackson road.”

“Your ‘hole’?” I asked in surprise.

“Yes, that’s what it is. Did you reckon we folks could live in houses while you’ve been pouring shot and shell into us at such a rate? There’s mighty few of our people who care to stay in a building, so we’ve dug caves in the clay banks and they’re not bad quarters, as you shall see.”

I knew that the Federal forces had bombarded the city more than once; but it never came across my mind that the people were driven to such extremities as to live in caves, for, as has already been set down, I had but lately come to the front.

By the time we reached the outskirts of the town

our fleet had gone by, and all was darkness once more, save here and there where a barrel of tar was yet burning, or where one could see the reflection, from the opposite side of the river, of the smoldering ruins of the railway station.

As I afterwards learned, Bob Yardley did not take me directly to his private cave; but rather led me through a portion of the city that I might see the ravages which had been wrought, and of a truth I was astonished and saddened by the scene of destruction.

On every hand were demolished dwellings; the streets were partially filled with rubbish, leaving only a narrow passage sufficiently wide for artillery to be moved through, and here and there great excavations had been made in the solid clay by our ten-inch shells.

At every point where the streets were cut through the clay banks leaving a high wall on either side, were holes sufficiently large to admit of the entrance of a man standing upright, and my captor, if such a generous Johnnie could be so called, explained to me that these were the dwelling places of those citizens who had by choice or force of circumstances yet remained in Vicksburg.

When he had shown me what he probably believed was sufficient of the horrors of war, he turned sharply to the right, leading the way past earthworks which I afterward came to know encircled the town, until

we arrived at a clay bank perhaps an hundred yards from a redan, or fort of earth, which formed a portion of the chain of fortifications. Here was cut an entrance somewhat like those I had seen in other parts of the city, and the lad entered as if expecting me to follow.

When I was inside this artificial cave I thought perhaps there might not be so much of hardship in such a shelter, for it seemed a snug retreat where two lads could live very comfortably, providing there was no scarcity of food.

Yardley had excavated a circular room, or hole, whichever you choose to call it, perhaps twelve feet in diameter, and less than half as high. In it, near the doorway, was set up a small cooking-stove, the pipe of which ran through the clay bank, and on the floor were two mattresses, three or four pillows, and considerably more bed-clothing than would be needed in that climate. There were, in addition, a couple of rocking chairs, a table, and thirty or forty books.

Viewed simply as a cave in which two lads were to spend a certain length of time, it was decidedly a cozy looking place after Bob had lighted a candle.

“It isn’t the worst, or the best, hole in town,” Yardley said with an air of proprietorship. “The best of it is that I dug it out myself, and unless the hill is cut away to strengthen the earthworks, we’re here for so long a time as General Pemberton allows General Grant to hang around.”

“It may be just the other way,” I said laughingly. “We Yanks have an idea that Grant will have considerable to say about this town before a great while.”

“You are making quite a big mistake, Dick. Vicksburg can never, never be taken! Surely you know how many trials you’ve made of it, and each one has resulted in disastrous failure to you.”

“I know nothin’ of the kind; as I told you, I haven’t been here long enough to learn much about the place.”

“I allow to tell you something of what the Yanks haven’t done; we shall have plenty of time, even if we both turn to and do military duty now and then.”

I looked at him in mingled surprise and fear.

“You couldn’t expect me to do military duty in the Confederate army!” I cried.

“Wouldn’t that be better than taking your place in the pens as a prisoner?”

“Not by considerable! I came out here to drum while our people were whippin’ you Johnnies, and I surely don’t count on turnin’ ’round an’ helpin’ you.”

“But you can’t stay here, Dick Studley, and not do something of the kind, without making people suspicious. As it is, we’ve got to keep close tongues in our heads if we hide the fact that you came ashore from one of Admiral Porter’s transports.”

“If the only way we can keep the secret is by my

helpin' in the Confederate army, then the sooner you give me up as a prisoner the better," I replied stoutly.

Whereupon Yardley laughed, as he began taking certain cooking utensils from a hole in the wall of the cave.

"We'll get something to eat, for you must be hungry after your adventure on the river, and perhaps by morning you'll look at the matter in a different light. I'll show you where the prisoners are kept, and then you'll decide that there are worse things than doing as I have suggested."

If provisions were scarce in Vicksburg I was not aware of the fact, or else Bob Yardley was a good forager, for he had an ample supply on hand, and was no mean cook, as I learned half an hour later when he had made ready what was a most satisfying meal.

When my hunger had been appeased I felt decidedly in need of sleep, for, owing to the excitement of running past the batteries and my subsequent exertions, I was thoroughly tired with the day of work, which had lasted nearly twenty-four hours.

Bob's bed was most rest-inviting, and it is not strange that it should have seemed comfortable to me, for he explained that he had taken from his home the best that could be found, with which to fit out the cave.

I did my share in the way of washing the dishes

and clearing up, and afterward he would have told me what our people had already done toward capturing Vicksburg, but that I fell asleep even as he began to talk.

On awakening I found myself alone in the cave; but this gave me no feeling of uneasiness since I could well understand that Yardley, not caring to disturb me, had gone out to attend to whatever business he had on hand in the city.

There was a supply of food on the table as if he had left it for my breakfast, and without ceremony I set about satisfying my hunger, which was reasonably great despite the hearty meal of the previous night.

I was yet at table when Bob returned and greeted me as if we had been old friends.

"How are you feeling?" he asked, looking at me critically, and I replied with a laugh, for just at that moment life seemed very pleasant even though I was a prisoner.

"First rate; but I am beginning to think that it would have been better if I had taken my clothes off last night, instead of allowing them to dry on my body, for these trousers have shrunk until they'd be a snug fit for a boy of ten years."

I stood erect for his inspection as I spoke, and he, with good natured raillery, cried out against the army contractors who would sell shoddy for properly woven cloth.

“I reckon it’s just as well, Dick, that they are a bit too small, for you’ll have to rig yourself out in gray if we’re to keep you in Vicksburg without its being known that you swam ashore from the burned transport. We’re not given much to blue here, you know, since we seceded, and your trousers are too suspiciously clean after having been washed in the river.

This remark brought back vividly to my mind the events of the previous night, which had been partially obliterated by the novel situation in which I found myself.

“What have you heard?” I asked.

“Regarding your people, I suppose you mean? Well, we captured four of them it seems, and the rest were either drowned, picked up by the other vessels of the fleet, or carried down river by the current.”

“Did you see those who were taken prisoners?” I asked eagerly, my mind going back to Uncle Rube and his possible fate.

“Yes, I took a squint at them as I went by; but if you’re very curious we’ll go up that way this afternoon. Are you thinking to find a chum among them?”

“There’s an old man—or he seems old to me—whom I am most interested in, because he comes from my own town, and he’s a very good friend indeed.”

“We’ve got one there who looks something like the pictures artists make of Uncle Sam,” Bob replied with a laugh. “Perhaps he may be your man.”

Now Reuben Smart of the 46th was not a handsome man, as I know right well, and on the instant I came to believe that he might be in Vicksburg.

“We must go to see them at once,” I said quickly, starting toward the door of the cave, and Bob checked me with his outstretched hand.

“Don’t be in such a hurry, my excitable Yank. We must rig you out to look less like a Northerner, and more as if you were a native of the soil, before we do very much promenading around this town. It wouldn’t be pleasant if you were clapped into the prison pens, and might be a decidedly uncomfortable mess for me in case it was known I had adopted one of the enemy.”

As he spoke I began to realize what this lad was risking in behalf of a stranger. He would indeed be in a dangerous position if all the events of the previous night were known to those in command, and I who had felt so secure and almost happy, began to grow dizzy with apprehension.

“Don’t take it so much to heart,” Bob said in his jovial tone, “I’m allowin’ that no one will pay very much attention to you unless we make ourselves too conspicuous, and even in case suspicions *are* aroused, we ought to be able to learn the fact in time for you to make your escape.”

“But I can’t get out of the city, encircled as you have said it is with earthworks.”

“Knowing as I do where the sentinels are stationed, it wouldn’t be such a hard task to slip through the lines; but what might be your fate outside is another story, which we need not attempt to read just now. It is the general belief among those with whom I have talked, that we won’t have any more serious business on hand for a day or two, now that your fleet has gone past, and you may as well get the lay of the land as soon as possible.”

“Are we to go out in the open day?” I asked in considerable surprise.

“I think it’s the safest plan. If some of the curious ones should come to know that I had a cave-mate whom I was keeping hidden from view, we might be called upon for explanations which would be disagreeable. I’ve got you a pair of butternut trousers, and a hickory shirt. Get into these, and if it so chances that you are forced to speak, try the best you can to drop that Yankee twang.”

I soon made the desired change, and Yardley was so cautious as to straightway put my trousers into the stove, lest they give evidence against me.

Then we went out into the street, and I saw before me more evidence of the cruelties of war than could have been found anywhere else except on a battlefield. It was a scene of devastation in city streets, where property seemed to have been destroyed in

very wantonness, and, accompanying it, was the neglect of the simplest precautions against ordinary dangers. One could well fancy that a citizen in almost constant peril of life or limb from the shower of missiles that were sent into the town, had come to think only that he might be shot down, and utterly failed of realizing what might come upon him by neglect of proper sanitary measures.

Huge holes in the streets where shot or shell had plowed deep furrows, leaving pitfalls into which one might fall at the risk of life or limb; shattered dwellings, tottering upon their foundations, and threatening to collapse when the wind sprang up; the litter and rubbish which marks the path of an army, strewn here, there and everywhere, until it seemed to me, little versed though I was in such matters, that under the southern sun, diseases of all kinds might be engendered.

As a matter of course all this was familiar to Bob, and he growled, when I loitered to look around me in astonishment not unmixed with fear, because of the possibilities.

“You’ll have plenty of time to see all this wreck, if that’s the way your inclination leads you,” he said with a laugh. “Just now, as I understand it, you want to get a glimpse of the Yankees who came ashore last night, therefore we had best keep moving lest some one whom I know should chance to come along to engage us in conversation, and, as I’ve said

before, it isn't exactly safe for you to open your mouth."

It seemed to me that we went straight across the town, in a line parallel with the river, until having arrived at a building which had somewhat the appearance of an old warehouse, save that at the rear there were two rows of small huts.

"What is it?" I asked.

"The old market-house, with the slave-pens behind it. Here's where we sold our negroes in the days when they were marketable property, as they will be again when the Southern Confederacy is a nation by itself."

I would have claimed that the day of which he spoke would never come, always being eager for an argument, but at that moment I was startled almost to the verge of crying out in surprise, when I saw standing in one of the upper windows none other than Uncle Reuben Smart.

"That's him!" I cried, raising my hand to point, and Bob struck it down roughly as he whispered:

"Don't make a fool of yourself by recognizing any of the prisoners, or you'll join them, and that place isn't a comfortable one in which to spend the hot weather. Walk fast, for he may show that he knows you, which would be quite as bad."

Uncle Rube, chronic grumbler and ill-drilled soldier though he was, had a vast deal of sound common sense. He must have recognized me at first

glimpse, even now that I was clad after the manner of a Southern boy, yet he made no sign; but looked directly at me with a fine air of indifference.

Nevertheless we passed on rapidly, for Bob would have it so, and when we had left behind the building, which by this time had taken on for me a sinister aspect, he said in a low tone:

“That old Yank ain’t so much of a fool as he looks, unless it is that he didn’t know you in your old clothes.”

“I’ll venture to say Uncle Rube would know me no matter what I wore,” I replied stoutly, and then, heeding not the selfishness of such a request, I cried earnestly, “Can’t you help him to escape, Bob?”

“And get myself shot for so doing?”

“Surely no one would go so far as that if you simply tried to help a prisoner!” I exclaimed.

“Look here, Dick, I’m afraid you don’t know as much about this business of war as you might. There’s precious little of friendship in it on either side, and if I should be discovered trying to aid a prisoner to escape, it’s nearly certain a firing squad would be out next morning at daybreak.”

“And the poor old man must stay shut up in that place! Why, it’s blistering hot out here, and what must it be in there?”

“Mighty uncomfortable, as I told you. You’ll be a heap better off working side by side with us rebels,

as you call us, than going in as prisoner, rather than lend a hand to the Confederacy.”

Disagreeable as the thought of sharing Uncle Rube's prison appeared, I was even then determined to take my place by his side rather than give any assistance, however slight, to the enemy; but it seemed to me just then that I would be wiser to hold my peace concerning all this, and while I remained at liberty do whatsoever I might toward helping the old man who had ever been a good friend to me.

It did not seem probable that I, who at that moment might be forced to make an effort to escape from the city, could lend any great aid to one who was confined in a military prison; but I gave little heed to what another might have considered an impossibility, and took what I believed was the first step toward this end.

“Let us walk back past the building,” I said, and Bob looked at me closely.

“What have you got in your mind now?” he asked sharply.

“I would like to see this jail once more.”

“You want to get a good look at its windows, eh? Now see here, Dick, don't make a mistake. It's pretty hard lines for your Uncle Sam friend to be shut up in the pens; but it would be a deal harder for you, if our people caught you trying to aid him. It can't be done; we here in Vicksburg are not such

simples that a boy can come ashore from a burning transport and run away with the entire city before he's been in town twenty-four hours."

I could have laughed at this remark but for the fact that he spoke in such a serious tone, and with an expression of gravity which would not have contrasted well with any mirth on my part.

"It is no more than natural that I should think of helping the old man," I said by way of excusing myself, and Bob interrupted:

"I know all that, Dick; but I want you to realize the danger in which you yourself are at this moment. It was simply an accident that I, instead of one of the soldiers, came across you at the ravine, and it's only because I happen to be a soft-hearted kind of a guy that you're walking the streets now instead of being with the other Yanks."

"I know all that, Bob Yardley, and if I have not given voice to my gratitude, it is because I was unable to do so. I can never thank you enough——"

"I don't want you to try. We won't make any talk about that part of the business. I spoke as I did only to impress upon your mind the fact that what was done last night, may get us both into serious trouble. It isn't improbable that you will come to wish you had been put into the pens, and I, that we had never met."

Now I was really alarmed, for he was making a life and death matter out of what had seemed to me

no more than an escapade, therefore I asked anxiously:

“Did you hear or see anything this morning that made you think I was in danger of being discovered?”

“Nothing; but it stands to reason that I must soon answer some questions. I have always lived in Vicksburg, and am well acquainted with many of the officers, therefore it is certain that sooner or later I shall be forced to give some plausible account of you.”

“What would be done if the commandant knew you were harboring a Yankee?”

“I can’t say exactly, and there is no need of that question just now,” he replied evasively.

“Look here, Yardley, I want to understand the situation, and you have said that I should, now answer my questions.”

“I can’t, because I don’t know. One thing is certain, that I’d go into the pens and be court-martialed; whether any sentence more than a term in jail might be pronounced, I cannot say.”

“Would they really arrest you?” I asked in surprise.

“There’s little question about that, and it isn’t any sure thing we could make them believe you came from the transport. Being here in disguise, so to speak, you could readily be taken for a spy. You know what that means?”

My mind was made up on the instant, and I said decidedly:

“Look here, Bob Yardley. I’m going to give myself up this very hour! I’m not minded that you should be put in such peril because of me.”

“So you would make a bad matter worse, eh?”

“It might be worse for me; but you’d be clear of the whole thing.”

“Is that what you believe? Suppose you went to the Provost Marshal and told him who you were; he’d ask where you’d been staying here in the city.”

“I’d refuse to tell him.”

“How much good would that do? In an hour he’d know that you had been with me, for an hundred people have seen us together, and the result of your smitten conscience would be my arrest. Then we’d be in the same box as if some one had discovered all these things. There is only one course, and that is to keep along as we have begun. If it seems that there is danger of discovery, you shall make a try at getting out of the city.”

“And leave you here to bear the brunt of it all? No, I’m not quite such a cur as that, Bob Yardley.”

“Then realize just where we stand; drop all thought of attempting to rescue your friend, and help me to carry out what seems a more difficult proposition than it did last night.”

I was beginning now to understand the danger which surrounded me and the lad who had lent such

timely aid. It was no longer an escapade, this entering Vicksburg by stealth and rigging myself out like a native; but a game in which life and death was the stake, and my heart grew heavy, for it seemed as if of all boys in the world I was the least capable of bearing my share in such peril.

CHAPTER III.

SUSPICIOUS.

It can readily be supposed that after this disquieting conversation we went directly back to the cave. I had no further inclination to roam about the streets of that desolate city, and Yardley appeared to be much in the same frame of mind.

Once we were come to his dwelling of clay I threw myself down on the bed, and he paced to and fro as if trying to solve some question. I believe neither of us spoke for over half an hour, and then he said as if with an effort:

“This won’t do at all, my Yankee friend; we are crossing bridges before we come to them, and there’s no sense in looking forward to what may happen. We’ve set out on this path, and may as well travel it as comfortably as possible.”

I failed to understand what he meant, and, seeing the question in my eyes he added:

“We’ll go along, about as was in my mind last night, trusting to chance; but this much is certain; you must make up your mind to at least appear to be one of us, else we will come to grief, and that right soon.”

“Why not help me to get away from the city to-night?”

“It seems to me it would be out of the frying-pan into the fire, for the only way I know of is along the Jackson road, and there you’ll find more of our people than might be agreeable. Besides, where could you go? There isn’t one chance in an hundred you’d be able to strike the Yankee lines, and would only succeed in exchanging prisons.”

I was about to insist that some decisive step must be taken at once, because I would not willingly remain longer to bring danger upon him, when a soldier suddenly appeared at the door of the cave, and called Bob by name.

The lad immediately went outside, returning a moment later to say to me:

“Stay here, Dick, until I come back; it isn’t likely I shall be gone very long.”

“Where are you bound?” I asked.

“Over here a bit,” he answered evasively, and, fancying I detected a look of disquietude on his face, I insisted upon a different reply.

“Well, to tell the truth, I’m going to headquarters,” he said as if reluctantly, and on the instant my suspicions were aroused.

“The soldier was sent to summon you! It has something to do with me.”

“That I cannot say; but I think perhaps I may be asked to explain who you are. Remember that you

make serious trouble for both of us if you fail to stay till I come back."

Then he was gone, and I took my turn at pacing across the room, working myself into such an uncomfortable frame of mind as to be persuaded that the moment was near at hand when I would be forced to join Uncle Rube in the prison pen.

The minutes seemed like hours, and I could have believed that a full day had passed before he came back, wearing a look of perplexity.

"What is it?" I cried.

"Well, not the best, nor the worst, and yet I reckon it's bad enough if you still hold those foolish notions about not lending any aid to the Confederacy. Why, bless you, Dick, what little you could do would be as nothing; it wouldn't effect anything one way or the other; yet by refusing we may both be brought to sore straits."

"Tell me what it is," I cried impatiently.

"Well, as might have been supposed, some one has reported a stranger being in my company—one who does not wear a uniform, and questions were asked about you. I told a part of the truth, and didn't lie regarding the rest."

"What did you say?"

"That I had never seen you before; that I came across you last night a short distance from the redan, and took you in, as I would any fellow who had no place in which to shelter himself. Now a lad of your

age or mine; in such a place as this, is expected to do whatsoever he may toward aiding in the defense of the city, and your name has been placed on the rolls as one who can be called upon in a time of emergency."

"How did they know my name?" I asked in alarm.

"I told them, of course; it was to be supposed that you had given it to me, and you are regularly enrolled among the defenders of Vicksburg."

I stared at him without speaking. That I, a boy from Maine, enlisted in the 46th, should be a member of the Confederate army, so to speak, was something at the moment most appalling! What would the people of Malden say if they heard the truth? I should be set down as a traitor!

As I look back now it doesn't seem such a serious matter; but simply a turn of affairs which might have been expected. Then it was horrible, and I believed I had been forever disgraced.

Yardley very wisely made no attempt to cheer me. He probably argued with himself that since the situation could not be changed, it was better for me to look at it in its worst light, with the idea that thereby I might the sooner become reconciled.

"I will leave the city," I said finally, and Bob replied calmly:

"If that seems best to you, go ahead, and I will do

whatsoever I can to aid you; but remember that I have not painted the situation in any false colors. There isn't one chance in a thousand, no, hardly one in a million, that you could escape our people. But it is for you to say what shall be done."

This brought me to my senses somewhat, for I realized that I was behaving very selfishly; but I made no further conversation about the matter, and after a time the lad said cheerily:

"I reckon we may as well be getting something to eat. I had breakfast right early this morning, and didn't leave so much for you but that a second meal will be to your liking. If General Grant surrounds Vicksburg entirely, as some of our people think he intends to do, we may not find it so easy to get food, therefore we'll gorge ourselves while we may."

Well, we cooked the meal and ate it, and then lounged around the cave, not caring to venture out because of the heat, and I all the while trying to make up my mind just what course to pursue, but finding it very difficult to decide.

When night came, at Bob's suggestion, we walked around the line of earthworks; but at a respectful distance from them, doing this because it was more pleasant than in the city itself. There were no signs of our army to be seen or heard, and, save for the evidence of war on every hand, the night was as quiet and peaceful as at my own home in Maine.

I had said I would leave the city at once, and yet as Yardley turned toward the cave once more, I followed him, too cowardly to go, and yet afraid to remain.

As if well content with the situation, I went to bed that night, asking myself again and again what I should do in case I was called upon to perform any kind of military service.

Bob, as if knowing how disturbed I was in mind, forbore questioning me, but talked concerning his life before the war began, and asked me about the State of Maine.

I slept as well as if in my own bed at home, and when I wakened next morning was as far from solving the one question which presented itself, as I had been twenty-four hours previous.

I must remain in Vicksburg until another night perforce, since I could not hope to walk out openly in the daylight, and, therefore, because of my indecision, I put myself in yet greater danger of being called upon for what was to me absolute disgrace.

There were times, as the day wore on, when I literally quivered with apprehension and fear. We did not venture out from the cave lest some one question me, and I, by answering, betray the truth.

Bob went alone once to get some trifling thing—I have forgotten what—and while he was gone I trembled at every footstep, fearing lest a messenger might be coming to order me into the fortifications, and yet

wholly ignorant as to what I should do in such a case.

As the day grew older we became more at ease—Bob had appeared quite as nervous as I—for it seemed as if we had a respite from the peril which must come to me sooner or later, and once more I discussed with the generous Southern boy the question of my leaving Vicksburg.

As before, he advised strongly against it, and after a time, as if by mutual agreement, we abandoned the subject, talking of almost everything rather than the present and its dangers.

It was cowardly in me, having come to believe that I must go, thus to remain in the city; but I did.

We were neither of us in the mood for sleep when night had fully come, and Bob proposed that we walk along the bluffs where we might have a view of the river, for, as he said, there was considerable amusement to be had watching the picket-boats, and then it was I learned for the first time that the Confederates had a number of small craft out after sunset, constantly moving back and forth across the river, on the watch for any vessel which might try to slip past the city in the shadow of the opposite bank.

It was not so dark but that we could see those tiny specks of black moving to and fro, and the night was so warm that I got no slight amount of pleasure in thus viewing the scene.

We remained longer than I realized, for Bob said suddenly as he raised himself to his feet, we having been lying at full length upon the ground:

“It’s nearly midnight, Dick, and time we went to bed. We’ve got through this day without any serious trouble; but who knows what will come to us with the morning?”

“Don’t talk about it,” I cried almost petulantly. “If I could only make up my mind what course to pursue it would be different; but as it is I had rather——”

An exclamation burst from Bob’s lips at this moment, and he stood with outstretched arm, as if suddenly seized by a great fear.

Looking up the river in the direction indicated by his hand, I saw a faint glow, and at the same moment heard cries of alarm, seemingly from everywhere around us.

“What is it?” I asked excitedly, springing to my feet.

“Your people are sending down another fleet, I reckon. That is the way the vessels first showed up night before last.”

There was no time for me to question the correctness of his statement, for in a twinkling, as it were, bonfires sprang up here and there along the riverfront, until once more was the bosom of the Mississippi illumined, and far up where the glare was

merged into the blackness, I could see the shape of a steamer.

Then the guns of the first battery boomed out, shaking the very earth, and these were followed, as the boat came on, by all the batteries, until our side of the river was seemingly one sheet of flame.

Still the vessel advanced, now in full view of those who would destroy her, and we saw she was towing by her side a large barge, evidently loaded to its utmost capacity.

When she was nearly opposite where we two stood, I expecting each instant to see her riddled with shot, another boat appeared in the distance, and then I understood that they were coming in the same order as when we had started—one fifty yards or more behind the other.

It was a cruel spectacle, thus standing among the enemy watching as they poured deadly missiles into a vessel freighted with one's own people, and my heart literally stood still with suspense and anxiety, until Bob clutched me suddenly by the arm, as he whispered:

“If you would set that Uncle Sam friend of yours free, now is the time when it may be done! I dare venture to say there isn't a sentinel left round about the prison.”

It was he who set off toward the relief of Uncle Rube, for I did no more than follow, hardly conscious of my movements.

The Southern boy whose heart was with the Confederate cause had thought of the old man, his enemy, who needed succor, and I, the one who ought to have had him constantly in mind, did no more than obey his commands.

I should have set it down before this, that at the report of the first gun the people, civilians as well as soldiers off duty, had rushed toward the bluff where a view might be had of the approaching vessels, and thus it was that as we dashed at swiftest pace back from the river, we found the streets deserted.

I know not how long we ran, for my brain was in a whirl, but when we were arrived in front of the building the question came to my mind clearly and distinctly as if spoken, as to how we might succeed in our purpose.

As Bob had said, not a sentinel was to be seen, and he showed himself familiar with the prison by going directly to the guard-room.

Immediately I saw how the prisoners might be released without our striking a blow, save perchance some one might come upon us when we were at work, and this last seemed improbable while such a deafening uproar continued along the water-front.

"Its a mighty mean thing I am doing," Bob said as if repenting of thus trying to set free the Yankee prisoners, and I, to stiffen his back, replied hurriedly:

“Uncle Rube isn’t a regular soldier. He don’t know enough about the business to do much of any fightin’. He’s only a poor old man who wouldn’t have been allowed to enlist if he hadn’t coaxed so hard, an’ he’ll die if he’s kept locked up during this warm weather!”

While I was speaking Yardley had seized from the desk a bunch of keys, and, as luck would have it, the first he tried on the door leading into the building fitted the lock.

We were inside, where was no ray of light to be seen, save the dull glimmer which came through the cracks of the door we had closed behind us, and all we had by way of guide was the fact of having seen Uncle Rube at one of the windows the day before.

“Call out to him,” Bob said hurriedly. “There is no one in the building save the four who were taken the night you came ashore.”

Then I called the old man’s name at full strength of my lungs, and in a twinkling came the answer:

“Hi! Dicky boy!”

“He’s on the next floor,” Bob said, darting forward in the darkness, I doing my best to keep close at his heels, realizing that once he outstripped me in the race I might not be able to find him again.

Uncle Rube did not content himself with calling out once; but continued his cries, and thus it was we went without loss of time directly to his room, while had any one been on the street immediately in front

of the building they could not have heard our voices because of the heavy cannonading.

Bob began to fumble with the bunch of keys, trying to find the one which fitted that particular lock, and I, fearing each instant lest the guard, suddenly realizing that they had forsaken their post of duty, return before our work was finished threw myself against it in the vain hope of battering down the barrier.

“You can’t do that,” Bob said sharply. “Better wait till we can find the key for it——”

Before he had finished the sentence the prisoners, understanding that help was near at hand, attacked the door with such fury, using a wooden bench as a battering-ram, that in less time than it takes in the telling, the way of escape from this one room at least, was open.

“Where are you, Uncle Rube?” I called out, forced to speak loudly because of the thunder of the guns, and for reply the old man seized my arm, shouting loudly:

“However did you do it, Dicky boy? However did you do it?”

“Never you mind that, Uncle Rube; but keep close to me. We’re not free by considerable yet, and may be getting ourselves into a terrible snarl.”

“But where are you going?” the old man repeated, and then it was that I realized how much yet depended upon Bob Yardley.

If he should suddenly come to believe that he was deliberately working against the cause which was so dear to him, he might refuse to go further in the scheme, and there is no need to set down what would be the result.

But Bob either did not take such a view of the case, or else was determined to play yet further the part of a good friend to strangers, for he led us out of the building, saying as we passed through the lighted guard-room:

“I didn’t realize that we were to set four men free, and am afraid that with so large a party we shall come to grief.”

“We’ll leave you here and take our chances,” one of the men, I know not who, said quickly, and Bob, his generous heart asserting itself cried out:

“I’ve got you into this mess, and will do the best I can to get all hands out of it, but how it’s to be accomplished is something beyond me.”

As the lad afterward confessed to me, he hadn’t the slightest idea of where we might go, or what could be done toward gaining further liberty than that of escaping from the jail.

There was in my mind the wild idea that all of us might hide in the cave until the following night, and then try our fortunes along the Jackson road, and I would have said something of this to Bob; but that he cut me off quickly, almost angrily, by crying:

“Don’t be foolish. I told you it couldn’t be done.

Our only chance is at the river. In case one of the Yankee steamers is disabled you might swim out to her."

This idea had come upon him like a flash, and he, knowing better than I how slight was the hope that we could leave the city secretly, and on foot, resolved to try it.

When we were once more on that side of the city facing the river I could see four steamers. The first on the point of disappearing into the gloom past the last battery, two in full view, and the fourth just emerging from the gloom into the zone of light.

So far as could be seen neither the vessel nor any of their tows were injured, and again my heart sank, for Bob's hastily devised plan depended upon one of them being so disabled that she would swing around, and thus give us a possible chance of getting aboard.

We were by this time amid the throng of spectators, and forced to move slowly; but Bob was not so calm as to slacken the pace to a walk.

I suppose that those whom we pushed aside in our flight believed we were only eager to get a better view of the warlike scene, and therefore gave but little heed to us, save in the way of complaining because of our roughness.

Down the steep incline we dashed, going faster and faster as we approached the water, and once more did Bob trust to impulse rather than calm judgment, for his course.

I had given up all hope of making our escape by the river, since the Federal fleet was moving in good order, somewhat faster than the swift current, and wondered what Bob counted on doing, for I saw him lay hold of the bow of a boat which was made fast alongside the bank, and clamber in.

We Yankees needed no invitation to follow him, although I believed at the moment that we were venturing straight into the face of death, for once we pushed away from the shore the Confederates, seeing us, must guess the true state of affairs.

Then would come the bullets of the sharpshooters, and after that a boat floating down the stream, bearing six lifeless bodies.

That seemed to be the natural ending of the whole business, and yet I felt surprise, even at such a critical moment, because I was not frightened.

I wonder now, as I have ever since that night, how it was Bob Yardley found in his heart so much of love for his enemies that he would willingly risk his life in behalf of those whom he had never seen before.

It was a strange performance, view it as you will, and stranger yet, that we escaped to tell the tale.

Before one could have counted ten we were on board the boat, which had evidently been left at the bank by the pickets, and three of the men whom we rescued were pulling for dear life at the oars.

As a matter of fact we were in the strong light of the bonfires and of the flashing guns, showing out in

boldest relief upon the black water, and, moreover, pulling as if into a haven of safety among the missiles which sent up spouts of water here, there and everywhere around us.

Before we were ten yards from the shore I heard, even above the booming of the cannon, outcries from those on the bank, and immediately after came the zip, zip, zipping of bullets, as they cut through the air close about, falling into the water with a "chug" which comes to me plainly even at this day.

We were the target for the sharpshooters, who were doing their best to kill us, and I doubted not but that they would succeed in their purpose before many seconds had passed.

If we lived through this shower of iron and lead, then would come yet more danger when we tried to make fast to one of the passing steamers, or, it might be, failing recognition as fugitives, we would be shot at by our own friends.

It was a madman's plan; but how many such plans were carried into effect, and failed or succeeded as the case might be, during that terrible time when we fought against our own!

There was a rudder on the boat, and Bob had at once taken upon himself the duty of steersman; Uncle Rube and I were the only idle ones on board, and I would have given much at that moment had it been possible for me to do something toward the escape.

To be killed while sitting there idly, seemed at the moment, worse than being stricken down while making a brave effort to aid my companions.

“Have you got rope enough forward to send aboard one of those steamers, if it so be we live to reach her?” Bob shouted, apparently giving no more heed to the whizzing bullets than if they were harmless pellets of paper.

I looked in the bow, and found nothing there save a short painter.

“There’s no more than ten or twelve feet,” I replied in despair, and he added cheerily, brave-hearted lad that he was:

“Then you must hail them for a rope, and make sure they understand who you are, or we’ll get a tough reception.”

“Let me pass you, boy,” Uncle Rube said, pushing me aside. “I can holler louder than any man in Aroostook County, an’ if they don’t hear me we’ll have to give it over as a bad job. I wish they’d stop them pesky bullets. A man don’t so much mind the shells, ’cause he can see ’em comin’ an’ knows that he’s goin’ to be hit!”

I was not disposed to parley with the old man about the best method by which death could be dealt out to us; but crouched dumbly in the bottom of the boat behind him, clutching the gunwale with both hands, and wondering vaguely whether it might be possible

for us to make fast to the steamer just above us, which seemed to be coming on so rapidly.

When we were nearly in mid-stream, we had entered the belt of the sharpest firing, the big guns being directed toward that point as a matter of course.

Once a bullet struck within four feet of our boat, drenching us with water, and nearly upsetting the craft. Another, falling a short distance astern, sent a stream directly over Bob's head, and I thought then that we were to be swamped instead of shot.

Uncle Rube and I fell to bailing, using our caps for that purpose, and Bob, holding the tiller with one hand, did what he could to aid us in freeing the boat from its burden of water.

Then we came directly in the path of the third steamer, and Uncle Rube began shouting at the full strength of his lungs; but while the din was so great, it seemed hardly more than if he had whispered:

“We're escaped prisoners! Pass us a line! Pass us a line!”

This cry he kept up constantly until the boat had nearly run us down, and Bob, believing we would be swamped, shouted hoarsely:

“In with your oars and jump for it, men! We shan't be able to tail on here!”

At that moment came a cry from Uncle Rube; our boat was pulled around so violently that I was flung

against the gunwale, and then I knew that our entreaties had been heard.

We were being towed on that side of the steamer opposite the city, and no longer in danger from the flying missiles.

We had come out from a veritable fiery furnace, escaped by a hair's breadth from a watery grave, and indeed a miracle had been worked in our behalf.

I was both laughing and crying when those on board the steamer pulled me over the rail; but I heard Bob say in a tone of grief and agony, as he gained the deck by my side:

“What have I done? I have deserted the cause, and given aid to the enemy, like the traitor that I am!”

He turned toward the rail as if to throw himself into the boat which was still being towed alongside; but some one—I know not who—clutched his arms from behind, crying:

“You can't go back, boy; you can't go back! Aboard this steamer you have entered the Federal lines, an' are safe from those who were so lately your friends!”

CHAPTER IV.

NEW CARTHAGE.

I COULD not if I would, paint so vividly in words that one who reads might understand fully the despair which took possession of Bob when he was being borne swiftly away by those whom he considered his enemies, and having in his heart the disagreeable knowledge that he had voluntarily entered into the captivity.

Put the matter to ourselves as best we could there was no question whatsoever but that the lad's friends, hearing his own story, would claim that he was a traitor to the Southern cause, and I doubt even if any one save myself understood and appreciated his motives.

I do not believe Bob Yardley entertained the slightest idea of aiding the prisoners to escape when we went out idly on the bluffs, and certain I am that to go aboard of a Federal steamer was something of which he never dreamed.

There was in his mind only the generous thought of aiding others, and he gave no heed to anything else until the moment when he found himself in a position from which he could not retreat.

Never before had I fancied that Uncle Rube's heart was kindly and sympathetic.

It was as if he understood all that had been in Bob's mind, for when those on board the steamer would have laughed at the boy, making of his grief their sport, the old man led him well aft, clasping him by the neck as if he had been his own child.

Never a word did Uncle Rube speak; but his actions were sufficient, and although Bob's grief was not assuaged, I fancied the touch of the old man's labor-worn hand soothed him.

During the first ten minutes after we boarded the steamer I was so occupied by the mental suffering which the generous-hearted Southern boy involuntarily displayed as to give no heed to anything else, but when he stood with his head on Uncle Rube's shoulder, the two comparatively alone, I had time to look about me, and then the danger from Confederate shot and shell had well-nigh passed.

The steamer was rapidly leaving that portion of the river illumined by the bonfires, entering a vale of darkness beyond, and from the throbbing of the engines I understood that the speed had been increased.

But for the fact that I had heard what were the orders given to our fleet when we started down, I should have wondered why the vessels ran slowly past the danger points. Then the command was that little more than steerage way be kept while passing the city, and although I could not understand how the

slowness of movement might be of benefit in the manœuvre, I was not surprised at knowing we were running very swiftly after being swallowed up by the blackness of night.

There were not many people on this vessel which had picked us up; perhaps half a dozen remained in the stern after we came aboard.

A man was standing near me, but I could not say whether he was soldier or civilian, because it was impossible to distinguish any more than the form of objects, and of him I asked:

“Where are we bound?”

“New Carthage. A portion of our fleet went down night before last, and we are to join them.”

“Yes,” I replied, “that I know full well, since I was on board the Henry Clay.”

“Then how does it chance that you were at Vicksburg?”

“The Clay didn’t get any further; she was set on fire by a shell an’ burned.”

Then it was that the man began to ply me with questions, with the result that in the fewest possible words I told him all the story of our misadventure, from the time of leaving the mouth of the Yazoo until we came alongside the steamer, laying due stress upon the part which Bob had played.

It was not in my mind at the moment that this stranger might aid me in protecting Bob. I told the story of his generous deeds simply because it was a

portion of my own adventure; but, as a matter of course, explained fully the poor lad's position.

That the man was interested more than one ordinarily would have been, I knew when he asked me many questions concerning the lad, the majority of which I was unable to answer; but I satisfied his curiosity about myself, and before Uncle Rube had brought to a close his part of Good Samaritan with Bob, we two—meaning the stranger and myself—were on very friendly terms.

“I will make it in my way to see you while we are at New Carthage, and it is not improbable something may be done to aid your friend,” he said finally, after which he went forward, leaving me alone, and I fancied the remark was no more than would have been made by any other stranger, never dreaming I might possibly have met a friend who could and would be of great assistance.

The steamer was nearly at her destination when I joined Uncle Rube and Bob, and found the latter more quiet in his grief.

I understood from his tone, when he answered my questions, that he was feeling little or no better in mind than when the fact of what he had done first burst upon him; but he seemed to have accepted the situation with the best possible grace, realizing that it was necessary to endure what couldn't be cured.

He no longer spoke of having played the part of a traitor; but asked dully, as if the question was put

rather for the purpose of making conversation than because he desired information, whether I expected to find the 46th encamped at New Carthage.

Uncle Rube made reply before I could answer:

“I reckon the 46th is pretty well shook up; but if it still holds a place in the army we’ll find it like Abijah Snow’s potatoes, ‘scattered terribly’.”

“Was the entire regiment on the Henry Clay?” Bob asked.

“Well I can’t say, lad. My idee is that about four companies went aboard the transport, an’, as you know, only five of us got ashore at Vicksburg. Now the question is how many were drowned, an’ how many drifted along till they could make land below the danger point? I’m allowin’ there’ll be so few of us when we come together at New Carthage that we shan’t cut any great figure in scaring the Johnnies.”

Then Uncle Rube further speculated as to what might be the fate of those members of the regiment with whom we were personally acquainted, and but for the fact that my heart ached so sorely on account of Bob, I should have found no little amusement in the old man’s discussion with himself regarding the ability of this man or that to save his own life.

He had hardly more than come to an end when our steamer dropped anchor in the midst of what looked to be a very large fleet, and Bob Yardley turned to me suddenly, almost angrily, as he asked;

“What’s to be done with me?”

“With you?” I echoed. “I reckon you know as much about that as I do.”

“Are you planning on holding me prisoner?”

“Now you’re talking nonsense, Bob Yardley.”

“I am thinking, Dick, that the greatest kindness you could do me would be to make it absolutely plain I am a prisoner.”

“Why?”

“Because otherwise I shall be showing to the Yankees that I am the traitor I know myself to be.”

“You have no right to charge yourself with anything of the kind,” I replied with no little warmth.

“You an’ I know full well how all this came about, an’ if there is any blame for you, it’s only because of your generosity.”

“We won’t argue, Dick. I know what I’ve done, and shan’t forget it. It may be I’ll have a chance to put myself in a better light with my own people some day, and perhaps the best way to begin would be by herding with such prisoners as your Yankee friends may have taken.”

I would not have continued the conversation if I could, for it was little to my liking; but at that moment the work of disembarkation was begun, and we took our places at the gangway with the others, that we might be set on shore.

Now it was Uncle Rube who assumed command of our force, for we who had left Vicksburg in such a

sudden and unexpected manner formed ourselves into an independent company, so to speak.

“I don’t reckon we’ll find anythin’ very fine in the way of sleepin’ quarters,” the old man said as he marshalled us in a squad, “an’ perhaps it don’t make any great difference; howsomever, I have taken you chaps under my wing, an’ you shan’t suffer, even if the 46th is wiped out.”

“Are you goin’ to make a report, Reuben?” some one asked, and the old man replied drawlingly:

“Wa’al, I reckon not to-night; we’ll kinder look ’round first, so’s not to make a mistake by gettin’ in where we don’t belong.”

If he had been a captain in command of a full company he could not have assumed a greater tone of authority than when he ordered the boat to lay a little further astern, that his “detachment” might get on board, whereupon one of the men who was at the oars asked:

“What regiment is yours?”

“It was the 46th when we left the mouth of the Yazoo; but I reckon we’ve dwindled down to ’bout no number at all.”

“The 46th what?” the man asked impatiently.

“Why, Maine, of course; they haven’t got any other soldiers ’round this way, ’cordin’ to what I’ve seen.”

“Then you want to put your spectacles on, old man, as soon as you strike the shore, for we’ve got

men here who wouldn't more'n make one chew of a whole Maine regiment."

"They'd better not tackle the 46th," Uncle Rube said grimly, "or they'll find they've bit off too big a piece, that is, pervidin' there's a few more of us left on dry land."

"Didn't you come down with the fleet night before last?"

"Wa'al, we started; but had stop-over tickets at Vicksburg for refreshments."

"Were you on the Henry Clay?"

"We were on her as long as anybody, I reckon."

"Do you know how many were saved?" I asked.

"I can't say for certain; but there's quite a bunch of 'em here that were picked up by the last steamer in the fleet, after they'd swam below the danger line."

"Can you tell me where to find them?"

"You needn't bother 'bout that, Dick. I'll 'tend to all such business," Uncle Rube broke in, and I held my peace, understanding that the old man really considered himself in command of the "detachment".

When we landed it was to find ourselves in as poor an imitation of a military camp as I have ever since seen. General McClernand was in command, and as yet had not gotten his men into position; at least, that was the way it seemed to me in the darkness, for, instead of coming across regimental lines, we found the troops encamped here or there apparently as fancy dictated.

Uncle Rube halted us near by what seemed to be the headquarters' tents, and disappeared in the darkness, I understanding very well that he had gone on one of his foraging trips for which he was justly famous.

That he was worthy to look after a much larger command than we formed, was proven a few minutes later when he appeared with a canvas tent, procured no one could imagine where, plenty of hardtack, and a strip of bacon.

In half an hour's time we were situated more comfortably than any recruits could reasonably expect under the circumstances.

The old man had built a fire, scraping away the mud until he had the semblance of a fireplace, and we munched hardtack while toasting slices of bacon held on sharpened sticks in front of the blaze.

When the meal was ended one of our party proposed that Uncle Rube go out in search of blankets; but this was rather beyond his power, and he claimed that soldiers from Maine didn't need anything of the kind, because a change from the luxuries to which they had been accustomed at home would be beneficial to their health.

We laid down on the bare ground, and I threw my arm around Bob, realizing somewhat his need of sympathy, for during the time we had been ashore, while the others were laughing and joking, he had remained silently thoughtful, although striving now

and then to appear cheerful lest he should cast a wet blanket over our mirth.

The poor lad slept some during the remainder of the night, as did all of us, and when we awakened Uncle Rube had brought in not only an additional store of rations, but entertaining news as well.

It seems that when the advance division of General McClelland's army arrived at New Carthage they found a force of Confederates behind a series of substantial looking earthworks, with four large guns in position, and since there were only four hundred of the boys in blue, they had no desire to try consequences with the Johnnies, who were apparently so well entrenched.

On the arrival of our fleet, two nights previous, however, McClelland's men took heart, and one of the steamers—the Tuscumbia, I believe was her name—went a short distance down the river to shell the enemy.

The Johnnies did not wait to see what the result might be; but took to their heels without delay, and then it was learned that McClelland's force had been held in check by four logs of wood, set up in imitation of guns, backed by less than one hundred men.

It was a clever trick; but those who had been deceived by it were being jeered at continually by our people who came down on the fleet, and no one laughed louder or more heartily than Uncle Rube.

“I’ll tell you what it is, they wouldn’t fool Maine boys like that! Why, four hundred men from Aroostook County would run right over that ’ere fort, even if the imitation guns were real, an’ think they weren’t getting much more than a before-breakfast exercise at that! It will take somethin’ more’n a stick of wood to frighten us fellows, an’ don’t you forget it!”

It was while we were discussing the news brought in by Uncle Rube, and eating our hardtack and bacon which he had procured, all of us, with the exception of poor Bob, making merry over the story, that an officer wearing the stripes of a major came our way and stood looking at us as if we formed a very amusing picture.

Uncle Rube, who delighted in making himself conspicuous, particularly in the presence of his superiors, must needs repeat the story of the wooden-gun check to McClelland’s force, speaking so loudly that the officer could not but overhear all he said, and when the old man had finished by declaring again that no Maine soldiers would be imposed upon in such a manner, the major asked:

“What is your regiment?”

“It was the 46th, sir.”

“The 46th Maine?”

“Yes sir; but I ain’t certain there’s much of it left by this time.”

“You came down on the steamer last night from

Vicksburg?" the major said as if he knew it to be a fact, and Uncle Rube assented feebly, beginning, perhaps, to think it would have been wiser had he refrained from telling a story for the officer's amusement.

"Come this way," the major said, beckoning to me, and I, full of astonishment at being thus selected from the party, as well as almost afraid I was to be made the scapegoat for Uncle Rube's shortcomings, obeyed, wondering why it was that the officer's tone sounded so familiar.

"Have you made up your mind what to do with your Vicksburg friend?" the officer asked, and then at once I knew he was the same gentleman with whom I talked while we were coming down the river.

It was a big relief to know that he was so high in command, for surely the major of a regiment, if he was so disposed, could aid us not a little in what promised to be a most perplexing situation.

I told him what Bob had said about being a prisoner, and declared that he should not be treated in such a manner if it was possible for me to prevent it.

"Do you think the general commanding will insist on putting him under guard?" I asked anxiously.

"There's little fear of that, lad, particularly after what he has done for you and your company. It was well to make a report, however, lest any gossip-mongers of the camp should make him out a full-fledged Confederate soldier, who might be held as a

spy, therefore I took it upon myself to explain the circumstances early this morning."

"To whom, sir?" I asked in surprise.

"To General McClelland, of course; he came last evening. You may keep the boy with you, and we will see what further can be done. I take it he wouldn't be willing to serve with us?"

"Indeed he wouldn't," I replied, knowing full well how I felt when Bob made a similar proposal to me. "I shouldn't like to ask him, sir, because of what I myself said when we were in Vicksburg."

"Make him as comfortable as possible, and in the meantime you had better hunt for your own regiment; it must be hereabout somewhere."

Then he walked away, and when I returned to our "detachment" Uncle Rube was in a fine state of curiosity concerning the interview, while I noted a look of painful anxiety on Bob's face, because of which I at once repeated nearly all that had been said, instead of worrying the old man by holding back the information for a time, as I would otherwise have done.

"I reckon he was right about our finding the 46th, if it so be any of 'em are here, an' you boys may as well take it easy in camp while I look around. Don't let anybody interfere with you. If folks ask you what you are doin', tell 'em Reuben Smart of Malden, Maine, is in command, an' they can find out from him."

Then the old man walked away in search of our regiment, and when the others lounged about the encampment to gratify their curiosity, Bob threw himself down inside the tent, motioning for me to follow his example.

“I’ve been thinking this thing over ever since we arrived,” he said gravely. “I am situated much as you were in Vicksburg—at a loss to know what should be done. I ought to try to get home at once, and explain as best I can what has been done, after which, take my punishment like a man. Wait a moment,” he added as I would have interrupted him, “let me finish, Dick, and then you’ll know all that is in my mind. It might be getting you into trouble if I made my escape now, for the general commanding would have good reason to believe I had simply come as a spy; but once outside your lines I’m certain of being able to get back to Vicksburg, even though I am carried back as a prisoner by my own people. Now the question is, whether I have a right to make an attempt to gain the city, leaving you in the position of one who will be suspected of having aided the enemy.”

It seemed to me, as Bob put it, that he was even more tangled up than I had been in Vicksburg, and I failed utterly of seeing any way out of the snarl; but I said decidedly, and without hesitation:

“If you believe you can get through to your lines don’t let any thought of me prevent you. I’ll do all

I can for you, as you would have done for me when the positions were reversed. I cannot be running any greater risk than would you have been had I succeeded in getting out of Vicksburg."

"I'm not doubting but that you would sacrifice yourself for me, but yet——"

"Don't put it that way; whatever I did would be no more than repayin' my debt to you."

"There is no debt between us, Dick; I did no more than any other fellow would have under the same circumstances. My fault is in going in the boat with you instead of remaining on shore. You fellows would have made your escape as well without me, but I must needs put my neck into the noose, and no one is to blame for it but myself."

"What I want is that you shall tell me exactly what course you wish to pursue; make up your mind whether it is impossible to stay here until matters may swing around your way, and then go ahead."

At this point in the conversation, Uncle Rube returned with the information that he had found the 46th, and, much to his surprise, not more than thirty men were missing.

I believe the old man was really disappointed because of having learned where our regiment was located. He enjoyed being in command of the "detachment," and to settle down once more as a private, with only the right to grumble to his heart's content, was not at all to his liking.

However, having reported his escape there was nothing left for him but to swing into place again, and as soon as might be we began the work of removal, for having come into possession of a tent much better than that enjoyed by the private soldier, we were not disposed to part with the luxury unless it became absolutely necessary.

When Bob asked Uncle Rube if he had told of his being in camp, the old man seemed almost offended that there should be any question as to whether he had performed his full duty by every member of the party.

It was a right royal welcome we met with when we joined the 46th again, for it had been believed that we were dead. The loss of Uncle Rube to the regiment would have been felt indeed, for he afforded no slight amount of amusement to all his comrades, even when he was complaining the loudest.

During this day General Grant himself came into camp, and I got my first glimpse of that officer concerning whom I had heard so much of praise, and was disappointed thereat. I had expected to see a soldierly man, instead of which there was before me, astride a huge horse, one who came as far from my ideas of a general as can be imagined.

However, the troops cheered him; first, because he was the commander, secondly, owing to what he had already done, and thirdly, because of what they expected him to do in the way of capturing Vicksburg.

After this there was no time lost in putting the encampment into strict military shape, and from the colonel down to myself, we of the 46th understood that while the general commanding this section was not wonderful to look upon, he understood full well not only his duties, but ours.

Three days followed, during which we had much experience in drilling and an ample amount of guard work, for it seemed as if the 46th was called upon to provide every sentinel within a distance of three miles.

It goes without saying that Bob remained idle in camp all this while; his story was known to every member of the regiment, and I dare venture to say there was not a man among us who did not sympathize fully with the poor lad in his perplexing and disagreeable situation.

Even more than that, almost every hour of the day some one would come with this thing or that which might serve to amuse or entertain him, and he must have understood that we from Maine were all his very good friends, appreciating to the utmost that which he had done for the members of our regiment.

Three days, I have said, were spent in camp duties, and then came an orderly with summons for Richard Studley to present himself without delay at headquarters.

I think of a truth that you might have knocked me down with a feather when I heard my name

called loudly throughout the camp, and every man looked at me curiously, for surely it was strange that a drummer-boy should receive such an order.

The thought in my mind was that I had unwittingly infringed some military rule, or had, in my ignorance, committed a grave error in camp, and was, perhaps, to be court-martialed. In fact, I was as frightened as a lad could well be under such circumstances, and but for Uncle Rube I question if I would have had courage to present myself in anything approaching decent condition.

“Bless your soul, lad, there’s nothin’ in this ’ere summons, except that I suppose General Grant wants to know somethin’ ’bout how the 46th got through,” the old man said, as I stood trembling with apprehension, not daring to go forward, and fearing to remain. “Most likely he’s found out that he’s got some Maine soldiers in this ’ere army, an’ wants to make their acquaintance in right good fashion. You’ll go up, an’ he’ll ask you about the folks at home; you must be sure an’ tell him about Ami Merrill’s twin calves, ’cause that’s a thing as doesn’t often happen. Jest let on that we’re friends of his, an’ he can depend on us to stand by him in case of trouble.”

“But what does he want me for, Uncle Rube?” I asked tremblingly.

“Why, ain’t I jest been tellin’ you?”

“But if he wanted to make the acquaintance of

the 46th he would send for some of the officers, instead of the drummer-boy of Company G."

"You can't tell how a cat'll jump by the length of her tail. He may be one of them right sensible kind of men who knows how to make friends, so toddle along, Dicky boy; put your best foot for'ard, an' let him understand that we from Maine are not to be sneezed at."

I knew full well that Uncle Rube was wrong in his speculations as to why I had been summoned, and in fear and trembling I approached the headquarters' tent, which stood a full half-mile from where our regiment was encamped.

There was a sentinel pacing to and fro in front of it, and I stood for a moment or two, like the simple that I was, not daring to go in without asking his permission, when the major with whom I had previously spoken, looked out through the flaps. Seeing me, he cried:

"Come on, lad; what are you waiting for?"

I mumbled something without being really conscious of having spoken, and mechanically entered the tent.

Here I found a number of officers, among whom was General Grant himself; but at the time I was so frightened as to be incapable of saying or hearing anything distinctly, therefore it is not in my power to give more than the merest outline of that interview which was destined to have so important a

bearing upon Bob Yardley's situation and my future life.

How the subject was brought up, I cannot say; this much, and this only, was I aware of at the moment: That Major Hartley—the officer whose acquaintance I had made without knowing his name—asked me if I would be willing to go with Bob Yardley a short distance across country, for the purpose of learning how far down on the eastern side of the river the Confederate line extended into the interior.

Then it was my scattered senses returned, and I understood he was not only asking me to play the spy; but proposing that Bob gather information for those whom he considered his enemies, against his own friends, and the thought so startled and frightened me that I was absolutely unable to make a reply.

CHAPTER V.

ODD SCOUTING.

WHEN the proposition was made to me that I do only a little more than my duty, and Bob Yardley seemingly play the traitor, no one joined in the conversation. The major was allowed to do all the talking, despite the fact of his being outranked by every officer present.

He must have understood from the expression on my face exactly what was in my mind, and, knowing all the circumstances, could readily realize the position in which Bob would be placed if he acceded to such a proposition.

Therefore it was he set about making more plain the plan he would have us pursue, at the same time using such arguments as might be calculated to remove from Bob's mind the scruples which would naturally find lodgment there.

“In order that you and your Confederate friend may understand that this is not in reality the work of spies which we would have you perform, but, rather, a scouting trip, to the end that the general commanding may know where can be found a landing-place

for the troops above Grand Gulf, the proposition is simply for you to go up the river to that portion of the bend nearest the most southerly point, and then tramp across to the next turn of the stream, a matter of three or four miles, although it would be fifteen by water. Then make your way directly toward the south, approaching Grand Gulf several miles to the eastward, somewhere on the banks of the Big Black. It would be your duty to ascertain how far the Confederate lines extend eastwardly, and, having done this, return along the river bank, starting from a point as near Grand Gulf as may be safe, to learn where we shall find a practicable landing-place above that town."

I followed these words as best I could; but my mind was in such a whirl with thoughts of what I must propose to Bob Yardley, that I did not succeed in getting a very clear idea of the nature of the work desired.

"There are several reasons why your Southern friend can be of great assistance to us, chiefest among which is the fact of his being acquainted with the country, and, consequently, the ability to strike a true course, with at all times a knowledge of approximate distances. I understand full well, my lad, that at this time you are thinking more of how he may look at the matter than of yourself. The commander would not ask him to perform any task which would directly conflict with his duty toward

the Confederacy, for a lad's conscience is something which should not be trifled with; he would only be doing what we could accomplish by an expenditure of additional time, and as a reward he shall be furnished with statements from headquarters, showing that his coming into our lines was not through any traitorous purpose."

It flashed across my mind that if Bob would agree to the proposition it might be a favorable opportunity for him to escape, when we were in the vicinity of Grand Gulf, for of a truth I would do nothing toward preventing whatsoever he might wish to do, and it was much as if Major Hartley read this thought from my face.

"It is well within the line of our duty to arrest your friend as a spy," he said. "You can understand, even though your experience in such matters has been slight, that this escape of four prisoners, and the consequent boarding of a Federal vessel, might be construed as a clever scheme of the enemy to learn of our strength and intended movements. Personally I do not believe the lad has lent himself to any such plan; I only suggested the possibility, and according to my best judgment he would be wise to do as is desired, while at the same time I fail to see how he can be accused in the future by his friends for playing traitor to the Confederacy. Have a talk with him at once, and report here within an hour."

This was much the same as telling me that the in-

terview was at an end, and, saluting awkwardly but to the best of my ability, I left the tent, feeling that if we two lads did set out it would be the oddest kind of a scout ever known, when one from each army was sent off on such business.

Uncle Rube and his "detachment" were awaiting me in the tent which had been confiscated to their use, and the only member of the party who did not look up eagerly and inquiringly as I entered, was Bob Yardley.

He sat at the further end of the tent with his face in his hands, as if brooding over the painful situation, and it was little wonder that he gave himself up to gloomy thoughts.

"Well?" Uncle Rube said questioningly, when I stood before them silent. "I reckon you wasn't called to headquarters jest for the sake of lettin' the general see what a Maine lad looked like, was ye?"

"That might have been the reason," I replied evasively, wondering whether I was at liberty to repeat all which had been said, and then came the thought that if the matter was to be kept a secret I would have been warned to such effect.

"Wa'al, are you goin' to tell us about it?" Uncle Rube persisted, and without further hesitation I began the account, watching Bob keenly meanwhile.

At first he gave no sign of heeding what I said; but as I continued the truth dawned upon him, and he

looked up at me in something very like alarm until I ceased speaking.

While one might have counted ten, silence reigned in the tent, and then Uncle Rube said as if talking to himself:

“I don’t see that there’s very much more than a pleasant little jaunt in such a scheme. I wouldn’t mind takin’ it myself, for it will give you a mighty good standin’ at headquarters if the work is done reasonably well, an’ I can’t see what’s to prevent your carryin’ it out in great shape; it really doesn’t amount to much of anythin’,”

“Not to you or Dick!” Bob exclaimed passionately; “but what about me? I am asked to spy on my own people. There must be many in camp here who know the country as well as I do, and it’s a cruel thing to require of me!”

I was not minded to enter into any argument with him, for even though it had been possible, I would not have influenced his decision by so much as a hair’s breadth, lest he should reproach me later.

Uncle Rube, however, had no such scruples, and set about arguing the matter, for he dearly loved to put his own views in opposition to those of another.

“I don’t see that you can rightly call it workin’ against your own side,” he began. “It isn’t as if the information couldn’t be gained by some one else.”

“Then why don’t they send another in my place?”

It's cruel to ask me when it's within their power to do otherwise."

"I can understand all that well enough, lad. They are sendin' out you an' Dick because it saves usin' two men who may be better employed at other business."

"You have simply shown me that I would be really working against the Confederate cause."

"I don't see how you figger that out!" Uncle Rube cried sharply; but I could see plainly that he realized the truth of Bob's words..

Then he began to picture the benefits which the lad would derive from going on the scout, claiming that it was an unusually good opportunity for him to court favor with the commander of our army, and losing sight entirely of the fact that Bob had already done what should have earned him the gratitude of all within our lines.

Then I interfered by saying to the old man:

"If, after five of us have escaped through his aid, it is necessary for him to purchase good will from our people by yet further deeds, then I say he may be payin' too high a price for what, possibly, he doesn't value. Leave Bob alone; let him work the matter out in his own mind, an' at the end of the hour I'll carry to headquarters his decision, whatever it may be. It's for him, not us, to decide the question."

Uncle Rube muttered something about there being times and places when a fellow shouldn't be allowed

to go contrary to his own interests; but I bundled him and his comrades out of the tent, following them as I closed the flaps behind me.

“The lad will never have another such a chance,” the old man began when we were in the open air, and I, vexed because he seemingly lost sight of what Bob had already done, took it upon myself to silence him by saying sharply:

“Leave him alone. We have no right to dictate in what is an affair of conscience, an’ he shall go or stay, so far as I am concerned, as seems best to him.”

It was not possible for me to prevent Uncle Rube from airing his opinions, however; but I paced to and fro in front of the tent, determined Bob should not be interrupted, until Major Hartley appeared, and asked the reason why I was thus seemingly performing sentry duty.

I told him of the conversation we had had, and that I was eager Bob should solve the question by himself, whereupon he said in a friendly tone:

“Let me go in and talk with the lad. I understand fairly well how he is feeling, and promise that I won’t try to influence him, save by presenting the case according to my point of view.”

As a matter of course I could raise no objection to the officer’s going inside the tent, and when he had done so I joined Uncle Rube’s “detachment.”

Twenty minutes, or maybe half an hour, passed before I saw Bob again, and then he came out in

company with the major, looking as if he had settled the matter very much to his satisfaction.

“We will go,” he said to me, “and had best get our instructions at once from headquarters.”

Without awaiting my reply he set off toward the general's tent, I following a pace or two in the rear, not venturing to ask a single question.

The major had preceded us, and when we entered, I passing the sentinel this time without hesitation, the decision was made known to him rather than his superiors, and quite rightly, as I afterward learned, for he was charged with the duty of selecting a landing place above Grand Gulf for our troops.

Then orders were given us to much the same effect as I have already set down, and the major explained that he would furnish us with transportation on the river to that point from which we were to start across toward the Confederate outposts.

Agreeably with his instructions we were to carry nothing save revolvers in the way of weapons; but our haversacks were to be well filled, and it was left to us to decide whether or no we would encumber ourselves with blankets.

Bob believed we should travel in as light marching order as possible, and therefore it was that after visiting the division quartermaster, who gave orders for rations to be dealt out to us, we were ready for the scout.

A boy in blue and a boy in gray were to make

their way across the country where Federals as well as Confederates were likely to be met, and I could not refrain from smiling as I asked myself what a squad of soldiers, whatever their uniform, would do on meeting us? It seemed as if we must be arrested by either force, and then there might be considerable difficulty in explaining how we chanced to be in each other's company.

It was a queer proposition, view it as you may, and I question whether during the entire war, you could find another situation so odd.

Major Hartley must have made his arrangements for our journey even before the matter was decided in Bob's mind, for immediately we had filled our haversacks a boat manned by four soldiers was in waiting, and without delay the journey was begun.

"How far must we pull up the river before coming to the southernmost point?" I asked one of the crew when we set out, and he replied:

"About three miles, an' they'll be long ones when we're rowin' against a current that runs five miles an hour!"

Our boat was a light one, and with four oars out the distance ought to have been covered, as I reckoned it, in less than an hour; but fully twice that length of time elapsed before we were come to where Bob believed we should begin our journey by land.

During all this time we had joined in little of the conversation. The soldiers, curious, as well they

might be, to know why we two lads, one from the Confederate and the other from the Federal army, had been sent off evidently on an errand of considerable importance, plied us with questions which we either failed to answer, or gave evasive replies.

Bob was silent, seemingly in a brown study, which caused me no wonderment, knowing as I did what must be in the lad's mind, and I, speculating upon the probable danger before us, did not desire to hear myself speak.

Thus it was that the voyage was made in comparative silence, and when we stepped ashore it must have been two hours or more past noon.

The soldiers wished us "luck" on our tramp, and turned their craft around for the return voyage, which would be quickly made, thanks to the current.

Then Bob and I were alone, and the dear lad said as he set his face southward:

"The major declares that, according to the military maps, we have no more than a seven-mile walk from here to Big Black river, and if we keep moving we may finish it before dark."

"I surely can travel seven miles in two hours."

"But in such a country as this? Within half an hour we shall have struck swampy ground, and then our progress won't be rapid. We must gain solid land before we can lie down to sleep, and that we are reasonably certain to find about a mile this side of Grand Gulf."

He quickened his pace as he spoke, pushing resolutely forward, as if eager to have done with the work in hand, and I followed, wondering not a little what argument Major Hartley had used to induce the lad to do that which seemed at first glance the work of a traitor.

I refrained from asking any question at the time, however, but kept as close at his heels as was possible until we were come to the marshy lands, where conversation would have been exceedingly difficult.

We floundered on; sometimes wading knee-deep, and again climbing over the roots of trees, advancing slowly, yet with infinite difficulty.

Not until we had pursued this wearisome way fully two hours, perhaps not having traversed a greater distance than three miles, did Bob come to a halt, and it was high time we had an opportunity for rest, so far as I was concerned, since my strength was nearly spent.

It was when we were seated on the trunk of a fallen tree that I gave words to the question which had been in my mind since the moment we began the journey.

“How does it happen, Bob, that you consented to come with me on this scout?”

The lad looked at me curiously for a moment, and then asked:

“Can’t you guess?”

“Not a bit of it; I made certain you would refuse.”

“And so I would, but for the proposition the major made.”

“Is it a secret between you and he?” I asked.

“Not where you are concerned, for even though I don’t explain, you must finally know he suggested that this scout would give me a good opportunity of making my way into the Confederate lines.”

“Meaning that you are going to run away?” I cried in surprise, and he replied with a faint smile:

“Not ‘running away,’ but running back. I have permission from your people to enter our lines after I have taken you to the desired point, and started you on the road to New Carthage; but it is with the understanding that I shall hold my peace concerning anything I may have heard or seen of military matters since the hour we boarded the steamer in front of Vicksburg.”

“Then it wouldn’t have been a hard matter for you to have gone to your own people at any time,” I said after a brief pause, and he replied bitterly:

“I am not so certain. It appears to me that the major’s proposal was in the nature of a price for my services on this scout. In other words, I am paying for the privilege of going where I belong.”

“I am glad for you; but sorry for myself, Bob, for I shall be mighty lonesome after you have gone. We haven’t been together so very long, and yet somehow we seem to be right good friends.”

“So we are, Dick,” the dear lad said emphatically,

“and the chances are that we shall meet again before the Southern states are free from the yoke of the North, more especially if your army hangs around about Vicksburg a very great while.”

I did not fancy his manner of speaking about the “yoke” of the “North,” but that wasn’t the time for me to argue or quarrel with him over political questions, and I held my peace until he said:

“I reckon on staying with you until we have learned what your general wants to know, and then we’ll come back toward the river bank as far as you may think necessary.”

“And what then?”

“Why, it’s only a question of going up to our lines and telling who I am.”

It all seemed so simple, this method of rejoining his friends. The one difficult portion which I could see was, how he might be able to explain, while still being true to the Southern cause, that which had been done at Vicksburg; but I was not minded to bring such a subject up at that time, for if he had no forebodings regarding the position, surely I shouldn’t be the one to suggest them.

From the moment of his thus confiding in me Bob grew light-hearted, and when we resumed our laborious journey we two were laughing and talking as if such a thing as war had never been known in the land.

I was happy because all his troubles seemed to

have vanished, and he must have been of the same mind.

Short though the distance was, we did not succeed in gaining solid ground until night had come, and then we laid down in a tangle of canebrakes, so weary that in a very few moments we were sleeping soundly, heeding not the fact that at any moment we might be discovered by troops from either army.

It was not until daybreak that I awakened and saw Bob building a fire, evidently with the intention of cooking our breakfast of bacon, which, with the addition of hardtack, made up our entire list of rations.

“Ain’t it kind of risky to be kindlin’ a blaze here?” I asked, and he replied carelessly:

“What harm can come of it? It isn’t likely the Confederates would be scouting in this direction; besides, a detachment of any size would make its way over the beaten road, which must be four or five miles from here.”

Surely Bob should know best regarding the situation, and I gave no further heed to the matter; but at once set about toasting my portion of the bacon and allowing the fat to fall on the bread, a trick taught me by Uncle Rube.

The sun had but just risen when we set off on our journey once more, this time making better progress because of traveling over a hard surface.

Bob was a good guide, and within a reasonable length of time we came to the banks of the Big Black

river, where he turned sharply to the right, going in the direction of the Mississippi with the idea of passing within a mile or more of Grand Gulf.

If he had before him a military map prepared by the Confederate engineers, he could not have laid his course any better for the purpose of ascertaining the position of the enemy.

We struck Big Black river at the ford, on the direct line to Grand Gulf, and then found ourselves in a position to make an examination of the fortifications.

Up to this time we had met no Confederate force, and it was safe to say that they had not pushed their outposts toward Vicksburg, save it might be by the traveled road.

The forenoon was not yet half spent when we saw the northerly line of earthworks, and then it was necessary to turn our faces eastward in order to discover how far into the country these extended.

“Unless what I heard at Vicksburg was false, we shall have finished this portion of our work by noon,” Bob said cheerily. “Of course I wasn’t very deeply interested in the situation of affairs here; but since thinking the matter over I remember hearing that our troops were massed close around Grand Gulf, and two or three miles in this direction should bring us to the end of the task.”

“And after that?”

“Then it’s a case of following up the line of the

river, according to Major Hartley's instructions, until we find a landing-place, if indeed there is one, on the easterly bank, this side of New Carthage."

"That is likely to be a long and difficult task."

"I reckon there's no need of your finishin' it," a voice cried suddenly, and apparently from behind a clump of scrub oaks directly in front of us.

It can well be fancied that we halted very quickly, trying in vain to peer amid the shrubbery, and drawing our weapons ready for immediate use.

Before we could have advanced a single pace even had we been so disposed, five men clad in well-worn uniforms of gray stepped out into view, with muskets leveled at us, and I heard the sharp command:

"You 'uns had better drop them revolvers!"

It is needless to say that I dropped mine on the instant, for though being ignorant of the art of warfare, I understood that at such a time a bullet was quite likely to follow a command.

Bob, recognizing the fact that we were prisoners, and that no more could be done to forward the work on which we had been sent, thought only of establishing himself on a friendly footing, therefore advanced jauntily, without obeying the harshly uttered command, and said cheerily:

"You are Confederates, and so am I. I have come across you in good time, for I want to get back to Vicksburg."

“Stop where you are, an’ drop that gun!” the foremost of the squad, who wore the stripes of a corporal, said peremptorily, and Bob, halting, gazed at him in astonishment.

“Can’t you see that I’m wearing gray?”

“That’s plain enough; t’other chap’s got on blue.”

“Yes; but he’s——”

Bob ceased speaking suddenly, realizing that he was on the point of admitting that I was of the Federal army, and as he paused the man repeated:

“Drop that gun!”

Bob’s revolver fell from his hand; but he had not yet come to understand that the story he wished to tell might be taken as a falsehood.

“I tell you I’m from Vicksburg; my name is Robert Yardley, and my father James Yardley, is on Johnston’s staff.”

“Well, what about it?”

“‘What about it’?” Bob repeated. “There’s nothing more; but it’s enough to prevent you from acting as if we might be your prisoners.”

“That’s jest what you ’uns are. Fall in there, an’ if I see any signs of you ’uns tryin’ to give we ’uns the slip, I’ll stop sich funny business with a bullet.”

“But look here! I want to get into Vicksburg,” Bob insisted, and I, believing it was useless for him to parley with this soldier, whispered:

“There’s no sense in tryin’ to make him under-

stand. He's bound to get us into camp, an' there you'll find some officer to whom you can tell your story."

"But there's where I don't want to go," Bob whispered so loudly that the corporal must of necessity have heard him. "You'd be in no end of trouble in such a case as that."

"Never mind me, but look out for yourself. Go ahead and tell your story exactly as it is. If they want to make a prisoner of war out of me, it isn't anything more serious than might have happened at Vicksburg."

"Don't want to go to camp, eh?" the corporal said with a laugh. "That's just what I allowed. But you 'uns 'll go, an' move right quick; so fall in, an' remember that the triggers of these guns work mighty easy."

"Do as he says, Bob," I pleaded, setting the example. "No good can come of bandying words with him."

Bob obeyed reluctantly, and the corporal, triumphant because of having such an opportunity to distinguish himself, shouted this order and that until one might have supposed he had no less than a full regiment under his command.

"Do you suppose you'll find any one here at Grand Gulf whom you know?" I asked as we were marching along, the soldiers keeping strict guard over us.

“There isn’t much chance of coming across a friend.”

“Then there’s mighty little hope we can find one who’ll believe the story, for even to me it seems ridiculous.”

Bob made no reply, and I said to myself again and again as we marched through the thicket toward the line of earthworks, that no one in either army ignorant of all facts, would put any faith in the account which we must give of ourselves if we spoke only the absolute truth.

CHAPTER VI.

PRISONERS.

So far as I could see the only hope we had of escaping the fate of prisoners, and, possibly, of spies, was that Bob should find among the garrison at Grand Gulf some one with whom he was acquainted.

When we entered the town the corporal who had arrested us was not disposed to hide his achievements under a bushel, but paraded us most openly so all might know that he and his valiant soldiers had accomplished a feat worthy of great praise, and meanwhile Bob was looking around anxiously, hoping each instant to see some one who might recognize him.

Had the man who was now controlling our movements so desired, he could have landed us in that building which served as guard-house and jail after a walk of a mile, possibly a trifle more, instead of which he marched us around fully an hour and a half, and during all that time Bob never saw a familiar face.

We were led into the guard-room, an apartment possibly fifteen feet square, in one corner of what had probably been a manufactory, and there halted

before an officer seated at a desk, who appeared in my eyes just then as a most disagreeable person with whom to come in contact.

“What have you got now, corporal?” he asked sharply, and our captor replied with a long story concerning his achievements in taking us, the most important portion of which, as he told it, being the remark made by Bob regarding “finishing our task before noon.”

The corporal seemed to believe that this branded us absolutely as spies, and I must say he had fairly good reason, since we were following along the line of earthworks, evidently trying to gather all the information possible.

The man laid great stress upon Bob's claim that he lived in Vicksburg, and his evident fear of being taken into the town of Grand Gulf.

The officer at the desk seemed to be much impressed with the story as told by the corporal, and when the latter had finished, he, looking at us sharply, asked in a bullying tone:

“When did you leave the Yankee lines?”

“Yesterday noon,” Bob replied calmly, and I was literally overwhelmed with astonishment and fear because he had admitted the fact.

“Then you are willing to confess that you are spies?”

“We're confessing nothing of the kind,” and Bob now in turn spoke sharply. “Two boys may have

left the Federal lines twenty-four hours ago and yet not be playing the spy. I live in Vicksburg; came from there four days ago, and am most eager to get back. If you, without hearing the story other than as the corporal has told it, have any doubts as to our ability to tell the truth, send me home, and you will speedily find that I am as faithful to the cause as yourself."

"Of what advantage will that be to you, save in gaining just so much time?" the officer asked angrily. "Do you suppose that, with the Yankees swarming between here and Vicksburg, we can run a couple of cubs through at the risk of losing the men who were sent to guard them? I've no doubt you've got a good story to tell; but I'm not bound to believe it, and don't especially care to hear it. I've never seen a spy yet who didn't claim he was as innocent as a baby."

The corporal, who had been standing first on one foot and then the other, looking like a turkey on a hot rock, interrupted at this point to give his advice as to what should be done with two such dangerous creatures as we were; but the officer dismissed him in a very unceremonious manner.

Then, summoning a soldier from the interior of the building by pounding on the partition, he gave orders that we be confined in a certain room, which he described as the "small" one.

I would at that moment have tried to persuade

the man we should not be looked upon as dangerous creatures; but Bob prevented me by whispering:

“It’s no use to waste words here, Dick. This fellow don’t want to believe anything except what the corporal has told him.”

We were ordered to follow the soldier who appeared in response to the summons, and so we did, passing through the main room of the building, wherein were a dozen or more men in Confederate uniforms, who were probably spending a few hours there because of some misdemeanor, or neglect of duty, until we arrived at the corner of the building diagonally opposite the guard-room.

Here was what I fancied had originally been a store-room or office when the place was used as a manufactory, for it projected into the main apartment from the main walls of the building.

I flattered myself that our prison would be a very comfortable one, and for the moment was pleased because the officer had thought it necessary to separate us from the soldiers under discipline; but once we had entered the place I changed my opinion decidedly.

I question if the room had been used since the building was converted into a prison. It was absolutely destitute of furniture, but the floor was covered to the depth of a foot or more with torn papers, bits of wood, and odds and ends of everything you would naturally expect to find in such a place.

The walls were festooned with cobwebs, yet the small window which looked out from the rear of the building was not so thickly encrusted with dirt but that one could see the rough bars which had been placed across it to prevent the escape of such unfortunates as might be confined there.

Our guard did not waste very much time on his prisoners; but thrust both of us in so roughly that I was thrown headlong on the floor, after which, locking the door behind him, he went away.

“This seems to be the end of our scout,” I said, scrambling to my feet and trying to speak in a cheerful tone. “If General Grant gets any benefit from our work he’ll be a smarter man than I give him credit for bein’.”

“You will see him in time to tell what we learned, and that before many hours have passed,” Bob said cheerfully, whereupon I asked with the petulance of a child:

“How do you figure that out? Neither the corporal nor the officer in command believe your story, an’ I tell you what it is, Bob, no one will be willin’ to take it as the truth, for it’s the wildest kind of a wild yarn.”

“And yet you have told nothing save the truth, even to the extent of admitting that we came from the Yankee lines!” he cried.

“Yes, *we* know it as fact; but you’ll find it impossible to make any one else believe it.

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“You are thoroughly discouraged already!” he cried accusingly.

“Not so much discouraged as I am convinced that the truth will avail us but little. It is what we might have expected, an’ I claim that Major Hartley is a thick-headed man, else he would have realized what must have been the result in case we were taken by the soldiers of either army. The situation would be quite as serious had we fallen in with a Federal force.”

Then we fell silent, with plenty of food for reflection, for even though Bob was within the Confederate lines his position was not less dangerous than mine, unless, perchance, he met with an acquaintance, and both of us knew full well how cruelly quick is the beginning and the ending of a military trial when a man’s life hangs in the balance.

After a time, wearied with standing first on one foot and then the other, I seated myself on the floor in one corner of the room, where I could lean against the wall, and presently Bob came to my side.

“We won’t give in,” he said speaking as I believed because he needed the sound of his own voice to cheer himself. “Matters might be a deal worse than they are, and whatever comes we shall at least know that we didn’t try to shield ourselves behind a lie. This fellow here can do no more than send the case to his superiors, and then surely we shall come

face to face with those who have at least a glimmer of common sense.

“I’m afraid the more common sense a man has the more disinclined he will be to believe our story,” I said with a laugh, which had in it nothing of mirth, for, to tell the truth, my courage was oozing out at the tips of my fingers’ ends.

When, to change the subject of conversation, I begged him to tell me about his life in Vicksburg, and what had been done there since General Grant took command of the Army of the Tennessee.

He described the bombardment by Admiral Farragut’s ships, before General Grant had been assigned to the command, and declared that but little damage was done, the people going about their daily pursuits without especial fear, after becoming accustomed to the missiles.

Then he told of the condition of affairs in the city since that time, and not only gave me a very good idea of the cruelty of war; but occupied my mind to the exclusion of thoughts concerning our present situation, for nearly two hours.

Coming to the end of his story suddenly, as if it were no longer possible for him to think of anything but the present, he began to speculate upon the chance of our meeting some one who would believe the apparently wild explanation which we had to make, until I stopped him by saying:

“It can do no good to talk about it, Bob. Let us

try to pass the time as pleasantly as may be, usin' every effort to keep from each other's minds the actual condition of affairs. We shan't be dependent on such rations as they may serve out, for two days at least, because we've still a good supply of bacon and hardtack. I wonder why the corporal didn't think it his duty to take that away from us?"

"He was so puffed up with the idea of having captured two such dangerous spies, that he didn't think of even searching us for weapons," Bob replied with a laugh, and then we set about eating supper.

Having no fire to cook the bacon, we rubbed it over the hardtack as a substitute for butter, and a very palatable meal did we make.

An hour later the jailer put into the room a small kettle filled with water, and a supply of corn-bread, which was sweet and appetizing, therefore it could be seen that it was not their idea to add starvation to our mental suffering.

That night we laid down side by side on the litter which covered the floor, thanking our stars that there was so much of it, and slept as soundly and sweetly as we had twenty-four hours previous among the cane-brakes.

Next morning, when a fresh supply of water and corn-bread was brought in, the jailor informed us that we could exercise for half an hour in the main room, and this we did before eating breakfast, for I was eager to get a general idea of the building, with

the idea that some way of escape might present itself, having come to believe that the possibility of flight was our only hope.

I saw no chance of leaving the building save through the guard-room. The windows were closely barred, and, on this day at least, there were five soldiers on duty in the main apartment, therefore a prisoner must of necessity make his attempt at escape directly under their eyes.

We walked to and fro the full length of time allotted us, and when we returned to our "private prison," as Bob called it, I was not in a very cheerful mood.

We had good reason to believe that on this day General Bowen, or some of his staff, would give instructions that we be examined in order to learn if we really were spies, and each time we heard footsteps approaching both Bob and I made ready for an excursion in the open air, even though it would be under a strong guard.

To our great surprise, however, no one intruded upon our privacy from early morning until food was brought us at night.

During the latter portion of the day, however, we heard some of the prisoners who had come near the door of the room in which we were confined, talking about the possibility of troops arriving from Vicksburg within a short time, and from such fragments of conversation as came to our ears, it seemed that

some movement menacing Grand Gulf must be on foot.

Another night came and was passed much like the one previous, save that we did not sleep so soundly.

On the following morning we were allowed, as before, half an hour for exercise, and while we were pacing to and fro in the large room the report of a cannon suddenly rang out, so near at hand that the very building was shaken by the concussion.

Another and another immediately succeeded it, and we two stood looking anxiously into each other's faces, for surely it seemed as if an engagement must have begun, in which case, as on that night in Vicksburg, there might be an opportunity for us to get away.

It can well be imagined that this cannonading caused a great commotion among the jailers as well as the prisoners; but I took due notice of the fact that not one of the guard left the room.

When we would have gone to those windows which overlooked the river, we were sternly ordered back, and, a few moments later, sent to our especial prison.

Within five minutes from the time the first gun was fired, the cannonading became heavy, as if a general engagement was on, and while I hoped most ardently that our troops would succeed in capturing the town, Bob was probably praying fervently that they would be repulsed.

Truly it was an odd situation, when two friends

in the same position of danger were each hoping that the other might be disappointed in his desire.

As we knew when the corporal had marched us through the town, our prison was situated near the first, or upper, battery, and thus it was that we felt the full shock of the firing. The floor shook under us as if the building was on the verge of falling, and the din was so great that we could only make ourselves heard by shouting in each other's ears.

Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the firing ceased, and because of the previous tumult the silence which ensued was almost painful.

"The Yankees have attacked the town and been beaten off," Bob said in a tone of satisfaction, and I, not minded to admit that my people could be whipped so easily, insisted that the uproar we had heard was caused by nothing more than a slight skirmish, or, possibly, a gunboat had run down the river opposite the batteries.

We had all day in which to speculate upon it, and did not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion until night came, when we urged the soldier who brought our food to tell us what had happened.

He was a decent sort of fellow, and pitying, perhaps, the two lads who were lying under so serious a charge as we, readily gave the desired information.

"A Yankee steamer, carrying only two guns, had the nerve to open fire on the upper battery within

half a gunshot. Whatever she came for nobody can tell except it was to feel of us. Most likely the new general wants to find out how we're fixed, an' he must know by this time that we can make things hot for him if we try. Some say he's like to attack the town, an' the steamer run up to make certain of the water. Them as ought to know, allow that General Bowen has sent to Vicksburg for reinforcements."

Then the man, having left our supper on the floor, went away, and Bob was almost boisterous in his joy.

"Reinforcements from Vicksburg!" he cried. "Can't you see how that will affect us, Dick? If the commander here will delay a court-martial until the troops in gray come down, I'll have proof in plenty to set me free!"

"And enough to hang me," I replied, not meaning to speak despondently, but giving voice to the words because there had been in my mind all day the one thought that whatsoever might happen to benefit one, must necessarily work to the injury of the other.

"Both of us go free, or I'll stay with you whatever comes!" he cried stoutly. "When our troops arrive from Vicksburg the chances are I'll have friends enough among them to persuade General Bowen into giving you the same treatment that was mine in the Yankee camp."

It was late that night before Bob settled himself

down to sleep, so overjoyed was he by the information we had received, and when morning came he was even yet more jubilant, for we heard, while taking exercise in the main room, that both men and munitions of war were being sent down in hot haste from the city which was so soon to be besieged.

During the day we could understand, from fragments of conversation heard now and then, that General Bowen expected an attack on Grand Gulf without delay, and was doing everything in his power to strengthen the defenses, while more than once there came to our ears from a distance certain sounds which caused us to believe that troops were entering the town.

“They can’t come from anywhere but Vicksburg!” Bob said confidently and triumphantly, “and I tell you, Dick, we’re all right, for while an attack is expected, as it seems is the case now, the commander won’t spend very much time killing two lads like us.”

And before that day came to an end I persuaded myself he spoke no more than the truth, and felt almost confident he could help me out of my difficulties once he met those who were his friends, therefore we were two as jolly prisoners as could have been found anywhere in the land, until the third morning, when all our joy was turned into grief and utter despair.

While taking our regular exercise a file of soldiers,

headed by a sergeant, came into the main room of the prison, and we were ordered to fall into line.

“What for?” Bob asked, assuming a fine air of authority now he felt that the extreme danger had passed.

“You’ll know soon enough.”

“But it can do no harm to tell a fellow. A man never hurts himself by showing up a bit friendly now and then.”

“Well, if you will have it, a court-martial sets this mornin’, an’ as near as I can guess from what has been said, when it rises orders will be given for a firin’ squad at daylight to-morrow mornin’.”

It was a brutal way of imparting the information, but I am bound to believe the man did not at first realize the cruelty of his words.

I caught my breath as does one when he suddenly plunges into cold water, and Bob raised his hand threateningly as if he would strike the fellow; but, fortunately, we succeeded in pulling ourselves together before having said or done anything unmanly.

Then, as we were marched out of the prison, Bob, to give me as well as himself courage, said hopefully:

“There is no reason why we should let what that fellow said disturb us, for after having told the story I will demand that some officer who has lately arrived from Vicksburg be summoned, and it will be

hard lines indeed if we don't come face to face with one or more whom I know."

I am not just certain how far we walked, or what we did and said during that march toward the building which we afterward came to understand was used for the transaction of military business.

Although I was quite convinced that Bob could succeed in finding some one who knew enough about what had transpired at Vicksburg, to vouch for a certain portion of our story, yet there was before me the fear that such aid would arrive too late, and I believe I thought more of Malden, away down in Maine, than I did of Grand Gulf, Vicksburg, or all the South and North put together.

Yes, I suffered mentally during that short march, and yet more when we found ourselves standing at the foot of a table, around which were seated five officers, all looking as if the business on hand was of the most grave nature.

It seemed to me as if already we were condemned, and I wished most fervently that we had some story to tell other than the absolute truth.

It is needless for me to set down here all the forms which were observed; it is sufficient to say that we were accorded a fair trial, and given an opportunity to make whatsoever statement we wished; but alas! that which we said only served to make seemingly more apparent our guilt, for we were really charged with being spies.

Bob had taken upon himself the part of spokesman, and when the first questions were asked he begged to be allowed to give an account of what we had done since the day I entered Vicksburg.

And the dear lad told the story well, omitting not the most trivial thing, whether it had a bearing upon the matter or not, until those who held our lives in their hands had before them as complete a history as could have been given however much time might have been spent in the telling.

While the dear lad talked I watched the faces of the judges, and it seemed to me that I saw unbelief written on every countenance; as if they were saying to themselves that there must be no show of mercy because we had attempted to impose upon them such an improbable story, and almost from the beginning of the trial I heard in my heart the same words which were spoken later.

“Is this all you have to say?” one of the officers asked when Bob had come to an end of his recital.

“All?” the lad cried. “Is it not enough? I have told you the truth without the slightest deviation, and it can be proven by any officer who has been stationed in Vicksburg during the past three months or more!”

“It would have been better had you invented a more plausible story,” one of the officers said in a tone of indignation. “It is beyond reason that General Grant should have sent you with one of his

own men on a scout to this place, with the promise that you might, once the work was completed, come into our lines."

"It is the truth!" Bob cried vehemently, "and General Grant himself, if you would send under flag of truce to New Carthage, must give the same evidence."

"It is hardly to be expected," said the man who acted as president, chairman, or whatsoever the chief office in such an assembly may be called, and Bob cried passionately:

"If the saving of two lives is not worth the sending of a messenger into the enemy's camp, then at least you can summon some of the officers who have lately arrived from Vicksburg!"

"How do you know any have come from there?" one of the party asked suspiciously.

"We heard those in the prison speaking of it. One of the guard told us that reinforcements were expected."

"It seems that you have a very lively curiosity concerning what may be going on."

"Any two prisoners, having nothing with which to occupy their time, would naturally be curious concerning what might be going on around them, and in our case it is not strange, since only from Vicksburg could we expect those who can verify what you are pleased to call an improbable story."

I saw the men whispering with each other, as if

they were done with us, and Bob must have noted the same, believing as I did that they were deciding upon the sentence, for again he declared that the least which could be done justly in our behalf was to ask the new arrivals if they knew such a lad as Robert Yardley.

Our judges gave no heed whatsoever to this demand, and then it was I knew the matter had been decided in their minds.

No need to speculate as to what the decision would be; there could be but one sentence for a prisoner found guilty of acting as spy.

It was as if all my strength suddenly deserted me. I clutched at the end of the table to prevent myself from falling; my mouth was parched and dry, and a red mist swam before my eyes.

Whether Bob said anything more after making the last demand, when the judges apparently gave no heed to his words, I cannot say, because I was not conscious of anything save the desire to hold myself erect as a boy from Maine should when such a deadly wrong was being perpetrated.

Then some one took me by the arm, leading me out of the room, and in the open air I revived sufficiently to know that Bob was by my side; but in the clutch of a soldier, as was I.

I knew full well the decision of those officers before whom we had stood; the precautions which were being taken against our escape, so much greater than

when we were led to trial, were sufficient, and I whispered to Bob, my voice sounding faint and far away:

“They believe we’re spies!”

“Unless something marvelous happens between now and to-morrow morning we shall pay the penalty of their belief,” he replied, pressing my hand tenderly.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPENDED SENTENCE.

I SHALL not attempt to describe my feelings when we were once more in the little room of the prison, for the simple reason that it would be impossible to do so.

Whether our trial had been conducted in all fairness I could not have said; but certain it was that we were adjudged spies, and under sentence of death. That there would be any delay in the last act of the tragedy I had no hope, for in time of war when the life of human beings is held so cheaply, there is little ceremony or expenditure of time in a military execution.

Not until we were inside our own particular portion of the building, with the door locked, did I look into Bob's face, and then we two sat gazing at each other through what seemed to be a thick veil, clasping hands as if the pressure gave us a certain amount of mental strength.

Nor shall I attempt to set down all we said when speech came to us. Bob, dear lad, cried out against the injustice of refusing to call upon such officers as had come from Vicksburg, and I reminded him that our time on earth was all too short to be spent in re-

viling those, who, as I believed, had treated us unjustly.

I in turn exclaimed at the wickedness of condemning boys as spies when they were not disguised, and only on a scout such as would be recognized by any belligerents as a fair and open one. Then it was Bob who spoke of the probable shortness of our lives, and I held my peace.

I have talked since then with many men well posted in military affairs, who have not hesitated to say that there is no law, written or oral, in the game of war which admits condemning a man as spy under similar circumstances, and also, that officers sitting in court-martial had no moral, even though there might have been a legal, right, to prevent us from calling upon witnesses wherever they might be found.

However, we were under sentence of death, and it seemed to me as if something very like a miracle must be wrought if our lives were to be saved.

I had no hope; but Bob still cherished the possibility of finding witnesses who would vouch for him, and who might have sufficient rank to reverse the finding of the court.

Therefore, when I gave way to silent despair, throwing myself at full length on the litter in one corner of the room, rebelling mutely against "man's inhumanity to man", Bob set about evolving schemes which might be worked to our benefit.

Finally, when it seemed to me as if the night must

be near at hand, he cried sharply, shaking me by the shoulder:

“How much money have you got, Dick?”

I raised my head dully, not understanding the question until he had repeated it, and then replied:

“Two dollars—a two-dollar greenback. Not enough to do any good, if you are thinking of bribing the jailers.”

“I’m not such a fool as to try anything of that kind, because even if we had hard cash in plenty, I question if it could be done. Give me your greenback.”

I did as he commanded, and the lad took from his own pocket what looked to be a considerable roll of Confederate script, counting the whole, and wrapping my greenback around the outside of the bundle.

“What are you goin’ to do?” I asked, although I was not overly curious at the time, for it seemed as if I was finally done with any of this world’s business.

“Listen, and you’ll find out,” he said, and then began knocking furiously at the door which led into the main room.

The summons brought one of the guard, who, knowing that we were in such sore straits, displayed more of kindly feeling than ever before, and instead of harshly ordering Bob to remain silent, as I had supposed he would, asked mildly:

“What’s the matter?”

Bob held up the roll of money; but before he could speak the man cried sharply:

“Don’t try anything of that kind, lad! If you claim to be Southern born you know it would be mighty poor, cheap white trash that would do anything of the kind.”

“You are making a mistake, my man, the same as did my comrade here a moment ago. I’m not expecting to bribe you—I didn’t think so meanly of you as that. You see that I have money, thirty-eight dollars in Confederate script, and a two-dollar greenback.”

“Well?” the man asked.

“Well, I’m willing to give it for the services of some honest soldier from now till midnight.”

“What is it you want done? A man should be willing to go quite a bit out of his way to do a favor to a couple of lads who are in such a box.”

“The service is trivial; simply to go around this town and find some officer from Vicksburg of higher rank than captain, if it can be, to whom it shall be told that Robert Yardley is lying here in prison under sentence of death as a spy. It should be possible to find the officer in ten minutes, for I have reason to believe our troops have come down from that city in considerable numbers.”

“And so they have, my boy; but why didn’t you make a demand for such services when you were before the court?”

“ I did, but it was of no avail. The officers laughed at our story, being thoroughly convinced we were trying to impose upon them, and showed us no mercy.”

“ What can be done if you find a man who knows you ? ”

“ What can be done ? ” Bob cried. “ Everything! It will mean the saving of our lives, for once an officer who knew me in Vicksburg learns of my position, for father’s sake, if not for my own, he will prevent the shameful ending of my life.”

“ You can put up your money, lad. I wouldn’t take a cent for doing a favor for one situated as you are, and if there are any officers in this town who know you, I will have them here within two hours.”

“ Will you come back and let me know how you succeed ? ” Bob cried as the man was on the point of turning away.

“ You shall hear from me, whatever the result, within the time I have mentioned,” and then, without giving my comrade time to voice his thanks, the man closed the door, locking it carefully.

Now it was that hope began to spring up in my breast for the first time since I dimly realized that we were sentenced as spies.

I had no doubt but that there were Confederates in Grand Gulf who had lately come from Vicksburg, and the guard seemed willing to make every effort in our behalf. The town was so small that, unless

the garrison was very large, he could readily finish his search within the time set.

The only question was, whether, having found the officer who would do what he might toward aiding us, anything could be accomplished?

However, for the time being I forced myself to the belief that something would be done, at least so far as saving me from the shameful death was concerned. It seemed just then that any other sentence would be bearable.

Then we talked of the possibilities, growing more cheerful each moment, so rapidly do the spirits of youth revive once an impetus, however slight, has been given.

We discussed the movements of the guard after he left the prison, trying to picture to ourselves where he would go and how long he might be occupied at this battery or that headquarters, and, according to our speculations, he had not more than half completed his task when we heard the click of the key in the lock. The door was thrown wide open to give admission to a gentleman wearing the straps of a major-general, while behind him were half a dozen officers of lesser rank, who probably composed his staff.

Surely the guard had kept his word, and that right royally, for whatsoever our visitor might command would be performed.

“Which of you is Robert Yardley?” he began,

and then, observing the suit of gray, added with a kindly smile, "it seems that there is no need of such a question. What is your father's name, lad?"

"James Yardley, sir. He is on Johnston's staff."

"Yes; I know him well, and came here only on the chance that it might be his son who claims to have been wrongfully convicted as a spy. Have I ever seen you before, lad?"

"I'm afraid not, sir, although I have seen you many a time."

At that moment one of the other officers stepped forward as he said:

"I am well acquainted with the boy, sir. He is indeed the Yardley he represents himself," and the gentleman shook Bob cordially by the hand.

How my heart leaped up when my comrade had thus established his identity, for it seemed to me certain that now our troubles were at an end.

General Bowen evidently did not intend to interfere, even in the case of a son of his friend, if that son was guilty of what he stood accused, for he said even while the officer was greeting Bob:

"Let me hear your story, lad, as you told it at the trial. Make it as short as may be without leaving out anything important."

By this time the guard had brought chairs for the distinguished visitors, and the general and his staff seated themselves, while Bob and I stood before them much like culprits.

My comrade gave a brief, yet detailed, account of all that had occurred since the night when I came ashore from the *Henry Clay*, and he was listened to intently by all present.

“Do you say, lad, that the officers composing the court-martial refused to make any effort toward corroborating your story?” General Bowen asked when Bob had ceased speaking.

“They did not even take that trouble. As I understood it, they simply dismissed the matter by sentencing us—at least I suppose we were sentenced, although at the time I hardly knew what was said or done.”

“Yet it seems that you have been aiding the enemy,” the general said suddenly.

“It was the price I was to pay, sir, for being allowed to regain our lines.”

“Unless you had taken it upon yourself to release the prisoners rightfully held at Vicksburg, no such price could have been demanded.”

“Yes, sir, that is my crime, and not what is now charged against me,” Bob said sadly. “I have no valid excuse to offer for my actions on the night the first fleet came past the batteries. What I did was purely on impulse—Dick and his four friends had come ashore from a wreck; it did not seem to me that they were in the same list with prisoners taken on the battle-field.”

“You must have understood that severe punish-

ment would be meted out to you for daring to release them?"

"I suppose I did realize it, or at least I would have realized it if I had had time to turn the matter over. It all came upon me so suddenly that I gave heed to nothing save the accomplishment of my purpose. Indeed, there wasn't an opportunity for me to think from the moment we ran to the prison, Dick and I, until I was on board the Yankee steamer."

"Why did you board one of the enemy's vessels? Having set the prisoners free, why did you not remain in Vicksburg? Was it to avoid punishment?"

"By no manner of means, sir. I was hardly conscious that I did go on board the vessel until I found myself on her deck, and then I would have given anything had it been possible for me to get back to the city and atone for the crime—if crime it was."

"It certainly was. And now, having agreed to lead this boy on his—well, let us call it 'scout'—you were to be allowed the opportunity of returning to our lines? Do I understand you to say that?"

"Yes, sir. I refused to have anything to do with the matter until one Major Hartley suggested that it be done, and declared he had due authority for speaking as he did.

"You showed yourself willing to give to the enemy information which he might want, as if your liberty was of more consequence than disaster to the armies of the Confederacy."

General Bowen was speaking very sternly now, and my heart began to sink once more, fearing lest he might believe that while we were not actually spies, the punishment of death suited the crime which had been committed.

“I’m afraid that’s the way of it, sir, although at the time I did not look at it in that light,” Bob said sorrowfully. “Major Hartley, when I had refused to take any part in the scout, represented to me that no great harm could come to our cause through what I did, since General Grant’s force would pursue the same course even if I refused. We two lads took the places of men, that is all it seemed to me, and, as the major put it, I, acquainted with the country, could do the work more quickly.”

“Do you know anything about the Federal troops which might be of advantage to us?”

“Nothing whatsoever, sir. We landed at night, and I did not go out of the tent until we started on the scout.”

General Bowen remained silent while one might have counted thirty, and then he asked abruptly:

“What do you expect me to do, Yardley?”

“Reverse the decision of the court-martial, sir, because it is unjust, and not through any favor to my father,” Bob replied promptly and manfully.

“And let you go scot free, young sir?”

“All I ask is for just treatment. Punish us as you will—as the usage of war permits; but do not

kill us as spies, for it seems to me clearly proven that we are innocent of the charge."

"I quite agree with you there," the general replied, and turned to one of his staff with whom he whispered a few moments, whereupon the latter took from his pocket an official-looking document.

The general glanced at it hurriedly, wrote with a lead pencil something across the face of it, and then turning to Bob, said:

"I am not disposed to set you two lads entirely free, although I have no doubt but what you have told me the absolute truth, Yardley. The matter shall be looked into at greater length when I have more time, and meanwhile you must remain prisoners, not confined here, but under parole. I haven't as much reason for pinning my faith on your Northern friend, as I have on the son of James Yardley, therefore I ask your pledge that both of you will remain here in Grand Gulf without making any effort at escape, or even allowing yourselves to be carried away if it can be prevented, and holding no communication with the enemy until such time as I shall have come to a decision regarding the whole affair."

Then, as if bethinking himself of the fortunes of war, he added after a brief pause:

"If it should become impossible to report to me, through any cause not of your own making, for a space of ten days, you are released from parole."

This was the end of the interview—a happier one than I had dared to dream might be possible!

That we should have been set free was beyond our wildest hopes, and I hardly breathed because of the suspense as I waited in fear and trembling lest the general recall his words.

To my great relief he arose while Bob was trying to stammer out his thanks, and a moment later he and his staff had left the room.

Bob flung his arms around my neck, and I hugged him more tightly than I ever had any human being save my mother.

We stood there looking and acting like a couple of fools, I fancy, until the door leading from the guard-room was opened and we heard our names called loudly.

Going to that apartment from which we had been ushered into the prison, we found the officer of the guard who had treated us with such scant ceremony a few hours previous, now as suave and friendly as the most captious could have desired.

I don't remember what he said; I even question if I knew at the time, because there was no room in my heart for any save the thought that we were not to be killed. I was only aware that he said something in the way of congratulation, and then flung wide open the outer door as token that we were free.

It was not possible for either of us to speak when

we stood in the open air, prisoners, and yet free to move about the town as fancy dictated!

Involuntarily we walked toward the bluff which commanded a view of the river in either direction for miles, where was situated the battery called "Bald Head," and there, as near the earthworks as the sentinel would have permitted, we stood for many moments silently clasping each other's hands.

"It has been a tight squeeze, Dick," Bob said at length, "and but for the fact that the Federal force came so near, General Bowen wouldn't have been in Grand Gulf to aid us this night. It seems as if everything worked our way."

"Don't say that, Bob!" I cried with an inward shudder. "It doesn't seem right for us to propose that all this has come about simply to insure our safety. It is only that we happen to be in this place at this time. I have come within the past few hours to realize that the lives of a couple of fellows like us are of mighty little importance."

"Well, have it as you will, Dick. We are saved, and it seems as if I must keep repeating that over and over to assure myself of the wonderful fact! Now what are we to do? General Bowen has made us promise to stay here; we've got thirty-six dollars in Confederate money, and a two-dollar greenback, which last is of more value than all the rest, That won't keep us going a great while."

"We needn't cross our bridges until we come to

them, Bob. Wait till mornin', an' then we'll lay plans for the future. Where are we to sleep this night?"

"Anywhere."

Well, we walked around a bit enjoying our freedom, and then laid down on the ground behind the bluff, looking up at the twinkling stars until our eyes were closed in slumber, and, later, the rays of the rising sun failed to awaken us.

Not until the trampling of many feet, and the rattle of heavy guns as they were being drawn up the hill, came close at hand, did we arouse to the consciousness of life again.

Once on our feet where we could see the hurried movements of troops as they swung into position, I needed not to be told that something of moment was near at hand.

I would have stood like a simple, questioning myself as to what was going on, but Bob, more accustomed to such scenes, ran swiftly, forcing me to follow as he literally dragged me along by the hand, until we were arrived at the summit of the bluff.

From that point could be seen, coming down the river from the direction of the town known as Hard Times, a squadron of six iron-clad steamers, heading directly toward Grand Gulf.

"The Yankee fleet!" Bob cried. "They're going to try to take what our people call 'Little Gibraltar,' and a warm time they'll have of it!"

“And so shall we, if we stay so near the battery,” I added in my prudence, for I had no great hankering to stand in the path of shot or shell, more especially when duty did not demand it.

“Let us get back on the hills,” Bob said after a hasty glance around. “We won’t be in very much danger there, and will be able to see all that’s going on.”

As he spoke he turned and ran, I following, quite naturally, close behind.

Now in order that that which follows may be the better understood, I must stop here for a moment to describe Grand Gulf and its defenses, promising to use no more words than may be absolutely necessary.

The town of Grand Gulf was as strong naturally as Vicksburg, and, as Bob had said, was spoken of as “Little Gibraltar.” The fortification known as Bald Head was on a bold bluff commanding an uninterrupted view of the river for a long distance in either direction, and was built on a perpendicular wall more than eighty feet above the surface of the water. In front of this the Mississippi forms a circular bay, or gulf, from which the town takes its name.

In the fort, as I afterward came to know, were mounted four heavy guns, and on the hills back of them were fieldworks built to protect the rear of the

main battery, which fortifications were at least three hundred and fifty feet above the river.

Half a mile below Bald Head were the "lower batteries," connected with the first by entrenchments through which troops could pass from one work to the other without exposing themselves to the view of the enemy. These last batteries were on the brow of a hill, and nine guns, mostly thirty-two pounders, as I came to know, were mounted there, while in some smaller batteries near at hand were rifled field-pieces.

I have since seen the following printed account of the defenses of Grand Gulf:

"All these batteries were more formidable from the fact that they were in very elevated positions, giving them a plunging fire, while it was difficult to elevate the guns afloat so that their shot would reach the enemy."

I dare not attempt to give an account of this engagement as I saw it, lest many inaccuracies creep in, therefore it is my purpose to set down here what Admiral Porter wrote in his "Naval History," concerning it:

"When the troops arrived at that point abreast of Bald Head, and the soldiers on the transports were ready to land as soon as the batteries should be silenced, Admiral Porter got under way with his squadron, and commenced the attack at 8 A. M., on the 29th of April, 1863.

“The Pittsburg, Louisville, Mound City and Carondelet attacked the lower batteries, while the Benton, Tuscumbia and Lafayette attacked Bald Head battery, the two former as close as they could get, and the Lafayette lying in an eddy four hundred yards above the fort where she could enfilade it.

“As the vessels approached the works the enemy opened fire, and in ten minutes the battle was raging all along the line.

“The fight was severely contested, and it was not until three hours after the first gun was fired that the enemy deserted his guns at the lower batteries, and then only after the Lafayette had been ordered from her first position to reinforce the gunboats below.

“In the meantime the flagship Benton, and the Tuscumbia were doing their best to silence the upper battery, getting close under the guns, and endeavoring to knock off their muzzles, when they were run out to fire. The current was so strong, however, that it was impossible to keep the two vessels in position, and they sheered about very much.

“In one of these sheers, a shot entered the Benton’s pilot-house, disabled the wheel, and cut Pilot William’s foot nearly off. Though the brave pilot never left his post, it was impossible to manage the vessel, and she was accordingly run into the bank to repair damages.

“The gunboats at the lower batteries had been

signaled to double up on Bald Head, and the Lafayette to resume her old position, and the Pittsburg arrived opportunely to take the Benton's place.

“During the time the latter vessel was out of action—twenty-five minutes—the Pittsburg lost six killed, and had twelve wounded.

“After all the vessels concentrated their fire on Bald Head there was less resistance, although the Confederates still stood to their guns. When the battle had lasted more than five hours, General Grant, who from a tug up the river was looking on, made signal to the admiral that he wished to communicate, and the Benton joined him two miles above the fort.

“The Confederates now ceased firing, but the gunboats maintained their position around Bald Head, occasionally firing a shell to keep the enemy out of the works.

“When General Grant went on board the flagship he decided that it would be too hazardous to attempt to land the troops, as it did not appear that the guns in the enemy's works were dismounted, and the gunners would therefore jump to their batteries again, open on the unprotected transports, and destroy many of the troops.

“For the same reason the general concluded not to send the transports past the batteries with the soldiers on board; but to march the latter around by

land. In this he was quite right, as afterward appeared.

“As there was no longer any object in keeping the gunboats under the batteries, all but the Lafayette were recalled, and the latter was left for a time in her old position to keep the enemy from reoccupying the works and repairing damages.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THOMPSON'S PLANTATION.

DURING all this time, while the battle raged, Bob and I stood on the hillside commanding a view of the entire scene, and our position was not what might be called a safe one, for many shots from the Federal fleet fell nearer us than was comfortable.

I had never before understood what was meant by having one's throat parched by the fumes of burning gunpowder, but that forenoon I realized to the full how one may become literally intoxicated with the acrid odor. It mounted to my brain speedily, producing what is known as the "fever of battle".

I lost all sense of danger, heeding not one whit when a shell burst so near where we were standing that the fragments whistled past my head. The one desire in my heart was to take some part in this battle, where I could see clearly that our people were being worsted.

Now I cheered when a shot from one of the steamers struck fairly into the fortifications, and again Bob shouted as a Confederate shell plowed its way through the so-called iron-clads.

He cheered when his side struck a telling blow,

and I when it seemed as if our forces had inflicted material injury, yet neither of us stopped to think how odd it was that we two friends—friends who had literally gone down together into the very borders of the dark valley—had hopes and desires so contrary to each other.

I could have wept with grief and mortification when the Federal fleet finally drew off; but Bob shouted and danced in glee because of the same fact, and his actions did not then strike me as being at variance with my own feelings.

“We’ve whipped them! We’ve whipped the Yankees in a fair fight!” my comrade shouted, clasping me in his arms as if expecting I would join in his wild demonstrations, and I said sorrowfully:

“It seems as if my people might have held on a while longer, when I am certain we would have had the best of the fight.”

Thus Bob rejoiced and I sorrowed, and through it all we were comrades, with no thought in our intercourse with each other of sectional feelings or animosities.

It was past noon when we finally came down from the mountain, and suddenly realized that we had had nothing to eat since the night previous. We still carried our knapsacks in which remained four or five hardtacks, and perhaps a dozen slices of bacon. This last we cooked in the open air, and then came

the question as to how and where we were to live, since, because of our parole, it was necessary we remain in Grand Gulf.

We were not troubled in mind regarding shelter, for at that season of the year a bed on the ground out of doors, would by no means be uncomfortable; the only matter about which we need concern ourselves particularly was that of procuring rations.

It seemed to me that since we were held as prisoners, for such we were in fact, it was the duty of the Confederates to feed us; but Bob, having received such a great favor at the hands of General Bowen, was not willing to annoy him with what would seem a trifling matter, therefore he proposed that we depend upon our own resources, which consisted of the Confederate money, the two-dollar greenback, and our ability to forage.

After having been rescued from death, it seemed to me as if I need have little care regarding anything else; but yet, the imminent danger of death having been removed, I began to speculate somewhat disconsolately upon the future.

Beyond question the officers at New Carthage, and my comrades of the 46th, would understand that some disaster had overtaken me, and I could fancy Uncle Rube mourning over me as dead, or a prisoner of war.

How was I to return to the Federal lines? When would General Bowen decide that because of what

we had done it was necessary we be punished by absolute imprisonment, or conclude that we might be allowed to go free?

I had little fear of his sending us back to be locked up. The worst of my position seemed the fact that I was on parole, having promised to make no effort at escape, and must, perforce, remain in the enemy's stronghold indefinitely.

Bob understood very much of what was in my mind when I suddenly fell silent, after our meal had been cooked and eaten in the open air, and at once began trying to convince me, that the situation was not at all as unpleasant, as might be supposed.

I quite agreed with him as to the truth of this, so far as he was concerned. He was among friends, and even should it be deemed advisable to punish him for setting free the prisoners in Vicksburg, and for yielding to the temptation of guiding me on the scout, there would finally be an end to the matter, whereas it was not likely I would be allowed to return to the Federal lines until the close of the war.

"There might be worse situations than remaining a prisoner on parole inside our lines, Dick," the lad said with an attempt at cheeriness, and I retorted by reminding him that when he had been in a similar position his heart was very heavy.

"That is true," he confessed; "but you must remember I was a prisoner in the Yankee lines, because of what I had done against my own people; I

had the sorrow of knowing that my situation had been brought about, by something which I ought not to have done, while you are here in the strict line of duty, and have fallen upon nothing worse than a soldier should expect, at any time."

I was free to admit that there was considerable of truth in this statement, yet the comparison did not tend to make me any more cheerful at the time.

I was still eager to know whether I might expect a termination of the conditions within what I considered a reasonable length of time.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Dick," Bob said after a brief pause. "Let's hunt up Colonel Vallette—he's the gentleman who shook hands with me last night. We'll ask his opinion and advice. That will come as near settling the matter as is possible, unless, perchance, we are so fortunate as to get an interview with General Bowen."

Since we had nothing better with which to occupy ourselves, and because I was anxious to learn how others might view the matter, I agreed with the proposition, and urged him to carry it into execution without delay.

It was not a difficult matter to find the officer in question, since we knew him to be a member of the general's staff, and therefore we went straightway to headquarters; but did not venture to enter immediately because of having no business save that which was purely personal.

We lounged around the outside an hour or more before Colonel Vallette made his appearance, and the welcome which he gave Bob, was sufficient proof of his friendliness to my comrade.

“Rather a tight squeeze you had last night, lad. The approach of the Yankees was the means of saving your life, and that’s about all they effected!”

“I should have thanked you at the time for what you said in my behalf, sir,” Bob began; but the officer interrupted him quickly:

“I only did what any man would have done, my boy, and was right glad of an opportunity to serve a son of your father. What can I do for you this morning?”

Bob first introduced me in due form, although such ceremony hardly seemed necessary, and then asked the colonel’s opinion as to our position in Grand Gulf—whether we were thrown on our own resources, or, as prisoners, might expect to receive rations.

“Oh, you must be fed, as a matter of course,” the colonel said with a laugh, “and two lads like you shouldn’t have any great difficulty in getting from the quartermaster, all you may require.”

“But what is likely to be the end of it, sir?” I asked anxiously. “Do you suppose General Bowen, if he decides not to punish us, will allow me to return to the Federal lines?”

“It think that is hardly probable, because by this

time it is in your power to tell very much concerning the defenses of Grand Gulf which we don't care to have made known. I fancy you'll be held as prisoner of war for some time, although not under any restraint since having given parole. By the way," he added, turning to Bob, "if you have any difficulty about rations, go to the quartermaster of my regiment, and he will provide you with whatever is necessary."

Having said this the colonel went on his way, leaving my comrade in very much better spirits than before, and me, cast down correspondingly.

We decided not to make any application to the quartermaster so long as our funds held out, and Bob, having had considerable experience in the way of making cave dwellings, proposed that we set about burrowing a hole in the side of one of the hills where we could find shelter during a storm.

It was to be a long task because both of us were eager to have some work on hand whereby our time might be occupied, for there is nothing more arduous than the making of idling a business.

Bob laid his plans for a most pretentious dwelling; it was to consist of two rooms, provided we found the soil sufficiently clayey and tenacious to support a partition, and when night came we had hardly more than dug out that which would serve as an entrance.

We slept well after our labors, and next morning

at daybreak I went to work again, while Bob foraged for food.

He succeeded in purchasing what appeared to be an abundant two-days supply of corn-bread and bacon, and after breakfast we made rapid progress with the excavation, carrying the soil in baskets, which last we borrowed from a planter nearby, out at some distance from the mouth of the cave, to form a road-bed into the ravine.

When noon came it was possible for one to see what our intentions evidently were, and then, because we were thoroughly tired and our hands sore, Bob proposed that we take a little recreation in the form of a walk through the town, where it was probable we might hear something of what was being done by the army.

And we gained more information than had been anticipated.

Having been on the hillside, beyond view of the heights, we had remained in ignorance of the fact that much out of the ordinary was in progress; but once arrived where the camps of the soldiers could be seen, we understood that a movement of some kind was in contemplation.

Orderlies rode to and fro in great haste; regiments were being formed in line, and around headquarters the officers congregated in large numbers.

“It looks as if news had been received from the

Yankees," Bob said half to himself. "I wonder if they are expecting another attack?"

"It appears to me that these regiments are getting ready to march off, else why are they drawn up in line?"

"There's no need for us to speculate very much about it," Bob said with a laugh, "for I fancy any one of these officers will tell us what is going on."

He went rapidly toward a sergeant who was looking to the accoutrements of his horse as if expecting a hard ride, while I followed close at his heels, eager to hear what might be said, and speedily learned that which gave me great hope.

"The Yankees are advancing in force on Port Gibson from Bruensburg, and the general counts on meeting them with the greater part of his army."

"Is General Bowen going to leave Grand Gulf?" Bob asked in great astonishment, and straightway I was plunged into a maze of perplexity, as to whether we were bound to accompany him, or remain where we were.

The sergeant did not waste any words on us lads; but rode away immediately the information had been given, and I, fearing lest we might inadvertently break our parole, insisted that Bob go without delay either to the general commanding, or to Colonel Vallette.

It seemed to me, when we were near headquarters again, that the confusion was increasing; the order-

lies rode more hurriedly, and, to my inexperienced eye, it appeared as if every officer was urging his men to rapid movement. I could well understand that some imminent and unexpected danger threatened.

It was not a simple matter to find Colonel Vallette amid the throng which surrounded headquarters, and we saw two or three regiments march out on the Port Gibson road before the officer of whom we were in search emerged from the building.

So pressed was he for time that instead of halting when we two lads saluted, and answering our questions at ease, he forced us to accompany him at a sharp pace, or forego making the inquiries which seemed to us so essential.

“What about our paroles, Colonel?” Bob asked. “Are we bound to stay here, or follow General Bowen?”

“It is quite certain the orders were for you to remain in Grand Gulf, and even if you had the option, it would not be wise to leave town just now.”

“Can you tell me what’s going on, sir?”

“The Yankees, twenty thousand or more strong, are advancing on Port Gibson, and we are likely to give them a chance of showing their fighting qualities right soon.”

The colonel walked yet more rapidly, as if answering our questions had reminded him that time was precious, and we fell behind, I hoping most

fervently that the Federal force might be victorious in case the battle was fought, and Bob feeling confident that his people were on the eve of triumph.

Now it was that we witnessed as stirring a scene as I have ever beheld. Troops were being sent rapidly out of the town, until no less than eight full regiments had marched down the road which I was told led directly to Port Gibson, and, following them, were half a dozen pieces of artillery.

The general and his staff did not start until all this warlike array was some distance from the town; but Bob and I remained outside headquarters, for all the while messengers were riding up in hot haste with what I fancied were reports from the front.

Then the officers also rode away, and it was to me as if Grand Gulf had been deserted, although there must have been left behind five or six hundred men in occupation of the batteries.

"We may as well go back to our cave-digging," I said after we had gazed down the road until the last cloud of dust raised by the feet of the horses disappeared; but Bob answered impatiently:

"I can't set myself about anything of that kind while a battle is going on."

"It hasn't begun yet," I suggested.

"True; but it's evidently very near at hand, or our people wouldn't have shown so much haste to get away."

As a matter of fact I was not in the mood for ex-

cavating our underground dwelling, because of the excitement which had taken possession of me. So much depended on the result of this battle, from my point of view! Who could say that the Federal army would not be victorious, and I find myself once more inside our own lines, arrived there by no act of mine which could be construed as breaking the parole?

I felt positive our army would win, and the only question was whether, in pressing their advantage, they might be able to come as far as Grand Gulf?

"I'm right sorry for you, Dick," Bob said after we had remained ten minutes or more with our faces turned in the direction where the troops had disappeared, and I asked in surprise:

"Sorry for what?"

"Because the Yankees will be driven so far away that your chances of joining them for a long, long while, even though General Bowen should give you permission, will be small."

"I'm thinking that General Grant will send you Johnnies flyin' back in great shape, an' then I'll be the one who is among his friends."

"We won't quarrel about it, Dick, no matter how the thing turns. Of course it's natural you should hope for one ending to the matter, and I for the other; but I guess we'd better not talk about it. I don't want to work on the cave when there's a chance

of getting news from the front. Let's stay here lounging around."

And news we did get in plenty, although how much of it could be depended on as the truth, formed for us a most perplexing question.

Shortly after General Bowen's force had left the town we heard from two men, who came up the river in a boat, that the Federal force numbered not less than sixty thousand, and would probably sweep everything before it.

Then, while I exulted and Bob sorrowed, an old negro came in, who said he had heard on good authority that only two or three thousand men were advancing on Port Gibson, and the Confederate leaders were certain of gobbling them up without difficulty.

And so it went on until sunset, each report purporting to be authentic, and varying in the most ridiculous manner from the one previously received, until we at Grand Gulf could form no definite opinion as to the number of Yankees that threatened Port Gibson.

From this last named place Grand Gulf is situated in a direct line not more than six miles to the northward, and therefore when, at about eight o'clock in the evening, we heard the booming of heavy guns, it was believed the engagement had begun, or that the artillery was skirmishing for position nearabout the threatened point.

The wind, coming from the south, brought to our ears quite distinctly the booming of the heavier pieces of ordinance, and those officers left behind in command of the batteries, with whom we talked—for we went to and fro from Bald Head to the lower bluff almost continuously on the lookout for news—were quite positive the firing could not be nearer than Port Gibson.

Then the rumble as of distant thunder died away entirely, and we speculated as to whether the battle had come to an end, or if the firing had only betokened the moving into position of the two armies.

We heard nothing more until three o'clock in the morning, when from far away to the southward came the report of a gun, followed by another, and then another and another, until it seemed as if an artillery duel must be in progress, and I said to Bob, referring to some of the rumors we had heard:

“Your Johnnies are not finding it as easy to beat the Yankees as they had reckoned,” and he replied with a laugh:

“I allow there were more Yankees around than some of our people would have had us believe.”

Then we sat down on the bluff, having been moving to and fro all night, and waited in suspense some definite knowledge of what might be going on.

Half an hour later silence reigned once more, not to be broken until the day had dawned, and thus we knew beyond peradventure that a heavy battle was on.

I think that in less than ten minutes every man, woman and child in Grand Gulf had gathered on the bluff, hoping for some word from the front; but knowing full well that none was likely to be sent until the action was well-nigh at an end.

Neither Bob nor I had thought of breaking our fast. Each of us had too much at stake to give heed to other than what might be happening a few miles away, and during the entire forenoon, while the roar of cannon could be heard almost continuously, we stood in a fever of suspense, straining our eyes down the river, or across the country, in the hope of seeing some one who would bring us the information we so earnestly desired.

There was no question in the minds of any but that the battle was being fought at Port Gibson; but about noon, when we had begun to despair of hearing any news whatsoever, a boat manned by two negroes came at a snail's pace up the river, and an hundred or more of us ran quickly down the incline to the water's edge to meet her.

An old darkey, with another who might have been his son, went on board the skiff, and the younger man seemed to be an unusually intelligent fellow. He declared that they had pulled the skiff up from Bruensburg, having left there about nine o'clock in the morning, and at that hour definite information had come to our troops who were left behind to guard the supplies, that the Federal force had met

the Confederates at Thompson's Plantation, which was situated about five miles directly west of Port Gibson.

He declared that no little fighting had been done during the night; but it was in the nature of skirmishes between the outposts of each army as the men moved into position. Then, after daybreak the battle was begun, a stiff one, according to his account, with eight or ten thousand Confederates opposing a Federal force of nearly twice that strength.

It was not cheering news to either Bob or I; it told him that his friends were outnumbered nearly two to one, and me, that either our force had been greatly overestimated, or had little heart for fighting, else it would seem the battle could not have been prolonged since daylight.

As may be supposed, we discussed this latest, and, apparently, most reliable information, in all its bearings, for we had nothing else to do, and it was a positive relief to speculate upon the situation.

The hours dragged on, each one seeming longer than the other, and all the while the roar of cannon could be heard, now faintly, and again more distinctly as the wind varied.

The afternoon was about half spent when I fancied that the sounds of conflict were decreasing, and twenty minutes later there could no longer be any question but that the battle was nearly at an end.

Now our excitement was at fever height, for

surely some word must come to us very soon, and I walked to and fro swiftly, unable otherwise to control my emotions.

An outcry from a throng a short distance away caused me to look up quickly, and I saw a horseman approaching along the Port Gibson road at full speed. A moment later it was possible to make out that he wore a uniform, and involuntarily I raised my voice in unison with those about me, in very joy because we were at last to learn what had been done.

Before he had come within hailing distance I saw another, and another, until it was as if an entire company, half enveloped in a cloud of dust, was riding in hot haste toward Grand Gulf.

With a quick intaking of the breath I mentally braced myself for what I believed was good news—good news to a Yankee like me.

If the Confederates had won the battle why should they be returning in such hot haste?

The fact that there had been no cavalry in Grand Gulf, and that those who approached were horsemen, told that they were also officers, since no others would have been mounted, and in event of a victory surely the commanders would have remained with their troops!

Those around me had evidently the same thoughts, for the cheering ceased suddenly, and there was an expression of sorrow and anxiety on the faces of all

when the foremost rider dismounted in front of headquarters, while we who pressed more closely heard him say to the sentinel:

“The Yankees outnumbered us two to one, and our troops are retreating on this town.”

It was as if my heart leaped upward with joy, and yet I strove manfully to repress any outward sign of joy, because I knew full well how much of sorrow must be in Bob's heart.

Twenty minutes later there was little reason to ask any questions regarding the result of that engagement which has been known as the “Battle of Port Gibson,” but which was really fought at Thompson's Plantation, for by that time the shattered army was pressing close on the town; here a company of men marching in orderly retreat, and there a score of “coffee-boilers” rushing pell-mell as if their precious bodies were of more value than anything else.

Then came the ambulances, and one did not need to inquire concerning their ghastly burdens, for all knew only too well that they must be freighted to the full with suffering humanity.

After them that portion of the army which had stood shoulder to shoulder like men, battling so long as it was of any avail, and then falling back like soldiers, whereupon I, whose sympathies were all with the men in blue, could not but feel a thrill of pride that these boys in gray who had been beaten

could make their retreat in orderly array, for were they not countrymen of mine?

It was not until a full half of the army which had gone out so boldly and proudly the day before, had arrived at their respective camps, and the regimental commanders were assembling at headquarters, with the mob of jaded horses tethered outside awaiting the coming of their riders, that Bob spoke, and then it was to say that which was already apparent:

“We’ve lost the battle!”

“Yes, lad,” I replied, flinging my arm around his neck, “your side has been whipped. It is reasonable to suppose my people will follow up their advantage by pursuing, therefore we may soon be within the Federal lines once more, when whatsoever I may, I will do, to repay the favors received at the hands of you and your friends!”

CHAPTER IX.

RELEASED FROM PAROLE.

I WOULD like to set down here, because it forms a portion of the Vicksburg campaign, General Grant's account of the battle of Port Gibson, as printed in the Century Company's "Battles and Leaders," and it is well that it be read with considerable care in order that we may better follow the movements of the Army of the Tennessee in subsequent actions.

"McClernand's advance met the enemy about five miles south of Port Gibson, at Thompson's Plantation. There was some firing during the night, but nothing rising to the dignity of a battle until daylight. The enemy had taken a strong natural position with most of the Grand Gulf garrison, numbering about seven or eight thousand men, under General Bowen.

"His hope was to hold me in check until reinforcements under Loring could reach him from Vicksburg; but Loring did not come in time to render much assistance south of Port Gibson.

"Two brigades of McPherson's corps followed McClernand as fast as rations and ammunition could be issued, and were ready to take position upon

the battle-field whenever the Thirteenth Corps could be got out of the way.

“Near the point selected by Bowen to defend, the road to Port Gibson divides, taking two ridges, which do not diverge more than a mile or two at the widest point. These roads unite just outside of the town. This made it necessary for McClernand to divide his force.

“It was not only divided, but it was separated by a deep ravine of the character above described. One flank could not reinforce the other except by marching back to the junction of the roads. McClernand put the divisions of Hovey, Carr and A. J. Smith upon the right-hand branch, and Osterhaus on the left.

“I was on the field by 10 A. M., and inspected both flanks in person. On the right the enemy, if not being pressed back, was at least not repulsing our advance. On the left, however, Osterhaus was not faring so well. He had been repulsed with some loss.

“As soon as the road could be cleared of McClernand's troops I ordered up McPherson, who was close upon the rear of the Thirteenth Corps with two brigades of Logan's division. This was about noon. I ordered him to send one brigade to support Osterhaus, and to move to the left and flank the enemy out of his position.

“This movement carried the brigade over a deep

ravine to a third ridge, and when Smith's troops were seen well through the ravine Osterhaus was directed to renew his front attack. It was successful and unattended by heavy loss. The enemy was sent in full retreat on their right, and their left followed before sunset."

It was not until a late hour in the night when we in Grand Gulf learned anything definite regarding the probabilities of the future; all that the private soldiers could tell us was that General Bowen had been whipped right handsomely, because of being greatly outnumbered, so they put it.

One and all appeared to be of the opinion that there would either be a battle very soon at Grand Gulf, or an evacuation of the town by the Confederate force.

Bob and I hovered around headquarters all night, my comrade hoping he could see some one who would be able to give us information concerning the probable movements of the troops.

It was not until an hour after sunrise that we were so fortunate as to meet Colonel Vallette, looking worn to the verge of exhaustion, as a man might who had been in battle for twenty-four hours, and in attendance upon his chief twelve hours longer.

"I am sorry, Colonel Vallette," Bob said as the officer halted when we were come up with him. "I am sorry to trouble you when you must be exceedingly busy; but the fact is that Dick and I are eager

to get some hint as to what may be done. As you know, we are under parole, and not quite certain how we ought to proceed in case the general makes a change of base."

"As he will do, my lad, within a very few hours," the colonel replied sadly. "It has been decided to evacuate Grand Gulf, and before noon our troops will be en route for Vicksburg."

"Then you believe the Yankees count on taking possession of this town, sir?"

"Undoubtedly. That was the reason for the battle yesterday. General Grant probably reckons on making Grand Gulf his base of supplies, and his force is advancing with all speed."

I could have hugged the man, so great was my joy at learning this, for it told me that soon I would be among my friends once more, and for the moment I entirely lost sight of my comrade's position.

"But I'm under parole to remain in Grand Gulf!" Bob cried excitedly.

"That need not trouble you, my lad; the general will unquestionably expect you to follow him."

"And me?" I cried. "Am I to go with your army, sir?"

"I am of the opinion that General Bowen will allow you to remain, releasing both of you from parole. It is no longer possible for you to give any information which may work to our disadvantage, and no good could come of holding you prisoner."

“Will it be necessary for us to speak with General Bowen, sir?” Bob asked, and the colonel replied:

“I will tell him before we leave that I have given one of you permission to stay here, and the other to go with us. In case he makes any objection to the plan, I will inform you in due season, therefore, unless word be sent from me, you two lads will soon be at liberty to rejoin your friends.”

It was most welcome permission, as may be supposed, and yet at the same time there was a certain sorrow in my heart because I was to part from the lad who had shown himself such a true friend. Although I would not have changed the situation in the slightest, my heart was troubled.

I fancied there was in Bob's mind much the same thought as in mine. It was only reasonable to suppose he rejoiced at the prospect of returning to Vicksburg, although there he might be called upon to account for what he had done in behalf of the Yankee prisoners.

And thus it was that both of us rejoiced and sorrowed at the same moment.

After parting with Colonel Vallette we remained just outside headquarters, not knowing what to do or where to go, and had stood there undecided ten minutes or more in silence, when Bob said:

“It will be like parting with a very old friend,

Dick, to leave you, and I'm wondering whether we shall ever come together again?"

I, trying to appear light-hearted, although I did not feel so, replied in what I intended should be a jovial tone:

"If General Grant sets himself about the capture of Vicksburg, giving no heed to anything else, an' the 46th remains in the Army of the Tennessee, we're likely to be near neighbors, Bob, even if we don't see each other."

"Yes," he replied with the semblance of a smile; "but you'll be beaten off so quickly that it'll seem as if you had no sooner arrived than a retreat will be ordered."

"I don't want to crow over you, Bob; but if you stay in Vicksburg many days you'll see us march in much as General Grant is now coming to Grand Gulf."

"I'll stay there," Bob said laughingly; "but we'll both of us be gray-headed before a Yankee comes in, until after peace has been proclaimed."

Then he suddenly realized, as did I, that it was not wise to spend the last few hours we had together in talking of the differences which were supposed to be between us, because of the color of our uniforms. Once more we fell silent, until I remembered that since the previous morning we had had nothing to eat, and of a verity the time had come when some attention should be paid to our stomachs.

“We’ll go out foraging, you and I, for the last time,” Bob said cheerily, “and a right good breakfast we’ll have if there are any provisions to be found in Grand Gulf.”

As he said, so we did, and the food was the best that could be procured with that two-dollar greenback of mine, for I spent it very willingly in order to make of our last meal a proper feast.

By the time we had eaten it the Confederate army was in motion; the first of the troops had left Grand Gulf, and the work of destroying such munitions of war as could not be carried away had begun.

I had expected that the Confederates would lay waste the entire town; but whether because it was believed the Federal army was very near, or because General Bowen did not consider it worth the labor, I cannot say. At all events, none of the buildings were fired, and in the fortifications but little mischief was wrought, save as I have said.

Such baggage trains as were at General Bowen’s disposal were loaded with supplies, each team pulling out as soon as its freight was received, and thus it was seemingly an endless line which stretched out from the town along the road leading to Willow Springs, it being necessary the retreating army travel some distance in that direction before coming upon the highway which led to the bridge across the Big Black river.

During all the remainder of this day troops, ar-

tillery or baggage trains were leaving, and yet General Bowen remained with his staff.

We lads had received no word from Colonel Vallette, therefore knew that, unless he had forgotten to mention the subject to the commander, we were released from our paroles.

And now Bob began to wonder whether he would be forced to march the entire distance, or if it might be possible to get some means of transportation.

It was while he was discussing this matter, questioning if it would be possible to get a horse from any of the civilians, that he came upon a surgeon of one of the Mississippi regiments, who was an acquaintance of his and a friend of his father's.

Then the matter was settled in a twinkling; the surgeon owned a spare horse which he would be pleased to have Bob ride in order that he might make sure of getting the animal safely into Vicksburg, and thus we two who had deferred saying the parting words, believing there was plenty of time at our disposal, found ourselves separated very suddenly.

The surgeon insisted that Bob should ride with him, and in less than five minutes from the time the arrangements had been made, the dear lad leaped into the saddle, saying as he leaned over to clasp me by the hand for what might be the last time on this earth:

"We won't make it 'good-bye,' Dick, for if the 46th sees any fighting you may be brought into

Vicksburg a wounded prisoner, and then I'll take you in charge once more,"

It was impossible for me to make any reply; the tears were very near my eyelids, and I was not ashamed of the fact.

I pressed his hand in adieu, and watched as he rode away; saw him turn back once and wave his hat to me, and then the huge cloud of dust raised by the retreating army shut him out from view.

Now I was alone in Grand Gulf, surrounded by enemies, and knowing full well that none of the people had at the best of times any great love for a Yankee, while now that a reverse had come they must be bitter indeed against all from the North.

The Federal troops had not yet come in sight; might not appear for many hours, and I believed it wiser for me to keep out of sight as much as possible in order to avoid any unpleasantness.

Therefore it was that I went over to the excavation which Bob and I had proposed should be our very comfortable home, and lying down in what was as yet no more than a hole in the ground, fell asleep.

When I awakened another day had come, and as I rose from my hard bed, wondering how much longer I must wait for the coming of the Federal army, I saw, floating from the flagstaff of Bald Head, the Stars and Stripes.

I had often read of my countrymen in some foreign country who, having long been deprived of a

sight of the flag, suddenly came upon it, and believed that the rapture which they claimed was theirs at moment, to be greatly exaggerated; but from that hour I could fully understand the emotions of joy and relief which come with a glimpse of the "red, and the white, and the blue."

The Federal army had taken possession of the town while I slept. I had laid down surrounded by enemies, and awakened encompassed by my friends.

Just for the moment I forgot Bob, and the tie of friendship that had bound us two together, and was conscious only of a sense of exultation, for I was with my own once more.

It must not be supposed that I stood near the excavation in the hillside a very long while after understanding that our troops held possession of Grand Gulf.

Immediately that happy fact was made plain I set out on a tour of the encampment, searching for the 46th, and had hardly more than begun the quest when I came full upon Uncle Rube, who, seated upon a half-demolished baggage-wagon, was holding forth to the members of that same "detachment" who had come with him out of the prison in Vicksburg.

As I came up softly the old man was saying with many odd gesticulations:

"I tell you what it is, lads, all this 'ere thing is wrong. We oughter taken a place like this by water,

leavin' the navy to do the work, while we came ashore like gentlemen. It would have been as easy as turnin' your hand, if we could have got the report from poor little Dicky boy, which I'm certain he'd made if the Lord an' the Johnnies had spared his life. That boy was no slouch, let me tell you, an'——”

At that moment Uncle Rube caught a glimpse of me as I stood hardly more than twelve paces distance, and, throwing up both hands wildly, he gave vent to a cry that sounded very much like fear, as he toppled over backward.

The “detachment,” instead of looking around to see the cause of his alarm, rushed forward to aid him, and I followed close at their heels until I stood directly over the old man, looking down into his face.

“Is it you, Dicky boy, really you? Or have I lost my senses since the battle?” the old man cried, raising his hands toward me imploringly, and then, without waiting for a reply, he leaped to his feet, hugging me with much the same rough tenderness that might have been displayed by a bear.

What a hearty, even though painful, greeting I received from the old man and his “detachment”! I was bruised and sore a full twenty-four hours after it, and it seemed to me as if they would never come to an end of passing me from one to another, making as much ado as if I had come from out the very

shadow of death, as in truth I had, although they did not know it then.

It follows as a matter of course that I was forced to tell my story with all the details before Uncle Rube would allow me to leave him for a single instant, and then he in turn described his feelings and his fears when I failed to come back from the scout in due season.

“We allowed you’d fallen in with them as shot you, Dicky boy, for it seemed to me we’d got some word if you’d been taken prisoner, although how it could ’a been sent I never stopped to figger. The major, he blamed himself sorely because of havin’ persuaded you into goin’, an’ I believe he’d have worked it ’round some way to send a flag of truce into this ’ere town, if it hadn’t been that General Grant made up his mind to push along hereabouts as quick as he could.”

This mention of Major Hartley reminded me that it was necessary I make some kind of a report, and after agreeing to meet Uncle Rube near Bald Head, that he might show me where the 46th was encamped, I set out in search of the officer who had been so kind to both Bob and me.

It was half an hour or more before I succeeded in finding him, and I truly believe the man was glad because I had come through my troubles in safety.

He shook me warmly by the hand, insisting upon knowing whether I was in need of anything, before

he would listen to that which I had to tell, and after my story was finished, he said feelingly:

“It never came into my mind, lad, that you might have been placed in so much danger. I believed it was nothing more than an ordinary scout across a portion of the country where you would not fall in with the enemy, and where, from a safe distance, you could gain the desired information. I am sorry I took such a part in the matter as I did, and yet it seems that your Confederate friend was benefited thereby, even though at the expense of considerable mental suffering.”

Then he went on to say many things which I need not set down here, lest I be accused of trying to sound my own praises, and concluded by making certain promises as to the future, if it should ever be in his power to put me in the way of advancement.

After that I returned to the rendezvous, and from there was escorted by Uncle Rube and his “detachment,” with considerable ceremony, to the encampment allotted to the 46th.

If every man in the regiment had been my warm personal friend I could not have received a more hearty welcome. Mine was a home-coming indeed, and I was forced to argue many a time with myself lest I be so puffed up with pride as to forget I held no higher rank than that of drummer-boy in Company G.

When we sat around the camp-fire that evening,

toasting our bacon, I spoke to Uncle Rube of Bob, and questioned whether I would ever see the dear lad again, whereupon he said confidently, as if he was one who could read the future:

“See him? Of course you will, Dicky boy. I don’t reckon a lad like him will do much of the heavy fightin’ when we capture Vicksburg, an’ you’ll have a chance to call on the major in his behalf after we’ve taken the whole boilin’ of ’em prisoners.”

“Bob believes we will never be able to capture the city,” I replied.

“Wa’al, I reckon he’d have said the same thing ’bout this ’ere town two days ago, an’ yet we got in here mighty slick, although I must say we had the stiffest kind of a row down near Port Gibson.”

“Were you in the thick of it, Uncle Rube?”

“In the thick of it, Dicky boy? I was where there were forty-nine bullets to every inch of air, fallin’ so close together that it looked like a solid lump of lead was comin’ right down on me. Talk ’bout fightin’! You should have seen me show them Johnnies what a man from Malden can do. I wouldn’t undertake to say how many of them I killed outright, an’ my heart reg’larly bleeds when I think of the arms an’ legs I cut off that day! I’d have come right through to Grand Gulf all alone if the boys hadn’t held me back, fearin’ as how the general would get jealous if I did the heft of the work.”

There was an expression of truthfulness on the old man's face as he told me this yarn, and never one of the "detachment" so much as smiled. I afterward came to know that these four men had agreed to stand by whatsoever wild and improbable story one of their number might tell.

Uncle Rube would have gone into further details of his share in the battle of Port Gibson, but I begged him to refrain until a more convenient season. I was not in the mood for hearing such blood-curdling stories, as he seemed disposed to tell, for just then my thoughts were more with Bob on his long ride to Vicksburg, than with those near at hand. I promised myself, however, that on some later day I would let the old man have full swing in relating the part he took in that engagement.

Six idle days I spent in Grand Gulf with the 46th.

I say "idle days," although that was not exactly the truth, for during almost every hour there was some duty or another to be performed; but after my adventures in company with Bob, it seemed as if the entire time was at my own disposal, because of the fact that we remained in one place.

During the last twenty-four hours of this time the gossip-mongers of the camp began to circulate the report that we were soon to make a break for some important point east of Vicksburg, where in all likelihood a battle would be fought, and General Grant

was reported as having said that he intended to "cut loose from his base, destroy the Confederate force in the rear of Vicksburg, and invest or capture the city."

It was evident even to my inexperienced eyes, that some important move was contemplated, for supplies were being brought in, wagon trains were being made ready, and orderlies were riding to and fro swiftly with commands from headquarters.

One division after another arrived in Grand Gulf only to be sent in this direction or that, east, north or south, until those who claimed to be the best informed among the privates were wholly at a loss to know in which direction the commander intended first to move.

Then came the word for the 46th to draw three days' rations, and when this had been done we were lined up in marching order, I with my drum at the head of Company G, hoping we would go in the direction of Vicksburg, where, even though we remained at a distance, I might get some news of Bob.

Shortly after daybreak the command to march was given, and until nightfall, with now and then a brief halt, we plodded onward, arriving finally at Rocky Springs, ten miles from Hankinson's Ferry.

When we bivouacked that night word was passed from one newsgatherer to another that we were bound for Jackson, and my heart sank within me for, because of what I had learned from Bob, I knew

that city was many a weary day's march from Vicksburg.

“ I'm allowin' General Grant ain't a man overly prone to tellin' of what's in his mind,” Uncle Rube said that night when I, with the remainder of his “ detachment ” had gathered around him. “ If he's given out that we're goin' to Jackson it's somethin' more'n he's ever done before, for he don't generally explain his plans; but wherever it is we'll see hot work, or I'm no prophet, for he's a fighter from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet—a reg'lar glutton at it! ”

CHAPTER X.

UNCLE RUBE'S RUSE.

IT was the night of May 8th when we bivouacked at Rocky Springs, and on the morning of the 9th we resumed the march, still with our faces to the eastward as if bent on a retreat not only from Grand Gulf, but Vicksburg as well.

Uncle Rube was in a fine state of perplexity when our army swung to the left at the fork of the roads, instead of continuing on to the right, which, as we had been told, was the most direct road to Jackson.

“I'd like to have jest a word with General Grant about this time,” he said as I, with drum swung over my back, was marching by his side. “I'm be-ginnin' to misdoubt whether he hasn't made a mistake.”

“Why do you think he may have done so, Uncle Rube?” I asked, smiling inwardly as I thought what might be the result, if he proposed to the commander, that the division was not being moved properly.

“Because we've all allowed that this 'ere army was bound for Jackson, an' by bearin' off to the left it looks as if we might be huntin' around for Big Black river. I tell you, lad, the general's made a

mistake, or else we are moonin' 'round here all at sea."

"Don't you think he could be trusted to attend to this portion of the business?" I asked, not venturing to suggest that the old man himself might be making a mistake by thus questioning the movement.

"If he was a Maine man it would be different. I ain't sayin' but what he knows his business up to a certain point, an' what I'm wonderin' is whether just about this time he hasn't come to that point."

Then the other members of the "detachment" joined in, and straightway arose such a discussion as to what might have been done, that one would have been justified in believing that these four men, if given command, could speedily settle the fate of Vicksburg.

We had the road to ourselves, which was more than could have been said the previous day, for then we were forced to give way now and again to the artillery trains, or make wide detours to avoid a long line of baggage wagons which had been sent ahead of us.

It was neither difficult nor wearisome, this marching over an unobstructed road, and the 46th swung along amid the clouds of dust as if the one thing each member had been aching for was an opportunity to stretch his legs.

Then some one got the information, I know not how, that a portion of our force had taken that road

leading to the right, thus branching off from us, and the fact that the army was seemingly split into two portions, caused the tongues of Uncle Rube and his companions to wag yet more furiously.

Much to the astonishment of all, we found one of the wagon-trains awaiting us at Big Sandy creek, and an order was given to halt and make camp, although we had the greater portion of the day yet before us.

This was another surprise for our wise soldiers, and I believe that nothing less than a positive command for them to set about camp duties, would have put an end to the wrangle.

However poor a soldier Uncle Rube may have been, he excelled in looking after his personal comforts, and we whom he considered as being under his immediate command benefited greatly thereby.

He was one of the first to get a shelter-tent, and had drawn the rations for his "detachment" before the quartermaster had really begun issuing them.

Then, all the camp duties devolving upon us five having been performed, we settled down to a day of rest, so far as legs were concerned; but the tongues of Uncle Rube and his cronies were considerably tasked before nightfall.

The day was cloudy, with now and then little spiteful showers of rain, which gave a more inviting appearance to the tents, and caused to seem right cheery the camp-fire which had been built for the purpose of cooking our evening meal.

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Among other alleged qualities, Uncle Rube claimed to be a skilful cook, although I was never very much carried away with the results of his culinary labors.

On this day, with plenty of time at his disposal, he proposed, as he said, to "give us such a feast as couldn't be had outside the woods of Maine," and I was not a little curious regarding it, knowing that he had nothing save hardtack and bacon, upon which we had lived so many days, as a basis for the intended banquet.

Where he got a frying-pan mystified me; at all events he suddenly produced one as a juggler does, seemingly from the sleeve of his blouse, and without asking whether it might please the rest of us, he collected all the rations belonging to the party of five.

Then he fried out the grease from the bacon until the pan was nearly half full of liquid fat. Into this he crumbled the hardtack until it was piled up considerably higher than the sides of the dish, and over the glowing fire he stirred the mixture until finally it was browned into the most indigestible mess that ever a soldier inflicted upon his stomach.

"Now that's what I call proper kind of grub for men who are worked down to skin and bones, the same as we've been since we struck this blessed country," Uncle Rube said as he divided the mixture, which sent forth a not unsavory odor.

"It ain't bad," 'Siah Fernald declared, as he made a vigorous attack upon his portion.

At this point it seems proper that I give some little attention to the members of Uncle Rube's "detachment", all of whom, as may well be fancied, were natives of Malden.

First in point of alleged superiority came 'Siah Fernald—his full name may have been Josiah, but I never heard him called by it. He was a tailor at home, and had enlisted only when he became convinced that without his supposedly valuable services the Federal army could never succeed in vanquishing the Confederates.

Then came Job Lord, he who kept the Yankee notion store at home. I'm not certain he entered the army believing that single-handed he could be of any great service in preserving the Union, but it always seemed to me that he came because 'Siah did. In Malden these two always "hunted in couples", as the saying is, and one would have thought that their business interests were identical to have heard them in the post-office of a morning discussing the financial questions of the day, and what bearing a crisis in Wall Street might have upon their individual affairs.

Steve Stubbs, the carriage painter, was the third member of the "detachment", and I always wondered why he had enlisted. Some of the boys at home insisted that he was obliged to put shingles in

his shoes in order to come up to the required height, being a little "sawed-off" fellow, and as thin as he was short. Steve signed the roll because Uncle Rube insisted he should, and claimed that the recruiting officer had much the same as told him his services as painter would be in great demand once he was at the front; that he could earn large sums of money with his brush in addition to his pay of thirteen dollars a month for being shot at by the enemy.

Therefore Steve enlisted with the idea of speedily becoming a rich man; but that he had not succeeded I know full well, because of the fact that he still owed me thirty cents which he borrowed in camp at Bangor, for the purpose of buying tobacco.

When he was at home Uncle Rube called himself farmer, sportsman's guide, hunter, or whatsoever best suited him at the time. He was "a little of everything" as Aunt Nancy Curtis used to say—she was his wife, but folks always called her Curtis because that was her name before she came into the Smart family. Whatever his regular business might have been, certain it was that he gave even more heed to the affairs of every one in Malden than to his own, and was looked upon by some, particularly the other members of the "detachment", as being a man of rare ability, one well calculated to take charge of any such matters as might come to his personal notice.

I have described thus minutely the four who made

up the "detachment" from Company G, with myself as a very humble member, because of the fact that during the Vicksburg campaign, after I rejoined them at Grand Gulf, we were close comrades. It also seems proper that I do so at this especial time because it was the first occasion, to my knowledge, when Uncle Rube's skill as a cook was called into question.

That it should have been Steve Stubbs who first found fault with our leader surprised me somewhat, for the little painter was really very meek, and inclined to accept with thorough good grace any proposition or act of Uncle Rube's.

"I'm thinkin'," he said with his head on one side meditatively, "whether so much fried stuff is good for us people who are marchin' all the time, with a chance of goin' into battle any minute. Seems to me if a man got shot this fat would kind'er stew up in his blood while the weather's so hot, an' of course a wound wouldn't heal so quickly then."

"You needn't be afraid of stoppin' any of the Johnnies' bullets," Uncle Rube cried sharply. "A little runt like you would slip in between 'em, no matter how thick they might be comin'."

Steve was sensitive on this point, and the remark might have led to serious difficulties between the friends, if 'Siah Fernald had not changed the subject abruptly by saying:

"I've always ate fat, an' always shall. What I

say is, that when a man can't get meat, the next thing is really fillin' stuff like this. It's the question of where we are goin' that bothers me. I'm a good deal like Rube, an' want to know about this 'ere dividin' up of the army into two pieces. It ain't safe, because nobody knows when we'll run into the thick of them 'ere Confederates."

"I ain't given to findin' fault with what other folks may do," Uncle Rube said gravely. "As a rule I say, let every man mind his own business; but now it strikes me the time has come when we ought'er have an understanding with the general. If he don't know where he is pointin' for, we'd better hold on right where we are till somebody can find out. You'll all allow that there ain't a better hand at trackin' moose or deer than I am; why, I followed a bull moose down the Middle branch eight days——"

"Now, look here, Rube, the Middle branch don't run more'n twelve miles, an' you must have been hoofin' it mighty slow," 'Siah Fernald interrupted, and Job Lord cried impatiently:

"Never mind about the moose; let's settle this 'ere business 'bout where we're goin'. I've heard that moose story more'n twenty times; when it was first started Rube chased the critter less'n six miles before he missed him. Now if we're lost in this 'ere swelterin' country, let's own it right up, like men."

"Lost!" Uncle Rube echoed. "How can you

be lost when you're with me? If General Grant will step aside two or three days, I'll bring you 'round all right."

Then the old man, forgetting for the moment the fried crumbs of hardtack, set about tracing in the soft earth certain lines which to him represented roads, as if he could make a map of the entire state, although never having been in it before. At different points he drew circles, which were intended to represent supposed Confederate detachments, and then set about explaining how we might gobble up each in turn, after which, having cleared the country of the enemy, take possession of all the important cities.

The plan of Uncle Rube's attack was not more than half explained when I went into the shelter-tent to lie down.

Before night it was told by those members of the army who acted as newsgatherers and reporters, that while there was no large body of the enemy in our front, the ravines were literally alive with Confederates who were carrying on a guerrilla warfare, probably for the purpose of retarding our movements until a force of some size could be brought up to oppose the march.

We had good proof that these statements were true early in the evening, when no less than three men were killed by the unseen foe who lurked along the ravine.

In order that it may be understood how much annoyance can be worked by a small body of men, I will set down here what General Grant wrote regarding this same march of ours, and the country in which we then were.

“The country in this part of Mississippi stands on edge, as it were, the roads running along the ridges except when they occasionally pass from one ridge to another. Where there are no clearings the sides of the hills are covered with a very heavy growth of timber, and with undergrowth and the ravines are filled with vines and canebrakes almost impenetrable. This makes it easy for an inferior force to delay, if not to defeat, a far superior one.”

We of the 46th did not suffer from the guerrilla warfare until near about nightfall, when the campfires were kindled for the purpose of cooking supper, and then Uncle Rube's “detachment” seemed to have been singled out for punishment.

We were enjoying a cup of coffee, and Uncle Rube was pouring out each man's portion, with an injunction that he “go light on it because of its strength,” when a bullet from the ravine below whistled past within an inch of his nose.

Brave though the old man claimed to be, he leaped backward not less than six feet, dropping the hot coffee on Steve Stubb's foot, much to that gentleman's discomfiture.

Steve seemed to think it necessary he take his turn

at jumping, and began hobbling around the fire nursing the injured member of his small body, when "zip," came another Confederate messenger, and the little painter tumbled backward so suddenly that we all made certain he had been shot.

To our great relief, however, we learned that he had sustained no injury, but had, as he said, "laid down to get out of the way of permiscuous lead."

Five minutes later, while those of us who had not been served with coffee prior to Uncle Rube's fright were bemoaning our loss, another bullet came into our midst, this time striking the fire, and scattering embers in every direction.

"By Jeems Rice, this thing has got to be stopped, or else somebody will be hurt," Uncle Rube said, as if it was only a question of pressing the button in order to dislodge the Confederate sharpshooters. "I can stand a good deal of one thing an' another, but when they come too often I'm apt to git riled."

"What're you goin' to do about it, Reuben?" 'Siah Fernald asked, and I laughed in anticipation of Uncle Rube's inability to answer the question with anything like a reasonable proposition, when he said quickly:

"I'll git that pesky Johnnie, see if I don't! Now where'bouts was I standin' when the bullet grazed the skin of my nose?"

The "detachment" set about locating the exact spot as nearly as possible, which work could be done

with no slight degree of accuracy since the overturned coffee-pot remained where it had fallen from the old man's hand. After being convinced that he had hit upon very nearly the right place, Uncle Rube stuck the ramrod of his gun into the ground, and, stepping backward a few paces, sighted over the top in about the direction from which the missile had come.

Directly in his line of vision as he stood there was a huge oak, the branches festooned heavily with the gray moss which gives so sombre a tone to the southern forests, and Uncle Rube said in the tone of one who is stating a fact which cannot be disputed:

“Our Johnnie is in that tree somewhere.”

“Run down an' shake him out,” Job Lord suggested.

“There's two reasons why that wouldn't be good policy,” Uncle Rube said in an argumentative tone. “First an' foremost, he might bore a hole through me while I was goin', an' secondly an' lastly, after he had emptied his gun he could drop down on the other side, in the tangle of vines, an' the best hound-pup Moses Dill's got never could find him.”

“Are you goin' to let him stay there an' shoot at us as much as he wants to?” 'Siah Fernald asked irritably.

“I allow he'll stay there quite a spell; but he won't do a great deal of shootin' after I'm through

with him. Keep right on about your eatin', an' I'll git to work, for it stands to reason we've got to take some measures for protection."

Nearby our tent was a pile of rails, lately split, and these, taking care to keep his body well screened from view, Uncle Rube stacked up at one side of our fire, in such a manner that we had a rude kind of shelter about four feet in height.

"Now boys, load your muskets, crawl up under these 'ere rails, an' draw bead on that oak tree. The fellow's bound to fire again pretty quick, an' when he does you're to try an' pot him. I'm goin' to stick my cap up over the top, like I was one of these 'ere dumb recruits what has got to see everythin' that's goin' on, an' I reckon he'll let drive when it shows. Keep your eyes peeled."

While his body was concealed from the view of the sharpshooter, Uncle Rube raised his cap on the end of a stick until it showed just above the top of the rails as if there was under it a human being striving to look down into the ravine.

In a twinkling a puff of white smoke came from amid the branches of the oak tree, and at that moment all of us who were watching for a token of the sharpshooter's whereabouts, fired:

There was a commotion among the branches; a dark form fell, striking here and there upon the lower limbs, and then amid the fast gathering shadows we could dimly make out the figure of a

man limping hurriedly away to gain a more safe retreat.

“Wa’al, I must say I’m more’n a leetle ashamed of you fellers! Four bullets to one medium sized Johnnie, an’ the best you could do was to cripple him.”

“We brought him down off his perch,” Steve Stubbs squeaked triumphantly, as he nursed his aching foot, “an’ that’s enough for us. I don’t know as I’m hankerin’ after any man’s blood—that is, not sich a terrible sight of it as you seem to want.”

“What do you reckon you are paid thirteen dollars a month an’ rations for, if it ain’t to kill Johnnies?” Uncle Rube asked angrily, and the little man replied curtly:

“I’ll kill jest as many as I please when it comes to a battle; but this ’ere pickin’ a man out of a tree in the dark, when you’ve got to dream about it all night, don’t come into my contract.”

“I’m afraid, Stephen, if this country’s to be saved you haven’t got backbone enough to do it—all by yourself, that is. Now take hold there, an’ let’s git these rails up into some kind of shape so’s the next Johnnie as comes snoopin’ around won’t get at us quite as easy as t’other feller did.”

All of us obeyed very promptly, and as for myself, I must say that I had a higher idea of Uncle Rube’s warlike abilities than ever before, for simple as the

ruse had been, it was effective, and I venture to say none of us could have devised it.

We were not troubled with the sharpshooters again that night; but other commands suffered, and in the morning there were six men under the surgeon's care.

We who held ourselves in Uncle Rube's immediate command were astir when the first gray light of coming dawn appeared in the eastern sky, making ready a hurried breakfast, for there was no question in our minds but that the march would be resumed at a very early hour.

Therefore it was that all of us were very much surprised and perplexed when, as the day wore on, no command to break camp was given.

"I reckon the general's goin' to hang on here till he can find out where we are at," 'Siah Fernald suggested, and that Uncle Rube was seriously disturbed in mind I understood full well when he failed to make any reply.

We five comrades were not the only ones in camp that day who felt uneasy because of the delay. Nearly every one—among the privates, I mean—speculated as to the reason why we were making such a long halt, and no one, unless it was 'Siah Fernald, had a decided opinion to offer.

Then we made certain the march would be resumed next morning; but when another day had come we still remained in camp, watching a full division as it swung past us, and wondering mean-

while if we had stopped there simply that the others might pass.

“ I wouldn’t be surprised if the general’d forgotten all about this part of the army,” Steve Stubbs squeaked. “ Jest as likely as not some of them clerks have lost part of their papers, an’ we’re wiped right off the whole record, bein’ likely to stay here till we starve.”

“ I’ll give ’em another twenty-four hours, an’ if there ain’t a change by that time I’ll see what’s up myself,” Uncle Rube said, and this declaration seemed to afford Steve and Job considerable relief of mind; but ’Siah still held to it that we were waiting until the commander learned “ where he was at.”

“ How about the troops that have just gone by? ” Uncle Rube asked. “ Why don’t *they* wait to find out about it? ”

“ I reckon it’s them, not us, as has been forgotten, an’ they’ll get orders to halt jest as soon as he brings ’em to mind.”

That seemingly settled the question as far as our halt was concerned, and during the remainder of the day Uncle Rube’s “ detachment ” mapped out campaigns and fought imaginary battles until had there been twice as many Confederates in the field as really was the case, they would all have been slaughtered.

The morning of May the 11th dawned while the rain was falling heavily, with no evidence of an immediate change in the weather, and as we loitered

over our preparations for breakfast, having come to believe we would remain on the bank of the Big Sandy several days, came the command to "break camp."

Then it was that all of Uncle Rube's ill temper showed itself, and he found fault with every one from the general commanding, down to the driver of the meanest mule team.

"Laid here while the weather was jest actually made for marchin', an' as soon as it begins to rain off we go, paddlin' around in the mud like so many ducks! It's ridiculous the way this war's bein' carried on, an' I for one have made up my mind not to stand it a great while longer. Things have got to change mighty quick, or Abraham Lincoln'll hear from Reuben Smart of Malden, Maine."

Uncle Rube was working even while he grumbled and scolded, and his "detachment" was ready to fall into line quite as soon as the command was given.

I am free to confess that the old man's criticisms on that morning pleased me, for it did seem strange that we should idle away the greater portion of three days, and then start off in most disagreeable weather. To be aroused from sleep and ordered to prepare for a march in the midst of a driving rainstorm, without an opportunity to cook anything for breakfast, was most disheartening.

I munched a dry hardtack while I stood in line with the water trickling down the back of my neck,

knowing full well that before we camped again I should be drenched to the skin and plastered thickly with mud.

There we stood, exposed to the downpour, while the baggage-train was being loaded and sent off, and when finally came the command to move, it was a decided relief.

“I reckon the general has found out where he’s at,” ’Siah Fernald said as he swung down the road which was now covered with two or three inches of mud, and soon to be converted into a veritable mire by the trampling of many feet.

“If he hasn’t, he’d better come back to us an’ find out,” Uncle Rube growled. “What it’ll be before night I don’t know; but I’m as wet now as ever Susan Snow was when she fell into Mill Creek, an’ goodness knows, she was the sloppiest woman I ever saw dragged out on dry land.”

CHAPTER XI.

A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

THERE is nothing I remember in all my experience so disagreeable and uncomfortable as that march, during the pelting rain, from the Big Sandy to Five Mile Creek.

The larger portion of the division was in advance of us, and before we had been on the road half an hour I was wading in the mud nearly to my knees, stumbling here in the ruts made by baggage-trains, and tripping over such useless articles as soldiers let fall in order to lighten their burdens during a wearisome tramp.

Uncle Rube growled and scolded for half an hour, perhaps, and then held his peace during the greater part of the day, explaining his reason for the silence, when I asked, by saying:

“I don't dare open my mouth, Dicky boy, for fear I'll get drowned with so much water all around.”

It was even more uncomfortable when the command halted, now and then, that we might take a brief rest, for our clothes were so saturated with water that to remain motionless for any length of time was absolutely painful.

Toward the close of the march every man plodded on in silence; there was such a sense of discomfort as to make of conversation a burden, and I know for my own part that I strove to put my thoughts very far away, or in other words, to forget the surroundings.

Then came the halt at Five Mile Creek.

The rain was still falling; the ground sodden with water, and no fuel to be had which was not soaked to such a degree that it was almost impossible to kindle a flame.

We passed the baggage-train, mired two miles in the rear of what was to be our camp for the night, consequently, there were no tents, and no rations save such as each man was fortunate enough to have in his haversack; but yet so nearly exhausted were all of us, that we threw ourselves on the muddy ground to get such sleep as might be possible.

And we did sleep despite all these discomforts. I had two hardtacks and a slice of raw bacon for my supper, and ate this while lying at full length between Siah Ferinald and Uncle Rube, fully exposed to the rain, after which my eyes soon closed in slumber.

During the night so many of the supply teams came up that rations were served out; but it was impossible either to make coffee or cook bacon, therefore the breakfast was not a success by any manner of means.

The command to "fall in" was a welcome sound to me. I was chilled to the very bone; my saturated clothing clung to me in a most uncomfortable fashion, and I could think of nothing save sharp exercise which would restore me to my normal condition.

The rain had ceased to fall, the air was clear and bracing, and before half an hour had passed we were in fairly good spirits, looking forward to the noon-day halt, when Uncle Rube had promised to make for us some coffee so strong as he said, that it would "lift us clean off our feet."

And he did. How delicious that hot, muddy, unsweetened liquid tasted, with the fried bacon and roasted hardtack!

It was not yet three o'clock in the afternoon when a portion of the division was halted at Fourteen Mile creek, and two regiments, one of which was the 46th, continued on until we were within two miles of Edward's Station.

The troops had been skirmishing here and there nearly all along the line, but none of it fell to our share. At times we could hear the crackling of musketry in advance, or in the rear, and expected each instant to be drawn up in line of battle, yet never once were we called upon to attack or to defend ourselves.

It seemed that the guerrillas who annoyed us on the Big Sandy, had given place to regular troops, for

now we were meeting the enemy's skirmishers, and there was hardly a man in the 46th who did not believe but that a battle was imminent.

"We are bound to have some hot work mighty soon," Uncle Rube said while we were thoroughly enjoying a well-earned rest around the camp-fire, which served as cook-stove for all our "detachment." "I ain't so well posted on how these people down here in Mississippi fight; but 'cordin' to what I know about sich things, the Johnnies have found out where we are at, even if our general does seem to be a little behindhand in that line. We'll catch it good an' lively before many hours."

"And what will you do, Uncle Rube?" Steve Stubbs squeaked.

"Do, Stephen? I'll work them Johnnies up so they won't know whether they're on foot or a-horseback before long. You've never seen me in what you might call a real fight yet. That little tussle down to Thompson's Plantation don't count for anythin'."

And as Uncle Rube believed, so did all of our people, therefore it was that when we laid down on the bare ground that night with only the stars above us, we had much disagreeable food for thought.

I had enlisted as a drummer-boy, but expected to show myself somewhere near a man in case I was ever under fire, yet at the same time the cold shivers of fear ran down my spine, when I heard my com-

rades talking as if we would soon be in the thick of a battle.

I thought of Bob Yardley, wondering whether he had been called upon to answer for the setting free of Uncle Rube and his "detachment"; if his mind went out to me as mine did to him, and if we should ever meet again.

Then I saw in my mind's eye Malden, and those whom I loved and who loved me, until it was as if my life passed before me, the last of the mental pictures fading into a misty haze, as my eyes closed in slumber, when I dreamed of those familiar and well-known places, until I was aroused by being lifted bodily to my feet.

When I had opened my eyes and gathered my scattered senses, I understood that Uncle Rube held me firmly by the collar of my blouse, and was shaking me as he cried sharply:

"Get into trim for another tramp, lad! There's trouble ahead of us, as I've predicted, an' they've sent for the 46th to put an end to it."

"Where are we going? What's the matter?" I asked stupidly.

"Nobody knows; the order is to fall in. One of Company A's men says as how he heard there's a big battle goin' on at Raymond, an' nothin' but the 46th and the help of God can save the day for our people."

It would have been evident to the most ignorant in such matters, that danger of some kind threat-

ened near at hand, for we were sent forward into the darkness, in what direction I have no idea, on the double quick, and little heed was given to precise formation.

How can I describe that night march in darkness so intense, that it was difficult to see the comrade just in front of you; with the line unconsciously swinging to this side or that, of the narrow road, until the outermost men were in the gutters, or among the foliage?

Before having gone half a mile we suddenly found ourselves fording a stream, with the water waist-deep, and yet we went blindly on, not knowing but that the next step would carry us beyond our depth, and whoever led the advance up the opposite bank of the stream must have been keen-eyed indeed to discover the road.

Just in advance of the 46th was a company of artillery, and after having forded the stream three of their cannon were mired so deeply and so suddenly, that the foremost company literally overran them, before understanding what had happened.

Then it was a case of all hands turning to and pulling the guns out of the mud.

Uncle Rube's "detachment" was engaged in this work, when I saw that two of the horses were nearly submerged in the soft soil, and these we pulled out as best we could, taking the chances of being kicked to death.

Here an ammunition wagon blocked the way, an axle having broken, and the order was given for all hands to lift it out of the road, that it might not impede the progress of those who were behind.

The one idea in the minds of our officers, seemed to be to go ahead with all possible speed, regardless of everything else, and so we did, splashing through the water and mire until we were drenched, even as in the rain when we left Big Sandy.

When we had marched at our best pace nearly an hour, a halt was called to enable the men to regain their breath, and Uncle Rube, ever eager to gain additional information upon every subject, went forward along the line to learn what he could of that which was ahead of us.

He did not come back; but waited in advance until, the march having been resumed, we overtook him, and then he stated as a fact that McPherson's command had fought a battle near Raymond during the afternoon; but whether our troops had been victorious, or forced to retreat, the old man could not say, yet it seemed probable the engagement must still be on, else why were we being sent so rapidly across the country?

“I'm gettin' all mixed up about it!” Uncle Rube said when we asked questions which he was unable to answer. “Some of the fellows in Company A say that from where we bivouacked to this 'ere town of Raymond it ain't but six miles, an' if a battle

is bein' fought now, we ought'er hear the guns, but there isn't so much as the noise of a snappin' cracker to tell that anybody's ahead of us."

"I reckon we'll find out soon enough," Steve Stubbs squeaked. "This 'ere speculatin' as to whether we are goin' into a battle or not, don't please me overly much. I'd rather take it sudden like, same way I do a bath, an' then I don't have to worry about the trouble it is goin' to give me."

Then 'Siah Fernald gave his opinion on the subject, and Job Lord had a word or two to say, but all the while we were advancing toward—I knew not where.

We were come to the second deep ford, when, possibly, our regiment may have lagged a bit, for the officers began spurring us on to renewed exertions.

By this time I was so weary that it really seemed as if I would fall into the stream, hardly having strength enough to brace myself when my feet struck a rolling stone in the river. Yet, under the commands and entreaties of our leaders, I struggled onward, arriving at the opposite bank just as a glare of light flashed out amid the darkness not more than a quarter of a mile ahead, and I heard the crackling of musketry which told that we had suddenly, and apparently by chance, come upon a force of the enemy.

No one of the rank and file, and I question if the officers were not equally ignorant, could say how

large a body of Confederates thus blocked our way; but as soon as might be, we were drawn up in line of battle under what seemed to me a most withering fire.

The 46th was the second regiment in line, and was deployed to the left, thus bringing us into the front rank.

Having gained this position, the word to "fire" was given, and then in the darkness, where we could see nothing more than the flashes of light from the guns of the enemy, we did our best at short range—for it seemed as if we were not more than an hundred yards from the Confederates—to hold our line.

On the instant I forgot entirely my weariness of body; the cold chills of fear ran down my spine, and while sorely afraid lest death should come to me there in the darkness, I praised myself for being able to stand apparently firm.

Had it been day I am afraid my comrades would have seen written upon my face the outward show of that fear which was in my heart.

"Get back to the rear where you belong," Uncle Rube said when, seemingly, for the first time he became aware of my presence at his side. "What right have you, a drummer-boy, in the firing line?"

"My place is with your detachment, an' here I'll stay," I replied in a voice tremulous with fear, and yet I would have been still more afraid to advertise

myself as a coward, by falling back to the place assigned the drummers at such times.

Not having a weapon with which I could fire at random, as those around me were doing, I beat my drum vigorously, hoping by thus keeping my hands occupied to forget the fear which assailed me.

Perhaps half a dozen rounds had been fired by our force, the enemy meanwhile keeping up a continuous discharge of small arms, when the man immediately behind me screamed shrilly, as he pitched forward directly on my back.

“Hold firm, Dicky boy, hold firm!” Uncle Rube cried warningly, pressing closer to my side as if believing the touch of his arm would give me the needed courage. “We must expect something of the kind in a scrimmage like this, an’ yet I’m free to admit it ain’t overly pleasant.”

The desire to know if the poor fellow in the rear had been seriously wounded was so great that, dropping the drum-sticks, I turned quickly around despite Uncle Rube’s warning; but drew back in something akin to horror an instant later, when I discovered that the man was either dead, or so badly wounded as to be entirely unconscious.

His musket had fallen at my feet, and picking this up I set about loading and discharging it with nervous haste, getting a supply of cartridges from Uncle Rube.

How long we fought thus blindly, no one knowing

whether a single regiment or an entire division was in front of us, I cannot say; but it seemed to me as if not more than ten minutes had elapsed, when a comrade at the left of me sank down in the darkness, and I heard 'Siah Fernald cry:

“Steve’s hit!”

Under other circumstances, I would have thought it my duty to go to the aid of any fellow from Malden who might need me; but now the fever of battle had taken possession of my brain, and there remained only the one thought—to do as much execution with the musket of the dead man, as might be possible.

The acrid fumes of gunpowder had literally intoxicated me, and I was no longer a rational being.

Then it was that I, dimly, as from afar off, heard a voice which sounded like Uncle Rube’s, saying:

“I reckon he hasn’t got it very bad; but some one ought to help him to the rear. Take the poor fellow along, Dicky boy, and do the best you can with him.”

I gave no heed to this command until it had been repeated, and I felt myself shaken violently by the shoulder, when my scattered senses seemed to return, and stepping over the body of the dead man immediately behind me, I made my way past Job Lord and 'Siah Fernald until coming to where Steve Stubbs was sitting on the ground nursing his left arm.

“How much are you hurt, Mr. Stubbs?” I asked bending over him, and he squeaked feebly:

“I can't say, Dick; but it seems as if I was shot all to pieces.”

“Did more than one bullet strike you?”

“I don't know.”

“Can't you get on your feet?”

“I'm afraid not.”

“Have a little spunk about you, Steve!” 'Siah Fernald cried sharply. “As near as I can make out, you've got a bullet hole in your arm, an' that's the whole sum and substance of it. Yank him back out of the way, Dick; he oughtn't to be a very heavy load for a lad like you.”

Not knowing how badly Steve might be wounded, I hardly thought it advisable to do much “yanking”; but I succeeded in raising him to his feet by throwing his right arm over my shoulder, and then it was he discovered that his legs were all right.

“Take me back where I can die in some kind of peace and quietness,” he squeaked mournfully, while I, not knowing but that he might be on the verge of death, raised him until I was bearing a full half of his slight weight, and staggered to the rear in the darkness, crying as I went:

“Where are the surgeons? Where is the hospital tent?”

No one answered until I came to a man twenty yards or more in the rear of our battle lines; the poor fellow was seemingly crippled in both legs, but answered my outcries by saying irritably:

“Do you reckon we’ve been carryin’ hospital tents, you bloomin’ idiot, when the whole command’s been goin’ at double quick?”

“But I’ve got a wounded man who needs to be looked after.”

“Well, here’s another. Dump him down, an’ the two of us will wait till somebody comes along; but I reckon that’s likely to be quite a spell.”

“Don’t stay here,” Steve whispered. “I couldn’t bear to get all mussed up with that man’s blood.”

I thought that if Steve was really as near death as he claimed to be, he might at least stand a little “mussing” rather than continue our painful way any further; but a fellow who was as near his last moments as the little painter claimed to be, should have his whims gratified if it could be done, and I staggered on ten yards more, when, despairing of coming to the end of the column, allowed him to sink gently in a tangle of vines, which would make a much more comfortable, if not a softer bed, than the mud of the road.

Meanwhile the fire in front was kept up without intermission, and I stood over Steve wondering what could be done for his relief, until he asked querulously:

“Ain’t you goin’ to hustle ’round for a doctor?”

“Where can I find one, Mr. Stubbs?”

“That’s for you to say. Do you expect a dyin’ man to answer a lot of riddles?”

It came upon me that the little painter was not in as serious a condition as he believed himself to be, and I ventured to say:

“Suppose you wait here, an’ let me go back to the front? I ought to be doin’ something in this battle, or they’ll think the people from Maine are cowards.”

“Don’t leave me; don’t leave me!” he wailed. “If you go who’ll take my last words to the folks at home?”

“Give them to me now, an’ I’ll remember what you say, Mr. Stubbs; but I’ve got to go back.”

At that moment two men came up bearing between them a soldier regarding whose condition there could be no question, for he lay limp in their arms as if dead, and easing their burden gently down until the unconscious man lay by the side of Steve Stubbs, one of the bearers asked me:

“Do you know if there’s a surgeon anywhere near?”

“That’s what I’ve been looking for. Steve here is hurt pretty badly, I’m afraid.”

“I’m tore all to pieces!” Mr. Stubbs wailed.

“You’ve got a pretty hearty voice for a fellow what’s in very bad shape,” one of the men said with a laugh as he bent over my comrade, making such an examination of him as was possible in the darkness, after which he declared stoutly:

“What you’ve got ain’t more’n a flea bite. Don’t

'pear to me as there's any bones broken, an' it's nothin' more'n a hole through your arm. You are in shape to walk 'round an' find your own surgeon.

Steve, indignant because his injuries were spoken of so slightly, would have entered into a discussion with the stranger as to his condition; but at that instant the firing at the front ceased, almost as suddenly as it had begun, and in a twinkling we were more concerned to know the reason for the silence, than regarding the whereabouts of a surgeon.

Believing Steve Stubbs was more frightened than hurt, I ran forward once more, until coming to the front ranks where I had left Uncle Rube and his "detachment."

They were yet in line, evidently awaiting some command, and I asked:

"Have the Johnnies run away?"

"That's what we can't seem to find out," Uncle Rube cried in a fault-finding tone. "An' it don't look as if the officers know any more than the rest of us who have been standin' the brunt of it. This comes of such reckless marchin' as we've been doin'. The idee of goin' at double quick right into a hornet's nest, without tryin' to find out anything about the siteration."

"What I want to know," 'Siah Fernald said complainingly, "is whether we was started off with the idee of goin' anywhere in perticular, or if it was jest a case of dodgin' 'round the country? If we folks

from Maine don't do somethin' pretty soon there won't be any army left here at all."

The "detachment" were evidently sound in limb and body since they could indulge in their favorite pastime of fault-finding, and not being disposed to listen to their criticisms, uttered where the officers might hear them, I asked:

"What is to be done with Mr. Stubbs?"

"Where is he?"

"Back there quite a bit, an' he thinks he's goin' to die right away; but a soldier who looked him over says there's nothin' the matter except a little hole in his arm."

"I reckon Steve's more frightened than hurt," Uncle Rube said with an air of unconcern. "I've always noticed that these little shavers think a heap of themselves when it comes to a pinch."

"But we can't leave him there alone," I insisted, "for even a hole in the arm is something neither of us would like to have."

"I don't see as we are called on to play the part of nurses when there's fightin' to be done," and now Uncle Rube spoke in a tone of irritation. "What would become of this 'ere army if 'Siah Fernald an' Job an' I went back to 'tend to Steve? I reckon he'd better stay where he is a spell longer, while we keep on savin' the country."

I was undecided whether I should remain where I was, or return to Steve, when word came along the

line, showing that skirmishers had been sent out to learn the strength of the enemy:

“They’ve beaten a retreat; there’s no one here!”

Then the word was given for us to form in marching order once more, and I asked hurriedly of Uncle Rube if it was his intention to leave Mr. Stubbs behind.

“I reckon we’re goin’ to chase up them ’ere Confederates wherever they may be, an’ unless he wants to be left it’s a case of his travelin’ along with us. Go back and tell him so.”

I ran at the best speed possible in the darkness, not minded to be left on this lonely road, and on coming to the little man I found him on his feet, while a soldier was tying a bandage around his arm.

“We are takin’ up the line of march, Mr. Stubbs,” I said hurriedly, “an’ Uncle Rube declares that you must come along, or run the chance of bein’ left here alone.”

“I’ll do the best I can, Dick,” he said feebly; “but I’m in awful bad shape for marchin’, an’ it seems like terrible cruelty to force me to it.”

“Come on; I’ll help you all I can,” I said, once more flinging his right arm around my shoulders, and then we made every effort to rejoin Uncle Rube’s command.

CHAPTER XII.

JACKSON.

WE marched during the remainder of the night at an ordinary pace, arriving at New Auburn just about daylight, and there bivouacked.

It was high time to call a halt, according to my way of thinking, for all of us were on the verge of exhaustion, the forced march coming hard upon men who had been on the road nearly all the day previous.

I believe it would not have been possible for me to keep anywhere near the 46th, burdened as I was, had it not been for Steve Stubbs. He claimed that if we fell back among the stragglers in the rear, our town of Malden would be disgraced, for thus far none of us who hailed from there had been found among the "coffee-boilers."

However, there were some in the command who were not so weary but that they could go out gathering news, and before an hour passed we learned why our division had been called upon so suddenly.

It seems, according to the news brought in by our camp reporters, that General McPherson had met the Confederate force under General Gregg about

two miles from Raymond during the afternoon previous. A stiff battle had been fought wherein our people lost sixty-six killed, three hundred and nine wounded and thirty-seven missing, and the enemy had fled in something akin to confusion.

We had been started off on the double quick for the purpose of meeting the retreating Confederates, with the hope that we might succeed in capturing them.

Such was the information Uncle Rube's "detachment" heard while they were cooking such a breakfast as was possible, with the materials the old man had succeeded in confiscating.

"So they counted on our capturin' a lot of Johnnies in the dark, on a narrow road where we were herded in like sheep?" Uncle Rube growled contemptuously to the soldier who had brought the news. "Why wasn't we told what game was up? How could I know what the general wanted?"

"I suppose he was too busy to send you all the details of his plan?" the news-gatherer said ironically.

"Wa'al, if he don't, he must expect things will go wrong, that's all I've got to say. I've held my end up just as long as I can; but to send a crowd of fellows out to play blind-man's bluff, after they've been marchin' all day, ain't what I call a joke."

"There was no joke about it for me," Steve Stubbs squeaked, "an' if the surgeons don't get 'round

pretty soon an' 'tend to my case I'll peter right out into materials for a funeral."

"Pretty healthy material you'll make, Stephen, accordin' to the way you pitch into the grub," Uncle Rube said in a fatherly tone, and added as if the thought just occurred to him, "I suppose it wouldn't be a bad job to let somebody look at that arm of yours, because it might need to be took off."

Mr. Stubbs turned pale, and I noticed that immediately he began to bustle around more actively than at any time since the wound was received.

When breakfast was over, however, Uncle Rube seemed to think it his duty to look after Mr. Stubbs a bit, with the result that the not overly painful wound was cleansed with clear water, and since the bullet had only gone through the fleshy part of the forearm, all the members of our "detachment" believed the little painter was not in sore need of medical assistance.

As the forenoon wore on and no word was given to resume the march, we came to believe that we were to spend at least one day recovering from the results of our severe exertions, and in this we were not mistaken.

No work was performed by us save sentry duty, and we had a long twelve hours in which to speculate upon the campaign that had seemingly been begun in good earnest. The one thing which troubled the wise heads of the 46th was, why we were moving

to the eastward, when it had generally been supposed that Vicksburg was the objective point.

This fact puzzled even Uncle Rube, and he speedily gave over trying to solve the problem.

“I’m bound to allow that we are headin’ for Jackson,” he said with an air of great wisdom, and ’Siah Fernald asked:

“Why should the general want to go there, Reuben?”

“That kind of sticks me; all I can figger out is because it’s the capital of the state, you know, where he can git all the papers in his hands, and then lo and behold, he’s only got to serve notice on the other towns that he has taken ’em.”

As might be supposed, our camp lawyers wagged their tongues furiously during the remainder of the day, and right glad was I when they finally lost themselves in sleep, for I was wearied with hearing so many words.

Next morning we were on the march again, with nothing of special interest occurring during the day, save that Mr. Stubbs complained bitterly because he, a wounded man, must perforce keep on his feet, when it seemed to him, he should be given a place in the ambulance.

At night we camped at Raymond, where a portion of General McPherson’s division yet remained, and there it was we learned the cheering news of the capture of Jackson.

It was said that seventeen guns fell into our hands during the fight, but that the enemy had set fire to their storehouses in the city, destroying a large amount of supplies.

Now it was that we of Uncle Rube's "detachment" were in a state of high excitement, believing we would surely enter the city, and all were eager to witness such a spectacle as must be presented, when our troops took possession of a town as large as the capital of Mississippi.

We were astir right early next morning, hoping we might be among the first to go into Jackson; but before an hour had passed the news-gatherers brought information which caused us no little disappointment.

It was said that General McClernand, who yet remained at New Auburn, had received word from General Grant to the effect, that it was probably the intention of the enemy to cross the Big Black river, and get ahead of our forces into Vicksburg; that to prevent this he must move all his troops to Bolton Station by the most direct road, from wherever they might chance to be, on receipt of the order.

That seemed a death-blow to our hopes, and we were correspondingly cast down until about nine o'clock in the morning when, a portion of our army being already in marching order, Colonel Hubbard—our colonel—sent a messenger to summon Uncle Rube to his tent.

We were in a fine state of curiosity as to what might be wanted, for no one could so much as guess, until Job Lord suggested that perhaps General Grant had decided to call upon Uncle Rube for advice, as he should have done when the campaign first began, and that the old man would probably leave us in order to go directly to Jackson.

Our sorrow was great; Steve Stubbs especially deploring the fact that the "detachment" was to be broken up just at a time, when it could probably have taken Vicksburg if left entire; but Uncle Rube soothed us by saying, as he made ready for departure:

"I don't allow, boys, that I'm called on for anything more'n advice. General Grant likely thinks he's doin' all right, and would be kind'er jealous if I was shoved in ahead of him. Howsomever, you wait here quietly, an' I'll see that this "detachment," ain't trodden on any, to hurt."

Then he went away, returning within fifteen or twenty minutes, and looking like a man who is well satisfied with the world in general, and himself in particular.

"It wasn't anything very pertic'lar," he said with a fine air of unconcern as he came up to where we were anxiously awaiting his return. "Somebody has got to carry word to General Grant telling him where we are, an' explaining as how his army is

scattered all over creation, so the colonel thinks I'm about the right man to do the job."

"Then you are to leave us, are you, Reuben?" Steve Stubbs squeaked.

"That's about the way the colonel figgered it. He allowed to send me off with anywhere from two to three hundred men as escort; but I says to him, says I, 'Colonel, bless your soul, when Reuben Smart gits so weak that he's got to have a whole regiment pokin' round to keep him from gettin' into trouble, it's time he went back to Maine,' an' the colonel says to me, says he, 'Reuben, we can't afford to lose you, an' that's why I'm takin' all these extry precautions.' Then I says to the colonel, says I, 'I'll tell you how it ought to be done without movin' all this here army: jest let me have my "detachment," an' we'll march straight through the whole state of Mississippi, Johnnies or no Johnnies.' 'It can't be done, Reuben, it can't be done,' the colonel says, an' then I jest told him a thing or two about war matters, till he decided that if we couldn't git into Jackson, there wasn't no northern army corps that could. You see Nat Hubbard an' I have been neighbors too long, an' have swapped too many cows, for me to be mealy-mouthed, when it comes to puttin' things as they oughter be put. So it's fixed, boys, an' the sooner we git off, the better."

"Look here, Reuben," our wounded comrade said

earnestly, "don't you think it would be better if we took forty or fifty soldiers along with us? There's no tellin' when we might run into a gang of them 'ere Confederates you know."

"Bless your soul, Stephen, don't borrow trouble when I'm at the helm. You are wounded, an' ain't of any more account than you ever was, so if we come to close quarters, jest stay back in the rear, an' I'll handle these 'ere Johnnies myself."

There is no reason why I should repeat any more of Uncle Rube's boasting; it is sufficient to say that we made ready for the march eastward, while the remainder of the troops started off in a northerly direction.

Uncle Rube declared that the distance to Jackson was not more than fourteen or fifteen miles, and we flattered ourselves it would be possible to arrive at our destination by noon, even hampered, as would be probable, by Mr. Stubbs, who still considered himself quite an invalid.

Whatever might be said of Uncle Rube as a soldier, certainly as a commander, he shone out brilliantly, so far as getting his men over the road was concerned.

When we had marched for an hour on our lonely way, and I was far from feeling comfortable in mind, at thus setting off with such a small force, Mr. Stubbs insisted that a halt be called because of his extreme fatigue; but the old man refused to

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listen to any such proposition, never allowing us so much as a breathing spell until noon.

Then we ate dinner by the roadside, congratulating ourselves in the meanwhile with not having fallen in with any of the enemy.

When we started again it was to finish the march without a halt, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon we entered the captured city, seeing there such scenes of war's havoc as saddened the heart, and I could well understand why the civilians of the South were so bitter against us of the northern army.

The Confederates had applied the torch to several manufactories, and many of their storehouses. As a matter of course the buildings had been consumed by the time we arrived, and, as we learned later, General Grant ordered the destruction of several factories which the enemy had spared. It was a city of ruins, so it seemed to me, and I wondered if all this was necessary in the capturing of Vicksburg.

It was in my mind when we marched through the streets of the town past this or that pile of smoldering ruins, inquiring our way to the commander's headquarters, that we would be received by General Grant with every mark of favor; that he would welcome our coming in the heartiest manner possible, perhaps promote each of us on the spot for having brought such valuable information as I doubted not was written down on the paper which Uncle Rube carried so carefully in the pocket of his blouse.

The reception was by no means in accord with my expectations.

We had no difficulty in finding headquarters, for General Grant had simply taken possession of General Johnston's apartments, and instead of seeing a squad drawn up to salute us, we were forced to cool our heels on the outside of the building until the commander could be informed as to why we asked for an interview.

Then, instead of being bidden to enter, an orderly appeared who demanded that Uncle Rube give him the missive, and directed us to report to the chief quartermaster, who would supply us with rations.

What was to become of us after that, the glittering orderly failed to say.

"It's a burnin' shame!" Steve Stubbs squeaked when the officer entered the building without apparently caring whether we followed his directions or not. "I don't know how folks down this way may look at it; but out in Malden we'd say General Grant wasn't as much of a gentleman as we took him to be!"

"I can't see as we have any call to blame him very much," Uncle Rube replied thoughtfully. "You see he don't rightly know who we are, else he'd have had us stop to supper, if nothin' more."

"Well, it seems that he ain't even goin' to thank us, so I reckon the best thing we can do is to toddle

over to the quartermaster's an' fill up on such rations as he may have to spare," 'Siah Fernald suggested, and this proposition I considered very sensible.

It was rather a "come down" to be sent to the quartermaster for rations, instead of being ushered into the commander's quarters and promoted. Uncle Rube appeared to be taking the disappointment very philosophically, however, and I speedily came to the conclusion that perhaps just at that moment, it would advantage us more to have a full haversack than a command, which last could neither be eaten or drank.

The "detachment" grumbled long and loud as we walked off, inquiring our way, from this soldier or that whom we met; but when our haversacks had been filled nearly to bursting, for the men in the commissary department were most generous, after hearing that we had brought reports to the commander, I believe all of us, except Mr. Stubbs, were in a more contented frame of mind.

His disappointment was most keen, because he had counted on telling General Grant of his wound, and indulged in the hope that especial orders would be given for his care.

There was no reason why we should not lounge around the city to our hearts' content, since the quartermaster had not given orders concerning our movements, and so we did, going wherever fancy dictated until we were come near the railroad shops, where

were a large number of Confederate soldiers guarded by our men.

They were herded much like cattle in a vacant lot, near where a regiment of soldiers were tearing up the tracks, for orders had been given to destroy the city as railroad center, and our "detachment" quite naturally halted to look at them.

Surely we five, of all the men in blue who gazed upon the unfortunates, had reason to sympathize with them, although their lot was not as unhappy as that of Uncle Rube and his comrades in the prison at Vicksburg, for we knew full well what it was to be held prisoners of war.

I was standing near the officer of the guard, looking with idle curiosity at these men who were forced to witness the destruction of their city, without being able to lift a hand in her defense, when one of the prisoners—a young man perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three years of age—called out as he looked at me intently:

Hello, Yank! Didn't I see in you in Vicksburg not so many days ago?"

I stared in surprise, and could see nothing familiar in the man's face; but had more than an ordinary curiosity to know how he chanced to recognize me, therefore asked the officer if I might speak to him.

The latter called the Johnnie toward him, and I asked:

"Are you certain you saw me in Vicksburg?"

"I reckon I am. Bob Yardley had with him a boy as like to you as two peas in a pod."

Now I was interested, as may be supposed, and asked eagerly:

"Do you know Bob Yardley?"

"Sure."

"And you saw me with him?"

"When you were walkin' past the slave pens, on the afternoon before Bob lent a hand at freein' four Yankees."

"That was me sure enough, an' here are the four Yankees who were in the pens," I replied with a laugh. "When did you leave Vicksburg?"

"Three days ago."

"Had Bob got back there?"

"Yes; came up from Grand Gulf with Bowen's force, so he said."

"Was he punished for having helped the Yankees?"

"I reckon that matter was hushed up by General Bowen. I don't know the particulars of it; but Bob told me he expected to get it pretty hot, an' I can't say but he deserved all that might have been given him. It's no funny business, breakin' into jail an' runnin' a lot of prisoners on board the enemy's fleet. I reckon if I'd done such a thing the screws would have been put on in great shape."

"But you say Bob wasn't punished?"

"He hadn't been when I left, an' all hands seemed

to think he got out of it by havin' met General Bowen at Grand Gulf."

"Where is he now?"

"He enlisted the same day he got back to the city. Perhaps that's why he was let off so easy, for up to that time he hadn't belonged to the army."

It pleased me mightily to get such news from Bob Yardley, and to know that he was, in a certain measure at least, restored to the good opinion of his friends. The poor fellow had anticipated the worst, and it must have been a wonderful relief, when he found that the authorities were not inclined to push matters against him.

When the prisoner had given me all the information possible, he said in the tone of one who is not ashamed to make a request:

"I don't fancy a lad like you has any great influence in the army; but at the same time you might do me a good turn if you were so disposed."

Remembering the favors which I had received within the Confederate lines, I replied promptly:

"You can count on me an' my comrades here for anything in our power. What do you want?"

"If the chance comes, I would like to have you get word into Vicksburg, that James Cathcart was taken prisoner at Jackson, without having been wounded."

This I promised should be done if it lay in my power. Then he asked if I would lend him some

money, promising that if he lived it should be returned to me, and I, knowing how much need a prisoner has at times of ready cash, was very wretched because of having spent my two dollars at Grand Gulf, since it was all I possessed.

Cathcart, noting the look of disappointment on my face, must have understood somewhat of that which was in mind, for he said quickly:

“Never mind, Yank, it isn’t to be supposed that a private soldier is carryin’ round any great amount of wealth with him. If you haven’t got it, no harm’s done; the biggest favor is to get my message into Vicksburg.”

“What’s that about money?” Uncle Rube, who had overheard a portion of our conversation, asked sharply, and I repeated what the prisoner had said, adding:

“Considerin’ how we’ve been treated by the Confederates, it’s too bad we can’t help this poor fellow, for he’ll need a bit of money now an’ then.”

“Who says we can’t help him?” Uncle Rube cried, as if angry because of the statement. “There ought’er be some cash in this ’ere “detachment,” an’ he shall have whatever we can scratch together.”

Then the old man demanded that his comrades give him all the money they had, and the result was that we were able to loan Cathcart four dollars and sixty cents in greenbacks and Federal shinplasters,

which was worth twenty times that amount in Confederate script.

The prisoner would have thanked us most heartily, but that Uncle Rube said decidedly:

“People from Maine don’t take thanks, for havin’ done what’s only a Christian duty. If we had more money you’d get it, an’ that’s all there is to the matter. Drop in on us any time you come our way; we’ll be glad to see you.”

Then the old man, his head held high as if he was not a little proud at being able to thus aid an enemy, led us away with never a thought that the fortunes of war would ever again bring us across the path of James Cathcart of the 143rd Mississippi Volunteers.

If I should attempt to set down all the details of our soldier-life, or as many in proportion as I have already done of our movements thus far in the Vicksburg campaign, the space allotted me would be all too small, and I should find myself cut off abruptly at the very point where it was to me, as if our most exciting adventures occurred.

Therefore it is that I propose to push ahead with the main incidents, leaving out the minor affairs which possibly interest me more than they would my grandchildren.

We spent the remainder of that day and a portion of the next in Jackson, and when we again presented ourselves to the commissary department for rations, having been extremely generous in the way of feed-

ing ourselves, we found awaiting us orders to report for duty to the colonel of any regiment, explaining to him why we were absent from our company.

Uncle Rube did as he was commanded, and the officer to whom he reported, not being at leisure to ask very many questions, probably concluded that the old man ranked at least as sergeant, because he spoke so often of "his detachment."

The orders which Uncle Rube then received were general rather than specific; hardly more than permission to march in the ranks of this regiment—I think it was from Ohio—, and draw rations during the time we remained with it.

We were told to quarter ourselves as best we might, and this we did, getting, as you may be sure, all that was coming to us when Uncle Rube attended to the details.

We did not fraternize with our new comrades; but kept rather by ourselves, as if being an independent command, yet we heard our share of all the news that was being circulated around the camp, much of which was to the effect that, having taken Jackson, thereby cutting Vicksburg off from communication with the interior of the state, it was General Grant's intention to lay regular siege to the city.

In order to do this we understood full well that there would be fighting, and plenty of it, between where we then were and the Mississippi river, for it stood to reason that the Confederates would put forth

their best efforts to prevent us from investing Vicksburg.

It had been known to us before we left Raymond that troops were being massed at Bolton Station, therefore it seemed most probable that between there and the Big Black we would do the heaviest work. Once across the river we would be within a short distance of the city we hoped to capture.

Regiment after regiment left Jackson, some marching and others riding on railroad trains; but yet we remained in the half-destroyed city, spending our time watching General Sherman's troops as they burned such manufactories and warehouses as the Confederates had spared.

When their work of destruction was completed, they too were sent forward toward Vicksburg, therefore it began to look as if this Ohio regiment to which we were attached by accident, would be left to hold the city, and the members of Uncle Rube's "detachment" were bewailing their fate in the strongest terms, when suddenly the word came for us to move.

It seemed, so we learned, that a battle was imminent near about Champion's Hill, and most likely we were to take part in it.

Five trains were made up to carry the soldiers who had been ordered to advance, and, perhaps, because we had remained so much by ourselves, little heed was given to sending us aboard. Not until four of the trains had pulled out from the station, leaving the

fifth, made up of only four box-cars, did Uncle Rube take it up on himself to settle the matter of our going.

“If we don’t get on here, boys, it’s a case of walkin’, an’ I’m not minded to do any more of that kind of work than is necessary. We have waited for these ’ere generals and colonels about as long as it’ll pay. Now git!”

We “got” by scrambling into the third car from the locomotive, and proceeded to make ourselves comfortable by taking up quarters in one corner, where, with the butts of our muskets, we knocked off a sufficient portion of the side to admit of our looking out.

Then the train started, the cars fairly well filled with men who sat on the floor or stood up, as fancy dictated, and were well shaken I guarantee you, before we had run a mile over a road which was in wretched condition, and in cars which had been built for the transportation of merchandise.

The train ran slowly because of the bad road-bed, and when we were perhaps five miles out from Jackson, near where a covered bridge ran across a small creek, we came to a standstill, while those in the first car were called upon to get out and remove a lot of railway sleepers which had been piled across the track.

Now this was good proof that a considerable force of the enemy still hovered around Jackson, for the train preceding us was not more than twenty minutes

ahead, and the ties must have been placed on the track since that passed.

“I reckon we ain’t called on to go out an’ lend a hand at shiftin’ lumber,” Uncle Rube said when Job Lord proposed that we “bear a hand” in the work. “The chances are that the Johnnies are near about here, an’ I’m expectin’ every minute when our fellows’ll catch it good an’ hot.”

“Is that why you don’t go?” Steve Stubbs squeaked, as if he was the only brave one in the party, and the old man turned upon him savagely:

“Stephen, you’re puttin’ on too many airs about that ’ere little hole in your arm. I allow to step up with the rest, like a full-sized man, an’ at the same time; but don’t you go makin’ any bloomin’ hero out of yourself.”

“I wasn’t allowin’ to pride myself on bein’ disabled——”

“Course you wasn’t, ’cause you ain’t in that condition. You’re pretty nigh as sound as any man among us.”

“But what’s that got to do with goin’ out an’ helpin’ handle the ties?” Mr. Stubbs squeaked feebly.

“You’ll stay right where you are, an’ so will the rest of my “detachment”. I’ve got to answer for all of you to Nat. Hubbard, an’ I ain’t allowin’ to meet him with any mournful yarn, as to how I let you toddle into danger when there wasn’t need of it.”

With half a company of men at work the task of removing the obstruction was neither long nor difficult, and before Uncle Rube had concluded his remarks to Mr. Stubbs the order was shouted for all hands to get on board again.

Then we moved at a snail's pace for a quarter of a mile or more, when we were come to the bridge of which I have spoken, and at this moment the report of a fieldpiece rang out from amidst the foliage on the hill north of the track, the shot crashing through one end of the first car, sending splinters flying in every direction, thereby slightly wounding the men in the cab.

Whether he did it involuntarily, or because he regarded it safer to go back than advance, I do not know; but true it is that within a minute after receiving the injuries from the flying splinters, the engineer brought the train to a standstill, just as two more shots plowed their way through the covering of the bridge, and, as we afterward learned, striking the engine in such a manner as to completely disable it.

Uncle Rube, using the butt of his musket, tore away yet more of the side of the car so that we might look out, and I learned then that the train had been stopped directly in the middle of the bridge, which was so narrow that a man could not walk either side of the train.

Even then, when we were naturally excited at having found the enemy where we least expected

him, I wondered how it was that the officials of the road had dared build a bridge so narrow, that there could not have been six inches of space to spare between the timbers and an ordinary car.

As if to show that we were in the tightest kind of a box possible, from which we could only extricate ourselves by surrendering as prisoners, another gun on the south side of the road sent a shot into the bridge, striking the car directly ahead of us, and doing much injury to the occupants, as we could understand from the cries and groans which followed.

“Knock a hole through this box, an’ we’ll take to the woods,” some one at the rear of the car shouted, and straightway half a dozen began battering at the boards.

Speedily an aperture was made sufficiently large for a man to crawl out, and then it was we saw a squad of mounted soldiers in gray riding across the track, as if taking station to prevent our escaping in that direction.

Uncle Rube’s “detachment” was at the opposite end of the car, and as a matter of course, could not see what was going on outside; but those nearest the aperture quickly gave information, and the old man said complainingly, as if we five of all the two or three hundred men, were the only ones in peril;

“I declare I’m out of all patience with the way this ’ere war goes on! It grows worse an’ worse every day. Here we are cooped up like chickens, an’

when the Johnnies get ready to come in an' yank us out, there's nothin' to hinder 'em from doin' it."

It occurred to me that we might swarm out of the hole that had just been made, and crawl over the tops of the cars to the locomotive, in order to escape by the other opening of the bridge; but this thought had no sooner entered my mind than I realized how hopeless it was, because having laid such a trap, there could be no question but that the Confederates were on the alert at the westerly as well as the easterly end.

"We're penned in here like a parcel of rats, an' cordin' to my way of thinkin', it's a case of givin' ourselves up as prisoners, to be shot, or roasted, just as pleases the Johnnies best," Uncle Rube said bitterly, and I believed he had spoken no more than the truth.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN A TRAP.

THERE was one thing evident to the minds of all, which was that we must in some way manage to get out from that trap, unless we were willing to be burned, shot, or taken prisoners, yet no one seemed to know how it might be done.

I believe of a vertiy that but for Uncle Rube we would have remained there idle until the Confederates had worked their will upon us, and during several moments he appeared to be as helpless as the rest of us.

There was no commissioned officer in our car, therefore, unless you counted corporals or sergeants, one man was as good as another; but none of very much account, at such a time.

Certain it is that the members of our "detachment" lost their heads; but to no greater degree than did those around us, for every man was complaining and scolding about our having been allowed to fall into such a trap, until the din was almost deafening.

Then it was that Uncle Rube showed himself a good leader, rising to a height which I had never believed he could attain.

After shouting at the full strength of his lungs in order to attract attention, he cried:

“If you fellows will hold your tongues a bit, I’ll show you how we men from Maine get out of a tight fix, when we’re foolish enough to drop into one.”

“You’ll show nothin’,” one of the company shouted angrily. “We can’t get off the bridge at either end of the train on account of the Johnnies, even if it was possible for us to crawl over the cars, an’ unless you can fly you’ll stay here till we’re ordered to march out an’ give ourselves up!”

“I belong to the 46th Maine, an’ we from that state don’t march out like peaceable little lambs, till after we’ve had one good, solid try at givin’ them gray-coated soldiers the slip.”

“Why don’t you set about it then?” a soldier on the opposite side of our car cried derisively, and Uncle Rube replied calmly:

“That’s jest what I count on doin’. If you fellows are willin’ to lend a hand, the work can be done quicker; but in case you’re achin’ to be taken as prisoners into Vicksburg, or wherever the Johnnies have their pens, then sit still an’ howl. Your Uncle Rube ain’t that kind of a man.”

He spoke so confidently, as if there was no question in his own mind as to the possibility of doing as he pleased, that the more sensible of the party began to realize nothing could be lost, while they were

apparently so helpless, by listening to his plan, and half a dozen shouted:

“Go ahead! Tell us how you soldiers from Maine can get out of this trap!”

“First an’ foremost,” Uncle Rube began, speaking so deliberately that I feared the impatient men would not give him time to present his scheme properly, “it’s certain we can’t go out through either end of this imitation bridge without standin’ the chance of bein’ shot down by them as are likely in hidin’ among the bushes.”

“Tell us somethin’ new!” a soldier cried. “It don’t need that a man should come all the way from Maine, to put up such a proposition as that!”

“I was beginnin’ in proper order, for by the way some of you fellers are yellin’, it seems as if you didn’t really know where we’re at. Now if you can’t go out of the bridge at either end, it stands to reason that we’re bound to take to the top or the bottom—”

“Sit down! Give your tongue a rest! Are all Maine men as sharp as you?” were the derisive cries from different portions of the car.

“If you fellows haven’t got time to listen to my plan, give us one of your own,” Uncle Rube cried, and Mr. Stubbs squeaked:

“Let Reuben Smart alone! There ain’t a man in Malden better fitted to handle this ’ere army than he is, and when he gives up the ship it’s time for everybody else to lie down.”

“Never you mind, Stephen; I’ll blow my own horn when there’s need of it. Now if you funny men have got through makin’ a noise, we’ll perceed to business. As I was sayin’ we’ve got to go through the top or the bottom of this ’ere imitation bridge, an’ I’m allowin’ that our easiest road is the last I’ve mentioned. It won’t be a big job to knock off the whole front end of the car, and then, by jumpin’ down on the track, we’ll be hid from them precious Johnnie sharpshooters, who are watchin’ a chance to pick us off.”

“Are we to wait there till our forces come back from Bolton Station?” some one asked with a laugh; but Uncle Rube gave no token that he was annoyed by the interruptions.

“Once out of this car I reckon we’re men enough to get a plank or two off of the bridge, an’ then it’ll only be a question of droppin’ into the creek, which I’ve noticed ain’t much more’n what we in Maine would call a brook.”

By this time, our companions began to realize, that Uncle Rube had in his mind a plan whereby at least some of us might succeed in escaping, and cries of approval and encouragement could be heard from every quarter.

“There are plenty of bushes an’ vines on the banks of the creek, an’ once among ’em I’m allowin’ we can stand off the Confederates quite a spell. Anyhow, we’ll be captured like men who’ve got nerve

enough to make a show of spunk, instead of bein' taken like chickens."

By this time Mr. Stubbs was not the only person in the car who had faith in the old man's ability to extricate us from a dangerous position, and before he could proceed further in his scheme at least a dozen soldiers were pounding at the end of the car with the butts of their muskets.

In a twinkling an aperture was made sufficiently large for two men to crawl through at the same time, and the occupants of our car began swarming out until there was danger too many would be on the bridge at one time to admit of the necessary work being done.

"Hold on!" Uncle Rube shouted as he pushed back those who were pressing toward the aperture. "There ain't room between the cars for very many at a time, an' you'll get all stacked up. There are enough out already! Stand by here, the Malden detachment, an' keep these idjuts where they belong!"

All of Uncle Rube's "detachment" obeyed the command on the instant, and many a blow was struck, in the effort to make our companions behave like sensible men.

It was done, however, and while we guarded the aperture, Uncle Rube threatening to knock down the first who should attempt to crawl through, those

below were working like beavers to remove two or three planks from the bottom of the bridge.

Perhaps five minutes were spent in this work, and then some one on the outside shouted:

“You can come through now; we’re goin’!”

Uncle Rube stepped back, allowing those in his rear who were so eager, to do as they pleased, and Mr. Stubbs squeaked complainingly:

“It’s our right to go first, Reuben. None of these fellows would ever have thought of such a plan.”

“Don’t you worry, Stephen; we’ll give ’em full swing,” the old man replied as he watched the throng which pressed toward the opening, each man struggling to the utmost in order to gain ever so slight an advantage over his fellows. “They’ll go out like a drove of sheep, an’ the chances are that more’n half will be gobbled up by the Johnnies, before they’re out of the ravine. We’ll kind’er sneak along on our own hook.”

What the occupants of the other cars were doing while we were making this break for liberty, I cannot say. We could hear nothing from them, but that was no proof they were remaining inactive, for what with the roar of the guns as the enemy fired now and then to warn us that we were surrounded, and the outcries of our companions, it would have been impossible to hear any ordinary noise which might have been made near at hand.

Certain it was, however, that we could see nothing of the others, therefore I felt confident Uncle Rube was the only one who had conceived the plan of escaping through the bottom of the bridge.

The old man held his "detachment" back until all our companions had left the car, and then he refused to move until the last soldier dropped through to the creek below.

"Now I reckon our time has come," he said in a low tone. "The crowd has gone in a jumble, an' the enemy ain't anyways smart if the whole boilin' of 'em ain't gobbled up in less than half an hour. Follow me, an' I'll show you a trick that can't be beat."

We were quite willing he should lead the way, and then it was that Uncle Rube displayed his good qualities in fine style.

Having emerged from the car, he waited until all of us were beside him, and then said softly:

"Let yourselves down through the hole; but keep a grip of the plankin' till I give the word. We'll drop at the same minute, an' then make up stream, keepin' in the creek quite a long ways."

At that moment the crash of heavy guns told that the Johnnies had begun the work of driving our people out from the cars, on to the open road, where they might be made prisoners in a comfortable fashion, and mingled with the roar could be heard the crackling of musketry, which, to my mind, betokened

the fact that those who preceded us in the break for freedom, had already been discovered.

As Uncle Rube had said so we did, and when the "detachment" struck the bed of the creek it was as one man.

It had been necessary to drop fully fifteen feet, and I was considerably jarred by the fall; but I managed to pull myself together in time to see Uncle Rube as he waded through the water well within the shadow of the bushes, directly up stream as if bent on running into the enemy.

The rattle of musketry and occasional roar of guns caused such a din, that the noise made by our small party was drowned, therefore we had no fear of being discovered because of splashing the water more than was absolutely necessary.

Not until we had waded half a mile or more, and Mr. Stubbs had fallen headlong into the water twice, owing to his carelessness in not finding proper footing, did Uncle Rube strike off through the thicket, and then we were on the side of a small hill, to the north of the railroad.

Here the old man halted, and, as we gathered closely around him, whispered cautiously:

"It won't be easy work to make our way through these vines an' underbrush; but it has got to be done. They're waitin' for us at Bolton's Station, an' if we don't get there jest as likely as not the general won't dare to begin the battle."

"I don't believe I can go another step," Mr. Stubbs squeaked as he nursed his wounded arm. "I'm wet to the skin, and the chances are I'll catch my death of cold if I can't get dry clothes."

"Then we may as well bury you right here, Stephen," Uncle Rube replied in a matter-of-fact tone, "for I don't see any show to coddle you overly much, while we're tumblin' through these 'ere woods. I've been on the Allagash many a time, when I thought it was the hardest country to work over that ever man saw; but this 'ere beats it all hollow. If you've made up your mind that you're dyin' for dry clothes, an' all the luxuries of the season, we may as well say good-bye now."

Then Uncle Rube held out his hand to bid our comrade a long farewell, whereupon Mr. Stubbs became indignant.

"This is a nice way to treat an old friend!" he whimpered.

"It's all we can do, Stephen, unless you put off dyin' till we've found the rest of the army. We're obleeged to foot it from here to Bolton's Station, pervidin' the Johnnies don't stop us on the way, an' it'll be hard sleddin' for all of us."

Mr. Stubbs had nothin' more to say about dying, and it seemed to me that he had relapsed into a fit of sulks; but I was not certain because, owing to the darkness, it was impossible to see his face.

Uncle Rube began the advance by ranging us in

single file about five feet apart, and cautioned us not to march in closer order.

“Why not?” ’Siah Fernald asked in surprise.

“Because if we run on to the enemy all hands of us’ll be gobbled up, whereas, by keepin’ a proper distance apart, them as are behind can dodge back if the leader gets into trouble.”

“But we ain’t countin’ on desertin’ each other,” Job Lord said reprovngly. “We’ll sink or swim together.”

“We won’t do anything of the kind, Job. Some of us must get into Bolton Station to tell the story, an’ it’s a case of every one for himself. I’ll go ahead, an’ if it so be I run my nose in where it don’t belong, the rest of you must back out.”

There was no further discussion on the subject, because Uncle Rube took his station in advance, fully six feet from me, who had been placed second in the line, and gave the word to move cautiously.

Then was begun as wearisome a march as I ever took part in. At times we found the tangle of vines so dense that one was forced to work his way through by exerting all his strength, and, as a matter of course, Uncle Rube had the most difficult task, since he it was who broke the first path.

Before half an hour had passed we came to understand that our leader, who may have been a poor soldier in camp or on the march, was a most excellent commander for such an expedition as ours, for when

we were come to where we could see the outlines of a house against the sky, and I was saying to myself that it would be well for us to seek refuge there until morning, he came to a sudden standstill.

“Halt!” rang out of the darkness, evidently only a few paces in advance of our leader, and on the instant we stood silent and motionless, hardly daring to breathe for a full two minutes.

In the meanwhile it was possible to hear the movements of some person amid the foliage, and I mentally braced myself for the struggle which I believed to be near at hand.

Then the sounds ceased, and Uncle Rube doubled back on his tracks, leading us in a wide detour past the building; but coming to a halt when we were well to the westward of the danger.

“I reckon that’s where we had a tight squeeze,” he said with a chuckle of satisfaction. “If we’d been marchin’ in a reg’lar huddle, that Johnnie would have had us sure.”

“It wouldn’t be one man who could take me,” Job Lord said with an air of exceeding bravery, and Uncle Rube replied with a laugh:

“I reckon there ain’t any Malden men loafin’ ’round in this section of the country who’d give themselves up to a single man; but that fellow had others at his back, else he wouldn’t been doin’ guard duty, an’ we’d had ’em swarmin’ ’bout our ears like wasps, if he’d given the alarm.”

“How do you know but that he was one of us?” Steve Stubbs squeaked. “There can’t be many Johnnies ’round here, else our people who’ve gone on ahead to Bolton Station would have routed ’em out.”

“If there’s any idee, Stephen, that the sentinel we passed would feel any ways friendly to a man wearin’ a blue uniform, there’s nothin’ in this wide world to prevent you from goin’ back an’ chummin’ with him; but I’m bound west for a spell longer.”

Uncle Rube had a way of dealing with Mr. Stubbs which never failed of being effective, and the little painter was silenced without further expenditure of breath.

When we had remained five minutes or more in the midst of a canebrake, our leader gave the word to continue the journey, and on we went, moving as cautiously as was possible amid the network of vines and creepers.

We had gone beyond earshot of the cannonading at the bridge, or the skirmish had been brought to an end by the capture of our men, for we no longer heard any sounds betokening the presence of an enemy, and I was coming to believe we had passed the danger point when a voice cried sharply, apparently from our right and only a short distance away:

“Who goes there!”

I could see that Uncle Rube had sunk down on his

knees, and I followed the example, fancying the others did the same, when the cry was repeated:

“Who goes there? Show yourselves, or I’ll fire!”

What the others may have done I know not; but for my part I literally dug my nose in the moist earth, so eager was I to stretch out as flat as possible, and it was well I showed myself so prudent, for a few seconds later the report of a musket rang out sharp and loud on the night air, the missile whistling over my bowed head.

Then I heard the voice of a man some distance away, shouting:

“What did you see, Jake?”

“Nothin’. It kind’er seemed to me I heard some-
thin’ in the bushes, an’ I fired to make sure, if it was
a Yank, he wouldn’t get past alive.”

Then came the thud, thud of a horse’s hoofs on a hard road, and the rider reined up apparently not more than twenty feet to the left of where we were concealed.

“You mustn’t fire so recklessly, Jake, or we may find ourselves in a snarl. The Yankee forces are pushing on to Bolton’s Station by the thousand, an’ I ain’t so certain but that we’re doin’ a foolish thing in hangin’ ’round here.”

“Then why don’t we mosey along. I reckon we’ll be needed a right smart bit, if there’s any battle this side of Vicksburg.”

“Our orders were to stay along the road to pick

up stragglers, an' that's what we're bound to do even though it does seem to us foolish."

Then the horseman rode away, and I saw by the movements of the bushes that Uncle Rube was working his way toward me.

"You're to stay here, an' keep the rest of the detachment quiet till I get back," the old man whispered cautiously, and I made bold to ask:

"Where are you goin'?"

"Out to pick up that Johnnie who shoots off his gun the same as he does his mouth."

"You don't mean to kill him!" I said in a tone of horror; but yet speaking cautiously.

Although we were taking part in war, and the enemy would shoot us down without thought of remorse, it seemed to me much like murder to thus take the life of a man in cold blood.

"I don't reckon we'll go quite so far as that; but I'm kind'er achin' for somethin' to remember this 'ere night's march by, an' the Johnnie will do for a keepsake like."

"But surely you're not thinkin' of takin' a prisoner? It's as much as we can do to get through here alive, without havin' to drag one of the enemy along with us."

"Never you mind that part of it, Dicky boy. Keep the other fellows quiet, especially Steve Stubbs, for as likely as not he's handkerin' after a hot bath, an' a bowl of chicken soup by this time. I'll show

you an' the general a trick or two before mornin' comes."

Then, without giving me an opportunity to raise further objections, Uncle Rube disappeared in the darkness, and I strained my eyes toward the rear for, after such a matter had been suggested, it would not have surprised me in the slightest if Steve Stubbs had suddenly demanded some gimcrack, which he had no right to even think about.

My comrades were quiet as mice, and since Uncle Rube moved through the underbrush without making more noise than might have been caused by a squirrel, the silence was profound, save for the foot-falls of the sentinel.

My heart beat loud and fast as I listened with painful intentness, for such noise as would tell that the old man had been discovered, for I questioned if it was possible, he could carry out such a mad-brained scheme.

After waiting in anxious suspense during what seemed to me like a very long time, I heard a familiar voice, speaking low but distinctly, apparently within a few feet from where I lay:

"Don't make a yip, Johnnie, or I'll let loose the bullet I've got in this 'ere musket, an' when you hear that I'm from 'way down in Maine you'll get a tolerably good idee that I've cut my eye-teeth, so far as shootin' goes!"

I fully expected to hear the alarm given, and was

prepared to take to my heels on the instant; but to my surprise I heard Uncle Rube again, this time speaking in a soothing tone:

“Now that’s what I call sociable like. Jest pace off six feet straight ahead, for I ain’t countin’ on takin’ any chances, an’ remember all the time, that at the first yip from you I shall fire!”

Then I heard the Johnnie measuring off the required distance, and a moment later Uncle Rube said:

“Hold on where you are! Now right about face, an’ don’t make too much noise with your feet, for I’m mighty careless with firearms.”

Now I could hear the footsteps of two men coming toward me, and once more the old man spoke:

“My detachment is back here in the woods a bit, an’ you’re called on to get through the bushes without overly much noise, for I ain’t takin’ many chances.”

“What’s the row over there?” some one whispered in my ear, and turning, I saw Mr. Stubbs’ head close to my own. “Is that Reuben bellowin’ ’round?”

“I reckon it’s him; but I can’t say so much for the bellowin’.”

“What’s he doin’?”

“He went out to capture the sentinel.”

“To cap— What?”

“He has taken prisoner the man who halted us, and is marchin’ him in here out of the way.”

“My, my, my! That man will be the death of me yet! He’s as reckless as any colt, an’ it’ll be the biggest kind of a mercy if I manage to get him back to our army in anythin’ like decent shape.”

“It strikes me, Mr. Stubbs, that it’s Uncle Rube who is takin’ us back, an’ ’cordin’ to the way things are movin’, he’ll succeed in doin’ it properly.”

“I can’t stand his shines much longer,” the painter moaned, and then by the rustling of the leaves I understood that he was crawling back to his hiding place.

“Here you are, Johnnie, snug an’ sound, with never a scratch, which is sayin’ a big lot after a man from Maine has held a bead on you. Now squat down, takin’ mighty good care not to breathe too loud, till we kind’er get an idee from you where your folks are located.”

Now it was that I understood Uncle Rube’s scheme more fully. He had not only taken a prisoner during the flight; but proposed to utilize him as guide, which last was, to my mind, the best stroke of business he had ever done.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNPLEASANT QUARTERS.

IT was needless for Uncle Rube to call his "detachment" together, for by the time he had brought the prisoner into the bushes all of them understood what he had done, and came up full of curiosity to learn further regarding his intentions.

I think by this time each of us was impressed with the idea that Reuben Smart was quite as able a man, while in command of an independent "detachment" such as ours, as when he was at home in Malden. We had considered him a slovenly soldier; one who was not well up in the drill, and who apparently could not obey an order promptly; but as a strategist he surely was a success, from our point of view.

And Uncle Rube rather admired himself that night. In the future he could tell over and over again, how he had led us out from the car under the guns of the enemy, and during our flight had taken a prisoner; but what he most ardently desired at that moment, I believe, was to sit down and praise Reuben Smart as he believed was Reuben Smart's due.

Therefore it is that I give him credit for holding

himself so well in check, as to proceed at once to the work in hand.

Steve Stubbs quite forgot he was a wounded man for whose benefit an ambulance should be called, and crouched by my side watching the old man as well as he might in the darkness, while Job Lord and 'Siah Fernald came up to where they could examine the prisoner, passing their hands over him from time to time, as if to make certain he was alive, and not some stuffed specimen which Uncle Rube had found by the roadside.

"Now look here, Johnnie," the old man began, speaking in a low tone lest he should be heard by the prisoner's comrades, "you're obleeged to confess that the jig's up for this night, so far as you're concerned, an' you've got to depend on us for fair treatment. If we should take it into our heads to kill you, rather than tote you all over this forsaken country, there's nobody to say us nay, an' we could call it one of the necessities of war; but we ain't that blood-thirsty. You give us a show, an' we'll do the same by you."

"How can I give you a show?" the man asked in a surly tone.

"Wa'al, you see it's jest like this: we started out for Bolton Station a spell ago, an' kind'er got mixed up with your folks on the way so it seemed easier like to take to the woods. We're still headin' for the station; but from what's been heard lately, it

looks as if there was quite a considerable of your folks 'round here, an' we don't want to git into any trouble with 'em. Therefore an' consequently, if you, knowin' where the rest of the Johnnies are 'bout this time, will lend a hand at gettin' us along, we'll see that you live on the fat of the land, while our people hold you prisoner."

"What Reuben Smart means is that you shall act as our guide," Steve Stubbs squeaked, unable longer to hold his peace, and seeming to fear that the man could not understand the plain statement of facts which had been made.

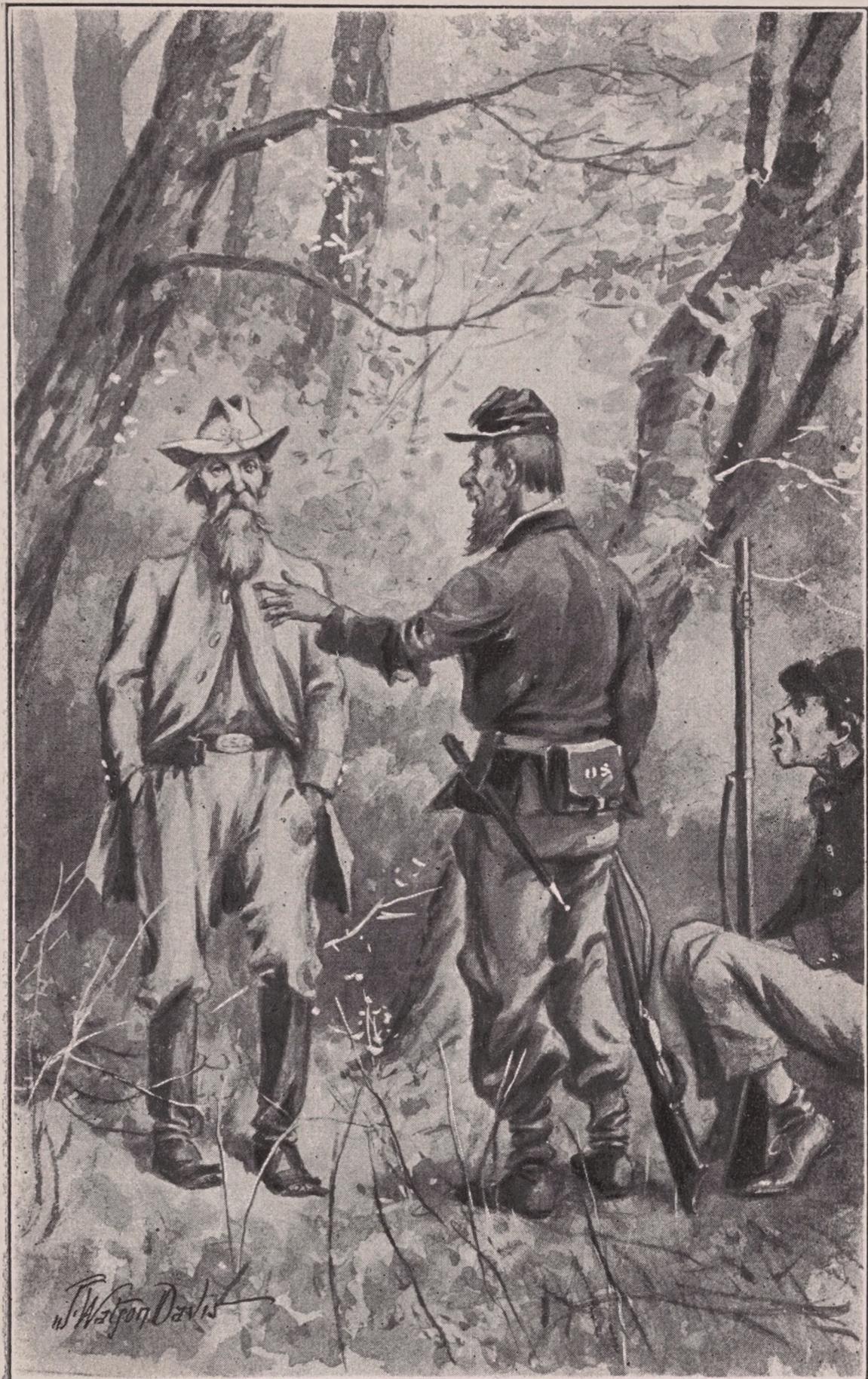
"Now Steve, you hold quiet a bit an' 'tend to your arm. I'll see this thing through, same's I've begun it, or let you take command, if so be the rest of the detachment think you're the best man."

"There, there, Reuben, don't have any squabble," Job Lord said soothingly. "This is no time for bickerin'. 'Cordin' to the way I look at it, we're in a terrible mess, an' there's no one but you to git us out of it."

Uncle Reuben again turned his attention to the prisoner.

"The question is whether you want to make a trade with us? We're in the humor for dickerin' jest now; but may not be half an hour later. What do you say?"

"I'll agree to lead you to Bolton Station, promisin' that you shan't come within half mile of any of my



“Jest kind’er fix it in your mind that you’ve been gobbled up.”
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— *With Grant at Vicksburg.*

people, if you will let me go when we get to your lines."

"That won't do, my son. We're countin' on carryin' in a prisoner to show that we haven't been asleep, an' you're the man. Jest kind'er fix it in your mind that you've been gobbled up, an' then perceed from there. We'll take you into camp an' turn you over to them as has charge of the prisoners, without sayin' a word, or we'll tell the story plainly, an' make it our business to look after you. Which way will you have it?"

The man hesitated a moment, and then said grumpily:

"I reckon I can't help myself. I'd be a fool to miss such a chance as that."

"Of course you would, an' now you're showin' sense; but jest let me whisper one word in your ear. I'm allowin' you'll play fair; but count on actin' jest as if I was suspicious of you. If we should have the misfortune to run into a lot of Johnnies, I'd put a bullet through your head quicker'n wink, without ever thinkin' I was doin' wrong. Now it's for you to say which course we'll take; but in case of a mistake, you suffer. See? That's the way we men from Maine do business."

"I'll do the best I can; but if you've got sense, you'll know that I might come across a party of Confederates where I don't expect to see 'em," the guide said appealingly.

“Wa'al, that wouldn't be your fault, I reckon; but it would be your misfortune jest the same, 'cause I should feel it my duty to keep the promise I've made. Up to this time no man can say Reuben Smart ever went back on his word, an' I'm bound to hold up my reputation. Now mosey along. I reckon we haven't got any too much time.”

Then it was the unwilling guide set out, Uncle Rube following close at his heels, with musket ready in case there should be any sign of treachery, and the remainder of us taking up the line of march as before.

We had traveled nearly an hour apparently at right angles with the cross-road, when Uncle Rube called a halt to ask the guide for an explanation.

“Where are you countin' on takin' us, anyway?”

“I'm lookin' to save my own life. Our people are scattered all through here for quite a bit, an' I don't dare strike for the station till we come to the cross-roads.”

“Do you allow to find 'em in the dark?” Uncle Rube asked suspiciously.

“If I don't we'll have to wait till mornin', an' it won't be a long spell, for we must be mighty close to sunrise now.”

“Go ahead,” Uncle Rube said curtly, and once more we plodded on, at times literally fighting our way inch by inch through the tangled growth, and again finding the forest so free from underbrush that we could travel at a reasonably good pace.

In half an hour or more the new day had come, and after looking about him a short time, the guide declared that he knew exactly where he was.

“We ain’t such a terrible long way from the cross-roads; but if there’s any show of a battle near about Bolton’s Station, I can’t promise we won’t run across some of the Confederate army, for a good many of us got away when you came into Jackson.”

“Go on; we’ll take the chances,” Uncle Rube commanded, and from that moment until we arrived at the cross-roads, not a word was spoken.

Then there was no need for giving the word to halt. We came to a standstill very suddenly, upon hearing the sound of cannonading in the distance, and knew full well what it meant.

“I declare it’s too bad!” Uncle Rube said mournfully. “The general’s got where he can’t help fightin’ a battle, an’ most likely the Johnnies roughed into him so hard that he couldn’t wait for us. How he’ll git along alone is more’n I can make out.”

Although we were ignorant of the fact at the time, the battle of Champion’s Hill had begun, and if the 46th took part, our “detachment” was not there to give aid.

“How far are we from the station?” Uncle Rube asked after a brief pause.

“I reckon it’s ten miles or more,” the guide replied; “but that firin’ don’t sound to me as if comin’ from there; it’s further to the south’ard.”

The old man stood as if perplexed, and Mr. Stubbs asked, after waiting a full minute for him to speak:

“What have you got on your mind, Reuben?”

“I’m tryin’ to figger out what our chances are for strikin’ General Grant’s army at the end of this ’ere road.”

“We’ll have to hit ’em if we keep straight on, won’t we?”

“That’s as might be, Stephen. You see the trouble is that the Johnnies may be between us an’ them, an’ it wouldn’t be any ways pleasant to come on a crowd of graybacks unawares, so to speak.”

“This ’ere road don’t go straight to Bolton Station,” the guide explained. “We’ve come about a mile an’ a half north of where we strike another cross-road that runs direct to the place.”

“That makes our work a bit harder,” Uncle Rube said thoughtfully, and then, as if he had made up his mind to a certain course, added, “I allow there’s no great reason for standin’ here chinnin’. We may as well move along ’till we can see where we’re at, an’ I’ll answer for it we don’t run into many Johnnies with our eyes shut.”

The roar of heavy guns in the distance increased as the moments wore on, and, knowing that General Grant had sent his troops out for the sole purpose of engaging the enemy, we understood that a battle of considerable importance was being fought.

In order to tell the strict truth, I must admit that

I was not overly anxious to arrive at the scene of conflict in time to take any active part. Surely it could make little difference, so far as the general result was concerned whether a drummer-boy was present or not, and I felt that I would be better pleased if circumstances prevented us from joining the 46th until after the bloody work was over.

Uncle Rube, however, who had, as I believe, really persuaded himself that General Grant stood in sore need of his services, was most eager to push on as rapidly as possible, and therefore led the way at his best pace down the hard road, where we had no excuse for lagging.

Never for a moment did the old man relax his vigilance over the guide; but remained close at his heels, with musket ready for immediate use, and I could well fancy that our prisoner was having a disagreeable time of it, for surely to be followed by a man who intends to shoot at the first show of danger, and who may make a mistake as to what he sees, is by no means pleasant.

As we advanced the roar of the guns increased until, because of the echoes, the noise apparently came from half a dozen different directions, and we knew beyond a peradventure that a very large body of troops must be engaged.

At the end of an hour after we had come to this road, Uncle Rube called a halt, and we needed it, for men who have been on the move all night without

other food than hardtack, eaten as they walked, are not in good condition for a long march.

Steve Stubbs begged piteously to be allowed half an hour's rest; but to his entreaties Uncle Rube turned a deaf ear.

"We're goin' to do our share of this 'ere fightin', Stephen, an' if you hang back it'll be all by your lonesome. We'll stop here ten minutes, an' then it's a case of hoofin' it to the next cross-roads without a halt."

As he said so we did, up to a certain point, when it became necessary to modify our plans somewhat, for then it was that we were arrived within about two miles of the cross-roads, as the prisoner informed us, and were brought to a sudden halt by the first evidences of battle.

Two springless farm wagons, drawn by weary-looking mules who bore evidences of having served their full time in the army, and driven by negroes, came into view a short distance ahead.

We halted immediately, as may be supposed, Uncle Rube forcing the guide into the bushes where he might be concealed from view until it was possible to learn whether these were friends or enemies.

They proved to be the latter; but we had no cause to fear them. The wagons contained most pitiful loads of wounded Confederates, who seemingly had not been cared for by the surgeons, and one could imagine the sufferings of the poor fellows as, under

that broiling sun, with nothing to shelter them from its fierce rays, they were jolted and shaken when the slightest jar must have caused exquisite pain.

“Where are they taking them?” I asked involuntarily, and the guide shook his head.

“I reckon it’s jest a case of haulin’ ’em away from the Yanks.”

“An’ they must go even further than we have walked, before coming to a house,” I said with a shudder.

“It’s what men call war,” ’Siah Fernald said half to himself, and then our unpleasant reflections were broken in upon by Uncle Rube, who had suddenly conceived another “plan.”

“Look out for that ’ere Johnnie, Job,” he said quickly. “Keep your eye on him so that he don’t let out a single yip,” and then, without waiting to explain his intentions, he ran swiftly up the road toward the hindermost cart, for by this time both teams had passed our hiding-place.

In response to the old man’s shouts the rude vehicle with its load of suffering humanity was speedily brought to a standstill, and I heard Uncle Rube ask one of the wounded men:

“Whereabouts is this ’ere battle goin’ on?”

“Champion’s Hill.”

“Quite a crowd there?”

“You’re a Yank, ain’t ye?”

“Yes; but that’s no reason why you can’t answer a civil question.”

"I'm willin' to tell you all I know. I was only wonderin' how you happened to be 'round here."

"We came up from Jackson, an' kind'er got mixed on the road," Uncle Rube explained affably. "Much of a fight on at that 'ere Champion's Hill?"

"I reckon you'll think so if our folks don't gobble you up before you git there. About fifteen or twenty thousand Yankees, I heard say, an' our force makes up ten thousand more."

"We're likely to strike a lot of you Johnnies, I reckon, if we keep on this road?" the old man said interrogatively.

"That's what you will, I reckon. We left two or or three regiments at the cross-roads. They were jest hurryin' in."

"I'm much obleeged to you, Johnnie, for your information, an' I'll try to do as much for you some time."

With this Uncle Rube hurried back to where we were in waiting, and the wagon with its ghastly burden moved slowly away.

When he rejoined us the old man set about questioning the prisoner as to how it might be possible for us to come upon the Federal force without striking the enemy's lines, and this the man, as might have been supposed, was unable to answer. He declared his willingness to do whatsoever he might in order to benefit himself; but insisted that it was not reasonable to expect he could guide us safely to Champion's

Hill without any previous knowledge of the Confederate position.

While we remained there screened by the foliage from view of those on the road, we had further evidences that it was not a safe neighborhood for men wearing uniforms of blue, and that any progress in the direction in which we had been advancing would be in the highest degree dangerous.

Half a dozen supply teams with the letters "C. S." prominently displayed, were driven down the road in hot haste, and before we were ready to go ahead or retreat there appeared in view stragglers such as are generally seen leading the flight of a vanquished army.

Then came a squad of terror-stricken men who yet carried their weapons, and Uncle Rube said in a tone of deepest disappointment:

"The Johnnies have been whipped out of their boots, an' we wasn't with the 46th!"

Now it became imperative that we decide quickly upon our course, for if Pemberton's army was beating a retreat the woods either side of the road would speedily be overrun, and we find ourselves prisoners at the very moment our people were victorious.

"I'll tell you what it is, Johnnie. If you can pull us out of this 'ere scrape I'll agree to let you go free the minute we git in sight of the Federal lines," Uncle Rube said suddenly, as if having at last decided upon a course of action. "It's the best trade you

can make; but if it happens that you try to play us false, a bullet from this 'ere gun will find a restin' place in your body."

"I'll do it," the man said promptly. "I give you my word to do the best I can, an' if I fail it won't be my fault."

"All right, my boy, go ahead, an' remember at the same time that it'll pay you to play square, 'cause your army has been soundly whipped, an' there'll be no refuge for graycoats anywhere 'round these diggin's."

"The only way that looks likely to me, is for us to strike right across the ridge, an' come on Champion's Hill by the road from Raymond."

"If you can put us on that road, my man, we'll be willin' to part company with you, for our people are holdin' the town of Raymond."

"I can do it; but you'll have to go over the ridges an' cross the creek two or three times, perhaps. It'll be a rough tramp; but we may strike a house now an' then where you can get somethin' to eat."

"How long will it take us?" 'Siah Fernald asked.

"Twenty hours or more."

"Push ahead," Uncle Rube said decidedly. "I'd rather spend that much time than run the risk of bein' gobbled up by the Confederates jest now, for they won't be in overly good humor after gettin' a drubbin'."

Thus we set off on as difficult a journey as one can well imagine.

After leaving the highway, now filled with fugitives, sound in body or wounded, we traveled through the woods a mile, perhaps, when we were arrived at a ravine down which we plunged at imminent risk of breaking a limb, and the first portion of this tramp was no more difficult than the last.

Uncle Rube would have had us keep on, regardless of exhaustion, to the end that we might gain our lines an hour or two sooner; but 'Siah Fernald and Job Lord were quite as determined as Steve Stubbs that we should take it more leisurely, the latter saying in a pathetic tone:

“If we run ourselves to death, Reuben, what difference will it make whether our corpses are in camp to-morrow or next day? It ain't right to force a man wounded as bad as I am, so fast on sich a road.”

Mr. Stubbs's entreaties would have had no weight with the old man; but when the other two comrades protested stoutly against such severe exertion, he could do no less than accede to their wishes, and therefore it was we halted about every thirty minutes, which was none too often, according to my way of thinking.

The small store of provisions which we carried in our haversacks was exhausted before noon, and after the last crumb had disappeared we were quite as hungry as when we ate the first morsel.

Until nightfall we pressed on without seeing any sign of human life, and then the guide, whom we no

longer looked upon as a prisoner because of the bargain which had been made, came to a halt at the edge of a clearing on a hillside, below which ran a narrow, unfrequented road.

“Do you know who lives here?” Uncle Rube asked as he threw himself on the ground almost exhausted, and the remainder of the “detachment” followed his example.

“I’m thinkin’ the place belongs to a man by the name of Barnes, who is what you people call a ‘bush-whacker.’”

“Could we trust him to give us a lodgin’?”

“His own grandmother couldn’t trust him to close her eyes after she was dead.”

“Then I’m thinkin’ we’d better give the place a wide berth.”

“This is the only house, ’cording to what I know of the country, that we’ll come upon for the next ten miles, an’ I’m mighty near knocked out,” the guide replied.

“What would you like to do?” Uncle Rube asked.

“Take the chances of stoppin’ here.”

“Pretty risky, ain’t it?”

“I ain’t so certain of that if you don’t give yourselves away. I could go up an’ ask the women folks for somethin’ to eat, claimin’ I’d jest come from Champion’s Hill, an’ you might stay here in the brush till I got back, or, if Barnes is away, there’s nothin’ to prevent you from goin’ into the house.

The crowd of us ought'er be able to do about as we pleased, if there were no men folks around."

"Go ahead, an' see what you can find," Uncle Rube replied, for the guide spoke fairly, and there was no reason why we should doubt the honesty of his intentions.

We remained concealed in the bushes while he entered the clearing, and in fifteen minutes or less he returned with what seemed to be cheering intelligence.

"There's nobody at home but a couple of women; Barnes an' two of his friends are said to be away on the river. It's for you to decide whether we'll risk it, keepin' in mind that the place may be visited by some of our men who are retreatin' from Champion's Hill."

I question if any of us would have been willing to run the risk of seeking shelter in that hillside cabin, which did not have about it as inviting an appearance as many a hunter's camp I have seen in the wilds of Maine, had it not been that we were positively on the verge of exhaustion. It seemed necessary we should have a shelter that night, and even Mr. Stubbs, timid as he was, favored the proposition.

The guide acted as spokesman and leader of the party after we were come to the house. He had already explained to the women that we were fugitives, and, therefore, no explanations were necessary when he asked for shelter and food.

The women were willing to give from such stores as they had, and readily agreed that we might sleep in the loft of the dwelling, the building being divided into two rooms on the ground floor, and an open space above under the roof.

It was all we could have expected under the circumstances, and, because of lack of chairs, we threw ourselves on the floor of that apartment which served as kitchen while the supper of corn-bread and fried bacon was being prepared.

Never was an odor more appetizing to me than that which came from the fireplace, and when finally the meal was set before us, we ate ravenously.

As soon as our hunger had been appeased we climbed the ladder which led to the attic, and there, on the bare floor of roughly hewn timbers, I fell asleep immediately after having stretched myself out at full length.

It may sound strange to one unfamiliar with such situations, that we Yankees should have been willing to trust ourselves so implicitly among those who were our avowed enemies; but when it is understood that we were well-nigh helpless from fatigue, really unable to force our way through the underbrush a single mile further, one ceases to wonder at our lack of suspicion.

The man whom we had captured was in no better bodily condition than the weakest of our party, therefore we had no reason to fear treachery on

his part, particularly because while our troops overran that section of the country, he was safer acting with us than against us.

How long I slept it is impossible to say of my own knowledge; but from what I afterward came to know, I must have remained in blissful unconsciousness four or five hours, although it seemed that my eyes had just been closed in slumber, when I became aware of a heavy pressure over my mouth, and that some one was shaking me violently.

Then, in a twinkling, a sense of danger came upon me, and immediately I was on the alert.

Raising my hand in token of returning consciousness, I was allowed to turn over, and then I found that it was none other than Uncle Rube who had thus been striving to arouse me.

“Look through the cracks, lad,” he whispered, removing his hand so that I might gaze through the crevices of the floor, and there I saw that which came near causing me to cry out in alarm.

In the room below were several men dressed in Confederate gray, sitting around the fireplace as if at their ease, while the two women moved to and fro cooking a second supper.

Like a flash came into my mind the thought that if these newcomers were not yet acquainted with the fact, they must speedily come to know we were in the loft, and would make it their business to learn whether we were friends or foes.

There was not a member of our party, save the Johnnie whom we had captured, who would fail to betray himself as being of Northern birth immediately he opened his mouth to speak, and, therefore, we could not for a moment hope to deceive these men when they demanded an explanation as to our presence.

And what rendered the situation all the more desperate, was the fact that we were shut up in the loft without means of escape, save by the ladder which led to the room below, for there was no window or other opening, as I knew full well, from having glanced around curiously when we first came into the place.

We were at the mercy of those men, who, it was reasonable to suppose, were bushwhackers, owning no military allegiance to the Confederates, although in sympathy with them, and were both ready and willing to commit any crime whatsoever.

I gazed at the strangers below as if fascinated, believing I saw in them my executioners.

CHAPTER XV.

A "DICKER."

THE one question in my mind as I lay looking through the crevices of the floor was, whether these women had told the late arrivals of our presence in the loft, and if they had not done so, why the information was withheld?

The men seemed to be familiar with their surroundings, or at least, so it appeared to me; but I failed to discover any signs of familiarity between them and the women, which would give token that they were at home.

Why I should have speculated as to whether any of these men lived in the cabin, at a time when we were in a situation of the gravest danger, I cannot say. That I did so is true, and instead of turning over in my mind the possibility of extricating ourselves from this unpleasant predicament, I spent the time idly asking questions of myself, and having but little or no interest in their probable answers.

Uncle Rube had made it his duty to awaken the others as he had me, and in less than ten minutes after I became aware of our danger, all the "detachment" were looking down upon the enemy.

The newcomers were four in number, young men, having the look of soldiers who had been hardened to fatigue and exposure by long marches, and in an idle way I set it down in my mind that they would be unpleasant customers with whom to have any dealings of an unfriendly nature.

How the other members of our company felt regarding the disagreeable situation, I had no means of knowing; but without turning my head it was possible to know from what I could hear of his movements, that Uncle Rube was holding a whispered conversation with each of our party in turn.

When he bent over me it was to say:

“We’ve got to capture them ’ere graybacks, or else find ourselves in a mighty tight box. Now I don’t put much dependence on what Steve is able to do with his lame arm, consequently he’ll pass his musket over to you.”

The words had been spoken in a whisper so subdued that it was only with difficulty I could distinguish them, and I asked quite as cautiously:

“What am I to do with the musket?”

“Get on your knees, if it so be you can without makin’ a noise, an’ find a crack in the floor where you may stick the muzzle of the gun through when the time comes. Then aim at that fellow near the ladder.”

“Are you goin’ to kill them all?” I asked in horror.

“I don’t reckon it’ll be necessary to muss up the house so much as that; but if it should come to a case of their lives or ours, you mustn’t do any foolin’—make certain your bullet strikes the mark.”

I could hear rather than see that my comrades were moving about ever so lightly, and judged they had received instructions similar to those which the old man had given me. Therefore, eager to show I could be depended on in a time of emergency, I set about obeying the command by rising to my knees, with much care, and holding the musket just above a crevice which was sufficiently large to admit of my shoving the barrel through when the moment for action arrived.

“When you hear me speak, jam your gun down so that three or four inches of the barrel can be seen,” Uncle Rube whispered, and at that moment the younger of the two women came up behind the man I had been instructed to draw a bead on, speaking a few words in his ear.

Without delay he arose from the rude stool formed of a single block of wood, and went out of the door, the young woman following.

The other members of the party turned their heads curiously as the two disappeared, but made no comment, and it flashed into my mind that now was to be told the fact of our being in the loft.

“I reckon things will get mighty warm when that fellow comes back,” Uncle Rube whispered to me,

thus showing that he had much the same thought in his mind as had come to me.

It was not possible for us to see very clearly in the gloom of the attic, for the only light which came in was through the crevices of the floor and from the aperture by which we had entered, yet I could dimly make out that my companions were on the alert, ready for whatever proposition our leader might make, and my heart beat quickly and heavily, for it seemed positive that we were about to engage in a most desperate conflict.

The man who had been called outside by the woman, re-entered after having been absent no more than five minutes, and I noted that his eyes were raised, looking up toward where we were concealed, therefore was I certain he had been told of our whereabouts.

While one might have counted ten he stood irresolute near the door, and then advanced quickly toward where the muskets of his party were stacked in one corner of the room.

Before he could get hold of his weapon Uncle Rube's voice rang out sharp and commanding:

“Halt where you are, or we shall fire! We are coverin' every one of you, an' not likely to miss our aim at such short range!”

The bushwhacker stopped as if he had been shot, and on the faces of his companions could be read fear and astonishment, as involuntarily they looked

in the direction from which the command had come.

No man moved, although after the first token that matters in the cabin were not as they had supposed, each glanced toward the weapons as if minded to make a sudden dash, and, understanding this, Uncle Rube cried sternly:

“There are six of us here; five belongin’ to the 46th Maine, an’ one Johnnie who is showin’ us the way out of the woods. I’m givin’ you an account of our force so’s to show how small a chance you’d have in case we come to a row. I don’t like the way you’re lookin’ at them ’ere guns, an’ it wouldn’t please me to see any of you fellows reach for a revolver. If you’re thinkin’ that a scrimmage will serve your purpose better than to make a bargain, strike out an’ we’ll do our share.”

The old man paused an instant as if to give those below time to realize fully what he had said, and then added, speaking to us in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by all in the building:

“Keep your men covered, lads, while I go down an’ kind’er take charge of things.”

“Don’t you go, Reuben, don’t you go,” Mr. Stubbs squeaked. “You’re takin’ too big a risk.”

“Not half so much as they are, I reckon,” the old man replied grimly. “All you’ve got to do is to hold ’em under your guns, an’ I’ll ’tend to the rest.”

Uncle Rube started to descend the ladder when

our guide, or prisoner, whichever you choose to call him, decided to take a hand in the matter.

“Look here, you lads below, I’m Sam Waters of the 143rd Mississippi; these fellows took me prisoner over near Catfish creek, an’ since then I’ve made a trade with ’em which I reckon they count on keepin’. The old man ain’t half a bad sort, an’ has sure enough got the drop on you. Better come to an agreement, for there’s nothin’ to be gained by fightin’.”

“You’re a fine kind of a Confederate to be runnin’ ’round guidin’ Yankees!” One of the party from below cried angrily, and Waters replied in a matter-of-fact tone:

“I’m no fool; but know enough to look after myself, when I get into a tight box, an’ you’d better come somewhere near my way of thinkin’.”

Uncle Rube did not wait longer for the Johnnies to discuss matters; but descended the ladder holding his musket in one hand ready for immediate use, and I literally held my breath, fearing lest, despite all that had been said, the bushwhackers might leap upon him.

I was not a little surprised, although it would have been worse than folly for the strangers to offer any resistance, while the odds were so strongly against them, to see each member of the party remain silent and motionless when Uncle Rube stepped on the floor below.

Never one of them had ventured to move from the time the old man first announced that they were in a helpless position, and now he walked across the floor, taking possession of the muskets as calmly and apparently as unconcernedly as if he had been among friends.

“I reckon you’d better come down, Job, an’ help me a bit,” he said, standing over the weapons and leveling his musket at the man who was in the middle of the floor. “The rest of you fellows upstairs will stay where you are in case of trouble.”

Mr. Lord was not as brave a man as Uncle Rube, and this fact was apparent when it came to the point of his descending the ladder, where the bushwhackers could readily shoot him down, if they were disposed to take the chances.

He hesitated at the top so long that I fully expected he would refuse to obey the command; but after seemingly pulling himself together, he went down rung by rung, slowly and hesitatingly.

“You seem to be kind’er tired out, Job,” Uncle Rube said with a laugh. “This ’ere job ain’t such a hefty one that it is goin’ to call for any great exertion. All I want is for you to make a collection among this ’ere company; most likely they’ll be willin’ to give up sich little keepsakes as they’ve got in the way of revolvers, when it’s known how bad we need ’em.”

“Look here, Yank,” the man who was standing

in the middle of the floor said in a not unfriendly tone, "I'm willin' to admit that you've got the drop on us, an' sich bein' the case there ain't no need of so much flummery. Tell us what you want, an' I reckon we'll have to come down to it like little lambs."

"I'm about through with the askin'," Uncle Rube said, drawling more than usual. "It won't be any hard job for you to understand that we can't live here peaceably like, until one side or t'other has all the weapons. Give 'em up, an' then we'll talk more about it."

Without hesitation the man in the middle of the floor drew two big pistols from his belt and handed them to Mr. Lord, the others following his example until Job was fairly loaded down.

"Lay 'em here with the guns," the old man said, and after the command had been obeyed, Uncle Reuben continued affably: "I reckon you Johnnies may as well make yourselves comfortable, an' the lads in the loft can come down, although I reckon it would please 'em better to sleep."

We descended the ladder promptly and without hesitation, now that the enemy had been disarmed, and the little room was crowded uncomfortably full, by the time we were all on the main floor.

"Now what is it you want?" the bushwhacker who had previously been called outside by the woman asked, as he filled and lighted a corn-cob pipe. "Let's have this 'ere business over with."

“We’re countin’ on gettin’ inside the Federal lines, an’ there’s nothin’ to prevent our takin’ all hands of you along as prisoners if we are so minded,” Uncle Rube began, as if explaining the situation to a party of friends. “The only drawback to it is that we’re needin’ sleep after travelin’ a good many miles, as this ’ere man can tell you,” and Uncle Rube motioned with his thumb toward Sam Waters.

“We’re in the same box, old man, an’ the grass didn’t grow under our feet, when we came down from Champion’s Hill, either.”

“So you was in the battle, eh?” and now Uncle Rube appeared to be very deeply interested. “Was there much of a scrimmage?”

“You can bet your life it wasn’t any tea-party; but somehow or other you Yanks got the best of it.”

“Where was you headin’ for when you pulled up here?”

“We didn’t have any special place in mind, just kind of gettin’ out’er the way, you know,” and the bushwhacker laughed unpleasantly.

“We want to go towards the river, an’ I reckon you fellers are pretty much bent on travelin’ the other way. Now if it so be that you’ll agree, here’s what I’ve got to offer, an’ if you don’t allow it’s about the best trade to be made, say the word an’ we’ll fix up some plan of carryin’ you into the Fed-

eral camp. I'm proposin' this, an' jist remindin' you that we've got all the shootin' irons: My men shall go upstairs an' get some sleep while I stay on guard here in the corner. You fellows can git your supper, an' then one of your men may keep awake if he likes, to see that we don't play any game, which is to say, one of each side will stand guard all night. In the mornin' we'll leave your firearms here in the shanty, an' you shall toddle along with us for a mile or more, when we'll say 'good-bye,' an' you'll be at liberty to do whatsoever you choose."

"But what's to prevent your playin' us a trick after we've gone a mile unarmed?"

"Nothin'," Uncle Rube replied quickly, "not a blessed thing; but if we was minded to do anything of the kind, it stands to reason we'd begin it now, an' not be here dickerin'. We've got the best of you, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', an' I allow that when a fair bargain is put up, it's good judgment to close it. The only reason why we're not luggin' you into camp is because we are clean beat out, an' don't want to spend the night travelin' when it seems as if we were bound to sleep; but it can be done if you want to push it."

The bushwhacker looked inquiringly at his comrades, and each in turn nodded his head, as if to say he was willing to agree to the proposition, which, according to my way of thinking, was the only sensible course to pursue.

"We'll do it," the man said at length, and Uncle Rube replied grimly:

"I kind'er had an idee you would."

Even though we were in no condition to burden ourselves by carrying these prisoners into our lines, more particularly because it was almost certain the country between where we were and Champion's Hill, was swarming with Confederates, yet I could not but say to myself that for once Reuben Smart had failed to take advantage of his possibilities.

However, if the old man was satisfied, certainly I, who was of the least importance in the party, ought to be, and I would not have ventured a criticism under anything save the greatest pressure.

Immediately the bargain was concluded the bushwhackers became at ease, and appeared most friendly. Our party remained in that corner of the room where were the weapons, but the others moved about as pleased them best, urging the women to make greater haste in preparing the meal that they might the sooner lie down to sleep.

The man whom I judged to be the leader of the party held a long and whispered conversation with Sam Waters, and to this Uncle Rube made no objection, possibly for the very good reason that while he held possession of the weapons the enemy could not gain any very great advantage over us.

When the supper was concluded, and the bushwhackers ate like men who were nearly famished, one of them said with a laugh:

“Seein’ as how we’ve been disarmed I reckon there’s no great call for any of us to stand guard, an’ if the Yankee here is agreeable, I’m goin’ up the ladder for a snooze.”

“Pile in anywhere that suits you best,” Uncle Rube said in a most friendly tone. “Our side will do the same, an’ I reckon you count on keepin’ guard with me,” he added, nodding toward the leader.

“Not a bit of it,” the man replied. “After such a bargain as we’ve made I don’t see any call for me to hold my eyes open, because if you are of the mind to play us a scurvy trick, it would be done as easily while we are awake as asleep.”

Then, after whispering with the younger woman, he went up the ladder, his companions following his example, and we were left in possession of the room below.

That position which had seemed to me so menacing, had simply resulted in a change of sleeping-quarters, although I still hold to it that we lost an excellent opportunity of carrying into our lines four prisoners.

The women of the house did not seem to be one whit disturbed because of our thus taking forcible possession of the place.

When they had, in a slatternly way, cleared the remnants of the meal from the table and washed the dishes, one of them drew across the corner of the room opposite where Uncle Rube had stationed him-

self, a faded chintz curtain, hiding from view a not very rest-inviting bed, and then both disappeared behind this flimsy partition.

“Now boys, turn in an’ get what sleep you can,” our leader said in a tone of command. “Considerin’ that all of us was mighty nigh played out, we wasted too much time with this ’ere dicker.”

“But you’re not countin’ on keepin’ awake all night, are you, Reuben?” Mr. Stubbs squeaked.

“Not a bit of it; I’ll hold out as long as I can, an’ then call ’Siah; he’ll wake Job, an’ Job will give Steve a chance after he’s done his trick.”

I lost no time, once the permission was given, in resuming my rudely interrupted slumbers, and in a twinkling I crossed over into dreamland, not to come back to my squalid surroundings, until the light of a new day streamed in through the windows, and the half-open door.

It was Mr. Stubbs who had wakened me, and when I would have leaped up, thinking to take my turn at standing guard, he said with an air of martyrdom:

“I stood your watch for you, Dick. [A] cripple like me, who is right at the point of dyin’, might jest as well have his burdens increased as to think that some one else will bear ’em for him. If Job Lord hadn’t had the heart of a stone, he wouldn’t have wakened a wounded man like me to spell him.”

“You can sleep now, for I’m wide awake.”

“It’s too late,” he said with a sigh. “It’s too late. The women folks have begun to stir, an’ a sick man like me can’t sleep with them trapesin’ in an’ out all the time.”

Mr. Stubbs might have added with equal truth that we would likely resume our march in a very short time, which would prevent his indulging in a nap; and I afterward came to know that he had only been on guard about half an hour, Job Lord taking upon himself the greater portion of the little painter’s duty.

The women set about cooking breakfast as if their stores were unlimited, although I believed they were well-nigh at the end of their cornmeal, and when the table was heaped high with bread and bacon, while a huge pot of coffee on the hearth sent forth a most delicious odor, the elder called shrilly up the ladder:

“You uns had better come down an’ get your feed.”

One would have supposed it necessary to repeat the summons several times before the tired men could be aroused, but they responded promptly, and in a few moments we were eating together as amicably as the best friends might have done, save that Uncle Rube took due care to have his “detachment” on the side of the table nearest the weapons.

Then preparations were made for the journey, by Uncle Rube’s ordering us all out of doors in line, saying as the bushwhackers obeyed without a mur-

“My detachment’ll take their guns an’ march behind you Johnnies. We’ll leave your muskets and revolvers here in the cabin, ’cordin’ to agreement. How does that strike you?”

“I allow it’s carryin’ out the bargain we made last night,” the leader replied.

“That’s it, an’ it only remains to ask if Sam Waters is agreeable to keepin’ on with his part of the work, as was arranged before we came into this ’ere clearin’.”

“I’ll do my best at puttin’ you within sight of the Yankee lines,” the Confederate soldier replied; “but I’m kind of askin’ myself what would happen if we should come upon a crowd of our people accidental like.”

“If that comes about without any of your connivin’, we Yanks will have to take our dose, the same as we are expectin’ you to take yours. Now then, march,” and Uncle Rube waited until the men had filed out into the road in front of the cabin, he being the last man to leave the place.

I am minded now, because once more am I giving too much space to such details as might not interest even my grandchildren, that it is best to push ahead with the writing, lest I find myself cut short in the account of what we did after Vicksburg was invested.

The march was made according to agreement, the bushwhackers accompanying us down the road con-

siderably more than a mile, and making no complaint because of being forced to go so far.

It was Uncle Rube who dismissed them as he brought us to a halt, and said:

“I reckon you Johnnies have lived up to the end of the dicker, an’ now we’ll part company. If it so be you are minded to sneak back after the firearms, an’ have a try at capturin’ us, you can do it, ’cause it’s clean outside of our trade; but I wouldn’t advise anythin’ of the kind, seein’s we men from Maine fight terrible hard.”

“You’re a decent kind of a Yank,” the leader of the party said, “an’ I reckon we shan’t have any more truck together if it can be helped.”

Then, with a cheery “so long” the irregular soldiers of the Confederacy turned their backs on us, and, without waiting for the word of command, Sam Waters pushed on rapidly in the direction of where he believed our troops would be found.

Ours was not all plain sailing when we parted company with the bushwackers. Now and then we were forced to take to the thicket when, by the clouds of dust, we understood that we were coming upon a force which would most likely prove that of the enemy, and we remained in hiding until they had gone by, thus delaying the journey not less than five or six hours; but when night came we were obliged to sleep supperless in the woods.

At daybreak the next morning, our movements

quickenened by hunger, we resumed the march, climbing up what Sam Waters declared was the last ridge, which lay between us and the direct road from Raymond to Champion's Hill.

Then it was that we heard the sound of cannonading in the distance, and knew beyond a peradventure that a second battle was being fought.

The forenoon was no more than half spent when we were come to the cross-roads, one of which led to Raymond, and the other straight away toward Edward's Depot, it being two miles perhaps to the first-named place, and ten or more to the latter, at which point we all decided that this new battle was being fought.

"I reckon I've kept my bargain with you Yankees," Waters said as we involuntarily halted.

"I reckon you have, Johnnie," Uncle Rube replied, an' if you are minded to join the Federal troops, we'll take you in an' give you a good show with us of the 46th. Better do it, for we're goin' to lick you fellers out of your boots, within the next six months."

"I reckon I'll stick to my friends," Sam Waters replied with a smile, an' do jest the same as you would, if I tried to coax you over to our side."

"I allow you're right, an' don't blame you a little bit; you've kept your bargain with us, an' done it like a man, so here's hopin' you won't run across any more Yankees until these 'ere so-called Con-

federate states are gathered into the fold where they belong."

Uncle Rube said this as if he was pronouncing a benediction, and Waters, thinking perhaps that it was well for him to get away while the old man was in such a devotional mood, wheeled about, taking to the road which would lead him in the direction of Bolton Station.

We pushed forward once more, weary, footsore and hungry, the noise of cannonading dying away within a couple of hours, thus telling, as we believed, that the supposed engagement had been no more than a skirmish.

Not until an hour passed noon were we cheered by the sight of a blue uniform other than those we ourselves wore, and then we came upon a regiment bivouacked by the roadside.

They were troops from Pennsylvania, I believe, and we learned that two battles had been fought since we escaped from the tight squeeze in the covered bridge, in both of which our forces were victorious.

Big Black River bridge was the second engagement, which, as these soldiers told us, wiped away the last Confederate resistance between General Grant's army and the city of Vicksburg.

As a matter of course we were overjoyed at the news; but I really believe Uncle Rube was a bit sore way down in his heart, because such decided advantages had been gained, while he was absent from

the army. The old man had gotten it into his head that he was assisting General Grant very decidedly, and that the commander should have been able to perform so much work without his advice, both surprised and displeased him.

There was one unpleasant matter for us in these welcome tidings. We of Uncle Rube's "detachment" would now probably be forced to press on nearly to the river before finding the 46th, and this we must do without rations, save as we could forage in a country which had probably been stripped bare by the army that had just marched over it, or in the event of our coming upon some kindly disposed quartermaster, who would give assistance to stragglers, for such we had really become through no fault of our own.

Advancing at the best pace of which our tired limbs were capable, we came upon this regiment or that division of the army, and found ourselves looked down upon in a manner which was by no means pleasing to Uncle Rube, who, as is well known, held his head exceedingly high because of being a member of the 46th, and hailing from Maine.

We were classed among the "coffee-boilers" by all who saw us, and were not likely to receive any immediate aid from those soldiers in blue who were doing their full duty, therefore the road before us, occupied though it was by our own people, would probably prove painful and disagreeable before we could bring the long march to a close.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CITY BESIEGED.

WE were five days tramping from where Sam Waters left us to the encampment of the 46th, and during all that time were among our own forces, and yet not with friends, for each and every one we met looked upon us as cowardly stragglers, who had wilfully separated from our command, in order to escape the dangers of the battle-field.

It irritated Uncle Rube until he could hardly reply to a civil question, that we, who had faced so many dangers in the attempt to rejoin our comrades in time to take part in the engagements, should be looked upon with contempt.

But yet, fret and fume as he might, it was impossible to convince the soldiers with whom we talked, that we were other than what we seemed.

It was a happy day for all of us when we finally found the 46th building trenches in front of the Confederate earthworks at Vicksburg, just south of the road to Jackson.

In order to better understand that which follows it is well one should look at a map of the country,

given in detail, nearabout where Vicksburg is situated. He will find that the Mississippi river makes a long bend, somewhat after the shape of the letter U, running for several miles parallel with itself, and that on the lower, or southerly, side of it is situated the city, surrounded landward by a series of ridges or chain of hills. The defenses were, as has already been said, at some distance outside the town, running from the river bank two or three miles above, in a rude circle to the high lands below, and ending at a marsh or swamp bordering the river.

General Grant himself thus describes the situation :

“ My line was more than fifteen miles long, extending about from Haines’ Bluff to Vicksburg, thence south to Warrenton. The line of the enemy was about seven.

“ The ground about Vicksburg is desirable for defense. On the north it is about two hundred feet above the Mississippi river at the highest point, and very much cut up by the washing rains; the ravines were grown up with cane and underbrush, while the sides and tops were covered with a dense forest. Farther south the ground flattens out somewhat and was under cultivation. But here, too, it was cut by ravines and small streams. The enemy’s line of defense followed the crest of a ridge, from the river north of the city, eastward, then southerly around to the Jackson road, full three miles back

of the city; thence in a southwesterly direction to the river. Deep ravines of the description given, lay in front of these defenses.

“As there is a succession of gullies cut out by rains, along the side of the ridge, the line was necessarily very irregular. To follow each of these spurs with entrenchments, so as to command the slopes on either side, would have lengthened their line very much. Generally, therefore, or in many places, their line would run from near the head of one gully nearly straight to the head of another, and an outer work, triangular in shape, generally open in the rear, was thrown up on the point; with a few men in this outer work they commanded the approaches of the main line completely.

“The first thing to do was to get the artillery in batteries where they would occupy commanding positions; then establish the camps, under cover from fire of the enemy, but as near up as possible; and then construct rifle pits and covered ways, to connect the entire command by the shortest route.

“In no place were our lines more than six hundred yards from the enemy. It was necessary, therefore, to cover our men by something more than the ordinary parapet. To give additional protection sand-bags, bullet-proof, were placed along the tops of the parapets, far enough apart to make loopholes for musketry. On top of these logs were put.”

General Grant, on investing the city, proposed to

enclose the earthworks of the enemy with a line of defenses which would hem them in entirely, leaving to the navy the care of cutting off communication by water.

When we finally succeeded in gaining the camp of the 46th, the investment of Vicksburg was complete, and he who cares to know exactly how that was done, can learn by consulting any military map of the scene of operations, and many such can be found in every history of the war.

All that is necessary for me to state is that our regiment was a portion of the 13th Army Corps, and our station in the Federal line of fortifications, not more than half a mile from the Jackson road, perhaps seven miles from General Grant's headquarters, which last were in the rear of the 15th Army Corps well up toward the north end of our position.

The Confederate force immediately confronting us was Stevenson's division, with which was the 143rd Mississippi, to which Cathcart belonged, the prisoner whom we had seen at Jackson and whom we promised to send in word regarding his fate.

When Uncle Rube's "detachment" arrived in camp one assault had already been made upon the Confederate line, and although nothing had been accomplished toward capturing the city, we were told that our troops had succeeded in getting into a better position as a result of the fight.

We reported for duty at eight o'clock in the morn-

ing, worn to the verge of exhaustion by the long tramp, and ravenously hungry.

Despite his need of food, Uncle Rube's first desire was to tell the story of our mishaps and wanderings in detail, to the end that it might be understood, we had not willingly lagged in the rear; but much to our surprise no one would listen to us, and every man seemed unusually busy or preoccupied, until I began to suspect we had fallen so low in the opinion of all, as never to regain our former standing in the regiment.

While we were drawing rations, however, some one in the commissary department announced, that a second attack was to be made on all parts of the line at ten o'clock that same morning. This information, although not particularly cheering to fellows who had been tramping so many days, was most welcome to me, since it explained why those who had formerly been our very good friends, were now seemingly indifferent to our past sufferings.

I believe all of our "detachment" felt much as I did, when we heard what was about to be done, for even if we were not in bodily condition to take part in a fight, by doing so we would be showing to our companions-in-arms, that we were not "coffee-boilers" save through stern necessity.

I know for my part that while I munched thehardtack, which tasted deliciously sweet after the long famine, I said to myself that there should be

no show of fear in my face, no matter how much of terror there might be in my heart, and I would follow whithersoever the 46th went, regardless of anything and everything, so that we might recover the good opinion of those of our fellows from whom we had been so long separated.

Uncle Rube was as well pleased with the prospect of standing face to face with death, and possibly of being worsted, as a man might be who had just received permission to do that which his heart most desired.

“I’ve got an idee, Dicky boy, that some of these fellows think we might have come up sooner, if we hadn’t been afraid of gettin’ into a fight, an’ it’s a mighty lucky thing for us that General Grant laid his plan for this ’ere assault, without waitin’ for my advice, ’cause we’ll have a chance to show ’em what we are made of before night comes.”

Mr. Stubbs was greatly exercised over the prospect, and straightway began trying to argue with whichever of us he could force to listen, as to whether it was safe for a man wounded as desperately as he had been, to go into battle before having fully recovered.

“You’re fit as a fiddle, Stephen, barrin’ that you may be a little tired in the legs,” Uncle Rube said decidedly, “an’ you’re bound to go in, I tell you, ’cause it wouldn’t do for one of this ’ere detachment to hang back after the way the soldiers hereabouts

are lookin' at us. We've done some mighty fine work, let me tell you, since this 'ere train was stalled in the covered bridge, but it won't count for anythin' until some of them as were in the same car, gets along to tell the story."

"But my arm is achin' terrible, Reuben."

"We'll all set to an' hunt for burdock leaves; old Miss Coburn used to say that burdocks steeped in vinegar was powerful soothin', an' if it so be they grow 'em down this way, we'll have you fixed up 'twixt now an' ten o'clock."

Mr. Stubbs appeared to suffer very much after 'Siah Fernald made the discovery that there were no burdocks in the vicinity, and but for the fact that all of us insisted stoutly, that he should accompany the "detachment" wherever it went, I believe of a verity he would have reported himself at the hospital, as unfit for duty.

We ate a hearty breakfast, and then furbished up our weapons as if about to go out for inspection, after which I reminded my companions of what we had promised Cathcart at Jackson, regarding sending word in to Vicksburg that he was a prisoner, and all agreed that if we came within speaking distance of a Johnnie whom we failed to capture, and who could not kill us, we would do our best to deliver the message.

By the time all this had been done we were ordered into line, and during the ten minutes or more we

remained waiting for the word, I suffered more in mind than during the entire remainder of the day while we were fighting.

To a fellow who is inclined to be faint-hearted, the moments spent in battle line, before the engagement begins, are more painful, and give greater opportunities for cowardice to assert itself, than any other interval in a soldier's life.

Job Lord and 'Siah Fernald stationed themselves either side of Mr. Stubbs, to make certain that at the last moment he would not beat a retreat for the hospital tents, and, thus guarded, the little painter resigned himself to the inevitable.

The signal for the advance was to be a heavy cannonading from every battery in position, and it came so suddenly, even though we were standing there awaiting it, as to startle us.

Then we poured out over the earthworks like ants from their hills, swarming across the space which separated us from the enemy, until it must have looked as if the earth was covered with insects of blue, and into this living mass the Confederates poured shot and shell at close range, mowing down wide lanes of our people, until the bodies appeared to be packed from one line of fortifications to another.

Men who ran forward intent only on killing, received their death wounds as they advanced, and continued yard after yard of distance without

knowing that their life was rapidly ebbing away, only to finally fall headlong, ghastly masses of clay.

Believing each instant that I would feel the impact of the bullet, which was to cut short my life, I ran, beating my drum furiously and nervously, trying to hold my position elbow to elbow with Uncle Rube, and stumbling here, or leaping there over the bodies of those companions-in-arms who had fought their last battle.

I believe it was the angry roar of the guns, the desire to gain the enemy's fortifications quickly, the hope of showing to our comrades of the 46th that we were no "coffee-boilers", that caused me to forget the danger and go forward as if I was the bravest hearted among all that gallant army.

Truly the scent of the battle was in my nostrils, and I burned with the desire to inflict deadly injury upon those men in gray, who were cutting down our ranks in such numbers.

The fever born of carnage, of thunderous roaring, of the pungent fumes of gunpowder, and the salty, indescribable odor of blood, was upon me with such force, that before we had traveled half the distance to our goal, I was conscious of nothing save that intense eagerness to slay.

When I came to realize anything distinctly perhaps an hundred of us were inside one of the enemy's earthworks, and I could see that the remainder of our men had retreated to their own lines.

It was a singular position, to say the least of it, and as if I had taken no part in the struggle which had resulted in our having gained that undesirable position, I asked Uncle Rube, after first glancing around to make certain all of our "detachment" were present and unharmed:

"How did it happen? How did it happen? We must be inside the enemy's lines!"

"That's exactly where we are, Dicky boy, an' mighty hot work it was to get here. For a little shaver, I must say you're a plucky one."

It shamed me to hear such praise, which I knew was not deserved since, had it not been for the fever which so thoroughly took possession of me, I know of a certainty I should have faced about and ran away from that death-dealing shower of lead and iron, even before we had well begun the charge.

I tried to explain to Uncle Rube that no praise should be given me, because of my not being responsible for my actions at the time, whereupon he said decidedly:

"If you were frightened, as you admit, then you showed all the more pluck in beginnin' the charge. They only are brave men who overcome fear in order to do their duty."

Talk as he might, I was not convinced that there had been any great display of bravery on my part, and therefore changed the conversation by asking:

"How did we get here, Uncle Rube? I don't remember anything about it."

“Wa'al, we come right along, barrin' two or three times when the enemy's fire kind'er staggered us, so to speak, an' the rush brought us to these 'ere rifle-pits, where I reckon we're likely to stay quite a spell.”

“What became of the men who were trying to hold them?”

“Some have stopped here,” Uncle Rube replied grimly, as he pointed to the lifeless bodies in gray which lay within view, “an' the rest of 'em took to their heels.”

“Are we countin' on holdin' this place?” I asked in surprise not unmixed with fear.

“That's as may be, lad. The whole boilin' of us would be shot down before we could get back, an' I reckon it's a case of stayin' till dark, unless our people make a charge with the idee of gettin' us out of the hole. Take it all in all, I should say there were well on to a thousand of us scattered along this line, an' we may be able to hold our ground till we can run away under cover of darkness.”

Mr. Stubbs did not venture to join in the conversation; but looked as if thoroughly frightened at finding himself in such a position, and I wondered, if he had not come much as I, so excited as not really to understand what he was doing.

'Siah Fernald and Job Lord stood where they could peer out over the top of the pit without too much exposure to the fire from our lines, and

looking wistfully toward the fortifications which they had left but a short time previous.

I came to know while talking with Uncle Rube, that our men who had gained a foothold, as we had done, in the enemy's lines, had been twenty minutes or more charging across that bullet-swept ground, no more than six hundred yards in width. Twice had they been repulsed to the very verge of a panic, and then, pushing forward with a fury no enemy of the same strength could withstand, they swarmed into the rifle-pits, killing or driving out those who tried in vain to hold them, and were in as dangerous a position as could be imagined, exposed to the fire of both friend and foe.

As I have said, there were about an hundred men in our poor place of shelter, and to guard against the danger of the enemy's coming upon us from either side through the covered ways which connected the rifle-pits, sentinels were stationed at each end to give warning of an attack. Then we tried to call up whatsoever of patience we possessed while we waited for some turn in the tide of battle which might give us an opportunity of escape, for it was not possible we could effect anything of advantage while we remained there.

Situated where we were it was impossible to turn our guns against the enemy, and it was not particularly safe to watch the surging tide of battle along the lines lest we be killed by our own friends,

therefore Uncle Rube and I got down upon the ground, little inclined for conversation at such a time.

We remained there in silence ten minutes or more, when I fancied I saw one of the supposedly lifeless bodies move his arms, and immediately I went toward him to learn if he was yet alive, hoping it might be in my power to relieve suffering. So far as I could make out the man had been stunned by a bullet which cut a furrow across his scalp, and after having remained like one dead, was just beginning to recover consciousness.

"Have you Yankees taken the works?" he asked feebly as I raised him to a sitting posture, where he might lean against the bank of earth.

"We have taken a little piece of them," I replied with a laugh, "an' have put ourselves into a hole which we can't easily get out of."

He did not appear to understand what I meant, and before I could say anything more Uncle Rube came up, ready as ever to play the part of Good Samaritan.

"I reckon, Dicky boy, if you an' this 'ere Johnnie are countin' on swappin' stories while we're loafin' 'round here, it'll be a good idee to fix him up so's he will look a leetle like a human bein', for the blood that's runnin' from that wound ain't improvin' his face a bit."

The soldier appeared to be surprised because we

were minded to relieve his sufferings so far as was possible, and indeed it did seem odd that we who had been so lately trying to kill, should now turn our attention to saving life. He, as a matter of course, made no protest against our doing whatsoever we might for his relief, and by emptying our canteens we got sufficient water with which to bathe the ugly looking, but not dangerous wound, after which Uncle Rube bandaged it with strips torn from the sufferer's hickory shirt.

It was a rude piece of surgery at the best, yet I make no question but that it answered the purpose for the time being, and certain it was we spared the poor fellow a deal of suffering.

The remainder of our "detachment", seeing us talking with a man whom they had supposed to be dead, gathered around, and while the battle was raging fiercely in every direction, with the shot and shell screaming over our heads, we had a most friendly chat with the Johnnie whose head was swathed in the checked bandage, until it looked as if he was wearing a nightcap.

We talked of the war in general; of the possibilities of capturing Vicksburg, which he denied, and of this particular assault, until the thought of that prisoner whom we had met at Jackson came to me, and I asked him if he knew one James Cathcart, of the 143rd Mississippi.

"Know him? Of course I do; he belonged to my

company. A right good fellow was Jim, but you Yankees downed him at last."

"Not so thoroughly but that you may see him again, in case we take you prisoner."

The man would have said something at that instant; but Uncle Rube interrupted by telling the story of our meeting Cathcart, and what we had done for him in the way of loaning money.

For a full minute the wounded Johnnie remained silent after having heard all we could tell him regarding his comrade, and then he said with deepest feeling:

"You Yanks don't seem to be half as bad as we 'uns allowed you was. The man what helps Jim Cathcart helps me, and when this war is over, all you 'uns has got to do is to hunt up the men of Company B, 143rd Mississippi, if you want to see whether we appreciate a favor."

"That part of it is all right," Uncle Rube said with an air of fine disdain. "You can turn about an' help some Yank who's in trouble, if you want to pay the debt. We're fightin' each other, it's true; but at the same time, we don't allow to be ravenin' wolves, 'specially us Maine men."

"What do you count on doin' with me?" the wounded man asked, and the leader of our "detachment" burst into a hearty laugh:

"I don't reckon it's for us to say very much on that matter, seein's how we are in snugger quarters

than you. It stands to reason we wouldn't let you go to tell your friends how few of us run into this trap; but there's no question in my mind of takin' you prisoner, 'cause that's about what we are this minute. All I'm askin' is for a chance to slip back into our lines."

The wounded man had no more than got an idea of the situation than an alarm was sounded from the lower end of the rifle-pit, and immediately all, save those on guard at the side nearest the Jackson road, rushed in that direction.

As a matter of course we soon found ourselves in a solid mass, hardly able to move our arms, because the pit was not wide, and but few were needed to choke it entirely.

We had among us a captain, from some western regiment, I believe, and he seemed to understand his business, for straightway we were ordered back into something approaching an orderly array, and then he set about giving such commands as were likely to prevent the enemy from breaking in upon us.

It would not be possible for any considerable body of men to make their way into the pit which we occupied, while half a dozen remained to defend it, because its shape was that of the segment of a circle, and those who advanced could readily be shot down, if we were on the alert.

Therefore it was that the captain formed us in line along the inner side of the pit, with orders

that we have our muskets loaded, and when the foremost should have discharged his weapon he was to march back to the rear. Thus we would have continually a man in advance, who was in condition to do execution.

Whether the Johnnies really counted on making an attempt to capture us then and there, I cannot say; but certain it is that after two of their men had been killed or wounded, they gave it up as a bad job, and we were left in peace for the moment, yet with the disagreeable knowledge that some decided attack would be made, if it so chanced we were forced to remain there very long.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAYING A DEBT.

It was a long, weary day we Yankees spent in the Confederate rifle-pits, waiting for the succor which, as it seemed, would never come, and constantly on the alert, lest the enemy make an attack upon us, which might not be successfully resisted.

Directly in front of where we were, the struggle between the two armies continued, with greater or less intensity throughout the major portion of the day.

Now we could see a division of men in blue sallying forth across the open space, and force ourselves to believe that, despite the incessant and deadly fire of the enemy, we might be able to join them.

Then each time we saw the lines of blue hesitate in the advance, waver, and fall back—not that they were cowards, but because the enemy's fire was so deadly that flesh and blood could not withstand it. Again and again were they hurled forward upon the fortifications in the useless struggle until, involuntarily, I cried out against the commander who would send his troops to certain death, when even by their dying nothing could be gained.

I believe on that day we of the 46th who lay

hidden in the rifle-pits came to so execrate General McClernand, who was responsible for the butchery, that we could never afterward see any good in him, and when the time arrived that he was relieved from his command, we held a feast of rejoicing.

I was sickened by the wanton killing of men, which could be charged only to ignorance of the true condition of affairs, or a desire to gratify personal ambition, and after a time refused to look out upon the horrible scene.

How we spent that day I cannot readily tell; to look back on it now seems as a nightmare. At that time it was as if we remained hemmed in there, fearing each instant the enemy would overrun the inner bank, and crush us by sheer weight of numbers.

Never had the sun moved so slowly across the heavens, and there were times when it appeared to me as if that globe which sent down on us such withering heat, almost as deadly as the enemy's rifle-fire, absolutely stood still; but the night finally came.

When the darkness hid from view that blood-stained slope of ground, we who were virtually prisoners at the same time we had been victors, crept out, and, running at full speed, chased by the bullets which the enemy sent at random after us, finally gained the Federal lines.

How strange it is that men standing beneath the very wings of the angel of death, will make merry

over a comrade's plight, when he has been surrounded by deadly dangers! We had come out from a more perilous position than can well be imagined, and yet once inside our lines, those who met us seemed to consider it a duty to jibe us, because of having remained so long with the Johnnies.

All that had been accomplished by the great sacrifice of life was the knowledge that Vicksburg could not be carried by direct assault. If the city was captured it must be by siege and the starving of its defenders.

As the days wore on, we did sentry duty in rotation; we stood our allotted number of hours in the rifle-pits, watching for an opportunity to kill one of the enemy, and by this time I had discarded my drum for a musket. Since it was no longer required of me that I perform the duties of drummer, and rather than remain idle while others were at work, I played to the best of my ability the part of a soldier. If I am not so careful about the date upon which this affair or that occurred, it is because one may learn from the histories of the war exactly when happened the incidents I have tried here to paint.

One date, however, stands out vividly in my mind, because then occurred that which was to me most amusing, and yet almost incredible.

On the 25th day of May General Pemberton sent a flag of truce into our lines, for the purpose of giving us permission to bury our soldiers, who had

been killed during the assault I have just attempted to describe, for during these seventy-two hours the poor fellows lay where they had fallen.

Directly in front of our corps the bodies were thickest, and while the greater portion of our division was told off into burial parties, we of Uncle Rube's "detachment" were not assigned to the mournful duties, consequently it was possible for us, during the short armistice, to move about at will between the lines.

Uncle Rube proposed that we stretch our legs, by walking leisurely across that space which we had traversed in such haste three days previous, and Mr. Stubbs flatly refused to accept the invitation, declaring that his arm was in such a condition, as to render it absolutely unsafe for him to move about amid the painful scenes of the slope.

I was not particularly desirous of going out, because of that which must be seen; but feared to hang back lest my comrades believe me to be cowardly, therefore I set off with as much alacrity as if the proposal had been of my own making.

The soldiers in gray, as a rule saluted us with the question as to how soon we were going to give up the attempt to get into a city, which could never be taken, and we in turn set this date or that in the near future, as to the time when we would, as Uncle Rube said, "bag the whole boilin' of 'em."

It was while Uncle Rube chaffed with a Johnnie

regarding the scarcity of food in Vicksburg, that I heard a voice which sounded somewhat familiar, crying out:

“Hi! You little Yank!”

Looking up quickly, to my great surprise, I saw none other than the same James Cathcart, whom I had good reason for believing was a prisoner among the Federal troops in Jackson, and yet there could be no question but that he stood before me.

“How did you get here?” I asked in astonishment, whereupon Uncle Rube, turning suddenly and recognizing the man, shouted in mingled surprise and bewilderment:

“Why ain’t you in Jackson?”

Cathcart laughed good naturedly, and invited us to come up on the earthworks where, as he said, we could see all that was going on, at the same time we had a chat.

We would have accepted the invitation, but that an officer speedily forbade our coming inside the lines, and Cathcart was therefore forced to join us, if he had any desire for an interview at short range.

“Didn’t expect to see me in Vicksburg, eh?” he asked with a laugh, and Uncle Rube replied grimly:

“Wa’al, hardly. How did you get away?”

“You Yanks ain’t half as smart as you think. The same night I saw you, three of us gave the guards the slip, an’ tramped across country. I don’t reckon we could have done it but for that four

dollars an' sixty cents you lent me. Didn't think you was aidin' a prisoner to escape when you scraped up that much money, did you?"

"Wa'al I'll be blowed!" Uncle Rube exclaimed. "It strikes me you Johnnies come mighty cheap when a leetle more'n a dollar'n a half apiece buys you off."

"I don't mean that we bribed any of your men. We had the cash with which to buy food, so you see it was really a case of gettin' through on your money, an' I've had my eye out while on picket, thinkin' I might run across you to pay what I owe."

"We're in no hurry for the cash, Johnnie," Uncle Rube said with a laugh; "but if you're loaded down with it, of course, as you know, it'll come in handy."

"I can't give you back the same kind you lent me, because we only have Confederate script in the city; but I'm allowin' that twenty of our dollars will be about the same as one of yours, an' I'll throw in a few for good measure. Here's a hundred; will that square us?"

Uncle Rube looked ruefully at the paper which Cathcart tendered him, and finally took it from the outstretched hand as he said:

"I ain't certain I'd like to make that kind of a trade every day, for it strikes me it would be a losin' game."

"You're gettin' twenty dollars for one."

"Yes, 'cordin' to the way it's printed here; but

if I had one of Uncle Sam's notes I could spend it, which is more'n can be said of this stuff."

"There's no trouble about passin' it in Vicksburg," Cathcart said with a laugh; "but if you'd rather keep the debt standin' I'll take the bills back an' give you hard money as soon as I can."

"I reckon we'll keep this, seein's how we're comin' into Vicksburg mighty soon, an' then we'll get you to show us where we can spend it."

"You're not countin' on bein' so reckless as to be taken prisoners, are you?"

"Oh no, jest comin' in to gobble you Johnnies up, that's all."

"It'll be many a long day before you do that, Yank, so don't set your heart too much on it," Cathcart replied, and I interrupted the idle conversation by asking how he had entered Vicksburg.

"That was easy enough," he replied. "The left of your line only runs as far as the high land next the river; between that an' the water is a wide strip of marsh, an' we didn't have a little bit of trouble in sneakin' along there after dark. Our people send out messengers that way."

Uncle Rube pinched my arm in token, as I understood, that he had gained some valuable information, and then I asked concerning Bob Yardley.

"Saw him the day after I got back," Cathcart said. "He's gone into the army regularly, you know, an' they tell me he makes a good soldier."

“Did you tell him you had seen us?” I asked, eager to hear more concerning the lad whom I had learned to love so well.

“Oh yes; gave him all the particulars of our meetin’ in Jackson, an’ he wasn’t surprised a bit, because you Yanks lent me money. He seems to think you’re right decent sort of folks, an’ the only thing against you is bein’ on the wrong side.”

“Do you know where he is stationed?”

“Well up the line, opposite General Grant’s headquarters.”

Then Cathcart asked where our regiment was encamped, and when I had pointed out the location he agreed to tell Bob, with the faint hope that, in event of another truce, the lad might come where we could meet.

Then we were forced to part company with this very agreeable Johnnie, in whose escape we had unwittingly aided, because the armistice was nearly at an end, and when we were returned to our lines I had in my heart the hope that I might soon speak face to face with the Confederate lad, whom I looked upon as a friend even while we were supposed to be enemies.

Another date is fixed in my mind.

It was on the 18th of June when it seemed to us of the rank and file that the long siege must be drawing to a close. A call was then made for volunteers to work on a tunnel or gallery, four feet in width by

five feet in height, to run at right angles with the parapet of the fort nearest the Jackson road, which fortification was the most formidable of all the enemy's defenses.

The soldiers of the third division had been working for some time on a branch, or "sap", as it is called in the army, which had been pushed forward until it reached the outer ditch surrounding the fort, and now was come the time when a gallery or tunnel must be excavated for the reception of powder.

There was to be a main tunnel run underneath the works for a distance of forty-five feet, and across the inner end of that, another running either side fifteen feet in length, the whole forming the shape of the letter T.

Volunteers were called for work on this tunnel, with the understanding that the men perform the labor in gangs or shifts, two using pickaxes, two shoveling back the dirt, and two more dragging it out in grain sacks.

These gangs of six men each—as many as could work to advantage at one time in the narrow space—were to be on duty one hour, and off three. Owing to the impossibility of ventilating the tunnel, laborers could not remain in the noisome place longer than sixty minutes.

I heard the call for volunteers without giving especial heed to the matter, for it never came into

my mind that we of the 46th had any reason to offer our assistance; but Uncle Rube was possessed with the insane desire to have a hand in the labor.

"We'll find some man to join our detachment, an' then we'll make a full crew," he said to me after announcing his determination to volunteer.

"But why do you want to mix in with it?" I asked. "There are plenty here to do the digging, an' if enough of our soldiers don't come forward, the government can hire negroes, as has already been done."

"But I want to have a hand in that 'ere mine, lad. 'Cordin' to my idee when that fort is blown up, we shall run into Vicksburg like sheep goin' over a stone wall."

"Well, what of it?" I asked, not understanding what the old man was driving at.

"What of it, lad? Can't you see for yourself, that when we go back to Malden, we can swell 'round tellin' of how our detachment was the one that worked on the tunnel which brought about the fall of the city? Don't you see any honor in it?"

"I don't see any honor in shovelin' clay," Steve Stubbs squeaked. "I came out here for a soldier, an' got myself shot almost to pieces, which, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', is all that can rightly be expected of me. Besides, I'm in no fit condition to be crawlin' 'round in tunnels like a bloomin' mole!"

“You’re in as prime shape as you ever was, Stephen, an’ it’s ’bout time you gave over coddlin’ up that arm. Why, bless you, man, the wound doesn’t look more than a pin-prick.”

“If you’d ever been pricked with a pin the size of that, you wouldn’t be here talkin’ ’bout rushin’ ’round in them bloomin’ old tunnels,” Mr. Stubbs said irritably. “I’m beginnin’, to wish I’d never had anythin’ to do with your old detachment! If I hadn’t belonged to it, the chances are I wouldn’t have had my arm almost cut off, an’ we wouldn’t have been in the covered bridge, or trampin’ over every hill in the state of Mississippi.”

“But it so happens, Stephen, that you do belong to it, an’ you’re goin’ to stick till the end of the business, or I’ll know the reason why. I didn’t ask your advice ’bout this ’ere tunnel business. I jest made up my mind to do it; but I’ll give you the choice of usin’ a pick, a shovel, or luggin’ out dirt.”

“I’ve washed my hands of the whole business,” Mr. Stubbs said emphatically as he turned to face ’Siah Fernald and Job Lord, neither of whom had raised any objections to Uncle Rube’s plan. “Are you goin’ to be sich fools as to let Reuben Smart volunteer your lives an’ liberties away?”

“I reckon, Steve, that workin’ an hour at a time in that tunnel won’t deprive me of very much life, or any great degree of liberty,” ’Siah Fernald said,

and Job Lord nodded his head to show that he agreed with his comrade.

My opinion had not been asked, and I did not venture to give it, after hearing how poorly Mr. Stubbs fared in his attempt to prevent Uncle Rube from volunteering the services of the "detachment."

What our leader said to the officer in charge of the work, I do not know; but it was afterwards whispered among the members of the 46th, that the old man had claimed we were well posted in mining operations, and, consequently, would be of more value than any others who might be selected.

At all events, he had no sooner volunteered than we were numbered among the laborers on the tunnel, and then it stood Uncle Rube in hand to find the sixth man, for, as he confessed, he had given the officer to understand that our "detachment" numbered the same as that required for one gang.

Well, as Mr. Stubbs said, he "found a victim"; Jim Haley from Meddybemps, a young fellow whom we knew right well; but who I felt certain was not thoroughly well acquainted with Uncle Rube, else he would have been less willing to join in the old man's schemes, particularly when so much labor was involved as seemed probable in this case.

We were set to work without delay, the engineer in charge giving us no instructions, save as to the direction in which we should dig, since he believed

from what Uncle Rube had told him, that we were all thoroughly familiar with such operations.

It is not my purpose to go into the detail of our share in constructing that tunnel. It is enough if I say that during every one of the sixty minutes when our "shift" was at work, Mr. Stubbs grumbled and scolded because he had been "dragged into the fool business", and at very frequent intervals while we were off duty, he reproached Uncle Rube most bitterly, declaring that it was much the same as downright murder, to force him into such a place while he was so grievously wounded.

I must say for our leader that he showed himself more anxious to volunteer, than he did to perform the actual labor, and but for the fact that 'Siah and Job spurred him on continually, I verily believe he would have searched for the seventh man to join the "detachment" in order that he might not be forced to do anything save give commands.

Now, of course, we being engaged in the work soon came to know exactly what was proposed to be done, and we learned that the engineers planned to deposit at the end of the main gallery eight hundred pounds of powder, and seven hundred pounds at each end of the cross tunnel, making a total of twenty-two hundred pounds.

This was to be carried in and then banked up with earth, which in turn would be braced by timbers, or, in other words, the tunnel was to be loaded

much in the same fashion as you load a gun, in order that there might be no loss of explosive power.

That portion of the scheme which called for the most attention from me was the fact that the miners—meaning we who dug the tunnel—were supposed to carry this powder on their backs, in bags which contained twenty-five pounds, and in order to do so, it would be necessary to advance a full hundred yards exposed to the fire of the enemy.

It was not pleasant to think of going up the open sap with a bag of powder on my shoulder, when I would most probably be the target for all the sharpshooters within range, and one could well fancy how such a proposition struck Mr. Stubbs.

When he learned what the officer in charge intended we should do, he opened all the vials of his wrath upon Uncle Rube's head, declaring that the old man must withdraw his "detachment" from the task at once, or he would straightway write a letter to Malden, telling the people there that Reuben Smart was absolutely killing him by inches, and intended to have him blown up as soon as the murder was completed.

I could have laughed at the little man's wrath if there had not been a certain sympathy in my heart for him, because of the fact that I was quite as much disturbed concerning the prospect of such labor as was he; but I did not intend to give the others an

opportunity of saying I shirked that which my comrades were ready to do.

At noon of the third day we were so nearly at an end of the task that orders were given to haul the powder up to a certain point in the main trench, from which place we who had been selected for the hazardous work were to take it.

Now that the time was so near at hand when we would be called upon to transport the explosive material, I looked forward to it with fear for myself, and anxiety as to what Mr. Stubbs in his terror might be tempted to do.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MINE.

I HAVE neglected to set down one fact which should have been stated some time before, in order that he who reads may have a better idea of the siege, as it appeared to us in camp.

From the moment the city was invested there was a continuous booming of artillery and rattling of musketry from one end of the long line to the other, for it was not the commander's purpose to sit down quietly and starve out the enemy. He proposed, in addition, to keep them busily engaged, thereby tempting the Confederates to expend their stores of ammunition which could not be replenished after we had the city thoroughly hemmed in.

But that this last was finally done so completely as to prevent any person whatsoever from going in or coming out, was due to the information given by Cathcart during the truce.

Uncle Rube lost no time in making known to Colonel Hubbard, that which he learned from the Johnnie whom we had befriended, and the result was that within a very few hours thereafter, the Federal lines below the city, which had stopped at

the bank overlooking the river, were extended down the slope and across the marsh-land out to the water's edge.

And now to go back to the moment when we understood that the time was near at hand for the explosion of the mine, and Mr. Stubbs was in that frame of mind very nearly bordering on mutiny, because of the extreme danger which he understood must be incurred, if we who claimed to be under Uncle Rube's command continued the labors for which we had volunteered.

It was no more than an hour from the time Mr. Stubbs declared he would not aid in the task of carrying the powder up the open trench, where he must necessarily be exposed to the fire of the enemy, when the command was given to make ready the mine, and we who had excavated the gallery and tunnel, gathered up the bags which had been used in carrying out the earth, running down the open trench at full speed toward that place where the powder had been left, by those who brought it to the rear.

The officer who had charge of the operation, set a force of men at work shoveling into each bag about twenty-five pounds of the explosive material, and tying it up loosely.

Then had come the moment of extreme danger, as it seemed to me. With one of these bags on his back, a fellow must run a full hundred yards ex-

posed to the enemy's general fire, and a target for the sharpshooters, which last it was only reasonable to expect, would soon get an inkling of what might be going on, for, as I figured it, no less than a hundred trips would be necessary in order to carry the entire amount of powder into the gallery.

It is as well if I confess that I was thoroughly frightened by the prospect before me; but I would have lost my right hand rather than let others know of my cowardice, and was determined to brave the dangers with a smiling face regardless of the terror in my heart.

I was also quite naturally concerned to know what Mr. Stubbs would do, after the threat had been made, and the little painter did not long leave us in doubt.

He had evidently become convinced that it would be worse than useless to appeal to Uncle Rube, therefore he awaited an opportunity when the old man, with his customary officiousness, was superintending the work of filling the bags, even though it was really none of his business.

Mr. Stubbs went up to the officer in charge of the work, wearing an expression of most intense suffering.

I suspected the intentions of the little man, and stepped forward with studied carelessness, until I was where it would be possible to hear what was said.

"I'm awful sorry, sir," he said in an apologetic, and at the same time anguished tone; "but perhaps you may not have known, sir, that it hasn't been such a great while since I was wounded, an' this work of minin' has put me in bad shape. I don't feel as if it would be possible for me to run back an' forth along this 'ere ditch at full speed, without doin' myself serious harm."

"Have you been in the hospital?" the officer asked.

"No, sir; I stuck it out all by myself, owing, as Reuben Smart says, to the fact that we men from Maine ain't inclined to coddle ourselves overly much. I've been doin' full duty ever since."

"Where were you wounded?"

"In the arm, sir," and Mr. Stubbs laid his hand very tenderly on the spot from which one would have supposed, by the expression on his face, that life had nearly fled.

It was fortunate for the little man that the officer was so pressed for time, that he could not afford to spend the necessary number of minutes to examine the alleged dangerous wound, and straightway Mr. Stubbs received more praise, when he was in reality displaying rank cowardice, than ever had Uncle Rube, who could rightfully claim to have saved the entire "detachment" from imprisonment, if not from absolute death.

"You are a brave fellow to volunteer for such

work as this, when many another would have been in the hospital. Go to the rear, and I will see to it that you receive proper mention for having done really more than a soldier's duty."

It was a veritable flood of joy which overspread Mr. Stubbs' face as he wheeled sharply around after saluting hurriedly, and ran at full speed toward the encampment of the 46th, thus making haste lest Uncle Rube should inquire into the cause of his flight.

"Where is that little runt goin'?" the old man asked me as he caught a glimpse of Mr. Stubbs' rapidly vanishing figure.

I was nearly shaking with mirth, and could not for some time make reply; but when I did succeed in repeating to Uncle Rube that which I had heard, the old man gave way to a torrent of anger.

"So he will be mentioned for bravery, eh? The little white-livered coward! He's been doin' full duty while he was wounded nigh to death, eh? The weak-kneed sneak! I'll expose him! He shan't set himself up here as a model soldier, when he ain't much more'n half a man! I'll tell all 'bout that 'ere wound of his!"

I did my best to calm the old man, for even though Mr. Stubbs had come very near telling an absolute falsehood, I was not minded that a member of the 46th should be exposed to the contempt of his companions, if it was in my power to prevent it,

Uncle Rube refused to listen, and would have gone directly to the officer in command with an explanation of Mr. Stubbs' story, but for the fact that at that very moment, word was given for us to begin the dangerous duty of carrying the powder into the tunnel.

Unwittingly Mr. Stubbs had done me a good turn, for because of his display of cowardice I was able to pull myself together in better shape than otherwise would have been possible, lest I might add to the shame which it seemed to me our comrade had brought upon the 46th.

It may seem a trifling matter to run at full speed an hundred yards through an open ditch with a burden of twenty-five pounds on one's back; but as a matter of fact it was most trying to the nerves, and I fully expected that many of us would be shot down before the task was completed.

While making the journey I ran as never a lad ran before, and on arriving at the point where I was sheltered from the enemy's fire, felt each time as if my escape was little short of miraculous; but yet, strange as it may seem, never a man among us was touched by the flying missiles which hurtled about our heads like swarms of angry bees, and the explosive material was finally piled in the galleries without mishap.

Then came the work of making it ready for the match.

To this end six strands of fuse cut to exactly the same length, were laid from each charge of powder out half-way the length of the tunnel, and protected by boards in such manner that when we should tamp them or pack them, the fuse would not be disturbed.

By this time the enemy appeared to understand full well what we were about, and it could be seen by those who occupied positions on the high land within our lines, that they had begun a counter-mine in the hope of striking our tunnel. In addition to this, they threw hand grenades down into the ditch and rolled shells with lighted fuses over the parapet of the fort, making it decidedly hot for those of us who were forced to venture out from the galleries during the work of tamping the mine.

After the fuses had been laid and protected, as I have said, we brought back a goodly portion of the earth which had been carried out, packing it in a solid wall against the piles of powder, and bracing each mound of earth with heavy timbers to the end that when the explosion came there would be sufficient resistance at the outer side of the tunnel to force the impetus upward.

Now because of the fact that it is beyond my power to set down in faithful pictures that which occurred immediately after our work was done, I propose to copy here the story as written by General Hicken-

looper, which is printed in the Century's "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War":

"The commanding general having been advised on the day previous that the work would be completed before 3 P. M. of the 25th, general orders were issued directing each corps commander to order up the reserves and fully man the trenches, and immediately following the explosion to open with both artillery and musketry along the entire twelve miles of investing line; under cover of which the assaulting columns, composed of volunteers from the 31st and 45th Illinois, preceded by ten picked men from the pioneer corps under charge of the chief engineer, were to move forward and take possession of the fort.

"For an hour or two previous to the time of the explosion the scene from 'Battery Hickenlooper,' where General Grant and his subordinate commanders had taken their positions, was one of the most remarkable ever witnessed.

"As far as the eye could reach to the right and left could be seen the long winding columns of blue moving to their assigned positions behind the besieger's works. Gradually as the hour of three approached the booming of artillery and incessant rattle of musketry, which had been going on night and day for thirty days, suddenly subsided, and a deathlike and oppressive stillness pervaded the whole command.

“Every eye was riveted upon that huge redoubt standing high above the adjoining works. At the appointed moment it appeared as though the whole fort and connecting outworks commenced an upward movement, gradually breaking into fragments and growing less bulky in appearance, until it looked like an immense fountain of finely pulverized earth, mingled with flashes of fire and clouds of smoke, through which could occasionally be caught a glimpse of some dark objects,—men, gun-carriages, shelters, etc.

“Fire along the entire line, instantly opened with great fury, and amidst the din and roar of 150 cannon and the rattle of 50,000 muskets the charging column moved forward to the assault.

“But little difficulty was experienced in entering the crater, but the moment the assaulting forces attempted to mount the artificial parapet, which had been formed by the falling debris about midway across the fort, completely commanded by the Confederate artillery and infantry in the rear, they were met by a withering fire so severe that to show a head above the crest was certain death.

“Two lines were formed on the slope of this parapet, the front line raising their muskets over their heads and firing at random over the crest while the rear ranks were engaged in reloading. But soon the Confederates began throwing short-fused shells over the parapet, which, rolling down

into the crater crowded with soldiers of the assaulting column, caused the most fearful destruction of life ever witnessed under like circumstances.

“The groans of the dying and shrieks of the wounded became fearful, but bravely they stood to their work until the engineers constructed a casemate out of the heavy timbers found in the crater, and upon which the earth was thrown until it was of sufficient depth to resist the destructive effects of the exploding shells.

“As soon as this work was completed, and a parapet was thrown up across the crater on a line with the face of the casemate, the troops were withdrawn to the new line beyond the range of exploding shells.”

Even had I myself witnessed the explosion of the mines, I could not have described it in such a vivid word picture as this which is copied above; but, as a matter of fact, Uncle Rube's “detachment” did not see very much of the spectacle, save the upward shooting of the mass after the earth seemed to split asunder, for the very good reason that we were in the rear of our lines on so low a level as to prevent our having a view of the doomed fortification.

Neither was it possible for us to see the brave fellows as they charged straight into that fiery excavation made by the exploding powder, giving no heed to the many dangers with which they were to

be confronted. We knew they were going forward, however, and Uncle Rube said to me in a tone of sorrow:

“It’s too bad, lad, that we can’t get to see the sight, for I allow men have never in this ’ere world done a braver deed, than to throw themselves into that smokin’ ruin!”

“An’ ’Siah Fernald is in the middle of all the racket,” Job Lord said calmly, as if giving information of the most commonplace matters.

“’Siah Fernald!” Uncle Rube repeated, and I gazed at Mr. Lord in open-mouthed astonishment. “He can’t be there! You’re dreamin’, Job, dreamin’ with both eyes open!”

“You’ll find a weasel asleep before you ever see me doin’ anythin’ like that, Reuben Smart,” Mr. Lord replied quietly, raising his voice only in order that we might hear his words above the terrific din. “If I saw him go, that ought’er be proof enough, eh?”

“Of course we’d be bound to take your word for it, Job; but there must be some mistake about the whole thing, for ’Siah fell back with us after we’d finished chargin’ the mine.”

“I know he did, an’ while we hung ’round here chewin’ hardtack sandwiches, he skinned over to the camp an’ got his musket.”

“What good would that do?” Uncle Rube persisted, still sceptical regarding the statement. “Only them as volunteered yesterday were allowed to go in.”

“I reckon you’re right, Reuben; but ’Siah went jest the same. I was standin’ close at his heels when the Illinoy men marched by to take station near the battery, an’, seein’ one of ’em who was lookin’ white ’round the mouth, ’Siah whispers to him, ‘You’re sick, man, an’ it looks to me as if you wouldn’t live a great while unless you shinney back to the rear.’ ‘I can’t leave this ’ere line,’ the man says, an’ he begun to look whiter’n ever. ‘Step out when nobody’s lookin’, an’ I’ll slip in,’ ’Siah whispers, an’ by gum, the feller did it!”

“But some one must have seen what was goin’ on, an’ Siah’d been ordered to the rear in short order,” Uncle Rube said stoutly, still incredulous as to all Mr. Lord had stated.

“I reckon that’s what would have happened if jest at that very minute the word to march hadn’t been given, an’ there wasn’t much time to fool with ’Siah. He went off lookin’ prouder’n any peacock, an’ I’m afraid by this time he’s mangled up a good deal worse than Steve Stubbs ever believed he was.”

“And ’Siah did all that?” Uncle Reuben cried, now forced to believe the story in its entirety. “If we folks from Maine haven’t got good reason to hold up our heads higher’n ever, I’d like to know the reason why? I never believed ’Siah had so much clear grit in him, an’ yet he allers acted like a man that would go through most anythin’, once his heart was set upon it. That kind’er lets up on the

disgrace Steve Stubbs has brought on us, for if the boys of the 46th ever come to know what excuse he gave to get out of carryin' powder, our detachment will never hear the last of it. Now if they so much as yip about what Steve did, we'll throw 'Siah in their faces, an' ask if there's a man among 'em who'd dare to do the same!"

I was quite as excited as Uncle Rube, and, knowing that one of our comrades was battling for life in that awful crater, we pressed forward regardless of any orders to the contrary, until we stood on the slope of the battery, exposed to the enemy's fire, but without being aware of the fact.

As a matter of course, it was impossible for us to make out what was going on in that place where death was raging; but we knew full well that our comrade would be in the very thick of the worst danger, and there were times when I literally held my breath in suspense.

When an hour had passed, and I believe that during all those sixty minutes we who were watching for 'Siah Fernald did not speak a single word, cheers went up from this or that portion of our line, for we had come to understand that the brave fellows from Illinois, among whom was a man from Maine, were holding their own against all the Confederate force that could be massed at that particular point.

With the sound of the cheering, which at times

rose even above the roar of cannon, Mr. Stubbs came up, his arm re-bandaged and in a sling. It seemed to me that he was trying to pull his face into an expression of pain, and he pressed his right hand against the limb which was supposed to be painful, as he asked in a feeble voice:

“What’s goin’ on? It wasn’t very much of an explosion, ’cordin’ to what I saw of it.”

“Where have you been, Stephen?” Uncle Rube asked sternly.

“I got so bad with luggin’ dirt out’er the tunnel that my arm jest completely went back on me, an’ I had to hunt up the surgeons or I’d been a dead man long before this,” Mr. Stubbs replied with the air of one who suffers most exquisite pain.

“It was your heart that went back on you, I reckon,” the old man cried sharply. “What surgeon did you find?”

“I can’t rightly say; he had such a terrible time tryin’ to save my life that he didn’t get a chance to tell me the number of his regiment.”

“An’ do you mean to say that a reg’lar doctor tied up your arm?” Uncle Rube asked as he pointed to the bandage, which had the appearance of having been torn from a woolen shirt.

“He’s goin’ to get some better cloth as soon as he has time; you see all hands are awful busy,” and Mr. Stubbs now spoke in an apologetic tone.

“Look here, Stephen, you needn’t try to stuff us

with any yarn like that," the old man cried angrily. "If it wasn't for the shame that would come to all of us, I'd strip off that rag, an' show your arm with nothin' but the meanest kind of a little scar on it. You've disgraced the 46th an' Malden, this day, that's what you've done, an' if it wasn't for 'Siah's showin' out so bright, I'd give right up tryin' to take Vicksburg."

Then Uncle Rube turned his back on the little man, who now looked as if on the point of bursting into tears, more particularly when Job Lord shook his fist at him.

"What's Siah been up to?" he asked tearfully, and I, pitying him because of thus having been so sharply reproved, even though I knew him for a coward, told the story of Mr. Fernald's bravery.

"Well," Stephen said after a brief pause, "it strikes me that 'Siah is a bigger fool than he looks! The idee of a man goin' into a place like that jest for the fun of the thing!"

"He has shown himself a brave man, an' everybody who lives in Malden will be proud of him from this time out," I said, beginning to regret having felt any sympathy for the little painter.

"I reckon it won't make much difference to him what folks think, 'cause it don't stand to reason he'll ever come out of that place alive."

"His friends will always remember that he died for his country, which, accordin' to my way of

thinkin', is way ahead of bein' left alive to hear people say he shirked his duty because of bein' scared of his own shadow," I replied sharply, and then walked away to join Uncle Rube and Mr. Lord.

What Steve Stubbs did immediately after that I cannot say, for in a few seconds I forgot him entirely while watching for our comrade of whose bravery I was exceedingly proud.

Not until night came did we get any tidings, and then two regiments were sent to the crater to reinforce those gallant fellows who had held the place so long, and the survivors came forth from the terrible place, bearing their dead and wounded with them.

I am not ashamed to say that my eyes were filled with tears as I scanned each helpless burden which was brought into our lines by worn and haggard-looking men, and then, suddenly, we came to know that 'Siah had paid dearly for his bravery.

We found him on one of the litters, wounded so badly that he could not speak when we gathered around, insisting on the honor of carrying him to where the surgeons were at work; but he looked up with something like a smile on his bloody face as we spoke, and my eyes were not the only wet ones in our "detachment."

Uncle Rube claimed the right to take charge of the poor fellow, supporting his head ever so tenderly, as Job Lord and I carried him to the rear,

and sternly ordering Steve Stubbs to stand back when the little man would have taken some part in the work of mercy.

I could not remain at the hospital tents while 'Siah was under the hands of the surgeons; but, later, when he was placed in a cot, so swathed in bandages that he looked like a veritable mummy, we came to know that while his wounds were severe, they were not necessarily fatal.

"A man with the grit 'Siah has got will pull through," Uncle Rube said late that night while we were eating supper, Mr. Stubbs sitting some distance away in compliance with the old man's commands. "He'll come out of that 'ere hospital alive; but I reckon he's through with fightin', for the army is no place for a one-legged man."

Then it was for the first time that I knew Mr. Fernald had lost one of his limbs, and again I was bowed down with grief, because of the comrade of whom we were so proud.

At that moment an orderly came to ask if we were minded to volunteer for the purpose of laying another mine, work on which was to be begun as soon as possible next morning, and Uncle Rube replied promptly:

"Of course we will. Men from Maine don't back down when they've started in on a thing, or, at least," he added, glancing at Mr. Stubbs, "it's only now an' then they show up small,"

When the orderly had written down our names and departed, Uncle Rube said in a loud and decided tone:

“ We’ll help rig up another mine, lads, an’ Steve will stay to see the thing set off, even if we have to tie him hand an’ foot!”

CHAPTER XIX.

UNDER FIRE.

I WAS not the only member of the "detachment" who felt just a bit disgruntled with Uncle Rube, because of his having volunteered our services as well as his own without first consulting us.

But for the heroism which 'Siah Fernald had displayed, I believe we would have refused to take part in the excavating of the new mine, for surely we had performed our portion of such labor; but after he had proved himself such a brave man, it really seemed as if each individual member of the "detachment" must exert himself far beyond what could reasonably be expected, in order to live up to the reputation which had been made.

Every man of the 46th, officers as well as privates, felt that 'Siah Fernald's glorious record reflected upon the entire regiment, and it was for us to follow, after such fashion as was possible, in his footsteps.

On the night after the explosion of the mine and the horrible work in the crater, we of the "detachment" gathered in an abandoned rifle-pit at the rear of our line to discuss the doings of the day, and particularly to rehearse what 'Siah had done.

Then it was that Uncle Rube began to bear, too heavily as I thought, upon Steve Stubbs because of his faint-heartedness, and during several minutes he called down upon the little painter's head a flood of reproaches and contempt, until Job Lord, who was not naturally a tender-hearted man, interfered by saying:

"Now see here, Reuben, supposin' we let by-gones be by-gones? It don't stand to reason that all the men who come from Malden can show the same amount of pluck 'Siah did, an' if Steve flinched when it came to carryin' powder along that trench, why it's no more than happened to all hands of us. I know for my part, I held my breath every minute I was under fire."

"But you kept right on at your work, Job," Uncle Rube interrupted. "You didn't go huntin' 'round for a surgeon, an' allowin' that the life was runnin' out of an old pin scratch, that had been healed up more'n three weeks."

"If you had been shot through the arm, same as I have, Reuben Smart, you wouldn't thank any man for callin' it a pin scratch," squeaked Mr. Stubbs, plucking up courage now that he knew at least one of the "detachment" was ready to extend him sympathy.

"See here, Steve Stubbs, I don't want to hear anythin' more 'bout that 'ere wound of yours. Why, when 'Siah was cut up so bad he couldn't speak, he

grinned at us sociable like so's to show that his heart was all right if his legs wasn't. He's done us proud, 'Siah has, and there ain't a man in the 46th but what is struttin' 'round to-night throwing out his chest because of what our comrade from Malden did. That's the kind of a record to make in the army!"

"But I ain't built that way, Reuben, accordin' to how the recruitin' officer put it, I believed I'd strike a fat job at paintin', as soon as we got to the front. You know I never was made for fightin'!"

"Yes, I know it now, Stephen," Uncle Rube said sternly, and then deliberatel turned his back upon the little painter, as he began talking with Jim Haley.

Mr. Stubbs' lip quivered, and, fancying that he was on the point of bursting into tears, which would complete his disgrace in the eyes of Uncle Rube, I reached over and took him by the hand.

At this show of friendliness Steve's face brightened, and gripping my hand until I was near to crying out with the pain, he whispered:

"I always counted you a good boy, Dick."

Overhearing the remark, Uncle Rube turned sharply, as he asked:

"Have you jest found out that he's got good Maine blood in his veins, Steve? He ain't needin' any pettin', that much I can tell you, for after what

the lad has done he stands next to 'Siah Fernald with the members of the 46th, an' away up among the officers of the staff, who know better'n we what he can do."

Then it seemed much as if the old man was again on the point of overwhelming Mr. Stubbs with reproaches, and for a second time Job Lord interrupted:

"There's somethin' I want to talk to you about, Reuben, an' that right seriously. I ain't allowin' the men from Maine are goin' to carry on this whole war, same as they've been doin', 'cause it's only fair we should give other folks a chance."

"What's crawlin' on you now, Job?" Uncle Rube asked in surprise. "Ain't things goin' to suit you?"

"No, they ain't, not by a long chalk!"

"What is it?"

"It's that 'ere new mine. You jumped right in an' allowed the whole "detachment" was jest achin' for more of that kind of work, when it seems to me you ought'er held your tongue. You've been blowin' Steve up 'cause he was afraid, when I allow all hands of us, includin' yourself, were in the same box, leastways, my teeth chattered so much that it's all I kin do now to bite into a hardtack without danger of loosin' 'em, and I don't want any more mines in my share."

"Now, see here, Job," Uncle Rube said sooth-

ingly, "General Grant is dependin' on us Malden men for this 'ere work, an' it won't do to disappoint him. I reckon he wouldn't have tried anythin' more of the kind unless we was willin' to go into the job, consequently we had to volunteer, an' that's the sum an' substance of it."

"But I've had enough," Mr. Lord persisted.

Uncle Rube knew full well that it would be useless for him to try to bully this member of the "detachment" as he had Steve Stubbs, and therefore he set about coaxing and cajoling until the matter was as good as settled, that we should go to work cheerfully when called upon.

My opinion had not been asked; but there were many times when the old man was arguing with Mr. Lord that I was tempted to declare, I would have no part in the arduous labor as a volunteer. As a matter of course if we were ordered in, I would do my whole duty, but the time for making all protest went by, therefore I was as fully committed as Uncle Rube himself.

The remainder of the evening was spent in laying plans for visiting our wounded comrade in the hospital, during such times as we were not at work, and listening to the news which was brought in by those who made it their duty to collect information.

From these last we heard many items of interest from the besieged city which may, or may not, have been true, for the only means our news-

gatherers had of getting information was from the Confederate pickets at night, who often, when opportunity offered, chatted with our men, or bargained for hardtack or coffee, offering in exchange tobacco, or a copy of the newspaper which was still being published in Vicksburg.

One story would be to the effect that the defenders of the city were so near the verge of starvation that our task must be completed in a very few days, and on the heels of such alleged news we would hear that the Confederates had a great store of provisions, sufficient to last them many months. Therefore it was that so far as concerned the siege we had little reliable information; but this much we did know for a fact: General Grant had good reasons for fearing that while he was besieging Vicksburg, General Johnston, who had a strong force in our rear, might lay siege to him.

It was not all plain sailing on our part, this cutting off the Confederate stronghold from communication with the remainder of the Confederacy, for at any moment, as we knew full well, an attack might be made upon our rear which would result in serious trouble, even though we might be able to hold our own.

I must set it down here, lest any think I had forgotten the Southern lad who proved himself such a good friend to me, that during all this time when we worked in the mine, or did duty in the trenches,

I thought constantly of getting some communication with Bob Yardley.

There was hardly a member of the 46th liable to picket duty with whom I had not spoken regarding my desire, and each man promised to be on the alert; but thus far little information had been gained.

One of the men in our company had talked with a Johnnie who claimed to have a slight acquaintance with Bob, and declared that he was in the city doing military duty, but further than this I heard nothing concerning him, and yet I did not despair of coming face to face with the dear lad, even though General Grant might not succeed in his purpose immediately.

There is no good reason why I should attempt to set down what we did when work was begun on the gallery, which was to be run under the left wing of the same fort we had previously mined.

There is little of interest to one not actually on the scene of operations, in digging beneath the surface, and hauling back by hand the grain sacks filled with earth, for one hour is the same as another. The danger that the enemy may have sunk a counter mine, and the laborers suddenly find themselves face to face with a death from which there can be no escape, is always in the minds of those who volunteer for such work, and therefore what is to the general public dry and uninteresting detail, is to them

of vital importance, for each blow of the pick brings them nearer success or destruction.

Because of 'Siah Fernald's being disabled we were forced to add another member to Uncle Rube's "detachment," in order to make up the working force of six, and we had our choice of the 46th, for every man was eager to join us after our comrade had so signally distinguished himself.

Isaiah Rich, a private in Company A, who hailed from Mattawamkeag, was the man we selected after a very long discussion, and we never had reason to be sorry for having him made one of us. A short, jolly-looking fellow was Isaiah, not more than twenty-two or three years old, and one who could find something of cheer or mirth in the most disheartening situation.

Had he been selected for the highest position in the land, this little roly-poly of a man could not have evinced greater satisfaction and pleasure.

"I've been wantin' to get in with the gang that kind of swarms by themselves," he said to me when he went up the trench to begin the gallery. "Your crowd seems to be gettin' about all that's comin' in the way of a good time, an' I hope I'll be able to hold my own with you."

The "new recruit" won Uncle Rube's heart by listening attentively to anything he might say, and obeying without question whatsoever commands he gave, while at the same time he placed himself on

the most desirable footing with the rest of us by his thorough good nature and cheeriness of disposition.

The absolute labor of working under the surface was not so great but that I could have laughed at it, for as before, we were on duty only an hour at a time, with three hours of rest between shifts; but it was the extreme danger which lay in our path as we went into or came out of the mine that told severely on my nerves.

I have already spoken of the trench along which we carried the powder while exposed to the fire of the Confederate sharpshooters. It was necessary to traverse this same road whenever we went to or came from our work, and because of the mine that had already been exploded, the enemy were on the lookout, taking extra precautions to prevent us from continuing the task. Consequently, their sharpshooters were watching for us every hour of the day, and why more of the miners were not killed I fail to understand even now.

When we started out in the morning all of us would halt at the last bend of the trench where we were screened from view, and then, mentally bracing ourselves for the effort, push forward at full speed until we were protected by the entrance of the mine, the journey requiring three or four minutes—minutes so full of agony to me that I suffered an hundred deaths every time I made the venture.

Yet, frightened as I was while in this place so

closely watched by the enemy, there came a time when I remained in it a full ten minutes, and forgot, if you please, to show the cowardly side of my nature.

We had worked on the mine until the last week in June was come. We knew that the enemy was sinking more than one countermine, because at times it was possible to hear even the blows of pick-axes, and the hum of their voices, so thin was the partition of earth which divided us. Already we were beginning to look forward to the day when it was to be exploded, and to speculate upon the possibilities of entirely destroying the fort.

Uncle Rube had come to believe that he should have the privilege of deciding the time when this engine of destruction was to be let loose, and declared that if our officers "knew their business," we would celebrate the Fourth of July by blowin' the fortifications into flinders."

On this particular day the "detachment" was ordered to work at eleven o'clock, that being our first shift, and the men whose places we were to take belonged to an Ohio regiment, as we knew through having made friends with them during idle moments.

It was customary for a crew on duty to come out from the gallery and down the open trench before the relieving squad went in, and on this morning our "detachment" stood as usual at that angle of the

trench where we were screened from the view of the sharpshooters, awaiting the arrival of the Ohio boys.

The enemy had been remarkably active that forenoon, so we heard as we came from our camp, and had wounded one man quite severely; but as we approached it seemed to me they had given over the attempt to do us injury, because of the waste of powder and lead, for not a gun was fired, although as a rule one could see the bullets striking here and there in the clay bank even when all our people were inside the gallery.

The working crew came into view, halting an instant to take a long breath before beginning the dangerous flight, and down toward us they ran at full speed, each urging the man in front of him to a better pace, as was but natural under such circumstances.

Then it was as if all that portion of the fortification commanding the trench bristled with sparks of fire, and I venture to say an hundred muskets were discharged within twenty seconds.

“Them Johnnies are shootin’ poorer an’ poorer every day,” Uncle Rube said as the men came on apparently unharmed, and at that instant, when the squad were midway of the dangerous passage, the hindermost man staggered and fell.

His comrades continued on without him, possibly not knowing of their loss, and, perhaps, unwilling

to linger even to succor a friend when it seemed that certain death must be the cost of the attempt.

“By Jeems Rice, they’ve done for that poor fellow!” Uncle Rube exclaimed, involuntarily stepping a pace forward, and then retreating as the bullets came yet more thickly.

We could see that the soldier was not mortally wounded. It appeared as if a bullet had passed through both his legs, for he strove to drag himself across the trench where one side of the excavation offered some slight protection against the flying missiles.

While one might have counted ten we stood gazing helplessly at the stricken man, thinking more of our desire to give him aid than of the danger which menaced.

Then it was that I ran swiftly out, hugging the southernmost side of the trench, and saying to myself that it was possible I could drag the wounded man to a place of safety, and yet escape with my own life.

Because others have spoken of what I did as a brave deed, and have given good proof of believing it such, I must in all honesty set it down that the act was not in reality my own. I know not how to explain my sensations, or why I went out under fire without really being conscious of the fact; but true it is.

It was as if some force independent of my own

will acted upon me, and I moved as does an automaton rather than a living, thinking being.

I realized only dimly that the bullets were coming thick and fast; understood as if in a dream that I was very near to death; but yet I went on at my best pace, and without having received a scratch, until I stood by the side of the wounded man.

Then for an instant I was conscious of the difficulties attending the undertaking. I heard Uncle Rube shouting wildly for me to come back; but was yet so far in that waking dream as to smile on hearing Mr. Stubbs' squeaky command for me to "get under cover."

"I'm afraid you can't do anythin', lad, an' I'll have to stay here until the Johnnies finish their work," the man said, seizing my hand as if he would thank me for my willingness to give him aid.

"Can you get on your feet?" I asked, crouching down beside him where I would offer less of a target to those in the fort.

"No, lad, no; it seems as if both my legs were paralyzed."

"Then how am I to get you in?" I asked helplessly, and for the first time there came across me a full realization of what I had involuntarily attempted to do.

"You had better leave me, my boy, else it'll be a case of two goin' under where there's no need of but one."

“I won’t leave you now I’m here; it’s just as dangerous to go back alone as to take you.”

“Not a bit of it, because alone you can go faster.”

“Come back here, Dicky boy, come back here! Have you lost your head completely?” Uncle Rube cried.

I paid no heed to these commands; it seemed possible for me to save a man’s life, and at the moment I believed it were better for me to lose my own, provided the task could be accomplished, than return empty-handed.

The soldier wore his blouse, an unusual thing for a man to do under that burning sun, therefore because it was odd I noted it, and on the instant came to me the idea which I needed.

“Button your coat, and I may be able to drag you along by taking hold of the collar.”

He did as I commanded, but said at the same time:

“You’re foolish to try it, boy. It’ll take a full ten minutes to do the job, and long before that we’ll both of us be out of this world.”

“We’ll go out trying, at any rate,” I said, shutting my teeth together hard, and pulling him around in such a manner that his head lay toward the point of safety. “I may hurt you some, but I believe I’ll get you where the Johnnies can’t pepper you,” and I spoke in as cheery a tone as one could assume under such circumstances. “Are you ready?”

“Never mind the hurt, lad; I can stand anything of that kind rather than lay out here to be killed, though I still hold to it that it’s a foolish piece of work for you.”

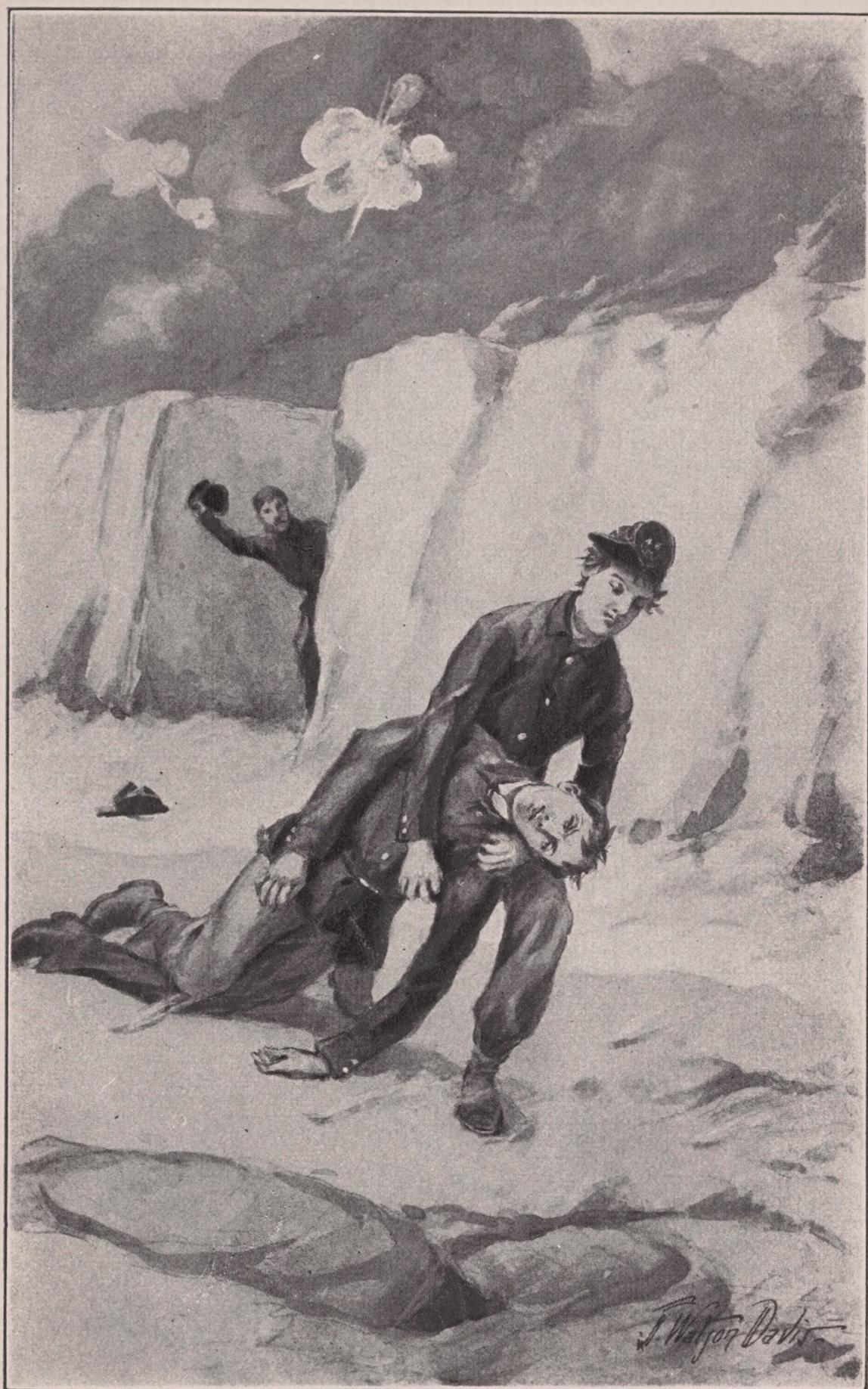
“Foolish or not, I’ll do it!” I cried, and leaping quickly to my feet I seized the collar at the back of the blouse with both hands, thus resting the man’s head on my arms.

It was now no longer a question of speed, but of strength. I was forced to travel backward the entire distance, and therefore could not move faster than a walk.

The burden was not as heavy as I had anticipated. The clay in the bottom of the trench was moist, and the man’s body slipped along very much more readily than it would have done over any other surface.

During a minute or more the bullets came thick and fast, and then I believe the Johnnies in the front began to understand what was being done, for suddenly the firing diminished very sensibly, and only here and there I could see a missile striking the clay bank near me.

I no longer gave any heed to the shouts where our “detachment” remained in waiting, I saw nothing save that long cutting in the earth which led to the mouth of the gallery. I tried to think only of the task in hand. Slowly, foot by foot, was the distance



I seized the collar at the back of the blouse, thus resting the man's head on my arm. Page 346.

—*With Grant at Vicksburg.*

lessened, until a great cry arose from all around me, and I knew that my work was accomplished.

Not until that instant did I fully realize what I had done, and then, when all the danger was passed, the fear of death came so strongly upon me that my knees gave way, my head swam as if in a dancing mist, and I tumbled headlong over him whom I had dragged into safety.

When next I was conscious of living, Uncle Rube had me in his arms as he would have held a baby, and my cheeks were so wet that I passed my hand over them, believing they were covered with blood. Then I saw that the old man was crying—shedding real tears, and I asked, fearing he had heard bad news from the hospital:

“Is 'Siah Fernald dead, Uncle Rube?”

“What makes you think he might be, lad?”

“Because you are crying, and I never saw you do anything of the kind before.”

“Wa'al now, look here, Dicky boy, the man who wouldn't kind of let himself out jest now, never was born in Maine, an' let me tell you that for a fact. I thought 'Siah had given us all the glory we were entitled to in this 'ere war, but you've gone an' topped him clean out of sight!”

Before I could speak again the comrades of the man whose life I had saved gathered around, and for ten minutes or more I heard enough to have turned my brain with vanity. To prevent being

thus puffed up I kept saying to myself again and again that it had been done unconsciously, and that a man who walks in his sleep has no right to take credit for that which he then does.

While so much ado was being made over me, the officer in charge of the mining operations came up in company with Major Hartley, and straightway these two demanded the reason for our thus loitering in the trench.

It was Uncle Rube who offered an explanation, and it can well be understood that he did not slight any of the details; but made a painfully long story out of that which I had done, while the comrades of the wounded man took it upon themselves to embellish his recital until I no longer recognized it as something in which I had taken a part.

I believe that at first Major Hartley failed to recognize me as the lad whom he had sent out on a scout, which had come well-nigh ending with the shameful death of two, for he took me by the hand and began with some words of praise such as an officer would ordinarily bestow upon a drummer under similar circumstances, and then interrupted himself by saying:

“Why, lad, it seems you were not born to die in prison, to be hanged as a spy, or to be shot in the trenches; I’m beginning to think that this war will make considerable of a man of you!” Then turning to his companion he said, “I was the means

of putting this boy into a very dangerous place, and promised that if it was ever in my power to advance him in the service I would do so. It seems to me that the time has come when his comrades should know that he who does more than a soldier's duty, is entitled to a reward."

"I am quite of the opinion that an example should be made of this case on its merits alone, to say nothing of the effect which it may have upon the troops."

I failed to understand what they were driving at; but it seemed plain enough to Uncle Rube, who straightway began shuffling around like a Jim Crow dancer, as if he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

Even Steve Stubbs had an inkling of the truth, for he squeaked in my ear:

"You've made yourself, lad, you've made yourself, an' 'Siah Fernald ain't in it alongside o' you; but however did you dare?"

I couldn't explain to the little painter just then what I did to all the "detachment" that night after our day's work was done, for we went into the gallery as if nothing had happened when the wounded man was carried away.

When we were gathered around the camp-fire, which had been built only for the purpose of toasting our bacon, I told my comrades in much the same words I have set down here, how it was I happened

to go to the relief of the wounded man, claiming stoutly that I had no right to take praise for what was really not an act of my own.

“I don’t know how you can figger it out, lad,” Uncle Rube said with a laugh, “an’ can’t see why you should go all ’round Robin Hood’s barn to show that you didn’t do somethin’ which the majority of us would have flinched at. You was the only one among the whole of us who had the nerve to drag that poor fellow in, an’ I’m claimin’ that you’re bound to get full credit for it, no matter what you may say to the contrary.”

“He’ll be promoted, that’s what’s the matter with him!” Steve Stubbs squeaked.

“Of course he will; a blind man could have told you that, an’ it’s a big pity there wasn’t more from Malden ready to pattern after him,” Uncle Rube said in a meaning tone, whereupon Job Lord, fearing that the little painter was again to be overwhelmed with reproaches, began to speculate as to whether I would be made colonel of the regiment or only a captain.

Now I had sense enough to know that even if promotion came to me, it would not raise me to any very high rank, for the simple reason that I was no soldier, and I said stoutly, trying to put the words in such a tone that my comrades should understand I meant it all:

“If I’m allowed to go into the ranks it’ll be

promotion enough for me, and as much as any commander would be willing to grant."

"I allow you're pretty near right, lad," Uncle Rube said thoughtfully, "although it ain't as much as you deserve by considerable, yet whatever does come, it's promotion on the field, an' that's a reward such as should satisfy every true soldier. Besides that, Dicky boy, the people of Malden will know the whole story, an' that'll make out of you a bigger man than General Grant himself, or I don't know the town!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE CAPITULATION.

EVERY night, after concluding our labors for the day in the mine, we visited 'Siah Fernald, remaining with him as long as the nurses would permit, and at each visit feeling more and more encouraged because of his rapid improvement.

His wounds, although terrible to look upon at the time, were not as serious as might have been fancied, and we were led to believe that although he would probably come out of the hospital a cripple, there was no serious danger of death.

Within forty-eight hours after having been taken from the terrible scene of conflict in the crater, he was so far himself as to listen with interest to the gossip of the camp which we brought, and Uncle Rube made it his especial duty to gather as much information regarding the movements of the troops as was possible, to the end that he might repeat the same to our invalid comrade.

Quite as a matter of course the story of what I had done in the trench was told him the evening after the affair occurred, and all the members of the "detachment" seemed to feel it their bounden duty

to make as much out of my behavior as was consistent with truth—I am not certain but that they embellished the facts more than was honestly warranted.

The praise which 'Siah Fernald bestowed upon me was very sweet, and I valued it more than that from any of the others, because he was a man who had proven himself a hero, and when he said it would give him pleasure to take off his hat to me after we were gone back to Malden, I blushed with pride like a girl.

He insisted on hearing the story in all its details from each member of the "detachment", until I was wearied with the repetition of words describing what I had done involuntarily, and begged that they put an end to the matter.

It is possible I have already set down here too much concerning the incident in the trench, which was so trivial as compared with that which was happening around us every hour of the twenty-four; but I should be excused, for when a man has in his life only one picture in which he is the central figure, it is natural he try to paint it again and again, that others know he has accomplished something out of the ordinary, and it is not given to every one to save a human life.

In order to keep within the limits of that space which I allotted myself when I began this account of what I did around Vicksburg, it is necessary to

pass over with but brief mention very much which happened while we were outside the besieged city.

As a matter of fact, I am compelled to cut short the flow of words, because I know of my own knowledge very little save what was going on immediately around the mouth of the gallery which we were excavating.

Our work was the same day after day; one hour of excessive labor and three for rest, over and over again until the last day of June, when the mine was finished and made ready for explosion.

Then came the morning of the first of July, when the match was laid to the fuse which led out from our charges of powder, and from a distance in the rear we saw the fort, which had barred our passage so long, uplifted, as if by a mighty convulsion of the earth, tremble momentarily in the air, and then fall back a mass of ruins.

At this time there was no charge made; the lesson of the crater had been learned, and was not to be repeated. It sufficed that we had destroyed the fortification, and all believed that with the explosion of this mine the end of the siege was near at hand, but never one dreamed, save it might have been the commander himself that we were so near the attainment of our purpose.

And now I must, in order to round out the tale, if such it has proven to be, depend upon what others have said about the closing of the siege, for we of

Uncle Rube's "detachment" knew little or nothing regarding the true situation until the signal came for an armistice, and even then we were far from guessing why a truce had been called.

The newsgatherers had stated very positively that after our last mine was exploded, and the main sap had been widened sufficiently to admit of the movement of troops in a "column of fours", the grand assault would be made, therefore many, among whom Uncle Rube was one, predicted that this would take place on the fourth of July, for no other reason than that it seemed fitting we should make our most vigorous demonstration on the national holiday.

We had waited anxiously for the day when it should be proven whether we were sufficiently strong to capture the city we had been besieging so long, or if all our efforts thus far had been in vain.

The day after the explosion of the mine was passed in comparative quietude; we threw into the city quite as many shot and shell as on other days, but yet it seemed to us who were looking forward to that grand assault, as if the commander was allowing many precious hours to slip by.

On the morning of the third we were thoroughly convinced that volunteers would be called for, or certain regiments ordered to make ready, when suddenly—so suddenly that it bewildered me, white

flags appeared upon that portion of the Confederate works directly opposite where the 46th was encamped.

“What is it?” I asked breathlessly of Uncle Rube, as we stood side by side in the trenches, awaiting an opportunity of picking off one of the enemy.

“I reckon the Johnnies are gettin’ tired out, an’ want to call a halt for two or three days. We’ve been makin’ things pretty hot for them, an’ most likely they know we’ll come in over the ruins of that ’ere fort before many hours.”

“Can they by any chance be wanting to surrender?” I asked, never for a moment believing that such a welcome event was near at hand.

“I don’t allow that’s the reason, lad, unless it so happens General Pemberton knows the 46th is out here, in which case he may be gettin’ a little weak-kneed. It’s more likely they’ve got some prisoners to exchange.”

Uncle Rube had lost the golden opportunity of writing himself down as a prophet of no mean magnitude, for if at that moment he had ventured to predict the truth, there was never a man in the 46th who would not have held from that time onward that he was a thorough-going judge of military movements.

Singular as it may seem, there was but little curiosity in my mind regarding the sudden appearance of those white flags over the enemy’s fortifi-

cations, because I believed they had been hoisted for some ordinary purpose, such as the exchange of prisoners, or burying the dead. It must be remembered that there had previously been two truces which had no connection with the surrender of the city, and that the enemy could give us such a Fourth-of-July celebration as would come from the capitulation of the city, had no place in my mind.

When, however, we who were waiting to learn what might be the reason for the flags, saw two officers wearing the Confederate uniform coming towards our lines, it seemed certain that something more than ordinary had led to the silent request for an armistice.

As they came nearer I recognized in one of them General Bowen, he who had saved the lives of Bob Yardley and myself at Grand Gulf, and the other I afterwards heard was Colonel Montgomery, one of General Pemberton's aide-de-camps.

It was only reasonable I should be considerably excited at seeing this officer coming towards our lines, when if the truce had been asked for anything unimportant, surely a major-general would not have come in person to make explanation, and I cried to Uncle Rube:

“The Johnnies are getting ready to surrender the city!”

“What makes you think so, lad?” the old man asked, and then I told him who the officer was,

whereupon he shared my excitement to some slight degree; but was not prepared to believe that I had really hit upon the truth.

We saw the two Confederates go in the direction of General Smith's headquarters, and straightway it was as if our men had lost their senses. A full half of them believed as I did, and began arguing with their neighbors as to the possibility of the glorious news, until the encampment hummed and buzzed, as if infested with millions of hornets.

"'Siah must know about this!" Uncle Rube exclaimed after it was possible for him to realize there might perhaps be some good foundation for the predictions of surrender. "It would do his heart good to hear it, an' I'm allowin' you'd best go over to the hospital, Stephen. Tell him jest what you've seen, an' what some of us think. Even though it may be that the Johnnies haven't any idea of surrenderin', it'll do 'Siah a power o' good to think there's a chance anythin' of the kind may happen right soon."

Mr. Stubbs was by no means pleased to be thus sent away when there was so much of excitement round about; but because of the past he did not feel warranted in refusing to obey the old man's commands, and off he marched looking much like a school-boy, who has been sent home in disgrace.

"It strikes me, Dicky boy, that you ought'er be pretty well acquainted with this 'ere General

Bowen," Job Lord said to me when Mr. Stubbs was lost to view in the distance.

"I only saw him that night when he saved us from being killed as spies."

"I reckon that ought'er make you pretty good friends, Seems to me if I'd saved a boy's life I should kind'er consider I was on speakin' terms with him."

"It isn't probable that he remembers what happened so long ago," I said with a laugh; "but suppose he did, and was willing to consider me an acquaintance, what then?"

"I was only thinkin' that you might run over yonder an' ask him what he'd come for. I reckon he'd be willin' to tell you, eh?"

"Now don't talk foolishness, Job Lord," Uncle Rube interrupted. "You must be pretty far down in military matters if you think a major-general's goin' to tell the drummer-boy of Company G, even though he does belong to the 46th, what his business is here jest now."

"I didn't know but what he might be willin' to do it for old acquaintance sake," Mr. Lord persisted, and I replied with a laugh:

"It is yet to be proven that we are old acquaintances," and thus the matter was dropped, so far as concerned my asking any information from General Bowen.

Half an hour later we saw the two officers return-

ing to their lines, and then, as if to deepen the mystery, white flags appeared along the entire line of Confederate fortifications, while word was sent from our headquarters to all division commanders, that there would be a cessation of hostilities during the remainder of the day.

Our newsgatherers were out in full force by this time, and the wildest kind of rumors were whispered from one to another, all having as basis, however, the supposed fact that General Pemberton was ready to treat for the surrender of the city, which we had besieged so many days.

It is needless for me to attempt to describe our joy when as yet it was by no means certain that our labors would be crowned by success. When an army has striven long and earnestly, shedding its blood, and reckoning not its privations, sufferings or mutilation, the very intimation that the task is well-nigh completed suffices to throw it into undue exultation.

The Confederate privates showed themselves beyond the fortifications; the Federal privates advanced across that space which but a few hours previous had been swept with lead, whenever any man ventured to step out from under cover, until the rank and file of the opposing armies were where they could hold conversation with each other, and then, as I hoped, was come the time when I might see Bob Yardley again.

I believe the Johnnies were as much in the dark regarding the reason for the truce as we were; they showed the keenest curiosity regarding it, and questioned us as if the flags of truce had first been displayed by our side.

Mr. Stubbs returned from the hospital with the information that 'Siah Fernald was so overjoyed by the news that he would then and there have gotten out of bed, had the nurses not forcibly restrained him.

"He said I was to tell you the Confederates had most likely jest heard where the 46th was, an' didn't like to keep up the fight any longer. He's lookin' chipper's a sparrow, an' it wouldn't surprise me to see him out here any minute."

"But he can't even stand up!" I cried, and Mr. Stubbs replied in a tone of conviction:

"When 'Siah Fernal sets his heart on doin' anythin' the biggest bullet-hole that was ever seen wouldn't stop him."

"Not even if he had such a one as you carried in your arm, eh?" Uncle Rube asked sharply, and again Job Lord interfered, much to my delight, for at such a time it was not seemly any man be reproved for past deeds, the present, providing half the rumors we had heard were true, was sufficiently glorious to warrant our forgiving everything up to that time.

Well, we walked to and fro in front of the Con-

federate lines for a distance of five miles or more, without seeing Bob Yardley, or finding any one who knew where he might be, and at noon I gave up the search, convinced that the lad had been assigned to duty in such portion of the city as prevented his coming into the eastern fortifications, for I knew full well he would make every possible effort to see me.

Two hours had passed since the Confederate officers had returned to their lines, and then an orderly from regimental headquarters came up to where Uncle Rube's "detachment" were preparing their noonday meal, and said:

"The Colonel wants to see Richard Studley!"

"What for?" Uncle Rube asked bluntly.

"That's for you to find out, I reckon," the man replied in a lofty tone; "but I'm told to say, however, that his comrades who claim to belong to an independent command under some greenhorn or other hailing from Malden, are to come with him to headquarters."

"Who're you callin' a greenhorn?" Uncle Rube cried angrily.

"That's what I can't rightly say; but I've heard that five or six of you chaps claim to be out on your own account, with a hedgehog hunter as captain!"

"Call me a hedgehog hunter do you?" and Uncle Rube sprang to his feet in a towering rage, evidently intent on inflicting bodily injury; but we of

his "detachment" laid violent hands upon him, and the orderly, chuckling at his supposed wit, walked swiftly away while the old man struggled vainly in our clutches.

"I'll show that whippersnapper what it means to call me a hedgehog hunter and a greenhorn!" Uncle Rube cried furiously, and I was really afraid he would disgrace us all by pursuing the orderly, even to Colonel Hubbard's headquarters; as I believe he might have done, had it not been for Job Lord, who did his best at soothing the angry spirit.

"It won't do, Reuben, for you to give way to your temper at a time like this," Mr. Lord said in a tone of authority. "Here Dick has been ordered to headquarters, an' we're allowed to go with him! Now it strikes me that means a little somethin' out of the ordinary run of things, an' you may spill all the fat in the fire, if you let your dander get out in this way."

"But I'll allow no man to call me a hedgehog hunter!"

"Well, he *has* called you that," Mr. Lord replied quietly, "an' run after him as you may, the words can't be taken back. The only proper thing for you to do now is to hold your tongue, until we find out what's comin' to Dick. Then, if it so please you, the whole boilin' of us will get after that orderly, an' make him wish he'd never been born."

"But I can't wait, Job Lord, I can't wait!"

“Now don’t git excited, Reuben. When it comes right down to facts you’ve got to admit that you *have* shot hedgehogs, an’ I want you to bear in mind how much harm it may do Dicky, if you give way to your temper like this. Keep calm, man, keep calm!”

Not until several minutes had been spent in earnest endeavor by Mr. Lord was Uncle Rube quieted down sufficiently to realize that I must answer the summons to headquarters without delay, and then we set out, I vainly trying to guess what Colonel Hubbard could want of me.

Fortunately for my peace of mind we were soon standing in front of the colonel, and to my great surprise—I may say bewilderment—he held out his hand toward me:

“I congratulate you, Studley, most heartily, and feel no little pride myself in the fact, that the 46th is singled out for this honor.”

I gazed from one to the other literally stupefied by the words. Uncle Rube stood like a statue, his mouth half open, as he gazed stupidly at the colonel, while Steve Stubbs seemed to be devouring me with his eyes, and Job Lord stepped uneasily about like one wearing boots much too small for him.

“I thought it best to give you warning of what was to come,” the colonel continued. “The regiment will be drawn up in a hollow square, and you men who have considered yourselves as forming an independent detachment, will step out from the ranks

in front of Company G, when I give the signal by raising my sword, after General Grant has arrived."

"What has the general got to do with the 46th?" Uncle Rube asked in bewilderment.

"I thought you fellows from Malden knew everything that was going on in camp," the colonel said with a smile. "I question if there are any other six men in the regiment who have not heard the substance of the orders of the day."

"And what may they be?" Uncle Rube asked irritably.

"The general intends to publicly thank Richard J. Studley, drummer-boy of Company G, 46th Maine, for heroism in rescuing a fellow soldier from death."

I heard exclamations of mingled surprise and pleasure from my comrades, and then it was that my knees gave way under me, as on that day at Grand Gulf when I had been condemned to death.

I clutched at Uncle Rube to save myself from falling, and tried in vain to say something expressive of gratitude and pleasure to the colonel, but succeeded only in making the most idiotic kind of a noise.

I was in a daze of astonishment, that what I had involuntarily done, could be considered of sufficient importance to call for words of thanks from the general commanding, and so weighted down with joy was I, that it was as if I must go away by myself

where I could make a noise, for it seemed impossible otherwise to give expression to that which was in my heart.

How we got out of the tent I can hardly say; but certain it is that Uncle Rube led me, and when we were at a respectful distance from headquarters, he pounded me on the back, and shook me by the hand, until there was every danger I might be incapacitated for duty, for the old man in his times of rejoicing, or of mourning, was very emphatic.

Now of all that passed during the hour which followed my visit to the colonel's camp, I propose to speak but briefly, lest I be accused of self-praise, and yet it would be strange indeed if I did not look back upon that time, with keenest joy and pride. To-day when my grandchildren point to the bronze medal which I wear, and ask why it was that the Congress should have seen fit to bestow it upon me, I try earnestly to recall every word and every movement I heard and saw, as I stood that day before General Grant surrounded by my comrades in arms.

The regiment was drawn up in line fully ten minutes before the general commanding arrived, and I stood in my place with Company G, hearing this man and that on either side of me, speaking words of praise and congratulation, which would have gone far toward turning the head of any lad.

Then the general arrived.

When the colonel gave the signal, we of Uncle

Rube's "detachment" left our places in the line and walked out to the front, I leading the way, and halted near where General Grant and his staff sat on horseback.

The general told in a few words, as if our men of the 46th were ignorant of the fact, what I had done, and thanked me in the name of the troops in front of Vicksburg, concluding by saying:

"It is my right to promote a man on the field, for an act of signal bravery, such promotion to be ratified by the commander-in-chief. I would gladly give to Richard J. Studley a commission, if I believed it would be for the good of the service; but the lad himself must realize, that it would work to his disadvantage, therefore, if it is his desire, he shall be enrolled as a private in the company of which he has been a drummer, and whenever it is possible for him to pass an examination for commissioned officer, I will most gladly recommend the promotion."

Then the general and his staff rode swiftly up the line where, as we afterward knew, he was to meet General Pemberton at three o'clock, and when the 46th broke ranks, such a tumult of cheers burst on the air as must have caused the Confederates in camp to believe we were rejoicing in advance over the possible fall of the city.

But for the fact that three officers were seen coming out from the fortifications, and approaching a

point to the right of where the 46th was encamped, I believe my regiment—for now I was a full-fledged member—would have spent the remainder of the day in congratulating me upon the signal honor which, as they claimed, had been fairly won.

Even while they were in the midst of their rejoicing and rude sport, in which I acted the part of shuttlecock to their battledores, some one cried out that General Pemberton with the two officers who had previously visited our lines, were coming out in front of McPherson's corps, and straightway every man at liberty ran forward, that he might witness at long distance, that interview which has become so famous in history.

Job Lord would have followed, urging the others of the "detachment" to follow; but that I proposed it was our duty to go without delay to the hospital to acquaint 'Siah Fernald with that which had happened.

This I did, not from a desire to receive yet more praise, but because it seemed to me our duty to carry the news to him who would be so pleased at the hearing of it.

Uncle Rube looked at the matter in the same light as did I, and straightway seemed to forget that there was anything of importance which we might like to see taking place near by.

Without waiting to question the preference of the members of his "detachment," our leader ordered us

to "fall in," and set off at a sharp pace, hauling me by the arm, as if thinking perchance I might try to give him the slip.

When we arrived it was to find Mr. Fernald looking particularly bright and cheerful, therefore I fancied some one had forestalled us in bringing the news; but from the look of bewilderment which overspread such portions of his face as were not bandaged, I soon knew we had taken him completely by surprise.

Not until some moments after Uncle Rube had come to an end of his story regarding the occurrences of the day, did 'Siah speak, and then it was to say in a tone so emphatic that one knew full well every word came from his heart:

"I'll be dinged if the boy don't deserve all he got, an' more too! I'm allowin' that to make him a private in the ranks ain't enough, Reuben Smart, an' it was your duty to have told the general so right on the spot!"

"But 'Siah, you know, an' so do I, an' so does Dicky boy, that he ain't fitted to be an officer jest yet awhile!"

"He comes a good deal nearer bein' fitted than many a man I've seen around here, Reuben Smart. It don't take our Malden men long to learn their business, an' if you'd give Dick the handlin' of a sword two or three days, I reckon he'd be able to flourish it in right good shape. One thing sure, he

wouldn't be found very far in the rear when there was any fightin' goin' on!"

I did my best to persuade Mr. Fernald that the reward I had already received was far in excess of anything I deserved; but to such a proposition he would not listen. However, he rejoiced because of the honor which had been bestowed upon me, and said many things which caused me to feel that I was getting far more of praise than was my share.

When we were come to our camp after leaving the hospital, the interview between General Grant and General Pemberton had come to an end, and the newsgatherers of the army, although never one of them could have been present, claimed to be thoroughly well informed as to all that had been said and done, while the two commanders were conferring together.

It was said that the Confederate general was ready to surrender the city, and the only hitch in the proceedings was in some of the minor details regarding the capitulation.

That the city would surrender without the firing of another gun all were convinced, and great was the rejoicing along our lines, although none of us really believed that the gatherers of news could have learned any details as to the meeting.

Then came the information that word had been sent to Admiral Porter, telling him that hostilities had been stopped on the part of both the army and

navy, and this was considered by us as positive proof that the city would speedily fall into our hands, even though nothing else had been heard.

The Confederate generals returned to their lines within an hour, perhaps, and then came a long waiting, the reason for which none of us could guess, although, as a matter of course, Uncle Rube had a plausible explanation which, by the way, as we afterward came to know, was nowhere near the truth.

We wandered about at will during this evening, for it seemed as if all discipline had been relaxed, and yet I saw no unseemly behavior on the part of our soldiers. It seemed as if the joy and relief were so great, that it could not be expressed by rioting and noise. The men gathered in little knots congratulating each other and wondering if it might not be possible for us to enter the city next day, or went here and there around the fortifications in order to engage the enemy's pickets in conversation, and with these last it can well be believed, I went, for now the moment was so near at hand when I was to see Bob Yardley, if he yet remained alive, that I could hardly restrain my impatience until the details of the capitulation had been arranged.

It was near ten o'clock, and my search was still unsuccessful, when we saw two mounted officers ride out from McPherson's headquarters, and straightway we knew that General Grant was sending a message to the Confederate commander.

“ If they’ve got so far as to be sendin’ letters back an’ forth like a couple of old maids, I reckon we can count that the thing is pretty nigh arranged,” Uncle Rube said in a tone of satisfaction, and Mr. Lord, remembering that the old man had failed in prophesying truthfully earlier in the day, reminded him of it by saying:

“ I’d have a deal more faith in your talk, Reuben, if you hadn’t been so far off this mornin’.”

“ I was out that time, I’ll admit, Job; but now there’s no doubtin’ it, an’ within the next twenty-four hours, Dicky boy an’ that ’ere Johnnie chum of his will be figgerin’ how the thing was done!”

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE CITY.

IT seems hardly necessary for me to set down the fact, that the men making up the Federal army did not sleep on this night of the third of July. There was too much at stake to admit of our giving ourselves up to slumber; the besieged city would be surrendered very shortly, or we should learn that the wearisome, arduous labor must be continued, until the Confederates were more nearly starved.

We could understand full well how eagerly the people in the North were waiting for the fall of Vicksburg, and if anything could have added at that moment to our intense desire to have the siege terminate immediately and successfully, it was the fact that so many millions of people, were looking toward us expecting such news.

So far as I could see, it was much as if the men of both armies were allowed at this particular time to do as they pleased, and the strangest of all strange things during the war was the fact, that in neither camp did we hear of any unsoldierly behavior. The men moved to and fro in their own encampments, and between the lines, much like swarms of bees who

are getting ready to leave the parent hive; but those in blue as well as those in gray were so imbued with the gravity of the situation that they awaited in comparative silence and inactivity, the result of the conference between our commanders.

We of Uncle Rube's "detachment" paid our customary evening visit to 'Siah Fernald, and then, as I have already said, made search along the lines of fortifications for Bob Yardley; but in vain.

It was near to midnight when we returned to our camp, and there we listened perforce to our self-elected leader's lecture on warfare in general, and the siege of Vicksburg in particular. He had the situation down to such a fine point, as to be able to show that General Grant might have taken the city a month sooner by simply following his advice, and gave a detailed plan as to how the whole war might be speedily brought to an end.

From time to time the newsgatherers of the army would come up with rumors which they claimed were facts; but each contradicting the other, until near to daybreak, and then the word passed from man to man with an electrical thrill:

"Pemberton will surrender unconditionally!"

This last rumor was not contradicted, and when the new day dawned, we heard it confirmed on every side, with the additional information, that at eight o'clock we were to march into the city around which we had fought so long.

There was comparatively little loud rejoicing when we came to understand, that on this Fourth of July we were to enter Vicksburg as victors; those who believed a noisy demonstration necessary had already exhausted their energies in that direction, and the remainder of us, I believe, were so impressed by the importance of the occasion as to be in a subdued, rather than a triumphant, frame of mind.

At that time I thought more of the meeting with Bob Yardley than of the campaign which had been brought to a successful ending, and speculated long and earnestly as to how I might set about finding him.

As our newsgatherers reported, and this time they had the correct information, the garrison of the city were to march out from their works, form in line, stack arms, and march back in good order, to remain until such time as each man could sign a parole, for General Grant had decided, as we learned afterward, upon the following terms of surrender:

The Confederate soldiers were to leave their weapons stacked in front of the fortifications, and return to the city to remain until the rolls could be made out and paroles signed by all, including the officers, who were allowed to retain their side-arms and clothing, while such as had been mounted were to take with them one horse each. The rank and file were to retain their clothing, and nothing more.

When the paroled army was ready to leave our lines they were to be at liberty to take all necessary stores, cooking utensils, and teams for the transportation of the same.

Promptly at eight o'clock General Logan's division marched into the town to act as guard, and then our entire army, drawn up in line, awaited the coming of the Confederates. At ten o'clock the foremost of the columns appeared, and because of orders given by every division commander, not one of our people raised his voice either in sympathy or in triumph.

Silently we watched that which was indeed a sad spectacle, although we rejoiced over it—the surrender of an army of brave men.

When the ceremony was completed by the return of the gray-coated troops to the town, we marched in, the 46th well in front, as seemed to me to be its right, and when we were dismissed, once inside the fortifications we had striven so long to capture, those who had been enemies became at once the warmest friends.

That the Confederates had been on short rations was soon known, and our men went about as if their sole purpose in entering the city was to feed those whom they had been trying to starve. Every man in blue whom I saw was dividing the contents of his haversack with some fellow in gray, and here, there and everywhere could be heard the merry jest,

sounds of laughter, and such other tokens as would have been given by life-long friends who were reunited after a weary separation.

Uncle Rube kept his "detachment" well in hand. I believe he was as anxious as I to find Bob Yardley, and after having distributed the greater portion of our rations among those who appeared to be suffering from hunger, he said to me:

"Now has come the time, lad, when we are to find your Confederate chum. We'll begin by askin' of every man we see if he knows where Bob Yardley is stationed, an' it'll go hard if we don't find him within an hour!"

We spent considerably more than that time in the search, however; but thought ourselves fortunate in ending it when we did, for the regiment to which Bob had been assigned was encamped at the north end of the city on the water front, and there we went, only to learn that, at the earliest moment after marching out in token of surrender, Bob Yardley had departed hurriedly.

I knew that he went in search of me, and therefore was not surprised when we, having arrived again near the fortifications, in front of McPherson's encampment, came suddenly upon the dear lad.

That he was as glad to see me as I him, went without saying; but there were tears in his eyes when he clasped me warmly by the hands, and I understood that his heart was filled with grief and morti-

fication because, after all his boasting that Vicksburg could never be taken, he as a prisoner, met me as one of the conquerors.

“Don’t talk of it, Bob,” I said quickly, fancying the lad was about to give words to that which was in his mind, “it’s the fortune of war; one side or the other must come out ahead in every decisive action, and the day will dawn when you can say truly you are glad Vicksburg was surrendered.”

Before I could say more Uncle Rube, Job Lord and Steve Stubbs came up to greet the lad who had done them such a good turn, and then we made him acquainted with Jim Haley and Isaiah Rich, the new members of the “detachment.”

What was talked about at the time I hardly know, so great was my excitement. I understood that my comrades refrained from saying anything which might savor of triumph over the vanquished lad, and all appeared eager to have him understand they desired to be reckoned as his friends.

After a time, Bob said:

“We here in the city have known for many days that General Pemberton would be forced to surrender, because it was impossible to get reinforcements, and therefore it is, Dick, that some time ago I made arrangements for this meeting.”

“In what way, Bob?”

“I thought you would, of course, have Uncle Rube and his friends with you, and decided that if it was

possible you should be my guests for one day, at least, in the cave where you first found refuge after swimming ashore from the Henry Clay."

"It'll suit us right well to go there," Uncle Rube said emphatically, "I want to see that 'ere place Dicky has talked so much about, an' reckon it won't be any very hard matter to get a furlough for twenty-four hours, seein's as how we can't have very many military duties to look after."

"We haven't been so well off for food that I can give you much in the way of a dinner," Bob said with a laugh in which there was very little of mirth. "I've got something saved up, however, so that we shan't be hungry, and it will be the first time for more than three weeks that I've had in my stomach all I've needed."

"I reckon you wouldn't take it very hard if we should chip in our share, if it so be you count on gettin' up a dinner?" Uncle Rube said interrogatively, and Bob replied with a smile:

"I see no reason why you shouldn't be allowed to do as you please, for it seems as if all the Yankees were feeding the Johnnies to-day."

"Some of us have got to see the colonel for permission to stay out of camp, an' I'll take that duty on myself, so's to do a bit of foragin' meanwhile."

"You can count on Reuben when it comes to huntin' for grub," Mr. Stubbs squeaked in a tone of

approbation, and the old man really appeared pleased at these words of praise.

It was agreed that we should meet him again near the ruins of the fort which we had destroyed by our mine, and he set off at a rapid pace, we following more leisurely, my comrades falling behind that I might have an opportunity of talking privately with Bob.

There was nothing for either of us to say that any one might not have heard, and yet it was much to my liking that we could thus converse without interruptions or listeners.

It was only natural I should ask how he had made his peace with the authorities after his return from Grand Gulf, and he explained that Colonel Vallette had interceded so well in his behalf, that the matter of setting the prisoners free was dropped, with the understanding that he should do full duty in one of the Mississippi regiments, but it was not stipulated, however, that he should formally enlist.

He had little to tell me regarding the siege, for, as he said, one day was much like another until the supply of food grew scanty, and then, according to his story, it seemed more important to "forage for something to eat than to fight the Yankees."

"It's been a weary, dreary time, Dick," he said sadly. "Dreary, because after a time we came to understand that unless Johnston could break his way through your lines we must surrender sooner or later,

and weary because of going through the same routine day after day, taking our places in the fortifications, repairing breaks in the earthworks, and hoping in vain for news of succor. I have no story to tell, while yours must be an interesting one."

I was not disposed to spend much time talking about myself in these first hours after meeting Bob; but I gave him an outline of what had been done since we parted at Grand Gulf, laying more stress upon 'Siah Fernald's heroism than on any other portion of the tale.

"I never would have believed he was particularly brave, but always fancied he might prove a good friend," Bob said half to himself. "I wonder if it wouldn't be possible for me to see him?"

"That's the very idea!" I cried, delighted because my friend had made such a kindly suggestion. "Uncle Rube won't be back inside of an hour, for once he gets out foraging, as you know from the past, he's likely to remain a long while."

Bob was eager to set off, and I proposed to the others of the "detachment" that they remain near the ruins of the fort while we ran over to the hospital tents, and thus it was that in the first hours after the capture of Vicksburg a boy in blue and a boy in gray stood by the bedside of a man who had shown himself as good a fighter as he was comrade.

I had never before given 'Siah Fernald very much credit for delicacy of feeling, and therefore it

was I felt no little surprise when he carefully avoided any reference to the present, but spoke only of the past, or the possibilities of the future.

We remained with him half an hour or more, and, on returning to the rendezvous, waited fully as long for the return of Uncle Rube, who came literally staggering under a burden which he carried in two meal sacks.

“ I reckon all hands will be filled up this day, till there won't be need of anythin' more for a good twenty-four hours,” he said as he gave a portion of his load to Job Lord. “ The colonel's willin' we should stay away as long as we please, provided we behave ourselves, an' a great time we'll have of it!”

I have told the story of being with Grant at Vicksburg, and here it ends naturally, therefore, I must bring this overly long account of myself to a close.

I also find great pleasure in depicting that day when 'Siah Fernald, so far recovered from his wounds as to be able to travel, was sent North to be honorably discharged, and carried with him to our town of Malden, many messages to the loved ones from us, and, as may be supposed, many a yarn of his own as to what Uncle Rube's “ detachment ” had done with General Grant in the Vicksburg campaign.

THE END.

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