



THE * * *
THREE SCOUTS

J. T. TROWBRIDGE

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THE

THREE SCOUTS

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE

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CONTENTS.



I.	
A SOUTHERN UNION MAN	7
II.	
GOBBLED UP	19
III.	
A STRANGE RIDE	27
IV.	
THE CONSCRIPT	34
V.	
THE MAN FROM THE NORTH	44
VI.	
THE FORTUNES OF ENOS CRUMLETT	56
VII.	
THE RETURN OF THE GUERILLAS	69
VIII.	
OLD FRIENDS	78

IX.	
THE RESCUE	88
X.	
A CHANCE FOR A SPECULATION	95
XI.	
THE PEDDLER BOY	110
XII.	
CARL'S ADVENTURE	122
XIII.	
ENOS FALLS INTO TEMPTATION	132
XIV.	
POMP FINDS EMPLOYMENT	142
XV.	
FRED AND POMP DISPOSED OF	152
XVI.	
WHAT BECAME OF FRED	164
XVII.	
WHAT HAPPENED TO POMP AND OTHERS	170
XVIII.	
THE KIDNAPPER'S PASS	180
XIX.	
A DANGEROUS LEAP	186

XX.

FRED MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH A LASSO 195

XXI.

A TALK IN THE DARK 209

XXII.

A NIGHT IN THE WOODS.—THE MORNING 218

XXIII.

OLD COMRADES, AND THEIR ADVENTURES 229

XXIV.

THE MAN IN THE CASK 245

XXV.

MR. CRUMLETT'S SUBSTITUTE. 250

XXVI.

A STRANGE MEETING. 262

XXVII.

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT 271

XXVIII.

THE DISCOVERY 279

XXIX.

OLD JOEL'S HATCHET. 289

XXX.

DANIELS 302

XXXI.

THE COURT-MARTIAL 320

XXXII.

A CAPTURE AND AN ESCAPE 329

XXXIII.

THE FIRST ATTACK 336

XXXIV.

INDIAN WARFARE 349

XXXV.

TO NASHVILLE.—A SURPRISE 363

XXXVI.

THE SPY 371

THE THREE SCOUTS.

I.

A SOUTHERN UNION MAN.



N the borders of a deserted estate belonging to a wealthy secessionist, some Federal pickets were one evening making themselves at home.

Around them were all the evidences of desolating war, — neglected fields, demolished fences, and orchards converted into stump-lots. In their front, stretching southward, was a wild region of wooded ridges, concealing, not far off, the rebel outposts, and threaded by daring scouts of both armies by night and day. A few miles distant, in the opposite direction, was the city of Nashville, beautiful in the sunset-light, its lofty capitol gilded with faint gold, and its church-spires pointing heavenward as peacefully as if the din of war had never been heard in the land.

It was early in the month of December, 1862, when the Army of the Cumberland under Rosecrans, and the rebel army under Bragg, confronted each other. The nights were chill, and the soldiers were kindling a fire in some confiscated rails.

"Pile on the stieks, boys! Rebel fences make good Union fires!" said a tall fellow, stretching himself comfortably upon the ground.

"Pile 'em on yourself, Jake," querulously said the oldest of the party, — too old to be called a boy (the others named him "Old Joel"), but that all were "boys" in the regiment. "You needn't lay there, and tell the rest on us what to do."

"That's always Jake's way," said the youngest of the group, — a boy indeed, scarcely sixteen years of age, with almost too tender a young face for the rough company he was in. "I knew him at home. 'Lazy Jake' is his name there. He always showed a fine talent for lying down, and telling others what to do."

"How happened it, then," said Jake, laughing good-naturedly, "that I raised such crops on my place?"

"Crops? You *did* raise the noblest crop of weeds ever I saw! I remember a grove of pig-weeds right before your front door, about as tall as those cedars. You'd have

laughed, boys, to see how carefully he used to walk around them, rather than take the trouble to pull them up ! ”

“ I didn’t raise any corn, did I, Fred ? ”

“ Yes ; and your mother used to hoe it while you were loafing about the tavern.” Jake winced at this severe hit, and looked sharply at the merry youngster who was exposing him so unmercifully. “ The way you used to get it husked was to make a bee, and invite us young fellows to come and help you, then tell stories and sing songs to keep us amused till the work was done. He could work, though, boys, if he was a mind to. He used to think every thing of Cy, and go over and lounge in the fields where he was ploughing or mowing. But Cy wouldn’t have him around, unless he would help ; so he used to make him drive the horses, or spread the hay after him, to pay for his company. My mother used to say, ‘ Jake Evarts had rather work for Cy Thurston for nothing, than for himself for a dollar a day.’ ”

Jake blushed fiery red, and raised himself upon his elbow ; his lips parting and his eyes kindling. But when he saw Fred’s innocent, laughing face, his resentment cooled ; or else he was too lazy, as old Joel suggested, even to get angry in earnest.

“ Fred is young,” said Jake, his lips relaxing with an indulgent smile. “ He is privileged to say just what he

pleases ; and you can believe just as much of what he says as you like."

"If they don't believe me, they can ask Cy," said Fred. "There he comes now !"

"With a reg'lar Southern Union man along with him !" said old Joel sarcastically. "That's a fire-eater that's taken the oath, I'll bet my rations. Always know them chaps ; and I'd give about as much for their patriotism as I would for the fur that grows on a rail."

"Hello, Cy ! what you got there ?" said Jake with languid curiosity.

"Oh ! only a secessionist I've picked up. The last of an unlucky family ; all been killed before him ; he's been spared till now on account of his tender years ; but the necessities of the service, you know, boys ! Ain't he a handsome feller ?" And Cy showed proudly, not the stranger at his side, but a pig which he had speared, and brought away triumphantly on the point of his bayonet.

"Bully for you, Cy !" cried Jake, rousing up with an interest which imparted unusual energy to his athletic frame. "Ain't very fat, though, is he ? Let's see."

"Roast pig is Jake's favorite flower," laughed Fred. "Have you arrested that man, Cy ?" — with a glance at the stranger.

"Nc," said Cy; "he has got a pass."

"Cy," said old Joel, "is it true, Fred Rivers's mother said Jake 'u'd ruther work for you for nothing than for himself for a dollar a day?"

"If she did," said Cy, "it wasn't a great ways from the truth."

"I thought so! and that's what made him redden up so," said old Joel.

"Or else it was because she's a pretty young widow," said Cy. "Jake's always sensitive about what the women think of him."

"Is your mother a widder, Fred? I thought you said 'tother day she wan't a widder;" and old Joel eyed the boy inquisitively. "How's that?"

It was Fred's turn to blush, this time. It was a moment before he raised his eyes. When he did so, they met the eyes of the stranger who had come in with Cy. He was a singularly quiet man in his demeanor, but with a face full of resolution, and eyes that burned with a deep and steady intensity of gaze. At least, such was their expression at the instant Fred looked up. For a moment longer, the boy forgot to answer Joel's question, surprised and embarrassed by those eyes: so Cy answered for him.

"Ye see, she passes for a widow; and I guess she don't know but what she is one."

"Oh!" said Joel, "parted from her husband, has she? That's nothing uncommon. I've parted from my wife about fifty or sixty times; but somehow we never could stay parted: one or t'other or both on us—gen'er'y both—was always foolish enough to want to try living together agin. Habit, you know; that kind o' gits to be second nater." And Joel lighted his pipe, and puffed.

"I showed you the way to the turnpike, stranger," said Cy. "Didn't I make myself understood? Shall I show you again?"

"No, I thank you; don't trouble yourself," replied the stranger indifferently. And instead of moving on, as Cy evidently expected him to do, he coolly seated himself on a rail by the fire.

Cy sat down too, and commenced dressing the pig. Joel in the mean time, with the curiosity of one who had had much experience on the subject, was questioning Fred about the separation of his parents.

"If you must know," broke forth Fred, smarting with irritation, "my mother was from New Hampshire. She married a Kentuckian."

"That's curi's!" said old Joel. "How did they ever git acquainted?"

“She was living in Hanover; and he was a student there, in Dartmouth College. She went home with him, and found herself mistress of twenty slaves. That was the trouble, I suppose. My mother did not like the institution; my father did. So they agreed to disagree. One summer she took me North with her on a visit, and forgot to take me back again. Since then we have been living with my uncle in Illinois; and my father has been taking care of his twenty slaves, I suppose.”

“Wal, he’s had enough to do these times, to take care o’ that kind o’ prop’ty, I guess!” said old Joel. “But, seems to me, if I’d been in her place, I’d have stuck to him and the slaves; fact, more slaves the better. I believe,” he added complacently, “it’s always the women that are in the wrong, when there’s family trouble.”

Fred looked up with spirit. “My mother wasn’t in the wrong! You don’t know any thing about it, old Joel! She is a woman of principle. She thought slavery was a sin; and whether it was or not, since she thought so, she did right to take herself and me away from it as she did.”

“But hain’t you never heard from your father? Hain’t he done nothing to support ye?”

“It isn’t his fault, if he hasn’t. He commenced send-

ing my mother money, after she left him; but she sent it all back again. It was 'the price of sin,' she said, and wouldn't have any thing to do with it."

"Wal, that's more principle'n I've got, I allow!" said Joel. "If money was throwd upon my hands, I be hanged if I'd throw it back agin, if 'twas arnt by slaves. Though your father was a bad man, I suppose?"

"Just the contrary," said Fred with strong feeling. "He was a very good man, in most respects; and I know my mother loved him. And if it hadn't been for the curse of the institution, and, I suppose, a good deal of pride and temper on both sides—well, no matter what might have been!" And Fred arose with an excited air, and walked about.

"Slavery has caused a good many troubles and separations," remarked Cy over his pig. "It's been the occasion of the biggest kind of a family jar in Uncle Sam's house. But I guess the two parts of the country'll do as old Joel and his deary have done so many times,—come together again, and be better friends than ever. Don't you think so, stranger?"

The man, who had been sitting for some time with his eyes fixed on the ground, slowly raised his head.

"Did you speak to me, sir?"

“Yes, I did. I take it you belong in these parts. And from the remark you made about destroying private property, when I was confiscating this pig, I judge your sympathies are more on t’other side of the secession fence than on ours.”

“You are mistaken, permit me to say,” was the quiet reply. “I told you I was a Union man.”

“I know you did. But, if you had true Union-grit, you wouldn’t have thought it such a pity that a miserable rebel pig should go to comfort good patriot stomachs.”

The man smiled ironically. “As for Union grit, few men, I reckon, have made greater sacrifices for the country than I have. I have been persecuted, driven from my home; I have seen my own buildings fired, and crops destroyed, by guerillas, assisted by my own neighbors. I was rich; now I am homeless, — a poor man, — my family scattered. Do you wonder, then, that I say such things are a pity? For you are much mistaken, my friend, in supposing I alluded to your pig.”

This little speech, uttered with calm dignity, yet with an undertone of earnest feeling, made an impression. Fred halted in his walk, and stood regarding the stranger with curious interest. The man looked up: again their eyes met.

“You are young for the business you are in, my lad!”

And once more the bronzed Southern face lighted with a smile, — not of irony, this time.

“I shall be older before it is done,” Fred replied.

“So you will, so you will!” said the stranger sadly. “The country needs all her able-bodied men in this crisis, but not her young boys.”

“If the men won’t go, then the boys must,” said Fred. “That’s what I told mother. ‘I’ll go,’ said I, ‘and shame ’em.’”

“And she gave her consent?”

“Of course she did, — though not till she saw it was no use to refuse it. We lived with my uncle, and I’d never done any thing for myself, or her, or anybody; but, when the war broke out, I believed my time had come. ‘Mother,’ said I, ‘don’t you say a word; for I’m going into this war, boy as I am. It’s what I’ve been waiting for,’ said I: ‘now I’m going to do something for my country, and pay all debts that way.’”

“And didn’t she oppose you?”

“Oppose me?” Fred laughed, with a tear in his eye. “My mother is a woman that likes to have her way about as well as I like to have mine. And I was all she had, ye know: that’s what made it hard for her. ‘But mother,’ says I, ‘other mothers have had to let their sons go. You

ain't the only one. But I wouldn't ask you, if I didn't believe this is what God designed me to do.' That's the way I talked, and finally she let me go."

Fred's voice quite failed him as he spoke the last words; but he winked the tears from his eyelashes, and laughed. He was evidently proud of his mother, and liked to speak of her, except when questioned by old Joel.

The stranger had arisen from his seat on the rail. He took the boy's hand.

"You have got the right spirit. I like a lad that stands by his mother. Don't do any thing to shame her, and you will do well. Good-by, my boy!"

"What! going, stranger?" said Cy.

"Yes: I have business, unfortunately; or else I would stay, and show you what a good Union man I am by eating a slice of your confiscated pig." And the stranger walked away in the direction of the turnpike.

"I guess he's all right," said Cy; "though I own he kind of riled me at first."

"Wal, Cy Thurston!" said old Joel. "I thought more o' your common sense than all that! That man is a pesky rebel spy, I'll bet my rations. They all pretend to be good Union men; they all have stories to tell about

being persecuted, and driven from their homes, property destroyed, and all that. What do you think, my boy?"

"I think he is a man who knows his own business a great deal better than we can guess it," replied Fred, watching the dark form of the stranger as he walked over the western ridge into the fiery eye of the sunset.

II.

GOBBLED UP.



LD Joel's suspicions would certainly have been confirmed had he watched the progress of the stranger beyond the ridge. Reaching the turn-pike-road, he turned southward, passed the picket guard, and, hastening on at a rapid pace, entered the rebel lines before dark.

The sun set upon the city; upon the white tents of the patriot camps encircling it, stretching for miles over the sombre hills like a chain of snow-drifts; and upon the lonely sentinels of the distant outposts. Night came on. The soldiers in their canvas city slept; while far-away mothers, sisters, wives, in their comfortable homes, dreamed of the loved ones here.

Did Fred's mother sleep that night? Did she dream of her darling boy resting upon the hard ground with those of the guard who rested, or watching with those who watched? Did she see him start from deep sleep late in the

night, and, leaping up with his comrades, answer to his low-spoken name?

They are going to relieve the sentinels. The fires are out, and in silence and darkness they proceed along the shadowy side of the ridge. They mount towards its crest, in the direction of some dwarfish trees faintly defined against the dim sky. Suddenly a voice beyond challenges.

“Halt!” The party halts.

“Who goes there?”

“Relief,” is the low response.

“Advance, sergeant, with the countersign.”

The sergeant advances, and whispers the magic word in the ear of the challenger. The latter in turn whispers it in the ear of the soldier who relieves him. The new sentinels take their places; the old ones fall into the rear of the relieving party, as it marches on. Then all is silence again on the dark crest of the ridge.

Fred is stationed near some low cedar-trees that screen the pickets there from the enemy's observation. He is not alone: he has old Joel for a companion. There is no moon, and but few stars are visible. What a strange, silent, lonely night! Nobody knows how near the enemy is. He may be far away in those woods yonder; or he may be dangerously close, — within a few rods.

Fred moves continually about, examining the ground.

“Didn’t ye hear nothing?” whispers old Joel. “A crackling noise down there in the holler!”

They listen: not a sound! Fred crouches low, in order to discern against the sky any object that may be moving near. He puts his ear to the ground. Footsteps! There is somebody approaching. Two or three forms are visible.

“Halt! Who goes there?”

“Patrol.”

“Stand! Advance one with the countersign.”

The countersign is right. The patrol asks a few questions, and moves on. Again silence.

“There’ll be an attack along the line here, somewheres, about daylight,” prognosticates old Joel. “There always is after one o’ them spies has been around.”

“Do you mean that Union man Cy brought in? He was no spy!” says Fred.

“Bet my rations on that. He’s in the rebel camp, long ’fore this. I believe Southern Union men are a humbug, gen’ly; and the whole pass system is wus’n the deuse. I wouldn’t grant one o’ them chaps a pass to go where they please, any more’n I’d — Was that noise any thing?”

“Only the wind: it is rising a little.”

“By time! there’s something! see it!”

“Challenge it!” says Fred.

Joel challenges. No response. He is about to fire, when Fred, who can scarce restrain his laughter stops him.

“It’s nothing but a beugh waving in the wind!”

“So I thought, when I challenged it,” says the old man ;
“but it’s always well to be sure.”

Slowly the moments drag. The stars grow dim. The dawn is not far off. What thoughts come to the boy soldier as he watches there? — his mother, who loves him, and whose life would be left so desolate if any accident should happen to him! the deadly, terrible war; (and when, when, will it ever end?) the strange sense of loneliness and mystery that fills him as he listens, and looks up at the far, dim stars; and, beating under all, a wild pluse of ambition, as he thinks of the glory which may be won.

Hark! what is that? Surely a sound of hoofs, distant, moving slowly as with cautious approach.

“Jake!” whispers Fred; “a troop of horse!”

“It’s only our videttes,” says Jake languidly. “You and old Joel are always seeing bug-bears.”

A small stream flows through a ravine in front of the picket line. Beyond that the ground is broken and par-

tially wooded. Ridge and hollow are beginning to appear faintly defined in the early December twilight. Fred strains his eyes, gazing to catch the first indication of a movement in that direction. Suddenly, crack! crack! The enemy has been discovered by pickets farther down, and been fired upon.

The reports are a signal of alarm to the outposts. They also serve as a signal to the enemy that his approach is perceived. Instantly the muffled sound of hoofs breaks into a clatter, a clash, — a galloping headlong rush over the hillsides, down the slopes, — crash, crash, through the thickets! splash, splash, into the water! and crack, crack, flash, flash, all along the line of pickets!

“Told ye so!” cried old Joel. “I said there’d be an attack.”

“Nothing but a little cavalry dash!” says Jake, alert. “Don’t ye run!” (Jake is decidedly averse to running.) “I don’t believe there’s going to be much of a shower!”

“They have dashed into our boys below!” cries Fred. “Fall back, or we shall be cut off.”

“Don’t ye run, I tell ye!” reiterates Jake. “The boys down there will look out for themselves. It’s only a little squad of guerillas: stand our ground, and we’ll capture the whole caboodle of ’em!”

The firing is rapid, but irregular. Pistol-shots mingle with rifle-shots. Then the clash of sabres, — shrieks, shouts, yells. The pickets fall back upon their guard, — Jake and his companions with the rest, but more slowly than some, — too slowly; for suddenly the rebel cavalry are upon them. Having dashed into the line, and captured a few prisoners, they wheel, and make a swoop to take in what stragglers they can. Here they come, a swift, tumultuous troop, yelling, with sabres in air.

“Rally by fours!” shouts Jake.

There is an attempt to rally; but it is useless. What can a few scattered bayonets do against such an impetuous charge of cavalry?

“Quarter!” cries old Joel, throwing down his musket, and throwing up his hands.

“Blast the luck!” growls Jake, following the discreet example.

Fred does the same; but he has fired first, emptying one saddle.

They have yielded just in time. The rebels surround them, more like demons than men, — spurring, brandishing their sabres, and driving them furiously down the slope, into the water, and into the thickets across the stream.

A body of Federal cavalry, with an infantry support, soon

comes charging after them. The pursuit is kept up, with occasional skirmishing in the rear of the raiders, until a strong force of rebels, advancing to their protection, charges in turn, and drives the pursuers back.

“My mother!—what will she think?” is Fred’s bitter reflection, when all hope of rescue is over. “There isn’t much glory in this, is there, boys?”

“It’s rascally,” says Jake, “to make men travel this way!”

“It’s better’n being mowed down on the spot with them pesky sabres,” says old Joel. “Hanged if I didn’t think ’twas all over with us, one spell. It’s all owing to that spy. But, boys, there’s one thing,—we may live to see him ketched and hung, yet!”

These words are uttered at intervals, with panting breath; for the poor fellows are well-nigh exhausted with their forced march. The pursuit over, the rebels slacken their pace; and two or three of the prisoners, who have been wounded, are taken upon horses.

“I’ll take this boy behind me,” says one. “Mount, youngster!”

Fred is seized by the collar: Jake gives him a boost, and he is mounted behind the horseman. “They think I’m wounded,” he says to himself; “but never mind the mistake!”

“Here! hello! I’m disabled!” says Jake, hugely discontented with his forced march. “Give us a lift, can’t ye?”

“I’ll give you a slash over the head, if ye don’t keep quiet!” answers one of the guard, pricking him on with his sword-point.

III.

A STRANGE RIDE.



RED had not ridden far behind the horseman, when he perceived that he was becoming separated from his companions. They were hurried on, closely guarded; while the man who had him in charge gradually fell into the rear.

“That was rather a neat operation, Daniels,” said an officer, reining up beside them. He was a brigandish-looking man, with long black hair, and a face almost hidden by a thick beard, out of which advanced a stout red nose. He appeared garnished all over with pistols: there were pistols stuck in his belt, and pistols in his holsters, besides a formidable pair which he wore in the legs of his boots.

“Very neat, indeed, captain,” replied the man in a voice that sounded strangely familiar to Fred’s ear.

“Is that boy badly hurt?” asked the captain.

“Not so but that he can ride by holding on to me. Are you faint?” — to Fred.

"No, not very," said Fred, puzzled and astonished.

He tried to remember where he had heard that voice. His guard was clad in the ordinary dress of a citizen, and he wore no sword.

"I must tighten this girth a little, if my horse is to carry double," he said loud enough for the captain's ear, and halted.

He seemed about to dismount. He of the pistols also drew rein, asking if he could be of any assistance.

"No," said Daniels. "I reckon I'll let it go for the present." And he spurred on again, after endeavoring to tighten the girth, without dismounting.

During the brief halt, the distance between them and the main body had materially increased. Moreover, something else had happened, of deep interest to Fred. The horseman, tugging at the strap to which the saddle was buckled, had turned his profile towards his prisoner. Glimpses of the silver east, brightening through the trees, shone upon it, lighting for an instant the russet beard, the calm, resolute face, the deep, quiet eyes, shadowed by the felt-hat. It was the same profile Fred had daguerrotyped upon his memory the evening before, when the suspected stranger turned from him, and walked over the hill into the fiery eye of the sunset.

"Joel was right: the man is a spy! 'Twas he that guided the rebels! He had examined our position, and knew just where to make the attack. But I may pay him yet!" The blood rushed violently to Fred's brain, and these were the thoughts that rushed with it.

"Come, Daniels, we shall be left quite behind!" called the officer.

"I am with you," replied Daniels, spurring forward.

A desperate resolve flashed its light into the boy's soul. To be revenged upon this man, and at the same time to escape! Carefully he withdrew his right hand from the horseman's waist, carefully felt with it in his own pocket, and drew forth a knife. It was a stout knife, with a long, pointed blade. He opened it with his teeth, behind the shoulder of the spy. Then, with the handle in his grasp and the blade in his sleeve, he softly returned his hand, now closed, to the horseman's waist, and awaited his chance.

"Perhaps the officer will ride on. Oh, to be one minute alone with this villain! I'll strike him with all my might in his neck, tumble him off, snatch the reins, and away!"

Such were the boy's thoughts, not formed definitely in those words, but passing through his mind in electric flashes.

He saw the possibility of escape clearly enough, provided the officer would take himself out of the way. True, the

rebel pickets were passed long ago; it was now broad day; they were in the enemy's country, travelling the open road; and, although it was a good horse they mounted (as he was pleased to observe), he could not hope to gallop back to camp without encountering danger. He seemed to think of every thing in an instant of time. He even thought of the glory of such an exploit; and of the delight of writing to his mother about it, when all was over. His plan was firmly outlined in his mind, — to plunge into the woods, and there, abandoning his horse, if necessary, to hide in the thickets from his pursuers, elude the rebel scouts, and make his way back at last, somehow, to the Union lines.

Once more the spy's horse fell behind. The man with the pistols galloped on after his companions. "Let him pass that ridge!" thought Fred, thoroughly nerved for his purpose; "and then!" He examined the horseman's neck, and thought where he should strike.

"My boy, let me give you a word of advice," said the spy, in a voice so calm and friendly that Fred felt compelled to wait and listen to him. Besides, the officer was not yet out of sight: nothing would be lost by a little delay.

"Well, sir," said Fred, in a tone he vainly endeavored to make as calm as the stranger's. He felt so much depending upon the action of the impending instant, that every nerve seemed alive with excitement.

“Put that thing back into your pocket,” said Daniels.
“Don’t you see you will spoil all?”

“Sir? What thing?” faltered Fred, utterly confounded, and no more able to use the blade than if the stranger’s hand had grasped his wrist.

That, however, Daniels had not done, and did not attempt to do. He had not even made a movement indicating that he knew what the boy’s fingers held.

“I mean that knife in your right hand, against my side. You thought of killing me. Very well: it was a bright idea. I knew you were a lad of spirit, or I shouldn’t have taken a fancy to you. But, next time, don’t open a blade with your teeth so near to your man’s ear: learn to open it in your pocket, or under your thigh.”

“I might kill you now!” uttered Fred, with his heart in his throat, and wondering why he didn’t.

“But you won’t.”

“Why won’t I?”

“Because it would be the foolishest thing you could do, my boy. You would spoil all I am doing for you.”

“Doing for me! What *have* you done for me?” exclaimed Fred.

“Not what you imagine. I am truly your best friend. Don’t you see how hard I have been trying to rescue you?”

And I have almost succeeded. The captain will be out of sight in a minute. What makes you tremble so?"

"I don't know what to make of you!" said Fred, experiencing a strange revulsion of feeling.

"But you think better of me than you did?" for Fred had taken the man's advice, and put his knife back into his pocket. "Now, hark ye. We are about to part. I have business that must be attended to. I should have been about it now, if it hadn't been for this piece of work. I have got you off at a risk to myself that you know nothing of. All I ask in return is, if we ever meet again, that you will trust me. Whatever appearances may be, whatever you may hear said of me, believe in me, my boy: will you?"

"I will," said Fred, almost involuntarily.

"Remember! for we shall meet again. I leave you in these woods. About a mile at the left, over on the next cross-road, lives a Union man, named Ellsmer. Go to his house, at night, when you want any thing. Be very cautious. Stick to the woods. Take these crackers." (Fred put them into his pocket.) "I shall be back this way to-morrow, when I will get you off."

"And our boys, the prisoners: can't you do something for them?"

"You don't know what you ask! But I will see." The

man then gave Fred simple and brief directions for finding the house, and also for meeting with him on his return. By this time they were quite alone on the road, with woods on either side.

“Now alight, and run into the timber as if for your life. I shall shoot at you, or pretend to; for we may be observed.”

Fred obeyed. Daniels spurred after him, and fired a pistol in the woods. Fred, to keep up appearances, tumbled into some bushes.

“My prisoner tried to escape, and I shot him: you understand!”

With these parting words, and with a strange, bright look — almost a smile — from under his felt hat, the horseman wheeled about, and galloped away.

IV.

THE CONSCRIPT.

HE morning was cool, and very pleasant. The sunlight flushed the dark tops of the pines, gilded the naked boughs of the deciduous trees, and slanted, in soft, bluish golden bars, through the hazy atmosphere, to the carpet of loose leaves that covered the ground.

But Fred had no leisure to appreciate the fresh, sweet beauty of the early day. It is only when the spirit is at peace that Nature instils her tranquil influences into it; and his spirit was strangely perturbed.

The excitement of his capture and escape; the mystery surrounding the man Daniels, who, his reason told him, was a spy, and yet to whom his heart acknowledged a debt of gratitude; the knowledge that at any hour he might be retaken or shot, — all these things kept his thoughts in a whirl. He found a good hiding-place under a fallen tree, and lay there several hours. He ate one of the crackers Daniels had

given him, — a dry, solitary breakfast. After that he grew thirsty, and resolved to go out, and look for water.

After wandering about for half an hour, he came to a little thread of water that trickled among stones in the almost dry bed of a woodland stream. Although so late in the season, the springs were low. Fred looked along for a good place to drink, and came at last to a gravelly basin, scooped out of the stones and earth, where some thirsty wayfarer had dug for water before him. He got down on his hands and knees, dipped his face into the clear, bright pool, and drank delicious draughts.

After quenching his thirst, he observed the prints of horses' hoofs on the bank. There were several of them in the soft earth; evidently tracks of animals going down to the basin. This was, then, a watering-place, known to travellers. "In that case I must look out," thought Fred. And now he was startled to see half a dozen horsemen go galloping among the trees not ten rods off. Evidently the road was there: he had not supposed it was so near.

Behind him was a thicket, where the undergrowth was encouraged by the moisture of the low ground about the stream. He crept into it, and, finding a spot where he was perfectly hidden, stretched himself out there, ate another cracker, which he called dinner, and went to sleep.

Being very weary, he slept long and well. If any one came to the pool to drink, he did not know it; for his slumbers were undisturbed. It was late in the afternoon when he awoke. He crept out of the thicket, and drank again: then, being very hungry, he ate the last of his crackers; that he called supper. "Unless," thought he, "I am lucky enough to find friends who will give me a more substantial meal; in which case," — swallowing the last crumbs, — "I call this luncheon."

As it was some distance to the house of the Union man Daniels had recommended him to find, he resolved to set out early to search for it. Cautiously making his way through the woods, he arrived on the outskirts of them just at dusk. The house was in sight. His heart swelled with joyous anticipations. Yonder, beneath that brown roof, were friends of the cause for which he was fighting; and no doubt they would prove friends to him.

"An old man and his wife," Daniels had said. "Their sons are in the rebel army, and they live alone."

He waited until he could trust to the darkness to screen him from observation, then left the cover of the woods. He approached the premises in the rear, and reached safely the shelter of a stable. The house was perhaps twenty yards distant. All was still about it, and there were no lights in

the windows. Neither were there any cattle, nor any living creature whatever, stirring in the yard.

Fred felt uneasy, without very well knowing why. It seemed to him that all was not right here. He had hoped to meet the old man at the stable or the corn-cribs, and avoid the risk of first entering the house, where there might be visitors he would not like to see. He coughed; then called aloud, "Hallo, there!" In case he had brought out a suspicious looking character, or anybody but an old man, he was prepared to run for the woods. The worst of it was, he brought no one whatever.

"They have gone to bed," thought he. "I'll just slip around, where I can see in front of the house."

In front of the house was a porch; and Fred perceived, standing under it, before the door, perfectly motionless, in the gloom of the early evening, the form of a man.

He waited a minute to see if his presence would be noticed. No: the man stood like a statue, his hands behind him, and his head on one side, in an attitude of the most profound and melancholy meditation. He had on a queer thing in place of a hat. He seemed very tall; or was he standing on something that raised his feet from the floor?

Fred approached, determined to attract attention. "Good-evening, sir!" said he. Still no motion, no response. The

lad's hair began to lift itself with thrilling roots. A fearful mystery was here.

Still he advanced, resolved to know who the man was, and why he did not speak. "Good-evening!" he said again, setting his foot upon the steps, and steadying himself with his hand against one of the posts.

Speechless as a spectre, motionless as the post itself, rigidly erect but for the drooping head, the figure kept its place in the gloom. But now Fred's attention was directed to another figure, — a woman on the porch floor; an old woman, with a wound in her temples, and her gray hair clotted with blood.

"What — who has done this?" he exclaimed with accents of horror.

He looked up at the man. His hands behind him were tied. The queer thing on his head was a handkerchief, tied over his eyes. Instead of standing before the door, as at first appeared, he was hanging by the neck from a rope attached to a rafter of the porch. That was what made him look so tall.

"Look at 'em! look at 'em!" said a deep voice hollow with passion and despair. "A pleasant sight, ain't it?"

Where did the voice come from? Fred did not know at

first. It seemed to be the voice of the present horror, that was in no particular spot, but surrounding him. Then he saw a movement in the open door of the house. A gun-barrel was pushed out menacingly towards him; and, behind the weapon, he discerned, in the darkness of the room beyond, the outlines of a human form. Fred did not recoil. A strange and terrible calmness had come over him.

“It is dreadful! dreadful!” he said. “Who did it?”

Upon that the individual in the house came out. He stood, holding his gun before his breast, while he pointed at the corpses. He was a young man; a mere youth even, as Fred could plainly see. He was in his shirt-sleeves: his throat was open, his head uncovered, his hair tangled wildly over his brow; his whole aspect ghastly and savage.

“Look at that old man! Look at that old woman!” he said. “That’s my father; that’s my mother. I’m their son,—the youngest. I was the baby, ye know. They sot more by me than they did by their own lives. That’s the way it happened, ye see!”

The young man’s chest heaved with a sudden convulsion, a fierce, dry sob; and he gnashed his teeth, leaning upon his gun, and looking down at his mother.

“But how—how did it happen?”

“How? I’ll tell ye. You ain’t one o’ them I was

watching for ; lucky for you ! ” — with a hideous laugh at Fred. “ Ye see I was watching ; my gun ready, loaded to kill. I thought they might be coming back. ”

“ They ? who ? ”

“ I’ll tell ye. We was Union folks here ; leastwise, all on us but Bob : that’s my brother. He’s as bad a rebel as any on ’em. But I stuck to the Union, ’long with the old man, till I was conscripted. They forced me into the ranks, and made me fight ; only I wouldn’t. I hain’t sent nary bullet at a Federal uniform yet ; for I swore I wouldn’t. Wal, I got mad, and made up my mind I’d come home. I come three nights ago, and have been hid here ever since. But, to-day, Gruffley’s Riders come hunting for me. They didn’t catch me napping, though. ‘ Go into yer hole, my son,’ says the old man. ‘ Ye’re safe thar ; they can’t find ye ; and me and the old woman won’t betray ye, if we die fust.’ So I went into my hole. I couldn’t hear nary thing that was going on ; but I waited for the old man to come and tell me ’twas all right, and I could come out. But he didn’t come, and I growed oneasy. Last I ventured out ; and this yer’s what I found. They wouldn’t tell whar I was : they give their lives for me ! ”

“ You found them dead ? ”

“ Jest as ye see ’em. That was three or four hours ago.

I didn't tech to take the old man down; for what was the use? 'Twas all over with him. I jest took my gun, and staid in. I knew the devils was waiting for me to show myself: so I waited for them. They'll be here agin, if they ain't watching now; and I'm bound to have a bullet in the heart of one of 'em, if I wait a week. Now, who are you, and what do you want? Jest step into the house; for, dark as it is, we may get a shot."

They entered the dark kitchen, where Fred told his story.

"So ye come here for help, did ye? Wal, my father has hid and protected many a Union man; but that time's over, ye see, and ye couldn't have come to a wus place now. The devils have stripped the house of every thing to eat, and druv off the cattle. I might hide ye; but I can't eat ye."

"Why do *you* stay? If you wait to kill somebody, you will be certainly killed yourself."

"That's about so, I reckon. And, I tell ye, I'd about as lives die as any way; only let me have my revenge fust. If it's starving, I can starve; or, if it's being shot, I can be shot: but I'm going to have my revenge."

Fred earnestly entreated the conscript to fly to the woods with him. "It is useless to stay here. You know the country: we will dodge the bushwhackers and rebel pickets, and get into our lines."

“That’s best for you ; but I stay here. I can take care of myself.”

“ Show me your hiding-place, will you ? ”

“ No, I reckon I won’t. ’Twouldn’t do you no good, and it might do me harm. We don’t know who to trust these times. As for the man Daniels ye speak of, I don’t know him ; but I’d advise ye not to trust him, anyhow. Don’t trust nobody : don’t trust me. Ye’d better leave me, and take care of yourself : that’s my advice to you.”

“ Can’t I assist you in any way ? ” Fred inquired, horribly depressed by the young man’s despair.

“ Nary a bit.”

“ Are your neighbors all secesh ? ”

“ They mought as well be, if they ain’t. There’s a man further up the road, name of Crumlett : he’s Union at heart, but he’s the biggest coward. He’s from the North too ; and wishes himself back thar, I reckon.”

“ From the North ! ” Fred caught eagerly at this fact, and asked many questions concerning the man, to which the conscript gave miserably discouraging answers.

“ Don’t ye go nigh him. Don’t ye have nothing to do with him, any way. He’ll like as not betray ye, if he finds it’s for his interest. Durn these half-and-half men. If you want some clothes to hide your uniform, I can give ’em to

ye ; and that's more'n ye could get out'n him. Here's an overcoat and hat that'll do ye. Never mind the trouse's : our folks have robbed your dead and wounded, till Federal pantaloons are common enough on secesh legs. But you'd better give up your cap, and put this coat on, if ye don't want to excite too much attention."

Fred hesitated ; for he had hoped to enjoy the triumph of wearing his uniform back to camp. But the experiences of the past half-hour had made a powerful impression upon him. He had seen shocking evidences of the barbarous ferocity of his enemies. The man upon whose assistance he had depended was hanging here before his own door. His faith in the man Daniels was weakened. He felt that his presence in the house with the young conscript was unwelcome ; and he saw no way before him but to betake himself once more to the woods. Then what dangers must be encountered before he could hope even to reach the Federal outposts ! He saw what advantages a disguise might afford, and he accepted the proffered hat and coat.

"Now be sharp," said the conscript, letting him out of the house by a back door. "I know this place is watched ; and, if you can get safe into the woods again, ye may think yerself lucky."

V.

THE MAN FROM THE NORTH.



“NOW I suppose I may consider myself in luck,” thought Fred, remembering the conscript’s last words, and pausing to take breath a quarter of an hour later. He had, in the mean time, quitted the house, and reached the woods unmolested. “It doesn’t look much like luck, though!”

The prospect was indeed dismal. The night was cloudy, the moon was hid, and darkness filled the woods. He had never before been in a situation so utterly forlorn and discouraging. He knew not a path; and, even if he had known all the paths in the forest, it was then too dark to find them. Besides, the boy was hungry.

But he did not lose heart. He thought of the son of the murdered old couple, in that house of horrors, waiting for revenge; and said to himself, “I am indeed lucky, compared with him!”

He thought of his own dear mother, for whose sake he was

determined to come off conqueror in this struggle with difficulty and danger.

“I won’t wait for Daniels,” he said to himself. “I am sorry I have waited for him at all. I might have found my way to the rebel pickets by this time ; and what a jolly night this would be to run past ’em ! That is north. Now I must remember and travel straight ; for I’m bound to make the most of this night, and get in, if it’s possible, before morning.”

He plunged straight into the woods, and bravely pressed forward. He could see his way dimly at first ; but he had not gone far when the last glimmer of light faded, and he became enveloped in almost total darkness. He ran against tree-trunks ; he tripped over roots and sticks ; he got entangled in invisible thickets. Then he saw that he had made a mistake. He ought to have followed the roads on such a night as this.

But regret was useless now. Besides, he hoped, by changing his course a little, to strike the turnpike soon. So he struggled on, feeling with his hands before him, stumbling often, and scratching his hands and face. At last, to his great relief, he saw that he was coming out of the woods. He arrived at open fields. But what was this ? The turnpike should be here ; but there was no turnpike ! He could

not remain long in doubt as to what had happened. In avoiding the obstacles in his way, he had lost his course, and emerged from the woods in a place where he was as ignorant of his situation, and of the points of the compass, as if he had just issued from a sack.

Fortunately, he saw a light. "A house!" And he resolved to approach and reconnoitre.

There was a road in front of the house; and, as he crossed it, a man appeared, standing in red shirt-sleeves, relieved against the back-ground of a fire-lighted room.

"Who's there?"

"A friend," said Fred, boldly advancing.

"What's wanting?"

"I'm a stranger," said Fred, "on my way to join the army. I've got lost, and I want some supper."

"Wal, that's bad! I don' know," said the man hesitating. "Which army?" looking anxiously at Fred as the firelight from the door shone upon him.

"The right one, of course," replied Fred.

"Of course!" said the man. "What do ye say, ma?" turning to a woman in the house, about whose gown half a dozen boys and girls were huddling, some hiding their heads under her apron, and some peeping from behind the folds of her dress with looks of fright. "We hain't got an inch o'

room to spare," the man added immediately, without waiting for her response; "and I don't see how we can take ye in, any way in the world."

"I only want some supper: I have money to pay for it," said Fred.

"Oh! that all ye want? Wal, I s'pose — what do ye say, ma? Can ye scare him up a bite o' suthin'? Guess he won't be very pa'tic'lar."

"I don't know," said the woman despondingly. "It's as *you* say: I don't have the ordering of any thing, nowadays."

"Yes you do, too!" said the man sharply. "Don't ye talk that way, now! Why ain't the young ones sent to bed?"

"They're so scaret: you know as well as I do. And ever since Tildy come home, and told about seeing Mr. Ellsmer hung 'fore his own door, you've been as scaret as any of us."

"Wal, 'twas enough to make a man feel a little narvous, I own: next neighbors, so. But I ain't scaret: no!" said the man stoutly. "Ye see," to Fred, who, in the mean time, had entered the house, "there's been dreadful doim's right in our neighborhood here this very afternoon. You've heered on't, maybe?"

“Yes,” said Fred: “I heard an old man and woman had been murdered.”

“Murdered? I didn’t say murdered, did I?” the man hastened to interrupt him, evidently in great alarm. “Their son had deserted, and come home; and they wouldn’t give him up, ye know. Set down, stranger. Been travellin’ fur?”

“A good many miles since morning.”

“You don’t look much like the generality I see goin’ to jine the army. Where ye from?”

“From the vicinity of Nashville,” replied Fred.

The man stood by the fire, with his hands on his hips, and his head one side, and regarded him with anxious interest.

“You ain’t Tennessee: I know by your looks. You’re from the North, somewhere, ain’t ye?”

“My father was a Kentuckian,” said Fred evasively.

“But your mother wan’t? See here!” The man stepped to the door to assure himself that it was latched. “Ma, you be gittin’ him some supper. Maybe he won’t want nothin’ more’n some bread and milk. Ye can fry him some pork, and warm him up some petaters, though, if he prefers. Like suthin’ perty hearty, would ye? Wal, I s’pose. Guess a slice o’ that ham, and an egg, mother.”

The woman set about her task with a discontented air.

scolding the children, and giving them an occasional cuff when they came in her way.

The man took a chair, and leaned over the back of it, scrutinizing his guest, and questioning him. Fred stood the ordeal well. He felt that he was master of the situation. He knew his host much better than his host-knew him. For it had not taken him long to satisfy himself of the fact, that he had come out of the woods on the same side from which he had entered them, and arrived by accident at the house of the man "from the North," who was "Union at heart," described by the son of the murdered old couple.

"Was the Union army about Nashville when you left?" said the man, confidentially drawing the chair near Fred's, and seating himself near by, facing him, with his back towards the fire. "What do ye think? is Bragg going to git whipped out?"

"If he should," said Fred, "that would take old Tennessee back into the Union, and you with it, Mr. Crumlett."

"That's so!" with excitement. "But how did you know that my name was Crumlett?"

"Oh! I have heard of you before," laughed Fred.

"Have ye?" The man fidgeted, hitched his chair, and recrossed his legs. "Read about me, hey? Wal, I heered

that affair had got into a book ; though I never seen it, and never wanted to."

"What affair?" asked Fred, interested.

"Wal, that affair of Neighbor Jackwood's, ye know."

"What! you don't mean to say that you are *that* Mr. Crumlett?" ejaculated Fred. "Not *Enos*?"

"That's my name," said the man, with a curious, weakly smile, as if he did not quite relish the reminiscence. "They've put me into a theatre-play too, I hear. Though Tildy, she never would believe that. The idee o' playin' us in a theatre was *too* silly!" And the man forced a laugh, as he looked over his shoulder at the mother of his children.

"Is *this* Tildy?" said Fred with increasing astonishment.

"That's Tildy!" said Enos, his spirits rallying as he saw how much his guest was interested in the discovery. "But ye'd hardly know her now: she's changed."

"And no wonder," said Mrs. Crumlett petulantly, "after what I've had to go through!"

"Go through?" echoed Enos tartly. "Come, now, what have ye had to go through that's so dreadful? Hain't I been a good provider? bought ye good tea and good snuff?"

"Wal, I ain't a-going to tell over my troubles 'fore stran-

gers," said Mrs. Crumlett with the air of an injured woman, who *could* tell volumes if she chose.

"By —— Sidon!" exclaimed Enos, unable to restrain his wrath even in the presence of his guest. "If you ain't the unreasonablest woman! Didn't I marry ye out of a poor family, and take ye right into a good home, and give ye — say, didn't I give ye a whole chistful o' gownds and things that was ma's, the very summer you come to live with me, when it might have been expected you'd bring your own outfit?"

"Wal," said Tildy sarcastically, "if you've flung that blue chist of old duds into my face once, you have a hundred times. I wouldn't mind it, if't wasn't 'fore strangers. I might fling back; but 'tain't my way to rake over family musses, presence of company!" referring to Fred, with a polite simper, and the air of a person who felt that she knew how to be a lady.

"Company or no company," broke forth Enos, "I ain't goin' to stan' by and hear that chist of nice valoobles of ma's called old duds by you nor nobody!"

"Wal," said Tildy with an independent toss, as she busied herself over the spider, "all I got to say is, that I had two good dresses when I was married, — the one I stood up in, that I paid for with my own money, and the one

Berthy Rukely give me; and that I haven't had what you may call a decent dress to my back since."

"Hain't had a decent — thunderation!" said Enos, springing to his feet. "But it's no use!" He sat down again, running his fingers through his hair with a look of desperation. "She's the most aggravatin' woman! and, if I hadn't got the most forbearin' temper in the world, we sh'd been divorced long ago!"

"I'm perfectly willin' to be divorced, if you want to be," said Mrs. Crumlett airily. "Guess 'twouldn't break my heart, neither."

"Wal, then, by jingoes, we will be! See then how you'll git along for want o' dresses to your back. You'll go and work out for a livin,' I s'pose, as ye did 'fore I married ye!" and Enos grinned.

"You've flung that in my face, too, often enough, I should think," retorted Mrs. Crumlett, flaring up. "If you'd been any thing of a man, you never would have seen me go out to work, after you'd made up your mind to offer yourself."

"Fact is," cried Enos, "I never did make up my mind till ye coaxed me into it, and I kind o' took pity on ye. Then when I seen what a terrible temper you'd got, — ungrateful, discontented, always flingin' out, — I'd been

glad to break off many a time, and tried to, but ye wouldn't. No, indeed!" with glittering sarcasm in his glances. "You'd hooked too good a fish; ha, ha! Ketch you lettin' him off after you'd once got him well on, I guess! Ha, ha, ha!" and Enos laughed with bitter and vehement scorn.

"There!" exclaimed Matilda, slapping a plate down spitefully on the table, "I never will touch to do another stroke of work in your house, Enos Crumlett, if I die! I've made a slave of myself for you long enough, if this is the way I'm to be thanked! Out from under my feet, Eeny!" — to her oldest boy, named after his father, — giving him a smart slap. "Now go to crying, and I'll give ye another to keep that company. Tildy, put that young one to bed, or do what you're a mind to: I don't care. I've done having any thing to do in this house, if your pa wants to get rid of me!" and Mrs. Crumlett threw herself upon a chair, muffling her sobs in her apron.

"Come, come, ma," said Enos, alarmed by this violent demonstration: "don't be silly, now. I hain't said I wanted to git red on ye." He examined the plate to see if it was cracked. "'Twan't your fault if you *didn't* smash it. Lucky for me I thought to buy thunderin' stout crockery, when you 'vas to have the handlin' on't, by jingoes! Hurt ye, Eeny? Wal, ye must larn to kept out o' the way when

yer ma's got her temper up. Run to roost, as the chickens do when there is a storm comin'. Come, Tildy, come!" coaxingly. "This young man is waitin' for his supper."

"Oh, yes!" sobbed Mrs. Crumlett in her apron, "if there's any thing ye want me to do, ye can be so pleasant! Then, when my feelin's is a little grain tried, — and it's you that try 'em, — you'll begin to talk about divorce!"

"Sho, now, ma! I tell ye I didn't. 'Twas you fust spoke o' divorce. I hain't put up with yer failin's all these years to want to give ye up. You *can* be jest the best woman in the world, if you're a mind to: I'll say that for ye. She ain't very well, ye know," said Mr. Crumlett, addressing his guest in words he intended should have a socthing effect on Mrs. Crumlett. "Have to make allowances. She's a good wife and mother, after all. Come, Tildy," — to his oldest, a dirty-faced girl, of the same age as Eeny, — "can't ye finish gittin' the gentleman's supper? Mamma ain't well, ye know."

Fred, amused by this alteroation, yet becoming weary of it, and hungry for his supper, resolved to divert the conversation into another channel. This he did so adroitly, that Mrs. Crumlett, perceiving that her sufferings were no longer the chief object of attention, soon began to dry her eyes, and peep over her apron to see what Tildy was doing. Tildy

was, of course, doing every thing awkwardly and wrong; observing which, the mother, losing patience, and forgetting her resolution to do no more work in her husband's house, sprang to her feet, jerked the dishes from the child's hands, shook her arm with a sharp reprimand for her stupidity, and sent her to look after "that young one," — meaning the baby. Tildy went to the baby; while her mother put Fred's supper on the board.

VI

THE FORTUNES OF ENOS CRUMLETT.



“OW happens it, Mr. Crumlett,” said Fred, drawing his chair to the table, “that you are living down here in Tennessee?”

“Wal,” said Enos, “I can’t hardly tell, myself. Got sick o’ Vermont. That Jackwood business had kind o’ raised a prejudice agin me, ye know. So, after ma she died, Tildy and me pulled up stakes, and moved to the Michigan. But Tildy she wan’t contented there.”

“You needn’t say *I* wan’t contented!” interposed Mrs. Crumlett. “’Twas you that wan’t contented, just as much as ’twas me, and more so.”

“Me?” cried Enos, prepared sharply to dispute that point. “But let it go; let it go; any thing for peace,” said he, in a tone which signified that he, being a man of exemplary forbearance, was ready to concede every thing in view of his wife’s infirmity.

“You know you was discontented!” persisted Matilda.

“And I won’t have you lay it all to me, that we couldn’t stay there, and had to move down here into Tennessee, — the foolishhest move, if I do say it!”

“What made me discontented, I’d like to ask?” Enos inquired with preternatural mildness of tone, designed to convince his guest how meek and conciliatory he was obliged to be with a woman of her temper.

“What made ye? ’Twan’t me that made ye, if that’s what you’re trying to insinuate. But the same thing ’t made us leave Vermont had followed us to the Michigan, and made us leave there.”

“Wal!” remarked Enos with a scowl, while he tried to look candid and unconcerned, drawing down the corners of his mouth with an expression of swallowing something bitter, which he pretended not to taste, — “wal! I own that may have had suthin’ to do with it. But what had I done? Only jest mentioned to a man in search of his property where that property was to be found. So they had to nickname me Judas Crumlett!”

“But that property was a human being!” said Fred.

“Wal, yes, — a slave, ye know, though she *was* white. But that wan’t my lookout. Property — why, property is property.” And Enos coughed, trying to look even more candid than before.

“But you received money for telling where she was!”

Upon that Enos smiled biliously. “All I received, and a hundred times over, wouldn’t begin to make me good for the trouble and expense I’ve been put to on account of that — wal, I won’t swear in presence of the children; but I want to, bad enough, when I think o’ the pay I got for my share in the transaction. We shouldn’t a’ gone to the Michigan, and had the fever’n ager there two seasons, and we never should a’ come to Tennessee, that’s mighty sartin, if ’t hadn’t been for that. They say bad news travels fast: and, by jingoes! it does; for we’d no sooner got settled in Michigan than it got noised about there ’t I was the man that took money for givin’ up a fugitive. Bime by I got mad. ‘Jerushey mighty, Tildy!’ says I, ‘we may as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb. Since this slave business has got us a bad name, let’s go the whole hog.’

Why,’ says she, ‘what’ll ye do, Enos?’ says she. ‘Do?’ says I: ‘I’ll go where my friends be,’ says I. ‘I’ll go where slave-huntin’ ’s the fashion; where folks believe in’t, and cry it up, and there ain’t none o’ these mean prejudices agin givin’ up a fugitive! By the laws!’ says I, ‘we’ll own slaves, Tildy!’ says I; ‘we’ll have the game as well as the name!’”

“There!” said Mrs. Crumlett triumphantly, “I’m glad you’ve owned up ’twas *your* idee, and not mine!”

“Wal!” replied Enos, disconcerted, but rallying immediately, “’twas my idee, after I see how res’less and uneasy you was, — that I own.”

Fred, seeing that Mrs. Crumlett was about to flare up again, made haste to inquire how Enos liked Tennessee.

“Between you and me,” — Crumlett lowered his voice to a confidential whisper; then, as if fearful of committing himself, he added, “Wal, to state it mild, I was a leetle grain disappointed. They don’t know how to farm it here, no more’n they know how to fly. Jest look at the kind o’ tools they use! Then, if a man undertakes to interduce improvements, they grow suspicious on him right off, ’specially if he’s a Northerner; and give him hints ’t he’d better keep the old track, if he don’t want to git into trouble.”

“But slavery — you found that a beautiful system, didn’t you?”

“I hain’t a word to say agin the system, of course!” Enos smoothed his chin. “I’d kind o’ placed myself that side o’ the fence, and I come here prepared to fall in love with’t head over heels. I bought three darkies, to begin with; averaged six hundred dollars apiece, they did; thought I was a goin’ to make a fortin’ out on ’em, and live at my ease. But, by jingoes! I couldn’t git so much work out o’

them three black hands as I could out o' one white one to the North, if I was to die. Whippin' was good for 'em, long as I follered it up, and stood over 'em with a lash till the work was done. But they beat all the shirks, the minute my back was turned; and there wan't no such thing as makin' 'em do their work to suit me. They tried me to death!" said Enos: "till, finally, I come to the conclusion 't if I wanted my work done as't should be, the way was to pay somebody to do it; for a man won't do nothin' well without he takes an interest in it, and he won't take no interest without you pay him. That's my experience. But, by the laws! the minute I hinted it to my neighbors, there was the deuse to pay. They said I'd come to meddle with their institutions; though I'd no prejudice agin slavery, and all I wanted was to git a livin'. But when I see 't the interest on my eighteen hundred dollars 't the niggers cost me, and the expense o' keepin' on 'em, not to speak of the wear and tear o' prop'ty, — for nigger-flesh, like horse-flesh, 'll wear out, course o' time, — when I see 't all that was about double what I'd haf to pay a single hired man to the North for doin' the same work, and doin' it well, — why, it sot me to thinkin'. But I soon see 'twan't safe even to think on that subject, much less to try to work out o' the beaten track: so I jest watched to see what my neighbors done, and

done the same, — let the niggers jog about as they pleased, and every thing about the farm go to seed and shiftlessness; for that's the order o' the day here. Then come along another pair o' twins: Eeny and Tildy's twins, and Rukely and Berthy's twins. If children is a blessin', I guess we've had about our share. I tell ye, it's been a hard time for us; and I don't know what in creation we should done, if 't hadn't been for some prop'ty my uncle left me. But then this plaguy secesh business turned up: that's cost me every thing!" Mr. Crumlett looked a picture of pecuniary distress. "Fust place, it's cost me over a thousan' dollars to keep out o' the army, — besides my niggers. One on 'em run away, and got into the Federal lines, where I guess I never shall see him agin; and t'other two has been took by the Confederate Gov'ment to work on fortifications. So here we be!" added Enos in a voice tremulous with emotion; "and what'll happen next, the Lord only knows, and he won't tell. You're from the North, or I never should talk to you this way; for, I tell ye, I've had to look sharp and not git into more serious trouble, all this time. See here, now! didn't I guess right? Ain't you from Ohio or Illinoize? Come on here with spec'lators? to buy cotton, mebby? I was sure on't!" he exclaimed triumphantly, as Fred gave him a sly wink. "Can't ye let me into the secret, if there's a chance for a spec'lation?"

“When the right time comes, perhaps,” said Fred. “I have to be a little cautious in my movements. By the way, can you keep me over night? I didn’t think of proposing it when I came in; but really, Mr. Crumlett, it is so nice to find myself in the house of a Northern man, — a friendly, intelligent man like you!”

Fred, you see, was careful not to trust Enos too far. On the other hand, Enos, scenting a chance for some speculation, and confident that the hospitalities extended to his guest would be paid for, began to consider whether, after all, there might not be an “inch of room” in the house for his accommodation.

“What do you think, ma? Can manage to pack three o’ the young ones into the trundle-bed, can’t ye? Then you can put him into the bed along with Eeny. You won’t object to sleeping with Eeny, will ye?”

“Not particularly; although” — Fred glanced at the younger Enos, who had already fallen asleep with his head on the table, where he was snoring vigorously — “I should prefer to sleep on the floor: I’m used to that.”

“Wal, then, ma, make him up a bed on the floor.”

“Oh!” said Mrs. Crumlett, “it’s easy, ain’t it, for you to set there, and say make him up a bed on the floor, when you know there ain’t a feather, nor even a straw tick, to spare,

say nothing of pillers and comforters ! That's always the way : I'm expected to manage without a thing to manage with."

"Without a thing to manage with !" echoed Enos, aghast with astonishment. "If you ain't the capsheaf of all the complainin' women ! What did you do 'fore I married ye, hey ? Had lots to manage with then, didn't ye ! I guess you've forgot how you come out of a family poor as Job's relations, right into a house where there was furnitewer, beds, and beddin', and every thing convenient and comfortable : no thanks to you for't, neither !"

"Wal, fling that in my face agin, will ye ? I say there's nothin' to manage with, and I can prove it."

"I deny it !" Mr. Crumlett stood erect, and slapped down the fact on the table with his hand so forcibly, that Beny started up, and stared about him, exclaiming, "Who's shot ?" — "Come, now," said his father, defiantly inviting opposition, "I deny it ! though I own we hain't the conveniences we once had : and whose fault is't, if we hain't ? You've had the things, and why didn't you take care on 'em ?"

"I take care on 'em ! when you've kept me knocking about the world, from pillar to post, so it's been much as I could do to take care of myself, say nothing of the chil-

dren. Such treatment as I have had! I'm sure I never expected it, after going two terms to boarding-school; when I might have married a'most any man I pleased."

"When you might a' married! — why in Sam Hill didn't ye, then?" said Enos furiously. "If you've got sick of me, you can quit any time you choose: you can go to Indanny, and git a divorce there, short notice; then go fishin' for another husband. Mebby you'd like to have me give ye a letter o' recommendation; tell what a sweet, amiable disposition you've got; what good care you've always took of your ongrateful fust husband; always made the best o' things, without a murmur, when he was unfortinit in business, and couldn't always pervide as he'd like to! I can say what an even hand ye always carried with the children: never gittin' cross, no indeed! never gittin' into a tantrum and slappin' on 'em around jest 'cause they happen to be in your way. Guess I could write you a certifkit 'u'd make your eyes swim! Mebby ye *could* git ye a bran-new husband on the strength on't; and, then agin, mebby ye couldn't. I'm willin' you should try, any time ye choose; that's all!" And Enos paced the floor in great excitement.

"I beg of you," Fred entreated, "don't let my presence here cause any trouble: I'm used to camping in the woods; and I'd rather do so to-night," rising.

“No, ye sha’n’t!” cried Enos, forcing him back into his chair. “I ain’t goin’ to see a stranger, — from the North too, and willin’ to pay at that, — I ain’t goin’ to see him turned out into the woods a night like this, jest ’cause my wife’s got on her high-heeled shoes; not by a long chalk!”

“I don’t want to turn anybody out of the house: I should think ’twas me that was turned out!” said Mrs. Crumlett. “To have my husband tell me to my face he wants to git rid of me, and will give me a recommendation to go and git a divorce, — presence of company too! I never thought it would come to this! But I can go; I can go right off to-night, if my staying here is so disagreeable: only I can’t take the children with me; I wouldn’t subject them to hardships.”

“Ye can leave the children,” suggested Enos coolly. “Ye needn’t worry about them. If you’re so anxious to go, don’t let any sich consideration as that hender ye, I beg!”

“Nobody has said I wanted to go; only you turned me out!” snapped Mrs. Crumlett, actually putting on her bonnet, and wrapping an old faded shawl about her shoulders. “Good-by, Tildy; good-by, Eeny. You won’t have any mother any more, till your pa brings you home a new one: see then if *she* can put up with the treatment I have

had to put up with, and be any more patient than I have been !”

“ I hain’t turned ye out ! Come,” said Enos, after pacing the room obstinately for a minute, but finally relenting, when he saw she was resolved to leave the house.

“ Same thing : you don’t want me. You’re all the time hinting about a divorce, and telling me to find another home.”

“ No, I ain’t : it’s you that keeps ta’ntin’ ! I hain’t said but that you’ve been patient. I hain’t said *I* could a’ married *any woman* I pleased : never. I say, if you’re bent on gittin’ a divorce, why, I sha’n’t hender. I don’t want ye to stay and live with me, if ye don’t want to ; and I’m sure that’s fair.”

“ I ain’t bent on gittin’ a divorce, and never said I was,” replied the afflicted Mrs. Crumlett, with pins in her mouth, drawing her shawl together. “ But human nature ” — taking the pins out — “ is human nature. I own I’m human. I can endure as much as a’most any woman, for my children’s sakes ; but when I’m told in so many words that I’ve outlived my usefulness, and ain’t wanted any more, that’s enough. I can go out in the woods, and lay myself down and die, a sacrifice to the peace of my family, that’s got sick and tired of me, if I can’t do any thing more ! ”

“ Come, ma : ye hain’t no notion o’ goin’ out into the woods, ye know ye hain’t ! ” Yet Enos looked disturbed.

“You’ll see whether I have or not! Ye won’t deny me the privilege of bidding my children a last farewell, will ye? No, ye won’t be so cruel as that!” Mrs. Crumlett went to the cradle, and bent over the baby,—her fingers busily pinning the shawl in the solemn interval of grief. “Poor thing! he won’t realize his loss yet a while; but ye may have twenty wives, and they can’t fill the place of a real mother to your children!”

Mrs. Crumlett wiped her eyes with a corner of her shawl, and, bending over again, kissed the baby very carefully, in order not to waken it. Enos looked on with visible remorse.

“Come, come, mother! take off yer things, and don’t talk of leavin’ the baby! You never can leave it; you know you can’t!”

“I’m glad it’s weaned,” Matilda went on, tying her bonnet-strings. “It won’t miss me much. Tildy is getting very handy about the house: so I don’t see as I shall be missed much, any way. Kiss me, Tildy! Eeny, Eeny, my dear! can’t you wake up, and kiss your mother: she’s going away; and you probably will never, never, see her no more!”

“Le’ me be!” said Eeny peevishly. “You’re always going to leave pa; but you never have yet!” and the incredulous urchin nestled his face in the crook of his arm, and persisted in sleeping.

“ Well, you’ll be sorry after I’ve gone! I s’pose you’ll say good-by to me, if I *have* been such a miserable wife and mother!” Mrs. Crumlett pathetically addressed her husband.

“ No: I won’t do any thing of the sort,” said Enos with a conciliatory smile; “ for you ain’t goin’, Tildy. I don’t want ye to go, ye *know*.”

“ No, I don’t know it. If I did, I’m sure I shouldn’t want to leave you and the dear, dear children !”

“ Well, then, take off your bunnet; don’t le’s part on a little misunderstandin’: come, Tildy !”

“ If ye re’ly want me to stay, — to please you; but I’m sure ” — Mrs. Crumlett’s voice choked; and, to relieve the obstruction, she sighingly untied her bonnet-strings.

“ Now say no more about it,” said Enos. “ The best woman in the world,” — aside to his visitor, — “ only not very well, and subjick to low sperits. Come, mother; chirk up, and see what we can do for — What did ye tell me your name was ?”

Fred gives his name. Mrs. Crumlett regains her composure, and concludes that she *can* manage to make a bed on the floor; and so he is provided for comfortably for the night.

VII.

THE RETURN OF THE GUERRILLAS.



AM as safe here as anywhere, for the present," thought Fred. "I'll rest to-night, take to-morrow to reconnoitre, and feel my way as near as possible to the rebel lines; then, to-morrow night, I'll dodge their pickets. This will be the best way, if nothing else turns up."

Something did "turn up," however, as we shall see. After breakfast the next morning, he paid Mr. Crumlett for his entertainment, and proposed to take leave of him. He had business, he said, which required his attention.

"Wal," said Enos, who, having scented a speculation, was determined to learn the secret of it, "if ye must be movin', I guess I'll walk a little piece with ye, and show ye the way."

To this proposal Fred had no valid objection to make. Mr. Crumlett buttoned his coat, and directed Mrs. Crumlett to look sharp after things during his absence.

“Just as if I needed to be told that!” said Mrs. Crumlett. “Don’t I always look after things when you’re away?”

“Sometimes ye do, and sometimes ye don’t,” replied Enos bluntly. “Ye needn’t be so uppish jest ’cause I mentioned it.”

“I ain’t uppish; but I do wish you would give me some little credit for what I do: guess I look after things well enough; and I shouldn’t wonder if we got along sometimes about as well in your absence as when you’re here to order and find fault.”

“Oh, wal!” exclaimed Enos, “if you do so much better without me, I might jest about as well stay away: I guess I’ll go for good. How would that suit, I wonder?”

“’Twould suit well enough, if ye want to!”

“Oh! would it? That’s interestin’! I’m goin’ off with this young man; and, if any thing *should* happen ’t I can’t come back, it’ll be comfortin’ to know I’ve got a wife to hum that can take care o’ things better’n I can! Glad ye told me!” and Enos went back into the house, and put some money into his pocket; an act designed to impress Mrs. Crumlett with the fact that he was preparing for dire emergencies.

“I hain’t said I could take care of things better than you could, Enos!” she said in a modified tone.

But Enos didn't seem to hear. "I ain't the kind," he muttered, "that wants to be in anybody's way." And he proceeded to fill his pockets with doughnuts.

"Ain't ye coming back, Enos?" asked Mrs. Crumlett affectionately. "Say, Enos!"

"I don't know; and, more'n all that, I don't care! It's discouragin' to a man to be told by his own wife she can git along better without him."

In vain Mrs. Crumlett protested against this unjust construction of her words, and entreated to be told when she might look for his return.

"These is ticklish times," said Enos grimly; "and no man knows, when he leaves home, what'll happen. Lucky for them that's got wives that can manage so much better without 'em!"

Having uttered this sarcasm, Mr. Crumlett marched away sternly with Fred, turning a deaf ear to Matilda's tearful expostulations.

It was yet early morning. As Fred expressed a wish to avoid observation, they proceeded towards the woods. Before they had entered them, however, a band of mounted men came galloping along the road, and ordered them to halt.

"Come back here!" shouted an officer.

Fred, who happened to be a few yards in advance of Mr.

Crumlett, on the edge of some bushes that skirted the woods, hoped that he had not been seen : at all events, he did not for an instant entertain the idea of going back. He had recognized in the officer his acquaintance of the previous morning, — the captain with the pistols.

“It’s Gruffley’s Riders !” said Enos, turning pale.

“It is you they want,” Fred whispered : “I’ll see you again !” and, plunging into the bushes, he was immediately lost to sight.

Enos was greatly alarmed : he was afraid to obey the harsh orders of the guerilla chief, who could have no errand to him promising either pleasure or profit. The rebels had already paid him too many visits, and he lived in perpetual dread of more disagreeable attentions. However, to avoid these attentions, by attempting now to escape, he felt would be the most dangerous and impolitic course he could pursue.

“Is it me ye want ?” he called, after a moment’s fearful hesitation.

The profane reply he received left no doubt in his mind on the subject ; and, trembling with apprehensions he endeavored to hide, he returned to the road.

“Mebby I’ve been harborin’ a spy, and now they’ll serve me as they served old Ellsmer yesterday !”

Only the captain and one other horseman remained : the rest had ridden on in the direction of Ellsmer's house.

"How de do?" said Enos, nodding with a ghastly attempt at cheerfulness.

To his surprise, the men made no inquiries at first concerning the lad who had just left him. They wished to know if he had heard any thing of the young conscript, Ellsmer, whom they had been in search of the day before ; or if he had been near the Ellsmer premises. Mr. Crumlett's answers to these questions would have been satisfactory enough but for his pale looks and embarrassed manner.

"Wasn't there somebody with you when I first called?"

"Yes : boy that come to my house last night ; said he was goin' to jine the Confederate army."

"Where was you going with him?"

"Wal, nowhere pa'tic'lar. Ye see," said Enos, "I kind o' wanted to know more about him : so I follered him into the woods."

"You're lying to me!" said the captain. "I believe that boy was young Ellsmer himself."

"Then the quicker ye send and overhaul him, the better!" ejaculated Enos. "He's no more Ellsmer than I be, Captain Gruffley. Ketch him : I wish you would, if you've any sich idee."

"I'll attend to that," said Gruffley. "Corporal, wait here, and watch the woods. Crumlett, you must come with me."

Hearing this stern order, Mrs. Crumlett, who had come out of the house and approached the spot, uttered a shriek of despair. Her husband's dark and bitter words on quitting the house had left her in the lowest kind of spirits, and now she believed her worst fears were about to be realized.

"Enos, Enos!" flinging herself on his neck, "what will become of me if you're took away?"

Which violent demonstration of feeling convinced the officer of Crumlett's guilty complicity in young Ellsmer's escape.

"You're a Northern man, and you've long been suspected of treachery to the South. Now, if it's proved, you swing! No more words! Fling off that woman! March!"

"What will become of me? what will become of me?" repeated Mrs. Crumlett, wildly wringing her hands. "Enos, Enos! hadn't you better give me back the money you put into your pocket? for if you should be hung, ye know, — think of me and the children, Enos!"

Mr. Crumlett, who had received her caresses with remorseful affection, thinking this calamity had come upon him as a judgment for threatening to abandon his family, now turned from her wrathfully.

“By jingoes! if you think more of a little money than you do of me, good-by!” And he marched away.

Fortunately for him, proof was not long wanting to corroborate his denial of the charge that his guest, who had fled into the woods, was Ellsmer, the conscript.

The captain, with sabre rattling, pistols bristling, and long bushy hair streaming behind under his bandit's hat, drove Enos at a trot along the road towards Ellsmer's house. The rest of the band had already arrived on the premises, and the house was surrounded; although, after the thorough search of yesterday, and the murder of the parents, it was scarcely to be supposed that the deserter still lingered about the old place. The guerillas had given him up, and retired, after the butchery. They had now returned, perhaps for very shame, to cut down the old man, and to bury him and the old woman from the light of God's sun and the eyes of men.

“Find a shovel somewhere! Dig a hole anywhere! Tumble the Union-shriekers in, and cover 'em up!”

A spade and some hoes were discovered in the barn. Three or four men fell to digging a grave. The rest guarded the approaches to the house. At this juncture the captain arrived, accompanied by the worthy Enos, who had trotted himself into a ludicrous condition of breathlessness and sweat.

A sergeant of the party, without dismounting, had ridden up to the porch with his sword drawn, prepared to cut old Ellsmer down. Enos forgot his side-ache, his asthma and sweat, in the horror of the sight. He winked involuntarily at the sword circling through the air. But he did not shut his ears, which heard distinctly the report of a gun, followed by the sound of a body tumbling heavily to the ground. When he opened his eyes, he looked to see the rope severed and the hanged man fallen. But the rope was untouched: there hung the old man still. But the sergeant's saddle was empty; it was he who had fallen: his sword lay on the steps; there was a bullet-hole in his head. That was the meaning of the gunshot Enos had heard. Young Ellsmer, who had waited so long for his revenge, had not waited in vain.

“He is in the house!” shouted the guerillas, falling back in consternation at the sight.

They rallied quickly, however. Five men rushed into the house with drawn sabres and pistols cocked, while their companions kept guard outside. A glimpse of the conscript had been seen, after the firing of the gun within: the smell of the powder was still in the room. But where was he? In the interval that elapsed between the shooting of the sergeant and the entrance of the Riders, the fugitive had disappeared.

He had certainly not left the house ; nor yet was he anywhere to be found in it. A thorough search from cellar to attic revealed no trace of him.

“ Never mind ! waste no more time, boys ! ” cried the captain. “ Fire the house ! ”

The house was fired in several rooms at once, and the guerillas surrounded it to see it burn.

“ Now let him roast, or come out and be shot ! ” said they, hungry to be revenged for their comrade’s death.

VIII.

OLD FRIENDS.



IN the city of Nashville, a few evenings previous to the events just related, two men were engaged in private conversation at the head-quarters of the army police. One of them was an officer of the department : the other was a negro. Their chairs were drawn near together, and they sat face to face, — the officer speaking in low, confidential tones ; while the negro listened with singularly calm, intelligent, proud features, giving now and then a nod, a smile, or brief word, in reply.

“ But how to trap him ? that is the question ! ” the officer was saying. “ He knows he is suspected, and is as sly as any old fox. There’s no doubt but that he is in the practice of smuggling contraband goods and information through our lines to the enemy : but he seems to know a detective by instinct ; and, with that venerable white beard and smooth tongue of his, he has outwitted some of our best men. But now, though he has been so careful to keep clear of the traps

we have set for him, there is a chance of his getting caught in one of his own. It is a very delicate piece of business, and we need your assistance."

The negro nodded with a peculiar smile. The officer understood its meaning.

"Yes, I know your readiness to undertake any service that has danger to recommend it. But this is something different from what you have been used to. It is not to risk your life passing the enemy's pickets, creeping around his camp, hiding in the woods, dodging his cavalry, picking off his scouts with that famous rifle of yours, and never coming in until you have gained us some important information worth risking your life for. This man has made a request for negroes to work on his farm, outside of our picket lines. He thinks we ought to let him have them to repair some fences our soldiers have destroyed. His own negroes have been sent down into Georgia to prevent their escape to us. Now, I propose to let them have one stout fellow, and that you shall be the man."

The negro nodded again with a thoughtful and dubious frown.

"He will come to the fortifications to-morrow, where the engineers are at work, to learn if his request is granted. You must be there. Captain Jones, to whom he made the

request, will say, 'I have permission to let you take one man, if there's any that will go with you; but I cannot compel any to go.' He will then call you to him, as if selecting you by chance. You will be in the garb and have the air of a laborer. It will be easy for you to assume the clothes; but not so easy, I fear, to put off that proud look of yours, which shows at once that you would not be a very easy subject to manage. Do you think you can do it?"

"I can do any thing for the service, sir," answered the black.

"Then we shall succeed. The captain will say, 'Here, Bill: will you go with this man? He will pay you.' Then you will make a bargain with him, and a hard bargain too; for he must not think you go willingly. With regard to that, however, I need give you no instructions. The thing is this: You are to go with him, and even set to work repairing his fences, if necessary; but, at the same time, keep your eyes open, see every thing that is going on, learn all about his operations, and return here when you get ready. I am confident he has other work for you to do besides making fences, and that you can get at some secrets our detectives couldn't."

At that moment an official looked into the room. "I have brought that boy you sent for, colonel," said he. "Will you see him now?"

“ Yes : bring him in. Meanwhile,” — to the negro, — “ you can be considering what I have said. Sit in the corner there. I shall be through with this other case in a few minutes.”

The official entered, conducting a lad in the uniform of a United-States private, with a broad, good-humored face, unmistakably German. The negro, in the mean time, had ensconced himself in the corner, where he sat in shadow, with his chin upon his hand.

The colonel spoke pleasantly to the boy, inquired his name, the number of his regiment, the length of time he had been in the service, and so forth ; to all which questions he returned deliberate and precise replies, in accents as decidedly German as his face.

“ And now it is proposed to you to desert, I understand,” said the colonel.

“ Vat you understand is wery true,” said the boy.

“ Well, sit down here, and tell me all about it.”

The lad asked permission first to help himself to a glass of water from a pitcher that stood on the table : “ It is such dry times talking,” he remarked. And, having drank, he seated himself, and began his story.

“ It is two days now, a man comes into our camp, who is a Tutch Chew.”

“ A Tutch Chew ? Oh ! you mean a German Jew ? ”

“ That is vat I mean : a Hebrew from my country. And, ven he sees me, he just gives me vun little vink out of his eye, — so ; and says to me, in our language, that I am Tutch as he.”

“ How did he know that ? ”

“ That is vat vas so queer : for I do not look very Tutch, nor speak so ; do I ? But he picks me out, and I vas pleased to make acquaintance ; till he says to me, ‘ Vat for you let yourself to be a tam Yankee soldier ? ’ And he says, ‘ I could put you into a pizness petter as that ! ’ And he vinks again to me out of his eyes ; and he says, ‘ I can show you to make five hunder’ tollar in two veeks. ’ — ‘ That is much money, ’ I says to him. ‘ It is very much for two veeks, and a poy as you, ’ he says to me. ‘ I would not tell anypody else ; but I vill tell you. ’ And so he tells me. He says he vill help me to desert from my regiment, and give me some clothes as nopody shall know me ven I vonce have ’em on ; and then he vill get me a pass to go through the lines, and give me some goods to sell, and I shall go sell them to the rebels, and make fifty tollars for vun, easy, and give him half ven I shall come pack. He says he has sent out two, tree poyes, that have smuggled for him, and made much money. Then he says, ‘ You get a furlough to come into the city to

wisit your relations : if not, then you just slip by the guard some dark night.' And he says his name is Yoseph ; but he vill not tell me his firm, or the house vare his goods are smuggled, fear of trouble. But he says, ' You get into the city, and come to the street and house, so,' — vich he marks on this paper, — ' and ask for Yoseph, and you shall find me, and I vill do vat I promise.' ”

The lad produced the paper. The colonel, who had listened with keen interest, examined it carefully.

“ Well, did you agree to his proposition ? ”

“ Not wery much.” The boy laughed with an expression of shrewd good-humor. “ I say to myself, ‘ This fellow is a willain ! Suppose I let him go on and tell just how much he is a willain, if that vill please him.’ For I hear the Chews are pad men here ; that they help spies and smugglers, and are wery slippery to catch. So I say, ‘ You shall hear from me so soon as conwenient.’ Then, ven he is gone, I go straight to my captain and show him this paper, and say to him, ‘ If it is the same thing to you, I should like to desert, and go and make some money.’ That vas for fun, you know. But my captain says, ‘ Keep quiet, my boy, and may be ve shall catch these rogues.’ Then he writes a letter to you ; and so I suppose you send for me.”

The colonel regarded the lad searchingly, and asked him

many questions. He seemed studying to learn just how far he could make use of him to advantage, — how far it would be safe to trust his honesty and shrewdness; when suddenly the negro left his corner, and came forward.

“Colonel,” said he with cordial emphasis, “you can trust this boy to any extent. I know him well; and I am right glad to see him!” He extended his hand, which the youngster seized as if it had been a brother’s. “Carl, how are you?”

“Pomp! I thought it was you!” exclaimed Carl, with tears of joy brimming his bright blue eyes.

The colonel, surprised at the recognition, wished to know where the two had become acquainted.

“I was run of the Union refugees he guided over the mountains from East Tennessee last year,” said Carl eagerly. “We had been driven to a cave there by the rebs. You have heard of Cudjo’s Cave? That was the place. A wery long story it would be to tell; but the short of it is, ven Cudjo was killed, and Mr. Willars and Wirginie had got away, then we conclude it was time to close that hotel for the season, and take a little journey into Kentucky, — for our healths, you know. Vell, it was a rough road to travel; but we come to Camp Dick Robinson at last, and that was the last ever I see of Pomp till now. But I hear of him, though.

He vas a scout in Eastern Kentucky for General Nelson, and more so for General Garfield; and some on his own hook, ven he had nothing else to do."

"And what became of you," said Pomp, "and the schoolmaster?"

"After ve said good-pie to you and Stackridge, ve kept straight on to Pennsylvany, — just going out of our vay a little, you know, to pay a visit to Wirginie and her father, who had got safe to Ohio. Then ve go to Mr. Hapgood's home, vair he enlists, wery much to the surprise and dishgust of some good friends of his. But I did not wolunteer then. He said I vas so young, I must stay at home, and take care of his sisters; and wery pleasant persons they vas to take care of too," said Carl, blushing. "But, after that, he vas detached from his regiment, and promoted to be a lieutenant in the regiment ve are now in. And vun of his sisters vas married; and the other," — Carl dropped his eyes, — "she has gone to live with the married vun, you unerstandt. So he did not prewent me any more, and that is the reason I enlishted unter him. He has been promoted vunce since; and that is the reason he is now my captain."

"Well, Carl, if you will consent to part from your captain for a few days, and do a little work for me, I shall be greatly obliged to you. These smugglers, and particuarly your

friends the Jews, are the pest of this department. I should like to catch that Joseph, — or Yoseph, as you call him, — and as many of his tribe as can be drawn into the net. Suppose you desert. You have got permission to come into the city to see your friends ; and, now, suppose you give Joseph a call. Find out where he is, and all about him. Learn who his accomplices are, what are his plans, and all that. Agree to every thing he proposes, even if it is to smuggle goods to the rebels ; and then report to me. Will you ? ”

“ I suppose I shall do any thing you say ; for that was Captain Hapgood’s orders,” replied Carl, with a bright look, which showed that he scented sport in the adventure.

The colonel gave him still further instructions with regard to his dealings with the Jew ; then called the officer who had brought him in.

“ This man will show you the street and house marked on this paper ; but do not let it appear that he is showing you the way. He or some of our men will be near you day and night. When you wish to communicate with me, appear on the street with this little flag pinned to your cap or coat-sleeve. This is the signal by which you will know my man.” And the colonel, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, shook it, and put it back again. “ He will make

off, and you follow him at a distance. When the coast is clear, you will speak to him, or you will follow him here. The rest I leave to your own good wit and discretion."

Carl scratched his ear: he seemed to have a doubt on some subject.

"I suppose it will be right for me to fool him? He is from my country; and vat I would never do is betray a friend."

"Depend upon it, he is no friend of yours: it was only to make a tool of you, for his own villanous purposes, that he sought you out."

"That is vat I think," said Carl, brightening.

"Besides, it is right to circumvent traitors at all times."

"Wery good: I shall try to circumvent 'em!" And Carl, taking leave of Pomp and the colonel, departed with his guide.

The business which his arrival had interrupted was now resumed, and speedily concluded; Pomp engaging to undertake the job proposed to him.

IX.

THE RESCUE.



IMMEDIATELY on parting from Mr. Crumlett, Fred slipped through the bushes, and dashed into the woods; firmly believing that he was the person the guerillas were in quest of, and expecting pursuit.

No horsemen came after him, however. "They'll go around by the road to head me off!" thought he. "My best way is to hide."

To conceal himself in some spot where he could observe the movements on the turnpike, without being himself perceived, seemed the wisest thing he could do. He remembered the thicket by the brook, where he had lain hid so long the day before. Towards this he made his way with all convenient speed, keeping a sharp lookout the while for rebel horsemen.

He reached the thicket in safety, and crept into it. The rustling of dry leaves and crackling of twigs where he passed

had ceased ; the beating of his heart had become still ; he could hear the trickling of the little brook among the stones ; when three horsemen appeared on the turnpike, and turned aside into the woods.

They rode directly towards the thicket where he lay watching them through the net-work of saplings. Two of them were tall, lank, coarse-looking men, with vicious faces : the other was a person of venerable aspect, with hair and beard white as snow.

Between the two younger men of the party was a led horse, upon the back of which was bound some strange burden. It was some time before Fred could make out what it was. The party halted at the little watering-place scooped out of the bed of the brook : there the younger men dismounted, and took turns drinking, — one holding back the horses, while the other got down on his face, and drank. The horses were then watered. The old man did not dismount, but sat in his saddle, watching the burden on the led horse, with gray eyes twinkling complacently under his white eyebrows.

And now Fred was enabled by degrees to make out what that burden was. “ Dead or alive, it is a man ! ” thought he with a thrill of horror ; for it was not a man sitting upright on the horse, but a figure bound hand and foot, stretched

lengthwise along the animal's back, and secured by ropes wound snake-like around both horse and man. His head hung down helplessly on one side of the horse's neck. Fred saw the face: it was that of a negro. There was a gag in the mouth; and the eyes, rolling with an expression of agony, betrayed that the man was alive.

"He will bring two thousand dollars in Atlanta," said the old man with a thoughtful smile. "You'll do so well with him, boys, you ought to give me a hundred extra."

"A bargain's a bargain, deacon!" replied one of the young men with a coarse laugh of satisfaction. "S'pose we do get two thousand: that's only six hundred apiece for us, after paying your share. I'll fix that with you now, soon as you please. Carter'll stay here and watch the nigger, while we go back to the tavern and get pen and ink to write a receipt with."

"Don't be gone long, neither," said Carter; "for it's about time to ease up on the ropes a little, and take the gag out, I reckon."

"Not yet a while," replied Carter's companion grimly. "He ain't tame enough yet. Nothing tames a nigger like toting him that fashion. He'll be as gentle as a kitten when we come to put him into a wagon. Now, old deacon!"

The venerable man went away with the speaker, and the two soon disappeared on the turnpike.

Carter remained, and watched the negro; while Fred, in his ambush, watched both.

“Getting uneasy?” said Carter, slapping the thigh of the black Mazeppa. “Wal, it’s rough, that’s so; but ’twill do ye good, my boy, — do ye good!” Another hearty slap. “We had too much trouble tying ye in the first place, to let ye loose in a hurry, — a plucky boy like you! Now make yourself comfortable as you can while I stretch.”

The horses were tied to a tree, and Carter lay upon the ground beside them. Almost immediately Fred could hear him snore: for a moment only, however; the sound itself appearing to awaken the sleeper.

“Blast me,” said he, starting up, “if I wasn’t on the pint of snoozing! This being up all night, nigger-ketching, makes a fellow sleepy as a bar in the dead of winter, next day. But don’t be skeert, my boy: I shall keep awake, for company, — so’s ’t ye won’t be lonesome, ye know.”

Having said this, the man suffered his head to droop until once more it rested on the ground. In a few seconds, he snored again. This time the sound did not awake him. He was fast asleep.

Then the negro began desperately to struggle with his bonds. He was evidently a man of great strength; for the tension of the ropes, as he strained at them, put the horse in

pain. The animal bounded forward ; then backed suddenly, tugging at his halter ; and finally attempted to lie down and roll. These movements, so near the head of the sleeper, awoke him. He rose to a sitting posture.

“ What’s that beast trying to do ? Stand up, Lark ! ” He struck the horse with a whip, without noticing that the negro’s legs came in for a share of the blow. “ Now be still, can’t ye ? ” And he stretched himself once more upon the bank.

The negro’s condition seemed hopeless. He could not free his hands from the rope, nor attempt to break it without starting the horse again. He lifted his head, and rolled his eyes about him despairingly. They rested on an object which at once inspired him with courage. It was a boy creeping from the thicket, with one hand on the ground, and the other raised with a gesture of secrecy and warning.

The negro waited motionless. His guardian slept on the bank. Fred advanced cautiously, yet making the twigs snap and leaves rustle at every movement. Stopping only to assure himself from time to time that Carter still slept, he approached the brooklet which was to be crossed, went over on hands and knees, and crouched behind the tree to which the horses were tied. Already he had taken from his pocket the knife with which, the day before, he had come so near assassinating Daniels. This time he did not open it with his

teeth When he arose to his feet, it was open in his hand. Quickly, and with little noise, he cut the negro's bands. A moment later, the negro was himself crouching by the tree: he relieved his own mouth of the gag, and stripped the fragments of the rope from his wrists and limbs; and still the sleeper slept.

A terrible smile lighted up the black man's face. Fred saw that he was a person of powerful bone and muscle, but that he was nearly disabled by injuries he had received. His limbs were so stiff, that he could with difficulty stand. Flight from his captors was out of the question. What was to be done?

"Mount the horse!" said Fred in a whisper.

But the negro shook his head: evidently he knew well that escape on horseback by daylight, in that region, would be impossible.

He motioned Fred to give him the knife. Fred gave it. The negro then pointed at the led horse. "Turn him loose!" he said, with lips so sore and rigid from the effects of the gag, that articulation was painful.

As he spoke, he crept to the side of the sleeping man, and held the knife over him, ready to plunge it into his heart should he awake.

Fred doubted the policy of turning the horse loose. Yet

there was something in the negro's look and manner — sagacious, resolute, commanding — that impelled him to obey. There was on the head of the led horse a halter only. That Fred slipped off, leaving it tied to the tree. Immediately the animal, appreciating the delights of freedom, especially after bearing so uncomfortable a burden, frisked, and walked away. All this time, the kidnapper, having grown accustomed to the movements of the horses, — for his own horse was pawing, — enjoyed that profound sleep which sometimes visits the wicked as well as the innocent.

So much accomplished, the negro, still holding the knife over his captor's heart, directed Fred, with a gesture of his unoccupied hand, to return to the thicket. Fred, beginning to comprehend the stratagem, obeyed. He had scarcely concealed himself, when the black, softly withdrawing from his position, gathered up the fragments of the rope, and followed him. Before entering the thicket, however, he paused, and threw a pebble picked from the bed of the brook, hitting the heels of the released horse, as he was walking somewhat too leisurely away. The horse started off on a trot through the woods, and the negro crept into the thicket.

X.

A CHANCE FOR A SPECULATION.



NOT a word was spoken. The little brook trickled with a pleasant sound among the stones, the wind stirred the trees, and the kidnapper snored on the bank. The negro laid his hand on Fred's foot, and they exchanged exultant glances. After that they scarcely looked at each other, but waited, lying close to the ground, and peering through the bushes.

In about half an hour, the other kidnapper was heard returning. He rode up the bank of the brook, whistling a gay tune. He had got rid of the old "deacon;" and now he possessed a clear claim to one-half of the negro.

"Two thousand, Carter?" he cried in the distance, ceasing to whistle. "We'll get three thousand, if we do a dollar! Three thousand or nothing, I say!"

"Yes, three thousand or noth— Hillo!" said Carter, starting up. "Whar — whar is the nigger?"

The returning kidnapper now perceived, that, where he had supposed two horses were standing, there was but one.

“Carter!” he exclaimed with a great oath, spurring to the spot, “what have you done with the nigger?”

“Me?” said Carter, stupefied. “It’s you, Bodson!” turning furiously upon his accomplice. “You’ve robbed me! You and that cussed old deacon have come and tuk away the nigger in my sleep!”

“None o’ that!” said Bodson, springing from his horse, and drawing a tremendous bowie-knife. “I’ll slice ye as I would a chicken!”

“No, ye won’t!” retorted Carter, producing a revolver, and levelling it. “Come an inch nearer, and I’ll let daylight through ye!”

The enraged kidnappers stood confronting each other, little knowing what interested spectators were witnessing the scene. The negro’s grasp tightened on Fred’s foot; and, looking back, the boy saw the ebon visage glowing with triumph.

“Now give an account of yerself!” said Bodson, still menacing his friend with the bowie-knife, but manifesting a wholesome respect for the pistol. “Who’s yer pardner in this trick? Whar’s he gone with the nigger? No use of yer denying what’s as plain as daylight through a Virginny

fence. Ye hain't been asleep at all. Ye only pretend. But ye can't fool me !”

Bodson's earnestness began to make an impression on Carter ; and Carter's astonishment and wrath produced a similar effect on his friend Bodson.

“ If you and the old man *didn't* come and steal the nigger, then somebody else did, — hoss and all ; or else he rubbed his halter off ! That must be the way on't. So, 'stead of fighting about an accident, le's hunt up the hoss. One thing's sure, — the nigger never could git off his back without help. Find the hoss, and we find the nigger.”

Bodson was more than half convinced of his friend's sincerity ; but his rage did not abate. That Carter, who had been left to guard their captive, should stupidly fall asleep, and suffer the horse to slip his halter and walk away, was, in his eyes, an unpardonable offence.

“ If ye'd stole him, I should think more on ye. I knew ye was something of a rascal, and I don't object to that ; but I didn't think ye was a fool !”

However, he agreed with Carter that no time was to be lost in quarrelling ; and, leading their horses, they wandered away in the woods, searching for the tracks of the missing animal.

“ They are on his trail !” said the negro, watching them from the thicket's edge. “ As soon as they find the horse,

they'll come back here to hunt for the 'nigger'!" he added, laughing. "They took me once at a disadvantage; but they don't take me again!"

"You were kidnapped?"

"Yes: that gray-headed villain took me out from Nashville to repair damages the Union soldiers had done to his fences. But his real object was to kidnap and sell me. As it was my business to learn what his object was, I allowed him to get me in his power."

"How your business?"

"Never mind about that now. It *was* my business: so, when he called me up last night to go and take care of some horses, I went; saw one of those men at the stable, and received a blow on the head from another I did not see. I was knocked down, and bound. Then the old man himself helped them tie me on to the horse. They carried me that way, in order that they might come by paths where wagons wouldn't pass. They were not to pay the old man his share of the profits until they had got me safe beyond both army lines; and so he came with them here. You are a Union boy? I thought so: one of the prisoners taken yesterday morning? I heard of that affair. How did you escape?"

Fred was telling his story, when the negro stopped him.

"See! they are going out of sight! They haven't found

the horse yet ; but they will find him soon. Then, whether they'll hunt further for the ' nigger,' or hasten back here first, is a question. At all events, we had better not remain. The man's name was Daniels who rescued you, did you say ?”

“ Yes : do you know him ?”

“ If he is the man I think,” said the negro, “ I know him, and I know you can trust him. If you see him again, ask him if he knows Pomp.”

“ Is that your name ?”

“ It is one of my names : it is the name he knows me by,” answered the negro with a smile. “ Now is the time !”

And before Fred could stop him, or demand what course he proposed to pursue, Pomp sprang out of the bushes. Fred followed. In order not to leave any tracks to betray them, they avoided the soft ground of the banks, but kept the bed of the brook, tracing its course up into the woods. Pomp had recovered from his soreness of joint and muscle sufficiently to make good speed over the dry stones. Fred, perceiving that they were approaching the edge of the woods, beyond which was the cross-road where Crumlett lived, and where he had last seen the guerillas, called to him to stop.

“ In the brush yonder !” said Pomp ; and, leading the way to another thick undergrowth, he found an opening, and crept into it.

In the midst of the thicket were a few saplings taller than the rest. One of these Pomp climbed in order to take an observation.

“They have found the horse!” he said. “They are leading him back to the watering-place. You can hear them swear, even at this distance.”

Fred not only heard, but he could soon see also; having climbed into another sapling beside Pomp. The kidnappers returned to the spot where the horses had been tied, examined the ground there carefully, and even penetrated the thicket where the fugitives had so lately been concealed; all the time breaking the stillness of the woods with their angry oaths. Then suddenly, leaving the led horse fastened to a tree, they separated, and galloped off in different directions; one resuming the search in the quarter of the woods where the animal had been recovered, while the other disappeared on the turnpike.

“All right!” laughed Pomp, slipping down from the sapling. “They have divided their forces: that was kind in them!”

“Instead of two against one, they will now be one against two, if they happen to meet us!” said Fred.

“But they are armed,” suggested the negro, regarding with admiration the bright, brave young face of the boy.

“So are we,” replied Fred. “We have a jack-knife between us.”

Pomp mused. “Perhaps I ought to have used the knife when I had Carter in my power. Then, when Bodson returned, he should have received a bullet from Carter’s pistol: that would have finished him. But I hate to take life, — even that of a villain, — when it can be avoided,” said he, rubbing his galled limbs.

“It is better as it is,” said Fred. “Our stratagem has worked pretty well, so far. But you have had no breakfast?”

“No matter: I only wish I had a drink of water. Will you keep watch while I crawl down to the run?”

Fred consented, keeping his station in the sapling. Pomp crept to the brook, hollowed a little place in the stones and gravel, and waited for the water in it to settle. Then, having drunk, he bathed his chafed and swollen limbs.

“What a blessing is water!” said he. “Now I feel fresh again.”

“Shall we stay here all day?” said Fred, as Pomp crept back into the bushes. “I know where I can get you something to eat, if you are very hungry;” and he related his adventure with the Crumletts.

“And would you really run the risk of going back there for me?” said Pomp. “Well, we’ll see.”

"Hist! there is somebody!" said Fred, perceiving a movement in the direction of the cross-road.

"A man?"

"Yes, on foot."

"More than one?"

"I don't know: I can see only one yet. There he comes, around the bushes!"

"Take care!" said Pomp. "You will be in sight up there. Drop down; but don't shake the tree."

Fred stopped to take a last look, and presently began to laugh.

"It is Tildy's husband! it is Mr. Crumlett himself!"

"Good!" said Pomp. "Perhaps we can make him useful."

"He is looking for me, I believe," said Fred, dropping to the ground. "Shall I go out and speak to him?"

After some hesitation, the cautious Pomp consented; and Fred, creeping out on the side near the brook, went around the bushes, and met, as if by accident, Mr. Crumlett.

"Sho!" said Enos. "I was jest lookin' for you! How about that spec'lation?"

"It's progressing," replied Fred cheerfully. "What's the news?"

"Had an all-fired excitin' time since I see you!" said

Enos, wiping the sweat from his neck. "They've burnt up Ellsmer's house, and young Ellsmer in it! But he paid two of Gruffley's men — killed one and wounded t'other — 'fore they got through with him."

"What did they want of you?" Fred inquired, horrified by this news.

"They wanted to know of me if I had seen him; and they driv me with 'em till they got pretty well convinced that you, that they'd seen with me, wasn't him; for he was firing at 'em out of the house, you see. Then they let me go: and I remembered our partin' had been rather sudden; and thinkin', if there was a chance for a spec'lation, I'd like to be counted in, I kind o' litered along, hopin' to find ye."

"A speculation at such a time as this, Mr. Crumlett?" said Fred, making Enos sit down with him under cover of the thicket. "You're a cool man."

"Wal, I be some cool, considerin'," replied Enos. "By jingoes, I never knew a man could git so used to blood and murder as I have these tearin' times, till I don't think scarcely any thing of 'em! Besides, I've been bled so awfully by the reb — the confederates," — Mr. Crumlett corrected himself, looking around nervously, — "that I must light on some sort of spec'lation to help myself, or I'm swamped."

“Where are the bushwhackers now?”

“Lucky for you and me, they’ve got a new job on hand : for they say they’re goin’ to overhaul you ; and, when they hain’t got nothin’ else for idle hands to do, they’ve a mis’ble habit o’ makin’ calls on me, confound ’em !”

“What’s the job now ?”

“Ye see, jest as they had finished burnin’ Ellsmer’s house, a man comes ridin’ up in a thunderin’ hurry, and tells the captain about a nigger that had jest got away from him, and was escapin’ to the Union lines. It’s for the interest of the reb — the confederates, ye know, to keep all the niggers they can this side o’ the split in the country. Besides, the captain knew the man that had lost the nigger : so he called off his men, and sent some on ’em around by the turnpike, and went with the rest himself around t’other side o’ the woods, so as to head off the nigger as he runs North. For he’ll run North, of course : that’s the way niggers take nowadays ; that’s the way mine took.” And Enos groaned. “A splendid nigger he was too ! Oh !”

Rapid thoughts flashed through Fred’s mind as Mr. Crumlett talked.

“They have all gone around the woods ?”

“Every ’tarnal one of ’em. There’ll be no chance for a nigger runnin’ North ; but if he was only fool enough to

move South, now, he'd be a wise dog ! For, ye see, the side o' the woods here towards my place is left open : there was a man stationed there at fust ; but even he has gone on the nigger hunt. After they surround the woods, and cut the darky off, then I s'pose they'll beat through the bushes till they find him."

Fred rubbed his forehead, scratched his head, and bit a twig to pieces, in extraordinary mental excitement, for a minute or two : then, seeming to feel the strong will of the sagacious negro in the thicket sustaining and impelling him, he spoke boldly : —

"Mr. Crumlett, I'll tell ye something about that nigger. The man you saw go for the bushwhackers is one of three who stole him from Nashville, and smuggled him through the lines."

"Sho !" said Enos, opening his eyes in astonishment.

"Yes," Fred continued. "He may have been an escaped slave ; but he never belonged to them. Probably they never lost a slave. But you have, Mr. Crumlett ; and who knows but this may be your man ?"

"Yes : who knows ?" ejaculated Enos, growing excited.

"Well, Mr. Crumlett, the only speculation I'm interested in is this nigger !"

"Ye don't say !" said Enos.

"I do," said Fred. "And, now, look here. If you and I can do something handsome by him, we've as good a right to as anybody, haven't we?"

"Yes to that, de-ci-dedly!" replied Enos with sound emphasis.

"You'd know your man, of course, if you saw him?"

"I guess! Know him! I'd like the chance!" and Mr. Crumlett laughed.

"Well, see if this is he. — Pomp!" called Fred.

And Pomp came tearing his way out of the thicket so suddenly, and with such a commotion of the boughs, that Enos sprang to his feet with an exclamation of fright.

"Don't be alarmed, Mr. Crumlett. This is the boy I'm speculating on. See if he looks like yours."

"I thought the very old scratch was coming!" said Enos nervously: "he took me so sudden in the rear! But ain't he a noble feller?"

"Is he yours?" Fred urged; while Pomp sat quietly where Enos had sat before, and waited meekly to be scanned.

"I wish he was! that is — he does look a little like — I don't know. Do you remember me, Bob?" said Enos, trying hard to imagine Pomp his property.

"Don't remember, sar," replied Pomp indifferently.

“He looks terrible like him! I believe—I guess—I swan—it’s his brother, if ’tain’t him!”

“He is a real good nigger,” said Fred, patting Pomp’s shoulder patronizingly. “He’s grateful to me for taking him away from the kidnappers, and will do any thing I tell him to; won’t you, Pomp?”

“Yes, sar: you’s been right good to me, sar.”

“Now I’ll tell you what we’ll do, Mr. Crumlett. It isn’t at all probable that the kidnappers will search your premises for him. So, if we can only get him to your house, we might keep him there till we have a chance to dispose of him; that is, unless he concludes to stay with you. In which case,” said Fred confidentially aside to Enos, “you’ll manage to satisfy me for my claim without much trouble.”

“Oh! of course,” said Enos, all the avarice of his nature aroused by the prospect. “But how to git him to my house? If we should be ketched at it, ye know! Or if them fellers should find him there afterwards!”

“If they should,” said Fred, “I don’t believe they would know him. They never saw him till last night, when they knocked him down in the dark, and then tied him on the horse by the light of a lantern. He doesn’t look to me now like the same being I saw an hour ago, bound, with his head hanging, and with a gag in his mouth. Just give him some

different clothes, clap an old hat on his head, and pass him off for your man : why can't you ?”

“ By George, I can ! But will he do it ? Say, Bob, will you go and be my man ?”

“ I do any ting sooner'n he tied on to dat 'ar hoss agin,” said Pomp, shaking his head and rubbing his ankles. “ Too rough, dat wuz !”

“ I'll try it !” exclaimed Enos. “ I'll take him right to my house, jest as if he was my nigger, and nobody's business. Jest le' me see if the coast is clear fust. I'll go ahead, and beckon to you from the road if it's all right.”

This arrangement pleased the others ; for it gave them an opportunity to confer privately together for a few minutes, and form their plans. This done, they followed Mr. Crumlett, who led the way to his house. He reached the road, where not a rebel was to be seen ; made the concerted signal ; and laughed with delight to see Pomp approach at a lazy and slouching pace across the field, with a load of sticks in his arms.

“ Why, Enos !” said Matilda from the door, “ have you come home ?”

“ I've come home, Tildy,” replied Enos, glancing up and down the road : there was a smoke in the direction of Ellsmer's house ; but still not a rebel, not a neighbor, was in sight.

“The cutest spec’lation you ever heard on in all your born days, Tildy!”

“Why, what is it? Is that our Bob coming home again? No, it ain’t Bob, Enos!”

“Yes it is Bob, too!” cried the hilarious Mr. Crumlett. “Or if ’tain’t exactly Bob, it’s his brother, and as like him as a vi’lin is like a fiddle. Say nothing, but laugh, Tildy! Git out some o’ Bob’s old clo’es for him to put on. Quit yer starin’, young ones, and go into the house! The thunderin’est spec’lation!” chuckled Enos, as Pomp came bringing his armful of sticks to the door.

XI.

THE PEDDLER BOY.



RED lingered on the edge of the woods until he had witnessed the negro's safe arrival; then followed him. He found Pomp ensconced in the Crumlett kitchen, with Mr. Crumlett admiring him, Mrs. Crumlett waiting upon him, and all the little Crumletts staring at him.

"A good breakfast! a good breakfast, ma!" Enos was saying. "By jingoes, he deserves it! Some o' these 'ere doughnuts," — emptying his pockets, — "and a slice o' that cheese, and a bowl o' milk: show him he's among friends. I'll keep a lookout from the door. If anybody comes," — to Fred, — "you and the nigger had better slip out of sight."

Mr. Crumlett walked up and down before the house, his hands deep in his pockets, and his mind deep in the contemplation of the profits to arise from this shrewd operation. All at once he heard a voice singing in the distance; and, looking

up the road, he saw, just coming over the hill, the appearance of a man on horseback.

“No 'tain't, neither!” he said to himself, scanning the figure closely. “He's a muleback; and 'tain't a man, neither, — it's a boy. Guess it's nobody I need be skittish about.”

The boy on the mule drew near, singing gayly a song which Enos did not understand. He seemed perfectly happy and contented; and you would have said his mind was as free from care as the blue sky above was from clouds. He was a droll-looking object, however, mounted on the most ancient and long-eared of mules, which it seemed impossible for him ever to urge out of a walk. He was seated on a tattered old saddle, with ropes for stirrups, into which his feet were thrust to his ankles. Behind him was a pair of saddle-bags, as antique as the saddle itself. He carried in his hand a short cudgel, with which he belabored the flanks of the indifferent animal from time to time, ceasing his singing to accompany the blows with fitting words.

“It's one o' them pesky Dutch peddlers!” said Enos, as the boy rode up, and turned upon him a broad, jovial face, smiling under a broad hat-brim. “No; don't want to trade none to-day: you can travel right along,” he cried forbiddingly, well aware, that, if his wife should see the peddler's

goods, she would find something among them which the family could not live without another day.

“I vas not asking you to trade,” said the hoy good-naturedly. “I vas going to a petter market as this. But my mule would like to make a pargain for a pucket of vater, if you please.”

“Well is low: no water to spare,” replied Enos curtly. “You’d better whip along.”

“Wip along I vill, then!” said the boy, as good-humoredly as before. And he began to ply his cudgel, — thwack, thwack, thwack! But the mule would not stir. The boy stopped beating him, and grinned.

“He’s a wery obstinate peast! Ven I get rested, I vill wip him some more.”

“It’s a trick to stop and show his goods,” said Enos, with increasing alarm lest Matilda should spend some money in traffic with the peddler. “I’ll help ye along!” and, seizing a heavy piece of bush from the bundle Pomp had brought to the door, he ran out to try its virtue on the mule.

“Thank you,” said the boy, backing the animal around, so that he presented his heels to Mr. Crumlett. The mule seemed to understand the trick, and to favor it. “Now wip: wip so hard as you can. If you succeed to make him go, I vill hire you to ’company me on my woyage, and make the ship to sail.”

Enos whipped ; the mule kicked. On which side soever he attacked, there the vicious mule's heels presented themselves, and flew back to meet his advances, greatly to his discomfiture, and to the amusement of the merry youngster in the saddle, who laughed until he seemed in imminent danger of tumbling off.

“I'll fix him !” and the enraged Crumlett ran to find a pole.

Mrs. Crumlett was already standing in the door, with her six children, wondering at the altercation between her husband and the mule. Fred and Pomp were at the window. Fred was laughing heartily ; whilst Pomp's eyes glistened with something more serious than fun. He had recognized the peddler-boy ; and he knew that his appearance in that place, and in that shape, had a meaning in it, beyond what Enos saw in the stuffed saddle-bags.

The moment, therefore, that Enos ran for the pole, Pomp seized the sink-pail, half filled with water, and hastened to offer it to the mule, with the customary obsequiousness of the black man serving a white master.

The mule drank complacently, while his rider started in amazement.

“Pomp ! is that you ?”

The negro responded with a significant look. “I'll go and fetch a little more water, — a little more water, sar,” he

repeated, as Enos came rushing to the spot, flourishing a bean-pole.

“What are ye ’bout?” shouted Enos.

“Watering de ge’man’s mule-brute, sar,” said Pomp.

“You go into the house, and I’ll tend to the ge’man, and his mule too!” said Mr. Crumlett wrathfully.

Pomp obeyed, but with a sullen look, which reminded Enos that he was not absolute master here, and that the success of his speculation depended upon the good-will and consent of the negro himself. Mr. Crumlett, therefore, followed him to the door, saying to him in a modified tone, —

“Ye must keep out of sight, ye know; for your own good, ye understand.”

Pomp, who understood vastly better than Enos dreamed, entered the house, where he found himself alone with Fred; Mrs. Crumlett having gone out with the children, baby and all, to gaze at the peddler.

“I must speak with that boy alone,” said Pomp. “How can we manage it?”

“See, he understands what you want!” said Fred. “He is dismounting, in spite of Crumlett. He will come in, if he can get in.”

“But the whole tribe will come in with him!” Pomp glanced rapidly around the room: it was certainly no place

for a private conference with the peddler-boy. In a chair were some clothes which Mrs. Crumlett had just brought for the black to put on in place of those he wore. He caught them up, and once more started to leave the house.

“Where ye goin’?” demanded Enos.

“To de barn, massa,” replied Pomp: “git into dis yer new rig.”

Enos did not like to trust him out of his sight. Neither was he willing to leave Matilda an instant alone with the peddler. He compromised the difficulty by requesting Fred to go with the negro, and keep an eye on him; himself remaining to prevent traffic between the peddler and Mrs. Crumlett.

“There ain’t nothin’ ye want, ma: so don’t look at his things, but go along into the house, and take fifty or sixty of these everlastin’ young ones with ye.”

“I haven’t traded with a peddler for six months,” complained Mrs. Crumlett, casting hungry eyes at the saddlebags.

“And ye won’t for six months to come, I tell ye now!” her husband declared. “High as every thing is, you’re crazy to think of tradin’. Come, kitchen’s the place for you: go, and look after yer work.”

“I guess I look after my work well enough, without bein’ told by you!” retorted Matilda.

“Ye don’t: ye neglect it half the time! You’re a Fosdick; and the Fosdicks always was a shif’less set.”

“What did ye marry one of ’em for, then?” cried Mrs. Crumlett sharply. “Seems to me you wasn’t very bright, if we was sich a very shif’less set!”

“Wal, I was a fool once in my life, — I own up to that! I thought, git ye away from the rest on ’em, I might mebby make suthin’ of ye: but ye can’t make a silk puss out of a sow’s ear; I’ve found that out!”

“Very well: if you’re so sick of yer bargain, I can go back to the Fosdicks, that you’ve such a mean spite against. If we *are* such a shiftless set as you call us, I’m sure I always lived a much sight easier life at home than I ever have since the day I was silly enough to make myself a slave to you.”

“A slave to me!” roared Enos, exasperated. “By Jimmy Neddy! if that ain’t the coolest impudence, after I’ve supported ye in yer laziness all these years!”

“Very well,” repeated Mrs. Crumlett with intensified scorn and spite: “I sha’n’t trouble you to support me in my laziness any longer!”

“Do as ye please, do as ye please!” cried Enos. “I’m willin’. I’ve got tired of your threats and complaints; and now, if yo want to quit, — why, quit. Ye ain’t my slave; I

sha'n't hender ye : you're yer own master, and can do what ye like."

"Very well! that's all I ask. Glad you are so ready to give me up! Thank Providence, I've got a little money of my own."

"Yes, ye have; a little that ye got sellin' eggs that my hens laid, and butter from milk my cows give. That's the kind o' slave you've been to me! But, if ye want to make a journey, you can take the money; and, if there ain't enough, guess mebby I can 'commodate ye with a little besides: any thing to 'commodate!" And Enos laughed maliciously.

"But I shall want some things first to get ready for the journey: so I'm going to trade with this peddler," said Mrs. Crumlett triumphantly. "Of course, since you give up all claim to me, I can do as I'm a mind to."

"No, ye can't; not on my premises!" Enos turned to look after the peddler. "Where you goin' with that beast?"

The lad, having deliberately finished watering his mule during this altercation, bringing fresh water from the well for the purpose, was now leading him with equal deliberation towards the barn, whither Pomp had gone before him.

"I vas going to invite him to visit your staple," said he, stopping reluctantly, and only upon compulsion.

“I’ll inwite this rock to wisit your head!” shouted Enos, mocking him. “Come back here! Quit my premises!”

“If he does,” said Matilda, “I can leave the premises to trade with him, I guess!”

“If you do, you don’t set foot inside my door agin! Remember that!”

“Oh, I’ll remember: no danger! I’m sure I ain’t going to degrade myself by living with a man that’s got tired of me, now I’ve worn myself out in his service. I’ll just take time to pick up my things a little: then I’ll go; for I may as well start first as last. — What have you got” (to the peddler) “that’ll be useful to a poor unfortunate woman that’s driven out of her house and home by her own husband and the father of her children, — six in all, and a baby only just weaned, and two pair of twins?”

“Pins, needles, lace,” said the peddler, drawing his saddle-bags from the mule’s back; “and some verry goot fine-tooth combs.”

“Oh, dear! I should like some lace so much! But I suppose I can’t afford it: other women can; for they have husbands different from mine. What’s the price of your combs?”

“I vill show you. This is the article; and it is vorth vun dollar apiece, green-backs, madam.”

“One dollar!” ejaculated Enos, like a man horrified by some fearful announcement. “Jest sich a comb as we used to git for a shilling.”

“But you will observe, things is wery high,” said the boy. “These is all contraband goots; has to be smuggled through the lines. I smuggled ’em myself; and there is risks. I take my load to Shelbyville, and I sell out for some profits: I vas not vishing to trade before I got to Shelbyville. You see,” — running his finger-nail along the ringing teeth of the comb, — “it is prime ivory, and vonderful strong!”

“Iv’ry?” sneered Enos. “It’s no more iv’ry than my shin-bone! So take your traps away.”

“Iv’ry or no iv’ry,” said Mrs. Crumlett, “we need just such a comb for the children’s heads.”

“What have you to do with the children’s heads?” cried Enos. “Thought you was goin’ to leave ’em ever so fast!”

“I can’t help feeling a mother’s interest, if I *am* driven away from ’em,” replied Mrs. Crumlett. “I hain’t had any thing for their heads but a broken piece of comb an inch long since we came to Tennessee; and I shouldn’t have had that, if I didn’t look closer after their welfare than ever their father did or will!”

“Thunder and jingoes!” snarled Enos, “if you don’t

beat all the women for makin' flings! Don't I look after their welfare? You'll see! Guess their heads 'll be took as good care on, and their faces kep' as clean, after you're gone, as they ever have been."

"Well," said Mrs. Crumlett, changing her tactics, and trying the pathetic mood, "I think I'll buy one of these combs, to make a present on't to the children, for the dear things to remember me by after I'm gone. Whenever they comb their heads, they'll think of me, the darlings! Won't you, Eny, won't you, 'Tildy, think of your poor, unhappy mother, turned out of doors just as you was growing up to be some comfort to her, after all her trials and troubles, and her devotion, and her—boo-hoo-oo!"

At this critical juncture, Fred made his appearance from the barn.

"Look here, peddler: have you got any sort of a plaster that will be good for a negro's bruised ankles?"

"I shouldn't be wery much surprised if I could do 'em some goot. But stickin'-plasters is high."

"No matter: I'll pay for them. Come with me."

Fred led the way; and the boy followed him to the barn, carrying his saddle-bags with him. Mr. Crumlett was but too glad of this diversion, which broke off the trade for the comb; so that, this time, he raised no objection to the ped-

dlers' visiting the stable. In case he had shown an inclination to accompany him, and look into the affair of the sticking-plasters, it was Fred's intention to stop him on the way, and propose some new speculation, whilst Pomp and the peddler would take that opportunity to confer together. But, just then, Mrs. Crumlett started to go into the house, with the air of one driven wild with the desperation of grief; and Enos, fearful of consequences, hastened to overtake her.

XII.

CARL'S ADVENTURE.



Y, Pomp!" exclaimed the boy on entering the barn, "how ever did you come here?"

"Carl! how did you come?" said Pomp, grasping his hand. "I was kidnapped and smuggled; but it seems you have turned smuggler yourself?"

"Yes, wery much so," said Carl with a merry wink and twinkle. "I vill tell you hew. I vent to find my friend Yoseph, you know. He vas to show me how I could do so much petter making money as I vas doing in the service. So he says, 'You take some goots I shall let you have, and go down to Shelbyville, and I vill give you a letter for introduction to my broder there; and he shall help you to sell your goots, and get you passes to come pack.' And then he says to me, 'There vill pe some letters from Nashville to confederates in Shelbyville; vich if you take 'em to my proder, he vill get much money for 'em:' for he says, 'I have smuggled letters and news many times that vay, and it

is wery goot piziness for profits.' And I says to him, 'Some goot piziness for profits is vat I vant; and I vill see vat I vill do. How shall I get my goots through the lines?' And he says, 'That is easy: ve have some pretty tricks for that.' — 'Tell me some pretty tricks,' I says. And then he tells me, 'The secesh farmers help us; and some help us that is not secesh. They does it for profits,' he says; 'for men vill do any thing for profits, you know.' And I says, 'I know.' And he says, 'Ve have vun vagon, made with a false bottom; and that's vat the guard sees ven they stop it to look if any thing contraband is in. But unter that bottom's another, and two inches between; and in them two inches ve stow much goots. So, ven our friends is in town, vun leaves his vagon, and takes ours that has the goots in, and carries it through the lines with his pass to his house. Then the goots is took out, and hid till ve are ready to send 'em on to our friends South, vich is suffering for 'em, you unterstan'.' And I says, 'I unterstan': it is a wery pretty trick. And he says, 'Vun day, a load of manure goes through the lines. the guard does not stop that; for the farmer has a pass to draw out vat he vants for his farm. But, you see, unter that load is boxes of fine stuffs for the rebs, vich goes from us, and prings pack much money. Is that a pretty trick?' And I says, 'Wery!' And he says, 'Ve have goots vaiting

outside the lines, vich you shall take, and go make profits for you and for us in Dixie, and bring the letters to my broder.' And I says, 'All that's verry goot to talk, but how do I get through the lines?' — 'That is easy as any thing, he says. 'A friend of ours is clerk in the provost-marshal's office, and he steals plank-passes for us; and ve writes in 'em names and descriptions as ve pleases.' — 'So that is another verry pretty trick,' I says. And then all vas agreed; but I must pay him some money, so he vill not loose if I forget to come pack to him after I have made some profits. So I says, 'I have a friend vill let me have money;' and I go to find my friend. By mishtake, I go pack to the office, vere I found you, Pomp; and I see the colonel, and I tell him the pretty tricks. And he takes down all I tell him; and py and py he says, 'How would you like to go and smuggle goots for your friend Yoseph? You shall go,' he says, 'and find out all about his agents that smuggle for him, and bring pack pesides much waluable information of the rebel forces and fortifications.' And I says, 'Vat you say I vill try.' And that is the reason," added Carl, "that I am turned smug-gler."

To this story both Pomp and Fred listened with deep interest; and, in return, Pomp related his adventure.

"I hope you will be luckier than I have been, Carl. You have unlertaken a dangerous business."

“If it vas not some danger, it vould not be fun,” replied Carl.

“But how happens it that you are on this cross-road?”

“Pecause. I come out on the Murfreesborough pike; for the goots vas carried out that vay. But I shall not go to Murfreesborough till after I go to Shelbywille, and see Yoseph’s broder, who vill give me passes to go through Murfreesborough ven I come pack. So I cross to go to the Nolenswille pike. The farmer that smuggles the goots let me have the mule at a pargain: only seven tollars for that vonderful peast,” laughed Carl.

“And how about the letters you were to take out to the rebs?” asked Pomp.

“The colonel could think of pretty tricks too!” Carl answered. “He looks into all the letters Yoseph gives me, and gives me pack some vich he says vill do no hurt for the rebs to see. So here I have ’em unter the lining of my west;” and Carl tapped his bosom.

At that moment, Mrs. Crumlett, with bonnet and shawl on, approached the barn in violent haste, followed by Enos, endeavoring to pacify her.

“Come, come, ma! Ye ain’t in earnest: ye know ye ain’t!”

“I’ll show ye whether I’m in earnest or not, Mr. Crum-

lett. I sha'n't wait to be told again that you want to get rid of me. But I must see the poddler first, and have that comb for the children. The Fosdicks always knew what was due to children's heads, if they be such a shif'less set!"

"I didn't mean you when I said that, Tildy. You ain' exactly like the rest of 'em, — I always stuck to that."

"Yes, I am: don't take back any thing you've said! I'm a Fosdick; and, of course, can't pretend to be as smart as the Crumletts. The Crumletts are *aristocratic*, everybody knows!" — spoken with withering emphasis. "Nobody ever heard of a *Crumlett* doing a mean thing: oh, no!"

"Gosh all hemlock!" broke forth Enos, writhing and smarting under the sarcasms: "won't ye never stop twittin' a feller?"

"*You* never twit!" said Matilda with a scornful toss, still pushing towards the barn. "Where's that peddler? I've got the dollar all ready to buy the comb."

"He is attending to the negro," said Fred, stopping her at the door. "It will hardly be proper for you to go in just now, ma'am."

"Oh! if it wouldn't be proper, I can wait a minute. The Fosdicks know what belongs to propriety, if they be so very, very shiftless!" — with a simpering, satirical glance at Enos.

“Come, ye ain’t going to spend that dollar now, I tell ye!” said Mr. Crumlett. “Come, come, Tildy,” he adiled coaxingly, “stay with the young ones yourself: that’ll be a better present than a cartload of combs.”

“Oh! how very flattering you do speak, sir! and I am sure I’m very much obliged to you!” Mrs. Crumlett continued. “But it seems it’s the dollar you care most about, and not me: you’d rather I’d stay than spend that! You sing a different tune from what you did a little while ago. Then you was ready to make any sacrifice to get rid of me: it was *any thing to accommodate,* then!”

“Wal, you provoked me. You musn’t take to heart what a fellow says in the heat of passion, Tildy.”

“Oh! then you do get provoked sometimes, do you? You own up that you say *some* things in the heat of passion? Glad to hear it, Mr. Crumlett! I thought you had such a forbearing temper!”

“Wal, I gene’lly always have. But a man can’t stand every thing!”

“Oh, no, indeed! but a woman can! A woman’s expected to put up with every thing, no matter how bad her husband treats her, and be *so* meek and forgiving through it all, up to the very minute when she’s told she ain’t wanted any longer (a pathetic snuff); and then turned out-doors (another

snuff), separated from her children (a sob), and no matter what becomes of her ; for that's the way it is ! ” And Mrs. Crumlett resorted again to tears.

“ Come, Tildy ! come ! ” said Enos softly. Then, with sudden spirit, “ Don't wipe your eyes with that dollar-bill, any how ! Don't you know no better'n that ? ”

“ Oh, well : I forgot ! If a dollar-bill is of so much more importance than my feelings, I must look out ! I'll spend it before I spoil it. — Do tell that peddler to come out, can't you ? ” said Mrs. Crumlett, with difficulty rising above the sea of affliction in which she had sunk, but still heaving on its waves.

“ Wal, spend it then, and be darned ! ” said Enos, out of patience. “ If you will be so thunderin' obstinate and extravagant, go ahead ! I've said my say. A dollar for a comb ! I guess that'll be sufficient grounds for a divorce, if nothing else. Children, look at your mother ! payin' a dollar — a dollar — for a comb ! ”

Carl had now come out of the barn, and was ready for a trade. But Mrs. Crumlett, who had appeared so violently determined to make the purchase as long as she was opposed, began to recede from the strong stand she had taken, the moment that opposition was withdrawn.

“ Is that the comb you showed me before ? ”

“The wery identical comb,” said Carl.

“No, I’m sure it ain’t!” said Mrs. Crumlett. “It ain’t near so good a one as that was, — not near! Let me see some more.”

“Take your pick, madam,” said Carl.

“Well,” said Matilda discontentedly, after examining the lot, “I don’t see any quite as good as that fust one. On the whole, I guess I won’t buy any, my husband is so dreadful set against it.”

“No, I ain’t, neither! I say, Go ahead! Why don’t ye spend yer dollar? Never say I hender ye!”

“No, I think I won’t trade to-day,” said Matilda, who, left free to assume the responsibility, could not now be driven even by her husband’s taunts to make the extravagant purchase. “I never can think of buying any little thing of a peddler, without making trouble in the family: so I learn to sacrifice my own wishes and inclinations, just for peace.”

Enos hardly knew whether to be nettled or pleased by this speech. However, the dollar was saved; and that was a solid satisfaction. Still he was not at ease in his mind; for, the moment Matilda gave up buying the comb, he began to feel that it was really needed in the family, and that he might regret his opposition to its purchase, especially if combs should be higher in a month or two, as Carl had taken occa-

sion to suggest. Besides, Enos may have foreseen that he would probably never hear the last of the affair from Matilda, unless he secured the comb. "That will shut her head, as well as comb it," he said to himself. And, in his turn, he began to examine the combs.

"Don't need one, as I see," he muttered; "git along with the broken one that's in the house jest as well: but mother'll be everlastin'ly dissatisfied, I s'pose, if I don't make some sort of a dicker for't."

"No, I sha'n't! Don't buy it to please me, I beg of you!" And Matilda turned away.

"You are so terrible set on havin' a comb! Look here, peddler!" and Enos whispered to Carl.

"I wouldn't buy it, I guess, Enos," said Mrs. Crumlett, quite seriously this time. "Come, we don't want any thing to-day. Well," — as Enos continued to talk aside with Carl, — "if you do buy it, remember that it isn't to please me; for I do think a dollar is twice what the miserable thing is worth!" and she swept abruptly into the house.

Enos followed presently, and smilingly presented her with a comb. She looked at it resentfully, until he said, —

"There, Tildy: that's to please you! Don't say a word: I got it cheap, — a bargain, Tildy!"

"What! didn't you give a dollar for it?"

“ A dollar ! S’pose I’d be sich a dunce ? ”

“ I hope not ! ” said Mrs. Crumlett.

“ Not I, I vum ! I’m jest goin’ to give his mule a little nibble o’ corn, and him a bowl o’ bread and milk ; and he’s to give me twenty-five cents to boot ! Wasn’t I cute ? ”

“ Why, Enos ! And it’s a real good comb, after all ! ” said Matilda.

Thus the difficulty was settled ; for, singularly enough, not another word was said, by either, of the proposed separation. Matilda had already quietly laid aside her shawl and bonnet ; and now she set cheerfully about getting Carl’s dinner.

XIII.

ENOS FALLS INTO TEMPTATION.

ARL had seen his mule fed, and partaken of Mrs. Crumlett's humble fare, and was settling with Enos, senior ; while Enos, junior, was leading the mule to the door. Fred was at table, fortifying his stomach also against emergencies ; when suddenly Mr. Crumlett discovered a movement in the woods.

"They're after the nigger !" he exclaimed, drawing an anxious breath.

In fact, the kidnapers and their rebel allies had by this time scoured the woods pretty thoroughly, and made their appearance on the southern side. They had not succeeded in their search, and the guerillas were inclined to give it up. Four or five of Gruffley's men came galloping across the field towards Mr. Crumlett's house. The captain was at their head. Enos turned pale ; feeling that a critical moment for his speculation, and also for his fortunes generally, had arrived.

“Mr. Crumlett,” said the captain, “you profess to be a good patriot.”

“Yes — patriot — to the back-bone!” said Enos in an agitated voice.

“And you’ve done a good deal, you say, for the Confederate cause.”

“Wal, I have that!” said Enos with emotion.

“I am glad to hear it, and to give you an opportunity of doing a trifle more. This foolish nigger job has delayed us, and we are unfortunately obliged to call upon you for forage.”

“Forage!” articulated Enos.

“For fifteen horses,” added the captain cheerfully.

“Fifteen — horses!” gasped Mr. Crumlett.

“And a dinner,” continued the captain, “for fifteen men.”

“Dinner! — fifteen! Goodness gracious, captain! we couldn’t scare up a dinner for fif—— FIFTEEN! to save our souls! Should be tickled to death to obleege ye, and do suthin’ for the cause; but we hain’t a thing in the house fit for you and your men to eat.”

“Oh! we’re not particular. A few slices of that bacon hanging in your wood-shed, and three or four dozen of those eggs packed in bran in your cellar, will do very well for hungry men. In half an hour, Mr. Crumlett. Meanwhile, sergeant, see about the forage.”

The captain, dismounting, adjusted his sabre, felt the pistols in his belt, and glanced at the pair that ornamented his boot-tops; then stood with folded arms, as picturesque a bandit as any that ever flourished in a novel. His eyes, looking out from between his slouched hat and his immense beard, fell on Carl.

“Who is this fellow? the boy I saw with you this morning?”

Enos, whose mind dwelt upon the appalling ravages that must necessarily be made by fifteen men and their beasts, did not heed the question.

“I am doing a little bizness for profits,” said Carl.

“No doubt!” said Captain Gruffley. “You rascals care mighty little for our cause, but every thing for your own profits.”

“Yes, captain,” said Carl with a smile, affectionately stroking the mule’s nose as he prepared to mount. “We look out for our own interests; that is so. But, ven our interests is your interests too, that makes it goot for all. This is my first trip; and I vas told I could do much benefit for your cause.”

“Have you any pistols?”

“No, captain, — wery sorry to say. Pistoles is hard to get through. But,” added Carl with a smile, “you seem to be provided already.”

“ Any percussion-caps, or any powder or bullets ? ” And the captain overhauled the saddle-bags.

“ Bullets is too heavy to pring ; and powder and caps is not convenient, the police is so sharp in Nashville ! ”

Whereupon the captain expressed boundless disgust.

“ Next time you come out, bring something we want, or I’ll take from you every thing you have. What we want is materials to fight with. A great deal of good you do the cause with your needles and pins and side-combs ! Go about your business now, you Dutch peddler ! ” — with a very disparaging epithet.

“ That is vat I vas vishing to do,” said Carl pleasantly as he mounted.

He was in no haste to depart, however. Both he and Mr. Crumlett were experiencing keen anxiety at that moment concerning Pomp’s safety. The Riders had led their horses to the barn, and were about to enter in search of forage. The negro might indeed attempt to hide himself : but the probability was that he would be discovered ; and discovery, under these circumstances, would be fatal. Pomp knew that, and chose a bolder course. As the sergeant of the party was going in, the negro came out.

“ Take your hoss, massa ? Hay or corn, sar ? ” said he, ducking, and taking off his hat (an old one of Mr. Crumlett’s), obsequiously.

“Ha!” said the captain, “you told me you had lost your niggers, Mr. Crumlett!”

“All but this one; that is,” said Enos, “I’ve let ’em to Gov’ment. This one, he did run away; but he got sick of his bargain, and was glad enough to run back again.”

“Like as not you’ll have a chance to lend him to Government too,” quietly suggested the captain, lighting his cigar.

“Wal,” faltered Enos, “he’s all we’ve got to depend on now; but, if it’s necessary, they ain’t a man, Cap’n Gruffley, more willin’ ’n I be to make sacrifices for my country.”

“Perhaps you’ll be called on to prove that soon. Meanwhile, you’d better be ordering our dinner; for fifteen, remember.”

“For sixteen!” cried a new-comer, riding to the door. It was Bodson, the kidnapper. “I reckon I shall have to tie up here with you, captain.”

“That’s right, Bodson. This gentleman will be delighted to entertain you. Have you given the nigger up?”

“Yes, about. He ain’t in these woods, that’s certain. Say, stranger, you hain’t seen that nigger put out of the bush, have you?”

Enos was almost too faint to speak; for, at that moment, Pomp came, by the sergeant’s orders, to take the captain’s horse.

“What sort of a nigger?” Mr. Crumlett inquired.

“What sort? Any nigger! A boy worth twenty-six hundred dollars of any man’s money! A noble fellow, taller’n your man thar” (Pomp had assumed a judicious stoop; and, in the humble part he was playing, he appeared really less than he was), “and stout in proportion.”

“No, I hain’t seen any nigger but him,” said Enos. “Niggers is gitting skase around here. I’ve got two to work for Gov’ment, and I ’xpect they’ll be borryin’ this.”

“Take my hoss along too, you black rascal!” cried Bodson.

“Yes, massa!” said Pomp, ducking and grinning.

“What’ll you take for that boy, stranger?” Bodson inquired, watching him as he led the horses away.

“For him?” Enos started. Here was an opening for a speculation! To sell Pomp to one of the very men who had kidnapped him, and were even then in search of him, — what a splendid joke that would be! Enos relished hugely jokes of that sort. He disguised, however, the eagerness with which he eyed the enticing bait; and added, with the assumed indifference of a practised jockey, “I don’t know: he’s the only one I’ve got left. Would you like to buy?”

“I’ll buy, if I can buy cheap enough. I never saw the time yet when I wasn’t ready for a nigger-trade, if there was a chance to save myself by it. Is he sound?”

“ Oh, perfectly ! — fur’s I know.”

“ Wal, if he’s all right, I reckon you’ll expect to git about eight or nine hundred for him : though he ain’t worth that ; no nigger is, these times.”

“ Only the one you’re lookin’ for, — worth, you said, twenty-six hundred ! ” And Mr. Crumlett smiled.

“ Oh ! that was talk, mostly,” replied Bodson. “ Besides, he’s a partic’lar nigger : I’ve got a use for him. If you’d like to say about eight hundred for this one, then we’ll talk, — provided we don’t ketch the one we’re huntin’ : in that case, I shouldn’t want to give so much.”

“ Couldn’t think of eight hundred, stranger.” Yet Mr. Crumlett did think of it, and reasoned within himself, that if he could get Pomp off his hands, and realize half that sum for him, he would consider himself amazingly fortunate. But there was his partner in the transaction, — Fred : what would he say ? “ Shouldn’t wonder if I could buy out his share cheap,” thought Enos. And what would Pomp say ? He did not trouble himself much about that. A negro, in his eyes, was — a nigger ; mere property : and, besides, even if he sold Pomp to the kidnapper, he would be no worse off than he was before he escaped from the kidnapper. And the fraud practised upon Bodson, — “ That’s nothin’ ! ” thought the honest Mr. Crumlett. “ The nigger never was his’n,

any how. And, after all my losses, I ought to make suthin' on him, if anybody."

These thoughts passed through his mind as he entered the house to give directions about the dinner; leaving Bodsor at the door. He found Matilda in great excitement and distress, not knowing "what on earth she should do" to get dinner for so many men.

"Do the best you can," said Enos. "'Tain't so bad as it might be, Tildy. They'll pay in Confed'rate money, I know; but I've got an idee for a dicker that'll make it all right, if things turn out as I guess they will. I'll go and cut the ham, and help you all I can."

He went to the pantry for a knife and platter, and discovered his associate in the negro speculation, standing up stiffly behind the door, and appearing extremely modest about being seen.

"Sho! I'd a'most forgot about you! Thought you was to the barn; but I remember now, — you was eatin' your dinner. 'Fraid o' these fellers, be ye?"

"Yes," said Fred decidedly; for again he had recognized the guerilla captain who rode by Daniels's side on the morning, and almost at the moment, of his escape. "If they discover me, it will spoil every thing."

"Will it? How so?"

“They will inquire into my business; and I’m afraid it wouldn’t bear investigation. Especially if they know I came from Nashville, it will go hard with me.”

“What do ye think they’d do with ye?”

“Carry me off; imprison me.”

“You don’t say! And the nigger — what would become of the nigger?”

“If any thing *does* happen to me,” said Fred earnestly, “do the best you can for him.”

“Oh, yes! certain, certain,” replied Enos with feeling.

“They haven’t recognized him yet, have they?”

“No; and I guess they won’t.”

“And the Dutch peddler — where is he?”

“He’s jest gone off.”

“And will I be safe here?”

“Safe as anywhere. If they should sarch the house for ye, they’d find ye ’most any place; and, if they don’t sarch, you’re as well off here. But darned if I don’t wish you was out of the house, though!”

“So do I,” said Fred; “but it’s too late for that.”

Enos took the knife and plate, and proceeded to the woodshed. At every slice of the ham, he paused to think. What agitating fancies crowded upon him! “It’ll take the hull ham to feed sich a slew of men!” (A slice.) “Confed’rate

paper ain't worth its weight in corn-husks!" (A groan, and another slice.) "If I can make four or five hundred dollars for my share on that nigger, though, that'll go a little ways towards makin' up for my losses. If 'twan't for this young feller, now, I might make double that. Wonder what he'd take, and quitclaim? I thought o' makin' on him an offer; but I'm glad I didn't. If the bushwhackers *should* diskiver him, and carry him off, then I don't see but that I'd be left in full possession; and that's nine pints o' the law." (A long pause, and then another slice; Enos appearing extremely troubled about something.) "Of course," — poisoning the knife again, — "I wouldn't tell on him; no, I wouldn't do that: but, if they *should* kind o' accidentally stumble on him, that would be a good thing for me! I could sell the nigger, without askin' leave of nobody. And why should I divide with him? Wouldn't they have ketched the nigger 'fore this, if't hadn't been for me? What claim has *he* on him, I'd like to know? He never's lost a nigger, as I have." And, having thoroughly reasoned himself into the conviction that nobody had any right to reap benefits from the speculation except himself, Mr. Crumlett took off another vigorous slice.

XIV.

POMP FINDS EMPLOYMENT.

RS. CRUMLETT could not make very rapid progress cooking with one spider over a wood-fire ; and, before she had got half through the wilderness of ham and eggs to be fried, the hungry soldiers began to eat in pursuit of her.

The family's supply of crockery was limited ; but, fortunately, each man had his camp knife and fork and tin plate. Only the captain and three others, of whom Bodson was one, entered the house, and sat in chairs at the table : the rest remained out of doors, and ate with their plates in their laps, sitting on the ground.

Mrs. Crumlett, heated and flushed and flurried to the last degree, continued to fry the bacon, and to roast her own face over the fire ; while Enos and the two older children flew about excitedly, waiting on their guests. No sooner was an egg or a slice cooked than it was transferred to the plate of some hungry Rider waiting for it. Carter and two

of the band had not yet arrived. Carter had postponed the claims of appetite, in order to gallop off, and bring to the hunt a friend of his who owned a pack of bloodhounds that would "follow the track of a man" (as the newspaper advertisements said of them); while the two guerillas remained in the woods, at his request, to keep a lookout for Pomp.

And now, to the astonishment of Mr. Crumlett, and of Fred, who surveyed the scene through the crack of the pantry door, Pomp himself entered the house.

"Beg pardon, ge'men, for not comin' before; had to look a'ter de hosses; den jes' stop to wash myse'f to de well, 'fore I waited on de cap'n," he said with the air of a menial proud of rendering service to so distinguished a personage.

He tied a towel about his waist, and performed his self-appointed task with a neatness and alacrity that delighted Gruffley. Bodson also regarded him with increasing interest, and with the complacent sidelong glance of a connoisseur.

"Look here," he said, beckoning to Enos, and whispering in his ear: "will ye say eight hundred? If you will, it's a bargain."

"Couldn't, nohow;" and Mr. Crumlett shook his head discouragingly.

"I'll make it nine hundred. That's fair, now, my friend."

“Yes, fair; but then!” said Enos with a look implying that such a piece of property would command a vastly greater sum.

“What do you expect to do with those dogs, Bodson?” asked the captain.

“Do with ’em? Tree that nigger,” replied Bodson. “If Carter can get ’em, he’s a gone case, he is! Dead or alive, we have him.”

“Fill your glass, sar?” said Pomp with servile politeness, advancing the water-pitcher.

“Have a taste of this, Bodson,” said the captain, who had a flask of spirits at his elbow. “Then a little dash of water, Robert.”

Robert was Pomp, who helped the gentlemen so adroitly to water, after they had helped themselves to the spirits, that Bodson regarded him with still-increasing admiration.

“Say nine-fifty: a big price it is too!” he whispered, pulling Enos down till his ear was level with his lips. “Is’t a trade?”

But still Mr. Crumlett shook his head.

“Well, here’s to the success of your hunt, Bodson,” said the captain, raising his glass. “When do you expect to get the dogs on the scent?”

“Before night, if possible; for I’m afraid ’twill be too

late in the morning: the scent will be cold then. I hope you'll join us, captain, and see the sport."

"Should be delighted," replied the captain, warming with his drink; "but we have a hunt of our own to prepare for."

"What's that?" said Bodson.

"A secret," laughed the captain. "Even my own men don't know it yet, — only the lieutenant here. The truth is, we succeeded so well in our little dash yesterday morning, that we are going to try another. This time we are going in greater force. There's a Federal forage-train that will either get captured or burned, unless they know of our intentions, and prepare for us; which isn't likely." And another glass of liquor disappeared behind the captain's beard.

"Egg, sar," said Pomp, skilfully introducing the freshly cooked morsel to Gruffley's plate.

"Thank you, Robert. I should like that boy for a body-servant, Bodson. Are you trying to bargain for him?"

"No," said Bodson indifferently: "his master either don't want to sell, or else he expects to get too much for him. Tell me about the forage-train, captain. I'm interested."

There was another present still more deeply interested in that subject than Bodson. It was Pomp. It was in order to gather from the chance talk of these men, information that

might be valuable to the Federal cause, that he had come to wait upon them.

The captain continued to ply the flask of spirits ; and presently, rendered indiscreet by its contents, he openly boasted of a rebel plan for surprising a position on Mill Creek at daybreak the following morning, and destroying a forage-train stationed there, and (according to one of Wheeler's spies) insufficiently guarded.

"We have some of the ablest men acting as spies that can be found in the service," he continued. "One of them dined with General Negley's staff the other day, heard Yankee plans discussed, and reported to our general the next morning. We have an agent in Nashville, who is making arrangements to furnish Rosecrans himself with a body-servant. If he succeeds, what a joke it will be to receive almost daily reports of the Federal general's table-talk, faithfully jotted down by the rascal behind his chair!"

The captain's friends all laughed at this ; and even Pomp grinned, who perhaps had the best reasons of any one for appreciating the humor of the idea.

"Is't a nigger you're going to give Rosecrans?" Bodson asked.

"Oh, no!" said the captain: "the Abolition generals don't object to nigger body-servants; but we couldn't trust one in

such a position. The niggers, somehow or another, are all, at heart, on the Yankee side."

"If I had my way," said Bodson, "I wouldn't leave a nigger within a hundred miles of the Union lines. Better send 'em South, at any sacrifice." This was meant for Crumlett's ear; and holding up ten fingers, indicating that he had raised his bid for Pomp to a thousand dollars, he lifted his brow interrogatively as he caught Enos's eye.

"I haven't much faith in anybody," spoke up the lieutenant. "What do you think now of that man Daniels, captain?"

"I think he is a true man, and I always did."

"Well, he may be; but I believe he deliberately helped that boy to escape yesterday morning."

It was now Fred's turn to be interested; and he strained his ear to catch the captain's reply.

"According to his account, it was all right; though I confess I was rather suspicious when he rode up without the prisoner. I questioned him sharply. He said his saddle-girth kept troubling him; and once, when he halted to fix it, the boy jumped off, and tried to escape in the woods. He rode after him, and ordered him to halt. As the boy wouldn't, he fired. The boy fell, and he left him for dead under a bush."

“It was in these very woods we have been beating through to-day; and it is a little singular, if the story is true, that we have seen no signs of the dead body.”

“So it is! I hadn’t thought of that,” said the captain. Then, turning to Mr. Crumlett, “Describe that chap that was with you this morning, when I called you from the woods.”

“Wal,” began Enos, “he was a young feller, don’ know exactly how old: he had on—wal, I don’t exactly remember what clo’es he *did* have on; and as for his complexion, he was either light or dark, I mos’ forgit which.”

“Tall or short?”

“Wal, I should say he wan’t very tall for a man, nor very short for a boy. I couldn’t swear to it; but that’s my impression.”

“Wonderfully definite your description is! I reckon you’re interested in that boy.”

“Wal, I be some, I allow. He owes me for a meal he et in my house; though I don’t much expect ever to git my pay. I’ve had to feed a good many strangers, cap’n, past year; and I hain’t realized nothin’ worth while for it, neither,” said Enos pathetically.

“Well,” said the captain, “before settling my bill, allow me to inquire if you have any blankets in your house.”

"Gracious, no!" replied Enos, terrified at the question: "not half as many as we want! Two pair o' twins, cap'n, and" —

"And a suffering country to call out your patriotism," added the captain. "We have cold nights now, and colder are coming; and my command is short of blankets. Government can't supply them; and I have to take them where I can find them, — paying for them, of course."

"In Confed'rate money!" said Enos.

"Certainly: what else would you have? What have you to say against Confederate money?" demanded the captain, sternly eying his host.

"Oh, nothin', nothin'!" said Enos. "Only I hain't got a blanket: not a blanket to spare!"

"Sergeant, just take a look about the house with this man, and see if you can't find something he may be induced to part with, being such a good patriot."

Enos looked like a sick man as he accompanied the sergeant in his search. And now Fred had reason to congratulate himself that he was not concealed in the chambers of the house; yet might not the search be carried even into the partry, where he was hid? He did not know. Anxiously he awaited the sergeant's re-appearance. At length, he came, followed by the miserable Enos, bearing his arms full of bed-

ding Mrs. Crumlett was so overcome at the sight, that, having no chair to sit in, she sat down, with a shriek, upon the kitchen-floor.

“O Enos, Enos! we can’t let them go! Captain, captain, you wouldn’t rob us of our all, would you?”

“Rob you, madam?” said the captain. “If you call supplying soldiers, who sleep on the ground, with blankets to protect them from the inclemency of the season,—if you call that robbery, your patriotism and that of your husband will have to be inquired into.”

“Oh, no! not robbery; but them’s all we have for our own family! Think of two pair of twins, sir, and be merciful! You’ve got my comforters too!”

“That patch-work quilt,” said Enos, “is one my own mother, that’s dead and gone, pieced and quilted!” His voice trembled, and his eyes filled with tears.

“She did it in a good cause!” cried the captain. “These things are a godsend to my men. Is that all you can find, sergeant? There’s a room you haven’t searched.”

“That’s the pantry!” said Mrs. Crumlett, fearing not so much for Fred as for a fine row of cheeses on the shelf, which she feared might prove a temptation to the soldiers.

But Enos said not a word. Perhaps he reflected, that to oppose searching the pantry would insure its being searched.

Perhaps he was so afflicted by the prospect of losing that interesting memento of his mother, the patch-work quilt, that he took no thought of other things. And yet it is barely possible that there did steal into his mind a gleam of solace in the consideration, that, if Fred should be taken, Pomp would be left. Only for a moment, however, did he appear indifferent to the sergeant's entering the pantry. Then — probably reflecting that the discovery of Fred concealed in his house, especially after the recent conversation concerning him, might prove a circumstance fatal to himself — he started forward. But the movement, if intended to intercept the sergeant, was too late. And it was perhaps better so; for even Pomp, who had become aware of Fred's presence behind the door, was too sagacious to attempt to prevent what could not be prevented.

The sergeant entered. He discovered no blankets in the pantry; but he did discover Fred. Perhaps that circumstance saved Mrs. Crumlett's cheeses.

XV.

FRED AND POMP DISPOSED OF.

FRED, who had had ample time to prepare for the unfortunate event, maintained perfectly his self-possession, and marched out with a very cheerful air, considering the tight hold the sergeant had on his collar.

“What’s that? — a skulker? — a spy?” cried the captain.

“I don’t know. I found him hid behind the door here.”

“Is that a son of yours, Crumlett?”

“Wal, not exactly,” stammered Enos.

“Not exactly! What’s he hid in your pantry for?”

“He knows better’n I do. I had nothin’ to do with hidin’ him there; that’s one thing sure.”

“What! don’t you know who he is?”

“No more’n I tell you, cap’n.”

“He’s the chap we’ve been talking about, then?”

“I s’pose he is, cap’n.”

“Why, then, when I asked you for a description of him,

which you couldn't give on account of your poor memory, why didn't you call out the fellow himself?"

"Hospitality! — hospitality! — the laws of hospitality, cap'n!" was all Enos could say in reply to this very pertinent and embarrassing question. And this, it would seem, should have been a sufficient argument in the chivalrous South; but it did not satisfy the captain.

"You had some other reason, Mr. Crumlett!"

"Wal, I don' know but I did; though if I *did* think of his owin' me for his dinner, which he might forgit to pay if he left before you did, that wa'n't the main reason. Hospitality is hospitality, cap'n."

"That will do, sir." Gruffley turned to Fred: "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

Fred was now beginning to realize the very important circumstance in his favor, that he had not yet been recognized as the escaped prisoner. He therefore answered, with a bold face, that his name was Rivers, and that he was from the vicinity of Nashville.

"But you are from the North!"

"I have spent a few summers at the North, and have been to school there; but I was born in Kentucky: my father is a Kentuckian, and a man of strong Southern principles."

"Well, how came you here?"

"I came with some friends of mine. I didn't want to come; but I was rather forced into it by circumstances." Fred omitted to state, however, what those circumstances were.

"And where are your friends now?"

"They have gone on South."

"And why didn't you go with them?"

"Because I preferred to remain here rather than go farther."

"And you are expecting their return?"

"I shall be very glad to see them again," said Fred sincerely; "but I don't suppose they'll be back immediately."

"Were they smugglers?"

"Well, they brought a few things with them through the lines."

"Any arms or ammunition?"

"A — very — limited supply," said Fred, thinking of what had been taken from him and his comrades when they surrendered. "But we disposed of them pretty soon. We met a party of Confederate cavalry that took all we had."

"And did you get your pay?"

"They did not pay us then; but my friends went with them, and of course the cavalry fellows will do all they promised."

“ Well, now tell me what you hid behind that door for ? ”

“ I’ll tell you truly. I didn’t wish to be seen by you.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Because ” — Fred hesitated a moment — “ because the soldiers I have — had dealings with — since we disposed of our arms and ammunition — have not treated me very well. Besides, I saw that you did not appear pleased to see the peddler that you sent away on his mule.”

“ Is he one of your friends ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ But you told this man, when you came to his house last night, that you were going to join the army, — did you not ? ”

“ I believe I made some such remark to him.”

“ Well, sir,” said the captain, “ I’ll furnish you facilities for joining the army.”

“ But I didn’t mean just what he understood me to say,” replied Fred, aghast at this sudden turn in the conversation. “ I shall wait till I am older before I go into camp.”

“ You are old enough. What you lack in years you make up in smartness. You’ve told me a mighty smooth story; and, to save the trouble of learning whether it’s all a story, I shall just turn you over to the next recruiting-officer. You’ll make a good soldier; and that’s a much better way to

serve your country than smuggling pins and peppermints. Sergeant, away with him! He's bothered us long enough."

Fred looked the captain steadily in the face for several seconds; then raised his eyes to the face that shone upon him from behind the captain's chair. It was the face of Pomp; and it said to him plainly, "Go; appear to consent: it is your best chance." Already the negro, by his innate power and sagacity, had gained a strong influence over the boy, who hesitated no longer, but went accordingly.

Mr. Crumlett, who had watched these proceedings with extreme uneasiness, now experienced a feeling of relief amounting almost to exultation. His connection with the negro speculation had not been betrayed. Fred was removed quietly out of his way; and there was Pomp remaining, with Bodson at hand, anxious for a trade.

"Never mind about payin' for your dinner!" he said to Fred magnanimously as they parted at the door. "And now," thought Enos, "if I can git a good rousin' price for the dinners and the beddin', why, I sha'n't make sich a very bad thing on't, after all. I'll stick the cap'n on a big price, or my name ain't Crumlett!"

Already the captain was producing his pocket-book.

"Well, friend," said he, "about what do you think I ought to pay you? Remember that you're a good patriot, and I'll let you make your own terms."

“Wal, — Confed’rate currency so, — I only want to live, ye know: every man must live.”

“I don’t know about that,” said the captain dryly.

“Wal,” Enos added, too intent on his gains to take the significance of the retort, “say about — dinners four dollars apiece — call it fifty dollars for all; thirty dollars for the horses, that’s eighty; then there’s the blankets and comf’ters, — say seventy dollars for them; total, hundred and fifty dollars. Guess that’ll be about right, won’t it, cap’n?”

“Certainly, if you say so,” replied the captain with a smile. “The sum is rather larger, however, than I expected, and I shall not be able to pay cash to-day.”

“Wal, then,” said Enos, who was not surprised to have his bill disputed, “what can ye pay?”

“I will give you a certificate of indebtedness, to be paid at the convenience of Government, on proof of your loyalty.” And the captain, making out the paper, shoved it across the table to the thunderstruck Mr. Crumlett.

“Now see here, cap’n!” — it was some seconds before Enos could speak, he was so choked with discontent — “I can’t do nothin’ with this ’ere stiffkit!”

“It is the best I can do for you.” And the captain, rising abruptly, left the house, striding slouchingly in his pistol-garnished boots.

Pomp went out to assist the men in getting up their horses ; so that Bodson alone was left with Enos.

“ I’ll give ye a thousand dollars for that nigger, Georgia currency. I’ll go over to Nolensville and raise the money, and come back before night, and take the nigger.”

“ Say nothin’ to nobody, and it’s a bargain ! ”

“ All right ! ” and Bodson went for his horse. “ This extry hoss of mine,” said he significantly to Mr. Crumlett, who followed him, — it was the same animal upon whose back Pomp had been bound — “ I’ll leave with you till along towards night, when I call to settle my bill. I shall want to take him away then,” he added, with a gloating look at Pomp.

There was now but one difficulty remaining to be overcome : the negro must be managed. But Enos was a man of inventive genius, and he never doubted his ability to do that. He took ample time to consider the matter ; Pomp meanwhile refreshing himself after past fatigues, and preparing for future action, by sleeping in the barn.

“ Hillo, hillo, Bob ! ” said Enos, coming to wake him.

“ Yes, massa ! ” said Pomp, sitting up on the straw, and winking at Mr. Crumlett.

“ Bob, my boy,” said Enos with a great show of sincerity, “ I been thinkin’ about your case ; and I can’t see the way clear to keep you here much longer.”

“Whar sh’ll I go?” Pomp asked with a blank expression.

“I been tryin’ to fix things for ye; and I guess I’ve got ’em about in shape. Do ye know that cap’n got his eye on you? They mean to rob me of every thing I have; and I shouldn’t wonder, if, this very night, you was sent to work on the fortifications. Then there’s another danger, — them dogs. I don’t much expect they’ll be here before to-morrer mornin’; and I could see Bodson didn’t much expect they would, neither: but then they may. ’Twould be uncomf’table for both on us to have ’em track you here.”

“Yes, sar.” Pomp scratched his head. “Now I do jes’ what you say, massa.”

“That’s right; that’s the way to ta’! My plan’s this: Bodson wants to hire you for a few days, and he engages to keep you out o’ the clutches of Gov’m^t. He wants you to go to Chapel Hill to take care of some hosses for a friend of his that he’s interested with, furnishin’ hosses for Gov’m^t. He’ll use you well, and bring you back when I want you. You’ll be as safe with him as with anybody: only be careful he don’t find out you’re the man he kidnapped.”

“Tank ye, massa: s’pose ye know best,” said Pomp.

“Wal, then, you can go to sleep agin; and, when you’re wanted, I’ll let ye know.” And Enos withdrew, delighted

with his apparent success; while Pomp stretched himself again upon the straw, and slept again.

At about sundown, Bodson returned.

"I've seen Carter," he said. "He couldn't get the dogs. That's his business: the nigger's his loss, and I've no more to do with it. Whar's the boy I bargained for?"

"In the barn," said Enos. "I've talked with him, and he ain't very willin' to go."

"That don't make no difference: they never be!" and Bodson laughed. "I've got some handcuffs to put on to him, if necessary."

"On the hull," said Enos, "I guess he'd better not know he's sold. I've told him you'll hire him, and take him to Chapel Hill to look after hosses; and he 'peared to like that. It'll be easier and pleasanter all around to let it go that way."

"Very good," said Bodson. "I ain't partic'lar."

"By the way," observed Enos, "I come by that nigger a kind of a roundabout way. I don't want you to inquire into't too close; but, as you're buyin' him, I thought I'd mention it."

"What! can't you give me a good claim to him?"

"Wal, good enough to answer your purpose. There ain't nobody that's got a better claim to him than I have; and I'll make that over to ye clear."

“Look here!” said Bodson seriously; “tell me about that!”

“Agree not to ax no questions that ’twouldn’t be agreeable for me to answer, and I’ll give ye the bare facts. You won’t approve,” said Enos with a preternaturally honest face, “and I don’t approve. I wouldn’t kidnap a nigger, and you wouldn’t, of course.”

“What do ye mean?” cried Bodson.

“But if a nigger should fall into your hands after he’s kidnaped, that would be diff’rent,” said Mr. Crumlett. “Now, I suspect, — for I don’t know, I don’t know,” emphatically, — “but I suspect Bob was ketched somewhere in the Union lines, and smuggled through by some of our boys. *I* hadn’t nothin’ to do with’t, though: *I* come by him honestly. Sich things do happen, I’m told.” And the upright Enos scraped his nails.

“How long ago was this?”

“That I don’t know: fact, I never knew the partic’lars I’ve had him now — wal, it’s conside’ble less’n a year.”

“Crumlett,” said Bodson with emotion, “you’re an honestest man than I thought, if ye be Yankee-born. You might have sold me the nigger, and said nothin’ of all that. But honor in trade: that’s my motto.”

“Of course, of course!” said Enos sympathetically.

“ Now, I’ll tell ye what I’ll do with ye. I can’t give ye a thousand down, considering your claim ain’t no better ; but I’ll give ye five hundred, and ask no questions, and run my own risks. Then, if it turns out all right, and I make a good speculation, I’ll give you t’other five hundred in six months.”

“ Couldn’t possibly,” said Enos. “ But I’ll tell ye what I will do. Give me eight hundred down ; and, as you say, ask no questions, and run your own risks : sign a paper to that effect, and he is yourn.”

To this proposition Bodson at length consented : the paper was drawn up and signed, and the money paid.

Pomp, in the mean time, brought the horses to the door.

“ Wal, Bob,” said Enos, with difficulty concealing his delight under an honest, sober aspect, “ ye goin’ with this man ? Jes’ for a few days, ye know.”

“ I spec’ I do as you say, massa,” said Pomp.

“ Wal,” said Bodson, “ tie the horses’ heads together, and jump on to that one.” Pomp obeyed. His horse had no bridle, and his halter was fastened to that of Bodson’s horse. “ Good-day, Mr. Crumlett ! Whenever you want your man back again, you’ve only to let me know.”

“ All right. Good-evenin’ ! Good-by, Bob ! Be a good boy, Bob, and don’t forgit. — The greatest spec’lation,

Tildy!" exclaimed Enos, unable longer to conceal his joy, but laughing excitedly as he watched the horses trotting briskly away with their riders, "the all-firdest cutest thing ever I done in all my born days!" And again he counted his money, and read over the paper, by signing which Bodson had cut himself off from all redress.

XVI.

WHAT BECAME OF FRED.

MEANWHILE Fred, placed upon a horse, and guarded by a mounted rifleman, the sight of whose carbine he particularly disliked, was conducted over the cross-road towards the Murfreesborough pike.

“Where are we going?” he inquired of his escort.

“To Stewartsborough,” replied the man.

“What are we going to Stewartsborough for?”

“Enlist: you are a recruit; didn’t you know it?”

“Yes,” said Fred; “but I’d rather choose my own time and place for enlisting.”

“Can’t help it. We’re bound for Stewartsborough: that’s the captain’s orders.”

“And there’s no way I can get off?”

“Not as I know on,” said the man sullenly.

“Not if I give you money?”

“How much money have ye got?”

"Four dollars, in green-backs," replied Fred with a gleam of hope.

"That all?"

"I have thirty cents in fractional currency."

"Give me the four dollars and thirty cents."

"And you will let me go?"

"I'll do what I can for ye."

Encouraged by this promise, Fred gave the man his money; and the man, glancing at it with satisfaction, put it into his pocket.

"Now where will you take me?" asked Fred.

"Same place," replied the guard stolidly.

"To Stewartsborough?"

"Precisely."

"What shall I do there?"

"Enlist."

"Then you don't mean to let me go?" Fred demanded indignantly.

"Nary a bit of it."

"Then what did you take my money for?"

"To prevent your offering it to the next man, who would take it, as I do, and might let you go, as I don't."

Fred, vexed as he was, could not help smiling — though rather bitterly — at the fellow's dry humor. The prospect

before him was discouraging in the extreme. They were travelling faster and faster in the direction in which he did not wish to go. Reaching the Murfreesborough pike, they continued their course towards the south-east amid clouds of dust raised by army wagons and troops passing to the front. Of course, any attempt to escape, under the circumstances, would have proved futile, if not fatal.

Only once, and only for an instant, Fred saw a ray of hope. It shone upon him through a dusty cloud that enveloped a sutler's wagon, on the other side of which rode a horseman at a rapid trot. That horseman was Daniels. Whether a spy or not, whether an enemy or a friend to the Union cause, he appeared to Fred, for the moment, only as the disinterested stranger who had rescued him once from rebel hands, and might rescue him again. He lifted his hand to attract his attention, and was about to call to him; when he remembered that already this man had run a great risk on his account, and that it might prove his ruin to claim his acquaintance now. He shrank from an act of such ingratitude; and Daniels, who was riding in the opposite direction, evidently on urgent business, failed to recognize him, if he noticed him at all, through the thick dust-cloud.

"Do you know that man?" asked the guard.

"I thought I knew him at first," said Fred. "Who is he?"

“He’s the man that shot a young fellow he was guarding yesterday morning, — one of the prisoners we gobbled up; just as I shall serve you, if you go to playing me any tricks.”

“Did he actually shoot a prisoner?”

“So he says; though some of our boys doubted it. The fellow tried to get away from him, and he stopped him with a bullet. It must have been somehow so, or else he let his prisoner get away, and was ashamed to own it.”

You may be sure that Fred listened with peculiar interest to this story; and he was now more than ever glad that he had not spoken to Daniels when they met. “He may be going now to look for me in the woods, and help me get away!” thought he. “I wish he had seen me! But, if I had called, I might have betrayed myself and him too.”

Regrets were useless; forebodings of evil in store for him at Stewartsborough were equally useless. To Stewartsborough he must go; and there was nothing now for him to do but to trust blindly in Providence to guide him through perils which he could not even foresee. Enlist? “I’ll die,” thought he, “before I ever take the oath of allegiance to Jeff’s government!”

“There’s your quarters, over yonder,” said his guard, pointing out an infantry camp on the outskirts of the village.

Riding up to the line of sentinels, he made known his busi-

ness, and was conducted, with his unwilling recruit, into the presence of the officer of the day.

“He’s too light for our service,” said he : “so the captain sends him as a present to you.”

“Your captain is very kind,” replied the officer ; “but our regiment is full.”

Fred’s heart gave a bound of hope.

“That’s a pity,” said his guard ; “for he’s very anxious to enlist.”

“So very anxious,” interposed Fred, assuming an air of gayety, “that if you’ll allow me to choose my own regiment, and have my own way, it will not be long before I have a musket on my shoulder.” Indeed, he most devoutly wished that he was in the ranks of his “own regiment” at that very moment.

The officer to whom he had been brought seemed inclined to regard him favorably ; but the man who had brought him whispered in his ear something which effected a change in his manner at once.

“I’ll take care of him. We have orders to send all such cases to the conscript camp at Murfreesborough. Tried to bribe you to let him go? Well, we’ll fix him.”

So much Fred overheard the officer saying : and he knew that all he had accomplished by offering his guard money was

to lose it in the first place ; and, in the second place, to secure for himself stricter treatment here in the rebel camp than he might otherwise have received.

In fact, he was immediately taken to the guard-tent, and confined. Even if he had been allowed the freedom of the camp-ground, escape would have been extremely difficult ; but, under present circumstances, it was impossible. There were two or three prisoners with him in the tent : their suppers were soon brought in ; and instead of losing heart, and repining at his misfortune, he cultivated a cheerful aspect, made acquaintance with his chance companions, and ate his supper with them. Then, when night came, he lay down upon the ground, and thought of his mother and of the morrow, and of Him whose power is over all things, until he fell asleep.

XVII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO POMP AND OTHERS.

RISKLY along the cross-road, towards the turnpike, rode Bodson and his new man. The kidnapper was scarcely less pleased with his bargain than Enos himself.

“For the nigger,” he reasoned, “is Carter’s loss. This one is equally as good, and I sha’n’t be obliged to share the profits on him with any one. Just as lieves have a kidnapped nigger as any other; and I’m afraid I sha’n’t be as honest with the man I sell him to as Crumlett was with me. What are ye grinning at, Bob?”

“Massa,” said the fictitious Bob, “I know sumfin’!—sumfin’ you’d be glad to know too!”

“Wal, what is it?”

“’Bout dat darky.”

“What darky, you rascal?”

“De one you lost to-day.”

“ You know about him ? ”

“ I know sumfin' ! You tell me one t'ing, and I tell you eber' t'ing.”

“ What ! You try to drive a bargain with your master ? ” cried Bodson angrily, stopping the horses.

“ Yes, massa ! ” said Pomp humbly, but firmly. “ One t'ing I wants to know. Have you bought me, massa ? ”

“ Yes, you black villain ! Now tell me what you know about that nigger, or I'll stop and lick ye on the spot.”

“ Did Massa Crumlett sell me ? ”

“ I tell you, yes, — for eight hundred dollars, cash : I paid him the money.”

“ Dat's all,” said Pomp. “ On'y wanted to know. Now you go wid me, and I show you whar dat darky was hid.”

“ Is he there now ? ” demanded Bodson earnestly.

“ He won't be fur from de spot. I'll show him to you, massa.”

“ Bob ! ” cried Bodson with excitement, “ if you're telling me the truth, and if we ketch the nigger, I'll do the handsome thing by you, — see if I don't ! But by ” — he swore a dreadful oath, and showed the handle of his bowie-knife, — “ if you're fooling me, it'll be as much as your skin is worth ! ”

"I know, massa," said Pomp, so quietly, yet decidedly, that Bodson was convinced of his sincerity.

They reached the turnpike ; then, instead of turning southward, Bodson, by Pomp's direction, reined the horses into the woods, and approached the thicket in which Pomp and Fred had been last concealed.

"Dis de place, massa," said Pomp.

Bodson, peering eagerly into the bushes, halted the horses, and dismounted.

"Aight!" he commanded. "Come with me, and show me."

"Dis way, massa. Here's de proof." And, creeping a short distance into the thicket, he withdrew again, dragging something with him. "You know dat, massa?"

Bodson knew it: 'twas the rope wherewith Pomp had been bound.

"But whar — whar is the nigger?" cried Bodson.

No longer suspicious of Pomp's fidelity, but thrown entirely off his guard, he stooped to peer into the deep twilight gloom of the thicket, hoping to discover his stray negro there. Then, with the suddenness of a lightning's flash, a change came over Pomp. The humble, obedient slave disappeared ; and in his place stood the untamable, terrible African.

“I am the nigger!” he said in a voice as changed as his face, — a voice which smote the soul of Bodson like a thunder clap.

Pomp waited for him to turn: for he would not smite even his foe, as he had ~~been smitten~~ by him, from behind. But as Bodson started ~~back~~, thrusting his hand into his bosom for his knife and confronting him, Pomp sent out from the shoulder one light, swift, straight blow with his fist, which felled him like an ox struck by the butcher’s sledge. Then, in an instant, the kidnapper was disarmed. “Scream, and you are a dead man! But, in a minute, you may scream as loud as you please. Do you remember this thing?” Pomp drew from his pocket the identical gag which had been thrust into his own mouth the night before. As Bodson had done unto him, so now he did unto Bodson. Then, from the pocket of the kidnapper, he took the handcuffs which were to have been placed upon his own wrists in case of necessity, and fastened them on the kidnapper’s. Then, having bound his feet, he threw him upon the same horse that had carried him, and lashed him there with many a twist and turn of the rope inextricable. And all the while poor Bodson, in his terror and pain, could only writhe, and utter groans stifled by the ruthless gag.

“Now good-by, my honored friend! I have to pay a

visit to Crumlett: then you'll see me again, if it isn't too dark by that time."

Leaving the horses tied, Pomp dashed across the field, and bounded in upon Enos in his kitchen before that self-complacent speculator had done chuckling over his trade.

"What's to pay?" ejaculated Enos, springing to his feet at the sight of the threatening black face.

"Eight hundred dollars!" said Pomp, stern and menacing.

"Why, Bob!" Enos chattered with fright: "what do you mean?"

"I mean, I have been sold. The money has been paid to you. It belongs to me. I have settled with the owner of this knife;" showing Bodson's weapon, at which Matilda and the children uttered screams. "Now I have come to settle with you."

"To kill me!" gasped Enos, white with mortal fear.

"Instantly!" said Pomp in a terrible voice, "unless you give me what is mine!"

"The money, the money!—here it is!" said Enos, showing it on the table, where he had been counting it for the twentieth time. Much as he loved lucre, he loved life more; and he knew the black visage meant death to him, if he d'd not obey.

“One thing more,” said Pomp, pocketing his price with a grim smile. “You forget that you sent me off without my supper.”

“The soldiers et every thing!” said Enos, his hair still bristling erect on his head.

“There are cheeses left,” said Pomp. “Bring me one.”

One was brought; by whom, not one of the family could ever tell: for Enos declared afterwards that he did not bring it; and Matilda was stuck up in a corner of the room, dumb and motionless with fright; and the cheese was too large for the children to lift from the shelf. But all remembered seeing the black man carve out a liberal wedge of it with two strokes of his horrid knife; and after he was gone, the visible proof remaining, that his visit was not a hideous dream, was the cut cheese on the table.

With the price of his bone and muscle in his pocket, together with his untasted supper of cheese, Pomp ran back to the woods as swiftly as he came; found Bodson bound as he had left him; then unfastened the horses, mounted the kidnapper’s, and, leading the other, drove away northward through the woods.

“O Enos, Enos!” moaned Matilda, wringing her hands.
“Did he take all the money?”

Enos was speechless. He paced the floor wildly; then

threw himself upon a chair, with smothered groans, and exclamations of rage ground fine between his teeth. The hair of his head, which had of late been standing erect with fear, he now began to pluck out despairingly by the roots.

“What made you let him?” cried Matilda. “You didn’t even say no! If he’d asked for your soul, I do believe you’d have given it up to him, you was so scaret!”

“Thunder and lightning!” burst forth Enos, “wasn’t you scaret? You aggravate me to death with your talk! Ain’t it enough to be robbed and murdered, without havin’ to be blamed for it afterwards?”

“You ain’t murdered yet!”

“Nobody knows when I shall be, if I ain’t! Don’t you wish I was? I do! I’ve lived long enough! Sigh a day’s work! Oh!”

“To stand still, with your hands folded, I may say, and have your money took from you in that way!” said Matilda. “I’d have done *something*. I’d have *said* something at least. I’d have thought of my duty to my wife and children, even if I was too mean-spirited to stand up for my own rights.”

“Duty to wife and — Jerushy mighty!” roared Enos, like a stung wild beast. “Stop the children’s noise! —

that's *your* duty. You and them keep up sich a clatter, I can't hear myself think !”

“ Do you expect you're going to be frightened out of your wits by a great black negro, and they won't cry ? Oh ! it's for men to be scaret, I see ! but women and children are expected to keep calm ! Eight hundred dollars : was it *eight hundred* ? ”

“ There, now : I never shall hear the end of that ! ” said Enos in the tone of a broken-hearted man. “ You'll fling it in my face to the end of time ! I may as well give up all idea of having any more comfort in my own house, first as last.”

“ Well,” retorted Matilda tartly, “ if you can have any more comfort out of it, you're welcome ! ”

“ By George, I will ! I may as well leave this country now as any time. It's nothin' bnt rob, rob, rob, as long as I stay here. I'd ruther live a beggar in the North, than have property here ; and, if I can git there, you're welcome to what's left behind. No doubt you can take care of things enough sight better'n I do ! ” And Enos, putting on his hat, pitched recklessly over his eyes, and buttoning his coat, strode to the door.

Matilda simpered and sneered ; seeming to say, “ Go, if you want to ; but I know well enough you won't ! ” Mr

Crumlett, a little disappointed that she did not appear alarmed, gave her an angry "Good-by!" and put one foot across the threshold. The door was open, and every thing seemed to favor his desperate resolve. But all at once he stopped, and drew back the foot he had advanced, recoiling into the house with a look of terror.

Matilda was not long in doubt as to the occasion of this sudden change of front. As Enos retreated, a dark figure, that had crept noiselessly to the door, followed him in. Was it Pomp, returned to finish the work he seemed to have left half done? or some spy, who had overheard Mr. Crumlett's table-talk? The figure was that of a man, black as any negro, but of inferior stature to Pomp, and with a still fiercer intensity in his aspect, which betokened rather the assassin than the spy.

"Mr. Crumlett," said he in a voice of command rather than entreaty, "give me something to eat."

"Gracious goodness!" said Enos with increasing amazement. "Ellsmer! is it you?"

The conscript — for it was he — smiled grimly as the fire-light shone upon his blackened face.

"It's either me or my ghost!" he answered.

"But I see you in the house, burnt up!"

"The house burnt; but I'm alive to do some mischief yet. Give me something: I'm starved."

As he reached forth to grasp the cheese, Enos could see that not his face only, but also his hands and garments, were covered as with soot.

“You was hid in the chimney!”

“No, I wasn’t!” with a mischievous smile. “I got this black off from the timbers. Don’t ye tell no one I’m alive. I can’t starve. This will do for to-night. I’ll call again when I want more.”

With these words, the conscript, having cut off a section of the cheese to match that which Pomp had carried away, glided with it from the house as silently as he had come in.

XVIII.

THE KIDNAPPER'S PASS.

OMP was by this time in the midst of the deep woods ; and it was night. Events had thus far seemed to shape themselves, and he had merely taken advantage of them ; but now it appeared necessary to form some decisive plan, and act upon it at once.

Finding himself in a dark hollow, surrounded by a scattered undergrowth, he halted, and tied the horses to a sapling. He then reconnoitred the position to satisfy himself that he was not discovered. This done, he returned to the horses and the bound man.

“You’re a smoker,” he observed in a friendly tone to the kidnapper ; “and I suspect you have matches,” — feeling in Bodson’s pockets. “Ah, here they are ! Very thoughtful in you, certainly ! Now let’s see what papers you have, and what use we can make of them.”

Having possessed himself of the kidnapper’s pocket-book, he proceeded deliberately to examine its contents. He

scraped together some dry leaves, touched a lighted match to them, and laid on a handful of broken twigs. By the flame thus kindled, he looked over Bodson's private papers, until — as Bodson, with uprolled eyes, discovered by the smile of triumph which seemed to illumine his sable countenance more brightly than did the firelight — he had found the particular document he was in search of. It was a pass, permitting the bearer, with his servant, to go and come through the Confederate lines.

“I thought you had such a pass,” said Pomp; “for you couldn't carry on your business very well without it. I'll be your servant, for once; and, if we don't get through the lines on the strength of this pass, I'll give you leave to discharge me. But you can't ride in that shape without attracting too much attention. It's only servants that can be treated in that way, and have it seem all right. Come, you shall ride like a gentleman.” He unbound the kidnapper, and placed him in a sitting posture in the saddle, with the handcuffs still on his wrists, and the gag in his mouth. “Now behave yourself, and all will be well; but attempt to escape, or to communicate with any person we meet, by signs or in any way, and I drop this knife-blade into your back several inches. That's the main thing for you to understand: I'll manage the rest.”

Pomp was then about to remove the gag; but Bodson's face wore such an expression of desperation and ferocity, that he resolved not to run the risk.

"I think we'll keep that in a little while, so that you can enjoy the comfort of it! It mustn't be seen, though. Your handkerchief will just come in play!"

He bound the handkerchief around the kidnapper's jaws, tying it behind. Then he placed his hat on his head in a manner disguising well his eyes. Lastly he removed the handcuffs.

"You see I give you much more liberty than you gave me. If you take advantage of it, so much the worse for yourself. Now for a start."

Remounting, with the horses' heads tied together, he reined boldly out of the woods, and struck the turnpike. He then turned northward, and kept on at a lively trot. It was a moonlight evening; and gusts of wind, blowing among the trees, made, to the kidnapper's ear, a dreary accompaniment to the clatter of hoofs over the lonely road.

Horsemen, and men in wagons or on foot, were met here and there; but nobody paid much attention to the solitary gentleman, with his face tied up, riding with his servant. Fields were passed, white with rebel encampments; and Bodson had the satisfaction of seeing officers and men on guard

within call, without the power of making known his situation to them by a word.

At length, a mounted patrol was met, and the travellers were challenged. Pomp halted the horses, and said in Bodson's ear, —

“ One movement now to betray me, and you get this iron into you ! ”

Prepared to accomplish his threat, and at the same time to wheel, and fly for his life, if necessary, he awaited the scrutiny of the patrol.

“ My master is Richard Bodson,” said he, showing the pass. “ He has been wounded in the jaw by an accidental discharge of a gunshot. I am taking him to his brother-in-law, Mr. Atkinson ; ” naming the venerable old secessionist, called the “ deacon,” through whose agency he had been kidnapped.

“ What Atkinson ? ” demanded one of the men ; while another struck a light, and held it for a third to examine the pass.

Pomp could answer any questions that might be asked concerning that aged reprobate ; and he now made good use of the knowledge he had picked up during his brief stay on his premises.

“ I know him,” said one of the men. “ If this is his brother-in-law, I suppose it's all right.”

"The pass is all right," said another, returning it to Pomp.

"Will the pickets let us pass?" asked Pomp.

"Not without the countersign. You ought to have got that at the camp back here."

"My master, gentlemen," Pomp explained, "ain't in a condition to do business 'cording to rule. He'll be much obliged to you if you'll give us the countersign."

"Couldn't do that. But I'll tell ye what you can do," said one of the men. "Ride on till you're challenged by the guard on the pike; show your pass then, and tell your story; and perhaps the officer will pass you through the pickets."

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Pomp, riding on.

Accustomed as they were to the sight of wounds and wounded men, the patrol had merely glanced at Bodson's bandaged face. The negro, greatly encouraged by the success of this experiment thus far, pushed on until challenged by the outpost guarding the turnpike. There, as he had been advised to do, he told his story, and saw his pass examined by the light of a lantern. The result was favorable; and a sergeant was sent forward to pass him and his charge through the line of sentinels.

The order was given, and Pomp was thanking the sergeant

for his trouble, when Bodson, who had all along watched in vain for an opportunity to make known his condition, without drawing down upon himself the negro's instant vengeance, seeing now that his last chance had come, got the better of his fears, and attempted to leap from the horse. At the first motion, however, Pomp's hand was upon his neck, holding him with a giant's grip in his seat.

"Halt!" shouted the sergeant, perceiving at once that all was not right, and revoking his order to the sentinels.

Pomp had just passed them; and he had no thought of risking all he had gained by obeying the command.

"Halt!" repeated the sentinels; and he heard the click of gun-locks.

Instead of halting, he struck with his heels the horse he rode, and, with the toe of his boot, the flank of Bodson's horse, cheering them into a sudden gallop by the sound of his voice, and plunged into the darkness beyond; while the bullets of the pickets whistled over his head.

Fortunately he encountered no rebel videttes outside of the line; and, in less than a quarter of an hour, he was challenged by the Federal picket-guard. He gave himself up to a sentinel, who conducted him to the office of the guard, who in turn, at his earnest request, forwarded him with his prisoner to the office of the army police at Nashville.

XIX.

A DANGEROUS LEAP.

HE next morning, Fred was released from confinement in the guard-tent, and allowed the liberty of a soldier in camp. He walked about, and amused himself by observing how the sentinels were posted, and imagining ways of escape. "If I am not put under guard again at night," thought he, "I shall either get out of this camp, or get shot, very sure!"

He was destined to pass the guard sooner than he supposed; not, however, in the manner he anticipated, or precisely as he would have wished. He was summoned after breakfast to accompany a corporal who was going to Murfreesborough with three invalid soldiers. These were to be placed in the Murfreesborough hospital, while Fred was to be delivered at the conscript camp.

The little party was conveyed in a wagon to a station on the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, and then placed on board a Government train from Lavergne, almost before Fred

had time to look about him ; and, a minute later, he was on his way to Murfreesborough, whirled away at thunder-speed into the very heart of the Confederacy.

The corporal left the sick soldiers to look out for themselves, and complimented Fred with the principal share of his attention. He sat on the same seat with him in the car ; and would not, under any pretext, allow him to leave it.

“ I wish to speak to the conductor,” said Fred ; thinking that if he could but reach the platform, where the conductor then was, he might avail himself of the only chance of escape which had yet occurred, or which probably would occur before he reached the dreaded conscript camp. It would be at the risk of life and limb ; but he was resolved. Swiftly as the train was flying past rocks and woods, he would jump off !

“ If the corporal will jump after me, he is welcome ! ” thought he.

But the corporal had no wish either to take a leap himself, or to permit his charge to try the experiment.

“ Sit still ! ” he said gruffly ; and, as he had Fred between him and the window, it was easy for him to enforce obedience. “ The conductor will be this way in a minute.”

“ No chance ! ” thought Fred, his heart sinking as he saw the conductor coming through the train.

The corporal had a pass for himself, the three invalids, and Fred. He showed it, and pointed out his men; saying at the same time to Fred, "Now you can ask any questions you want."

"I just wanted to inquire," said Fred (since it was necessary to say something), "how far it is to Murfreesborough."

"We shall be there in about fifteen minutes," said the conductor, glancing at his watch.

"Then how far is it to the station beyond?"

"To Christiana, the first regular station, ten miles."

"Thank you," said Fred; and the conductor passed on.

The brief fifteen minutes soon elapsed. The train slackened speed; the brakemen screwed up the brakes. "Murfreesborough!" was shouted in at the doors. The corporal laid hold of his musket; and Fred's heart swelled anxiously as he thought of the conscript camp, now so near at hand.

Arrived at the stopping-place, the corporal kept close by his side as he conducted him from the platform of the car to the platform of the station. There Fred found a guard placed to prevent all persons without a pass from taking or leaving the train.

"Keep this boy till I call for him," said the corporal to one of the guard. "I've got to send these sick men to the hospital; then I'll come and take him."

“All right,” said the sentinel.

The corporal walked off with his men, leaving Fred, unfortunately, inside the guard line.

“If I was only outside now,” thought he, “I’d run for it!” He attempted to pass; but instantly down came a bayonet to the level of his waist.

“Have you a pass?”

“The corporal has my pass.”

“Wait, then, till he comes back.”

There was no other way: the platform was so guarded, that he could not leave it except by going back into the cars; neither could he escape from them on the other side. All this time, he saw soldiers and citizens coming aboard the train; although a few who attempted to do so, unprovided with passes, were sent back by the guard. The signal-bell was ringing.

“The train will be off again in a minute!” Fred thought, looking anxiously for the return of his corporal.

Rapid thoughts passed through his excited mind. True, the train was headed in the opposite direction from that in which he ardently wished to be travelling; but—

“All aboard!” cried the conductor, waving his hand at the engineer.

It was a time for quick, decisive action. Should Fred re-

main tamely where he stood, waiting for the corporal to return, and hurry him off to that place of all places where he most dreaded to go, — the conscript camp? Better, penniless and friendless as he was, an escaped prisoner and an enemy, rush into obscurity in the midst of the enemy's country, and trust to Providence for safety and sustenance, than be forced into the rebel ranks.

The engine panted and wheezed; the train started with irregular motion and clanking sound; and the corporal, having disposed of his invalids, came hurrying back in search of Fred. But Fred was not to be seen.

“Where's that boy?” he demanded of the guard.

“Don't know.”

“I told you to keep him!”

“We did. He hasn't passed out: all we had to do was to see to that. He was here a minute ago.”

“Then he's on board the train!” exclaimed the corporal, exasperated; for already the train was steaming away in the distance.

“Outwitted!” and the guard laughed at the unlucky subaltern.

“If the train had been going t'other way, I should have looked out for that! But he's from the North; wanted to get back to Nashville; and I'd as soon have thought of his

going to the moon as further south. But I know what I can do. The train don't stop till it gets to Christiana; and I can telegraph, and have him nabbed there!"

So saying, the corporal hurried away to the telegraph office; while Fred, from the car window, watched the receding suburbs of the rebel town, and congratulated himself that he was out of it.

But were his troubles ended? On the contrary, he felt that they were but just begun. Still he congratulated himself; for even had he passed the guard at the platform, and escaped into the streets of the closely guarded city, there he would have been still a prisoner, with far less chance of escape than he had now.

He saw the conductor coming through the train, demanding passes and tickets. Fred had no ticket, and no money to buy one; neither had he a pass. But he had one thing which often serves in the place of others, and is especially useful to an escaped prisoner in an enemy's country, — a shrewd and self-possessed mind.

"Ticket, pass!" said the conductor, extending his inexorable hand.

"The corporal has my pass," said Fred.

"What corporal?"

"The same who came down with me to Murfreesborough

We had some sick soldiers with us: don't you remember?"

"Are you the young fellow that asked me some questions?"

"Yes," said Fred, secretly rejoiced that he had thus called the conductor's attention, and caused himself to be remembered.

"Well, where is your corporal?"

"He is behind," — and Fred pointed towards the rear of the train.

"All right," said the conductor, passing on.

He passed through to the end of the train without finding the subaltern, who was farther behind than that, a great deal.

"Your corporal isn't aboard," said he, returning to Fred.

"Isn't!" exclaimed Fred in great surprise. "Where is he?"

"You ought to know."

"I! He told me to stay with the train while he went to take care of the sick men! He said that he would come back to me; and I saw him coming back just as we started."

"Did you see him come aboard?"

"No: but he might have jumped on to the last car; and I don't see why he didn't." And Fred appeared hugely disappointed. "He's got my pass, and I don't know what I shall do!"

“ You can go back to Murfreesborough.”

“ Yes, so I can ! ” But Fred had no wish to return to Murfreesborough, and become inextricably entrapped within its network of picket-guards, even if not caught at once by the corporal.

The conductor passed on, leaving him to his reflections. “ He’ll certainly send me back to Murfreesborough by the first train,” he thought. “ He said it was ten miles to Christiana. I don’t want to go to Christiana. If the station is guarded there too, there’ll be no chance for a fellow. Besides, a telegraphic despatch may be sent along to head me off.”

As a last resort, he determined to jump from the train ; but it was going at full speed, and he was in no haste to try the dangerous experiment. He wished some cattle would get on the track ; but then he reflected that stray cattle, in such close proximity to the rebel army, must be very scarce. He almost hoped there would be a railroad accident ; but railroad accidents do not happen every day. All this time, the cars were running through a picturesque region, which, troubled as his thoughts were, he could not but admire.

At length, he believed he must be within two or three miles of Christiana. There was now no surly guard to keep him in his seat. The conductor was out of sight. The brakemen did not consider it their business to prevent passengers

from breaking their necks. Fred walked at a careless gait through the car, and stood upon the platform. The train was still running at its usual speed, and trees, bushes, rocks, and stumps were flitting by. But, seeing no evidence of slackening up before the stopping-place was reached, he resolved to risk a leap.

He considered well what he was about to do, however, and used every possible precaution. He got down on the platform-step, and pretended to be looking ahead. He was, in fact, searching for a smooth spot. Then suddenly he threw himself clear of the car. He had kept his face turned in the direction it was going, in order to save himself from a violent fall by running a few steps as he struck the ground, and, to counteract the motion of the train, he gave a spring backwards. For a second, he was suspended in the air; then the train shot past him as he lay sprawling by the track.

XX.

*FRED MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH
A LASSO.*



HE boy was on his feet again in an instant. He did not stop to consider whether he was hurt, or even to see if he was observed from the train, but ran straight for a woody hill.

Reaching its shelter, he paused to take breath, and collect his senses, which had been somewhat scattered by the shock of his fall.

“I dare not stay here,” he thought; “and it won’t be safe to follow the railroad back again. I’ll dive deep into the country, where nobody’ll think of looking for me. To go north, I’ll start west, — make a flank movement. I’ve hurt my foot a little; but no matter!”

He passed over the hill, and came to a dusty turnpike. “This must be the Murfreesborough pike,” he thought: “I’ll cross it.” He did so, without being accosted by any one, and entered the woods still farther west.

Through woods, over hills, and across fields, in a beautiful undulating country, avoiding farm-houses and the sight of men, he travelled for two hours or more. At length, from a commanding elevation, he discovered the white line of another thoroughfare running north and south. "That must be the Shelbyville pike," he reasoned. "I'd better strike it, and follow it back to Nolensville. That can't be more than twenty miles from here. I can sleep in the woods to-night, and reach Crumlett's to-morrow."

He had no wish to pay Enos a visit, except for the purpose of getting something to eat, and learning what had become of Pomp. He did not object to sleeping in the woods; but starvation was not so pleasant. Already he began to experience the inconveniences of hunger. If he had had money, he would have gone boldly to a farm-house, and asked for refreshment. Notwithstanding all that he had heard said of Southern hospitality, he was aware that Southern farmers were in the habit of receiving pay from strangers who sat at their tables; and he was unwilling to beg so much as a crust. There's nothing so suspicious as poverty; and, unless he could first find out the residence of a Union man, he felt that it would be unsafe to make his necessities known.

A long journey, therefore, with weariness and starvation,

appeared before him; to say nothing of all the dangers that must be encountered. "Never mind," he said stoutly to himself: "I can stand it!" One thing, however, troubled him, — his ankle. He knew he had sprained it in jumping from the train. He had scarcely observed the pain at first; but it increased alarmingly as he walked.

He reached the turnpike; but had scarcely commenced travelling upon it, when he was refreshed by the sight of a squad of cavalry. The chance of being pressed into the rebel service, or of being arrested as an escaped prisoner, was not inviting. He could give no satisfactory account of himself, if stopped and questioned; and he did not like to resort to invention, even with an enemy. He had just time to throw himself down behind a clump of trees, when the horsemen galloped past him. Fortunately, he was not seen. But he was strongly impressed with the danger of keeping the turnpike; and he began to think that he had made a great mistake when he exchanged the hardships of the untrodden woods and hills for the smooth but unsafe highway.

He lay for some minutes behind the bushes, watching the people and teams that passed. But he felt that he had no time to lose; and, getting up, he once more set out to walk. To his dismay, he found the lameness of his ankle worse than ever. If it should increase during the hour to come

as it had during the hour past, he would be unable to walk. The thought was appalling.

He fortified his soul against the pain, however, and limped away, grimacing at every step; but soon found himself obliged to sit down again. The prospect before him was more dismal than it had yet been at any time since his capture. As long as he had the use of his limbs, he had hopes; he shrank from no hazard, from no hardship: his brain teemed with plans of escape. But the worst prison he could be put into was his own lameness. He could run from the rebels; but he could not run from a disabled foot. He thought of the weary, weary miles before him; only enemies around him; starvation in prospect; not a cent in his pockets; himself a stranger to the country; and, what was worst of all, a cripple. What should he do?

Do you wonder that he was, for a moment, discouraged? But something within him said, "Have faith; be brave; shrink from nothing: a way will yet be provided for your safety." And in his heart he resolved, "I'll do my best, and never give up till the last. I'll pick me up some crutches in the woods, and hobble. I'll live on air, water, roots, and my own spunk; and I'll go back to our lines, if I have to crawl!"

He was startled from his reflections by the sight of two per

sons, mounted, riding towards him. The savage aspect of the foremost drew his entire attention. His hair was long, his beard bushy, and his whole appearance rough and shaggy in the extreme. He wore a broad, slouched hat : he was armed with a carbine, and carried a curious coil of rope at his saddle-bow. Perceiving Fred trying to limp out of the way, he spurred towards him like a wild man on horseback, and with a swift, dexterous motion of his right hand, throwing his whole body forward to second it, he loosed the coil of rope. It shot out like a streak of untwisted lightning from the saddle ; and, what was very remarkable, a noose at the end of it fell, neatly as possible, over Fred's neck. The man was a Texan ranger, half drunk ; and he had lassoed the boy for fun.

Something far more serious than fun, however, might have been the result, if the ranger had not suddenly reined up his horse ; or if Fred had not seized hold of the rope with his hands, just as the noose was tightening.

The Texan burst into peals of laughter, and reeled in his saddle, partly with merriment, and partly with intoxication. Fred took advantage of his unsteady movements to slip the noose over his head. By this time the ranger's companion came riding up, thwacking his beast's sides with a stout stick. That beast was a mule ; and Fred, released from the

lasso, and looking up, recognized with surprise and joy the rider. It was Carl.

Carl did not, however, appear to recognize Fred.

“Vat for you throw your lash-you at him? You preak somepody’s neck vith your fooling, py and py!”

“No offence, no offence!” cried the ranger, replacing the coil at his saddle-bow. “All a joke, you understand, my friend,” he added thickly, offering to shake hands with Fred.

Fred felt an impulse to pull him from the saddle, disarm him, and take possession of his horse. But the man was not drunk enough to render this an easy undertaking: besides, the time and place were unfit.

“I’ve a broken ankle already; and you came very near giving me a broken neck!” said Fred, as good-naturedly as was possible under the circumstances.

“Boy, you’re a brick!” said the ranger, shaking his hand again with maudlin enthusiasm. “I like a chap that can take a joke! Is any thing I can do for you?”

“Nothing in the world,” replied Fred, anxious only to get rid of him.

“Look!” cried Carl, perceiving the wish, and sympathizing in it, “yonder is sport, old fellow!”

He pointed to a dog trotting along the roadside in the dis-

tance; at sight of which the Texan steadied himself once more in his saddle, and spurred towards it eagerly. Carl laughed heartily.

“He has lashed every dog we have met these last six miles! But it is queer to see you. You vas with Pomp! Vair is Pomp? And how does it come you are here?”

The Texan, tipsy as he was, lassoed the dog with great skill, and dragged him, struggling and howling, at the heels of his horse; until, fortunately for the poor quadruped, the rope slipped over his ears, and he ran away, with his tail betwixt his legs brushing the dirt. The owner of the dog jumped from his wagon, and confronted the ranger with rage and oaths, until he discovered active preparations making to lasso him next, when he discreetly returned to his wagon.

Fred, in the mean while, related briefly his adventures, and demanded, in return, how Carl had picked up so terrible a companion.

“I didn’t pick up him: he picked me up,” said Carl. “I vill tell you how. I vas riding my mule-peast like a shentleman, ven he comes shrieking after me, and lashed my mule-peast as if he vas a vild horse of the prairies.”

“With you on him?”

“I vas on him: yes. And ven I see vat vas the choke” (Carl meant to say joke), “I just sits pack, and volds my

arms, and have vun goot laugh. But the mule-peast vas not wery much pleased to pe lashed : it vas a choke he did not like. So he just settles pack on his hind-legs, and pulls vun vay, vile the horse pulls another. So I laughs more yet to see vich would peat. The horse peat, and muley vas dragged after him like a vooden plough with four feet. He wouldn't walk, and so he slid. And I kept on to say, 'Wery goot, wery goot! you give me much help!' till py and py the willed he shtops. It vas time; for he had wery nigh joked my muley to death. I say, 'Much opliged to you, sir.' He say, 'Vat for?' — 'For making my peast move for vunce in his life against his vill,' I say. 'He is a wishous peast, and it is goot for him!' Then he says to me, vat he says after to you, 'that I vas vun brick,' and shakes my hand to conwince me he is my friend. Then ve travel together: but I travel too slow for him; and he takes up the time lashing dogs, till py and py he lashoes you."

"I wish I had his horse," said Fred enviously; "for I shall soon be unable to step on my lame foot."

"I vish I vas going your vay," said Carl. "But I must go to Shelbyville first. And now I vill tell you: you shall go to Shelbyville too."

"I!" exclaimed Fred. "I am far enough in the wrong direction already!"

“ But sometimes doctors give sick men medicines to make 'em more sicker before they get vell. If you are far in the wrong vay, go a little more so, and that vill help to make you in the right vay. You shall turn peddler like me, and pass easy.”

“ But my lame foot ! ”

“ That is the wery thing : you shall ride. Get right up here behind me, and ve vill punish muley ; for he is so wicious ! If he vill not carry vun decent, he shall see how he likes to carry touble.”

Fred was very much averse to becoming thus a burden to Carl ; but Carl insisted : and, indeed, this seemed the only thing that he could do. Accordingly, he mounted behind Carl. But no sooner had he done so than the vicious nature of the animal showed how it resented such punishment, — by refusing to budge an inch with the additional load. Carl began to beat him ; and he began to kick up his heels in a manner that threatened to throw both riders together over his head. At this juncture approached the Texan. Seeing the condition of affairs, he generously proffered his assistance. Should he cast his lasso once more over the mule's neck, and drag him on towards Shelbyville with his double burden, or take Fred behind him on his own beast ?

The latter proposition was chosen by the boys ; and Fred,

mounting behind the ranger, wondering at the strange combination of circumstances which had placed him in such an odd situation, pursued his journey still farther into the heart of the Confederacy.

At Carmel they stopped to dine ; and there was a friendly strife between Carl and the Texan — who, though a “ rough ” of the roughest sort, enlisted in a bad cause, was a most generous fellow — as to who should pay the tavern-bill. Thus Fred, who but a little while before knew not where he should obtain a crust to keep him from starvation, enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing two companions, money in hand, struggling to pay for his dinner.

The ranger drank sufficient whiskey at Carmel to keep himself in a condition of tipsy merriment. His mania for throwing the lasso continued unabated ; and Fred, mounted behind him once more on the way to Shelbyville, had a fine opportunity of witnessing the practice of that art. Every dog, every stray pig, they fell in with on the journey, had a taste of the lasso. The Texan even proposed to teach the art to Fred, and swore that he should try his luck on the next pig. Before another pig was seen, however, they were stopped by the turnpike guard at Shelbyville.

The Texan showed his furlough. Carl explained that he and Fred were visiting the place on business : and they were permitted to enter the town.

Carl's first precaution was to inquire out the whereabouts of Joseph's brother. He found him — a little man with a prominent face, nearly all nose — in a little, low, dark variety store, on the main street ; and, making known his errand, was welcomed by him with eager cordiality.

Fred waited with the Texan at the door while Carl went in. "He is provided for," he thought ; "but what is to become of me?" In a little while Carl came out again, smiling, accompanied by his new friend, with whom he was conversing in German.

"I shall shtop here," he said to Fred. "But since you have got lame, and vill not be much use to me peddling, you had petter go to the tavern, and shtay."

This proposal, however, the Texan vetoed with a tremendous oath. He was going over the river to visit some friends in a regiment encamped there ; and he swore, that, if Fred would go with him, he should be treated like a brother. There was to Fred something romantic in the idea of his becoming, not only a comrade of a genial rebel, but actually a guest in the camp of a rebel regiment. He saw that Carl, whose real business it was to learn the numbers and positions of the rebel forces, favored the plan ; and he accepted it accordingly. And there the friends parted : Carl remained with the Jew ; but Fred, still riding behind the ranger, crossed Duck River, and entered the rebel encampment.

If Fred had been astonished and entertained by his Texan friend, what must have been his emotions on making the acquaintance of half a regiment of such! True, they were not all drunk; yet many of them had evidently tasted whiskey. Neither did Fred see, among them all, more than two or three lassoes. They treated him with boisterous hospitality, and in their company he soon found himself at home.

His lameness did not allow him to move about much that evening. But the next morning, provided with a crutch by his new friends, he hobbled around the camp. In the afternoon, Carl came over to visit him; and guided by their original Texan friend, who furnished them with horses borrowed of his comrades, they made the tour of the encampments on that bank of the river. An entire division of the rebel army was there, besides the rangers; and you may be sure the boys kept both eyes and ears open to all that was to be seen and heard.

The ranger, having transacted the business which had brought him to Shelbyville, was to return the next day to rejoin his company, which had been detached upon some service at the rebel front. Carl and Fred resolved to accompany him.

“I have had vonderful goot success!” Carl whispered in

his friend's ear. "I have disposed of my shtock for wery handsome profits to the Chew; and he has promised to have us passes to return, and go vair ve please; and he says the letters I prought is wery acceptable, and vill do much goot, pesides making for us friends of the rebel officers. Pesides, I have learned all about the forces on both sides of the river, and now, the sooner ve get off, the petter. I have traded my mule-peast for a horse varranted to carry touble: so ve can both ride."

The next day, accordingly, they set out on their return, and arrived late in the afternoon at a small public-house on the Murfreesborough pike, just outside of the rebel pickets. Fred had no wish to proceed further in that direction: so he remained at the tavern, while Carl and the Texan passed the guard and entered the city.

Carl had promised to return for him after transacting his business in Murfreesborough. They had but one pass for both, and that Carl carried with him. It was a dangerous mission on which Carl had gone; his object being to do at Murfreesborough what he had already done at Shelbyville: and, should any thing happen to him, what would become of his companion? Unfortunately, neither of them knew the real danger which he was destined to encounter.

It was not until the evening of the following day that Fred

began to grow really anxious. Carl had not been heard from. The next day, he still remained absent. Another morning came, and another night, but brought no tidings.

Then Fred became seriously alarmed. The little money Carl had given him was all spent. Again he was penniless ; he had no pass ; he was without a friend ; he was still lame ; and he was aware that he was surrounded by camps of the rebel army. Well might these circumstances render him sleepless and feverish ; nor would his mind have been at all set at rest had he been informed of the fact, that Carl had been arrested as a spy, and was awaiting his fate in a rebel prison.

It was not long, however, before news reached Fred of his friend's captivity. It happened in the following manner.

XXI.

A. TALK IN THE DARK.



HE boy's lameness afforded him a good excuse for keeping his wretched room at the tavern ; and he saw only a few scattering guests at the table, to which he always contrived to come late.

That evening, however, just at dusk, while he was sitting by his solitary window, holding his lame foot, wondering if it would ever get well, and if Carl would ever come back, a stranger was shown in.

" Well, my friend," said he, " it seems we're to share this little pigeon-hole together."

" You are very welcome, sir," said Fred ; " and I should be delighted to give you the whole of it, if I could."

" You are anxious to get away, then ?"

" Yes : do you come from Murfreesborough ?"

" I was there lately."

" Then," said Fred, " may be you can tell me something of what I wish to know." And he related as much as he

deemed prudent of his connection with Carl; concerning whom, in conclusion, he eagerly questioned the stranger.

"I am afraid," said the latter, seating himself on the bed, — for there was but one chair in the miserable room, — "that your fellow-peddler has got into difficulty."

"How so?" Fred asked breathlessly.

"Such a boy as you describe came into the city about the time you say he left you. He had a letter of introduction to a German engaged in smuggling contraband goods, who is tolerated by the authorities because he has really done them some service by getting letters and important information through the Union lines. Well, two days ago, he brought the boy you speak of to General Bragg's headquarters. I happened to have business with one of the general's staff, and was present at the interview. Your brother peddler was questioned, both by the general and his chief of staff, with regard to affairs at Nashville; and it was remarked by all, that his answers, boy as he was, were wonderfully shrewd and intelligent; though it was afterwards remembered that he gave little information of real importance to anybody. The probability is that he had been told just what to say, and not to say, by those who sent him."

"Who sent him?" demanded Fred, his fears for his friend almost betraying him.

“The managers of Rosecrans’s police and spy system, it is supposed. For there is not much doubt, my friend,” added the stranger, coolly lighting a cigar, “but that your friend is a spy.”

“But why — how — what reason have they to think so?”

“I’ll tell you” (smoking). “While the boy was at headquarters, the guard outside was changed” (puff, puff); “and, when he went out, there happened to be on duty a man who knew him” (another puff: it seemed that the stranger would have smoked, had Fred’s life depended on the next word), — “a soldier belonging to Colonel Derring’s East Tennessee regiment, of the name of Pepperill. It seems that he and the boy are old acquaintances; and he was so glad to see him, that he never considered that calling him by name at such a time was equivalent to pronouncing his death-sentence.”

“How so? I don’t understand.”

“Don’t you? Well, I’ll tell you. Your friend once joined the same regiment this man Pepperill belongs to; but during the Union troubles in East Tennessee, and the fighting at the Cave there, he deserted, joined the refugees, and escaped with them over the mountains. Of course, he pretended not to recognize Pepperill; and Pepperill, seeing

what a blunder he had committed, immediately began to disclaim his acquaintance. But, by this time, the attention of another soldier was attracted, who declared that your peddler friend was a deserter from the regiment, and that his name was the same Pepperill had called him by, — Carl Minnevich. Still the boy might have got off; but, just then, up rides Colonel Derring himself, who orders him arrested. So your unfortunate friend is now under guard, awaiting his trial on a double charge, — of being a deserter and a spy.”

So saying, the stranger smoked away complacently, while Fred’s thoughts were whirling in a vortex of pain and fear.

“What will they do with him?” he asked, as soon as he could trust his voice.

“Hang him!” The stranger quietly knocked the ashes from his cigar. “Nor is that all,” he added, with another whiff. “His pass was for two boys, instead of one. The other must have been his accomplice, so the authorities reasoned; and they have ordered search to be made for him too.”

“And what will they do with him?” demanded Fred, his courage and spirits returning, now that he saw his own life in peril.

“Hang him too!” replied the stranger. He laid his hand impressively on Fred’s shoulder. “Now, my friend, you are

confessedly this boy's accomplice. And do you know who I am?"

"An officer sent to arrest me!" exclaimed Fred, springing to his feet, and grasping the chair with the instinct of self-defence.

"On the contrary," quietly returned the stranger, striking another match, — for his cigar had gone out, — "I have come to save you. Haven't you recognized me yet?"

His voice changed, as he spoke, to a tone strangely familiar to Fred's ear. At the same time, the flame of the match lighted up his bronzed, bearded, resolute, calm face. With a thrill of joy, Fred put down the chair, and started towards him.

"Daniels!" he exclaimed.

"That is my name; but you should never speak the name of a friend so loud, if at all, under such circumstances. Your friend Carl has lost his life, probably, through a similar indiscretion on the part of that stupid wretch, Dan Pepperill. Let me advise you, moreover, to keep quiet, and sit down. You are standing too long on that lame leg of yours. Let us talk a little quietly. Nothing is to be gained by heat and hurry. Remember that."

Daniels spoke in the tone of a man conversing on an ordinary topic of business.

Fred, agitated by conflicting emotions, knew not what to say. His first question was about Carl: "Was there any hope of his rescue?"

"Very, very little: it is a pity. He is a bright boy: I like bright boys!" Daniels turned his eyes upon Fred, with a look which seemed to reach his soul, even in the darkness of the room; and his voice, usually low and imperturbable as it was, had something like a thrill of tenderness in it. "I have taken an unaccountable liking to you: do you know it? I have been looking for you ever since you were carried off by Gruffley's men to be conscripted."

"I know: I met you riding down the pike that very day. But how — how did you ever find me?"

"It would be a long story: I'll make it short; for we have not much time to lose." Daniels looked at his watch by match-light. "I went back to the woods where I left you, — to the spot where I told you to meet me. You were not there; nor indeed did I much expect to find you; for I had seen the ruins of Ellsmer's house: I did not suppose you would apply at any other for assistance. What, then, was left for you but to try to get back to the Union lines without my help? I concluded you had done so; and, as I had pressing business at Nashville, I gave up the search, and hurried on. I reported your case at the army police on my

arrival, and made inquiries concerning you : you had not been heard from. That very night, however, news came : it was brought — by whom, do you suppose ? By your negro friend Pomp.”

“ Then he escaped ? ”

“ Yes, curiously enough. He brought in as a prisoner one of the rascals that had kidnapped him. He also brought intelligence of the greatest utility to the Yankees, concerning an attack to be made the next morning on their position on Mill Creek.”

“ Was the attack made ? ” Fred eagerly asked.

“ It was attempted ; but the Confederates found the Yankees prepared for them, and barely escaped falling into a trap.”

“ And the kidnappers ? I hope Pomp has had his revenge on them.”

Daniels related how Bodson had been captured, and added, —

“ The gray-headed old villain who had taken him out of Nashville, and had him kidnapped, was already under arrest. He had been brought to Nashville, as soon as it was ascertained that Pomp had disappeared. He professed utter ignorance of the manner in which the negro had left him, and of his reasons for running away ; for he assumed that he had

run away, and even had the solemn effrontery to request the loan of another laborer to take his place ! His venerable white beard and pious demeanor did not serve his purpose this time, however. He was retained until Pomp's return, when Bodson himself denounced him, and confessed the kidnapping ; and they were both sent to prison, where they will probably remain until the end of the war."

" Good ! " ejaculated Fred. " I was never so glad to hear any thing in my life."

" But what chiefly interested me in Pomp's revelations," Daniels continued, " was the news he brought of you. I could not leave Nashville for twenty-four hours ; but, as soon as my business would permit, I started. I traced you to the camp at Stewartsborough, and thence to Murfreesborough. There, at the railroad depot, I lost you : worse than that, I could not pursue my inquiries without great risk ; for, ever since I helped you to escape, I have been a suspected man. Well, I saw your friend Carl arrested. Pomp had told me of Carl ; and, when I saw his pass for two, — knowing he came from Shelbyville, and believing you had taken the train south, — I thought it barely possible that you might have fallen in with him. But I did not think you would enter Murfreesborough ; and, in fact, it was ascertained that nobody had come in with him but a Texan ranger. The ranger

had gone on to Lavergne. I followed, and had the good luck to find him; and he told me where I could find you."

"Good for him!" exclaimed Fred. "So much is gained by being lassoed! But how much trouble you have given yourself on my account! How can I ever repay you?"

"Ask no questions; but believe in me, and that will repay me. I took a fancy to you in the first place; and, having once undertaken a thing, I never like to give it up. I have undertaken to get you off. The difficulties in the way make me only the more determined." Again Daniels struck a match, and looked at his watch (the tavern did not furnish candles). "Now, how is the thing to be done? You are hunted, and I am suspected. I have a pass for myself; but I dare not ask for one for you. It is almost nine o'clock. Can you walk?"

"A little, with a cane."

"But you can ride?"

"If I have a chance."

"Well," said Daniels, "one thing at a time. The first thing is to get out of this tavern. I reckon you are out of money. Take this and your cane, hobble down to the bar-room, pay the landlord what you owe him, and tell him you are going on towards Murfreesborough. You will not get far before I shall overtake you on horseback, and pick you up. Then we'll see what is to be done next."

XXII.

A NIGHT IN THE WOODS. — THE MORNING.

RED followed Daniels's advice, and went hobbling along the turnpike in the darkness. A horseman soon stopped at his side. It was his stranger friend ; and, a minute later, he was seated behind him, on the animal's back.

They turned into a lane, and were soon climbing hills, and riding over ridges, along by-roads and bridle-paths, in darkness that would have been universal and absolute but for the surrounding camp-fires. These lighted up the waste of blackness about the city, and made the night picturesque. Daniels carefully avoided them. At length, he turned his horse into a dense, dark wood ; so dark, that he had to dismount and lead him, feeling his way among the trees. Some of these were pines : all night thoir fragrance filled the air with balm.

“ I have no more idea where we are than as if we were in the moon ! ” said Fred.

It was almost the first word that had been spoken since their ride began.

"I know the country pretty well," replied Daniels. "Here is the safest place for you at present. We'll camp down for the night."

"Won't it be a waste of time?" said Fred. "We might travel a good many miles before morning."

"Yes; but you don't know the difficulties in the way. Besides, I must be in Murfreesborough in the morning, to meet an engagement, and to avert suspicion."

"You know best what to do," said Fred gratefully, yet regretfully. "But, oh! I'd like to ride, and ride all night, and never stop till I was once more in sight of blue-coats!"

"That can't be. Here we tie up." Daniels helped Fred to dismount; then made him lie down on the ground, wrapping him in his blanket. "Now sleep, my boy: you need to. You are safe here: I'll watch."

"Sleep while you watch? Take your blanket, and leave you none? No, sir: I can't do that."

Daniels used persuasion, then commands; but Fred, although so ready to yield to him in every thing else, would not in this. At length, the matter was compromised; Daniels consenting to lie down, and share the blanket with him.

From the first, Fred had felt a strange respect and admiration for this man ; and now, lying under the same blanket with him, conscious of a strong arm stealing over him and infolding him in a tender embrace, his heart began to warm towards him with something deeper even than gratitude.

“ How kind you are to me ! ” said he, nestling close to the man’s heart.

“ My boy,” replied Daniels in a low, gentle voice, “ we must be kind to each other in this world : we cannot be too kind. Have you brothers ? ”

“ I am an only child,” said Fred.

“ Then I will be your brother. Is your mother living ? ”

“ I have the dearest, best mother there is in this world ! ” said Fred with a gush of emotion.

“ I am sure she must be, since you say so. Few boys know what a prize a good mother is. I remember now hearing you speak of her that first night I saw you. Did she and your father consent to your going to the war, young as you are ? ”

“ She consented ; but I had no father whose consent to ask.

“ What ! is he dead ? ”

“ He may be : I don’t know. We have not seen nor heard from him for a long time,” said Fred in a voice that betrayed how painful the subject was to him.

“Ah! I remember: you said he was a slaveholder, I believe; and your mother separated from him on that account. Well, no doubt she acted nobly, since she acted conscientiously. But I have known good and even noble men among slaveholders. I am not a slaveholder myself; but I would do them justice.”

“And I believe,” replied Fred earnestly, “that my father was a good man; or at least would have been, if it hadn’t been for slavery. My mother says slavery makes men selfish and tyrannical. They soon learn to prefer might to right. They get into a habit of being unfeeling, if not cruel. They despise honest labor, and become so proud and passionate, that a man, or even a woman, that has different opinions, can’t live with them.”

“Well, she is more than half right in her judgment, I am afraid! Couldn’t your father see it so? It seems to me, if she is the woman I take her to be, he ought to have been willing to give up a thousand slaves, rather than such a wife.”

“And so he would, I presume, if it hadn’t been for his prejudices. Good-hearted he was, my mother says, but the most wilful man in the world. If he had set his mind on a thing, he would have it or nothing; and what he said he would do, he would, though the world should come to an end.”

“Strange that men will be so! And is not your mother a little self-willed too?”

“She is very firm: yes, I don’t know but she is self-willed,” Fred confessed. “But, oh! she is such a generous, noble-hearted woman! She makes sure she is right, in the first place; then she is capable of any thing. I don’t think there was ever a mother that loved a son better than she loves me; but when she saw how I wanted to go and fight for my country, and that I was right, then” —

Fred could not finish the sentence: all his love for that noble and dear mother seemed welling up in his heart, and choking him.

Daniels was silent for some minutes; but there was a thrilling tenderness in the touch of the hand, and the pressure of the arm, that drew the boy softly and closely to his breast.

“Well, Frederick,” said he at length, “I hope, for her sake as well as yours, that you will get out of this trouble, and go through the war safely, and return home to comfort her.”

“I thank you, — I thank you, from my inmost heart!” said Fred. But he added, “My name isn’t Frederick, though.”

“I thought the boys called you Fred.”

“That is my nick-name ; but my name is Alfred.”

“Well, Alfred, it is time for you to go to sleep. I shall leave you soon ; but don't be disturbed when I go. Some time to-morrow you will see me again.”

“I hope you will not go into any danger on my account !”

“I never go into danger unnecessarily : that is very foolish. So set your mind at rest ; and good-night !”

The “good-night” meant “sleep.” And soon the tranquil, deep breathing of the man indicated that he slept. But Fred, excited, lay awake, and envied him. He envied the sleeping horse, and all the sleeping creatures in the woods. The woods themselves seemed to slumber ; and the night-wind, swelling through them, heaved them gently, as it were, with long-drawn sighs of repose.

At length, Fred, too, fell into a light slumber, from which he was awakened by the stirring of his companion. Daniels was getting up.

“Are you going ?” whispered Fred.

“Yes, Alfred. Have you slept ?”

“A little.”

“You are not much of a soldier, or you would have slept a good deal. A soldier learns to sleep at all times, and in all weathers, in the face of danger, and on any kind of a bed, when he has a chance.”

“ Oh ! my bed is well enough. It isn't danger nor the strangeness of the place that troubles me ; but I couldn't help thinking.”

“ About what ? ”

“ About my mother, — and my father. I wonder if she has heard by this time that I have been taken prisoner. Oh ! I know just how she will feel. Then I can't help thinking that my father is probably in the rebel army, and we are fighting against each other, and may be we shall meet yet.”

“ And if you should ? ”

“ I hope I shall not know that he's my father ! ”

“ I hope so too. But now good-by. I leave my saddle-bags with you. They make a good pillow ; and you will find they are good for something else when you open them.”

Fred sat up ; while his companion, scarcely visible in the gloom of the woods, untied his horse, and led him slowly and cautiously out through the trees. Soon the sound of hoofs and footsteps and the rustling of boughs ceased. The lad was alone in the darkness and silence.

He now lay down again, wrapped the blanket well about him, and slept three or four hours. He awoke at last, feeling very cold ; for the night, though still, was wintry. It was not yet day. He looked up, and saw, through the black boughs of the pines, the high, calm, holy stars, twinkling in

the far-off heaven. He lay watching those glittering points of light, as they moved across an opening in the branches, until he thought the deep, dark blue of the vault of night began to pale a little, and that a dim, gray glimmer began to infuse itself, so to speak, into the gloom of the woods.

Yes, the dawn was at hand. But hark! what sound was that? Footsteps! Could it be Daniels returning? Fred sat up, and listened with strained nerves. More than one man was approaching, — stealthily, quickly, with suppressed whispers, and now and then the sudden shaking of a bough or sharp snapping of a twig. There must have been half a dozen, at least, treading the dark mazes of the woods. They passed very near the spot where he sat watching for a development of the mystery. He could even see their dim forms start like darker shadows across the shadows of the woods. One came treading close by his lame foot outstretched upon the ground, and another passed on the other side of him. Had he been betrayed? and were these enemies surrounding him? They might have seen him sitting there, close by the trunk of the pine-tree, with the saddle-bags behind him, and the blanket, fallen from his shoulders, upon the ground; but, in the obscurity, he might have been taken for a stump, he was so motionless and still.

Now, Fred was not a coward ; yet the mystery of these moving human forms impressed him strangely. They passed on, out of sight, out of hearing, and the woods were silent again ; and he felt that he was once more alone. But he did not cease to wonder at the incident ; and he sat long, listening to catch the faintest sound, and watching the shadows all around him in the great sombre woods.

“ Well, whoever they are, they are gone,” he said to himself. He lay down again ; but he could not sleep. His open eyes kept looking up through the pine boughs, watching the stars fade and the blue brighten. At length, there were no stars ; and a subdued, still light filled all the woods ; and suddenly, into the topmost boughs above him, there shot a golden flash. It was sunrise.

He sat up, with the blanket wrapped about him ; for he was hardly warm yet. He found himself in a little hollow of a woody hill. The pine-leaves matted the ground. All around him were still, solemn trunks and great roots grasping the soil, and here and there clumps of undergrowth, filling up the vistas ; all so peaceful and pleasant in the early light, that Fred, breathing the fresh dawn and the piny odors, was almost happy.

He got upon his feet, or rather foot, and, with the aid of his cane, hopped about a little for exercise, and to take

an observation. He could discover no traces of the mysterious men who had passed so near him just before dawn. He took his blanket and the saddle-bags, and carried them to a clump of bushes near by, which would afford him a sort of shelter in case others should come.

Having placed the blanket on the ground, and seated himself, he proceeded to open the saddle-bags for amusement. He found them well stored with provisions, consisting chiefly of hard biscuit and bacon. There was also a flask of water, with a flask of something besides water. Fred ate and drank, and felt grateful; interrupted two or three times, however, by sounds that startled him a little. Was somebody coming behind the bushes? He could see no one; and concluded that what he had mistaken for the crackling of a twig or the rustling of a leaf was the crushing of the brittle biscuit between his own teeth.

“This is a breakfast for a king!” he said to himself. “There’s enough for a dozen; and I only wish I had somebody to share it with.”

He had scarcely made the wish, when, lo! once more the startling sounds! It could not be the biscuit this time; for he had but just drank, and his mouth was empty. He started up, determined to take a good look behind the bushes. No sooner had he done so, however, than up leaped half a dozen

men from the ground, over which they had been for the past ten minutes creeping like so many cats, ready, at a motion, to spring upon him. He was surrounded in an instant; and two in rebel uniform rushed upon him. The foremost, presenting a musket at his breast, said in a suppressed voice, —

“ You’re our prisoner ! ”

The rest crowded around. One brandished a hatchet, the others had guns or clubs. Not a word was spoken loud enough to be heard ten yards off. Fred, frightened at first by the sudden onset, — thinking neither of resistance nor flight, for he was defenceless, and running was out of the question, — stared at his captors with astonishment; then stared again with still greater astonishment; winked, to make sure that his eyes did not deceive him; and burst into a joyful laugh.

“ Hello, Fred! is it you ! ” exclaimed the foremost man with the musket.

That man was Cy Thurston; and the man next him was lazy Jake; and the man with the hatchet, now pressing forward to seize the saddle-bags, was old Joel.

“ It’s me, boys! How are you? how are you? ” cried Fred, grasping their hands two at a time, as if he would have embraced them all at once, so great was his delight.

XXIII.

*OLD COMRADES, AND THEIR
ADVENTURES.*

AL! if this don't beat all natur!" said old Joel, dropping his prize, and coming in for a share of Fred's attentions. "Who would ever have knowed you in that rig?"

"Sit down, boys," said Fred. "Where did you all come from? What luck! I was just wishing for company at breakfast!"

"Well, it's breakfast we want," said Cy. "We are half famished. We have travelled something less than a hundred miles, with not enough to eat to keep a cat from starving."

"And you were going to rob me?" Fred laughed, glancing delightedly from one to the other. "If that isn't a joke!"

"We came into these woods this morning just before light, and hid for the day," said Cy. "But hunger was pressing. Old Joel and I crept out to reconnoitre. We spied a young

fellow in a butternut coat making for these bushes, with saddle-bags in his hands. I watch him whilst old Joel informs the rest. I see him open the saddle-bags, and begin to crunch. It's a matter of life or death to us; and taking you all the while for a good rebel, sent in our way by a kind Providence, we pitch in."

"And came near splitting my brains with that hatchet! Well, here's something else to split: split those biscuit. Take hold, boys; take hold! Eat, old Joel; eat!"

"Bless me!" said old Joel, "I forgit the victuals looking at you! It's breakfast enough jest to see you agin. We was in hopes you had got off; but the rebs said you'd been shot, and we didn't know *what* to think. Been hit in the leg? or what's the matter that makes ye lame?"

Fred told his story in as few words as possible, hurrying to get through, so great was his curiosity to hear how his companions had escaped.

"Get well into the bushes here, boys," said Cy. "You keep watch on that side, Jake: Joel will keep a look-out on the other. You and your saddle-bags are a tremendous treat, Fred! Wine?" — tasting the contents of flask number two. "Oh! that is royal!"

"Pass it around," said Fred. "It's just the stuff for you. You are the haggardest set of fellows I've seen this

many a day. Jake, you look as though you'd been drawn through a knot-hole!"

"I feel as though I'd been drawd through about sixty! If any one calls me lazy Jake after this, he deserves to be hung!"

"Jake, git him woke up once, is a deuse of a feller," said old Joel. "He could out-travel the best on us, 'cept Cy; and he's done wonders other ways: but Cy must tell you about that."

"You see," said Cy, — "keep a sharp look-out while I tell, boys, — the rebs hurried us on to the railroad, and shipped us aboard a train bound south; taking us to Macon, down in Georgia, there to rot in prison till the end of the war, we understood. Well, 'twasn't a pleasant prospect. Even Jake preferred a little more active kind of life. But what should we do? We were under a strong guard, and even our jack-knives had been taken from us. We passed through Murfreesborough, and on towards Chattanooga. We didn't have the chance you did to jump from the cars, and sprain our ankles without knowing it. Shut up in a little air-tight freight-car, we were, a dozen of us, all together, and locked in. We came as near suffocating in that horrible box as ever mortal men did. No window, scarce a crack to let in light or air, nothing but the bare boards, we were piled in

there like so many cattle ; only no drover, with any common sense or a grain of humanity, would treat dumb beasts in that way. At Tullahoma the guard did have the kindness to unlock the door in reply to our shrieks for air and water, and inform us, that, if we did not keep still, we should be shot without notice. He couldn't help seeing the condition we were in, though : and we got a bucket of water, which was a great luxury ; for by that time we were dying with thirst. We got half a breath of air, besides ; and that's all we had to live on for the next two hours. We stopped some time in Tullahoma, locked up again as before, and waiting for the train to start, and growing impatient ; for we were in a hurry now to get to Macon, — to get anywhere out of that car. We didn't believe a rebel prison could be worse. But it was two hundred miles to Macon : think of two hundred miles of suffocation before us !

“ Well, we were off at last, and running horribly slow, as we judged by the motion of the car. At last, we grew desperate. Although we knew we should be fired into for the attempt, — whether we succeeded or not, we determined to make one grand rush, in a mass, and burst the door, or break the lock or something : we cared little what.

“ Just as we were going to try it, an accident happened ; and a very fortunate one, as it proved for us. The train ran

off the track. There was a terrible shock and crash and we knew what it meant.

“ ‘ Now is our chance, boys ! ’ says I ; and three times — crash, crash, crash ! — we went against the door before it gave way.

“ It was not merely a breath of air we were after now, but escape. Webster Jones — you remember him ? — was the first one out : he was shot down in a twinkling. I was next ; and a bullet whizzed across the back of my head, cutting my hair, and just grazing my scalp. Lazy Jake left the first part of his name behind him in that car, and leaped like a deer : he ran betwixt the bullets, just as I believe he would have run betwixt the drops if it had been raining a shower. Then up came the bayonets, cutting off the escape of the rest : so that only he and I got away.”

“ One on us killed,” said old Joel, “ and three others wounded, — two with bayonets, and t’other with a ball : that’s all we made out o’ that stampede, for the time. But Jake and Cy had cleared ; and that was glory enough, even for the wounded fellows.”

“ I rather think,” said Jake, “ me and Cy did some tall running just then ; hey, Cy ? ”

“ I should know you would go where Cy went,” said Fred in the gayest spirits. “ It was to keep him company, I suppose, that you concluded to try a race with the bullets.”

“ You would have said he had kept his running powers bottled up all his life, and uncorked them on that special occasion,” said Cy. “ Bullets couldn’t catch him. He went ahead of me like a streak. You couldn’t see his legs, any more than you could the spokes of a wheel making sixty revolutions a second. There was just a twinkling mist where legs should have been; while his body flew through the air like a very large bird with very small wings: I mean his arms.”

“ I might have looked so to any one in the distance,” said Jake; “ for, I own, my nose cut the wind like an arrow-head for a few minutes. But Cy was too near my heels not to see them.”

“ Well,” Cy laughed, “ I thought with Jake, that, since our legs had found something to do, we had better do it with all our might. I looked behind, and saw three of the guard coming after us with fixed bayonets. I looked ahead, and saw the loveliest mountain slope that ever cheered on a hunted fugitive, — such tremendous woods, such a wild, grand forest, to hide in! Jake reached it first, and turned around, and swung his hat, and yelled defiance at the rebs; and, the next minute, we were both safe in the timber.”

“ But the rest — what became of the rest of you? ”

“ We was jammed back into the car again, by time! ” said

old Joel. "But the door had been broken open once, and might be agin. Besides, the train couldn't be got on to the track, and damages repaired, short of six or eight hours: by that time it would be night; and the guard was small. So it was concluded that the best thing to do with us was to march us men to the nearest county jail, and lock us up for safe keeping till called for. We was in Franklin County, on the borders of Alabama; and the jail was at Winchester, — about four miles from where we run off the track. Wal," added Joel, "we made them air four miles at a double-quick; and, in 'bout an hour from the time o' the accident, we was behind grated winders and double-locked iron doors."

"How did you ever get out of that scrape?" asked Fred.

"I must tell you first what became of Jake and me," said Cy. "We were hunted, of course; and, after the rest of the boys were disposed of, the guard had a good time with us. They scoured the mountain; and once came so near where we were hid, that we could hear them talking about us. We didn't know the country, and we didn't dare trust to the bushes: so we had climbed up a couple of low pine-trees; and there we were like a couple of coons, peeping down through the tops, which were just thick enough to prevent us from being seen, but not too thick for us to see something of what was going on below.

“ Well, the rebs hunted beyond us, and all around us ; and finally it began to grow dark. Then we saw two fellows coming through the woods. They had been hunting us for miles, but had given us up, and were on their way back to the railroad. ‘ If we could only capture ’em, and get their guns ! ’ says Jake from his tree. ‘ If we only had their guns, then we could capture the men themselves, ’ says I from my tree. But neither of us imagined, for a moment, that the thing was possible. We were only waiting for night, when we expected to slip down from the trees a little faster than we had slipped up, and travel towards the north star till morning.

“ But ’twasn’t so to be. We were destined to come down from those tops a little faster even than we anticipated. I thought the rebs must have discovered us, they marched so straight to where we were. But, instead of looking up into the trees, they stopped near them, and began to shout for their comrades. Finally they set their guns against the very tree I was in, and threw themselves on the ground. They appeared tired ; and there they lay talking over their bad luck, when something curious happened. Jake must tell you about that.”

“ What happened, ” said Jake, “ was this. I’m a lazy cus, as you know, Fred, and as you take the trouble to in-

form folks, every chance you git. But I forgive you. I am kinder inclined that way, I allow. Wal, you see, I was too lazy to come down that tree the way I went up. So when I see one o' them rebs stretched out there, within jumping distance, — so tempting to a lazy peep like me, ye know, — says I to myself, 'If I can light on him, 'twill be killing two birds with one stone.' One bird would, like as not, be the reb: besides that, I should break my fall on his fat stomach, and so get down from that roost easy."

"And you jumped?" cried Fred, laughing at Jake's humorous way of stating an exciting fact, but eager to hear the result.

"You should have seen him!" said Cy. "I always knew, that, when he could be got to jump, he was a prodigious jumper. But I never expected such a leap from such a ticklish foothold as he must have had on the tree. No kangaroo ever equalled it. The reb must have been a dozen feet from the trunk. He heard a rustling, and both rebs started up. If they had the leisure to observe, they might have seen a spread-eagle of the largest dimensions soaring out of that tree-top, but suddenly changing his mind, and pouncing down upon 'em. They didn't have time to reach their guns, or even to get well on their feet. The nearest was just rising, when Jake struck him, and he went down

again as if a thousand of brick had fallen on him. Jake's knees went into his body, and his breath went out of it, with a loud '*Ha!*' you might have heard half a mile."

"T'other reb," said Jake, biting a slice of bacon as deliberately as if he had been telling the most commonplace story in the world, "sprung for his gun; and, before I could have got untangled from the ribs I had smashed in, he'd have been on me, and it might have been said of me that I'd made my last jump. But just then another spread-eagle might have been seen coming out of Cy's tree. He didn't go the full figure quite so extensive as I did; but he was some. He didn't hit the reb neither, but come down between him and the guns, just in season, — on all-fours, of course; but any how was better than no how."

"The reb might even then have got the start of me, and snatched a gun before I could stop him," added Cy. "But he looked as if he expected to see a spread-eagle come out of every tree in the woods, and turned to run like a coward. 'Stop him!' says Cy; and I stopped him. I got hold of a gun; and, as he was legging it straight from me, I took good aim, and — no matter about the rest. He didn't run far. That's his coat Jake has got on. Show Fred the hole in the back, Jake."

It was a bullet-hole, and there was a blood stain around it.

“By this time,” said Jake, “the cushion I had jumped on to gasped, and came to a little. He was more frightened than hurt; and when we stood over him, with the p’int of his own gun at his breast, and told him if he lied to us, or yelled, we’d blow his brains out, he had no more gumption than to out with every thing we wanted to know. He told us how the jail was situated, but said it wasn’t possible for the boys to break out. Then Cy and I put our heads together, and hit upon a neat little stratagem. Tell about it, Cy!” And Jake, having finished his repast, stretched himself under the bushes languidly.

“We promised to spare the fellow’s life, if he would do every thing we required. He promised. Then I made him change clothes with me. At the same time, Jake got into the dead rebel’s uniform. We waited till it was dark enough; then, armed with the guns we had captured, and with our prisoner between us, we started. As we were getting off the mountain, we met a rebel farmer. We halted him, and inquired the most direct road to Winchester Jail. He told us, and said, ‘So ye cotched him, did ye?’ — ‘Cotched one of the scoundrels,’ I said, ‘and killed t’other.

“We didn’t meet with any difficulty until near Winchester. There we fell in with the night patrol going the rounds. As they were only two, and we were two, our prisoner didn’t

dare to make any demonstration. We were challenged ; but we told our story, and inquired the way to the jail. ' We'll go with you,' said they, ' and see your prisoner jugged.' ' There's no necessity of that,' I said : ' we had the glory of capturing him, and we mean to jug him without any help.' Then one of them said he would go and show us the way to the jail ; and we couldn't refuse his polite offer, without exciting suspicion. We made him go ahead, and tell the jailer a prisoner was coming. It was midnight : the town was all asleep, and the jailer had to be called up. Knowing the patrolman, he supposed all was as it should be, and came with his lantern and keys to let us in."

" We were just the least mite tickled to find no guard about the jail," said Jake, raising his head among the bushes ; " but Cy made believe he was mad to see such neglect. ' What's the reason there's none of our fellows on duty here?' says he. ' Oh ! there's no need of that,' says the jailer ; ' for this is one of the strongest jails in Tennessee. Your boys was tired out after their hunt, and concluded to go to bed.' Just then, the prisoner undertook to speak ; but I fetched him a blow on the mouth, and swore, if he opened his head to make a fuss, I'd put the cold steel through him."

Cy resumed : " The patrolman was now behind, and the

jailer before, opening the doors. 'Come, hurry up!' says I. 'We don't want to be all night about this little job.' He opened one door. I went in with him and the prisoner: Jake staid outside to take care of the patrolman. The jailer locked the door behind us, then selected another key to open the door that led into the main hall of the jail. Just then, the prisoner, seeing that I was one, and they were two, burst out with a few words; and I couldn't stop him without knocking him on the head. Down he fell senseless. But he had said enough to alarm the jailer. 'I'm afraid all ain't right,' says he. 'All will be,' says I, 'when you've opened that door!' He gave one yell for help, — but not two. He got a stunner on the temple; and, before he had recovered from that, he felt the bayonet biting his ribs. 'Not a word; but unlock that door, or this iron goes through you!' He was too frightened to make any resistance; and so he unlocked it."

"By that time," said Jake, "I had my hands full. At the first screech of the jailer, the patrolman (I had kept him talking till then) started, and said, 'What does that mean?' — 'It means you are my prisoner!' says I; and my bayonet was at his breast before he could say *Jack Robinson*. He undertook to get away, and was drawing a revolver, and shouting; so I was obliged to let him have it. I

gave one lunge; he went back agin the fence, and there he stuck. The bayonet went clear through him into the post, and there I left him pinned. I let go my gun, snatched his revolver, and ran back into the jail. I heard a rumpus in a room opposite the cells. I sprang to the door, and threw it open; and there the jail lamp showed me an interesting sight, rather! It was the jailer's sitting-room, and there four rebel soldiers—the same that had been hunting us, and had got tuckered out—had been asleep. But they were wide-awake enough now. Their guns stood close by the door I had opened. They were making a rush for 'em. One had just got hold of his. I fired the revolver square in his face, and he dropped, with the horriblest groan ever I heard in my life. That struck terror into the rest. 'The first that touches a gun is a dead man!' says I. Then I shouted, as if giving orders to a dozen men outside, 'Guard the passages! Shoot the first one that goes out or in! Take these guns, one of you!'—I took them, and handed them out, as if to some one in the hall, but only just set them agin the wall, out of their reach, you know. By this time, the jailer's family seemed to be screaming all over the house. I knew the town must be getting alarmed; and I looked with pretty considerable interest, you may believe, to see what 'uck Cy was having. At last he came, and the

boys with him, and the jailer, white as a sheet, carrying the lantern and keys. But Cy must tell the rest." And Jake sank down again.

"Joel found a hatchet in the jail. Four more of our boys were armed in a moment with the guns Jake had captured; and, two minutes later, his prisoners, and the jailer himself, were locked up with the one we had brought in. Then we started: and it was high time; for the town was waking up, the fire-bells were ringing, and we could see men running. Then commenced the famous retreat of our forces. Josiah Williams was so badly wounded, we were obliged to leave him behind at the jail. Another of the wounded men, Cale Hobbs, gave up before we had got forty rods, and was retaken. We couldn't help scattering a little in the dark; for not one of us knew the country: and when we rallied, a mile or so out of the village, two more men were missing. We have lost one since: he went out on a scout, and to bring in provisions, and, I suppose, got captured. We have been hunted like foxes; but, like foxes, we have kept to the woods and hills. We have hid in bushes and rocks and hollow trees by day, and travelled by night. When we couldn't stand starvation any longer, Jake and I, or somebody else in our secesh uniform, would go to a solitary farm-house, pass for rebel soldiers drunk and reckless, and ask for

provisions ; which nobody ever dared refuse. But this is a dangerous trick, and we have resorted to it as rarely as possible. We have seen hardships ; but, on the whole, we consider that we have been very fortunate. We have lost but three of the guns we captured ; and the three we have left are all we have wanted to carry. It would be too long a story to tell all our adventures now ; and I'm afraid we are not in a very safe place here."

"There's some grand good bushes to hide in, just over that knoll," said old Joel. "There's a ravine there, and a brook runs through it ; and there's first-rate thickets both sides. We can get water there too. There's a long, bare hill t'other side of the ravine ; but that ain't no objection : nobody can see us if we keep in the bush ; but we can see if anybody is coming from that direction better'n as if 'twas all woods. I move we adjourn to the ravine."

The motion was carried ; Fred's objection, on the ground that Daniels was to return for him to that spot in the afternoon, being disposed of by Cy, who said, "In the afternoon, one of us will be here to meet him."

XXIV.

THE MAN IN THE CASK.



THE party removed, with suitable precautions, to the ravine. There Fred and his old comrades talked over their adventures, or spent the forenoon in sleep. After dinner, at which they finished the contents of the saddle-bags, one of the company borrowed Fred's hat and butternut coat, and returned to the rendezvous where Daniels was expected.

Two hours elapsed ; at the end of which time, old Joel, who kept watch on the side of the hill-slope, announced a discovery. The boys all crept up to the edge of the bushes fringing the ravine to see what it was.

"It's the curi'sest thing : I don't understand it !" said Joel. "They're rolling something to the tip-top of the hill."

"It's a cask o' whiskey," said Jake. "They're going up there to have a drink. I wish the cask would get away,

and roll towards some good thirsty fellows in a ravine I know of!"

"The cask is empty," said Cy, "I know, by the way that chap kicks it along the ground. Keep quiet, boys, or we may have trouble."

"They ain't but four o' them, and there's six of us," said Joel, flourishing his hatchet. "If't only was whiskey, 'twould be worth the resk of capturing, I say."

"One of the men is a prisoner!" said Fred. "Don't you see? They're putting him into the cask!"

"So they be!" said Joel. "See him squirm: he's pleading with 'em not to; but down he goes into it, head fust, by time!"

"It seems to me, I know that man!" murmured Fred. But he wasn't sure.

"Hear 'em swear at him! See 'em jam his legs in!" said Jake. "They're heading of him up, I swow!"

"It's some Union man: this is the way they treat Union men in this cursed country!" said Cy, his eyes glittering with excitement. "It's hard to stand and see that!"

"If ye can't stand it, lie down, then," said old Joel. "We can't afford to interfere: there may be twenty more scesh jest over the hill."

'Joel believes in non-intervention, when there's only a

barrelled-up Union man in question," said Fred. "Bnt he was for pitching in when he thought 'twas a cask of whiskey."

"Brile me for a mackerel, if they ain't going to roll the poor devil down hill!" ejaculated Jake.

"If they do, the slant is this way, and the barrel will come straight to us!" said Joel. "The place is gittin' too hot for us. I move that we adjourn."

Nobody seconded this motion; but Cy said, authoritatively, —

"Keep still! If he comes near us, and they follow, something may occur to surprise 'em! You may have a chance to use that hatchet of yours, Joel, on a secesh head. Be ready for emergencies, boys! The thing is coming!"

The three men who had barrelled up the fourth now proceeded to send him on his unwilling journey. With laughter and oaths and brutal jests, they tumbled the cask over on its side, not gently by any means, and kicked it violently to the brow of the long slope. Then they adjusted it for the descent, and gave it a final push. It rolled a few yards, and, turning endwise, stopped, notwithstanding their loud, wild cheers. Then they went at it again; and, having now reached a point of more rapid descent, set it once more in motion, with brilliant success. The cask went whirling down

the slope, bounding and leaping like a living thing over hummocks and rocks, and uttering smothered shrieks from the voice of the victim within.

The cask came crashing into the thicket by the ravine, broke through the first thin bushes, struck a stout sapling, and stopped almost within arm's-length of Fred and Cy.

The creature inside was groaning dismally. Cy and Jake grasped the cask, hauled it a little farther into the thicket, and set it up on end. At this movement, the muffled groans within became shrieks for mercy, faintly audible through the stout hoops and staves.

"Oh, don't! I've had enough, I've had enough! I'm bruised to a pumace a'ready! Do let me out, — do! and I never'll do it again, — never!"

"He's a cowardly fool, whoever he is!" said Cy. "But never mind: give me that hatchet, Joel! Keep a lookout for the villains, boys!"

"They've gone back to the top of the hill. By time, they're going away!" said old Joel.

"They'll go and take a drink," said Fred; "your chivalrous Southern gentlemen always do on such occasions: then they'll be back again."

"Meanwhile," said Cy, — "thus!" — knocking off the hoops that had just been driven on. Then he loosened the

staves, and knocked in the head upon the wretch crowded and crammed within that narrow compass.

“You’ve got him wrong end up!” said Fred.

In fact, the victim, having been thrust into the cask head foremost, was destined to come out of it feet foremost. He straightened his legs apart in the air, and kicked helplessly, his head on the bottom, and his voice, like a voice in a well, entreating to be taken out.

“Stop your noise,” said Cy, “or I’ll head you up again! Don’t you see you are among friends? Now get out.”

He turned the cask down on its side. The man’s legs were already out. Then his hind-quarters emerged. Next came his body, crawling slowly backwards like a crab. Lastly appeared the head; and the head, being lifted up, revealed the most ludicrous expression of countenance any present ever beheld. It was a miserable, frightened, blubbery, bleeding face; for the nose of it had suffered. It was the face of the meanest and most despicable man in the world, — a “Northern man with Southern principles,” — a slave-catching Yankee. It was the face of Enos Crumlett.

XXV.

MR. CRUMLETT'S SUBSTITUTE.

“**I** THOUGHT SO!” said Fred. “Crumlett, how are you?”

Enos attempted to rise, but reeled, and fell over. He recognized Fred, however.

“Pretty sick, thank ye! Hold me, can’t ye! Stop my whirlin’!”

“You are not whirling now,” said Cy, supporting him

“Ain’t I? Then every thing else is!” Enos rolled up his eyes at his preservers. “How swift ye go round, — round!” And, closing his eyes, he gave another lurch.

“You’re a little dizzy, that’s all.”

“Wal, I be some dizzy, I guess! It’s kinder struck to my stomach, besides. O Tildy! who’d ever a thought? Where is Carter and them other chaps? If they hain’t gin me a dose! Nose broke! — darned if it ain’t bleedin’ all over my Sunday shirt! Shoulder got an awful wrench!

Neck jest about broke! Bruised from head to foot! Jints — never suffered so in my jints in all my life! That knee's out, I know! O Tildy, Tildy!" — winding up his lamentation with a groan.

"Keep quiet!" said Cy. "Come down to the water here, and wash; then you'll feel better."

"I can't move a step, I'm sich a jelly!"

"Then we'll have to leave you behind. They'll be down here looking after you pretty soon, and we must take care of ourselves."

"Take care o' me too, won't ye? I'll give ye suthin' if ye will. Don't let 'em git holt o' me agin. I'm loyal, ain't I?" appealing to Fred.

"To which side?" demanded Jake.

"To the right side, — to the Confederates, of course!" said Enos, perceiving that Jake and Cy wore the rebel uniform.

"To the Confederates, you villain!" — "You traitor!" And the bluecoats, hidden hitherto by the bushes, came around him.

"I mean, to the Union!" gasped Enos. Then, glancing again at the rebel uniforms, and seeing how wrathful their wearers looked, his wits fell into inextricable confusion. "I mean the — the — both sides! I'm loyal to both! that is, to neither! I'm neuter: ask him if I ain't!"

Again appealed to, Fred explained Mr. Crumlett's position: "He's a man without *any* principles."

"That's it, — that's jest my case!" said Enos eagerly. "I hain't no principles, — not a darn'd one!"

Fred laughed. He rather pitied the poor wretch. He had not yet heard of his treachery towards Pomp. He only knew that Pomp had got away, and carried Bodson with him. Accordingly, he gave the best account he could of Crumlett's embarrassing situation, as a Northern man compelled to profess allegiance to the Confederate despotism. Enos was as grateful for these kind words as it is possible for a mean spirit to be, and he entreated Fred not to suffer him to be again abandoned to his enemies.

"It all comes o' that mis'ble speo'lation, — the nigger speo'lation, ye know. The nigger got away that night, and that's the last I've seen of him. But some secesh from Nashville brought word to Carter how 'twas, — that Bodson was took up, and the old man, and that this was the very nigger they'd lost. He says nothin' to me; but he comes to our house when I'm away, and gits it all out of Tildy, every bit. Darn the women!" said Enos: "they can't keep a secret no more'n a fool! Wal, he said nothin', but pretended friendship, and said he wanted to see me on pa'tio'lar business, — about a speo'lation that would make up all losses

to both on us. When I come home, and she told me the fust part about the spec'lation, — for she put that fust, — I was nat'rally int'rested; but, when she told me the rest, I allow it riled me: we had the all-firedest flareup, and I left the house."

"Separated," suggested Fred. "Here's old Joel: he will sympathize with you. He and his wife have separated several hundred times, I believe, and come together again."

"What a feller you be to set out a story!" said old Joel.

"Wal, it never went quite so fur with me and Tildy afore," said Enos ruefully. "I s'pose I was jest the least might hasty; but then she was so terrible provokin'! I slipped on my Sunday shirt, and told her I never'd come back agin, in the world; but I'd no notion my words was so likely to prove true." And with a remorseful, despairing sigh, he felt of his broken nose.

"So you haven't been back to her?"

"No; and the worst on't is, I'm afraid I never shall. O Tildy, Tildy!" Mr. Crumlett forgot his dignity so far, even, as to snivel. "Little did I think, little did I think! That was 'arly this mornin'; and she, of course, expected I'd be baok agin 'fore noon. But I hadn't got over my mad fit, when I met Carter in a buggy. He 'peared terrible friendly, and told me a long rigmarole story 'bout the

new spec'lation. I was sucked in for once in my life, I own ! I thought 'twould worry Tildy if I staid away till night : so as Carter wanted me to git in, and ride with him to see two friends of his'n that he said would advance the money, I got in, and never 'spected the trick, thinkin' what a capital chance 'twas to come up with Tildy, and make suthin' at the same time, till about an hour ago. We kep' ridin' and ridin', till bime by we found his two friends ; and the way they advanced the money was a caution to narvous chaps like me ! " said Enos with a wild expression. " They dragged me to the hill, and barrellled me up ; pushin' and punchin' me in head fust, without no more feelin' for baak-bone and kneepans than as if I'd been a dead calf," —

" Instead of a live one," put in Fred.

" Come, come ! " said Cy, cutting the story short, " we know the rest. The question now is, What's to be done ? You can share our fortunes, if you like ; but they're desperate, I'll tell you to begin with."

" I think you'd better go back to your family, Mr. Crumlett," said Fred.

" It's too late for that ! " Enos whimpered miserably. " They told me, 'fore they spun me down hill, that was only the beginnin' of my spec'lations ; and 't after they'd got through with me I'd got to go into the army, whether or no.

I can't do that: I can't fight; I've got religious scruples agin it."

"How many scruples of that kind does it take to make a dram?" asked Jake, amid the derisive laughter Crumlett's ludicrous apology for his cowardice called forth.

"I thought you hadn't any principles," said Fred.

"Political principles, I meant: I hain't got nary one of that kind. But I'm a moral man: I—I—try to be a religious man."

"I respect religion," said Cy grimly; "but, if there's any thing I detest, it's pretence and cant! To see a low-minded, sneaking, cheating scamp draw down the corners of his mouth, and talk pious, just for a cloak, when he has no more religion in his heart than this rebel musket has, — it makes me sick!"

Fortunately for Enos, he had not told that part of his negro speculation which was least creditable to his moral character; else it is probable that this nauseating bit of cant would have provoked the boys to head him up again in the cask, and leave him to his fate.

Just then, one of the men left to watch the hillside reported a movement.

"They're coming back," said Cy, "after you again, — you man with religious scruples! They've probably got all the

liquor aboard they can carry, and they'll miss their plaything."

"I ain't their plaything! Don't leave me in their clutches!" exclaimed Enos, starting to his feet, forgetful, in his tremor, of his dislocated joints and his bruises. "Stand by me, won't ye?" fawning upon Fred. "I did by you, ye know."

"There's only one of 'em in sight," said old Joel.

"It is Carter," said Fred. "He's coming to take a private look at Crumlett's interesting case, while the others are lighting their pipes."

"Alone, is he?" said Jake, rousing up. "I'll tell ye what we'll do, boys. Get down further into the ravine, all but me and Cy: we'll stay and watch. Mabb̄y something funny 'll come of it."

Smoking a thick cigar, and staggering slightly with intoxication, Carter came sauntering leisurely down the hill. He could soon be heard muttering to himself, as he approached the spot where the cask had lodged, and Jake and Cy lay in ambush. As he kept the cigar in his mouth, only now and then a word of his thick talk could be distinguished.

"Fooling Southern gentlemen — cussed Yankee — learn him manners — wus'n any nigger," &c., with a large admixture of profanity.

At last, he saw the bottom of the cask sticking up.

“How do ye fancy the spec’lation?” he called to Enos, supposed to be still inside. “Going to give ye another roll soon, jollier nor that. Ye dead in thar? Why don’t ye make a row?” He kicked the cask. To his astonishment, it sounded empty and open.

“Got out?” he exclaimed with disappointment and rage, bending forward to examine the open end, shielded by the bushes.

He was so intent on looking for his victim, that he did not see the but-end of a musket that had been quietly pushed through the thicket, a minute before, towards the very spot where his head was expected soon to be. Seeing the cask open, and his victim gone, he looked around suddenly, and perceived two men lying low in the bushes. He was staring stupidly at them, wondering if there was really more than one man, — for he was in that condition in which he sometimes saw double, — and trying to make out whether they were the men he sought, when the said musket was suddenly pushed forward still farther in the same direction. Something struck his head; it was the but of the gun: although, from the vivid flash of light which he saw, he was afterwards inclined to think he received a discharge from the muzzle.

The vivid flash was the result of a violent collision between the musket and his cranium. He dropped as if he had indeed been shot; and, before he could recover his feet or his wits, he was seized, and thrust head-foremost, Crum lett-fashion, into the cask. His legs were crowded in after his body, without much ceremony. He set up a hoarse bellowing for help; to stop which, and also to induce him to forbear kicking the pieces of the head away as Jake endeavored to adjust them, Cy found it necessary to prick him gently with the bayonet. Thus admonished, the kidnapper became reluctantly quiet, and was headed up in the most rapid and scientific manner by the accomplished Jake.

“Drive the hoops on tight!” said the delighted Enos, coming from the ravine as soon as he saw his enemy secured. “He can’t git out! he can’t git out! It’s an almighty stout cask; and a fellow stuffed in in that shape, as you’d stuff a sassidge, can’t get no purchase with his legs. Goes to push, he breaks his neck, ye see. I tried it.”

All this time, the drunken kidnapper was struggling and roaring for help. But his struggles only caused the cask to wriggle a little; and his roars were rendered exceedingly small by the aperture through which they came. The bung-hole had been left open to admit the little air necessary to preserve life. Enos put his ear to it.

"I'm dying!" said the buried voice.

"That's it!" said Enos, hopping with delight. "I thought I was too! I thought so too!"

"My neck — my neck is broke!" gasped the bung-hole.

"So was mine! so was mine!" And Mr. Crumlett writhed with vindictive joy.

"Oh, my back!" groaned the man in the cask.

"'Tis hard on the back! I can swear to that: I can take oath to the back-breaking!" chuckled he who had been in, but was now out.

"I smother! I can't breathe!"

"I know! I know! You'll smother more bime by! I did. But ye hain't been rolled yit. The rollin' 's the best part on't. I want to see ye rolled!"

Enos was so excited, that he quite forgot the danger with which the rare fun was accompanied. Cy, although laughing convulsively himself the while, felt obliged to restrain him.

"The other two'll be here soon. Get down into the ravine again, boys. Jake and I'll stick by, and knock 'em softly on the head, if necessary."

Just then, shouts were heard on the hill-top. "There they are!" said Fred. But, instead of two rebels, there were a dozen. A rumor of the sport with which Carter was treating

his friends had got abroad, and the obivalry were flocking to see a Yankee rolled down hill in a cask. Several were in uniform, and carried guns.

“Here’s a scrape!” whispered Cy. “Hide, and keep as still as death!”

The rebels came rushing down the hill with yells and laughter; one shouting, “Whar’s Carter? Whar’s he tuk himself to?”

“Never ye mind Carter!” oried another. “Here’s the cask, with the Yankee in it, by ——! Hear him take on!”

“Lay hold here!” said another; and they tumbled the cask over and over, getting it up from the ravine.

Poor Carter shrieked and swore; but his voice was so muffled, that nobody recognized it.

“It’s me!” he screamed.

“Yes, wo know it’s you, — you damned Yankee speculator!”

“It’s me! — Carter! Carter!”

“He’s calling Carter!” And the rebels gave vent to a chorus of laughter. “But why ain’t Carter on hand?” some one asked again.

“Oh! he’s gone for more whiskey: the more company, the more liquor. Le’s heave the cask to the top o’ the hill, time he gets back.”

"I'm Carter!" said the voice within as the tumbled cask revolved.

"What does he say?"

"He says, 'Damn Carter!'" And again the mob guffawed.

"You idiots! you fools! Oh, curse you!" And the enraged kidnapper, finding that he could not get a hearing, uttered shrieks and oaths.

But, by the time he had been pitched and kicked to the top of the hill, even those had become too faint to have any other effect than to amuse his persecutors. Half dead from suffocation, and the terrible whirling, jamming, and jolting, now round and round, and now heels over head, he had given up at last in utter exhaustion and despair. Even when he had reached the summit, his friends allowed him no peace. They kept up an incessant clamor around him, — riding the cask, drumming on it with stones to the tune of "Yankee Doodle," and now and then — just to prevent him inside from going to sleep, they said — oanting it along the ground, or hurling it end over end.

XXVI.

A STRANGE MEETING.

UNFORTUNATELY, two of the chivalry remained by the ravine in order to receive the cask when it should come down ; and their presence prevented the withdrawal of the boys from their dangerous hiding-place.

“ They’re waiting for Carter to come with the whiskey ! ” said one.

Indeed, the mob just then set up a shout for “ Carter, Carter ! hurry up ! we’re waiting for the liquor ! ” — cries which must have been particularly edifying to the kidnapper in the cask.

By this time, the two rebels by the ravine, becoming impatient, set out to climb the hill. The boys were just creeping out of the bushes, when Daniels arrived with the man who was sent to meet him.

“ This won’t do ! ” he said sternly.

He was evidently not pleased to find his young *protégé* in such company. He helped him at once to his horse, and directed him which way to ride.

“Go at once: I’ll follow as soon as I have spoken with your friends.”

So saying, he started the horse off through the woods, and then descended into the ravine to consult with Cy and the rest.

Whilst they were talking, the mob at the top of the hill, weary of waiting for Carter, launched the cask. It came spinning and rattling down the slope with even greater velocity than before; and, striking the bushes, tore its way completely through them, bumping and bounding end over end amongst the stones to the bottom of the ravine.

The mob came rushing after too closely to permit the party below to escape from the spot undiscovered.

“We can fight the cusses!” said Jake.

“Don’t you think of it!” said Daniels. “Within a mile there are three thousand Confederate troops. To the thickets!”

The boys got as far as they could from the cask, and concealed themselves just as the rebels came yelling and crashing into the ravine in pursuit of their victim.

“Wonder how he liked that!” whispered Enos with a

strange mixture of terror and delight, looking down at the cask, and congratulating himself that it was not his bones inside.

It was the intention of the fugitives to wait until the mob had returned with the cask to the top of the hill, and then to beat a hasty retreat. But this was thwarted by an accident.

The bottom of the cask, striking a rock as it plunged into the ravine, had been stove in. The skull that had been packed into it, had, to all appearances, been likewise broken. The rebels gave a howl of disgust and disappointment, thinking their sport spoiled by the death of the supposed Yankee. They drew him out insensible, like a chicken out of a broken egg-shell. His countenance was so bloody and disfigured, that even his most familiar friends did not recognize it until it had been plunged two or three times into the shallow water of the brook.

“Bring him to, so’s to have the fun of hanging him, if nothing more!” said they, — a remark which made Mr. Crumlett quake horribly in his hiding-place.

“Hold on!” suddenly shouted two or three at once.
“Carter! — it’s Carter himself!”

At the same moment, Carter, gasping a little, rolled up his eyes, and recognized his friends. Their astonishment was extreme. How came *he* in the cask? Was it a playful trick of his? And where was the Yankee?

They poured brandy down the throat of their friend, whom they had come so near immolating by mistake.

“It’s the Yankee’s doings!” shouted furious voices.
“Look for the Yankee!”

The Yankee heard, and his soul thrilled with mortal fear as he shrank into the bushes, which the rebels rushed at once to search.

Fred, riding over an inequality of the ground, was already out of sight. He looked sharply before him, at first, for rebels; but soon began to look still more anxiously behind for his friends. The sun had set: twilight was deepening.

Alarmed at the delay, he checked the horse’s pace, and was riding slowly among the trees, gazing back over his shoulder, and listening to the distant shouts, when a singular incident occurred.

The horse stopped; and Fred, turning quickly, saw standing directly in the path before him the form of a man.

The apparition was startling. For an instant, Fred half believed it was a ghost, so motionless it stood there in the gloom. But, if a ghost at all, it was that of a friend, not a foe; a very sturdy, stout young ghost: and it smiled, — a broad, beaming, unmistakable smile.

“Carl! is that you?”

“Wery certain,” said the spectre, advancing. “And is it you?”

“I’m not so certain,” replied Fred, too much astonished to believe any thing real just then. “Haven’t you been hung?”

“Not wery much!” Carl shrugged and laughed. “I vas not tickled vith the idee to be hung: so I compromised.”

“How so? How did you get away?”

“Just as easy as twice vun is two. You have heard how I vas took up for a shpy and deserter? Vell, it vas queer! And they vas going to hang me so fast! but py and py Colonel Derring comes to see me. It vas in his regiment I vas enlisted for a rebel; and I see it vas no use to deny that. So I gives him the salute, and I says, ‘Colonel, this is wery pad piziness for me!’—‘So bad,’ says he, ‘your neck will be stretched for it to-morrow.’ And I says, ‘My neck vas never so long as a goose-neck; but it is long enough for practical purpose, and I shall be glad for to dispense vith the stretching operation.’ Then he said the court-martial vas going to set on me in vun hour; and I said I vas not unanimous to be set on py anypody. And then he said, ‘Vat a pity I should turn shpy,—a vine vellow like me!’—‘Shpy!’ says I; and I opened my eyes vide, like I vas astonished, till I sushpect they looked like two pig English vatches. Vell, to be prief, I conwince him, if he vill go see my friend the C’heW, he vill learn for sure, that, if I vas a shpy for any-

pody, it vas for the Conwhederates ; and, if I vas a deserter, it vas pecause I vas took prisoner first, and vas afraid to go pack to his regiment after. And he says, ' Would I go pack to the regiment now ? ' and I says, ' That is vat I should be wery delighted to do. ' And he thinks I am such a vine vellow for a soldier, and such a innocent young Tuchman, ye know ! So he sees my friend the Chew, and talks it over vith the court that vas going to set on me ; and it vas conclude I should be put pack in the regiment. But the regiment vas moved forwards to the left centre before Murfreesborough. So I vas put unter guard of a rebel this afternoon, to be sent vair it vas. Now, ven it vas in question to stretch my neck, I vas more in favor to join the regiment ; but, ven it come to joining the regiment, I vas more in favor to run away. So I says to my rebel, ' This marching is such try piziness, ve ought to find something goot to trink. ' And he says, ' I know a place to puy viskey ; but I hain't nary bit of money to pay. ' Wery fortunate, I had sold all my goots, and had a pocketful of money. So I says to him, if he vill go for the viskey, I vill pay for vun pottle. And he says, ' You vait here vile I come pack. ' And I sets me down on the grund, and says, ' You hurry ; for I vas never so furious for viskey since I vas a poy ! ' So he takes the money, and goes. And then I forgets to vait for him : so I jumps up from the grund,

and goes too, — in wery much the wrong direction from that he vas gone. I see some woods, and git lost in 'em quicker as vink. And here I vas lost, and thinking of you I had left vith your sprained ankle to the tawern, and vondering vat I should do for you and for me, ven I sees somepody riding horseback, and it vas you ! ”

Fred, in return, related his own adventures since they parted. Great was the joy of both at their re-union. Meanwhile they moved on to a secluded hollow. Fred remained in the saddle ; Carl sat down on the end of a great log : and thus they talked and waited, while the gloom of the woods deepened around them.

Suddenly a rustling of leaves and bark was heard beside the log. Carl sprang up with extraordinary alacrity for one so phlegmatic as he. Neither he nor his friend had arms ; and he was sure there was a man under him.

He was right. The bark of the log hung loosely from its side, like a curtain : it shook, then lifted ; and out from under it rolled a human form.

It was a young man with sharp Southern features, rifle in hand. He was on his feet in an instant. His garments were torn and filthy, his hair resembled the tangled mane of a wild colt, and the expression of his countenance was haggard and savage.

The boys knew not what to make of him. Was he a spy, who would betray them? Although armed, he made no hostile demonstration; but on the contrary, after regarding Fred fixedly a moment, he stepped forward, and with a wan smile offered him his hand, claiming acquaintance.

"You have got the start of me," said Fred, who could not remember having seen him before.

"That coat and hat — whar did ye get them?" said the young man, with a strange, piercing look.

The voice, and the pertinent allusion to his disguise, roused Fred's recollection.

"Ellsmer! But they said you were burned up in the house!"

"I was in my hole," said the conscript; and, in the suppressed voice of one who has suffered until there is nothing more in fate for him to fear or dread, he told his story.

A wing of the Ellsmer House had been built over the well, making a sort of floorless washroom and woodshed. The guerillas, hunting for the conscript, had looked into the well, of course. But, between the wall of the well and the surrounding earth, there was on one side a cavity covered by the slabs of the curb. One of these slabs could be lifted; and the conscript, whenever he wished to conceal himself, had only to get under it. This was his "hole," which nobody

thought of penetrating in search of him. He was in it when the house was fired; and would soon have been roasted, or at least suffocated, had he not soon discovered his danger, and descended into the well. This was fortunately free from noxious gases; and in its depths he actually remained while the roof was burning above him, and fiery cinders were showered down upon his head and into the water.

“What a terrible situation!” said Fred. “I should think you would have been burned to death, or stifled, as it was.”

“I kept my clothes wet,” said the conscript; “and the stifling — I didn’t mind that, or any thing else, if I could only live to shoot one more rebel. I staid about the old place a couple of days: but I found the scoundrels had left for good; and finally I left too. I’m just hanging around these parts for revenge. Whenever I see a cavalry-man, I have a crack at him. I’ve knocked two over, and haven’t been ketched nary a time yet. When I spied you, I thought you was another, and came nigh sending you my respects in the shape of a bullet. But I’m glad to meet a friend again, — glad to see a friendly face!”

Once more he shook Fred’s hand; but now his touch, and the glitter of his eye, made the boy shudder. His sufferings had unsettled his mind: on the subject of being revenged on his enemies, he was a maniac.

XXVII.

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

CARL, who was on the lookout, announced the approach of hurrying footsteps. Immediately after, several dark forms were seen speeding swiftly through the dim woods. The conscript thought he recognized the rebel uniform; and, dropping beside the log, lay in wait, taking aim across it.

“Don’t shoot, — they are my friends!” said Fred, riding out to meet them.

The first man he encountered was Crumlett. Crumlett, when there was danger in his rear, could run like a stag.

“What is the matter?” demanded Fred.

“We are discovered; that is the matter,” said Cy Thurston coolly.

“And pursued!” said old Joel. “Who’s that there?”

“Friends of mine,” said Fred, — “Carl, that I told you about, and Ellsner. Where’s Daniels?”

“The deuse knows!” said Jake, bringing up the rear of the retreating party. “The rebs set out to search for Crumlett; and, to bluff ’em off, your man steps out, and begins a parley. ‘Soon as I’ve cleared the way for you,’ says he to us, ‘take care of yourselves and the boy: never mind me,’ says he. So, when he had diverted their attention, we started, and might have got off slick enough; but, whilst we was slying out o’ the bushes, Crumlett, finding himself ahead, and meaning to take care o’ number one, no matter what ’come of the rest, undertook to run, and stumbled down the ravine. That sp’ilt it all. The rebs see something was to pay, and pitched into us. ‘Show ’em our heels!’ says old Joel. ‘Show ’em our guns fust!’ says Cy. We jest charged out on ’em once; and you should have seen ’em scatter! That give us the start; but they’ll be after us!”

Jake told his story, trotting beside the horse, as the fugitives swept, Fred and his companions along with them in their retreat.

“But Daniels — we can’t leave him!” exclaimed Fred.

“We must!” said Cy. “All he seemed to care for was you; and, if we get you safe, he’ll be satisfied.”

“Is he a prisoner?”

“Likely, by this time: though, if Crumlett hadn’t be-

trayed us, he would have done well enough ; for he was fooling the rebs splendidly ! ”

Just then, the report of two or three muskets was heard not far behind them, in the woods.

“ Oh, I wish we'd left Crumlett in the cask ! ” groaned Fred.

He looked behind, filled with remorse for the fate of his friend.

“ Shall I fire ? Is't a reb ? Can you see ? ” cried Ellsmer, dancing by his side with poised rifle, and glancing back at some object in the woods.

It was a man running through the hollow they had just cleared.

“ No ! wait ! It is Daniels, — Daniels himself ! ” said Fred, wild with joy.

And in a minute his benefactor was at his side.

“ All right ! ” said he. “ Push on, push on ! ”

“ Was it you they fired at ? ”

“ Yes ; they are close upon us ! ”

“ Will you mount ? ”

“ Not yet, if you can rein the horse among the trees. We can travel faster than he can safely ; and the woods are growing thicker ahead. Take care you don't hit your head or get your foot rubbed ! ”

The darkness increased, the woods were pathless, and many branches grew so low as to imperil continually the rider's face and limbs.

"You must alight, and we must carry you," said Daniels.

"You can't. The rebs are coming up the hill now, and I shall hinder you so. No, no; leave me behind!" cried Fred.

"Scatter and hide!" said old Joel. "They can't find us!"

"There'll be whole regiments on our track in an hour," said Daniels. "These woods will be surrounded, and retreat cut off on every side. Then they'll hunt you at their leisure. You must get out of these woods, or you are lost!"

Fred was obliged to dismount. "Don't carry me," he said; "but just help me a little, and I can get along on one foot." But that was slow business. Just then, the rebels in the rear fired a volley; and the balls came singing and tapping among the boughs, close above their heads.

"Take hold here, one of you!" said Daniels.

Jake — "lazy" Jake no longer — gave his gun to another, and bounded to the boy's side. "Give me his head and shoulders; you carry his feet!" said he: and in-

stantly Fred found himself taken up, and borne through the undergrowth in the arms of two strong men. Carl followed, leading the horse, in order to preserve him for future emergencies.

But these causes of delay gave the pursuers a decided advantage. They were coming in superior numbers over the hill, firing occasionally. Nobody was hit, however; and, as yet, not a shot had been returned.

At length, an open space was reached. It was a hundred yards across; and, before the fugitives had entered the woods on the opposite side, the rebels had emerged in full view, under the soft light of the twilight sky. Two or three fired, this time with clearer sight and more fatal effect. Fortunately, the guns of the rest were empty, and there was no time to reload. One ball went through Cy's clothes, grazing his side; another struck Ellsmer's leg, shivering the bone just below the knee.

"Give 'em one for that!" said Cy. And the boys, rallying on the edge of the woods, sent back a sudden and sharp *crack, crack, crack!* well aimed, blazing out of the bushes, and checking the onset of their pursuers midway in the open space.

Up to this time, Ellsmer, dissuaded by the command of Daniels, who was averse to fighting an overwhelming force,

had refrained from firing a shot. But soon, crawling into the bushes, he prepared to take revenge. He refused to go farther, and told the rest to proceed without him.

“ I can be of use here. Never mind me at all, but make the most of the time while I’m picking off two or three of them cowardly cusses.”

Daniels and Jake hurried on with Fred. Crumlett was ahead, of course. The rest, reluctantly leaving the conscript to his fate, followed in all haste. They heard the report of a rifle in their rear, repeated several times at intervals. That rifle was Ellsmer’s. Bleeding, crippled, and devoted to certain death, he coolly charged his piece, and discharged it again, with deliberate aim, whenever an enemy appeared. The rebels, thinking the whole party had made a stand, retreated to the cover from which they had emerged, bearing their wounded back to a place of safety. Twice they started forth again, confident that the fugitives had resumed their flight; and were again and again driven to shelter by the accurate firing of a single rifle. Fearing to make a bold charge upon an ambushed enemy of unknown strength, they finally made a wide circuit, keeping out of rifle-shot, and entering the woods on Ellsmer’s left. Perceiving this movement, he crawled out into the open space, dragging his maimed limb behind him, and lay flat on the field, until they

re-appeared, dashing with yells at the spot from which his shots had been fired. Once more his rifle rang. The rebels, discovering no enemy, but amazed at getting a shot from the rear, stood baffled and confused a moment, then rushed upon their victim. Several gun-barrels might have been seen converging at a figure on the ground: there was a simultaneous discharge, accompanied by yells of rage; and the conscript received, without a cry, without even a moan, the death he did not fear.

This diversion gained for the fugitives much valuable time. They struck a bridle-road, and Fred was mounted upon the horse. But soon the animal's pace began to flag unaccountably, even with smooth ground under his feet:

“He staggers!” said Fred.

“He has been shot!” added Daniels in his usually calm voice. “The poor brute is bleeding to death!”

“Oh, what a misfortune!” And Fred slipped off into the arms of his friends.

The animal was driven into the bushes, and turned loose to die. Then Daniels called a council of the fugitives. The bridle-path ran in a northerly direction; and their course, up to the moment of striking it, had been nearly north-west. But now he proposed a change.

“You can't hope to escape directly through the Confeder-

ate lines, now that you are discovered and hunted. Besides, you will be looked for in this direction. The shortest way will prove the longest way. Bragg's lines extend from the Lebanon pike to Franklin. Hardee commands the left; and you must get around him, somehow: it is your best chance. Forrest's cavalry covers his flank, and may give you trouble. But, if you attempt a shorter cut to Nashville, you will find Wharton at Nolensville, and Wheeler at Lavergne, and their videttes stretching across the country, not to speak of infantry camps and pickets to be encountered everywhere."

"What, then, do you advise?"

"A straight cut westward. That will throw your pursuers off your track. You will soon strike some of the tributaries of Harpath River. The face of the country will favor your escape. But keep well to the westward: cross the pike and the railroad considerably south of Franklin; then make a wide circuit towards the Charlotte pike."

"You talk as though we knowed the country," said old Joel; "and there ain't a darned one of us knows a foot on't."

"If you accept my plan, I shall go with you as far as you need a guide."

"Agreed!" said Cy, speaking for the rest.

"Well, there is no time to lose!" And the retreat, after this brief breathing-space, was resumed with fresh vigor.

XXVIII.

THE DISCOVERY.



LLSMER'S devotion had saved the little band of fugitives from the harassing attacks of a closely pursuing foe. As rapidly as possible, and as silently as possible, they threaded the mazes of the tangled woods. The evening was cold, gusty, and cloudy. The moon had not yet risen ; and soon the last gleam of twilight had faded, and darkness enveloped the forest.

“ How that man knows which way he's travellin', when ye can skurcely see your hand 'fore yer face, beats all my cal'e'lations ! ” said old Joel.

“ O Tildy, Tildy ! ” groaned Enos Crumlett ever and anon.

“ May be it's all right, ” said Jake, who preferred the excitement of danger to long and tedious travel ; “ but I be hanged if I exac'ly fancy this going the longest way round. ”

“ Moon rises at about half-past eight, boys, ” said Cy.
“ 'Twill be all right then ! ”

The coolness, decision, and quiet, silent power, which distinguished the guide, inspired all with a certain confidence. He said but little ; he shrank from no difficulties ; and he marched like one inured to hardships, and accustomed to finding his way in the darkest night.

He never left Fred's side. Others might become weary of bearing their share of the burden, but not he. "I'll take him now," he would say, as soon as those supporting him began to flag ; and his voice, whenever he spoke, was so calm and cheerful, that nobody seemed to suspect that he could ever tire.

And Fred — what a night it was to him ! How bitterly he regretted his untimely lameness, which made him a burden to his friends ! "I'd give my three-years' pay," he said, "for two good legs to-night !"

Assured that their pursuers had been baffled, the fugitives fell into a more leisurely pace, and avoided the woods which had proved so essential to their safety before. The darkness made progress through those trackless wilds terribly toilsome and painful ; but it favored their flight through by-roads and fields. Fred, who had long insisted on using, at least, the one sound limb that remained to him, was now and then permitted to support himself with his cane, and, with Daniels at his side, hobble a little.

Notwithstanding the pain he suffered and his comparative helplessness, and the danger that encompassed them, he was happy, as gratitude and love make us happy. His heart overflowed, and he talked extravagantly.

“I’m going to live and get rich, and do wonders for all you fellows : see if I don’t ! I’ll give you, Carl, a whole menagerie, to pay you for the animal you have lost. Old Joel, if you’ll stop drinking and swearing, I’ll give you a farm and sixty yoke of oxen. As Jake don’t like to work, he’ll have to become a minister : if he does, I’ll build him a meeting-house. Will you have a tower or a steeple, Jake ? You’ve only to say the word.”

So he promised munificent gifts to all, except Crumlett, for whom he would have nothing, he said, but an empty cask, whenever that gentleman wished to retire from life ; except also Daniels, with whom he did not like to joke. But Daniels said, “What are you going to give me, when you come into your fortune ?”

“You ?” said Fred earnestly. “I’ll tell my mother all you have done for me, and make her your friend forever, as I am ; and that will be worth more than all the trifles I’ve promised the rest.”

“But why reward me more handsomely than you do them ?”

“Because they are my comrades, and they do nothing more for me than I would do for them. But you are a stranger; and yet you have done more for me than they have, — more, a great deal, than I should have done for you, I am afraid. All this trouble just for me! Then there is your poor horse; and, besides, your life is in danger! What right have I to accept all this from one I don’t know?”

“Wait till you do know me better than you do now; then you will not ask that question. Once out of this scrape, and all will be well: nobody will have any thing to regret.”

“Nobody but me!” groaned Enos Crumlett. “O Tildy! what will she think? I sha’n’t da’s to go back to her now! I hain’t had a mouthful to eat since breakfast!” he added pathetically.

“And I hope you won’t have, for seventeen days to come!” said Jake, exasperated at the man’s pusillanimity.

For hours the fugitives pursued their wild journey. At midnight, the clouds blew off. The moon was soaring in the heavens. The wind had gone down, and the air was frosty and still. Even Daniels had not, for a long time, known where they were; for there had been no stars by which to shape their course, and the turnpikes could not be travelled with safety. They halted on the edge of a wood to consult.

Gentlemen,” said Daniels, “we must be considerably

farther north than I supposed. What we mistook for an ordinary cross-road must have been the Murfreesborough and Franklin Road ; and we must have crossed the Nolensville pike north of Hardiman's, instead of south, as I intended."

"Wal, the further north, the better : that's my doctrine, and it's a sound one !" growled old Joel.

"Yes," said Daniels ; "but in order to carry out our original plan, and keep south of Franklin, we shall have to change our course again."

"Which I ain't a-going to do, if I die fust," said Jake decidedly. "If we've been bearing more to the north than we thought, le's make the most on't."

"And trust to luck," added Cy, "to get past the rebel lines when we come to 'em."

"You speak my mind precisely," replied Daniels. "We have thrown our pursuers off the track, and we may possibly get in this side of Franklin. But we must move very cautiously now."

They resumed their flight, proceeding almost due north, across a rolling farm-country. They had not gone half a mile, however, when they discovered the fire of an extensive encampment, and saw fields of white tents gleaming in the moonlight.

"That must be on the Nolensville and Franklin Road,"

whispered Daniels. "We must keep to the west now, or camp down soon; for it's too light altogether to think of running the gantlet of the enemy's pickets to-night."

"Let's put a mile or two between us and the rebels, anyhow," said Cy.

This was deemed good advice, and woods and hills soon intervened between them and the Confederate camp-fires. For an hour longer they plodded on, and then a halt was determined upon. Travel by night over a rough and unknown region is perplexing and laborious in the extreme. All were weary: some were ready to drop down upon the ground with fatigue. Fred was suffering intense pain in his foot, and was exhausted with the efforts he had made to walk.

They passed a sheltered little dell, and came to the foot of a hill, crowned by woods, stretching in irregular long black lines against the western sky.

"I think I know these woods," said Daniels. "They are extensive. It is too far to go around them; and we may as well wait for daylight to get through them."

They climbed a steep, rocky crest, and entered the edge of the forest.

"Here's a good place to camp down," said Fred. "We can keep a lookout from this ridge, and have all the woods beyond to dive into, if we see danger coming."

All threw themselves upon the ground, too weary to care much where they lay. Daniels had preserved his blanket, which he once more shared with the boy, in whose welfare he took so deep an interest.

"I am too tired even to thank you!" murmured Fred; and, almost before he had ceased speaking, he fell asleep.

For an hour more, he was drowned in utter oblivion. Not even the pain he suffered could interrupt that blissful repose. The last thing he remembered was his kind friend putting his arm affectionately about him; and the first thing he observed on awaking was, that that friend was gone.

But somebody was near, whispering to him, and gently shaking his arm.

"Wake up, vill ye? and say nothing; but come vith me vile I show you."

"What is it, Carl?" said Fred, rousing himself, amazed at the strange awaking.

"I vill tell you; but I vas not vishing to tell the rest, because he is your friend."

"Who is? Daniels? Where is he?"

"You shall see vith your own eyes," said Carl.

Leaving their comrades sleeping, they crept softly among the trees, over roots and logs, to the brow of the crest. Here Fred became aware of a murmur of voices below; and ad-

vancing, as Carl drew him by the hand, to the edge of a rock which jutted clear from the fringing shrubs of the wood-side, he looked down, and saw a bright fire burning in the little dell beneath. Beyond the fire were horses picketed; around it were men lying, rolled up in their blankets, on the ground; and on a log near by sat two men conversing amicably. One of them had an immense beard, long hair, a brigandish hat, and very brigandish pistols: it was Captain Gruffley. The other was Fred's mysterious friend Daniels.

"It is he?" whispered Carl. "I thought so; but I was not quite sure. I had not seen him by goot daylight, you know. But I vake up sudden; and I hear somepody step, step, so shly py my head: then I hear woices off here; and I say to myself, 'Old vellow, I vollow you soon!' So I vollow, and I see the rebs down there; and this man comes from vun side, and he shakes hands vith the captain hearty; and then they make a sofa of that log, vith a blanket for cushions, and have social times, vich I vas not wery pleased to see," added Carl.

"It is strange!" said Fred. "But why wasn't you pleased?"

"Pecause, I vill tell you now all. That man, your friend, is secesh: he is rebel all to his pack-pone, and vun tam shpy!"

Fred felt a strange sickness strike to his heart.

“Are you sure?” he said faintly.

“Wery, wery sure!” answered Carl earnestly. “Vun time before now I have see him, and I know.”

“When? where?” breathed Fred in an agony of suspense.

“It vas ven I vas to General Pragg’s headquarters.”

“He said he saw you there!”

“Yes, and I saw him too; and he vas showing to the officers — vat you think? — some maps of Nashville fortifications; and he vas explaining how they vas to be attacked for success. I vas instructed to spot all such vellows I see; and I spot him. It is no mishtake. It is against my principle to shwear; but vat I call him is vun tam shpy!”

Carl uttered these words with a heat and vehemence very unusual with him. Fred was astonished. All his former doubts as to this man’s good faith returned with overwhelming force. It was a moment of torture to him.

“O Carl! I didn’t know how I was beginning to like him! And now to think he is a traitor and a spy! It must be — it was he who betrayed our pickets: he guided the rebels; and then, from remorse, I suppose, because I am so young, he helped me to escape! Oh, see! he is pointing this way now!”

“ He has got us in a trap ! ” said Carl ; “ and he is telling the captain how he shall catch us . ”

“ But why, after doing so much to help us away, — why will he give us up now ? ”

“ He was not vishing to help any but you ; and now he will fix it to save you, if he gives up the rest . ”

“ But I will not be saved by him ! ” said Fred with bursting indignation. “ Owe my life to a traitor to my country ? Never ! I go with the boys ; and their fate shall be my fate ! ”

“ Vell, vat shall ve do ? ”

“ Wait. Let’s watch a little longer. I hate to tell the boys ! Oh, I wish I had never seen him ! ” And Fred’s heart was wrung with grief.

XXIX.

OLD JOEL'S HATCHET.



HEY watched until Daniels and the captain, arising, shook hands again cordially, and separated. The captain then stretched himself upon the ground by the fire; while Daniels, instead of returning directly to the hill, disappeared in the shadows of the moon, below its base.

“He is your friend,” said Carl: “you shall do vat you please. I say nothing to nopody.”

Weighed down by the terrible responsibility thus cast upon him, and filled with bitter and conflicting emotions, Fred crept back to his bed. He found his comrades still sleeping. Should he suffer them to sleep on, unwarned of the threatening danger? He could not do that; and yet, still secretly hoping, against all reason and proof, that Daniels was not the spy he seemed, he could not make up his mind to denounce him until he knew more.

“Who is that?” said a low voice, —the voice of Cy Thurston, who had been awakened by the movements of the boy.

“Cy,” whispered Fred, “there’s rebel cavalry bivouacked just below the hill! Carl discovered them; and I have just been to take a look.”

“On which side?”

“On the side we came up.”

“Then they have arrived since we did, and they must be on our track!”

“So I think!” said Fred. “Don’t raise any alarm, but go and look.”

Cy went to take a peep at the enemy. Fred sat down where he had lain before, instinctively discarding the blanket of the man to whom he felt that he already owed too much. There he waited, with intense anxiety, until Cy’s return.

“Boys,” said Cy, waking his sleeping comrades, “wake up! Make no noise, — not a word; but move!”

“What’s the trouble, what’s the trouble?” said Enos, starting up wildly, “I thought it was Tildy punchin’ me!”

“Are you awake, Jake? Stirring, Joel? Do you hear me boys, all of you?” said Cy. “Well, I have to tell you there’s rebel cavalry within forty rods! Where’s Daniels?”

“Here!” said Daniels, who had silently returned. “I have just made the same discovery, and was coming back to tell you.”

Fred trembled violently: he was on the point of rising up, and denouncing this man.

“What do you say? Shall we move?—and which way?” said Cy.

“You are a little too near such dangerous neighbors,” replied Daniels with his customary quietness of tone. “But you need not go far. No doubt, they have been sent here to be on the lookout for you. They have sentinels posted along the base of the hill. It seems it has been expected that you might pass this way; and they are waiting for you now, not supposing it possible that you have already passed, and got beyond them.”

“They must be wery wigilant to come pat after us like that,” said Carl. “Vill you tell, sir, vat for they sushpect ve shall be coming this vay?”

“Probably they have sent out to cut you off in many directions. This party happens to arrive here, where it was very reasonable to suppose you might pass, if you knew the country.”

“Vich you happen to know it, and vich ve have you to thank for pringing us,” said Carl, so dryly, that only Fred, who knew his thoughts, perceived the irony.

“It is just daybreak,” said Daniels. “You had better not think of getting out of these woods. You’re safer here than anywhere else. Move on quietly a little farther: take Fred with you. I’ll stay, and see what the Dixie boys do at daylight, and warn you.”

Without confusion, without noise or haste, the party retired farther into the woods, leaving Daniels to keep watch.

“This will do: let’s wait here,” said Cy.

“No, no! further, further!” Fred insisted.

So they kept on; but, in a little while, not only Cy, but a strong majority with him, declared they ought not to proceed another rod until they heard from Daniels.

“I have a particular reason for insisting,” replied Fred. “Go a little farther, and I’ll tell you: then you’ll agree that I was right. Won’t they, Carl?”

Carl, upon whose shoulder he was leaning as he hobbled along after his friends, knew his determination, and answered confidently, —

“He is right, — wery much so! Keep along to a goot sitting-down place, and ve vill tell you a shtory vill make you shtare!”

“Now, what is it?” said Jake, when at length they had reached a log, upon which Fred seated himself; while all stood around him in the dim early twilight of the woods, eager to hear his reasons.

Fred took his lame ankle on his knee, drew a deep breath of anxiety and reluctance, then said in a suppressed voice, —

“Boys, I have made a discovery. That man is what some of you at first suspected. He betrayed you once, and he will again. He is a rebel spy!”

“Told you so! told you so in the beginning!” said old Joel with firm triumph. “And I hain’t changed my mind no time; though I didn’t want to hurt Fred’s feelin’s by sayin’ so.”

“But, Fred, what has converted you?”

And Fred related all he knew. The doubt and astonishment with which his comrades listened at first changed rapidly to certainty, and then to furious resentment.

“Why didn’t you tell us at once?”

“Because I was afraid you would kill him.”

“And why not kill him? — the dog!”

“No doubt he deserves it,” said Fred; “but I couldn’t — I couldn’t, traitor though he is, after all his kindness to me. Oh, don’t blame me, boys!”

“And you meant he should get away from us?”

“Yes, or that we should get away from him. Hanging him would do no good, and you couldn’t keep him a prisoner. All we can do now is just to take care of ourselves.” Fred, gulping down his emotions stoutly, and forgetting all

pain, rose from the log. "We've no time to lose. We should be miles from here by sunrise, — where not even he can find us!"

"I rather guess the boy is about half right," said Jake. "He means well, anyhow. But I be hanged if I'll stir a step further till I lay my claw on that scoundrel's throat. I'm going back to find him."

"Don't ye do it, don't ye do it!" remonstrated old Joel. "Don't run no resks o' that kind. Better let him alone."

"Better for us, I suppose," replied Jake. "But I feel it's a duty to stop the mischief he's doing the country. Don't you, Cy?"

Fred trembled; for he knew that Cy, such was his influence over Jake, had but to speak a decided "Yes" or "No" to determine Daniels's fate.

"I think he ought to be hung," said Cy in a low, firm voice, after a moment's solemn thought.

"Besides," added Jake, "I'm such an unredeemed wretch, I own up to a love of vengeance. I'm willing to run some risk, and take a little trouble, to be even with the traitor. Shall I go back for him?"

"Yes; and I will go with you," said Cy.

Fred's heart sank with misgivings and remorse for what he had done.

“ Oh, don't go ! ” he entreated. “ I shall be sorry I told you. I can never forgive myself or you, if you do, — boys, boys ! ”

But they would not listen ; and, even while he pleaded, there arose in his heart, with strange inconsistency, the feeling that perhaps he ought not to consult his own personal wishes, but, for his country's sake, to let justice be done upon this man.

He sat down upon the log, and covered his face with his hands, writhing with anguish of spirit ; whilst his companions stood around, silent, sullen, relentless, yet pitying him.

Then the boy, controlling his passion, tried to pray, — a voiceless, inward prayer, — his face still covered from the cold and shadowy dawn and from the eyes of his companions. So he calmed himself ; and into his heart stole a glimmer of light, like that from the brightening east diffusing itself through the woods, — a gleam of trust, of faith in that Providence his mother had taught him to revere, and which had watched over him so wonderfully hitherto.

“ It vill be all right, — all right, you see ! ” said Carl, patting him kindly on the shoulder.

It seemed as if the Power to which he prayed had inspired Carl to speak these comforting words.

“ Yes, I believe so ! ” exclaimed Fred manfully, uncover

ing his face. "I have done what I thought best. Now, happen what may, I believe it will be all right."

"There they come!" said old Joel, seeing two tall forms approaching, and looking eagerly for a third.

But there was no third. Fred leaped up, and gazed; and his heart leaped up also with gratitude and joy, when he saw Cy and Jake returning without the spy.

"Couldn't find him!" said Cy. "He has probably suspected something, and made off. Now, boys, for a double-quick through these woods before the rascals are after us!"

"Any thing for exercise!" grumbled old Joel, stirring himself. "I'm nigh about froze."

"I've ketch'd the thunderin'est cold!" said Mr. Crumlett aguishly. "My legs are so stiff!—don't leave me behind, Tildy!—I mean, gentlemen!" Amid the gloom and terrible uncertainty of that dreary dawn, he had been thinking ruefully of her at home; and the name slipped from his tongue before he was aware.

"I can stand the freezings," observed Carl; "but I am wery much awerse to starwation. I have nothing but the east vind in my pelly since all night; and it is lonesome!"

"If I had only two good legs now," said Fred, "I shouldn't care for cold or hunger either.—I'm so glad you didn't catch him, Cy!"

"So am I!" Cy answered with a stern smile; "for it's no trifling matter to hang a man."

The woods brightened with the morning light as they passed through. The foliage, which would have overshadowed them with its heavy canopy during the earlier months, was lying on the ground, rustling under their feet. A few brown and withered oak-leaves fluttered from their boughs, among^d which the startled crows were beginning to caw; and there was occasionally a colony of pines, breathing out their sweet odors upon the frosty air: but, with these exceptions, all the forest-tops were bare

"Nuts, boys! nuts!" at length cried Jake. "We sha'n't starve now! Yonder's hickories; and we can do as the squirrels do."

"Shagbarks!—that's what we call 'em in Vermont!" exclaimed Enos, running to look for nuts among the leaves.

"Walnuts!—that's vat they call 'em in Pennsylvany, vair the Hapgoots live," observed Carl.

"Little did I think I should ever go a-nutting in secesh woods!" chuckled Fred. "Joel's hatchet will be just the thing to crack them. You can send some of these to be society for that lonesome stomach of yours, Carl!"

"Yes! nuts makes verry excellent prowisions!" And Carl filled his pockets.

“Gather now, and crack afterwards,” said Cy to old Joel, who was beginning to use his hatchet on a log.

“Oh, yes, Joel! wait till we come to a good safe place to crack and eat,” added Fred.

“I shall crack jest where I’m a mind to, and eat jest when I’m a mind to, for all anybody,” growled the old man, who could never bear that the young should dictate to a veteran of his wisdom and experience.

The surface of the log was rotten; and his fingers were so stiff with the cold, that he pounded them about as often as he did the nuts. The others, in the mean time, scrambling over the ground and raking among the leaves, filled their pockets.

“Come, old fellow! we are too much exposed here!” And his companions, hastening on, looked out eagerly for thickets in which to conceal themselves and enjoy their providential breakfast.

Joel, determined to have something to nibble by the way, continued cracking the nuts and his numb fingers in the most stolid and obstinate manner, until, glancing up at length, he discovered that he was entirely alone. The crows cawed in the high tree-tops, and flapped their black wings in the silvery light. A squirrel, coming head foremost down a tall oaken trunk, and perceiving an intruder robbing him of

his winter's stores, stopped at half-mast, cocked up his little head, jerked his tail angrily over his back, and scolded most vehemently, filling the woods with chattering echoes. He was so near, that the old man believed he could hit him with his hatchet.

“I can make jest a little fire in a hollow somewhere, and roast him! By time, won't it be nice!”

His mouth watering with the delightful anticipation, — forgetting his absent companions, or thinking only of his triumph over them when he should show his prize, and refuse to share it, in order to punish them for running away from him, — forgetting all danger from the enemy also, — he stepped carefully forward, poising his weapon, until within three or four paces of the trunk to which the saucy squirrel clung. He looked up with a smile of confidence. The squirrel looked down, spitting defiance. Suddenly the hatchet, swung swiftly over Joel's head, slipped from his hand, and sped straight towards the little stranger.

The tomahawk of a practised Iroquois could scarcely have made a better shot. Unfortunately, however, Joel had failed to take into consideration the squirrel's remarkable talent for dodging. By the time the hatchet reached the spot where the chattering head had been, head and body and tail had disappeared on the other side of the trunk. That was the last Joel saw of his fine breakfast.

And the hatchet — where was that? It had gone up, and failed to come down again. In fact, it had quickly and adroitly taken the squirrel's place; and there it clung, fifteen feet from the ground, looking down at the astonished Joel almost as intelligently as the squirrel had done before. You see, there was another important contingency for which the astute old man had neglected to make due allowance, — the possibility of a hurled hatchet sticking where it hits.

“Wal!” he muttered, “that didn't happen edsac'ly's I ca'c'lated!” With a sudden feeling of consternation, he looked for his absent friends, and seemed to realize the danger of being separated from them altogether, and the folly of his own obstinate conduct. To rejoin them without his hatchet, however, would be too great a mortification. So he hastily searched for clubs to throw at the handle, in the hope to dislodge it. But his ill success in discharging these missiles proved that he was either becoming nervous, or that his previous capital shot at the squirrel had been the result, not of skill, but of chance.

“By time!” he exclaimed, — appropriately swearing by the precious thing he was losing so much of, — “I can't bring the pesky thing down in all day, at this rate! But I can shin up the tree in a jiffy!”

Joel had been a good climber in his youth; but it was

many years since he had had occasion to "shin up" a trunk like that. He over-estimated his agility. If the exercise of cracking nuts and throwing clubs had not warmed him, he was destined to get warm now. Claspings tight the trunk with arms and legs, he succeeded with fearful toil, panting and sweating prodigiously, in working his way up hitch by hitch; that is, inch by inch.

"I'm plaguy glad the boys ain't none on 'em here to laugh at me!" thought he, conscious of the ridiculous figure he cut.

There was a spectator, however, who witnessed the feat. Attracted by the cawing of the crows, or the scolding of the squirrel, or the thumping of the clubs, — or perhaps by all these evidences of a man in the woods, — he approached the spot, and reached the foot of the tree just as Joel reached the hatchet.

The old man had been too busy to keep a lookout as he climbed, and his own toilsome struggles and heavy breathing had drowned the sounds of footsteps in the leaves. But having, with a jerk, disengaged the hatchet, he glanced over his shoulder to see where it should fall, as he was about to drop it. Instead of dropping the hatchet, he came near dropping himself, so great was his amazement to see a well-remembered face looking up at him with calm eyes from below.

It was the face of Daniels, the spy.

XXX.

DANIELS.



REAT was the vexation of Joel's companions when they at length halted for him to come up with them, and he did not appear.

"Leave him behind, and good enough for him, if a man will be a fool!" said Enos Crumlett, strenuously opposed to incurring any danger for the sake of another.

"If we had applied Mr. Crumlett's idea of justice to his own case, I'm afraid we should have had but little of his interesting company all this time!" said Fred.

"Well, boys," said Cy, "we are nearer the enemy than I wish; but, since the old man is missing, we may as well crack a few nuts whilst we're waiting."

"Hello!" cried Jake, who had gone on to reconnoitre: "we're 'most out of the timber on this side!"

Cy went forward to join him; and they soon returned, announcing the discovery of a barren field overlooking an ex-

pause of country, and clumps of low savins on the edge of it, offering conveniences for concealment and nut-cracking.

“There’s a ledge to crack on, and little stones we can use in place of the old man’s hatchet,” said Cy. “We can see if there’s anybody coming for a mile on that side; and one of us can keep watch on this.”

The opening was on the north side of the woods; and Fred, hobbling near enough to look out, saw a large undulating field, covered with white frost, and gilded here and there with rays of the newly risen sun. In a still valley below, the roofs and gable-ends of a few scattered and half-hidden dwellings were to be seen, with now and then a thin wreath of smoke rising slowly from an out-door chimney, and blending with the pale-blue morning haze that hung over all the landscape. In the distance were more woods and hills, dimly glorious in the sunlight and mist.

But Fred’s eye was quickly diverted from the beauty of the scene by an alarming incident. By a road that wound through the little village, and around towards the west side of the woods, galloped a squad of cavalry-men.

“See! — the rebels! They are surrounding us!”

“Sure as guns!” said Jake. “Your friendly spy, Fred, has done for us!”

“If ve could have the pleasure to hang him from a sour

apple-tree first, then we could fight with good stomachs; for I suspect fighting is in the programme now!" And Carl's broad, brown features lighted up belligerently.

- "Jake and I will make a reconnoissance on the west side, and look after those fellows," said Cy.

They departed, gliding swiftly among the trees.

"The rest of you be cracking our breakfast," said Carl; "and I will squint my eye out for old Joel and the rebs. Maybe I shall climb a tree to get a wiew."

He also disappeared. The others knelt, or sat tailor-fashion, about the ledge, and cracked the nuts they had gathered, and chatted in low voices, with as much apparent unconcern as if they were on a mere pleasure excursion in Northern woods, — all but Mr. Crumlett, who kept starting up, and listening, and saying, "O Lord! we shall all be killed!" whilst ravenously eating.

"I say, old Crumlett!" exclaimed Fred indignantly, "you're the only man that's eaten a nut. All the rest of us are waiting to share with the other fellows when they come back; but you think only of yourself."

"It ain't of myself: it's of my wife and children, my dear wife and children!" replied the affectionate husband and father, cutting open a shell with trembling fingers holding a jack-knife. "I must save my life for them, — for them!"

and he snapped up the meat with his teeth, glancing wildly around once more for the enemy. "If I should starve, what *would* come o' Tildy and the twins? There! there!" — he leaped to his feet, prepared to run like an Indian for their sakes, — "the bushwhackers! they're comin'!"

"Vait vile I show you if I am a pushvacker!" and Carl's genial countenance peered through the savins. "I have got some sass to go vith your try preakfast," — emptying a hatful of persimmons on the rock.

"Jerushy! where j'e git them?" And Enos made a lunge to seize a handful of the fruit. But Carl quietly put up his hat, and caught Mr. Crumlett's face in it.

"Wery sorry to intervere vith your polite intentions, Mr. Grumblett! But you shall not crab! These is for all the vellers, ven they come; and I have not eat vun; and you shall not, by swow!"

"You can't help my eating that, now I've got it in my hand!" said Enos, who had secured a single persimmon, which he tossed into his mouth (for Tildy's sake and the twins'), before Carl could hinder him.

"I shall help it some!" And the sturdy lad, leaping upon Mr. Crumlett's back as he turned from him, munching the fruit, to separate the seeds from the pulp, bore him to the ground, where he held him in a stooping posture, with his

fingers at his throat. "Shpit it out! as the little girl said to the bull-dog that had her doughnut. I shall joke you till you do. And make haste; for I must go pack to my post."

Mr. Crumlett, notwithstanding the urgent case of wife and children, yielded to Carl's still more urgent persuasion, and sacrificed the persimmon.

"Thank ye! wery much opleeged!" said Carl, smiling grimly, when he saw the stolen fruit ejected. His fingers relaxed their stern grip; and Enos, terrified, and ghastly blue from the throttling, arose to his feet, picking up his hat. "Now I go: and, if any of you see this wery comical individual do any more of his funny tricks" (for the boys were laughing convulsively at poor Enos), "you shall tell me ven I come pack; and, if it is another plum, I shall prewail on him to shpit it up, though it is three times swallowed."

"Darned fool!" muttered Mr. Crumlett, pressing his hat into shape after Carl retired, and feeling of his windpipe. "I believe he'd have killed me jest for one persimmon! I never had sich a tiger-cat's claws at my gullet in all my born days!"

Carl returned to his persimmon-tree, and was filling his hat again, when he discovered two men walking through the distant woods. He said nothing, but crept back softly into the savins.

“ Fred Rivers ! I wish to shpeak with you apout something wery particular.”

Fred promptly left his nut-cracking, and followed his friend, little dreaming what a shock the cool-headed Carl was preparing for him.

“ An animal I have discovered ; and I vant to ask your adwice.”

“ What animil ? — where ? ” said Mr. Crumblett, believing Carl had found something nicer still than the persimmons, and meaning to have his share.

He was starting to accompany the boys, when Carl stopped him.

“ Mr. Grumblett, you are not invited to the show. You shtay vair you are, or I rap you.” So Enos staid.

“ Now, Fred, my poy, my wision is not so goot for long ranges as some, and I vant you with your eyes to tell me vat for an animal it is. Look through the voods there, and see. Is its name Joel ? ”

“ Old Joel, sure as the world ! ” exclaimed Fred, delighted at the sight of the lost old man.

“ And now you see another pibed coming from the hollow : tell me if I see right, and if its name is Shpy Daniels ? ”

“ Oh ! ” Fred could only utter a groan ; and his heart sunk within him like lead.

“I have been to cattle-shows, and I have seen animals I was gladder to see than him! I was hoping he was cleared out. Now, as I have said vonce this morning, he is your friend; and I shall do vat you say. If ve call to Joel, he vill come too: and it vill be sorry times for him if he gets into the hands of our vellows.”

“He is looking for me!” said Fred. “Oh! when he got away once, why didn’t he stay? Joel is hunting for us too; and we shall lose him again, if we don’t call. See! they are going off towards the other side of the woods!”

“And you vill feel pad if something wery uncomfortable should happen to your friend?”

“I should, I should! But, Carl, do as you think best. If the rebels are surrounding us, and he betrayed us to them, why, then, if he was my own father, he ought to suffer, and I ought to be willing!”

“Pesides, ven ve have him in our hands, and the rebs are coming too close for our fancy, it may be some adwantage to have their man.”

“Yes, yes!” said Fred, his spirit rising up stern and resolute within him. “We must take him! We must put it out of his power to do any more mischief!”

“Then, shall I shtand up, and fizzle?” Carl meant to say “whistle.”

“ No : I will ! ”

“ That is goot : it vill be more surer to fetch him. ”

Fred rose up by the persimmon-tree, and whistled, and waved his cane.

“ Vell done ! ” said Carl. “ That brings him ! And look how old Joel hurries with his hatchet ! ”

Full of grief, but determined ; looking pale, but inexorable, — Fred sat down by the tree, and waited for the two to come up. Carl in the mean time crept into the savins, and warned the others.

“ Well, Fred ! ” said Daniels gravely, bending his keen, magnetic eyes on the boy, with an expression kindly but searching : “ well, my boy ! what does this mean ? ”

“ I don’t know, sir, ” replied Fred coldly : then with a look, and in a tone sorrowful, reproachful, stubborn, he added, “ I ask you, sir ! what does it mean ? ”

“ If you think I intended to desert you, you are altogether mistaken, ” said the spy. “ But it looks as if you had intended to give me the slip. ”

“ Yes, sir ! ” — Fred rapped the ground nervously with his cane, — “ yes, sir ! I did intend to. ”

“ You think you can do better without me, then ? ” And Daniels smiled, — a strange, significant smile.

“ I think, sir, we could all have done very much better without you from the first. ”

“Then it will be useless for me to propose what I came to propose,” he said, folding his arms, and looking down with a disappointed face at the boy.

“I am willing to hear any thing you have to say,” Fred answered sullenly, yet with a gleam of hope, — a feeble hope, that this man, for whom he was beginning to feel such gratitude and affection, might yet say something to clear himself from the terrible shadow of suspicion that rested on him.

Daniels got down upon one knee, and pretended to be picking up some persimmons, as he said confidentially in Fred’s ear, —

“You do wrong to blame me for what has happened. You are in a precarious situation here, I know. With that lame foot of yours, I don’t see how you can escape, or how your comrades can get safely away with such a burden on their hands. Now, I happen to know the officer in command of the Confederate cavalry here” —

“I notice you always say ‘*Confederate* cavalry, *Confederate* government,’” interrupted Fred. “I say *rebels*. But they are particular friends of yours, I perceive !”

Daniels regarded him in silent astonishment a moment, and went on in an unchanged tone of voice, as if no interruption had occurred.

“I have a chance acquaintance with the officer ; and through

his influence I can get you off, put you on a horse, and perhaps carry you through the lines."

"And my friends here?"

"They must take care of themselves. I would help them more, if I could; but to relieve them of you is the most I can do."

"Well, sir, I will call them, and put it to vote: -and, if they say I ought to accept your offer, I will accept it; but otherwise I scorn it. If they are tired of me, I'll rid them of my company; but, if not, I'll stick to them, and die with them, if necessary, before I will degrade myself by receiving any more assistance from a rebel spy! Carl! boys!"

As Fred called, the boys rushed out. At the same moment, old Joel, who had been standing near, waiting for a fitting opportunity to perform an act of valor he had long meditated but feared to undertake, sprang upon Daniels, and grasped his shoulder with his left hand, whilst he brandished the hatchet with his right.

"You're my prisoner!"

Daniels scarcely changed countenance as he rose from his knee, and looked the old man fixedly in the face.

"Don't be a fool!" he said in a tone of stern authority. And with two motions of his hands, rapid as the play of a wild beast's paws, he threw off the grasp from his shoulder, and wrenched the hatchet from Joel's hand.

Scarcely had he done so, however, when Carl, who had crept behind him, served him as he had previously served Enos, — pounced upon his back, and throttled him. The rest rushed to his assistance. One seized the hand that had seized the hatchet, another secured its fellow; and as Daniels, choked and embarrassed as he was, flung his adversaries about him with the strength and violence of an athlete, there came suddenly a bayonet to his breast. Even Mr. Crumlett aided, or sought to aid, in the capture, by standing afar off, and exclaiming, “Ketch him! hang on to him! for God’s sake, hang on!” while he held himself in readiness to run for his life, in case he had seen so dangerous an adversary break loose again.

But Daniels, powerful and resolute as he was, could not shake himself free from the relentless clutches of his captors.

“Don’t hurt him! don’t!” cried Fred, restraining the man with the bayonet. “He gives up. Let go, Carl: he is safe!”

Indeed, the spy had ceased to struggle, seeing the utter futility of his efforts to release himself; and now, surrounded and held, but not thrown, slightly flushed, and breathing quick, but smiling quietly nevertheless, he glanced around on his antagonists.

“ Well, what of it? You have got me. I am not equal to half a dozen : I am in your hands. But you might have had me with less trouble : for I have no wish to get away ; only I don't like forcible restraint ! ”

“ As the fox said, ven he found himself shut up in the hen-coop : ‘ This is just the place vair I vas vishing to be, ’ says he ; ‘ only if you vill be so goot as open the vinder for a little more air. How wery comfortable ! ’ says he. So madam hen, she opens the vinder, and out hops the fox. But ve shall not open the vinder ; and so you shall not hop out. Hillo ! there is Cy : just in time ! ” cried Carl.

Grim and pleased looked the tall Illinoisan as he drew near, and stood in his rebel uniform, with his rebel musket, and observed what his comrades had done.

“ Happy to meet you, sir ! A little while ago, I was almost glad you were gone ; but now I hope to cultivate your acquaintance still further. Boys, we have certainly been betrayed. The rebels are posting scouts on the west side of us, and forming a complete line around us. They will close in upon us when every thing is ready ; and we shall have to fight like fury, or surrender. Meanwhile, let's quietly deal with this man according to his deserts. ”

“ Don't do any thing rashly ! ” Fred interceded.

“ No, ” said Carl : “ ve vill go only on proof. Make a court-martial to sit on him. ”

“Gentlemen,” said Daniels with calm dignity, touched with a certain cool contempt for his captors, “you only show your ignorance and folly by these proceedings. I have been actuated by a sincere desire to serve you; and this is my reward! You are like the cat that bites the hand that is binding up her wounds. You will see it some time, and be ashamed of this. And you, Alfred, especially, — I thought you had more confidence in me. I believed you had more heart and more good sense than to join in such a silly piece of business!”

His voice changed, and there was a degree of tenderness in his manner; and contempt gave place to sad disappointment, as he addressed the boy; and the boy, called by his name almost for the first time since his mother sent him from her with blessings and tears, was deeply moved. He trembled as he replied, —

“It is not a silly business, sir; but altogether too serious. I hope from my heart that you can clear yourself from the charges against you: for you have shown kindness to me; and I — I wish you well.”

“Be sure I can clear myself.” Daniels smiled, as if well pleased to see the boy’s emotion. “But I must first know what the charges are.”

“You shall, and have every chance to defend yourself,”

said Cy. "But understand, once for all, there's to be no trifling. We have no time to throw away. It is a matter of life or death to you, sir, and may be to us. We have every reason to believe you are a rebel spy, and that you have betrayed us. Prove the contrary, and I for one will thank you for taking a disagreeable job off our hands. That job is, to hang you if you fail!"

"What! murder me?" And Daniels shook his head with a smile which was half a sneer.

"No, not murder; for it will be a deed of necessity. If we could convey you a prisoner to our lines, then you should have a regular trial, and die if proved guilty. But we can't have a prisoner on our hands: you see that. So, as Carl suggests, you shall have a trial here, — slightly irregular, it may be: but I'll see that justice is done; and, if proved guilty, you die here."

Cy spoke with a dignity and solemnity which surprised his companions, and which all admired the more, because they had never suspected what a noble and splendid spirit was in him. They knew his bravery; but that passed for nothing extraordinary with men who were equally brave. Now, however, they saw him assume the stern and impressive character of a judge.

Daniels was conveyed to the concealment of the savins,

and made to sit down upon the ledge, surrounded by a strong guard of his captors.

“I see you have your nuts cracked and fruit gathered,” he remarked with philosophical coolness. “Allow me to suggest that you proceed to breakfast, and try me afterwards. Men are more apt to exercise patience and do justice on a full stomach than when exasperated with hunger.”

“As you please,” said Cy. “But understand, if we are attacked prematurely, or if you attempt to escape, we kill you without a trial.”

“Very well. I am in your power. You will do what you like.”

“Breakfast it is, then. By the time we have eaten, Jake will be here. Help yourself, stranger: you shall not be tried and hung on an empty stomach.”

“Thank you: you are very thoughtful!” And the spy ate as freely and unconcernedly as any.

Carl brought more persimmons; others cracked the rest of the nuts. They guarded their prisoner, and kept a lookout for the enemy, while they feasted. Before the repast was ended, Jake arrived.

He, too, looked grim and pleased at sight of the captive; and he, too, brought evidence that their presence in the woods was known to the enemy. He had penetrated to their south-

ern edge and seen scouts galloping along a cross-road on that side also.

“Time’s a precious article ; and I move we proceed to the trial at once !” said Cy.

“Hang him without a trial, I say !” exclaimed Enos, fearful of delay.

“Mr. Grumblett, you please let your wittles stop your mouth,” said Carl dryly. Then, addressing the rest : “I move Cy Thurston is appointed judge-advocate of this court-martial.”

The motion was carried unanimously, and Cy gravely nodded acceptance of the office.

“The detail for the court is as follows,” — the judge-advocate proceeded at once to declare : “Jake Evarts, Joel Bangs, George Weston, Medad Parker, Fred Rivers, and Lyman Waterhouse. Gentlemen, hold up your right hands. You do solemnly swear to perform your duty on this court-martial to the best of your ability, without prejudice, fear, or favor : so help you, God.”

The oath was taken. Then the judge-advocate said, “Jake Evarts, being the first in rank, is president of this court-martial. Mr. President, you will please administer the oath to the judge-advocate.”

Cy took the oath, and continued : —

“If the person about to be tried objects to any member named being allowed to sit, he is at liberty to state his objections.”

“Gentlemen,” said the spy, with more emotion than he had hitherto betrayed, “I see you are determined to carry out your purpose to a desperate extremity. You therefore compel me to make known a secret which I had the best reasons for wishing kept locked in my own breast.”

Fred’s heart gave a leap of glad expectancy. “Oh! now,” thought he, “the mystery is to be cleared up, and we shall know he is an innocent man!” For, notwithstanding his reason was convinced of the contrary, his heart still clung to the hope that there was some mistake; that this strange man, who had befriended him, and shown so many noble traits, was, after all, loyal to the cause of Freedom and the Right, and not the traitor he seemed.

What, then, was the breathless interest with which the boy listened, what his horror and despair, when Daniels, fixing his intense, deep, reproachful eyes upon him, said,—

“That boy must not be a member of this mock-court! I see you mean to murder me; and I say it is not fit that a son should unite in pronouncing the death-sentence on his own father. My name is Daniel S. Rivers, of Adair County, Kentucky. He is my only son; and this is the portrait of his mother.”

He drew from his breast a miniature, which he extended towards the boy. But Alfred, pale as death, staring glassily, kept his eyes fixed on the face of the spy, and did not glance at the portrait, nor reach forth his hand; appearing, indeed, like one altogether stunned and paralyzed by what he had just heard.

Cy took the miniature, however; and, having looked at it, passed it to Jake.

“The likeness is genuine: it is Mrs. Rivers as she was ten or twelve years ago.”

XXXI.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.



HIS unexpected revelation, and the unquestionable proof accompanying it, produced a profound sensation among the rude men interested in the trial. The expression of earnestness and solemnity which each dark countenance wore was intensified. There was a pause of some seconds; and then Cy Thurston spoke: —

“Gentlemen of the court-martial, it might, perhaps, be expected that what the prisoner has just said should operate in his favor. But we have sworn before Almighty God to conduct this trial without prejudice, fear, or favor; and his assertion, that he is the father of our young comrade here, rather tells against him than otherwise. I have known Mrs. Rivers many years, and I know something of what that noble-spirited woman has been made to suffer on his account. And as for Fred, he owes every thing to his mother; but, to his father, nothing but family sorrow and disgrace. I make

this plain statement simply to offset the temptation some of you may feel to violate your oaths through a mistaken pity. And now I will show you the strong point which the prisoner has unconsciously made against himself. By claiming Fred as his son, he has explained away what appeared the only evidence of his loyalty to our cause, — his kindness to this boy. It was not because he loved the old flag, and those who were fighting for it, but because he felt remorse for having betrayed his own flesh and blood. However, I consider his objection to Fred's remaining a member of the court-martial a very reasonable one. Besides, we shall need him as a witness."

Fred, in the mean time, had sat in a sort of stupor, — the figures before his eyes, and the voice of the judge-advocate ringing in his ears, no more to him than the ghastly phantoms of a sick dream.

"Oh!" said he, when told that he was excused from the court-martial: "the trial? the trial? Is it going on?"

"Yes," said Cy; "and we want you now to tell every thing you know about this man. What we want is the truth; and, if it is in his favor, so much the better: but let it be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

None who looked upon him — not even the prisoner, whose searching eyes were scarcely for an instant removed

from the boy — knew what a terrible struggle was taking place in his heart. But now it proved too much for all his powers of self-control.

“ O my father, my father ! ” he cried out in an agony of remorse and grief ; and, hobbling upon the ledge, he threw himself, sobbing convulsively, upon the neck of the stern parent, so long lost, and loved at last too late.

The spy folded him tenderly in his arms, and smoothed his cheek and patted his shoulder with his hands ; and all the while the features of that imperturbable, calm face scarcely moved, but a light from within — the radiance of a proud and satisfied soul — shone through them, and his eyes were suffused with mist. There was something sublime in that lofty, thrilled expression ; and more than one who saw it, and heard at the same time the sobs of the boy, let fall sudden tears, or choked them back.

“ There, there, Alfred ! I don't blame you. You have done your best : I also have done my best. I have always loved you, and yearned for you. I knew you, when I saw you that first evening, from your resemblance to this portrait, — to your mother ! ”

“ And it is for me that you must die ! and I betrayed you ! ”

“ Oh, no, not you ! — you have not betrayed me, my boy ! ”

“I did, I did! When I saw you talking with the rebel captain this morning before day, then Carl told me what you were, but left it all with me whether we should tell the rest; and I told them! And, when we saw you in the woods with old Joel, he left it with me again; and I called you: for I knew you would come to me; and I knew, if you did come, you would be taken and killed! Oh! why didn't you tell me before that you were my father? or why have you told me at all?”

“I tell you now, that you may not have a hand in my death,” said the spy very gently. “And I did not tell you before, because I did not wish you to know who I was until — but no matter for that. The time will come when you will know that I have acted from as conscientious motives as any of you here. Some things you will understand better than you do now: then you will not blame me; and then it will be much for you to know that you had no hand in my murder.”

“Fred,” said Cy kindly as a brother, laying hold of the boy's arm to remove him, “we will excuse you even from giving your testimony. What the rest of us know, and what Carl can swear to, will be sufficient; for the trial must go on.”

“You see, they are determined to have my life,” said the

spy with a smile. "I forgive them too : they, no doubt, act as conscientiously from their views and belief as I have done from mine. So, be a man, Alfred ! be worthy of your mother and of me !"

Then Fred controlled himself, and looked up.

"Kiss me, father ! Say you forgive me !"

And his father kissed him and forgave him ; and, after that, Cy took him away.

The trial then went on. Carl gave his testimony, which alone would have been sufficient to convince any one of the prisoner's guilt, even had they known no more.

"Have you any questions to ask ?" said Cy, addressing Mr. Rivers after Carl had finished.

"It would be useless. The boy has told the truth — as far as he could possibly know the truth — with remarkable clearness and precision. There is a passage in Scripture something like this : ' Judge not from appearances, but judge righteous judgment.' But I perceive that you are bound to judge from appearances, and to judge unrighteous judgment."

"No doubt," then said the judge-advocate, addressing the court, "if we judged this man's acts from his own point of view, we should consider that he had done right. So, from their own point of view, we should excuse the au

thors of this infamous Rebellion, which has plunged the country in war, and desolated so many households, and cost so many lives. So, by seeing every criminal as he sees himself, we might excuse his crime, on the plea of fancied necessity or ignorance or passion. But there is another point of view. We are to judge by a standard of law and equity. This man is proved to be a spy in the service of the rebels ; and, by the laws of war, a spy, if found guilty, is worthy of death, even if he is a spy in a good cause : but this man is a spy in the worst and wickedest cause that ever convulsed a country with war. All his sympathies are on that side. You remember how respectfully he has always spoken of the *Confederates* ; you remember how averse he was to our firing on them last evening, when we were running for our lives. And now I ask you to consider all his acts of which you have any knowledge, and then decide whether it is safe, for us, safe for our country, to suffer such a man to live. In the first place, he spied out our position, and led the rebels to attack us ; and that has been the cause of all our subsequent misfortunes."

"Excuse me, sir," interposed the prisoner ; "but, now that you know my relation to the boy, do you think it probable that I would direct an attack, when I knew his life would be endangered ?"

“I remember hearing the rebels say, after they captured us” Thurston replied, “that the attack was made prematurely; that it was the original intention to move later, but with a larger force. In that case, Fred would have been relieved; and you probably knew it. But when you saw how the plan was changed, no doubt against your recommendation and wishes, you accompanied the party in order to save your son from the mischief you were glad enough to bring upon the rest of us. But, gentlemen of the court, words are of not much account. It is very evident that this man gave the rebels a hint last evening of the route he intended to lead us, or they would not have come so close upon our heels: and, having got us into the woods, he stole into the rebel camp this morning before light, and concerted a scheme for entrapping us; a part of which, without doubt, was the safe removal of this boy. Now for Fred’s sake, whom we all love, I should like to see this part of the plan carried out. But we owe a duty to ourselves and our country as well as to him. That duty compels us to put this man to death. Mr. President and gentlemen, it is for you to decide whether you will do your duty, and keep your oaths; or fail in your duty, and violate your oaths.”

The judge-advocate ceased; having impressed every one by his dignity of manner and natural eloquence, which proved

how much native ability as well as heroism lies latent in hundreds of our familiar acquaintances, waiting only for a fit occasion to call it forth.

The members of the court conferred together in whispers. The rest were silent. Fred did not dare to look at his father ; he did not dare to read that father's fate in the countenances of his comrades. The strange quiet of the woods, and the beauty of the morning sunlight gilding and spotting them, seemed all a sickening mockery to his senses : so he shut out all sight from his eyes, and sat with his face buried in his hands, as the trial drew to a close.

As for the spy, he was apparently the least disturbed of any person present. There was no symptom of levity or bravado about him ; on the contrary, he seemed perfectly well aware of the terrible seriousness of the crisis to which his career had come : yet you would have said that his mind had been long made up to meet the event with perfect calmness, an adamant will, and a spirit schooled to keep its own counsel through every vicissitude of fate.

" Mr. President and gentlemen," said the judge-advocate, " time presses. Have you agreed upon a verdict ? "

" We have."

" Is the prisoner guilty, or not guilty ? "

" GUILTY."

“Prisoner,” said the judge-advocate, “you have heard the decision of the court. Have you any thing to say why sentence of death should not presently be pronounced upon you?”

“A few words I have to say,” replied the spy in an equable tone of voice, and with a look of strange confidence in the justice of his cause, if not in his power to avert the sentence. “Since it has come to this, and I am forced to break silence” —

Fred uncovered his face, and lifted his eyes to his father with an expression the most eager, prayerful, despairing, which any who witnessed it had ever beheld. His father saw, and smiled.

But, before he could proceed with his plea, Enos Crumlett, who had been set to act as a sentinel for the party during the trial, came rushing to the spot.

“Here’s some cavalry-men coming up along by the woods!” he wildly whispered.

“Be quiet!” said Cy authoritatively. “Guard the prisoner! Kill him if he tries to escape!”

“The court will take an intermission of six minutes to squint at the enemy,” said Jake, lifting his musket with a sparkle of gayety in his eyes, kindled by the prospect of a fight.

XXXII.

A CAPTURE AND AN ESCAPE.



Y and Carl crept through the savins to reconnoitre. The cavalry-men, six in number, were galloping by the edge of the barren field. Behind them, more slowly, rode the most thoroughly brigandish-looking fellow of them all, examining carefully the woodside with eyes that gleamed out from between a slouched hat above, and an immense beard and projecting red nose below. He wore a jingling sabre, and was studded all over with pistols.

“It is Mr. Grumblett’s friend, the captain!” observed Carl, peeping from a bush.

Mr. Crumlett’s friend, the captain, was passing on, following his companions, who were already disappearing over a hill; when suddenly the savins, which grew thickly all along that side of the woods, excited his attention. He checked his horse, and rode back along the edge of them; reining

straight towards the clump, surrounding the ledge where the boys had cracked their nuts and tried their man.

“By lightning!” said Jake through his teeth, “we’ll have to kill that buck!”

But Cy restrained him, aware that a shot would spoil every thing. Something was to be done, however, or, in a minute, the fugitives would be discovered.

“Vait vile I try some trick!” And Carl, stepping from behind his bush, appeared in full view of the advancing rebel.

The latter pulled rein, and drew a pistol in an instant.

“Wery pleased to meet you vonce more!” said Carl with a bland smile, unshrinkingly.

“Advance!” commanded the captain. “You’re my prisoner!”

“I’m most happy to advance and be anypody’s prisoner as vill protect me and my pishtols.”

“Your pistols? Give them to me!”

“That is just vat I was proposing to do. Ven I see you last, you say to me, ‘Next time you come through the lines, pring pishtols, pring pishtols!’ you say.”

“And where are they?”

“You come into the voods just a little vay, and I vill show you. Ven I see your soldiers, I vas afraid: but I re-

member your wery benevolent countenance; and I say to myself, ' He vill protect me, and pay for my pishtols.' ”

“ Yes, I recollect,” said the captain, after musing grimly a moment. “ You're the Dutch peddler. You did well to smuggle pistols.”

“ You wait here, and I vill run and get 'em. You see,” said Carl, “ I get into some wery pad scrapes with my smuggling; and some things must be kept out of wiew.”

“ Halt!” — as Carl was going. “ How far is it? ”

“ I shall not be gone more as three or four rods.”

“ Not if I go with you; but, if you go alone, I'm afraid you'll forget to stop! Have you seen any Yankee runaways in these woods? ”

“ I have seen some men a little vile ago: but I thought they vas Conwhederates; and, as I said, I vas afraid.”

“ Where did you see them? ”

“ Shall I tell you first, or shall ve see to the pishtols? ”

“ You look like an honest boy!” said the captain, eying him sharply. “ But mind, if you fool me, you will get pistols enough! ”

“ Yes, I see, you have a wast wariety!” remarked Carl with a smile, glancing from the captain's belt to his boots. “ Vat a pretty little popper that is!” — as the captain drew one, and cocked it.

He was gaping admiringly at the weapon, and drawing near as if to examine it, when the captain's ear caught a rustle and his eye a movement behind the bushes, in among which he had reined his horse. Instantly up leaped Cy and Jake with gleaming guns. Simultaneously, spurs were struck into the horse's flanks, and the pistol aimed and snapped. But Carl caught the bridle, and the pistol missed fire; and, before another could be snatched from belt or holsters, Carl had seized the captain's arm, and was dragging him to the ground.

"Help!" cried the rebel, as he saw Jake and Cy rushing to the boy's assistance.

"You stop that holler, or you die joking!" And Carl, for the third time that morning, applied persuasive fingers to another's windpipe.

The captain succumbed, and was carried "into court," as Jake termed it. There, his arms taken from him, he was permitted to sit upon the ground, and look around upon the strange group and unexpected scene in the midst of which he found himself.

"For the pishtols it vas my intention to show you, these here is the wery articles," said Carl, assorting the weapons. "Ve captured a whole arsenal ven ve captured you! And, for the men I had seen a little vile ago, they vas your own cavalry, — all but these, vich is some friends of mine."

“Stranger, do you know that man?” said Cy; for the captain’s eyes, after peering about him curiously for a minute, had rested on the spy.

The captain nodded three times, slowly wagging his head up and down, and parting his lips with a malign smile.

“Is this your work, Daniels? Well, next time I suspect a man, I’ll hang him first, and investigate afterwards!”

“That is a goot notion, and may be ve shall inwestigat your case in the same vay. I go for the halter from that horse: it vill come in fashion on some necks!” And Carl went to bring it.

“But you do wrong to suspect your friend, captain,” said Cy. “He has served you only too well; and that service has cost him his life.” And he explained.

“Is it so?” said the captain. “Daniels, I beg your pardon; but don’t be disturbed. My fellows will be here for me in five minutes; and they’ll avenge as well, I promise you, if a hair of our heads is injured.”

“In that case,” said Jake, “we must hurry up. The sentence of the court is, Daniels, that you be hanged by the neck, from that beech-tree, with the captain’s halter, until you are dead!”

“But he was going to speak!” broke forth Fred. “He was going to say something why sentence should not be passed. You said he might, Cy!”

“ And so he shall, if he will speak quick ! ”

The spy glanced from Fred to the captain with a gloomy expression, as if it was the presence of the latter that closed his mouth ; and answered in a solemn, firm voice, —

“ I have nothing to say.”

“ Nothing? My father! nothing? Oh, don't say that ! ”

“ Fred ! ” — and, as Cy spoke, he himself was well-nigh overcome with emotion, — “ don't feel too bad ! It can't be helped. We are obliged to do it ; or, God knows, I wouldn't for all the world ! ”

“ Tie his hands behind him, Carl ! ” said Jake.

“ Thank you,” replied Carl. “ I was only a witness in this trial : I was not the court, and I am not the sheriff.” And, having brought the halter, he would not lift a finger to aid in the execution. Phlegmatic as he seemed, his heart was heaving with sympathetic throes at the sight of Fred's affliction ; and he turned away his face to conceal what was mastering him.

“ I'll tie 'em ! ” said Enos Crumlett.

He took the throat-latch, which Jake had stripped from the halter for the purpose, and was performing with shaky hands the service for which he had volunteered, hoping thereby to gain credit for zeal and courage, when he heard a movement behind him, and looked around.

The captain, taking advantage of the concentration of interest about the spy, attempted an escape. He sprang to his feet, knocking down Joel, who was guarding him; and would have got out of the savins, and into the open field, had not Cy and Waterhouse leaped after him like tigers, seized, and brought him down.

Mr. Crumlett, as I said, looked around: so also did Jake and his assistants, who were guarding the spy. A rapid turn, a swift blow or two, and Jake and Crumlett went down in a heap together upon the ledge, and the prisoner was gone. He went through the savins like a bird; so suddenly, that Weston and Parker, attempting to grasp him, only grasped each other. Carl, betrayed into carelessness by his own feelings, was not on hand to render assistance; and, before Jake could regain his feet, the spy, mounting the captain's horse at a bound, was galloping through the woods.

Fred jumped up eagerly to witness the flight of his father, whose death, a moment before, seemed inevitable. He strained his eyes; he stood tiptoe on the ledge, regardless of pain. Then, when the fugitive was out of sight, he sank down again without a word, his hands clinched, his teeth set, and his features convulsed and rigid.

XXXIII.

THE FIRST ATTACK.



“WAL!” said Jake, looking exceedingly cheap, “I guess this court had better adjourn! I hain’t had such a blow! I thought thunder and lightning had kicked me!”

“I could have fired some pishtols at him,” said Carl; “but that would have been signals for the rebs!” And he appeared wonderfully cheerful as he saw the empty halter in Jake’s hands. “How goes it, Fred? He is in a convulsion!”

Fred recovered himself as Carl kindly lifted him in his arms.

“Goot times is coming, Fred! The court takes a wacation to rub its eyes open! That vas a veak sentence; it could not hold: and the shpy is gone, and you are glad!”

“I am not glad, and I am not sorry!” said Fred, sitting up, the expression of his countenance gloomy almost to fierceness. “It was hard to see my father hung; but it is just as

hard to think he is a spy, and deserves hanging! I believed — I felt — he might have cleared himself; but you were right, boys!”

“We shall have it hot here pretty quick, I reckon!” said Cy. “The rebs will be on us!”

“That’s so!” said the captain. “And my advice to you is, to give yourselves up, and receive the treatment of prisoners of war.”

“Suppose you put that to vote, gentlemen. In mean time, I shall appropriate this carving-knife.” And Carl, considering himself entitled to the sabre he had been chiefly instrumental in capturing, buckled the belt about his waist, and stuck one of the captain’s stock of small arms into it.

“What say, boys,” cried Jake: “shall we fight, or surrender?”

“Fight when we can, surrender when we must: that’s my motto,” said Cy.

A vote was taken; and all agreed with Cy, except Fred and Enos Crumlett.

“I’m a peace man,” said Enos with a white and ghastly smile. “I say, Run when we can; but surrender rather’n fight the devils! They’re so reekless, they don’t mind killin’ a feller no more’n nothin’!”

‘Just vat I should expect from a disciple of Mishter

Wallandigham!" remarked Carl. "But I didn't expect you would turn coward or secesh, Fred!"

"Coward? secesh?" Fred's eyes blazed. "I said I didn't agree with Cy; and I don't. He says, 'Fight when we can; surrender when we must.' I say, Fight any how, and don't surrender at all!"

"That is vat I call a praisevorthy sentiment! It vas mine all the time; but I did not say it, fear some should think I vas selfish."

"How, selfish, Carl?"

"You see, Cy, if I am took again, I shall make acquaintance with the hanging process this time, wery certain. I have preferences for fighting. The rest of you may be treated prisoners of war; and so I shall not take it on myself to give advice."

"Prisoners of war!" said Waterhouse wrathfully. "I have had two brothers die in their inhuman jails; and do you suppose I want to go and rot and starve like them? Better die here, and done with it!"

"Fight it is, then, boys!" said Jake with a quiet chuckle.

"Fred, you're a cripple; and it's no more than fair you should choose your weapon."

"Give me that horse-pistol!"

"You make a goot choice for your veapon, Fred; but I vill

tell you peforehand, that ammunitions is not plenty for pish-tols. I have taken some liberties vith the pishtol-man's pock-ets, and I conclude he vairs the small arms for ornament. There is but two cartridges for the pig pishtols, some pullets for the litle arms, and just three charges in the rewolwer. But there is a powder-flask that will be welcome ! ”

“ Give it to me ! Jake's bullets will fit this bore ! ” said Fred with a lurid smile. “ There'll be sport, boys, before we are quite used up ! ”

“ When the ammunition is gone, then the bayonets ! ” said Cy.

“ And the hatchet, by time ! — don't forgit the hatchet ! ” added old Joel.

“ And the rebel carving-knife ! ” (Carl rattled his sabre.)

“ And Mr. Grumblett's jack-knife, he's such a walian't chick ! ”

“ Hush, boys ! ” said Parker : “ the cavalry-men are coming back ! ”

“ Hunting for their lost captain ! ” laughed Cy. “ Lie low, and keep dark ! There they go ! they don't suspect ! Now, boys, get every one a good position ; but don't fire till we're discovered. ”

“ Tell me if any thing interesting turns up, ” said Jake, nibbling at the nuts that had been left for him. “ Seems to

me, this is a rather slim breakfast for fighting-men! I wish I had one of them turnips!"

"Vat turnips?" said Carl, starting up with an eagerness he rarely betrayed.

"I see a whole field on 'em over t'other side of the woods: but 'twas in sight of the rebs; so I kept my vandal hands off."

"It is time turnips vas pulled! Turnips is excellent vegetables. If I see some, I shall not keep my wandal hands off! Vair did you see your turnip-patch, Jake?"

Jake informed him more particularly, but warned him against attempting to get any.

"Raw turnips is goot fodder!" said Carl with a twinkle of anticipation. "Gentlemen, you just give my compliments to the rebs, if they come. Meantime, I take my own risks, and go reconnoitre some turnips."

He stole out of the savins, and through the leafless, sunny woods, and was soon out of sight.

"Hello!" said Weston, keeping an eye out towards the north. "See that man riding up the road over the hills!"

"He goes like Jehu!" said old Joel.

Fred, whose eyes were perhaps the best in the crowd, gazed long at the flying horseman; then, as the latter disappeared in a gorge that opened among the hazy, cedar-

crowned hills, he said quietly, through his close-held teeth, —

“That man is my father, on the captain’s horse !”

“Going for re-enforcements,” observed Cy. “One company of rebel cavalry ain’t enough to venture an attack on a squad of Yankee runaways !”

“Look here, friend captain,” said Jake, “how many have you got hunting us?”

“Enough, so that there needn’t be any hurry about beating up the game. There’s no possible escape for you; and, if more men are needed to make the capture easy, more are within call.”

“What cavalry is yours?”

“Gruffley’s Riders. We are a detached company.”

“In other words, bushwhackers,” said Cy; “more politely called guerillas. Is your name Gruffley?”

The captain nodded with an appropriately ferocious smile.

“It was he and his men that murdered old Ellsmer and his wife !” said Fred. “They are bloodthirsty cowards !”

“They took part in the attack when we were gobbled up,” said Cy. “And now, my friend, tell us how it happens you are on our track to-day.”

“I’ll tell you that; for I see you suspect my friend

Daniels unjustly," replied the captain, pulling his beard. "You couldn't make such a row in an enemy's country as you did last night, without receiving attention. Companies were sent out for you in every direction where there was a possibility of overhauling you. I happened to be in the neighborhood with my men, — it is our business to look after such little jobs, — and I was ordered to sweep the country this way. I took the turnpike to head you off, and threw out scouts on all the roads. You almost walked over one of my men: his horse was tied, and he was lying on the ground to let you pass and hear what you were saying. He made sure of the course you were travelling, — that was all he could do, for he was alone, — then rode to find me. That brought us to this hill. I sent half my men around it, and bivouacked the rest on the east side. This morning I found your tracks on the frosty ground, and knew I had trapped you."

"You quite forget to mention one very important thing, — Daniels's visit to your bivouac before daylight this morning."

"It was on very different business from what you suppose. He had a plausible errand to me; no matter what: but I half suspected he was trying to find out my business and intentions. I didn't enlighten him much. So he left me;

and it seems, from talk I have overheard among you, he came back to you. I remember this boy; and, now I know he is Daniels's son, I understand some things that looked to me suspicious before."

"Oh, I was sure he could not have betrayed us!" exclaimed Fred. "He may be a rebel and a spy; I know he is: but he couldn't be such a villain!"

"Perhaps not," said Cy. "But I am no more sure of it than I was before. You defend your absent friend well, Captain Gruffley! In return, I suppose he will bring a regiment or two of your brother rebels to recapture you."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jake quietly: "there come your Riders back, looking for you, captain!"

"And six more with 'em!" said Parker.

"They've got their eyes on these 'ere bushes too!" said old Joel. "By time! they're steerin' straight towards us!"

"Take aim!" whispered Cy.

Each man, save Enos and the captain, thrust the muzzle of his musket or pistol through the bush that sheltered him, and waited.

"Don't shoot till I git under that log!" gasped the terrified Mr. Crumlett; and, plunging through the savins, he made a rustling that alarmed the Riders.

They pulled rein, and, rising in their stirrups, looked

eagerly over into the clump of evergreens. The captain laughed, — noiselessly, however ; for he was bound to a bush by the halter taken from his horse ; and he knew that there were bayonets ready to turn, and thrust him through, if he spoke or moved.

The Riders called his name. Receiving no answer, they withdrew a few rods, and consulted.

“ They’ve seen us ! ” said Fred. “ But the thicket is an ugly place to charge into. Look ! they’re going to fire ! ”

Three or four of the Riders unslung their carbines, and levelled them.

“ They’re going to feel on us that way ! ” said Jake. “ Chance shots ; not much danger : don’t return ’em ! Say nothing but laugh ! ”

Few felt like laughing, however. There was a gleam of excitement in each face, as it watched for the flashing of the carbines. It’s a queer sensation, not provocative of merriment, to see a row of steel barrels aimed at you, — or at the bushes that conceal you, — not five rods off, and to wait for the flame and the bullets ! The moment of suspense seems strangely long ; and how all your senses are intensified ! It requires no ordinary degree of courage, and strength of will, for armed men to stand such an ordeal, and not attempt to avert ’t by firing first.

In the savins, every finger was at its trigger ; but not a trigger was pulled. The carbines blazed. Crack, crack ! — ping, ping ! — and the bullets, with short, sharp whizz and clip, came cutting the twigs close around the ambushed heads.

And now there was a laugh, — a savage, silent laugh. It was Jake's.

“Told ye so! They'll try again; then they'll come nigher. Then we'll give 'em Hail Columby!”

“Lie flat, Fred!” said Cy, — “flat on your belly! You expose yourself!”

“They can't see me,” replied Fred; “and, if I get any lower, I can't see them.”

“Is this fair,” muttered Gruffley, — “to expose a prisoner of war to the fire of his own men?”

“You stand as good a chance as any of us, and a little better,” said Cy. “I'll get before you.” And he magnanimously changed his position, so as to cover his enemy's body with his own.

“Now we have it again!” said Waterhouse.

Half a dozen scattered shots, fired more at random, came singing among the savins.

“By time! look here!” whispered old Joel; and he showed the handle of his hatchet, which he had held before

his head as a protection, nicked by a ball that had glanced off, and slashed a line three inches long up his coat-sleeve. "If't hadn't been for this, 'twould have split my collar-bone, and like as not played the mischief with me gener'ly!"

And he laughed too, rejoiced to think he had not left his hatchet sticking in the tree, where he had flung it at the squirrel.

"They are dismounting!" said Fred. "No show for horses in this brush: they're going to make a dash on foot! Cy, you must let us fire, this time! You give the word!"

"Gruffley's Riders turned into Gruffley's Walkers!" joked Cy. "They're slinging their carbines: they're going to give us a taste of the sabre."

"Tell 'em I surrender, I surrender!" gasped forth Enos Crumlett, putting up his head from behind the log, and dodging out of sight again in a twinkling.

"They're coming! Ready, boys!" muttered Cy.

With sabres in air, and with hideous yells, ten of the Riders (the other two were left with the horses) came charging at a double-quick towards the savins.

"Give it to 'em! Fire!" cried Cy.

Flash, flash, flash! bang, bang, bang! from the muskets, mingled with sharper reports from the pistols; and the flame and smoke and crackling roar burst out of the bushes full into the faces of the oncoming assailants.

There was a momentary check. The smoke lifted. Two of the rebels were seen upon the ground : a third had dropped his sabre ; his arm hung shattered.

“ Come on, come on ! ” shouted the Union boys.

Up went the defiant, bristling bayonets ; aloft glanced the hatchet : the holders of the pistols lay low, and reloaded.

The Riders, although temporarily repulsed, saw but four weapons against them : they were seven. Rallying at once, they rushed to avenge their wounded and slain. Click, clash ! — steel met steel, the sabre the bayonet ; slash and thrust, shrieks and yells ! Joel hurled his hatchet : lucky again. No rebel could dodge as a squirrel could : a rebel’s face was spoiled ; the rebel himself tumbled.

And what was this ? Another sabre from behind, with a running accompaniment of pistol-shots !

It was Carl, astonishing to behold ; his hat off, lost upon the wind in the fervor of running ; his sword-belt thrust full of turnips, with the tops hanging and flapping like green fringes of a barbarian’s war-sash ; his right arm brandishing the captain’s blade, his left firing the captain’s revolver ; and himself taking marvellous strides to join the fray.

The sight of him, and the lusty shouts of his belligerent lungs, sufficed to turn the scale of battle. The assailants showed heels, and scampered ; that is, all who were in a con-

dition to scamper. One had been killed outright. A ball from Fred's horse-pistol had shattered another's knee. ("We generally fire too high when there's excitement," said Fred: "so I thought I'd aim low enough.") These two remained on the field. A third, whom Joel's missile had damaged, was only stunned: he had been struck on the cheek-bone by the head of the hatchet, not the edge. Recovering himself, he got up; and, seeing what his companions were doing, did the same. At least two others carried with them disabling wounds.

Cy and Jake immediately rushed out, and, seizing the fallen Riders, dragged them into the bushes. Their object was twofold: first, to secure their arms and ammunition; next, to see what could be done for the men themselves.

Whilst they were thus occupied, the rest were busy reloading. Gruffley, who had been waiting for this chance, slipped his limbs free from the halter, which he had succeeded in loosening, leaped over Mr. Crumlett's log, and dashed, not in the direction of his defeated friends, but into the deep woods. Carl fired the last shot from his revolver at him; but the ball was intercepted by a tree. There was no help for it: the captain had escaped.

XXXIV.

INDIAN WARFARE.



SHOULD have fired some turnips at him; but that is too waluable ammunion to lose on a rebel. The pullets may go into their podies, and velcome; but the turnips is predestined to go into ours! Lend us a jack-knife," added Carl, "and I vill make 'em into cartridges."

"How did you get 'em, Carl?" asked Fred.

"There vas rebs not more as twenty rods off; but I got flat on the ground like a mud-turkle, and crawled. Ven I pulls a turnip, I takes him so, and slips the tops down through my sword-belt. Then, ven it vas full all around, — more turnips as ever the captain had pishtols, — I crawls back again; not quite so flat, for the turnips vas not villing. 'Never mind,' says I: 'you are outside now; but you shall be inside soon.' Then I hear the firing: so I jumps up, and runs, and gets here just in time to see some shport."

All was quiet now in the savins, and not a head was visible

to the rebels on either side; for they were on more than one side now. Carl, when he leaped up from the turnip-patch, had been discovered: three swift-spurring Riders pursued, but were compelled by the undergrowth and prudential reasons to haul rein on the edge of the woods. There they were met by their captain, who lost no time in marshalling his forces for a grand assault on the fugitives.

Forty Riders, dismounted, and deployed as skirmishers, were soon advancing on all sides through the woods, like savages, darting from tree to tree, and surrounding the little band of men and boys in the savins within an ever-narrowing circle. The latter, as before, withheld their fire. "Let 'em come nearer!" said Cy. "Don't pull a trigger till you are dead sure of your men!" In the mean time, he bound the halter about the leg of the wounded prisoner, just above the knee, to prevent him from bleeding to death; while Carl and the rest coolly pared and ate the raw turnips.

"By time!" said old Joel, "our little rumpus is raisin' the country! See 'em flockin' over the hill yender, comin' to help surround us! There'll be a hundred rebs poppin' at us from behind the trees in half an hour."

"Yes, and in less time than that!" said Fred. "But the fun is, we can pop back."

"There ain't much fun fightin', though," grumbled old

Joel, "when there ain't no longer no chance, not even to sell our lives dear."

"Plenty of negatives in that sentence, but not much pluck," replied Fred. "Why can't we sell our lives dear? We've got the carbines, and a little addition to our stock of powder and lead; and you've your hatchet again, that does such splendid execution!"

"If any man wishes to surrender, now's his time. He can raise a white rag on a stick, and put," said Cy. "The rest of us mean to fight it out."

"Wal, I guess I better stick by, if that's the decision." And Joel, having finished his turnip, took a chew of tobacco, a liberal supply of that interesting weed having been discovered in exploring the two rebels' pockets. "By time, don't that taste good! I believe it's a week since I've had a chew. I never suffered so in my life!"

"The rag is coming from the other side!" laughed Fred. In fact, one of the assailants, with a white handkerchief on a stick, was advancing cautiously among the trees.

"Come along!" said Jake. "You sha'n't be hurt!"

The flag of truce approached until within twenty yards or so of the fugitives; when Cy ordered it to come no nearer.

"That's close enough! Do your errand, and be off! What do you want?"

“ Captain Gruffley demands your unconditional surrender.”

“ Tell Captain Gruffley he demands too much. After receiving such treatment as he got from us, he might at least grant us some privileges.”

“ What privileges do you ask ? ”

Cy stood out from the savins, and answered in a loud voice, —

“ We demand to be paroled, and sent to the Union lines : we, on our part, engage not to bear arms again until regularly exchanged. Give us these terms, and pledge your honor that not one of our party shall on any account be detained, and we yield ourselves prisoners of war.”

“ I know Captain Gruffley will not grant any such conditions. You are to surrender unconditionally.”

“ We know what that means, ” answered Cy in a voice that reverberated through the forest. “ It means, we are to be shot. If we are to die, we prefer to die fighting. Now go back, or you’ll be fired upon ! ”

The flag of truce withdrew, and Cy retreated into the savins.

“ Boys, ” said Waterhouse, “ remember how they served Edson and his fellows in Kentucky : after they had promised to parole them, they took them out, and shot them down, and beat out their brains like dogs ! Don’t trust the fiends. Let them promise what they will, don’t trust ’em.”

“Waterhouse is right!” said Fred. “Let’s die like men, if we must; not like dogs.”

The flag of truce, having passed from sight over a wooded knoll, was presently seen returning.

“Captain Gruffley promises to spare your lives if you surrender without further trouble. If you fight him, he swears to hang every man of you that is taken alive.”

“Boys,” said Cy solemnly, — indeed, it was a moment of awful solemnity to all, — “shall we trust him?”

“I believe they’ll hang us, anyway, if they get us into their hands alive!” said Fred. “They are treacherous: they’ll promise any thing.”

“That is my opinion. But, if there’s a man here that will take the bushwhacker’s word, let him step out now, and try him.”

Not a man stirred.

“Mr. Flag,” then said Cy, “we have concluded not to surrender. Now clear out, and don’t bother us again. Go and say to Captain Gruffley, that, if he or one of his men shows himself within range of our pieces, he gets a shot!”

“Wait, wait!” cried Enos Crumlett, starting up. “Do you think they’ll spare *my* life? will they spare *mine*? I hain’t fit, and I ain’t a fightin’ man!”

“Yes, they’ll spare your life, I’ve no doubt,” said Fred,

“for the sake of your wife and children! Gruffley knows you: go, and give yourself up.”

“And he knows I didn’t fight, don’t he?” said Enos with a gleam of hope. “Think they’ll shoot me if I show myself?”

“We’ll fire on their flag of truce, if they do. Go with the flag.”

And Enos tremblingly went.

“Good riddance!” said Fred.

“Now comes the final struggle!” added Cy. “Our only chance is in making it too costly for the rascals. Let ’em see they’ve got to give two or three lives for one, and we may keep ’em off, and gain time. If we can hold our own till night, well and good!”

“This carbine is jolly!” chuckled Fred. He sighted it through the savins. He was a good shot; having had practice on the Illinois prairies, picking wild geese out of alighted flocks with the rifle, and bringing down wild hens on the wing with the fowling-piece. “I believe I could put my mark on the patch of Mr. Crumlett’s pantaloons!”

He was sustained by that exaltation of spirits, of which those, whose souls have never risen sublimely above mortal danger, know nothing. Was this terrible hour his last? He did not stop to question. The future? — he felt that the

future would take care of itself, and that all would be well with him if he did his duty now. That duty was, to defend himself and his comrades to the last against men whom he knew to be assassins, whose promises were good for nothing; and in whose hands his life would be less safe than here with his fellows in their lair at bay. And his mother? — something fearful swelled up in his throat when he thought of her; but this heroic resolve came ever uppermost: “She shall know that I died as a boy of hers should; she shall be proud of me!” — and he put all softer thoughts aside.

They were a determined, cheerful company, all, — that little devoted band of comrades in the bush. Cy and Jake were unmarried; but Jake had an aged mother dependent on him for support: he had not always been as kind to her as he might have been. Perhaps he thought of that; for a shadow of pain crossed his brow. And of whom did Cy think? — for a strange expression of tenderness came into that tanned, masculine, eagle-eyed, handsome Western face of his. Did he really care for that pretty little prairie maid the others joked him about? Care for her! — she was all he cared for now. And Waterhouse had a wife at home; and Parker and Weston, though both young, had wives and children, — children playing at their mothers’ knees at that very moment, perhaps! Carl had neither parent nor wife

nor betrothed : yet there were those he loved, — one beautiful Quaker girl above all, sister of his beloved Captain Hapgood ; a tender-eyed, sweet-mouthed, mellow-voiced maiden, who had smiled upon him, perhaps only for her brother's sake, yet whom he had tremblingly half hoped — but no matter now ! He carefully cut a bullet in quarters to make slugs for his revolver, and occasionally took a bite of his pared turnip.

Old Joel, who scarcely knew whether he owned a wife or not (he had parted from her and disowned her so often), was the only one who grumbled ; but then he was always a grumbler, happen what would.

Whizz came the ball of a carbine, aimed, Indian-fashion, from behind a tree. It split the stem of one of the little savins.

“ I saw where that came from ! ” said Fred. “ Let the Rider show himself again, and he'll be a tumbler ! ”

Crack, crack, crack ! and the bullets, all fired from behind trees, began to come thick and fast. The log under which Enos had sheltered himself served as a convenient breastwork to the Union-boys now fighting on that side of their ambush. They could lie behind it, and thrust their pieces through the bushes, and see a great deal better than they could be seen.

Suddenly a shot responded from the savins. Fred's carbine spoke. The occasion was this: The rebel he had discovered once more showed one arm supporting his short rifle, one eye squinting, and one little spot of forehead peering around the trunk. In an instant, Fred sighted him, and pulled trigger. The carbine scarcely made any report: it must have contained a very light charge; but it did its work. The bushwhacker did not fire at all, but flung up his hands, dropped his piece, and with a faint yell plunged forward, falling headlong and heavily to the ground.

"Bully for you, Fred!" said Jake.

"Let every shot we fire tell such a story as that, and there's a chance for us!" said Cy. "Hello! a pretty close shave!" A bullet had raked the top of his cap.

"You can shoot so petter as I can, Fred, I vill load vile you fire." And Carl, passing his friend a loaded carbine, received the discharged one in exchange.

Just then, a dozen of the rebels made a dash; each man, at a signal, darting to gain the shelter of a nearer tree. The movement was accomplished with such rapidity, that not a shot was fired by the Union-boys; whose motto was, not to risk the wasting of a single cartridge. Other bushwhackers followed the example; and the hunted fugitives saw the circle of their foes still gradually narrowing. I said, the circle:

yet semicircle would be the better term ; for, on the side of the open field, there was not a rebel within rifle-range.

Since Fred had brought down his man, few shots had been exchanged.

“ Carl,” whispered Fred, “ take my cane, — it’s on the ledge there, — and just lift up my hat on it : see if we can’t draw their fire.”

Carl obeyed ; and presently might have been seen the appearance of a head, cautiously rising among the bushes as if to get a view of the enemy. Two carbines flashed in the woods, and two bullets penetrated the hat. Fred fired ; and one of the carbines was dropped the instant it was discharged : but the rebel himself drew back behind his tree.

“ Never mind ! ” said Fred. “ I cut his hand off, I can swear ! ”

Whilst he was speaking, a bullet, aimed at the flash of his piece, came buzzing through the boughs close by his ear.

“ That was a bob-tailed slug, I know by the hum ! ” said he, laughing. “ Damage any thing, Cy ? ” for Cy had fired.

“ I winged him ! ” Indeed, Cy had taken his game flying ; that is, as the rebel was darting from one tree to another. The latter reached his goal, but staggeringly, and sank down on the roots.

“ A good lesson ! ” said Waterhouse. “ They must stop that trick : they’re near enough.”

“By tim^e! I’ve got it now!” growled old Joel.

“And so has the reb! I paid him!” said Jake through his teeth, pulling his smoking barrel in over the log, and re-loading as he lay on his back.

“Nothing but a flesh-vound, Joel!” said Carl. “But it vas a mighty saucy vun, by swow!”

A bullet had raked the old man’s shoulder and back, as the previous one had raked his arm; but this time the inimical lead had ploughed to the bone.

“If the pesky critter hain’t took up lodgin’s inside my carcass, I don’t keer!” muttered the old man. “This havin’ to have lead dug out of a feller is wus’n bein’ shot in the fust place, a plaguy sight!”

“Hold on!” said Fred: “I see Gruffley himself! If he hadn’t dodged behind that tree quite so quick — But never mind: he can’t stay there always!”

The captain was quietly giving orders for a grand charge by his whole line. His men were passing the word to each other from tree to tree; when the bushwhacking chief, who didn’t seem to realize the extent of his great beard any more than a fashionable lady considers the sweep of her skirts, unconsciously pushed the boundaries of the vast black bush into view. Fred, thinking that, where so much hair was, there must be a little face, let fly the waiting bullet. It

whizzed through the mass, cutting close to the ambushed jaw. The shock, the strange sensation of having his whiskers tweaked in that way by an invisible leaden finger, betrayed Captain Gruffley into an indiscretion. Dodging back hastily behind the tree, he dodged too far, and exposed himself upon the other side of the trunk. Fatal error! Weston had long been waiting for a good shot, and now he had it. The bushwhacker tumbled over backwards with scarce a groan.

“The Ellsmer Family is avenged!” murmured Fred.

“Not only that, but we are getting the best of them!” said Cy.

“I haven’t another cartridge,” said Jake. “How is it with the rest of you?”

The ammunition was already half spent: that was, after all, the most distressing circumstance in this terribly unequal conflict.

But now an event occurred that put an end to hope; if, indeed, any there had seriously indulged a hope, that, by resistance until night, they might yet be saved. A distant firing was heard. “Signals!” said Cy. It was in the direction of the hills, over which they had seen the escaping spy disappear. Carl crept to the edge of the savins overlooking the fields and the country-side, and saw hurrying horsemen

“It is the re-enforcements!” he said. “Vat a shame! Vun company of rebs is not enough to wanquish eight feds; and so there comes two, three, four companies!”

“We have but little time left,” said Cy solemnly. “Fire now, boys, whenever you have a chance!”

“I be blowed if ever I see sich a slew of the darned graybacks puttin’ helter-skelter for a little private shootin’-match like this ’ere!” growled old Joel; who feeling that his wound entitled him to some indulgence, went to gratify his curiosity by peeping at the enemy’s re-enforcements.

On they came, pouring in a swarm through the gorge, then scattering in every direction; some keeping the road, and others spurring across the fields.

“What in time makes ’em scatter so?” grumbled old Joel. “Don’t the plaguy fools know no better ’n that? They ’re sweepin’ field and road: only they look more as though they was bein’ swept themselves! There ain’t no discipline amongst them wild south-western hoss-jockeys. They jest know how to ride, that’s all: they’re busters to ride, I know! Hello! what’s there?”

A column of cavalry, whose splendid array contrasted

strikingly with the disorderly body of horse that had preceded them, came pouring through the gorge, their arms glittering in the sun. They crossed the valley; then, leaving the highways, a portion of them took to the fields, and came thundering up the slope directly towards the woods. Then Carl set up a shout which made the forest ring.

“Blue-coats, blue-coats! Hurrah, hurrah!” And he fired his horse-pistol in the air.

The rest heard; they saw; they took up the shout. “Blue-coats, hurrah!” At the same moment, the bushwhackers, who had some time since ceased firing, in astonishment, left their tree-shelters, and fled in confusion through the woods.

“Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!”

The boys leaped upon their feet; they swung their hats; they made the forest echo and re-echo with their wild shouts of joy. They were answered by swinging sabres, and cheers from a hundred patriot throats. A minute later, they were surrounded by their friends, — strangers all, personally, but yet friends; for did they not wear the dear blue coats? and were they not fighting in the just cause and true?

Yet there was one who was not a stranger, — to Carl

and Fred at least. He bounded from his horse, and clasped the hands of both boys at once. They were none the less delighted to see him because his skin was black.

“Pomp! you dear old yellow!” said Carl: “who would ever have thought of seeing you?”

XXXV.

TO NASHVILLE.—A SURPRISE.



THE blue coats were worn by a regiment of Ohio cavalry belonging to General Stanley's command. That popular officer — "gay old Stanley" he was filially called by his men, though still young — was that day (it is written in history as the 11th of December) giving them exercise and practice with their new revolving rifles by making a reconnoissance in force, and a dash on the rebel lines.

Pomp was acting as scout to the expedition. Mounted on a magnificent black charger, he had done daring service from the start. Moving along the Franklin pike in strong force, they had found the enemy soon after passing the Federal outposts, and driven everything before them. They were now chasing the flying rebels towards Triune and Nolensville; watching, however, for the right moment to wheel, and pounce upon the garrison at Franklin.

How Pomp had learned the situation of his friends in the woods, Fred did not ascertain until afterwards; for it was Pomp who had guided the Ohio boys so opportunely to the spot. Captured horses were brought up, and the rescued fugitives were speedily mounted, — Fred with his disabled foot; old Joel with his gashed shoulder, clinging to his hatchet and growling good-naturedly; Carl and Cy and the rest; all indeed but Enos Crumlett, who was neatly whisked away into captivity and tribulation by the rebels, to whom he had unfortunately been in such haste to surrender. Of the fate of this luckless Northern man with Southern principles, the few words that remain to be said may as well be said here.

That he was not hung on the spot by the enraged guerillas, he owed not at all to their promise to spare the lives of those who surrendered, nor to the fact that he was a non-combatant, but simply and solely to the prospect of a bribe which he held out to them. For them to take the lives of their enemies was pleasant; but to receive a heavy ransom was more pleasant. And to Enos, though money was sweet, existence — even the existence of a creature like him, strange as it may seem — was sweeter. So he pledged his house, his land, every thing, to raise the fearful sum of THREE THOUSAND

DOLLARS, to give in exchange for his life. A week afterwards he was permitted to return home, in order to pay the first instalment (two hundred dollars), and to make preparations for paying the rest. Poor Matilda, who had given him up for lost, was wild with joy at sight of him. But, when she learned the price he was to pay for himself, she angrily declared that it was the silliest bargain he ever made. She seemed to think that, if he had been shrewd, he ought to have let the rebels take his life, and to have chuckled the while at the smart "speculation;" giving them a thing so worthless in place of the substantial three thousand dollars they had named as an equivalent. But Fortune, which favors the brave, sometimes does not forget the mean and cowardly. Enos paid the first instalment of his ransom immediately; but before January, when he was to pay the rest, occurred the battle of Stone River, — or rather the week of battles, — by which, after days of terrible conflict and terrible slaughter, Bragg's magnificent army was driven back from its strong position, and the rebel power in Tennessee broken. The Crumlett Family woke up one morning, and found themselves, to their great delight, inside the advancing Union lines. Enos became at once a devoted "Union man from the start," and he

had heart-rending tales to tell of his sufferings and losses in the good cause. These pathetic narratives procured him some indulgences from those in authority; so that he rapidly repaired his fortunes. He has since developed, naturally and easily, into the character which, no doubt, Heaven designed him to be, — a prosperous Government contractor and speculator in the misfortunes of war.

Stanley's force pursued the enemy beyond Triune, destroying two camps, and capturing a few horses and men; and bivouacked that night seven miles west of Murfreesborough. The next morning they carried out their original design of an attack on Franklin, captured the place, put the garrison to flight, took a number of prisoners, destroyed a flouring-mill, and returned — having made a brilliant and successful reconnoissance, without the loss of a man — to report to Rosecrans.

In the mean time, soon after the rescue, Fred and his companions, together with a handful of prisoners, under a sufficient escort, had been sent off to Nashville. Pomp, despatched as a courier, accompanied them. They reached the city in the middle of the afternoon, as jovial a set of fellows as ever were seen returning safe and whole, after all the hardships and horrors of a flight from captivity and death in an enemy's country.

And now the time came for Fred to separate temporarily from his old comrades; for they were going to the provost-marshal's; and Pomp, for a particular reason, wished to take him, with Carl, to the office of the army-police.

“Good-by, boys! See you soon. Be with you at the front again in a few days. My foot is almost well already!” (Joy had cured that.) “Don't go to the hospital if you can help it, Joel: I sha'n't!”

“Blast the hospital!” growled old Joel. “I want to git back to the rigiment agin: that's all I ax!”

As he emphasized the word *ax* with a flourish of the *hatchet*, all the boys laughed; and so they parted.

“A good old soul, but as odd as Dick's hat-band!” said Fred, gazing after his comrades with affectionate, earnest eyes. “And what a splendid fellow Cy is! He'll go to Congress some day, I'll bet! I've known him for years. I only found out to-day what a man is inside his clothes! And Jake—glorious Jake! I am filled with remorse to think I ever called him lazy!”

Pomp had galloped on before the arriving party, and delivered “gay old Stanley's” despatch at Rosecrans' headquarters; and he now had nothing to do but to accompany the boys. At the office of the army-police

they dismounted, and Fred entered, leaning on Carl's shoulders; for joy had not quite cured his sprain after all. They were shown into a private room, where the two boys sat down and waited. Pomp went out, and in a little while the "colonel" came in.

He was delighted at the sight of Carl; and he questioned both boys closely with regard to all they had seen in Dixie. They had brought important information with regard to the rebel forces at Shelbyville: and Carl, moreover, was enabled to lay before him a complete exposition of all the smuggling operations carried on by "Joseph," and his associates North and South; an exposition which, it may here be said, led to the speedy interruption of those operations by the national authorities, the arrest of several of the gang, and the confiscation of their goods.

But, when Carl proceeded to relate his adventures in Murfreesborough, the colonel interposed with a smile,—

"Never mind about that now. I know more of what you saw there, and of much that you only suspected, than you suppose. — As for you, my plucky young friend," — pressing Fred's hand cordially, — "I sympathize with you in all you have suffered in connection with that strange man, Daniels; but I have a bit of good

news for you, that will make you forget all that. Your mother" —

"My mother!" echoed Fred with a start: "you have heard from her?"

"Better than that," said the pleasant colonel. "The morning you were captured, word was sent to her that you were wounded. It proved to be another that had the wound; but the mistake had, as it now turns out, happy consequences."

"She came on! she is here!" said Fred, trembling with joyous excitement.

"Exactly; and as you are lame, and could n't very well go and find her, I told Pomp she had better come and find you. Come in, Pomp!"

It was indeed Pomp's face at the door. But Fred saw also another face, to him the dearest in the world, — a face beaming with love and rapture, with joy, and tears — his mother's. In a moment he was in her arms.

"My boy, my boy!" was all she could utter, as she snatched him to her lips and fluttering heart.

As for Fred, he could not say a word, but just flung his arms about her, laid his face upon her neck, and sobbed with excess of joy. It was such a little while ago that he gave up all hope of ever seeing her again in

this world ; and now here she was ! On ! God was certainly good to him ; and well might he feel now such gratitude and blessed happiness as he had never in all his life felt before.

“ My child, my Alfred ! Heaven has given you to me again ! And he has given me something more. O Alfred ! look ! this is ” —

Along with Pomp and Mrs. Rivers had entered a third person, whom Fred, overcome by the sight of his mother, had not observed. But now he looked up ; and a shadow swept over him ; an icy chill contracted his heart : for he saw standing before him, bronzed and calm and bland, smiling upon mother and son, Daniels the spy.

XXXVI.

THE SPY.



“Y father! I know it!” said Fred in a hollow voice, shrinking back, and coldly declining the man’s proffered hand.

Daniels — or rather Mr. Rivers, as we must call him now — received this rebuff with perfect equanimity; still extending his hand, and smiling proudly, even affectionately, upon the spirited boy.

“Alfred, my son!” exclaimed Mrs. Rivers, “you do not know! — it is he who saved your life!”

“I know that, too!” said Fred, in a voice that ill-concealed the indignation, grief, and shame that convulsed his heart; “and, at the same time, he betrayed my friends!”

Still Mr. Rivers did not speak: he continued to smile, with hand extended, and with the same look of paternal love and pride. But Mrs. Rivers exclaimed, —

“Betrayed them? On the contrary, it was he who rode to meet the Union cavalry, and told Pomp just where to find you!”

“And, moreover, it belongs to me to inform you,” said the colonel, laying his hand kindly upon Fred’s shoulder, “that you have quite misunderstood certain things. Even Carl here, shrewd as he is, has been—well, a little too shrewd!”

“I’ve been shtoopider as my mule!” broke forth Carl, throwing up his hands with gestures of dismay, “Was ever such? I shall vake up to-morrow vith ears a foot long! Give me some bags to get into and hide!”

“Why, Carl,” laughed the colonel, “what’s the matter?”

“I made such a plunder! It vas bogus maps he vas showing the rebs, ven I spotted him for a spy!”

“Maps I gave him myself,” added the colonel. “But the conclusion you came to was perfectly natural, and you acted altogether right afterwards. The truth is, I have in this room here now three of my very best scouts. You have proved yourself worthy to be called one, Carl. Pomp, in his way, is unequalled. But the man who has really rendered us the most extensive and valuable service is — Mr. Daniel S. Rivers!”

Scarcely changing a feature, but smiling still, and still extending his hand, the noted scout waited patiently for Fred to recognize him in his true character. And Fred, listening, gazing, wondering — bewildered and incredulous at first, but his doubts clearing and his mind convinced at last, — bent forward with a sudden impulse, penitent but overjoyed, clasped the hand, and pressed it to his lips.

“O my father! forgive me!” he exclaimed. “I was wrong; but I loved you all the while!”

“Did you, my boy? I believe so!” said Mr. Rivers, drawing him to his bosom as fondly as when they lay that night in the pine-woods under the same blanket. “But let me tell you that I have nothing to forgive. You and Carl and the rest did only your duty.”

“Oh! but why did n’t you tell us how it was? It would have saved so much!”

“That, indeed, I should have done, before permitting you quite to hang me up! In fact, I was on the point of explaining everything when you captured Captain Gruffley. I had become a pretended spy in the rebel service, against my will, and in order to save my life, when I was once scouting for our army; and, after that, I found it necessary to keep up the character whenever

I entered the rebel lines. I was able, by that means, to gain a great deal of information which could not otherwise have been obtained; but, at the same time, I was obliged to use the utmost caution to prevent my real business from being discovered. I made it a rule to intrust absolutely no one with my secret; and many a time I have passed for a reprobate with good Union men, rather than give them a hint that I was different from what I seemed."

"Oh! but our fellows would have kept your secret sacred as the grave!"

"Very likely, and yet possibly not. Suppose they had been recaptured, as seemed inevitable at one time, and had afterwards, in some fit of disgust and despair, concluded that I had deceived them: do you think they might not have flung out something which would have led to my being suspected by the rebels, especially since I had run some risks in rescuing you? Gruffley was beginning to distrust me: I found that out when I stole down the hill before daybreak to have a talk with him. My object was to ascertain *his* object in being there, and to learn his plans. But he was so close, I could get nothing out of him. For that reason, I did not think it useful to tell you I had seen him."

“And you did *not* guide the rebels to attack our pickets that morning?”

“Quite the contrary. It was several hours after I entered the rebel camp that I first heard that an attack was meditated. I was sent for to consult with the leaders. I did my best to dissuade them from it; but, finding them determined, I resolved to accompany them, and see that no harm came to you. I also hoped to be able to get the start of them, and warn your pickets; but their excessive precautions rendered that impossible.”

“Oh! I am so glad!” exclaimed Fred. “And you have truly been a Union man all along?”

“From the beginning, my boy. And now I will tell you more. I was once an uncompromising proslavery man, as your mother here knows too well; and I never had my eyes fully open to the evils of the institution, until, of late years, the subject of secession began to be agitated. Then I found that slavery had besotted the moral sense of the South; that, for its sake, men who prided themselves on their high and stainless honor were ready to do the most dishonorable things. Whatever was done in behalf of the favorite institution was considered right, even to the overthrow of the most beneficent Government on earth, and the plunging of

their country into civil war. Then I remembered, and found true, many things your mother had said to me in days when that was the only great subject we differed upon, — the source of all our unhappiness. Yes, my boy: I say it to you now, as I have already said it to her, I discovered, when too late, that I had been wrong, and that she had been right all the time. I lived in a neighborhood of violent secessionists; and, as soon as it was well known that I had decided to stand for the Union at all hazards, their persecution began. I foresaw all that has taken place since in those regions of guerillas and assassins; so I kept quiet as possible until I had perfected a plan for freeing my slaves; then with them I abandoned every thing, and escaped to the Union camps. Since then I have devoted body and mind and soul to defeat the designs of the traitors; and have, even as you have seen, been willing to pass as a spy in their employment, in order to discover and thwart their own plans. I hoped to do my country some worthy service; and I hoped too, in that way, to prove to your mother how sincerely I repented of my past errors of opinion, and the wrong I have done her. A wonderful Providence has brought us together here: she was hunting for you, and found me. She has forgiven me. Have you?"

All this was said with the air of a frank, generous, and manly nature, avowing faults of the past, and standing calm and grand for the truth now and for evermore. Mrs. Rivers's fine and noble face beamed with inexpressible pride and happiness, and Fred was fairly intoxicated with delight.

"But Alfred is suffering with his foot! Let us take him home," said Mrs. Rivers.

"Never mind the foot! But what do you mean by home?"

"We will show you," said his father.

There was a mutual happy understanding between his parents which puzzled Fred. Were they taking him to his father's home in Kentucky, or to his mother's home in Illinois?

"Any thing but the hospital!" said he.

"You shall have no hospital except our own house, and no nurse but your mother!" replied Mr. Rivers.

"But where is Carl? and Pomp?"

They had delicately withdrawn during the boy's interview with his parents. He found them at the door. There was also at the door a carriage, which had brought his mother and father to the army police-office, and was waiting to take them away again.

“Go with us, can’t you?” cried Fred, loath to part with his tried friends, although he had found those who were dearer than any friends.

“I should be wery happy,” replied Carl, with a sturdy grip of the hand; “but I must go find my captain, and see vat news” — what made him pause and blush so? Was it news from Penn Hapgood’s beautiful Quaker sister he was so eager to obtain? — “news from the regiment, you know!” he added, with a droll smile.

“You don’t regret your little scouting expedition, do you?” said Mr. Rivers.

“Ve had some shport!” Carl answered. “And I vill show you, Fred, vat the colonel has just shlipped into my vist.” It was a fifty-dollar “greenback.”

He was evidently very proud, not of the money, but of the fact that his services were thus appreciated. “Yoseph said I shall make much money,” he added with a smile. “The colonel says I must take this horse, too, to make up for the walue of the vun I lost” (it was the captured animal which he had ridden into Nashville). “So now goot-py!”

He mounted, and rode cheerily away: not that he parted from Fred and Pomp without regret, but that his anticipations of a speedy meeting with his beloved cap-

tain, and of getting news from — *the regiment*, overshadowed every other consideration.

“But you are going with us, Pomp?” said Fred.

“I’ll be your coachman, I reckon,” the negro answered, measuring out the reins.

“Oh! if we could only stop at the provost-marshal’s a minute, and tell the boys!”

“That we can do, Alfred,” said Mr. Rivers. “I should like to see them a minute myself.”

Pomp reined up to the door of the provost-marshal’s office, and, bounding to the ground, ran in to inform Cy and his companions that he had caught the spy.

“Good on your head, old fellow!” ejaculated Jake.

“By time! where is he?” growled old Joel, grasping his hatchet.

“At the door: come and identify him, some of you.”

All went; all identified the man they had tried, condemned, and nearly hung: and great was the astonishment of all when they saw his wife with him and his son, and learned the truth.

“I was never so glad to know I had made a fool of myself!” exclaimed Cy, cordially shaking the hand of his late prisoner. “Mrs. Rivers, I am rejoiced to see you, and to congratulate you!”

“All I have to say is, that you ’ll see me turn somersets to the moon, before I ever set on a court-martial again!” declared Jake. “This justice is ticklish business, after all; ain’t it, Cy?”

Only old Joel, who would never acknowledge himself to be in the wrong, grumbled, and shook his head, and threw out dark hints that all was not yet as it should be. Mr. Rivers laughed.

“Well, my friends,” said he, “I think you were a little hasty and over-zealous; but you were very excusable, under the circumstances. I shall be happy to meet you all at my house, and have an opportunity to thank you for your kindness to my son here, and also to give you some useful hints with regard to conducting a court-martial!”

“Your business with the rebels is no secret now?” Cy queried.

“No; for I think my usefulness in that line has terminated with this last adventure. I still remain in the employment of the Government, however. I have taken a house in the city, where, as I said, you will all be welcome. Drive on, Pomp!”

Fred swung his hat at his comrades as he rode away, and they cheered him in return. A short drive took the

carriage to the door of an elegant residence, where Mr. Rivers jumped down, and helped his wife to alight. He then took Fred in his arms, and carried him gayly up the steps.

“What! is this our home?” cried the delighted boy.

“For the present, and probably as long as the army remains at Nashville. It is one of those fine houses which our rebellious relatives have vacated, and left ready furnished for our accommodation. In consideration of my services, which I have hitherto refused to receive pay for, Government has placed all this at our disposal.” And, the door being opened by a black servant, Mr. Rivers took Fred in, and showed him the comforts and conveniences of their new home.

“O mother! isn’t this tip-top!” exclaimed Fred, overflowing with gratitude and happiness. “I am almost glad I am lame, so that I can stay a little while with you!”

Fred’s “little while” became a long while. It was weeks before he was able to walk without lameness. The result was, that he never returned to his regiment. Through his father’s influence, he obtained an appointment on the staff of one of the most brilliant young

officers in the Army of the Cumberland; and he has since distinguished himself on many a hard-fought field.

His parents, so happily re-united, have scarcely been separated since; for while Mr. Rivers follows the army, being now at the head of one of its most important departments, his wife accompanies him, devoting her life to the welfare of the wounded soldiers,—one of those noble missionaries of the hospitals, whose good deeds shall not be forgotten either in this world or the next.

Carl has not been out on any very extensive scouting expeditions of late. Not so Pomp: where services of that sort, involving greatest danger and hardship, are to be performed, there the fearless and sagacious black scout is to be found.

THE END.

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