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SCOTTO, THE SCOUT;

OR,

The Union Rangers.

A TALE OF THE GREAT REBELLION.

BY DR. J. H. ROBINSON.

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# SCOTTO, THE SCOUT

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## The Union Rangers.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE SITUATION—THE LOYAL PICKETS—THE HORSE-MAN.

Washington was a military camp, and its usually quiet streets echoed to the measured tread of armed men. The star-spangled banner waved tranquilly over perturbed and fluctuating Baltimore, and Federal cannon bristled on Arlington and Georgetown Heights. A long line of loyal bayonets gleamed brightly on the troubled borders of Virginia. McClellan and Patterson were advancing; the impatient columns of McDowell faced Fairfax and Manassas; on the extreme left, Fortress Monroe frowned grimly on the defiant approaches of mad rebellion; while the blockading squadron swarmed the Gulf.

The disloyal States were beginning to feel the power of the Government, the strength of the Union, the wrath of the North, and the glowing patriotism of the awakened West.

The uprising of a free, brave, and industrious people is a grand, yet terrible spectacle. Mothers wept over their gallant sons, and sent them to the glorious field. Sweethearts and wives kissed lovers and husbands, and hurried them to the great battle for freedom. Gray-headed sires girded the sword to their stalwart boys, and blessing them with uplifted, trembling hands and husky voices, reminded them of Washington; that wounds in front are the glory of the soldier; that to die for ones country is to join the world's army of commemorated heroes and martyrs.

Never was such a sight seen since the Revolution. Party lines were forgotten; partisan differences died the death, and the discordant tongue of demagogue-clamor was heard no more. There was political peace in the North and in the West. The spirit of unanimity possessed all hearts. A new crusade was inaugurated. Fair women, stirred with a nobler enthusiasm than

erst inspired the daughters of the conquering pilgrim Cross, prepared laurels for their soldier-heroes, and cheered their hurried, eager march to meet the insulting foe. The coldest blood grew warm; the most stagnant currents began to flow, and all thought as from one mighty brain. If here and there Treason dared to mutter, low down in its throat, the quick verdict of the People sent it, silent and shamed, to its own place.

There was no conscription. Neither threats, nor wheedling, nor bribery, were resorted to, to fill the ranks of the Union hosts. The Government was amazed and embarrassed by the swarming multitudes that hurried to the national standard at the first blast of the bugle. The despotisms of the Old World, that had, at the beginning, laughed at our calamity and mocked when our trial came, wondered beyond measure at the spectacle of a mighty army, gathered in a day, by a power inherent in itself, stimulated neither by hope of pillage nor love of conflict, but by pure patriotism.

This great Army of the North and West rested quietly on the Potomac, awaiting calmly the shock of battle. General Scott, strong in his integrity, faithful to the Union, and his soldier-instincts, in consonance with his carefully-studied plan of the campaign, was now drawing his strong cordons more closely around the black heart of Rebellion.

The rebels affected to behold these vast preparations with contempt. Intrenched behind masked batteries, they raised and struck the war-post, boasting of their achievements in the past, and vain-gloriously breathing speedy defeat to the barbarian Yankee hordes. But nothing came of the semenaces; and Washington, instead of becoming a "stone quarry," as threatened by the potential leader of the Confederate forces, was unusually gay and attractive. In the various skirmishes that took place, the Southern chivalry showed more haste than he-

roism. Indeed, their legs were their best arms, the former taking them from that danger which the latter could not, or would not, manfully meet.

The rebels occupied Fairfax and Manassas, and an advance upon those places was talked of by those in authority, greatly to the satisfaction of the loyal troops. The retreat of the enemy had been so uniform that many dreamed of an easy victory; but there were cooler persons who shook their heads, and talked of Gates flying before the charging squadrons of Cornwallis at the disastrous field of Camden.

Weary of inaction, and incited by an earnest but over-zealous press, the Army of the Potomac was impatient for a decisive forward movement. Such was the situation of affairs at the time our story commences.

Late on a soft and pleasant summer-night, some weeks after the magnificent moonlight-march over the Long Bridge, and the occupation of Alexandria by the dashing Fire Brigade, a man, mounted on a powerful horse, was observed by two of the loyal pickets slowly advancing in the direction of Fairfax, unconscious, apparently, that he was near those whose duty it was to demand his business and dispute his right to proceed, unless duly vouched for by a military pass. The pickets, on making this discovery, drew closer to each other, and, screened by a cluster of intervening bushes, quietly awaited the horseman's coming. When he was sufficiently near for that purpose, one of the men stepped from his covert, and demanded:

"Who goes?"

The horseman, instead of answering this challenge in customary form, instantly spurred his horse and made a bold attempt to run the picket. So sudden was this movement, that the guard had neither time to cock nor present his musket; and had it not been for his companion, the determined rider would have effected his purpose. The former, as the latter was passing near his concealment, and, indeed, almost upon him, had the presence of mind to throw himself forward before the plunging horse, and seize it by the bridle, with a force and energy that effectually checked the animal, which, however, made a spirited effort to shake him off.

The man making this decisive demonstration was tall and athletic, and clad in a plain suit of national blue. While his right hand grasped firmly the tightened reins, he held in his left a rifled musket, surmounted by that terrible weapon, the sabre-bayonet, which, in the soft moonlight, glittered like burnished silver. A heavy dragoon-sword was girt to his side by a substantial leathern belt, which also gave support to a bowie-knife and a brace of revolvers.

His strongly-defined and sun-browned face was singularly calm and unruffled in expression, as he nervously pressed the horse back-

ward upon his haunches, and controlled his fiery spirit.

"Don't hurry, stranger, don't hurry! You'll sweat your horse, if you ain't keeful. There's time enough for any honest business, without heatin' your blood."

The horseman had reached down to the saddle, and half-drawn a pistol; but, on hearing this salutation, let it fall slowly back into the holster.

"My haste is urgent. Do not detain me. I should even now be several miles from here," he answered, looking uneasily about him.

"No doubt on't; but them several miles ought to be toward Arlington, 'stead o' this way. I'd have you comperhend, impatient stranger, that nowt done up in the shape of flesh, be it the flesh of men, women, children, or animals, can budge this way without the countersign or a written pass. I'll take one or t'other o' 'em about this time of the lone starry hours; which means, young traveler, about as quick as you can cleverly git at 'em."

The horseman glanced downward at the features of his interrogator; they were quiet but determined.

"I thought," he said, searching his pockets, "that I passed the loyal pickets half a mile back; but it would seem that I am mistaken. I had a paper," he added, hesitatingly, "from one in authority; but—but I fear I have lost it."

"Sorry to hear it, sir! Am afraid it'll put you to a deal o' trouble. You'll oblige me by gittin' off o' this hoss. It's a slashin' fine un, and 'll do for the Boys to prac-tise the calvary movements on."

"You surely don't mean to detain and rob me!" cried the horseman, in evident alarm. "I warn you that any violence offered to me will be resisted. Who are you? Call the corporal of the guard!"

The man laid his hand again upon a pistol. "To confiscate the spiles of an enemy, is no robbery. Your resistance I keef nowt about, inasmuch as fightin' is at present my profession. As for the next question concernin' who I be, my name is Scotto, independent cap'n of an independent company of star-spangled critters. I go for the Union, the whole Union, and constitutional liberty. If I don't eat my bigness into rebellion, if I don't cut and hack, hash, slash, and gash, right and left, it 'll be because my hand forgets its cunnin', and my arm loses its strength, my heart its patriotism, and my brain its sense! That's who I be, and that's the ground on which I stan' on, and, with God's help, will stan' on while I stan' anywhere on the airth. As for the cor'poral of the guard, I'll send for him when I need him. Havin' answered all your questions, I'll take the liberty to help you out of the saddle."

Captain Scotto dropped his musket upon the grass at his feet, and was about to drag the young man from his seat, when, making a virtue

of necessity, he saved him that trouble by dismounting; but not till he had looked at the other guard, and perceived his weapon leveled at his head.

"Everything you have asked has been replied to by me. It is now my turn to be inquisitive. What name did you say?" added Scotto.

"In times like these, names are of little consequence," responded the person interrogated. "However, I have no objections to telling you a name that has never been disgraced by me. I am called Ralph Girdwood."

"A good name and a good figger by natur'," returned Scotto, appreciatively. "But names and figgers don't pass pickets without the dockyments. We've suffered enough by being too easy with our enemies. Our Gov'ment has hard work to b'lieve that we're in an actooal state o' war with them as will show no marey. Mistaken kin'ness has got to stop some here; and as true as my name is Scotto, it shall go hard with the spy that falls int' my hands."

"Spy!" exclaimed Girdwood, quickly.

"Spy I said, and spy it is!" said Scotto, sharply. "Down on the grass, mister! Barney Malone—he turned to the guard who stood near him—"off with this chap's boots, and see what's into 'em."

"Just as your honor plazes! If 'twas a leg or an arm that ye'd have pulled off, I'd pull it off all the same; for obajence to orders is the first duty of a bowld soger boy," responded Barney, advancing upon Girdwood, with alacrity.

"I protest against this!" exclaimed Girdwood, retreating behind his horse, which Captain Scotto still held. "I warn you not to come nearer. If I am to be detained, take me to the quarters."

He drew up his person and showed Barney Malone a figure straight, athletic, and handsome, and too formidable to be lightly approached.

"Is it to Barney Malone ye say it? Is it to a thrue Union soldier that ye're sp'akin'?" retorted Barney, throwing himself into an attitude of defence. "Mind these two illigant bunches o' bones, now!" (Barney held up his fists like a prize-fighter.) "Down on the grass, as ye're awid, ye murtherin' blackguard! If 'twasn't for the likes of ye, we might ivery mother's son of us be home, dhr'amin' peaceably in our blissed beds."

"Back!" admonished Girdwood. "Back!"

Barney not heeding this warning, but continuing to press upon the young man, the latter truck straight out from the shoulder and knocked him down; then, with singular celerity of motion, sprang upon his horse, plunged his spurs into his sides, and riding over Scotto, made good his escape.

The captain seized his musket and fired after the daring horseman. The report was followed by a quick succession by several others along the

line, but Ralph Girdwood rode on, apparently unharmed.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE INDEPENDENT RANGERS AND THE BASKETEERS.

Scotto gazed after Ralph Girdwood till both horse and rider had dwindled into a mere speck in the distance.

"There he goes, drivin' full speed into the enemy's picket!" he muttered, in a tone that sufficiently evidenced his dissatisfaction. "Tisn't often I git fooled in that way. Losin' what few fakilities I had, I guess. The twins could done better'n that. Well, it's been the way from the begianin'; the seeceshers, spies, pirates, and Union-killers have escaped their deserts. Them as should a been hung by the head, or shot by a squad o' men at thirteen paces, shirk the awards o' justice in one way or another; either by the tender mercies of the Gov'ment, their wit, or their heels. I wonder when this thing 'll stop? I wonder when the wise uns at Washin'-ton 'll begin to work in earnest? I wonder when the dull eyes 'll be opened, the heavy ears begin to hear, and the inactive hands put forth their strength. For one, I want to fight! For one, I want to eat my bigness into this rebellion! For one, I want to draw the sword o' Liberty, and hack, hash, and gash for the Continental Constitution, which is the hope o' the world, and which we've lived under happy and contented till this rotten seecesher idee was dinned into the ears of the South-downers by a few lazy, pervaricatin', pervarted dimagogues, graspin' arter rule and authority. That's the short, long, and whole on't!"

Scotto looked thoughtfully at the bright sabre-bayonet on his musket, sighed, and turned slowly to Barney Malone:

"Up, Barney, up! Never fall down, man, when a traitor strikes."

"Niver fall, is it?" cried Barney, springing to his feet. "Kape your trotters when you're knocked down, you mane? Stan' up when you're sprawlin', wud ye? Cap'n, jewel, thry it yourself, and jest be afther informin' me how it agrays wid ye, immejiat aftherwards. His fist flew out like a stame-hammer straight into me countenance, when all to oiet, without any warnin', somethin' drapped at me feet; and meself was it that drapped. Bad cess to the murderin' seecader! He's spiled the sittin' of as illigant an eye as iver sighted a gun-barrel, or winked at an angel. May gunpowther and lead bring me to grafe if I don't remember this insult when we reach Melasses Gap, Feerfax, Coort-House, and other ribil intrenchments. The Sixty-ninth is the boys for 'em! The Sixty-ninth is the eye-wather for me!"

Barney resumed his musket, and seemed lost in a sudden reverie of the Sixty-ninth.

"Will they fight?" asked Scotto, looking again at the lessening form of the horseman.

"Is it of Paddy Malone ye axes it? Is it me self that ye're axin' to? Isn't it some dirty drame you're in, cap'n dear? Will cats keton mice? Will fishes swim the say? Will ferrets run aither rats? Go away wid ye, Cap'n Scotto!"

Barney made a playful thrust at Scotto with his bayonet; but it was evident that the question had touched him in a sensitive spot.

"I'm sorry," said Scotto, with a troubled face, "that the chap got away. I thought you could manage him, Barney, or I should laid hands on him myself. I shouldn't wonder now, if there was plans of our works in his boots. He wouldn't slipped through the fingers of one o' them Fire Zerves in that way, I'll warrant."

"It's the rid-capped divils you're comparin' me wid! I'll tell ye jest the truth, cap'n; the fire craythers are good for contindin' with fire and wather, but wud go down afore a stame-hammer as suddint as Barney Malone of the Sixty-ninth. Take part of the blame to yourself. Didn't a fine horse flout ye at the same time? Why didn't ye hould him, cap'n? Tell me that question, I axes ye!"

Barney leered cunningly at Scotto, who was now very willing to drop the subject, and, fortunately for him, the appearance of a body of horsemen favored his wishes.

"Here comes my star-spangled critters! You'll hear from them, Barney, afore this on-nat'ral war is over. There isn't one on 'em but is able to eat his bigness into rebellion. They're true men, gathered from all parts of the North and West. They've seen all sorts o' service, and love the Union as they do their mothers. They're boys arter my own heart! For liberty and the nation, they'll hack, and cut, and slice, with the bravest fighters in the land. Not that they nat'rally love blood and slaughter. Not that, by no means whatsoever. In civil life they're as tender-hearted as women, and industrious as ants. But the sperrit of Seventy-Six is into 'em! The patriotism of the fightin' fathers swells in their bosoms like new wine in bottles. No plunder, no filthy lucre, no pay for the Independent Union Rangers. They're in nobody's service but the country's; under nobody's command in particular but mine; in for no time, but for the war, long or short. We ask nothin' of Government but the privilege of bein' put face to face with the foe. We want no clothes, no equipments, no hosses, no rations, no money out o' Uncle Sam. We can take keer of ourselves, and do it cheetful, all for the sake of the glorious old Stars and Stripes that our ancestors fought under at Bunker Hill, Lexington, Concord, and other places. It's a fine old rag," he added, casting his eyes upward to the flag that floated over his command. "It's a fine old rag, and woe, woe to the traitors that betray it!"

Perhaps the patriotic Scotto thought of a white-headed old man, once known in America

as General Twiggs, but remembered now only for the enormity of his treason.

By this time the Union Rangers had drawn up before their leader. This company of independent men was composed of the best material for hard and efficient service. They numbered a hundred and ten, including officers, and had rallied around Scotto because he had seen service in Mexico, and in the wild warfare of the West. They knew that he would not flinch, and was the man to lead them to victory, if it were within human attainment. His hardy frame, well-seasoned muscles, and universally-accredited courage, gave promise of great effectiveness; while his unquestioned loyalty and many good qualities, secured the respect and friendship of his followers.

"Lieutenant Scarlett," said Scotto, "have you seen anybody stirrin' within our lines?"

"Only a man on horseback, who might, for aught I know, have been one of our pickets. Seeing us, he quickened his speed, and we soon lost sight of him. He should have reached the picket somewhere hereabout," replied the officer addressed.

"He did reach it, and run it, too!" returned Scotto, biting his lip, "He's a good two mile on his way to Fairfax, by this time."

"A detachment of the Black Horse Cavalry has been popping at our pickets a few miles above," remarked the lieutenant, looking inquisitively at the face of his leader.

"The Black Hoss Calvary!" repeated Scotto, quickly. "We must have a dash at them, boys. Black hosses or white hosses don't make no difference in a man's fightin' qualities. The black hoss idee may scare children, but it won't go down with our Northerners and Westerners that are big enough to buckle on a sword, or sight a rifle. There's nothin' in color, but everything in pluck. We'll move out our lads, and make a reconnoissance toward the enemy's advance-guard."

At that moment a man spurred from the rear in considerable haste, and, approaching Captain Scotto, said, with a scandalized look:

"Them twins are fightin' ag'in!"

"Fightin' ag'in? In course they're fightin' ag'in. They're allers fightin' ag'in," returned Scotto. Then raising his voice, he shouted: "Peleg! Pickering! To the front, you little rascals!"

After some delay and commotion in the rear rank, two boys, about a dozen years old, dressed as Zouaves, mounted on mules, made their appearance in front. They were somewhat disordered and blown, evidently from a recent brush.

"Been at it ag'in—haven't ye?" queried Scotto, without a particle of apparent wrath.

One of the lads grinned, the other looked sulen.

"Clapperclawin' each other, weren't they

Co'p'ril Keith?" turning to the man who had preferred the charge against the culprits.

"They was! They was at it, peggin' away at each other arter the old fashion," replied Corporal Keith.

"It's into 'em! It's nat'rally into 'em, and has been into 'em ever since I found 'em a hangin' in a basket at my door. Prehaps you all may or may'n't know," he continued, looking at his command, "that that was the way that I come into the possession of them belligerents. Yes, my men, them critters was in a basket, done up in some coarse sackin', with never so much linen on 'em as would kiver a pin-cushion. They was very new babies. They was too new to be ballooin' in a basket. I was a single man then, as I am now, and as I'm like to be through life; and knew no more about new babies than a Thomas-cat about kittens. I was a good 'eal exercised in my feelin's. I thought, at fust, that I'd slip 'em slyly aboard the fust stage-coach that passed along the road, and send 'em, sackin' and all, to seek their fortins otherwheres. But fate ordered things different, for jest then they begun to claw each other and scream. Their cries went through my ears like the shriek of a file. While I stood starin', onsartin what to do, my housekeeper, an old maid aunt, come out of a suddint. When she seed that basket, she bristled up like a porkypine, and looked at me awful.

"What's into it?" sez she.

"Reg'lar live uns!" sez I, edgin' away.

"Luke Scotto, you're a depravity!" sez she.

"Who'd a thought a respectable house would a had babies hung onto it?"

"Nobody, I guess, that's acquainted hereabouts," sez I, maliciously. With that she tossed her head and went in, leavin' the basket on the door-step. But she didn't stay long. There was a woman's heart into her, notwithstanding her sharpness. She come back ag'in and told me to fetch in the basket."

"Were they twins?" asked the lieutenant, smiling.

"The Lord he only knows! They was about the same length and bigness. Their featur's was as onlike as two blind idols, and they fou't each other; therefore we thought it best to call 'em twins; though I generally styles 'em the Basketeers. Individooally, they're named Peleg and Pickering. Like many other brethers—takin' it for granted they're brethers—they don't agree. There is a tendency into 'em to pitch in. There hasn't been a day since I brung 'em up, that they haven't pitched in, more or less, often-er more. I reckon they come of a fightin' family, and these be the instincts of the second and third generations."

Scotto paused, and various comments were made by the Rangers, some of which were by no means flattering to the subjects of this short history.

"There bein' so much fight in 'em," resumed the captain, "I'm goin' to turn it to some account. If they'll tackle the enemy with half the spirit they do each other, they'll do mischief. There's been a good 'eal of our ousty and 'quity, and some innocendo about these boys, and I've taken this occasion to set ye all right. They're fo'ndlin's. There no more nor less than basket fo'ndlin's. Co'p'ril Keith"—he turned to the corporal—"if they git to fightin' ag'in, let me know it. Boys, fall back to your places!"

The Basketeers, in obeying this order, purposely backed their mules together, which fell to kicking furiously, to the great delight of their riders, who clung to their backs like monkeys.

"The mules are twins, too, I allow!" said Corporal Keith.

Peleg and Pickering finally effected a retreat, creating confusion in whatever direction they went. One was presently heard singing "Dixie," and the other "John Brown."

"Attention! Now, my star-spangled critters, we'll look arter driftin' squads of the Black Hoss Calvary. Right face! File left! March!"

Previously to giving this order, Captain Scotto mounted his horse, which had been tied to a tree near by, and which Barney led forward.

The Union Rangers moved off at a lively pace, the fighting brothers cantering in the rear, their red caps and red trousers rendering them conspicuous long after Scotto's columns presented but a dark mass.

"The blessings of God and all the saints that iver was, go with 'em, and with the ould flag that floats over 'em!" said Barney Malone, fervently, as he renewed his rounds. "Bad luck to the Irishman that won't fight for the Stars and Stripes, and the country that gives him bread and butter, and more liberty nor he gits at home. The Sixty-ninth is the boys for 'em, say I!"

Thinking of the Sixty-ninth, Barney stepped off more firmly, and held up his head bravely. At the moment when the Rangers swept out of sight, he was singing, sturdily:

"With my sprig of shillalah and shamrock so green."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CAPTAIN OF THE BLACK HORSE.

Meantime, the man who had so successfully passed the loyal picket, kept on his way uninjured by the bullets that whistled after him. One of these leaden messengers pierced his cap, doing, fortunately, no further damage than carrying away a lock of hair.

"Close shooting for night practice!" he muttered. "I'll warrant yonder stout Yankee captain aimed that missile. I wonder what is to be the end of all this?"

Ralph Girdwood fell into a fit of musing, and, being out of rifle range, allowed his horse to slacken its speed. He had proceeded but a short

distance in this manner, when the sudden clattering of iron-shod feet startled him from these reflections, put him upon the alert, and caused him to gather up the loose rein with a quick and energetic hand. Before he had time to question or draw pistol from holster, he perceived a man at his side, riding a coal-black horse of truly wonderful size and symmetry.

To glance sharply and searchingly at the person who had so unceremoniously joined him, was the natural and quickly-obeyed instinct of Girdwood. The impression he received by this cursory, instantaneous examination was far from reassuring. The horseman was of athletic proportions, sat firmly and at ease in the saddle, while his countenance was of a cast stern, dark, and thoughtful, recalling vividly to the young man's mind pictures he had seen of Cromwell.

"Friend or foe?" exclaimed Girdwood, almost involuntarily, simultaneously checking his horse, and reaching for a pistol.

"Either, young man; according to your own election!" answered he of the black horse, bluntly, and in a voice by no means soft, giving Girdwood an inquisitive glance from beneath his heavy and sombre brows.

"Your answer is most vague and ambiguous," returned Girdwood. "In times like these, all men are friends or enemies. There is no neutral ground. We are either mortal foes or sworn brothers."

Girdwood's hand remained on his pistol; but the other made no motion toward his weapons, of which he had no lack, being literally armed to the teeth; a heavy cavalry-sabre swinging at his side, with a bowie-knife and revolvers for its neighbors, while a short rifle was slung across his broad shoulders.

"Right, sir, right!" he replied, with the same harsh brevity of annunciation. "Had you not been followed hither by Northern bullets, as well as by a Northern accent, your business would have been settled ere this."

"You saw me break through the loyal pickets?" said Ralph Girdwood, quickly.

The horseman knit his brows, and darted a suspicious glance at Girdwood.

"I like not the term 'loyal,' sir! Call them Yankee or Federal pickets, if you will; but the word 'loyal' falls not pleasantly on my ear. I, too, am loyal—to my cause!"

"It matters little to me," rejoined Girdwood, after a pause, "what they are called. Their lead will kill as quick by one name as another. In justice, they owe me a cap." He pointed to the bullet-hole in the article named.

"Better a cap than a head. But sufficient of this. What brings you, young man, upon the sacred soil of Virginia?"

"I might give you the old saw upon words, that my horse brings me," said Girdwood, willing to gain time, and evade a direct answer.

"Young man," retorted he of the black horse,

sternly, "trifle not, upon your peril! If your heart is in the right cause, you have nothing to fear from me. I belong to the Confederate States, soul and body, for life, and perhaps for death. My name is Hurdlestone—a name that shall yet become fearful to the Northern hordes that, like devouring locusts, swarm our border. Wherever you hear the tramp of the Black-Horse Cavalry, you may look for me!"

The man's brows contracted vengefully, and he shook the bridle-rein fiercely in his clenched hand.

"I have heard of that formidable body of men," answered Girdwood, "but did not so soon expect the honor of meeting one of them."

"They are known to the Federal lines!" said Hurdlestone, grimly. Then, turning quickly to Girdwood, added: "Why is your horse's head toward Fairfax? I tell you, frankly, that you are treading dangerous ground, unless well vouched for. Our general shows slight mercy to prowlers and spies. He does not imitate the weak and vacillating policy of the Federals. We have staked all upon the sword, and we are not the men to falter at hemp and steel. What are a few paltry lives to the success of our terrible venture? Now, sir, you know who I am. Who are you?"

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Hurdlestone—"

"Captain Hurdlestone," interrupted the man, bluffly.

"To tell the truth, Captain Hurdlestone, I think of taking service in the Confederate Army."

"Others have had the same thought, and been hanged for their pains!" sneered Hurdlestone.

"I trust to better fate, sir. I shall never pull hemp, if I can help it. Besides," he went on, in a different tone, "I swear to you I'll shoot the luckless person who shall make a proposition of that nature in my hearing. You will find me one no more to be trifled with than yourself!"

"Humph!" muttered Hurdlestone.

"My business," continued Girdwood, with increasing steadiness, "I make known to no person not entitled to the knowledge!"

"You flap your wings well for so young a chicken!" said Hurdlestone, dryly. "You may have them clipped, for all that!"

"I bear dispatches, which must be delivered as soon as may be," continued Girdwood, without heeding the other's remark.

"To whom? From whom?"

"To an officer high in command. But your last question, excuse me if I do not answer."

"You have a prudent tongue. What officer?"

Hurdlestone's clear, cold, gray eyes were fixed intently upon the young man.

"Beauregard," said Girdwood, quietly.

"Beauregard!" repeated Hurdlestone, with evident surprise, but incredulity.



"The same," answered the young man, unmoved.

"It's a trick that's been tried before, and ended here!" Hurdlestone drew his hand across his throat.

"Trouble not yourself, Captain Hurdlestone, about the ending of my mission. We should, in courtesy, believe that every man knows his own business best. I request you to conduct me to your commander-in-chief, fully knowing what I do, and willing to take the responsibility of the same. I bring that from Baltimore which he will, perhaps, be glad to receive!"

Hurdlestone was silent a few moments.

"Be it as you will," he said, presently. "The Federal bullets are, with me, your letters of recommendation. I trust no man's word. Actions are my standards of judgment. If you persist in seeing General Beauregard—" He paused an instant; then added, in a voice a shade less harsh, as if a more merciful thought had struck him: "And yet I would bid you hesitate, young man, before taking this step." His keen, gray eyes again flashed coldly upon Girdwood.

"The subject is fully considered by me. I am not a boy, to change my mind without cause," he answered.

"I spoke from a feeling of humanity for one so young and full of life."

A dubious smile flitted over the lips of Ralph Girdwood.

"In a moment," continued Hurdlestone, "you shall pass the Confederate picket, after which there will be no return till you have looked our general in the face, and passed an examination too rigid to be lightly hazarded."

"The kindness of your motives I certainly appreciate. Lead on. Fear is a feeling with which I do not feel inclined to be inspired to-night. I am of that dull and phlegmatic temper, that I must see danger absolute and imminent, before I shrink from it."

The Confederate officer made no reply. Pricking his horse, he soon reached a rebel picket, and, giving the countersign in a low voice, entered the lines of the Confederates, followed by Girdwood.

"Presently," said the captain, when they had ridden some distance in silence, "we shall reach Fairfax—a place much talked of by the Federals, and about the strength of which they have indulged in much speculation. In passing through it you will learn, perhaps, what Mr. Lincoln and the commander-in-chief of the Northern vandals would be glad to know. But I assure you, that whatever discoveries you make at this, or any subsequent time, will never reach the ears of our enemies."

"I protest against these suspicions!" rejoined Girdwood, with spirit. "As I have informed you, I think of taking service under the new

flag; and I am not one to suffer my motives to be called in question, even by you, sir!"

Ralph Girdwood spoke with more determination than he had yet exhibited.

Hurdlestone quickened his pace, which was his only response to this remark. The young man readily accommodated his own speed to that of his companion.

"That building, I apprehend, is Fairfax Court-House?" said Ralph.

"Call it what you please," replied the other, briefly.

"It is not a strong position," continued Girdwood. "A regiment of Fire Zouaves would readily carry the place."

"Be silent, sir!" thundered Hurdlestone, his swarthy features still blacker with wrath. "Do not talk to me of those demi-savages—those brawling thieves—those midnight prowlers and assassins!"

"You do wrong to a gallant body of men, sir. Let us not underrate our foes. Ellsworth's Zouaves are brave as the bravest; and, should it be your fortune to meet them in the shock of battle, you will remember my words. I tell you, Captain Hurdlestone, they will fight!"

"Cowards! cowards, sir!" muttered the captain. "The blood of Jackson cries for vengeance!"

"Speak not of that!" retorted Girdwood, hurriedly. "Whose blood, think you, will cry the loudest? It was murder, sir—murder!"

"What was murder?" demanded Hurdlestone, fiercely.

"The killing of Ellsworth!" replied Ralph, in a suppressed voice.

Hurdlestone's gloved hand toyed nervously with the handle of his revolver.

"Death and hell, sir! How dare you say it to me?"

"When I dare not speak my mind, I shall not dare to live," said Girdwood, steadily. "Assassination is not honorable warfare. To shoot a brave and promising young man, outside of the heat of battle, in an unexpected moment, by total surprise, does not in the least affect the great question at issue, and is, in my view, downright murder. Our troops fled from Alexandria, and the Federals were in quiet possession when that unmanly deed was perpetrated. There, sir! I have had my say; and I trust never to be so blinded by partisan hate, as to be unable to distinguish between things naturally heinous in themselves, and things naturally honorable to human nature!"

Hurdlestone compressed his lips, and repressed, with evident effort, some impetuous thought that leaped from his brain to his lips, for expression.

"Talk not thus south of Centreville," he said, coldly and sneeringly. "Warrenton Road and Manassas will speedily cure such views as you have expressed. You cannot, Mr. Girdwood,

teach chivalry to chivalry itself. You are in Virginia, sir!"

"Virginia had a history under the old flag!"

"And shall have one under the new!"

"Dark and bloody, perhaps."

"Dark and bloody let it be!"

The two now continued their way, in nearly unbroken silence. Putting their horses to a gallop, they passed Centreville. Girdwood had yet seen nothing to impress him with the strength of the Confederates, whose cause he seemed ready to espouse. Indeed, he had observed little else than a few feeble, and, obviously, hastily-constructed intrenchments, mounted by three or four six-pound howitzers. Centreville was in no state of defence. There were men there in considerable force, but without the means of making an efficient stand. Ralph could not forbear expressing astonishment.

A grim smile—the first he had seen upon his sombre visage—appeared a moment upon Hurdlestone's lips.

"We have no daily press to betray us," he said, quickly, and with an energetic gesture. "General Beauregard ties up the tongues of fools and the necks of knaves. But blabbing folly reigns supreme and rampant in the camp of our enemies. We know when they buy a battery, and where they place it. We know when they contemplate a movement, and when it takes place. The Northern press tells us their weak places, their poor generals, and, in short, their doubts, fears, and expectations. We have spies and emissaries, friends and sympathizers in all the departments at Washington. We will conquer the Federals as much by secret agents and cabal, as by the sword and masked batteries."

He stretched out his gauntleted hand, and, laying it suddenly on Girdwood's arm, added, in a raised and exultant voice:

"The fatal mistake of the Federals is, that they cannot believe themselves seriously at war, and play the magnanimous while we are masking batteries, and playing the devil with the Union. I tell you, sir, that war is a terrible giant, with iron remorseless fingers, and no May-day queen, to be decked with wreaths and crowned with laurel!"

"True—most true!" said Girdwood, so fervently, that Hurdlestone fancied he had fired him with his own dark enthusiasm.

Sentry after sentry was passed, to each of whom Hurdlestone seemed well known.

"What road is this?" asked Girdwood.

"The Warrenton Road, over which the Federals will march to Manassas!" replied Hurdlestone, shrugging his shoulders.

"What ravine and wood is this, stretching away before us?" queried the young man, gazing through the moonlit mists of night, at the broken country around him.

"It is called Bull Run," answered the officer

with a peculiar lighting up of his eyes, "where the Federal troops will stop to refresh themselves in the cooling shades, when weary of their tramp down from Arlington, previous to their triumphal entry into Manassas."

Hurdlestone lifted his shoulders again, and a grim ghost of a smile appeared to give a meaning to his face that Ralph could not fathom. In truth, he was becoming every moment more mystified with the rider of the black horse. He was, clearly, a man of strong prejudices, deep and ever-consuming passions, of a character bold, resolute, and unshrinking, and inexorably wedded to a purpose, disposed, like many others, to hold the prowess of his enemies in contempt.

"This position is a strong one, by nature," Ralph remarked.

"You tell me no news, young man," answered Hurdlestone, turning from the main road into a well-trodden path. Crossing a few rods of rolling table-land, green with foliage, they reached, anon, a spot remarkable for its quiet and secluded beauty. Trees peculiar to the soft and luxurious climate grew there in native perfection. Here were more sentinels, with whom the Confederate officer communicated in low tones, and passed on.

A ride of twenty rods through the trees took them to a neat farm-house, near which, on the grass, in the now waning moonlight, several blacks were sleeping.

"Haimon! Dagon!" said Hurdlestone, sharply. "This way, lazy fellows, and take these horses." Then to Ralph: "Dismount, sir. Here our journey ends."

Two of the blacks arose slowly from the soft, green pillow of Nature, and, after rubbing their heavy eyes an instant, came briskly forward and took charge of the horses, favoring Girdwood with many inquisitive glances as they led the animals away.

#### CHAPTER IV.

HOPE HURDLESTONE—DOCTOR BENEDICT—SCOTTO A PRISONER.

"Come in," said Hurdlestone, with that coldness of manner which had thus far marked his deportment. He led the way through an open piazza, followed by Girdwood. Opening a door at his right, Hurdlestone entered an apartment on the first floor, in which a lamp was dimly burning. The same air of neatness that had impressed him without, was apparent within. But Ralph, as it happened, had no time for general observation. A feminine figure, arising suddenly from the obscure background, approached the Confederate officer with quick steps and outstretched hands, crying:

"Father! father!"

Perceiving that he was not alone, but accompanied by a stranger, she paused in girlish confusion. It was this hesitating and blushing

creature that now involuntarily drew Girdwood's attention. He experienced a singular yet not unpleasant surprise. Her figure, her face, her eyes, her warm and glowing expression, were each and all instantaneously impressed upon his consciousness. So wonderful appeared the perfectness of her womanly composition, that he could not particularize any part as being pre-eminently lovely, but could only admire her as a faultless whole—a creation to which nothing was wanting to give grace and beauty. Her advent was, to him, like the sudden lifting of a curtain from an exquisite painting. It was an inexpressible relief to turn from the stern realities of war to the contemplation of such an object. The enthusiasm of twenty-five years of manhood was agreeably excited, and Ralph's blood thrilled with a magnetism new, and, situated as he was, embarrassing.

"You have returned safely," she faltered.

"But not alone," replied Hurdlestone, making a motion toward Girdwood. Then, stooping, he kissed her forehead, but without the least enthusiasm.

"Mr. Girdwood," he added, "this is my daughter. Her name is Hope."

Ralph bowed.

Hope Hurdlestone! The name had a euphonious sweetness for the ear, and fell smoothly from the tongue.

"My frequent absences trouble her not a little. The girl is affectionate, though something of a traitor," continued the officer, in a voice divided between gentleness and rebuke.

"A serious charge!" said Girdwood, smiling.

"For some reason," replied Hurdlestone, with a moody drooping of the brows, "her heart is not with us in this work."

"I love the old flag, father," sighed Hope.

"Let it wave in the North!" retorted Hurdlestone, with a flash of his recent fierceness.

"I am no politician," said Hope, timidly, glancing at Ralph, "but the Stars and Stripes to me seem sacred; and, if I am not much deceived, there are thousands in the South who revere them above the Stars and Bars of this new-born Confederacy. If there's treason in that, I cannot help it."

"Treason enough, girl!" muttered her father. "Has our guest retired?" he added, immediately, giving Hope a meaning look.

"I think he has. His room has been quiet for the last two hours," she replied.

"Very well. He requires rest. He must not be disturbed." Then, turning to Ralph: "You are doubtless weary and hungry. Will you eat before sleeping?"

"I want no food. An hour's sleep were worth a day's feast," answered Ralph.

"Then I will show you to a couch, not luxurious enough for a pampered civilian, but good enough for a soldier."

"I would not intrude upon your hospitality,

nor in any manner disturb your domestic arrangements. A blanket beneath the trees will afford me all the ease and comfort I require," said Girdwood, fearing that he might give inconvenience to his host.

"I am no churl!" said the latter. "You are welcome to what I offer."

Hurdlestone lighted a lamp, conducted him across the narrow hall, up a staircase, to a small chamber in which was a bed.

"It wants an hour of daylight," said Hurdlestone, "but you shall not be aroused until the sun is above the tops of the trees."

With these words he left Girdwood to watch or sleep, as he saw fit. Sleep would have been his choice, had he been free to choose; but the circumstances surrounding him, for a time effectually prevented the approaches of the gentle angel of repose. He thought of the war in which the country was involved; the blood shortly to flow like water, and he thought of Hope Hurdlestone. The latter had brought into life new feelings and aspirations, which surprised and bewildered him. Her inspiring eyes were looking at him while his were closed; and while his voice was silent, hers was yet speaking.

The golden rays of daylight were creeping into the chamber when he, finally, lapsed into slumber; and even when sleep had sealed his sight, dreams tossed him to and fro, as waves toss a ship at sea.

He was awakened by a voice he well remembered; a voice still cold and brief.

"Awake, sir, awake! The sun is higher than the loftiest pine in Virginia. Breakfast is waiting you."

Girdwood sprang from the bed to his feet and felt for his arms; but seeing his entertainer, smiled, and greeted him with:

"Good morning, sir! I have slept over long, I think."

"And in your clothes, too, and pistols within reach," observed Captain Hurdlestone.

"It is quite the same to me," responded Ralph. "He who sleeps in his clothes is soonest dressed. It is not the first time, sir. I have roughed it somewhat of late."

"Where and wherefore?" asked Hurdlestone, abruptly.

"It would scarcely be worth your time to tell you," answered Ralph, coloring, and regretting directly that his reply savored so much of discourtesy.

Without minding it, however, the captain conducted him down stairs. On the way, he remarked:

"A friend of mine will breakfast with us, who need be no restraint upon your actions. At my table, you may express yourself freely on any topic."

The young man threw a look at the Confederate officer, but observed no change in the firmly-drawn muscles of his face.

"If I am to appear before ladies, my toilet is scarcely presentable," said Ralph, glancing at his travel-worn garments.

"These are times not to be over-particular. It is not the outside that should commend you to the favorable regards of Southern dames and damsels. You will see none of the gentler sort, save my daughter."

These words were not uttered with that graciousness which Ralph believed he had a right to expect as a guest. Entering the room to which he had been conducted a few hours before, he looked for Hope and the person whom Hurdlestone had mentioned. Neither were visible. A table was spread in a neat and inviting manner, and two black servants stood waiting for orders. A moment after, Miss Hurdlestone appeared, and, greeting Girdwood in a friendly manner, seated herself behind the coffee-urn. Almost simultaneously, from another door, a man walked gravely in.

"Doctor Benedict, this is Mr. Girdwood, recently from Baltimore, through Washington and the Federal lines."

The man bowed slightly to Ralph, and took the seat to which his host pointed. The young man, sitting opposite to Doctor Benedict, was impressed by his person and manners. He was slight in form, but compact in the economy of muscle. Strength seemed combined with the most skillful disposition of material, so that the whole structure should possess the greatest efficiency compatible with the percentage of weight. His features were regular, with a strong Anglo-Saxon cast, and a noticeable firmness about the mouth and a prying quickness of the eyes. His hair was somewhat gray. The upper lip was covered with a moustache. He wore a plain military coat.

The commencement of the meal was somewhat stiff; but presently Doctor Benedict began to talk, and the constraint gradually wore off.

"What do the people of Washington think of this rebellion, Mr. Girdwood?" he asked, sipping his coffee, leisurely.

Just then Ralph saw Hope Hurdlestone look at him. It struck him that her eyes warned him of danger; at least he so construed their language.

"There are many minds at Washington," answered Ralph, guardedly. "The President and Cabinet feel assured that the Union will be preserved, and the rebellion crushed. There are others who predict, with equal confidence, that the seceded States will never return to their allegiance."

"And what do you think?"

The eyes of Doctor Benedict were now lifted full upon Girdwood, who fancied they beamed with a wild and ambitious light. Before he replied to this home-question, he glanced at Miss Hurdlestone, and saw the same warning language in her face.

"My opinion," he said, discreetly, "can be worth little to persons of more years and experience than myself. I will say this, however, the South underestimates the power of the North."

"How many men has General Scott within a day's march of Washington?" continued Doctor Benedict, deliberately.

"A hundred thousand," answered Ralph, promptly.

"It's false!" exclaimed Hurdlestone, angrily.

"Patience, patience, Colonel Hurdlestone! I think the young man is right," said Benedict, with easy self-possession.

"Pardon me, sir. You have mistaken my rank. I am simply a captain in the Black Horse," responded Hurdlestone, pettishly.

"Nay, my friend, it is you who are mistaken. You were a captain yesterday; but you are a colonel to-day. I have it from good authority."

Doctor Benedict held up a hot roll in his white hand, and looked tranquilly at his host, who for a moment was confused.

"My blunder, I trust, is pardonable, doctor, if you bear in mind the circumstance that I have been absent more than twenty-four hours. The general has, no doubt, judged my ability by my zeal, and, thereby, done me too much honor. On him be the consequences of my inefficiency."

Hurdlestone's voice had its usual hardness; but even his stern visage could not conceal his inward satisfaction.

"A responsibility he will readily accept, no doubt," said the doctor. "How is Baltimore, Mr. Girdwood?"

"Under the heel of the Union. The guns of Fort McHenry are turned upon that devoted city, and at the first rising of the people it will be laid in ashes," responded Ralph.

"I like not such talk," said the colonel.

"The truth," interposed Doctor Benedict, "is always better than falsehood. Baltimore, indeed, lies panting at the feet of the North; but when the grand army of the South moves forward, her shackles shall be broken."

Ralph looked up from his coffee, and perceived that the speaker's face was flushed with some strong feeling that was at work within him.

"Will they bring down those pet lambs of Wilson's?" he continued.

"I see, sir, that you have fallen into the common error concerning the 'pet lambs,' so called. Wilson's Zouaves are not in the Grand Army of the Potomac, nor have they been there. By this time they are in Fort Pickens," answered Ralph.

"That cannot be, sir!" exclaimed Hurdlestone. "I have seen the red-capped ruffians myself, at Alexandria."

"Pardon me, colonel! You saw Ellsworth's Fire Zouaves; quite a different body of men," added Girdwood.

"They are Northern barbarians!" muttered Hurdlestone. "Let me tell you, young man,

that if you have come here to land our enemies, you run a thankless errand, and one that may bring you to sudden sorrow. But, till those famous dispatches are delivered to General Beauregard, I shall bear with what patience I may your evident leaning to the Federal heresies. Call those red-legged Satans what you will—Ellsworth's or Wilson's Zouaves—you cannot change their natures, or my views. Their rallying-cry is: 'Booty and Beauty.'"

"I give you my word of honor," replied Ralph, earnestly, that such a rallying-cry was never heard within the Federal lines."

"I have never believed it for a moment!" said Hope, with suffused face.

"Traitor!" snarled Hurdlestone. But whether he meant Hope or Girdwood, was not quite apparent. "Dagon!" he added.

"Here massa colonel!" answered the black, promptly.

"Do you know what the abolitionists are trying to do?"

"Yes, massa. Dey's comin' down to play de mischief wid de poor nigs. I o'pect we'll have a hard time in de corn-fields ob de North. I's heerd it's drefful cole there, massa. Dey say dere's icebugs in de nigger's wool de hole time."

Doctor Benedict smiled.

"What are the New York Fire Zouaves, Dagon?"

"Bress you, massa colonel, dey's de debbil hisself! I's tole, yes'day, dey eat de little nigs fast 's dey can catch 'em, and make nottin' 't all ob it. Begins to be skeered, I does!"

While Dagon stood winking and blinking behind his master's chair, a great deal cast down in view of the calamities hanging over the early heads of the juvenile blacks, the colonel's catechising was brought to an abrupt termination by the hurried tread of feet, and the sudden entrance of armed men with a prisoner, with his hands tied behind him, pushed forward by bayonets and swords.

The surprise of Girdwood was not slight in recognizing in the luckless captive Captain Scotto, the tall and muscular Federal whom he had encountered the night before on the line of the Union pickets.

The eyes of the prisoner, after wandering around the room a moment, fell upon Ralph.

"We've met afore, I reckon?" said Scotto. "You's under a cloud, then; my turn now."

"Do you know this man?" asked Doctor Benedict, turning sharply to Ralph.

"I narrowly escaped his bullet last night; but I bear no hardness. He had me fairly at his mercy for a short time; but, thanks to a quick hand and eye, and a good horse, I made my escape."

"It was harnsomenly done, if you be a p'isoned Secesher!" said Scotto, planting his foot in the stomach of a soldier who had goaded him beyond endurance. The fellow fell upon his

back, with his gun across him, in a very grotesque fashion. "Lay there, you mean critter! Can't you let a man alone when you've got him sang and fast? A brave man don't exult over his enemy when he's got the better of him. If I only had my hands untied, I'd make sickness for some of ye!"

Scotto looked at his captors threateningly.

"Tell ye what! some of you Black Horse riptiles 'll lose the number of your mess, if you ain't a leetle keeful. I've got a handful of calvary myself, that have got some 'at to say about this ere business. You can hang me to the nearest tree, if you want to; but that won't exterminate the Independent Rangers. I did want to live the year out, that I might eat my big-ness into this rotten rebellion; that I might hack, hew, and slew; that I might see the old flag take the place of the new secession rag! But, if I can't fight, I can hang, or knock under in any way whatsoever you may light on."

Scotto drew himself up very straight, and flashed on his enemies bravely.

"What is your name?" asked Doctor Benedict.

"Scotto," answered the captain, with honest boldness.

"Scotto, the Scout!" exclaimed Hurdlestone.

"You rebels may have called me so, fust or last. I'd rather be Scotto, the Scout, than Beauregard, the Traitor!" retorted the prisoner, fearlessly.

"Up with him, boys of the Black Horse!" cried Hurdlestone. "You'll find a tree hard by."

"I think I've heerd that voice afore. Ain't you one of the *shoveley* that run away at Philippi? I's in that bit of a skrimmage myself," said Scotto, coolly.

Hurdlestone scowled, and bit his lip.

The soldiers began to drag him away.

"Stay!" said Benedict, in a voice of authority. "I always like to have a hand in hangings and such things. I wish to question this Yankee. Fall back!"

The men fell back to the door, leaving Scotto in the open space between them and the table.

"I breathe better," he said. "This rebel air isn't good for Northern lungs."

"Are you willing to take the oath of allegiance, sir?" asked Doctor Benedict, whose sharp, imperative manner somewhat perplexed Girdwood.

"I can't talk, general, or cap'n, or whatsoever you may be, with strings onto me," answered Scotto. "If you think its uncommon dangerous lettin' my hands loose, you can jest shet down the winders, and let your seceshers cock their pieces and bring 'em to a charge; though it's been thought, hercaways, that one of your rebels was ekal to five Yankees."

"Untie him," said Doctor Benedict.

One of the soldiers obeyed, with singular alacrity and silence. Girdwood marveled that

Colonel Hurdlestone showed so much deference to this Doctor Benedict.

"There!" said Scotto, stretching out his long arms. "That's more like life, liberty, and the pursuit o' happiness. Your the only decent Confederate I've seen. If you's fightin' in a good cause, you mought be a gentleman. The old flag, sir! The old flag!"

Scotto looked up as if he expected to see the dear old Stripes above him.

"Take a cup of coffee, to warm your heart, sir," said Hope.

"That's woman, all over!" quoth Scotto. "Bless your pretty face! my heart's warm enough for four. Do you know what makes it warm, lass? It's loyalty to the Great Republic! There's Bunker Hill into it, and Leexington, and Concord, and Ticonderoga. That's where I git the fire, gal." Then to Benedict: "Now, sir, fire away!"

"Will you take the oath?" asked Benedict, somewhat moodily.

"The which?"

"The oath of allegiance."

"Allegiance to what?" asked Scotto, tartly.

"To the Southern Confederacy."

"Afore God, I know of no sich institution! May the grass grow over me afore I know it!" cried the scout, with a burst of enthusiasm.

His interrogator frowned darkly.

"You will not swear?" he said.

"If all the trees in yender ran was men, and all the branches and leaves on 'em was bago-nets, and all the grass growin' round 'em was dead-shot rifles, and if all the sunbeams let down from heaven was rebel halters, I swear to ye that I wouldn't swear allegiance to your one-horse consarn! You wince, do ye? Prehaps you ain't, in the natur' o' things, dead to condemnation and remorse. Think of what you've lost! You've lost the Revolution; you've lost your history; you've lost the Cowpens, and the memory of the Swamp Fox, and the Santee!"

"No matter what we have lost," said Benedict, after a pause. "You are about to lose that which makes loss and gain the same thing." Then to one of the men who had brought him to the farm-house: "Where was this man taken?"

"Within our pickets, not far from Fairfax Court-House. He tried to pass himself off, when surprised and questioned by our cavalry, as a Confederate scout, and resisted when told that he must go to head-quarters," was the reply.

"There need be little waste of time in examining this man," said Hurdlestone. "He was with Scott in Mexico. His business there was to obtain information of the enemy's movements. He was the most efficient scout in the service. To please the then victorious general, there was no secret service too dangerous for

him to undertake. He would have been a good man on the right side; but being on the wrong, our duty is plain."

"Pity that some which went to Mexico hadn't died there! I have a man in my eye"—the scout advanced a step, and looked sternly at Benedict—"I have a man in my eye which once had a good name. I have a man in my eye as went to the battle-fields of Mexico, a risin' and accomplished officer, but whose name is now so black with treason that all the waters of the Gulf wouldn't wash it white!"

Benedict recoiled. A burning blush reddened his face. He gnawed his nether lip, as if in pain, and when he again spoke, his voice was husky with anger, or some other emotion.

"Life is worth something to every one," he said.

"Honor is worth more," interposed Scotto.

"Death and the devil!" roared Hurdlestone.

"Do you presume to teach us what honor is?"

"Too late for that!" sighed Scotto.

"Enter our service; serve us as faithfully as you have General Scott, and your life is saved," said Benedict.

"Never! never!"

"Looke Scotto, you will be hanged!"

"If you are not hanged, it will be a singular thing in the history of nations!" retorted the scout, emphatically. "Your face, name, and fame are alike known to me. In days to come, the names of Beauregard, Davis, and a few others, will be recorded with that of Benedict Arnold, and held in the same contempt. That's prophecy, you may depend on't!"

Girdwood, at that moment, found himself standing near Miss Hurdlestone. While the attention of the other parties was fixed upon the prisoner, she whispered in his ear:

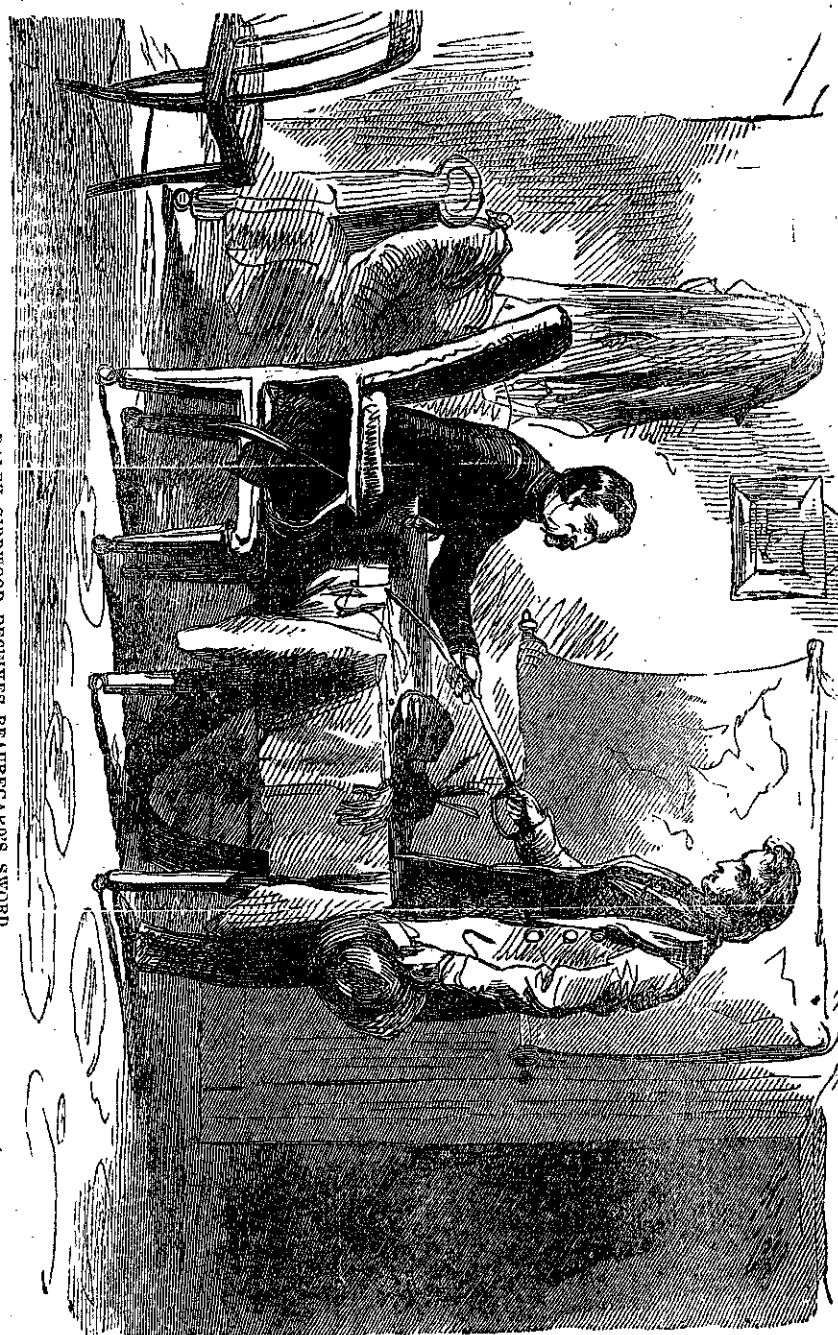
"It is Beauregard!"

Her eyes glanced intelligently at Benedict. Another steadfast look at the compact figure of the latter, fully assured Ralph that he was in the presence of the distinguished rebel general, and he comprehended at once the significant words of the scout.

The deportment of the man had perplexed him from the first, but he was no longer a mystery. He mastered his surprise, and his grateful eyes thanked Hope Hurdlestone. While she was present, he was forgetful of his own position; and he felt that her silent influence threw a protecting shadow over the prisoner, whose fate he now watched with the deepest interest.

"You are not here to talk politics," said Beauregard, whose assumed name we shall now lay aside. "We want money and ammunition more than Yankee sentiment. I will give you yet another chance for life. Your shrewdness will soon tell you in what that chance consists. You might not have any objections to tellin' me how many men General Scott has on the Potomac?"

RALPH GIRDWOOD RECEIVES BEAUREGARD'S SWORD.



"I mought, and then ag'in I moughtn't!" answered Scotto, with great self-possession.

"Think not that any recollections of Mexico, on my part, will save you," added Beauregard. "We are engaged in a desperate struggle, and a single life is as the fall of a leaf in the forest. War will have its terrible dues. We will pay tribute with our own blood and the blood of our enemies. Valuable information, however, shall be rewarded. You hold in your hand the balance of life and death; turn the scale which way you will. You have free access to General Scott. You know his plans. Make a clean breast, and a colonel's commission in the Confederate Army shall be yours, as soon as it can be ratified by the proper powers."

Beauregard folded his arms upon his chest, and looked steadily at the scout.

Scotto stood unmoved and motionless. His sun-burned face kept sacredly the secret of his thoughts till his lips were ready to speak them. Every eye was fixed on him. Hope Hurdlestone, with parted lips and suppressed breath, waited for his answer.

"You are silent," said Beauregard, impatiently.

The scout drew himself straight and firm as a Virginia pine.

"I live and die under the old flag!" he said, slowly and distinctly. "I want no commission among rebels. I despise both the Treason and the Traitor. The secrets that are within me, you'll have to cut out with your bowie-knives; and I've heerd you're mighty handy with them things. You hew down Union men like savages, because they dare to have opinions of their own. If you'd stop there, we could look upon ye as half-civilized Ingins; but you don't. Helpless women have been whipped, imprisoned, and insulted. The North has no such record of shame and outrage. Do you s'pose, sir, Heaven'll bless sich a cause? Will the God of battles shet His eyes and let the bad passions of men run wild? No, sir! No! He planted this Republic, and He'll keep it, though it run red with blood! What's death? What's the hangin' up of this six feet of flesh of mine, compared with the mighty interests at stake? Bring out your halters. String up such loyal men as you can lay hands on, and see what the end on't'll be. Come on, traitors! I am ready!"

"You shall be hanged in ten minutes!" said Beauregard, with compressed lips and scowling brow.

"Thank ye, gen'ral! That's nine minutes more nor I expected," replied Scotto, composedly. "I die for the Union!"

Filled with admiration for the scout, Ralph Girdwood could no longer resist the impulse to say something in his favor.

"Let me entreat you, sir, to save this brave fellow," he said, addressing Beauregard.

"Spare your breath, sir!" replied the gener-

al, with freezing coldness and a flash of the eye that was far from encouraging.

"Soldiers," said Hurdlestone, in a voice in which no sympathy could be detected, "make ready outside there."

Two or three of the men touched their caps, and hastened with great apparent satisfaction to obey this portentous order.

"For humanity's sake," began Ralph, with much earnestness, when a keen and menacing glance from Beauregard stopped him.

"I am obliged to ye, young man," said Scotto, "for daring to speak a word for me; but it's no use. A man who betrays his country won't show mercy. Benedict Arnold, you remember, was the worst on 'em all, arter he went over to the Britishers. Should you ever happen to see the old hero, Scott, tell him I've kicked the air at last, and shan't bring him no more news. Tell him, also, that there's a couple o' boys that I've took care on for about a dozen year, that may or mayn't be brothers, who'll need lookin' arter, I bein' hung and gone. They're with my scoutin' Rangers, Peleg and Pickerin' by name, and full o' fight by natur'. I've no doubt the old gen'ral would help 'em, some'at, should they come to want. I'd like to be decent buried, but I don't s'pose it'll make any great odds whether one's body rests atop or beneath the airth."

He paused an instant, and looking sternly at Beauregard, said, interrogatively:

"There's no sich thing as shootin', I s'pose?"

"The fate of the spy is fixed from time immemorial," answered Beauregard, lifting his eyes with strange intensity upon Girdwood, whose lips and cheeks grew white.

"Major André was hanged," mused Scotto. "He was a fine fellow, too. I know a brace of critters, travelin' that road, that the same can't be said on."

"All ready!" said a voice at the door.

"Away with him!" ordered the general, peremptorily.

Before a hand could be laid upon Scotto, Hope Hurdlestone sprang between him and the soldiers.

"Perpetrate not such a crime!" she cried. "Add not cold-blooded murder to your disloyalty. This man's death will aid you not. O General Beauregard, hear me, hear me!" She sank upon her knees at his feet.

"Woman's natur' ag'in—woman's natur'!" murmured Scotto. "Good gal! good gal!"

Beauregard gently repulsed her, but she grasped his hand and held it.

"You pain and embarrass me, Miss Hurdlestone," he said, with some displeasure.

"Hope Hurdlestone," exclaimed her father, sternly, "you disgrace me!"

"General—general!" added Hope, "heed my request."

"He must die!" responded Beauregard, decisively.

"So must you and I. Sentence is passed upon all. Let not human wrath cut short the appointed time of nature."

Beauregard shook his head.

"At least spare him till to-morrow or the day following?" she continued, with touching eloquence. "Do not this murder, now. You will sleep better to-night for listening to the voice of mercy. You have shared our hospitality. These hands have ministered to your wants. Will you refuse this—the first favor I ask? Reflect that you may sometime be without power, and lie at the mercy of another, as he at yours."

Beauregard was moved. He could not look with indifference at the beautiful pleader at his feet.

"Say yes. Countermand the cruel order. The prisoner shall have my room. You may guard the house with a hundred soldiers, if you will; only spare him till to-morrow. Cooler judgment may give wiser counsel."

"You plead so gracefully, Miss Hurdlestone," he replied, "that I can refuse you nothing. I yield to your wishes."

Then, to the colonel:

"Colonel, let the prisoner be closely guarded in your house. I make you responsible for his safe-keeping till to-morrow. It will be as much as your commission is worth to let him escape."

Hurdlestone heard this order with a clouded brow, and, with a rebuking glance at Hope, gave the necessary order for the safe-keeping of the prisoner.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### GIRDWOOD'S MISSION.

Luke Scotto heard the decision of the Confederate general without perceptible emotion. A life of vicissitude and danger had so seasoned his temper that the most startling episodes scarcely ruffled the surface of his soul. He was a worthy type of that class so useful in great crises, and whose deeds are historical. Though rough in exterior, he was able to appreciate things honorable to human nature, and to hold in equal detestation acts of treachery and cruelty.

"For this short reprieve, young woman," he said, "I thank you kind and hearty. To be sure, one more day and night on the air, another sunset and sunrise, mayn't be of special service to me; yet the intention on your part was noble and generous."

Then, to Girdwood:

"For a South-downer, there's more maircy in me nor I expected to light on. I'm glad my bullet didn't go no nearer a head, that, not stan' in the p'ison doctrines which are affout, has some remains of sense and reason in it. But the debt isn't all on my side. Comin' upon me without

a countersign, it was my duty to stop ye; and resistin' me as you did, I mought have shot ye without violatin' the rules of the service, or bein' called in question for it. As it has turned out, I feel none the worse for keepin' my revolver in my belt."

Hurdlestone was pointing impatiently to a door which a soldier had thrown open. The scout, before moving, looked at Beauregard. Sorrow and indignation seemed to be struggling in his countenance.

"Tonton Beauregard," he said, in a tone strikingly impressive.

"General Beauregard!" cried one of the Black Horse boys, striking Scotto with his sabre. "We shall have to teach you Federal madsilla good manners."

Scotto snatched the weapon from him with a sudden flash of his brawny hand, broke it in twain, and threw it through an open window, with a silent scorn and dignity that rebuked them all.

"Touch him not!" said Beauregard, shamed by an indignant glance from Hope Hurdlestone.

"Tonton Beauregard," resumed the scout, with precisely the same tone and manner with which he had commenced, "I have refrained from speaking your name, because it leaves a bitterness on my tongue and in my heart. It must be a rebuke to you to see before ye a man who has fou't with you under the old flag. It'll go ill with ye—ill enough with ye, arter a while. Prehaps you can tell me where and how Benedict Arnold died!"

"Take him away!" said the general, with his eyes bent upon the floor. Then added, as Scotto walked erect toward the room where he was to be guarded: "At ten o'clock, to-morrow morning!"

Hope shuddered.

Colonel Hurdlestone bowed gravely, and an orderly immediately posted a strong guard about the house.

"Young man," said the general, with a slight gesture to Girdwood, "come with me."

Ralph followed the man of authority to an apartment that he had not seen, opening a door in which they had breakfasted, and in the room of the house. This apartment was about fifteen feet, and contained writing-tables covered with papers, plans, and specifications. The walls were hung with maps and charts. The whole arrangement was business-like and orderly.

It was the head-quarters of the Confederate General. Clerks had, evidently, recently been busy there; but their places were now vacant.

Stepping to an open window, he said to an officer on the piazza:

"Inform the provost-marshal that I may need him presently." He then closed the window and drew the curtain.

Ralph was now alone with him. The general

sat down at a table, and resting his head in his hands, seemed for a time lost in meditation; forgetful, apparently, that any one was present.

Girdwood remained standing, waiting patiently to be noticed. Presently, growing weary of inertia, he began to move about, believing that the general had, in truth, become so speculative that nothing short of sound could arouse him. He paused beside a desk, and his gaze mechanically rested on a folded parchment, on which were written these words:

"A PLAN OF THE MASKED BATTERIES AT BULL RUN."

His eyes were irresistibly drawn to this document.

"Young man!" said the general, sharply.

Ralph looked up in some confusion, and perceived that Beauregard was observing him.

He approached the table and stood full under the scrutiny of the officer, who now appeared a different personage than Doctor Benedict.

"Do you think, sir, we are in earnest down here?" he asked, with searching severity of manner.

"Without doubt!" answered Ralph, recovering his equanimity.

"Do you think we can keep our own counsel?" added Beauregard, in a firm tone, depressing his brows a little.

"I think you can, sir."

"I can, sir—I can! I would burn my coat, sir, if I thought it was in sympathy with my secrets. Men may come here on frivolous errands, thinking to go back with my plans; but they are more likely to return to mother earth."

He paused, with his penetrating glance still fixed on Ralph.

"What is your business, sir?" he asked abruptly.

"I bring letters and dispatches from Baltimore and Washington, from those who sympathize with our cause," replied Ralph, with promptness.

"Your cause I have yet to know. Give me the dispatches."

"Lend me your sword a moment, general," said Ralph.

The general gave him another of those looks that were like the sharp thrusts of a bayonet.

"I never surrender my sword, though I may sometimes lend its point."

The general's sword was lying on the table, at his elbow. He unsheathed it, and presented the hilt to Girdwood, allowing the polished steel to slip slowly through his fingers as the young man received it with a bow; but those eyes never left him. He smiled, too, somewhat disdainfully, as Ralph held the shining blade extended, watching with admiring eyes its excellent workmanship.

"You are not over-modest, sir, in your requests, as you leave me unarmed," remarked Beauregard, carelessly.

"A thousand pardons, general!" answered

Girdwood, coloring. "I was quite unconscious of the construction that might be put upon my words. Heaven forbid that I should assassinate even an enemy, much less one to whom I come for preferment."

"Use it!" said Beauregard, briefly.

Ralph cut the lining of his coat and cap, and drew therefrom papers ingeniously concealed; papers of a fabric so thin and light, that they almost floated in the air like gossamer. He laid them before the general, who opened and examined them.

"These, unquestionably," he said, "are from the friends of the new Confederacy. Do you know their contents?"

"I may guess of their nature, but of them definitely and in detail, I know little or nothing," answered Girdwood.

"I can do little for Maryland at present," said Beauregard, thoughtfully. "There are many ready to take arms if the flag could be planted there with sufficient force. But the time has not yet come. Let them wait patiently, and we will, perchance, send them aid and comfort from Washington itself."

Girdwood remained silent.

"These papers," added the general, "vouch for their writers; but scarcely for the bearer of them. What is your purpose?"

"To remain within your lines and take service, if any offers agreeable to my wishes," he responded.

"You think you can carry a sword better than a musket?" returned the general, sarcastically. "Well, there are many that think so. I could soon form an army of officers. But there is more merit in being a good soldier than a poor officer. You seem inclined to take this matter very coolly. Your heart is not enough with us to fall into the ranks, I dare say?"

"I confess that I am, like others, desirous of preferment. I believe I can do more efficient duty than in the ranks. That, however, shall be judged of by those in authority."

"You are strangely without enthusiasm. We want those who are willing to meet the Northern foe in any capacity, however humble. You can remain here till I know more about you. But I must inform you that you cannot wander at liberty among our works. You will keep within the limits of this farmhouse, nor attempt to pass the guards on any pretext whatever."

"You mean that I am a prisoner!" exclaimed Girdwood, in real or affected surprise.

"I mean not exactly that; but—" he added, significantly—"you will transcend my wishes at your own personal risk. I do not say, young man, that you are not what you profess to be; but we cannot afford to hazard the fortunes of war on a mere matter of courtesy. The daughter of our host, I dare say, will make you some amends for the restriction I lay upon you."

"May I ask how long I am to be a prisoner?"

"Till those arrive who will pronounce on your good or bad faith. I daily expect some of the writers of these very letters." He struck the missives with his white fingers as he spoke, and a slight flush appeared upon Girdwood's cheeks. "You will then," he deliberately added, "go hence to an appointment in the Confederate Army, or—" He stopped, his lips curled, and he made an imperious motion upward with the forefinger of his right hand.

Ralph Girdwood affected not to see or feel this pantomime; but, in truth, he was much impressed by it.

"There, Mr. Girdwood," said the general, anon, "we have done with one another for the present. When next we refer to these matters, may it be with more satisfaction. You will find Colonel Hurdlestone where you left him, doubtless."

He waved his hand toward the door, his calculating manner came back again, and Girdwood passed from the apartment much more thoughtful than when he entered it.

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### HOPE AND RALPH.

Returning to the apartment where he had breakfasted, Ralph found Hope Hurdlestone there. The colonel was absent, attending to his military duties. He was glad of this meeting. Under ordinary circumstances, there would have been a charm in her presence; and, situated as he then was, hemmed in with embarrassments, suspected, and watched, the charm was greatly enhanced. Her face was the only friendly and gentle one he had yet seen in the rebel camp. He instinctively turned to her for sympathy and strength. Some restraint, however, was upon him, for they were yet but strangers; and, in times of strife, when the caldron of human passions seethes with hate and death, too much confidence is often of the most serious consequence. That they should regard each other a moment in mutual uncertainty, was a matter naturally growing out of the situation.

For Ralph Girdwood to gaze at Hope Hurdlestone, was to endanger his safety—not his personal safety, but the peace and quiet of his hitherto-untroubled heart. He felt that he had discovered one at whose feet he would cheerfully cast all the love-treasures of his soul. This feeling had come upon him at the instant of seeing her, and grown stronger with every hour; and he feared that he might shock her by a sudden betrayal of the same.

"I have to thank you, Miss Hurdlestone, for your efforts for that poor fellow," he said, advancing. "However much I may believe in the Confederacy, I cannot see the necessity of such summary dealing with a brave man."

"Watch the windows, Mr. Girdwood, for sentinels have ears as well as eyes," answered

Hope. Then, in a lower tone: "I suspect that your own position may not be a safe one."

"May I ask why, Miss Hurdlestone?"

"Because I perceive that you are an object of suspicion. My father evidently doubts your sincerity; and I marked that even the common soldiers frowned upon you. Some of the Black Horse dragoons talked of you and shook their heads while you were with the general. I hope your interview has been satisfactory?"

She watched his countenance anxiously.

"I cannot tell you what the general thinks. He is remarkably reticent."

"And you will find him cunning as a serpent, also. You need not confess, in words, your loyalty to the old flag; but in you would have my poor assistance, a look, a motion, may suffice."

There was a modest drooping of her eyes as she spoke, but her earnestness was manifest.

"I know which way the vane of your own heart turns; it points to the North, like the magnetic needle. There is both truth and beauty in your devotion to the starry banner," he said.

Ralph looked down. He dared not meet her too inquisitive eyes. He felt sure that if he had a secret, however important, it would be endangered by her questioning glances.

"I have nothing to confess," he added, a moment after. "My purpose has already been declared."

"Nay, Mr. Girdwood, there is no need that you should sully your truth, with me. Say nothing—admit nothing, that there may be no falsehood between us. Excuse my freedom. In affairs of life and death, some liberty must be allowed. I know what you are. I know why you are here. I know you are in that most dangerous character of a—"

She stopped, looked at the windows and Girdwood, and added: "You can supply the word; three letters spell it. Your changing cheek tells that I have touched the secret. Be assured that you are playing a most hazardous game. I know not how you came into possession of those dispatches referred to by my father, but yonder ambitious and crafty man will ferret it out, you may rely upon it. His agents come and go like invisible spirits. His messengers are always astray. Copies of documents written at Washington in the morning, are often in his hands at night. He has spies in every department, and in every camp and fortress. A daughter of Virginia, true to the Union, advises you to improve the first opportunity of escape."

Miss Hurdlestone spoke in a voice low and guarded.

"You take much for granted," replied Girdwood, with a forced smile, "but the motive is so pure that I am flattered by your fears. If what you affirm were true, to pass these trebly-guarded lines would be an undertaking of extreme danger. For the kindness and aid that I may

expect at your hands, without any particular claim upon either, I am most deeply grateful. Will you permit me to think that we are friends?"

"If you love the old flag, we are friends," she answered, with a flush of enthusiasm. "But about this brave fellow," she added, quickly, pointing to the room where Scotto was secured. "He must escape!"

"Exactly my own thought, Miss Hurdlestone. I see no necessity of sacrificing such a life. How to assist him, however, is a matter of much perplexity. I have great faith in your sagacity, and his cool judgment and quick hand. Once outside this house, there will be a strong probability in his favor."

"There is another who may be useful in this endeavor. You will distrust my judgment when I inform you that I trust the fidelity of the black, Dagon."

Hope Hurdlestone smiled.

Just then the shadow of a sentinel moved slowly across the window-panes.

"Your opinion is of more weight than mine; but I certainly should be disposed to doubt him, after hearing, as I did, his grotesque views of the North, as drawn forth by the colonel, your father."

"Believe not half you hear from Dagon and Haimon. They are wiser than they seem. Duplicity is taught the blacks from childhood by the stern lessons of servitude."

Both Hope and Ralph now stood facing the windows that opened on the piazza. Whenever they saw the automatic figure of a sentinel, they stopped speaking, and went on when his short rounds took him out of sight.

"Dat's true, Missy Hurdstone!" said a voice behind them, that startled Ralph not a little. "Dat's true as the book of the Gospels! But, Missy Hope, what makes ye for to go on in dis yer way? This am a haunted house. Dar am ghosts in the body, that walk 'bout and has ears. You's been talkin' treason a heap, and I jest crep' in and heard it by dar back door."

It was Dagon who thus surprised them.

"No matter, Dagon, so long as you were the only listener," said Miss Hurdlestone, without apparent apprehension.

"Dat yer a'n't no s'cuse, missy," persisted Dagon, in a very serious manner. "You's too good for to be found out and coteched up by the ceshers. I knows I's a contraban'; but the children o' darkness is sometimes wiser nor the children o' light."

Ralph heard these words with secret consternation and dread. His confidence in the black was not equal to the influence which he believed he might exert on Hope and himself. Nor could he forget the catechism of the morning, in which Dagon had expressed his loyalty to his master and the South.

Miss Hurdlestone, perceiving his apprehen-

sions, and suspecting rightly their cause, hastened to allay them.

"Fear not Dagon," she said. "He is one of the faithful among the unfaithful. I would trust him with my life."

"Bress ye, Missy Hope, you might well say that yer!" interposed Dagon, with a visible deepening of his voice and feelings. "You is the only cretur that keeps me 'mong de cesh, anyways. You see I isn't what I was. I's no longer a nigger, nor a chattel, but a contraban'. Now these yer contraban's, missy, can go anywhere they wants to. I 'spect we's allers been contraban's, but nobody tole us. Abe Linkum was the fust man that give us the 'telligence, and I pray the Lor' in his massy to bress him for it, whether he be black or white; though Mas'r Hurdstone says he's black as the ace o' cards, and that Missus Linkum is the same. Though," added Dagon, with a puzzled look, "I don't see how that is, as she's got a brudder in the cesh army, white as anybody."

"Is it possible, Miss Hurdlestone," asked Ralph, smiling, "that such absurd stories are circulated in the seceding States?"

"Not only circulated, but believed," replied Hope. "It was hardly good manners, Dagon, to steal upon us in this fashion," she added. "If I did not know your fidelity, I should be seriously displeased with you. You heard our conversation?"

"'Bout every swyllable, missy—'bout every swyllable, I should reckon!' answered Dagon, coolly. "But it's safe—safe as a nigger in a swamp afore he's missed. Dis yer contraban' was jist on the look-out for ye, and that's the truth. The colonel hisself, might come 'pon you onawars; but he couldn't do it while dis yer nig was watchin'. Then the sagers, with the one-pronged forks on dar guns, might been puttin' dar ears to one place and another, whar they hadn't no business."

"Well, Dagon, since you know what we were talking of, what is your opinion of the matter?"

She looked toward the room in which was Scotto.

"I's drefful 'feard, missy, he'll wear the hemp collar. 'F I's found tryin' to help him off, shouldn't stan' no chance 't all. Judges and juries isn't for colored folks. It's the drawin' of a pistle, the runnin' up of a rope, or the whizzin' of a whip; and that's all the law we gits. Don't 'spect it's Abe Linkum hisself, shut up dar, does ye? That can't be, nother, 'cause Mas'r would knowed him. But that don't make no odds. He's in trouble, and I's boun' to help him. So, missy, you can count on dis yer contraban'."

"What with General Beauregard, what with your father, and what with the sentries that surround the house, the chances of the prisoner are small," observed Ralph, reflectively. "No one, Miss Hurdlestone, can gain access to him

so readily as yourself. You are familiar with the house, the various doors and windows, the habits of those who come and go, and the situation of the adjacent grounds. That door, I believe, does not communicate directly with the street?"

"A narrow hall lies between it and the door opening into the room where he is secured, and which is directly in the rear of that occupied by the general. A sentinel, you observe, paces the hall, and, were his eyes cast at any time betwixt the prisoner's door. At night, the difficulty will doubtless be increased by a sentinel at the hall," answered Hope.

"Nothing will be overlooked or forgotten that can contribute to his safe-keeping," said Ralph.

"There is but a single window in the room, and that, unfortunately, has wooden shutters fastened upon the outside, and which, for additional security, have been nailed. Even during the day, his little prison cannot be very light; while in the night the darkness will prevent him from making a successful unaided effort. Were all these obstacles in the way, his liberation, I confess, seems a task of no easy accomplishment."

Hope looked, inquiringly at Girdwood, who shook his head with undisguised dubiousness.

Dagon stood musing profoundly. He chafed his sore forehead, plaited down his wool with his convulsed palm, rolled his eyes, rested his weight on one foot, then on the other, and labored heavily in thought. While the black was thus mentally sweating, the parties were startled by a rough voice outside, exclaiming:

"Stand away from hyar! Git out o' my daylight, you Virginny coons! Make room for a live wildcat! Your kumel sent me hyar, and I'm gwine in, if I have to use my claws for't. I'm Kentuck, South Car'line, Texas, and old Missip b'iled down."

Before Girdwood had recovered from the effect of these words, a singular-looking man entered, followed by two boys.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ZADOC MURCH.

The man who thus unceremoniously presented himself to Miss Hurdlestone and Girdwood, was of low stature, but sturdily built. He was of a remarkable breadth across the shoulders and chest, with an unusually large development of muscle, which was specially noticeable in the arms and tawny hands. His face was broad, mostly covered by a long, red beard, shaggy and unkempt. His mouth, in extent, might be compared to a cruel, transverse gash between the nose and chin. His eyes were small and cunning, far back in their sockets, while the lashes and brows were nearly white. His forehead was not of the Northern schoolmaster type, but low and determined. His head was a

swamp of hair, and an utter stranger to the benign influences of a careful toilet.

The cap mounted upon his matted poll, and which seemed a permanent fixture there, was of a conical cut, doubtful age, and drawn tightly upon his head. He wore a greasy gray blouse that hung loosely upon his burly body, while his baggy trousers naturally suggested Turks and Zouaves, and other loose people.

His arms were a short rifle, a brace of Colt's navy-size pistols, and a long bowie-knife.

The boys that followed this strong decoction of "Kentuck, South Car'line, Texas, and old Missip," were very simply clad—their entire wardrobe consisting of four articles: cap, shirt, trousers, and brogans, each in an advanced state of service. These lads were thirteen or fourteen years of age, of the same height, but bearing no resemblance in feature and expression. One had a drum slung over his shoulder, and the other a fife tucked under his arm.

The man in the blouse dropped the butt of his rifle upon the floor, stared a moment at Hope and Ralph, and cried out, in an explosive voice:

"What ye doin' hyar?"

This was an unexpected and novel salutation, and neither of the parties to whom it appeared to be addressed were prepared to answer it.

"Humph! Dumb, I allow," added the intruder. Then to the boys: "Strike up, chaps—strike up! Give 'em Dan!"

The drum began to rattle, and the fife to squeak, and the nondescript to sing:

"Old Dan Tucker come to town,  
With one leg up and t'other leg down—"

"Hole up, dar! hole up!" shouted Dagon, advancing, with remonstrating gestures. "Mas'r Hurd'stone don't low no sich gwine on as dis yer."

The drum and fife became silent.

"Bow-wow!" barked the free-and-easy stranger, in a very abrupt and strident manner, diving at the negro in a grotesque fashion. "Go 'way, nig! Don't speak to white folks. It's you long-armed apes that's kicked up the muss." Then turning from Dagon, as if he were too insignificant for contempt, even, he again addressed Hope and Ralph:

"Didn't expect me, did ye? Didn't know I war comin', I s'pose?"

"We certainly did not," answered Hope, smiling, now more amused than alarmed.

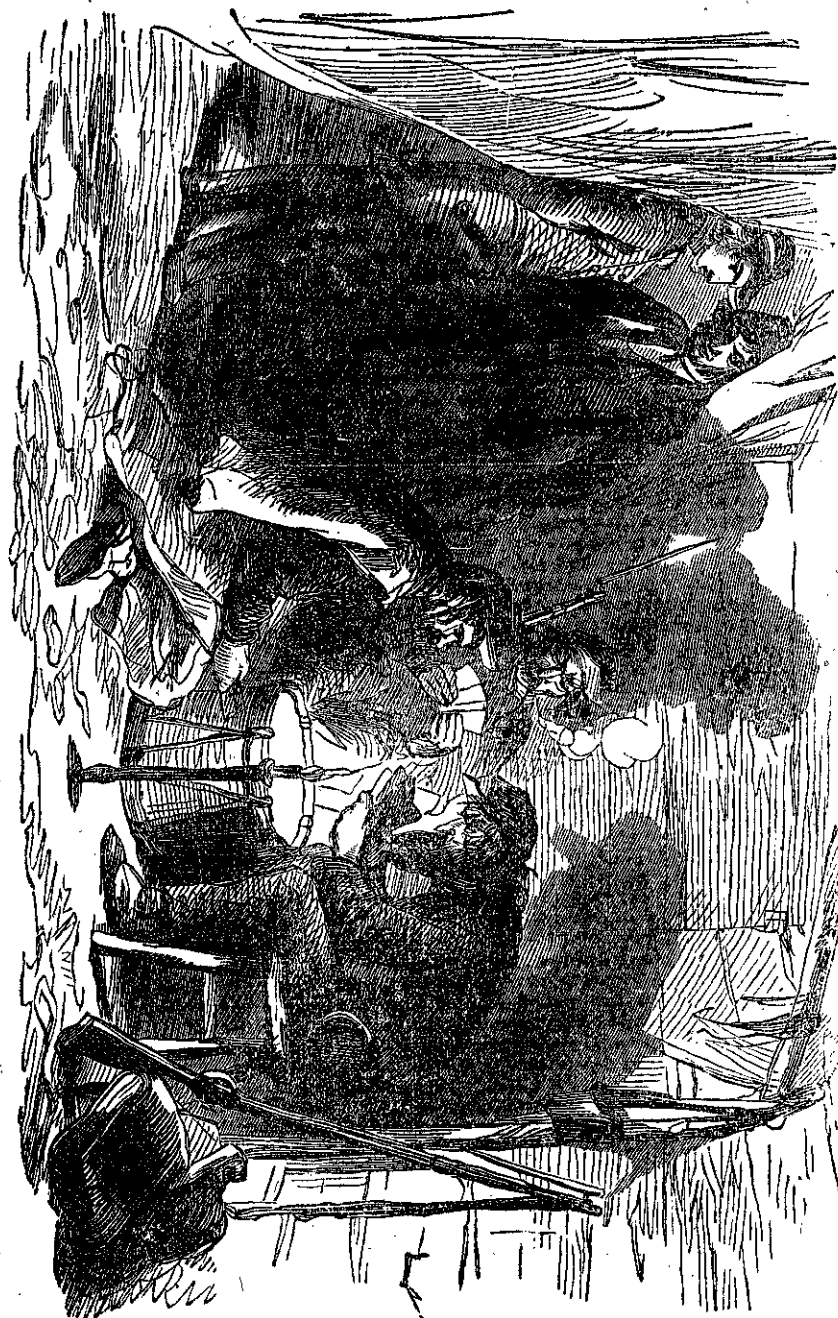
"Prehaps you don't know me?" he continued, looking at Miss Hurdlestone inquiringly, his small eyes twinkling with rough humor.

"Not in the least," said Hope.

"Wall, I'm sev'ral States b'iled down! I'm a strong tea for abolition sickness! I'm a screamin' wildcat for ketchin' Yankee mice! I'm a Confed. I'm Zadoc Murch."

These formidable announcements did not so

A REBEL CAMP.



much confound the young woman as the man had anticipated.

Girdwood, however, was less pleased with this familiarity, and was about to rebuke him, when he dropped carelessly into a chair, adding:

"Give me somethin' to swallow, gal, and some 'at to chew."

The cool assurance of Zadoc Murch chased the gathering shadow from Girdwood's brow. Perceiving that a character was before him, his better sense brought him good-humor.

"Drum and fife," quoth Zadoc, looking benignantly at the lads, "down on your haunches and rest. Make yourselves to home. This is a Confed shanty, and we're Confed critters. We'll all one. There's no distinction, 'cept with niggers. We're brothers all, from the least to the biggest. He's a brother, she's a sister"—he pointed at Hope and Ralph—"and we're all fightin' for wool and cotton—nigger wool, and nigger cotton. These toddlers"—he made a suggestive motion to the lads—"these toddlers, white folks, are game chickens. Knowed 'em when they's jest from the egg. They've come up from Richmond to see the fun, and pound and squeak for me and the sengers."

He paused a moment.

"Whar's the kurnel? Whar's the gin'ral?"

Just then, Colonel Hurdlestone entered. He exhibited surprise and some confusion on seeing Zadoc Murch, who stretched out his hand, without rising, and said:

"Give us a shake, hoss!"

They shook hands, Hurdlestone performing that ceremony somewhat stiffly.

"Sooner nor you expected, I allow. Prehaps I've traveled, kurnel! Prehaps I've been to places! Prehaps not!"

He shook and nodded his head mysteriously, then looked steadily at the floor.

"All's well down hyar, I reckon?"

"Excellently well," said Hurdlestone.

"Most ready to fight? Can't stan' it much longer without a scrimmage, kurnel," continued Zadoc.

"Here comes one who can tell you more of these matters than I," replied Hurdlestone. As he spoke, the Confederate general crossed the threshold, seeing no one in the room, apparently, but Zadoc Murch, who thrust forth his big brown hand as coolly as before, and, not in the least abashed, said:

"How-do, gin'ral? Proud to see ye. All right! No ceremony atween friends. Two little Confeds—them be." He nodded at the lads. "Leetle vessels, but runnin' over with rebellion. There's fun, fight, treason, and music in 'em. They'll play 'March to Boston' for ye, or Bunkum Hill, nother. We sha'n't keep much longer, gin'ral; we're sp'illin' for a fight. Have to sprinkle a trifle of cheercoal over us, I allow."

"Be patient, good fellow! You shall have enough of it, by-and-by," replied Beauregard, with great good-nature. "Let them first step on our trencher and spring our trap, man!"

"The springs'll rust, if you let it set too long," said Zadoc.

Hurdlestone lifted his shoulders in his own peculiar fashion.

"We're enough for them—quite enough for them, Mr. Murch," answered Beauregard, quickly. "We feel, already, the prestige of victory." He glanced at Hope and Girdwood. "McClellan is rushing to destruction in Western Virginia. I am hourly expecting to hear that he is cut to pieces."

Zadoc grunted very gruffly.

"What do you mean by that?" said the rebel leader, sharply. "Garnet and Pegram will prove a match for McClellan and Rosencranz. I hold the skill and courage of these Yankee officers in light esteem."

"That's whar you're wrong, gin'ral. Garnet and Pegram won't lick 'em!" added Zadoc.

"I'll stake my epaulets on it!" interposed Hurdlestone, glancing contemptuously at the last speaker.

"And why won't they whip them?" asked Beauregard, studying the brown visage of Murch.

"Look 'e hyar!" cried the latter, stretching out the bundle of muscles that composed his right arm. "Look 'e hyar!" The arm subsided to its former position.

"Well," said Beauregard, uneasily, while the colonel gnawed his lip with impatience.

"That's a reason for everything, gin'ral. They can't whip 'em, 'cause they're whipped themselves. The Feds has swept Western Virginia! Garnet's dead, and Pegram's a prisoner!"

Zadoc cast his eyes quietly about the room, to observe the effect of his news on the different parties.

The rebel leader stood silent and dismayed.

Hurdlestone flushed with anger and unbelief.

"Death and fury!" he muttered. "It's false as hell!"

Murch arose to his feet.

"Look 'e hyar!" he shouted. "Whar's the lie? I take that up! I take it up now and hyar. Go outside along o' me!"

Zadoc took up his rifle and started for the door, as if everything were fully arranged for a deadly settlement.

Beauregard stepped forward, seized the burly fellow by the shoulder, and faced him about with a single motion. It was a display of strength that filled Murch with admiration and surprise.

"Wall, that beats old Missip! You're a rum un, B'uregard! You're the hoss to lead us! I declar' if you ain't some persimmons! Lo' me look at that ar?"

Zadoc laid hold of the general's arm with as little reverence as if it had been a fire-arm, felt the muscles, and examined the small, white hand carefully and curiously.

"Thar's a mistake hyar!" he said, shaking his head skeptically. "This war not the thing that done it. Hook hold on me ag'in."

The Confederate chief good-humoredly took him by the arm and spun him round like a top. "All right!" said Zadoc, manifestly quite satisfied and relieved, as well as forgetful of his wrath toward Hurdlestone. "Them's the patent double-action fingers, though they ain't bigger nor a woman's."

A momentary glow of pride appeared on Beauregard's face. He had been noted for his strength.

"Friend Murch," he said, his mind instantly reverting to the intelligence he had just heard, "are you sure that you are not deceived?"

"Sure as a rifle-cannon! If thar war any doubt, I should told ye. Kurnel Garnett was shot while tryin' to rally his men, and thar war bad work. Soon arter, Pegram, who was wanderin' about in the mountains, caved in, and trotted into the Yankee camp with a thousand men. They did so, gin'ral!"

Girdwood saw Hurdlestone frowning at his daughter, whose face expressed anything but grief.

"A thousand prisoners!" muttered Beauregard.

"Which were let go on their peril of honor," interposed Zadoc.

Looking up, the general saw a smile on Hope's lips, and tried to quell her with his eyes, but was discomfited, and smiled himself.

"The oath of allegiance!" sneered Hurdlestone. "They hanged the officers, I suppose?"

"No; but they embalmed one on 'em, and sent him to his friends in a nice box."

Hurdlestone was confused.

"I believe little," he said, "in Northern courtesy and mercy."

"Nobody axed you to!" retorted Zadoc.

"Who keers for their courtesy or massy? But the Feds war fools, though, in p'int o' common sense, to let their prisoners go arter takin' a swar all round. Why, I sometimes swar by the hour together, and think nothin' on't. They call this the peril of honor, the Feds do, 'cause if they're cotched in arms, arterward, they'll be shot."

"Their parole will not, in all cases, be respected, I think," said Hurdlestone, with a shrug.

"What are you going to do with these boys, Mr. Murch?" asked the general.

"I'm gwine to l'arn 'em to be wise as serpents. I'm gwine to train 'em up to thump and squeak right among the cannon-balls. It's a private band, you see. I have 'em the same as you have your bottle o' wine at dinner. In ba-

tle, they're to trot arter me with their drum and fife, playin' 'Dan Tucker' for dear life. That's why them's boys is hyar. Long's kin hear the tap o' the drum and the squeak o' the fife, there'll be mischief and motion in me. It a Minié ball or a round shot should tumble me over, jest squeak and pound a feeble louder, and I'll up and at it ag'in."

"Come with me, Zadoc," said the general; "and you, also, colonel."

The Confederate chief lingered a moment on the threshold, looked searchingly at Girdwood and Miss Hurdlestone, then thoughtfully retired to that apartment which had so many secrets, and kept them so well, followed by the colonel and Zadoc Murch.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### THE MASKED BATTERIES OF MANASSAS.

Girdwood passed the day as well as he could in the circumscribed limits assigned him. Sometimes standing on the open piazza, he watched the streams of Confederate soldiers flowing and fluctuating this way and that; sometimes he cast his eyes inquiringly up the Run, wondering why so much animation pervaded it; sometimes he noted officers, in gay uniforms, appearing and disappearing mysteriously in the woods; sometimes he listened to the vague murmur of camps; sometimes the blast of the bugle echoed through the hills and valleys, with a wild yet stirring effect; sometimes he marked messengers coming in hot haste to the head-quarters of the rebel chief; and sometimes he listened to the light step of Hope Hurdlestone within.

Random pistol and musket shots; occasionally the boom of cannon, with near or distant bursts of martial music, mingled with muffled voices; the sound of busy axes, and the crash of falling trees far in the depths of the forest, all conspired to give him a lively impression of the realities of war and the zeal of the Confederates.

He saw the sun set, at length, with a feeling of relief on the imperfectly-seen and comprehended activities of the Run. As the dimness of evening fell, the guard was doubled, and their vigilance increased. A sentinel was stationed in the narrow hall, near Scotto's door. His hope for the scout waned as he beheld these precautions. He mentioned his fears to Miss Hurdlestone, whose despondency was greater than his own. From Beauregard he had received no further attention. That important personage, on whom centred so many thoughts and expectations, had been busy several hours with his clerks; while the colonel was absent, scouring the country with the Black Horse Rangers. His absence might be protracted through the night, or he might appear at any moment.

One of Zadoc's boys was found asleep in the hall. The sentinel shook him; but he was so

pitifully weary and drowsy, that, after being shaken awhile, he was allowed to slumber on, with his drum beside him.

Ralph breathed a few words of encouragement to Hope, but with so little enthusiasm that they failed of their purpose. He was conscious of being little else than a prisoner himself, and this feeling was equally well understood by her. Whether within or without, he knew he was observed, and that knowledge was so annoying to his pride, that he sought solitude in the chamber that had been allotted him, utterly despairing of being of any service to the unfortunate scout, whose firm tread he could occasionally hear beneath him. Although his mind had much to occupy it, his own safety among other considerations, he could not help thinking of the prisoner doomed at ten in the morning. Earnestly he deplored the stern usages of war that rendered such sacrifices necessary, or, at least, sanctioned them with belligerent powers. He did not think of repose, but sat with his face buried in his hands, pondering upon the dark scenes about to open upon the Old Dominion and other hitherto peaceful States. Once or twice he heard a fife squeaking shrilly various negro melodies, but did not heed it. Several plans for the rescue of the loyal scout came and went; but he was painfully conscious that his position was too critical to compromise it by any possibly apparent interference.

In the quietude and darkness he remained some hours, without any particular realization of the passage of time.

Some one entered his chamber. Raising his head, he perceived a figure, dim, and scarcely distinguishable in the obscurity. This figure must have stolen up very softly, for he heard nothing until a moccasined foot tapped lightly on the floor.

"Are ye hyar?" asked a voice, which, though quite recognizable, was pitched on a soft and, seemingly, cautious key.

"I am here," answered Girdwood, falling into the same tone, and feeling quietly for his side-arms.

"What do you want?"

"If I'd a wanted to harm ye, could I do it—couldn't I?" responded Murch. "Stood lookin' a minute afore I made a noise. Thinkin' a good deal, ain't ye? Prehaps it's the gal; prehaps ag'in, it's other things?"

Ralph knew not whether to resent this familiarity or pass it over; the latter course seemed the wisest. He was about to give a careless reply, when Zadoc added:

"Why don't you air your legs, some'at? There's a bit o' moon in the sky, a shimmerin' like pale silver on the woods. Let's walk."

"Really, Mr. Murch," said Girdwood, considerably embarrassed in view of the restriction laid upon him, "I scarcely feel like walking to-night. I am not well, I believe."

Zadoc's wide gash of a mouth seemed to grow wider with a cunning smile.

"I know your health's awful debilit, but I thought that prehaps a sight of our works moughtn't do ye no harm!" he answered.

"I should like to see them; but—but—"

Ralph hesitated, for it was revolting to his pride to confess the truth.

"Look 'e hyar!" Murch dallied with his huge bowie-knife. The young man looked, but saw nothing unusual. A bushy figure loomed up before him, and that was all.

"Now is your time! Come with me! I'm wildcat! I'm Kentuck, Carline, Texas, and old Missip biled down. I'm a bitter tea for any one as molests me. Come along!"

"It's impossible!" answered Girdwood, impatiently, arising, and standing face to face with Murch.

"Thar's no sich word as that ar in my Choctaw dictionary," answered Zadoc. "What I sets my mind on, I do, and nothin' on airth can stop me. Trust in a Mississipp valley crocodile, and come arter me without fear. And, stop! Look 'e hyar! If a guard speaks to ye, say 'Warrenton.' Warrenton will take 'em down. Thar's nothin' can stan' Warrenton hyar to-night."

Girdwood was surprised; but adjusting his arms, he followed Zadoc Murch, who added, as they crossed the threshold:

"You needn't take pains to step louder nor nat'ral, for B'regard is at his dictatin' and writin' yet. He's allers late to bed, and thar's no need o' disturbin' him."

Girdwood descended the stairs full of doubt and uncertainty, and treading very lightly. A bayonet stopped him at the door. He whispered "Warrenton." The glittering steel quivered an instant, then dropped, and he passed on. Another line of sentinels was passed in the same manner.

"Now," said Murch, "we'll go up the ravine. We shall now and then be challenged; but you know what to say."

Zadoc, leading with steady, assured steps, crossed the Warrenton Road and struck into the woods. The ground was uneven, lying in irregular swells, with occasionally sharp hills and deep valleys. They reached a stream or run, dry in most places, but with here and there a pool of stagnant water.

Girdwood began to feel a strange hum of life around him.

"Look thar!" said Zadoc, pointing with his brown finger.

"I see nothing," replied Ralph, "but an indistinct maze of shrubbery."

"Do you hear nothing?" pursued Zadoc.

"Yes, voices, and the hum of human presence," said Ralph.

"Come on!" added Murch.

"I smell the smoke of smouldering camp-fires," said Ralph.

"Who goes there?" cried a sentinel.

"Friends," answered both.

"Advance, friends, and give the counter-sign."

"Warrenton!"

"Warrenton goes. Pass, friends!"

"What do ye see hyar?" asked Murch. His great arm lifted slowly, and fixedly indicating a certain point.

"A masked battery!" replied Girdwood.

Zadoc Murch turned and strode on.

"Look yonder."

"I see a wall of brush," replied Ralph, and his eccentric guide stalked on again. The word

"Warrenton" seemed omnipotent.

"What do ye see now?"

"A masked battery, and dying camp-fires!"

The broad figure of Zadoc Murch pushed forward through the oak openings. The white moonlight fell upon him as he moved on. A hundred—two hundred yards, were traversed.

"Thar!" said Zadoc, abruptly swinging his chubby arm in a certain direction. "What now?"

"Some dried limbs, and the tall, undulating grass," said Ralph.

Another short walk and another pause.

"What ag'in?"

"Masked batteries, camps, and dying camp-fires!"

Zadoc glanced at his companion, filled his mouth with the strong Indian weed, and chewing it savagely, resumed his steady course onward.

Soldiers started up from sleep and fell back heavily. A few restless ones looked after them dreamily; while now and then an acquaintance gave Murch rough greeting, or sent after him words of badinage. To these the man gave little heed. He seemed absorbed. Some overpowering thought was evidently working in his mind.

"What place is this?" questioned Girdwood.

"The way to Manassas!" replied Murch.

The young man felt a chill upon him. Thinking many things, he followed his conductor.

The position appeared fortified by nature.

"Look once more," continued Zadoc.

"A phalanx of trees," responded Ralph.

"Come on! Now what?"

The suggestive arm was again raised.

"A masked battery, camps, and dying camp-fires!"

The moonbeams fell in white threads upon the silent guns. The Confederate soldiers turned unconsciously in their sleep, dreaming of distant friends. The brands smoked in the rough and now-deserted kitchens. And thus the woodland walk continued, and battery after battery met the eyes of Girdwood.

Miles of broken wooded country, rolling table-land, hills and vales, were traversed in this man-

ner, with the constant recurrence of batteries and camps.

Ralph was greatly impressed with what he beheld. He was perplexed, too, with the strange conduct of his guide, whose taciturnity was unlooked for. They finally left the forest, to return by a different route; first, to cross some swampy ground, then through open fields and occasional clusters of oaks.

"What have you seen?" asked Murch.

"What may be called a zig-zag line of forts, extending between two and three miles," answered Girdwood.

"Can the Federals take it?"

Zadoc turned a curious look at the young man.

"Not without the advantage of numbers, and terrible loss of life!" replied Ralph, thoughtfully.

"Jes' so! Now do you know the name of that thar place? It's called Bull Run, hereabout."

"A place I never heard mentioned at Washington, or within the lines of the army of the Potomac. Tell me, Mr. Murch, have our enemies no scouts?"

"Oh yes! Touton B'ur-gard's goin' to hang one in the mornin'!"

"Can it be possible," said Girdwood, continuing the same train of reflection, "that the Yankees know nothing of the masked batteries of Manassas?"

"You'd better say nothin' about what you've seen down hyar," added Murch. "If B'ur-gard knowed where you'd been, you'd be treated to clost quarters till after the advance of the enemy. That's a secret he gards like the apple of his eye."

"Why, then, have you led me through Bull Run?" queried Ralph.

"Look 'e hyar! Thar's things that musn't be talked about, nor meddled with. This is one on 'em. You've seen what no livin' man can see, not in full fellership with the Confeds, and pass that thar line of sentinels. You're one of us, and 'tan't no matter 'bout motives. But I can tell ye this: the Fed's 'll be cut up cruel, if they go down thar without knowin' what they're goin' into. I predict for 'em a bloody rout, sich as was never seen in these parts. I, Zadoc Murch, say it!"

By this time they were near the farm house.

"Go in," he added, "and keep your own counsel. Breathe not a word of this breachy old hoss. Look well to your own neck. Good-bye, till we meet ag'in."

With this closing exhortation, delivered in a friendly tone, Zadoc Murch turned on his heel, and went his way.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

Girdwood went quietly to his room. It was midnight; and, soon after, he heard the rebel chief retire to his chamber; but, apparently, not to sleep, for his restless footsteps were audible for a long time.

The young man stretched himself on his bed; but thoughts of the prisoner below, and Hope Hurdlestone, banished repose, and when he at length slumbered, he dreamed of masked batteries.

He met Hurdlestone, and Hope, and the general at the breakfast-table, at a late hour in the morning. He was treated with marked coldness by the latter. He watched Hope's countenance, hoping to get good news from it respecting Luke Scotto; but her expression was downcast and anxious. The meal passed in comparative silence, and Ralph was heartily glad when it was ended. The guard still environed the house, and a soldier stood leaning on his musket at Scotto's door.

"You'd better leave the room, Hope," said the colonel.

The young woman shook her head, and remained.

Low orders were given, and preparations of some nature were made in the clump of oaks before the house. Girdwood tried to get an opportunity to speak to Hope. Gradually getting near her, he whispered:

"Has anything been done, Miss Hurdlestone?"

"No," she answered; "no chance has been given. The surveillance has been so close that I found it impossible to move. Poor fellow!"

Ralph sighed, and, perceiving the eyes of Beauregard upon him, colored.

A file of men appeared.

"Take him out!" said Hurdlestone, in a suppressed voice, glancing at his daughter, and leaving the room.

"I meant," said Hope, addressing Beauregard, "to have appealed to your magnanimity again; but see, by your expression, that the gates of mercy are closed. You are fortified, in advance, against the attacks of pity."

"You are right, Miss Hurdlestone. Spare yourself humiliation, and me a scene."

This was uttered in a manner that offended the pride of Hope.

"If your bandit ancestor were brought in from the hills of Mexico," she added, with a slight toss of the head, and a sarcastic glitter of the eyes, "I would not put up cry nor prayer for him!"

The face of the traitor-general reddened with anger.

"You shall regret this, Miss Hurdlestone! To cast at me the foul slanders of the Northern press, is something you might have spared me, without detriment to your cause and wishes."

"Nay, the story came from your own real hills; and you will find it in the *Diario di Mejico*; also, translated and copied into sundry Anglo-Saxon sheets," responded Hope, glad to see that her shaft had taken effect.

"There's no military discipline for you, Miss Hurdlestone. The tongue of your sex is a weapon that cannot be guarded against. And yet," he added, frowning, "even women have sometimes suffered for political sins."

"They have been whipped in Southern latitudes," murmured Hope.

"Death and the devil!" cried the colonel, at that moment. "Where's the prisoner?"

A corporal had just opened the door, and was staring, with open mouth, into Scotto's room. The colonel, seeing him, dashed through the hall, with the foregoing exclamation. He looked into the dim, little apartment; he searched every corner with his troubled eyes; but Luke Scotto was not there. He had escaped. The window was fastened, nothing was disturbed, and Hurdlestone sought in vain for a clue to his mysterious disappearance.

"We have been cheated and enjoled!" he roared. "There are traitors among us!"

"Colonel Hurdlestone," said Beauregard, coldly, "bring out your man!"

"General," answered Hurdlestone, his voice husky with anger, "he has escaped! I know not how; but the fact is obvious. The guards have been tampered with, or the devil helped him."

"A fair devil, I'll warrant!" retorted Beauregard, looking at Hope.

"I understand you, sir!" said Hope, with quiet hauteur.

"Nor do you deny the implication," resumed the general.

"The will, sir. I do not deny; but the opportunity I most certainly do," she returned, with dignity.

"She shall take his place, and feed on bread and water!" protested the colonel, in great excitement. "In with you, miss—in with you! I'll teach you that I can punish traitors of my own household!"

Hope stood, calm and unmoved. She glanced at the Confederate leader, with an expression that said:

"See the storm you have raised!"

Girdwood remained, astounded, in the background.

Hurdlestone seemed determined to enforce his hasty menace.

"Do you hear me, girl? You are no daughter of mine, if you aid and comfort traitors!" raged the colonel, striding, with angry gestures, about the room.

"I will obey you, father, if you do not change your mind after a moment's reflection," answered Hope, unruffled and dignified.

"Be silent, sir!" exclaimed the general, au-

thoritatively. "The word of Miss Hope is sufficient for her innocence."

Miss Hurdlestone bowed slightly to Beauregard.

"Her denial may satisfy you; but I know her disloyal leanings too well to be deceived," muttered the colonel, in tones less fiery. "Her heart is not with us, sir, but with the Federal cause. It grieves me that a child of mine should cherish such sentiments."

"Her sentiments do not ill become her, colonel," Girdwood ventured to remark.

"Your opinion, sir, is of little value," retorted Hurdlestone, with sneering brevity.

Ralph saw Beauregard's eyes lowering on him ominously.

The file of soldiers that had come to take Scotto to execution fell back, grumbling, and dissatisfied. A universal feeling of sullenness prevailed about the head-quarters:

"Where are them d--d boys?" asked the colonel, suddenly, regardless alike of grammar, and an emphatic word. This question referred to Zedoe's band. Drum and Fife could not be seen; they had disappeared. A soldier reported that he had observed one of the boys sleeping under a tree, at daylight.

"The other cannot be far off, then. Besides, Murch is sufficient guaranty for their honesty. But there's an infernal leak somewhere," added Hurdlestone.

"Send up a corporal's guard!" said the general, to the soldier who had spoken.

Hope and Girdwood looked at each other inquiringly. The more prophetic instincts of the former foresaw something unpleasant. Her cheeks grew pale, and a lurking fear disturbed her. An awkward silence followed. It was the lull that precedes a fresh outburst of storm.

The guard came, at a double-quick.

"Corporal," said the rebel leader, pointing to Girdwood, "that man is a prisoner. Put him in there! If he escapes, I'll know the reason why!"

"General Beauregard, I protest against this treatment!" said Ralph, quite confounded. "When I entered your lines, I brought vouchers that should have satisfied every doubt."

"I know my duty, sir!" answered the Confederate general, sternly. Then, to the corporal: "Place a trusty man at that door, and see that the prisoner is seen, or spoken to, every hour."

The corporal touched his cap.

"Look you, sir!" he continued, sharply. "A fellow gave us the slip last night. Nobody can explain the mystery; but if we have another such mystery, somebody will suffer for it." Then, to Girdwood: "Not a word, young man! I know well what I do. You will occupy the quarters of Scotto, the Scout, during my pleasure."

The stern face of the rebel chief was turned

threateningly upon Girdwood, who saw in its rigid lines but too much to hope and much to fear.

## CHAPTER X.

### THROUGH THE WALL.

Girdwood's imprisonment proved rigorous. It was no pastime to be immured in a little dark room, day after day, with no prospect of relief, and an uncertain fate before him. His mind was ill at ease. There were reasons best known to himself why he should feel disturbed and alarmed. He certainly would have escaped had an opportunity offered. Of his food, which was placed before him in silence, he did not complain, and he thought he detected, both in its quantity and quality, the friendly hand of Hope Hurdlestone.

One day a folded paper was thrust through a crevice into his room. He seized it with eagerness. Upon it was written:

"You are believed to be a spy. I tremble at what may happen."

His blood thrilled with gladness. He was remembered by one whom he never could forget. Pleasing consciousness! Here was a ray of light shining upon his darkness. He kissed the paper, tore off a piece of it, and wrote with his pencil:

"I care not what others think; but your good opinion is priceless. I dare not write what my heart feels."

This he slipped through the crevice, and awaited anxiously an answer. It came, and was as follows:

"Think of your own safety. I am scarcely worth a thought."

With nervous hand, Ralph wrote:

"To me you are worth the price of a world! In all the solitary hours passed in this room, the remembrance of you has been my solace. I am no longer myself; I am obsessed, and by you, kind and loyal Hope. Will you not forgive this from one whose imminent peril renders him incapable of deception?"

This well-freighted scrap went after its predecessor. Girdwood's blood was in strange perturbation. His uncertain position, the convenient tree, and the dangling cord, were lost sight of. He only thought: Shall I be rebuked or encouraged? Will this be met with indifference or maiden modesty?

He placed his impatient ear to the wall. He fancied he could hear above the throbbings of his heart the rapid tracking of a pencil over paper. A woman often knows her own mind, but seldom, save in moments of peril and trial, speaks it. How long were the seconds! How tardy was every pulse! Love, the enchanter, and being there, changed all things into one. A white dove, at length fitted through the wall. It said:

"Think of Hope Hurdlestone whatever gives you pleasure. I am waiting for an opportunity to serve you. But this arch rebel, Beauregard, is in earnest. What can I do? I am watched most unmercifully. It is rumored that the Grand Army of the Potomac is advancing. I hope, I

believe you are loyal. If General McDowell could receive a word of warning! You must escape. I hear there is fatal evidence against you. I can write no more."

As Ralph received this friendly messenger, he heard the light footsteps of Hope, receding. He read and re-read the assuring and gentle response. The love of life was stronger within him than at any previous time. More sincerely than ever he deplored the unhappy difficulties in which the country was plunged. But there was one feeling that ran parallel with his love for Hope Hurdlestone. That feeling, for the present, shall be nameless.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN IRONS.

While Ralph Girdwood's heart was beating with the new and delicious sensations inspired by Hope, he received a visit of a less exhilarating character. Colonel Hurdlestone and two men entered. One of the latter brought irons and a hammer, and the other a block.

Girdwood arose and looked at them inquiringly.

"Put them on!" said Hurdlestone.

The block was placed on the floor, and the man with the hammer motioned to Ralph to sit down and put his feet upon it. The clink of the fetters made him start.

"Am I to be ironed, sir?" he asked.

"You are," replied Hurdlestone.

"I will not submit," protested Girdwood.

"Will you compel me to use force?" responded the colonel, grimly.

"This is undeserved and unlooked for," added the young man, preparing to resist.

"Unlooked for it may be, but undeserved it is not!" said Hurdlestone, with severity.

"Is this the reward of my—my—"

"You do well to hesitate for a word, young man! Treachery is the proper word to end your sentence with. Spare yours—if needless falsehood."

"If I were not a prisoner, Colonel Hurdlestone, that is a term I should resent," retorted Girdwood, flushing to the forehead.

"A truce to this! You are unmasked. Your character is known. The device was ingenious; but, like other well-matured schemes, has failed. General Beauregard is aware, sir, that the legitimate bearer of those dispatches is a prisoner at Fortress Monroe, while the spurious messenger is in a fair way to meet the punishment meted out to spies and secret emissaries of the enemy."

"In this position, affirmation or denial would have little weight; therefore I am silent, and rest for the present, under your imputation," answered Girdwood, slowly, but with some embarrassment.

"Nevertheless," he added, a moment after, recovering his firmness, "I protest against those fetters. Being wholly in your power, it is a humiliation that you can afford to forego. Here

are my hands; put on your locks. Better men than I have worn them."

He held out his hands, and the handcuffs were slipped on, closing upon the wrists with a sharp click.

"There! Am I not enough at your will without cramping my limbs in those odious manacles? I appeal to your magnanimity, Colonel Hurdlestone!"

The latter signed to one of the men to take away the fetters.

"You have little claim to consideration, Mr. Girdwood; but in view of your youth and the ignominious fate before you, I comply with your wish."

Both tone and manner were gloomy.

"Beauregard will not—dare not—" began Ralph, impetuously, and as suddenly stopped.

"He will—he dares!" returned Hurdlestone, with sombre brevity. "What has he not dared?"

Impressed by the gloomy dignity of Hurdlestone, Girdwood paused, and was silent some minutes. He clearly realized his perilous position. It flashed over him, too, with startling force, that Hope's father stood before him, and that consciousness staggered him like a blow. Was there not one secret the stern colonel had not yet fathomed?

"Colonel Hurdlestone," said Ralph, presently, with impressive voice, "you are not a man to trifle. If worst shall come to worst, and I should fall a victim to misapprehension or rashness, I should be glad to die the death of a soldier."

"I have no control over that, young man. While I regret your rashness, I can promise nothing."

He turned to go.

"One question, sir. Is the Union Army advancing?"

"It is so rumored; but I advise you to hope nothing from that circumstance."

Hurdlestone retired slowly, leaving Girdwood in a state of mind not to be envied.

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN UNEXPECTED PRESENCE.

Ralph Girdwood looked ruefully at the irons on his wrists. Following the pleasurable excitement produced by his singular interview with Hope, was this new misfortune. The visit of Hurdlestone had stunned and confounded him. He appeared to have been quite unprepared for the communications that had been made. Here, apparently, was an end of his ambition. So far as he could apprehend his situation, the door of escape was closed. He was, doubtless, to fall a victim to this cruel and bitterly-raging civil strife.

"Have I not counted the cost?" he asked himself, many times. With the gloomy realities of death before him, he was forced to answer this query in the negative. That stern,

old conqueror of men, when seen at arm's length, is a far different thing than when beheld at a distance. Even brave men reluctant and shrink from the approaches of the pitiless tyrant. Girdwood wished fervently for life and its enjoyments.

He sat down, and his head sank into his handcuffed hands. The love of Hope Hurdlestone had given a new charm to existence. He heard, without, the hum of camps, the challenges of sentries, the occasional tap of the drum, the blare of trumpets, and now and then the reverberation of the distant signal-gun. He sensed more fully than ever that he was living in the midst of war. But, strange inconsistency! he did not regret his visit to Manassas; for it was his introduction to Hope. Suggestive name? It kept ringing in his ears. It sounded again and again. It made music in the mystic chambers of his brain. Could he wholly despair while Hope was in his heart, touching, with invisible fingers, its responsive strings?

Hours rolled over the bowed head of Girdwood.

When the night fell, a candle and writing-materials were brought and placed beside him in ominous silence. In defiance of his strong nerves, this circumstance shocked him not a little; for it was full of meaning. It said: "If you have any parting words to leave, you are permitted to write them."

At first, he was tempted to comply with this invitation; but reflection changed his mind.

"If this is to be," he mused, "I will die without sign or witness. Besides, it may be a snare to entrap me. If I have secrets, I will keep them."

So he pushed the pen and paper from him, and the night flowed slowly on. The candle on the little pine table dimly burned, flashing and falling with melancholy light.

A sudden vibration startled him. It came from the floor under his feet. Presently a board began to lift, rising gradually and noiselessly. Ralph watched the phenomenon with lively interest. It portended something. What was it? A human hand became visible, the board was pushed entirely aside, and a head arose to view.

Girdwood sat fixed and mute, staring in wonder at this sub-mundane appearance. The face turned silently toward him. As quickly as he could, with his manacled hands, he seized the light, and held it downward; and it threw its pale rays on the features of Scotto, the Scout!

The surprise of Ralph was complete. Of all the faces he might have expected to see, Luke Scotto's was not among them. Doubt, hope, and strong curiosity possessed him. He waited for the key to this mystery, nor was he kept long in suspense.

The scout laid his finger on his lips, then, elevating his arm, beckoned him to follow. At that moment, a scrap of paper fluttered to the

floor. Girdwood eagerly picked it up. Upon it was written, in Hope's handwriting:

"The countersign, to-night, is Richmond!"

He handed it to Scotto, who nodded with a satisfied air, and signified, by another and more imperative motion, that he should immediately lower himself through the opening. It was not a time for questioning or explanation, and he instantly obeyed the admonition. He found himself standing on the firm earthen-floor of a cellar. He would have taken the candle, but the scout shook his head, and he left it burning. Scotto then replaced the board, and they were in total darkness. Taking him by the arm, his guide led him several paces, and presently he saw the moonlight creeping through an opening in the wall.

"Be quiet!" whispered Scotto; and, mounting a box, looked out cautiously. "When you hear the sentinel say 'About,' be within reach of me."

With these low-breathed instructions, the scout's body darkened the hole, and Ralph was conscious, an instant after, that he was lying in the grass outside. He stepped upon the box, his heart beating as he had never before known it to beat. Just then, a sentinel said "About!"

A strong hand grasped his shoulder, and he was dragged through the narrow outlet, and pressed hard and prone to the earth. His emotions were indescribable. He tried to bring every muscle into subjection, and to hush his respiration. Another life was staked, and for him. The sentinel passed the corner of the house, and for a moment was hidden from view. The garden was a few yards distant, and in it was a trellis, covered with vines. A gentle pull admonished Ralph that the critical moment had arrived. Scotto half arose, glided across the intervening space, and sank down behind the trellis; and the young man imitated his movements with wonderful fidelity.

An approving pressure signified the scout's satisfaction. They lay there, entirely screened by the foliage, till the sentinel passed and returned again.

About ten yards from this screen was some shrubbery, and trees beyond. The distance between was rather open, but darkened by the shadows of surrounding objects.

"Now!" whispered Scotto, and they ran this dangerous gauntlet in safety, then crept away among the oaks. All seemed to go well till they came upon a figure lying upon the ground, asleep, apparently.

Girdwood was seized with apprehension; but Scotto advanced without fear, and the figure cautiously arose. It was Dagon, to the unspeakable relief of Ralph.

"Take off the ruffles!" said Scotto. The black applied a key, and relieved the young man of the handcuffs.

"Here's the clothes," said Dagon, drawing a

suit of gray garments from a hollow tree. "Put 'em on, Mas'r Girdwood, and the Lor' be a friend to ye till ye git out o' dis yer trouble."

Ralph threw off his clothes, which Dagon deposited in the tree, and put on the army-gray.

"It's the color of the Confeds," added the friendly black, as he dexterously assisted Ralph. "Here, mas'r, is the fatigue-cap. What's dis yer?"

The sooty fingers of Dagon lifted the redundant locks of Ralph.

"Some o' dis must come off. No soger feller wears such ha'r. It's a heap too long, mas'r. Dis yer contraban' sidered about it aforehand. Hlo steady, mas'r, while I clip."

Girdwood felt cold steel tracking around his neck, and his long, brown hair fell rapidly to the ground.

"Here's yer pistols. Missy Hope said you'd want 'em. You've got 'em, brass de Lor'! Don't be taken—don't be taken! Better be shot than drawn up a tree. De poor nigs'll do well nuff to draw up a tree; but it don't 'gree with white folks. De Contrabans is used to it, Mas'r Girdwood, and a mighty heap of 'em'll go up afore another corn-plantin'."

"Come!" said Luke Scotto. "We've got but a short start. There'll be a hubbub afore an hour, and the Black Hoss boys'll be rampin' round like mad."

"You are running a fearful risk, my friend," observed Ralph, impressed by the cool courage of the man.

"Not the first time—not the first time! I've been on the border, lad, and in Mexico. I don't think I's born to be stretched. I b'lieve in God and the Union, and reverses don't put me down. Our course is thereway—into the timber, and across swamps, so's to steer clear, if possible, of the sentinels. A weary tramp is afore us, but it's better nor hangin'; therfore, forrard!"

"Jist one little word, Mas'r Scout. Mas'r Hurdstone has got a bloodhoun' that's awful on niggers. And with a little 'couragement would put her teeth in white folks. I hearn Mas'r say he'll put her on de track ob de next abolition spy as cuts and runs. Now, dat yer slut will smell tracks likè de debble! I knows her like preachin', 'cause I brung her up from a pup. Jist like a streak—she is! You can't stinguish nothin' but a little white line when she bolts. Now look yer!" Dagon's voice and face expressed the deepest earnestness. "Dat yer slut's name is Jule—called arter my ole woman. If Mas'r Hurdstone should put her to scentin' ye—"

"Hold up, boy—hold up!" interrupted Scotto. "I'll tell ye what to do. Has any of the darkeys run away, lately?"

"Bress de Lor'! dey goes every day! One went last night," answered Dagon.

"Well, if you can get me some at that he

used to wear, we'll manage it. A hat, cap, brogan, or rag of any kind'll do," continued the scout, hurriedly.

"I sees de joke, mas'r! Wait about ten winks of yer eye." Dagon glided away like a black phantom, and was back again before one could count fifty, bringing a ragged hat.

"Dis yer is what ye want. Go yender to them yer trees, and I'll bring Jule."

"Yes, that's what I mean. I'll take the dog along; and if we're questioned, we'll tell 'em we're huntin' runaway niggers. That'll be better nor a letter o' recommendation to the p'isoned s-cashers. With the countersign and nigger-huntin', I reckon we'll stan' a smart chance. Hurry, Dagon—hurry!"

The black disappeared again, and Scotto and Girdwood made their way cautiously to the spot indicated, where they waited anxiously for the coming of their faithful ally, who came, presently, leading a beautiful hound, which looked at them, at first with suspicion, then with curiosity, and finally, encouraged by Dagon, with complacency.

"You're to go 'long, Jule, with de white folks," he said, patting the sleek animal upon the head, "and do jist what they tell ye. Behave yerself, ole gal—behave yerself! I'll meet ye t'other side o' Jordan one o' dese yer days, bress de Lor'!"

Dagon placed the leash in Scotto's hand, who held the crushed hat to her long, sensitive nose. She smelled it, sniffed the air, and emitted low, menacing sounds.

"All right!" said Dagon. "Good-bye, ole gal—good-bye!"

Dagon took a long, parting look at the dog, sighed mournfully, and the next moment was out of sight.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### AWAY FROM MANASSAS.

Skillfully, and with steady pace, Scotto picked his way across the country. Once, they came suddenly upon a sentinel, but upon giving the countersign, and affirming that they were hunting a runaway, they were allowed to pass. The ragged hat and the hound gave such an air of probability to this statement, that it could scarcely be doubted.

They traversed swamps, woodland, and neglected fields. Girdwood's emotions were indescribable. He felt like one passing from the portals of death. He found it difficult to realize that he had escaped. His gratitude to the man who had conferred upon him liberty at such a personal risk, was deep and earnest. The motive that had actuated the scout was yet a perplexing mystery. He wondered by what means he had gained knowledge of him and his character.

While he pondered these things, the dog Jule trotted quietly by the scout, now looking

up wistfully, now depressing her sharp muzzle to the ground, and now scenting the chance odors of the air.

"I am greatly surprised at what has happened," Girdwood remarked. "Your appearance, to-night, was certainly a most unexpected event."

"No doubt!" said Scotto. "I couldn't naturally been looked for. But that's my disposition. I'm allers goin' where I ain't invited."

"Your own escape produced a great deal of conjecture. Miss Hurdlestone was anxious to aid you; but your escape seemed to surprise her as much as others," added Ralph.

Scotto smiled with satisfaction.

"I had help, Mr. Girdwood," he answered, "and very good help it was. The Basketeers proved themselves worthy of their bringin' up."

"Who are the Basketeers?"

"I'll show ye pretty quick," replied the scout. Jule pulled on the leash, thrust out her nose, and raised a cry.

"Hold up, pup, hold up!" admonished Scotto. "What's into ye? There's nowhat hereabouts to harm ye."

They had entered a swamp of scrub-cedar, of a growth so close that it was nearly impervious. They were often obliged to stoop in pushing onward.

"Peleg! Pickerin'!" cried Scotto. "Hark! Where on earth be they?" He paused, and listened.

Girdwood heard boyish voices in altercation. "That's them! They're pitchin' in ag'in. They'd fight if they's goin' to a funeral."

Walking a short distance farther, they came upon two boys, who were squaring off upon each other. Girdwood recognized them as Zeddoe Murches' band—drum and fife.

"Stop it, my banties!" said Scotto. "Keep your surplus knoeks for the enemy." Then to Girdwood, explanatorily. "These be the Basketeers."

"Basketeers?" repeated Girdwood.

"Cause found in a basket, thirteen year ago and up'ard."

"Twins?"

"Twins, every inch on 'em," answered Scotto, with a quiet smile and a touch of pride. "Same height, you see, and not a grain alike in featur'. One took arter his father, and the other arter his mother, I reckon. Therefore they're twins."

"Excellent reasoning," said Ralph.

"Jes' so!" responded Scotto, dryly.

"I saw them in strange company," observed Ralph.

"The same may be said of yourself, I consider!" retorted the scout. "You must't expect to understand' all you see in this world, young man. I don't, and never did. I didn't understand' why you run the loyal pickets. I didn't understand' why you went down to Manassas, and straight to the head-quarters of Touton Bear-

gard. I don't ask to understand', cyther. I don't want to understand', nyther. I'm only part of a machine. I do my duty 'ordin' as I know it. I go here and I go there like a jack-o'-lantern. Sometimes I lead the star-spangled critters to scour the kentry, or to a squirmish with the 'ceshers. Sometimes we water our hosses at the Potomac, and ag'in miles away into rebel waters. Sometimes I'm in the saddle, sometimes afoot. Sometimes I'm plenty, then ag'in I'm scarce. Sometimes I'm found absent, and then 't would puzzle the Old Nick to track me. I'm one as is willin' to all kinds o' work. I don't take an affront 'cause I ain't app'inted colonel or a brigadier. I love the flag, and, if need be, I'll knock under fort. If I can't do one thing I'll do another. In some capacity or other, I'll eat my bigness into this here rotten rebellion. I'll hack, hew, and slew!"

Luke Scotto spoke in a calm and even voice, as if he had reflected thoroughly upon the matter, and these were the inmost feelings of his heart, which no possible pressure could change.

"Therefore," he added, anon, "I am as I am, and don't keer to be no different. I move as I'm moved, and ask no questions. Your business is your own, and not mine. I've got no enviousity."

"Let me ask you one thing, Luke Scotto," said Girdwood, perceiving that the scout wished to make no explanation of his recent conduct. "Are you acquainted with the defences at Manassas?"

"Some at; but I should knowed more, if things had worked to my mind. I found it impossible to git down to what they call the Run. There's awful secrets thereabouts, I reckon."

"You are right; and General McDowell cannot be warned too soon. I have important information for him."

"You're a 'cesher!" said Scotto, smiling.

"No matter what I am. There are two miles or more of, masked batteries at Manassas."

"Are you in earnest?" asked the scout, with a start.

"Most seriously," responded Girdwood. "I hope the Army of the Potomac has not moved."

"It is movin' now, I allow," answered the other, uneasily.

"Let us hurry."

"No, let us rest here till they reach Fairfax or Centreville, when it'll be easy to jine 'em."

"It's a fatal mistake!" exclaimed Girdwood, much agitated.

"Mistake or not, I know they're comin'. They've been pushed on and worried on, and a battle must be foun't. I long to be in it! You'll see me with the star-spangled critters, lookin' sharp for the Black Hoss Calvary. We shall cut, hack, gash, hew, and slew! There!"

he added, after a momentary pause. "That's what I had to say. It's nigh mornin'; let's down and sleep, an' be ready for the stirrin' work of

to-morrow—if work there should be. Boys, stop bickerin', and take good keer of this dog. Feed her, and pet her, and she'll take to ye kindly."

The darkness that precedes the dawn now lent a deeper gloom to the swamp. The hum of the Confederate camp had long since died away in the distance.

Peleg and Pickering spread a couch of cedar boughs, and Scotto and Girdwood stretched their weary limbs upon it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN THE SWAMP.

When Girdwood awoke, the sun had reached the meridian. He was surprised that his slumbers had been so profound and protracted, but weariness and relief from anxiety had contributed to his repose. The hound Jule was watching beside him; but Luke Scotto and the fighting brothers were not to be seen. He wondered at this desertion, and at first was inclined to regard it as a breach of friendship; but reflection brought different feelings. He believed that Scotto would return, and resolved to wait a reasonable time for his appearance. He was very thirsty, and searched for water. Finding some dark, brackish pools in the swamp, he drank from them, and the warm, thick fluid was more grateful to his parched tongue than the clearest water he had ever tasted.

Leaving the cedar jungle, he endeavored to obtain a view of the surrounding country, but on account of its inequality, could see but little. In a distant field, however, he discovered what seemed to be a company of Confederate skirmishers or scouts, and retreated to the swamp, the cover of which he had scarcely gained, when he had reason to congratulate himself on his prudence; for a small body of horse, a moment later, crossed the open space space beyond.

Keeping the hound crouched beside him, he observed the progress of the riders, who were evidently a squad of the Black Cavalry, either searching for himself or reconnoitering. They passed slowly by his hiding-place. The ground being soft, the horses sank to their fetlocks, precluding the idea of speed. When directly opposite, and within a dozen yards of him, he recognized, with a heart-throb of apprehension, the stalwart proportions of Colonel Hurdlestone.

He pressed the delicate head of the dog to the earth, to prevent her from seeing her master and bounding after him, as she might be likely to do.

"These escapes have been very singular," he heard Hurdlestone remark.

"Secret enemies are the worst enemies," a horseman, wearing the badge of a lieutenant, replied.

"I know of no secret enemies at the general's head-quarters," returned the colonel.

"They may be in one's own household," said the other, moodily.

"Lieutenant Storow," answered Hurdlestone, haughtily, "the Confederacy has no active enemy in household of mine. I throw back your insinuation with scorn, and its repetition will call forth my resentment."

"I meant no offence," responded Storow, with the same dissatisfied manner. "I but know that two spies have mysteriously slipped through our fingers, and are now laughing at the hangman, and carrying I know not what important information to the Union Army. Prisoners can't get from under our very noses without help, especially when they are in iron and doubly guarded."

"I like not your tone!" retorted Hurdlestone, with displeasure. "I was made responsible for their safe keeping, and these two escapes touch me more nearly than you or any other officer. To the general-in-chief I am accountable, and to no other."

"You know best, sir; but if I had my way, there should be no more escapes between sentence and the halter. I'd hang 'em right up, sir—right up! I had my suspicions of that oily fellow, Girdwood, from the beginning. The bullet-hole through his cap didn't deceive me. I wouldn't give that for his dispatches!" Storow snapped his thumb and finger contemptuously. "But he's had a fine time among us," he went on, now addressing his conversation apparently to a man on his left. "He has fared well and fed well, and it is rumored that he has found time to toy with the boy Cupid. If certain parties do not belie him, he has not tried his arts of pleasing in vain."

"Forward!" cried the colonel, spurring his horse and dashing on.

The horsemen ascended the ridge, and soon disappeared on the other side. Girdwood was infinitely relieved by their speedy passage from sight. Going back to the spot where he had slept, he awaited the return of the scout, sometimes gazing up at the sky through the broad, dark-green branches of the cedar interposed between him and the hot rays of the sun like a sheltering hand, sometimes caressing the hound, and always thinking of Hope Hurdlestone.

Presently he heard quick, light steps in the swamp, and Scotto, long looked for, came at last.

"What news?" asked Girdwood, impatiently. Just then heavy firing was heard in the direction of Manassas.

"Hark!" said Scotto. "General Tyler has waked up some rebel batteries, I reckon, down to the Run."

"The attack, then, is premature!" exclaimed Ralph.

"They're not goin' to attack in force to-day."

They're makin' a strong reconnoissance of the enemy's position," replied the scout.

"Strong indeed, if one may judge by those heavy, rapid discharges of cannon. I am fearful that their patriotic ardor has outrun their prudence. If I can judge correctly by the sound of the firing, nothing less than crushing brigades should be thrown upon them at that point. Single regiments will not do. See! Wreaths of smoke are curling up to the sky."

"There'll be more smoke to-morrow. Our army has passed Fairfax, and now rests at Centreville, stretching to the right and left like bats' wings. To-morrow 'll be the 21st, an dSunday; and a great battle will be fought. God he only knows what the result 'll be!"

"Disastrous, I'm afraid. They don't know what they're going to fight. There's a great difference between meeting an enemy in open field, and intrenched on ground of his own choosing. Even undisciplined volunteers can fight behind breastworks. Then they have the advantage of knowing the country. There is not a cow-path they are unacquainted with."

"True!" responded Scotto. "But if our boys were well commanded, I shouldn't have no fear for the end on't."

"Ay! There's the rub. Many of the Federal officers have never smelled gunpowder, except in woodcock and snipe-shooting. There's a vast difference between mustard-seed shot and cannon balls. Let us hurry to Centreville," answered Girdwood, with earnestness.

"Be patient," said Scotto, coolly. "The Black Calvary are out in every direction, and 'wouldn't be pleasant to fall into their clutches. In the mornin', airly, there'll be work in airnest. If there's no accident, you'll hear the thunder of cannon with the risin' of the sun, when, if you've a mind for service, you can fall in with the Sixty-ninth, or the Fire Zaves, or whatsoever regiment you like. The Sixty-ninth, I've heard, will have the post of honor, and lead up to the batteries. Their time's out, and they can go home, every man of 'em; but they ain't the boys to show the white feather in sight of an enemy. I wish I could say as much of the Pennsylvania Fourth, which, in the mornin', 'll take the back track."

"Turn their backs on their brothers-in-arms? Impossible!" exclaimed Girdwood.

"When the Sixty-ninth and other gallant lads march to danger and death, the Pennsylvania Fourth will left foot, right foot, torards safety and home."

Luke Scotto contracted his brows, and mechanically tightened the belt around his loins.

"It pains me to hear it. Every regiment will be needed."

"Ay! They might stay with the reserve force, rather than turn back, if they don't keer to snuff gunpowder. Howsomer, let 'em go."

They'll git a name by it that nobody 'll covet. What's into 'em, I wonder?"

"Not cowardice, I hope? Not want of patriotism, I trust? Where are those singular lads?"

"Couldn't keep 'em, therefore let 'em go. They was off like sky-rockets soon as never they heerd the big guns; for there's been firin' at odd jobs for a long spell. What day of the month did I say it was?"

"The 20th."

"Then the 21st of July will be a day in our history. Prehaps a dark, prehaps a bright one. On the 21st, the star-spangled critters, if they have a chance, will try their steel on them as have plunged this land into poverty, distress, and war. As for myself, I keer nowt for the terrors of battle. I've foun't under Scott, in Mexico. I've seen the old flag carried triumphantly hundreds o' miles into the enemy's country. I've seen it wave over cities, and forts, and bloody fields."

Scotto looked up, raised his right arm, and his face glowed with enthusiasm.

"They was the pride o' nations, the Stars and Stripes was; they was the hope o' the miserable and downtrodden everywhere. There's a heavy account to reckon. We'll foot up the whole on't presently. I said I didn't mind the battle for my own sake. But there's young lads in the army that ain't seasoned to the melancholy sights o' war. Their hearts 'll fly up into their throats, at fust, but they'll get used to it arter a little, so that they'll hack, hew, and slew with the veterans. Many on 'em won't go back, in course not. Their bodies 'll enrich this sile, but their names won't never die."

Scotto, the scout, continued to gaze at the sky, and his brown face was calm and earnest.

"Even so!" responded Girdwood, impressively. And each felt that the morrow was big with events.

#### CHAPTER XV. AT MANASSAS.

With the first burst of artillery on the eventful morning of the 21st, Ralph Girdwood sprang to his feet. The scout was already on the alert.

"It's General Tyler's division," he said. "They've had a long march, and are directly atween us and the enemy."

"The guns speak loudly. They are much nearer than I supposed. Now is our time," responded Ralph, eager for the affray.

"Stay come at! There's no hurry yet. You'll have enough on't afore night."

Girdwood looked at Scotto inquiringly, and chafed at his inexplicable delay.

"Trust an old fighter, and don't fret," he said, in reply to the young man's impatient glance.

The hound Jule arose from the foliage where

she had been sleeping, snuffed the air, and, a moment after, the tramp of horses was heard.

"They're comin'!" said the scout, taking some hard biscuits from his pocket and offering them to Ralph. "Eat," he added. "An empty stomach is a bad thing. He that's faint, athirst, and hungry, is poorly prepared for work."

While Girdwood was masticating this dry breakfast, the tramping drew nearer, and Scotto led the way from the swamp.

"It's my mounted scouts," he said, quietly. "The boys have told 'em where to find me. Here they be."

The Independent Rangers crossed the soft ground, and now drew up around their leader, the fighting brothers foremost among them, leading two horses.

"Glad to see ye!" said Scotto, shaking hands with the nearest, and regarding all with satisfaction. "How d'ye do, Lieutenant Scarlett? How be ye, Co'p'til Keith? The bulldogs are barkin' down there."

"We thought we'd lost you, captain," replied the lieutenant.

"Well, I did, git pretty nigh the edge on't, but, thank fortin, didn't tumble over."

"Them twins has been clinchin' ag'in," observed Corporal Keith, with a scandalized look.

"They're allers clinchin'." Let 'em clinch. We'll give 'em a chance to clinch some at of another natur', soon. Fall in, men, and foller me: Bring them hosses here, boys. Where's the rifles—eh?"

"Brought 'em along. Here they be," answered Corporal Keith.

"Mount, Mr. Girdwood," said Scotto. "We are well provided for. That hoss has got some bottom, I reckon. Peleg, pass that rifle to him. Pickerin', bring mine. How's the ammunition? Plenty on't—eh? All right! We shall want a heap of the stuff. You must use your weepers to-day, lads. Cut, hack, and slew!"

Scotto spoke very rapidly as he mounted, adjusted his tall person in the saddle, and eagerly grasped the rifle placed in his hands by one of the boys.

Girdwood observed his haste with pleasure, and could not conceal his joy at being mounted and armed.

The Rangers were in motion. A cannonading in the direction of Manassas, which had subsided for a brief space, was now heard, crash on crash, in rapid succession. The horses pricked their ears, and responding willingly to the wishes of their riders, went forward at a canter.

The hound, which had manifested a decided preference for Girdwood, ran beside him.

"Be keerful," admonished Scotto, addressing his conversation to Ralph, "not to fall into the hands of Tonton Beauregard. Findin' you in sich company, it might be diffikil for ye to prove your innocence of loyalty to the old flag."

Them as fight with halters round their necks, should fight shy."

"The same advice may apply to yourself," said Girdwood.

"It mought, and then ag'in it moughtn't," returned the scout, musingly.

They passed rapidly across the country, and reached, presently, some rolling fields, with a ridge beyond.

Scotto pointed to the ridge, and remarked:

"The Warrenton road is onto it. It crosses Bull Run by a stone bridge. There's two fords above the bridge (which they say is guarded by artillery), one defended, and the other not. General Tyler is gone to the upper ford, I reckon, to turn the enemy's left. See the columns of smoke risin' yender! I like the looks on't! The wind's bringin' it down to us. I'm fond o' the smell on't!"

By this time they were in sight of the long stretch of woods through which Girdwood had enjoyed the unusual favor of a nocturnal walk with Zadoc Murch. White clouds of smoke were rolling over it. The roar of musketry mingled with the thunder of cannon. The air was hot and sulphurous.

"To the upper ford!" cried Scotto; and touching his horse with his heel, dashed ahead.

The Rangers swept onward, without much regard to order, their enthusiasm increasing as they approached the scene of action. They passed the Stone Bridge at a hard gallop, and the enemy, thinking they designed forcing a passage, let fly a charge of grape, which passed harmlessly the rearmost of the Rangers.

With every step the din grew louder. They met ambulances bearing away the wounded, but no cowards in flight. Across the fields, from various directions, columns of infantry were seen hurrying to the fight. Every passing breeze bore the sound of shouting and cheering, drowned occasionally by the boom of the heavy guns.

Scotto drew his sword. His swarthy face was flushed all over, and his usually mild eyes beamed with the fires of battle. In a moment, they swept into the stormy circle of the conflict, shadowed by a hot, black canopy of smoke.

Although it was early in the day, the ground was already strewn with the dead. Some lay in the attitude in which they had fallen; some had crawled a short distance, and died painfully; while others, placed by their comrades against trunks of trees, had said their prayers, thought of home, and passed quietly away. The wounded looked at them as they went by, but made no complaint. Some of them feebly cheered. One poor fellow, fatally shot, raised a heavy and stiffening arm, and cried:

"Stand by the flag, boys!"

When Girdwood went back that way, that brave heart was cold.

The Minié and musket balls flew like hail.

stones, while whirling globes of iron and lead from rifled cannon sheared the branches from trees, or plowed their way through ranks of infantry.

The Rangers shot into the tempest of death just as an overpowering charge was being made upon a loyal battery, and our men were being forced slowly backward by the mere preponderance of physical weight. Scotto waved his sword and shouted: "Forward!" In an instant Girdwood was in the thickest of the strife, which, like the sea, flowed, and ebbed, and fluctuated to and fro, now breaking on a shore of dead horses and men, now rolling backward into the forest over a beach of batteries, now deserted and silent, now turned and vomiting fire on the retreating foe.

The green grass and newly-sprung foliage was slippery with blood.

Girdwood kept near the scout in every charge that was made. Wherever his tall and swaying figure was seen, there was hot work and busy blades around him. Wherever he saw the flag wavering and sinking, there he led his Rangers, and broke on the traitors like an angry wave, hurling them back and decimating their ranks.

Ralph thought of the two boys, and felt compassion for their youth; but, by-and-by, when the battle lulled, and both the assailed and assailants drew back to rest, he was surprised to see them unharmed, riding about with entire self-composure, loading and firing like veterans. As they stood on the margin of the wood, and the smoke gradually lifted, Girdwood looked around at the torn and blackened columns that had been engaged. His eyes fell on a regiment that in a particular manner drew his attention. The men were stripped to shirt and pants, their arms bared to the elbow, every powder-smutched visage expressing grim determination and courage.

"What regiment is that?" asked Girdwood of a man who was busily employed in wrapping a handkerchief about his left arm.

"What regiment is it? That was the question ye axed. Bless me, if I thought there was a man in Ameriky but'd know the Sixty-ninth!" answered the soldier addressed.

"The Sixty-ninth!" repeated Girdwood. "They are brave boys. Honor to the green flag! What officer leads them so gallantly?"

"It's the Pader ye wants to know? He's a true son of Old Ireland—Major Meagher—Cap'n Meagher we call him, for the r'son it sounds more intimate-like."

The Irish soldier looked hard at Ralph. His smutched face lighted up with a gleam of recognition.

"Misther Scotto—cap'n dear, I made—will ye jist clap your two eyes on this chap? Bad cess to me if 'tisn't the same intirely that run the picket with niver a countersign at all, at all!" cried Barney Malone, directing his remarks to

the scout, who had dismounted and loosened the girths of his saddle. Then to Ralph, laying hold of his bridle-rein: "I make ye my prisoner in the name of the President of the United States. Oh, ye murderin' sacesher! Ye pick-et-runnin' blackguard! Ye spyin' rebel! Give me the countersign imma'ate."

"Hold up there, Paddy Malone!" interposed Scotto. "He's been fightin' aside of me these three hours."

"All that may be, cap'n, jewel, but I want the countersign that's honestly due me. I remember as well what it was, as though it was give me the last night that iver was. I want Feerfax, bedad!"

"Fairfax it is," said Girdwood, smiling.

"All right. Now I'll accept the cap'n's recommendation. But I never like to be cheated of what belongs till me. The top of the day to ye, misther. If ye want to know more of the Sixty-ninth, I'm the boy to ax ye questions. Them yender is the Highlanders, the Seventy-ninth, under Cameron. Heaven rest his soul! They say he fell fightin' like a lion at the head of his men."

"Gallant Cameron," sighed Girdwood.

"It's the fate o' war," said Scotto, thoughtfully. "He as goes to battle takes his life as it were, in his hand. A battle-field is a good place to die on, if one falls with his face to the foe, and his back to the field. And there's one other thing: God knows the true man from the traitor."

"I solemnly think so. Tell me, captain, your opinion of the day? Shall we win or lose?" asked Girdwood.

A troubled look passed over Scotto's face.

"It depends," he answered, carefully weighing his words, "on the length of time we are obliged to fight. If the men are kept in the field a few hours longer, without re-enforcements, hunger and thirst will conquer 'em, and not the rebels. An empty stomach is worse nor an empty gun. The last three days have been deadly hot. The sogers have sweltered, blistered, and fainted in the sun. This deceitful climate has sapped 'em of strength, and wilted 'em like mown grass. This sultry air goes into the lungs like fire. Look yender at the Fire Zouaves. They lay pantin' on the ground like dogs, and they're men as are used to the smoke and heat of burnin' buildings. See! they pluck up the grass and eat it to get a little moisture for their tongues. If it was autumn, Mr. Girdwood—if it was autumn!"

The scout struck the perspiration in great drops from his brow, while his horse snapped voraciously at the green leaves.

The roar of cannon was heard in other parts of the field. The batteries they had assisted to defend began to play again. The Fire Zouaves sprang to their feet, cheered the flaunting Stars and Stripes, and disappeared in the woods, like

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black and fitting shadows, relieved only by the glitter of sabre-bayonets and unsheathed knives. For a time, the clamor of human voices ceased. Both infantry and horse stood silent, while the rifled guns poured in their horrible hail of shell and spherical shot.

Then there arose a yell that made the forest reverberate with a thousand thrilling echoes. The Zouaves had crept upon a battery and taken it. Immediately after, there was a terrific crash that shook the earth, and made the air vibrate in sulphurous waves. Another concealed battery had opened upon the gallant Zouaves, who were flung backward in bleeding masses.

"As I feared! As I feared!" exclaimed Girdwood. "This is the Valley of Death."

"Too late to think on't," added Scotto. "We must fight it out." Then to his Rangers: "Boys, stan' your ground and strike whenever there's a chance. Cut, hack, and slew! Eat your way into this p'ison rebellion. Let 'em see what's into ye."

At that moment Major Meagher was seen riding to and fro on a spirited horse, waving his hat, and cheering the Sixty-ninth to the onset. Sherman's battery replied as well as it could to the rebel fire, and the battle again became general. Scotto, at the head of his command, ragged to and fro, seeking in vain for the Black Horse Cavalry.

And thus the conflict went on. The sun went swimming past the meridian, red and fiery, obscured by clouds of black and stifling smoke. Men fell down and died, without wounds, from heat and thirst.

The enemy gave ground, slowly at first, but with a rout at last. The victors cheered, and the wounded and dying lifted up their voices with the rest. The word passed up and down the lines that the day was won. Comrades in arms shook hands and congratulated each other, and weary officers talked of a victory. Every loyal heart beat high. Soldiers forgot eight hours of fighting and a harassing march beneath sultry skies, and tasted their reward in the triumph of the moment.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### THE BLACK HORSE CAVALRY.

While the troops stood panting and thirsting, there came an order to fall back. No one could definitely trace the origin of the order, but such an order there appeared to be; and various regiments that had been most hotly engaged, much thinned and disorganized, made a retrograde movement to the open fields. Much surprised, Girdwood and Scotto followed them. When they reached the open space, they found the Fire Zouaves already there, cool, collected, and characteristically unconcerned. They, with the *débris* of other regiments, were retreating slowly, without hurry or flurry, toward their camp at Centreville.

Girdwood presently heard the words. "Johnston! Re-enforcements!" which ran from mouth to mouth along the broken lines. Just then clouds of dust were seen, indicating a grand flanking movement of the enemy. The troops quickened their pace. Scotto rode among them, entreating them to form again and fling back the foe; but the worried tides of men and horses rolled on. Anon there was a cry: "The Black Horse! The Black Horse!"

The officers made a desperate effort to stay the reflex current; they shouted, persuaded, threatened. Scotto and Girdwood aided them in this endeavor, and finally the Sixty-ninth, a Wisconsin regiment, and a portion of the Fire Zouaves, formed to receive the charge of the Black Horse Cavalry.

Scotto and his Rangers drew up on the left, glad of an opportunity to meet that redoubtable body of men. They came with thunderous noise, the heavy tramp of six hundred horses shaking the ground like an earthquake. They came in their pride, and insolence, and contempt of Northern courage. The clank and jangle of their spurs and sabres were like the din of workshops.

Foremost among those charging squadrons Girdwood descried the grim and stalwart figure of Hurdlestone. He was leading the onset, and his voice rang out stern and clear.

Girdwood thought of Hope, and an involuntary shiver went over him.

A terrible silence fell upon the devoted regiments. Each man grasped more firmly his musket, and turned a face of iron resolution to the rushing foe. The front rank sank upon one knee, and with those in the rear, formed a fearful wall of glittering bayonets. Not a gun was fired till the Black Horse rangers were within twenty yards, then a sheet of flame met them in the faces, and the head of the column staggered and fell.

While dizzy and reeling with the first shock, another destroying storm of lead was poured upon them, and the next in order went down, to embarrass and obstruct those behind.

For a few moments there was a continuous and deadly hail of Minié balls. Proud steeds fell by scores. There was a frightful mass of men and horses struggling in the throes of death.

"Come on!" shouted Scotto; and leaning forward in his saddle, he led his men into the floundering chaos of the nearly annihilated cavalry. The Zouaves, with loud yells, plunged after them, and when they came out of the *melée*, their long sabre-bayonets were no longer bright, and horse and rider, on that field, were found thrust through and through, when the dead were buried. Some of those dark-haired steeds were ridden to Washington by the lads of the Eleventh.

From the writhing mass, a small body of

norsemen tried to escape, but few succeeded; and of all those who rode so proudly to the encounter, not a dozen rode back.

Girdwood looked eagerly for Hurdlestone, and began to believe that he was among the slain, when he discovered him upon his large horse, leaping ghastly heaps of dead, parrying now a bayonet-thrust, now a sword-cut, now turning to the right or left, to avoid collision with overpowering numbers. Ralph and Scotto saw him at the same moment, and spurred toward him; but with very different motives. Scotto reached him first, and their swords were already striking fire when Girdwood came up.

"Hold, Captain Scotto!" he cried. "Harm not this man. Sheathe your sword, Mr. Hurdlestone!"

The earnestness of Girdwood caused the scout to fall back.

"What is it?" he sharply demanded.

"This is my friend. I wish to save him," answered Girdwood, hurriedly.

"Friends among the Black Hoss critters! What's into ye?" retorted the scout, evidently but little pleased.

"Be patient, captain. Colonel Hurdlestone?"

"Sir?" responded the colonel, with grim disdain.

"Surrender your sword, and yield yourself a prisoner."

Hurdlestone pointed with his blade to the bloody field.

"Here," he said, hoarsely, "lie my comrades in arms. They were the pride of Virginia. It will be hard if I cannot die with them."

"It is the fortune of war, sir. I entreat you to yield!" interposed Girdwood.

"Never!" cried Hurdlestone, fiercely, gathering up his reins, and clutched his weapon determinedly.

"For your own sake—for Hope's!" remonstrated Ralph. "See! you are surrounded. To resist is madness."

"I care not for numbers," answered Hurdlestone, after an instant's reflection; "but you have named a name that has power over me. Against my wishes, I yield."

"Jes' so!" said Scotto. "You might as well surrender your sword and pistols. I reckon You took away my tools, if my mem'ry serves me. mighty suddint, when I fell among thieves. You talked about hallooers and hangin', seems to me. Remember my featurs, don't ye?"

"Luke Scotto!" muttered Hurdlestone.

"The same as was down in Mexico," responded the scout. "The same as knowed you and Tonton Beauregard when you was better men. Co'p'r'il Keith! Where's Co'p'r'il Keith?"

"Here!" said a voice.

"Here's a prisoner, co'p'r'il; a colonel in the rebel service. Take keer on him! Take him safe into camp, or you'll die a co'p'r'il, depend on't!"

"Ay, ay, cap'n! I'll catch him near or alive," responded the worthy corpora-

At that instant the hound, Jule, which had followed Girdwood all through the fight, placed its fore-feet upon the flank of Hurdlestone's horse, and licked his hand, whining joyously.

"Jule! Jule! Poor Jule!" sighed the colonel, for the sight of the animal made him think of Hope.

"Colonel Hurdlestone, I hope you bear me no hardness?" said Girdwood, riding close to the colonel. "Where is your daughter? Is she safe?"

"I know not," he answered, gloomily. "The farm-house is torn in pieces by your snells, I have heard."

"I will look for her," said Girdwood, hastily.

"To what end?" asked Hurdlestone, coldly.

"How can you ask, sir? To save her from danger and insult; to assure her of your safety?" responded Girdwood, somewhat indignant-

ly. "Go, if you will; but I warn you that you will find it far safer to retreat with your flying columns, than to engage in such an undertaking. You are dreaming wildly, young man. If I was blind at first, I am no longer so. You are a traitor, sir! I detest traitors and spies!"

"You may change your mind, sir. I am content to remain under your displeasure till these dark days are over. While I give my love to your daughter, I am willing to give my blood to my country. I pledge you my word for good treatment while a prisoner among us."

"Think you I care for such trifles?" answered Hurdlestone, curtly. "Good or ill usage is the same to me. I have cast my lot with the Confederates, and shall not murmur at the reverses of fortune. Should you go on this mad errand, and chance to find my daughter, tell her that I am not disheartened, and yet have faith in the Southern Stars. Before we part, take this advice from me: Crush the ill-timed and silly passion that seems to have sprung up while you were an inmate of my house. Hope will be governed by the wishes of her father."

"Fall in, men!" cried Scotto. "No time to waste."

The mounted scouts began to form.

"Lieutenant Searle, keep the lads in good order," added Scotto. "Co'p'r'il, where's them boys?"

"I left 'em clinched with a scotchier, back yonder a piece. They was gittin' the best on't, I guess, for he was growin' black in the face."

"Let 'em clinch! Fust thing they ever greed on. Forward, men! Look well to the prisoner. One colonel's worth a dozen privates."

Girdwood waited to hear no more, but dashed off, as nearly as he could judge, in the direction of the farm-house.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE SEARCH FOR HOPE.

As Girdwood galloped away, he passed the brave Irishman that he had seen leading and cheering the Sixty-ninth. As he swept by him, he saw his gallant horse torn in pieces by a cannon-ball. The poor beast fell upon its rider, a mangled mass. Reckless of his own fate, he made for the Warrenton Road. There was still firing from the woods and on the open field, and now and then a shot or shell went whistling over his head, or near him.

Lapping fences, and fallen trees, he attained the road in safety, and turned his horse's head toward the Run. He met caissons, ambulances, and Union soldiers, in moderate retreat.

"Look 'e hyar!" said a voice.

Girdwood mechanically drew rein, and glanced around in search of the person who addressed him. His eyes presently fell on Zadoc Murch. He was standing beside a crippled gun, to which the dead artillery-horses were yet attached. His face was black with powder, his garments torn and stained, and his whole appearance indicative of the active and sanguinary part he had borne in the struggle. His expression, however, gave no sign of flurry or perturbation. The formidable knife in his belt was of an ominous hue, and he held his rifle in his left hand by the muzzle, with the breech upon the ground.

"Look 'e hyar!"

"Is it you, Mr. Murch?" responded Ralph, surprised.

"I allow it is!" said Zadoc. "I want to show ye a sight. Don't pint yer rifle this yer way. If I'd meant ye mischief, I'd done it afore this time, for I've both powder and lead in this hol-ler consarn." Zadoc raised the rifle a little and let it fall again.

"Which side are you fighting on?" asked Girdwood, watching the man suspiciously.

"Fightin' on my own hook, I allow. What's the odds, so long as I fight? Fightin' is nat'-ral to the human animil, and it must come out at one time or another. But, mister, the fightin' for to-day is done. I tell ye, look 'e hyar!"

Zadoc Murch raised his muscular right arm, and pointed straight toward Manassas. Girdwood looked. He dropped the reins; he rubbed his eyes and questioned the correctness of his vision. Flashing out from the enemy's extreme left, far up the green slopes, a dense column of infantry, with martial music, with floating banners, with a forest of gleaming bayonets, with measured and regular tread, appeared in view! It seemed a phantom host, adjoined from bodiless space, or a startling picture painted against the lurid sky.

On and on rolled the portentous pageant. Regiment after regiment burst from the glitter-

ing soil, and stretching to the right and left with stern precision, formed three sides of a hollow square, with cavalry in the centre.

Girdwood's hands fell nerveless at his side. All the blood in his body appeared rushing to his heart. He gasped for breath. The fearful truth rushed upon his apprehension. Johnston, with thirty thousand men, had come to rob them of victory, and fling back the weary and scattered tides of the loyal army. It was a fine yet maddening spectacle!

He threw an anxious, troubled look backward and forward, and upon such portions of the field as he could see, and saw a direful panic seize our broken, staggering columns. Full of dread, Ralph continued his course along the road. It was then he saw a sight that cheered him—Burnside's Brigade forming, in order, to cover the inevitable retreat. The batteries of the brave Rhode Islanders were belching forth their deadly fires, and the gallant Sprague was conspicuous everywhere, when Ralph shot beyond the scene of action.

He had not galloped far, when he heard the clatter of hoofs behind him; and looking over his shoulder, caught a glimpse of a black horse in rapid pursuit. He wheeled suddenly to bring down his foe with his rifle; but the rider tumbled from the saddle before he could bring his piece to his shoulder. Some expert marksman had shot him from the woods. Ralph resumed his course again, and he heard, as he believed, the riderless horse galloping after him; but a voice crying: "Look 'e hyar!" dispelled the illusion.

"Look 'e hyar!"

The black horse and Zadoc Murch sprang to his side. The young man knew not what to make of this strange character.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Wharsoever you go. Makes no odds. I'm to home anywhar. Trackin' the gal—ain't ye? Yes! Thought you was. 'Speet to be shot—don't ye?" responded Zadoc, whose composure never was disturbed.

"I don't know what I expect, but I must find her," replied Girdwood, hurriedly, forgetful of all personal considerations in his anxiety for Hope.

"One party or t'other shelled the house. I hearn," said Zadoc. "There war wounded folks in it, too, at the time. I allow that the gal can't stan' shot and shell."

"It don't seem to trouble you much!" retorted Girdwood, curtly, provoked at his nonchalance.

"What do I want to be troubled for? There's no good comes o' trouble, that I knows on. You're ridin' by the path, mister. We turn up hyar."

"I had forgotten. Thank you, Murch. I never traveled this ground but once, and then in the night."

"Exactly, mister. You brought dispatches to B'regard, I remember."

Zadoc glanced queerly at Girdwood.

"Didn't go down much, I allow—they dispatches didn't. Pity you should take up sich a trade. You might a been some'at in the Confed Army, if you'd been honest. You lost a chance, mister, and your wind along of it, nigh-abouts. I'm strong tea for some kinds o' sickness—I be!"

"I don't understand you yet, Mr. Murch."

"Shaller waters are easy measured. What do you think o' that walk mong the masked batteries?"

"There was the trouble. We whipped the men, but we couldn't conquer the batteries. My God! Where was Patterson?"

"Playin' into the hands of Jeff Davis, I allow," answered Zadoc, somewhat testily.

"He should have engaged Johnston, at all hazards. He might, at least, have crippled his energies, and kept him from Manassas. His inefficiency is astounding! We shall never have a good army till we shoot a general. This day has covered Patterson with shame."

"If I's on your side, I might think so," answered Zadoc, grinding his quid of tobacco with singular vigor. "Our luck is your misfortune. That's the way the world goes; but may all cowards and traitors be infarnally b'iled in ile!"

Zadoc made a twitch at his belt, then a snatch at his knife, then jerked his little skull-cap tightly to his head. He seemed in a highly-nervous state, and ejected tobacco-juice copiously. By-and-by, he straightened himself up on his black horse, and said, with habitual brevity:

"Look 'e hyar!"

They had reached the farmhouse, and Zadoc's adjuration referred to it. But how different was its appearance from a former occasion! There were ragged rents in the roof, and the walls were driven out and shattered by shells. There were many bloody signs of a struggle around it. Several Confederate and a few Union soldiers lay stiff and motionless on the ground.

Throwing his rein over a post, Girdwood sprang from the saddle and across the now-apparently deserted threshold. There was no sign of life within. The floors were splintered by exploding missiles, and dirt from the cellar beneath was cast to the very roof-tree.

"Miss Hurdlestone! Miss Hurdlestone! Hopel! Hopel!" cried Girdwood.

A wounded man, in a corner, opened his eyes languidly. It was a Federal officer.

"How goes the battle?" he asked in a faint voice.

"Lost! lost! Johnston, without striking a blow, has rolled back the tides of victory. Our wary columns are retreating."

The officer groaned and said no more. He

asked for neither water nor help. His reeling faculties were grappling with the terrible truth he had heard.

"Hope! Hope!" repeated Ralph.

No voice responded to the name. He ran from room to room. Signs of the sad desolation of war met him at every step. His search was unsuccessful. When he returned, Zadoc Murch was holding a vessel of water to the wounded officer's lips. He was forcibly struck with this instance of the rough man's kindness. While he contemplated him with surprise, he put down the vessel, adjusted the officer in a more comfortable position, then turning to Girdwood, said:

"She isn't hyar. Come along!"

Leaving the shattered house, they mounted their horses, and Murch took the lead. As they were passing some negro huts, Dagon appeared, but in a notable state of despondency. He was amazed at seeing Ralph.

"I's 'stoulished," he exclaimed, "to see ye down dis yer way ag'in. Lor! why don't ye keep 'way from de seecesh, Mas'r Girdwood? You'll be taken, jest as true as preachin'!"

"I'm looking for your mistress. Have you seen her?"

"Seen her? Gorry, Mas'r Girdwood. I's seen noffin but mighty great shells, screamin' through the air like a hundred pigs under a gate. The debble hisself is let loose. I s'pect! Whar's the end on't? Whar are we comin' to?"

"But your mistress?"

"They looked, for all the world, like great iron pots, them yer balls did. While they lay fizin' on the groun', and I went up to 'zamine 'em, they went off like a keg o' powder, and the dirt flew as no nigger could make it fly with a plantation-hoe. Gorry, mas'r! I's covered all over, I was, and pieces of them yer iron pots went buzz! buzz! whirr! whirr! in every direction, cuttin' off limbs o' trees, and damagin' the sogers and their hosses," continued Dagon, following the train of thought that occupied his mind.

"Well, your mistress?" insisted Girdwood.

"Dar's whar I's in trouble! These yer same iron pots has sploded in the house, bangin' things all to bits, and I's afeard Missy Hurdstone is blowed up. I s'pect," added Dagon, shaking his head in the most mournful manner, "you'll find the pieces all about yer."

The powder-stained lips of Zadoc Murch relaxed into a grim smile.

"She war a good missus, she war, and she went in strong for de liberty. But she's gone, and who car's for de liberty, now? I s'pect! I doesn't car' a hili o' corn for't. I's a miser'ble contraban', I is!"

"Cheer up, Dagon! I have strong hopes of finding her uninjured," said Girdwood.

"Time was," continued Dagon, "when I'd pull foot for de Norf with the fastest runaway

that ever was. But the run is all taken out of me, now. I has nobody to car' for. No use to play 'possum no longer. Might as well lay right down and give up."

The hound, Jule, ran to Dagon, and fawned about him.

"You here, ole gal?" said the black. "I's glad to see you, I is! Thought we shouldn't meet no more till I seed ye in the lan' of Abe Linkum, whar all de liberty's gone. You's a good pup, and lives 'cordin' to your natur'. Wouldn't chase nig's 'less you'd been taught to do it. You a'n't to blame for doin' what you've been taught. If I's runnin' for dear life, you wouldn't run arter me, would ye, ole gal?"

Dagon drew his leaden-lued and horny palm over the hound's smooth head, and caressed her tenderly.

"Whar's your missy, pup? Whar's your missy? Your dog-natur' couldn't tell me that, could it?"

The hound looked up wishfully, and presently began to smell around in a circle.

"Scents the boom-shells, I s'pect," added Dagon.

After a few gyrations, Jule started off into the woods.

"Come on," said Zadoc, following. "That pup's the best guide we can have. When I's in the mountains, I had a dorg that was so keen o' scent, it could foller a rifle-ball, e'enamost."

Ralph moved after Murch, Dagon trotting at his horse's heels. They passed through an oak glade, leaving the negro shanties behind, reaching, after a five minutes' gallop, a heavier growth of wood, into which Jule sprang lightly and eagerly. Bending low to avoid the branches, they managed to keep the hound in sight, which presently led them to a small hut, of a fashion exceedingly primitive, and in which she vanished. Burning with expectation, Girdwood threw himself from the saddle, and followed.

The first object that greeted his eye was Hope. She was seated on a rude bench, while Jule, with her slender paws upon her lap, expressed her joy in various canine ways.

"Why, Jule! I am glad to see you, Jule!" cried Hope. She heard steps, and looking up, beheld Girdwood. A mingled expression of surprise and pleasure swept over her features. She half-arose, then sank back, quite overcome by emotion.

"Miss Hurdlestone," he exclaimed, "I am rejoiced to find you! I feared that you had suffered from the casualties of this stirring day."

"You might well call it a dreadful day, Mr. Girdwood, without exaggeration," responded Hope. "But before more is said, tell me if the Stars and Stripes are moving toward Manassas?"

"Alas, no! The arrival of Johnston has plucked the laurels of victory from our brows

The Union army is falling back to Centreville," answered Girdwood.

"You bring me bad news, Mr. Girdwood. My father is in the battle."

She looked anxiously at the young man. "I saw him not long ago. He was unharmed, though he had s'ood amid a tempest of destruction. The Black Horse Cavalry went down, man and horse, before sweeping volleys of musketry. Froa out the struggling mass he came, unscathed," replied Ralph, glad to give her such an assurance.

"Thank Heaven!" said Hope, fervently.

"It were perhaps unkind not to inform you that he is a prisoner," added Ralph.

"A prisoner! He will be treated, then, as a prisoner of war. The Government at Washington is a merciful one, and worse than captivity might have befallen him," answered Hope, reflectively.

"Mercy," observed Girdwood, "has been the weakness of the National Government. Colonel Hurdlestone will be well treated. I deem myself particularly fortunate in discovering your hiding-place. The farm-house, lately so quiet, is now little better than a ruin. I was terribly nervous about you."

"Laws, missy! I thought you sploded with the boom-shells. Gorry, Mis-y Hurdstone, them yer iron pots has give me a heap o' trouble! Never spierenced sich worriment as I has this drefful day. How'd ye git here, missy, anyhow?" said Dagon, whose joy was visible all over his black face.

"I came with Haimon, when the battle began to roll toward the farm-house," replied Hope.

"Where is he?" Dagon asked.

"I sent him to get tidings of my father, if possible. I have remained undisturbed. I still hear cannonading, Mr. Girdwood?"

"That's Burnside coverin' the retreat, I allow," interposed Murch, thrusting his begrimed face in at the door.

"Zadoc Murch!" exclaimed Hope, much alarmed. "Mr. Girdwood, take care of yourself."

"Look 'e hyar, miss! If you want to find your father t'other side o' the Cornfed lines, you'd better be movin'. Young man, why don't you talk to some account, and not be runnin' on in this idle way? Take up the gal, if it's the gal you're arter, and let us off at once, 'less you have a mind to be hanged, as you soon will be if you stay hyar."

"Right, right! Miss Hurdlestone, intrust yourself to me. There's no safety here for you, or those of your sentiments."

"He declar's the plain truth, Missy Hurdstone. Jes' mount dat yer hoss, and we'll make tracks for the only land o' liberty in the world. Your fader and Abe Linkum'll be proper glad to see ye," urged Dagon, earnestly.

Miss Hurdlestone arose, hesitated, blushed,

and gave her hand to Girdwood, who, with swelling heart, led her from the hut, and assisted her to mount his horse.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MURCH GUIDES THEM.

Murch vaulted to the saddle, and the parties moved on, Girdwood walking at the bridle-rein of his horse, well pleased to be near Miss Hurdlestone, and have her in charge.

"I's heerd a heap 'bout de Norf Star," said Dagon, "and I should like mighty well to see dat yer."

"It is best seen in the night," replied Ralph. "It's not the star of Dixie."

"Don't know 'bout that, mas'r. There's many eyes down in Dixie as would be proper glad to git a glimpse of dat yer star. Lots o' contraband's has struck out for it right through swamps, alligator bayous, across rivers, and through much tribulation."

"You jest let the North Star alone, boy!" interposed Zadoc. "You've got a flat foot, a flat nose, a flat forehead, thick lips, long hands, and ha'r that is wool. You belong, I allow, to a flat race; and the best thing you can do is, to be happy with hard work and enough to eat and drink. What you want o' liberty—eh? Wouldn't know what to do with it if you had ever so much on't. Wish you's all back ag'in whar you come from! You've jest fixed the Southerners, you nigs have; fixed 'em so they won't work their selves, nor let other white folks work. But come on if you want to. I don't keer much if you run right among the 'bolitionists, and git into all kinds o' trouble. Be glad to git back ag'in, I guess, if you once cross the Potomac. If I's your master, I wouldn't have ye, if ye come back never so humble and whimperin'."

Zadoc threw an inquiring look upward through the branches of the trees at the smoky sky, and quickened his pace. Night was drawing on; but the sounds of strife had not ceased; they reached the ears of the fugitives from various quarters. The boom of cannon and the bursting of shells were ever and anon audible.

Zadoc bore away across the country, keeping in the woods as much as possible, and avoiding the open fields. They had not proceeded far in this manner, when they found themselves near the skirmishers of Johnston's flanking column, and were obliged to pause in their flight.

Squads of the Black Horse Cavalry which had not yet been in action, were seen hurrying toward Centreville. Their position was now extremely precarious. They could neither turn back nor go forward. Girdwood looked at Zadoc with painful perplexity.

"Our embarrassment," he remarked, "increases at every step."

"If you'll leave the gal, you can git out o'

this 'hyar," answered Zadoc, glancing queerly at Hope.

"It is not to be thought of!" returned Girdwood, quickly and courteously.

"You see, squire, that men-critters can go where women-critters can't, on account o' their clothes and their daintiness. Gal's flesh is as tender as a young partridge. The brush and bushes of swamps and woods tears their plumage to bits in scarceely no time."

"Whatever comes of it, I remain with Miss Hurdlestone," said Ralph, firmly.

"Save yourself!" exclaimed Hope. "My danger is not comparable to yours. As the daughter of Colonel Hurdlestone, I am safe with the Confederates; although I confess it will be a severe disappointment if I cannot join my father, and lighten his captivity by my presence. Reflect, Mr. Girdwood, on the fate your re-capture involves."

Miss Hurdlestone spoke with much animation.

"I shall not desert you while thought worthy by you to be trusted with the care of your person." Then to Zadoc: "Come, Mr. Murch, secure us a present hiding-place. Surly you are acquainted with this portion of the country."

"Look 'e hyar! Keep that pup in, Dragon!" said Zadoc, with a warning motion to Dagon. "Can't have that pup scoutin' aroun'. Keep her clost under your nose, or you'll never see the North Star till your ha'r is whiter nor your ivories. Come on, white folks! I'm a strong tea, I be, with bitterness for the mouth, and sickness for the head. Good for all sorts o' complaints, this wildest is. I'm a extract of down South. Car'line and Kentuck, Missip, Texas, and the border, is biled into me."

Murch seemed infinitely relieved by this outburst, and turned his horse's head toward the darkest recesses of the forest, while the Confederates were heard sweeping through the glades on either side. Advancing to where the trees stood more closely, and the foliage was more compact, he dismounted and led his dark and glossy steed by the bridle.

"Softly, youngster, softly!" admonished Zadoc. "Pay a leetle attention to your steppin' as well as to the gal. Dry sticks 'll break, if you tread on 'em rough."

Girdwood blushed consciously, while Hope smiled at the quaintness of their guide.

It now grew suddenly dark. They had entered a swampy dingle so dense with foliage, that it well nigh shut out the light of day. Even this secluded spot had been visited by destructive missiles, for the young man stumbled over a round shot, and anon tripped on a fragment of shell.

"Big Union gun!" said Zadoc, explanatorily. "Awful range. Thirty-two pounder! No way o' fightin', that isn't. If human critters want



to fight, let 'em come up and tackle each other, hand to hand, and weep on to weep on. Whar's the good o' killin' a critter a mile off, with a ball as big as a tumble o' hay! Look 'e hyar!"

Zadoc wheeled front face upon his auditors.

"Them rifle cannon be damned! They take the legitimate business out o' the hands o' the nat'ral-born fighter. They're like sewin'-machines to sewin' gals. They throw the regular workers out o' employment. 'Tisn't personal bravery that decides battles nowadays, but the cursed artillery!" With a deprecating sweep of the hand, Murch went on again, to pause presently, and repeat his favorite expression: "Look 'e hyar!"

Both Girdwood and Miss Hurdlestone looked, and beheld indubitable evidence of previous occupation of the place. Upon a pole, supported by two sticks driven into the earth, hung a camp-kettle over some charred brands. A little back of this was a roof of boughs, upheld by a scaffolding of poles, placed on convenient limbs, or in notches cut in the trunks of trees. This small, extemporized covering, sloping on one side nearly to the ground, with the front and ends open, was, nevertheless, a welcome shelter to Hope, on whom the excitement of that and previous days had exercised a depressing influence. Now that the unnatural pressure was subsiding, weariness came heavily upon her.

"You can rest hyar," said Murch, drawing a blanket from beneath the dried leaves, and doubling it in folds for Hope to sit upon. "I'm goin' out to take a peep at things, and Mr. Girdwood 'll take good care of ye till I git back. Don't be afeard. If there's trouble, I'll be hyar to help ye." Then to Dagon: "Dragon, keep your pup in, and a sharp look out for your mistress. And by-and-by, if you ain't disturbed, build a fire under that thar kittle."

Zadoc took the saddle from his newly-acquired black horse, and hitched it within reach of a green patch of grass, and then, rifle in hand, stalked away.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

##### LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

Girdwood heard the concluding remarks of Murch without fully realizing their import till he had left them, and disappeared in the dingle. Dagon, withdrawing a short distance, stretched his dark proportions on the ground, and, directing his eyes upward, seemed to be looking for the North Star; while Jule, crouching beside him, watched his unchanging visage through the deepening haze.

Ralph felt himself alone with Miss Hurdlestone. It was the first time they had been thrown so entirely together, with such apparent immunity from interruption. The newness of the situation confused him. Though brave to face an enemy, he faltered in the presence of

Hope. He was not embarrassed for want of thoughts, but for the power to choose and express them as the proprieties of the position demanded.

Twilight was creeping into the dingle. The atmosphere was yet charged with sulphurous vapors, ever suggestive of the direful scenes of the past day. The shadows of the closely-compacted trees and dark-green foliage added to the gloom of coming night. They seemed to inhabit an inner mystic circle of silence and sombreness, while the outer circumference, stretching away over the battle-field, was at intervals broken by a random gun, or an occasional burst of artillery. The dead within that red circumference (brave fellows!) were at peace; but the wounded (poor lads!) were suffering the torments of thirst, with no prospect of immediate relief.

Girdwood himself was weary, and began to feel inconvenience from various slight injuries he had received in the action. He scorned to complain, while ready to weep bitter tears over the loyal dead and dying. He sat down near Hope. Both, though busy with thoughts of that historical day, were strangely conscious of each other.

"The dingle is very dark," said Hope.

"It might be darker," answered Ralph, mythically. He was thinking how much darker the dingle would be if she were not there. It was a lover's platitude. Girdwood came out of his abstraction with a blush at his absurdity.

"Darkness, after all," he added, "is a comparative thing, like happiness. Objects are dark or light, as the heart feels dark or light. My prison was dark at the farm-house till a white messenger dropped at my feet; then my prison was light. I knew that you were near; that a thin partition only divided us. But you might have been near, and not given me a thought. You remembered me. You beamed upon my sadness like a star. You put forth your hands to aid me, when every rational expectation was eluding my grasp."

His enunciation was rapid and earnest.

"Your active imagination gives me too much goodness. These are troublous times, Mr. Girdwood."

"Troublous, truly! But I was thinking, not of the times, but of you. Or rather, I find it difficult to separate and disconnect the two. You and I have played parts in the drama. I little thought that my nocturnal ride to Manassas would affect so deeply my inner life."

"Is there not a glimmering of light just above us?" asked Hope. I fancied the clouds pushed away a little."

"You can turn those clouds into banks of golden light. Miss Hurdlestone, I have not, and shall not attempt to disguise my sentiments. This may not be well-timed, but, Hope, opportunity is everything."

"I am sure, Mr. Girdwood, that the clouds swing less heavily to and fro. Do you not see the webs of silver lining?" murmured Hope, softly.

"May I interpret the metaphor as my heart dictates?" cried Ralph, capturing a lighter band than he had that day encountered in the field. "Not the thought of personal danger, not the war itself, would abate my joy, if one short word by your lips were spoken."

"Our acquaintance is brief. Ask not too much. Turn your eyes upward, Mr. Girdwood. See the light steal through the narrow rifts! Is it not a promise of future brightness?"

Hope's voice was low and gentle. Her eyes, which were upturned a moment, fell modestly beneath the drooping lashes.

Girdwood pressed the imprisoned hand to his lips. His blood was in a pleasing commotion. His pleasure was equalled only by his gratitude. He dared not trust himself to believe too much, or to give an overwrought coloring to her simple words.

"It is the fault of man to be too sanguine," he said, when calm enough to speak with composure. "I will endeavor to bear your overwhelming kindness with humility."

"Speak not of humility! I am but dust and ashes. In this world, words are of little worth. Be reasonable. Hope not too much; for the exigencies of the times are such, that everything relating to us is involved in uncertainty. Even our friendship may be rent asunder by the terrible vicissitudes of war. Think of my father!"

"He stands between us, angry and stern!" exclaimed Girdwood. "But the war must sometime end. The rancor of political feuds may not embitter his after-life. The restored Union and peace may soften his prejudices and temper his hatred."

"Believe it not! Believe it not!" cried a voice, that made Girdwood and Hope spring to their feet. The grim and powerful figure of Colonel Hurdlestone loomed before them.

"My father!" exclaimed Hope, running toward him, with outstretched hands. Hurdlestone repulsed her moodily.

"You are no daughter of mine!" he muttered, with a gloomy brow. "If you draw legitimate blood from these veins, you would love what I love, and hate what I hate. Father and daughter are one: you and I are not one."

He turned from her, folding his arms upon his breast, with sullen pride.

"Nay, father, we are one in all but this madness of rebellion," answered Hope, with touching tenderness.

"Madness! Who dares call it madness?" he retorted, shaking her off, for she had laid a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"Call it what you will; I will not gainsay. But I think I know how it will end."

Hurdlestone turned slowly upon Girdwood.

"So, sir!" he began. "This is the way you protect my daughter. This comes of your magnanimity in seeking her after the battle."

"Your reproaches, sir, have some point of justice; yet I swear to you that what I have said was unpremeditated," answered Ralph.

"Unpremeditated!" sneered the colonel. "The worst of criminals might plead that excuse in extenuation of crime. It was for this you sought my daughter, and decoyed her footsteps hither!"

"Colonel Hurdlestone, I must beg of you to use no language that a man of honor may not bear without offence," returned Ralph, with dignity. "If Miss Hurdlestone has received a disrespectful word or look from me, I will not evade the responsibility, but hold myself accountable for the same."

"Most kind! Most considerate!" murmured Hope.

"Too kind—too considerate!" vociferated the colonel. "It is this *kindness and consideration*, as you daintily term it, that I complain of. A fine time, girl, for love-making, when your father was a prisoner, and your native soil overrun with Federal hireling-hordes!"

"While regretting and deprecating your anger, I rejoice at your escape," observed Girdwood.

"Young man, the best advice I can give you is, to follow the retreating rabble of the Washington Army. As for my daughter, the paternal arm, I trust, will be found sufficient to protect her. Be wise, and return no more to Manassas. Should you unhappily disregard this injunction, the reward you have earned will be rigorously meted out to you. I go to join my friends of the victorious army. Come, girl—minion—ingrate! Follow me!"

Hurdlestone looked at his daughter as if he expected and exacted obedience.

Girdwood stood confounded and wondering. The man whom he had believed a prisoner on his way to Arlington was before him, to dampen the first glow of his feelings, rob him of Hope, and baffle his plan. An emotion of crushing disappointment came upon him. The light no longer crept through the drift of smoky clouds. Darkness rolled in upon the dingle. The metaphor of Hope had, apparently, lost its meaning. The silver lining had departed.

## CHAPTER XX.

### LOOK 'E HYAR!

The dark-green leaves fluttered and rustled in the stillness. A puff of hot and stifling air swept down from the battle-field. For a moment it seemed to Girdwood that the earth was reeling under his feet.

"Follow me!" repeated the colonel. "As for you, sir," he added, with a stern glance at Ralph,

"as for you, sir, misguided young man, escape while you may."

He turned slowly to go, and Hope made a step forward.

"Look 'e hyar!"

The parties started, as if simultaneously thrilled by a shock of magnetism. Moving from beneath the foliage that drooped over the camp, the short, stout personality of Zadoo Murch advanced quietly and laid his hand on Hurdlestone's shoulder.

"Look 'e hyar!"

Never before had Girdwood heard this singular man throw so much meaning into these words.

"You here!" exclaimed the colonel.

"I'm hyar!" said Murch, gruffly.

"Well?" queried Hurdlestone, curtly.

"I allow that you're a prisoner," said Murch, ungraciously.

"Not long since I was a prisoner, but now I am free," answered the colonel, with a flush of pride and conscious strength.

"Did ye give your *peril of honor*?" asked Zadoo, with increasing ambiguity of manner.

"Not I! I gave a few lusty blows and the spurs to my horse and you see me here," responded Hurdlestone, who prided himself on his prowess. "Hope, take my arm," he added.

"You're hyar, but not free," continued Murch.

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Hurdlestone, angrily. "I don't comprehend your bearing, sir."

There was a stir of feet on the dry leaves. Hurdlestone felt himself seized by the legs and shoulders. He shook himself like a rampant horse, but without freeing himself from his unexpected assailants.

Girdwood, who perceived the true condition of affairs, saw the fighting brothers clinging about the colonel's nether limbs, like young anacondas, and Corporal Keith clutching him firmly by the collar.

Luke Scotto walked composedly from among the trees into the foreground.

"This hyar is my meanin'," said Murch.

"Traitor!" hissed Hurdlestone.

"I'm the extract of sev'ril States," quoth Zadoo, "and a strong tea for some kinds o' sickness. Call me what you will."

"Give us the slip, didn't ye, colonel?" said Scotto. "Co'p'ril Keith, you ain't the man I took ye to be."

"As we's ridin' along," answered the corporal, "the twins elinched, and I went to separate 'em. While I was a untwistin' 'em, the prisoner rode down and knocked down the guard, and streaked it. I cut arter him, and here he is."

"Stop shakin' him! What's into ye, co'p'ril? You've got him, therefore be quiet. Colonel, don't be rampagous. Submit like a man. The thing's agin ye, and you can't help it. There's

a squad o' the star-spangled critters within call," said the scout, with that easy self-composure that characterized him.

"You speak truly," responded Hurdlestone, with gloomy grandeur. "Fate orders it. Cut off these cuds, and I give you my word that I will make no attempt to escape, unless rescued by my friends."

"You do well," returned the scout. "Your word is taken, although one who has proved false to the flag mayn't be fully trusted. Don't flush up, colonel, for I say it, as 'twere, in sorrow."

"You know the fortunes of the day, I suppose?" interrogated the prisoner, with a smile that could not be mistaken.

"Repulsed, but not beaten. It brings you no nearer the end, and only lengthens the war. Your masked battery,agin victory, avails now what, for 'tisn't follered up by Beauregard. Our troops 'll reach their old campin'-ground in safety; and arter this the army 'll be made over and perpard to put down this p'ison rebellion. This 'll wake up and open the eyes of Government and People."

The righteousness and greatness of his cause shed a notable dignity over the features of Luke Scotto. Hurdlestone looked at him and involuntarily sighed. Possibly a thought of Washington, the Revolution, and the heritage of freedom, left a mournful, regretful track along the road of memory.

"Had you brought the whole North down to Manassas," he said, presently, with an obvious effort to shake off his depression, "we should have whipped you."

"You mought, and then ag'in you moughtn't," returned Scotto, with composure. "Let's be movin'," he added, "for the remnant of the Black Horse is ragin' up and down, searchin' f'r them as is unfortunately cut off from the main body of our troops."

"Where's that traitor and villain?" asked Hurdlestone, glancing about for Murch. But Zadoo had mysteriously disappeared, and the colonel was left in doubt respecting his character.

The parties followed Scotto a few rods, and found, farther up in the dingle, a dozen of the Independent Rangers waiting the coming of their leader.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SCOTTO AND THE REBEL LEADER.

"Well, captain, what's to be done?" asked one of the men. "The rebels seem to be pretty plenty hereabouts. I can hear them stirring on both sides of us."

"Dismount, lads, and let your horses breathe some at, and wherever you see a bunch o' grass, let the poor critters have it. It may be safest to stay awhile where we are. Arter 't's a our bearin's, we'll make a fresh start."

look favorable. With women folks along"—he looked at Hope—"t'would be foolish to show ourselves unnecessarily to the rebels."

"I know," he went on, reflectively, "that we might back, hew, and slew, peradventure," but the dainty body of the young woman ain't bullet-proof; therefore we must conduct ourselves accordin'."

"Let me refresh your memory," said Hurdstone to the scout, as he was moving away. "If there is an attempt at rescue by my companion—in arms, I shall not remain passive."

"I understand, sir," returned Scotto, coldly. "In that event, your word isn't pledged to stay with us any longer nor we can keep ye. Southern honor mustn't be tarnished, I reckon!" Luke Scotto shrugged his shoulders, and there was a quiet sarcasm in his voice that was sufficiently obvious. Then to his followers:

"Men, take good care of the prisoner." With this parting injunction Scotto walked away, and was soon hidden from view by the trees. He passed from the dingle on that side commanding the best view of the battle-field. Climbing a sharp eminence, he strained his eyes in the direction of Centreville and Warrenton Road. But the shadows of evening lay like a dim mantle over the scene. Here and there lights were flashing, like faint and erratic meteors. Already had anxious friends gone forth to search for familiar faces among the dead and wounded. It was the old, sad, and often-enacted afterpiece of battles. He could hear the sound of hurrying feet, as squads of horsemen swept to and fro from various quarters. Beneath the hazy canopy, scarcely distinguishable from other objects, he caught phantom glimpses of fragments of infantry, flitting and fluctuating like the billows of a disturbed sea. Borne on the passing breeze, the low and melancholy wail of the wounded came to his ears. He had heard that mournful music before. He had grown acquainted with it in bloody raids of the border, and on the red fields of Mexico.

"They wanted war," said Luke, speaking aloud, "and they've got it. We've got the worst on't this time, but the next time the Union banners move toward Manassas, they won't float over an armed mob."

The sharp clang of iron hoofs startled Scotto, and cut short his soliloquy. A horseman spurred up the ascent. Scotto prudently stepped behind a sturdy oak, while the headlong rider, reaching the summit of the eminence, paused to breathe his panting steed. Giving a slack rein to the reeking animal, the rider endeavored to separate the realities before him from the prevailing shadows. He seemed exultant, yet doubtful and perplexed.

"They'll make a stand at Centreville," he muttered. "Surely, they don't mean to run to Washington. This must be a ruse to draw us on. Johnston hesitates. He fears to hurl his

forces against them. Accursed darkness that covers both friend and foe!"

The horseman bent over his horse's mane, and looked with the utmost intensity. He saw the same objects that Scotto had seen, but with far different feelings.

"Victory! victory!" he added. "The old flag flies! My name shall live in history. Before me are power and dominion! The Great Republic is dead!"

"Touton Beauregard!" said a stern yet steady voice.

The horseman gathered up the flowing rein and turned quickly toward the person who had thus addressed him. He beheld Luke Scotto, with the barrel of his cocked rifle resting in the hollow of his left arm. The sight, for a moment, paralyzed him. He knew well the man; his integrity; his stern patriotism; the iron rigidity of his resolves, when once formed. The triumph of Manassas, the glory of the hour, faded away. The fresh laurels on his brow withered as by the blighting touch of lightning.

"Touton Beauregard!"

The tones of the scout thrilled to the marrow of his bones.

"Luke Scotto!" faltered the victorious general.

"How good is your memory!" said Luke, with ominous *sang froid*. "If you hadn't seen me, you wouldn't knowed me, I reckon. This isn't like Mexico—is it? We didn't see no flag with seven stars on't down there!"

The Confederate officer sat silent in the saddle, gazing vacantly at Scotto.

"Tisn't long since you had me at your headquarters, with your screech rabble around me, talkin' of halts and spies. My life seemed as nowhat in your eyes. I was a Northern mud-sill, to hang between the heavens and the earth. Now I have you, traitor! This weapon that's leveled on ye, has brought down a man at eighty rods, and can do the same at a hundred. The muzzle, as I hold the thing careless in my hand, covers your heart. Why should I spare you, Touton Beauregard?"

He paused, standing stiff and stirless as iron.

"The world would be better for't," he went on. "No true man would weep, but for your sins. In time to come, when this twenty-first day of July has passed into history, some at like this might be found in the record: 'Beauregard, the rebel general, was shot the evenin' arter the battle by Luke Scotto—a man who served his country accordin' to his abilities, without hope of fee or reward. His friends buried him in the night, and the grave of the traitor is unknown and unmarked by stone or tribute of affection.'"

A breathless silence followed. The distant occasional firing rendered it more impressive.

The general's stunned faculties began slowly to react. His blood flowed and glowed again.

"It is not my destiny!" he said, somewhat hoarsely.

"You're the Napoleon of the South, I s'pose, therefore have a star? Don't be misled by stars, Touton. There's but one star worth the mindin', and that's the star of honor. I've heard of the North Star; but who ever heard of the South Star?" answered Scotto, his rifle still turned upon the chieftain.

"The Southern Star," returned Beauregard, "is the star of empire."

"And it rolls towards the Gulf!" retorted Luke, with dignity. "It rolls not Westward nor Northward. Not by no means! The light of your star will be quenched in the waters of the Gulf o' Mexico."

"The fanaticism of the North!" sneered Beauregard, whose only hope was to engage the scout in conversation, and watch for the favorable moment of escape. He had reason to believe that his friends were not far distant. They might come up; his stern captor might be thrown off his guard, or something to his advantage might in some way happen. He did not abandon hope. He would not and could not perish without tasting the fruits of victory. He wanted to hear a gaping multitude cry: "There goes the man who defeated the Union Army!"

"Fanaticism and zeal are much alike, I allow," said Scotto. "Without zeal, a man's nowhat. There's nothin' into him to give him energy. But I'll preach you a sermon at another time; therefore, git off that hoss. A prisoner a hoss-back is a prisoner with the advantage of four hoss legs to two man legs."

"Luke Scotto," answered Beauregard, with earnestness, "hear me! As you value rank, and riches, and a name, hear me!"

"Go on, Touton! Go on, for half a minute," responded Scotto, still standing firm and straight and unbending in his simple integrity.

"Go with me, Luke Scotto. Yield your advantage. Trust your future fortunes in my hands."

He spoke rapidly and with emphasis.

"To what end?" asked Luke.

"To the end of riches and rank. Look at me! I am fresh from the battle-field. I am flushed with my first great victory!"

The voice of the rebel chief might have moved one whose loyalty was less.

"If you was flushed with a thousand victories, 't'would be the same!" replied Luke, without the slightest sign of relenting.

"To go with you, is to go to the halter," continued Beauregard. "A prisoner to the Federals I will never be. A rifle-ball would be far more friendly and welcome than such a fate. No! no! that may never be. As I said, you have me at an advantage; but tell me the price of this advantage, and I give you my word of

honor as a man and a soldier, that it shall be paid to the last farthing."

"Tempt me not! Tempt me not, for I bear you no good will," answered Scotto. "Give me all the Confederate bonds, all the Confederate cotton, all the Confederate niggers, and all the Confederate gold, and I wouldn't let you go of my own will!"

The scout, in the pale moonlight, looked really sublime. His rude eloquence smote the heart of Beauregard more than the sound of the Federal cannon he had heard that day. His brave words gave manhood and beauty to his character.

"I believe in my destiny!" muttered Beauregard, watching the dark barrel of the rifle, resolved to strike the spurs deeply into his horse and dare the menacing bullet. Had any other hand held the weapon, his fears for the result would have been infinitely less; but the quick eye, steady arm, and sure finger of the scout, rendered the trial no ordinary risk. He was about to lance the reeking sides of the animal, when the leveled rifle was suddenly struck upward by another hand, and the contents were discharged in the air, and, to his joy, the Confederate officer perceived the well-known form of Zedec Murch. He spurred to aid him, exclaiming, as he drew and presented a pistol at Luke:

"Die, obstinate villain!"

"Nary die!" cried Zedec, interposing his burly body between the pistol and Scotto. "Put up that weepin, B'uregard."

"Nay, but the rascal would have shot me!" remonstrated the general, provoked at the interference.

"Look 'e hyar!" retorted Murch. "I saved your life."

"And it may cost ye some'at, too," muttered the scout, leaning moodily on his empty rifle.

"No matter *why* I saved your life, but I saved it," continued Murch. "Perhaps 'twas because you saved me from bein' hacked to bits in a row down at the Run; and perhaps 'twas'n't. Who keers? Be that howsomever it may, this man mustn't be tetch'd. He's got the true grit in him, he has. When a man's got the true grit, I don't mind whar I find him, nor which side he's on. I stick to him, I do!"

"You are a strange fellow!" said Beauregard, reluctantly returning his pistol to the holster. "You must have your own way, I suppose. I owe you something for your timely interference. A victorious leader should not die on the day of victory. Come; will you go with me, or shall I leave you in such questionable company?"

"Go your way, gin'ral. Look arter that Star you war jist speakin' of, and leave me to look arter mine. You owe me nothin' worth the mentionin'. I trust when I see you ag'in, it may be at Washin'ton, or Baltimore, or Phila-

delphy, or some o' them ere doomed cities!" said Murch, with an expression not easy of comprehension.

"As you will," answered Beauregard; and with a flush on his brow, and a singular smile on his lips, he spurred down the declivity and disappeared. The clatter of his horse's hoofs was soon heard in the valley below.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ALONE.

Meantime matters did not go smoothly at the dingle. While the Rangers stood beside their weary horses, a volley of pistol-shots suddenly startled them from their fancied security. A few of the boldest plunged into the surrounding thickets and endeavored to find the enemy; but not succeeding in this, the whole party moved quickly from the ravine, believing they could resist attacks more efficiently in the open fields than when hemmed in by trees and shrubbery that gave abundant shelter to an enemy on foot, who could not be reached by mounted men.

Two of the Rangers were slightly wounded, and several bullets whistled in dangerous proximity to Hope. Greatly alarmed for her personal safety, Girdwood hastened to her side, but looked vainly for a foe. Colonel Hurdlestone accommodated himself to the movements and wishes of his captors in moody silence. Neither passing bullet nor fear for his daughter seemed to disturb him. His bearing was that of one who had determined to meet everything that might happen with firmness and lofty misanthropy. The Basketeers, Pelog and Pickering, were the only ones who really relished the situation. To them, evidently, it was excellent pastime. Running under the brush like squirrels, they alone claimed to have seen the concealed marksmen, and given them suitable return for their leaden compliments.

"Them boys," said Corporal Keith, "will get shot, yet. They're allers dodgin' around 'mong the 'ceshers when the bullets are flyin'. But it's the natur' of 'em. They fit in the basket, when they hung on the door-handle, the cap'n says, and I believe him! It would be safer for 'em to take a little clinch 'mong themselves, than to be strollin' about loose in that way. There! they're firin' ag'in. Some o' the rebels got it then, I guess; for if anybody can find 'em, it's them twins."

Then to Hurdlestone:

"Colonel, keep up close to 'long side here, for you're a slippery 'un to take keer on. For your darter's sake, I don't want to harm ye; but if I see ye makin' a motion to run, I'll be blamed if I don't send a ball arter ye! Bear that in mind, and there'll be no hard feelin's if you get winged. Mr. Girdwood, have an eye on the gal. These skulkin' fellers don't have much respect for women."

"No need to tell him that, e-r-poral!" muttered

ed one of the men. "He don't see nothin' but her, and no bullet could touch her, if he could get between her pretty body and it."

"Be ready and steady, boys!" admonished the corporal. "Remember what you're fightin' for. Here we are in the open. Draw up in some kind of order, for I see horses' heads over yonder."

"You may see their bodies, if you like, for here they come!" responded his right-hand man, drawing a sabre that might have answered very well for that stalwart hero, William Wallace, in the olden days of Scottish valor.

While the Ranger was speaking, a body of cavalry, outnumbering our little party three to one, came dashing toward them.

Girdwood's first thought was of Hope. He feared to leave her, and he could not remain idle while his arm was needed. She perceived his embarrassment.

"Think not of me!" she exclaimed. "Do your duty. Yonder thicket will afford me shelter and concealment. I have only to ask that you will remember that yonder brave man is my father. His escape cannot be prevented. I am sure your hand—"

"Will never be turned against him, save in self-defence," interposed Girdwood, quickly.

"You are loyal, you are generous!" answered Hope, with emotion.

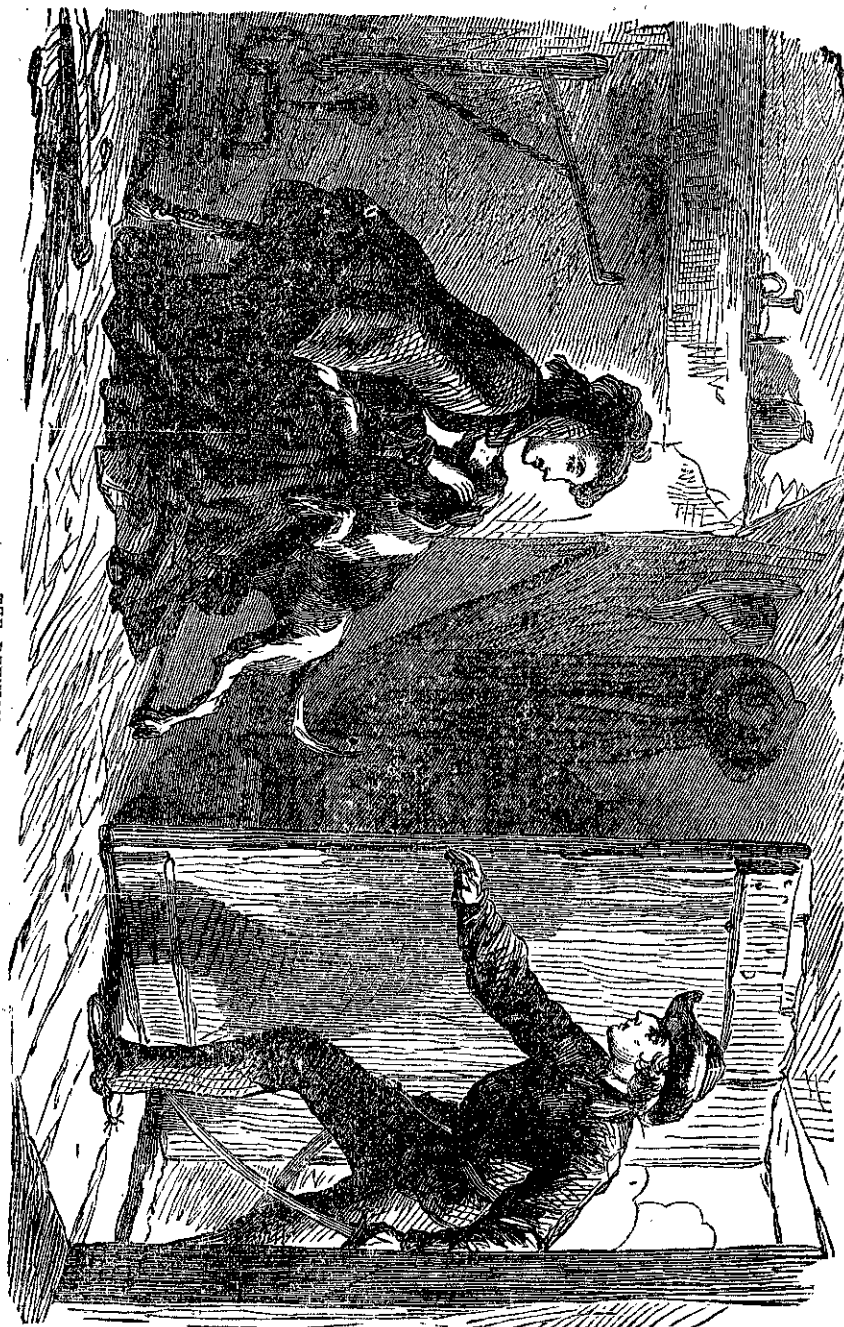
"Miss Hurdlestone, one word: If I fall—if we are parted—if we never meet again, know that I loved you!" His foot was in the stirrup; he vaulted to the saddle, gazed at her an instant, waved his hand toward the thicket, and drawing his sword, spurred to meet the enemy side by side with the devoted little band of dragoons.

Hope looked after him, saw him ride into the fray, heard scores of pistol-shots, when he was lost to view in smoke. Her father, who seemed to have been forgotten in the excitement of the moment, instead of joining her, or seeking safety in flight, hurried toward the combatants, to cheer on his friends in arms and take part in the strife.

Sickened by the thought of what might happen, she paused to see no more. She fled to the woods, and still pursued by the sounds of the conflict, continued to fly. It appeared to her that she was leaving the dire uncertainty behind, and she favored the delusion. Panting and trembling, she stopped, finally, in the dark recesses of the forest. Resting upon the trunk of a fallen tree, she had time to reflect on the folly and cowardice of her panic.

When rest had restored her to something like calmness, she resolved to retrace her steps. The gloom of the woods, which, at other times, would have made her uncomfortable, was now little thought of. She commenced her return, ashamed of her weakness. But the task proved difficult of achievement. To her inexperienced apprehension, it appeared an easy matter to pick

THE REUNION.



her way back; but when she had walked a half-hour, she was surprised that she had not accomplished her purpose. She kept on, till the conviction that she had lost her way stole gradually upon her.

When she emerged from the woods, it was a place unknown to her, but a portion of the theatre of the day's events, for it was marked by the red track of battle. She believed that she was far from the farm-house, and was surprised at the long stretch of ground that had been occupied by the hostile armies.

Treading with timid steps, she passed many mementoes of the fight. She thought she had not courage to look upon the victims of war; but when she saw the motionless sleepers, it was with more of solemnity than fear. It was not without feelings of patriotic sublimity that she saw the Union dead in their last, quiet slumbers. She reflected that they had fallen in a good cause, and that the private who had yielded his life for the beloved flag was as much a hero as the gallant officer who had died, sword in hand, at the head of his column.

Such sensations and deductions were wholesome; they disarmed her foolish, selfish terrors, and directed her mind to higher moral lessons and nobler objects.

The pale and eternal orbs of heaven poured down upon her innocent and undefended head a pure atmosphere of mild and softened light—a snowy illumination that also fell upon the white faces of the slain. Federal and Confederate lay side by side. Mothers and wives would weep over both. Liberty and Slavery had its martyrs there. The God of Battles sat in His majesty—  
—er all

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

##### THE VIVANDIERE.

Hope moved on. She knew that she was astray, but she felt protected and guided. A low sobbing reached her ears. It did not startle her much; she was expecting sounds of grief and pain; it was the place and the hour for them. Looking onward, she beheld a figure seated beside a heap of slain men. It was a female form, and the presence of the dead gave her a peculiar sanctity in the eyes of Hope, who approached her without hesitation.

She was a young woman of eighteen or twenty years, with a pretty, childish face, and clad in the picturesque costume of a French vivandiere.

Miss Hurdlestone's light step at once drew her attention. She arose quickly, and the former perceived that she held a pistol in one of her small hands. Seeing that it was one of her own sex who had disturbed her sad and solitary vigil, she manifested both surprise and pleasure, and returned the dangerous little weapon to its pocket.

"You followed the Federal Army?" said Hope, affected almost to tears.

"I wear the red, white, and blue!" answered the vivandiere, in a melancholy voice.

Hope now observed that her cassock or frock was made of those united colors.

"Why do you weep?" Hope asked.

The vivandiere looked at her inquiringly.

"Why do you ask such a question?" she replied, throwing a mournful glance over the field. "You, who are a woman, young, and with a heart in your bosom, should know. True men lie here, unburied, slain by their brethren! Who can refrain from weeping? It has been a dreadful day, miss!"

"Terrible, indeed!" sighed Hope. "I tremble at the thought of the dangers to which you have been exposed, and I shudder at everything around me. My good girl, you should have kept out of the red circle of battle."

Hope advanced and took the passive hand of the vivandiere, whose fair face expressed both sorrow and courage.

"Think of the poor soldiers," murmured the girl, "fainting with heat and thirst! Think of the wounded, too, dying for water! Is it not a work of duty, as well as mercy, to place the drinking-cup to their hot lips?" The vivandiere touched the canteen that hung at her side.

Her cheeks glowed with soft melancholy. The silvery moonlight, falling on her young face, seemed like a halo from heaven.

"I have received the 'God bless you!' of many a brave soldier to-day," she added. "I never shall forget what I have seen and heard. Some of the water-carriers have been shot by the enemy. That was cruel; for civilized men do not fire at women. You found me weeping, because it is a day of disaster. A dearly-bought victory was strangely lost. Cameron, and many gallant officers and men, lie dead. I cry with grief and anger!"

"Tears, my girl, will not recall them," said Hope, soothingly.

"You have questioned me; now let me question you," responded the girl, beginning to examine Hope with more interest. "You, too, are young," she went on; "as young as I, for my half-masculine dress makes me look more youthful than I am. Why, then, are you here? Are you loyal?"

"As yourself, young woman!"

"That gives me joy! It is pleasant to see a loyal face in a scene like this. Perhaps you have come to look for a brother or lover?"

"Neither, neither!" answered Hope, quickly. "My father is a rebel officer. He led the Black Horse wherever the battle raged."

"Then you may look for his body away yonder, for I know well the spot where the Black Cavalry were cut to pieces. Come, my friend, I will go with you, if you wish. I have pity for all."

The vivandiere pressed Hope's hand affectionately.

"I thank you, but there is no need. My father lives. Let us leave this sad place. Tell me your name."

"Margaret Moore. They call me Maggie. I followed the Seventy-ninth. But when I found one moaning for water, I did not ask to what regiment he belonged, or whether he were friend or foe. More than one rebel has drank from my canteen," replied the vivandiere.

"I doubt it not, my friend. Loyal hearts are ever merciful. I am sure we understand each other. Let us be friends. My name is Hope Hurdlestone."

"The daughter of Colonel Hurdlestone!" exclaimed Margaret. "He fought bravely. I saw him sweeping to and fro, with empty saddles at his right and left. Those who came out alive from the last charge upon the three regiments will have a story to tell."

"Speak not of it! Let us somewhere seek shelter and safety. I left friends not long ago, but fear that I cannot again find them. You can do no good here, and remaining may expose you to new dangers; for victory makes bad men brutal."

"If you go toward Manassas, no; if toward the Potomac, or in any direction where we shall be likely to fall in with Union troops, I will go with you gladly," answered Maggie Moore.

"There is one," said Hope, with heightened color, "whom I would find, who is no traitor, but whom I left in great danger. I am in doubt whither to direct my footsteps; but yonder, I think, should be my way. I have been gently reared, my slightest wish being anticipated and obeyed by willing slaves; and the vicissitudes of this day have been alike new and strange. But I ought not to murmur, when so many lose life itself for that cause which costs me but fatigue and a silly girl's terrors. Your courage and devotion justly rebuke me."

"Your words are very sweet, dear young lady. Maggie Moore fears not to go with you. Look at this little instrument."

The pretty vivandiere held up her pistol. It was an improved and beautiful pattern, with seven revolving cylinders.

"I can use it well, Miss Hurdlestone. I will not tell you what it has done to-day; but all things are lawful in self-defence. Look at this small copper canister. It is the load. I thrust it into the empty cylinders in a moment. See how I do it. There! the pistol is loaded. Now that holds seven lives, if well aimed. It requires a steady hand, though. Isn't my hand steady? Observe me, Miss Hurdlestone."

While speaking, Margaret Moore loaded the empty cylinders with the percussion canisters; and to prove the firmness of her nerves, held out her arm and leveled the pistol as deftly and steadily as a veteran.

"So you need not be afraid, Miss Hope. For one or two enemies, you see, I am quite prepared. It's a good thing to know how to defend one's self. You might as well be a rag-baby, or a log of wood, as not to have the knowledge and courage to take care of your person. The meanest thing that crawls has the instinct to turn on what turns on it. Non-resistance, among brutes, is foolishness."

"Very good and very true, to my simple apprehension," responded Hope, surprised at the philosophy and self-possession of the vivandiere.

Margaret had returned the pistol to its appropriate pocket, and they were moving away, mutually pleased with each other, when Hope discovered two men approaching, whose lawless bearing filled her with alarm. They were dressed in the dingy gray of the Confederate Army, but the original color was nearly lost in dirt and tatters; a fact which the fitful moonlight was sufficient to reveal. Their faces were unshorn, and blotched with red, and (so far as Hope could judge, on their nearer approach) bloated with whisky, and the indices of all that was coarse and revolting in the human character.

Such were the observations of Hope as the men advanced and confronted them. However wanting in tidiness, they had no lack of arms—their leathern belts being literally crowded with weapons that they had manifestly taken from the slain and wounded. Each stood in a circle of steel made up of pistols and bowie-knives, thrust into their belts promiscuously, as gathered from the field.

The discovery of Hope and Margaret gave them the greatest satisfaction. They leered at each other with a species of frightful facetiousness that struck terror to the hearts of the trembling girls.

"I say, Peterson!" said one.

The other, for a suitable response, ducked his head, put a tawny hand over his mouth, and kicked out behind him with his right foot. This pantomime was intended to express something too good to be believed, and to which words were inadequate.

"Peterson!" the fellow repeated.

"Go 'long!" said Peterson, now kicking at his comrade in bear-like playfulness. "Go 'long, sweetmeats! What's this here? Don't be afraid, little dears. Don't be an artom afraid. We a'n't grizzly b'ars, I allow."

Peterson doffed an old fatigue-cap, and made a grotesque bow to Hope and Margaret.

"Hang me, old boy, if these a'n't some o' the Federal gals as have come down yer with the army! This is what I calls a circumstance. I sort of fancies this one in the long clothes. She's a reg'lar good-looker!"

Haskins expressed his admiration by advancing a step, and staring and grinning in Hope's face.

"This one, with the queer rig on, jest about

shines my eyes," replied Peterson. "Dog me if she isn't the neatest Yankee gal I've seen for a twelvemonth! How'd' ye do, miss? What ye got in your little keg?"

"Nothing for you," said Margaret, with spirit.

"Ho, no! Plucky, eh?" chuckled Peterson.

"Stand back! Don't come too near!" said Maggie Moore, warningly.

"Who are you?" asked Hope, summoning all her firmness. "To which army do you belong?"

"She speaks!" cried Haskins. "The Federal angel has found her tongue. I s'pose I must answer. Well, listen! We a'n't anybody in particular. If we be anybody in particular, we don't know it. As for the armies, we're Sec's, though we don't go into it in the reg'lar stand-up-fight, but on our own hooks; and we're allers liable to be found on the field arter a battle."

"They come like the carrion-crows," interposed Margaret, "to prey on the dead. They are the miserable hangers-on of the rebel rabble. They are of that class who rob dead men's pockets, and follow war for pillage, and not from principle."

"I knew she's a smart one!" cried Peterson. All grit, she is. Come, pretty miss, let us be a marchin', as the song says."

He stretched out his hand, and pulled the vivandiere by the sleeve. She released herself at once.

"Tough me not! Back, I tell you! Go your ways, both of you. If you think I cannot defend myself, you are mistaken." She drew her pistol, and pointed it, which action was hailed with derisive laughter by the two men.

"She's got a pistol, Haskins. Oh my! She's got a pistol! It's about the size of a bodkin. A good deal o' damage she'll do with it! Look here, miss! What do you s'pose a man cares for that thing who picks his teeth every mornin' with an eighteen-inch bowie-knife? You might shoot all day at my hand, and not make holes in it big enough for a pepper-box cover!"

"Don't be too sure of that. I can hit a smaller mark than your hand!" retorted the vivandiere, holding the pistol very steadily.

"The heart, eh? I say, Haskins, I like this. What a pair o' em, to be sure! Come; it's no use to mince matters. You must go with us; and snivelin' and hangin' back won't do no manner o' good. Start at the word 'Go!' So do all your screamin' and faintin' as quick as you please."

"We shall do neither!" answered Margaret, with singular calmness. Hope looked at her with surprise. The confidence of the vivandiere increased her own, and sustained her faltering courage.

"You say," she said, assuming all the dignity that she could, "that you belong to the Confederate Army. My father is a colonel in that army!"

"What regiment?" asked Haskins, incredulously.

"He commands the Black-Horse Cavalry,"

"Oh, you're Colonel Hurdlestone's daughter! That's a good one! Tell another, gal; tell another! It looks likely that Colonel Hurdlestone's daughter would be wanderin' round in this style in the woods and among the dead, after dark."

Haskins said this with an insolence that was alike insulting and provoking.

"Low and degraded creature!" exclaimed Hope, unable to restrain her indignation. "Full of falsehood and guile yourself, you look for the same qualities in others. We wish to go our way undisturbed. Hinder us not, at your peril!"

She drew herself up haughtily, and waved back the ruffian.

"Dainty airs are nothing to me," said Haskins, doggedly. "There's no use in tryin' the fine lady here. By —" (he swore a frightful oath), "you shal go to camp with us! Come along!"

"We've done foolin'," put in Peterson, "and there's an end on t. Be movin', gals—be movin'!"

"Keep near to me!" said Margaret to Hope. "We had better die here than follow them. There is no crime they are not equal to." Then, to the men: "Will you go?"

"Not without company!" sneered Peterson, advancing to seize the vivandiere.

Margaret retreated a step, leveled her pistol steadily, and fired. Peterson staggered, clapped his right hand on his breast, and fell.

While Haskins stood confounded and amazed, a bullet from Margaret's little weapon struck him between the angle of the forehead and the left ear. The maledictions gathering on his lips broke into a cry of pain as he went down.

"There!" exclaimed Margaret. "That is justice. Let us run!"

Taking Hope by the hand, they hurried from the spot, and were soon gliding swiftly and silently through the forest.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

BARNEY MALONE.

The dim solitude was a relief to Hope. Her hurrying feet left the scene of her late terrors far behind. The vivandiere strengthened and encouraged her by cheering words and brave example. Every sound revived her fears, so much had her nervous system suffered by the shocks of the eventful day. In imagination, the villains, Peterson and Haskins, were following their flight, furious in their baffled purpose.

By-and-by, as a greater feeling of security gradually stole upon them, fatigue began to affect them—Hope, in an especial manner, her delicate person having never before been subjected to such a severe trial. They paused in

an oak glade, and were glad to sink upon the grass to rest.

Casting their eyes upward through the long and thread-like vista formed by the trees, that stood like sentinels on either side, they beheld the mystic stars, and the mild moon, staggering faintly on its ethereal way. To Hope, the gentle orb seemed to shudder at the deeds of men, and hurried on its course, pale and sorrowing.

She thought of her father and her lover. She wondered how it fared with them, and tried to feel that they were safe. A distant rustling of leaves reached her now too-vigilant ears. Her companion heard the same, but with less alarm, and attributed it to the playful leaps of the ever-restless squirrel. The sounds, however, drew nearer, and became more distinct.

"It's a beast of prey!" said Miss Hurdlestone, in a suppressed voice. "I can hear its long, light bounds."

"It sounds like the running of a strong and agile animal, I confess," answered Margaret; "but it may prove to be a harmless rabbit, or some poor opossum on a nocturnal ramble."

"I fear it may be something of a fiercer sort," continued Hope. "It would be so dreadful to be torn in pieces by a stealthy catamount or prowling wolf!"

The animal, whatever it was, whose tread disturbed them, occasionally paused, then advanced with greater speed. Both the young women were now thoroughly frightened. The creature was fearfully near. Its bounds were rapidly devouring the ground. It reached the glade; it came down it like an arrow, straight toward them. The vivandiere drew her little pistol, and Hope covered her face. A half-dozen quick bounds, and the fleet-limbed animal was upon them. Hope expected to feel its hot fangs in her flesh, instead of which two soft paws were laid upon her, and the cold nose of the hound Jule was pressed against her cheek.

"Oh!" exclaimed Margaret, "it's nothing but a dog! And it must be yours, for it seems to know you."

Hope smiled faintly, and showed to Margaret a very pale face. She returned the joyful caresses of the hound with genuine pleasure.

"Jule! Good Jule! I'm glad to see you, Jule!" she said. "Where have you been? Why didn't you stay with me?"

Jule wagged her tail and frisked about.

"Ah!" added her mistress. "If this creature could speak, what news it might tell me! Perhaps Dagon is seeking me!"

"Let us follow the dog," suggested Maggie; a proposition to which the other willingly assented.

Jule, at first, appeared to have no particular destination, her course being discouragingly erratic, pausing often to look up at the face of her mistress and evince her satisfaction. Presently the hound's discretion became more defined,

and they followed with increasing confidence. Her actions indicated that she scented something; and, after going a few rods further, they discovered a man sitting at the root of a tree. Jule stopped, and eyed the figure with evident doubt and curiosity, while Hope and Margaret shared the first, if not the latter feeling. On seeing the dog, which was some yards in advance of the young woman, the man arose, with a sabre in his hand, and put himself in a defensive attitude.

"Is it a dog ye be?" he inquired, in the very voice of Barney Malone. "Perhaps it's a wild baste ye are! But you're slim for a dog, be jabbers! If ye're a cat, say so; but if ye're a catamount, jist take the right-hand direction, and I'll give ye the full of the road."

Jule sat down upon her haunches, looked blandly at Barney, and answered never a word.

"It's blockadin' me, ye're aftir! Away wid ye, ye brute! Secade, ye long-nosed warmin'!"

Barney made a hostile motion with his sabre. Just then his eyes fell on the girls.

"Howly mother! What's comin' now, I wonder? Hang me, if iver I see the like of it! Here are two faymale women as true as I'm a good Catholic! They 'pear to be a thrifle afeard of me. They're stoppin'—lookin', for all the world, like two partridges hidin' in the grass. Bad 'cess to me if I don't spake to 'em! They may be secaders; but devil a bit cares Paddy Malone!"

Barney paused, scratched his head, then drew a dirty fragment of a handkerchief from his pocket.

"A flag o' truce!" quoth Barney. "A flag o' truce is jist the chaase. I'll go accordin' to the regulations of belligerents, bedad!"

Barney clapped the rag on the point of his sabre, and raised it over his head.

"Barrin' the color," he said, "it's as good a flag o' truce as iver was carried." Then, to the girls: "Advance, ye faymales, and we'll ratify treaty in the lickin' of a cat's ear."

"Surrender!" retorted Margaret. "Lay down your arms and surrender!"

"The Sixty-ninth never surrenders! It's like Gin'ral Taylor at Bony Vista!" replied Barney, waving his flag.

"Where is the Sixty-ninth?" asked Margaret.

"I'm the Sixty-ninth intirely! Every divil of 'em, privates, commissioned and non-commissioned, officers was jist killed where they stood; so that the Sixty-ninth is meself, and meself alone. I'm colonel, lieutenant-colonel, major, cap'n, lieutenant, orderly-sergeant, corporal, private, and me own quartermaster. Bad luck to me, it's the quartermaster's department that brings me to grafe; for sorra a bit of atables has passed my lips this blissid day," responded Barney, promptly.

"Then you are the sole survivor of the Sixty-ninth?" said Maggie, not much shocked by this intelligence.

"That's jist it! You may set it down as Bible truth, every word of it. And this was the fashion of the accident: We wint up to storm a masked-battery of about two hundred rifle-cannon, more or less, as the case may be; and ivery one o' them cannon was double-barreled—a circumstance I never see before in me life. Well, as we marched up side by side, in illegant order, they let fly at us, and down they all wint but meself. I was shot through various parts of me body, and aftir what 'd happened, as ye may well belave, I was in trouble in me mind. I didn't stay only long enough to spike a few guns, aftir which I made a mastherly re-trate. It's a sad day. O philliloo! Ochone! Ochone!"

"It's a great lie you're telling, Barney Malone!" said the vivandiere, advancing, and showing her person more fully.

"Who spakes? What voice is that I hear? What forrom is that I see? It should be Maggie, of the Seventy-ninth."

In his surprise, Barney dropped his flag of truce.

"I am the vivandiere who gave you water to-day, when you were carried to the rear in an ambulance," answered Margaret.

"Cushla Maadree! It's some kind of a dear that I knew you was, little dear or vivandiere. It's glad I am to see ye! Come closter, that I may put my two eyes on something human. God bless ye, and the likes of ye, this day! Barney Malone is better for seem' ye, and the other one wid ye; but I'm hurted bad, and it's not long I can stan' comfortable on me feet; so, with your Pave, I'll jist clasp meself down ag'in, while ye tell me all about the battle."

"There's nothing to tell, Barney. Our troops are repulsed—that's all," replied Margaret, sighing.

"Ochone! My heart is heavy for it. We'd a thrashed 'em, if they hadn't skulked in the woods, behind breastworks and big guns. Sorrow and grafe be unto 'em! Bad whisky and bad luck to the murtherin' secaders! May they slape with their eyes open, and wake with 'em shut! May they never know the blessin's of p'ace, nor the satisfactions of freedom! Listen to me, Maggie Moore. Aftir ye give me the wather in the sick slay for the wounded, I revived wonderful, and was crawlin' out of the machine, when a shell bu'st under it and whisked me into the air as if I'd been a bundle o' straw. The Mother of God only knows how far I wint up, but in me cooler judgment, should think about the matter of a thousand feet! If I hadn't come down in a soft place, it would been the wonder of the world if it hadn't killed me. Would ye belave it?—the rebels had the haythenness to fire on me when I's in the air! But I had me revinge; for I fell on a big cap'n and broke his neck. Well, I picked myself up, quite f'elshened by the shock, and was doin' me

best to stop the retrate, when a frightened powder-cart, drawn by six horses runnin' at the rate of three minutes a mile, fetched me a wipe in the small of me back, knocked me sprawlin', so that the wheels wint over every part of me body. But that misfortin was the luckiest thing that happened to me during the day; for another shell bu'st, jist then, doin' terrible execution, and coverin' me with a hape of slain. Philliloo! There I was, naythur able to move hand nor fut, by r'ason of them atop me. Ah, Miss Maggie, imagine yourself in me place!"

"It was very dreadful, Barney," observed Margaret.

"Ye may well say that! God knows it's no lie I'm tellin'. But I kept me self-possession wonderful. 'Pull me out,' sez I.

"'Pull who out?' sez somebody else.

"Barney Malone, of the Sixty-ninth," sez I. And with that, two soldiers got hold of me, and with much pullin' and haulin', sucsayded in draggin' me out. Come to look at the hape that was on me, there was about the full of two wagin-loads, in a r'asonable estimate. I had now nothin' for arms but me revolver, havin' left me musket with two secaders strung on the sabre-bayonet, like a herrin' on a stick. But I might been worse off than havin' six charges at the pullin' of a finger."

"You were fortunate in being so well provided for," said Margaret, willing to listen to Barney's adventures.

"As things happened, it was the luckiest thing in the world," he resumed; "for I had no sooner got on me pins ag'in, than I was in danger of being knocked off 'em by siven of the Black Horse Cavalry, who come rampin' upon me with a terrible jinglin' of spurs, sabre-sheaths, and 'countrements. My littledear, or vivandiere—whichever ye plaze—stick a pin here while I make a r'asonable observation. You've no conception, Miss Maggie, of the noise and clatter them blackguards made as they galloped at me. 'It's neck or nothin'!' sez I, to meself. 'Kape up your courage,' sez I, to the same person, and in the same way. 'If ye die, now, Barney Malone, ye'll never see Biddy ag'in, nor the little childer to home.' With that, I grew very stout in the heart and the knees, and blazed away at the traitors in a way that 'd done your eyes good to see, for they dropped out of the saddle, one after the other, like so many bricks set on end and tipped over."

"But the throuble wasn't settled yet. Six bullets, you know, Miss Maggie, can't very well do the business for more'n six men; so the seventh was left on my hands, mounted, you must remember, all the while, with a sword in his hand about the length of two yardsticks, and sharper'n a barber's razor. It was thin that I thought Biddy'd be a widdier and the little childer fatherless. Now, the last man that fell when I fired was about six feet from the muzzle

of me pistol, and his horse boundin' foward with him, he toppled off at my side. Quick as thought, I ketches the sabre from his stiffenin' fingers and run as I never run afore, with the fast gallop of a horse close at my heels, soundin' mighty uncomfortable to a distressed Sixty-ninth on foot. I see a tree straight ahead, and never a snake left Ireland so fast as I made for that same tree. By the help of the saints and me legs, I got behind it afore ye could tell two beads on your rosary, and down thundered acesh with murder in his heart and eyes. Thin there was a race round the trunk of the tree. A man, you see, can turn shorter than a horse, and there was me advantage. I capered about like a clown in a circus. 'Twould been a sight to see us. 'Twas Truth afoot, and 'Twasou a horseback.

"O Biddy! O the childer!.. Oh, philliloo!" Barney Malone picked up his tattered flag of truce, and wiped large drops of perspiration from his brow.

"You were in great danger, Barney," said Maggie, kindly. "Go on. But first take a drink from my canteen."

"Hould it up, darlint, for me left arm is hurted bad."

Margaret good-naturedly placed the canteen to his lips. He drank long and deep. The fluid must have been low down the wooden staves when he ceased.

"Cushla machree!" exclaimed Barney, smacking his lips. "Alanna machree! Your eyes shine like stars, honey! It's a credit to human nature ye are! There was more in it than wather; it had the smack of poteen, sweetheart. Arrah! it's me own mother's daughter that I wish ye was. In case o' that, it's your own swate lips I'd be afther kissin'."

"Never mind the lips, Barney. Let us hear whether you were killed or not?"

The fair vivandiere smiled so bewitchingly on Barney, that it was several moments before he recovered his breath and voice.

"How faxeinatin' ye makes yourself, Maggie Moore! If I was killed, how could I be spakin' to ye with me own nat'ral tongue? As I was sayin', I cut round the tree, like the devil afore howly wather. Every instant, I expieted to feel cowl'd steel in me back. Otherwise Saint Patrick ordered it. You see, the thickness of me body was shorter nor the length of his horse, and two legs was more manageable nor four; so, by makin' short turns, I gained on him, and fetched his baste a wipe across his hamstrings that brought him to the ground of a suddint. Cuttin' the murtherin' traitor over his eyes with me sabre, I took to the woods as fast as me trotters could carry me."

"You were very lucky. What happened then?" asked the vivandiere.

"More'n I could tell ye in a day, miss. It's

doubtin' me I fear ye are?" answered Barney, looking at her inquisitively. "It's little I'd be afther tellin' ye, if I thought ye'd quistion me voracity. Well, no sooner had I got intel the woods than I was tackled by Johnston's skirmishers, and if I hadn't cut my way through 'em, there'd been an end of Barney Malone. Ochone! Howly mother! how I land about me to the right and left! If I hadn't efaned meself in the fast runnin' strame, I shouldn't be decent for your two eyes to look at. Another gintle taste from your little barrel, honey, and I'll resarve the rest of me adventures till a more convenient s'ason."

Maggie tipped the canteen again, and Barney's "gintle taste" proved an exhausting libation.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### AND THE LAST.

Footsteps were heard approaching, and a moment after Luke Scotto appeared, followed by March and Dagon.

On the first alarm, Barney sprang up, sabre in hand.

"Don't be afeard, girls," he said. "Just stan' back and give me a chance with my weep-on, and I'll make an illegant fight. Come on, ye blackguards—come on!"

"Put up your sword, Barney Malone!" answered Scotto, advancing. "There's no need of haekin', hewin', and slewin' among your friends."

"Arrah! Is it you, cap'n, jewel? It does me good to hear your voice. I've been thinkin' that ye might be piled up with the dead bapes at Bull Run. It's a murtherin' thing, this war is!"

Scotto addressed a few words to Hope and Margaret, then asked:

"Where's your regiment, Barney?"

"With the blissid saints in heaven, where we all hope to be, if we live till we die! I'm the only one that marched off the field in good order, havin' fast wrapped the colors of the regiment round me body, and speared a few gunners at their guns."

"I know what done it," interposed Dagon. "'Twas dem yer iron pots as busts and flies all to bits."

"Is it iron pots ye calls 'em?" Barney looked from Dagon to Scotto. "Is it shells the nagur manes?"

"What odds whether you calls 'em dinner-pots or boomb-shells? Holler—isn't they? A dinner-pot's holler, too—isn't it? Well, dat yer's de argyment. No use talkin' 'bout dat! Easy 'nough to see what de case am."

"Spake not of dinner-pots; they hurt not, nayther do they bust. It's one of that same I wish I had before me now, full of good corned beef and peraties. It would not be the dinner-pot that would bust, in st a case, but meself

THE VIVANDIERE AT LAY.



intirely. Go away, nagnr! It's the likes of ye that's made the trouble. If ye'd been a decent Christian color, I shouldn't been harried round a tree by a bloody-minded sacesh! It's worried I've been this day for the rayson of your blackn ss."

"Look 'e hear!" said Murch. "There's got to be wars and a bitin's on the airth. The world gits rank with blackguardism, and rotten with peace, arter a time. It wants thinnin' out, it does. War is a thunder-storm to clear the human atmosphere. No matter whether it comes through the nig or the white man, come it must, sooner or later. So let it come! I'm willin' to fight, I be! I likes it more than 'totherwise! I'm wild-cats in a scrimmage, and a pooty strong tea for some kinds o' sickness!"

As Murch spoke, he emerged from the shadow into the moonlight. Barney eyed him with great curiosity.

"Ye'd make a strong tea, be jabers, if ye's staped without washin'! The devil might drink ye, for all me, for any sickness that me sins might bring to me mortle body!" retorted Barney, whose humor had often involved him in difficulty.

Zadoc smiled grimly, and the scout, fearful that the friendly relations of the two might be interrupted at the beginning of their acquaintance, hastened to say:

"Don't bicker, men! Remember there's women here; therefore be quiet."

Then to Miss Hurdlestone:

"We've been lookin' for ye, miss, a long time. There's been a sharp fight out in the open."

"Well?" said Hope, uneasily. "Go on, my friend."

"There's a little I mought say," answered Scotto, with embarrassment, which he tried to conceal by glancing at Margaret, and remarking: "You're one o' them vivanders, I see?"

"Yes," said Margaret, mechanically.

"Captain Scotto," exclaimed Hope, "you do not speak frankly! There is something you fear to tell me."

"Nothin' more than one might expect in these times. The colonel, your father, was wounded some'at in the squirmish this evenin'," replied the scout, avoiding the questioning eyes of Miss Hurdlestone.

"Wounded!" she repeated, while a sad, sick sensation swept over her.

"It may be but slightly," said Maggie, soothingly.

"In battle, all men are mortal," said the scout.

"Lead me to him at once!" cried Hope, in a decided voice. "You fear to tell me that his wound is mortal. I must hurry to him to hear his last wishes, and receive his dying benediction."

"Follow," replied Scotto. "Mr. Murch, lend

your arm to Barney. He is one of the gallant Sixty-ninth, and must be cared for."

"One of 'em, cap'n dear? Shure it's the whole of 'em I am! Where's the tay for sickness? Give me your shoulder, misther, for ye're sacesh, in which eviat I'll none of ye," quoth Barney Malone.

"You are tired, miss," said Scotto, kindly, to Hope. "Lean on an old soldier's arm, and you'll find yourself steadier for 't. Don't be downcast."

The admonitions of Scotto fell on the ear of one whose mind was tossed to and fro with suspense. Clinging closely to his arm, she kept pace with him, however fast he walked.

They reached, presently, the glade where a dozen of the Rangers had met three their number of the enemy's cavalry. A little group marked the spot where her father was lying. In a moment she was at his side. His eyes were closed, and he was breathing quickly. She grasped his hand, and was startled at its coldness. As she dropped on her knees beside him, she observed Girdwood, standing opposite, with a melancholy face.

"Father! father!" she exclaimed.

The wounded man opened his eyes. His failing sight fixed itself on the features of his daughter. That pale and beautiful countenance recalled to his recollection a teeming, touching history of many years. He did not speak at first; thought was too busy with him for utterance.

"Do you not know me, father?"

"Know you, child? I know you now, and shall know you forever! I know and love you! I am leaving you, Hope."

"Leave me not! Oh, leave me not, father!" sobbed Hope.

"The word 'March' comes from One who may not be disobeyed. The Commander-in-chief has high orders me to a distant and unknown post. I know not how it will fare with me there; but I trust, dropping the errors of earth with my body, I shall find favor and mercy."

"Abundant favor and abundant mercy!" said Hope, fervently.

"What flag is that floating near me?" he asked.

"The old flag, father! The flag that floated over the head of Washington."

"Take it from his sight," said Girdwood, softly, to Scotto.

"No; bring it nearer," responded Hurdlestone, quickly. "Let me behold it once more. Plant the staff beside me."

Scotto thrust the flag-staff into the earth just opposite Hope. The Stars and Stripes floated gently over the dying man, who gazed at the national banner with singular intensity.

"Death clears my sight!" he murmured. "Human selfishness and human hate are receding from view. Our Revolutionary fathers were

right. This is the flag to die under. I retract my heresy. I die loyal! The time will come when my brothers-in-arms will wish to die the same. Union is the true shibboleth of safety. Death is a plain dealer. With it, dark ambition, the lust of power, and wild aspiration, end."

He paused a little, then asked:

"Where are you, daughter?"

"Here, dear father, holding you back, and grieved that you must go—grieved past expression," answered Hope, weeping.

"Dear, dear girl! You have your sainted mother's face. I would I could be longer with you; but the Conqueror is at hand. Where is the young man? Where is Girdwood? I am feeling for him in the dark."

"I am here," replied Ralph, taking the hand that was groping blindly in the air.

Hurdlestone pressed it with dying energy.

"Let these two hands be joined," he added, with thrilling solemnity.

Hope's and Girdwood's hands touched and clasped; they rested across the breast of the dying man, while his own cold fingers lay on both.

"I have done you wrong, young man, but I make you abundant reparation now. I bequeath unto you my Hope. When I am dead, bear her safely from these scenes. A great and conquering Union Army will be gathered on the Potomac. Pause not till you are within its circling hues."

He stopped.

"Luke Scotto?" he said, anon.

"Ross Hurdlestone!" answered scout, with emotion.

"Are we at peace?"

"We're at peace!" responded Scotto, impressively.

"You have heard my wishes," continued Hurdlestone, with wonderful clearness. "Be a father to Hope till Ralph Girdwood has a right to take her from you. Give her away, Luke, and think of me as I was in Mexico."

"Ross Hurdlestone, all this shall be done," answered the scout. "Your child shall be sacred in my eyes. I will do what you would do, were you to live to carry out your own desires. You know Luke Scotto."

"I know him well. Bless my daughter in my name when you give her to this man."

Hurdlestone's breath failed him. He gasped and seemed going.

"Where's the flag?" he asked, presently, somewhat wildly.

"Floatin' over you," said Scotto, passing his hand over his eyes.

"That's as it should be. God bless you, Hope! God bless you, Girdwood!"

He paused again, and his eyelids quivered over the sightless balls. He tried to speak.

"Tell Beauregard—" he began.

All present leaned intently forward.

He stopped.

"Tell Beauregard—" he stopped for the last time, and for the want of life. Colonel Ross Hurdlestone was dead.

A silence followed, broken only by the low sobs of Hope.

"Gone!" sighed Scotto. "A brave man has gone." Then to Ralph: "Remain with her. Girdwood, a half-hour, that she may weep over him without restraint. Men, withdraw. Grief is sacred. When the half-hour has passed, Luke Scotto will return for the orphan that was confided to him."

Hope and Girdwood were left with the dead, their hands yet clasped over the motionless breast. He gently unloosed the captive fingers, and withdrew to a little distance, where he remained, till Scotto informed him that the half-hour had expired.

"It's time to go," he said. "You and Margaret attend to the poor gal, while I place the colonel's body where it may be easily found by his friends."

When Ralph returned to Hope, he found her comparatively calm, but she would not listen to the proposition of the scout respecting the burial of her father.

"I will not leave him," she said, "till dust is consigned to its dust."

No one had the heart to oppose this resolution. A grave was hurriedly hollowed at the foot of a patriarchal oak, and all that remained of Hurdlestone was laid tenderly in it, with a American flag upon his breast.

Dagon breathed a short, simple, yet fervent prayer over the body of his master, and the earth was replaced. But Hope still lingered. She could not tear herself from the spot, and it was not till morning was near that she was prevailed upon to mount a horse and go with her friends.

Leaving the enemy's country was perilous; but guided by Scotto, and protected by several of the Independent Rangers, Manassas was left far behind, and before many hours they were beyond the fear of pursuit.

Barney Malone, mounted upon a black horse taken from one of the rebel cavalry, accompanied them—regaling them, when the way permitted, with unique accounts of his adventures.

The Twins, who had turned up in good preservation, did not, it was observed, have a brotherly "clinch" till Arlington Heights appeared in view.

Dagon spoke often of the North Star, but declared a firm determination not to leave his young mistress. The hound, Jule, seemed in excellent spirits, scampering and frisking over the "sacred soil" as irreverently as though it was the commonest earth in the world.

Zadoc Murch left them mysteriously of the

way. Girdwood was confident that he caught a glimpse of him, the following day, near the White House at Washington, but could not absolutely identify him. Again, after the new army began to pour in by thousands, and pitch their white tents on the opposite bank, late one evening he saw a burly figure crossing the Potomac in a boat that strongly reminded him of the sturdy proportions of Zadoc Murch.

Margaret, the vivandiere, remained with Hope, in whom she found a loved and valued friend.

Luke Scotto, the scout, with his Rangers, is yet doing efficient duty in Virginia, while the Basketeers give great promise of becoming good soldiers; although Corporal Keith is occasionally worried by their "pitching-in" propensities.

The Rangers having been recruited to a reg-

ment, Girdwood has accepted its colonelcy; that honor having been stoutly declined by its former leader, who is much absent, and is often seen in close conference with the commander-in-chief. It is well understood that the War Department is indebted to him for information of the utmost importance. When he is observed to throw his long rifle across his arm, and go quietly from camp, the Union soldiers say to each other:

"We shall have news from beyond the enemy's pickets to-night!"

Miss Hurdlestone has received much attention from the loyal ladies at Washington; and when a suitable time has elapsed, will make Ralph Girdwood the happiest man in the world.

[THE END].

# THE OWLET;

OR,

## THE ROYAL HIGHWAYMAN.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE CHAMPION'S GLOVE.

On the 22d of September, in the year 1761, King George the Third of England, then twenty-four years of age, and who, the year previous, had succeeded his grandfather, George the Second, was solemnly crowned in Westminster Abbey, and banqueted in Westminster Hall.

The new monarch was popular.

The old one had been detested; and new hopes and aspirations had arisen in the breasts of all who came into contact with the court, or were in any way connected with those who did, on this, the advent of a new reign.

Besides, youth is always popular. The spring-time of the feelings is a pleasant-looking season; and it was hoped, thought, and believed that a new reign of a more English character was commencing; and that the delicate tree of parliamentary freedom and national tolerance, which had but faintly struck root in British soil, would now grow and flourish apace.

That was one of the full-hearted, weak-minded mistakes of the British public, which is ever so ready to fling up its cap and shout "Huzza!" if royalty condescends even to look human for a moment.

And so, on this 22d day of September, 1761, the young king was solemnly crowned in Westminster Abbey, and banqueted in the old hall at Westminster, which had covered with its net-work of dingy rafters so many memorable events, in which the great, the little—the noble, the base—the mighty of heart and soul, and the most groveling and vicious—had borne a part, and "strutted their hour upon the stage."

The hall was a blaze of decoration. Banners fluttered their silken folds in the air, heavy with perfumes; gorgeous candelabra

were ready to make a new day with their hundreds of wax-lights, so soon as the brief sunlight of the autumn season should pass away; diamonds flashed like little suns in all directions; the rich costumes of the officers of state; the quaint old dresses of officials occupying positions long since dead and forgotten, except to the exchequer of the thrones of military officers; the waving of feathers; the entanglements of spur in hoops—ladies then affected the ermine, as now; the rustling—positively the rustling—of gold lace and embroidery; the clank and clangor of sword-hilts and sheaths; the subdued hum or conversation from so many fair and noble lips; the light laugh; the banquet, which presented a blaze of gold and jeweled cups; all combined to produce one of these in-door pageants—half-barbarous, half-magnificent—which no other country, at that period, could exhibit but old England.

It was a dim and lustreless day.

At a little past twelve o'clock, the sun, which had shed but a weak and watery radiance upon the ceremonial, finally retired behind one of those masses of slaty-colored clouds which Englishmen have such abundant opportunities of contemplating.

But the royal banquet went forward right merrily, and the programme of the day's proceedings, part by part, was carried out.

The king had recently married Charlotte, daughter of the Duke of Mecklenburg; and this "plain young woman," as Monsieur Clevoille described her, when writing to his court, sat at the right hand of the young king, and "looked stupid and weary."

The great officers of state said their ray. There was abundance of lip-service, and courtly smiles, and backing out from the royal presence; and chamberlains grew red in the face with their exertions, and gold sticks, in waiting, and silver sticks, solemn-look-

ing clerks marshal, Rouge, and Croix, and Clarencieux, and all the trickery of courtly inanity and corruption, fretted, and fumed, and were zealous, and affected great courtesy to each other, while malice and bitterness were in their hearts; and the banquet, like a stage pageant, was performed.

But what means that fanfaronade of trumpets—that brazen blast that awakens the echoes of the old hall—and, as if it had been a call to battle, lights up many an eye there present with a dormant chivalry?

Again the silver trumpets of the pursuivants rang loudly and cheerily. What a clangor of martial notes! How the air shivers and vibrates to the ringing sounds.

And now there is a commotion at the entrance to the old hall. The crowd in the palace-yard rend the air with loud huzzas. A dense throng of court minions and relations of officials crowds the lower end of the old hall.

Another shout from the mob without. Another ringing peal of silvery music from the heralds' trumpets, which might awaken ancient chivalry from its grave, and

"Whirling like a blazing flame,  
Its heavy falchion,"

defy a world in arms.

Then all is still, except the lingering echoes of the wild and martial clangor in the remote corners of the hall, and the rustling flutter of the silken banners that, like a forest of various blossoms, float overhead.

"Gott gracious!" said the queen, "what dat?"

"Eh!" replied George the Third. "Eh! What—what that? Oh! Champion—Dymocke—eh? The glove, you know. Sir Henry Dymocke—champion."

There was heard now the tramp of the iron-shod feet of a horse on the stone flags at the entrance of the hall.

A loud cheer burst from the mob without.

"That's it," said the king. "Champion—Dymocke. Has the gold cup, though. Perquisites—don't like perquisites. Don't happen often, eh?"

"Gott gracious!" said the queen.

Another much more genteel and courtly shout now arose from within the hall; and a lane was made for Sir Henry Dymocke, the hereditary champion of England, to advance to the upper end of the banquet-room, where he was to defy to mortal combat all and every one of the grade of knighthood, who, by word, act, or deed, should dare to question the right of King George the Third to the crown of England.

The hereditary champion was encased in steel armor from head to heel. A plume of three white feathers, tipped with azure, floated above his helmet. His spurs were of

gold; and a scarf of blue and silver tissue crossed his corselet, having heavy bullion tassels dependent from it.

The horse was in half armor. A rich saddle-cloth of crimson velvet trailed upon the floor, and the arms of England were embroidered, in pearls and gold, upon it.

A steel spike projected from the head panoply of the horse; and, as the noble animal stepped up the old hall, there was a fretfulness of manner about its head, and a wild look about its eyes, which showed that it was rather scared by the flash of jewels and the glare of many colors.

The champion was preceded by a couple of heralds, in their gorgeous and stiff tabards. They carried each a silver trumpet.

Clarencieux—king-at-arms, as he was called—followed them, carrying a scroll in his hand.

Then came the knights' banner.

Then the champion.

Two pages followed. One bore his shield, the other his lance.

And so up the centre of that stately hall—tramp, tramp, with its iron-shod feet upon the sounding flag-stones, strode the horse, tossing its head, and snorting with surprise at all it saw around it.

The court ladies waved their handkerchiefs. The courtiers clapped their hands.

The king smiled.

"There—you see—eh? Charlotte, Charlotte—you see—Champion. Kill all the world—eh? Gold cup as a perquisite, though—eh? Don't like that—eh? Blanchard! What, gone! Colonel Blanchard—"

"Your majesty is respectfully and humbly informed," said a gold-stick, in waiting, "that Colonel Blanchard, of your Majesty's Guards, is not here."

"Not here, eh? Was here—was here, though, this minute. Officer on duty—on guard, eh? Sure he was here."

"Your majesty is right."

"Right—right! To be sure."

The gold-stick bowed so low, that nothing could be seen of him but the middle of his back; and then the two heralds, who preceded the champion, paused and placed their trumpets to their lips.

One full-toned, ringing blast from the silver throats of the trumpets put an end to all whispered conversation in the hall; and hardly had the clanging sounds died away, when Clarencieux, king-at-arms, advanced a step, and from the scroll he bore, read a challenge.

A challenge to all knights, of all degrees, to come forward there and then, and dispute the title of the recently-crowned king, or forever hold their peace.

And then the two heralds turned to en-

side of the hall, and blew a loud challenge on their trumpets; then to the other side, a second challenge; and then toward the door, a third.

And Sir Henry Dymocke took off the glove—the iron-clamped and bound gauntlet—from his right hand, and flung it down on the stone pavement of the hall.

And the trumpets gave one last, loud blaring sound of defiance.

"There, Charlotte," said the king; "you see—eh?—the glove. If anybody had anything to say—or wanted to fight—eh?—against us, you know. Why, they would have to come and pick up the glove—eh? What? what? what?"

"Gott gracious!" said the queen.

A young girl dashed out from amid the throng of spectators in the hall. She reached the glove in a moment; and lifting it from the floor, she held it above her head, and in a clear, high voice, she cried:

"Long live Harold the Second!"

Another moment, and before a cry could be uttered—before an arm could be raised to stop her—she had turned and plunged among the crowd again, conveying with her the champion's gage of battle—the iron-clamped glove of Sir Henry Dymocke.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ROUTE TO TYBURN.

The autumn wind blew keenly and fiercely around the massive stone walls of Newgate, on the Monday morning that succeeded the coronation, of which we have given our readers but a faint glimpse.

From the palace to the prison is a step in the march of events which has been common enough to lose almost the flavor of a novelty; and we may well leave for a time the gorgeous old hall at Westminster, and the solemn abbey, with its thousand glorious and mystic reminiscences of the past, to gaze awhile upon that dreary pile in old London, which, with its granite aspect, seems to frown upon the tide of humanity which, during the busy hours of the day, floats past it.

Standing boldly on the brow of the eastern swell of ground, which, in that direction, bounds the valley of the Fleet, Newgate, square, compact and defiant—cold, rigid, hard, and dense—seems as if it would stem the full ocean of London life that toils up the hill; and, passing the old Church of St. Sepulchre's, seeks the marts of commerce and enterprise that lie yet another half mile beyond.

And who that passes that gloomy prison-house fails to accord to it the attention of an upward glance—so rich it is in recollections of the past—stormed once as it was, like the old Bastille of Paris; but not like it,

to fall to rise no more—for Newgate was never the tyrant's dungeon, in which political creeds were converted into social offences—burnt once as it was by a fanatic crowd, who only sought flames as part and parcel of the wild saturnalia they enjoyed; and yet, now calm, cold, and terrible in its compact integrity, with its little eyes of windows thickly stanchioned, and its deeply-indented door-ways far away in the massive walls.

And over the gateway, there hang sculptured fetters—albeit, now, such iron janitors are but little used, if at all. And here and there—between huge blocks of stones, of fabulous thickness—may be seen narrow steps, through which, by many and sinuous way, the outer air—some of the outer light—thin and faint, like the last flicker of a winter's day—and some echoes of the hoarse murmurs of the every-day life without—may reach a cell.

A cell, in which some weary prisoner is sighing life away.

A cell, to the chill, iron bars of which, perchance, some solitary wretch clings, and rusts with his tears.

A cell, which is a tomb. The tomb of all hope, of all joy, all passion, and in which the very intellect slowly exhales, until the inmate smiles vacantly, and builds armories with the straw that has formed his couch.

Then the soul has achieved its freedom, and the walls of old Newgate have fallen down before the first smile of fatuity, while the tears of despair have seemed but to thicken and harden them.

Oh! what a world of sighs have issued forth through those prison-chinks! What tears have in vain tried to soften the cold iron of the barred grating! Will the accurate water-drop drill a hole through adamant? So it is said. Alas! no tears have yet sufficed to melt the granite walls of Newgate.

And what frantic cries—cries that the almost bursting heart could not suppress—cries that it must perforce give utterance to, or burst in the vain struggle to imprison them, have, with a dull and faint sound, only made their way to the world without.

Those cries were like some poor prisoner who seeks escape, and in the process is dashed to-and-fro, until at length, when, perchance, he falls into the outer world, he has lost the semblance of humanity from many concussions and many hurts. They lose their screaming vehemence and their supplicating pathos by alternate blows against those cruel stones, ere they issue forth into the great city, and the cry which in the cell—which at the inner mouth of some one of those sinuous slits would have harrowed up the soul, issues forth an inarticulate murmur, which is lost in the rout of sounds that belong to the outer world.

