

FICTION

Oliver Optic

The Young Lieutenant

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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THE
YOUNG LIEUTENANT

OR
THE ADVENTURES OF AN ARMY OFFICER

A STORY OF THE GREAT REBELLION

By OLIVER OPTIC

Author of
"The Soldier Boy," "The Sailor Boy," "Brave Old Salt,"
"The Yankee Middy," "Fighting Joe," etc.

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TO
William A. Moulton, Esq.
THIS BOOK
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY HIS FRIEND
WILLIAM T. ADAMS

THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT
OR
THE ADVENTURES OF AN ARMY OFFICER

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN DE BANYAN AND OTHERS

"I beg your pardon, sir; but I see, by the number on your cap, that we belong to the same regiment," said an officer with two bars on his shoulder-straps, as he halted in the aisle of the railroad-car, near where Lieutenant Thomas Somers was seated. "May I be permitted to inquire whom I have the honor of addressing?"

"Lieutenant Somers, of the ---th Massachusetts," replied the young gentleman addressed, as he politely touched his cap in return for the salutation of the other.

"Ah! is it possible? I am rejoiced to meet you. I have heard of you before. Allow me to add in the most delicate manner, that you are a good fellow, a first-rate soldier, and as brave an officer as ever sported a pair of shoulder-straps. Permit me to offer you my hand; and allow me to add, that it is a hand which was never sullied by a dishonorable act."

"I am happy to make your acquaintance," replied Lieutenant Somers, as he accepted the offered hand. "Won't you take a seat, Captain----"

"Captain de Banyan, at your service," continued the officer, as he seated himself by the side of the young lieutenant, who was completely bewildered by the elegant and courtly speech of his new-found friend.

If Lieutenant Somers needs any further introduction to the reader, we may briefly add, that he was a native of Pinchbrook, a town near Boston, in the State of Massachusetts. He was now entering his eighteenth year, and had enlisted in the great army of the Union as a private, with an earnest and patriotic desire to serve his imperiled country in her death-grapple with treason and traitors. He had won his warrant as a sergeant by bravery and address, and had subsequently been commissioned as a second lieutenant for good conduct on the bloody field of Williamsburg, where he had been wounded. The injury he had received, and the exhaustion consequent upon hard marching and the excitement of a terrible battle, had procured for him a furlough of thirty days. He had spent this brief period at home; and now, invigorated by rest and the care of loving friends, he was returning to the army to participate in that stupendous campaign which culminated in the seven-days' battles before Richmond.

Inspired by the hope of honorable distinction, still more by the patriotic desire to serve the noblest cause for which the soldier ever drew a sword, he was hastening to the post of danger and duty. As the train hurried him by smiling fields, and through cities and villages whose prosperity was mysteriously interlinked with the hallowed mission which called him from the bosom of home and friends, his thoughts were those which would naturally animate the soul of a young patriot, as he journeyed to the battle-fields of a nation's ruin or salvation. He thought of the bloody scenes before him, of the blessed home behind him.

Only the day before, he had made his parting visit to Lilian Ashford, who knit his "fighting socks," as he had called them since the eventful day when he had found her letter and her picture in them. Of course, he could not help thinking of her; and, as he had a thin stratum of sentiment in his composition, it is more than probable that the beautiful young lady monopolized more than her fair share of his thoughts; but I am sure it was not at all to the detriment of the affection he owed his mother and the other dear ones, who were shrined in the sanctuary of his heart.

Lieutenant Somers was an exceedingly good-looking young man, which, as it was no fault of his own, we do not object to mention. He was clothed in his new uniform, which was very creditable to the taste and skill of his tailor. On his upper lip, an incipient mustache had developed itself; and, though it presented nothing remarkable, it gave brilliant promise of soon becoming all that its ambitious owner could possibly desire, especially as he was a reasonable person, and had no taste for monstrosities. He had paid proper attention to this ornamental appendage, which is so indispensable to the making-up of a soldier; and the result, if not entirely satisfactory, was at least hopeful.

The subject of our remarks wore his sash and belt, and carried his sword in his hand, for the reason that he had no other convenient way of transporting them. Our natural pride, as his biographer, leads us to repeat that he was a fine-looking young man; and we will venture to say, that the young lady who occupied the seat on the opposite side of the car was of the same opinion. Of course, she did not stare at him; but she had two or three times cast a furtive glance at the young officer; though the operation had been so well managed, that he was entirely unconscious of the fact.

Inasmuch as this same young lady was herself quite pretty, it is not supposable that she had entirely escaped the observation of our gallant young son of Mars. We are compelled to say he had glanced in that direction two or three times, to keep within the limits of a modest calculation; but it is our duty to add that he was not captivated, and that there is not the least danger of our story degenerating into a love-tale. Lieutenant Somers thought she was nearly as pretty as Lilian Ashford; and this, we solemnly declare, was the entire length and breadth of the sentiment he expended upon the young lady, who was certainly worthy of a deeper homage.

She was in charge of an elderly, dignified gentleman, who had occupied the seat by her side until half an hour before the appearance of Captain de Banyan; but, being unfortunately addicted to the small vice of smoking, he had gone forward to the proper car to indulge his propensity. Lieutenant Somers had studied the faces of all the passengers near him, and had arrived at the conclusion that the lady's protector was a gentleman of consequence. He might be her father or her uncle; but he was a member of Congress, the governor of a State, or some high official, perhaps a major-general in "mufti." At any rate, our hero was interested in the pair, and had carried his speculations concerning them as far as theory can go without a few facts to substantiate it, when his reflections were disturbed by Captain de Banyan.

"Lieutenant Somers, I'm proud to know you, as I had occasion to remark before. I have heard of you. You distinguished yourself in the battle of Williamsburg," said Captain de Banyan.

"You speak very handsomely of me--much better than I deserve, sir."

"Not a particle, my boy. If there is a man in the army that can appreciate valor, that man is Captain de Banyan. You are modest, Lieutenant Somers--of course you are modest; all brave men are modest--and I forgive your blushes. I've seen service, my boy. Though not yet thirty-five, I served in the Crimea, in the Forty-seventh Royal Infantry; and was at the battles of Solferino, Magenta, Palestro, and others too numerous to mention."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lieutenant Somers, filled with admiration by the magnificent record of the captain. "Then you are not an American?"

"Oh, yes, I am! I happened to be in England when the Russian war commenced. So, being fond of a stirring life, I entered as a private in the Forty-seventh. If the war had continued six months longer, I should have come out a brigadier-general, though. Promotion is not so rapid in the British army as in our own. I was at the storming of the Redan; I was one of the first to mount the breach. Just as I had raised my musket----"

"I thought you were an officer--a colonel at least," interposed Lieutenant Somers.

"My sword, I should have said. Just as I had raised my sword to cut down a Russian who threatened to bayonet me, a cannon-ball struck the butt of my gun----"

"Your gun?"

"The handle of my sword, I should have said, and snapped it off like a pipe-stem."

"But didn't it snap your hand off too?" asked the lieutenant, rather bewildered by the captain's statements.

"Not at all; that is the most wonderful part of the story. It didn't even graze my skin."

"That was very remarkable," added Lieutenant Somers, who could not see, for the life of him, how a cannon-ball could hit the handle of the sword without injuring the hand which grasped it.

"It was very remarkable, indeed; but I was reminded of the circumstance by the remembrance that you were hit in the head by a bullet, which did not kill you. I shouldn't have mentioned the affair if I hadn't called to mind my own experience; for life yourself, Somers, I am a modest man; in fact, every brave man is necessarily a modest man."

"Were you ever wounded, Captain de Banyan?"

"Bless you, half a dozen times. At Magenta, the same bullet passed twice through my body."

"The same bullet?"

"Yes, sir--the same bullet. I'll tell you how it happened. I was in the heavy artillery there. The bullet of the Russian--"

"The Russian! Why, I thought the battle of Magenta was fought between the Austrians and the French."

"You are right, my boy. The bullet of the Austrian, I should have said, passed through my left lung, struck the cannon behind me, bounded back, and hitting me again, passed through my right lung. When it came out, it hit my musket, and dropped upon the ground. I picked it up, and have it at home now."

"Whew!" added Lieutenant Somers in a low whisper. "It's quite warm to-day," he continued, trying to turn off the remark.

"Very warm, indeed."

"But didn't you fall after the ball had passed through both your lungs?"

"Not at all. I walked five miles to the hospital. On my way, I met the Emperor Napoleon, who got off his horse, and thanked me for the valor I had displayed, and conferred on me the medal of the Legion of Honor. I keep the medal in the same bag with the bullet."

"Then you have actually shaken hands with the Emperor of France?" cried the amazed lieutenant.

"Yes; and King Victor Emmanuel called to see me in the hospital, where I was confined for five weeks. At Solferino,

both their majesties shook hands with me, and thanked me again for my services. Being a modest man, I shouldn't want to say out loud that I saved the day for the French and Sardinians at Solferino. At any rate, their majesties did the handsome thing by me on that day."

"I thought you were in the hospital five weeks after Magenta."

"So I was; and well do I remember the little delicacies sent me by the King of Italy while I lay there on my back. Ah! that Victor Emmanuel is a noble fellow. At Solferino, he----"

"But how could you have been at Solferino, if you were in the hospital five weeks?"

"I did not die of my wounds, it is scarcely necessary for me to remark. I got well."

"But the battle of Solferino was fought on the 20th of June, and that of Magenta on the 4th of June. There were only twenty days between the battles."

"You are right, Somers. I have made some mistake in the dates. I never was good at remembering them. When I was in college, the professors used to laugh at me for forgetting the date of the Christian Era. By the way, do you smoke, Somers? Let's go into the smoking-car, and have a cigar."

"I thank you; I never smoke."

"Ah! you are worse than a hot potato. But I am dying for a smoke; and, if you will excuse me, I will go forward. I will see you again before we get to New York."

Captain de Banyan, apparently entirely satisfied with himself, rose from his seat, and sauntered gracefully forward to the door of the car, through which he disappeared, leaving Lieutenant Somers busy in a vain endeavor to crowd five weeks in between the 4th and the 20th of June. The captain was certainly a pleasant and voluble person, and Somers had enjoyed the interview; though he could not repress a rising curiosity to see the bullet which had passed twice through the body of the valiant soldier, and the medal of the Legion of Honor conferred upon him by his imperial majesty the Emperor of France.

Some painful doubts in regard to the truth of Captain de Banyan's remarkable experience were beginning to intrude themselves into his mind; and it is quite probable that he would have been hurled into an unhappy state of skepticism, if the train in which he was riding had not been suddenly hurled down an embankment some twenty feet in height, where the cars were piled up in shapeless wrecks, and human beings, full of life and hope a moment before, were suddenly ushered into eternity, or maimed and mangled for life.

CHAPTER II

THE SENATOR'S DAUGHTER

A scene terribly beyond the power of description was presented to the gaze of Lieutenant Somers when he recovered his scattered senses. The car had been literally wrenched to pieces, and the passengers were partially buried beneath the fragments. Our traveler was stunned by the shock, and made giddy by the wild vaulting of the car as it leaped down the embankment to destruction. He was bruised and lacerated; but he was not seriously injured. He did not make the mistake which many persons do under such trying circumstances, of believing that they are killed; or, if their senses belie this impression, that they shall die within a brief period.

Lieutenant Somers was endowed with a remarkable degree of self-possession, and never gave up anything as long as there was any chance of holding on. He saw a great many stars not authenticated in any respectable catalogue of celestial luminaries. His thoughts, and even his vitality, seemed to be suspended for an instant; but the thoughts came back, and the stream of life still flowed on, notwithstanding the rude assault which had been made upon his corporal frame.

Finding that he was not killed, he struggled out from beneath the wreck which had overwhelmed him. His first consideration, after he had assured himself that he was comparatively uninjured, was for those who were his fellow-passengers on this race to ruin and death; and perhaps it is not strange that the fair young lady who had occupied the opposite seat in the car came to his mind. Men and women were disengaging themselves from the shapeless rubbish. Some wept, some groaned, and some were motionless and silent.

He did not see the fair stranger among those who were struggling back to consciousness. A portion of the top of the car lay near him, which he raised up. It rested heavily upon the form of a maiden, which he at once recognized by the dress to be that of the gentle stranger. The sight roused all his energies; and he felt that strength which had fired his muscles when he trod the field of battle. With desperate eagerness, he raised the heavy fragment which was crowding out the young life of the tender form, and bore it away, so that she was released from its cruel pressure.

She, poor girl! felt it not; for her eyes were closed, and her marble cheek was stained with blood. The young officer, tenderly interested in her fate, bent over her, and raised the inanimate form. He bore it in his arms to a green spot, away from the scattered fragments of the train, and laid it gently down upon the bosom of mother earth. By all the means within his power, he endeavored to convince himself that death had not yet invaded the lovely temple of her being. But still she was silent and motionless. There was not a sign by which he could determine the momentous question.

He was unwilling to believe that the beautiful stranger was dead. It seemed too hard and cruel that one so young and fair should be thus rudely hurried out of existence, without a mother or even a father near to receive her last gaze on earth, and listen to the soft sigh with which she breathed forth her last throb of existence. He had a telescopic drinking-cup in his pocket, with which he hastened to a brook that flowed through the valley. Filling it with water, he returned to his charge. He sprinkled her face, and rubbed her temples, and exerted himself to the best of his knowledge and ability to awaken some signs of life.

The task seemed hopeless; and he was about to abandon it in despair, to render assistance to those who needed it more than the fair, silent form before him, when an almost imperceptible sigh gladdened his heart, and caused him to renew his exertions. Procuring another cup of water, he persistently sprinkled the fair face and chafed the temples of his charge. With his handkerchief he washed away the blood-stains, and ascertained that she was only slightly cut just above the ear.

Cheered by the success which had rewarded his efforts, he continued to bathe and chafe till the gentle stranger opened her eyes. In a few moments more she recovered her consciousness, and cast a bewildered glance around her.

"Where is my father?" said she; and, as she spoke, the fearful nature of the catastrophe dawned upon her mind, and she partially rose from her recumbent posture.

Lieutenant Somers could not tell where her father was, and his first thought was that he must be beneath the wreck of the shattered cars. For the first time, he looked about him to measure with his eye the extent of the calamity. At that moment he discovered the engine, with the forward part of the train, backing down the railroad. Only the two rear cars had been precipitated over the embankment; the accident having been caused by the breaking of an axle on the last car but one. The shackle connecting this with the next one had given way, and the broken car had darted off the bank, carrying the rear one with it, while the rest of the train dashed on to its destination.

Of course the calamity was immediately discovered; but a considerable time elapsed--as time was measured by those who were suffering and dying beneath the *debris* of the train--before the engine could be stopped, and backed to the

scene of the accident. Lieutenant Somers had seen the lady's father go forward, and had heard him say he was going to the smoking-car; he was therefore satisfied that he was safe.

"He will be here presently," he replied to the anxious question of the fair stranger.

"Perhaps he was--oh, dear! Perhaps he was----"

"Oh, no! he wasn't. The smoking-car was not thrown off the track," interposed the young officer, promptly removing from her mind the terrible fear which took possession of her first conscious moments. "Are you much hurt?"

"I don't know; I don't think I am; but one of my arms feels very numb."

"Let me examine it," continued our traveler, tenderly raising the injured member.

He was not deeply skilled in surgery; but he knew enough of the mysteries of anatomy to discover that the arm was broken between the elbow and the shoulder.

"I am afraid your arm is broken," said he cautiously, as though he feared the announcement would cause her to faint again.

"I am glad it is no worse," said she with a languid smile, and without exhibiting the least indication of feminine weakness.

"It might have been worse, certainly. Can I do anything more for you?" added Lieutenant Somers, glancing at the wreck of the cars, with a feeling that his duty then was a less pleasing one than that of attending to the wants of the beautiful stranger; for there were still men and women lying helpless and unserved in the midst of the ruins.

The train stopped upon the road; and the passengers, though appalled by the sight, rushed down the bank to render willing assistance to the sufferers. Among them was the father of the young lady, who leaped frantically down the steep, and passed from one to another of the forms which the survivors had taken from the wreck.

"There is your father," said Lieutenant Somers as he recognized him among the excited passengers. "I will go and tell him where you are."

"Do, if you please," replied the lady faintly.

He ran to the distracted parent, and seized him by the arm as he dashed from one place to another in search of the gentle maiden whose life was part of his own.

"Your daughter is out here, sir," said Lieutenant Somers, pointing to the spot where he had borne her.

"My daughter!" gasped the agonized father. "Where--where?"

"In this direction, sir."

"Is she--O Heaven, spare me!" groaned he.

"She is hurt, but I think not very badly. Her left arm is broken, and her head is slightly cut."

"O God, I thank Thee!" gasped the father, as he walked with the lieutenant to the place where the young lady was sitting on the grass.

"I think you need not be alarmed about her," added our officer, anxious to console the suffering parent.

"My poor Emmie!" exclaimed the anxious father when they reached the spot, while he knelt down upon the grass by her side, the tears coursing in torrents down his pale cheeks.

"Don't be alarmed, father," replied she, putting her uninjured arm around his neck and kissing him, while their tears mingled. "I am not much hurt, father."

Lieutenant Somers had a heart as well as a strong and willing arm, and he could not restrain his own tears as he witnessed the touching scene. The meeting seemed to be so sacred to him, that he could not stand an idle gazer upon the expression of that hallowed affection as it flowed from the warm hearts of the father and daughter.

"As I can be of no further service here, I will go and do what I can for those who need my help. If you want any assistance, I shall be close at hand," said he, as he walked away to the busy scene of woe which surrounded the wreck.

The wounded, the maimed, and the dead were rapidly taken from the pile of ruins, and placed in the cars on the road; and there was no longer anything for the young officer to do. He returned to the grassy couch of her whom he could not but regard as peculiarly his patient. The father had recovered his self-possession, and satisfied himself that Emmie was not more seriously injured than her deliverer had declared.

"My young friend, while I thank God that my daughter is still alive, I am very grateful to you for the care you have bestowed upon her," said the father, as he grasped the young officer's hand.

"You may well thank him, Mr. Guilford," said one of the two gentlemen who had followed the young officer to the spot; "for the first thing I saw, when I came out from under the ruins, was this young man lifting half the top of the car off your daughter."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I think we should convey the young lady up to the cars; for I see they are about ready to start," said Lieutenant Somers, blushing up to the eyes.

"I thank you, young man," added Mr. Guilford with deep feeling. "I must see you again, and know more about you. Emmie has told me how kind you have been to her; and you may be sure I shall never forget it while I live. How do you feel now, Emmie?"

"My arm begins to pain me a little," she answered languidly.

"We must put you into the car, and in a short time we shall be able to do something for you."

"I will carry her up to the train, sir," said the young officer.

"I thank you, sir," said Emmie with a smile; "but I think I can walk."

"Well," said the gentleman who had spoken before, "I saw him carry you from the wreck to this place; and I am bound to say, I never saw a mother handle her baby more tenderly."

"I am very grateful to him for what he has done for me," added Emmie with a slight blush; "and if I needed his services, I certainly should accept his kind offer."

She took the arm of her father, and walked very well till she came to the steep bank, whose ascent required more strength than she then possessed. Her father and Lieutenant Somers then made a "hand-chair," and bore her up to the car, in which she was as comfortably disposed as the circumstances would permit. The train started with its melancholy freight of wounded, dead and dying.

"I see, sir, you are an officer in the army," said Mr. Guilford as the train moved off; "but I have not yet learned your name."

"Thomas Somers, sir," replied our young officer.

"I must trouble you to write it down for me, with your residence when at home, and your regiment in the field."

Lieutenant Somers complied with this request, and in return the gentleman gave him his address.

"I shall never forget you, Lieutenant Somers," said Mr. Guilford when he had carefully deposited the paper in his memorandum-book. "I have it in my power to be of service to you; and if you ever want a friend, I shall consider it a favor if you will come to me, or write to me."

"Thank you, sir; I am very much obliged to you. But I hope you won't consider yourself under any obligations to me for what I have done. I couldn't have helped doing it if I had tried."

"Lieutenant Somers, you are in luck," said the gentleman who had accompanied him before. "That is Senator Guilford, of ---, and he will make a brigadier-general of you before you are a year older."

CHAPTER III

A FRIEND AT COURT

Lieutenant Somers sat down in one corner of the car, near the seats occupied by Miss Guilford and her father. He was just beginning to be conscious of the fact that he had done a "big thing;" not because he had helped one of God's suffering creatures, but because she happened to be a Senator's daughter. But he still had the happy reflection, that what he had done had been prompted by motives of humanity, not by the love of applause, or for the purpose of winning the favor of a great man who could dispense the "loaves and fishes" when he should need them.

He was rather sensitive. He was a young man of eighteen, and he had not yet become familiar with the grossness and selfishness of this calculating world. He was rather offended at the patronage which the Senator had proposed to bestow upon him, and he even regretted that he had so readily given him his address.

Lieutenant Somers regarded himself as emphatically a fighting officer; and the idea of working his way up to distinction by the favor of a member of Congress was repulsive to him. He really wished the Hon. Mr. Guilford had only thanked him for what he had done, and not said a word about having it in his power to be of service to him.

While he was meditating upon the events which had transpired, and the Senator's patronizing offer, he saw Captain de Banyan enter the forward door of the car through which the gentleman who had taken so much pains to compliment the young officer had disappeared a short time before. The distinguished captain walked through the car directly to the seat of the lieutenant, who had not even yet ceased to blush under the praises which had been bestowed upon him.

"Somers, your hand," said he, extending his own. "I have heard all about it, and am proud that our regiment has furnished so brave and devoted a man. Oh, don't blush, my dear fellow! You are a modest man. I sympathize with you; for I am a modest man myself. I didn't get over blushing for three weeks after his imperial majesty, the Emperor of France, complimented me for some little thing I did at the battle of Palestro."

"I thought that was at Magenta," added Somers.

"So it was. The fact is, I have been in a great many battles, and I get them mixed up a little sometimes. But you are in luck, Somers," continued the captain in a lower tone, as he seated himself by the side of his fellow-officer.

"Why so?"

"They say she is the daughter of a Senator."

"What of that?"

"What of that! Why, my dear fellow, you are as innocent as a school girl. Don't you see he can get you on some general's staff, and have you promoted every time there is a skirmish?"

"I don't want to be promoted unless I earn it."

"Of course you don't; but every officer that earns it won't get it. By the way, Somers, can't you introduce me to the old gentleman?"

"I never saw him before in my life."

"No matter for that. I'll warrant you, he'll be glad to make all your friends his friends."

"But I don't feel enough acquainted with him to introduce a gentleman whom I never saw in my life till two hours ago."

"You are right, my dear fellow; excuse me," replied Captain de Banyan, looking very much disappointed. "I dare say, if I should show him the autograph of the Emperor of France, he would be very glad to know me."

"No doubt of it. At any rate, I recommend you to make the trial."

"Yes; but the mischief of it is, I have left all those papers at home."

"That's unfortunate," added Lieutenant Somers, who had some serious doubts in regard to the existence of those papers.

"So it is. If I had been lucky enough to have made the acquaintance of that young lady, as you have, I would not let my aspirations stop short of the stars of a major-general."

"You need not as it is, if you do your duty."

"Ah! my dear fellow, you are as sentimental as a girl of sixteen. I am a modest man; but, in my estimation, there are ten thousand men in the army as good as I am. They can't all be major-generals, can they?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, if you live a few months longer, you will find out how good a thing it is to have a friend at court. You are a modest young man; but I suppose you think there isn't another man in the army who is quite your equal, and that your merit and your bravery will make a brigadier of you in less than a year. It's a good thing to think so; but----"

"I don't think so. That would be modesty with a vengeance."

"I was a sentimental boy like you once, and I was just as certain that I should be made a field-marshal, and have the command of the French army in the Crimea----"

"I thought you were in the English army in the Crimea," interposed the young lieutenant, eager to change the subject.

"Certainly, in the English army; that's what I said," continued the gallant captain, entirely unmoved by the interruption. "I was just as sure of having the command of the British army in the Crimea as you are of becoming a brigadier by the time we get into Richmond. But I have no friends at court as you have now."

"I never thought of such a thing as being a brigadier," protested Somers. "I never even expected to become a second lieutenant."

"It isn't much to be a brigadier. I served with 'Old Rosey' in West Virginia for a time. We had a captain there who didn't know any more about military than a swine does about Lord Chesterfield's table etiquette. He went into action with a cane in his hand, hawbucking his company about just as a farmer does a yoke of cattle. That fellow is a brigadier-general now; and there's hope for you and me, if we can only have a friend at court."

"I am higher now than I ever expected to be, and I wouldn't give a straw for fifty friends at court."

"That's because you are sentimental; but you'll get over that."

"Lieutenant Somers," said Senator Guilford, who had risen from his seat, and approached that occupied by the two officers, "I shall leave the train at the next stopping-place, in order to procure proper medical attendance for my daughter. I desire again to express my thanks to you for the signal service you have rendered to my daughter."

Our hero blushed again, and stammered out some deprecatory remark.

"When you are in Washington, you must call and see me. You must promise this for Emmie's sake, if not for mine," added the Senator.

"I should be very happy to call," replied the young officer.

"My friend Lieutenant Somers is as bashful as a maiden of sweet sixteen," interposed Captain de Banyan. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Guilford; though your name and fame are familiar to me, I have not the honor of your personal acquaintance; but, under the circumstances, I shall make it part of my duty to see that my friend does not neglect your reasonable request."

"Thank you, sir," replied the Senator.

"Captain de Banyan, at your service," added the modest officer who had served in Italy and the Crimea.

"Thank you, Captain de Banyan. I see you are in the same regiment with Lieutenant Somers."

"Yes, sir, I have that honor; and I assure you there is not a nobler and braver young officer in the Army of the Potomac. He reminds me very much of a splendid fellow I served with in the Crimea."

"Ah! you were in the Crimea?"

"I was, sir; and he looks very much like Captain de Waite, whom I saw made a major on the field of Magenta, for the most daring bravery, by the Emperor of France."

"You have seen service, captain," added the Senator.

"A little, sir."

"You must speak with my daughter, lieutenant, before we part," continued Mr. Guilford. "Her gratitude has no limit."

Lieutenant Somers was astounded by the effrontery of his military companion, who had claimed to be his friend, and forced himself upon the acquaintance of the powerful man on the strength of that intimacy; had even brought to his notice the fact--if it was a fact--that he had been at Magenta and in the Crimea. The simple-minded young man had seen no such diplomacy in Pinchbrook, or in the course of his travels in Maryland and Virginia; and he was fearful that the audacious fellow would dare to address the daughter as he had the father.

"Be seated," said the Senator, as he pointed to the seat in front of Miss Emmie.

She was pale, and appeared to be suffering from the pain of her broken arm; but she bestowed a sweet smile upon him

as he took the proffered seat.

"Lieutenant Somers, after what I have heard from Mr. Holman"--that was the gentleman who had spoken so handsomely of him--"I feel sure that I owe my life to you."

"I think not, Miss Guilford," replied the lieutenant, very much embarrassed. "I only pulled you out from the ruins; I couldn't have helped doing it if I had tried; and I hope you won't feel under any obligations to me."

"But I do feel under very great obligations to you, and I assure you I am happy to owe my life to so brave and gallant a soldier."

Somers felt just as though he was reading an exciting chapter in a sensational novel; though he could not help thinking of Lilian Ashford, and thus spoiling all the romance of the affair. He made no reply to Miss Emmie's pretty speech; it was utterly impossible for him to do so; and therein he differed from all the heroes of the novels.

"I want to hear from you some time, and even to see you again. You must promise to call and see me when we get to Washington."

"I may not be able to leave my regiment at that time."

"Oh! my father will get you a furlough any time you want one."

Lieutenant Somers thought he would like to see himself asking a furlough to enable him to visit a young lady in Washington, even if she was a Senator's daughter; but he promised to call at Mr. Guilford's whenever he happened to be at the capital, which was entirely satisfactory to the young lady. Though Emmie was by this time suffering severely, she managed to say several pleasant things; and among them she hinted that her father could make a brigadier as easily as a tinker could make a tin kettle.

The train arrived at the stopping-place; and Mr. Guilford, with the assistance of Lieutenant Somers, placed his daughter in a carriage. Captain de Banyan was very anxious to assist in the operation; but the sufferer declined. They parted with a renewed promise on the part of the young officer to visit her in Washington, whenever his duty called him to that city. The cars arrived in New York two hours behind time--too late to connect with the train for Philadelphia. Captain de Banyan proposed, as they were obliged to remain in the city over night, that they should stop at the "Fifth Avenue," declaring that it was the best hotel in New York. Somers objected; hoping that he should thus escape the society of the captain, who appeared to be altogether too "fast" for his time.

De Banyan was accommodating; and, when the lieutenant mentioned a small hotel downtown, he readily agreed to the proposition, and Somers found it useless to attempt to get rid of him. The captain, for some reason or other, appeared to have taken a decided liking to our officer. Perhaps he hoped to share with him the powerful patronage of Senator Guilford.

After supper, Captain de Banyan proposed that they should go out and see the "elephant;" but Somers, having no taste for the study of this description of natural history, positively declined to see the metaphorical monster.

"We must go somewhere," persisted the captain, taking up a newspaper. "Here's a 'Lecture on the Battle of Bull Run, by Lieutenant-Colonel Staggerback, who participated in that memorable action,'" he continued, reading from the paper.

"I was in that battle myself; I don't object to that," replied Somers.

"Good! Then we'll go."

They walked up Broadway till they came to one of those gaudy saloons where rum and ruin are tricked out in the gayest of colors.

"We are early for the lecture, Somers. Let's go in here, and see what there is to be seen."

"No, I thank you; I don't care about going into any of these dens of vice and sin."

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen,"

repeated the captain with dramatic force.

"But seen too oft----"

You needn't see it but once. Don't you want to see the lions of the metropolis?"

"Don't object to the lions; but, in my opinion, you will find only the donkeys in there."

"Let us see, at any rate."

"I will go in for a moment," replied Somers, who did not like to seem over-squeamish.

They entered this outer gate to ruin. There was a bar at the end next to the street, while at the other end a band of music was playing the national airs. It looked like a very pleasant place to the young lieutenant, who had never entered one of these saloons before.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRE OF TEMPTATION

Captain de Banyan sauntered gracefully up the saloon, with Somers at his side. He appeared to be perfectly at home, and to have all the ease and finish of a thorough man of the world. His movements were calculated to make a sensation; and, as he passed along, old toppers and gay young bloods paused to glance at him. If the captain had been in command of the Army of the Potomac, his elevated position would hardly have justified a more extensive flourish than he made.

Lieutenant Somers was duly impressed by the magnificence of his companion, though the surroundings of the place created some painful misgivings in his mind. The captain sat down at one of the little tables where the frequenters of the saloon who were disposed to prolong the enjoyment of their drams discussed "juleps," "cobblers," and other villainous compounds.

Somers could not do less than seat himself at the other side of the table. He was ill at ease, even while he was endeavoring to seem indifferent and at home. I am sorry to say he was haunted by that abominable bugbear which often takes possession of the minds of young men when they find themselves in the presence of those who are adepts in the arts of vice--a fear of being thought "green," "verdant," or being measured by some other adjective used in fast circles to caricature the innocence of a soul unsullied by contact with the vices and follies of the city. He half expected that some of the dissolute young wretches who were drinking, swearing, and pouring the filth of a poisoned mind from their lips, would ask him if "his mother knew he was out." He tried to maintain his self-possession, and to seem at home where ruin was rioting in the souls of young men. If he did not entirely succeed, it was all the more to his credit.

"What will you take?" demanded Captain de Banyan, after they had sat at the table long enough to examine the prominent features of the saloon.

"Take a walk," replied Lieutenant Somers.

"No, no! What will you drink?"

"Nothing, thank you. I've just been to supper, and don't want anything."

"Yes; but people who come in here, and listen to the music, are expected to patronize the establishment. I'm going to have a brandy smash: shall I order one for you?"

"No, I thank you."

"But I can't drink alone."

"I never drink."

"Nonsense! A lieutenant in our regiment, and not drink! I see! You haven't learned yet; but it won't take you long. Your case is exactly my own. I was about your age when I went to the Crimea, and didn't know wine from brandy. After the battle of Balaclava, where I did some little thing which excited the admiration of the nobles in command, Lord Raglan sent for me, and invited me to take a glass of wine with him. Of course, I could not refuse his lordship, especially as he was in the very act of complimenting me for what he was pleased to call my gallant conduct. I drank my first glass of wine then. It was Sicily Madeira, and light, sweet wine; and, my dear fellow, you shall begin with the same, and we will drink the health of Senator Guilford and his fair daughter. Waiter, one brandy smash and one Sicily Madeira."

"Really, Captain de Banyan, you must excuse me," stammered Somers, completely bewildered by the eloquent and insinuating manners of his brilliant companion, who had spoken loud enough to attract the attention of a dozen idlers greedy for excitement of any kind, and to whom the latter part of his remarks seemed to be addressed, rather than to the timid young man in front of him.

Captain de Banyan appeared to have a point to carry; which was nothing less than to overcome the conscientious scruples of the young officer. He had spoken loud enough to attract the attention of these miserable tipplers, that Somers might be over-awed by their presence, and intimidated by their sneers, and thus compelled to taste the intoxicating cup. The squad of fast men who had taken positions near the table were interested in the scene, and impatient to see the pure soul tumbled from its lofty eminence.

"Here's the nectar!" almost shouted the captain as the waiter placed the drinks upon the table. "Wine for you; brandy for me. You will be promoted to brandy one of these days, my boy, when your head is stronger and your nerves stiffer. Lieutenant Somers, here's to the health of the patriot statesman, Senator Guilford, and his lovely daughter;" and the captain pushed aside the straw in the vile compound, and raised the glass to his lips.

Somers was embarrassed at his position, and bewildered by the dashing speeches of his companion. A dozen pair of leering eyes were fixed upon him; a dozen mouths were wrinkled into sottish smiles, called up by his sufferings at that critical moment. He reached forth his hand, and grasped the slender stem of the wine-glass; but his arm trembled more than that of the most hardened toper in the group before him. He had been trembling in the presence of that squad of tyrants--those leer-eyed grinning debauchees, who seemed to be opening the gate of hell, and bidding him enter.

"Tom Somers," said the still small voice which had spoken to him a thousand times before in the perils and temptations through which he had passed, "you have behaved yourself very well thus far. You have been promoted for bravery on the battlefield; and now will you cower in the presence of this brilliant brawler, and these weak-minded, cowardly tipplers? What would your mother say if she could see you now, with your shaking hand fastened to the wine-cup? What would Lilian Ashford say? Dare you drink the health of Emmie Guilford in such a place as this? You should have smote the lips that mentioned her name in such a presence!"

He drew back his hand from the glass. His muscles tightened up, as they had on the bloody field of Williamsburg. Tom Somers was himself again.

"Come, Somers, you don't drink," added the captain sarcastically.

"No, I thank you; I never drink," he answered resolutely, as he cast a steady glance of pity and contempt at the bloated crew who had been reveling in his embarrassment.

"You won't refuse now?"

"Most decidedly."

"Lieutenant Somers, I took you for a young man of pluck. I'm disappointed. You will pardon me, my dear fellow; but I can't help regarding your conduct as rather shabby."

"I never drink, as I have said before, and I do not intend to begin now. If I have been shabby, I hope you will excuse me."

"Certainly I will excuse you, when you atone for your folly, and drink with me."

The spectators laughed, and evidently thought the captain had made a point.

"Then I can never atone for my folly, as you call it," replied Somers, his courage increasing as the trial demanded it.

"What would Lord Raglan have said if I had refused to drink his Sicily Madeira?"

"Very likely he would have said just what you said; but there would have been no more sense in it then than now."

"Bully for young 'un!" said a seedy dandy, whose love of fancy drinks had made a compromise with his love of dress.

"I will leave it to these gentlemen to decide whether I have not spoken reason and good sense."

"I will leave you and these *gentlemen* to settle that question to suit yourselves, and I will bid you good-evening," said Somers, rising from his chair.

The unpleasant emphasis which he placed upon the word "gentlemen" created a decided sensation among the group of idlers; and, as he stepped from behind the table, he was confronted by a young man with bloodshot eyes and bloated cheeks, but dressed in the extreme of fashion.

"Sir, you wear the colors of the United States Army," said the juvenile tippler; "but you can't be permitted to insult a gentleman with impunity."

Lieutenant Somers wanted to laugh in the face of this specimen of bar-room chivalry, for he forcibly reminded him of a belligerent little bantam-rooster that paraded the barnyard of his mother's cottage at Pinchbrook; but he was prudent enough not to give any further cause of offense. Bestowing one glance at this champion of the tippler's coterie, he turned aside, and attempted to move towards the door.

"Stop, sir," continued the young man, who plainly wanted to make a little capital out of a fight, in defense of the dignity of his friends. "You can't go without an apology, or--or a fight," added the bully, shaking his head significantly, as he placed himself in front of the young lieutenant.

"What am I to apologize for?" asked Somers.

"You insulted the whole party of us. You intimated that we were no gentlemen."

"I haven't spoken to any of you since I came in," protested Somers. "I never had anything to do with you, and I don't know whether you are gentlemen or not."

"You hear that, gentlemen!" added the bully.

"I think I have said all that is necessary to say; with your leave I will go," said Somers.

"Stop, sir!" snarled the young ruffian, putting his hand on the lieutenant's collar.

"Take your hand off!" said he sternly.

The fellow complied.

"This thing has gone far enough, sir," said Captain de Banyan, stepping between Somers and his assailant. "Lieutenant Somers is my friend; and, if you put the weight of your little finger upon him, I'll annihilate you quicker than I did a certain Austrian field-marshal at the battle of Solferino. Gentlemen, permit me to apologize for my inexperienced friend if he has uttered any indiscreet word."

"He must apologize!" blustered the young ruffian. "He says we are no gentlemen. Let him prove it."

"You have proved it yourself, you little ape," replied the captain, as he stepped up to the bar, and paid his reckoning, bestowing no more attention upon the ruffled little bully than if he had been a very small puppy; which perhaps he was not, by a strict construction of terms.

"I demand satisfaction!" roared the flashy little toper. "Apologize, or fight!"

"Neither, my gay and festive lark," said the captain with abundant good humor, as he took Somers's arm, and sauntered leisurely towards the door. "Now, my dear fellow, we will go and hear what Lieutenant-Colonel Staggerback has to say about the battle of Bull Run. I was in that action, and rallied the Fire Zouaves when Colonel Ellsworth was killed."

"Colonel Ellsworth! He wasn't killed at Bull Run!" exclaimed Somers, astonished beyond measure at the singular character which his companion was developing.

"You are right; he was killed at Ball's Bluff."

"I think not; but were you at Bull Run?"

"Certainly I was. I was on General Fremont's staff."

"Were you, indeed? Whew!"

"What may be the precise meaning of that whistle? Do you think I was not there?"

"Well, I don't remember to have seen you there?"

"Very likely you did not; but you will call to mind the fact, that things were rather mixed up in that action. But never mind that: we will talk those things over when we get down upon the Peninsula, and have nothing else to think about. Do you really mean to say, my dear fellow, that you never drink at all?"

"I do not."

"Well, I have heard of a man climbing up to the moon on a greased rainbow; but I never heard of an officer before that didn't drink."

"I'm afraid you haven't been very careful in the choice of your companions. I know a great many that never taste liquor under any circumstances."

"It may be so; and I am willing to confess that I have found one. I wouldn't have believed it before if I had read it in the Constitution of the United States. I owe you an apology, then, for letting on in that saloon. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, my dear fellow; but I thought you were joking."

"I hope you will not repeat the experiment, then; though I shall consider myself fair game if I ever enter another rum-shop," replied Somers.

They proceeded to the place designated for the lecture; and Captain de Banyan betrayed his interest in that memorable battle, where he had served on the staff of General Fremont, by going to sleep before the eloquent "participant" had got half-way through the exordium. Lieutenant Somers listened attentively until he was satisfied that Colonel Staggerback either was not in the battle, or that he had escorted "Bull Run Russell" off the field.

When the lecture was finished, Somers awakened his edified companion, and they returned to the hotel; though the captain hinted several times on the way that the "elephant" could be seen to better advantage in New York than in any other city in the Union. The young lieutenant had an utter disgust for the elephant, and took no hints. Before he retired that night, he thanked God, more earnestly and devoutly than usual, that he had been enabled to pass unscathed through the fires of temptation. He was still in condition to look his mother in the face.

CHAPTER V

ON THE SKIRMISH LINE

In the morning our travelers resumed their journey, more refreshed and in better condition for service than if they had spent the evening in chasing the "elephant" from one to another of the gilded dens of dissipation with which the metropolis abounds. In spite of his errors and sins, Somers could not help liking his dashing companion. He was a dangerous person; but his enthusiasm was so captivating, that he could not close his heart against him. But, while he liked the captain, he hated his vices.

They stopped in Philadelphia only long enough to dine, and in Baltimore only long enough for supper; arriving at Washington in the evening. Captain de Banyan again proposed to "go round;" which, rendered into unmistakable English, meant to visit the drinking-houses and gambling-saloons of the city, to say nothing of worse places. Lieutenant Somers had grown wise by experience; and no amount of persuasion could induce him to leave the hotel. It was horrible to him to think of spending even his leisure time in the haunts of dissipation, when his country was bleeding from a thousand wounds; when his gallant comrades in the Army of the Potomac were enduring peril and hardship in front of the enemy. He had no taste for carousing at any time, and every fiber of his moral nature was firmly set against the vices which lured on his reckless companion.

Lieutenant Somers stayed at the hotel that evening, listening to the conversation of the officers who had been at the front within a few days. The great battle of Fair Oaks had been fought during his absence, and there was every prospect that the most tremendous operations of the war would soon commence. He listened with the deepest interest to the accounts from the army, and needed none of the stimulus of the bar-room or the gambling-saloon to furnish him with excitement. He was soon to be an actor in the momentous events of the campaign; and the thought was full of inspiration, and lifted him up from the gross and vulgar tastes of his companion.

Before noon the next day, somewhat against the inclination of Captain de Banyan, the two officers were on board a steamer bound down the river. After some delays, they arrived at White House, on the Pamunkey River; and then proceeded by railroad nearly to the camp of the regiment, at Poplar Hill, in the very depths of White Oak Swamp.

"My blessed boy!" shouted Sergeant Hapgood when Lieutenant Somers appeared in the camp.

The veteran rushed upon him, and, not content to shake his hand he proceeded to hug him in the most extraordinary manner.

"I am glad to see you, Hapgood! How have you been since I left?" said Somers.

"First-rate! Bless my withered old carcass, Tom, but I thought I never should see you again. Why, Tom, how handsome you've grown! Well, you'll be a brigadier one of these days, and there won't be a better-looking officer on the field. Dear me, Tom--- Beg pardon; I forgot that you are an officer; and I mustn't call you Tom any more."

"Never mind that, uncle," added Somers, laughing. "It would hardly be good discipline for a sergeant to call an officer by a nickname; but we will compromise, and you shall call me Tom when we are not on duty, and there is no one within hearing."

"Compromise! Don't never use that word to me. After we fit the battle of Bull Run, I gouged that word out of my dictionary. No, sir! You are a leftenant now; and I shall allus call you Leftenant Somers, even if there ain't nobody within ten mile of us."

"Just as you please, uncle; but, whatever you call me, we shall be just as good friends as we ever were."

"That's so, Leftenant Somers."

"Precisely, Sergeant Hapgood."

"Now, what's the news in Pinchbrook?" asked the veteran.

But, before Somers had a chance to tell the news from home, he was welcomed to the camp, and cheered, by officers and men; and his account of what had transpired in Pinchbrook during his thirty days' furlough was eagerly listened to by a large and attentive audience. He received in return a full history of the regiment during his absence. Though the narrative of sundry exciting events, such as forays upon pig-sties, poultry-yards, and kitchen-gardens, was highly amusing, there was a tale of sadness to tell--of deaths by disease and on the battlefield.

Many cheerful hearts that were beating with life and hope a few weeks before, were now silent in the grave--the soldier's mausoleum in a strange land. But soldiers have no time to weep over a dead past; they must live in the hope of

a glorious future; and when they had dropped a tear to the memory of the noble and the true who had fallen on the field or died in the hospital, victims of the pestilential airs of the swamp, they laughed as merrily as ever, careless of Death's poised arrows which were always aimed at them.

Captain de Banyan took his place in the regiment, where Somers found that he was prodigiously popular, even after a few hours' acquaintance with his new command; but who he was, where he came from, and how he had procured his commission, was a mystery to officers and men. He told tremendous stories about the Crimea and the Italian war; and now for the first time intimated that he was the only survivor of the company which led the advance at the storming of Chapultepec, in the Mexican war. However much the officers enjoyed his stories, it is not probable that all of them believed what they heard.

Lieutenant Somers was perfectly familiar with the company and battalion drill; and, having quick perception and abundant self-possession, he was competent at once to perform his duties as an officer. He had no vices to be criticized by the men, who respected him not only for his bravery on the battlefield, but for his good moral character; for even the vicious respect the virtues which they practically contemn. Being neither arbitrary nor tyrannical, he was cheerfully obeyed; and his company never appeared better than when, by the temporary absence of his superior, it was under his command.

He was, however, allowed but a short time to become acquainted with the routine of the new duty before he was summoned to participate in those tremendous events which have passed into history as at once the most brilliant and disastrous operations of the war; brilliant in that our gallant army was almost invariably victorious, disastrous in that they were the forerunners of the ultimate failure of a hopeful campaign. The victory at Fair Oaks had raised the hopes of that brave, thinking army.

The picket-lines were within a few miles of Richmond, and the soldiers were burning with enthusiasm to be led against the enemy in front of them. They were ready to lay down their lives on the altar of their bleeding country, if the survivors could grasp the boon of peace within the buttressed walls of the rebel capital--peace that would hurl to the ground the defiant traitors, and insure the safety and perpetuity of free institutions. The notes of victory, those thinking soldiers believed, would reverberate through the coming ages, and point an epoch from which America would date her grandest and most sublime triumphs.

But not then was the great rebellion to be overthrown; for not yet had the leaven of Liberty leavened the whole lump; not yet had the purposes of a mysterious Providence been accomplished; and the brave men who sighed for victory and peace in the swamps of the Chickahominy were doomed to years of blood and toil, of victory and defeat, as they marched on, alike through both, to the consummation of a nation's glorious triumph, not over paltry armies of arrogant traitors, but over the incarnation of Evil, over Heaven-defying institutions, whose downfall established forever principles as eternal as God Himself.

Lieutenant Somers was filled with the spirit of the army. He felt that the salvation of his country depended upon the valor of that army; and, impressed with the magnitude of the interests at stake, he was resolved to do his whole duty. With cheerful alacrity he obeyed the summons which brought Grover's brigade into line of battle on the morning of the eventful 25th of June. What was to be accomplished was not for him to know; but forward moved the line through the swamp, through the woods, through the pools of stagnant waters up to the hips of the soldiers.

Impressed by the responsibility of his position, Lieutenant Somers encouraged the weak as they struggled through the mire on their trying march, and with fit words stimulated the enthusiasm of all. After a march of about a mile, a heavy skirmish line was thrown out, which soon confronted that of the rebels.

"Now, Somers, my dear fellow, the concert is about to open," said Captain de Banyan. "By the way, my boy, this reminds me of Magenta, where----"

"Oh, confound Magenta!" exclaimed Somers.

"Why, my dear fellow, you are as petulant as a belle that has lost her beau."

"You don't propose to tell us a story about Magenta at such a time as this, do you?"

"Well, I confess I have a weakness in that direction. Magenta was a great battle. But I'm afraid you are a little nervous," laughed the captain.

"Nervous? Do you think I'm a coward?" demanded Somers.

"I know you are not; but you might be a little nervous for all that."

At that instant, the sharp crack of a single rifle was heard, and Somers observed a slight jerk in the brim of the captain's felt hat.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Captain de Banyan as he took off his hat, and pointed to a hole through which the rifle-ball had

sped its way. "I'll bet a month's pay that fellow couldn't do that again without making a hole through my head. But that's a singular coincidence. That's precisely the place where the first bullet went through my hat at Solferino. At Magenta--ah! I see him," added the captain, as he took a musket from the hands of one of his men. "I'll bet another month's pay that reb has fired his last shot."

As he spoke, he raised the gun to his shoulder, and fired up into one of the trees. A crashing of boughs, a rattling of leaves followed; and a heavy body was heard to strike the ground.

"You owe me a month's pay, Somers," continued Captain de Banyan, as he handed the musket back to the soldier.

"I think not," replied the lieutenant, trying to be as cool as his companion. "I never bet."

"Just so. I forgot that you were an exceedingly proper young man."

The skirmish-line, which had paused a moment for an observation to be taken, now moved forward again. The rebel skirmishers were discovered, and the order was given to fire at will. The enemy's sharpshooters were posted in the trees, and they began to pour in a galling fire upon a portion of the line.

"Steady, my men!" said Somers, when the firing commenced. "Gunpowder's expensive; don't waste it."

"Not a single grain of it, Leftenant Somers," added Sergeant Hapgood.

"There, uncle!--up in that tree!" said Somers, pointing to a grayback, who was loading his rifle, about twenty feet from the ground.

"I see him!" replied the sergeant as he leveled his piece, and fired.

The rebel was wounded, but he did not come down; and the captain of the company ordered his men to move forward. From the thunder of the artillery and the rattle of musketry, it was evident that heavy work was in progress on the right and left.

"Forward, men!" said Somers, repeating the order of Captain Benson.

The men were scattered along an irregular line, and firing into the bushes, which partially concealed the rebel skirmishers. Somers's platoon advanced a little more rapidly than the rest of the line, being favored with a few rods of dry ground. He had urged them forward for the purpose of dislodging three sharpshooters perched in a large tree.

"Come down, rebs!" shouted Somers, as he reached the foot of the tree, and told half a dozen of his men to point their guns towards them.

"What d'ye say, Yank?" demanded one of them.

"Will you come down head first, or feet first? Take your choice quick!" replied the lieutenant.

"As you seem to be in earnest, we'll come down the nateral way."

They did come down without a more pressing invitation, and were disarmed, ready to be sent to the rear.

CHAPTER VI

THE REBEL SHARPSHOOTERS

"Lieutenant Somers, I don't think I can stand it much longer," said Phineas Deane, a private, who had joined the regiment a few days before the battle, as he saluted his officer.

"Can't stand what?"

"The fact on't is, lieutenant, I'm sick. I haven't felt well for two or three days. I come out here to fight for my country, and I want to do some good. I might help take them prisoners back, if you say so."

"Sick, are you? What's the matter?"

"I've got a bad pain in the bowels," replied Phineas, as he placed himself on the right side of a tree, and glanced uneasily in the direction of the rebel skirmish line. "I'm subject to sich turns, but allus git over 'em if I have a chance to lay down for a few hours."

"Oh, well, you can lie down here!" added Somers, who understood the case pretty well.

"What! down here in the mud and water? Wal, that would be rather steep for a sick man," said Phineas, with a ghastly smile, as he glanced again towards the enemy.

"I will get some medicine for you. Here, uncle, let me have one of your powders," continued the lieutenant, addressing old Hapgood.

"Sartin; they've done me heaps of good, and I'm sure they're just the thing for that man."

Somers took one of the powders, and opened the paper.

"Now, my man, open your mouth, and let me give you this medicine," he added.

"What kind of medicine is it?"

"It'll make you kinder sick to the stomach; but it'll cure you in less'n half an hour."

"Well, lieutenant, I don't know as I want to take any medicine," answered poor Phineas, who was not prepared for this active treatment; though he would have taken it quick enough if he could be sent to the rear. "I guess I don't keer about takin' on it."

"You needn't, if you don't want to get well."

"I only want to go back to camp, and lay down for a spell."

"We can't spare you just yet, Phineas; but, if you don't stir yourself, you will lie down here somewhere, and never get up again," added Somers, as a shower of bullets passed over their heads. "Forward, boys!"

The captain detailed a couple of men to conduct the prisoners to the rear, and the company pressed forward. The rebel sharpshooters were dislodged from the trees; a few prisoners were captured; but the heavy fighting and the heavy losses fell upon other portions of the line. The rebels had been forced back, and the movement seemed to be a success. Half the regiment moved out of the woods, while the rest remained under the trees; when a halt was ordered. Somers found himself near an old house, behind which a number of rebel sharpshooters had concealed themselves for the purpose of picking off the Union soldiers.

The firing in the immediate vicinity had diminished, though the din of battle resounded on both sides. The boys were rather nervous, as men are when standing idle under fire; but it was the nervousness of restrained enthusiasm, not of fear, unless it was in the case of invalid Phineas, and a very few others whose physical health had not been completely established.

"Well, Somers, my dear boy, how do you get on?" asked Captain de Banyan, as he sauntered leisurely up to the lieutenant, whose command stood next to his own.

"First-rate; only I should like to have something a little more active than standing here."

"It takes considerable experience to enable a man to stand still under fire. When I was at the battle of Alma, I learned that lesson to a charm. We stood up for forty-two hours under a fierce fire of grape and canister, to say nothing of musketry."

"Forty-two hours!" exclaimed Somers. "I should think you would all have been killed off before that time."

"In our regiment, only one man was killed; and he got asleep, and walked in his dreams over towards the enemy's line."

"Captain, you can tell a bigger story than any other man in the army," said Somers, laughing.

"That's because I have seen more of the world. When you have been about as much as I have, you will know more about it."

"No doubt of it."

"I should be very happy to be more actively employed just now; but I am very well contented where I am."

The position they occupied enabled the two officers to see some sharp fighting along the line. Through an opening at the right, they saw a rebel regiment, wearing white jackets, or else stripped to their shirts, march at double-quick, in splendid order, with arms at "right shoulder shift," to the scene of action. It was probably some volunteer body from Richmond, whom the ladies of the rebel capital had just dismissed, with sweet benedictions, to sweep the "foul Yankees" from the face of the earth. They were certainly a splendid body of men; and the ladies might well be proud of them. They went into the field in good style, with the blessings of the fair still lingering fondly in their ears. But one volley from the veterans of the Army of the Potomac was enough for them, and they gave way, running off the field in wild disorder, threading their way in terror through the bushes, every man for himself. It is not likely that they were welcomed back from the gory field by the frothy feminine rebels of Richmond.

"That's just the way the Russians ran at Palestro!" exclaimed Captain de Banyan, as he watched the exciting scene.

"The Russians at Palestro!" added Somers, "I think you have got things a little mixed, captain."

Before this difficult question could be settled, Captain de Banyan was ordered to take a sufficient force, and drive out the rebels who were skulking behind the old house.

"Somers, you shall go with me," said he, when he had received his orders from the colonel. "We'll do a big thing, if there is any chance."

"I am ready for anything, big or little, captain," replied Somers heartily. "What shall I do?"

"March your men over by that little knoll, and come round on the other side of the house; I will move up in another direction, and we will bag the whole squad. But mind you, Somers, the enemy are round that way; don't let them gobble you up or lay you out."

"I will do the best I can, captain."

"Angels could do no more."

The lieutenant advanced, with the men detailed for the purpose, towards the hillock. By taking a circuitous route, he avoided the observation of the rebels behind the house, and reached the other side of the knoll, where, behind the friendly shelter of a clump of bushes, he was enabled to survey the ground. Not more than a quarter of a mile distant he discovered the rebel breastworks. It was about the same distance to the house.

Between the knoll and the house there was a small patch of wheat, which, by some chance, had escaped the havoc of foraging parties. Though the grain was not full-grown, it would afford concealment to his men. In order to reach it, he must expose his men to a volley from the rifle-pits, or from any body of rebels which might be posted in the vicinity. He could not afford to lose a single man, and he was perplexed to determine how he should overcome the distance between the wheat-field and the knoll.

It seemed to him very singular that he had not already been fired upon; and he concluded that it was because his party had been mistaken for rebels, or because some of their troops were between him and the Union lines. Whether the enemy had been deceived or not, he was fully determined to afford them no further information in regard to his politics, if any of them had seen him. He therefore ordered his men to take off their coats, which some of them had done before they started on the expedition. The blue trousers could not be so easily disposed of; but as some of the boys had straw hats, some felt, and some caps, it would have been hard to determine what they were at the distance of a quarter of a mile, especially as some of the Confederates wore the plundered clothing of the Union army.

After instructing his force in regard to their future conduct, he marched them boldly into the open space. To assist the deception, he directed one of his men to halt occasionally, and point his musket in the direction of the Union pickets. Not a shot was fired at them; and when the young lieutenant reached the wheat-field he fancied that he was clever enough for any brigadier in the rebel army.

It was desirable that the rebel sharpshooters at the house should not be alarmed; and, when his men reached the grain, Somers ordered them to get down upon their hands and knees, and creep cautiously towards the point to be assailed. The lieutenant, like a good officer, led the way himself, and had advanced about half the distance to be accomplished, when he heard a rustling noise in the grain before him. It was an ominous sound, and he paused to take an observation.

He could not see anything without standing up; and, as he was within twenty rods of the house, it was necessary to avoid exposing himself.

From whatever source the sounds proceeded, it was just as safe to advance as it was to retreat; and he decided to go forward. With the utmost caution, he continued to creep along through the wheat; but he was careful to assure himself that his men's muskets and his own revolver were in condition for instant use. After he had gone a few rods farther, the sounds were more apparent; and, with no little consternation, he heard voices, rich with an unmistakable Southern accent.

"I tell you, more of our fellers is coming through the grain. You mought hear 'em, ef you weren't deafer'n a dead nigger."

"I heerd 'em. You kin bet yer life they're some of our pickets. Howsomever, I'm gwine to see."

"Hush, my men! don't speak a word!" whispered the young lieutenant. "Lie flat on the ground."

The rebels were nearer than he had supposed; for, as he turned from his men, he discovered a wiry grayback, with the chevrons of a sergeant on his arms, trying to stare him out of countenance. The fellow did not look wholesome; and Somers was in doubt whether to blow his brains out, or let things take their natural course.

"Who mought you be?" demanded the grayback, exhibiting more curiosity than of fear in his dirty face.

"One of the people," replied Somers, disposed to avoid a direct issue. "Who are you?"

"I'm one of the people too," grinned the rebel.

"I see you are; and I suppose you belong to the army, don't you?"

"Bet your life I do."

"Of course you won't object to telling me which army you belong to, as there may be some difference of opinion between us."

"Tain't no use to ask a officer dressed in blue, and lookin' as spruce as you be, whar he kim from. I say, Yank, what are you uns doin' in hyar?"

"Only taking a look."

"You're as civil as a Mobile dancin'-master; and I axes yer, very perlite, to surrender."

"How many men have you got, reb?" demanded the lieutenant, as he put his hand on his revolver.

"See hyar, Yank; play fair. You uns allers cheat playin' poker. Don't tech yer shooter yet," replied the grayback coolly, as he thrust the muzzle of his gun in the lieutenant's face. "Two kin play at that game, and your wife or mine will be a lone widder quicker'n a coon kin wink at the moon. I've got seven men," he added.

"I have twenty-three," said Somers.

"Then yer kin whip us if yer be Yanks; for three of you uns can just lick one of we uns."

"That's good logic. Will you surrender, or fight?" demanded Somers.

"Let me count your men. I surrender," he continued, after he had stood up, and counted the Union soldiers. "Here's my shooter; fair play, even with Yanks."

Leaving a guard of eight men with his prisoners when they were disarmed, Somers hastened forward to complete his mission.

CHAPTER VII

AN EXPEDITION IN FRONT

The affair in the wheat-field had been conducted very quietly, and apparently had not attracted the attention of any of the rebels in the vicinity. During the brief parley, the thunder of the battle had sounded on the right and left of the parties. The enemy were in force in their works, and it was believed that there were squads of pickets in every place of concealment which the ground afforded.

Somers was very much surprised to find that he was not molested, and made all possible haste to carry out the programme with which he had been intrusted by Captain de Banyan. Followed by the balance of his men, he crept carefully towards the house till he had reached the end of the grain-field. He could see about a dozen rebels skulking behind the building, all of them so intent upon getting a shot at the Union soldiers, that they paid no attention to the events transpiring in the rear of them; probably deeming it impossible for an enemy to approach in that direction.

The lieutenant had but fifteen men left to execute his part of the scheme, and there seemed to be double that number of graybacks lurking in and about the house. Everything depended upon his effecting the requisite junction with the force of the captain. As his superior had but a short distance to march, it was probable that he was already in position to support him; and he decided to make the attack without permitting any delay to rob him of the chances of success.

"Now, double-quick, forward!" shouted Somers, as he rose from the ground, and led the way to a position where he could intercept the retreat of the rebels.

Agreeably to the instructions previously given, his men stretched out into an extended line, and commenced firing at will upon the luckless graybacks who were in sight. It did not take them long to find out that they were assailed by a fire in the rear.

"Surrender!" shouted Captain de Banyan, who at this moment appeared at the head of his men.

The rebels were not disposed to accept this polite invitation, but began to fall back from the house in good order. They discharged their pieces at the force in front, and then started at a run to effect their escape in the opposite direction. They forgot for the moment that they had been fired upon from the rear, or else thought that the fire had been directed by some of their own people at the Yankees who had so suddenly attacked in front.

"Surrender!" shouted Lieutenant Somers, as the retreating rebels approached his line.

They halted at this unexpected summons. The officer in command of them took a hasty survey of the situation, and then ordered his troops to cut their way through the thin line between them and the rebel field-works. The commander of the rebel pickets was a gallant fellow; and, drawing his sword, he rushed towards the spot where the lieutenant was stationed. Discharging his pistol with the left hand at Somers, he dashed forward like a festive horse.

Both parties had discharged their guns, and there was no time to reload them. Some of the rebels had bayonets, and some had not; and, with the fury of their brave leader, they attempted to break their way through the line. A sharp but very irregular conflict ensued, the rebels clubbing their muskets or grappling with the Union soldiers, each according to his individual taste. As they were two to one of the Federals, they would certainly have won the field if Captain de Banyan had not promptly come to the rescue.

The excited rebel officer manifested a most persistent desire to revenge his misfortunes upon Lieutenant Somers. After he had fired his pistol twice, and one of the balls had passed through his opponent's cap, the latter, by a sudden dash, knocked the weapon from his hand with his sword. He then attempted to use his own sword, and, if Somers had not been a "master of fence," would probably have run him through the body. Some hard blows were struck with these weapons, and the age of chivalry, when men fought hand to hand with trusty blades, seemed to be revived. But the sword of the rebel officer was not so trusty as it ought to have been. It was not a regulation sword; and, while its owner was flourishing it most valiantly, the blade flew away from the handle.

"Now, surrender!" said Somers, out of breath with the violence of his exertions, as he drew from his belt the pistol which, being so hard pressed, he had not been able to use before.

"Never, sir! I don't surrender! I was sent here to fight, and not to surrender!" replied the officer, as proudly as though he had been in command of a beleaguered fortress, instead of a squad of two or three dozen men.

Somers had him at his mercy, and it seemed but little better than murder to shoot him in his defenseless state.

That was a bad mistake on his part; for the rebel officer at once proceeded to prove that he was no effeminate character, who depended upon a sword, pistol, or other weapon, to fight his battles with, but could, if occasion required, defend

himself with his naked arm. He sprang upon Somers with the ferocity of a tiger. The latter fired; but the sudden movement of the former impaired his aim, and the ball whistled harmlessly over the head of the rebel. The desperate officer attempted to gain possession of the pistol; but Somers, now thoroughly aroused to a sense of his own danger, sprang at the throat of his antagonist, and, by the fierceness of the dash, bore him to the earth. His victim struggled to escape; and, being a stronger man than the other, would certainly have succeeded, if Somers had not picked up his pistol, which lay on the spot where they fell, and struck a blow with the butt of it on the temple of the rebel. This effectually quieted him; but the lieutenant's little force were falling back before the furious assaults of the graybacks.

He had only time to get up before the rebels were upon him. At this interesting and critical moment, Captain de Banyan came up with his large force; and the enemy, finding themselves pressed in front and rear, gave up in despair. They were disarmed; and, those from the wheat-field being brought forward, the whole squad were marched in the direction of the Union line.

About one-half of Somers's men were wounded, though some but slightly. These were sent back. The rebel officer lay insensible upon the ground; but Somers, satisfied that he was only stunned, desired to carry him off, not only as a trophy of his prowess, but because such a desperate fellow would be less dangerous in a prison-camp than in the lines of the rebels. He directed two of his men to bear the insensible form to the house, whither they were followed by the remainder of the force.

"Somers, my dear fellow, give me your hand," said Captain de Banyan, as soon as the pressing business of the moment had been disposed of. "You have covered yourself with glory."

"Pooh!" replied Somers, trying to look indifferent. "I have only done my duty, and obeyed my orders."

"That's very true; but, if you had been weak in the knees, you couldn't very well have obeyed orders. Somers, you have done a big thing; and, in my judgment, you ought to be promoted."

"Promoted for that?"

"In the battle of Magenta----"

"Oh, confound the battle of Magenta!" exclaimed Somers, interrupting him. "I will give you a handsome present if you will never say Magenta to me again."

"Don't be petulant, my dear boy! You have got a sweet temper naturally, and I hope you won't spoil it."

"I am afraid you will spoil it for me."

"I was only saying pleasant things to you, and you fly off and roll yourself up in your dignity like a little hedgehog. By the way, Somers, don't you suppose that Senator Guilford will hear of this affair?"

"I hope not."

"Nor that little lady we left all used up with a broken arm?"

"I don't care whether she does or not."

"Or that other little lady who knits socks for soldiers that don't run away in battle?"

Somers blushed like a maiden, and his experienced companion saw that he had touched the tender spot in his heart. Very likely the captain would have said something more on this interesting subject, if the conversation had not been interrupted by their arrival at the old house. Here they were met by a messenger from the colonel, ordering the detachment to hasten back; for orders had come for the brigade to retire to their old position.

The wounded and the prisoners were conducted safely back to the line in the woods, where our party were warmly congratulated upon their decided success. The brigade fell back, but were immediately ordered forward again, and held the advanced position which had been so gallantly won. It was not a very comfortable place; for the soldiers stood over shoes in the water. Late in the evening, our regiment was relieved by another, and ordered back to the breastworks in the rear. It had lost but few men, though torrents of loyal blood had flowed on that eventful day.

The action of that day was the initial conflict of the seven-days' battles. General McClellan actually commenced his long-deferred operations against the city of Richmond. But the favorable moment had passed by, and even then the battalions of the rebels were gathering in readiness to be hurled upon our devoted army. While the regiment, whose fortunes have been more intimately connected with our story, was retiring from the pestiferous swamp, the commanding general received information of the approach of Stonewall Jackson. These proved to be sad tidings; for the anticipated triumphal march into the rebel capital was changed into a bloody but glorious retreat. The battles which were to be fought for a victorious advance were made to cover a disastrous defeat--disastrous to the campaign, though not to the army.

Fatigued, hungry and chilled by the night damps of the swamp, the regiment threaded its way through the intricacies of

the woods towards the breastworks in the rear. It was a dark and gloomy hour, though the *prestige* of victory dwelt in the souls of the gallant soldiers. The officers were not familiar with the ground; and with difficulty they found their way back to the old line.

"Well, Somers, how do you feel?" asked Captain de Banyan when the regiment was dismissed.

"I'm all worn out. I haven't got toughened to this kind of work yet," replied Somers.

"Don't give it up yet, my boy. We shall be in Richmond in less than a week, and then we will take rooms at the Spottswood House, and have a good time."

"Do you believe we shall ever get into Richmond, captain?"

"Certainly I do. Everything is working to my entire satisfaction. You feel a little blue, my boy; but it is only because you are tired. You will feel better in the morning."

"I am tired, but I am not blue. I am ready to do my duty, in victory or defeat. There has been an awful roar of guns all day, and no one can tell what the result of a battle will be."

"An awful roar of guns! 'Pon my word, I like that," laughed the captain. "Why, at Magenta----"

"Magenta again!" sneered Somers, who was heartily sick of that word.

"Yes, at Magenta! If you could only have heard the guns there! Why, there were seven thousand two hundred and forty-six pieces rattling away like mad on our side alone; and I believe the Russians----"

"Russians at Magenta again! I don't believe you were at the battle of Magenta any more than I was!" exclaimed Somers desperately.

"Do you mean to tell me that I lie?" asked the captain gravely.

"Go on with your story," said the lieutenant, fearing that he had said too much.

"Answer my question, if you please. You gave me the lie; did you not?"

"No; I didn't use that word."

"You said you didn't believe I was at the battle of Magenta."

"To be perfectly candid with you, I don't believe it; but I am tired, and want my supper," answered Somers, wishing to escape the issue which he had provoked.

"Fair play, my boy. You charged me with lying--indirectly--but not the less offensively on that account. Don't dodge the question."

"I haven't dodged it. I gave you my candid opinion that you were not present at Magenta; and I don't think there is an officer in the regiment who believes you were there."

"Isn't the word of an officer and a gentleman to be accepted?"

"Certainly, if he keeps within the bounds of reason; but when you talk about the Russians at Magenta, and over seven thousand cannons in a single army, we know that you are either 'drawing the long-bow,' or laboring under some strange delusion. Supper is ready."

"We can eat and talk too." And they did. "May I be allowed to ask, Lieutenant Somers, if you deem my statement inconsistent with reason?"

"To be sure I do. We have six guns to a battery; seventy-two hundred guns would make twelve hundred batteries. We have about one hundred and fifty men to a battery, which would make one hundred and eighty thousand men in the artillery arm alone; which is positively ridiculous. You said Russians----"

"Of course, that was a slip of the tongue. I meant Prussians," added the captain, entirely overwhelmed by the lieutenant's arithmetic, as well as by the laughter of Captain Benson and Lieutenant Munroe, who belonged to the mess.

"Worse yet," said Somers. "They were Austrians. Now, captain, you are a brave man, and a splendid fellow; but I think it is a great pity you should tell such abominably great stories."

"I accept the apology," laughed Captain de Banyan. "We will call it square, and turn in; for I think that we shall have hot work to-morrow."

CHAPTER VIII

AN ORDER FROM HEADQUARTERS

While Captain de Banyan and Lieutenant Somers were asleep, the commanding general received the intelligence of a movement on our right by the famous Stonewall Jackson. The position which had been gained by the advance at Oak Grove was abandoned, and the troops returned to their old line. The next day was heard the roar of the guns at Mechanicsville; and on that succeeding was fought the battle of Gaines's Mills--the only defeat in the field sustained by the Union army during that battle-week.

General McClellan then decided to change his base of operations; which, rendered into plain English, meant that he had been flanked, and was obliged to make the best move he could to save his army and material. The troops fought all day, and ran all night, till they reached the James River, where they were protected by the all-powerful gunboats. In the battles of Savage's Station, Glendale and Malvern Hills, they were victorious, and fought as no troops had ever fought before. As a retreat, it was successful; but it was the sad and inglorious end of the Peninsular campaign.

The whole brigade to which Lieutenant Somers belonged went on picket every third day. While the tremendous operations to which we have briefly alluded were taking place on the right, the soldiers on the left were leading their ordinary military life. But they were thinking men, and, while they were firm in their devotion to the good cause, they were disturbed by doubts and fears. They knew not, as they listened to the booming guns, whether they were in the midst of victory or defeat. Occasionally, they were shelled behind their breastworks; apparently for the purpose, on the part of the rebels, of keeping our forces from interfering with the work on the right.

The brigade went on picket, and here the troops were face to face with the enemy. Lieutenant Somers, by the illness of the captain and the absence of the first lieutenant, was in command of his company. But there was no chance to do anything to distinguish himself, except that steady and patient attention to duty which is the constant opportunity of every good officer.

"Well, captain, was there anything like this at Magenta?" asked Somers, as he met De Banyan.

"This is tame, Somers. Magenta was a lively scene."

"I fancy it will not remain tame much longer. We shall either be in Richmond as victors or prisoners within a few days."

"Don't croak, Somers. It will all come out right in the end."

"I have no doubt of that; but I feel just as though some big thing was going to happen."

"So do I; and I felt so just before the battle of Solferino. By the way, on the night before that battle, I captured a whole brigade with my single company, while I was out on picket-duty."

"Indeed!" laughed Somers.

"I'll tell you how it was."

"Don't take that trouble, captain; for I shall not believe you if you do."

"Do you mean to doubt my word, even before I utter it?" demanded the captain, apparently much hurt by the insinuation.

"Captain de Banyan, I wish I could persuade you to speak the truth at all times."

"Come, Somers, that's rather a grave charge; and, if it came from any other man than yourself, I should challenge him on the spot," added the captain, throwing back his head, and looking dignified enough to be the commander-in-chief.

"You may challenge me if you please; but let us be serious for a moment."

"I am serious, and have been all the time."

"You are a first-rate fellow, captain; I like you almost as well as I do my own brother."

"You are a sensible young man, Somers," replied De Banyan, slightly relaxing the rigid muscles of his face.

"You are a brave man, and as brilliant as you are brave. I have only one fault to find with you."

"What's that?"

"You will draw the long-bow."

"In other words, I will lie. Somers, you hurt my feelings. I took a fancy to you the first time I ever saw you, and it pains

me to hear you talk in that manner. Do you think that I, an officer and a gentleman, would stoop to the vice of lying?"

"You certainly do not expect any one to believe those wretched big stories you tell?"

"Certainly I do," replied the captain with dignity.

"But they contradict themselves."

"Perhaps you don't believe there ever was such an event as the battle of Magenta."

"Come, come, my friend; just slide off that high horse."

"Lieutenant Somers, my word has been doubted; my good faith maligned; my character for truth and veracity questioned."

"Yes, I know all that very well; but answer me one question, captain. Seriously and solemnly, were you at the battle of Magenta?"

"I decline to answer one who doubts my veracity. If I answered you in the affirmative, you would not believe me."

"I don't think I should; but, if you should answer me in the negative, I should have full faith in your reply."

"I cannot answer on those terms. Somers, I am offended. I don't know but that I am in duty bound to challenge you. Just after the battle of Magenta, I felt compelled to challenge a young officer who cast an imputation upon my word. We fought, and he fell. His brother challenged me then, and I had to put a bullet through his head. The family were Corsicans, I believe; and one after another challenged me, till they got down to fifth cousins; and I laid out fifteen of them—I think it was fifteen; I don't remember the exact number, but I could tell by referring to my diary. You are so precise and particular, that I want to give you the facts just as they are."

"You haven't the diary with you, I suppose?"

"Of course not; I couldn't carry a volume like that around with me. I only mention this circumstance to show you the sad results which sometimes follow in the wake of a duel."

"But I'm not a Corsican; and I don't think you need fear any such results in my case, if you should conclude to challenge me," answered Somers with abundant good nature.

"Now, seriously and solemnly, Somers, this doubting a comrade's word is a vicious habit. It shows that you have no confidence in what I say."

"That is precisely the truth; but I think you are responsible for the fact, not I. If you would only tell the truth----"

"Tell the truth! My dear fellow, you keep making the matter worse, instead of better."

"So do you; for, instead of abandoning your bad habit, you tell me an absurd story about killing fifteen men in a series of duels!"

"I told you I couldn't fix the exact number. You are too critical by half."

"I am not particular about the number; for I don't believe you killed even a single person in a duel. You are too good a fellow to do anything of the sort."

"Somers, I have been laboring to keep my temper; but I am afraid you will make me mad, if you keep on. I think we had better suspend this conversation before it leads to any unhappy results;" and the captain rose from the ground, and glanced in the direction of the enemy's pickets.

"The most unhappy result I could conceive of would be your continuing this bad practice of telling big stories," replied Somers, standing up by the side of his companion.

"No more; you add insult to injury, Somers."

"Really, captain, you injure yourself by this habit, and----"

Captain de Banyan, at this point of the conversation, suddenly turned round, and sprang upon the lieutenant, bearing him to the ground before the latter could even make a movement in self-defense. Together they rolled upon the earth, at the foot of the tree whose sheltering branches had protected them from the intense heat of the sun. Somers, as the reader already knows, was bold and belligerent before an attack; and, on the impulse of the moment, he proceeded to repel the sharp assault of his companion.

"If you fight a duel in that way, I am ready to take part in it," said he, his face red with anger. "Let go of me!"

"With pleasure, my dear boy," replied De Banyan, edging away from him.

"What do you mean by pitching into me in that way?" demanded Somers angrily.

"I have been trying this half hour to teach you a useful lesson; but you don't know who your best friends are."

"I think I do. Some of them tell the truth sometimes."

"Somers!" said the captain sternly.

"Captain de Banyan!" replied the lieutenant firmly.

"Do you see that hole in the tree?" continued Captain de Banyan, pointing to a fresh bullet-mark.

"I do."

"I only pulled you down to keep that rifle-ball from going through your head. I saw a rebel picket through the trees, ready to fire at us. The ball struck the tree before we struck the ground."

"Forgive me, captain. I did not understand the movement," replied Somers, extending his hand.

"With all my heart," replied the captain, taking the proffered hand. "We don't always know who our best friends are."

"Perhaps not; but I know that you are one of my best friends. You have just given me another reason for wishing you did not----" Somers hesitated, not thinking it exactly fair to reproach his companion for his vile habit, after he had rendered him such a signal service.

"Lie," added De Banyan, finishing the sentence.

"Perhaps it isn't exactly lying; you don't mean to deceive any one. At the worst, they are only white lies. Now, captain, don't you think you exaggerate sometimes?"

"Well, perhaps I do; my memory is rather poor. I don't carry my diary with me."

"Don't you think it would be better if you could confine yourself to the exact truth?" added Somers, who really felt a deep interest in his associate.

"I think it very likely it would; but things get a little mixed up in my mind. My memory is poor on details. Just after the battle of Magenta, while I was lying wounded on the ground, one of the emperor's staff rode up to me, and asked how many cannon my regiment had captured. To save my life, I couldn't tell whether it was two hundred or three hundred. My memory is very treacherous on details."

"I believe you are hopeless, captain," laughed Somers.

"Hopeless?"

"Why, you have told the biggest story that has passed your lips to-day."

"What, about the cannon?"

"Two hundred or three hundred! Why, your regiment captured all the guns the Austrians had!"

"Didn't I tell you I couldn't remember whether it was two hundred or three hundred? You are the most critical young man I ever met in the whole course of my life!"

"But two hundred would be an abominable exaggeration. Perhaps you meant muskets?"

"No; cannon."

"But, my dear captain, just consider for one moment. Of course the batteries were supported?"

"To be sure they were."

"Six guns to a battery would have made fifty batteries; and----"

"Oh, confound your statistics!" exclaimed the captain impatiently.

"But statistics enable us to see the truth. Now, captain, at the battle of Bunker Hill, I saw a man----"

"You?" demanded Captain de Banyan.

"I said so."

"Were you at the battle of Bunker Hill?"

"Didn't you see me there?"

"Come, come, Somers; you shouldn't trifle with the truth. I was not at the battle you speak of."

"But I was----"

"You! You were not born till sixty years after the battle of Bunker Hill."

"But I was--only illustrating your case."

"Here comes an orderly with something from headquarters," said Captain de Banyan, apparently as much rejoiced to change the conversation as the reader will be to have it changed.

The orderly proceeded to the position occupied by the field and staff officers of the regiment; and, a few moments later, came an order for Lieutenant Somers, with twenty of his men, selected for special duty, to report at the division headquarters.

"You are in luck, Somers; you will have a glorious opportunity to distinguish yourself," said Captain de Banyan, whose second lieutenant was ordered to the command of Somers's company.

"I don't know what it means," replied our lieutenant.

"Don't you, indeed?" added the captain with a smile. "Don't you know what special duty means? On the night before the battle of Solferino----"

"Excuse me, Captain de Banyan; but I am ordered to report forthwith," interrupted Somers, who had no desire to hear another "whopper."

The young lieutenant marched off, with his little force, to report as he had been directed. He knew his men well enough to enable him to make a good selection; and he was confident that they would stand by him to the last.

"Do you know Senator Guilford?" demanded the general, after Somers had passed through all the forms of reporting.

"I do, general," replied the lieutenant, with a fearful blush, and with a wish in his heart that the distinguished Senator had minded his own business.

"He speaks well of you, Lieutenant Somers," added the general.

"I am very much obliged to him for his kindness; but I never saw him but once in my life."

"He asks a favor for you."

"I am very much obliged to him; but I don't ask any for myself, and I hope you will not grant it. If any favors are bestowed upon me, I prefer to earn them myself."

"Good!" exclaimed the general. "But I assure you and Senator Guilford that no man in this division of the army will get a position he does not deserve. I assure you, Lieutenant Somers, I should have thrown the Senator's letter among the waste paper, if I had not known you before. I remember you at Williamsburg; and you did a pretty thing in the wheat-field yesterday. You are just the man I want."

"Thank you, sir; I should be very glad to prove that your good opinion is well founded."

Apart from others, and in a low tone, the general gave his orders to Lieutenant Somers to undertake a very difficult and dangerous scouting expedition.

"Before sundown you will be a prisoner in Richmond, or a first lieutenant," added the general as Somers withdrew.

CHAPTER IX

LIEUTENANT SOMERS CHANGES HIS NAME AND CHARACTER

Like the major-generals in the army, Lieutenant Somers had strong aspirations in the direction of an independent command. Like those distinguished worthies, no doubt, he felt competent to perform bigger things than he had yet been called to achieve in the ordinary routine of duty. He had the blood of heroes in his veins; and, in spite of all he could do to keep his thoughts within the limits of modesty, he found them soaring to the regions of the improbable and fanciful. His imagination led him a wild race, and pictured him in the act of performing marvelous deeds of valor and skill.

Fancy is a blind and reckless leader; and it gave our hero oftentimes a command which his reason would not have permitted him to accept. What boys, and even what men, think, when stimulated by ambition, would be too ridiculous to put upon paper. If their thoughts could be disclosed to the impertinent eye of the world, the proprietors would blushing disown and disclaim them.

Still, almost every live man and boy gives the reins to his fancy; and in the Army of the Potomac, we will venture to say, there were a hundred thousand privates and officers who permitted themselves to dream that they were brigadiers and major-generals; that they did big things, and received the grateful homage of the world. At any rate, Lieutenant Somers did, modest as he was, even while he felt that he was utterly incompetent to perform the duties incumbent on the two stars or the one star.

Experience had given him some confidence in his own powers; and there was something delightful in the idea of having an independent command. It was a partial, a very partial, realization of the wanderings of his vivid fancy. He felt able to do something which Lilian Ashford would take pleasure in reading in the newspapers; perhaps something which would prove his fitness for a brigadier's star at some remote period. Now, we have made all this explanation to show how Somers had prepared himself to accomplish some great thing. The mission with which he had been intrusted was an important one; and the safety of the whole left wing of the army might depend upon its faithful performance.

He was wrought up to the highest pitch of patriotic inspiration by the charge which had been laid upon him; and he was determined to bring back the information required of him, even if he had to fly through the air to obtain it. It was of no use to suggest impossibilities to a young man in such a frame of mind; he did not know the meaning of the word. To impress him with the importance of the duty intrusted to him, the general of division had given him a faint outline of the intended movements of the army. If the enemy massed his forces in this direction, it was of vital necessity that the general should know it.

Thus prepared and thus inspired, Lieutenant Somers marched his little force to the point from which he proposed to operate. On his right hand there was a dense wood, on the border of which extended one of the numerous cross-roads that checker the country. On his left was another piece of woods, terminating in a point about a quarter of a mile from the road and in the center of a valley.

On the hill beyond was the intrenched line of the rebels. In front of it, at the foot of the slope, was a line of rifle-pits, which were occupied by the rebel pickets. The hill and the woods concealed the operations of the enemy; and no signal station was high enough to obtain the necessary information. The woods on both sides of the open space were picketed by the rebels; and the rifle-pits in front were an effectual check to the advance of a small force, while a large one could not be sent up without bringing on a general engagement, which had been prohibited by the commanding general.

Lieutenant Somers surveyed the ground, and came to the conclusion that his chance of spending the night in Libby Prison was better than his chance of being made a first lieutenant. The rifle-pits had a chilling effect upon the fine dreams in which his fancy had indulged. He was not a grub, and could not burrow through the earth to the rebel lines; he had no wings, and could not fly over them. The obstacles which are so easily overcome in one's dreams appear mountain-high in real life. He looked troubled and anxious; but, having put his hand to the plow, he was determined not to turn back.

The best way to conquer a difficulty is to charge upon it; and this Somers decided to do, even though he had no well-defined plan for the accomplishment of his purpose. Avoiding the observation of the rebels in the rifle-pits, he moved round, and reached the point of woods on the left of the road.

"Excuse me, Lieutenant Somers," said Sergeant Hapgood with a military salute: "'tain't none o' my business, but I'd like to know where you are goin' to."

"Through this woods," replied Somers doggedly.

"You used to be a good boy, when you was a boy; and I hope you've said your prayers," replied old Hapgood, appalled at the prospect before his young friend.

"Don't you croak, uncle," added Somers.

"The rebels' pickets are up here, not twenty rods distant. Do you calculate to go through them, or over them?"

"Either--just as I can; but I am going through, somehow or other."

"It can't be done! Thunderation! you'll bring down the whole rebel army upon us! You don't think of going over there with only twenty men!"

"I do, uncle. I'm going over on that hill yonder, and I'm coming back again before night."

Hapgood tapped his forehead significantly with his finger to indicate that the young lieutenant had lost his senses.

"I was ordered to do it, and I am going to do it, uncle. You can set your mind at rest on that point."

"It can't be did!" said the old man positively. "I don't keer who told you to do it; it can't be did with less'n twenty thousand men. You will sacrifice yourself and all the rest of us."

"You may return to the camp, if you wish."

"Tom Somers--Lieutenant Somers," said the old man, much hurt by the words of the young officer, "you know I'm not afraid of anything; and I didn't expect you'd say that to me."

"Excuse me, uncle; I didn't mean it. Now, hear me a moment."

In a low tone, Lieutenant Somers told the sergeant the nature of his mission, and what depended upon its prompt and successful execution.

"He ought to have sent a division to do such a job," muttered the old man, taking off his cap, and scratching his bald head. "Howsomever, I'm ready to follow you wherever you choose to go."

"Forward, then," replied Somers; and they advanced cautiously through the woods till they came to a kind of bog-hole, beyond which they discovered the rebel pickets.

The party lay down on the ground, and crawled on the edge of the bog, till they obtained a fair view of the rebels.

"Now, uncle, the time has come, and my plan is formed," said Somers in a whisper. "When they discover you, retreat with the men as fast as you can. Fire on the rebels; but don't pay any attention to me."

"Where are you going?" demanded the old man.

"When you retire, I am going to roll into that grass. They will follow you; and, as soon as they have passed me, I shall move forward."

"I won't do anything of the sort. Thunderation! you are goin' to run right into the arms of the rebels."

"Obey my orders! That's all you have to do. I can take care of myself."

"Excuse me, Tom--Lieutenant Somers."

"I know all about it, uncle. You do what I tell you, and you shall have all the particulars to-night, when I return."

"Return! You will be in Libby, if you are not shot, by dark."

"If I am, leave that to me," replied Somers, as he rolled over into the long grass of the bog, and entirely concealed himself from the view of his own men. "Now fire one or two shots into the rebel picket and then retire."

Hapgood reluctantly obeyed the order; though he felt as though he was signing the death-warrant of his young friend by doing so. The bullets began to fly; but the sergeant took care to keep his men out of sight as they retreated. The enemy followed; for they always chase a retiring foe, and run from an advancing one. They reached the bog in which Somers was concealed, where one of the three fell before a ball which the lieutenant was sure had been directed by the practiced eye of the veteran sergeant. The other two swore at the calamity, and vowed vengeance on the Yankee who had done the deed.

Hapgood continued to retire, and led his foe to the very verge of the woods. In the meantime, the lieutenant emerged from his hiding-place. The first object that attracted his attention was the ghastly face of the dead rebel. The sight of him was not pleasant, but it was suggestive; and, without the loss of a moment, he dragged the body into the grass, and hastily removed the uniform from it. It was a loathsome task; but the necessity of the moment seemed to justify the act. Taking off his own uniform, he put on that of the dead rebel, who was fortunately about his own size. Rolling up his own clothing in as small a bundle as possible, he concealed it in the bog, at some distance from the place where the picket had fallen. Dragging the corpse to a quagmire, he sunk it beneath the muddy waters, and it passed from his view.

After taking the precaution to straighten up the long grass, which might have betrayed his movements, he advanced towards the rebel lines.

Lieutenant Somers felt that he was now actually embarked in his perilous venture. He was within the enemy's line, and in disguise. If discovered, he would be liable to the penalty of being a spy. But inasmuch as he did not intend to be discovered, he did not think it necessary to expend his nervous energy in a discussion of this question. Success was a duty to him; and he spent no time in considering the dark side of the picture.

He was excited, and he knew that he was excited. He knew that coolness and impudence were the essential elements of success in such an adventure; and when he had followed the woods nearly to the top of the hill, he sat down to recover his self-possession, and compose his nerves to their natural quietude. It was not a very easy matter. He had already arranged his plan of future operations, and he diligently set about the business of making his appearance correspond with his circumstances.

He felt that he was hardly dirty enough to be a rebel; so he rubbed his face, neck and hands with some dark-colored earth, ripped his pants and coat in sundry places, and otherwise disfigured his comely person, till Miss Lilian Ashford would not have known him, or if she had known him, would have been ashamed to acknowledge his acquaintance. Having completed this work to his entire satisfaction, he rose, and resumed his march towards the rebel line. He had advanced but a few paces before he felt something in the breast-pocket of his coat, which excited his curiosity. It was a diary which the dead soldier had kept from the time he entered the army.

Such a work would have been deeply interesting to the lieutenant at any time, but especially at the present, when he was sadly in want of the information which would enable him to personate the difficult part he had chosen to perform. Seating himself on the ground again, he was soon absorbed in the contents of the note-book. The owner's name was Owen Raynes; and from the diary Somers learned that he had been a clerk in Richmond when the war broke out; and that his father resided on the Williamsburg road, near Seven Pines, where the battle had been fought. Somers was alarmed at this information; for the young man must be well known in the neighborhood. Of course he could not assume the name and character of Owen Raynes.

Though the time was precious, he continued to read the diary till he came to an entry which excited his deep interest: "Poor Allan Garland was captured to-day by the Yankees; and I suppose they will torture and starve the poor fellow, as they have the rest of our boys who have fallen into their hands. We shall never meet again. He was a good fellow. He was on a scout."

Somers was deeply concerned about poor Allan Garland, who had fallen into the hands of the terrible Yankees, to be tortured and starved; and he turned back to the beginning of the diary to obtain further particulars in regard to this interesting person. Fortunately for history, and particularly for Lieutenant Somers, Owen Raynes had given a tolerably full account of his friend. They had been to school together in Union, Alabama, where Owen had an uncle, and where Allan resided. They were fast friends; and both agreed to enlist as volunteers in the Fourth Alabama, Colonel Bush Jones; for their schoolmates were mostly in this regiment.

When the regiment arrived at Richmond, Owen had not time to visit his father; for the troops were instantly ordered to Manassas, and he enrolled himself without discovering that his friend was not in the ranks. He was too sick to come with his comrades; "wrote letter to Allan" was a frequent entry in the diary, until June 18, 1862, when this record appears: "Allan joined the regiment to-day; has been sick about a year; is very well now; he is a handsome fellow. Sue shall be his wife, if I can bring it about; they have kept up a correspondence for three years; she never saw him, but she will like him."

"All right!" exclaimed Somers, as he closed the book, and put it in his pocket. "I am Allan Garland. Don't think I shall marry Sue, though, whoever she may be. I wonder if Lilian Ashford would object. I don't know as she would. Never mind; I am a soldier of the Fourth Alabama, Colonel Jones, just now. How are you, Allan Garland?"

He walked along towards the rebel lines, feeling in his pockets for further revelations. An old letter from Allan Garland rewarded his search. He spoke tenderly of Sue, who was Owen's sister.

"Sue wouldn't think I'm very handsome just now," said Somers, glancing at his dirty hands, and imagining his dirty face, as he continued to advance.

CHAPTER X

ALLAN GARLAND AND FRIENDS

Allan Garland, *nee* Somers, advanced confidently towards the rebel line. As he was to perform the leading part in the exciting drama about to be acted, he conducted himself with the utmost caution. Everything depended upon the amount of impudence he could bring to bear upon the case before him, and the skill with which he personated the part he had chosen. He knew of nothing, short of falling on the Fourth Alabama, which could disconcert him. Even if he did, there were only a few who knew the captured scout; and his chances were fair, even if the worst should befall him.

"Stand!" said a rebel sentinel on the breastwork of the line. "Who goes there?"

"Friend," replied Somers confidently.

"What's your name?"

"Allan Garland. Can you tell me where the Fourth Alabama is?"

"About four miles from here. Do you belong to the Fourth Alabama?"

"Well, I did before I was captured; I don't know where I belong now."

"Where d'ye come from?"

"Just got away from the Yankees. They gobbled me up about three weeks ago."

"Bully for you! Come in; you can report to the officer of the day."

Somers was entirely willing, and hastened in the direction indicated by the sentinel; and was soon ushered into the presence of Major Platner, brigade-officer of the day. He was a very pompous little man, and Somers saw his weakness as soon as he spoke. With a most profound bow, he answered the questions of the major, using the utmost deference in his tone and manner.

"How dare you present yourself before an officer of the day with such a dirty face?" demanded Major Platner.

"I hope your honor will pardon me; but I have just escaped from the Yankees, and have not had time to wash my face. If you please, sir, I will go and do it now. I thought I ought to come to you without any delay."

"You did right, young man," replied the major with a consequential flourish of the hand. "You were out scouting when you were taken?"

"Yes, sir."

Major Platner then proceeded to ask a great many questions in regard to the force and position of the Yankees; all of which Somers answered entirely in the interest of the Union party. He was very careful not to give a particle of information that could be useful to the rebels; at the same time avoiding any gross exaggerations which would throw discredit on his story.

"You seem to be a very intelligent and patriotic young man," added the officer. "I have heard some inquiries for a person of your description to-day."

"I have always endeavored to do my duty to my country," answered Somers, trying to blush under the compliment of the patronizing little major; "and I kept my eyes wide open while I was in the Yankee camps."

"I see you did. Your information is very definite, and, I doubt not, very reliable."

"My only desire has been to serve my country, sir," added Somers very modestly.

"Well, go and wash your face, so that we can see what color you are, and I will report your name to the general, who was inquiring for a useful person like yourself. I trust that you will have discretion enough not to mention anything that has passed between us."

"Certainly not, sir. I judge, from what you have said, that my poor services may be required for some special service."

"That is the idea which I intended to convey. In a word, the commander of this division wants information. You have just come from the Yankee lines, and you know where to look for the intelligence that will be of the most value to us."

"I think I do, sir."

"The fact that you have just made your way through the Yankee lines shows that you possess the necessary address."

"I thank you for your good opinion; and I assure you, sir, that I should be very glad to serve my country in any capacity in which she may require my humble labors."

"Very well, young man."

"A plan occurs to me now, by which I could easily enter the Yankee lines."

"Indeed! What is that?"

"When I ran through the enemy's pickets, they fired upon me, and one of them chased me. I brought him down with my pistol," replied Somers, producing the weapon, which he had taken the precaution to bring with him. "I know just where that Yankee lies now; I could borrow his uniform, and go in among the enemy without suspicion."

"Very well arranged, young man."

The major then directed an orderly to attend to the wants of the fugitive, and gave the latter orders to report to him within two hours. Somers washed his face, and partook of some cold bacon and corn bread, which constituted the staple of the rebel rations. He then told the orderly that he wanted to look round a little, and find his regiment, if he could; but was informed that the camp regulations did not permit any strolling about the camps. He suggested that the officer of the day would give him a pass, and he returned to the major to beg this favor. It was readily granted; and the time for him to report was extended to four hours, as his regiment was situated at some distance from the brigade camp, though it belonged to the same division.

Thus provided, Somers commenced his tour of observation. Of course, he had no intention of visiting the Fourth Alabama; for that would have been putting his head into the lion's mouth. We need only say, that he used his time to the best advantage for the country in whose service he had enlisted. He noted the brigades, regiments, and batteries of artillery, which he saw in his walk; and arranged a little scheme in his mind, by which he could remember the number of each.

In the course of his perambulations, he reached the Williamsburg road, and was on the point of extending his observations in the direction of the railroad, when he was stopped by a sentinel. He produced his pass, which the rebel soldier could not read; and he was conducted to the sergeant of the guard, who was listening to a conversation between a captain and an old man who appeared to be a farmer. They were bargaining about some forage which the captain wanted, and which the farmer was not disposed to sell.

"What have you there?" demanded the officer, as the sentinel brought in the doubtful case.

"Man with a pass."

"Your pass is good up to the Williamsburg road, and no farther," said the sergeant when he had read the document.

"I didn't know where the lines were," replied Somers, returning the pass to his pocket.

"Where are you going?" asked the officer, apparently not satisfied with the appearance of the "man with a pass."

"Looking for my regiment, sir," replied Somers, giving the military salute; which excess of politeness, however, was lost on the matter-of-fact captain.

"What regiment?"

"The Fourth Alabama."

"The Fourth Alabama! What are you doing over here, then?"

"I am a stranger in these parts; and I don't know where to look. I have just escaped from the Yankees, and don't know much about this part of the country."

"What is your name?"

"Allan Garland, sir."

"What!" exclaimed the old farmer, suddenly becoming interested in the conversation.

"In my opinion, you are a deserter," added the officer in a crabbed tone. "I advise you to arrest him, sergeant. That pass is good for nothing on this road."

"No, captain, he is not a deserter," interposed the farmer with energy. "I know him well; and he is as true and patriotic a young man as there is in the Southern Confederacy."

Somers looked at the farmer with astonishment. He did not remember to have seen him before; and he could not account for the interest he manifested in his case.

"What do you know of him, Mr. Raynes?"

Mr. Raynes! That explained the matter; and Somers could not help shuddering in the presence of the man whose son he had buried in the soft mud of the bog.

"He is my son's friend," replied the farmer. "Both of them belong to the Fourth Alabama."

"That may be, Mr. Raynes; but do you suppose a man looking for the Fourth Alabama would be wandering about here?"

"He is a stranger in Virginia. He came on from Alabama only a few weeks since, and was captured while out on a scouting expedition. I assure you, captain, it is all right; I will vouch for him."

"Very well, Mr. Raynes! If the sergeant is willing to take your word for it, I have nothing further to say. Indeed, it is no business of mine; but our soldiers are allowed to walk over to the enemy, or back into the woods, without let or hindrance. It's a disgrace to the service. Major Platner gives this man a pass to go all over the country. Do as you please, sergeant."

"I mean to," replied the sergeant in an undertone; for he was not pleased at this interference on the part of a commissary of subsistence, who had nothing whatever to do with the affair. "I am satisfied," he added aloud.

"Allan, I am very glad to see you; and I thank God that you have been enabled to escape from the Yankees. Have you seen Owen since you got back?"

Somers trembled at the question; and, while he did not dare to tell the old man the truth, the thought of telling him a falsehood was utterly repulsive to his nature. It was easy enough to deceive the enemy in war--his duty called upon him to do this; but to deceive an old, fond father, in regard to a true and devoted son, seemed terrible to him.

"He was out on picket when I came through," he replied after some hesitation.

"Then you did not meet him. He will be delighted to see you again; for really the boy is as fond of you as he is of his sister."

Somers found himself unable to answer to the warm congratulations of the old man, or to enter into the spirit of the conversation. The staring, death-sealed eyes of Owen Raynes haunted him; and, when he attempted to reciprocate the friendly sentiments of the doting father, his heart seemed to rise up in his throat, and choke his utterance. The only consolation he could derive from the remembrance of the scene in the woods was in the fact that he had not taken the life of Owen Raynes himself. He wore his clothes, and had his diary and letters in his pocket.

"You are very sad, Allan! I should think you would be happy to escape from the Yankees. They would have starved you to death in time."

"I think not, sir! They are not so cruel as that," added Somers, who desired to remove such a reproach from the mind of the old man.

"Perhaps they would not willingly starve their prisoners; but I don't see how they could avoid it. They say that the people of the North are suffering terribly for the want of food. In New York, the laboring classes have attacked the banks and the flour-stores, urged on by hunger. There will be terrible times in the North before many months have gone by. I pity the people there, though it is their own fault. I hope God will be merciful to them, and spare them from some of the consequences of their own folly. I am thankful that you have escaped from them."

"I don't think they are quite so badly off as you say," answered Somers, provoked by this view of the condition and resources of the North. "I have talked with a great many Yankee soldiers, and they say that plenty abounds in all the Northern States."

"They would tell you so. They are deceived by their officers."

"That's the way it is done," added the rebel sergeant, who had been listening to the conversation.

"But I saw what rations these soldiers have. They live like lords."

"That's the very thing which will starve all the people in the North. Their big armies will eat them out of house and home in a few months, Allan."

"I think not, Mr. Raynes."

"A gentleman from New York, who got through the lines last week, says the grass is a foot high in some of the streets of New York. The people can't find anything to do, and are cursing their rulers for plunging them into this horrid war."

"I think the gentleman from New York lied," replied Somers with a smile. "I saw the New York papers every day while I was in the Yankee lines; and they are full of advertisements, which look like business. Why, in one paper I saw four columns of 'Wants,' in which people advertised for farm-laborers, house-servants, clerks and sailors."

"Ah! Allan, those papers are printed to sell in the Yankee army. I'm sure I hope they are not so badly off as has been

represented. I should not want my worst enemy to suffer what they are called upon to endure. It is all their own fault; but I hope God will be merciful to them."

"I think you needn't feel bad about them," added Somers, amused, but indignant at the pitiful stories which were circulated in the South to keep up the courage of the people.

"Let that pass, then. Really, Allan, I am very glad to see you. You must go to the house with me. Sue will be delighted to meet you. She talks about you a great deal; and I can insure you a warm welcome."

"I think I cannot stop to call now; but I will try to come over in a few days," replied Somers, embarrassed beyond measure at the idea of facing Sue and the rest of the family.

"Not stop!" exclaimed Mr. Raynes, holding up his hands with surprise.

"Not now, sir; I am in no condition to appear before ladies," he added, extending his arms so as to display his tattered garments to the fullest advantage. "You know a young man is rather particular about his appearance when he is going into the company of ladies, and especially into the presence of *some* ladies. The fact is, I tore my uniform all to pieces after I passed through the Yankee lines."

"Never mind your uniform, my boy. It looks as though it had seen service; and that is the best recommendation a young man can have to the girls in these times. You must go, Allan."

"Indeed, sir, I hope you will excuse me for a few days," pleaded Somers.

"Come, Allan! this is not kind of you. Sue has been dying to see you for a year. She was terribly disappointed when you did not come up with your regiment, and again when she heard you had joined without calling upon us. If it had been Owen, she could not have felt worse when you were captured. Now you want to disappoint her again."

"You need not mention that you have seen me, Mr. Raynes," suggested Somers.

"Not tell her that you have escaped, when she is fretting about you every day of her life! That would be too bad."

"You can tell her as much as you please without informing her that you have seen me."

"I could not tell a lie, Allan. It would choke me," said the old man solemnly. "You must go with me."

"Let me get another uniform, and it would surprise her when I come."

"No more words, young man. You must go. It is only a short distance," replied Mr. Raynes, passing his arm through that of Somers, and walking towards his house. "It will be the happiest day for Sue which she has seen for a year."

"Happier for her than it will be for me," thought Somers, who was disposed to break away from the old man, and make his escape.

By this time, Sue had become an awful bugbear to the poor fellow. In these days of photographs, it is more than probable that she had a picture of the original Allan Garland, and the cheat would be discovered the moment he showed his face. He was deliberating a plan for breaking away from his persistent friend, when a young lady of eighteen stepped out from the bushes by the roadside, and hailed the old man.

CHAPTER XI

THE VIRGINIA MAIDEN

"Where have you been, father?" said the young lady in a very sweet and gentle tone, which, however, sounded like the knell of doom to poor Somers. "I have been waiting for you half an hour."

But then, perceiving a stranger with her father, she drew back, abashed at her own forwardness.

"Come here, Sue," said the old man. "Come here; I want to see you."

She advanced timidly from the bushes where she had been partially concealed from the gaze of the passers-by. She was certainly a very pleasant and comely-looking maiden; but, if she had been the "Witch of Endor," she could not have been any more disagreeable to Somers. He was as fond of adventure as any young man; and if he could have forgotten that poor Owen Raynes, the son and the brother, was at that moment lying in the mud of the swamp; his manly form no more to gladden the hearts of those who stood before him; his voice hushed in death, no more to utter the accents of affection to the devoted father and his loving sister--if he could have forgotten his relations with the dead Owen, he might even have enjoyed the exciting situation in which he was placed.

Sue, with a blushing face and half-averted gaze, stepped out into the road, and stole a few timid glances at the young lieutenant. It was quite evident that she did not have a suspicion of the identity of the young soldier before her. Her father appeared to have a vein of romance in his character, and was disposed to torture her for a time with the torments of suspense, before he declared to her the astounding truth, that the young soldier was her well-known but hitherto unseen friend from Alabama, the bosom companion of her brother Owen, and, if everything worked as the loving conspirators intended, the future husband of the affectionate maiden.

She did not like to ask who the stranger was; and she thought it was very provoking of her father not to tell her, when she was so fearfully embarrassed by her position. She continued to blush; and Somers felt so awkward, that he couldn't help joining her in this interesting display of roses on the cheeks.

"Don't you know him, Sue?" demanded the farmer, when he had tantalized her as long as the circumstances would warrant.

"Why, of course I don't, father!" stammered the Virginia maiden.

"Look in his face, and see if you can't tell," persisted Mr. Raynes.

"How absurd, father!"

"Absurd, child? Not at all absurd! Haven't you his picture in the house? And, if I mistake not, you have looked at it as many as three times a day for the last year."

"Now, father, you are too bad! I haven't done anything of the sort," protested Sue, pouting and twisting her shoulders as any country girl, who had not been trained in a satinwood seminary, would have done under such trying circumstances. "You don't mean to say that is Allan Garland?" added she, her pretty face lighting up with an expression of intense satisfaction.

"But I do, Sue," replied Mr. Raynes with emphasis.

"Why, Allan! I am so glad to see you! I was afraid I should never see you!" exclaimed Sue, rushing up to the young man, and extending both her hands, which he felt compelled to accept.

He was fearful that she would kiss him; and, though he would have been under obligations to submit to the infliction, he was not sure that the operation would not cause him to faint. Fortunately for him, Sue was reasonable in her behavior; and he escaped cheaper than he expected, when he beheld the impetuous charge which the maiden made upon him. If he had really been Allan Garland, his reception would have been entirely proper, and highly creditable to the affectionate nature of the Virginia damsel. He was not the young gentleman from Alabama; and he felt as though he had been flanked on both sides, with no chance to beat off the enemy in front, or to run away in the rear. He was only a short distance from a line of rebel sentinels, and he did not consider it prudent to escape by taking to his legs. He did not wear his fighting socks at this time, and felt that it would be no disgrace to run away from such an enemy as that which confronted him.

"I am very glad to see you, Allan," repeated Sue, as the wretched young man did not venture to use his tongue.

"Thank you, thank you, Miss Raynes!" said he at last, when silence seemed even more dangerous than speech.

"Miss Raynes! Dear me, Allan, how very formal and precise you are! You called me Sue in your letters."

"Did I? Well, I didn't know it," replied Somers with a stroke of candor not to be expected under the circumstances.

"Certainly you did. I don't think you ever mentioned such a person as Miss Raynes."

"I am confident I didn't," added he with another touch of candor. "But I will always call you Sue hereafter, when I have occasion to speak to you."

"Thank you, Allan! You begin to sound a little like yourself."

Somers was very glad to hear it, but wished he had been five miles off, even if it had been in the very jaws of the Fourth Alabama.

"You don't look a bit like your photograph," continued Sue, gazing with admiration at the face of the young man; for which those who ever saw Lieutenant Somers will cheerfully pardon her.

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure you don't."

"That's very strange. Everybody who has seen my photograph says it looks exactly like me."

"I don't think so."

"I gave one to a young lady of my acquaintance, who said it was perfect."

"Indeed! Who was she?"

"She is a young lady whom I have met only two or three times."

"What is her name?"

"Lilian Ashford."

"What a pretty name!" said Sue, endeavoring to be magnanimous; though it was evident that she was troubled by the honest avowal of the young soldier.

"Where does she live?"

"She is at the North, now," answered Somers, who could not bear to tell a lie when there was no need of such a sacrifice.

He was becoming very uneasy under this rigid catechizing, and hoped she would not ask any more questions about Lilian Ashford. He had mentioned her name with the hope that it might produce a coldness on her part which would afford him some advantage. She did not, however, seem to be annihilated by the prospect of a rival, and was proceeding to interrogate him still further in regard to the lady, with whom he was apparently intimate enough to present her his photograph, when Mr. Raynes reminded her that they were standing in the road, and had better go into the house.

"Now, Mr. Raynes, as I have seen Sue, and Sue has seen me, I think I had better hasten to my regiment," suggested Somers.

"Not yet, Allan," replied the old man.

"Do you wish to run away, and leave me so soon, you monster?" added Sue. "I tell you, sir, I shall not let you go yet."

"But, Sue! you forget that I have just returned from the Yankees. I was furnished with a pass, to enable me to find my regiment."

"You shall find it in good time."

"Come to the house, Allan: we will not detain you long," added Mr. Raynes.

"You must and shall come!" protested Sue, taking him by the arm, and absolutely compelling him to go, or be guilty of the most unpardonable rudeness to the fair Virginia damsel.

"I should be very glad to go with you, Sue, if my duty did not call me elsewhere. I am to be sent off on very important service."

"Again?--so soon?"

"This very day. I may never see you again."

"And you would coolly run away and leave me without even going into the house!"

"But my duty, Sue!"

"You will be in time for your duty."

"I may be arrested as a deserter."

"Nonsense! You have a pass in your pocket."

"In spite of the pass, if your father had not happened to see me, I should have been arrested, and might have spent a day or two in the guardhouse before the case could have been explained."

"No more argument, Allan," said the persevering girl. "Here is the house; you shall go in and look at mother, if you don't stop but a minute. Besides, I want to see your photograph while you are present; for I am sure you don't look any more like the picture than the picture does like you."

"Probably not," replied Somers, as the resolute maiden dragged him into the house; where, without stopping to breathe, she presented him to her mother, with the astounding declaration, that he was Allan Garland.

Mrs. Raynes gave him a cordial Virginia welcome; and, while he was endeavoring to make himself as agreeable as possible to the old lady, Sue rushed up-stairs to procure the faithless photograph. She returned in a moment with the picture in her hand, and proceeded at once to institute a comparison between the shadow and the substance.

"Now, stand up here, sir, and let me see," said she, as she playfully whisked him round and scrutinized his features. "I told you it did not look like you; and I am very sure now that it does not."

"Let me see," added Somers, extending his hand for the picture.

"Will you promise to give it back to me?"

"Certainly I will! You don't imagine I would be so mean as to confiscate it?"

"I should not care much if you did, now that I have found out it does not look any more like you than it does like me," she answered, handing him the photograph.

"Where did you get this picture, Sue?"

"Where did I get it? Well, that is cool! Didn't you send it to me yourself?" And Sue began to exhibit some symptoms of amazement.

"I am very sure I never sent you this picture," added Somers gravely.

"You did not?"

"Never."

"Why, Allan Garland!"

"This is not my picture."

"I shouldn't think it was."

Thereupon Mr. Raynes began to laugh in the most immoderate manner; opening his mouth wide enough to take in a very small load of hay, and shaking his sides in the most extraordinary style.

"What are you laughing at, pa?" demanded Sue, blushing up to the eyes, as though she already felt the force of some keenly satirical remark which was struggling for expression in the mouth of the farmer.

"To think you have been looking at that picture three times a day for a year, studying, gazing at it; kissing it, for aught I know; and then to find out that it is not Allan after all!" roared the Virginia farmer between the outbreaks of his mirth. "I haven't done anything but groan since the war began, and it does me good to laugh. I haven't had a jolly time before since the battle of Bull Run, as the Yankees call it."

"You are the most absurd pa in Virginia. I didn't look at it three times a day, I never studied it, and I'm sure I never kissed it. No wonder Allan wants to get away, when he finds what an absurd girl you make me out to be. You think I'm a fool, don't you, Allan?"

"I do not, by any means. I'm sure, if I had your picture, I shouldn't have been ashamed to look at it three times a day," replied Somers, gallantly coming to the rescue of the maiden. "But, really, my Virginia patriarch," he added, using an expression which he had found in the correspondence in his pocket, "I must tear myself away."

"You seem to be glad enough to go," pouted Sue.

"Sorry to go, but compelled by the duty I owe my country to leave you."

"When will you come again?"

"Of course, that question I cannot answer. I may never see you again. This is a terrible war, and we cannot tell what a day may bring forth," replied Somers solemnly; and the thought was all the more solemn when he thought of the cold corpse of the son and brother concealed in the mire of the swamp.

He had seen the old man laugh as none but a happy man can; and he could not help feeling what a terrible revulsion a few words from him might cause. He had watched the playful manner of Sue, and had joined in the gay raillery of the moment. A word from him would crush her spirit, and bow that loving mother to the ground. The scene had not been one of his own choosing; and he would gladly escape the necessity of dissembling before those affectionate hearts.

"We are on the eve of a terrible battle," added the old man very gravely. "Hundreds of our poor boys went down yesterday, never to rise again. We tremble when we think of you in the field. I may never see my son again; for the issue of the war may depend on the battles of the next few days."

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Raynes seemed to know more than he had dared to speak; and Somers was full of interest.

"The Yankees, who expect to go into Richmond, will be driven down the Peninsula, where they came up, like flying sheep, within a week. I have heard a few words, which satisfies me that great events are coming."

Though it was not supposable that the people in the vicinity of Richmond knew the plans of General Lee, from what he had seen, and from what he had heard from men in power, he had formed a very correct idea of the intended operations of the rebel chief; and he stated his views very clearly to Somers. While he was listening to the old man's theory, Mrs. Raynes had spread her table, and placed upon it such food as was available for a hasty lunch. She insisted that he should partake; and, while he enjoyed the welcome refreshment, Mr. Raynes told him everything about the movements of the Confederate army in the vicinity, with full particulars of the battle of the preceding day. While the scout was thus answering the ends of his mission, he was in no hurry to depart.

General McClellan's "change of base" was not suspected by the rebels at this time. It was their purpose to flank the Union army on the right and left, and destroy it effectually. The dispositions had been made for this purpose; and, as Mr. Raynes was a man of influence and intelligence, his information was as reliable as could be deduced from the preliminary movements of the rebel army. He was confident of success. The execution of the plan had already been commenced, and the right of the Union line was in the act of falling back.

He expatiated upon the perils of the campaign, and the terrible fighting which was to be expected; and manifested the utmost solicitude for the safety of his son, and hardly less for his guest.

Somers prolonged his repast, that the old man might leave nothing unsaid that would be important for the Union generals to know. Sue occasionally joined in the conversation; but she was quite serious now, as she contemplated the perils to which her brother and her friend from Alabama must be subjected.

"Do you know where General Jackson is now?" asked Somers.

"I don't know exactly where he is; but I know what part he has to play in the great drama. The last we heard of him was, that he was watching McDowell, near Fredericksburg. If McDowell keeps quiet, Jackson will rush down on the left flank of the Yankees, and cut off their retreat."

"Are you sure?"

"I am very sure. I can tell you why."

Before he had time to tell him why, a knock at the door disturbed the conference; and a young man, in a tattered rebel uniform, was ushered into the room.

CHAPTER XII

THE DIGNIFIED YOUNG REBEL

Lieutenant Somers, who had been very nervous and uneasy before, was exceedingly annoyed by the appearance of another actor on the stage. He had become in some slight degree familiarized with the awkwardness of his situation; for the fact, that no suspicion had yet been cast upon his identity, was encouraging, and he began to have some confidence in his position, open as it was to an assault from any direction. The advent of the tattered stranger was a new cause for alarm, and he at once became very anxious to beat a retreat.

There is no night without some ray of light to gladden it. His first impression was that the visitor belonged to the Fourth Alabama, and would readily recognize him as an impostor; but he was in a measure relieved to find that none of the family gave the soldier more than a friendly greeting, which proved him to be a stranger to them as well as to himself. Yet he might belong to the Fourth Alabama; and then it occurred to him that the man had come to inform Mr. Raynes of the death of his son while on picket duty.

In the brief period which elapsed between the advent of the stranger, and the statement of the object of his visit, Somers was disturbed by a dozen fearful theories; all of which seemed to end in a rebel prison at Richmond, and even in a rebel gallows--the fate of the spy. The minutes were fearfully long; and, before the momentous question of the object of the stranger's visit could be introduced, he decided to make an abrupt retreat.

"Well, Mr. Raynes," said he, approaching the old man as he put on his cap, "I have already run a great risk in stopping here so long; and, with many thanks to you for your kindness and for your generous hospitality, I must take my departure."

"I suppose we cannot keep you any longer, Allan; but you must promise to call again at the first convenient opportunity."

"I promise you that I will the first time I can safely do so," responded Somers warmly, and with the fullest intention of redeeming his promise. "Good-by, sir!"

"Good-by, my dear boy! May you be spared in the hour when the strong men bite the dust!" said Mr. Raynes solemnly, as he gave his hand to Somers.

"Good-by, Sue!" added the young lieutenant, taking the hand of the Virginia damsel.

"Adieu, my brave soldier-boy!" she replied.

"You are a soldier, I see," said the stranger, as Somers approached him on his way out of the house.

"Yes, sir," answered the latter nervously; for he would gladly have escaped any communication with the newcomer.

"What regiment do you belong to?" persisted the dilapidated soldier.

What business was that to him? Why should he trouble himself about other people's affairs? It sounded like a very impertinent question to the excited lieutenant, and he was tempted to inform the busy-body that it was none of his business; but, as he had already earned a good character for civility with the interesting family in whose presence he still stood, his bump of approbation would not permit him to forfeit their esteem by so inconsiderate a reply.

"Good-by, all!" said he with energy, turning away from the rebel soldier, and moving towards the door.

"What regiment did you say you belonged to?" demanded the persistent rebel.

"I didn't say," replied Somers, not in the most gentle tones.

"Will you oblige me by telling me to what regiment you belong?" added the rebel.

"I think I will not," continued Somers, more and more displeased with the persistence of the other. "I came very near being arrested as a deserter just now, though I have a pass in my pocket; and I don't care about exposing myself to any further annoyance by my own indiscretion."

"I assure you I am a friend, and I would not betray you if I knew you were a deserter," said the stranger in very civil tones.

Thus appealed to, and perceiving that he was not gaining in the estimation of Mr. Raynes by his reticence, he decided that he could not make the matter much worse by answering the question.

"To the Fourth Alabama," he replied desperately; "but you must excuse me; for I am in a tremendous hurry."

"The Fourth Alabama! I thought so," exclaimed the stranger with a pleasant smile, as though the information was particularly agreeable to him. "I belong to the Fourth Alabama myself."

"Do you, indeed?" added Somers with the most intense disquiet, wishing all the time that the soldier had been in Alabama, or anywhere but in the house of Mr. Raynes.

"Can you tell me where the regiment is?"

"I cannot. I have been looking for it myself for the last two hours. As I can be of no assistance to you, you will excuse me if I leave you."

"Not so fast, comrade; I will go with you. I have some directions which I think will enable us to find the regiment; and, if you please, I will bear you company."

Somers did not please; but he could hardly refuse the offer without exciting the suspicion of the family, which he felt might be fatal to him. It would be better to depart with the member of the Fourth Alabama, and part company with him by force of stratagem when they had left the house.

"I won't keep you waiting but a minute. I called here to see my friends; but none of them seem to know me. You are Mr. Raynes, I presume?" continued the soldier, addressing the old man.

"I am; but I don't remember to have ever seen you before," replied the farmer.

"You never did, sir; but I will venture to say that my name is well known in this house," added the soldier with a mysterious smile, which caused Somers to dread some new development that would compromise him.

"Ah!" said Mr. Raynes, ever ready to welcome any one who had the slightest claim upon his hospitality.

"I am well acquainted with your son, Owen; I suppose I shall not be disputed here, when I say that he is the best fellow in the world. Don't you know me now?" demanded the tantalizing rebel, who appeared to be very anxious to have his identity made out in the natural way, and without any troublesome explanations.

"Really, I do not," answered Mr. Raynes, much perplexed by the confident manner of the visitor.

"This is Sue, I suppose?" pursued the soldier, advancing to the maiden, and extending his dirty hand; which, however, was not much dirtier than that which she had so eagerly grasped before. "Don't you know who I am, Sue?"

"I do not, sir," she replied rather coldly.

"When I tell you that I belong to the Fourth Alabama, don't you know me?"

"I do not, sir."

"And when I tell you that I am the intimate friend of your brother Owen?"

Allan Garland stood by the door; and, of course, it was not he; therefore she could not, by any possibility, conceive who he was; and she said so, in terms as explicit as the occasion required.

"I live in Union, Alabama, when I am at home. Don't you know me *now*, Sue?" persisted the perplexed visitor, who, perhaps, began to think he had entered the wrong house.

If the veritable Allan Garland, however little his photograph resembled him, had not stood by the door, she would have been rejoiced to see him, and to recognize in him her unknown friend and correspondent. As it was, she did not know him; and she was candid enough to express her conviction without reserve, in spite of the disagreeable effect which her want of perception seemed to produce upon the mind of the stranger.

"This is very strange," said the soldier, taking off his cap, and rubbing his head to quicken his faculties, which seemed to have led him into some unaccountable blunder. "Will you be kind enough to inform me who lives in this house?"

"Mr. Raynes," replied Sue, quite as much mystified as the stranger seemed to be.

"There is some mistake; but I can't make out what it is," said the stranger.

"I cannot wait any longer," said Somers, who had been riveted to the spot by the astounding revelation to which he had just listened.

He had been almost paralyzed by the words of the rebel, in whom he promptly recognized the young man whose name and antecedents he had borrowed for the present occasion. His first impression was to take to his heels, and to run away; but a certain worldly prudence prevented him from adopting this doubtful policy. If you attempt to run away from an angry dog, he will certainly bite you; whereas, by facing him boldly, you may escape all injury. This fact, which Somers had fully exemplified in his own experience before he left Pinchbrook, was the foundation of his action. Seeing that the stranger was perplexed and annoyed by the failure of the family to recognize him, even after he had told them everything except his name, he decided that he might safely retire under the plea of haste.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for this intrusion," said the soldier, blushing with mortification as he retreated a pace towards the door. "You will excuse me, Miss Raynes, for my unwarrantable familiarity; but I have made a blunder, or you have," he added rather bitterly. "Perhaps, when Owen comes to introduce me, you will know me better."

"Owen's friends are my friends, young man; and you are as welcome as my son would be, whoever you are."

"Thank you, sir; but, with many regrets for this intrusion, I will take my leave."

"No, no, my young friend," interposed the old man. "You must not leave us in this manner. It is true, we do not recognize you; but you are none the less welcome on that account."

"Thank you kindly, sir. I have deceived myself into the belief that I was better known here than I find I am. It was weak in me to thrust myself across your threshold without an introduction; and, if you will pardon me, I will leave you, with the promise to come again with Owen."

"Not yet, sir; at least, not till you have told us who you are."

"Excuse me; but I must go now," replied the young rebel with an exhibition of gentle dignity, which quite won the heart of Somers, as it did that of the family.

"Pray, give me your name, sir," interposed Sue, whose woman's curiosity could no longer endure the silence which maidenly reserve had imposed upon her, especially as the stranger proposed to depart without solving the mystery.

"You'll excuse me, Miss Raynes, if I decline for the present. My comrade is in a desperate hurry, and it is not reasonable for me to detain him any longer."

"But, young man, you wrong me, you wrong my daughter, and above all, you wrong my son, who is your friend, by leaving in this manner," said Mr. Raynes earnestly. "You actually charge us with a want of hospitality by this abrupt withdrawal."

"You will pardon me, sir, for saying it; but after the description I have given of myself, if you do not know me, I am compelled to believe that it is because you do not wish to know me."

"That is very unjust, and we do not comprehend the force of the remark."

"Why, sir, I have written to you, and to your daughter, and your daughter has written to me; and now you seem never to have heard of me. I have told you that I reside in Union, Alabama; and that I am a friend of Owen."

"We know a young man from that town very well, though we never saw him. His name is Allan Garland; but it is impossible that you should be the person."

"I must go, comrade," said Somers desperately, as he rushed out of the door.

"Wait a moment!" exclaimed Mr. Raynes, grasping him by the arm; for the old farmer seemed to think his presence was necessary to the perfect unraveling of the mystery. "It seems to me you ought to know this young man, if none of us do."

"I do not, Mr. Raynes; never saw him before in my life," protested Somers, feeling very much like a condemned criminal.

"My name is Allan Garland," quietly continued the dignified young rebel. "I am, undoubtedly, the person to whom you allude."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Raynes, still holding Somers's arm with the grasp of a vise.

"Impossible!" almost shouted the fair Sue, more excited than she would have been, if, through patient reading, she had arrived at the last chapter of a sensational novel, where the pin is pulled out and all the villains tumble down to perdition and all the angels stumble upon their apotheosis.

"Impossible!" chimed in Mrs. Raynes, who had preserved a most remarkable silence, for a woman, during the exciting incidents we have transcribed.

"May I be allowed to inquire why you think it is impossible?" calmly demanded the gentle rebel, who, in his turn, was amazed at the singular course of events.

Sue did not know what else to do; so she sat down in a chair, and laughed with hysterical vehemence at the strange aspect of the affair. The old man opened his eyes, and opened his mouth; but he did not forget to hold on with all his might to the arm of the unfortunate lieutenant, who was just then picturing to himself the interior of a rebel dungeon; which view suddenly dissolved into an indistinct representation of a tree, from a stout limb of which was suspended a rope, hanging down over a cart--these latter appurtenances being symbolical of the usual rebel method of hanging a spy.

The affair, which had been growing desperate for some time, had now actually become so to poor Somers. He placed

his hand upon his revolver, in the breast-pocket of his coat; but some prudential considerations interposed to prevent him from using it. The house was on a line of rebel sentinels. Whole divisions of Confederate infantry, artillery and cavalry, were encamped around him, and any violent movement on his part would have been sure to result in an ignominious disaster. The doughty old farmer, who was not less than six feet three in his stockinged feet, held on to him as a drowning man clings to a floating spar. It was not possible to get away without resorting to violence; and if he offered any resistance to what, just then, looked like manifest destiny, the rebel soldier would become an ally of the farmer, and the women could call in the sentinels, if nothing more.

"Really, Mr. Raynes, you are very unkind to detain me, when I tell you that my leave has nearly expired," said Somers, when he had fully measured the situation; which, however, was done in a tithe of the time which we have taken to transcribe it.

"Young man, there is some *mistake*," said Mr. Raynes, placing a wicked emphasis on the word, which went to the very core of the scout's heart. "This man says he is Allan Garland, and you say you are Allan Garland. One of you is an impostor. Neither of you shall go till we determine which is the one. Sue, bring out your photograph again."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Somers, as in a fit of momentary despondency, he gave himself up for lost, when the maiden went for the picture.

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

Miss Sue hastened to procure the photograph, which she had placed in her mother's room after it had been fully discussed by herself and the supposed original. At the same time, her father conducted Somers into the room again; and, being fully conscious of his desire to get away, he kept a watchful eye upon him, though he removed his grasp from the arm. The rebel soldier looked on in utter amazement at the singular proceedings of all the party, and seemed utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of them.

"Here is the picture," said Sue, returning with the photograph in her hand; "but I don't see that it looks any more like you than it does like the other gentleman;" and she proceeded to institute a comparison between the new claimant and the picture.

Somers began to cherish a faint hope again, and to be very grateful for the general truth, that photographs do not always look like the originals. This encouragement, slight as it was, gave our hero a new inspiration, and in a measure restored his impudence; which, under the pressure of circumstances, had begun to give way.

"I am sure it does not look at all like you," continued Sue, after she had patiently balanced all the points of resemblance, and all the points of disagreement.

"You should remember that the picture was taken more than a year ago; and that I have been an invalid for ten months of the time," suggested the rebel soldier.

"That may be; but I am sure this picture could never have been taken for you."

"Let me see it, if you please?"

Sue handed him the card, and he glanced at it with an expression of great curiosity.

"Where did you get this picture?" demanded he.

"It was sent to me by the original," replied she.

"This is not my picture."

"That is just what the other gentleman said; and I am perfectly willing to believe both of you."

"But I sent you a picture of myself, though this is not the one."

"Well, that is very singular."

"If you will remember, there were two in the same letter; the other was a young man whom Owen was acquainted with, and who desired something to remember him by. He is in a Mississippi regiment now."

"Dear me! what a blunder!" exclaimed Sue, laughing heartily. "I am sure I took the best looking of the two for Allan Garland's."

"Perhaps that is not very complimentary to me; but where is the other picture?"

"I put it in Owen's room. I told him what I had done with the two pictures; but he has been at home so little, that I suppose he never looked at them. I will get the other."

"We are beginning to get a little light on the subject," said Mr. Raynes, when his daughter had left the room.

"And I think you will let a little light through my body with a bullet-hole," added Somers, whose last hope was gone again, though his impudence still remained.

"Be patient, young man; we shall soon see the mystery explained, and be able to inform you whether you are Allan Garland or not."

"I am sorry to put you to so much trouble, Mr. Raynes; but you will remember that I was very much opposed to coming into your house at all; that I was literally dragged in by yourself and your daughter."

"And you will also remember that I saved you from arrest, when you gave your name as Allan Garland, of the Fourth Alabama. I think I have imparted to you some very valuable information; and I intend to see what use is to be made of it, before I take my eyes off you."

"You are very affectionate, Mr. Raynes; and, in behalf of the great Southern Confederacy, I thank you for the zeal and loyalty which you have displayed," replied Somers boldly; for it was plain that nothing but the most brazen impudence

could save him.

"You are a bold youth, and it is plain that you have brilliant talents; I hope they have not been abused."

"They have been, and will continue to be, used in the service of my suffering country."

"I like you, and I hope everything is all right about you; but I cannot see your object in coming here under an assumed name."

"Then you have decided the case against me--have you?" said Somers, glancing at the rival Allan.

"Perhaps I was a little too fast," added the old man, mortified to find that his character for strict justice had been compromised by this hasty avowal.

Sue was absent a long time; and it was clear that the photograph had been mislaid. Somers was in hopes she would not be able to find it; though he had but a meager expectation of over-throwing the claims of his rival to the name of Allan Garland. It was a hot day, and the windows of the house were all open. His legs seemed to promise the only satisfactory solution of the problem; and while he was considering the propriety of jumping out through one of the open windows, and trusting to them for safety, Sue returned with the photograph.

"This looks more like you than the other; and more like you than it does like the other gentleman," said Sue.

The rebel soldier took the card, and acknowledged that it was his photograph; at the same time, he was compelled to allow that it was but an indifferent likeness of himself. His hard service in the army had changed his appearance much. Sue gazed at the picture, and at the original, and her father did the same; but both of them were in doubt.

"There, sir! I have waited patiently for you to end this farce," said Somers, in deep disgust apparently. "You have looked at the pictures, and you are not satisfied yet. I can stand it no longer; I am tired of the whole thing. You have treated me very handsomely, and I am grateful to you for your kindness to me; but I cannot and will not remain any longer."

Somers spoke decidedly, and was fully resolved to use his pistol, if occasion required. He was not willing to remain for a decision to be made between him and the other claimant.

"I will go with you, brother Allan Garland," said the rebel soldier facetiously; "I think between us we can readily decide which is the right man."

"I am ready."

"But we desire to be satisfied, especially in regard to this young man, who was suspected of being a deserter, and for whom I feel that I am responsible," said Mr. Raynes.

"I can do nothing for you, sir," replied Somers.

"But I can do something for you; and I propose to take you to the sergeant where I found you, and let the military authorities decide," continued the old man, whose ire was roused, as he moved towards the impudent young man.

"I propose that you shall do nothing of the kind," answered Somers, drawing the pistol, and cocking it for use.

"Don't, father, don't!" exclaimed Sue, rushing between Mr. Raynes and the active youth, pale with terror.

Somers would have been very unwilling to use his weapon on the old man. He pitied him, and could not help thinking of the terrible blow which was in store for him when he should hear that his only son had been killed. He hoped that something would interpose to prevent any violence, and he expected much from the gentle dignity of the young rebel.

"I am sorry that you compel me to draw this pistol," added Somers; "yet nothing but the duty I owe to myself and my country would permit me to use it upon those who have treated me so kindly."

"I will be responsible for him," said Allan Garland--the real one; for there could be no doubt that he was what he claimed.

"You shall not go near him, father! He will kill you!" cried Sue, terrified, as her father attempted to push her aside, and advance upon the armed young man.

"Come! brother Allan," said the soldier: "we can best end this scene by leaving the house."

As they approached the door, a hand was placed on the handle outside; but the old man had taken the precaution to fasten it, in order to insure the safety of his prisoner. A heavy knock succeeded.

"Who is that?" gasped Sue, afraid that any newcomer would only complicate the difficulties of the moment, and that the bold youth would be compelled to use his pistol.

"Perhaps it is Owen," replied the old man, a little calmer than before.

"I hope it is."

The words sent a shudder through the frame of Somers, as he again thought of Owen Raynes, cold and dead in his oozy grave in the swamp.

"Open the door," said a voice from without.

Allan Garland drew the bolt, and threw the door wide open.

"Why, Allan, my dear fellow!" exclaimed a young man who stood at the outside of the door in his shirt sleeves, as he grasped both of the rebel soldier's hands, and proceeded to make a most extravagant demonstration of rejoicing. "I am glad to see you!"

"Owen, my dear boy!" replied Allan Garland, as he returned with equal warmth the salutation of the newcomer.

"Where did you come from, Allan? I had given you up for lost?"

"I escaped from the Yankees the next day after I was taken, and have been beating about the woods ever since."

Somers was thrown all aback by this arrival, which was certainly the most remarkable one that had taken place during the day. He couldn't help feeling very much like the hero of a sensational novel; and realized the very original idea that truth is stranger than fiction. He could not exactly account for the presence of Owen Raynes, whom he had satisfactorily buried in the swamp, and whose clothes he had the honor to wear at that moment. He did not believe in things supernatural, and it never occurred to him that the form before him might be the ghost of Owen.

"I am glad you have come just as you did, Owen," said Mr. Raynes.

"So am I; otherwise I might not have met Allan. But who is this?" he added, glancing at Somers.

"Your most obedient servant," replied Somers, trying to pass him in the narrow entry.

"Stop, young man!" shouted the old man. "Don't let him go, Owen!"

"Who is he?"

"His name is Allan Garland, of Union, Alabama; and he is a private in the Fourth Alabama," replied Allan with a smile, as Owen placed himself between Somers and the door.

"What!"

Mr. Raynes, being the oldest man present, was entitled to the position of spokesman; and he made a very prolix statement of all the events which had transpired since he first saw the pretended Allan Garland.

Owen Raynes was a very good-natured young man, and the recital of the affair amused him exceedingly. He did not fly into a passion, being a very amiable and reasonable rebel; and seemed to regard the whole thing as a stupendous joke.

"Then your name is Allan Garland, is it?" demanded he, with a broad laugh still playing on his lips.

"That is my name at present," replied Somers.

"But have you no other name?"

"None worth mentioning."

"Good! To what regiment do you belong?"

"To the Fourth Alabama, Colonel Jones; but I have already told your respected father all the facts relating to myself, and some relating to you."

"Say, is this a joke, a sell?" demanded Owen.

"I suppose that would be a very proper interpretation to put upon it."

"You seem to be a good fellow, and deal in four-syllable words."

"Now, as you seem to have the best of the joke, I hope you will not detain me any longer. I have a pass in my pocket to prove that I am all right; and, as I am in a great hurry, I must move on."

"Not till you explain the joke. Eh? What's this? Where did you get this coat?" said Owen, glancing at the garment which Somers wore.

"This is the key to the joke."

"The key to it! I am of the opinion that this is my coat," replied Owen, as he felt of the garment, and turned up the lapel.

"May I be allowed to inquire where you left your coat?" asked Somers, who was quite curious to know how Owen Raynes happened to be alive just at that moment.

"Certainly you may; but first let me ask where you found it."

"Over by the picket-line beyond the hill," replied Somers.

"Just so. A young fellow in a Mississippi regiment, encamped next to ours, borrowed it of me last night, when he was detailed for picket-duty. The poor fellow had no coat, and picket-duty is rather steep at night when a man has no clothes. He is a good fellow, in poor health; and I lent him mine."

"The nights are cool, but the days are hot," added Somers. "He took it off, and left it on the edge of the woods, where I found it. I didn't know that it belonged to anybody. I found some papers and a diary in the pocket----"

"Did I leave my papers in the pocket? Well, that was stupid," interrupted Owen.

"I read the papers with a great deal of interest. Seeing frequent allusions in them to Allan Garland, I took the liberty to appropriate the name myself; for the owner of it seemed to be a very good fellow."

"Thank you!" said Allan; "but, as you seem to have no further use for it, I see no objection to your giving your own name."

"On the contrary, there are some very strong objections, and I must trouble you for the use of your name an hour or two longer."

"Oh, very well! I am satisfied," replied Allan.

"So am I."

"But I am not," interposed Mr. Raynes. "I think the fellow is an impostor, if nothing worse."

"Anything you please; but my time is out, and I must report for duty," replied Somers boldly, as he took off the borrowed coat, and restored it to the owner. "I am very much obliged to you for the use of this garment. When we meet again, I trust we shall understand each other better."

Owen Raynes was an easy-going young man; familiar with the practical jokes of the army, enjoying them with the most keen relish when no one's feelings were hurt, and no damage was done to person or property. He was not, therefore, disposed to put a serious construction on what seemed to him to be one of these farces; but his father took an entirely different view of the affair. He wanted to argue the question, and show that it could not be a joke; but Somers was too impatient to listen to any eloquence of this description.

Sue, who had now actually found the young man who had been indicated as her "manifest destiny," was in no hurry to part with him; and when the father proposed that Owen and Allan should accompany the impostor, as he insisted upon calling him, to the brigade headquarters, where his pass was dated, she decidedly objected to the proposition. The earnestness of Mr. Raynes, however, at last vanquished her and the young man; and they started to escort our young lieutenant to the place indicated.

Now, Somers, being a modest man, as we have always held him up to our readers, and being averse to all the pomp and parade of martial glory in its application to himself, was strongly averse to an escort. He preferred to go alone, tell his own story, and fight his own battles, if battles there were to be fought. Owen and Allan were unutterably affectionate. They received him into their small circle of fellowship, and stuck to him like a brother. They were both good fellows, splendid fellows; and, under ordinary circumstances, Somers would have been delighted to cultivate their friendship. As it was, he ungratefully resolved to give them the slip at the first convenient opportunity.

Unhappily for him, no opportunity occurred, for his zealous friends would not permit him to go a single rod from them; and Somers had about made up his mind to trust the matter to the judgment of Major Platner, who had shown a remarkable discrimination during the former interview, when the trio came to a line of sentinels guarding a brigade camp.

"What regiment do you belong to?" demanded the guard.

"Fourth Alabama," replied Owen.

"You can't pass this line, then."

"But I have a pass," interposed Somers.

"Show your pass."

Somers showed the important document, which the sentinel, after a patient study, succeeded in deciphering.

"Your pass is right--pass on; but you can't go through," he added to Owen and Allan.

Owen explained.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REBEL DIVISION GENERAL

The sentinel listened very patiently to the explanation of Owen Raynes; but, as he proceeded, the face of the soldier relaxed till his muscles had contracted into a broad grin. The sergeant of the guard was then sent for, and the explanation repeated. At its conclusion, both the sentinel and the sergeant seemed to be disposed to laugh in the faces of the twin friends, so keenly were the former alive to the ludicrous.

"That's a very pretty story, my men! You, without the pass, are going to see that everything is right about the man that has the pass; in other words, the devils are going to see that the angels don't do anything wicked," said the sergeant, laughing at the awkward position of Owen and Allan, and perhaps quite as much at the sharpness of his own illustration.

"We are entirely satisfied in regard to this young man," said Owen; "but we have come in order to satisfy another person, who believes that he is an impostor. We promised to take him to Major Platner."

"You can't enter these lines without a pass," replied the sergeant firmly. "This man can go through; for he has a pass," he added to Somers.

"As I am all right, and in a hurry, I will proceed to the brigade headquarters," said Somers. "Now, good-by, my friends; I am very glad to have met you, and much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken to come so far with me."

"You take it coolly," laughed Owen.

"Perhaps, if you desire to go to the brigade headquarters, the sergeant will let you pass, if I will vouch for you," continued Somers with great good humor.

"We are not very particular."

"What do you say, sergeant?"

"My orders are to permit no stragglers from other camps to pass these lines, and I shall obey my orders to the letter," replied the official, who, for some reason or other, seemed to be prejudiced against Somers's friends.

"Stragglers!" exclaimed the sensitive Allan. "I think we have gone far enough."

"I think you have," added the sergeant; "and, if you don't leave at once, it will be my duty to arrest you."

"Whew!" exclaimed Owen. "That would be carrying the joke altogether too far. I think my *pater* ought to be satisfied with what we have done."

"Move on," said the sergeant.

They did move on; and Somers, attended by the officer of the guard, walked towards headquarters.

"Those are the coolest fellows that ever came near my lines," said the sergeant. "Men without a pass looking out for one who has a pass!"

"Well, they are good fellows; but I played a joke upon them, which makes them a little sour towards me," replied the scout. "I am even with them now."

"What was the joke?" demanded the sergeant, who was filled with interest at the mention of the word.

Somers gave him a modified account of the affair at the house of Mr. Raynes; which he embellished a little for the occasion, to allay any suspicion which might arise in the mind of the auditor. But the officer of the guard had no suspicion. Why should he have any? for Somers, armed with a pass signed by the officer of the day, was walking as directly as he could towards the headquarters. The sergeant of the guard left him when they reached the guard tent; and Somers proceeded to report in due form to the major, whom he found smoking his cigar under a tree as complacently as though there was not a traitor or a spy in the land.

"Well, young man! you have returned promptly at the time specified," said the major, as Somers very deferentially touched his cap to this magnate of the rebel army.

"Yes, sir; I have endeavored to discharge my duty faithfully," replied Somers.

"Did you find the regiment?"

"No, sir; I lost my way; and finding I should not have time to go to the place where it is, without overstaying my time, I hastened back, knowing that the service upon which you wished to employ me was very important indeed."

"You did right, young man. Where is your coat?"

"It was one I picked up just after I had passed the lines, and a soldier down below claimed it. I gave it up when he convinced me it was his property."

"You are very honest as well as patriotic."

Somers bowed, but made no reply to the compliment; which, however, was fully appreciated.

"You seem to be a young man of good address, and you can render your country a great service, but it will be at the peril of your life," said the major with impressive formality.

"I am willing to serve my country, even with my life."

"I do not doubt it. I was impressed by your manner, and I have recommended you to the general for the service he has in view. I hope you will do credit to the selection I have made; for the most important duty which a commander has to perform is to select proper persons for the execution of special missions."

"I will endeavor to serve my country to the best of my ability; and I am satisfied that I can go all over the Yankee camps without difficulty."

"Very well! You have confidence in yourself; and that is the first requisite of success. If you discharge this duty with fidelity and skill, you may be sure of being made a sergeant the moment you return."

"Thank you, Major Platner. I am very grateful to you, sir, for the opportunity you thus afford me to distinguish myself."

"You will find me a good friend, if you are faithful and intelligent."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now you shall go with me to General M---'s headquarters, and he will give you your final instructions."

Major Platner led the way; and Somers reverently followed a pace or two behind him, flattering the officer in every action as well as word. They reached the division headquarters, and our hero was ushered into the presence of the general. He was a large, red-faced man, and had evidently taken all the whiskey he could carry, at his dinner, from which he had just returned.

"What have you got there, Platner?" demanded the general, in a tone so rough, that Somers was reminded of the ogre in Jack the Giant-killer.

"The young man of whom I spoke to you this forenoon. He is a person of remarkable address, courage and skill; and is just the man you need."

"All right; adieu, major!" added the general, bowing to the other.

Major Platner took the hint, and took himself off, leaving Somers standing alone and somewhat abashed in the presence of the great man.

"Young man!" said, or rather roared, the rebel general, as he raised his eyes from the ground, and fixed them with a half-drunken leer upon our hero.

"Sir!"

"How much whiskey can you drink without going by the board?"

Somers did not know, had never tried the experiment, and was utterly opposed to all such practices. But he desired to conciliate the tipsy general; and, if he had not been fearful of being put to the test, he would have signified his belief that he could carry off half a dozen glasses. As it was, he did not dare to belie his principles.

"Not any, sir! I never drink whiskey," he replied, with the utmost deference in his tones.

"Hey?" gasped General M---, darting a sudden glance at the young man.

"I never drank a glass of whiskey in my life, sir," added Somers.

The general jumped off his camp-stool with a sudden jerk, and stared at our lieutenant in silence for an instant.

"Give me your hand," said he.

Somers extended his hand.

"Yes! you are flesh and blood. You are the first man I ever saw that never drank a glass of whiskey. You drink brandy, don't you?"

"No, sir! I never drank a glass of liquor or wine of any kind in my life."

"Give me your hand," said the general again.

"Flesh and blood! You are the first man I ever saw that never drank a glass of liquor or wine of any kind. 'Tis a bad practice," he added with an oath.

"I think so, sir," replied Somers with due deference.

"Young man!"

"Sir."

"The greatest enemy--hic--that the Confederate army has to contend against is whiskey. Yes, sir! whiskey. If the Confederate States of--hic--of America ever win their independence, it will be when the whiskey's all gone."

"I am very glad to hear officers of your high rank condemning the practice," said Somers, alive to the joke of the general's proceedings, but prudently looking as serious as though it had been a solemn tragedy instead of an awful farce.

"Yes, sir! I'm opposed with all my might to the practice. Yes, sir! Whiskey is the greatest enemy I have on the face of the footstool, young man."

Somers believed him.

"Always be temperate, young man. You are in the sunshine of--hic--of life. Never drink whiskey. It will ruin your body and soul. Don't touch it, young man," added he, as he sank back on the camp-stool, whose center of gravity was nearly destroyed by the shock, and closed his eyes, as if overcome by the potency of his great enemy, which was just then beginning to have its full effect, and which produced a tendency to sleep.

"I will endeavor to profit by your good advice, sir," said Somers.

"That's right; do so," added the general, as he jerked up his head to banish the drowsy god, who was struggling for the possession of his senses. "That will do, young man. You may go now."

The general, in his drunken stupor, had certainly forgotten the business for which Major Platner had brought him to the division headquarters; and Somers began to fear that he should have no errand that day.

"I beg your pardon, general; but Major Platner was kind enough to say that you had some service for me to perform."

"Eh?" demanded he, tossing up his head again.

Somers repeated the remark more explicitly than before.

"Exactly so; I remember. Do you know what I was thinking about just then, young man?" said the general, spasmodically leaping to his feet again, as though the thought was full of inspiration.

"No, sir; a man in my humble position could hardly measure the thoughts of a great man in your situation."

"I'll tell you; I was thinking about issuing a division general order on the subject of temperance. What do you think of it?"

"It would be an excellent idea," replied Somers.

"Young man!"

"Sir."

"I believe you said--hic----"

Somers did not say anything of the sort; but he waited patiently for the rebel general to recover the idea which he appeared to have lost.

"I believe you said you never drank any whiskey?"

"I never did, sir."

"Then you never was drunk?"

"Never, sir."

"Young man!"

"Sir."

"Are you a--hic----"

Somers was not a "hic;" but he was an impatient young man, and very anxious to be instructed in regard to his difficult and dangerous mission.

"Are you a minister of the gospel?" demanded the general, after a mighty effort.

"No, sir; I am not."

"I'm sorry for--hic--for that; for I wanted to appoint you a division chaplain, to preach against whiskey to the general officers. Some of them are--hic--drunken fellows, and no more fit for a command than the old toppers in the streets of Richmond."

"I am sorry I am not competent to fill the office; but I think, if you should lecture them yourself, it would have a better effect."

"My words are--hic--powerless. They laugh when I talk to them about the error of their ways," added he with a string of oaths, which seemed to exhibit a further necessity for a chaplain on the division staff.

"I beg your pardon, sir; but I am afraid your interest in the moral welfare of your officers----"

"That is it, young man!" interrupted the drunken general, catching at his idea with remarkable promptness. "My interest in the moral welfare of my--hic--of my officers! You are a trump, young man [big oath]. You are a major now?"

"No, sir."

"Only a captain?"

"No, sir; nothing but a private."

"Then you shall be a captain. I haven't heard any such--hic--sentiments as you expressed used in this division before. You ought to be a--hic--a brigadier-general."

"Thank you, sir. You are very kind. I came to you for instructions in regard to my mission over to the enemy."

"Bless me! yes; so you did. Well, I have not written them yet."

"I only want a pass from you, general, with such verbal instructions as you may please to give me."

"So you do; the fact of it is, my interest in the moral welfare of my men had driven the matter out of my mind."

The general called an orderly; and Somers was sent off to the adjutant for the pass, which was given to him under the name he had assumed. When he returned, the general was sound asleep on his camp-stool, rolling about like a ship in a gale, with a prospect of soon landing at full length on *terra firma*. Somers would gladly have received some military information from the general, who was in a condition to tell all he knew; which, however, could not have been much, under the circumstances. He concluded that it would be best for him not to awaken the tipsy moralist; and, after waiting a short time on the spot to avoid suspicion, he joined Major Platner, who was smoking his cigar under a tree near the headquarters.

"Well, young man, did you obtain your instructions?"

"Yes; all I require."

"Perhaps we ought to have seen the general before dinner," added the major, using the remark as a "feeler" to induce his companion to inform him what had transpired during the interview.

"Perhaps it would have been more agreeable to the general. However, he seemed to be in a very talkative mood."

"He commonly is after dinner."

"He is a very jovial, good fellow."

"Very."

"But he appears to feel a deep interest in the moral welfare of those under his command. He expressed himself as very averse to habits of intemperance."

"Humph!" coughed the major.

"He said that whiskey was the great enemy the army has to contend against, and intends to issue a general order directed at the vice of intemperance."

"Did he?"

"He did; but I ought to add, that he took me to be a major in the service; a mistake which was very natural, since I wore no coat."

"Very natural--after dinner," replied Major Platner suggestively.

"I told him I never drank any strong drink; and he kindly advised me never to do so."

"The general is a brave man, and I hope he will be able to overcome all his enemies."

The major permitted the conversation to go by default, and Somers respectfully dropped a pace or two behind him.

They reached the brigade headquarters, and then repaired to the guard tent, from which the scout took his departure upon his arduous and difficult mission, with the best wishes of the rebel officers.

With his pass he had no difficulty in going through any line, and made his way down to the woods on the left of the open fields. He began to feel easier when he had passed the field-works, and experienced a sensation of exultation as he thought of the reception which awaited him at headquarters as well as in the regiment.

CHAPTER XV

THE SHARPSHOOTER IN THE WOODS

Somers found the picket guard nearer the rebel line than he had anticipated; but the exhibition of his pass, which had been prepared with special reference to this purpose, prevented any long detention, though a sergeant had to be called who was scholar enough to read the mysterious document.

"I reckon you haven't got the best place to go through," said the sergeant, after he had examined the pass, and satisfied himself of its correctness.

"Why not?"

"There's a whole squad of Yankees a good piece in there," he replied, pointing in the direction of the Federal lines. "They've been there all day watching for something."

"What do they want?"

"There was a man run through the line this forenoon from their side, and I reckon they are trying to find him."

"Was he a Yank?" asked Somers, desirous of obtaining their idea of the fugitive.

"Dunno what he was. We didn't see him till he got a good piece behind us. We were chasing the Yanks who run away when they saw us."

This was satisfactory to our scout; for the sergeant appeared to have no knowledge that would be dangerous to him, and none of the graybacks recognized the pants he wore. He advanced cautiously, as though he was afraid of stumbling upon the squad of Yankees described by the sergeant, till he could no longer be seen by the pickets. The last obstacle seemed to be overcome; and he hastened to the place where he had concealed his uniform, which he wished to put on before he approached the pickets on the other side. It was now nearly dark, and he had no time to spare; for, if he approached his own men in the darkness, he would be in danger of being shot before they discovered who he was, though he had full confidence in the discretion of Hapgood.

Without difficulty, he found the place where he had concealed his clothes; and, after assuring himself that none of the rebel pickets were in sight, he hastily put them on. To prevent any unpleasant suspicions, he took the precaution to hide the gray pants he had worn, in the long grass of the swamp, so that they need not attract the attention of any stroller who might pass in that direction. Though we have frequently held our hero up as a model of modesty, we are compelled to acknowledge that he felt exceedingly well satisfied with himself on the present occasion. He felt that he had done what, in the homely vocabulary of the boys of Pinchbrook, might well be called "a big thing."

He had fully and successfully accomplished the arduous purposes of his mission. He had examined the positions, and counted the forces of the rebels. He had received very valuable information from Mr. Raynes, and from others whom he had encountered in his walk through the enemy's lines. He was satisfied that he should receive a warm welcome from those who had sent him upon the perilous tour. He had earned the first bar to his shoulder-straps, and was proud of his achievement.

The work had been done, and he was within a short distance of the Union lines--within a short distance of the devoted Hapgood, who was patiently but anxiously waiting to give him a soldier's reception. Above all, he was safe; and he trembled when he thought of the perils through which he had passed, of the consequences which must have followed the discovery of his real character. As he thanked God for the boon of life after the battle was over, so now he thanked Him for the signal success which had crowned his labors in the good cause. The last article of his raiment was put on and adjusted; he rose from the ground to walk towards the Union lines.

"I say, Yank, you look better'n you did 'fore yer changed your clothes," said a voice, which struck his ear with startling distinctness.

Somers looked in the direction from which the voice came, and discovered a villainous-looking countenance, that had just risen from the tall swamp-grass, within a couple of rods of the spot where he stood. The man was unmistakably a rebel--one of the most savage and implacable of rebels at that; such a character as we read of in connection with slave-hunts in Mississippi, or "free fights" in Arkansas. He wore a long, tangled beard; and his hair had probably never known the use of a comb. The grayback looked as cool and impudent as though he was perfectly assured of his prey, and intended to torture his victim with his tongue, as he would with his knife or his rifle if occasion required.

"I say, Yank, you look better'n yer did 'fore yer changed your colors," repeated the rebel, as he received no reply to his first salutation.

Somers looked at him again; indeed, he had hardly taken his eyes off the savage-looking fellow, who would have made a very good representative of Orson in the fairy story. He held a rifle in his hand, the muzzle of which could easily be brought to bear upon his victim. Our lieutenant at once understood the humor of the fellow; and, having recovered his self-possession in the momentary pause, he determined not to be behind his foe either in word or in deed.

"I say, reb, when did you shave last?" demanded Somers, with something as near akin to a laugh as he could manufacture for the occasion.

"Fore you was born, I reckon, Yank," replied the rebel; "and I sha'n't shave ag'in till after you're dead. But I reckon I sha'n't hev ter wait long nuther."

"I suppose you don't know what a comb is for, do you?" continued Somers, who was, however, thinking of some method by which he might get out of this scrape.

"I reckon I've heerd about such things; but Joe Bagbone ain't a woman, and don't waste his time no such way. I say, stranger, you've got about three minutes more to live."

"How long?"

"Three minutes, stranger, I've sat here by them clothes, like a dog at a 'possum's nest, all the artemoon. Now I've treed the critter, and I'm gwine to shoot him."

"Is that so?"

"That's so, stranger."

"Do you usually shoot any man you happen to meet in the woods?"

"Well, I don't reckon we do, every man; but some on 'em we does. I calkilate you got on Tom Myers's clothes now, and yer shot the man 'fore you took the rags."

"I didn't shoot him."

"No matter for that, stranger; he was shot by a Yank, and you've got to settle the account."

Somers began to be of the same opinion himself. The grayback had evidently found the clothes, and suspected the purpose for which they were concealed. It was possible he had even more definite information than this; for he seemed to be prepared for precisely what had taken place.

"My friend----"

"I'm not your friend, stranger. You kin say anything you like, if yer don't insult me; Joe Bagbone don't take an insult from any live man."

"Well, Joe Bagbone," continued Somers, who was disposed to parley with the fellow to gain time, if nothing else, "if you shoot me, you will make the worst mistake you ever made in your life; and I can prove it to you in less than five minutes."

"No, yer can't, stranger. Don't waste yer time no such way. If yer want ter say yer prayers, blaze away lively, 'cause three minutes aren't long for a man to repent of all his sins."

"I have a pass from General M----, which permits me to go in safety through these lines," persisted Somers. "The sergeant above just examined it, and passed me through."

"Don't keer nothing about yer pass. I respects Jeff Davis just as much as the best man in Mississip'. If yer had a pass from him, you mought as well not have it as have it. Tom Myers was killed, and somebody's gwine up for him."

"But I have important business on the other side."

"I knows that, stranger," replied the imperturbable Joe Bagbone. "It don't make no difference."

"I am sent over by General M----. I belong to the Fourth Alabama."

"Shet up! Don't tell no lies, 'cause yer hain't got no time ter repent on 'em."

"Then, if I understand it, you mean to murder one of your own men in cold blood."

"Nothin' of the sort; only gwine to shoot a Yank."

Somers looked into that hard, relentless eye; but there was not the slightest indication of any change of purpose. He felt that he stood in the presence of his executioner. All the errors of his past life crowded upon him, and the grave seemed to yawn before him.

"Call the sergeant above, and he will satisfy you that I am all right," said he, making one more effort to move the villain from his wicked purpose.

"Don't want the sergeant. Yer time's out, stranger."

"Let me call him, then."

"If yer do, I'll fire. Say yer prayers now, if yer mean ter; but I reckon the prayers of a Yank ain't of much account," replied Joe with a sneer.

Somers stood within a few feet of a large tree. Joe had several times raised his rifle to his shoulder; but, when he magnanimously offered his victim the last moment of grace, he dropped it again; and our lieutenant, taking advantage of this interval, darted behind the tree. Joe raised his piece quicker than a flash; but he did not fire, for the reason that he could not secure a perfect aim, and because he was sure of a better opportunity. Our lieutenant, who had carefully preserved his revolver during the various changes he had made in his dress, now took it from his pocket, and prepared to contest the field like a man.

The grayback, chagrined at this movement on the part of his victim, whom he had evidently intended to intimidate by his coolness and his ferocious words, rose from his seat in the long grass, and moved towards the tree behind which Somers had taken refuge. Probably he was not aware that the Yankee was armed; for he adopted none of the precautions which such a knowledge would have imposed upon any reasonable man.

"Come out from that tree, stranger, or you shall die like a hog, with a knife; not like a man, with a rifle-ball."

"I intend to die by neither," said Somers resolutely, as he discharged his pistol in the direction from which the voice of the grayback came; for he dared not take aim, lest the bullet of the ruffian should pierce his skull.

He might as well have fired into the air, so far as any injury to his enemy was concerned; but the report had the effect to assure the rebel that he was armed, and thus put an end to his farther advance in that direction. Somers listened with intense anxiety to discover the next movement of his wily persecutor. He had only checked, not defeated him; and an exciting game was commenced, which promised to terminate only in the death of one of the belligerents. Somers hoped that the discharge of his pistol would bring the sergeant down to his relief; but then to be discovered in Federal uniform was about equivalent to being shot by his relentless foe, burning to revenge the death of Tom Myers.

The report of pistols and muskets was so common an occurrence on the picket-lines as to occasion nothing more than a momentary inquiry. No one came for his relief, or his ruin, as the case might be; and he was left to play out the exciting game by himself. The grayback, with a wholesome regard for the pistol, had retired beyond the reach of its ball, while he was still a long way within rifle-range of his doomed enemy. Somers dared not look out from the tree to obtain even a single glance at the foe; for he knew how accurate is the aim of some of these Southern woodsmen. He had nothing to guide him but the rustling of the dried branches beneath his tread, or the occasional snapping of a twig under his feet.

Joe Bagbone, after retreating beyond pistol-shot from the tree, had commenced describing a circle which would bring him into a position that commanded a view of his concealed victim. It must be confessed that Joe's tactics were singularly deficient in range; for nothing but a surprise could make them successful. While he was moving a hundred rods to secure his position, Somers could defeat his purpose by taking a single step. As soon as he determined in what direction his persecutor was going, he changed his position; and Joe discovered the folly of his strategy, and sat down on a stump to await a demonstration on the part of his victim.

The game promised to be prolonged to a most unreasonable length; and Somers, now in a measure secure of his life, was impatient to join his anxious companions, with whom he had parted in the forenoon. He was satisfied that Joe would never abandon the chase, and the slightest indiscretion on his own part would result in instant death. It was a fearful position, and one which was calculated to wear terribly upon his nerves. He was anxious to bring the contest to a conclusion; and, while he was debating in his own mind the chances of escaping by a sudden dash in the direction of the Union lines, a happy thought in the way of strategy occurred to him.

He had determined as nearly as he could the situation of his bull-dog opponent, and thought that, if he could draw his fire, he might get out of range of his rifle before it could be reloaded. Placing his cap on the barrel of his pistol, he cautiously moved it over, just as it would have appeared to the rebel if his head had been inside of it, and projected it a little beyond the tree. He withdrew it suddenly two or three times to increase the delusion in the mind of his enemy. He could not see the effect of the stratagem; but he was hopeful of a satisfactory result. He continued to repeat the operation with the cap, till he was confident Joe was not to be fooled in this way. He was probably one of the sharpshooters, and had too often fired at empty caps to be caught in this manner when success depended upon the single charge of his rifle.

Somers did not despair, but slipped off his coat; and, rolling it up so as to form the semblance of a head, he placed the cap upon the top of the bundle, and cautiously exposed the "dummy" on the opposite side of the tree. The crack of Joe's rifle instantly followed this exhibition, and Somers felt the blow of the ball when it struck the cap. The critical moment had come; and, without the loss of a second, our lieutenant darted towards the Union lines. This movement

was followed by a shrill yell from the Mississippian, which might have been a howl of disappointment at his failure; or it might have been intended to startle, and thus delay the fugitive.

Somers had listened to that battle yell too many times to be moved by it, especially when uttered by a single voice; and, with all the speed of which his limbs were capable, he fled to the arms of his friends. Joe was not content to give up the battle; and, dropping his rifle, he drew his long knife, and gave chase. They made a long run of it; and it was only ended when Tom heard the demand of his faithful sergeant--

"Who goes there?"

"Friend," gasped Somers, utterly exhausted by his exertions.

"Lieutenant Somers? God be praised!" replied Hapgood, instantly recognizing his voice.

CHAPTER XVI

RETURN TO THE CAMP

The moment Somers was recognized, Hapgood and his party rushed forward, rightly judging, from the rapidity of his motions, that he was pursued. The sharp eye of the veteran sergeant was the first to perceive the ferocious Mississippian, who, undaunted by the appearance of the Union soldiers, continued the pursuit as long as there was even a gleam of hope that he could overtake his intended victim. He was only a few paces behind the lieutenant when the latter was discovered.

Hapgood raised his musket and fired, just as the implacable pursuer abandoned the chase, and turned his steps back to the rebel line. He staggered for a few paces more, and fell just as a dozen other muskets were leveled at him. He appeared to have been hit in the leg; for he did not fall flat upon the ground, as he would if he had been struck in a vital part, but sank down to a sitting posture.

The Union men rushed up to him, and found that the supposition was correct; the ball had passed through the fleshy part of his thigh, disabling, but not dangerously wounding him. The ruffian--we do not call him so because he was a rebel, but he was naturally and by education just what the term indicates--was as savage and implacable as before.

"Better leave me where I am, Yanks," said he; "case, if I get well, I shall be the death of some of you. You kin shoot me through the head if you like."

"Don't consarn yourself about us, reb," replied Hapgood. "We'll take good care that you don't hurt yourself, or any one else, while you are in our hands."

"Mebbe you will, Yanks; but, just as sure as you was born, I'll hev the heart's blood of that younker as fotched Tom Myers down."

"Who's Tom Myers?" demanded the veteran.

"The man that you Yanks killed this forenoon."

"Whose heart's blood do you want?"

"That younker with the badge on his shoulder; the un I chased in."

"He didn't kill Tom Myers, or any other man."

"Show me the man, then," growled the rebel, now beginning to feel the pain of his wound.

"I'm your man. I brought Tom Myers down," replied Hapgood, anxious to remove any cause of peril from his *protege*.

"Did yer?"

"Sartin I did; saw him drop when I fired."

"Then, stranger, yer kin make up yer mind to die like a hog within ten days. I tell yer, Yank, there ain't bolts and bars enough in Yankee land to keep me away from yer. You kin shoot me if yer like now, and that's all the way yer kin save yerself."

"Well, reb, you are great at blowing; but I've seen a good many jest sich fellers as you be. I've fit with 'em, and fit agin' 'em; and I tell you, your uncle can take keer of just as many of you as can stand up between here and sundown. Put that in your hopper, reb; and the sooner you dry up, the sooner you'll come to your milk. We'll take keer on you like a Christian, though you ain't nothin' but a heathen. Here, boys, make a stretcher, and kerry him along. Take that jack-knife out of his hand fust, and keep one eye on him all the time."

Having thus delivered himself, Sergeant Hapgood hastened to the spot where Somers had seated himself on the ground to recover his wind and rest his weary limbs. The terrible excitement of the last hour seemed to fatigue him more than the previous labors of the whole day; and he was hardly in condition to march to the division headquarters, where he was to report the success of his mission.

"Oh, Tom--I mean Lieutenant Somers--I'm glad to see you!" exclaimed the veteran as he grasped both the hands of the young soldier.

"Thank you, uncle; I'm just as glad to see you as you can be to see me," replied Somers.

"You're all tuckered out, Somers."

"I had to run for some distance, with the odds against me; but I shall get rested in a little while."

The sergeant began to ask questions; and, as soon as he had recovered his breath, Somers gave him a brief sketch of his adventures, dwelling mainly on the last and most thrilling event of the day.

"I can hardly believe that I am alive and well after all that has happened," said he in conclusion. "That was the most bloodthirsty villain I ever encountered in the whole course of my life."

"If you say shoot him, lieutenant, it shall be done quicker'n you can say Jack Roberson," added Hapgood, indignant at the conduct of the savage rebel.

"Of course, I don't say anything of that kind. It would be murder to do anything of that sort while he is our prisoner."

"He deserves hanging more'n Kyd the pirate did; and if I had my way, he'd swing afore sunrise to-morrow. He's a consarned heathen!"

"Never mind him; only keep him safe, and where he can't do any mischief; for he is wicked enough to kill the man that feeds him."

"I'm only sorry I didn't hit him a little higher up, where I hit the other feller this mornin'," added the veteran. "How do you feel now, lieutenant?"

"I am improving. I shall be ready to go with you in a few moments more."

After sitting on the stump half an hour longer, he was in condition to march; but the danger was past, the tremendous excitement had subsided, and his muscles, which had been strained up to the highest tension, seemed to become soft and flaccid. The party passed the Union pickets, and reached the headquarters of the division general, who had just finished his supper.

"Somers! by all that is great and good!" exclaimed the general, who probably never expected to see the scout again.

"I have come to make my report, sir," replied the lieutenant.

"You are all used up. You look as though you could hardly stand up."

"I am very tired, sir," added Somers languidly.

"Sit down, then. Here, Peter," he added, addressing his servant, "bring in a glass of whiskey for Lieutenant Somers."

"Thank you, general; I never drink anything stronger than coffee."

"But a little whiskey would do you good in your present condition; you need it."

"I thank you, general; I never drink whiskey, as I had occasion to say to a rebel general of division to-day."

"Eh? 'Pon my conscience! Were you asked to drink by a rebel major-general?" demanded the officer, greatly surprised at the statement of the scout

"Not exactly, sir. About the first question he asked me was, how much whiskey I could drink without going by the board."

"Who was he? Bring coffee, Peter."

"General M----."

"So I supposed. He is a jovial, good-hearted fellow; but I'll wager my shoulder-straps he was tight at the time," laughed the general.

"Very tight, sir."

"Well, he is a fighting man, drunk or sober; but I should rather lead than follow him in action. Where have you been all day?"

"Shall I tell my story in full, or only give you the information I obtained?"

"Tell the story, so that I can determine whether the information is good for anything or not."

Somers drank the tin cup of coffee which the general's servant brought to him, and then proceeded to relate the incidents of the day in the rebel camp. His distinguished auditor, who, in the Army of the Potomac, had well earned the title of "the bravest of the brave," listened with eager interest to the details of the lieutenant's story, asking occasional questions upon points which were not only calculated to elicit particular information, but to display the skill and intelligence of the scout. The interview was prolonged for several hours; and at its close a staff-officer was despatched to the corps commander; for what purpose, of course, Somers had no intimation.

"Lieutenant Somers, you have earned your promotion; and if you don't have it, it will be because I have not influence enough to procure it. You have done well."

"Thank you, sir."

"Your friend, Senator Guilford, shall hear of you within forty-eight hours."

"I beg your pardon, sir; but, grateful as I am to Senator Guilford for the interest he has expressed in me, I don't care to be patronized by any man in civil life."

"Whew!" laughed the general. "I wish some of our colonels and brigadiers would take a lesson from you. Never mind, Lieutenant Somers; you will deserve all you ever get."

"Thank you, sir."

"Go to your quarters now. Here," he added, dashing off a note at his table, in which he desired that Somers might be excused from duty for the next two days, to enable him to recover from the fatigues of his arduous expedition.

I need not inform my readers how soundly our hero slept in his shelter tent that night, nor how his slumbers were disturbed by a horrid rebel with a bowie-knife, and a horrid feminine monstrosity which seemed to be called Sue by her attendant demons; but he slept as a tired boy only can sleep.

The next morning the brigade was relieved from picket duty, and the regiment returned to its camp. Captain de Banyan had neither seen nor heard from his young friend since his departure on the forenoon of the preceding day. Of course he was overjoyed to see him, as well as intensely curious to know where he had been, what he had done, and whether he had been promoted. Somers told his adventures to the mess, omitting such military information as was "contraband" in the camp.

"Somers, my dear fellow, you are a man after my own heart!" exclaimed the captain, grasping his hand, and wringing it with all the enthusiasm of his fervid nature. "Somers, my boy, did you ever hear of a man having his double?"

"I have read of such things in old legends."

"I believe in it, Somers. You are my double! You are my second self! You are as near like me as one pea is like another! Just before the battle of Magenta----"

At this interesting point in the conversation, the officers of the mess burst into an involuntary roar of laughter, ending up Magenta with a long dash.

"Not exactly like you, Captain de Banyan," added Somers.

"You can't tell half so big a story," said Lieutenant Munroe.

"Gentlemen," interposed the captain with dignity, "you interrupted me at the wrong moment. I was about to prove to you wherein Lieutenant Somers was my double; and with your permission, I will proceed with my argument. Just before the battle of Magenta, I was sent out on a scout; and I went at the particular request of the Emperor Napoleon, who--permit me to add, in the presence of a company which seems to be inimical to my antecedents, if not to me--had unlimited confidence in my ability to perform this delicate duty with skill and success. Well, gentlemen, I passed our pickets; of course I mean the French pickets; for I was, as you are all aware, a colonel in the French infantry at that time."

"We are all aware of it," laughed Munroe--"over the left."

"That is a slang phrase, and repulsive to the ears of a cultivated gentleman. As I was saying, gentlemen, I passed our pickets, and soon encountered a Russian general of division."

"Russian?"

"Austrian, I should have said; and I thank you, Somers, for the correction. I suppose he was making the grand rounds with the officer of the day. Be that as it may, he considered it his duty to stop me; and I was under the disagreeable necessity of putting a bullet through his head. He was a count, and the father of a large family; however, I could not help it, though I was sorry to make orphans of his children. I stepped into his uniform without the delay of a moment."

"Where was the sergeant of the guard, the officer of the day, and the sentinels?" demanded Lieutenant Munroe.

"I beg you will not interrupt me, Lieutenant Munroe, with these ill-timed remarks, which are merely intended to throw discredit on my character for truth and veracity. I remarked, that I stepped into the uniform of the defunct major-general. To abbreviate the narrative somewhat, I walked through the Austrian lines for three hours, till I had discovered the position of the infantry, cavalry and artillery. But the most singular part of the affair was, that, when the long roll was beat once during that eventful night, I placed myself at the head of the departed general's division, and maneuvered it for an hour on the field, intending to place it in such a position that the French could capture it. Unfortunately, no attack was made by the Emperor's forces, and I could not carry out my plan."

"Can you talk the Austrian lingo, captain?" asked Munroe.

"Of course I can," replied De Banyan with dignity.

"Here, Schrugeneimer, let us have a specimen of the lingo!" said the tormentor, appealing to a German officer. "Ask him some questions in your own language."

"Gentlemen, if my word is not sufficient, I shall not condescend to demonstrate what I have said. You will notice the similarity between the adventures of Lieutenant Somers and my own."

The officers of the mess all laughed heartily at the conclusion of the comparison; for the story, like a fairy tale, was pleasant to hear, but hard to believe. But weightier matters than these were at hand for these gallant men; and before night the gay laugh had ceased, and they had nerved themselves for the stern duties of the hour. Cannon had been thundering to the right of them for three days; and in the afternoon they had seen the smoke of burning bridges, which assured them that their communications with White House had been cut off. At night, orders were given to have the men ready to move, and to prepare for a hurried march. Extra stores were destroyed, clothing thrown away, and tents were cut in pieces, or otherwise rendered useless to the next occupants of the ground. Everything to be transported was reduced to the smallest possible compass.

These orders were ominous of disaster; but on the following morning a general order was read, to the effect that all was right. The troubled expression on the countenances of officers and men indicated their incredulity; for the destruction in which they had been engaged belied the words of the order. The brigade was then moved back three miles from the camp. A portion of the regiment was posted near a house, in which was a bedridden old woman, attended by her daughter. The rebels were advancing by the Williamsburg road, and soon had a battery of artillery in position to shell the vicinity of the house.

It was an intensely hot day. Captain de Banyan sat asleep on the fence near the house. He was very much exhausted by the labors of the two preceding nights on picket, and at the destruction of the stores; and while Somers was watching the progress of the battle on the right, where a sharp fight was in progress, a shell screamed between them, and struck the house about a foot from the ground.

"That reminds me of the night before Magenta," said the veteran, opening his eyes, without even a start. "A hundred-pounder shell knocked my hat off, and then passed through the two open windows at each gable of a house, without even breaking a pane of glass."

"A narrow escape for you and for the house," replied Somers with a languid smile.

CHAPTER XVII

GLENDALE AND MALVERN HILLS

Captain de Banyan was as cool and indifferent to danger as though he had been shot-proof. Cannon-balls and shell flew through the air; but the veteran paid no attention to them—except that once in a while they reminded him of Magenta, or some other of the numerous battle-fields where he had displayed his valor. There was little fighting for our regiment at this point, though there was a sharp action on the right of the position.

The rebels attacked our forces with tremendous vigor at Savage's Station. It was believed by their generals that the Union army was utterly demoralized; that it was retreating in disorder towards the James River; and that a vigorous onslaught would result in its capture. The first intimation of the blunder was received at Savage's Station, where the Confederates were decisively repulsed; yet the hope was not abandoned of ending the war by the destruction of the Army of the Potomac. The hosts of the rebellion were poured down the roads, where they could intercept the loyal forces; and the full extent of their blunder was realized only at Malvern Hills.

At noon our regiment marched through White Oak Swamp, and late in the evening bivouacked in a field near the road. During all this time the road was filled with troops, and with trains of army wagons on their way to the new "base." Very early the next morning, the march was resumed. It was an exceedingly hot day, and the troops suffered severely from the heat. Somers was nearly exhausted when the regiment halted at noon near a church, which the surgeons had already occupied as a hospital. But nothing could disturb the equanimity of Captain de Banyan. If an opportunity offered, he rested, and went to sleep amid the screaming shells as readily as though he had been in his chamber in the "Fifth Avenue." It was not quite so hot as it was at Magenta, nor the march quite so severe as before Solferino, nor the shot quite so thick as at Chapultepec. He never grumbled himself, and never permitted any one else to do so. If Somers ventured to suggest that events were rather hard upon him, he wondered what he would have done if he had been at Magenta, Solferino, Balaclava, or Chapultepec.

Somers was disposed to make the best of the circumstances; and though hungry, tired and nearly melted, he sustained himself with unflinching courage amid the trials of that eventful march. All day long, the tide of army wagons and cattle flowed down the road; and the brigade remained near the church at Glendale, waiting for them to pass. At dark the order was given to move forward, while the roar of cannon and musketry reverberated on the evening air, assuring the weary veterans that the baptism of blood was at hand for them, as it had been before for their comrades in arms.

The regiment followed a narrow road through the woods, which was thronged with the *debris* of the conflict, hurled back by the fierce assaults of the rebels. The cowardly skulkers and the noncombatants of the engaged regiments were here with their tale of disaster and ruin; and, judging from the mournful stories they told, the once proud Army of the Potomac had been utterly routed and discomfited. Cowards with one bar, cowards with two bars, cowards with no bar, and cowards with the eagle on their shoulders, repeated the wail of disaster; and the timid would have shrunk from the fiery ordeal before them, if the intrepid officers and the mass of the rank and file had not been above the influence of the poltroons' trembling tones and quaking limbs.

"Forward, my brave boys! I've been waiting all my lifetime for such a scene as this!" shouted Captain de Banyan, as he flourished his sword after the most approved style.

"Don't mind the cowards!" said Somers, as the stragglers poured out their howls of terror.

There was little need of these stirring exhortations; for the men were as eager for the fight as the officers, and laughed with genuine glee at the pitiful aspect of the runaways. They advanced in line of battle to the support of the hard-pressed troops in front of them, and poured a withering fire into the enemy. With that fiendish yell which the Southern soldiers invariably use in the hour of battle, they rushed forward with a fury which was madness, and into which no fear of death entered.

"They are coming!" shouted Somers, as the legions of rebellion surged down upon the line, yelling like so many demons, as though they expected the veterans to be vanquished by mere noise. "Stand steady, my men!"

"That reminds me of the Russian advance at Magenta," said Captain de Banyan, who happened to pass near the spot where Somers stood.

"The Austrians, you mean," replied Somers, trying to keep as cool and unmoved as his companion.

"Excuse me; I meant the Austrians," replied the captain. "The fact is----Forward, my brave fellows!" roared he as the order came down the line.

The enemy had been temporarily checked, and the brigade advanced to pursue the advantage gained. They poured

another terrible volley into the rebels; when a regiment of the latter, infuriated by whiskey and the fierce goadings of their officers, rushed down with irresistible force upon a portion of the Union line, and succeeded in making a partial break in our regiment. The only remaining line officer in one of the companies where the rupture occurred was wounded at this critical moment, and borne under the feet of the excited combatants.

"Lieutenant Somers, take command of that company!" shouted the colonel, as he dashed towards the imperiled portion of the line.

Somers made haste to obey the order when the line was giving way before the impetuous charge. He felt that the safety of the whole army depended upon himself at that momentous instant, and that on the salvation of the army rested the destiny of his country. What was the life of a single man, of a hundred thousand even, compared with the fearful issue of that moment? It was the feeling of the young soldier, and he was ready to lay down his life for the flag which symbolized the true glory of the nation.

"Rally round me!" he cried, as he discharged his revolver into the breast of a brave captain who was urging his company forward with the most unflinching resolution. "Down with them!" he shouted, as he waved his sword above his head.

"Hurrah!" roared a brave sergeant near him, and the cry was taken up by the gallant fellows who had been pressed back by sheer force of numbers.

"Forward!" shouted Somers, as he dashed down a bayonet, which would have transfixed him on the spot if he had not been on the alert.

The men rallied, and stood boldly up to the work before them. They were inspired by the example of the young lieutenant; and the rebel regiment slowly and doggedly retired, leaving many of their number dead or wounded on the field, and a small number as prisoners in the hands of Somers's new command.

After alternate repulses and successes, the rebels were signally defeated and driven back. It was a sharp and decisive struggle; but again had the army been saved from destruction, and the long line of army wagons still pursued its way in safety towards the waters of the James.

Again had the rebel general's brilliant calculation failed. His troops, maddened by the fires of the whiskey demon, had done all that men or fiends could do; but the trained valor of the Army of the Potomac had again saved the country. Onward it marched towards the goal of safety under the sheltering wings of the gunboat fleet in the river.

All night long the men marched, with frequent intervals of rest, as the movements of the army trains required them. There was no sleep, even after that hard-fought battle; no real rest from the exciting and wearing events of the day. There was little or no food to be had; and the fainting soldiers, though still ready to fight and march in their weakness, longed for the repose of a few hours in camp. But not yet was the boon to be granted. On the following morning, our regiment arrived at Malvern Hills, where they were again formed in line of battle, in readiness to receive the menacing hosts of the rebels.

"We are all right now, Somers," said Captain de Banyan while they were waiting for the onset.

"Not quite yet, captain. Don't you see those signal-flags on the houses yonder?"

"They mean something, of course. I did not intend to say there will be no fighting; only, that we have a good position, and all the rebels in the Confederacy can't start us now."

"Those flags indicate that the rebels are moving."

"Let them come; the sooner the better, and the sooner it will be over. Hurrah!" exclaimed the captain, as the inspiring strains of the band in the rear saluted his ears.

Cheer after cheer passed along the extended lines as the notes of the "Star-spangled Banner" thrilled the hearts of the weary, fainting soldiers. The bands had not been heard during the operations in front of Richmond; and their music, as Sergeant Hapgood expressed it, "sounded like home."

"That does me good, Somers," continued the captain. "There's nothing like music for the nerves. It wakes men up, and makes them forget all their troubles. Forward, the light brigade!" he added, flourishing his sword in the air. "I suppose you know that poem, Somers?"

"Of course; I know it by heart; read it in school the last day I ever went."

"Did you, indeed?"

"Nothing very singular about that, is there?"

"Rather a remarkable coincidence, I should say," replied the captain with easy indifference, as he twirled his sword on the ground.

"I don't see it."

"You read the poem at school, and I was in that charge."

"You?"

"Yes, my boy. I was a captain in that brigade. But what called the circumstance to my mind was the music which struck up just now. I had a bugler in my company who played 'Hail, Columbia' during the whole of the fight."

"Hail, Columbia?" demanded Somers.

"Certainly; the fellow had a fancy for that tune; and though it wasn't exactly a national thing to the British army, he always played it when he got a chance. Well, sir, I think that bugler did more than any other man in the charge of the light brigade. He never lost a note, and it fired the men up to the pitch of frenzy."

"He was a brave fellow," replied Somers languidly; for he was too thoroughly worn out to appreciate the stories of his veteran companion.

"He was the most determined man I ever met in my life. He was killed in the charge, poor fellow; but he had filled his bugle so full of wind, that the music did not cease till full five minutes after he was stone-dead."

"Come, come, captain! that's a little too bad," said Somers seriously.

"Too bad? Well, I should not be willing to take oath that the time was just five minutes after the bugler died. I did not take out my watch, and time it; and, of course, I can only give you my judgment as to the precise number of minutes."

"You are worse than Baron Munchausen, who told a story something like that; only his was the more reasonable of the two."

"Somers, my boy! you have got a villainously bad habit of discrediting the statements of a brother-officer and a gentleman," said Captain de Banyan seriously.

"And you have got a bad habit of telling the most abominable stories that ever proceeded from the mouth of any man."

"We'll drop the subject, Somers; for such discussions lead to unpleasant results. Do you see that rebel battery?" added the captain, pointing to a road a mile off, where the enemy had taken position to shell the Union line.

"I see it."

The rebel battery opened fire, which was vigorously answered by the other side. The scene began to increase in interest as the cannonade extended along the whole line; and, through the entire day, there raged the most furious artillery conflict of the war. The rebel masses were hurled time after time against the Union line; but it maintained its position like a wall of iron, while thousands of the enemy were recklessly sacrificed in the useless assault. General M---- had probably drunk more than his usual quantity of whiskey; and, though he was as brave as a lion, hundreds of his men paid the penalty with their lives of his rashness and indiscretion.

Night came again upon a victorious field, while hundreds of weeping mothers in the neighboring city sighed for the sons who would return no more to their arms; and while mothers wept, fathers groaned and sisters moaned, the grand army of the Confederacy had been beaten, and the proud rulers of an infatuated people were trembling for their own safety in the presence of the ruin with which defeat threatened them.

After the battle commenced the movement of the Army of the Potomac down the river to Harrison's Landing. The rain fell in torrents, and the single road was crowded with troops and wagons. Though the exhausted soldiers slept, even while the guns of the enemy roared in front of them, and during the brief halts which the confusion in the road caused, there was no real repose. The excitement of the battle and the retreat, and the undefinable sense of insecurity which their situation engendered, banished rest. Tired Nature asserted her claims, and the men yielded to them only when endurance had reached its utmost limit.

At Harrison's Landing, the work of intrenching the position was immediately commenced; and it was some days before the army were entirely assured that defeat and capture were not still possible. The failure of the campaign was not without its effect upon the troops. They felt, that, instead of marching under their victorious banners into the enemy's capital, they had been driven from their position. It was not disaster, but it was failure. Though the soldiers were still in good condition, and as ready as ever to breast the storm of battle, they were in a measure dispirited by the misfortune.

General McClellan and General Lee had each failed to accomplish his purpose. It was the intention of the latter to send Stonewall Jackson into the rear of the Union army, cut it off from its base of supplies, and then attack in front and on the left. The plan was defeated by General McClellan's change of base, which was forced upon him by the cutting-off of his communications with the Pamunkey River. The Union generals, who were first attacked on the right, supposed they were confronted by Jackson, who had come down to flank them in this direction; while Lee intended that he should attack farther down the Peninsula. Each commanding general, to some extent, mistook the purpose of the other.

Whatever errors were made by the grand players in this mighty game, about one thing there can be no mistake--that the courage and fortitude of the rank and file saved the Army of the Potomac, and pushed aside the mighty disaster in which its ruin would have involved the country. All honor to the unnamed heroes who fought those great battles, and endured hardships which shall thrill the souls of Americans for ages to come!

CHAPTER XVIII

LIEUTENANT SOMERS HAS A NEW SENSATION

The experience of the soldiers at Harrison's Landing, for a month following their arrival, was not of the most agreeable nature; and consisted of too large a proportion of exercise with pick and shovel to be very pleasant to those who had not been accustomed to handling these useful implements. Intrenchments and batteries were constructed; and the position was as carefully fortified as the genius of the distinguished engineer in command could suggest, and as thoroughly as though he expected to spend the balance of the term of his natural life at this place.

The army was soon in a condition to defy the operations of the enemy, who were wise enough not to molest it. Somers, in common with the rest of the command, recovered from the severe trials of the movement from White Oak Swamp, and again longed for active operations. About two weeks after the cessation of active operations, the official documents which announced his promotion to the rank of first lieutenant came down to the army; but this was a foregone conclusion. He had won his first bar by his scouting services, and his commission was expected for a fortnight before its arrival. It did not, therefore, cause him any surprise; and was so small an elevation, that his comrades hardly congratulated him upon its reception.

A fortnight later, there came a startling sensation to thrill him with satisfaction and delight. An orderly from the division headquarters summoned him to attend upon the general. The message startled him; for it indicated some momentous event to him, and he hastily prepared to obey the order.

"You are in luck again," said De Banyan, grasping his hand.

"Perhaps not," replied Somers, bewildered at the suggestion.

"I know you are, my dear boy. I was sent for just four weeks after the battle of Solferino, and made a brigadier-general," persisted the captain.

"Ah! then you are General de Banyan?"

"No, no; I dropped the title when I ceased to hold the office."

"That was modest, general."

"Captain, if you please."

"You are entitled by courtesy to the use of the title, and you shall not be robbed of any of your honors."

"As a particular favor, Somers, never call me general. I do not wish to rise above my actual rank. I have never mentioned the little circumstance of my promotion before. Your good fortune was so similar to my own, that I was surprised into doing so."

"What do you mean by my good fortune, captain?"

"Why, you are promoted again. I will bet my year's pay you have had another lift."

"Nonsense! I have just been promoted."

"Bah! what was that to a man of your merit, with a Senator to speak at court for you? A petty first lieutenancy is nothing for a brilliant fellow like you."

"I am not half so brilliant a fellow as you declare, and I think that a commission as first lieutenant is a big thing for a young man like me. I'm sure I never had an idea of being an officer at all; and, when I was made a sergeant, I didn't think I deserved it."

"What do you suppose a major-general can want with you? You have heard from Senator Guilford once before, and I am satisfied you will hear from him again. Now, Somers, what do you suppose the general wants of you?"

"I don't know; I think it very likely he wants a man of my size to go up the river, or on the other side, scouting; nothing more than that, I am satisfied. But I must obey the order," added Somers, who had been making his preparations during the conversation.

"Well, good-by, my boy; and I shall have to stand one side for you after this, and salute you as major."

"As what?"

"Major."

"How absurd you are, captain! You always talk like a sensible fellow; that is, when you mean what you say."

"A hard hit; and very likely the first thing you do, when you get to be a major, will be to arrest me for lying."

"Your hit is the hardest, my dear captain. We have seen some hard times together; and you may be sure that whatever I am, I shall never forget you."

"That's hearty, my boy! Your hand once more," replied De Banyan, extending his own. "After the battle of Solferino----"

"Really, captain, you must excuse me this time, or the general will put me under arrest for my want of promptness, instead of sending me on special duty."

"Well, good luck to you, Somers," said the captain as the lieutenant started for the division headquarters.

As he passed out of sight, an expression of sadness settled down upon Captain de Banyan's face. He looked disappointed and uncomfortable, and it is quite probable that he envied the good fortune of his young companion in arms. If Somers had been brave, and attentive to his duty, he had been no less so himself; and he could not help feeling that the destruction of those railroad cars had made the young man's fortune; that his rapid advancement was a mere stroke of good luck.

Lieutenant Somers, wondering what could possibly be wanted of him, hastened to the headquarters of the division. He had no faith whatever in the prognostications of Captain de Banyan, and was too modest to believe that he had done anything to merit another promotion so soon. Recalling the incidents of his career since his eventful expedition within the rebel lines, there was nothing in his conduct to merit even the notice of his superiors, unless it was what others called his skill and courage in rallying the broken company at Glendale. He had been warmly praised for this act; but he deemed it of little importance, for the memory of Williamsburg cast into the shade anything that had occurred to him since that bloody day.

He was ushered into the presence of the general, who gave him the kindly welcome which he always bestowed upon those of humble rank. Now, Somers cherished an intense admiration for this distinguished officer, and esteemed it a greater honor to stand in his presence than in that of the most powerful sovereign of the earth.

"Lieutenant Somers?" said the general, extending his hand; a piece of condescension which made our officer blush, and appear as awkward as a country school-boy.

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," stammered Somers, as he took the proffered hand.

"You behaved well at Glendale, Somers," said the general bluntly.

"I endeavored to do my duty, general."

"You did well on that scout, too; and I'm going to send you out on another, if you have any fancy for such work."

"I will do the best I can."

"But, my brave fellow, I wish you to be very careful; for we can't afford to lose officers like you."

"I am always careful, general," said Somers with a smile.

"Can you handle a boat?"

"Yes, sir; I was brought up among boats."

"You will go over the river. There is rebel cavalry over there, and very likely a considerable force of infantry. I am inclined to think they are building batteries in the woods, to close up the navigation of the river, or perhaps to shell us out of our position. In a word, I am instructed to solve the problem, and I have selected you to do the work. What do you say?"

"I am all ready, sir, to undertake that, or any service to which I may be ordered."

"That's the right spirit, Captain Somers; and I thank you for the promptness with which you enter into my plans. I am satisfied, captain, that you will discharge the duty to my entire satisfaction."

"Thank you, sir."

"Well, Captain Somers, you shall take what force you think necessary. As it will not be prudent for you to go over before dark, you may make up your plan, and I will listen to the details before you go. How many boats shall you want, captain?"

"Only one, sir," replied Somers promptly; though he was wondering with all his might how the general happened to make so many blunders in regard to his military title, for he had called him captain four or five times.

"Only one? You will need force enough to protect you, captain," replied the general.

Captain again!

"I do not intend to fight the whole rebel army, if it is over there. I do not propose to take more than half a dozen men with me."

"I think that is a sensible view of the enterprise; for the more men you take, the greater your chances of being discovered. Select your own men, Captain Somers."

Captain Somers! The general had certainly forgotten that he was only a first lieutenant, or else he was amusing himself at his modest subordinate's expense.

"I know of several men in our regiment who are just what I want," replied Somers, hardly able to speak from embarrassment, on account of the general's often-repeated mistake.

"Very well; you shall have the necessary authority to select whom you please. You may go now, and arrange your plans."

Somers saluted the general, and was about to retire, when the thought occurred to him that he might at least gratify his friend Captain de Banyan, and perhaps bring him favorably to the general's notice.

"May I be allowed to select an officer to go with me?" he asked.

"Certainly, if you desire; but you will remember that you are a young officer, going out on difficult and dangerous service, and that officers will not be so obedient as privates," suggested the general. "Whom do you desire to go with you?"

"Captain de Banyan, of our regiment."

"Captain! Why, then he will be your equal in rank, and by priority of commission, your superior."

"We shall agree remarkably well, general, though he is my superior in rank, without regard to dates," replied Somers, who by this time had come to the conclusion that the general meant something by calling him captain.

"No; you are both captains," added the general with apparent indifference.

"I beg your pardon, general; you have probably forgotten that the commission which was forwarded to me only about two weeks ago was that of first lieutenant."

"I remember all about it, Captain Somers; but, by the time you reach your quarters, there will be another commission there for you. By the way, captain, do you remember Senator Guilford?"

"I do, general; I have good reason to remember him; for he takes a deep interest in my affairs," replied Somers, whose brown face was red with blushes.

"Has a pretty daughter, hasn't he? Fell out of a railroad car and broke her arm, didn't she?"

"That was the only time I ever saw her, general," stammered Somers; "and probably I shall never see her again."

"Why, you are as cold-blooded as a frog! Why don't you write to the damsel, and tell her you are still alive, if you can't think of anything else to say?"

"I don't like to curry favor with great folks."

"I like that, captain. But you must attend to your duty now. You may have Captain de--what's-his-name--if you like."

"Captain de Banyan, sir. He is a brave and noble fellow."

"Your friend, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I remember him. He is certainly a brave fellow; for I noticed him at Glendale."

"At Oak Grove he captured the enemy's sharpshooters, who were lodged in the old house."

"I thought you did that."

"No, sir; I was under Captain de Banyan's orders at the time."

"I see; and I will remember that, Captain Somers. By the way, it would be well for you to write to Senator Guilford, just to inform him of your promotion. He has done good service for you, though I have no hesitation in saying your promotion would have been certain without his aid."

"Thank you, general," replied Somers, who fully understood the meaning of that significant remark.

We regret that the good conduct of our hero has destroyed the fitness of the title which we had chosen for our humble volume; but we will venture to say that our sympathizing readers will rejoice with him in his advancement.

Captain Somers! The idea seemed to him as big as a mountain, when he withdrew from the presence of the general, who

evidently experienced a deep satisfaction in the result of his recommendation to the authorities, and had humorously chosen this method of communicating the welcome news. The earth seemed to be as elastic as India-rubber under the feet of the new-made captain, as he hastened back to the camp of the regiment.

He could hardly believe his senses; it was so strange that a young man like him should attain to this high rank. He wanted to "crow;" and perhaps he would have done so, if he had not considered that he must maintain the dignity of his new office.

"Captain Somers, I greet you!" exclaimed De Banyan on his return to camp.

"Who told you I was a captain?" laughed Somers.

"This document," replied he, handing him the ponderous official envelope. "I congratulate you, my boy; though I'm rather disappointed to find you are not a major."

"Nonsense, captain! I would have declined a major's commission."

"Declined it!" gasped De Banyan. "Well, I don't know but you would. You are the only officer I ever knew to decline a glass of wine, and I don't know but you would decline a major's commission."

"I certainly would. Why, I'm only a boy; and I don't know but I ought to decline even a captain's commission. I'm only eighteen years old."

"What of that? There's the Fourth Vermont over there--the colonel of that regiment isn't twenty-one yet, and there isn't a better or braver officer in the army. If you decline, I'll cross you off from my list of friends. Why, at Balaclava, when I was----"

"Balaclava and blarney!" exclaimed Somers impatiently.

"I was only going to say, that I was but seventeen when I was made a captain in the British army."

"I have been a brigadier in my own imagination, just as you were a captain, when you were seventeen. But never mind that; I am going on a scout; have got my orders."

"Ah, my boy! you are going to celebrate the arrival of your commission by active duty. I wish the generals would think of me when they want something handsome done."

"What do you say to going with me?"

"I would thank my stars for the chance."

"Well, then I have orders for you."

"Somers, my dear fellow, you touch my heart-strings!" cried the captain, jumping up, and throwing his arms around Somers in the most extravagant manner.

"On one condition," added Captain Somers.

"Any condition you please."

"You are my superior; but----"

"I know all about it. I will go as a volunteer, and you shall command the expedition."

"We will work together."

"With all my heart."

Somers then selected six men for the service, with special reference to their skill as boatmen, and ordered them to make the necessary preparations for duty. As there were still several hours to spare before dark, he used a portion of this time in writing a letter to his mother, informing her of the remarkable fortune that had attended him; and another to Senator Guilford, thanking him for the kind interest he had manifested in his welfare, in the postscript of which he wrote the history of Captain de Banyan's valuable services, and modestly added that any favor conferred on his friend would ever be gratefully remembered by the writer.

CHAPTER XIX

OVER THE RIVER

Captain Somers, as we are hereafter to call him, was proud and happy in the distinction which had been bestowed upon him; but he had some doubts whether he had fully earned his promotion. He had done as much as any, and more than some. Yet it seemed to him just as though nothing short of the capture or annihilation of a whole brigade of the enemy's forces could entitle him to such a distinguished honor, especially as he was only eighteen years of age. He was afraid that Senator Guilford had exerted too much influence in his favor; but the general of the division had assured him he had won his promotion, and would have received it in time, even without the powerful aid of the honorable gentleman at Washington.

This thought comforted him; and he only hoped that his friend De Banyan would be as highly favored as he had been. The valiant captain, in spite of his glaring faults, was a good fellow, a fine officer, and very popular with his inferiors as well as his superiors. He had become very much attached to Somers, and had proved by many substantial acts that he was animated by a warm regard for him. Though he talked a great deal about the favor of high officials in securing his promotion, he had never hinted a wish that Somers should attempt to influence his powerful friend to do anything for him.

Somers said nothing to the captain about the letter he had written. If anything was done, he wished to have his friend surprised as he had been. But he had only slight hopes that anything would be accomplished by his application. Though Captain de Banyan had always behaved well in battle, and had always faithfully discharged his duties in the camp and on the march, there was something like a mystery hanging about him, which had a tendency to prejudice the officers against him. While they admired his bravery, and enjoyed his society, there was a certain lack of confidence, resulting from a want of knowledge of his antecedents.

De Banyan always evaded any allusion to his former residence or occupation. He desired to be regarded as a soldier of fortune, who had fought with every nation that had a quarrel with its neighbors. Where he was born, where he had lived, or how he obtained his commission, were secrets locked up in his own breast. Somers had some doubts in regard to him, and was constantly afraid that he should hear more of the captain than it would be pleasant to know.

Captain Somers reported his arrangements in due form to the general, and they were approved. About nine o'clock in the evening, he, with his little party, embarked on the river, and the rowers pulled towards the opposite shore. Of course, it was necessary to use the utmost caution; for a rebel picket on the opposite bank of the river might suddenly put an end to the career of some of the party.

"I think we are making a mistake, Captain Somers," said De Banyan in a whisper, when they had gone about half way across the river.

"So do I; but it is not too late to correct the error," replied Somers, as he turned the bow of the boat down the river.

"I believe you are my double, Somers; for you know my thoughts before I utter them."

"I was just thinking, when you spoke, that we were running into a nest of the enemy."

"Just before the battle of the Alma, I went on just such an expedition as this; but we went down the river beyond the enemy's lines, and doubled up in the rear of them; thus finding out all we wanted to know."

"That is what I propose to do."

"Captain Brickfield and myself landed, and walked sixty-four miles between nine o'clock in the evening and four o'clock in the morning," added Captain de Banyan.

"How far?"

"Sixty-four miles."

"Good!" exclaimed Somers. "Did you walk all the way?"

"Every step."

"It was tip-top walking, De Banyan--a little more than nine miles an hour."

"Do you doubt the story?"

"I don't doubt that it is a story."

"Now, that isn't kind of you, Somers, to be perpetually throwing discredit upon everything I say," replied the captain,

apparently much hurt.

"You mustn't say such things, then. You don't expect any man in his senses to believe that you walked over nine miles an hour, and followed it for seven hours?"

"I was tougher then than I am now."

"And you can tell a tougher story now than you could then, I'll warrant."

"There it is again!"

"Now, my dear fellow, I'm afraid you will die with an enormous fib in your mouth."

"Come, Somers, you are taking a mean advantage of my friendship. You know that I like you too well to quarrel with you."

"Silence!" said Somers earnestly. "There is a boat coming out from the rebel side of the river."

The water was covered with vessels of every description in the vicinity of Harrison's Landing; and the boat had just emerged from this forest of masts and smokestacks. It was time to be entirely silent again; for the rebels were on the alert in every direction, watching to strike a blow at the grand army, or to pick up individual stragglers who might fall in their way. The boat which Somers had discovered was approaching from the rebel side of the river; and to be seen by the enemy, at this point of the proceedings, would be fatal to the expedition.

"Who goes there?" said a man in the rebel boat.

"Friends!" replied Somers.

"Who are ye?"

The tones were so unmistakably Southern, that there could be no question in regard to the party to which the boat belonged.

"Officers examining the enemy's lines," replied Somers.

At the same time he ordered his crew to pull, and steered the boat so as to run her alongside the other. On the way, he whispered to the men his instructions; and, as soon as they were near enough, they leaped on board the rebel boat, and captured her astonished crew before they had time to make any resistance. No doubt they thought this was very rude treatment to receive from the hands of those who professed to be their friends; but they had discovered their mistake by this time, and it afforded a sufficient explanation of the seeming inconsistency.

The capture of this boat involved the necessity of returning to the nearest steamer in the river to dispose of the prisoners. On the way back, Somers and De Banyan conversed with the rebels on general topics; for the latter refused to say anything which could be of service to their enemy. After the captives had been delivered on board the steamer, our party decided to take the boat which had been captured, instead of the one they had brought from the landing; for there were some peculiarities in its construction, which made it a safer conveyance in rebel waters than the other, the approach of which would excite suspicion if seen.

Again they pulled down the river, and passed the point from beyond which the rebel boat had approached them. The shore was probably lined with pickets; and the wisdom of exchanging the boats was now more apparent to them than before. Somers steered into a little inlet or bay beyond the point, and at the head of it found a creek flowing into the river. It was wide and deep at the outlet; and he decided to ascend it.

"How was it, Andy?" said a voice from the shore, after the boat had advanced a few rods up the creek.

"All right!" replied Somers at a venture; though he was somewhat startled by the question.

"Have the Yankees any picket boats out?" demanded the man on shore.

"Haven't seen any."

"How far up have you been?"

"About two miles," answered Somers, continually coughing to account for any change in his voice which might be apparent to his friend on shore.

"The fire-steamer is all ready," added the voice; "and it is about time to go to work."

"The fire-steamer!" exclaimed Somers in a low tone.

"They are going to burn the vessels in the river," added De Banyan.

"What shall we do?"

"We must stop their fun at all hazards," replied the valiant captain promptly.

"What are you stopping there for, Andy? Why don't you pull up the creek?" continued the man on shore.

"My name isn't Andy," said Somers; "and I don't fully understand this business."

"Who are you, then?" replied the rebel. "What has become of Andy?"

"He has got another job, and sent me to do this one," answered Somers, whose ready wit had adopted a plan to defeat the purpose of the enemy.

"Who are you?"

"Tom Leathers. Andy sent me up to attend to this matter. Where is the fire-steamer?"

"About half a mile farther up the creek. But where is Andy?"

"Some general sent for him; and he has gone to Richmond. I reckon the iron-clad's coming down soon."

"Can you take care of the steamer?"

"Certainly I can."

"Are you a pilot?"

"Pilot enough for this business."

"I understand it all. Andy was afraid to do this job, and has backed out."

"I only know what he said to me," replied Somers innocently.

"Well, pull up the creek, and don't waste any more time in talking about it."

"I haven't wasted any time. You have done all the talking yourself," replied Somers, who thought he should not be a consistent Southerner if he did not growl.

Somers directed the men to pull again, and the boat advanced up the creek till the steamer appeared. She was a small, worn-out old craft, which had probably dodged into the creek when the Union fleet came up the river. The man who had spoken from the shore reached the place almost as soon as the boat. He was dressed in the gray of the Confederate army, and was evidently an officer detailed to perform the duty of fitting out the fire-ship.

"This is a most remarkable proceeding on the part of the pilot," said the officer.

"I can't help it. You needn't growl at me about it. If you don't want me, I don't want the job," replied Somers sourly.

"Don't be impudent to me," added the officer.

"And don't you be impudent to me," said Somers. "I'm not one of your men."

"Silence! or I shall put you under arrest."

"No, you won't."

"Do you know the channel of the river?"

"Of course I do. What do you suppose Andy sent me here for?" snarled Somers.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, man."

"You had better show me how to do it first. Come, Graves," he added, turning to De Banyan, "we are not wanted here, and we will go home again."

"Who is that man with you?"

"Graves."

"Where did you get all these men?"

"They came with me to see the fun, and help the thing along."

The officer stepped on board of the steamer, and Somers and De Banyan joined him on the deck.

"I think I've seen you somewhere."

"I think very likely; I was there once."

"You are a crusty young cub; but it may be you know your duty."

"Of course I do; and as for being crusty, I treated you like a gentleman till you began to snarl at me."

"Well, well, my friend, we will rub out the past and begin again," said the officer pleasantly.

"With all my heart, if you say so," replied Somers with equal suavity.

"This is a very important enterprise, and we want to teach the Yankees that it will be better for them to stay at home next time they want to come down South. What is your name?"

"Tom Leathers. What's yours? Andy told me; but I've forgotten."

"Captain Osborn."

The rebel officer proceeded to give the supposed pilot very full instructions in regard to the steamer, which was to be run up the river to City Point, set on fire, and then abandoned to float with the current through the thickest of the Federal fleet, blowing up gunboats, and consuming transports by the hundred. The fire-steamer had been loaded with pitch-wood, tar, pitch and turpentine; and Captain Osborn was satisfied that the plan, if thoroughly carried out, would cause tremendous havoc among the Yankee vessels. He rubbed his hands with delight as he contemplated the prospect of driving the "Hessian" fleet from the river, and starving the Union army out of its position.

An engineer and two firemen, whom they found on board the steamer, were all the crew she had, and all she needed besides the pilot. They had got up steam, and the vessel was all ready to move on her errand of destruction when the word should be given.

"Now you are all ready," said Captain Osborn when he had completed his instructions. "You will hoist the American flag, and pretend you are a Yankee, if they attempt to stop you on your way up the river."

"I can do that to a charm," replied Somers. "I am all ready. Where is Graves? Hallo, Graves!" he shouted, when he found that his companion had left his side to take a look at the other parts of the steamer.

"Here I am, Tom," answered Graves, emerging from the engine-room, where he had been talking with the presiding genius of that department.

"Run up the colors."

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied De Banyan.

The colors went up, and other preparations were made for the great enterprise.

"Cast off that stern line!" said Somers. "Make fast your painter on the port quarter," he added to the man in the boat; and no doubt by this time Captain Osborn was fully satisfied that he was perfectly familiar with the management of a steamer.

Now, Somers was very well satisfied that he should run the steamer aground before he rounded the first point in the river, and he had wisely concluded not to undertake so rash an enterprise. Besides, he did not come over there to be the skipper of a steamer; he had other and even more important duties to perform. He was much more interested in certain rebel batteries which were believed to be in process of construction farther up the river. But Captain Osborn was an unreasonable man, and demanded the execution of his plan. He was determined to see a conflagration, and Somers was equally determined to gratify him.

Our pilot discovered the value of his limited nautical experience in Pinchbrook Harbor; for it enabled him to convince the rebel officer that he was a full-fledged "salt," and was entirely at home on the deck of any vessel that could float in the waters of the James. The stern-line and the bow-line were cast off; and Somers stood in the little wheel-house, ready to ring the bells. Captain Osborn had just stepped on shore, intending to mount his horse and ride up the river, where he could see the conflagration when it came off.

Just then, there was a tremendous commotion among the firemen and engineer; and, a moment later, a broad, bright sheet of flame rose from the heap of combustibles in the after-part of the steamer.

CHAPTER XX

CAPTAIN DE BANYAN FINDS AN OLD FRIEND

Both Somers and De Banyan flew to the rescue, and made a most enthusiastic attempt to check the fire; but the raging element was now past control. The flames spread through the combustible material which had been stored on the deck; and they were compelled to abandon the ill-starred steamer with the utmost precipitation, in order to save their own lives.

De Banyan had rolled up an old newspaper, making of it a kind of torch, some three feet in length, which he had inserted in a mass of pitch-wood shavings, and set the end on fire. It had burned long enough to remove suspicion from him; and, when the pilot and crew went on shore, Captain Osborn had no idea of the trick of which he had been made the victim. Our scouts kept up appearances in the most remarkable manner, and Somers was only afraid that his zealous companion would overdo the matter.

"What do you mean by that, Captain Osborn?" demanded Somers, as he shook the cinders from his clothes in the presence of the rebel officer. "Did you intend to sacrifice our lives?"

"Yes; burn us up before we had time to leave the old hulk!" added De Banyan furiously. "I thought we were to light the fire ourselves."

"I didn't do it," replied Captain Osborn.

"You didn't? Who did do it, then?" persisted Somers.

"I don't know."

"Well, I don't know; but, in my opinion, you did it yourself."

"You are an idiot! Do you think I would destroy the work of my own hands?" added the rebel warmly.

"Well, I supposed you fired the train so as to be sure the thing was done right."

"You are a fool, or else you didn't suppose any such thing."

"I didn't know but what you had one of those clock machines, that touch a thing off at a certain time. Well, how did it happen, then?"

"I don't know; perhaps from a spark from the fire. No matter how it was done now. It is done, and can't be helped. I have lost the satisfaction of seeing half the Yankee fleet burnt up. I would rather have given a year's pay than have had this accident happen."

"Haven't they got most ready for the Yankee fleet above here?" asked Somers as carelessly as he could.

"What do you mean?"

"They are building batteries up above, to knock the Yankees into pieces, aren't they?"

"Perhaps they are."

"Well, Captain Osborn, I don't believe your plan would have succeeded if the steamer hadn't caught afire."

"Don't you? Why not?"

"Suppose the Yankees had stopped us on our way up, and come on board the steamer. Don't you think they would have known what she was for?"

"Perhaps they would."

"Of course they would. Why didn't you fit out your steamer up the river?"

"We haven't so many steamers that we can afford to burn them up. We took this one because she happened to be in the creek, where the Yankees could capture her at any time they pleased."

"It wouldn't need a steamer above the fleet; a raft would do just as well. I think I shall go up the river, and see what can be done. Well, boys," added Somers to the men in the boat, "there will be no fun to-night, and you may as well go home."

As this order was in conformity with previous instructions, the men pulled down the creek to its mouth, where they could remain concealed till their officers returned.

By the light of the burning steamer, Captain Osborn had attentively scanned the features of the pilot and his companion, apparently for the purpose of determining where he had seen the former. As they had both dressed themselves for the occasion, they submitted to his scrutiny without fear. When he had finished his survey, he mounted his horse, which was fastened to a tree near the creek, and had become very restive as the glaring fire scattered burning cinders near him. As the rider had no further use for our enterprising operatives, he bestowed no further notice upon them, and rode off to report to his commanding officer the failure of the hopeful enterprise.

"Well, we have done some good by coming over here," said Captain de Banyan as the officer galloped up the road above the creek.

"Hush, captain!" replied Somers. "You forget where you are."

"No, I don't; we are alone."

"Perhaps not; the trees have ears sometimes."

"Well, where are you going now?"

"Up the river. We will take a walk up to the batteries, if there are any there."

They proceeded in the direction indicated for about three miles without being molested, or even challenged by a sentinel. The Army of the Potomac had been on the other side of the river nearly a month, and had ceased to be a curiosity to the rebel inhabitants in the vicinity; and like sensible people, as they were in this respect if in no other, they devoted the hours of darkness to sleep. On the shore opposite the camp, they found a battery of artillery. Rude field-works had been constructed near the water, on which the guns of the company had been placed. Our travelers were too modest to make the acquaintance of the rebels, and kept at a respectful distance from them, crawling on the ground near enough to ascertain the force of the enemy.

Taking to the fields for greater safety, the scouts went up the river several miles farther, without making any discoveries worthy of notice. The object of the excursion had been fully accomplished; and they began to retrace their steps towards the creek, where the boat was waiting their return. When we are well employed, time passes away very rapidly; and our adventurers had taken no note of its passage. Before they had made a single mile, the bright streaks of day in the east warned them that they had remained too long for their own safety.

The prospect of being examined by rebel officers in broad daylight was not pleasant; and, increasing their speed, they walked by the shortest way towards the creek. When they had passed the battery of artillery, they abandoned the fields, through which they could make but slow progress, for the road. They had three miles farther to go, and it was now nearly sunrise.

"I think we must have lost two or three hours," said Somers as they hastened on their way. "I had no idea that it was more than two o'clock in the morning when we turned about."

"Nor I," replied De Banyan. "We must have spent two or three hours in crawling on the ground about that battery."

"I don't see where the time is all gone."

"It goes fast when we are busy. When I was in the Crimea----"

"Never mind the Crimea now," protested Somers, who was in no mood for his companion's fibs.

"Don't be crusty, Somers."

"I did not mean to be crusty; but you know my opinion about those stories of the Crimea and the Italian war, and I don't think it is a good plan to talk so much over here."

"As you please; it is your turn to speak next."

"I meant no offense."

"I know you didn't, Somers; but you reprov'd me, and I can only hold my peace; for you are the commander of this expedition."

"You know I like you as a brother; but I don't like those silly yarns about your impossible achievements. Hark! What's that?"

This last remark was caused by the sound of horses' feet behind them; and our travelers looked back with eager interest to ascertain what was approaching. It was a body of cavalry, which had just swept round a bend of the road, and was now in plain sight of them.

"That won't do," said De Banyan with energy. "We must conceal ourselves."

"I think they have seen us, and we may as well make the best of it. If we hide, they will certainly suspect us."

"They have not seen us yet. They are half a mile off," replied the captain, as he retired to the field by the side of the road.

Somers followed him, though he did not fully approve the policy of his friend. They walked a short distance till they came to a covert of bushes, in which they concealed themselves.

"I think we have made a mistake. The dog always bites when you attempt to run away from him," said Somers.

"I don't think they saw us," persisted De Banyan. "If they did, we can tell as good a story here as we could in the road."

"I always believe in facing the music. I have found that impudence will carry a man a great deal farther and a great deal faster than his legs can."

"Perhaps you are right, Somers. When I was in Italy----"

"Bah! Don't say Italy or Crimea again till we reach the other side of the river," interposed Somers, who was too seriously affected by the perils of their situation to be willing to listen to any of his companion's hallucinations.

"Just as you please, Somers," answered the captain, unmoved by the rebuff; "but, when I was doing scout duty before the battle of Magenta, I saw the advance of the Austrians coming up behind me. I crawled into a haystack, and remained there while the whole army of the Austrians, about four hundred thousand men, passed by me."

Somers could not but smile at the infatuation of his friend, who at such a perilous moment could indulge in such a vicious practice as that of inventing great stories. He did not even ask him how long it took the Austrian army to pass the haystack, whether they had haystacks in Italy, nor if it was probable that such an army would pass over a single road. He waited patiently, or impatiently, for the approach of the rebel cavalry, which soon reached the road near the bushes where they were hidden.

To his consternation, they came to a dead halt; and he could see the men gazing earnestly in the direction they had retired. Then half a dozen of the troopers entered the field, and rode directly towards the covert of bushes.

"We are caught!" whispered Somers.

"That's so. Just after the battle of Palestro, when I----"

"Hush!"

"Hush it is," replied De Banyan, as coolly as though he had been under his shelter tent on the other side of the James.

Taking a knife from his pocket, he began to cut away at a straight bush which grew near him, and was thus busily employed when the soldiers reached the spot. Somers stretched himself on the ground, and waited the issue of the event; deciding to let his companion, who had got him into the scrape, extricate him from it. The coolness of the captain, and the peculiar manner he assumed, convinced him that he had some resources upon which to draw in this trying emergency.

"Hallo, there!" shouted one of the troopers savagely, as though he intended to carry consternation in the tones of his voice.

"How are you, old hoss?" inquired De Banyan, as impudently as though he had been the lord of the manor.

"What ye doin' in here?" demanded the horseman, as he forced his animal into the bushes far enough to obtain a full view of both of the fugitives.

"Well, old hoss, if Heaven gin you two eyes, what were they gin to ye fur?" replied the captain, still hacking away at the sapling.

"What d'ye run for when you saw us coming?"

"Didn't run."

"Yes, yer did."

"You know best, then."

"What d'ye come in here fur?"

"Don't ye see what I came in here for?" replied De Banyan, as he finished cutting off the bush, and proceeded to trim off the branches.

"Who are you?"

"Well, old hoss, I'm the brother of my father's oldest son."

"What's yer name?"

"Hain't got any; had a difficulty with the district attorney in our county, and lost it."

"Come out here, and show yerself. The cap'n wants to see yer down to the road."

"Just goin' down there. Say, you hain't got a spare hoss in your caravan, have you? I'm gettin' amazin' tired."

"Come out, both of you. I can't stay here all day."

"Needn't wait for me; I'm in no hurry," answered the captain, as he slowly emerged from the bushes, followed by Somers.

"But I shall wait for yer; and, if yer don't step along lively, I'll let yer know how this cheese-knife feels."

"Don't distress yourself to do anything of the sort," said De Banyan; and he hobbled along on his new-made cane.

A walk of a few rods brought them to the road, where the commander of the company was impatiently awaiting their arrival. He looked daggers at the travelers, and evidently intended to annihilate them by the fierceness of his visage.

"Give an account of yourself," said he.

"We're no account," replied De Banyan.

"I've seen you before," continued the cavalry commander, gazing intently at the captain.

"No; you saw me behind."

"That sounds like you. Why, really, it is Barney Marvel."

"Who?" demanded De Banyan with an expression of humor.

"Barney Marvel! Don't you know your own name? Give us your hand, Barney," added the officer, as he extended his own.

"Well, cap'n, perhaps I'm Barney what's-his-name; but, 'pon my word, I don't think I am;" and De Banyan wore a troubled expression, even to the eyes of his anxious companion.

"Don't be modest about it, Barney. You left us rather unceremoniously; but I hope you'll be able to show that it was all right."

"'Pon my word it was all right, though I haven't the least idea what you mean."

"Haven't you, indeed, Barney?" laughed the captain, who, in spite of his present happy manner, was evidently as much puzzled as the other party.

"'Pon my word, I haven't."

"Do you mean to say you are not Barney Marvel, formerly a lieutenant in the Third Tennessee?"

"Not if I know it."

"I suppose I understood your position, Barney; but I advise you not to deny facts."

"I never deny facts, captain; you haven't told me your name yet."

"No need of that. Now, be honest, Barney. Tell us all about it. There wasn't an officer in the regiment that didn't mourn you as a brother when you left us."

"I'm very much obliged to them," replied De Banyan lightly; but even Somers began to have some doubts in regard to his popular friend.

"How are Magenta, Solferino, and the Crimea, now-a-days?" demanded the officer.

"Never heard of such places. Don't know much about geography," answered the captain.

Somers was confounded when the officer repeated these words, which was proof positive that he was the man whom the captain represented him to be.

"Sergeant, dismount, and tell me if you find B. M. on that man's right arm."

The sergeant obeyed, and, with the assistance of another, bared the captain's arm, where they found, plainly marked in India ink, the initials B. M.

CHAPTER XXI

THE THIRD TENNESSEE

Probably there was no one in either party who was so thoroughly bewildered by the incident which had just transpired as Captain Somers. The mystery of his companion's antecedents was in a fair way to be cleared up, though in a very unsatisfactory manner to those most intimately concerned. The conversation, and the verification of the rebel officer's statements, showed that De Banyan was not De Banyan; that the brave and brilliant Federal officer was not a Federal officer; that, of all he had been, only the "brave" and "brilliant" remained.

It was painfully evident that the bold and dashing captain was, or had been, a rebel officer. Somers was terribly shocked at the discovery, even while it was a satisfaction to have the mystery of his companion's previous life explained. For the time, he forgot the perils of his own situation in the interest he felt in the affairs of his friend. Perhaps De Banyan was a spy, who had been serving in the Union army for the purpose of conveying information to the enemy. He had been very glad of the opportunity to cross the river; and it seemed probable to our hero that he wished to return to his friends. It is true, the efficient services of the captain in the Army of the Potomac, his readiness at all times to fight the rebels, and especially his shooting down the enemy's pickets in the swamp, were not exactly consistent with such a record; but perhaps he had done these things to keep up appearances, and thus enable him the better to promote the objects of the rebellion.

He was anxious to hear the captain's explanation of these gross charges; but, of course, that was utterly impracticable at present. In the meantime, there was no room to doubt that the cavalry officer had all the truth on his side. He had hinted very strongly that De Banyan was a deserter; but he might have deserted for the purpose of performing the special duty which had been assigned to him. Officers and soldiers, sent out as spies, had often incurred the odium of such a reputation, in order to keep their own counsels, and serve their country the more faithfully.

If Captain de Banyan was a deserter in appearance only, he would, of course, soon be able to make his fidelity and patriotism apparent to the rebel authorities; and being a patriot, in the traitor use of the word, he could not do less than denounce his companion as a Federal spy. Whatever turn the affair might take, Somers felt that his own chances of escape were every moment becoming beautifully less. If De Banyan was a faithful rebel, there was proof positive that his companion was a spy; if not, he was in the company of a deserter, and would be subjected to all manner of suspicion.

De Banyan still held his head up, and did not lose his impudence, even after the letters had been found upon his arm. He did not appear to be at all confused by the discovery and the triumph of the cavalry officer's argument. He punched Somers in the side with his elbow; but the latter was unable to divine the significance of this movement.

"Well, Barney, I wish somebody else had caught you instead of me; for it is not pleasant to find an old friend under such circumstances."

"If you please, captain, I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Come, Barney, don't keep up this farce any longer."

"I was about to beg the favor, that you would not call me by that offensive name any longer."

"You seem to be changing your colors very rapidly," laughed the officer. "When I first saw you, you were a rough-spoken fellow; but now you use the language of a polished gentleman. Barney, you and I were good friends in the Third Tennessee; and, though I am sorry to meet you under these circumstances, we must both make the best of it."

"I tell you, captain, you are entirely mistaken in your man. I never was in Tennessee in my life."

"Good! You were always celebrated for monstrous stories; and they are fully in keeping with your past history. Well, since you refuse to recognize an old friend, of course I shall be excused for any unpleasant measures to which I may be compelled to resort."

"Anything you please, captain, so long as you refrain from calling me Barney, which in my estimation is a low and vulgar cognomen, that I am unwilling to have applied to me."

"Who is the man with you?" demanded the officer in more business-like tones.

"His name is Tom Leathers; he's a pilot on the James. We refer you to Captain Osborn for evidence of our character. We came here to do a job for him."

"All right, then. Captain Osborn lodges at the next house on this road, and we will let him speak for the other man. He

can't speak for you; for I know you better than he does, or any other man who has not served in the Third Tennessee. As you were going this way, you can walk along with us."

"Thank you for the polite invitation, and this is a handsome escort for a man of my humble pretensions."

The captain of the company ordered his men to keep back, and Somers and De Banyan walked by the side of his horse, a few yards in advance of the platoons. He had evidently adopted this method to draw out his prisoners; for as such our officers were compelled to regard themselves.

"Marvel, you used to be a very sensible fellow when you were in the Third Tennessee," said the rebel captain. "I am surprised to see you adopting such a stupid method to conceal your identity."

"I had good reasons for it," replied De Banyan, casting his eyes behind him, as if to assure himself that none of the soldiers were within hearing.

"What reasons?" asked the officer curiously.

"I should think a man of your discretion would easily understand the reason, without any explanation. If I am to be tried for any offense, I don't want to be judged by a whole company of cavalry. You know I always took pride in my reputation."

"I used to think so; but, when we missed you one day, we got rid of that opinion in the Third Tennessee."

"Then you wronged me; for I have faithfully served my country from that day to this."

"I am glad to hear it, and I hope you will be able to prove what you have said. How came you here?"

"I came over from the other side of the river last night. You intimated that my departure from the Third was not all regular," added the captain.

"In a word, it was understood that you had deserted."

"That was a mistake."

"I am very glad to hear it; but you will remember that your loyalty to the Southern Confederacy was not above suspicion when you joined the regiment."

De Banyan punched Somers with his elbow at these words, as though he wished him to take particular notice of them; but his admiring friend needed no such admonition to induce him to give strict attention to the statement, for it was the most satisfactory remark he had heard during the interview. Captain de Banyan rose twenty-five per cent in his estimation at the utterance of those words, however injurious they were in the opinion of him who had spoken them. There was hope for the captain; and Somers trusted that he would be able fully to exonerate himself from the foul charge, when the occasion should permit such an exposition.

"My loyalty ought to be considered above suspicion, and those who know me best do so regard it," added De Banyan as he administered another mild punch on the ribs of his fellow-sufferer. "I was taken by the Yankees, in short; and, at the first convenient opportunity, I have come over to see you again."

"I hope it is all right, Barney; but I am afraid it is not."

"I shall be able to clear myself of every imputation of disloyalty, before the proper tribunal."

"How did you get over?"

"I have been following the fortunes of the Yankee army till last night; when I took a boat, and came over the river. On the way I met a pilot whose name was Andy, who turned me over to this man, who is also a pilot, and came down to take out a fire-ship."

"The one that was burned in the creek last night?"

"The same. I refer you to Captain Osborn for the truth of the last part of my statement; though the time was when you did not ask me to bring vouchers for what I said."

"For nothing, except your stories of the Crimea and the Italian war," replied the captain of cavalry with a significant smile. "I must do you the justice to say, that I never knew you to tell a falsehood on any matter connected with your social or business relations."

"Thank you for so much," replied De Banyan. "Now that I have made it all right, I suppose you needn't trouble yourself to attend to my affairs any further."

"No trouble at all, I assure you. Under the circumstances, I shall feel it my duty to deliver you into the hands of my superiors, and they can do as they please with you. But I sincerely hope that you will be able to vindicate your character from the stain which rests upon it."

"I don't think it needs any vindication."

"There is some difference of opinion between us on that point. Where are you going now?"

"To Richmond," replied De Banyan promptly; and perhaps he intended to go there with the Army of the Potomac, though its present prospects of reaching the rebel capital were not very favorable.

"This is not the way to Richmond. Your stories don't agree very well."

"I thought it was; or rather to Petersburg, and from there we expected to get a ride up in the cars."

"Oh, very well! I can procure you a pass to Richmond," added the rebel.

"And an escort to attend us, I suppose," replied De Banyan with a smile.

"A small one; but here is the house where Captain Osborn lodges. If he knows your friend here, and can vouch for his loyalty, all well; if not, we shall not part two such loving friends."

Captain Osborn had not risen when the company of cavalry reached his quarters; but he was called from his bed, and appeared in front of the house in the worst possible humor; for, being human, he did not like to have his slumbers disturbed by unseasonable calls. As Somers feared Captain Osborn denied all knowledge of the prisoners, except so far as related to his interview with them during the night. He had never seen either of them before; and he even took the trouble to add that he didn't believe the young fellow was a pilot, which was gratuitous and uncalled for on his part.

"Well, Marvel," added the cavalry officer rather coldly, "this business is settled very much as I supposed it would be. I shall have to send you up to Richmond, where, if your stories are all true, I doubt not you will be able to clear yourself."

"Thank you, captain. You are the same affectionate fellow you used to be when you were a lieutenant in the Third Tennessee," replied De Banyan with a sneer; for it was evident that he was not at all pleased with the result of the affair.

Four soldiers were detailed from the company to conduct the prisoners to a certain camp near the railroad at City Point, and there deliver them over to the keeping of an officer whose name was mentioned.

"Good-morning, captain," said De Banyan with forced gayety.

"Good-morning, Marvel, and success to you."

"Thank you."

"By the way, Barney, if there is anything I can do for you, don't fail to call upon me; that is, anything consistent with the duty of a faithful officer."

"Such a remark was entirely uncalled for," said De Banyan with dignity. "Do you think I would ask an officer to sacrifice his conscience?"

"Excuse me, Barney. I meant no offense," added the rebel captain, touched by the proud and dignified manner of his former friend.

"Your words and your conduct are in keeping with each other."

"Really, Barney, I meant nothing by the remark."

"Then it was the more unmanly to make it."

"I am still your friend. In proof of it, permit me to do you a favor," pleaded the rebel, much concerned at the wound he had inflicted on the sensitive nature of his late associate in the Third Tennessee.

"I ask no favors," answered De Banyan proudly.

"You are too hard upon me. Upon my word, I meant no offense. As a proof of my friendship, I will take your parole of honor not to escape, and you shall report at Richmond at your own pleasure. If you have any interest in this young man, I will allow him the same favor."

"After what has happened, I cannot accept a favor at your hands. I can't see how an officer who doubts my word should be willing to take my parole."

"As you please, Marvel," added the captain petulantly. "I can do no more for you."

Somers was greatly relieved when the rebel officer rode off, followed by his company. He had trembled with anxiety, when the parole was offered to De Banyan, lest he should accept it, and thus compel him to do the same. Although he could not see how it was to be brought about, he intended to escape from the hands of his captors at the first convenient opportunity, with or without De Banyan, as the case should demand.

One of the four troopers detailed to guard the prisoners was a sergeant, who intimated to them that they might take up the line of march for the camp where they were bound. To preclude the possibility of an escape, he ordered two of his men to ride ahead of the captives, while himself and the other followed in the rear. The little procession moved off; and there was never a sadder-hearted young man than Somers, who, were his true character discovered, was liable to the pains and penalties of being a spy.

"Sergeant, have you been to breakfast?" demanded De Banyan, after they had walked a couple of miles, and were passing a farm-house.

"No, sir."

"I smell fried bacon, and am willing to pay for breakfast for the whole party. What do you say?"

"There is nothing in my orders to prevent me from taking up your offer; and I will do it, if you will agree not to run away while we are at the house," replied the prudent soldier.

"How shall we run away, with four men watching us?" demanded De Banyan.

The sergeant seemed to be satisfied with this argument; and they entered the house, where breakfast was soon in preparation for them.

CHAPTER XXII

THE REBEL FARM-HOUSE

Somers, besides the chagrin caused by his capture, was greatly disturbed by the astounding discoveries he had made in regard to Captain de Banyan. He was extremely anxious to obtain an opportunity to converse with him in relation to his disgraceful antecedents; but the presence of the rebel soldiers prevented him from saying a word. Yet his looks must have betrayed the distrust he felt in his companion; for De Banyan seemed to study his face more than the faces of their captors.

By this time, the six trusty soldiers who had been selected to participate in the enterprise must have given them up, and returned to the camp with the sad story of their capture. It was mortifying to Somers to have such a report carried to the general of the division; for it seemed to be an imputation upon his skill and tact; but he found some consolation in believing that he should not have been taken if it had not been for his unfortunate connection with Captain de Banyan, who was rash beyond measure in venturing within the rebel lines, unless he really meant to return to the Third Tennessee.

Whatever the captain was, and whatever he intended to do, Somers could not believe that his late friend had deliberately betrayed him into the hands of the enemy. It might be so; or it might be that to save himself from the consequences of his alleged desertion, he would claim to have been always a faithful adherent of the Southern Confederacy. Somers was perplexed beyond description by the perils and uncertainties of his situation. He had, in fact, lost confidence in his companion; and the result was, that he resolved to make his escape, if he could, from the hands of the rebels without him. Under other circumstances, he would have deemed it infamous to harbor, for an instant, the thought of deserting a friend in the hour of extremity; and nothing but the remembrance of the Third Tennessee could have induced him to adopt such a resolution. Having adopted it, he kept his eyes wide open for any opportunity which would favor his purpose. His curiosity, excited to the highest pitch to know what the captain could say in defense of the heinous charge which had been fastened upon him by the rebel cavalry officer, and which he himself had substantiated, rendered the intention to part company with him very disagreeable; but the terror of a rebel prison, and perhaps a worse fate, were potent arguments in its favor.

In the course of half an hour, the breakfast was ready, and the party sat down with a hearty relish to discuss it. The fried bacon and biscuit were luxuries to Somers, and he partook of them with a keener satisfaction than he did of the costly viands of the "Continental" and the "National;" but, deeply as he was interested in this pleasant employment, he hardly ceased for a moment to think of the grand project of making his escape. For the time, this had become the great business of existence, and he banished from his mind all minor questions.

Opportunity is seldom wanting to those who are resolutely determined to do great deeds. Only the slow-molded and irresolute want a time and a place. The breakfast was finished, and the troopers and their prisoners were on excellent terms with each other long before the conclusion of the repast. Eating and drinking promote the social feeling; and Captain de Banyan was as brilliant as he had ever been in the camps of the Chickahominy. He made the rebels laugh, and excited their wonder by the most improbable stories in which even he had ever indulged. It would have been impossible to distinguish between the captives and the captors; for the latter were extremely considerate, as they had probably been instructed to be by the captain of the company.

When the meal was finished, the troopers rose, and proposed to resume the journey. De Banyan paid the bill in gold; for there was still a small portion of the precious metal in the army.

"Now we are ready," said the sergeant; "and we will get our horses. It's a pity we haven't horses for you; but, when you get tired, we will give you the use of the saddles for a time."

"Thank you, my friend. That's handsome. You remind me of a Russian major-general, who insisted that I should ride his animal while he walked by my side, after I was taken prisoner in the battle of Austerlitz."

"He was a good fellow," replied the sergeant, who probably did not remember the precise date of the celebrated battle quoted by the versatile captain. "We shall not be behind him; and, if you like, you shall have the first ride on my horse."

"Thank you; but I couldn't think of depriving you of your horse, even for a moment."

"Well, we will settle all that by and by. Come with me now, if you please," said the sergeant, as he led the way out of the house.

As very little attention seemed to be paid to Somers--for the rebels evidently did not regard him as either a slippery or a

dangerous person—he was permitted to bring up the rear. Now, it is always mortifying to be held in slight esteem, especially to a sensitive mind like that of our hero; and he resented the slight by declining to follow the party. Near the outside door, as they passed out, he discovered another door, which was ajar, and which led up-stairs. Without any waste of valuable time, he slyly stepped through the doorway, and ascended the stairs. The rebels were so busy in listening to the great stories of Captain de Banyan, that they did not immediately discover the absence of the unpretending young man.

When our resolute adventurer saw the stairs through the partially open door, they suggested to him a method of operations. It is true, he did not have time to elaborate the plan, and fully determine what he should do when he went up-stairs; but the general idea, that he could drop out of a window and escape in the rear of the house, struck him forcibly, and he impulsively embraced the opportunity thus presented. The building was an ordinary Virginia farmhouse, rudely constructed, and very imperfectly finished. On ascending the stairs, Somers reached a large, unfinished apartment, which was used as a store-room. From it opened, at each end of the house, a large chamber.

No place of concealment, which was apparently suitable for his purpose, presented itself; and, without loss of time, he mounted a grain chest, and ascended to the loft over one of the rooms; for the beams were not floored in the middle of the building. The aspect of this place was not at all hopeful; for there were none of those convenient "cubby holes," which most houses contain, wherein he could bestow his body with any hope of escaping even a cursory search for him.

In the gable end, on one side of the chimney, which, our readers are aware, is generally built on the outside of the structure, in Virginia, was a small window, one-half of which, in the decay of the glass panes, had been boarded up to exclude the wind and the rain. The job had evidently been performed by a bungling hand, and had never been more than half done. The wood was as rotten as punk; and without difficulty, and without much noise, the fugitive succeeded in removing the board which had covered the lower part of the window.

By this time the absence of the prisoner had been discovered, and the rebels were in a state of high excitement on account of it; but Somers was pleased to find they had not rightly conjectured the theory of his escape. He could hear them swear, and hear them considering the direction in which he had gone. Two of them stood under the window, to which Somers had restored the board he had removed; and he could distinctly hear all that they said.

"Of course he did," said one of them. "He slipped round the corner of the house when we came out."

"If he did, where is he? It's open ground round here; and he couldn't have gone ten rods before we missed him."

"The captain will give it to me," replied the other, whose voice the fugitive recognized to be that of the sergeant.

"We shall find him," added the other. "He can't be twenty rods from here now."

"I did not think of the young fellow running off, but kept both eyes on the other all the time; for I thought he wasn't telling all those stories for nothing."

"Maybe he is in the house," suggested the other.

Somers thought that was a very bad suggestion of the rebel soldier; and, if there had been any hope of their believing him, he would himself have informed them that he was not in the house, and reconciled his conscience as best he could to the falsehood.

"Can't yer find 'em?" demanded a third person, which Somers saw, through the aperture he had left between the board and the window, was the farmer.

"We haven't lost but one."

"He can't be fur from this yere."

"Isn't he in the house?" demanded the sergeant anxiously.

"No; I saw them both foller yer out."

"So did I," added the farmer's wife, who had come out to learn the cause of the excitement.

"Well, then, we must beat about here, and find him;" and the party beneath the window moved away in the rear of the house.

Thus far, the project was hopeful; but it was apparent to Somers that the rebels would not leave the place without searching the house, after they had satisfied themselves that the fugitive was not hidden in any of the out-buildings of the farm. If they did so, his situation would at once become hopeless, if he remained where he was. The remembrance of his former experience in a chimney, in another part of Virginia, caused him to cast a wistful eye at the great stone structure which adorned the end of the building. At that time, he had occupied his smoky quarters with the knowledge and consent of the lady of the house. But now his secret was lodged in his own breast alone; not even Captain de

Banyan knew where he was, or what he proposed to do.

When the party beneath the window left the place, he carefully removed the board, and thrust out his head to reconnoiter the position. The only way by which he could enter the chimney, which his former experience and prejudice assured him was the only safe place in the vicinity, was by the top. To achieve such a result was a difficult piece of gymnastics, even if it could have been performed without reference to any spectators; but to accomplish it without being seen by any of the party below was as near an impossibility as any impracticable thing could be.

The rebels, both civil and military, were now out of sight; but he doubted not from his eyrie on the ridge-pole of the house, if he could reach it, they could all be seen. Somers was as prudent as he was bold, and he decided not to run any risks until necessity should absolutely compel such a course. Quietly ensconcing himself beneath the window, where he could hear what transpired below, he waited the issue; but he had studied out the precise steps which it would be necessary for him to take in order to reach the roof of the house. He knew exactly where his right and his left foot were to be successfully planted to achieve his purpose, when it could no longer be postponed. But he indulged a faint hope that the rebels would widen the area of their search, and finally abandon it when it should be unsuccessful.

A long quarter of an hour elapsed—long enough to be an hour's time as its ordinary flow is measured; so burdened with intense anxiety was each second that made up its sum total. The rebels, assisted by the farmer and his wife, who were now hardly less zealous than the soldiers, had examined every hole and corner in the vicinity of the house, without finding the escaped prisoner.

"I tell you, he must be in the house," said the sergeant, as the party paused under the window on their return to the front of the house.

"Of course, ye kin look in the house if yer like; but I see 'em both go out of the door with yer," persisted the farmer.

"We will search the house," added the sergeant resolutely.

"Yer kin, if yer like; but I hope yer won't lose the other feller while ye're looking for this one."

"I told Gordon to shoot him if he attempted to get away; and I can trust Gordon."

They passed out of hearing, and Somers felt that his time had come. But, as we have several times before had occasion to remark, strategy is successful in one only by the blunders and inertness of the other; and he cherished with increased enthusiasm his project of hiding in the chimney. Neither the farmer nor the soldiers were trained detectives, and the blunder they made which rendered Somers's strategy more available was in hunting in crowds instead of singly. They all entered the house together; and even Gordon, in charge of the other prisoner, conducted him to the interior, that he might have the pleasure of seeing the fugitive unearthed.

Taking down the board, Somers emerged from the little window, and, by the steps which he had before marked out, ascended to the roof; a difficult feat, which would have been impossible to one whose father was not the master of a vessel, and who had not explored a ship from the step to the truck of the mainmast. It was done, safely done, and without much noise, which would have been as fatal as a fall. As he sprang from the window still to a projecting stone in the chimney, he heard the steps of the whole party on the stairs below. He was not an instant too soon in the execution of his project; and, when he reached the ridge-pole of the house, he paused to recover the breath which he had lost by excitement and exertion.

The pursuers occupied some time in examining the store-room and the adjoining chambers, and he had a sufficient interval for rest before he renewed his labors. But in a few moments he heard the noise caused by the party ascending to the loft over the room beneath him, and the movement could no longer be delayed.

"I tell yer, sergeant, the feller isn't in here!" protested the farmer violently, and in a tone loud enough for Somers to hear him on the roof. "Be keerful there, or you'll break down the plastering."

Somers could not hear what the sergeant said in reply; but the farmer was so earnest in his protest against any further search of his house, that the fugitive was almost willing to believe that the protester knew he was in the house, was his friend, and meant to save him from the hands of his enemies. But this supposition was too absurd to be tolerated, for the farmer could have no possible interest in his welfare.

While watching, he had taken off his shoes, and thrust one into each side-pocket of the old blouse he wore, partly to save noise, and partly to prevent his feet from slipping on the smooth stones of the chimney. Thus prepared, he climbed to the top, and commenced the descent of the smoky avenue. He found the opening much smaller than that of his previous experience in chimneys; and, after he had descended a few feet, the place became inconveniently dark. He could no longer hear the steps or the voices of his pursuers; and he had begun to congratulate himself on the ultimate success of his stratagem, when his foot struck upon something which moved out of his way. It was an animal—perhaps a cat. He moved on.

"Quit! Lemme alone!" said a snarling voice beneath him.



CHAPTER XXIII

THE MAN IN THE CHIMNEY

"Lemme alone!" repeated the voice in the chimney several times before Somers could make up his mind as to the precise nature of the adventure upon which he had stumbled.

There was another man in the chimney; and this was the full extent of his knowledge in regard to the being who had stepped into his darkened path. A succession of exciting questions presented themselves to his mind, all of which were intimately connected with the individual with whom, for the moment, his lot seemed to be cast. Was he friend, or foe? Yankee, rebel, or neutral? What was he in the chimney for? What business had he there?

Somers had some knowledge of a useful and otherwise rightly respectable class of persons, known as chimney-sweeps, who pursue their dark trade up and down such places as that in which he was now burrowing; but the sweeps were a civilized institution, and he could hardly expect to find them in this benighted section of the Ancient Dominion. He did not, therefore, waste a moment in the consideration of the question, whether the man beneath him was a chimney-sweep or not; for the supposition was too improbable even for the pages of a sensational novel.

The individual was in the chimney; and there seemed to be the boundary of knowledge on the subject. If he was not crazy, he was there for concealment; and, thus far the two occupants of the chimney were in sympathy with each other. Why should the man wish to conceal himself? Was he a hated Yankee like himself, pursued and hunted down by the myrmidons of Jeff Davis? Certainly, if he was a rebel, he had no business in the chimney. It was no place for rebels; they had no occasion to be there.

Of course, then, the man must be a Yankee, a fellow-sufferer with Somers himself, and therein entitled to the utmost consideration from him. But, if a Yankee, what Yankee? The species did not abound on this side of the river; and he could not imagine who it was, unless it were one of his own party. Just then, induced by this train of reflection, came a tremendous suggestion, which seemed more probable than anything he had before thought of. Was it possible that the other denizen of the sooty flue could be Captain de Banyan?

His fellow-prisoner had been taken into the house by his custodian; and, while the guard was looking the other way, perhaps he had suddenly popped up the chimney, leaving the rebel soldier in charge of him to believe that he was in league with the powers of darkness, and had been spirited away by some diabolical imp.

In the range of improbable theories which the fertile mind of Somers suggested to account for the phenomenon of the chimney, this seemed more reasonable than any of the others. The personage below him very considerably dropped down a step or two, to enable our theorist to discuss the question to his own satisfaction; albeit it did not take him a tithe of the time to do his thinking which it has taken his biographer to record it.

"Captain?" said he in a gentle whisper, as insinuating as the breath of a summer evening to a love-sick girl.

"I ain't a captain; I'm nothing but a private!" growled the other, who seemed to be in very ill-humor.

Nothing but a private! It was not the captain then, after all. He had hoped, and almost believed, it was. He had told his friend all about his experience in a chimney; and it seemed to him quite probable that the valiant hero of Magenta and Solferino had remembered the affair, and attempted to try his own luck in a similar manner. It was not the voice of the captain, nor were there any of his peculiarities of tone or manner. If the other character had only said Balaclava, Alma, or Palestro, it would have been entirely satisfactory in any tone or in any manner.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Somers in the same low voice, with commendable desire to obtain further knowledge of the dark subject beneath him.

"I don't want nothin' of you; so yer kin let me alone. If yer don't let me alone, I'll be dog derned if I don't ketch hold of yer legs, and pull yer down chimley."

"Hush!" said Somers in warning tones. "They will hear you, if you speak so loud."

The man was a rebel, or at least a Southerner; and it passed our hero's comprehension to determine what he was doing in such a place.

"Hush yerself!" snarled the disconcerted rebel. "What yer want o' me? I ain't done nothin' to you."

"I don't want anything of you; but, if you don't keep still, I'll drop a stone on your head," replied Somers, irritated by the fellow's stupidity.

"Will yer?"

"Not if you keep still. Don't you see we are in the same box? I don't want to be caught, any more than you do."

"Who be yer?" asked the man, a little mollified by this conciliatory remark.

"Never mind who I am now. The soldiers are in the house looking for us; and, if you make a noise, they will hear you."

"What regiment do yer belong ter?" said the lower occupant of the chimney in a whisper.

"Forty-first," replied Somers at a venture, willing to obtain the advantage of the fellow's silence.

"Did yer run away?"

"No. Did you?"

"What yer in here fur, if yer didn't run away, then?" asked the deserter from the rebel army, which it was now sufficiently evident was his character.

"Keep still!" replied Somers, regretting that he had not given a different answer.

"I know yer!" exclaimed the rebel, making a movement farther down the chimney, thereby detaching sundry pieces of stone and mortar, which thundered down upon the hearth below with a din louder, as it seemed to Somers in his nervousness, than all the batteries of the Army of the Potomac. "Yer come to ketch me in a trap. Scotch me if I don't blow yer up so high 'twill take yer six months ter come down ag'in!"

"Keep still!" pleaded Somers, in despair at the unreasonableness of the rebel. "The soldiers are after me; and, if they catch me, they will catch you. I don't want to hurt you. If you will only keep still, I will help you out of the scrape."

"You go to Babylon! Yer can't fool me! What yer doin' in the chimley?"

If Somers could quietly have put a bullet through the fellow's head, and thus have punished him for the crime of desertion, he might have promoted his own cause; but the bullet would not do its work without powder, and powder was noisy; and therefore the remedy was as bad as the disorder, to say nothing of assuming to himself the duty of a rebel provost-marshal.

"Yer can't fool me!" repeated the fellow, after Somers had tried for a moment the effect of silence upon him.

It was unnecessary to fool such an idiot; for Nature had effectually done the job without human intervention. It was useless to waste words upon him; and Somers crept cautiously up out of his reach, and out of his hearing, unless he yelled out his insane speeches. Every moment he stopped to listen for sounds within the house; but he could hear none, either because the pursuers had abandoned the search, or because the double thickness of wood and stone shut out the noise.

The rebel deserter, for a wonder, kept quiet when Somers retreated from him, evidently believing that actions spoke louder than words. From his lower position in the flue, he could look up into the light, and observe the movements of him whom he regarded as an enemy. He seemed to have discretion enough to keep still, so long as no direct attack was made upon him; and to be content to wait for a direct assault before he attempted to repel it; which was certainly more than Somers expected of him, after what had transpired.

Carefully and noiselessly our fugitive made his way to the top of the chimney for the purpose of ascertaining the position of the pursuers, as well as to remove all ground of controversy with the intractable deserter. On reaching the top, he heard the voice of the sergeant at the window, who had probably just reached this point in his investigations.

"How came this board knocked off?" demanded the sergeant, who had perhaps observed some other indications of the advance of the fugitive in this direction.

"The wind blowed it off t'other day," promptly replied the farmer. "Yer don't s'pose the feller went out that winder, do yer?"

"No; but I think he has been up here somewhere."

"Well, I hope yer'll find him; but I've showed yer into every hole and corner in the house; and I tell yer he's five mile from this yere 'fore now."

The sergeant looked out of the window, looked up to the top of the chimney, and looked up to the ridge-pole of the house. He was no sailor himself; and, if the thought had occurred to him that the Yankee had passed from this window to the roof of the house, he would have been willing to take his Bible oath that not a man in the Southern Confederacy could have accomplished such an impossible feat. He could not do it himself, and consequently he believed that no other man could. After examining the situation to his entire satisfaction, he retired from the window, and with a great many impolite and wicked oaths, aimed at Yankees in general, and deserters in particular, he descended from the loft, and abandoned the search.

Somers was happy, and even forgave the deserter in the lower part of the chimney for his stupidity. He waited patiently

for the troopers to depart--very patiently, now that the burden of the peril seemed to be over; for he had heard the conclusions of the sergeant at the window. From his present perch near the top of the chimney, he could hear some of the conversation in front of the house; and he even ventured to take a look at his enemies below. To his intense satisfaction, he saw them mount their horses: and he was not much disturbed by the unamiable reflections which they cast upon him.

Captain de Banyan was with them; thus proving in the most conclusive manner that the gentleman in the chimney was not this distinguished individual. Having lost one prisoner, they were particularly cautious in regard to the disposition of the other. The captain marched off in gloomy dignity, with two cavalymen before and two behind him. Somers caught a glance at his face as he turned the corner into the road. It was sad beyond anything which he had ever observed in his countenance before, and a momentary twinge of conscience upbraided him for deserting a comrade in such an hour; he might have waited till both of them could escape together. But the captain's record in the Third Tennessee assured him that he had only done his duty; though he hoped his brilliant friend would be able, if an opportunity was ever presented, to remove the stain which now rested on his name and fame.

With a feeling of intense relief, however much he commiserated the misfortunes of his comrade, Somers saw the little procession move up the road which led to Richmond and a rebel dungeon. They disappeared; and while he was considering in what manner he should make his way down to the creek, where he hoped to find a boat in which to leave this treacherous soil, he heard a voice beneath him, and farther down than the locality of the deserter.

"Yer kin come down now, Tom," said the farmer.

Though the name was his own, the invitation was evidently not intended for him; and he remained quietly on his perch, waiting for further developments.

"Hev they all gone, dad?" asked the deserter.

"Yes; all gone. Yer kin come down now."

The renegade, then, was the son of the farmer; which accounted for the unwillingness of the latter to have the house searched by the soldiers; and, though Somers had a general contempt for deserters, he felt his indebtedness to this interesting family for the service they had unwittingly endeavored to render him.

Tom--Somers wanted to have his name changed then--Tom descended from his position in the chimney. It was an easy matter; for the kitchen was at the other end of the house, and there had been no fire on this hearth for many a month.

"Dad," said this graceless son of a graceless sire.

"Go and wash yer face, Tom. Ye're blacker than Black Jack."

"Dad, there's another man up the chimley. We come near havin' a fight up there. I told him what I would do; and he got skeered, and went up top."

"What d'yer mean, Tom?" demanded the patriarch.

Tom stated again, more explicitly than before, the subject matter of his startling communication.

"I reckon he's a Yank, dad; he talks like one, but says he b'longs to the Forty-fust Virginny. I know he's a Yank. I kin smell one a mile off."

Somers was flattered; but he was not angry at the compliment, and calmly waited for an invitation to join the family below.

"He's the feller that gin the soldiers the slip," added the father. "The sergeant says he's a Yank; but t'other prisoner says he's a James River pilot."

"I know he's a Yank. He'd 'a' killed me if I hadn't skeered him off."

"I reckon he skeered you more'n you skeered him," added the head of the family, who appeared not to have a very high opinion of his son's courage. "We'll smoke him out, Tom. Go'n git some pitch-wood and sich truck."

Somers had a very strong objection to being smoked out, and he commenced a forward and downward movement in the direction of the assailing party. Fearing that some unworthy advantage might be taken of his lower extremities before he could assume an attitude of defense, he drew his pistol, and placed himself a few feet above the fire-place. Tom returned with the fuel, and the old man ordered him to make a fire.

"One moment, if you please," said Somers. "I'll shoot the first man of you that attempts to make a fire there."

With an exclamation of terror, Tom retreated from the hearth; and Somers, improving the opportunity, leaped down from his perch. Stepping out from the great fire-place, he stood in the presence of the hopeful son and sire.

CHAPTER XXIV

A BROKEN BARGAIN

Somers was entirely satisfied with himself when he stood in the presence of the farmer and his son; and, so far as they were concerned, he had no fears for the future. The redoubtable Tom retired to one corner of the room, and, full of terror, awaited the issue. The father was the braver of the two, and stood in the middle of the floor, confronting the pestilent Yankee who had thus so unceremoniously invaded his house.

"Who be you?" demanded the old man.

"No matter who I am," replied Somers, with the pistol still in his hand. "I propose to spend the day with you, and will pay for everything I have."

"Perhaps yer will stay here, and perhaps yer won't," replied the farmer doggedly.

"There's no perhaps about it; I intend to stay here."

"I s'pose yer don't keer whether I'm willing or not."

"On the contrary, I do care. I had much rather stay with your consent than without."

"Well, then, yer won't stay with my consent."

"Then I shall stay without it," answered Somers, with a degree of decision which was exceedingly annoying to his involuntary host.

"No, yer won't," growled the farmer.

"I will pay you well for the use of this room, and for all that I eat and drink," said Somers, wishing to be fully understood.

"Yer can't stay here."

"No, yer can't," added Tom.

"I have made you a fair offer, and am willing to do what is right; and, as I said before, I intend to stay here till to-night, whether you are willing or not."

"Yer kin put up your pistol; I ain't afeerd on it."

"I have no desire to use the pistol to your injury, and shall not do so unless in self-defense. You know that I am a fugitive."

"A nigger, by gracious!" exclaimed the farmer, whose vocabulary was very limited, and who had no idea that the word "fugitive" could mean anything but a runaway negro.

"You know that the soldiers are after me, and it will not be safe for me to leave this house before dark. I'm not a nigger; and it makes no difference to you what I am."

"You are a dirty Yankee; and I'd rather hev a hundred niggers in my house than one Yankee."

"That's a matter of taste. If you are fond of negroes, I don't interfere with you for that."

"Shet up!" snarled the farmer, highly displeased with the answer of the fugitive. "I won't hev a Yankee in my house a single hour."

"Very well; we won't argue the matter. You can do anything you please about it," replied Somers with perfect indifference as he seated himself in a chair.

"Then yer kin leave."

"I shall not leave; on the contrary, I shall remain here till night."

"I reckon we'll see about that. I'll jest go down and call up two or three of them soldiers, and let 'em know you're a Yankee. I calkilate they'll tote you out of this rather sudden."

"Go ahead!" replied Somers coolly.

"I reckon ye'll tell another story by the time they git here."

"I reckon your son Tom will too," added the unwelcome guest.

"See here, dad; that won't work, nohow," interposed the hopeful son. "They'll ketch me if yer do."

"Exactly so," added Somers, who, of course, had depended upon the situation of the rebel deserter for his own safety.

The farmer looked at his intractable guest, and then upon his dutiful son; and the idea tardily passed through his dull brain that the soldiers would be just as dangerous to the welfare of the son as to the visitor. Probably he had intended, when the military force came, to send Tom up the chimney, as he had done a dozen times before; but the secret was no longer in the keeping of the family alone.

"I see you understand the case perfectly," said Somers, as he contemplated with intense satisfaction the blank dismay of both father and son. "If you had the wisdom of Solomon, you couldn't comprehend it any better."

"I reckon ye're about right, stranger," replied the farmer.

"You can see now it is for your interest as well as mine that we make friends. Tom's safety and mine are both the same thing. The best you can do is to take good care of me to-day, and at night help me to make my way over to the other side of the river."

"Then yer be a Yank?"

"I didn't say so. Tom can go with me if he likes. He will be safer there than here."

"Tom?"

"If he is a deserter from the rebel army, he will be caught sooner or later, and be shot. He will be safe on the other side of the river."

"Go over to the Yanks! He hates 'em wurs'n pizin. Don't yer, Tom?"

"Bet yer life I do, dad," replied the hopeful son. "I won't go over thar, nohow."

"Just as he pleases about that. I only wanted to do him a friendly act."

"Well, stranger, I don't mind keepin' yer to-day; but Tom can't go with yer."

"Very well; then I will stay in this room; and, if the soldiers come, I can go up the chimney with Tom," replied Somers. "I'm tired and sleepy. Didn't sleep a wink last night. I will take a nap on the floor. You will wake me, Tom, if there's any danger; won't you?"

"Yes, I'll wake yer," replied the deserter with a broad grin.

"We'll see that you don't git caught; kase, if yer do, of course, Tom'll git caught too," added the farmer.

There was something in his manner which Somers did not like. Though he was a man of dull mind, there was a kind of low cunning visible in his look and manner which warned Somers to be cautious. He stretched himself on the floor; and the farmer and his son left the room, closing the door behind them.

Our scout was, as he had before declared, both tired and sleepy; but rest and sleep were luxuries in which he could not permit himself to indulge in the midst of so much peril and so many enemies. As soon as the door closed behind the sire and the son, he rose from his reclining posture, and hastened to reconnoiter the position. The enemy--for such he was fully assured his host was--passed through the entry and out the door at the back of the house, as Somers discovered from the noise of their retreating footsteps.

There was a window in the rear of the room, which commanded a full view of them as they paused near the door to consider the situation. Somers raised the sash a little, so that he could hear what they said, not doubting that his own case would be the subject of the conversation.

"Don't you do it, dad," protested Tom in answer to some proposition which the farmer had made before the listener came within hearing distance of them.

"Don't yer be skeert, Tom. The feller's gone ter sleep in there, and the soldiers kin hurry him off afore he wakes up. Don't yer see, Tom? I reckon the Yank's an officer, and they'll give me suthin handsome fur ketchin him."

"Yes; but, dad, they'll get suthin handsome fur ketchin me too."

"You kin hide, as yer allers does when they comes."

"But the Yank will blow on me."

"What if he does?"

"He'll tell 'em I'm up chimley, and then they'll look fur me."

"Tom, ye're a bigger fool'n yer father!" said the farmer petulantly. "Can't yer hide in t'other place down suller?"

"It looks kinder skeery, dad," replied the doubtful son.

"Yer used ter hide down suller more'n yer did up chimley. But don't yer see, Tom, arter I've called in the soldiers, and give up the Yank, they'll think I'm a patriot, and won't b'leeve nothin' a dirty Yank can say agin' me."

"Well, dad, I hate the Yank as bad as you do; but yer must be keerful."

"Now go and see that the feller don't wake up and run off, and I'll go down arter a sergeant and half a dozen men. When yer hear us comin', just step down suller'n crawl inter the drean. Git the feller's pistol out of his pocket, if yer kin, while he's asleep."

"What a precious old scoundrel that man is!" thought Somers, as he retreated from the window, and threw himself on the floor where the farmer had left him.

He almost regretted that he had not used his pistol on the treacherous old villain, who had made a fair bargain with him, and agreed to the terms of the contract. The wretch had actually gone after the soldiers to entrap him, and Tom was to remain and keep watch of him in the meantime. Taking the revolver from his pocket, he thrust it under his blouse; still keeping his hand upon it, so as to make sure that the deserter did not carry out his part of the programme. Thus prepared for the conflict which might ensue, or for any other event, he closed his eyes, and pretended to be asleep.

Presently the door softly opened, and Tom crept into the room. He had taken off his shoes, that his step on the uncarpeted floor might not disturb his prey, and stole towards him. After approaching as near to the prostrate form as he dared, he bent over him to determine in which pocket the pistol had been placed. Somers was tempted to grapple him by the throat, as he listened to the young villain's subdued breathing; but he feared that he would scream if he did so, and it was necessary to achieve his conquest in a more gentle manner.

He moved his body a little, as if his slumbers were disturbed by unpleasant dreams; and added a noise like a snore to complete the delusion. Tom retired for a moment till his victim should again be composed; but Somers, instead of subsiding into the slumber of a sleepy and tired man, gradually opened his eyes and waked up. Slowly rising into a sitting posture, he looked around him; and apparently, as if entirely by accident, he discerned Tom.

"Can't yer sleep?" asked Tom, with extraordinary good nature for a person of his saturnine disposition.

"I've been asleep these two hours, I believe," gaped Somers. "What time is it, Tom?"

"Tain't eight o'clock yet. Yer hain't been asleep more'n fifteen minutes."

"Haven't I?"

"Not more'n that. Better lay down, and finish yer nap; kase I s'pose yer won't git much sleep to-night, if ye're gwine over the river."

"I feel better than I did, at any rate. I think I'll get up. It's tremendous hot here. Don't you ever open your windows?"

"I reckon we do. I was just thinkin' o' that."

And it was quite probable he was thinking of it; for he certainly wanted the earliest information of the approach of the soldiers. He opened the window in the front of the house, and Somers opened that in the rear. The latter then went to the door, and took a careful survey of the entry, in order to determine the way which the deserter must take to reach the cellar, where he was to conceal himself when the soldiers came. The prudent son of the master of the house had opened the door leading to the cellar, from which he was to enter his subterranean retreat.

For more than an hour, Tom nervously watched the wakeful Yankee, and several times suggested to him that he could sleep just as well as not, promising to wake him up if there was any danger; but Somers was most provokingly lively for a man who had been up all the preceding night, and resolutely refused to take a hint or to adopt a suggestion. Both of them were fearfully anxious for the result that was pending, and each had his plan for overreaching the other. It was a long hour; but at last Tom broke the spell which seemed to rest on both of them by declaring that he was "clean choked up," and must go and get a drink of water. At the same moment, Somers heard the tramp of the soldiers in the road as they approached the house, and understood why his companion had suddenly become so thirsty.

"No," said Somers, placing himself between the deserter and the door, with the revolver in his hand. "I don't want to be left alone. Somebody is coming to the house--half a dozen men. They are soldiers!" he exclaimed, glancing out at the window.

"Run right up chimley thar, and you'll be as safe as if you was t'other side of the river."

"But they'll catch you too! Come, Tom, up chimney with you, and I'll follow. If any one attempts to follow us, I'll shoot him with my pistol. Be in a hurry, Tom! We have no time to spare," urged Somers, driving the coward before him towards the fire-place.

"You go up fust," pleaded Tom, in mortal terror of the revolver.

"Up with you, or I'll blow your brains out!" added Somers in a low, fierce tone, which frightened his companion half out of his wits.

"Don't fire, and I will," replied the wretch, as he stepped into the fire-place, and commenced the ascent of the chimney.

"Up with you!" repeated Somers. "Now, if you attempt to come down, I'll shoot you."

The voice of the farmer, leading the soldiers to their prey, was now heard close to the house; and Somers deemed it prudent no longer to remain in the room. Darting out into the entry, he made his way to the cellar, closing the door behind him just as the rebels were about to enter.

"Where is he?" demanded the sergeant, who belonged to the battery at the works near the house.

"In this room," replied the farmer, putting his hand on the door of the apartment where he had seen the victim lie down to sleep an hour before. "But yer must be keerful with him. He had a pistol, and mebbe he mought shoot some on us."

"We aren't afraid of all the Yankees this side of the north pole," added the sergeant, as he pushed the door open and entered the room, followed by his squad of soldiers. "Where is he? There aren't no Yankee here."

"Well, he was here an hour ago," said the farmer.

"See here, old man, if you've been makin' a fool of us this hot day, I'll spit you on my bayonet. We heard that a deserter and a Yankee had been taken, and that the cavalry lost one of them."

"That was the Yankee. They lost him, and I found him ag'in."

"Where is he, then?"

"He aren't far from here," said the farmer, walking up to the fire-place, and pointing up the chimney, where he had no doubt the victim had retired when he heard the soldiers approaching.

"Up there?"

"That's where the feller hid when the troopers was lookin' fur him; and yer kin be sure he's up there now. But yer must be keerful; fur he's got a pistol, and is a mighty savage fellow."

"We'll soon bring him down," added the sergeant as he stepped into the fire-place, and looked up the chimney. "I see him; but he's half way up to the top. I reckon we can smoke him out best. Come, old man, take some of this pitch-wood, that will make a big smoke, and kindle a fire."

"We'll soon have him," said the farmer as he obeyed the order.

"I say, Yank!" shouted the sergeant up the chimney; "if you don't want to be smoked out, come down."

No answer came to this polite suggestion; and then one of the soldiers proposed to fire his musket up the chimney; which so terrified the occupant thereof, that he begged for mercy.

"Don't shoot, and I'll come down!" groaned the wretch.

"The cowardly Yank! He's like all the rest of them. Come down quick, then!"

The farmer, who had stepped out for more wood, returned; and at the same moment, Tom the deserter, begrimed with soot, dropped down on the hearth, and stepped out into the room.

CHAPTER XXV

SOMERS IS COMPELLED TO BACK OUT

Very likely the Virginia farmer had some idea of retributive justice when he saw his hopeful son step out of the fire-place into the very jaws of ruin. To say that he was astonished would be expressing his state of mind too tamely; for he was overwhelmed with confusion, fear and mortification. He had expected to find the Yankee asleep on the floor; but, as he was not there, it was sufficiently evident to him that he had again resorted to the chimney for concealment. It had been distinctly arranged beforehand, that Tom, his son, should conceal himself in the cellar; and, of course, he did not expect to find him in the chimney.

In short, all his expectations had been defeated, and he himself had opened the trap for his son to enter. He probably knew how strict was the discipline of the rebel army in respect to deserters. He had frequently heard of executions of persons of this class; and he could hardly expect his son to escape the penalty of his misconduct. He had broken his bargain with the fugitive; and, in attempting to surrender him to his implacable enemies, he had deprived his heir of liberty, if not of life.

"This is your Yankee, is it?" demanded the sergeant, as he gazed at the remnants of the rebel uniform which Tom still wore.

"No, no; this ain't the Yankee!" stammered the farmer.

"Well, you needn't tell us who he is; for we know. I was told to keep a sharp lookout for one Tom Rigney, a deserter; and I reckon this is the chap. You are my prisoner, my fine lad."

"There, now, dad!--d'ye see what ye've done?" snarled poor Tom Rigney, as he glanced reproachfully at the patriarch, who had unwittingly sprung the trap upon him.

"I didn't do it, Tom," replied Farmer Rigney, appalled at the calamity which had overtaken his house.

"Didn't you bring me in here to capture this boy?" asked the sergeant, who appeared to be bewildered by the unnatural act of the father.

"I brought yer here to take the Yank, who was as sassy as a four-year-old colt."

"He promised the Yankee he'd take keer on him till night," added the vengeful Tom.

"That was only to keep him here till I could fotch somebody to take keer on him," pleaded the farmer. "The Yank must be up chimley now," he continued, reminded that his own reputation for loyalty to the great and general Southern Confederacy was now doubly compromised.

"He ain't up there, dad, nohow," said Tom.

"Where is he?" demanded the sergeant.

"Dunno."

"Where did he go?"

"Dunno."

"Didn't you see him?"

"I reckon it was too dark, up chimley, to see anything."

"Haven't you seen him?"

"I reckon I have. He woked up, and druv me up chimley right smart, with the pistol in his hand; reckon, if I hadn't gone, I'd been a dead man; I'll be dog scotched if I shouldn't."

"You say he drove you up the chimney?" demanded the sergeant.

"I reckon he did."

"Where did he go, then?"

"Dunno."

"Yes, you do know! If you don't tell, you'll get a bayonet through your vitals," said the soldier sternly, as he demonstrated with the ugly weapon he had fixed on his gun before he began to examine the chimney.

"Dunno," replied the deserter sulkily.

"Answer, or take the consequences!"

"Dunno. Jes as lief be stuck with a bagonet as shot by a file of soldiers," answered Tom, to whom the future looked even more dark than the present.

"Tell, Tom," pleaded his father.

"Dunno, dad; I was up chimley when he left. Dunno no more'n the dead."

Perhaps the sergeant concluded that Tom's position was a reasonable one, and that it would not have been possible for him to see, from his dark retreat, where the Yankee had gone. At any rate, he was saved from further persecution; and two of the men were ordered to conduct him to the camp, while the remainder stayed to continue the search for the fugitive. Farmer Rigney protested and pleaded, and even offered to warm the palms of the soldier's hands with certain pieces of gold which he had in the house; but, unfortunately for the patriotic farmer, the sergeant was above a bribe, and Tom was hurried off to his doom.

A careful search of the house and premises was now instituted; and this time the farmer was a zealous co-operator with the soldiers; for it was necessary for him to establish his own loyalty before he could do anything to save his son from the deserter's fate. The party proceeded up-stairs first, and carefully examined every closet, and every nook and corner which could by any possibility contain the form of a man. As Somers was not up-stairs, of course they did not find him; and we will not weary our readers by following them in their fruitless search.

Somers went down into the cellar, closing the door after him; and, as he may be lonesome in his gloomy retreat, we will join him there, though it was rather a tight place for more than one person. The cellar was dark when the fugitive made his advent within its somber shades; and, as he was an utter stranger in the place, he was not a little bewildered by the awkwardness of the situation. He was in darkness, and wished for light; at least, for enough to enable him to find the hiding-place of which he had heard the farmer speak.

This snug retreat, where the deserter had balked his pursuers, was undoubtedly the cellar drain; though, to Somers, it appeared to be a Virginia notion to have it long enough to admit the form of a man. Tom Rigney was a larger person than himself; and the case was hopeful enough, if he could only find the opening. The cellar contained various boxes, barrels, firkins and other articles, the mass of which were piled up in one corner.

Somers followed the wall entirely around, from the pile in the corner, till he returned to it, without finding what he desired. It was sufficiently evident, therefore, that the entrance to the drain was under the boxes and barrels, which had probably been placed over it to ward off the over-inquisitive gaze of any visitors who might explore the cellar. Our enterprising hero immediately commenced the work of burrowing beneath the rubbish, and soon had the happiness of discovering the identical road by which the original occupant of the place had entered. Before the opening, he found sufficient space to enable him to readjust the boxes and barrels, so as to hide his den from the observation of any who might be disposed to follow him in his subterranean explorations.

The drain was certainly small enough, even for the genteel form of Captain Thomas Somers; though, as his mustache was quite diminutive in its proportions, he was able to worry himself along several feet into the gloomy hole. It was a miserable place in which to spend the day; but, miserable as it was, he hoped that he should be permitted to remain there. He was fully conscious of the perils of his situation. He knew that Tom, in the chimney, must be captured; and it was not probable that the farmer would let the soldiers depart without examining the house. His retreat was known to him, and there was not one chance in a hundred for the hole to be passed by without an examination.

It would be fatal to remain where he was; and, after resting himself from the fatigue which the exertion of moving in his narrow den induced, he again pushed forward, cheered by the conclusion that a drain would be a useless institution without an opening at each end. Indeed, there was a glimmer of light at some distance before him; and he indulged the hope that he might work his way out to the blue sky.

He had scarcely resumed his progressive movement, which had to be accomplished very much after the fashion of a serpent—for the aperture was too narrow for the regular exercise of his legs and arms—he had scarcely begun to move before voices in the cellar announced the approach of the pursuers. A cold sweat seemed to deluge his frame; for the sounds were like the knell of doom to him. With desperate energy he continued his serpent march; but it was only to butt his head against the stones of the drain, where its size was reduced to less than half its proportions near the cellar.

His farther advance was hopelessly checked; and there was nothing more to be done but to wait patiently the result of the exciting event. He was satisfied that his feet were not within eight or ten feet of the cellar; for, being a progressive young man, he had entered the hole head first. It was possible, but not probable, that he might escape detection, even if the opening was examined; and, with what self-possession he could muster for the occasion, he lay, like the slimy worms beneath him, till ruin or safety should come.

"I reckon he isn't down here," said the sergeant, after the party had examined the cellar, and even pulled over some of the boxes and barrels.

"God bless you for a stupid fellow as you are!" thought Somers; for he was prudent enough not audibly to invoke benedictions, even upon the heads of his enemies; but the words of the sergeant afforded him a degree of relief, which no one, who has not burrowed in a drain in the rebel country, can understand or appreciate.

"I reckon there's a place down in that corner that's big enough to hold a man; fur my son Tom's been in there," added the farmer.

These words gave Somers another cold sweat; and perhaps he thought it was a mistake that he had not put a bullet through the patriarch's head when he had been tempted to do so in the room above. He was a double traitor; but I think the conscience of our hero was more at rest as it was than it would have been if he had shot down an unarmed man, even to save himself from prospective capture.

"Where is the place?" demanded the sergeant.

"In yonder, under them barrels and boxes. Jest fotch the trumpery out, and you'll see the hole," replied Rigney.

Somers heard the rumble of the barrels, as they were rolled out of the way, with very much the same feelings that a conscious man in a trance would listen to the rumbling of the wheels of the hearse which was bearing him to the church-yard, only that he was to come forth from a hopeless grave to the more gloomy light of a rebel dungeon.

"I can't see anything in that hole," said the sergeant. "No man could get into such a place as that."

"Blessed are your eyes; for they see not!" thought Somers. "May your blindness be equal to that of the scribes and Pharisees!"

"But my son Tom has been in there. I reckon a Yankee could crawl inter as small a hole as anybody."

The sergeant thought this was funny; and he honored the remark with a hearty laugh, in which Somers was disposed to join, though he regretted for the first time in his life that he was unable to "crawl out at the little end of the horn." He was encouraged by the skepticism of the soldier, and was satisfied, that, if he attempted to demonstrate the proposition experimentally, he would be fully convinced of its difficulty, if not of its impossibility.

"Go and bring another lamp and a pole," said the sergeant.

One of the party went up the stairs, and Somers gave himself up for lost. The extra lamp would certainly expose him, to say nothing of the pole; and it seemed to be folly to remain there, and be punched with a stick, like a woodchuck in his hole. Besides, there is something in tumbling down gracefully, when one must inevitably tumble; and he was disposed to surrender gracefully, as the coon did when he learned that Colonel Crockett was about to fire and bring him down. There was no hope; and it is bad generalship, as well as inhuman and useless, to fight a battle which is lost before the first shot is fired.

We have before intimated that Captain Somers, besides being a brave and enterprising young man, was a philosopher. He had that happy self-possession which enables one to bear the ills of life, as well as the courage and address to triumph over them. He had done everything which ingenuity, skill, and impudence could accomplish to save himself from the hands of the rebel soldiers; from a rebel prison, if not from a rebel halter. He had failed; and, though it gave him a bitter pang to yield his last hope, he believed that nothing better could be done than to surrender with good grace.

"How are you, sergeant?" shouted he, when he had fully resolved upon his next step.

"Hallo!" replied the sergeant, laughing heartily at the hail from the bowels of the earth. "How are you, Yank?"

"In a tight place, sergeant; and I've concluded to back out," replied Somers.

"Good! That's what all the Yankees will have to do before they grow much older. Back out, Yank!"

Somers commenced the operation, which was an exceedingly unpleasant necessity to a person of his progressive temperament. It was a slow maneuver; but the sergeant waited patiently till it was accomplished, by which time the extra lamp and the pole had reported for duty.

"How are you, Yank?" said the sergeant, laughing immoderately at the misfortune of his victim.

"That's the smallest hole I ever attempted to crawl through," replied Somers, puffing and blowing from the violence of his exertions in releasing himself from his narrow prison-house.

"How came you in such a place?" asked the sergeant as they walked up the stairs.

"Well, my friend, the farmer here, suggested the idea to me. He said his son had crawled in there a great many times."

"I?" exclaimed Rigney. "I never said a word about the drean."

"You must be looked after," added the sergeant, with a menacing look at the discomfited farmer. "You have concealed a deserter in your house for weeks; and now we find that you hide Yankees too."

"I didn't hide him!" protested Rigney.

"Didn't you agree to keep me here till night?" asked Somers, who despised him beyond expression.

"If I did, it was only to have the soldiers ketch yer."

The sergeant declared that Rigney was a traitor, and that he must go along with him; but Somers, with more magnanimity than many men would have exercised towards such a faithless wretch, told the whole story exactly as it was, thus relieving him of a portion of his infidelity to the Southern Confederacy; and the sergeant was graciously pleased to let him remain at home, while his victim was marched off to the rebel camp.

CHAPTER XXVI

A NIGHT IN PETERSBURG

The sergeant who had captured our hero seemed to be a very clever fellow, and appreciated the sterling merits of his captive. While he was rigidly devoted to the discharge of his duty, he treated his prisoner with all the consideration which one human being has the right to expect of another, whatever the circumstances under which they meet.

Somers was disgusted with the result of the adventure, even while he had no reason to blame himself for any want of care or skill in conducting his affairs under the trying circumstances. He was only a few hours behind his late companion, Captain de Banyan; whom he had now a reasonable expectation of meeting again before the close of the day.

If Somers was disgusted with the issue of the adventure, he did not yet despair of effecting his escape. This was all he had to live for at present; and he was determined not to lose sight of this great object of existence. Libby Prison was a flourishing institution, even at the time of which we write; and he was determined not to be sent there, if human energy and perseverance could save him from such a fate. It was easier to avoid such a trap than it would be to get out of it after he had fallen into it. As he walked along with the talkative sergeant, he kept his eyes open, ready to avail himself of any opportunity which might afford him a reasonable prospect of shaking off his disagreeable companion.

His captor asked him a great many questions in regard to himself, and to the Army of the Potomac on the other side of the river, which Somers answered with skill and discretion; though we suppose that even a rigid moralist would have excused some slight variations from the strict letter of the truth which crept into his replies. He was an officer in the Yankee army; but he dared not acknowledge his rank, lest he should be accused of being a spy. If he was a captain, he ought to have worn the uniform of his rank in order to have it recognized. As he was a private, his chance of spending the summer on Belle Isle was better than that for Libby. But, as Somers was fully resolved not to go to Richmond in advance of the noble army whose fortunes and misfortunes he had shared, he did not deem it necessary to consider what quarters he should occupy.

The sergeant was a faithful soldier. Somers found no opportunity to slip away from his guard on the way to the camp. He was duly delivered to the officer of the day, and his intimacy with his good-natured captor was at an end. The officer who was responsible for him made some inquiries in regard to the prisoner, and learned that he had escaped from the troopers in the morning. When he understood the case, as it was only eight miles to the railroad station, where the other prisoner was probably waiting a conveyance in the camp, he decided to send Somers forward at once, fearful that he might again take leave of his captors. From what he had heard from Captain Osborn and the cavalry soldiers in charge of him, he concluded that the young man was a person of more consequence than he appeared to be--that he was either high in rank, or guilty of enormous military misdemeanors.

A two-horse wagon used for general business about the camp was brought up, and Somers was sent forward in charge of two soldiers, who were especially ordered to shoot him if he attempted to escape; which they would probably have done of their own free will and accord, without any orders. The captive looked in vain for an opportunity to elude the vigilance of the guard; they hardly took their eyes off him during the ride. Possibly they thought the young fellow was President Lincoln in disguise, and that the salvation of the Southern Confederacy depended upon his safe delivery into the hands of the provost-marshal at Richmond.

The roads were very muddy from the recent rains, and it required two hours to accomplish the distance to the railroad station. On their arrival, Somers was handed over to another officer in charge of the camp at the station. Captain de Banyan had already been sent forward to Petersburg, and another train would not depart till evening. Somers was carefully guarded during the remainder of the day, and an attempt to get away would have been equivalent to committing suicide. At dark he was put into a baggage-car, with two soldiers to guard him; and in a short time reached the city of Petersburg. With several other unfortunate Union soldiers, he was placed in a small room in the station-house, to remain until a train should start for Richmond. Of course, they were carefully guarded; and Somers began to fear that he should, after all, be compelled to visit the rebel capital without the army.

The room was on the second floor, with two windows opening into the street; but the prisoners were charged, on penalty of being shot, not to look out at them. There was not the ghost of a chance to operate under such unfavorable circumstances; and Somers gave up all thoughts of doing anything that night. Stretching himself on the floor, he tried to sleep; but his spirit was too great to permit him calmly to view the prospect of a rebel prison. As he lay on the floor, he ransacked his brain for some expedient which would save him from the horrors of Libby or Belle Isle.

The best scheme that suggested itself was to leap from the cars on the way to Richmond. It involved the liability to a

broken neck or a broken limb; but he determined to watch for an opportunity to execute this reckless purpose. His companions in bondage were worn out with long marches, and all of them slept on the floor around him in a few moments after they entered the room. They had asked him some questions; but he kept his own counsel, and endeavored to cheer their desponding spirits with the hope of being soon exchanged.

At last Somers went to sleep himself, after he had heard a church clock in the city strike eleven. He had slept none on the preceding night, and his slumbers were as sound as if he had been in his attic-chamber in the cottage at Pinchbrook. Even the opening of the door, and the entrance of three men with a lantern, did not disturb him. One of the party was an officer. He wore a military cloak over the gray uniform of the Confederate army.

"Which is the man?" demanded he in sharp tones of the two soldiers who accompanied him.

"I don't know which he is now," replied the corporal of the guard. "What's his name?"

"Tom Leathers," answered the officer.

The corporal then passed round among the sleeping prisoners, and roughly kicked those who were asleep, including Somers, who sprang to his feet, and was rather disposed to make a "row" on account of this rude treatment, before he remembered where he was.

"Now they are all awake," said the corporal when he had been the rounds. "Is there any such man as Tom Leathers here?"

"Tom Leathers," repeated the officer in a loud tone.

No one answered to the name; but, in a moment, Somers happened to think that this was the appellation which he had assumed when he was a pilot down on the creek by the James River. He was evidently the person intended; but he was in doubt whether to answer the summons. The antecedents of the young pilot of the James were not such as to entitle him to much consideration at the hands of the rebels; and he was disposed to deny his identity. While he was debating the question in his own mind, the corporal repeated the name.

"There's no such man here," he added, turning to the officer.

"He must be here. He came up in the night train."

"He don't answer to his name."

"Hold your lantern, and let me look these prisoners in the face."

The corporal passed from one to another of the captives till he came to Somers; thrusting the lantern into the face of each, so that the officer could scan his features.

"What's your name?" he asked, as the corporal placed the lantern before Somers.

Not having made up his mind as to the effect of acknowledging his identity with the pilot, he made no reply.

"That's the man," said the officer decidedly.

"Is your name Tom Leathers?" added the corporal, as he made a demonstration with his bayonet at the prisoner.

"Put down your musket, corporal; you needn't be a brute to your prisoners."

"I only wanted to make him answer the question. If you give me leave, I'll find a tongue for him."

"He is the man I want; bring him out," replied the officer.

"Bring him out? I beg your pardon, sir; but I don't know who you are. I can't give up a prisoner without orders."

The officer, who seemed to be suffering with a bad cold, and wore the collar of his cloak turned up so as to conceal the greater part of his face, opened the lower part of his garment, so that the corporal could see his uniform. At the same time he took from his pocket a paper, which he opened, and handed to the guard.

"That's all right," said the latter, when he had read the document. "Of course, you will leave this with me?"

"Certainly. Now bring out the man; and lose no time, for I am in a hurry."

Somers was conducted from the room to the car-house below, where the officer asked for a soldier to guard the prisoner to the office of the provost-marshal, who was waiting for him. The corporal furnished the man; and the captive walked off between his two companions, bewildered by the sudden change which had taken place in the course of events. He could not imagine why he had been singled out from the rest of the prisoners in the station-house, unless some specific and more definite charge than being in arms against the great Southern Confederacy had been laid at his door. The most unpleasant thought that came to his mind was that Captain de Banyan had betrayed the object of his mission to the south side of the river. There was good evidence that his fellow-officer had come over as a spy; and the hope of saving his own life might have induced him to sacrifice even one who had been his best friend.

It was not pleasant to think of Captain de Banyan as capable of doing so mean an act; for he had been regarded in the regiment as the soul of honor,—of worldly honor, which scorns to do a vile thing if public opinion has condemned it. But the astounding information which he had obtained among the rebels concerning his friend's antecedents had destroyed his confidence in him, and he was prepared for anything from him. In this light, his situation was almost hopeless; for the evidence would certainly condemn him before any court-martial in the Confederacy, and the chances of escape were lessened by his separation from his unfortunate companions in arms. He had probably been taken away from them to prevent even the possibility of exercising his talent in getting away, as he had done after his capture.

They walked in silence along the gloomy and deserted streets; and Somers felt just as if he were marching to his execution. He knew that the rebel officers had a summary way of dealing with cases like his own; and he was prepared to be condemned, even before another sun rose to gladden him with his cheerful light. He thought of his mother, of his father, of the other members of the family, and of the blow it would be to them to learn that he had been hanged as a spy. He thought of Pinchbrook, of the happy days he had spent there, and of those who had been his true friends. He thought of Lilian Ashford, the beautiful one, in the remembrance of whose sweet smile he had reveled every day since they parted, and which he had hoped to enjoy again when war should no more desolate the land, and he should be proudly enrolled with the heroes who had saved the nation from ruin.

All these pleasant memories, all these bright hopes, all these loving forms, though present in his heart, seemed dim and distant to him. He had nothing to hope for in the future on this side of the grave, nothing in the present but an ignominious death on the scaffold. Yet it was sweet to die for one's country; and, disgraceful as his end might be in its form, it was still in the service of the nation. He felt happy in the thought; and, if there was nothing more on earth to hope for, there was still a bright heaven beyond the deepest and darkest grave into which the hate of traitors could plunge him, where the ruptured ties of this life are again restored, never again to be subject to change and decay.

There was a tear in his eye as he thought of his fond mother; and he wept for her when he could not weep for himself. No one saw that tear, and the officer permitted him to indulge his sad revery in silence. But, after they had walked two or three squares, his companion in authority suddenly stopped.

"I have left a book, which I carried in my hand, at the depot," said he, in tones full of chagrin at his carelessness. "I must have it; for I can do nothing without it."

"Where did you leave it?" asked the soldier.

"In the guard-room. You may go back, and bring it to me. Give me your gun; you needn't carry that."

"Where shall I find you?"

"Here, where you leave me. Go quick, my man."

"I won't be gone ten minutes," replied the soldier, as he started off at a run for the missing volume.

The officer took the gun, and stood by the side of his prisoner, at the corner of the street, till the soldier disappeared in the darkness. Somers, still thinking of the sad fate which he was confident was in store for him, wished to confirm his impressions in regard to his destiny. His companion seemed to be a gentleman of a kindly nature, though stern in the discharge of his duty. It was possible that he would give him some information in regard to the probable disposal of him.

"Will you tell me, sir, why I am separated from the rest of the prisoners?" said he, as soon as the sentinel had departed upon his errand.

"Because you are an officer."

"How do you know I am?" asked Somers, very desirous of ascertaining how much Captain de Banyan had told in regard to him.

"We know all about you," answered the officer, muffling his cloak more closely around his face, as if afraid the night air might injure his lungs as he opened his mouth.

"What do you know about me?"

"All about you."

"That isn't very definite."

"In a word, you are Captain Thomas Somers, of the —th regiment."

"Who told you that?"

"That's of no consequence."

"What is to be done with me?"

"I don't know."

"I suppose I am only a prisoner of war?"

"You crossed the James River in disguise, and went into our lines for the purpose of obtaining information. I suppose you can put those two things together."

Somers's worst fears were confirmed. He was to be tried as a spy, and De Banyan had told all he knew about him. Before he had time to dwell on the dark prospect any longer, the officer said he was cold, and could not stand there any longer. Taking his prisoner by the arm, he led him down the cross-street. Somers was just thinking of an attempt to bid his companion good-night, when the latter spoke again:

"I shall catch my death from this night air," said he. "Just before the battle of Magenta----"

"Captain de Banyan!" exclaimed Somers.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FRIEND INDEED

"Hush, my dear boy! not a word!" said Captain de Banyan in an impressive whisper, as he led the way along the street.

Somers made no reply; for he readily perceived that the utmost caution was necessary, though he did not understand the position of his friend, or what complications there were in the situation. He was filled with rejoicing at finding himself again in the way of getting back to the Union army. Of course, his feelings towards Captain de Banyan, in spite of his antecedents in the Third Tennessee, underwent a sudden and agreeable change; and in the joy of his heart he was disposed to embrace his friend, and beg forgiveness for the suspicions he had entertained of him.

They had advanced but a short distance from the main street, when they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs.

"That's bad," said Captain de Banyan, as he stopped to ascertain in what direction the horsemen were going.

"What's bad?" demanded Somers.

"My absence has been discovered, I am afraid. The provost-marshal has a section of cavalry to run down Union prisoners who may escape. I think they are after me; at any rate, we must be very careful where we go."

A few moments later, a small party of horsemen dashed down the street by which the captain was conducting his retreat. It would prove fatal to their hopes, if they were seen; and Captain de Banyan entered the yard of a house, followed by his companion. There was a stable on the premises; and, without a special invitation from the owner, they entered, making their way to the hay-loft, which seemed to be the most promising place of concealment. A horse in the stall below whinnied when they reached the second floor, expecting, no doubt, his morning rations of hay.

Unfortunately for the fugitives, still more unfortunately perhaps for the horse, there was very little hay in the loft; so that a secure hiding-place was not readily found. But, as it was no part of the captain's intention to remain long in this loft, they seated themselves on a grain chest, to wait till the troopers should pass the house.

"What time is it, captain?" asked Somers.

"About four in the morning. We are rather late. It will be daylight in about an hour."

"Where have you been since we parted?"

"Since we parted, my boy? We didn't part. You did all the parting, Somers," replied De Banyan in a reproachful tone.

"I know I did; but, after what I had heard, you need scarcely wonder. You acknowledged that you had been a rebel officer, and a member of the Third Tennessee regiment."

"I grant it; but I thought enough else was said to enable you to understand my position."

"Well, I had some hopes that you were all right; but I could not banish my fears. How could I know that you had not been sent over on the other side for the same purpose that we crossed the James?"

"You might have known it, my dear fellow. They don't usually send men over on such business whose loyalty is doubtful. You heard the captain say that I had been suspected."

"I did; but I could not fully understand your position."

"And so you gave me the slip? Well, Somers, I forgive you."

"I am sure, if I had not been in doubt in regard to what you were, I would not have left you, even if I had been certain of hanging with you."

"I know you wouldn't, my boy. I confess there were a great many dark things against me; but I assure you I am a loyal and true man. I have suffered more for the Union than you have; for I was born in the sunny South, and all my friends and neighbors went with the rebels. I had no alternative but to go into the army, where my experience in the Crimea, in Italy, and in Mexico, made me an officer. I escaped as soon as I could, and enrolled myself on the right side."

Somers grasped the hand of his brave and devoted companion, which he pressed with a warmth that indicated his feelings more eloquently than words could have done. He was entirely satisfied with the explanation, because it was fully sustained by the conduct of the captain, and by the words of the rebel cavalry officer who had claimed his acquaintance. He was even disposed to believe that De Banyan had been a soldier in the European wars and in Mexico; which was a degree of credulity hardly to be expected of a sensible young man.

"You will forgive me for my unjust suspicions, captain? I assure you it went against my grain to believe that you were a

rebel."

"You had good reason for it. I was more afraid of you, when I confessed my sins to the rebel officer, than I was of him. We are friends again, Somers; that's all I want."

"You have proved yourself my friend by this last act; and I should have needed no further explanation to convince me that you were a loyal man."

"I am all that, my dear boy."

"Where have you been since I parted from you?"

"I got up to Petersburg in the afternoon. I was put in that hole where I found you at first; but, when the provost-marshal learned my story, he sent for me, and I was conducted to his office. Just as I came out of the depot, you went in. He wanted to question me, he said. Well, I happened to know him, though he did not know me. I knew his weak point; and, in a word, I bamboozled him. I assured him I was an officer in the Third Tennessee, and that, on further inquiry, he would find I was all right; that I had rendered greater service to my country by going over to the Yankees than I could possibly have done by remaining with my regiment; which, you are willing to believe, was strictly true.

"I asked the privilege of putting on my uniform again, which he granted; and, with the gold in my pocket, I purchased a full fit-out of the quartermaster. The provost-marshal told me that I must report at Richmond, which I promised to do; and, my dear boy, I hope I shall be able to do so at no distant day, though it doesn't look much like it just now. He gave me an apartment next to his office, for the night; where, of course, he expected to find me in the morning. In the night, I got up, and went into his office to transact a little business on my own account.

"After I saw you at the depot, my dear fellow, I couldn't forget your sad look. You seemed to be as hopeless as a stray chicken in the wet grass, and I was trying to think what I could do for you. I couldn't have gone back to Harrison's Landing without you; it would have broken my heart. And what could I have said to the general, when he asked for you? How could I have made my peace with the officers of the regiment, if I had gone back without you?"

"It was very kind of you, after the shabby manner in which I had treated you," added Somers.

"That was the very reason why I was bound to help you out of the scrape, if I could. I wanted to set myself right with you. I wanted to convince you I wasn't the man you took me to be."

"You have convinced me in the fullest manner; and I owe you a debt of gratitude which I shall never be able to pay."

"Steady, my boy; we are not out of the scrape."

"No matter whether we get out of the scrape or not, my feelings towards you will be just the same."

"Thank you, Somers; I am satisfied."

"But where did you get the pass you gave the corporal of the guard at the depot?" asked Somers.

"I found the provost-marshal's signature on certain papers, one of which I filled out to suit myself. But there was a sentinel at the door of the office, put there, I suppose, for my benefit; though I was sorry to trouble the poor fellow to stand there on my account. My friend, the provost, had done this little act in the most delicate way in the world. He did not tell me that I was under guard; but I happened to find out before I put my foot in the trap.

"In a word, not wishing to disturb the sentinel, I took the liberty of leaving by the way of the window of my chamber, instead of the door. Luckily there was a one-story shop next to the office; and with the aid of a blanket from my bed, I dropped down upon it, without disturbing the meditations of the sentinel or the slumbers of the provost. I got into the street, and went to the depot. There I told the corporal of the guard a very interesting story about the prisoner who had been brought up in the afternoon, meaning myself; and that the man I wanted was needed immediately as a witness. You know the rest, my dear fellow; and here we are."

"And here we are likely to remain, I'm afraid," added Somers.

"Not a bit of it. I haven't exhausted half my expedients yet. On the night before the attack on the Redan, at Sebastopol, I went all over that city, and spent the evening at the house of one of the most distinguished citizens--a gentleman who had a government contract for rations. Of course, he didn't know me."

"Hush! There is some one coming into the stable below," said Somers, as he heard a door opened on the floor below.

It was impossible to move then without making noise enough to excite the attention of the person who had entered; for the stable was old and rickety, and the boards creaked at every step they took. The fugitives listened with breathless interest to the movements of the unwelcome visitor. The horse whinnied again; and the person entered the stall, and spoke to him. The sound of his voice filled the occupants of the loft with consternation; for evidently the speaker was not a negro servant, as they had hoped and expected to find him, but a white man, and one who used the English language well.

"Come, Jenny, there's a job on hand for us; and you must postpone your breakfast till we catch the Yankee prisoners," said the person, who, the fugitives were now satisfied, was an officer of the cavalry service.

While De Banyan was telling his story, they had heard some noise at the house; and they now concluded that the party which had ridden up the street had come to call this officer for duty. They hoped that nothing would require him to pay a visit to the loft, and that, like a good officer, he would be as expeditious as possible in his preparations.

"You are my prisoner, if he comes up-stairs," whispered De Banyan.

Somers pressed the hand of his companion to assure him that he understood his plan; and they held their breath, in the intense anxiety of the moment, for further developments. The present seemed to be the turning point in the career of the adventurers; and, if they could once escape from the horns of this dilemma, skill and prudence would conduct them in safety to the Union lines.

The officer below, after he had politely informed "Jenny" of the early movement, seemed to be in no hurry to get into the saddle. He went out at the door of the stable, and all was silent again, except the voice of Jenny, who seemed to be protesting against any movement before she had received her customary feed of corn.

"Peters!" shouted the officer from the door, "hurry up! The Yankees will get to the James River before you get the saddle on my horse. Where have you been?"

"I was looking for my boots."

"An orderly ought to wear his boots to bed with him, if he can't put them where he can find them," replied the officer, as the heavy step of another man was heard in the stable below.

"What news did you hear?" asked the officer, as the orderly led the horse from the stall.

"The sergeant said some officer that had been took as a deserter done runned away," replied Peters, as the fugitives heard the rattle of the saddle-gear.

"Hurry up, then!"

"He done took a Yankee prisoner from the depot with him," added Peters, who, if he had not been called an orderly, the listeners would have taken for a negro.

"You may take a peck of corn in a bag for Jenny, Peters. We may have a long ride of it," added the officer, as he left the stable.

A peck of corn! De Banyan and Somers were sitting on the grain chest! It was impossible to avoid discovery; and De Banyan threw off his cloak, ready for the emergency.

"Somers, my boy, we must change our tactics. They have heard the whole story, and we can't blind them. We must make the best of it. Have you a pistol?" whispered the captain.

"No; all I had was taken from me," replied Somers.

"I have only one. No matter; it would never do to fire up here," added De Banyan, as he picked up a short pitch-fork which lay near him.

"Are you going to kill him?" asked Somers.

"It's life or death for you and me! We can't stop for trifles," answered the captain in hurried tones, but still in a whisper.

They listened for a moment longer to the quick movements of Peters in the stable below. It was evident that Jenny was duly caparisoned for service; and then another horse was led out, which belonged to the orderly. He was prepared for service in less time than Jenny had required; and, a moment later, the step of Peters was heard on the stairs. With the bag in his hand, he was coming up for the corn, as he had been ordered by the officer. He did not see the fugitives till he had reached the last step; when, as he was on the point of opening his mouth to speak, De Banyan leveled a blow at his head with the handle of the pitch-fork, which felled him to the floor.

He sank down upon the stairs stunned or dead; and the captain, as though he had carefully matured his plan beforehand, dragged the body to one corner of the loft, where he covered it with hay.

"Not a word, Somers," said he in an excited whisper, as he crouched down behind the grain chest.

"Are you going to stay here?" demanded Somers, astonished at this singular disposition of the forces.

"Hush--the officer is close by."

With beating heart, Somers waited for the further action of his resolute companion. It was the most critical period of his life, it seemed to him, especially as he did not fully comprehend the purpose of De Banyan. Only a moment elapsed, but it was long enough to be a week, before the owner of Jenny returned to the stable.

"Peters! What are you about?" shouted he angrily. "I shall never get off at this rate. Peters!"

Peters was not in condition to answer the summons at that moment. Somers hoped he was not dead; but he might as well have been dead, so far as speaking was concerned.

"Peters!" shouted the officer again, with a string of Southern Confederacy oaths; "where are you? What are you about?"

Of course, the orderly could not answer; and his silence only added to the rage of his master, who continued to swear in a manner which must have disgusted the gentle Jenny, and the other respectable horse standing on the stable-floor.

The officer rushed out of the stable, and the heaviness of his step indicated the state of his mind. He had gone to look for Peters; but, as Peters was not outside, he must be inside; and the officer entered again. He now walked towards the stairs leading to the loft.

"Peters!" he continued to roar as he rushed up the stairs. "Peters! this is your last day's service with me!"

But the poor orderly was unable to remove the stain which rested upon his fidelity. He still held his peace; still silently submitted to the unjust imputations on his character. The officer landed in the loft just as Captain de Banyan rose to receive him.

"Who are you?" demanded he, as the stout form of the captain confronted him.

"Your most obedient servant to command," replied De Banyan.

"You are a Confederate officer?"

"I seem to be; but I am not. Be that as it may, your presence is dangerous to my health and comfort."

"I see: you are the deserter."

"I am; but the future lies between you and me."

"Then we will let the future speak for itself," answered the officer, drawing a pistol from his belt. "Surrender, or you are a dead man!"

"I must positively decline the honor," replied De Banyan, as he swung the pitch-fork over his head, and attempted to strike him down.

He failed; and the officer fired, but without effect. At that moment, Somers stepped forward with a billet of wood he found on the floor. At the same time, De Banyan raised the pistol; but the rebel fired a second time before he could discharge it. Somers instantly dropped his stick, and his left arm fell to his side; the ball had passed through it. De Banyan fired; the officer sank down, not killed, but badly wounded.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DR. SCOVILLE'S PATIENT

The ball from De Banyan's pistol had passed through the right side of the officer; and he sank upon the floor, the blood flowing copiously from the wound. These proceedings were so irregular, that Somers could not reconcile himself to them. He was wounded himself; but, when the officer fell, he was full of sympathy for him. It was evident that the sufferer would bleed to death in a short time, if left to himself without any attention; and Somers could not endure the thought of letting even an enemy die in this forsaken condition.

"Come, my boy; we have no time to lose. It's daylight now, and we ought to be five miles from the city before this time," said De Banyan, as he moved towards the stairs. "Take the man's pistol and ammunition, and come along as fast as you can."

"Will you leave this gentleman in this condition?" asked Somers, gazing with pitying tenderness at the pale face of the fallen officer.

"Leave him? Of course; we can't take him with us."

"But he will bleed to death if we leave him here."

"Let him bleed to death; I can't help that. Many a better man than he has bled to death since this war began. Come along, Somers! What is the matter with your arm?" demanded he, when he saw that it hung useless at his side.

"I was hit."

"Hit! We are lost, then!"

"No, we are not lost, either. I am not killed," replied Somers, whose arm was still numb from the effect of the shot.

"That's a misfortune. I am afraid it will spoil everything. Can you sit on a horse?"

"Of course I can. But I can't bear to let this man die here alone. He is a brave fellow, and deserves a better fate."

"Come along, Somers! You are an odd stick, when you are wounded, to trouble yourself about your enemies. Let me see your arm."

The captain examined the wounded member, which was now bleeding very freely. He tied a handkerchief around the arm, and did the best which the circumstances would admit for his friend. He then led the way down-stairs, where the horses were impatiently waiting for their riders. Jenny was a noble mare, and the orderly's horse was an excellent animal. De Banyan, knowing how much might depend upon the endurance of the horses in the flight before them, filled the bag with corn in the loft, after he had helped Somers to mount the horse of Peters, which appeared to be the steadier beast of the two.

The noise of the affray in the loft had probably been heard by some of the occupants of the house; and, just as the fugitives had mounted the horses, a black woman from the dwelling approached the stable. She gazed with astonishment and alarm at the riders, and seemed to be satisfied that all was not right.

"Your master is up in the loft," said Somers, as they rode by her. "He is hurt, and wants attention."

"Now whip up, Somers. We must make quick time; for we shall have the whole city after us in ten minutes," said De Banyan, as he urged Jenny to the top of her speed.

The spirited animal seemed as willing to exert herself for the enemies as the friends of the Southern Confederacy; thus proving that she was a neutral horse, or cherished Union sentiments. But the other horse could not keep pace with her, and De Banyan was compelled to restrain her speed. The fugitives had scarcely appeared in the street before a hue and cry was raised; for the place had been thoroughly aroused by the clamor which the troopers had created. Still, there was nothing in sight which promised to offer any serious resistance to their progress.

A few moments brought them to the outskirts of the town; though in what direction, or to what point, the road they had taken would lead them, neither De Banyan nor Somers had the most remote idea. To go in the wrong direction was equivalent to plunging into certain ruin; to go in any direction was hardly less perilous; for the rebel cavalry was out upon every road, intent upon capturing the deserter and the Yankee. As they emerged from the more thickly settled parts of the city, they discovered a negro approaching them.

"Where does this road lead to?" demanded De Banyan, reining in his fiery steed.

"Prince George's Court House, massa," replied the man. "Wha' for you gwine down dar?"

De Banyan was not disposed to answer any unnecessary questions, and again spurred on his horse.

"See here, massa!" shouted the negro.

"What do you want?" asked De Banyan impatiently; for, being a Southerner himself, he had no particular respect for the negro race.

"Don't go down dar, massa."

"Why not?"

"Git cotched if you do, massa," said the man with an expressive grin. "De sodgers on de horses is down dar arter you."

"How do you know they are after us, you black rascal?"

"Kase dey ax dis chile if he see two men, one ob 'em dressed like de 'federate ossifer, and de odder a Yank. Dis nigger didn't see no sich pussons den; but, golly, sees um now fur sartin. You done git cotched as shore as you was born, massa, if you go down dar."

"Where shall we go, then?"

"Dunno, massa; but you mustn't be seen gwine down dar."

"How many soldiers did you meet?"

"Four, sar."

"This won't do, Somers. How is your arm?"

"It begins to ache. We may as well go forward as back," said Somers, who was now suffering severely from his wound, which had not been improved by the hard gallop of the horse he rode.

"Who lives in that house?" demanded De Banyan of the negro, pointing to a splendid dwelling a short distance ahead.

"Dr. Scoville, massa."

"Doctor?" replied the captain, glancing at Somers.

"Yes, sar; Dr. Scoville. Dat's a mighty fine mar you rides, massa. I reckon dat's Captain Sheffield's mar."

"Very likely."

"Don't mind me, massa; dis chile's a Union man for shore," grinned the negro.

"All the negroes are Union men," replied Somers faintly.

"Dat's so, massa!"

"What's Dr. Scoville?" asked De Banyan hopefully.

"Secesh, massa--drefful secesh. He done been in de army fur a surgeon."

"He is a dangerous man, then."

"Dar, massa, dar!" shouted the negro suddenly, as he pointed down the road over which the fugitives had just come.

"Dey's some more arter you."

De Banyan started his horse again, followed by Somers; but it was evident from the appearance of the latter that the chase was nearly finished for him. He was beginning to feel very faint from the loss of blood, while the pain of his wounded arm was almost unupportable. The gait of the horse seemed to wrench the bones asunder, and cause the shattered parts to grate against each other.

"Hurry up, Somers, my dear boy," said his companion, as he glanced back at the pale face of his friend.

"I am afraid I can't go much farther, De Banyan," replied Somers. "I am very faint. I feel sick."

"Cheer up, and make one effort more. The rebels are upon us!"

"I cannot. I shall fall from the horse, I am afraid."

"Don't do that."

"I won't if I can help it; but the motion of the horse almost kills me. Leave me, De Banyan; save yourself if you can."

"Leave you? I haven't the remotest idea of doing anything of the sort."

"Better go on, and save yourself. It is all up with me."

"A mother would sooner leave her baby than I would leave you," replied De Banyan in tones as tender as a woman's.

"I'll never leave you, Somers. If you go to Richmond, I shall go with you."

"You cannot do me any good. Save yourself before it is too late."

"Not I."

"I beg you----"

"Cease your blarney, my dear boy! We are one flesh; and we will hang together to the end of life, or *at* the end of it, as the case may be. Here, Somers, stick to your horse a moment more, and we will call and see the doctor."

"Dr. Scoville!" exclaimed Somers, alarmed at the idea.

"Very likely he is a good surgeon. You are on the sick-list now; mind what I say, and do just what I tell you."

De Banyan, without stating what he intended to do, dashed up the roadway leading to Dr. Scoville's house. It was evident that he was about to resort to some desperate expedient to retrieve the shattered fortunes of his party; but he kept his own counsel; and Somers yielded himself to the master will of his companion like a child, as indeed he was in his exhausted and suffering condition. The roadway led to the rear of the house where the stable was located; and De Banyan reined up his foaming steed as soon as he reached the corner of the building.

"Keep still a moment, Somers, and I'll have you taken care of," said De Banyan, as he rode back to a point where he could see the road without being seen.

It was evident that they had been observed by the party of horsemen which had just come out of the city; and he wished to ascertain whether they had seen him turn in at the doctor's premises. The pursuers (for every mounted man was a pursuer on that eventful morning) were riding in every direction in search of the fugitives. He hoped they would pass by, satisfied that any person who should boldly call upon Dr. Scoville must be a rebel.

He was disappointed. When the party reached the road, they reined up their horses; and De Banyan, without losing a moment, dismounted, fastened Jenny to a post in the yard, and ran down to intercept the troopers. The captain walked with the quick, sharp, consequential tramp of a military commander; and, when the soldiers saw him, they involuntarily saluted him.

"What are you doing up here?" he demanded in tones of authority.

"We are looking for the prisoners that runned away," replied a corporal.

"Well, do you expect to find them in the dwelling-house of Dr. Scoville? Ride down the road as fast as you can, and turn to the first left. If you meet the major, report Captain Sheffield badly wounded--shot by one of the prisoners."

"Then the prisoners have gone down this way?"

"Certainly they have. Off with you as fast as you can!"

The corporal saluted, wheeled his horse, and dashed off, followed by the rest of the party. De Banyan wiped away the cold sweat from his brow, and returned to his suffering companion. He helped him to dismount and seated him on a block while he secured the horse. By this time, a couple of negro women came out of the house. They were the early risers of the family, and at once manifested the most abundant sympathy for the sufferer. The doors of the house were thrown wide open to him; and Captain de Banyan, supporting Somers, followed the servants into the sitting-room, where the patient was laid upon the sofa in a fainting condition.

"Now call your master," said De Banyan, with as much assurance as though he had been the lord of the manor.

"Yes, massa," replied one of the women as she hastened to obey the order.

"How do you feel, my dear boy?" said De Banyan, bending over his charge.

But Somers was past answering. He had fainted from loss of blood and the agony of his wound. The resolute captain did not wait for Dr. Scoville in this emergency; but, taking a bottle of cologne from the mantel, he applied himself with skill and vigor to the restoration of his patient. While he was thus engaged, the doctor made his appearance. He was a man of fifty, of forbidding aspect and rough exterior.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded he in brusque tones, placing himself in front of the captain, and without bestowing more than a glance at the patient on the sofa.

"Captain Sheffield," replied De Banyan as sharply as the question had been put.

"Are you, indeed? Then you have altered a great deal since I saw you yesterday," added Dr. Scoville, with an expression of malignant triumph on his face.

This reply was a damper on any little scheme which the over-confident De Banyan had proposed to carry out; but the captain was a profound student in the mysteries of human nature, and at once correctly read the character of the gentleman who stood before him.

"You didn't see me yesterday, and you know you didn't," he replied in tones hardly less savage than those of his involuntary host.

"That's very true; I did not," said the doctor.

"This point settled, I'll thank you to turn to the next one, which is the patient before you."

"You are a plain-spoken man," added Dr. Scoville, still gazing intently into the face of the captain; who, however, returned the look as resolutely and as earnestly as it was given.

"I am; I don't waste words when my friend is dying, for aught I know. Will you attend to this man?"

"Who is he?"

"He is a man shot through the arm, and needing instant surgical attendance," answered De Banyan impatiently. "It isn't necessary to know any more before you examine him."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor with a smile such as that in which a hyena might be supposed to indulge when pleased, if hyenas ever are pleased.

He turned to Somers, and proceeded to examine into his condition. The coat of the patient was removed from his insensible form, and he was carefully disposed on the sofa, according to the directions of the doctor; the captain and the negro women assisting in the work. Though the surgeon was as rough as a bear in his tone and manner, he was as tender as a loving mother in his treatment of the sufferer, and handled him as carefully as though he had been a newborn babe. The blood was stanchd, and the wound dressed as skilfully as human hands and human knowledge could perform the operation.

"What do you think of him?" asked De Banyan, full of anxiety for his suffering companion.

"He won't die just yet; but he may lose his arm."

"Good heavens! do you think so?" exclaimed the captain.

"No; I don't think so."

"What did you say so for, then?"

"I didn't say so."

"Didn't you say he would lose his arm?" demanded De Banyan savagely.

"I didn't say so."

"What did you say, then?"

"I said he might lose his arm. You may lose your arm; but I think you are more likely to lose your head. Who is this young man?"

"He is a friend of mine; and, as I find it necessary to be entirely candid with an old fellow like you, I shall answer no questions in regard to him at present."

"Indeed!"

"Not a question, Dr. Scoville. I intend to have him stay at your house till he is able to join his regiment; and I intend to stay with him."

"You do me unmerited honor by making my humble house your home," said the doctor satirically.

"I think you are worthy of the honor, Dr. Scoville. As your humble house, I think it is very well got up, creditable to your taste, and altogether a fine place."

"Thank you," growled the host. "I suppose you have no objection to my informing the Confederate States military officers in the city of your presence here?"

"Not the slightest," answered De Banyan promptly. "I propose to inform them myself in due time."

"What did you say your name was?"

"Captain Sheffield."

"Of Petersburg?"

"No, sir."

"Not of Petersburg?"

"No, sir; of Nashville, Tennessee, which I can further inform you is the capital of the State. I have the honor to be a

captain in the Third Tennessee. I served in Mexico, in the Crimea, and in Italy. I was present at four battles in the Crimea, seven in Italy, five in Mexico; I have been engaged in nine battles of the present war, and have been wounded six times."

"Were you ever killed?"

"Never was so unfortunate. Can I furnish you with any further information?"

"No more at present," replied the doctor, compressing his lips, apparently to keep from laughing, but really because he could not think of anything sharp enough to dash so ready a talker. "If you do me the honor to remain here a week, I shall have better opportunities of hearing your marvelous experience, Captain Sheffield. Ah, what have we here?" continued he as three horsemen galloped up the roadway.

A violent knocking was presently heard at the side door of the house, and Dr. Scoville hastened to learn the errand of the excited visitors.

CHAPTER XXIX

DE BANYAN AT WORK

"How do you feel, my dear boy?" asked Captain de Banyan as soon as the doctor had left the room.

Somers, by the skilful applications of the physician, had been restored to consciousness, and had listened with astonishment, not unmingled with alarm, to the last part of the conversation between his friend and their host.

"I feel a little better, captain; at any rate, I am more comfortable," replied Somers.

"I am glad to hear it. I have been terribly worried about you."

"I think I shall do well enough. But what shall I say for myself?"

"Say nothing, Somers--not a word. Don't commit yourself to anything."

"What have you told him?"

"Nothing; and I don't intend to tell him anything. He is a jolly old fellow, who thinks he is very eccentric, and takes pride in being considered so. When I was in the Crimea----"

"Never mind the Crimea now," interrupted Somers with a languid smile.

"I was only going to say that I understand the old doctor first-rate, and can manage him as easily as I could an old plow-horse. Keep still, Somers; don't let on, under any circumstances. Leave me to do all the talking."

"But the cavalry are after us now."

"Never mind; the doctor will take care of them."

"They will recognize our horses, if they don't know us."

"No matter if they do."

Somers thought it was matter; and he could not see for the life of him how De Banyan was to get out of such a scrape as this; for it was an infinitely worse one than his own experience on the Williamsburg road. He could only hope for the best, expecting nothing but disaster.

"Good! Bully for the doctor!" exclaimed De Banyan as the sounds of an excited controversy at the side door reached the ears of the patient and his friend. "He is doing just what I expected him to do."

"Pray, what did you expect him to do?" asked Somers, who could not see what a rebel surgeon could be expected to do under the circumstances, besides delivering them up to the military authorities.

"I expect him to protect us to the utmost of his ability; and, in my opinion, he has quite as much influence as any other man in Petersburg. When you see a man like Dr. Scoville, you may depend upon it he is a power in the community where he lives. He knows it as well as any other person. Let the doctor alone, and he will manage the matter as skilfully as he dressed your wounded arm."

Whatever confidence Captain de Banyan had in the will and the ability of Dr. Scoville to protect them, he was curious to hear what the soldiers and what the doctor had to say. He was not quite willing to be seen by the rebel soldiers; so he passed quickly into the entry, and took a position where he could hear without being observed.

"Do you know who I am, you villain?" demanded the doctor, in tones so full of rage, that the troopers ought to have been annihilated, though it appears that they were not.

"I don't care who you are; I want the men that came here an hour ago," replied one of the troopers.

"If Jeff Davis himself came for them, he couldn't have them!" roared Dr. Scoville.

"I tell you, sir, one of them is a deserter, and the other is a Yankee."

"I don't care what they are. Report my answer to the provost-marshal; tell him Dr. Scoville will be responsible for the safety of the men."

"I won't report any such answer to him."

"If a man of you attempts to enter my house, I'll shoot him!" replied the doctor, taking a rifle from a nail in the entry.

"Very well, sir; if you can shoot any better than we can, you may begin," said the soldier. "But, as sure as you fire, you are a dead man."

"And those of you whom I don't shoot will be hung as soon as you report the death of Dr. Scoville at headquarters."

Whatever the soldiers thought, they were not willing to assume the responsibility of shooting a man like the doctor, whose splendid mansion was a guaranty of his wealth and high standing, and whose strong words assured them that he was a man of influence. Even the possibility of being hanged in such a cause was not agreeable to contemplate; and the doctor carried the day against his assailants.

"I don't want to shoot you, Dr. Scoville; but I shall put a guard over your house, and wait for further orders," said the soldier, who appeared to be a sergeant.

"Do anything you please; but don't you enter my house. Every man, woman and child here is under my protection," replied the doctor, as he restored the rifle to its original position; and the troopers retired from the door.

Captain de Banyan withdrew from the hall, and joined Somers in the sitting-room, where he was immediately followed by the doctor. The situation did not look very hopeful, even to a man of such desperate fortunes as the bold Tennessean. The house was surrounded by rebel soldiers, and a report of the case would probably be made to the provost-marshal; therefore it was not at all likely that the doughty doctor could long remain contumacious.

"So, my mysterious friend, you are a Confederate deserter, are you?" said the doctor, as he placed himself in front of the captain, thrust his hands deep down into the pockets of his pants, and stared at his guest with all the vigor of an active and piercing eye.

"You say that I am; but I adhere to my original resolution, to say nothing at present," replied De Banyan, returning the gaze of the doctor as earnestly as it was given.

"If you were Abe Lincoln himself, you are safe in my house," said the doctor after a long pause. "But I wish you to understand clearly and precisely what I mean. I am not the man to shield a deserter or a Yankee from the penalty due to his crimes. You came into my house with a wounded man. I am an Arab on the subject of hospitality. Whoever comes into my house is my guest; and I never betrayed a man who trusted in me."

"Thank you, doctor."

"You needn't thank me, for I despise you from the deepest depths of my heart; and in due time you will fall into the hands of the military authorities, but not in my house."

"Thank you, Dr. Scoville. I appreciate your hospitality, and despise you as much as you do me," answered De Banyan.

"Despise me! How dare you----"

"Oh! I dare do anything; and I beg leave to inform you that neither myself nor my friend will fall into the hands of the soldiers, either in your house or outside of it. You can set your mind entirely at ease on that subject."

"I am tempted for once to violate even my own law of hospitality."

"As you please, doctor; that matter is for you to consider, not for me. But I beg you to understand precisely what I say. I am very thankful to you for your kindness; and I assure you that whatever you do and say, I shall remember your hospitality with the most grateful emotions. I speak for myself and for my friend."

Dr. Scoville seemed to be very much perplexed, as the captain evidently intended he should be; and, turning abruptly from the deserter, he paced the room, rapidly and in silence, for several minutes. De Banyan sat down by the side of Somers, and said a great many comforting things to him, which, in his weak and suffering condition, were as grateful as a woman's smile at the couch of pain.

Breakfast was ready, and with the utmost politeness the doctor conducted his guest to the table, while one of the black women was ordered to supply the wants of the patient on the sofa. During the meal, not a word was said about the war, or the peculiar circumstances under which the patient and his friend had come to the house. The captain discoursed about the wars in other lands, and it is more than probable that he exercised the credulity of the doctor to the utmost. Both the host and the guest were affable to the last degree; for the choleric physician was conscious that he had more than a match in the other.

After breakfast, Somers was conducted to the guest-chamber on the second floor of the mansion. He was as tenderly cared for by the doctor and the servants as though he had been an honored friend, instead of a hunted enemy. In the course of the forenoon, Dr. Scoville received a visit from the provost-marshal, attended by half a company of cavalry. Of course, the captain was exceedingly curious to know the result of this interview, which was conducted in the most courteous manner; and he was so impolite as to play the part of a listener. The officer was informed that Captain Sheffield had been dangerously wounded by the fugitives; but the eccentric physician positively refused to have his guests taken from his house, assuring the provost-marshal that he would be responsible for their safe-keeping, and offered to board a dozen men who should be employed in guarding them. The officer protested in gentlemanly terms against such a course; but it was evident that the doctor was the greatest man in Petersburg, and must have his own

way.

The result of the conference was, that the provost-marshal yielded the point, and a sentinel was placed at the door of Somers's chamber, to which the captain had retreated. The officer visited the room, and fully identified his prisoner, between whom and himself a sharp conversation ensued, much to the amusement of the doctor. The captain was assured that in due time, he should swing, which pleasant information he received with becoming good nature, promising to be present when the exciting event should take place. The provost-marshal retired, satisfied with the precautions he had taken.

For the following three days, the sentinel at the door, with a loaded musket in his hand, kept guard over his prisoners. Somers had improved rapidly, though by the advice of his managing friend, he pretended to be much worse than he really was. Dr. Scoville, though he still kept his word and maintained his position with regard to the prisoners, continually "thorned" the captain with a prospect of the gallows, which he declared was his certain doom. De Banyan still preserved his equanimity, and still declared that he should never be hanged.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Somers on the third day of his confinement, after the doctor had taunted his guest with more than usual severity.

"I haven't the least idea, my dear boy," replied the captain with a grim smile. "So far, I have no plans. When you are able to move, Somers, we will see what can be done."

"I can move now; you need not delay a single hour on my account. I am all right but my arm."

De Banyan was by no means as cheerful as he appeared to be. He was troubled, and paced the room with uneasy tread; but, the moment the doctor entered the room, he was as gay as a Broadway beau. Somers had vainly attempted to persuade him to make his own escape, and leave him to his fate; but the brave fellow steadily refused to desert him under any circumstances that could possibly present themselves.

The captain was remarkably still for him, after Somers had convinced him that he was able to move. He paced the room as before; but his eyes were glancing uneasily at the floor, the ceiling, and the walls of the apartment. The work had commenced in his mind; and Somers watched his movements with interest, yet without hope. On one side of the fire-place in the room there was a door, which was locked, but which evidently opened into a closet.

Before this door, De Banyan suddenly came to a dead halt. He examined it with the utmost care; and then with a fork from the breakfast things which had not been removed, he commenced operations upon the lock. One of the prongs of the fork was broken off between two bricks in the fire-place, and the other bent; so that the instrument formed a very good pick-lock. The door was opened without the expenditure of much time or patience; and the captain proceeded to explore the interior of the closet, after instructing his fellow-prisoner to give him timely warning of any movement on the part of the sentinel.

Somers did not see the captain again for half an hour, but when he came out he looked as though he had endured the tortures of a month of suspense; but, with a ghastly smile, he told his companion that the hour for action had come.

"What do you mean, captain?" demanded Somers.

"Let us use haste; we shall have more time to talk to-morrow, when we get back to the camp on the other side of the James River. Are you very sure that you can stand the fatigue of a long walk?"

"I know I can."

"Then come with me; but a particle of noise will be fatal to us."

De Banyan led the way to the closet; but, before he entered himself, he tied together the two sheets of the bed, and made one end fast to one of the bed-posts, near a window at the end of the house, which he opened without noise. Dropping the sheet out, he retreated to the closet, and with the pick-lock secured the door. They were in darkness now, and seating themselves on the floor, with palpitating hearts they waited the issue. For more than an hour they waited the expected alarm. They could occasionally hear a movement on the part of the sentinel in the entry; but he probably thought it was foolish to be very vigilant over a man so sick as Somers. But the demonstration came at last; and the prisoners, sweltering in the confined air of the closet, listened with breathless interest to the shouts of the soldiers outside, and to the rapid steps of those within the mansion.

The doctor and the sentinel entered the chamber so lately occupied by the prisoners. The former swore in no measured terms at the faithlessness of the sentry at the door, and at the stupidity of those who guarded the house outside. But they seemed to have no doubt as to the manner of the escape.

There was the open window, and the rope made of the bed-linen, which De Banyan had pulled with his hands till it had the appearance of having sustained a great weight. Dr. Scoville did not even try the door of the closet; and the anxious listeners soon had the pleasure of hearing the sounds of horses' hoofs, as the cavalry rode off to engage in the search

for the fugitives.

Everything about the house soon subsided into the most profound quiet, and it was evident that the doctor and all the soldiers were engaged in the search. After this solemn stillness had continued for a time, they heard the voices of the servants in the chamber. They talked about the escape, and all of them expressed a hope that "poor young massa would get out ob de way." Here was an opportunity for an alliance, offensive and defensive, which the prudent captain could not reject. Carefully opening the door, he presented himself to the astonished negroes. With considerable difficulty, he hushed their noisy exclamations, and opened the case so eloquently, that all three of them readily promised to help the fugitives in making their escape. They grinned with delight when they comprehended the trick by which the doctor and the soldiers had been put on the wrong scent.

With their assistance, the fugitives left the house, and made their way to the stable, where Alick, the man who had waited upon them in the room, raised a plank in the floor, and introduced them to secure but not very comfortable quarters under the building. There was no cellar under the stable, and the space which they occupied was not more than two feet in height; but what it lacked in this direction, it made up in length and width.

When the fugitives were fairly installed in their new hiding-place, Alick sat down on the floor, and told them all he knew about the events which had transpired since their absence had been discovered. He brought them an abundant supply of food and drink, and promised to provide them with horses as soon as it was dark. It was nearly night before the doctor returned; and while attending to his horse, Alick asked him some questions about the chase. He was not very communicative, for, of course, the pursuit had been unsuccessful; but the ingenious black wormed some facts out of him in regard to the events of the day, which enabled him to be of great assistance to the fugitives.

The doctor had hardly gone into the house before Alick commenced his preparations for departure; and three horses instead of two were in readiness when Somers and the captain emerged from their covert. Alick was to be one of the party; and by the fields in the rear of the house they commenced their perilous journey.

CHAPTER XXX

ANOTHER COMMISSION

The horses which De Banyan and Somers rode were those taken from the stable of Captain Sheffield, which had not yet been removed from Dr. Scoville's stable; while that on which Alick was mounted was one of the best of his master's stock. The party proceeded through the fields for a short distance till they came to a cross-road, when they put their horses to the top of their speed. The guide was familiar with all the roads in the vicinity. The information which he had obtained from the doctor was exceedingly valuable; for it assured the fugitives in what direction the search for them had been pushed.

Dr. Scoville believed that the prisoners were concealed in the vicinity of the city, and that at night they would attempt to make their way in the direction of City Point; and he assured Alick that they would certainly be caught before morning, for the country in that region was strongly picketed by cavalry. It is more than probable they would have been taken if the doctor had not been so obliging as to inform Alick of these facts. The faithful black, who had served his master, man and boy, for forty years, was entitled to this consideration. Of course, he could not have believed that Alick would be so ungrateful and ungenerous as to run away from him; but it is a fact which speaks well for the negro race, that so many have preferred liberty with toil and hardship to slavery with ease and plenty.

Somers had over-estimated his power of endurance; and a hard gallop of five miles was about the extent of his capacity. The rude jolting of his arm made it extremely painful, while his system, reduced by the fever attending the wound, was incapable of supporting such a heavy draft upon his strength. He bore up against the pain and faintness which beset him as long as he could; but at last, to the oft-repeated inquiries of Captain de Banyan in regard to his condition, he was compelled to answer in the most discouraging terms.

"We must stop and rest," said the captain. "We have about fifteen miles more to go; and you mustn't break down yet, Somers."

"Here, massa, take some of this," said Alick, as he reined in his horse.

"What is it?" asked Somers faintly.

"Brandy."

"I can't drink brandy."

"It will do you good, my dear boy. There is strength in brandy--only as medicine. Don't be stubborn, Somers."

"Good brandy, massa," added Alick. "I brought it along on purpose for you. I was mighty feared you wouldn't be able to stand the ride."

"I am willing to take it if it will do me any good," said Somers. "I am about used up."

The sufferer drank two or three swallows of the fiery liquid from the bottle after he had dismounted. The potion gave him an artificial life, which enabled him to ride five miles farther, though at a much slower pace than before. The roads seemed to be entirely deserted, and the party felt satisfied that they had passed out of the reach of a successful pursuit. Another dose of brandy gave Somers strength enough to accomplish fifteen miles of the journey; but at this point he was absolutely unable to sit on his horse. With the assistance of De Banyan, he got off and lay for two hours on the ground, where his devoted companions made him a bed of their coats. Alick produced some bacon and crackers, which he had brought for an emergency, of which Somers partook in small quantities. Pressed by his fellow-fugitives, he again drank some brandy; and while his head was flying round like a top, his friends placed him on the horse again.

In the overpowering weakness and suffering of the hour, Somers had begged his companions to leave him to his fate; but De Banyan declared that he would be hanged a dozen times before he would do so mean and wicked an act. With the fumes of the brandy darting in every direction through his brain, which seemed to be about fifty feet above his shoulders, he spurred on his horse. The liquor had inspired him to a kind of desperation. He hardly knew what he was about, and even forgot the pain of his wounded arm.

"Halt!" shouted De Banyan, as the party dashed over a rude bridge extending across a broad creek. "Halt, Somers!"

But Somers heeded not the word, and still spurred on, till the captain, who rode the fastest animal, could overtake him. He succeeded in stopping the furious rider, and in making him understand that they had reached the end of their journey in this direction. They returned to the bridge, where the sharp eye of the captain had discerned a boat moored to a tree, a short distance below the road. Somers, still stupefied by the effects of the brandy, tamely submitted to whatever disposition his companions chose to make of him. Taking off their coats, they made for him a bed in the

bottom of the boat, which was a large yawl, evidently used for conveying merchandise to some point farther up the creek. The horses were turned loose, and the captain and Alick took the oars.

After pulling for half an hour, they were rewarded by a view of the broad river which to them was like the Land of Promise; and moored in the middle there was a steamer, which in those waters could belong to no other party than the United States Government. They rowed out to this vessel, and hailed her. Of course they were cordially welcomed after a satisfactory explanation had been given.

"Glory hallelujah! How do you feel, Somers?" said Captain de Banyan, after he had insured a proper reception on board of the steamer.

"Badly, very badly," replied Somers faintly.

"Well, cheer up, my boy! We have got home again."

"Home!" said Somers, raising himself partially up at the sound of that magical word.

The captain and Alick lifted him tenderly, and assisted him up the accommodation-ladder of the steamer. The vessel was a gunboat bound up the river, and was waiting for the daylight. Somers was taken to the ward-room, where the surgeon dressed his arm, and prescribed for his bodily ailments. Alick was duly installed as his nurse, though Captain de Banyan performed the greater part of his duty. But the consciousness that he was again beneath the old flag did more for the patient than even the assiduous care of his devoted friends.

After leaving Petersburg the fugitives had pursued a nearly easterly course till they arrived at the bridge over Chipoak Creek, where they had abandoned their horses, and taken the boat. Alick had chosen this direction to avoid the pickets which were on the lookout for them in the vicinity of the City Point Railroad. His calculations had been well made, and he was rewarded for his zeal and skill by the priceless boon of freedom, which he preferred even to the life of comfort and ease he had enjoyed beneath the roof of his kind but eccentric master.

How Dr. Scoville ever made his peace with the provost-marshal of Petersburg we are not informed; but we will venture to say that his whims were not respected after the events we have narrated. He was a wilful man; but his guests were very sorry to be compelled to make him such an ungenerous return for his noble hospitality. When the war is ended, and he is enabled fully to understand the meaning of treason to our beneficent Government, no doubt he will be very thankful that his prisoner guests escaped as they did.

At nine o'clock on the following morning, the gunboat dropped her anchor off Harrison's Landing. Somers, who had slept for several hours, was more comfortable, though he was still in a deplorable condition. With the kindly assistance of his friends, he was landed at the pier, and conveyed in an ambulance to the headquarters of the division. Leaning on the arm of De Banyan, he entered the tent of the general.

"Captain Somers!" exclaimed the general. "I had given you up for lost. Why, you have grown ten years older in five days!"

"I have the honor to make my report, general," said Somers with a faint smile.

"Your report? Good! After losing you, I did not dare to send another officer upon such a perilous errand. But, Captain Somers, you are all used up," added the general, with a glance filled with sympathy--a look which Somers regarded as an adequate reward for all he had suffered; for to have *that* man feel an interest in him was better in his estimation than the plaudits of the multitude. "What is the matter with your arm?"

"I was shot at Petersburg," replied Somers.

"Well, well, captain, you must go to the hospital: and Captain--what's-his-name----"

"Captain de Banyan, at your service," promptly responded Somers's faithful friend.

"Captain de Banyan shall report for you, and tell me all about this scrape," added the general. "Get into your carriage, Captain Somers, and go to the hospital. I will call and see you to-day or to-morrow."

"Thank you, general."

Captain de Banyan assisted him into the ambulance; and, when he had placed him in the care of the surgeon, he returned to headquarters to tell the marvelous story of their capture by the rebels, and their escape from Petersburg. It is quite likely that he did not add his experience in Tennessee; but when the general called on Somers at the hospital the next morning, the latter supplied all that had been withheld. The general had a higher regard for the captain's patriotism than ever before, for he had voluntarily renounced the ranks of the rebellion, and placed himself on the side of his country. There was nothing against him; on the contrary, his conduct had been in the highest degree praiseworthy. But Captain de Banyan was sensitive on this point; and the general readily promised to conceal what the brave fellow regarded as a stain upon his character.

Captain Somers did not improve so rapidly as his friends desired. The surgeon declared that his night ride from Petersburg, in his feeble condition, had done him more injury than a year's hard service; and after he had been in the hospital ten days, it was deemed advisable to give him a furlough, and send him home, especially as the division was then under orders to march to Yorktown. The gallant young hero regretted the necessity of leaving the regiment just as he had been promoted; but he was in no condition to endure the long and weary march. He was able to walk about a little; and on the day before the sailing of the transport by which he was to proceed to Washington, he received another visit from the general.

After a few kind inquiries in regard to the invalid's condition, the general took from his pocket one of those great official envelopes which so often carry joy to the heart of the gallant officer. Somers was amazed. It could not be possible that his own promotion was indicated by this document. It was not three weeks since his commission as captain had reached him; but then Senator Guilford was a great man, and wielded a tremendous influence, both at Washington, and with the military authorities of his native State.

Recalling his former declaration to Captain de Banyan, he was fully resolved to decline any further promotion, at least until he had done something which entitled him to this distinction. The general held up the formidable packet, while Somers's pale face was suffused with blushes.

"I have brought you a major's commission, Somers; and I know it will give you joy."

"Really, sir; ah! general, I don't think----"

"Don't you?" laughed the general.

"I don't deserve it, general; and you will pardon me if I say I cannot accept it. I am very grateful to you; but----"

"Oh, it isn't for you!" roared the general as he handed him the official paper.

"Major de Banyan!" exclaimed Captain Somers as he read the superscription with a thrill of delight. "It is indeed a joy to me. I am ten times as happy as I should have been if my own name had been coupled with that title. I am ever so much obliged to you."

"Senator Guilford again! By the way, Captain Somers, you must call on him when you get to Washington."

"I shall certainly do so. But I know my friend could not have been promoted without the good word which you have spoken for him."

"Well, it is all right, captain. Major de Banyan is a brave fellow. He has done you a good turn; and I waylaid this document so as to afford you the pleasure of being the first to address him by his new title."

"Thank you, general."

"And, captain, if you could prevail on the major to be a little more reasonable in some of the lies he tells, his reputation for veracity would be improved."

"I will endeavor to do so."

The general bade the invalid a hearty and even affectionate adieu; and they did not meet again till they grasped hands on the bloody field of Antietam, where Somers acted in a new sphere of duty. No sooner had the general departed, than Somers, inspired to new vigor by the joyful event which had just transpired, hastened to the camp of the regiment.

"Ah, Somers; my dear boy! how are you now?" said his friend as he seized his hand.

"Better, I thank you, *Major de Banyan*."

"Come, now, Somers, that is cruel! A friend of mine, just before the battle of Solferino----"

"Confound the battle of Solferino, *Major de Banyan*!"

"I was about to say that a friend of mine, just before the battle of Solferino, made fun of my aspirations, just as you do now----"

"I don't do anything of the sort. Here's the official document. If I read right, it says *Major de Banyan*."

"Somers," said the captain, winking very rapidly to dissipate some evidences of weakness which were struggling for existence in his eyes--"Somers, you have done this."

"I did write to Senator Guilford about you before we went over the river; and now I thank God with all my soul that I did so."

"Somers, you are one of the best of friends!" exclaimed the major as he stood with the unopened document in his hand.

"And so are you. Without you, I should have been in a rebel prison or under the sod at this time."

"God bless you, Somers!" ejaculated De Banyan, as with trembling hand he opened the envelope, and took therefrom his major's commission. "I have loved you just like a younger brother; not selfishly, my dear boy, but with my whole heart. You haven't disappointed me, only once, when----"

"Don't mention it. I thought you were a rebel then, but I repented."

"I don't blame you. Now, Somers, you are going home. May God bless you and keep you! I shall be as sad as a maiden who has lost her lover, while you are gone."

"I shall not be absent long. We shall be together again in a few weeks."

"I hope so. I have no home now. It has been desolated by treason. I heard since I came over that my wife was dead. I had a son, a boy of fifteen; I know not where he is. Well, well; I will not groan or complain. I will do my duty to my country, and that shall cheer my heart;" and with an effort of his powerful will, he banished the sad reflections from his mind, and smiled as though earth had no sorrows. "After the battle of Magenta, I had the blues, and----"

"One word, De Banyan. *Were* you at the battle of Magenta?" said Somers solemnly.

The major looked on the ground, at the commission he had just received, and then into the sympathizing face of his friend.

"To tell the truth, Somers, I was not; but I fought in every battle in Mexico, from Vera Cruz up to the capital."

Somers improved this opportunity to repeat the injunction of the general.

"Now promise me, major, that you will never say Magenta or anything of the sort again as long as you live," added Somers.

"That would be a rash promise. I have got a bad habit, and I will try to cure myself of it. On my soul I will, my dear boy!"

In the course of the conversation the major, who was now in a truth-telling mood, informed Somers that he had, after his escape from the rebel army, enlisted in the regular army, where he had been made a sergeant, and, through the influence of a Massachusetts officer, had been commissioned as a captain. His gallantry had won a swift reward.

On the following day they parted on board the transport in the river; and in that sad hour the friendship which, though brief in duration, had been fruitful enough for a lifetime, was pledged for the future. They parted, De Banyan to mingle in the terrible scenes in which the regiment was engaged before the close of the month, and Somers to bask in the smiles of the loved ones at home. Alick, who had been regularly installed as the captain's servant, went with him.

CHAPTER XXXI

WASHINGTON, BOSTON AND PINCHBROOK

Though the session of Congress had closed a month before, Captain Somers was gratified to learn on his arrival that Senator Guilford and his family were still in Washington, the distinguished gentleman having been detained by important public business. As soon as he could make himself presentable, he hastened to pay his respects to the Senator, and thank him for his kindness. He was not at home. Emma received him with a warm blush of pleasure on her fair cheeks. She had entirely recovered from the effects of the accident; and her tribute of gratitude was so eloquently poured forth, that the gallant young captain, who had hardly seen a young lady before for two months, could not exactly tell whether he stood on his head or his heels; for praise from those beautiful lips produced a sensation of giddiness in the region of the brain.

Young men will be silly in spite of all we dignified old fogies can say to convince them of the folly of being carried away by the witching arts of pretty, graceful little creatures like Emma Guilford. Perhaps the remembrance of the scene on the railroad was some excuse for him; and it is entirely unnecessary to apologize for anything a beautiful girl may do, especially if she be the daughter of a Senator. The young lady said a great many pretty things, and the young gentleman a great many smart ones, before she discovered that the captain was wounded in the arm, though she had already remarked upon his pale face and rather attenuated form.

He told her when and where he was wounded; and of course she wanted to know all about his adventures in Secessia. He was as willing as Othello to speak

"Of most disastrous chances,

Of moving accidents, by flood and field;
Of hairbreadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach;
Of being taken by the insolent foe."

All this to hear did Emma Guilford seriously incline. But he had hardly commenced the story before the Senator himself entered the room.

"Ah! Captain Somers, I am delighted to see you!" said he with enthusiasm, as he extended his hand, which our hero as warmly grasped.

"Thank you, sir. I have called to express my obligations to you for all your kindness to me and to my friend. Major de Banyan wished to be kindly remembered to you."

"I am happy to hear from the major; and as for the rest, I feel that I have not yet begun to discharge my obligation to you. Why didn't you write to me before?"

"I did not wish to burden you with any remembrance of such a humble individual as myself."

"You are too modest by half, Captain Somers. I should not have known anything about you if it hadn't been for General--- Well, no matter who," laughed the Senator.

"Now, papa, you have cut short the most interesting story that ever was told!" interposed Emma.

"The captain must begin again, then. Of course, you will make my house your home while in the city."

"Thank you, sir. I left my servant at the hotel"

Senator Guilford insisted on sending for the servant and the baggage; and, in half an hour, Alick was present to confirm the wonderful tale which Somers told of his captivity in Petersburg, to which Emma and her father listened with the most intense interest.

Very much to his surprise, Captain Somers found himself quite a lion in Washington. He was introduced to Senators and Representatives; and on the following evening actually took the President of the United States by the hand, just as though he had been one of the patriarchs of Pinchbrook.

In spite of all these brilliant surroundings, Somers was anxious to get home. He was too feeble to endure the excitement of the capital; and on the third day after his arrival, he started for home. When he reached Boston, by an unfortunate chance it was two hours before a train would start for Pinchbrook. As he had spent two days with a Senator in Washington, and shaken hands with the President, he deemed himself qualified to call at No. -- Rutland Street, where the carriage soon set him down.

Lilian Ashford was at home; and Captain Somers, who had faced a whole rebel brigade, trembled and blushed in the

presence of the maiden like the veriest coward in the world. But it was some satisfaction to know that the other party was similarly affected. The young hero could not exactly explain how he felt. It was a different sensation from that which had come over him in the presence of Emma Guilford. He experienced a feeling of awe before her, but he could talk as fast as ever; while to Lilian he stammered, couldn't remember anything, and made woful confusion in his words and in his ideas.

When the ice was broken, he succeeded in telling her something about his adventures in Virginia, and roused a very strong desire in her mind to see the wonderful Major de Banyan. But his brief hour expired all too soon; it faded in a moment, and seemed like a tale that was told.

"I wore your socks at the battles of Savage's Station, Glendale and White Oak Swamp, Miss Ashford," said he; "and I shall keep them for future service of the same kind. If I am killed in battle, I shall be found with those socks on my feet."

"Oh, I hope you won't be killed!" exclaimed she with a shudder.

"Well, I hope not; but, as soon as I am able, I shall return to my duty."

"What a brave fellow you are! I shouldn't think you would dare to stand up before the cannons, and the muskets, and the bayonets."

"When I feel like running away, I always think of my socks," said Somers.

But the carriage had come for him, and Alick stood at the door waiting for his appearance. He took the little soft white hand in his own, and readily promised, when she invited him, to call again soon and see her grandmother, who was out of town that day. Of course, Somers was deeply interested in that venerable lady, and actually looked forward with intense pleasure to the anticipated visit.

He was driven to the railroad station, and reached Pinchbrook at "high twelve," when the Pinchbrookers were just going to their dinners. Captain Barney, as usual, was at the depot, and gave him a seaman's welcome home. He insisted upon being driven to the cottage before dinner; and the old shipmaster, finding that Captain Somers carried too many guns for him, gracefully yielded the point.

"Bless my stars, if there ain't Thomas!" cried Mrs. Somers as she jumped up from the dinner-table, and actually upset the teapot in the operation.

"How do you do, mother? How do you do, father?" exclaimed the young captain as he shook hands with his father and Gran'ther Green, kissed his mother, and hugged his sister.

"How pale you look, Thomas!" said his mother. "I declare, you are as thin as a hatchet! How is your arm?"

"Better, mother; I shall be as good as new in a few days."

"You look pale; but your face is as nateral as life," said Gran'ther Green. "I don't know what we shall do with two cap'ns in the family."

"I think we can manage that, gran'ther," replied Somers, as he took the place at the table which had been prepared for him.

We drop the curtain upon the scenes which followed; for our patient reader can better imagine than we can describe them. Our hero was once more within the hallowed precincts of home; all its sacred joys flowed in upon his soul; and he thanked the good Father who had conducted him through so many perils, and restored him to the hearts of the loved ones who yearned for him in his absence. They were as grateful for his return as he was--grateful that God had restored him at all; but doubly so that he had come with his soul unstained by the vices of the camp and the wickedness of the great world.

The health of Captain Somers did not permit his return to the army to participate in those great battles before Washington in which his regiment was reduced to a mere skeleton of its former self. But, while the country was breathing slowly and fearfully before the terrors of Lee's invasion of Maryland, there came to Pinchbrook a letter from the gallant general of division--now in command of a *corps d'armee*--under whom he had before served, containing an appointment on his staff. Though still but partially restored to health, he hastened to accept his new position, and started at once for the scene of strife.

His suffering country needed him; and he could not satisfy his sense of duty, even with the reasonable excuse of a shattered physical frame. He went, and his record was always honorable and noble in success and in misfortune.

THE END

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