

CHAPTER I.

"For God's sake, dear Harry, come to me at once. Brother Frank was captured by your people at Lebanon ten days ago. He was charged with being a spy, taken to Camp Dick Robinson, and then, after a trial that must have been a judicial farce, he was sentenced to death.

"Mother is so prostrated by the news that she can not leave her bed and I feel as if my senses were deserting me.

"If brother had fallen in battle, fighting for the cause so dear to him and to his family, the blow would have been still hard to bear, but it would have been as Heaven compared with being hanged like a dog, and this for an offense of which he is entirely innocent.

"I did not think during this struggle to ask a favor from any man wearing a blue uniform, nor should I do so under any other circumstances. I am emboldened to appeal to you when I recall that your family and mine were neighbors, since long before we were born, that you and Frank were playmates in boyhood, and that you were classmates at Center College when the war burst upon us; nor can I forget that there was a time when I held more than a sister's place in your heart. By the memory of the happy past, I invoke your aid in this the hour of our sore distress."

I was in command of a troop of cavalry and was on my way to join Burnside at Knoxville. For two months we had been hunting "Tinker Dave Beatty" and his bushwhackers in the Cumberla d mountains in my native state, Kentucky, and were glad of the recall to a more congenial field.

We were encamped on the old battle field of Mill Springs, the first complete Union victory of the war, when a black



THE BOY WAS WELL MOUNTED.

boy came to my quarters with the letter from which the foregoing is an extract. The boy was well mounted, and his spattered dress and the flanks of the animal, which were covered with crimson feam, told how hard he had ridden.

Jessamine County, seventy miles to the north, was my old home, and on the other side of the Lexington pike from my father's house was the fine blue

grass farm of the Widow. Brent, the black boy's mistress and the mother of Miss Carrie Brent, whose remarkable letter I had just read. "Have you come straight from Nich-

olasville, Ike?" I asked the boy, after I had directed an orderly to have the horse cared for.

"I came ovah from Nicholasville last nigh', sah, wid Miss Carrie, an' I done left her dis early mawnin' wid Massa Frank at camp Dick Robinson, whar dev tole her so how you was jes' 'bout ovah heah; so she tole me to fine you an' gib you de lettah," said the boy.

I ordered my cook to give Ike something to cat, and then I took a turn about the camp to think over the situation.

It was early November, 1863, and word had come North that Longstreet was hard pressing Durnside at Knoxville. Troops were being hurried South, by way of Cumberland Gap, to the help of the Ninth Corps, and as the rest of my regiment was in East Tennessee, my orders were to push through and join it without any unnecessary delay.

If I had not received this letter I should have been riding for the Southeast within an hour; but I was suddenly reminded that we needed a larger supply of ammunition for our recently-received Spencers, and that time would be gained by going to Camp Dick Robinson to get fresh mounts for about half my men. It was not a violation of orders to go by this route, and after I had made up my mind, which did not take me many minutes, I tried to make myself believe that the hope of again meeting Carrie Brent had nothing to do with my change of plans; but looking back after the lapse of these many years, I am confident I could have reached East Tennessee without fresh horses or more am-

munition. I loved Carrie Brent as heartily as I disliked her brother, but my dislike for Frank was not because he was a Confederate; for many of my dearest kinsmen and friends had enrolled themselves under the same banner. Captain Brent-I doubt if he was regularly commissioned-commanded, before his arrest, an irregular troop who had given themselves the name "Partisan Rangers." These men had shown themselves to be experts in gathering up horses, while they were cruel in their treatment of the non-combatant Union men of the State. Unfortunately such conduct was not peculiar to the Southern

When it was found that Kentucky must take sides and that her valleys and hills were to be battle-fields, Frank Brent and I parted in anger, he to go South with John Morgan and his "Lexington Rifles," and I to don the blue and yellow and fight under the old flag. He had been recklessly bold in his coming and his going, and, as a consequence, he had brought on himself the capture, which I regarded as inevitable from the first, and he was now threatened with a

CHAPTER II.

The following afternoon found me with my troop at camp Dick Robinson, when I at once reported to the com-mandant, my old friend, General Boyle. The General had known Frank Brent since that unfortunate young man's childhood, and I found him in sore distress over the execution, which was to take place before ten o'clock the following morning.

death which many believed he deserved.

"I am powerless to help Frank," said the General, after we had been talking a few minutes, "for the evidence is all against him. It was any other man-if had not known him since he was a child and his mother since she was a school-girl I should say without hesitation that he richly deserved his fate." Recalling the fact that men on our side as well as on that of the South

der to get through to see their friends when on leave or furlough, I said: "Under the circumstances, it seems pretty hard to charge a Kentuckian with

often had to disguise themselves in or-

being a spy." "Do you know the circumstances?" asked the General.

"Only in a general way," I replied. "He was captured in citizen's dress near Lebanon," explained General Boyle; "but we might overlook that were it not for the fact that on the trial it was proved conclusively that Frank Brent, a few weeks before his arrest, wantonly murdered an old and respected Union citizen over on Chaplin creek, near Perryville. He had a fair trial, and there is no getting away from the evidence.

"And has he offered no defense?" I asked. "He made a statement, but there was

nothing to confirm it."

"Then there is no hope for him?" "I fear not," said the General, compressing his lips and shaking his head. "But," he added, after a pause, "I am making an effort to get the date of the

sentence postponed." "What have you done?" "I have telegraphed the President and am expecting a reply at any moment."

"And if a favorable answer does not come by to-morrow morning?" "Then," said the General solemnly,

"I must do my duty as a soldier; indeed, I am powerless to stay the execu-"And Miss Brent is here?"

"Yes, poor girl. I have given her my private quarters. You will find her there or at the prison," replied the Gen-

Feeling my helplessness more than ever, and dreading the meeting, which I had recently been so anxious to bring about, I went to the General's quarters, whither the boy, Ike, had preceded me.

I will confess to having trembled and felt nervous when in the past I heard the irregular rattle of rifles along the skirmish line, that always impressed me like a prelude to the opera of death: but such experiences were calmness itself compared with my sensations on once more standing in the presence of the girl, who, from the hour of our cruel parting under the locust and tulil trees before her mother's house, had never been out of my heart. It is not love that leads me to extol

Carrie Brent; for in a land famed for the beauty of its women she was an ac-



SHE GAVE ME HER RIGHT HAND.

knowledged belle. Two years had passed since last we met, years of march and battle, that had solaced and aged me, and changed my character from a light-hearted boy to that of a bronzed and bearded man whose soul was affame with a sense of duty and a desire to bring about peace with Union-that or an eternity of war.

I had made up my mind to stand on my dignity. I recall the last words I had heard from her lips, words that cut me and pained me more cruelly than the shell, which subsequently at Bentonville tore off my right arm; "Go, Harry Watts, and join the Lincoln hirelings if you will, but after you have taken that step I wish never to see your face

again." I repeated these words to myself, as I neared the place where I knew I should find Carrie, for she was beckening to me as I approached. But when I saw the beautiful, pale face and the expression of unutterable woe in her eyes, I forgot the dignity I had promised myself, forgot the indignity with which she had dismissed me, and feeling only that on my side at least, the love of our early association had survived the parting, I reached out both hands and said, huskily:

"I got your letter, Carrie, and I have come.'

She gave me her right hand, and I could see in the half-averted face the struggle between pride and feeling. She made an effort to speak, but, overcome by her emotions, she dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

I heard her low moaning, while her slender form swa,ed as if she would rock her agony to rest; this and the tears pouring through her little white fingers and falling on her heaving breast unnerved me more than the unexpected appearance of all Bragg's army could have done.

A man never appreciates his want of power or realizes how utterly helpless it is possible for him to become so much as when he tries to check the flow of a beautiful woman's tears. By an effort of will, rather than because of my wellmeant attempt to pacify her, Carrie Brent brushed the tears from her cheeks, and, springing to her feet, cried out in a voice full of pleading and passion:

"Oh, Captain Watts, save my brother! Do not let your people become his murderers!

Feeling that it would be cruel to repeat to her what General Boyle had told me or to assure her of my own inability to assist her, I said, vaguely:

"For your sake and your mother's, as well as in the interest of humanity, you may depend on my doing every thing in my power for your brother. But I should like to ask what you know about his

"I can tell you Frank's story as he told it to me, and I never knew him to lie," she replied. 'Is it not true that Frank was in cit-

izen's dress when captured?" I asked.
"It is; but you should know how difficult-how even impossible-it is for Confederate soldiers to secure proper uniforms, Go to camp Chase, or look at the prisoners recently brought here, and you will see that, although captured in battle, not one-half of them are in uni-

form," she said. I was forced to confess that if I had been on the court-martial I should not have paid much heed to the dress worn by the prisoner at the time of his capture; and although I did not tell her so, I was very sure that the officers who tried Frank Brent were not influenced in their verdict by the fact of his not ing in uniform

"His command," I said, "is reported to be down near Cumberland Gap. How does he explain his being two hundred miles away from it and within our lines when captured?" "I will concede that he was rash in

coming into this part of the State as he did," she answered promptly; "but his purpose was not to play the spy."
"What then was his purpose?" "You know Miss Mattie Vernon and

her family at Versailles?"

"Yes, very well." "And you may have heard that since even before the trouble Frank has been

devoted to her?" I had heard something of this, but I also knew that Miss Vernon and her family were in favor of the Union and that it was generally believed that she was engaged to Howard Scott, a young

Kentuckian then on General Carter's staff; so I simply nodded in response to Carrie's question. "Learning that Mattie Vernon was very ill," she continued, "Frank, in the hope of seeing her, was making his way through to Versailles when he was captured; then, to make sure of convicting him, they charged him with a murder

that was committed when he was away with his command in East Tennessee.' This, of course, was her brother's story, and she, at least, believed it as if it were Holy Writ.

Asking her to remain where she was for the present, I secured a pass from the provost marshal and went down to the inclosure within which was the log liouse in which the condemned man was confined.

CHAPTER III.

I must confess to having often felt an intense desire to capture Frank Brent, and on his part he had boasted, with something of an Indian's ferocity, that he would wear my scalp at his belt before the war was over. But the joy I had anticipated in his humiliation was not mine when in the dusk of that stormy evening we stood face to face.

When I last saw Frank Brent he was as handsome a youth as could be found in all the Blue Grass country, but the two years of strife and privation had told on him-this and the terrible ordeal he was then undergoing. His fine, tall form was still erect, and his bearing half defiant, but the ashy pallor of his cheeks, the haunted expression in his dark eyes, and the nervous twitching of the lips told how keenly he felt the situation.

I gave him my hand, and said, as I led him to a seat:

"Frank, I am mighty sorry to find you in this fix."

"I have no fault to find with my being a prisoner, for that is the fortune of war," he said, with a nonchalant air. "As good or even better men than myself have had to submit to capture. But I do object to being convicted of a crime which I am incapable of committing." "But there must have been evidence

against you?" I said, quietly. "So there was!" he exclaimed, "but frem first to last the condemnatory part was perjured."

"You refer to the murder of John Harding, near Perryville?" "Yes, that's it, Captain. Harding was

killed, how or by whom I know not. but I do know that at the date of the murder I was still with my command, two hundred miles away," said Frank, with a fierce earnestness that convinced me he was telling the truth.

"But could you not prove your whereabouts at the time?" I asked. -

"Prove my whereabouts at the time!" he repeated. "Why, how could I bring any of my men before a Yankee courtmartial to prove an alibi?"

"But, are there no Union troops who might have been aware of your vicinity? It is your custom to let your whereabouts be known," I said.

Frank Brent rose and began pacing the floor, while he stroked his soft, brown beard in a perplexed way. Suddenly coming to a halt before me, he fixed his eyes on the floor and said:

"There is one of your men, an old friend of yours, who is now in Libby prison, who, if he were here, could prove that on the very day John Harding was killed I was in Powell's valley, near Cumberland Gap."

"Who is the man?" I asked. "Howard Scott."

"Howard Scott a prisoner?" I ex-

"Yes, captured by me on the tenth day of October-the day of the murder, mind you-captured by me two hundred miles from the place where Harding's body was found. I am usually well-mounted, but no horse could make that distance in a few hours," said Frank Brent, with a nervous laugh.

"I shall not deny what you state," I said, "but as you can not corroborate it, it does not help your case. As we are not exchanging prisoners now, Lieutenant Scott's presence is out of the question, though I will confess that his evidence would save you."

He had evidently been thinking over every chance to avert his sentence, for he said quietly:

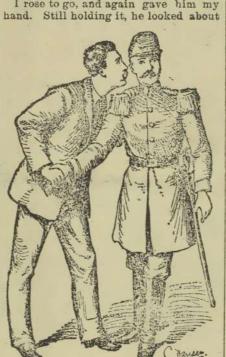
"General Boyle believes he can get your President to postpone the date. If that is done, Scott can be paroled, specially exchanged, or his evidence, taken in Richmond can be sent through under a flag of truce. He does not like me, and there is no love lost between us, but he is a brave man and he would not lie, not even to get square with me for the trick that led to his capture."

I did not ask what this trick was,

nor did I dream that I was shortly to hear the infamous story from the lips of the man in question.

"Every thing," I said, "depends on the outcome of General Boyle's efforts with the President. If there is a reprieve, and I sincerely hope there will be, we may get Lieutenant Scott's evidence in time to save you. Meanwhile, keep a stiff upper lip, and command my purse and my time. I shall be here till noon to-morrow."

I rose to go, and again gave him my



LOAN ME YOUR KNIFE.

to make sure that he could not be overheard, then bent towards me and whispered:

"They have taken away my knife; loan me yours." I was in the act of putting my hand into my pocket, when his purpose struck me, and I withdrew it.

"It is against the rules" I said, "for you to have a knife; you cannot expect me as a good soldier to violate them. "But I will not hang!" he said, with an oath. "There is a way-some way, to avoid that, and my sister will help

me, if you do not!" I made up mind to prevent his suicide. I tried to soothe him, but was not disappointed at my failure. A man with a rope about his neck and the gallows in sight is in no mood to listen to platitudes.

Promising to spend the night with him I went out to attend to the duties that had been my excuse for coming to camp Dick Robinson. Every few minutes I dropped into the telegraph office at headquarters in the hope of hearing that a favorable answer had been received from Mr. Lincoln; but ten o'clock came, with increased wind and rain, without a word that might give hope to the condemned man,

CHAPTER IV.

I had no appetite for my supper with General Boyle. We left the food untasted, while we discussed Frank Brent's chances.

"There are two Kentuckians in Washington," I said, "who should have weight with the President if they were to intercede. I am sure they know Frank's kinsmen, if they do not know him."

"Who are they?" asked the General. "Tom Speed and Judge-Advocate General Holt.'

"By Jove, Captain, I did not think of them!" exclaimed the old man, as he started to his feet. "Join me in a telegraph and we will send it at once." (N. B .- At this time, the word "tele-

gram" had not come into use.) We hurried into the telegraph office, and within ten minutes the message was being flashed to Washington, there to be duplicated and copies sent to Tom Speed and General Holt.

As a drowning man is said to clutch at a straw, so I drew comfort from what we had done and at once went down to the prison to communicate the fact to Carrie Brent and her brother. I passed the guards about the enclos-

ure; passed the guard pacing before the door, and came to a halt on the threshold. Withit I saw ten soldiers wearing their side arms and standing at parade rest. It was my first experience with a military execution, but I did not need to be told that those men were the death watch and that they or their relief would remain with the condemned man till he stood on the scaffold and the trap was sprung.

Adim lamp, suspended from the heavy, rough-hewn cross-beams, revealed the prisoner and his sister seated beneath it, while in front of them stood the old, white-haired post chaplain, himself a

The rain came down on the shingled

roof with the rattle of a hundred minia-

ture drums to the accompaniment of

the wind's shrill fifing. I had grown fa-

Kentuckian. That picture impressed me powerfully.

miliar with funeral dirges and hurried burial services, and although I never witnessed one unmoved, the most solemn of them had never affected me as did the preparations for death going on before my eyes. Many a night when lying near the mangled dead and listening to the heart-rending cries of the wounded, Ihave cursed the cruel barbarities of war, and this feeling of loathing has

grown on me with the years. As I looked in at the white face and loved form of the woman dearer to me than life, I felt like shrieking out a protest against the conditions that, without any deserving, had crushed her pure, brave After a few words of exhortation that

impressed me as being the very essence of heart-born eloquence, the old chaplain began Tom Moore's exquisite sacred song: "Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish." During the singing, in which the prisoner and his sister joined, I went in and sat down beside her, and with a broken voice I tried, as did the stolid guards, to give emphasis to the closing line: "Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven can not heal." Promising to call again before day-

light, the chaplain went out about twelve o'clock, and the fury of the storm seemed to be intensified by the silence. I made an effort to speak, but realizing how weak words were for my purpose, I whispered to Carrie that I would go down to the telegraph office and find out if a message had been received from Washington.

"No word yet, sir," replied the operator to my inquiry; "and," he added, as he bent his car over the receiving instrument, "I'm afraid we can get no news from Washington to-night.'

"Why not?" I asked. "The storm covers a wide area," said the operator, "and I fear our communi-

cation with the North will be shut off before morning.' "Has this happened before?" "Yes: several times." "And how long before

made?" "The shortest time was twenty-four hours," said the operator. Feeling that even the elements were

arrayed against the unfortunate prisoner, I made my way back to the log house. Carrie gave me a quick, searching look, but she asked no questions; she knew as well as if I had told her that

no word of comfort had been received from Washington. I suggested to Frank to lie down, but he shook his head and said, grimly: "The time is too short to spend it in sleep. When the end has come one can

rest through eternity." It seemed as if the sun had gone down for the last time, so long was the night. Just before daylight the chapl in returned, and, thankful for the excuse his presence gave me, I again sought the telegraph office. There I found General Boyle, and he did not need to tell me that he had not closed his eyes in sleep

during the night. In answer to my question, the operator

"The direct lines working west from Washington are down."

"Then," I gasped, "you can not communicate with the Capital?" "Yes, Cincinnati has just said that they were about to operate over the long circuit by way of Cleveland, Buffalo, New York and south along the coast, but as the storm is moving rapidly in that direction, I should not be surprised

to find all communication shut off before ten o'clock," said the operator. While we stood bending over the instrument on whose mysterious ticking emy's scouts, from whom we had nothso much depended, the gray dawn of a stormy morning stole in the room, and smoke could be seen spurting out from the reveille went ringing through the

I looked at my watch: it was ten minutes to six. In four hours Frank Brent would be standing in the place of execution, from the direction of which I could hear the hammering of the men making the scaffold ready.

I was about to wall out with the General when the clicking increased in a feverish way, and the operator called out:

"Wait, gentlemen, I think there is something coming soon!" We turned back and bent over him. reading the words as they came from his pencil:

"WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 10, 1863. - General J. Boyle, Comman....it Camp Dick Robinson, Ky .: - The President directs me to say that after an interview with Messrs. Speed and Holt he deems it best for the interest of the service to-"

Then the writing stopped and the clicking died out while the operator nervously worked the switch Stard key, but without making a sound.

"What is up?" asked the General, his strong face twitching with excitement. 'The lines are down to the North; we are shut off from Washington, and we must remain so at least for the day," said the man.

CHAPTER V. The General picked up the paper, and after reading over the few words in

three different ways he exclaimed: "I think I have enough to act on!" "And you will postpone the execution?" I asked.

"Yes, I feel justified in doing so till I hear further from Washington." Without waiting to hear more I fairly flew down to the military prison. It was of Carrie I had been thinking, for Carrie I had been hoping and praying. She saw me coming, and in her awful

eagerness she ran to meet me. She must have divined my message before I spoke. for her white face flushed and the hunted expression fled her eyes. Crying out: "Thank Godforthe good news!" she throw her arms about my neck, and our lips met in forgiveness and rejoic-

At ten o'clock that morning the troop wagons were ready to draw out, and my men stood by their horses impatient for the order to mount. I had bade Carrie and her brother good-bye, and her last words were still ringing like music in my ears: "What you have done for me and mine, Harry Watts, can never be

Holding my hand, General Boyle said: "Find out if Brent was in Powell's Valley at the date he claims, and, if you can get evidence to corroborate his statement, send it through by one of your scouts at once. If this is not done, the postponement which I have assumed may turn out to be a great misfortune to all concerned."

The old soldier knew the secret of my interest. I promised to do all that lay in my power; then, with mutual prayers for the success of our common cause, I swung into the saddle, the bugle sounded, and my troop rode out of Camp Dick Robinson.

On the erect of the sort, wind by to the southeast, I turned and lifted my hat, and, through the mist and storm, I saw the flutter of a white scarf, like an angel's wing, and I felt that there was one Union troop followed by the prayers of a Confederate woman.

This was my second visit to Camp Dick Robinson. When here before we were preparing under General Thomas to advance against Zollicoffer, whose host, untrained and boastful, was raiding the shores of the Cumberland. War seemed a grand thing to me in those days, when nearly every regiment marched to the stirring strains of its own brass band, and when every private had more impediments than a Major-General carried now. Then the trappings of the horses were regal in their plendor and the officers were moving sictures framed in blue and gold, and houlder-straps were so beautiful and novel that it was said some of the younger men wore them when in bed. The regimental banners, aside from what they symbolized. were things of shimmering, silken beauty; now they were shredded and riddled, and bloodstained, but those very rents had become eloquent with memories that thrilled us as the new flags never did. Our officers carried no insignia to distinguish them from the men. The trappings of the horses were rusty and cracked, our uniforms were faded and ome of them rdely patched; our carbines had lost the gloss of finish; our troop guidon was a tattered, faded rag, nd the scabbards of our sabers were dented and worn. The cheer, the song and the wild halloo of exultant youth were no longer heard in camp or on the march. On the faces of the youngest, and the oldest man in that 'troop was not twenty-seven, there were set lines that made them stern, lines that had been burned deep in the furnace heat of battle. But though not so fair to the eye, each one of these men was worth ten of the volunteers of the

early war. Our march to Cumberland Gap was over the route taken by Bragg's army a year before, when, after the fierce fight at Perryville, they fell leisurely back, laden with the rich spoils of Central Kentucky, while the tardy Union legions made only a show of pursuit. Still, the track of that unhurried retreat was visible through every defile of the tempest-tossed Cumberland range.

The log cabins, clinging like odd bird's nests to the mountain ledges, were abandoned or inhabited only by women and children. The fences that had inclosed their patches of potatoes and corn were gone, and the men who had built them were in the field or sleeping on it. Along the hard, rutty trail lay scattered the debris of war's flood; broken wagons, the skeletons of mules and horses, and ash spots, marking the site of old camps; here and there a grave; and over all the naked crests and rain-washed valleys the spirit of silence

and desolation. Now and then we caught state us a horseman far off from the line of march, and the fact that he kept out of reach convinced us that he was one of the ening to fear. Now and then a puff of some cliff, far overhead, and the crack of a bushwhacker's rifle would follow. If no harm was done, we passed on unheeding; if a man was shot, we encircled the mountain, and never returned with a prisoner. And so for six days we pushed our way through to Cumberland

Gap.

CHAPTER VI. On the evening of the seventh day we went into camp not far from Claiborne creek and well below the Gap. Since noon we had been hearing the hoarse booming of guns coming from the South. Longstreet was making his last fierce assault on Fort Saunders, sixty miles away, but the conformation of the valleys carried the sound without break, till even to trained ears the fighting seemed less than an hour's hot ride be-

Our proximity to Longstreet's corps and Wharton's ubiquitous rangers did not increase our vi-lance, that ha! never been abated. The hope of soon rejoining my regimen's cheered my men who now began to speculate as to the old friends they should find left to greet them, for on the march we learned that our boys had been badly cut up at Campbell's station while trying to check Longstreet's advance from before Chat-

tanooga. While I did not permit my love for Carrie Brent to blind me to the interests of the cause in which I was enlisted, still she was never out of my mind, and besides this, I felt that it was my duty as a man and a soldier to save her brother if I could. We were now on the ground where Frank claimed to have been when John Harding was killed near Perryville, and I determined to secure whatever evidence might be in his

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

favor.