

INSIDE THE LINES.

Nobody knew just why a fort had been put in that place. There was no chance for fighting anything except mosquitoes, yet there was a long line of fortifications, and an enfilade of pickets guarded the little town from which all the men had gone away.

If beauty of location had been a military requisite, the fort was certainly well planted. The earthworks ran near the edge of a high bluff, which rose almost perpendicularly from the strip of land bordering the brown river at its foot. On the other side Louisiana stretched away to the horizon line, level and green as a garden, and in the distance a bit of lake often caught some of the blueness of the sky and shone the gem of all this fair setting.

The boy who was lying on the edge of the bluff had no eyes for the distant view. Through an opening in the trees clinging to the sides of the hill he was gazing at the antics of a party of boys far below him. Close under the bluff lay a white, many-pillared house, and stretching before and behind it were smooth spaces of lawn, long lines of clipped hedges and avenues of magnolias. Something in its sheltered position between the river and the bank had saved from destruction this estate, whose possessors had given it the fitting name of the Garden. It seemed like a vision of paradise to the eyes of the homesick boy who was gazing down into the enemy's country.

From the door of a rough house with the embankment two officers watched the boy. The elder, Colonel Denning, was the commanding officer of the fort. "I am afraid I made a mistake when I brought my son down here," said the colonel. "He is almost desperate with loneliness. I was afraid of it, but it seemed too hard to leave him there after his mother died."

"I think you did right to bring him, colonel," said the younger man. "It's a good, quiet, healthy place, and after a while he will make friends with the men and be happier."

"I hope he will," said the colonel.

"I feel sure of it," rejoined the other.

"Just now he longs for the society of boys, but he is fighting against the inevitable. He has not philosophy enough to endure nor experience enough to understand the feeling these people have for everything inside these walls. Nothing could tempt one of these town boys to have any intercourse with him, and their scorn is rather hard to bear."

"My name is John Prescott, and over there is that white house below your fort my mother is dying, and I am trying to see her once more if she isn't gone already."

"I got a two weeks' furlough—you needn't stare, I've been in the army nearly a year—and slipped down the river two days ago. Unfortunately for me I made this point too near daylight yesterday morning to venture any farther. I knew the reputation this place has among the negroes, and I thought it safe to wait here until night. I reckoned I was too tired and sleepy and didn't make it fast, and the boat managed to slip away while I was looking for a good place to draw it up among the bushes."

"Here I have been ever since, like a rat in a trap. I have watched the house over there for two days, and have even seen the family on the terraces and dared not make a signal! Now, sir, what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to do this," said Will, holding out his hand. "I'm going to say I believe every word you say, and I want you to trust me to help you out of this scrape. I lost my mother not six months ago, and I do know how to feel for you, if we are on opposite sides. I happened to hear today that your mother is no worse. Maybe you'll see her more than this once."

"But how can I get over?"

"I don't see quite clearly how to do it, but I'll get you over there before daybreak somehow. You must give me your word to go away when the time is up. Now I must go, or that boy's curiosity will be enough to overcome his fears, and he'll come to look me up. I know you're hungry, so take my lunch. Keep a sharp lookout after dark."

The lumbering skiff carried a very silent passenger back across the river. George ventured to inquire if Will had "seed de gho's," and was answered gravely in the affirmative that he then and there laid the foundations for several marvelous tales with which to astound future audiences.

Will knew quite well that the thing he had in mind to do was a very delicate and difficult thing to undertake. That he, the trusted son of the commander, should attempt to smuggle an enemy inside the lines was no light matter. The thought of it rested not lightly on his conscience, but a refusal to aid the poor fellow on the island to see his dying mother would have rested more heavily still.

At any rate he meant to do it, and by the time the skiff touched bottom at her landing his plan was formed. Making a careful survey of the landing, and noting the shortest route out to the open water, he dismissed his companion without ceremony. A few minutes walk brought him to the big white gate of "The Garden." He summoned up all his courage and dignity and marched through the magnolia avenue.

His appearance was greeted with a consternation that was far from pleasing. His request to see Miss Prescott in private for a few moments seemed to freeze with terror the black maid in waiting, but after a brief delay he was shown into a bright, flowered little room, which had a delightfully feminine and welcome look to eyes long used to camp life.

But the slender girl who met him with the air of an offended duchess had no welcome in her look. Her manner was sadly chilling. Ten minutes later, however, she was holding his hand at the door and saying: "Mr. Denning, I never, never can thank you enough if you will do this! Mamma is a little better, and if she can see John for one hour it would do her more good than medicine. I will wait at the side gate for him, and he shall leave before daylight."

There were a few more hurried questions and replies, and then Will was climbing the hill to a still more difficult interview. A night pass was not an easy thing for which to ask his father, but he could not leave the fort without it. The colonel was a very quiet and somewhat stern man, and Will knew that the best way was the straightforward one. He made his request in the fewest words.

"No mo'! I ain't had much pinion er Uncle Jake lately, but I'se jes' about as nigh dat ole coat as I keers to go."

"Well, I'm going to have a look at the old shanty," said Will, rising from the sand. His companion did not venture to follow him in the expedition.

The river had year by year added to the strip of land, and the old flatboat was now nearly hidden by the under-brush that had grown up between it and the water. The low hut which had once been the boat's cabin was still standing amid the decayed timbers of the hull, and Will noticed with surprise that there were traces of something like footprints leading to it.

Nevertheless he stepped quite unhesitatingly over the doorway. Once fairly within he felt himself roughly grasped by the arms from behind.

"You make a noise to call that boy," said a voice close to his ears, "and I'll kill you! Tell you I will never be taken prisoner!"

The person who had seized him now faced him, still holding him by the arms. Will saw a youth scarcely older than himself dressed in a worn gray uniform. His grip was like steel, but his face was so pinched and drawn and his eyes so desperately miserable that the heart of his captive warmed to him.

Recovering his composure a little, after his first astonishment and alarm, Will said, with an effort to laugh: "Let me go! I'm the only prisoner there's likely to be. I'm not after you. I was only looking for a ghost."

"Who are you? I know all the boys over there, and I know you are a Yankee by your cap and your voice. I tell you I can't be taken."

His sharp, short whistle was answered by a figure leaping aboard before the skiff had fairly touched the shore.

"I knew you would come," the young man said. "At dark Nina put a light in my window just as she used to when I was out late on the river, and I knew you had been there. Before we go any further tell me the name of the person I am trusting myself to."

"The trusting is not entirely on your side, Prescott. Do you know what it means when I tell you my name is Denning?"

"It means that if I play the rascal it would be worse for you to have helped me than for any one else. I see and I appreciate it."

"The only way in which I can settle it with my conscience is to consider you my prisoner on parole while you are inside the lines, and see you safely outside before I leave you."

"How about your picket?"

"Fortunately for you he is up at the old sawmill. He saw me, hailed me, and got the password as I went up. Lie low now as we go. He knows me and I will surely wonder what I am about."

As they were swinging merrily by a raft of decaying logs a suppressed voice called to them:

"John! It's Fred, and it's all right. You slip off here and cut for the side gate. Harry is there and Nina."

"Now, Prescott," said Will, "it's 10 o'clock and I give you until midnight. Goodby."

It was a long walk. Will never forgot those two hours alone on the great river at night. All sorts of doubts and misgivings came crowding into his mind as he listened to the mysterious noises of the night and the river. A bright constellation which he had watched at home seemed like the visit of a friend, as it came wheeling into sight over the hill. It cheered him not a little, but it was marching westward rapidly before the paroled prisoner returned.

"Nina's cedar skiff is just here," Prescott explained, as he came out promptly on time. "It is loaded with all I need for my journey. She has planned for everything, and you need only go half way with me. Denning. Your duty will be done then. Strike directly across, and miss your picket. We can make the Townhead by a hard pull on the other side—at least I can."

At daylight Will was in his father's room again.

"Is it all right, Will?"

"All right, father, and I am not sorry I went."

The talk of the town found the commandant's boy's intimacy with the Prescotts a nine days' wonder, and scoffed not a little at the Prescott boys. But the intimacy continued, to the secret amazement of Colonel Denning, and in after years ripened into the friendship of a lifetime.—Mary Stewart in *Youth's Companion*.

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"I am almost a man, father," he said, after he had made his request, "and I want you to trust me now, as you have always done in small matters. I can't tell you about it now, but I am doing nothing wrong. I am only helping a poor fellow in great trouble. I know my mother would wish me to do it."

"I don't doubt the excellence of your intentions, Will," said his father. "You can be trusted; I know, but are you sure your heart has not the better of your head in this matter, and will get you into some scrape?"

"I give you my word of honor, sir, that in my circumstances I believe you would do just what I wish to do."

"Then here are your papers, and remember it is the commander of the fort as well as your father who trusts you."

"Every leaf in the old cottonwood on the bank seemed to quiver as Will started on his lonely trip. The green band of light above the horizon had quite died away, and the river seemed blacker than the night. Things which were plain enough by daylight appeared mysterious and fearful now, and every huge black shadow around the boat seemed to contain an enemy.

It was not pleasant to think of the sunken snags an unfamiliar oarsman might encounter, nor was that ghastly bond just above, where the encroaching river cut far into the old cemetery, a cheering recollection.

"I will not think of it!" he said. "It must be nearly time for me to turn across to the Towhead. The current may carry me down a little, but I would rather pull for it than stay on this side and get the horrors!"

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Tests made under the auspices of the Royal Philosophical Society with a single barley stalk unfolded wonders which but few have ever thought even possible. By steeping and watering that one plant with saltpeter dissolved in rain water they managed to produce 249 stalks and over 16,000 grains.—Philadelphi

MARKET REPORT.

Below is given the Oregon City Market Report, corrected Jan. 19, from quotations furnished the *Examiner* by local merchants:

GRAIN.

Wheat, valley, per bushel..... \$1.00
Oats, per bushel..... 125¢ 44

FLAX.

Oregon City Mills, Portland brand..... 35¢ 63

ONIONS.

..... 12¢ 00

CLOVER.

..... 12¢ 00

TIMOTHY.

..... 12¢ 00

PRODUCE.

Potatoes, per 100 lbs..... 70 to 80

ONIONS.

..... 4¢ 00

APPLES.

Green, per box..... \$1.25 00

APRICOTS.

Dried, per lb..... 60¢ 00

CHICKENS.

..... 2.00 to 4.00

TURKEYS.

..... 10.00 to 11.00

BUTTER.

..... 1.00 per lb.

Eggs.

..... 32¢ 14

HONEY.

..... 17¢ 00

FRUIT.

..... 10¢ 00 to 12¢ 00

MEATS.

Beef, live, per lb..... 12¢ 00