

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER III. A DEVOTED CONFEDERATE.

On the morning of the general ada drissling rain set in which lasted at tervals during the whole campaign. Day after day the men tramped through the mire, often to lie down at night with no means of lifting themselves out of pools except by cutting the wet branches from the trees, and on these making a bed in drenched clothes. The artillery soon cut up the roads so that the guns sank to the hubs of the wheels. The right continued to march toward the left and in the direction of the base of the Cumberland plateau, where Miss Betsy Baggs and the others were pass-ing between the lines. The Unionists were moving upon gaps i the f thills held by the Confederates, and r cessary to the latter to prevent their e amies getting on their right, and thas compelling them to leave their fortifi ations at Tullahoma and fight on open

It was the day that the Union men attacked these gaps that Miss Baggs passed under Confederate protection, and the farmer and the two young people with him were also pursuing their route south. Fortunately for him, the farmer, being on the flank ' the two armies, was not forced to pass over roads out up by either. After Major Burke had administered the oath not to divulge anything they had seen concerning the Union forces to the farmer and the young girl in the wagon with him (he considered the boy too young to treat in the same way), the party were suffered to depart and proceeded down the road.

"Jake," said the farmer, slapping the horses' backs with the reins, "what hev you l'arned at skule?"

"L'arned how ter play 'hop scotch' and 'shinny.' "

"I don't mean thet kind. I mean real

"Jakey was at a great disadvantage, pe," remarked the girl on the rear seat, "because he was obliged to go in classes with little bits of boys. You remember he didn't know his letters when he

"No more did you," said the father.
"Oh, yes, I did. I began to study them a month before I went away, and I taught Jakey, so that he knew something about them, too, when he got

"Air they doin much talkin 'bout the war up no'th?"

"Well, it isn't at all like it is down hyar" (no southerner will ever change the pronunciation of this word). "They take lots of interest in it, and all that; but, laws, it's one thing to get up in the tles and such things, and another to have soldiers running all over you, 'specially taking the garden truck and the horses onten the barn—I mean out of the barn. Teacher, she had the hardest work to break me from saying 'outen' for 'out It seems she hasn't quite done it yet." She spoke the last words with

a sigh.
"Lordy, Souri, y' talk like a fine lady compared 'ith what y' did afore y' went no'th. Jake, would y' like ter drive 'em?"

"Reckon." The father handed the reins to his son, who, considering that he had not driven a horse for a year, handled them

with considerable skill. "How did you leave ma?" asked the

"Waal, y'r maw she war a heap lonesome 'thout y' uns, and she's been worritin fo' fear y'd git sick up thar 'ith no one ter tend ter y', but sence the time fo' y'r comin hum hez drawed nigh she's puckered up pretty peart."

The boom of a gun came faintly from

far down on the lower level, and the cannonading heard by Corporal Ratigan and his charge began. Taking up the whip, the countryman gave his horses a

"I want ter make hum afore somep's happens. Thar's goin ter be a big fight bout Tullyhoomy. Thar's forts all round the place and big guns on em."

The horses trotted on briskly for a short distance, when, looking ahead, the farmer could see the picket post. He got his pass ready, and when they reached the post an officer came out to ex-

amine it. "Is your name Ezekiel Slack?" he asked of the farmer.

"Zeke Slack; yaas, thet's my name."
"And yours?" to the girl, raising his forage cap admiringly. "Missouri Slack."

"The other name on the pass refers to the boy, I suppose. You have a name, sonny, haven't you?" he saked absently, while he was studying the pass, though it is questionable if the inquiry was not intended to show some facetiousness be-

fore the pretty girl "Hev I got ha'r?" "Oh, Jakey," said his sister, "don't fall back into that habit of asking ques-

tions instead of answering them. You know how hard they tried to break you of it at school. And say 'hair,' not "I got a name," said Jake. "D'y"

reckon a boy 14's goin ter git on 'ithout "Well, what is it?" asked the officer.

smiling. "Jake."

"Jake what?" "Slack," answered the farmer. "These two uns is my children. They been ter skule up in Ohio. They got lots o' l'arnin. Reckon they'll down the old

"Union or Confederate sympathies?" "Union."

"All right. Go ahead."

Leaving the picket, they came to an opening in the country which enabled them to get a view of the region lying to the west. The farmer, though desirous of getting on, could not resist a temptation to rein in his horses and watch the fighting, or the distant evidences of it, that morning going on at Hoover's Gap. Volleys of musketry were mingled with the deeper tones of cannon. Then the firing ceased for awhile, when the booms began again, continued and rapid. A white smoke rose above a ridge on which Confederate cannons were shelling the advancing Union troops on the ground below. Souri Slack thought of the lives that were passing from under that smoke and covered her face with her hands.

When the sounds ceased, Farmer Slack drove on and soon reached the Confederate picket. The party were sent in charge of a trooper to the headquarters of an officer commanding a body of cavalry on the Confederate extreme left. His headquarters were in a house beside the road. It had once been in the center of a neat country place. The fences, the outhouses, the walks, had all been in excellent condition prior to the first passage of troops. Now of the fences there was an occasional upright post left; the walks were overgrown with weeds and grass; the outhouses had nearly all been torn down. The place was a picture of desolation. Nevertheless the general who temporarily resided there was making himself very comfort-

The wagon drew up before the house. and the conducting trooper sent in word to the general that a party, who had come in from the Union lines, were waiting outside, desiring permission to go on south. An order came to send the party all inside.

The three travelers entered the house to find a tall man with an iron gray beard recliming in a rocking chair with Baggs, remarked: as much apparent unconcern as if war were simply a pastime.

"You have just come from the enemy's lines, I hear," he said to the

"Yane, sir."

"What force did you see in the region through which you passed?"

The farmer explained that he could not answer the question, inasmuch as he had been permitted to pass after taking an oath not to give any information.

"H'm. You are quite right not to answer under the circumstances," observed the general. "Did your daughter take the same oath?"

"Yaas, general," said Souri.
"Surely they didn't administer an

oath to a boy of your age?" he said, turning Jakey.

"Reckon th' thought I war too little to swar," said Jakey. He thrust his hands in his pockets, a sure sign that he was steadying himself for a conflict of wits and words. But the general was not acquainted with the peculiar characteristics of Jakey Slack and prepared in a very hazardous service?" to question him as unconcernedly as he would pump water from a well. "What route did you come?" he ask-

ed of the farmer.

"I met the children at Galletin," rethrough Lebanon and Liberty."

"Souny," said the general, turning to Jakey, "did you pass any troops on from an expression of indifference to

"Lots."

"Infantry?" "What's thet?"

"Soldiers who walk and carry guns. "Didn't see none o' them kind."

"Did you see any artillery?"

"Don't know what them uns air." "Men with great big guns-cannon." "No, sir. Didn't see no 'tillery."

"Then what you saw must have been avalry."

"Didn't see none o' them uns nuth-

The general looked surprised. the arms of the service I ever heard of, and I am an old soldier."

"Critter companies." "Oh, I see!" exclaimed the general, remembering the mountain Tennessee ans' name for cavalry. "How many soldiers belonging to the 'critter companies,' as you call them, did you see?"

as I got at countin in skula." Souri was about to remind her brother that he had proved himself one of I returned to my adviser. You know the best boys in the school at mental

"Waal, I counted 20, 'n thet's 's fur

arithmetic, but desisted.
"H'm!" The general thought a mo-

ment and beat a reveille with his fingers on the arm of his chair. "What were they doing within the Federal lines just before you left the

outposts?" "Waal, I only noticed one man, 'n he war doin somep'n very partickeler."

"What was it?" "He war lookin at the sky through a

squashed apple." "Not a fieldglass, was it?" "No. sir. Reckon 'twasn't thet." "Was the man of high rank?"

"Reckon he war. He had stripes on his arm." "Tut, tut, he wore chevrons. He was

only a noncommissioned officer. Can't you describe more nearly the object through which he was looking?" "Waal, I think I hearn some'un call

it a can-can"-"Not a canteen?"

"Yes, thet's it."

The general looked sharply at the boy, who looked stolidly stupid. He determined to try another route through which to lead Jakey's infantile mind. "Were the troops you saw in camp,

or on the march, or in bivouse?" "Don't know what thet ar' last air. but the trees 'n brush war so thick I couldn' see plain."

"Can't you tell me if you saw any infantry. Soldiers who walk and carry guns, you know?"

"I never looks at them kind o' so jers," replied Jakey contemptuously.
"I only notices 'em when th're on

critters' backs." "That will do," said the general. Then, turning to a staff officer near him,

"Captain, you may pass these people south," and added in an undertone: "Ride over to division headquarters and | say that nothing has yet been obtained of the enemy's movements in this vicinity by questioning citizens. Only one party has come through—a farmer, with his son and daughter. The farmer and his daughter took an oath not to give any information concerning the

dispositions of the enemy, and the boy

is profoundly stupid." There was a sound of hoofs without, mingled with the rattle of wheels. Looking through an open window, an officer was seen to dismount and hand a woman from a mud covered, paint rubbed buggy. All recognized Miss Elizabeth Bagga. The general arose from his chair and went out to meet her at the front door. From there he conducted her into a room where they could confer together alone.

"What luck?" "I struck their wires within their lines midway between Murfreesboro and MacMinnville at midnight, and no one was near. I threw my wire over the line and made my connections with my instrument. I waited till nearly daylight before any messages of impor-tance came along, though dispatches were passing all the while. At last one came in cipher. I took it down, but as we haven't the I key fear it will avail us nothing."

"Let me see it," said the general. Miss Baggs handed him a piece of paper on which was written:

MUHFHEESBORO, Tenn., June 28, 1868.

Yelsinteers Garfield with circling between you possession turn an be cob Bumble at to get that possible by move Benjamin pony chief rapidity around that put of the hours ready shingle to notice enemy's Tullahoms your point the by of polliwog of plateau Niggard if desire and hope forward to haha move we right I command and mountain order staff.

The general read the dispatch over carefully, and then, looking up at Miss

"Balked!" "Can't it be interpreted, general?"
"I fear not without the key. It is

doubtless an important dispatch, and I shall send it at once to general head-quarters. If they can decipher it, they are welcome to do so. I don't care to try it."

Calling an aid-de-camp, the general bade him carry the message to the army telegraph station, a short distance to the rear, and repeat it to General Bragg.

"General," said Miss Baggs in an undertone, "if you will let me have the original or a copy, I will try to decipher it. I may find a clew that will aid me hereafter, though I fear it will be too late to take advantage of information contained in this one." "Certainly. Lieutenant, return the

dispatch I have given you to this lady after it has been repeated." The officer departed. The general turned again to Miss Baggs with a se-

rious look. "Do you know that you are engaged "Perfectly."

"And do you understand the penalty if caught?"

"Death, I suppose." "There's no telling whether it would plied Slack. "I driv' 'em from thar be death or a long imprisonment in the case of a woman. A man would hang."

Miss Baggs' countenance changed

one of those flashes of the superhuman attributes that lurk within the human soul.

"Am I to make anything of my life when thousands of the south's defenders are giving theirs every day? Have I not seen our homes laid desolate? Have I not seen my brothers, my friends, those I have loved, those I have played with as children, cut down by either bullet or disease? For months I have devoted myself to the care of the sick in the hospitals. There I learned to dread a long continuance of this struggle. There I conceived the idea of do-"Then what did you see? That's all ing something to win success for our armies by giving them an advantage not possessed by the enemy. I consulted one high in rank. 'How can I give my life to the best advantage?' I asked. 'In the secret service.' 'Point the way. 'Do you know anything of telegraphy?'
'No, but I can learn.' 'Go and study a month and then come to me.' For a month I studied night and day. I learned to read words from the clicking of the keys as readily as I can read letters.

> the rest." The general paced the floor with a

clouded brow. "I dread a catastrophe," he said, "in the case of one inspired by such noble sentiments. I dread to see a woman exposed to ignominy, perhaps death." "If that time comes, general, God

will give me strength to bear it." The general was silent a moment and then asked abruptly:

"Is your brother aware of what you flat round thing what looked like a big are doing?" "He is."

"And he consents?"

"He does not. We are individuals. He is one of the noblest of the south's legitimate defenders, but he is not responsible for my acts, one of its illegit-

imate machines." "The pitcher that goes often to the well is at last broken. "Then some one else will spring up to carry on the work."

"God grant that the day may be far distant—that it may never come. I can crets." hardly approve of it, though you are working in my cause."

"General," said the woman, her face again lighting as if inspired by some absorbing thought, "each side has an organized secret service. What general would dare report to his government that he had acquired information which would enable him to destroy his enemy, but it had been obtained by illegitimate means, and he would not take advantage of it? Yet what general would care to be called a spy himself? We are engaged in a terrible struggle. Before its close any and all means will be used to conquer. Cities will be burned, vast districts will be laid waste. Must I cease to employ the most effective method of all because I am doing illegitimate work? Is my work more



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illegitimate than trying to conquer a people fighting for their independence?" The general made no reply for a time.

"Yours is a singular family," he said presently. "You are all alike, and yet you differ." "We are united in the cause; we

differ as to the means." The interview was interrupted by the ringing of a dinner bell in the hall.

The general called a negro and bade him show Miss Baggs to a room up stairs, to which she retired for a few minutes. The servant brought in her belongings from the buggy, together with the little box. When she came down stairs, the party were waiting for her before going in to dinner. Souri, who had seen her covered by the sun-



"For love?"

bonnet and her eyes screened with glasses, was astonished. She saw a woman three or four years older than herself, the beauty of her head and neck contrasting with the homeliness of her costume. Miss Baggs noticed Souri's surprise, and going up to her took both her hands and kissed her cheek.

"You sweet child," she said feelingly, "you can't get over my appearance when you met me on the road this morning, can you? What a fright must I have seemed to you! I don't care for those Yankee officers, but bless your innocent heart I can't bear to have shocked you."

Souri did not reply in words, but she looked at Miss Baggs admiringly.

"Don't think hard of me," the latter went on, drawing Souri aside and motioning the rest to go on into the dining room. "I do only what I believe to be a duty, for you must suspect that I keep a secret. You could not play a part beneath you, child. You are too loving, too innocent, and you wonder how any

other woman can.' "I did once."

"When?" "Before I went to school."

"For your country?" "No.

Miss Baggs looked into Souri's deep eyes and asked softly: "For love?" Souri dropped her eyes to the floor, but her questioner, who by this time

reply. "Came." she said, "let us not torture each other. I see we both have our se-

had put an arm around her, received no

She led the way to the dinner room, where the general and his staff were standing waiting for the two women. The party were joined by Farmer Slack and Jakey, and all sat down at a signal from the general.

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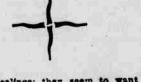
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