



(CONTINUED)

"This is no less important than the other," mused Miss Baggs. "It is clear from both that Rosecrans has pre-emptory orders to advance, and Burnside is ordered to join him. I must get this through the lines at once. From here I must find a way across the Tennessee, just above Chattanooga, if possible, and perhaps I may strike their line connecting with Rosecrans' headquarters at the front and gather in the latest news. 'It never rains but it pours,' and I'll get in all I can get while I'm in luck."

CHAPTER X

A PROMISE SOON BROKEN. Colonel Maynard was in the habit of making frequent visits to his wife and without warning. Laura understood perfectly the embarrassing position in which he would be placed at surprising a Confederate spy under the same roof with herself and protected by her. She had no mind to place him in any such position. When Miss Baggs went up stairs, Laura posted a sentry in the person of Uncle Daniel to keep a sharp lookout and give notice of the colonel's approach in order that Miss Baggs might be got out of the way before his arrival. Daniel sat down on a bench on the veranda and lit his pipe. He was an old man and prone to doze. It was not long before Lookout mountain across the river began to sway among the clouds, the nearer trees began to rock, the old negro's head fell upon his breast, and he slept.

It was nearly 10 o'clock when Laura, having given up the coming of her husband that night and for once in her life rejoicing thereat, was about to dismiss Daniel from his responsible position when she heard a step on the veranda. Thinking it was Daniel walking back and forth to keep himself awake, she paid no attention to it. There was a turning of the knob to the front door, and in another moment Colonel Maynard stood on the threshold of the sitting room looking in upon Mrs. Fain, Laura, Souri and Miss Baggs. He was about to enter when, observing a strange person, he hesitated. Laura advanced, and taking him by the hand led him to another room. He had only once before seen Miss Baggs and then in disguise and did not recognize her. "Why, sweetheart," he said to his wife, "you're trembling."

"You came in so hurriedly," "I am hurried. We cross the river tomorrow morning." "Tomorrow morning! Oh, Mark, why couldn't they wait a few days?" "If wives and sweethearts had the giving of orders, Uncle Sam would have his armies always in winter quarters."

"Why couldn't this happiness have lasted just a little longer?" "And then still a little longer. Come, I have but a short time to stay. Let me say goodby to the baby."

Laura led the way up stairs and drew the curtains from the cradle, exposing the sleeping infant. There was something in the innocence, the absence of force in the little slumberer, so different from the scenes in which he was wont to mingle, to set in motion a train of feelings in Mark Maynard which he had thus far been a stranger. On the one side was the wife he loved and the sleeping child; on the other, what now appeared to some marches, nights spent on wet ground, sickness, mangle by shell and bullets and saber cuts. A year before he had loved these hardships, these dangers. Now a new element had entered into his life, and at least while he gazed on the little stranger (the only life that had come to him among the many gone since the war began) he felt a strange repugnance to entering upon the coming campaign.

drifting like smoke wreaths about his father, obscuring the way from their peaceful influence.

There was one more embrace, then another last one, then another final one, then a stirrup kiss, and Colonel Mark Maynard rode back through the night to camp. Not long after his arrival bugles sounded the reveille. It was 2 o'clock in the morning, and the men were aroused to begin their advance to the front. Sending for Jakey Slack, the colonel gave him a note to take back to Laura at the plantation. He had repeated his adieux so often in person that one would hardly think it necessary to send any more on cold paper, but Maynard's heart strings were pulling him as strongly away from war as his duty was forcing him toward it. Besides he knew that Laura would treasure every word from him.

Jakey mounted Tom and rode in the gray of the morning to deliver the note. When he reached the plantation, he was obliged to do a good deal of pounding and ringing before he could get into the house. Finally Mrs. Maynard's maid, Alice, let him in, and considering the fact that Mrs. Maynard was in bed and Alice stood in very close confidential relations with her, Jakey consented to deliver the note to the maid and waited to see if there was any reply. Alice returned and said that her mistress would be down in a moment. Presently she entered, dressed in a morning wrapper.

"Jakey," she said, taking the boy by the hand and smoothing the hair out of his eyes, "can I rely on you to do something for me?" "Could the colonel?" "You are going to the front, and no one can tell what may happen. You'll probably have to meet your enemies some time, and the colonel says that a battle may come at any day. I want you to promise me that if anything should happen to the colonel you will come here as fast as you can and let me know of it. Do you understand?" "Y' mean ef th' colonel gits hit on th' forehead with a cannon ball?" "Oh, Jakey, don't talk so! I mean if he gets sick or wounded or in any other trouble, will you come and tell me at once?"

"Reckon." Laura knew that this was Jakey's way of making a promise, and she was satisfied. She told him to wait a few minutes and went out of the room. When she returned, she brought two parcels with her. "This one is for you, Jakey," she said, handing him one of them. "It's a luncheon. Put it in your haversack and give the other to the colonel. And hand him this note."

She gave him a tiny white envelope, within which in a few words was concentrated what may be best expressed as three days' rations of desiccated affection.

Jakey took the parcels, and placing the note in his cap went out, mounted Tom and dashed away after his commander.

Maynard's brigade crossed the river south of Lookout mountain and passed over the mountain's face where it juts out to the river. His command was but one of the many, all moving forward toward a retreating enemy. He marched through Chattanooga to Rossville, situated at a gap in Mission Ridge. From there he was ordered forward, entering what is called McLenmore's cove, an undulating space lying between two ranges, Mission Ridge and the Pigeon mountains. There the brigade encamped on a field soon to become memorable as the scene of one of the most desperate, the most dramatic of all the battles of the civil war—the field of Chickamauga.

CHAPTER XI

A RACE FOR LIFE.

Major Burke's command was ordered to guard the telegraph line extending south from Rossville. The regiment was strung out to a considerable distance, each troop guarding a certain portion of the line. Corporal Ratigan was placed in charge of a section of two miles. Putting himself at the head of eight men, he led them to the end of his section nearest camp, and dividing them into two reliefs of four men each posted them at intervals of half a mile along the line under his care. At sunset, not being relieved, he prepared to spend the night in bivouac. Selecting a clump of trees under which to rest and cutting some boughs for beds—rather to keep the men from the damp ground—the corporal established the relief, off duty, there. The rations were cooked and eaten, after which the guard was relieved. The corporal went out always with the relief, posted his men and slept between times.

It was 2 o'clock in the morning when Ratigan started out to post the last relief for the night. The men followed, grum and stupid, having just been wakened out of a sound sleep and not yet thoroughly aroused. The party rode to the extreme end of the section, left a man and turned back, leaving a man at every half mile. Corporal Ratigan had posted the last man half a mile from the bivouac and was returning when suddenly, turning a bend in the road running through a wood, he descried a dark object before him beside the road. He drew rein and watched and listened. The dark object, as he fixed his gaze

upon it, grew into the dim outlines of a vehicle, but it was too dark for him to see if it contained any one. The corporal, whose mind had been fixed on the special duty of protecting the line, at once assumed that some one was trying to cut the wire. He put spurs to his horse and called out:

"Halt, there! Throw up your hands and surrender, or I'll shoot."

The only response was a swish from a whip which came down evidently on a horse's back, and the dark mass before him vanished around the bend in the road. The corporal dashed on, but before he could get around the bend the object had turned again. He could hear the rattling of wheels and sounds of a horse's hoofs digging into the road at a gallop. Whoever was behind that horse must be driving at a frightful pace, for urging his own beast to his best he seemed to lose rather than gain ground. Coming to a straight piece of road, he could again see the object before him, but in the darkness it was simply a darker spot than its surroundings. Suddenly the ears of the corporal caught a sound that filled him with astonishment. It was a voice urging forward the horse he was chasing. Ratigan had supposed that whoever was trying to escape was a man, yet this voice was different from a man's tones. It sounded like that of a child or a woman. The corporal was puzzled. Then it suddenly occurred to him that perhaps he was chasing Betsy Baggs.

Now, the corporal was as conscientious a man as there was in the Army of the Cumberland and one of the most gallant, but when the suspicion fell upon him like a chill that he was after a woman whose presence, for the brief period he had been with her, had thrown a strange spell over him he ceased to urge his horse with the same pressure as before. In the midst of the chase there had come a contest within his own breast between two conflicting emotions. If Betsy Baggs were in front of him, what would be the result if he should catch her? He must turn her over to the military authorities, and the chances were she would be executed for an spy. On the other hand, supposing he permitted her to escape, he would be liberating an enemy far more dangerous to the army in which he served than a dozen batteries. In short, he

Would it not be best for her to leave her horse and buggy in the road and take to the woods? No. They would mark the point where she had left them. But her pursuer would not know which side of the road she had taken, and there would be an even chance that he would follow on the wrong side. Something must be done; the race could not last forever; the man behind seemed to be gaining, and then the dread of coming upon a Union camp!

She was about to bring her horse to a stand and jump from her buggy when the clatter behind her—Ratigan had turned a slight bend in the road—sounded so loud, so near, that instead of doing so she gave him a cut with the whip. "There's no time now, Bobby. We must put a greater distance between us and the Yankee. Get up, Bobby! Oh, go on! Why haven't you wings?" "Heavens, what is that ahead? Tents, white and ghostly in the gloom! And how many of them! The whole field is covered!" "Nearer comes the clatter from behind. In front is a sleeping regiment, brigade, perhaps a whole division. It was not there yesterday. It must be in transit. Oh, why should it have halted just in time to block the way?" "God help me, I must take my chances and go on."

Sentinels were pacing on their beats about the camps. In some cases the beats led along the road, but not across it. Right through these chains of sentinels, right into the heart of this sleeping multitude of armed men, dashed the woman whose only weapons of defense were Bobby Lee and her antiquated vehicle. "Halt!" "Go on, Bob!" A shot, a bullet singing like a tuning fork in ears which already sang loud enough in themselves with excitement. "Turn out the guard!" Following Miss Baggs came Corporal Ratigan, to find the road in front of him blocked by half a dozen men with as many muskets pointed right up in his face.

He uttered an involuntary "Thank God!" He must be delayed; the responsibility for the escape of the fugitive would be with them. If indeed she were Miss Baggs, he would regard himself fortunate at the delay. "What's the matter?" asked one of the men. "I'm chasing some one in front. I suspect a telegraph breaker."

"Ah! That's it, is it? Well, go on; we've stopped the wrong person." The corporal regretted that the interruption had been so brief, the interruption so short. He had no option but to dash on. Before the fugitive there stood a man in the middle of the road with a musket leveled straight at her, or rather at the coming mass, which he could not distinguish. Miss Baggs did not see him till she got within a dozen feet of him and heard: "Halt, or I'll fire!" Rising in her seat and concentrating all her strength in one effort, she brought her whip down on the horse's back, at the same time holding him in the center of the road by the reins. The man was knocked in one direction, stunned, and his musket went flying in the other. And now each one of the chain of sentries through which the fair dispatch stealer's horse dragged her and her swaying buggy with a series of lunges, hearing shots, the cries of guards, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the rattling of wheels, and seeing something coming through the darkness as Miss Baggs approached, shouted "Halt!" "Turn out the guard!" "Who comes there?" and a score of other similar cries, to none of which Miss Baggs paid any other attention than to fly through and from them as from the hand of death. A score of shots were fired at her along half a mile of road while she was running the gantlet.

And now the last sentry is passed, and the woman shoots out from between the rows of white tents into a free road ahead. The noises are left behind. But amid the confusion of distant sounds is one which, coming with a low, continued rattle, strikes terror into her heart. A familiarity with war has taught her its call. She hears the beating of the "long roll." The whole camp is aroused. A legion of Yankees may soon be in pursuit.

Corporal Ratigan was stopped by every sentinel who had tried to check Miss Baggs. After an explanation to each he was suffered to go on. The men who stopped him transmitted the information at once to the guard tent that some one—doubtless an enemy—was being

chased. The force was a division of infantry, with no cavalry except a mounted escort to the general commanding. Some of these were ordered in pursuit. There was a hurried saddling of horses, sprinkled with oats at the delays encountered, and three cavalrymen mounted and dashed after Miss Baggs and her pursuer. But before they started a couple of miles had been placed between her and the camps.

The gray of the morning was by this time beginning to reveal objects with greater distinctness. Ratigan, coming to a rise in the ground just beyond the camps, saw the buggy about two miles ahead swaying like the dark hull of a ship rolling through the billows of an ocean. For a moment he hesitated between his duty as a soldier and that quick, sharp something, be it love, bewitchment or a natural sympathy of man for weaker woman, while beads of cold perspiration stood on his forehead. It seemed to him that if he should do his duty he would be acting the part of an executioner, not only that, but the executioner of a woman—a woman whose image had got into his heart and his head and never left him a moment's peace since she first threw the spell of her entrancing personality about him. It was a hard struggle, and from the nature of the case could not be a long one. Duty won. He shouted to his horse, gave him a dig with both spurs and dashed forward.

There was a depression in the ground down which the corporal plunged. Then the road ran along a level for awhile, with another slight rise beyond. As he rode down the declivity the fugitive was on the crest of the second rise. She stood up and turned to catch a glance behind her. She saw a horseman—she was too far to recognize the corporal—dashing after her. Below her was a wooded space, and she noticed that which gave her a glimmer of hope. The road forked. Urging her horse onward, she aimed to get on one of the two roads beyond the fork while her pursuer was in the hollow back of her, trusting that she might escape, as she had escaped before, by forcing him to choose between two roads, and trusting that he might take the wrong one.

Down the declivity her racer plunged while Ratigan was galloping down the one behind her. So steep was the road and so swift her horse's pace that the danger of death by mangle seemed greater than death by hanging. She reached the bottom, where the road ran level to the fork and the wood. Hope urged her. It was not 100 yards to the point she was so anxious to reach. Passing over a rut at the very fork of the road that seemed her only chance for escape, the old buggy gave a dismal groan, as much in sympathy with the mistress it had served so well as a death rattle, and flew into a hundred pieces.

(To be continued.)



RATIGAN ADDRESSES THE COURT.

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