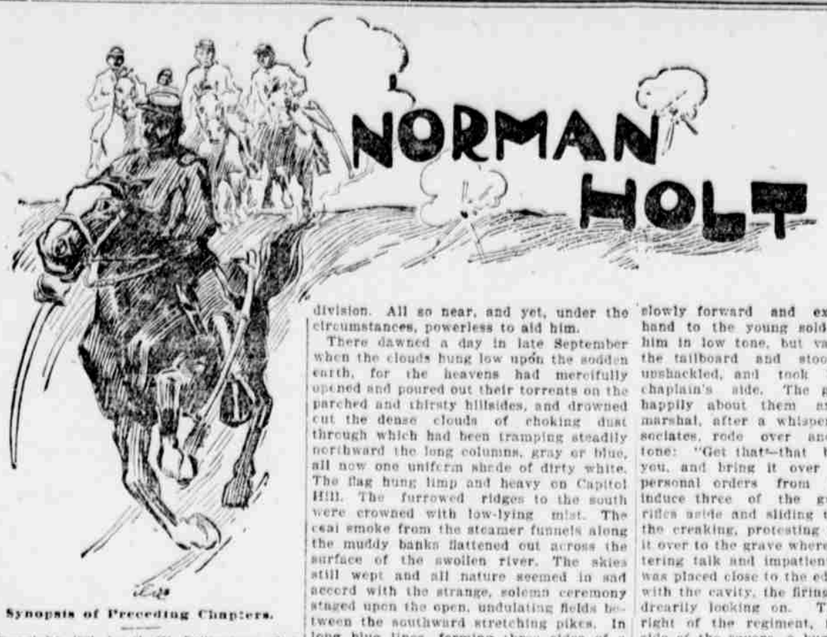

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

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Norman Holt, favorite son of an old Kentucky family, is reprimanded at West Point for dueling and is withdrawn by his high-spirited father. His home-coming in the winter of 189 is celebrated by an old-fashioned Kentucky Christmas gathering. Among the guests are Daisy Lane, daughter of Dr. Holt's lawyer, and J. Barrett Malloy, both of Cincinnati. The latter brings letters of introduction from Lane's partner, Mr. McIntyre, and is courteously received, but arouses the jealousy of Norman Holt by his attentions to Daisy Lane. Malloy separates Miss Lane from the main party during a fox hunt and at the Christmas ball the same evening affects an air of proprietorship distasteful to Daisy and obnoxious to his rival, Norman Holt. But all ill-feeling is forgotten when at midnight all surround Dr. Holt to drink the Christmas punch, which ceremony is interrupted by a midnight messenger, who announces the dangerous illness of Judge McIntyre. Investigation reveals his financial affairs in a hopeless tangle and the Holt fortune dissipated. Henry and Norman enter Lane's law office in Cincinnati. Norman enlists as a private in the Ohio infantry. Malloy, through political influences, is lieutenant in the same company, and Henry Holt joins the confederate forces. Norman is ordered to conduct a skirmishing party under Captain Wing to Belleview in search of prominent rebels. Belleview raid fails, Wing is captured and Norman is accused of treachery. Brain fever saves him from trial and takes him to the hospital. Charges against Norman are disproved by Enyart. Norman rejoins his regiment and aids Sheridan in capturing Henry Holt. Norman Holt drugged by Malloy while on picket duty is found asleep at his post. Court-martial convicts Norman, who demands that Malloy, whose testimony convicted him, shall head the firing party on the day of his death.

CHAPTER XVI.

September, and all the north was in wild alarm! Lee, outfighting Pope and outstripping McClellan, had leaped the Potomac, and was swinging northward through the heart of Maryland, his flankers riding within hail of Washington. Bragg, dodging Buell, was bursting into Kentucky, where Kirby Smith was already at work, his foremost troopers shaking their fists and flaunting their guidons in the very face of Cincinnati. At the national capital there was amaze and despond. Throughout the southland was mad exultation. Through Nashville, day after day, poured the divisions of the old army of the Ohio, hanging on the left flank of the foe, yet never checking his stride. The peril of the union oppressed every loyal heart. The fate of the old flag hung in the balance. "Let the dead bury their dead," moaned the over-weighted president. "Every man must be at the front. I cannot grant a leave." It was in answer to the plea of a convalescent colonel, begging only for two days in which to carry home the body of his beloved wife, who had nursed him and his men through the Chickahominy fever, only to fall at last herself a victim. Those were days in which individual cases could hardly look for presidential action or interference, for days and nights were given up to public business. In the magnitude of the cares of the commander-in-chief, the peril of the nation, small wonder was it that there seemed little hope of bringing to the presidential ear the lone case of an humble private, over whom the death watch had been set, for whom there would be no week to come unless he signaled "Hold."

Enyart, shot in fierce cavalry encounter near McMinnville, had been borne to hospital. Gaffney, still invalided, had been transferred to a camp for convalescents. Norman Holt was utterly alone. One week—only one week—and the stern soldier at the head of the department had said he must face the firing squad, that the army might learn its fearful lesson that sleeping on post meant death.

He had written to the Rays, who had taken refuge in Louisville while Lexington was invaded, but until the fourth day no answer reached him. Then it came in the form of a letter from Captain Enyart's mother, saying that Mr. and Miss Ray had gone to Washington two days before his letter reached the house and, knowing their anxiety on his account, she had opened it and telegraphed. It seems Major Lane, too, was ill of a fever, and his wife and daughter had been sent for. Mrs. Enyart was in deep distress about her son, who, with other wounded, was being slowly trundled out of Tennessee. But she dreaded lest Forrest or Morgan should swoop down upon the train. All the world looked black to her, but she could find time to write words of hope and cheer to the lonely and condemned prisoner. Womanlike, she could not believe it possible that so atrocious a sentence could ever be carried out. Long years of peace had dulled our people to the fearful possibilities of war.

Five of the seven days were gone. Nashville was in wild commotion. Bragg's triumphant hosts had crossed the Cumberland, pounced on the Louisville railway and were heading for that city hard as they could go. Buell had hastened through, leaving Thomas to command a day or two, then bidding him follow. Thomas had turned the situation over to Negley and hurried away with his fine division, and still a great force was left to hold this vitally important state capital, and the eyes of all men were turned northward watching for the first sign of the tremendous struggle that must ensue the moment Bragg could be brought to bay. And in those days there drooped alone, apparently deserted of the world and forgotten, save for his sentence, the young soldier whose loyalty was costing him his life.

The one wish he had expressed savored too much of the melodramatic to find favor with the general in command, yet there was method in it, for Holt had reasoned that, while Malloy might not flinch at false swearing, now that he had either to swear falsely or admit that his report of the affair in the first place was largely untrue; still, he might, probably would, lack the nerve to give the word that should stretch his rival dead at his feet. Holt did not knew that only to an officer of the provost marshal was such unwelcome duty assigned, and that under no circumstances would it be saddled on a material witness. Notified that his request could not be granted, he asked that at least Lieutenant Malloy should be required to attend the execution. Even that ordeal might be too much for him and prompt him at the last moment to confess the truth, but Malloy had been sent with the other witnesses in haste to join their regiment, marching with McCook to the rescue of Louisville. Sheridan, too, they told him, was now at the head of a division. All so near, and yet, under the circumstances, powerless to aid him.

There dawned a day in late September when the clouds hung low upon the sodden earth, for the heavens had mercifully opened and poured out their torrents on the parched and thirsty hillsides, and drowned out the dense clouds of choking dust through which had been tramping steadily northward the long columns, gray or blue, all now one uniform shade of dirty white. The flag hung limp and heavy on Capitol Hill. The furrowed ridges to the south were crowned with low-lying mist. The coal smoke from the steamer funnels along the muddy banks flattened out across the surface of the swollen river. The skies still wept and all nature seemed in sad accord with the strange, solemn ceremony staged upon the open, undulating fields between the southward stretching pikes. In long blue lines, forming three sides of a hollow square and facing inward, a brigade had taken station and stood in silence and at rest. Behind them swarmed by hundreds the idlers of the camps, the negroes of the city streets, the curious, the morbid. In the center of the square a freshly turned mound of earth lay along a yawning, narrow rectangle—a new made grave. Shrill and wailing and to the accompaniment of the throb and roll of the mournful muffled drums the notes of Pleyel's hymn arose and fell on the heavy air, as into the square, with slow, funereal step, came marching a little column. Foremost the field musicians of the provost guard. Then a lieutenant with a dozen infantry, their arms reversed, their eyes downcast. Following came two staff officers in saddle, and then a two-horse team, with a long, open wagon, surrounded by guards with rifles loaded and on the shoulder. Within the wagon, from which all but the driver's seat had been removed, upon a long, rectangular box of unpainted pine, sat a young soldier in the union blue. The box nearly filled the length of the wagon, and somebody in authority, noticing this, and being possibly a deputy master of ceremonies for the occasion, had told the lone occupant to sit faced to the rear. Obediently, passively, he had submitted, and, with dark, mournful eyes, from which all light of earthly hope or fire of soldier protest had fled, he sat looking sadly over the crowded road and over the dripping fields—over the heads of the guards who followed close at the tailboards—guards whose very glances were furtive and ashamed when they glanced at all. In that solemn funeral procession there came but one more vehicle, a buggy, in which, seated beside the hired driver, was a gray-haired chaplain, whose lips seemed moving constantly, as though in prayer; whose eyes were often uplifted, as though imploring divine intercession; often closed, as though to shut out from sight the unutterable sadness of the young face before him; yet when they opened again were fixed upon it in tenderness and sympathy unspeakable. Six thousand strong, soldiers in rank, spectators in nudging, shouldering, neck-stretching, gaping swarms, the onlookers watched the coming of that mournful little cortege, and never dreamed that that very morning, for over half an hour, that gentle soldier of the cross had earnestly, eloquently, vehemently pleaded with the general at whose order death was to be dealt, despite the recommendation of the court for mercy, and had pleaded all in vain. "Cruel? Yes!" was he final answer. "But unless this army learns that death alone can be the punishment of the sentry who sleeps upon his post, something far more cruel will happen any night. I would not remit it were he my only son."

The head of the column had reached the grave, and there, irresolute, marked time. The provost marshal, charged with the execution of the sentence, sat in saddle, facing them, but knew not what to do. Every ceremony laid down in the regulations, guard mount, review or dress parade, these fellows of the army of the Ohio could be counted on to do without appreciable flaw. Without ceremony, too, had they done to death many a man along their blazing front, but this ceremonious shooting of a fellow soldier in cold blood, was another matter. One colonel, reining about, gave the command attention to his grave-faced line. The other two followed suit, and military propriety, so far as they were concerned, had been observed. It was the escort itself that seemed uncertain, and the column halted. Then the staff officer and the provost marshal rode together and compared notes and opinions, but none of the three had ever seen the like before, and the mode of procedure was not prescribed in the tactics. Just one thing the provost marshal knew, and that was, in case the firing party failed, through nervousness or deliberate design to kill the condemned man, it would become his duty to finish him with the pistol, and the provost marshal was wondering what his wife and children and fellow-citizens of Chicago would think of him as an amateur Caleraft, and prayed to God the volley might spare him—and not the prisoner.

Then the senior staff officer bade the drums and fifes strike up again and follow him. He led them twenty yards beyond the gaping mouth in the face of the field, filed them to the left, the escort followed, and presently he had them in line again, their backs to the center regiment, the grave in their front, and beyond them, 200 yards away, the upward slope of the Overton ridge to stop such bullets as might elude the living target. The wagon, too, reined to one side, the buggy followed, the chaplain, with brimming eyes, stepped slowly forward and extended a helping hand to the young soldier, who thanked him in low tone, but vaulted easily over the tailboard and stood erect, unbound unshackled, and took his place by the chaplain's side. The guard looked unhappily about them and the provost marshal, after a whisper with his associates, rode over and said in a low tone: "Get that—that box out, some of you, and bring it over here." It took personal orders from the sergeant to induce three of the guard to lay their rifles aside and sliding the long box over the creaking, protesting tailboard, to bear it over to the grave where, after much muttering talk and impatient gesticulation, it was placed close to the edge of and parallel with the cavity, the firing party meanwhile drearily looking on. Then, over at the right of the regiment, forming the east side of the square, a bugle sounded and a little cavalcade came riding into view. A general with four or five staff officers and half a dozen orderlies entered the square, but halted as soon as well within, as though unwilling to come closer to the scene. Then the marshal and his friends again took counsel. "I suppose you'll have to read the order," said he to the senior, "and—he ought to be at the coffin, oughtn't he?" he added, in a lower tone.

"Yes, and afterward he must be blindfolded,' answered the other, thanking God he didn't have to carry out his own suggestion.

"Chaplain, will you and—and the prisoner please step this way?" said the provost marshal. "Right here—yes, that's right," for the condemned soldier, calmly removing his cap, had taken the position of attention.

"Don't read—just yet," whispered the major to the assistant adjutant general, who, sitting very high on his horse, and clearing his throat, was glancing about at the three regimental lines, as though wondering if he was expected to make them all hear, and yet sit facing the prisoner. In the cuff of his gauntlet was tucked a copy of the fateful order, and he wanted to get through with his part of the business as quickly as possible. Then he could ride off back of the brigadier—anywhere out of sight or seeing. But the provost had bethought himself of another thing. One of the twelve rifles told off for the execution would be charged with only a blank cartridge, eleven with ball. One man was destined to fire a harmless shot. No man was to know which. Any man might, but for the kick, perhaps believe that his was the blank, and that, therefore, he had no part in the sad work. But how was this leading to be accomplished without their knowing? This was something the major realized he should have thought of before. Here, silent and somber, in line, stood the firing squad. There, huddled about the wagon, were the guards with their sergeant. An idea occurred to the officer: The rifles could be loaded by the guard while the condemned man was facing the adjutant general and listening to the long order that presently was to end his earthly career. Then guards and firing party could temporarily exchange. "Go ahead, captain," whispered he, "read the order." And, glancing about him at the dull blue ranks of the silent square, the staff officer again cleared his throat and nervously began.

With the first faltering words the clouds that had for a time retained their tears, began again slowly, but heavily, to weep. Two or three big drops pattered on the paper already shaking in the officer's hand. Holt, unbound, unfettered still, but bareheaded, stood calmly, sadly at attention, his dark eyes fixed upon the reader's face. The gray-haired chaplain had stepped forward and placed himself silently by the side of the condemned man. A young officer, the aide-de-camp who had borne the general's message to him, had announced his intention of standing by his comrade of cadet days, but unaccountably he had failed to appear. "I don't blame him," thought the chaplain, as he looked upon the solemn preparations. Off to one side, beyond the wagon, the provost marshal had moved the firing squad, and they were stacking arms. With pale, awe-stricken faces, the drummer boys stood gazing at the prisoner and listening in bewilderment to the long technicalities of charge and specification as the reader proceeded. Two officers with green sashes under their waist belts had come forward from the east side of the square, saluted the provost marshal and joined the group about the wagon, which had been moved a dozen yards back of the grave, so that the entire brigade, drawn up to witness the last ceremony and profit by the same, could to the last man have unobstructed view. All eyes seemed fastened on the little group in front of that freshly turned heap of earth and the bare pine box beside it—the mounted reader, the two silent listeners. Behind the adjutant general, a few paces retired, sat in saddles his comrades of the staff. Behind him fifty yards away, all its mounted officers on the flanks or in rear of the file closers, stood the center regiment. In the gap between its left flank and the band of the eastward battalion the brigade commander and his staff and orderlies were grouped, and as one of the latter rode forward and tendered a poncho to his chief and held his broad-brimmed black hat while the general poked his head through the slit and settled the rubber on his starred shoulders, another horseman, a young staff officer, rode swiftly in from the Franklin Pike and sat in saddle at a salute as the brigadier again straightened up. Not a word was exchanged. Significantly the aide pointed to an official envelope protruding from between the second and fifth button of his uniform coat. Significantly the general raised his gauntleted right hand and motioned toward the sumber little group out in the center of the square. The firing party had once more resumed their arms and stood at the wagon awaiting orders. The surgeon, with long, folded handkerchief in his hand, had stepped up in rear of the prisoner. It was the bandage prepared to blindfold his eyes, shutting out for the last time the blessed light of day. But surgeons both, the provost marshal, the associate staff officers, the chaplain, whose arm began to tremble violently, guards, firing party—all save Norman Holt and the reader, now found themselves staring at a new arrival, the aide-de-camp who came riding slowly forward and reined in just a little to the left rear of his senior's stirrup.

Solemnly the adjutant general read the closing words: "The proceedings, findings and sentence in the foregoing case of Private Norman Holt are approved and the sentence will be duly executed." Solemnly he read the fateful order requiring that the sentence be carried out in the presence of as many of the garrison as could be spared from their station, and when he dictated the general thought to have no less than a full division on the spot. Solemnly the date and time were announced and the provost marshal charged with the execution of the order, and with the last words, "By command of Major General Blank, B. F. Nemo, assistant adjutant general," the reader slowly folded his paper, turned and bowed to the provost marshal.

And then rode two yards farther to the front the ypung aide-de-camp, touched his cap and handed to his senior the envelope that nestled in the breast of his trim uniform coat. Eagerly it was grasped. Quickly it was torn open. With eyes that lighted with sudden joy and relief unutterable, the soldier read, and then the voice so choked and hoarse the moment before, rang out on the misty air like the clarion tone of the stirring call he loved, and over the sodden fields and away to the fog-wreathed ridges to the south, the thrilling voice proclaimed so that all men might hear and know and thank God with him:

"And now the commanding general directs me to declare that the prisoner stands pardoned and restored to duty by order of the president of the United States."

"Oh, may God bless Abraham Lincoln!" went up the cry from the chaplain's lips, as he clasped a reeling, swaying form in his strong and tender arms.

"HE FACED ABOUT SUDDENLY AND WE CONFRONTED EACH OTHER."

CHAPTER XVII.

The long-expected campaign on Kentucky soil had come and gone, much to the detriment of Kentucky and the betterment of nobody. Many a brave life went out in the crash of battle along the Chaplin hills and both commanding generals, Bragg and Buell, were the losers by the luckless fight. Bragg, who had been vehemently urged to invade the state and promised that thousands of enthusiastic young Kentuckians would flock to his standard, fell back into Tennessee, disgusted. Unreasoning hotheads among his advisers, prominent among them Dr. Holt, had insisted that the sight of the St. Andrew's cross waving through the blue grass country was all that was needed to turn the tide. The invaders brought with them to Frankfort a new governor and state officers, there to be installed in pomp and ceremony. But the shotted guns of Sill's division answered the roar of their saluting cannon and shelled the aspirants out of the state house before their seats had time to warm. Twenty thousand new rifles brought Bragg with which to arm the young Kentuckians and he was in big luck to be able to take them back, for the Kentuckians failed to come to claim them, barring several stalwart regiments in union blue. Brave, brilliant and admirably supported by his corps and division commanders, the southern general had been grievously misled by over-confident Kentuckians within his ranks and in bitterness of spirit he abused the state, declared it not worth fighting for and found that he had not only left the "dark and bloody ground" more loyal than when he entered it, but had lost in marked degree the confidence and loyalty of many of his gallant men. So far as the south was concerned the campaign was a failure. So far as Kentucky was concerned it had cost her dear, for many an old homestead in the track of the battling armies lay in ruins. And so far as the union arms were concerned they, too, had suffered through dissensions in high quarters and no sooner were the southern legions safely back in Tennessee than the army of the Ohio, little lamenting, either, so stern had been his methods, was taken from the man who made it and given to another. It is one thing to mold and make, to drill and discipline a great command; it is another to lead and fight it, as a long-suffering president and commander-in-chief of the land and sea forces of the union had abundant reason to know. Both east and west and almost at the same time the army of the Potomac and that of the Ohio lost their old leaders and were launched into battle with a new. Meanwhile there had been opportunity for many a cavalier son of Kentucky to revisit in confederate gray the home of his youth and love, and for one brief fortnight Belleview and Asholt, lying well within the broad pathway of Bragg's invasion and to the east of Buell's racing column, awoke from the lethargy of the year and once more rang with martial voices and soldier revelry. Once more the rejoicing host, hastening homeward with the army, threw open the door and welcomed the gallant comrades of his first-born son. With eager enthusiasm the doctor had followed the movements of Bragg's marching hosts, never for an instant doubting the result, and rallying about him the old retainers, faithful even in his exile, he filled manor and stables with man and beast from each successive division on its northward way and lavished on officer and soldier, on mount and mule, the best that Belleview afforded. He waited with mad impatience the announcement that Louisville had fallen before the advance guard and was amazed to hear that Sill had whipped the new governor, "the only rightful governor, sah," out of Frankfort, and, worse still, that Bragg was falling back. He listened to the thunder of the guns at Perryville, at first with wild elation, then with harrowing doubt, for when nightfall came the dull booming died away and the roads began to choke with ambulances seeking shelter for wounded officers and men. At midnight there had come to him a line saying that already the trains were moving away southeastward and it was high time for him to follow. What, Bragg beaten! Kentucky abandoned! Belleview again to be left to the scant mercy of invading Yankee hordes! "By heaven, it is horrible!" he said. "I will not go! I'll stay and fight! Where is my son, my Henry?" he demanded. "Send him to me instantly! Say his father bids him come and fight for Belleview. Bragg is a coward! Bragg is a traitor! Bragg has betrayed us!" he raged. And the young staff officer who bore from General Polk the brief words of advice besought old Harkless to send at once for Dr. Woodrow—he dreaded an apoplectic seizure—and Woodrow came and sought to sooth and counsel, only adding to the fury of the broken old squire. Not until the night was nearly spent and the cavalry detachment was resaddling on the lawn, was he induced to enter his carriage and be driven eastward. Even then it took stratagem to bring it about. "You must get him away," said Woodrow. "If captured he will be sent to some northern prison, and that will kill him." The matter was settled by the entry of one of the troopers with a letter only just written on the kitchen table while the host was raging in the library, but it was dated at Stanford, 7 p. m., and all it said was: "Major H. C. Holt seriously wounded. Just brought in. Come to him as soon as possible." And was signed "Polk, surgeon, C. S. A." Before the dawn the broken-spirited father was jolted away in the old family carriage, behind a pair of mules, Belleview's last remaining horses having disappeared when the Holts fled to Nashville, and once they had him well within the encircling force of Bragg's slowly retreating column there was no turning back, even when it was ascertained that Henry had escaped without a scratch, and that "Polk, surgeon," was a myth. Then the doctor would gladly have shot the vile forger, but in his agitation he had left the forgery on the library table, where Harkless found it on the following day, and where, two weeks later, he laid it in the hands of a sorrowing young soldier in union blue—Norman Holt returned at last to look upon what was left of the once beautiful and ever-beloved home.

"YOU SHOT HIM."

His father again gone! His brother again wounded, this time seriously! His home dismantled, fences burned, lawn and shrubbery disfigured by reckless hands and trampling hoofs, outbuildings stripped, stables, kennels and coach house partially destroyed, while within doors desolation, if not desecration, reigned everywhere! Woodrow and other old friends had packed up books and pictures, silver, china and glassware and for love of the Holts and in hopes of better days stored it all away in loyal lofts and cellars. But the noble old furniture, the carpets, the curtains and hangings had already been sadly defaced, and who could say what might happen next? Sheridan's division, sorely hammered at Perryville, was camping all about it, resting for a day on the slow, westward march to Bowling Green, whither Buell directed his column after escorting Bragg to Cumberland Gap, and Sheridan himself had slept within Belleview's walls and stationed sentries to see that no harm befell it while his fighters filled the neighboring fields. And with that snappy young division commander there rode now as inspector general on his staff the youthful aide-de-camp who had so befriended Norman in the bitter days of his trial and incarceration at Nashville, who, next to the old chaplain, was the first to wring his hand and welcome him to life, to freedom, to new opportunity. Even in the busy days of the pursuit and the recuperation after Perryville, Sheridan had found time to listen to Captain Ransom's vivid account of that dramatic scene and of the trial and tribulations that preceded it, and now the little general's sympathies were fully aroused and his efforts in Norman's behalf were redoubled. An order had earlier been obtained granting the young soldier a month's furlough, for by this time his history, his high connections and his sufferings were matters that were the talk of half the army. The Enyarts had opened their hospitable doors to him at Louisville, despite the fact that already they had three wounded officers beneath their roof. Captain Bob, recovering slowly, had eagerly questioned their soldier guest as to any knowledge he might have concerning the influence brought to bear upon the president. On this point Enyart seemed oddly inquisitive. A stern war secretary had declared such sentence must be executed or all discipline fail. East and west such sentences had been carried out, yet here in the case of Norman Holt, where the evidence seemed conclusive, at the last moment, the great, the merciful, the sorrowing, suffering, overweighted head of the nation had interposed and pardoned. Who could have gained his ear?

It was something Norman himself greatly longed to know. The Lanes were again in Cincinnati, so Mrs. Enyart had learned, and there the major and judge advocate was convalescing. The Rays had returned to Lexington as soon as Bragg's forces fell back and they heard of Kate Ray nobly, assiduously laboring in the hospitals, nursing our sick and wounded—ours whether blue or gray. Enyart begged his mother to write and urge their coming again to Louisville and the mother promised, but could she not minister to her only son without another's help? And, if that other came, might not the mother's hand, dear as it was, be—no, no, not spurned, but set aside for the sake of another? With unerring eyes she had seen signs and symptoms in her brave boy that told their tale almost before he himself knew what they meant. Kate was a fine girl, a noble girl, she admitted, but Bob was her all and how many a mother thinks her only son almost too good for almost any woman, when it is apt to be just the other way! Now, if Henry Holt were only left wounded at Lexington or Harrodsburg, or somewhere—how suitable that might be! Bob was for having Norman go to fetch them. They could be so much more comfortable than in Lexington, overcrowded as it must be with sick and wounded. But Norman had been only twenty-four hours within their gates when he set forth again on matters of his own. Reporting at the commanding general's he had received the necessary pass and papers to permit his visiting Belleview and had gone forthwith. It was but a sorrowful reminder of the old home in which "young marse" now modestly strove to do the honors to the fiery, restless, nettlesome division commander who had espoused his cause. It was strange indeed that he, the younger son, and still a private soldier upon the rolls, should welcome to Belleview, and then, seated in his father's place, become the host of a union general and his staff. The civilian garb old Harkless had carefully preserved for him needed longer sleeves, yet hung loosely about the thinned flank, for suffering and privation had sorely reduced him. But hope was again kindling his brave young eyes, for the long withheld opportunity was coming. Sheridan had not appealed in vain.

And then the division went on its westward way and only stragglers appeared for several days at Belleview. Norman had written at once to the Rays, apprising them of his father's recent movements and of Henry's serious wound, and begged them to ascertain through friends at Harrodsburg whether the latter had been left with other wounded or carried along with Bragg's retreat. Woodrow, accused now of being a southern sympathizer, with certain of Asholt's citizens, had fled Tennesseeward until the union troops were once more grouped about Glasgow and along the railway. And so it happened that there was no one to undeceive Norman during the few days he remained at Belleview, packing and storing such property as might still be rescued. The overseer knew not how to treat him. It was understood among the townsfolk and the neighbors that Norman stood disinherited, yet, with the father and elder brother both away, who to question his authority? Among the darkies, still hovering about the old home, there was universal love for young Marse Norman, and they were eager to do his bidding.

But the month would soon expire. There was still a most important matter to be settled. He had written to Major Lane, most courteously, yet pointedly, asking for an accounting. He felt that there should be money coming to him from the few thousands still left of his father's modest fortune, but not for a year had Lane remitted a dollar. New money was needed for Belleview and himself. He much disliked to importune, but it had to be done.

And he had waited ten days for the reply. None came. None had been received at Louisville, and no time was to be lost. Norman decided on returning at once to department headquarters and obtaining permission to go to Cincinnati. That night came a banging at Belleview's door that would have waked sounder sleepers than Norman Holt. In the moonlight without, with panting horses, stood a brace of troopers. Old Harkless shuffled down and admitted the bearer of an official looking letter, and Norman met him at the stairs.

"This was forwarded to camp from Bowling Green, sir," said the orderly, with a touch of his cap, "and the colonel sent us over with it, as it was marked immediate and important."

The blood flew to Norman's face even before he saw the superscription. That "sir" and the accompanying salute told their story. The packet was addressed to Lieutenant Norman Holt, —th Kentucky Volunteer infantry, care commanding general Eleventh division, and it was hard to repress the gasp of delight with which he read it. An officer at last! and, best of all, with a regiment from his own beloved state! Who but Sheridan could have done this? How could he sufficiently thank him? He tore open the packet, and there was the prized commission—a first lieutenant's, too—all duly signed and sealed, and with it were other missives: One from Ransom, whose handwriting he knew at once, and therefore opened it first. "The general bids me send this, with his hearty congratulations, to which I beg leave to add mine," wrote the young captain. "He had a chance to speak to the governor. McCook backed him up in his big-hearted way, and the thing was done. It's a bully regiment, too, and most of its officers are gentlemen to whom your name is well known. See the mustering officer in Louisville quick as you can, and at the expiration of your thirty days' leave report at or enroute for Nashville. Oddly enough you will be brigaded with your old comrades of the ——th Ohio."

In the same brigade was the old regiment! To meet day after day, as equals and associates now, the officers whom he had been wont to greet with such deference and soldierly show of respect! Above all, to meet Malloy, no longer his superior—to meet him on the same plane! Norman's eyes blazed, his hands clinched at the thought. But first, he was master at Belleview, and standing in his father's stead. "Harkless, see to it that a hot supper is got ready for three at once and show the orderlies where they can stable their horses. You shall have the best we've got, but the war has played havoc with Belleview."

He was alone when he opened the next letter—a queer looking affair at best, but filed to the brim with loyal and affectionate greeting. It was from old Gaffney, who had been among the first to get the news and shout aloud in his joy.

"Just wa'nt the boys be proud when I tell them!" wrote he. "And I'm going on the minute I finish this. Sure wasn't it blessed luck that brought me to Sheridan's headquarters when the mail got in! We'll have you close by us, Norman, my lad, and bedad I'll see to it Malloy doesn't get away till you come to pull the nose of him. What d'ye think, Norman, will he try to quit? O, that reminds me. You know they've sent young Lane back to the company at Louisville when we went through before Perryville (that we only heard from beyant Harrodsburg—bad scran to it!) and when Malloy would have coddled him and kept him out of the ranks, I set him to drilling again. He was never cut out for a soldier, that boy. He was nothing but a ne'er-do-well anyhow. They put him on wagan guard on the march over from Crab Orchard and bedad, when he answered to his name at Cave City he wasn't there at all at all. Brennan, who was too sick and left back at Greensburg, said he came in and got $5 off of him after the wagons went through, and now he's dropped as a deserter, with his own father ordered for duty as judge advocate of the Department of the Cumberland. I'm thinkin' that boy makes nothing but trouble for everybody."

(To be Continued.)

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