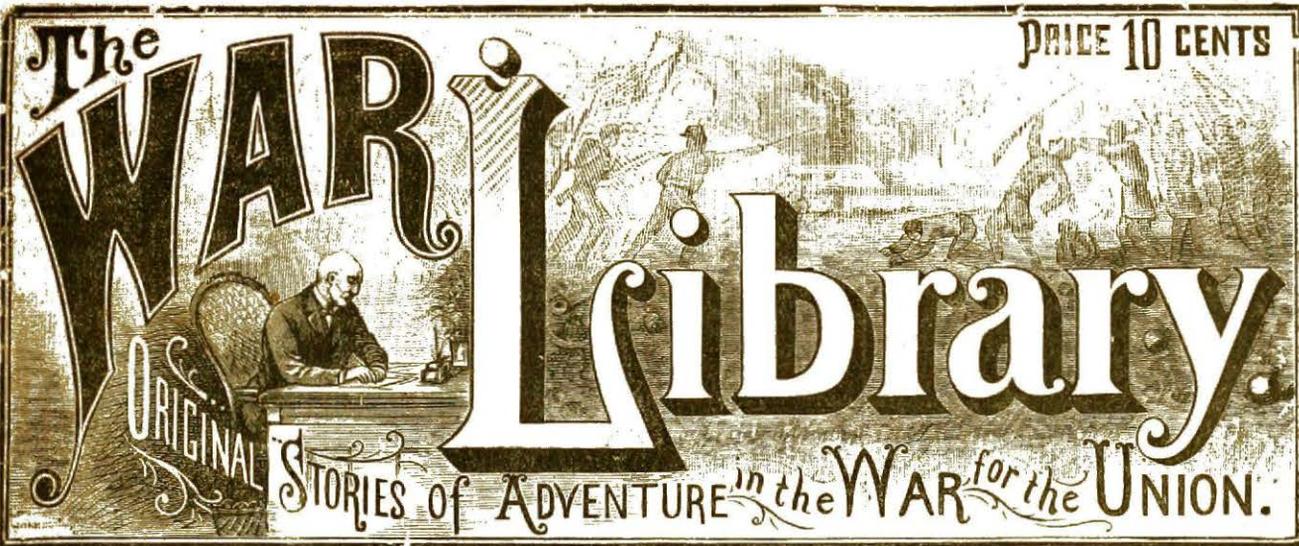


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NO. 233.

# Phil, the Scout; or, A Fight for Beauregard's Dispatches

BY CAPTAIN ILIAN VERNE.

**A Story of Pittsburg Landing.**



Phil Lamonte, the Union scout, capturing the Confederate dispatch-bearer.

## PHIL, THE SCOUT;

—OR,—

## A Fight for Beauregard's Dispatches

A Lively Story of Shiloh's Bloody Field.

BY CAPTAIN ILIEN VERNE.

## CHAPTER I.

## A STILLETTO.

A stormy night in Western Tennessee.

Desolate though the scene was and full of evil suggestions, on this night a man was crouching in the shadows of the low growing trees surrounding a handsome Southern residence.

He had been an hour in making his way up from the highway, which stretched, heavy and black, toward the Tennessee River, for in every direction about the building ran the beats of vigilant rebel sentinels, guarding the quarters of Colonel Fontneroy.

Now flat on his face, crawling over the cold wet grass, now dashing quickly across a narrow opening, and now dodging into the shade of some dense growth of shrubbery, the bird of the tempest had finally reached a point from which, by extreme care, he could peer through the window, half hidden by a thick ivy-vine, into the room where sat the Confederate colonel.

As he pulls aside the dripping vine the light from within falls for an instant full in his face.

It is that of a man who has been hunting for something till every line on his countenance is plowed deep with watchful anxiety—a face in which may be traced determination unyielding, vigilance untiring and bravery undaunted.

Could we have seen his entire form we would mark how uncouth yet serviceable was the attire he wore; how unkempt was his whole appearance, like that of one whose own hands alone performed the task of preparing and keeping in order the garments which sheltered him from wind and tempest.

As this singular man turned his gaze upon the face of Colonel Fontneroy, a glare came into his eyes like that seen in those of a beast hungry for prey, and a smile almost ghastly in its hideousness lighted up his hard features.

Hark! He whispers!

"Aha! At last, at last, my brave colonel, I have found you! Found you! Ay, and to-night shall you learn of my presence, and know that my vow is not forgotten. Will this be the last time I visit you? No; I must see you still nearer; must meet you face to face, and wring from your accursed lips the words for which I have waited so long. And yet, may not my waiting for this, cheat me of my purpose? If I thought it—but no; it shall not be done now. I will wait. Justice is on my side. Ha! he is not alone. Well, it matters not."

The hand of the stranger sought his breast. A moment later it held a weapon which glittered in the lamp light as it shimmered through the damp leaves.

He stroked it lovingly, as one might fondle a child, and muttered words inaudible to all but himself.

Inside that room the rebel colonel had sat alone all the evening long.

His pen had traced page after page, hurriedly, till there lay on the table before him a pile of manuscript wet with ink.

Once or twice the door had opened softly. An inquiry had been made, and an answer given.

When the hands of the clock on the mantel denoted ten a footstep woke the colonel from his labor.

Looking up quickly he saw a fair young lady, with eyes and hair dark as midnight, and lips of the loveliest red.

"Laura!" he exclaimed, springing up and seizing the hand she extended toward him with a smile.

"Yes, Laura," she replied. "You did not expect me."

"Through this storm, no. Why should I? It seems almost madness in you to attempt it. See, you are drenched through and through."

He lifted her cape, which was indeed wet, as if it had been dipped in the river.

"Pshaw! What care I for such a storm as this! Why, this is grand. It is only the lightning which makes me tremble. When such tempests come I hide away out of reach of the gleam and roar. To-night is nothing.

Can you not guess why I have come here to-night?"

There was something in the tone and the look which made the heart of the Confederate officer leap madly.

Well did he know what had brought Laura Doane thither in spite of night and storm.

"I can guess, Laura," he said, his voice assuming a gentler tone. "But don't you think it a great deal to risk? How did you pass the guard?"

"I had some trouble, that is true. Your men hold their watch over you well, Colonel Fontneroy must be much beloved by them. It was only by producing the letter you sent me last that I was allowed to come within the lines. You remember in that you gave me some instructions to follow in case I should ever want to come here?"

"Did I? I had almost—"

"Forgotten it, you mean," interrupted the girl, seeing him hesitate for an instant. There was a tone of reproach in her voice.

"No—no; I did not mean that; but you see I have been so busy of late. It would not be surprising if some things did escape my memory, would it?"

"If you are satisfied with your explanation, I surely ought to be. You men do not think so much about these things as we do."

Laura Doane was watching the face of her lover closely. Did she mistrust him?

We shall see.

The colonel bit his lip.

It was evident that he felt disturbed. The girl came to the rescue.

"But your letter served me well. It gained me entrance here."

"And you bring us news."

"No. I did not come for that. There is nothing new outside. The Union troops are resting still. When they do strike, the blow will be terrible."

"Skeptical as ever in regard to the justness of our cause, I see. If I were to tell you that we strike first, what then?"

"Colonel Fontneroy, I believe that right is on the side of the Confederates. You have not heard me say aught to the contrary. What I do say is, secession never will prevail. It becomes more and more evident every hour. Disaster is all that awaits you."

"You forget that our people are becoming more thoroughly aroused than at any previous time since the war opened. When churches, court houses and every public institution give up their bells for use in founding cannon, it shows that the hearts of our citizens believe in rebellion, and will stand by it to the last."

"Yes, I remember all this; but let me ask if that metal ever reached the founderies? You know, as well as I, that it fell at once into the hands of the Unionists. So ends your beautiful illustration. Night rests with the North. It will crush out this loyal, patriotic South. Look at what you have just lost at Fort Douelson and Island Number Ten! It will always be thus hereafter."

The Confederate colonel remained silent for a moment.

The reference to these recent disasters to the Confederate arms chafed him.

"And I have come to-night to ask you once more if you will not give up this fighting. It is against fate and against reason."

"Laura!"

"It would kill me if anything happened to you. I know it."

There shown in the girl's eyes a tender light which could not be mistaken. Interpreting it, the Confederate winced and moved in his chair uneasily.

Still the girl bent her piercing gaze upon him.

"You do not really wish me to stop where I am now, do you? I have great hopes for the future."

"Hopes greater than facts warrant. Don't think I want to blight any real ambition of yours. Forgive me, won't you, for saying this? But I cannot think you are truly desirous of following this life. If it should, by any chance, lead to the glory you dream of, do you believe it would satisfy you?"

"You have too many questions to-night, Laura," said Fontneroy, rising hastily, and beginning to pace the room. "I can state my position in this matter very briefly. The South has right on its side. I feel that I ought to do all I can to aid her cause; and, God helping me, I will not swerve from what I deem a duty."

"So you prefer to forget those who love you, if need be, put them far out of mind, that you may gratify this blind ambition! Well, it may."

"You wrong me; I do not forget my friends. I think of you often, Laura."

"As a friend, only?"

It was wonderful how quickly she grasped at every word, which tended to show that the love she bore him was not fully returned by this haughty Southerner. Her passionate nature demanded, measure for measure, the affection she gave. And it was evident she would brook no trifling.

"Laura, dearest, I cannot understand why you speak thus," said Fontneroy, seeming to throw aside all restraints, and speaking in a different manner than he had assumed in the course of the interview. "You know I look upon you as my dearest friend. Don't pain me by your unjust words. I cannot retrace my steps, now the war is upon us. I hold a position of trust, and would be a traitor were I to abandon it. I am sure your prophecy of evil will not be fulfilled. We now have on foot a scheme, the issue of which will, I doubt not, turn the tide in our favor. I cannot speak further of our plans, even to you; but I ask you only to wait patiently a few days longer before you abandon hope of our success."

"I could wait forever for anything you ask!" the girl said, as she lifted the hand of the Confederate to her lips. "Perhaps I am down-hearted to-night. I cannot drive away from my heart the feeling that harm will come to you if you do not let war go and come back to me."

"I will come back to you with love all the stronger for waiting; and I can't help thinking you will be glad to share the glory I am winning, too, by and by."

"Give me the love and you may keep the glory!" said the girl, gently, as she rested her head for a moment on the breast of the rebel officer. Then springing up she said quickly:

"I must be away. I have staid too long already. Molly will scold me soundly for this anyway."

"Ah! Molly. She is still with you, then?"

"Oh, yes; the dear girl is so devoted to me that she cannot endure it if I am out of her sight an instant."

"She hopes to convert you, maybe, to her political belief."

"It cannot be done. Even Molly is admitting it at last." Then she heard a footstep outside, and placing her hand in that of Fontneroy, whispered:

"Good-night, dearest. Do be very careful, for my sake!"

Another instant and she was gone.

Colonel Fontneroy threw himself into his chair, and placing his hands upon his forehead muttered to himself:

"What a demon I am! Heavens, how that girl can love. Had I known it sooner—why, it is like playing with fire to even suggest that I am not hers body and soul. What can I do? Certainly there must be some end to this. I ought to have told her long ago. If her evil words should come true—"

The words died on his lips.

The sharp ring of a pistol woke the night air.

Colonel Fontneroy threw up his arms wildly, and uttered a terrible cry, then fell headlong across his table.

Through the window before him, which had been slightly raised, something fluttered to the floor.

A close view revealed the fact that it was a stiletto.

It pinned to the carpet a piece of paper.

## CHAPTER II.

## ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

The same night.

Not far from the hour when the Confederate colonel was engaged in conversation with Laura Doane, a man rode hurriedly up the gravel walk leading from the road.

Flinging himself from the saddle, he spoke a single word to the soldier who confronted him at the door and sprang up the steps.

As the light from within fell upon him it revealed the face of a young man, clad in the gray uniform adopted by the Confederacy.

He was handsome as an Apollo, with a form which seemed built for deeds of bravery and endurance. His eyes, dark and piercing, seemed to take in at a single glance the entire room and its occupants, and a smile curled his lip, as he strode to the great fire blazing in the old-fashioned fire-place.

Seeming to recognize in the new-comer a man who would demand at once respect and obedience, the group about the sparkling fire made way for him, and for some moments contented themselves in surveying him from head to foot in a manneravoring much of suspicion.

It was a time when both Union and Confederate troops were every moment on their guard against character whose movements or appearance in any manner indicated that they were not what they represented themselves.

Especially was this true of the men who stood and sat under the roof beneath which the young stranger had just come.

Seemingly unconscious of the scrutiny bestowed upon him, the man stood for some minutes passing and repassing his hands through the genial flames, his eyes fixed before him, as if his thoughts were for the moment on things far distant.

"Been out some time, I reckon," finally ventured one of the bystanders after waiting some time for the stranger to break the silence, which had fallen over the room when he entered it.

Starting up from his reverie the young man replied, with a laugh:

"Look like it, don't I?"

At the same moment he cast a glance down at his high cavalry boots now heavily splattered with mud, and his garments steaming before the fire.

"Yes, I have had a long ride. A long ride, gentlemen, and such a one as I don't want again on a night like this. Ugh! what a storm!"

As the words were spoken, a gust of wind hurled the rain in sheets against the windows of the fine old mansion with a mournful sound; and almost involuntarily those present crept nearer the wide open fireplace.

"From what place have you come this evening, stranger?" continued the first speaker, evidently of a more inquiring turn than his companions. "You see, we're anxious to get any news from outside just at present."

The young man replied without a moment's hesitation:

"I came last from Island Number Ten."

"Ah!"

Something almost like a groan run around the assemblage at mention of this place, the scene of recent disaster to the Confederate forces.

"The name seems familiar to most of you. Were any of you there the other day?"

"Every man of us," was the reply; "and, stranger, we don't like the sound of the word, naturally. But how is it that you're getting here at such a late day? There must be something up. What delayed you so long?"

There was a tone of suspicion in the voice. It was bound to come out.

Noticing the expression very speedily, the stranger drew himself up before the fire.

"You don't suspect me, I hope."

"Who said we did?" was the somewhat short query. "The question was civil enough. What fault have you to find with it?"

"Who is in command here?"

The tone was one which admitted of no delay.

"This house is the quarters of Colonel Fontneroy at present," said one of the company, who had not spoken up to this moment. "I have the honor to have command of the guard to-night."

"Then you're the man I want to see. It is plain that some of those fellows suspect me. What reason they have for it is more than I can imagine, unless it be on general principles. I want to tell you that no man here has purer Southern blood in his veins than I. I am a citizen of the soil on which we now stand. I was born here and spent my boyhood among these hills. But I am not going to ask you to take my word for it. Look at these papers, please; they will tell you all you want to know about me."

With these words he placed in the hands of the Confederate officer a package of letters.

Hastily running them over, the captain gave them back to the young man, and turning to his subordinates, said:

"It's all right, boys; this man is entitled to our confidence. He has letters from headquarters to Colonel Fontneroy."

Then he added, addressing the stranger:

"I am afraid the colonel is too busy tonight to see you. I don't suppose you will care about waiting till morning."

"Certainly not. But I must see him early. It is of great importance that the object of my coming should not be delayed a moment longer than can be avoided."

Apparently accepting the words of their leader as final, and removing all reasonable doubt as to his loyalty, the Confederates at once renewed the free and easy conversation in which they had been interrupted.

The warm fire seemed conducive to gar-

dulity, and the tendency was increased by the sound of the heartless rain outside.

Perceiving that he had succeeded in dispelling suspicion, the young man seated himself beside the Confederate captain, who said, in an apologetic manner:

"You can't wonder that our men are becoming more and more watchful regarding strangers. This vicinity is overrun with Union spies at present. Every day they are being run in. These parts are getting too hot for them, however, and I think they'll begin to give us a wide birth soon."

The young stranger acquiesced. Who that knew the situation would have thought it strange that the Confederates used every possible means in their power to conceal their movements from the eagle eyes of the indomitable Union general who was even at that moment hastening to supercede them at Corinth?

There had been in the late repulses sustained by the Confederates, other lessons than those conveyed by the overwhelming losses of life and treasure, lessons which they intended to make available in the future.

Foremost among these lessons was this: Secrecy regarding every operation, however insignificant.

This, primarily, was the reason why such watch was kept up along the lines. But how little did this resolution ultimately avoid, history tells us in words so plain that no repetition is needed.

Everywhere the scouts of the Union forces penetrated the most carefully guarded camp of the Confederates; everywhere the actions of their own troops were followed as by gaze omnipotent, and in every unsuspected quarter they found that they had not been so sly that the wary Unionists had not detected them.

For a moment silence fell upon the group. The eyes of the young man still rested upon the fire in apparent unconcern at the continued gaze kept up by the soldiers about him.

"Too much care cannot be exercised in this matter," he said, at length. "It is frequently the case that men we least suspect are closest on our trail. I judge something is afoot among you, captain," he continued, turning suddenly toward the man he addressed. "I had not a little difficulty myself in passing the sentry to-night, though I had the countersign and these letters to back me. At one time I thought I was about to fail. What is the meaning of such extraordinary precautions?"

"Ah! then you have not heard the latest? You are far behind the times."

"How should I be aware of anything which is passing here? You forget, captain, that I am just in from a long absence."

There gathered more closely about the couple a half score of Confederate privates. Among them was the man from whose lips had proceeded the words of suspicion when the stranger first entered the room.

Unaware to him, the never resting glance of the young man had seen in this man, actions which he did not like.

He knew from them that the letters he had showed the captain upon the strength of which he had been proclaimed worthy of confidence, had not removed from his path one who would prove an enemy, and who would not hesitate to strike him at the first opportunity.

The question asked by the young man had the effect of bringing this individual to the side of the captain.

Leaning over his shoulder as he sat in front of the grate, he whispered something in the officer's ear.

From the muttered oath which the captain uttered when he heard the words spoken, could be inferred that he placed no reliance in them.

With a gesture of impatience he returned to his conversation with the young man at his side.

As he did so the soldier thus thrust from the captain strode quickly, though quietly out of the room.

Silently though this little piece of acting had been going on, there had not the slightest part of it escaped the notice of the stranger, but nothing in his manner betrayed that fact.

He listened in apparent unconcern to what the captain was saying.

"You understand that this matter must be kept a profound secret with you," the Confederate said. "If it should get to the ears of the Yanks it would ruin everything. We can depend upon you?"

"Sir, what more can I say to satisfy you upon that point?" demanded the young man, sternly, and with the air of one who

feels his pride insulted. "I tell you again, I am to the manor born. I am by birth and early education one of you."

Rebuked thus, the captain continued:

"In yonder room sits Colonel Fontneroy, who, though inferior in rank to General Beauregard, is really his superior as a soldier. By him has there been devised a plan by which we hope to do much toward regaining what we have lost within the past few weeks. This very night a messenger went out of this camp bearing dispatches."

"Dispatches? To whom?"

"Valuable information and instructions to Van Dorn and Price. Within two hours after they receive those dispatches, there will be on the move a force of men which will enable Beauregard to carry out the plan just referred to."

"And that is—"

"Nothing less than—"

"Gentlemen, I proclaim yonder villain a Union spy! Arrest him on the spot!"

The words sent a thrill through the heart of every man present, and all turned toward the speaker.

Hardly had the sound of his voice ceased to ring through the room when the young stranger thus accused cleared the group at a single bound, and before a step could be taken to arrest his course he stood at the door.

Whirling when the opening had been reached, he displayed in each hand a gleaming revolver.

Leveling them upon the Confederates, he exclaimed in a clear voice, which sounded to those present like the tones of the trumpet of doom:

"I am what that man has called me. I will say more. I told you I was born among you. It was true. I stand at this moment under the roof of the house where I first saw light. I have a right to say what I will here, and I shall do it. I am Phil Lamonte, the son of old Jared. I see you remember him and me. I have come back here to find my home held by a band of traitors. Take it and do as you will with it. When you want me, seek me on the track of the messenger, who is bearing the dispatches to Price and Van Dorn!"

The next moment the intrepid youth bounded down the steps and out into the darkness.

Just then a shot sounded in the room of Colonel Fontneroy!

### CHAPTER III.

#### BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

When Laura Doane left the presence of Colonel Fontneroy she ran down the walk, stopping not until she reached the road. Here she groped about in the darkness till she found the horse, which had brought her thither, fastened to a sapling but a few paces from the gateway.

Springing lithely upon the animal's back, she galloped away through the storm.

Only a short distance had she gone, however, when the sound of the shot fired by the night bird through the window in the room of the Confederate officer, rung through the air.

Drawing up her horse the girl turned her head in the direction of the noise and listened long and earnestly.

"A shot!" she whispered, "and from the Lamonte mansion. What can it mean? At this hour it bodes no good. I tremble at everything which even hints that evil may befall my lover yonder. I must know what called forth that report. Am I foolish? Fond heart, be still! Nothing shall harm him I love. It must not, must not be!"

In an instant she had wheeled the animal sharply about, and dashed madly back over the course she had just covered.

Nearing the mansion the sound of voices commanding and the thunder of heavy footsteps fell upon her ear. Lights flashed everywhere. The entire grounds about the great building seemed alive with troops.

As the girl was leaving the road for the walk leading to the door, a hand was laid on the bridle of her horse, and a soldier said:

"You cannot pass. Any attempt to do so will prove fatal to you!"

"But I must pass!" exclaimed the girl.

"You know me. I am Laura Doane."  
"Did you tell me you are the daughter of General Beauregard himself I would not let you enter now. In fact, I am not sure that I ought not to arrest you till we know the source of that shot up yonder just now. You came from the mansion just a moment ago?"  
"I did."

"And from the presence of Colonel Fontneroy?"

"Yes. But why do you ask? Has evil befallen him? Speak, quick."

"He was shot in his room by some one unknown. That is all I can tell you."

"Shot!" shrieked the girl, wildly. "Shot, and you will not let me see him. I must go on! Remove your hand or I will strike you. You know not what you are doing."

She raised her riding whip as she spoke, and urged her horse onward up the drive. But the soldier retained his grasp and half a dozen companions leaped to his assistance.

The horse reared frantically and almost unseated the girl. Another cry of terror broke from her lips.

Through the darkness suddenly there plunged a horseman, before whom the Confederates retreated in haste. The blows he dealt from side to side about him with the butt of a heavy pistol fell with such violence that no one dared to stand before them.

"Unhand that woman!" he said, in a low, commanding tone. "You have no right to beset her in this way. Back, you scoundrel, or I will strike you down!" he exclaimed, thrusting himself upon the spot where a rebel was holding the girl's horse by the bridle.

Startled by this unexpected and vigorous attack the man dropped his hand and crept back into the shadow of a thick cypress.

Then grasping the reins himself, the stranger guided the animal he rode and that upon which the girl was seated back into the highway.

Stupefied for the moment, Laura remained silent in her saddle, wondering who this unknown person was.

It was only when they were far out of reach of danger that she said:

"I do not know who you are, sir, but I must thank you for your kindness, and beg you to leave me now. I am beyond any possible harm now, and I must return to the house yonder."

"Return! Madness. It would be but to rush into deepest peril. Have you not seen that already? Pardon me for refusing to grant your request. It is not through any wrong intention on my part that I do it."

"You do not understand—I cannot tell you my reason for asking what I do. I must know the truth about the shot I heard at the mansion. Colonel Fontneroy is—"

"Say no more, miss. I know what you would say; and I promise you shall soon know what you wish. We must go on now, however, as every moment this place is becoming more dangerous. The Confederates will be swarming in every direction presently. If you will accept my attendance home, then I will return and ascertain all I can about the matter."

Silently acquiescing, the girl urged her steed forward at the top of his speed.

She felt she could trust herself in the hands of this man, and relying upon the thought she determined to give him his own way.

The house occupied by the Doanes was a beautiful one, standing several rods from the highway, in the midst of grounds the loveliest of the vicinity.

When the two reached it, the stranger turned up the path as if he had been acquainted with the locality for a lifetime.

The wonder of Laura was momentarily deepening.

Who was this stranger?

Bringing their horses to a standstill before the door, they dismounted.

Hardly had they done so when a flood of light streamed through the opening, and a young girl holding a lamp high above her head met them.

"Laura, oh, Cousin Laura! You don't know what a fright you have given us all. Why, we have hunted high and low for you, you naughty girl, all this great house over. And when we found that Tom was gone from the stable we gave you up for lost."

"Molly, I wish I were lost. Oh, why must it be! Why must it have happened!"

Rushing up the steps and past the astonished girl, who stood holding the light, Laura disappeared in the house.

Flinging herself, all wet and cold as she was, upon a sofa she gave way to a passionate outburst of tears.

Molly, with a sad expression on her pretty face, turned toward the young man who still kept his position at the foot of the steps, saying, in a choked voice:

"Sir, you must know something about the cause of my cousin's grief. Tell me, I pray you, what has taken place to pain her so."

Advancing a little so that the light rested full on his features, the stranger was about

to reply when Molly sprang forward, a cry of surprise escaping her.

"Phil!" she exclaimed.

The young man held out his hand.

"Yes, Molly, it is I, though I hardly expected you would know me."

"Know you! Oh, Phil! As if I ever could forget you! Come in out of the rain and tell me how it happens that you are here to-night, and what is the matter with Laura."

Phil Lamonte gladly obeyed the invitation.

In days gone by many and many had been the time when he had sat under that roof, listening to the charming voice of Molly Gramme and her cousin, the proud, passionate Laura Doane.

Those were the days when he was the only son and prospective heir to old Jared Lamonte, master of the great plantation adjoining that owned by Paul Doane.

Happy days they were, too, and full of naught but youth's bright dream.

Though never a word of love had passed between him and the golden haired Molly, each knew the heart of the other, and slept in the sweet consciousness that those hearts beat in unison.

But the spirit of enterprise had seized the ambitious Phil.

In the Far West for three years he had wooed the fickle goddess of fortune, and his wooing had not been in vain.

Meanwhile the aged Jared had been gathered to his fathers, leaving the wide estate in the hands of a few overseers who ruled the negroes who remained with a high hand. Then war blew its brazen blast over the land; and Phil, notwithstanding he had been born a Southerner, saw, with an eye more far-reaching than his kinsman at home, that right was with the North—that the South would be crushed in the end.

High in his heart burned the love of home and friends, but brighter still shone the lamp of patriotism.

So he had come back to the old plantation, but to find it in the grasp of Southern hordes who thought not of the owner as they burned and plundered.

Seeing this state of things he had resolved to cast his lot with the North.

He did so, and was once again in the old country, this time with a mission.

Following Molly into the house, he replied:

"It would take too long for me to tell you what brings me home again. Only this will I say now: I am fighting for the Union."

"For the Union! Oh! Phil, how glad I am to hear you say that! But your clothes—they do not agree with your words. They are those of the other side."

"They cover a suit of the truest blue, Molly. See."

He opened the breast of the Confederate uniform, displaying a coat of deep blue.

"But why are you disguised? Can it be you—"

"I am a spy, Molly. To-night I have learned something which may prove of the greatest importance to our generals. Before this time I should have been on my way. Your cousin, Laura, has detained me, as you see."

"Yes, but how? That is what mystifies me."

"You may be able to understand better than I when I tell you that Colonel Fontneroy was shot not an hour ago in his quarters."

"Great heavens! shot, Colonel Fontneroy! Now it is plain to me. Poor Laura—poor Laura!"

Molly sprang from the chair in which she had been sitting, and put her little hand up to her head, as if trying to comprehend the full meaning of the news she had just heard.

"You are sure? There can be no mistake? Was the wound fatal?"

"That I cannot tell you. I have promised Laura that I would return and learn all the particulars possible. I must not delay longer."

He rose as he spoke.

"Back again? Oh, Phil! I am afraid you ought not to do this. May there not be danger?"

"I will not conceal the facts from you, Molly. It will be dangerous for me to retrace my steps into the Confederate camp. I have been detected, and nothing but the shooting of Fontneroy has kept me from being pursued. My promise to Laura shall be kept, however. Not yet has the word of Phil Lamonte been broken."

He stood there so proudly that the heart of little Molly leaped as she looked upon him. What a noble man he was!"

"Does Laura know that you are Union in sentiment?"

"No; and Molly I want you to keep it a secret for me for the present. I don't know on which side you stand, save through one little word you spoke a moment ago; but I know for the sake of the old time I can trust you."

The eyes of Molly glistened.

"No heart in all the Union army is truer to the cause than mine, Phil. Your secret is safe. But, Laura, bark! What was that?"

"The sound of horse feet on the gravel walk!" exclaimed Phil, as he peered through the window. "Either they want Laura, or they have tracked me hither. I am afraid in any case I shall bring you into trouble by remaining here. If I am quick I may be able to escape by a back way. Can you show me out?"

"I will see. Here, come quickly!"

The girl bounded out of the great parlor into a hall leading to the rear of the house.

Pulling open a door she looked cautiously out.

They were too late!

Let her gaze rest where it would there was a man on horse.

Hurriedly withdrawing, she shot the bolt in the lock, whispering:

"It's no use, Phil. They are everywhere. We must try somewhere else."

At that moment a loud rap was heard at the front door, and a hoarse voice said:

"We want Phil Lamonte."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A STARTLING ACCUSATION.

The pistol shot which struck down the Confederate colonel brought to his room every man in the spacious Lamonte mansion, and for a moment nothing was thought of but to ascertain the extent of the injury done by the blow.

Even the guard outside deserted their posts, and left the coast clear in all directions.

Captain Drury, who was in command of the guard, was the first to reach the side of the wounded officer.

Raising him from his fallen position he carried him as carefully as possible to a sofa, and laid him upon it.

"Call Surgeon De Jarnette at once," he commanded, and half a dozen men sprang to obey his bidding; for the proud colonel, though sometimes severe with his men, was a favorite with all.

Speedily the surgeon made his appearance, and while he went through his examination there was a deep silence in the apartment.

"The wound is severe, but not dangerous," said De Jarnette, after a few moments. "It was a singular shot. I cannot understand it. It looks as if it had not been intended to kill, but to injure terribly. Who knows anything about this affair!"

The question recalled to their senses the soldiers crowding around. For the first time the query presented itself: Who did the shooting? In a twinkling the search for the midnight assailant was commenced.

Rallying from his state of unconsciousness, Colonel Fontneroy was in a short time able to relate all he knew of the shooting, which was nothing further than that from some source a bullet came crashing through his left breast. Then he became insensible.

Search revealed that the old ivy vine outside the window had been disturbed, and the sash even then stood up a little way.

In the hurry, consequent upon the alarm, no one had noticed the stiletto which still remained pinning to the floor a bit of paper.

Here was a clue.

Directly it was discovered that it was brought to Surgeon De Jarnette, who pulled the paper from the point of the weapon and handed it to Colonel Fontneroy.

With hands white and trembling the officer unfolded the note and glanced at it.

But a single word met his gaze.

That word was: "Justice!"

The pallor which had hitherto overspread the face of Fontneroy heightened till he was deadly pale.

For an instant he leaned back upon his pillow, his eyes closed, and the piece of paper crumpled between his clinched fingers.

"How is it, colonel? Does that reveal anything that can be of use to us?"

It was the voice of Captain Drury.

"Yes; no—that is—I cannot tell you now. This is nothing, I assure you. It will be of no use to try to trace the fellow. I know him. Curse him! I know him, and know how dangerous he is! But what am I say-

ing? Leave me with the doctor, captain. I want him to tell me how badly I am hurt. Let the villain who fired upon me go for the present. By and by I will meet him again face to face."

Led by the captain, the soldiers vacated the room, leaving the wounded man with the surgeon.

Although the colonel had expressed the wish that no pursuit should be given, there were reasons why Captain Drury determined to go in search of the intruder.

He half believed Phil Lamonte was connected with the firing of that shot.

At any rate the young man had deceived him and drawn from his lips information which might prove fatal to the Confederate plans.

Smarting under this unconsciousness, Drury summoned a band of trusty men and hurried out upon the road.

For some time he hardly knew which way to turn. Then falling in with the men who had just had the encounter with our hero, he learned that he had ridden away with Laura Doane, in the direction of the home of the latter.

"Ha! So she is concerned in this matter, is she? It looks like a conspiracy. If it is, I'll ferret it out, if it costs me the entire night. This way, lads," he shouted. "To the Doane mansion. I think we'll find the young devil there who cheated us so to-night, and I am almost certain he had something to do with the shot at Colonel Fontneroy."

Dashing up the road through the rain, which still came down in torrents, the band rapidly made their way toward the house of the Doanes.

The night was intensely dark. Not a foot in advance could they see. The mud splashed heavily under the feet of the horses.

Upon reaching the mansion, Captain Drury commanded his companions to surround it and permit no one to pass. Though it was believed that the Doanes were friendly to the Confederacy, it was known that Molly Grame's heart was true to the stars and stripes, and the story told by the guard of the flight of Laura with the daring young scout lent a shadow of suspicion to even her fidelity to the Southern cause.

Mounting the steps to the porch, Captain Drury pounded loudly upon the heavy oaken panel with his pistol, at the same time exclaiming:

"We want Phil Lamonte!"

Hearing this peremptory demand, Laura sprung from the couch upon which she had thrown herself and hastened to the door.

The light from the brilliant chandelier within, resting upon her features, showed that they were tear-stained and full of anguish.

"You bring me news from him—from Colonel Fontneroy. What is it? So he—"

"He is badly hurt, that we can tell you; and we are here after that young dare-devil, Phil Lamonte, who came here with you just now. It's no use to say he is not here. We've found your horse, and he is wet and foaming outside, and we know he is here."

"If he is, I do not know it," said the girl, brushing away her tears and growing the beautiful and haughty Laura again. "A stranger rescued me from the hands of a number of your ill-bred men as short time ago; but it was not the man you name. Phil Lamonte has not been in these parts in years. You are mistaken."

"I tell you we are not. I have seen him this night with my own eyes. You cannot make me think your story is true. You may as well know, first as last, that you and he are under suspicion as having been connected with the wound received by Colonel Fontneroy to-night."

"It's a lie!" cried the girl, fiercely. "I won't listen to such a base accusation. It is a foul plot against me. It shall fail! I scorn you all."

She stood proudly erect, facing the hard-faceted Confederates as she spoke, and her keen eyes flashed at the insult placed upon her.

What! she accused of intrigue in bringing about this blow upon Colonel Fontneroy? Why, she loved him!

She would have given her life to save his. The idea was too preposterous, and stepping back into the room she was about to close the door, when the Confederate officer put up his hand and hissed through his clinched teeth:

"You give me the lie and your scorn in the same breath. I am not the man to take either, even from the lips of a woman. Now we will search the house."

The captain took a step forward

That instant a pistol touched his forehead

and an ominous click woke the echoes of the room.

The hand of Laura Doane held the weapon. She was now pale as the driven snow, but there was a look in her face which boded no good to the rebel before her.

"I am but a woman, sir, but I tell you this," she said, in a voice which thrilled the hearts of her listeners. "No man enters here save over my lifeless body. I am a Doane. All my life long I have lived among the people of Tennessee. My heart's best wish has been for the success of the Confederate cause. But if this is the manner in which you conduct your warfare; if you, sir, are a specimen of the Southern soldier, I am done forever with you. I am innocent, God knows it, of the charge you bring against me. As for the young man you seek to implicate in conspiracy with me, I know nothing. He may or may not be guilty as you allege. I do not believe he is. If he is under this roof, he shall be protected to the last. I dare you to enter further!"

Recoiling a little, the Confederate stood for a moment irresolute.

He rebelled against being thwarted in his intentions by the slender girl.

By nature a poltroon, he was, nevertheless, a man of great brute strength, before which few would care to stand.

There was a villainous look in his evil eyes, as he heard the words of the fair maiden. Was he indeed to be foiled by her?

Foiled, never!

Watching her closely, he leaped forward, and striking up Laura's arm, bore her with terrible force to the floor.

Scarcely had she touched the floor when a figure sprang out of the shadow, and Phil Lamonte appeared on the scene.

He had divested himself of the Confederate uniform, and stood clad in the Union blue.

At one blow he hurled the rebel captain to the floor. Then turning to the band of soldiers crowding to the threshold, he exclaimed:

"Will you try to imitate the example of your captain? I am ready to meet any one who dares to risk his life. I am Phil Lamonte. You know me of old. Come on if you will!"

Staggering to his feet, the captain yelled, fiercely:

"Yes, we know you, and you shall know us better before we are through with this matter; you traitor! You're the man we came here after, and, by Heaven, will take you dead or alive! If you want to carry the battle into this house, so be it. Up, boys, and avenge the blood of our colonel!"

The Confederate drew his pistols and rushed almost blindly forward.

He was met by a blow from the fist of Phil Lamonte, which sent him again reeling backward.

But the fight was no longer with this man alone.

Incited by words of their leader, half a score plunged through the doorway to support him.

It was a moment of peril.

One man and two women against a host of armed soldiers.

As the rebels one by one crossed the threshold the powerful arm of the young man laid them low.

As yet not a shot had been fired. But each moment Phil expected to hear the dreadful sound of a pistol.

And it came.

Some one in the mass of struggling, raging human beings upon the floor discharged a shot which went hurtling through the air close to the head of the daring Phil.

In the space of a second there came an answering report from the weapon of Laura Doane.

It could hardly have missed some one in that living wall, and a cry of distress showed that it had taken effect.

Another shot!

This time the finger of Molly Grame sped the bullet.

Like heroines of old these two were defending their paternal castle.

With Laura the controlling thought was no longer that of love for the seceding South. She had resolved that her patriotism would be wasted on men so devoid of true manhood as these.

Fierce though this contest was, and loud as were the outcries that went up, above the din, the ears of the gallant Phil suddenly heard the sound of horse's feet clattering up the sandy walk, and peering through the doorway he saw coming out of the shadow a single horseman.

Listening, he expected to hear sounds indicating a bitter struggle outside, for he felt

that this must mean help for him, and he was right.

He saw the horseman sitting hither and thither among the rebels blocking up the space before the house; heard dull yet crushing blows and watched the band of assailants dwindle away till not one was left; all had fled howling into the storm and darkness.

Then a man bounded up the steps and halted before the surprised persons he had so nobly saved.

## CHAPTER V.

### A WOMAN'S RUSE.

It was a singular face which looked out from under the low cavalry hat on the head of the man who stood at the door of the Doane mansion.

There was no doubt in the mind of Phil that the stranger was in disguise. The hair and beard were those of a man far advanced in years, while the eyes peeping from their bushy covering were those of one much younger.

This might have escaped the notice of an ordinary observer, but not our hero.

And he saw more; the hungry expression which every feature bore.

We have seen that face before to-night.

It was the same which glared into the window of Colonel Fontneroy.

Leaning against the doorway, this strange man said, in a tone half inquiry, half surprise:

"Well!"

"You have done us a good turn, my friend," Phil responded, reaching out his hand.

"Indeed, you speak the truth, Mr. Lamonte," exclaimed Molly, also coming forward. "We were in a terrible position. Do you think we have seen the last of those men?"

This to the stranger.

"You don't know 'em as well as I do, if you think that, miss," was the reply. "That Captain Drury is a fiend, I can assure you. They'll be back here in a few minutes, an' they'll come for business."

Laura now pressed forward, her face beautiful, though pale as ashes.

"Oh, tell us what to do! All this trouble has come through a mistaken idea that I have some knowledge of the shooting of Colonel Fontneroy. They will be satisfied at nothing less than my arrest, I suppose. By giving myself up I can put a stop to this persecution. If they come again I will do so. I know the colonel will direct my discharge as soon as he is able to attend to the matter, if that time ever comes."

"Don't worry about his being hard hurt, miss," said the stranger, directing his words to Laura. "I know he is not seriously injured."

"You know it, strange man," she said, eagerly, placing her hand upon his arm and looking up into his stern face. "Are you sure that you know what you say is true? It means a world to me."

A smile lighted up the features of their preserver.

"Miss, Old Janquin would not deceive you if he could. I'm sorry if you're anything to that man, or he to you; for I know him—ah! how well I know him—but the wound he received to-night was not fatal. Rest your breast on that. But I tell you again they will return. If you have any way of escape, now is the time."

"I think our friend is right," Phil said. "Not alone you, Laura, are sought. They want me. I have aroused their ire by ferreting out a desperate plan they have on foot, and they will hunt me down to the last. I think if I were not here all would be well with the ladies. It is I who have brought all this misfortune."

"Say not so," cried Molly, putting her hand to the lips of the brave young man. "You have saved us from death, perhaps. You shall not reproach yourself."

Laura put her hand in that of Phil.

"Mr. Lamonte," she said, "you must let me thank you for the noble part you have borne this evening. I do not agree with you in your ideas about the merits of the Northern cause; but I think I know a true man wherever I find him."

There was a tender light in her eyes as she spoke. It was evident that she felt what she said deeply.

Before Phil could reply the stranger said quickly:

"This is no time for words like these. Time is too precious. Even now I hear the tread of horses on the road. Which will you do, make a useless fight or flee! My ad-

vice is for you, youngster, to get out of this at once. These ladies can take care of themselves. There is nothing against them. It's you they are after. Don't waste any words, but come."

"The stranger is right, I think," said Laura. "Go, quickly."

With a fond look at Molly the young man prepared to follow his guide.

Reaching the porch they saw that they were not quick enough.

Their departure had been cut off. A constantly increasing host of Confederates blocked every avenue of approach to the house.

"Too late!" muttered the stranger, as he put up his arm to check the further advance of Phil. "We've got to cut our way out, I am afraid."

"Do you say they are here?" asked Molly, meeting them as they stepped back into the room.

"Here! I should say they were, the whole secesh army, by the looks, has come here to capture two women and one man."

"But they shall not do it!" hissed Phil, his eyes flashing, and his hand seeking his pistols. "If they have not learned to know me yet I'll give them a few more lessons."

"Your pluck is good," said the stranger, admiringly. "But the case is a serious one now. I tell you retreat is the safe word. There are enough men out yonder to tear this house down by pieces, and they'll do it, too, if they're pressed."

Molly Graeme whispered:

"Phil, I have an idea. Please don't say no to it. Stand quietly here for a moment. Laura, go to the door and put those fellows off a short time. You can do it by telling them we will go with them to Colonel Fonteneroy himself. I know he will at once remove all charge from you."

Phil was about to remonstrate. His blood was at a point little less than boiling. But the stranger said quietly:

"Let the girl have her own way. She'll bring us out all right."

Molly flew away to the rear of the house, and darted through a long shed which connected the house with the stables. In a moment she disappeared.

Laura Doane hastened to the door. Already loud tramping of feet sounded without. Although she knew not what was the plan her quick-witted cousin had on foot, she believed that an escape for Phil might be procured.

So standing face to face with the rebel horde, she engaged them in long parley, ending by promising to surrender herself up to them if she could be promised that she should be conducted immediately into the presence of Colonel Fonteneroy.

This request having been granted not a moment too soon, Molly dashed into the room.

Her scheme was working well.

But, not satisfied with the capture of Laura, the Confederate captain now declared his intention of searching the house.

They had scarcely set foot in the house, however, when there was a shout from the stables.

Hastening thither with the belief that the young man had been discovered, the captain saw a crowd of his men surrounding a load of straw upon a wagon, to which was attached a span of mules; and on the top of which was perched a trembling negro.

For a moment the Confederate officer was angry with himself for allowing his attention to be distracted by so simple a thing.

"This is a false alarm," he exclaimed. "Who started it? It's a ruse to take our attention from the house. Here, men, back to the mansion at once, and let this old nigger go about his business."

"If we do we lose our man," said one of the number around the load of straw. "I know he is buried in that wagon."

"You know it?" said the captain, angrily, turning to the speaker. "I'd like to learn how you know it. Did you see him crawling in?"

"No, sir; but—"

"No buts or auds about it. It's not likely that he could have got out of the house without being seen. Here, you black nigger," he said, suddenly addressing the colored man on the load. "How is it that you're starting out at this time o' night. Where are you going?"

"Down to Massa Beauregard's camp, dat's all. He say he want some straw very early in de mornin', and I see gwine to tuk it down to him."

"Who sent you?"

The captain came nearer the wagon and begun to look suspiciously up at the negro.

There might after all be something in what the soldier had said. The plot might be to hide Phil Lamonte beneath this straw, and convey him out of the Confederate lines.

"Massa Doanedone tole me to do dis, sah," was the response, from the fear-stricken negro. "Deed, sah, I ain't done nuffin' 'gainst de Souf. I see Massa Doane's man, Pomp, an' he knows I se liable."

"If he's in here, curse him, I'll fix him!" the officer said, hissing the words through his teeth, as he drew his sword and commenced thrusting it deep into the load.

Here, there, everywhere he plunged the weapon, now and then listening for some cry of pain from within.

But none came.

At length, as if convinced that no living being could possibly be hidden inside the straw, he whirled on his heel and said:

"You see I was right. This is all a scare. The fellow is still in the house, unless he has taken advantage of this piece of nonsense on our part and escaped. But to make assurance doubly sure," he muttered, half to himself, "I'll send a man with this wagon to Beauregard's quarters."

And he detailed a private for this purpose, then hastened back to the house.

Meanwhile the negro, breathing easier when he saw that suspicion no longer rested immediately upon him, cracked his whip over the mules, and disappeared down the road, the Confederate keeping him company on his horse beside the wagon.

It was not long before there was a stir inside the straw.

Was there, indeed, a man stowed away there?

A few minutes later the sharp crack of a pistol woke the silence.

With a wild yell the Confederate horseman threw up his arms, and fell heavily to the ground.

Instantly the wagon was brought to a standstill.

From beneath the heavy covering of straw which had buried him Phil Lamonte sprang.

"Hurrah for little Molly!" he shouted.

"Her scheme has saved me. Pomp, you've done nobly, too; here's a piece of gold to repay you for this night's adventure. Go back into the woods here till you think it is safe to venture home. Then tell your pretty mistress Sam is safe."

Springing at a light bound to the back of the horse from which the Confederate had just fallen, the young man darted along the highway.

"A close shave, by Jove!" he soliloquized, with a smile of congratulation, as he thought of his narrow escape. "That bit of steel came unpleasantly near to me several times. I don't see how he could have missed me. Once or twice the blade cut my coat. But I'm safe! Three cheers for Molly! Dear little Molly! When shall I see her again?"

Ah! when?

"How brave she is! Well, I must not think of her too much now. I've other things on hand at present, and must devote myself to them. By-and-by, who knows but I may come back here for my jewel. Now, away for Pice and Van Dorn! If that scout has not yet reached them with those messages he shall try a race with me. If I can get my hands on them, it will be just a grand thing for me. Won't it, though? Well, here goes. I'll try the metal of this horse a little."

At this he dug the spurs deep into the animal's sides.

With a bound the horse sprang forward, heavy though the road was in consequence of the prolonged rain, a long distance soon lay between the daring young scout and the scene of his recent escapade.

Weary though he began to feel by the events of the past twenty-four hours, on, on through the night he rode.

The steed he had secured proved a noble one, and stood the hard ride well.

The gray morning light found him still galloping ahead, his eyes fixed toward the spot where he hoped to overtake the rebel messenger.

At break of day he drew up at a spring to refresh his thirst and that of his horse.

Bending low upon the ground to reach the limpid streamlet, the cracking of a stick fell on his ear.

Before he could regain his feet, three men rose from the bushes not a dozen paces from the spring, and he looked down into the murderous throats of three rifles.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CONFEDERATE DISPATCHES.

"Put up your hands! Stir out of your

tracks, and we'll snuff your candle for you!"

The words were uttered in the cool tone of a man who knows his advantage, and intends to make the most of it.

Phil Lamonte fastened his eyes full upon the three, but made no motion toward obeying the command thus boldly given.

If they were daring, he was bravely itself.

Seeing that the young man remained motionless in the spot where he had been surprised, one of the number came forward out of the thicket, guarding our hero sharply as he did so.

As he came fairly into sight, Phil saw that he wore the dress of a Confederate.

Probable his companions were of the same stripe.

"You heard what I said, didn't you?" the rebel said, with an air of bragadocia. "Why don't you follow orders?"

"I accept orders from a superior, sir," was the calm reply, as Phil perceived with what sort of men he had to deal. "I don't see in this case why I should obey orders."

There came over the face of the Confederate a scowl of intense hate.

"You're rather bold, it strikes me," he sneered. "Perhaps you don't know who we are. Come here, boys, and we'll introduce ourselves to this innocent young chap. Your eyes rest at the present moment on Bud Overton and two friends of his."

For an instant the heart of Phil Lamonte thrilled as he heard the name spoken by the men before him, for Bud Overton was known even at that early period as one of the most dangerous scouts of the Confederate army.

Many and many a man had fallen into his hands, never to be heard of afterward. He was the terror of the Union scouts.

No one care to come face to face with him.

Phil Lamonte, however, resolved that no deed or word of his should show this friend that he feared him!

"Bud Overton!" he repeated in a disparaging way. "I know as well now as I did before who you are. You'll have to make further explanation before you impress me very seriously. If introductions are in order, why, I'll make myself acquainted with you. I'm Phil Lamonte, of the Union army!"

This was meeting bravado with bravado. It was an extremely dangerous thing to do.

The scowl of hate on the face of Bud Overton deepened into a glare of rage, and his finger nervously played with the trigger of his rifle.

"You'll know me better before you are through with this morning's piece of work," he hissed. "I'll show you what it is to brave Bud Overton, the rebel scout! Here, boys, put this around him, and bind it tight, mind you. The cursed rascal must be made to feel what a stout cord can be made to do."

As he spoke, Bud tossed a piece of fine cord to one of his followers, who, catching it, took a step or two toward the young man.

As yet Phil had not stirred from the place where he had planted himself when the noise in the bushes disturbed him at the spring.

He displayed no fear at the approach of the Confederate who was under instructions to make him captive.

A slight paleness rested on his handsome features, but that might have been due to the fatiguing journey of the night just ended.

At that moment something unexpected happened.

Just what it was Bud Overton and his companions never knew.

Two flashes in rapid succession lighted up the early morning, and two reports deafened the over confident Confederates.

With a groan, Bud and the man who stood beside him measured their length on the ground.

One quick blow with his fist and the soldier who held the cord lay beside his comrades.

"When you meet me again, do you think you will know me?" he cried, as he leaped upon his horse and disappeared in the distance. "By Jove! but that was a narrow escape!" the young man said, when once safely on the road again. "Lucky I have had some training in the Far West, or it might have been Phil, the scout, who lay back yonder instead of those fellows. Bud Overton, eh? You may be a dare-devil but you are not quick enough for me. Now I'm off again."

And he spurred rapidly forward.

Suddenly he drew his horse up, so quickly that the animal slipped on the wet ground.

"I wonder if those fellows haven't got the dispatches I'm looking for? It would be very natural for the Confederate general to

select such a man as Bud Overton to carry his messages to Price and Van Dorn. It has seemed a little strange all along why they turned up just as they did. It may be I shall lose time, by it, but I must know whether there is anything in this thought of mine. The more I think of it, the more likely it seems that I am right."

Whirling abruptly, the young man shot back over the road he had a moment before traversed.

Nearing the place of the encounter, he dismounted and fastened his horse to a sapling in the midst of a dense clump of undergrowth.

Then he made his way as cautiously as an Indian might have done toward the spring, near which he had left the three Confederates.

It was not long before he could hear through the bushes the low sound of voices, mingled now and then with exclamations of pain and anger.

Crawling still closer, the young man drew back the thicket in front of him and peered through.

It then became evident that one of his shots had proved fatal; but Bud and the man he had struck with his hand remained. The latter had stripped away Bud's clothing and was examining his wounds.

"He has given you an ugly-looking hurt here, Bud, an' no mistake," was the Confederate's remark, when he had finished his examination. "I wouldn't wonder much if it laid you up for awhile. The ball passed clean through the left side, not three inches below the heart. A close shave, an' no mistake. You can thank your lucky stars that you ain't with old Jim, there."

The Confederate groaned.

It was a hard thing for him to admit that he had been outwitted and almost sent out of existence by a youngster, little more than a boy.

"I'll make that stripling repent all this!" he muttered. "No man ever came out ahead of Bud Overton in the long run. Can't you help me up to the spring, Bill? It seems as if a little water would do me good. But, stay; look and see if the dispatches are all right. That infernal bullet must have gone through them."

Taking up the coat which he had removed from the wounded scout, the Confederate searched for the dispatches.

"You are right, Bud," he said, at length. "There is a hole big enough for a man to crawl through, right in the center of the papers. I'm afraid nothing can ever be made out of them."

Again a moan of baffled rage and despair broke from the lips of Bud.

"They must go on to their destination, though it don't seem now as if I could go ahead with them," he said. "I feel as if this might be my last work. This hurts me terribly."

Phil Lamonte's heart was as tender as that of a woman, though he was as brave as a lion.

The words of the Confederate scout, perhaps wounded to the death by his own hand, sent a thrill of deep sympathy through his bosom; and though he rejoiced to learn that this conjecture regarding the dispatches was correct, and that they were almost within his reach, still, it struck a tender place in his nature to listen to the moanings of Bud, the strong, brave, though mistaken man.

In a moment he had marked out for himself a plan at once humane and daring.

Breaking through the low bushes which had concealed his form while listening to the conversation of the two scouts, he approached the place where Bud lay. The soldiers, who had escaped other injury from the hands of Phil than a stunning blow of the fist, rose from his kneeling posture beside his injured companion, a look of profound astonishment overspreading his face.

Had the young Unionist returned to learn the extent of the damage done by him, and if need be finish up the work he had begun?

The hand of the Confederate sought his pistol-belt.

"Hold!" exclaimed Phil, making a commanding gesture. "I do not come now to renew our recent struggle. It was forced upon me in the first place, and I could do nothing different from what I did. You must admit that I could not yield myself up like a craven cur. You are badly hurt."

Thus speaking, he bent down over the prostrate form of Bud.

Taken by surprise at this strange proceeding on the part of one who was supposed to be ever an enemy, and one who could feel no pity for a Confederate in distress, Bud re-

mained silently watching the face of the young scout.

The rebel, whom Bud had addressed as Bill, slipped his pistol back into its place.

"Indeed, Bud is hard hit this time. You gave him a bad wound, I'm afraid—"

"Did you want water?" asked Phil, recalling the last words the scout had uttered before he left the thicket. "Let me help you carry him up to the spring, Bill. Lucky that the rain has ceased falling. But you are drenched to the skin. It will never do to let you remain out here. Still, I see no sign of a house near. That's bad."

The two men lifted the stricken Confederate in their arms and bore him gently to the crystal spring, when Phil assisted him to quench his feverish thirst in the clear water.

This done, the young man did his best to stanch the crimson life-current which was slowly ebbing from Bud's side.

The hand of no woman could have done this work more softly, and even from the hard features of the rebel scout there shone a look of gratitude.

"This is strange," he said, in a voice growing weaker. "I thought you Yanks wouldn't raise a finger to help one of us in such a time as this."

"You were mistaken then, Bud. War is a cruel thing; it was brought on by the leaders on your side. I don't say that I really blame them; but they were mistaken, that is all. The North is fighting against the establishment of wrong principles, not against men. If you can understand that then you know the secret of my course."

A smile lighted up the grim countenance of Bud.

"It's worth something to hear you say this, comrade; but it don't ease the pain here. I guess I'm going out, boys. The light is fading, and I know it is not because night is coming. Will you leave me and Bill alone for a minute? I have something I want to say to him."

"Certainly," was Phil's response; and he withdrew a few paces.

"Bill," whispered the dying scout, hoarsely, "the dispatches—take them. I can't go through with them. You must see that they are delivered. Promise to guard them with your life."

"I swear it!" said Bill, solemnly.

"That's all, Bill. Good-by."

Phil came back in a few minutes and all was over with Bud.

The vicissitudes of civil war had blotted out the life of one more erring mortal.

With a sorrowing spirit, Phil aided the Confederate to give his two dead fellows the best burial they could, and that was poor enough. Many a soldier has found such a grave beneath the Southern sky.

Then the two sat silently down beside the spring and looked at each other.

What would be the next move of the young Union scout?

"Bill," he said, calmly, after some time had elapsed, "you've got the dispatches."

An expression of alarm swept over the countenance of Bill.

"You don't know that," he replied, in a steady tone.

"Yes, I do. I overheard what you and Bud were saying before I came back. They were in his breast when I shot him. The ball from my pistol went crashing through them. He handed them over to you before he died. I did not see him do that, but it's natural to suppose that he did so."

An interval of silence.

"Well?"

"I want the dispatches."

"I tell you it is impossible."

"I would say I must have them. That is what brought me away out here through the dark and storm."

"I have promised to guard them till death. I will keep my promise!"

"I must have them!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### A MISSION FULL OF EVIL.

Pretty Molly Grame had a lover of a character entirely different from that of Phil Lamonte.

Oliver Oglethorpe was a genuine son of the South.

He had inherited wealth enough to make him entirely independent of sordid labor.

He had acquired evil ways which caused him to be a terror to all right-minded citizens.

Not without a certain degree of talent, he was possessed at the same time of a low cunning which would stoop to anything for the sake of carrying a point.

His name had frequently been seen in pub-

lic print since the opening of the rebellion, attached to articles of so incendiary a nature that nowhere else under the sun could they have found light save in the South.

That they had an influence with a certain class cannot be doubted. And they had brought him a kind of notoriety which he used ever to a selfish purpose, and made him fellow to men of considerable rank.

He had professed to love Molly Grame ever since she had come, an orphan, to the Doane mansion to live, some eight years prior to the time our story opens.

It is needless to say that his affection was not returned by Molly.

As soon would one think of a dove having tender feelings toward a hawk. She scorned him, yet, like the true lady she was, treated him with a respect to which he was by no means entitled.

When Laura and her cousin gave themselves up to the Confederate soldiers, and were conducted to the Lamonte mansion, where Colonel Fouturoy lay wounded, among the first to interest themselves in their favor was Oglethorpe, to whose ears had come the news of the capture.

Although the Confederate colonel lost no time in proclaiming Laura in no manner connected with his misfortune, there were some, and among them Captain Drury, who insisted in a thorough examination, hinting that even if the girl did not actually have a hand in the shooting, there were facts which went far toward implicating her as an accomplice.

In fact, circumstances did point in that direction, as will be seen by recalling the time when Fouturoy was shot, and the whereabouts of Laura when that event took place.

Hence, there was need that some one should take the matter up and carry it further than the colonel, wounded so seriously, could do.

Seeing this, young Oglethorpe lost no time in espousing the cause of Laura; and, much to the disgust of Drury, succeeded in securing her release.

Both Laura and her cousin, grateful for this service, were not slow in expressing their thanks.

But this was not all the wily Southerner desired.

He had entered upon this matter with the intention of gaining something more than empty thanks.

For the time, however, he made no show toward taking advantage of the service he had performed. But the morning after the shooting of the colonel and the events dependent thereon, Oglethorpe presented himself at the mansion of the Doanes.

Perhaps his actions had been accelerated by the news that Phil Lamonte, the dashing young Union scout, had returned to the vicinity, and the memory that in days gone by he had been an ardent admirer of the object of his own affections.

The heart of Molly sunk as she witnessed his approach, for, with a woman's intuition into his character, she had feared that there might follow from the difficulty of the night previous, danger to her from this very source.

The Southerner, ever impetuous, was not long in proclaiming the object of his visit, and with words as gentle as her tongue could frame Molly told him that it was impossible for her to look with favor upon his advances.

"I beg you will not think unkindly of me for this, Mr. Oglethorpe," she said, earnestly. "It is only because I feel that I am doing both you and myself justice that I speak as I do."

Oglethorpe, hot with passion at the refusal with which he had been met, replied:

"I presume I could guess why I am not accepted. I don't think it would be very hard. I hear that young Lamonte has returned from his roamings."

A flame of scarlet lighted up the face of the fair young girl, as she heard these words.

"Mr. Oglethorpe," she said, rising from the sofa on which she had been sitting, "you may not pardon me for saying that I do not think you have any right to address me with that language. Mr. Lamonte's return has not the slightest bearing upon my answer to your proposal this morning. Were he a thousand miles away, had I never seen him, I could not have answered you differently."

Oglethorpe, throwing aside all reserve, now displayed his true nature—that of a villain of the deepest dye.

"I believe you lie, Molly Grame!" he exclaimed, leaping up and standing before her the brute he was. "I know you, and I have watched you when you did not think it, and I repeat that I do not think you tell me the truth."

"You are no gentleman, sir, and I will not

allow myself to be insulted by you. I will listen no longer."

Oliver Oglethorpe threw himself in the girl's way, as she turned to leave the room. He was now white with rage.

"You shall hear me! I will speak further, and tell you that never so long as life is left me to move that right arm shall Phil Lamonte wed you. Curse him, he shall not stand in my way longer! Your handsome young lover will not look upon your face again. I swear it!

"He is able to defend himself against such as you I fear not for him. I will tell you now that were it a question with me between you and him an instant's time would suffice to decide the matter. I would as soon think of ending my own life as wedding you! That is all I have to say, and you can make the most of it."

Springing aside, she ran like a startled fawn away from the monster.

Trembling with anger at his utter discomfiture, Oglethorpe hastened back toward the Confederate camp.

His heart was full of wrath toward Phil Lamonte.

Reaching his quarters a message was handed him.

It read:

"Come at once.

FONTNEROY."

"Fontneroy! I wonder what he wants?" said Oglethorpe, when he had finished this brief message. "It may be he can help me out of this scrape with Molly Grame. If I remember rightly he has a soft spot in his heart toward that dark-eyed cousin, Laura Doane. The thing is worth trying, at least. If my plans work well, let Phil Lamonte look out for himself. He shall not stand in my way long. Either he wins or I do; and who ever knew Oliver Oglethorpe to be defeated? Yes, colonel, I'll come at once."

The young man crumpled the piece of paper which the Confederate colonel had sent him into a hundred shapes, then tossed it to the ground.

He did not see a pair of eyes gleaming out of a face which had grown hungry with watching that followed his every movement, and he was not aware that the owner of those eyes stole silently to the spot where he had been standing and picked up the message from the colonel.

"How are you to-day, colonel?" asked Oglethorpe, entering Fontneroy's room in the Lamonte mansion ten minutes later. "Better, I hope."

"Yes, I am better, Oglethorpe. This thing will keep me here only a day or two. In fact I came near getting up this morning, but the doctor thought I had better wait a little longer."

"Glad to hear it. We need you every minute. But I suppose you are busy planning all the time, just the same. You sent for me, colonel?"

The officer cast a hurried glance about the room at these words, and a strange expression came over his countenance.

He fastened his eyes upon the window near the couch on which he lay for a moment.

"Oglethorpe, would you mind dropping this shade? I am full of singular notions to-day. I fancied I saw some one peering through the window upon us just now. Only a whim, of course, but I want no watchers now."

"Certainly, I will do so," responded Oglethorpe, suiting the action to the word.

The next moment shadows rested over the apartment.

It was with difficulty that the two could distinguish each others features.

"I did send for you, Oglethorpe. I want something done which I cannot trust to any one but you. I thought of you first of all because I know you will not betray me."

"I would die sooner."

"Thank you. I know I shall not be disappointed in you. Now, what I want is this—listen closely now: I must speak hardly above my breath. There must be no secrets between us. I know the man who shot me last night."

"You do?"

"Sh! I tell you, we must not let the slightest syllable of this get upon the wind. It would mean ruin for us both. I say I know him. He has haunted my footsteps like a sleuth-hound, till last night he found the opportunity he sought, and like the craven coward he is, he sought my life. He must be removed!"

"But, colonel, why have you not mentioned this before? What is the reason you have not given it into the hands of the law, military if not civil, to seek him and punish him?"

"I have my reasons, Oglethorpe. For the present they must remain concealed in my breast. Some time I may be able to answer these questions. Not now. You will not press me further, I feel certain."

"Pardon me for suggesting that which causes you pain. Ignorance alone must be my plea. But now, what do you wish from me?"

"I was coming to that. I will speak plainly. Will you undertake the work of ridding me of that villain?"

"How can I, colonel? You forget that I know nothing of the man. It would be necessary for me, at least, to know what his personal appearance is. Otherwise I might work in the dark, and perhaps commit some awful blunder."

"I have thought of that, and I must confess it affords me no little pleasure to tell you that by following my instructions you cannot mistake the man I wish you to find. I am sure he is now in disguise; but he cannot change the expression of his eyes. Here is a picture. Look at it carefully. No man ever had such eyes as those. Heaven! they are burned into my soul! Would that I could forget them! Once they rest upon you they seem to sink so deep into your memory that you will remember them to your dying day!"

The colonel handed Oglethorpe a photograph as he spoke.

Oglethorpe took it, and bending over it, by the uncertain light of the room strove to get an idea of the man it represented.

"Take it with you; it will be a sure guide. I know it. The man is hanging about this vicinity. I feel sure of that. Hunt him down, and don't let him escape! You are a good shot?"

"I never miss?"

"Be doubly sure this time, and I swear to you that you shall have anything it is in my power to grant."

Oglethorpe rose from the posture he had held over the wounded Confederate, and paced up and down the room several times in a nervous way.

It was evident that he was deliberating what answer to give the colonel.

His heart was bad enough to do even baser crimes than that suggested.

The only question was how to introduce the subject nearest his heart.

Finally he paused before Fontneroy.

"There is one thing, colonel, you can help me about. I love Molly Grame, the cousin of Laura Doane, who is, rumor says, your fiancée. Can you do anything toward overcoming a prejudice she has for me? I am not so well versed in these matters of the heart as you are, and I don't know how to get at the little witch."

Fontneroy started violently at the mention of Laura's name in connection with his own.

"Who says that Laura Doane is to be my bride?" he demanded, almost fiercely. "People must not be too free with my name."

"Every one is talking about it. You must admit the matter looks rather suspicious. Here she is, making you calls on such a night as the last."

"It was imprudent in her, to say the least; but— Well, Oglethorpe, I'll see what can be done. I think I may be able to assist you."

"That's all I ask. Now, good-morning. You shall hear from me soon."

In another moment he was gone. Outside the house he rubbed his hands together and laughed almost boyishly.

"I'm getting my hands full of jobs. I don't really like the looks of this thing of the colonel's. I'd like to know what's behind all this. Perhaps I can find out before the end comes. At any rate, it will prove a good thing for me. I see that Fontneroy is in earnest this time."

An hour later a man rode out of camp upon a powerful, long-limbed horse which bore him speedily out of sight around a turn in the wooded road. From beneath the slouched hat he wore, there peered the dark baleful face of Oliver Oglethorpe.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RIVAL SUITORS MEET.

"I must have the dispatches!"

The voice of Phil Lamonte was stern as fate, and hearing it, the heart of the Confederate began to misgive him.

"I have come on here expressly to overtake you and get possession of the message you are carrying to the rebel generals in Arkansas. I am not going to be defeated now when they are almost in my hands."

"What do you intend to do with them?" asked Bill, very seriously.

"I mean to hasten on to Nashville with them and place them in the hands of General Buell. You see I am very frank with you. There is no use in your trying to escape me. I don't want to have any further difficulty with you, and I see only one way out of this trouble. You must come with me."

"With you? Never!" exclaimed Bill, springing up and making a move to draw his pistol.

Phil raised his own arm. A pistol gleamed in the face of the Confederate.

"I tell you, Bill, you only make matters worse by resisting. I mean what I say. Those dispatches are going to Nashville. If you refuse to give them up, why, then I must take you also."

An expression of suppressed rage burst from the lips of the discomfited soldier, but he sunk back to the ground weakly.

"We have no time to lose!" continued Phil. "Get up and come with me. Remember that I shall not take my eyes off you, so any attempt at escape will compel me to deal severely with you. Come!"

The Confederate obeyed. There was no other alternative.

The young scout led the way back through the bushes to the nook where he had left his horse standing.

"Mount!" he said, laconically.

Bill sprang into the saddle, and Phil bounded lightly up behind him.

"This makes a heavy load, but this horse is a powerful animal, and can carry us for a time, at least."

Thus the two set out for the camp of General Buell.

As yet Phil had not seen the papers he so sincerely coveted—the dispatches to Van Dorn and Price. Still he was very positive they were concealed upon the person of the man who sat before him, and he determined that nothing should prevent him from obtaining them.

Slippery though the country road was, they made fair progress, for Phil urged the horse on at the highest possible rate of speed.

Toward noon they were passing through a lonesome piece of wood and on either hand nothing but interminable forests were to be seen.

The road dwindled down till it became little more than a bridle-path.

While threading this dreary way Phil was startled by the sudden noise of pursuing horsemen.

Almost before he could spur on his horse, there shot around a turn in the road a troop of Confederates.

There was little use to attempt escape by flight, with the double load his horse bore. Something must be done, and that, too, at once.

"Give me the dispatches!" he said, in a commanding tone. "If you hesitate or refuse I will not be responsible for the result."

The Confederate felt the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed close against his temple.

"Have you no mercy?" he cried, hoarsely. "I promised Bud that I would guard these papers with my life. Yet here you compel me to yield them up so tamely that I feel like the base coward I am."

"Don't stop to talk. It is too late for that now. Be quick with the dispatches."

"Curse you, you shall repent this!" was the reply of the rebel, as he plunged his hand into his breast pocket.

In another moment Phil held between his fingers the blood-stained package containing the dispatches he had sought.

Hiding them in his own bosom, he aid, sharply:

"Now get down! I cannot carry you further."

"You intend to leave me here to receive the punishment of a traitor for giving up the message I should have delivered only to General Price. This is terrible!"

"Get down instantly or I will push you off!" repeated Phil, bringing the horse to a halt.

The Confederate half jumped, half fell to the ground, where he stood waiting the approach of the horsemen in the rear.

Quick as thought Phil Lamonte was hurrying onward.

His horse, relieved of its extra burden, and smarting under the spurs of our hero, soon placed a considerable distance between him and the following party which had drawn up where he had left Phil, whose story they eagerly listened to.

It was now a race for life.

Phil knew that if he fell into the clutches of the Confederates, now that they had

learned that he had in his possession the papers Beauregard supposed by this time almost at their destination, he could expect nothing but death as a spy.

On the other hand, could he only reach Nashville, which he was rapidly nearing, and acquaint General Buell of the contents of the letters, he felt sure that it might be the means of foiling some scheme the rebels had in view.

These thoughts nerved him to desperation. He must reach Nashville!

It was not long before he saw his pursuers again take up the chase, and by watching them closely he could perceive that there existed among them intense excitement.

Every man was urging his steed onward, yelling fiercely and cutting the sides of their horses deeply with the spur.

Half an hour did not lessen the distance between the two parties. Each held his own remarkably, and the heart of the young Unionist began to bound with hope that even yet he might avoid an encounter with the troop behind him.

This hope had scarcely come into existence, however, when his horse dropped from the steady gallop it had kept up so long into a broken gait.

It was in vain that he attempted to rouse the animal to take up its former pace. Evidently it was exhausted.

Here was a dangerous position.

Moment after moment flew by on wings of lightning, and the Confederates were gaining upon him at a fearful rate.

What could he do?

A dozen paces further and his horse began to tremble under him.

A rod further and it sunk in a heap in the road.

The spot where the horse dropped was very close to a thicket, so close that by crawling on his face a few feet, Phil was able to gain a place in which to conceal himself.

Once inside the bushes he ran quickly back toward the approaching band of horsemen.

As they came up, he crouched low down beside the narrow road, so near to the edge of the undergrowth that he could easily watch the movements of the Confederates.

Like the wind the main body of the horsemen swept past him.

Then a few stragglers came up.

The last of these was exactly opposite Phil when, with a bound like a tiger, he cleared the thicket and fastened himself upon the bridle of the animal.

Whirling the horse aside like a flash, Phil half dragged man and beast into the thicket.

So quickly had this been done that the rebel had not had time to raise so much as a finger, and only when a thundering blow from Phil brought him to the earth did he seem to realize the danger of his position. But it was then too late, for he fell unconscious at the feet of the daring young man.

With a baste born of his desperate position, Phil stripped off the uniform of the Confederate, and putting it on over his own he mounted the horse and rode quickly toward the place where the Confederate troop had halted around his worn-out steed.

It was evident that his escape from the spot where he had fallen had not been seen, for the first words of the leader of the Confederates were:

"The fellow must have been swallowed up by the earth. My eyes were riveted upon this horse from the moment he dropped, and I know he could not have got away without my seeing him."

"But he must have done so," followed another member of the party. "This is not the day of miracles. We shall find him skulking somewhere near by."

"In that case we are losing time," pursued the leader. "Into the bushes and hunt for him. We want him alive, but if worst comes to worst don't let him escape."

Here was the opportunity Phil had hoped for.

The Confederates scattered widely, disappearing one by one in the forest adjacent to the point where the dashing young scout had last made his appearance.

Seizing this auspicious moment our hero touched his horse's side lightly, and the beast sped away along the road toward Nashville.

It could be only a short time before this daring feat would be discovered, for the search in the bushes must soon bring to light the soldier who had been left insensible beside the road; and Phil resolved to make the most of the chance he had secured.

Sooner than he had deemed likely there came from the rear yells betokening the discovery of the rebel.

The forest rung with the shouts of baffled and enraged men, and this sound lent new energy to the movements of Phil Lamonte.

"They shall find me game," he muttered. "Only when this horse fails me shall they overhaul me."

And on, on he flew.

The forest lay behind him in a short time, and he swung at a steady gallop out upon a smooth highway, leading through great plantations, now lying silent and deserted in consequence of the military operations in the vicinity.

Up to the present not a man of the troop behind him appeared in sight.

This seemed a little strange to Phil.

Had they given up the chase? This seemed hardly probable.

If these men had been detailed from Beauregard's army to pursue and overtake him if possible as a spy, it was by no means likely they would abandon the chase.

Now that they knew he had the dispatches which had been sent to the rebel generals in Arkansas, they had a double reason for his capture.

The day wore slowly on.

Still the scout was riding toward Nashville.

Through a rift in the dun black clouds the sun, now low in the western sky, cast its pale rays over the scene.

Far in the distance the spires of Nashville glittered in the sunset.

The sight brought hope to the heart of Phil Lamonte.

In an hour more he would place in the hands of General Buell the precious letters. He drew his horse to a walk. It seemed safe to give the animal a breathing spell.

At a point where the road forked off at right angles with the one he had been following he halted and listened.

Ahead of him stretched a gloomy forest. It looked so dark and foreboding that he hesitated a moment before entering it.

He wished he were on the other side of it. That instant a puff of smoke rolled up from the wood near by.

A sharp report woke the echoes.

The horse Phil rode gave a cry almost human, and sunk dead in its tracks.

Struggling to free himself from the stirrups, the scout heard a wild shout of triumph, and out of the cross-road sprang the band of Confederates whom he thought now far in the rear.

They had passed around him through the forest, and cut off his further flight.

Before Phil could take a step toward secreting himself he was surrounded by the Confederates who with drawn weapons crowded closely about him.

"Aha! you infernal Yank! So we have you after all!" sneered the leader of the band pushing his way to the side of Phil.

"May I ask what you want of me?" said the scout, calmly. "I have a right to know why you have shot my horse at least."

"We want you because we know that you are a Union spy," was the response. "That would be reason enough; but we have further cause. You're suspected of having a hand in the shooting of Col. Fontneroy last night, and you have upon you messages taken from our men which you intend to get into camp with. But you have missed this time. Oliver Oglethorpe never fails in his plans."

"Ha! then I have you to thank for this. I remember you now," and Phil scrutinized the face of the man before him. "I know you, and can say that I never heard any good of you."

The young man looked his rival squarely in the eyes as he spoke and watched closely for the result of his words.

A deadly pallor rested on the face of Oglethorpe.

Here was the incentive he needed to precipitate a quarrel.

"Take that for your insult!" he exclaimed, fiercely dealing a blow at Phil.

Springing aside, Phil escaped the thrust, and returned the stroke with telling force, sending the Confederate reeling several feet away.

Like a flash, Oglethorpe drew his pistol. He was not any quicker than Phil Lamonte.

Thus the two men stood face to face, scarcely three paces separating them.

It was a moment of deepest peril for Phil Lamonte.

For well did he know that if by any good fortune he succeeded in disarming his foe there were ranged around him a score of soldiers who would not hesitate a moment to shoot him to the heart.

Ere yet a move had been made, a steed, black as night came crashing out of the for-

est, tearing straight down upon the group of horsemen.

Upon its back a man, every feature of whom was concave from sight.

He touched neither rein nor spur, but in his hand appeared a peculiar weapon, shaped like the club of a policeman.

Plunging into the midst of the Confederates, this singular horse-man dealt blows about him which hurled those who came within his reach to the ground as if a thunderbolt had struck them.

Shot after shot was fired in rapid succession upon the stranger. Still he was unharmed.

Finally, leaning from his saddle, he drew Phil Lamonte up beside him, and, swifter than thought, darted down the forest road.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A GLIMPSE AT THE PAST.

Again we must return to the quarters of Colonel Fontneroy.

He is not alone.

Near the door in front of him sits a man, who bends upon the troubled face of the Confederate officer such a glance that he winces painfully, though he endeavors to maintain his accustomed composure.

"Will you tell me the object of your visit here to-day? I do not like to sit here in ignorance. Bring this silence to an end."

The stranger moved not a muscle as he replied:

"Soon enough shall you be answered, Norman Fontneroy, and when I do speak you will wish I had forever remained silent."

The tone was earnest and calm.

The colonel tried to raise himself on his couch.

"Great God! Is it, can it be that I look upon—"

"Arthur St. Clair? You do."

With these words the stranger put up his hands.

An instant later he let fall a mass of hair from his face, and revealed the features of a man hardly thirty, and handsome as an Apollo.

Fontneroy sunk back upon his pillow, pale as death, and trembling in every limb.

"Well, I am at your mercy. You can do with me as you will," he said, feebly.

"I have come to you to-day for this purpose only: You are deceiving Laura Doane."

"Laura Doane! What do you know of her? You venture too far, man."

"You tell me that! You in whose heart nothing of good lies! I will speak further. Not even here will I stop. You must cease your attention to her."

"You miserable villain! You come here and dictate to me what I shall and shall not do. I'll crush you as I would a viper under my feet. Why, I could cause your arrest for a criminal—a would-be assassin. And yet you have the audacity to speak to me like this!"

Fontneroy's eyes flashed with an unwonted brilliancy, and his clinched hand was upheld toward his visitor.

"Perhaps you might do this, Fontneroy, but you won't," was the measured reply. "I only wish you would attempt it. I think you would be the loser in such a case."

"Press me much harder and I swear I will do it, though it cost me everything! I tell you, you have carried this thing too far already. Even an animal when chased till it finds itself at bay, will at length turn and face its enemies defiantly."

"You are right, Fontneroy; you are right: for that reason I am here now. Not a word of complaint shall ever cross my lips in your presence. I am beyond all that; but when you, you talk to me of being a criminal, an assassin, a man who has hunted you to desperation, you pass beyond the bounds of sense, and enter those of purest farce! But you tell me that you will not listen to my warning that never more must you urge your suit with Laura Doane. I have only this to say: Unless you promise me here that you will cease deceiving her I will go to her myself and lay before her your villainy!"

"You dare not! By Heaven! I will kill you if you venture it! Am I such a coward that I will tamely cower before such an outrage as this? Scoundrel, you have come to me when I am weak and unable to defend myself against such insults as these. You show how base-born you are; but I will yet revenge myself, remember that!"

"I am not to be disturbed by these ravings, Fontneroy. I know you well enough to be aware that they amount to little. I simply want a positive answer to this question:

Will you cease your course toward Laura Doane?"

"I will not! You have your answer. You dare not carry out your threat to tell her the old past. You dare not, I say!"

"Wait and see," was the response, as the stranger rose. "When we meet again, Fontneroy, you shall say whether you were right or not. Adieu!"

The next instant the place where he had stood was vacant.

Struggling to the bell-pull the Confederate colonel rang loudly, then half stumbled upon his couch once more.

"I'll do it," he hissed. "The villain has pushed me too closely. I'll let the law take its course with him."

A soldier appeared at the door.

"The man who wounded me just passed this house. Tell Drury this and give him my orders not to let him get away alive. Be quick now."

The Confederate disappeared.

Five minutes later Arthur St. Clair hastening toward the Doane mansion was arrested from his reverie by the clatter of pursuing horses.

"Ha! so soon as this! Well, I am ready. Oh, Ned, my boy; we have a race ahead."

As if understanding the words of his master, the noble animal fairly flew over the ground, causing his beautiful mane to stream out behind like silken threads.

In a brief space of time, however, the pursuing force came in sight not far in the rear.

Half a dozen rifle-balls whizzed through the air. This showed that he was within reach of the Confederate weapons.

"I'll show you a little trick, I think," said the disguised man, as the second round of bullets cut the air.

Shuffling off a worn and soiled coat which concealed a better suit, the man waited for the next shot from his pursuers.

When it came he dropped the bridle to the ground, and threw himself low down upon the side of his horse, clinging like an Indian when he was entirely out of sight, while the coat he had let fall bore every appearance of a man shot from the saddle.

A yell of triumph burst from the Confederates. They believed they had brought down their enemy.

Riding almost breathlessly up, they halted around the garment St. Clair had cast off, when a howl of rage rent the air.

They saw in a moment the deception which had been practiced upon them; but it was too late.

When they were ready to take up the chase again the object of their pursuit had vanished as if into space.

For two hours the search was kept up. Vain were all the endeavors of the Confederates to determine the whereabouts of St. Clair.

Cursing loudly and dreading the reproof of Fontneroy upon their return, the troop rode back to camp.

Meantime where was St. Clair?

Seeing the troop of horsemen draw rein at the spot where his coat lay, and knowing that their attention was no longer upon him he turned his horse abruptly to one side and plunged deeply into the forest beside the road.

Making a wide detour he changed his course at the end of an hour, and, with the accuracy of one who has perfect knowledge of the section of the country around him, emerged exactly in the rear of the grand old house of the Doanes.

"I said I would do it, and I will not break my promise!" muttered the stranger, as he dismounted and secured his horse within easy reach should he be surprised. "Fontneroy shall learn that he told the truth when he said that the hunted stag finally turns against its persecutors, that the sting of the serpent cannot be borne forever."

Making his way up to the mansion, he asked for Laura, and a few minutes afterward he was sitting face to face with her in the parlor.

The girl was pale, still lovely as ever. The effects of the late scenes of excitement had told upon her.

"You, no doubt, wonder at this intrusion, and think it unwarranted, perhaps, that a stranger should come to you in the way I have. I am not without my reasons for so doing."

The man's words were so utterly at variance with his personal appearance that Laura, from that moment, knew that he was in disguise.

"I must confess to some little curiosity," she said, smiling. "A woman is supposed to be a curious creature, you know."

A grave expression settled upon the features of Laura's visitor.

"Mine is an errand which cannot bring you immediate happiness, Miss Doane; yet I am fully sure that when you are over the sharp pang my words bring you, you will be thankful to him who now speaks to you. You have a lover, Colonel Fontneroy."

Laura started quickly, and a look of terror depicted itself on her countenance.

Why was it that her lover's name had never brought her the peace of mind she had a right to expect?

Why must thoughts of him ever be coupled with feelings of unrest and forebodings of something awful, something indefinite and incomprehensible, yet awful?

"I perceive you start. Believe me, I would not say one word to cause you needless pain. Neither do I come to you for the purpose of striking any man behind his back. I am not a coward. I am here for your good, to thwart the schemes of as infamous a villain as treads the earth!"

Laura sprang to her feet, a gleam of fire lighting her eye.

"Of whom do you speak? Certainly not of Colonel Fontneroy? He is the very soul of honor. I will not listen to words like these."

"Listen, then judge," was the calm response. "First, let me tell you that I shall utter no word which is not as true as that the sun shines in the sky. Lady, there was once, not long ago, a home so happy that God's purest blessing seemed to rest upon it like a curtain of love forever. One man and one woman, not more than two years wedded, knowing the love of no one, save their own, dwelt in that home."

Even as the serpent entered the home of that first couple long ago, so that same slimy reptile crept into this peaceful abode.

He stole away the love of that wife once devoted and true. He changed that husband into a common criminal, wallowing in the gutter. He caused the arrest of that husband for a forgery done in an hour of drunken madness, and stayed not his hand till he saw him shut up behind prison bars, a felon in the eyes of the law.

He kept on till he brought that wife in tears to the grave. Then, and there only, did he pause.

"Need I say what name that serpent bore? It was Norman Fontneroy!"

Listening with wide, staring eyes, as the stranger proceeded with his story a hand, as of ice, seemed to close slowly around the heart of poor Laura Doane.

With a cry she pressed her hands tightly over her forehead, and fell insensible into the arms of St. Clair, who sprang at that instant to her side.

Placing her gently upon the sofa, he patiently waited for her to recover consciousness. When that moment arrived, Laura said:

"Strange man, do you know this is true? God pity me!"

"Do I know it is true? Would to Heaven I did not. Here before you, with the Maker as my witness, I tell you what I have said is true! I could say more. I know it is not needed. This is hard for you to hear, but it is better that you know it now."

"Better! From what has it not saved me! I shudder to think of what might have come to me but for this. But I will wring the story from his own lips. I must know more than this, and from him only will I ask it."

"Let that be as you wish, I have no more to say. But stay; I have something further to tell you. Not content with compassing your destruction, he is plotting with a fiend like himself to destroy the happiness of Molly Grame."

"My cousin! What is this you say? Speak quickly."

"They intend she shall wed Oliver Oglethorpe."

"That villain!"

"This I have but recently learned. At this moment Oglethorpe and his paid emissaries are on the track of brave Phil Lamonte, who stands, as he believes, in the way of his own success. I fear that evil may have befallen him."

"This is terrible! And I, I had ever dreamed him so true and so noble!"

The girl rose and began to walk nervously up and down the room. Stopping at a window, she said:

"Was this the secret of the dreadful misgivings which have always possessed me since I knew him? It must be true. It must be."

Then coming back, she continued:

"Where is Philip Lamonte?"

"He escaped from the hands of the enemy

when surrounded in this house, and hurried to overtake a Confederate scout who was bearing dispatches to a distant point, intending to convey them to Nashville, if successful. By this time he should be there."

"Molly must know of this plan against her and her lover. Brave Phil! He must not fall for her sake. Can you do anything toward putting him on his guard?"

"I shall at once bend my energies in that direction. I pledge myself to do all I can. Now I must say farewell. Pardon me for the pain I have caused you. Adieu."

In a moment he had gone.

Rushing into Molly's room the excited Laura, with glittering eyes, told the tale to which she had just been a listener.

Many were the interruptions which the sweet little cousin made, and wrathful were her exclamations when she knew the plot against Phil Lamonte.

"And you are at heart a rebel, Laura? You sympathize with such men as these? Shame—shame upon you! I should think this would be enough to turn you from such a horde of fiends!"

"But, Molly, it is not men, but principles, I uphold."

"The principles are just as false as the men who are defending them. Both are deceptive and must fall."

Molly's cheeks were aglow with rage.

The story of her cousin had set her brave heart all on fire.

"But they shall not kill Phil Lamonte. He is too good and brave to fall by the weapons of such a set of poltroons."

The girl leaped up quickly.

"What will you do, Molly?"

"You shall see."

And Laura did see.

Just as night was dropping its mantle over this Southern homestead, a woman rode out of the yard adjoining the Doane mansion, and set her face resolutely toward Nashville.

It was Molly Grame.

## CHAPTER X.

### RESCUED FROM THE BURNING BUILDING.

After rescuing Phil Lamonte from the clutches of his rival and enemy, Oglethorpe, the stranger urged his horse hotly on till they had left the Confederates far in the rear.

Not a word had been as yet passed between them.

Phil, though wondering much who this bold horseman was, and why he had happened to make his appearance so opportunely, chose to let him open conversation in his own time and way. The manner in which he did this only added astonishment to our hero's already deep surprise.

"Are the dispatches safe?"

The dispatches! What did the man mean? How had he gained his information regarding this mission of Phil?

Such were the questions which run through the mind of the scout.

"What dispatches do you refer to?" asked Phil, guardedly.

"I am not ignorant of your mission, sir," was the reply. "You can trust me. Though I am not in Union uniform my heart is loyal; I wear the blue in my bosom. You have been following Confederate couriers from Beauregard's camp, and have gained from them messages to Price and Van Dorn. Are they safe?"

Phil sought to catch a glimpse of the face of this stranger who had such perfect knowledge of his own movements, but the twilight was now deepening into night and he failed.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I must be careful. I acknowledge your kindness in helping me out of what promised to be a tight box; but I do not know you well enough to—"

"I will prove to you that I am what I pretend to be—a friend. I come here direct from the home of the Doanes."

"Ah! you know them, then?"

"Not as fully as I could wish; yet somewhat. I know that Molly Grame loves you—"

"Loves me! Then you know more than I do. Explain yourself."

"It is not my right or province to do that. She will prove it to your satisfaction if you ask her. I know, further than this, that you have a rival, a dangerous man; no other than Oglethorpe, the leader of the band from which you have just escaped."

"A rival! This is all news to me. I did not dream of such a thing. Then that fellow had a double reason for desiring my arrest. I begin to see. What else is there to tell me, strange man?"

"Only this: that if the dispatches are still safe, you must make all possible haste to get them before Buell. There's mischief afoot. As yet I cannot tell its exact character, but I fear disaster lurks very near to the Union cause."

"I share your belief in that respect," said Phil, gravely. "I hardly needed the incentive you give; yet, it shall warm me to greater exertions than ever. Unless I die before midnight, Buell will have all the knowledge the Confederate dispatches can impart."

"Good! Now we are nearing the city limits. I think I must leave you. I have work to do elsewhere, and I think you are out of danger for the present from Oglethorpe; but I advise you to keep a sharp eye out for him. He is tricky, and desperate, for he thinks you stand in his way."

"Stay!" exclaimed Phil, to whom this short conversation had been a startling, as well as pleasing revelation; "I must know further about Molly Grame. Are you positive—"

"Learn all you would know from her lips. I am away."

The next moment Phil stood alone in the dusk, listening to the clatter of the hoofs of the stranger's horse as he hastened into the dark.

What would not our hero have given at that moment to have been placed face to face with pretty Molly Grame!

But how impossible!

Here he stood, miles away, on a mission of dangerous moment.

The future was brighter, however, for this little gleam of sunshine.

There was no time for delay; onward must be his watchword.

In the light of history we know what importance attached to every movement of the great opposing forces at the time of which we write.

Let us look for a moment at the situation. Here, at Pittsburg Lauding lay General Grant, who, with that remarkable foresight which ever characterized him, had been pushing toward Corinth, well knowing the importance of that point, but who was now awaiting the arrival of General Buell, from Nashville.

At the same moment, and also fully appreciating the fact that Corinth was an objective point of highest value, Beauregard had hastened thither.

He had already been reinforced by the troops of General Johnston and was only resting till Price and Van Dorn came up to strike a blow, from which it was intended the Unionists never should recover.

Totally unaware of the peril of Grant's position, Buell was slowly making preparations to move southward.

Hence, it becomes plain that it was of the greatest importance that General Buell should recognize that Grant was in imminent danger, and hasten to his rescue.

Phil Lamonte, even yet ignorant of the real value of the papers in his care, nevertheless, felt that not an instant should be lost in delivering them.

This impression had been made more vivid by the words of the strange man who had been of such use to him that night.

To us they now seem almost prophetic. Danger did at that moment lurk near the Union cause.

Pausing not an instant in the spot where St. Clair had left him, Phil Lamonte struck out at a rapid pace for the city.

Already there were numerous houses along the road, and he expected every moment to hear the welcome challenge of the pickets.

Not yet was he out of danger, however.

Nothing was to be seen of the Union picket line, when, suddenly, and without warning, Phil heard the thunder of approaching horsemen.

Had he seen the dark, evil face of Oglethorpe riding at the head of that band, our hero would not have been more certain that he it was who led the flying troopers. And he knew the object of their search.

Springing into the shadow of an old house, now apparently deserted and tumbling into ruin, Phil waited with hushed breath the coming of his pursuers.

Not long had he to wait, for he had barely left the highway when the troop came in sight.

The presence of Phil must have been discovered, as when just opposite the building where he had attempted to conceal himself the band drew up and came to a dead halt.

A crisis was at hand.

In the hope that a close search of the old house would not be made, Phil dodged

around the corner, taking care to keep in the shadow, and finding a window in the rear which had been broken in, he swung himself lightly through the opening.

Lauding on the floor inside he crept noiselessly along a dark passage till he reached a point where he could hear what was going on without.

"I know my eyes didn't deceive me," a voice said. "He was just here, not two minutes ago, and I reckon he can't be far off now."

"Well," said a man whose language revealed to Phil the presence of his rival, Oglethorpe, "to make sure about the matter we had better take a look in this vicinity. That old house yonder would make an excellent hiding place for the fellow. Half a dozen of you come with me, and we'll go through the place. The rest of you scour the grounds, and remember that I'll reward the man who captures him or shoots him as he stands!"

Phil's hauds clinched hard together as he listened to this cold-blooded remark. Oglethorpe's case must be desperate indeed to urge him to measures so severe.

"A reward on my head, eh? I am to be shot in my tracks if worst comes to worst. But I am not so sure, my dear sir, that any man will claim the reward you offer. I rather think not. Now let me see. A hiding-place is what I want for the present."

Darting hither and thither in the hope that he would find either a door leading up stairs or downward into the cellar, he was startled by the sound of a hand upon the latch in front of the house.

Not a moment was to be lost.

Feeling along the wall Phil discovered an old-fashioned fire-place, and above yawned a wide-throated chimney.

Quicker than a flash he stooped and crawled under the mantel up into the chimney. Placing his hands against its sides, he drew himself upward far enough to be out of sight from below.

Bracing his feet in front of him with his back resting upon the wall behind, he waited.

His place of hiding had not been found an instant too soon, for hardly had he reached it when the Confederates burst in a body into the building.

Lights soon flashed hither and thither through every room from cellar to garret. Each nook and corner, each closet and out-of-the-way place was explored with the thoroughness which desperation alone gives.

"You see, gentlemen, he is not here."

The speaker was Oglethorpe.

"Bill, your eyes must be getting poor, certainly."

"I reckon I wasn't mistaken. I tell you again he is very near here. He may not be in this house; I didn't say he was; but you'll see I am right. They may be having better luck outside."

"We'll make sure he never gets out of this place alive at any rate," said Oglethorpe, "if he is hidden away in some hole we haven't stumbled on. Here, boys, apply the torch to this infernal old shell in a dozen different places. We'll let the Yanks know we're near, if nothing more."

Phil heard these words with a feeling somewhat akin to despair, but there was mingled with it a stern resolve not to yield till fate compelled.

Only a brief space of time elapsed before the crackling of flames fell upon his ears.

The command of Oglethorpe was being carried out. Fiendish though the scheme was, and worthy none but the most cruel and inhuman brain, Oglethorpe laughed wildly as he saw the fiery demon leap from point to point of the deserted house.

"If the cursed Union spy is in there, and I hope he is, that'll be the last of him! On, boys. He's safe now!"

Phil heard the sound of the retreating horsemen, then he leaped to the floor.

Now for escape!

He must show Oliver Oglethorpe that it was not so easy to shake him off. He would reappear to him when least he expected it and avenge this insult.

Escape!

But how?

Look where he might, his eyes rested on sheets of flame, growing more and more intense and becoming blinding in their intensity.

Hotter and hotter grew the air.

Heaven! must he suffocate here?

He ran from place to place in the great house.

Everywhere it was the same.

He tried again and again to reach the cellar, but was met by a cloud of smoke which sent him back almost stifled.

It was of no use to attempt to mount the rickety stairs which, at length, he found in fact, the danger would be great there.

Must he then fold his hands and submit to death!

Was this fate?

The dispatches! He had failed to carry out his purpose. For once in his life he was forced to admit defeat.

It was a sore trial for him to make this admission; yet was it not best to look the matter square in the face.

All this was due to Oglethorpe.

Would Molly Grame now accept his rival for a suitor?

He could not believe it. She was too true a woman, too pure in heart to have anything to do with such a miscreant.

Beams began to tumble about him, sparks burned the floor near the spot where he stood.

How hot it was!

Hark!

Like the wing of a rescuing angel something fell over the head and shoulders of Phil Lamonte.

He felt himself half dragged, half led, through a sea of blinding smoke and flame, by a passage he had not discovered; a singular faintness came over him.

When it was over, he was in the pure air of heaven, and a hand was upon his brow.

Could it be—?

It was the hand of a woman!

## CHAPTER XI.

## A BLOW IN THE DARK.

Phil Lamonte, revived by the fresh air, feeling the gentle hand of the unknown being upon his brow, lay still for several minutes, unwilling to move lest the sweet dream might vanish and leave him naught but the stern reality of that burning house.

He felt the woman—for such he believed his rescuer to be—bend down and watch for his breathing, and the soft touch of her fingers upon his wrist sent his blood coursing like the mountain rivulet through his veins. He wished this might go on forever; but suddenly he noticed all was silent about him.

Looking up quickly he saw that he was alone.

The angel had flown.

Phil started up, and put his hand to his brow. Was this indeed all a dream?

No.

There was the blazing tenement which had so recently imprisoned him. The timbers had fallen in one after another, leaving nothing but a red skeleton. There was no doubt about it.

Someone, a woman, had saved him from imminent peril.

Who was that woman?

He knew of only one in all the world who would risk so much for his sake, and he had no right to suppose that she would do it.

Must the question remain unanswered?

He tried to pierce the gray curtain of night which now hung heavy about him, hoping to catch some glimpse of the woman who had just retreated from his side.

It was in vain.

Nothing but impenetrable gloom met his eyes save where the old house was crackling into ruins.

Several times he fancied he heard footsteps in the highway beyond, but after listening earnestly for some further signs of an animate object he decided that he must have been mistaken.

"I am certain that time will reveal to me the truth of this matter which is now little more than mystery," said Phil, as he groped his way toward the road. "I would like to know whether I am right or not in thinking it might possibly have been her! Wouldn't I like to know that. Pshaw! Phil Lamonte, you're getting sentimental, and it's no time for sentiment. On to Nashville, must be my watchword, so here I go."

Bounding over the low fence which ran along the highway, the young man started on a run toward the city.

In half an hour he met the pickets, and in a short time thereafter he had the pleasure of standing in the presence of General Buell.

"General," our hero said, tossing down a package upon the table at which Buell sat, "here are some papers that weren't intended for Union eyes. As you will see, they are addressed to Price and Van Dorn, now on their way from Arkansas."

Buell took a glance at the blood-stained and crumpled packet, and then turned his eyes upon the young man, who spoke so calmly about this matter.

"But how did you come into possession of these documents? I judge they have been

in dangerous places. There is blood on them."

"You are right, sir; they have been brought to you with some difficulty. It would take too long for me to tell the story of how I came to get on the track of these dispatches. It is not of much importance anyway, now that they are here. The main point is to make available the information they contain. I judge no time is to be lost in examining them."

With a smile, General Buell returned to the papers.

He liked the earnest, unassuming manner of this stranger.

Opening the soiled envelope, he spread the papers out on the table, and bent over them for some time in silence.

Then he exclaimed:

"Heavens! Can that be? See here, young man, do you know the contents of this package?"

"Not a word."

"You may have performed service of the greatest value to the Union cause by bringing these papers here. Let me tell you what they reveal. The Confederates intend to move up to General Grant secretly and attack him unawares, while he is waiting for me. These dispatches were to hurry Price and Van Dorn up to render assistance in this plan. The question now is, can I reach Grant in time to avert the impending disaster?"

"How soon can we move, general?"

"Within two hours," said Buell, rising quickly, and pulling a bell-rope. "I am angry with myself for not pushing forward more rapidly, as I might have done easily enough."

A messenger appearing, General Buell gave orders in a quick, excited way for the entire force under his command to get under way for the march to Pittsburg Landing.

Unexpected as was the command, in a marvelous short space of time all was commotion among the troops.

"I want you to undertake a task of grave importance, my young friend," said General Buell, after meditating a while over the dispatches which still remained on the table.

"It is—"

"To carry a message from me to Grant. As yet he is ignorant of this intended move upon him, and is quietly awaiting my arrival before going on to Corinth. I want to acquaint him of this scheme of the Confederates, and at the same time inform him that I shall march night and day to join him. Will you accept the commission?"

"General," was the dignified reply, as Phil drew himself proudly up, "if you think me worthy to serve you and my country in the way you suggest, I am happy to tell you that nothing could compel me to refuse the trust. Write out the message, please."

"You are a true soldier," said Buell. "I wish my men were all like you. I shall not forget to speak to General Grant of this matter at the earliest possible moment; for I know the danger I ask you to face as well as you do, and that your bravery ought not to go unrewarded."

The general then seated himself and wrote rapidly for fifteen minutes, now and then stopping to consult the mutilated Confederate dispatches before him.

At the end of that time he folded the letter he had written, and sealing it placed it in the hands of Phil Lamonte, saying:

"There is what I wish you to carry to Grant. I need not tell you how important it is that he receive the packet as soon as possible. I believe you appreciate that as I do."

"I will do my best," was all Phil replied, as he placed the papers in his bosom. "These letters are safe, believe that. If I fail, they go out of existence with me! Good-night, general."

In a moment he was gone.

"A true hero," said General Buell, pacing up and down his room with a thoughtful brow.

As for our hero, looking ahead over the route, at every step of which lurked hidden peril, when he went forth on his mission it was with the courage which ever marks the movements of a brave man.

Applying at the proper place he obtained a horse suited to his taste in every way.

Furnished with the password, he delayed not in placing the city of Nashville behind his back.

Although he was constantly on the outlook for Confederate scouts, with whom the country was at that time swarming, his greatest anxiety was lest Oglethorpe, sneaking like a serpent in the grass, should intercept him.

Not that he feared the man in an open-handed contest, but this he knew his rival never would grant him.

Half the night long bespied on his way, unmolested, and hopeful.

The night proved more auspicious than he had feared.

The late storm had spent its force apparently for the present, and the dun black clouds had rolled away to the westward, leaving only here and there a few scattering flakes, like the stragglers of a retreating army.

Descending a sharp declivity in the road, Phil came to the edge of a rapid stream, shut in on every hand along shore by crags that seemed almost insurmountable.

So swift was the current that he hesitated to attempt to ford it lest his horse might be swept down the stream.

He remembered that there had formerly been a bridge at that point. The recent heavy tempest had carry it away.

He wondered if there were not some point either above or below which would afford a better crossing. For some time he groped his way along the bank where the rocks hung beetling above his head, and at certain points, he was compelled to dismount and lead his horse in order to make any progress.

The hope which had inspired him finally began to vanish, and there came in its place a grim resolution to plunge boldly in and fight it out with the watery element.

This determination having fully taken possession of him he stood for a moment on the shore in the shadow of an overhanging cliff and stroked the neck of his beautiful steed.

"Poor old fellow!" he said, "it is worse for you than for me, I know not what else to do but to drive you out into the current."

With these words he mounted, when suddenly the icy muzzle of a pistol sent a chill through his whole being.

"I know what you will do, my dear sir," said a voice, which he instantly knew to be that of his evil genius, Oglethorpe; "not to-night will you ford this stream. It is not set down in the book of fates thus."

"Well, what will prevent it?" said our hero, calmly.

"I will."

"You? May I ask who you are?"

"Phil Lamonte—you know who I am!" hissed the Confederate. "We have met before. You escaped me. But it was the last time. Oliver Oglethorpe never misses in the end. In the end, understand."

"What is the meaning of this attack?" continued Phil, now determined to draw from the lips of his rival the true object he had in pursuing him. "I am a stranger to you. I am not aware that I have injured you. It certainly has been through ignorance if I have."

"The folks back at Corinth want you."

"But that isn't your motive in haunting me like this. I know it."

There was a moment's silence.

"I am fool enough to love Molly Grame." The Confederate spoke like one half-ashamed of the admission.

"Well?"

"She loves you."

"Ah! she never told me so. I had rather hear it from her own lips."

"Make the most of the knowledge. Gain what happiness you can out of it; for I swear never shall you listen to those words from her."

"What do you intend, then?"

Not a trace of fear in the tone.

"Stir but a muscle and you will know sooner than you think. Phil Lamonte, I am a desperate man. I have followed you here to rid myself of your presence. If I cannot have the love of Molly Grame, you shall not, so hear me Heaven!"

At that moment the Confederate gave a shrill whistle.

The echoes took up the sound and sent it back from a hundred different points along the stream.

In a trice a score of men leaped from their concealment close by, and sprung to the spot where their leader stood with his weapon yet upon the brow of Phil Lamonte.

"Men," said Oglethorpe, "here is the man we have been seeking—the Union scout. He is, as you know, just from the quarters of General Buell, where he has been to deliver messages taken from us. The result may be everlasting ruin to us if we do not take vigorous steps to arrest the disaster he hopes to precipitate upon us. What shall his fate be?"

"Death!"

The word sounded hollow and sepulchral.

"By what means?"

"Let him find a grave in the center of this stream, the noisy Launton!" said one of the number, pointing out over the current.

"Agreed!" was the united response.

Without another word three men seized Phil, and pinning his arms to his side, bore him to a boat which they drew from the bank. Lifting him in they rowed rapidly into the middle of the stream.

Then raising him they held him over the edge of the boat ready to hurl him overboard.

As they stood thus with the young man poised in mid-air two shots rung out on the still night, and two of the Confederates dropped dead in the boat.

The next moment a second boat, cleft the water and came to a pause beside that which had brought Phil thither.

In it were a man and woman.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CARRYING OUT THE COMPACT.

Night in the woods.

Oglethorpe, after leaving the old house near Nashville in flames, spent some time in skirmining around in that vicinity expecting momentarily to find his rival lurking there.

But when at the end of an hour the members of his band came in one by one reporting no success, he began to think that Phil had indeed perished in the burning building. Perhaps this belief was strengthened in some degree by the hope he cherished that it might be true.

This conclusion having been reached, the young man ordered his men to fall back into the wood lying a mile or two from the city and encamp for the night.

The location selected was in a deep ravine sheltered in every direction and apparently safe from detection.

Oglethorpe, instead of hitching his horse with those of the men who followed him, stole away in the darkness and directed his steps still further back from Nashville.

"This is a part of this night's work that I wish was over," he muttered, when once fairly on the way. "If the colonel had given it to some other man it would have suited me better. I would not have undertaken it if I had not thought he would stand by me in my little affair with Molly Grame. I don't exactly fancy this crawling up to a man, and without cause, sending him to Davy Jones' Locker. But if it has to be done, and I have promised it shall be, why, what is the use in having conscientious scruples about the way it is to be done? Conscience! Pshaw, what nonsense! As if an Oglethorpe ever had a conscience. Convenient that they haven't, at times. To-night, for instance. Lucky I came across the camp of that fellow accidentally to-day. Oglethorpe was right; no man could ever look in his eyes without remembering them till death. I hope they will not fasten themselves on me this evening, for they would haunt me forever. I know they would. I wonder what the secret is between that unknown and the colonel? I'll find that out sometime."

Thus the paltroon soliloquized, picking his way around in the silence of the great forest.

There is something about the solitude of the woods which arouses within a man a sense of his positive insignificance as a part of the great creation.

If he be a criminal, such a place brings up before him every act of his which he wishes to hide from his fellow men and to push out of his own memory.

Here he seems nearer to his Maker.

All these things came again and again into the mind of Oglethorpe, threading the devious paths of the forest.

No wonder he wished his errand done.

In an hour he drew his horse up and threw himself from his saddle.

The narrow track he had been pursuing lost itself in a dense growth of shrubs and low bushes. No longer could he have even the company of his horse. And that meant a great deal to Oglethorpe.

He dreaded to be alone. What wonder?

Fastening his horse securely, the man struck a match and carefully looked at his pistols and drew his thumb across the edge of his keen hunting-knife.

"This is the weapon of my choice," he whispered. "It gives out no sound, and does its work swiftly and well. I will try it first. If it fails, then these others must be used. Fails? The word must not be spoken. I fail?"

With a sound, partly a laugh, partly a sigh, the bird of the night thrust his weapons into their places, and parted the thicket before him.

To a stranger it would have seemed almost impossible for one to feel his way through such a tangle of briars and underbrush. Yet Oglethorpe, as if born here, pressed forward making rapid progress.

So quiet was he that he did not waken the birds from their slumber in the branches overhead.

In half an hour he stopped.

The smell of smoke fell upon his nostrils, and he knew he was nearing the spot where his victim lay unsuspecting of his approach.

Double caution now marked his movements.

Almost crouching upon the ground he crawled, rather than walked, toward the camp-fire.

It was some time ere its glimmer shone through the trees.

"I have not missed in my reckoning the fiend muttered. "No; too long have I trod these woods for that. Ha, ha! I now have an opportunity to use the knowledge my past training has brought me. I wonder what Molly Grame would say if she knew what my past has been? Or, if she could see me now crawling through these forest paths like some beast of prey. Would she love me better? Love me better? Would she not the rather hate me with deadlier hatred than even now? And yet it is for her I am here. But I swear here in this still spot that when this war is over and Molly Grame is my wife, I will forsake the black ways I have trodden."

The words were those of a man who means what he says.

Then on he crept nearer and nearer the fire glowing from the little valley below.

Making the circuit of the place he peered closely about for the exact spot where the sleeper lay.

After some time he was able to distinguish a form prostrate in a blanket under the shadow of a low-branched cypress.

Evidently the approach of Oglethorpe was all undreamed of.

Drawing his dagger the assassin almost lying upon the ground edged his way forward.

That night Arthur St. Clair, as we shall hereafter know the stranger whom we first met at the window of Colonel Fontneroy's quarters, after leaving Phil Lamonte safely near the suburbs of Nashville, plunged back into the wood toward a place where he had often rested for the night.

Reaching that spot, he cared for his horse as attentively as if it had been a human being, then set about preparing for himself a plain yet substantial meal from articles which he had concealed in the secluded nook where he had chosen to hide.

He was a strange man.

Yet many another is like him.

Proud, well-born, intellectual, his childhood had been full of promise—promise which seemed but the bud of grand achievements for the future.

But evil befell him, and he became what we now find him—a wanderer.

Listen and catch a glimpse of his story:

"Why am I not a man-hater? Were it not that at first my heart was so full of the milk of human kindness that nothing can ever root it out, to-day I would have naught in my heart for my fellow-men but bitterest hate! As it is, only one single man has my enmity, and that man is he who brought me to this low estate, robbing me of all that life held dear. And now he seeks even life itself! Not by your hand or that of your paid assassins shall I die, Colonel Fontneroy. Fate has something better in store for me than that. I am in disgrace but to give up my life through such means as you can invent would be terrible indeed. Well, now must I seek the repose I need for the work of the morrow. I must keep guard over Phil Lamonte, for the sake of the sweet girl who loves him."

Wrapping his blanket about him he stretched himself out by the cheerful fire, and was soon asleep.

Over his silent form now bent the murderer, Oglethorpe.

In his hard hand he held his dagger, now uplifting it, and again letting it descend harmlessly to his side.

"How well he sleeps," the villain muttered. "I hate this deed. It is murder. Why did Fontneroy choose me for its perpetration? If it must be done why could he not do it himself? The coward! But coward as he is, he holds me in his power. I must obey his command!"

Again the hand was uplifted.

The rays of light as they fell shimmering through the leaves betrayed the face of Ogle-

thorpe, pale, even baggard, as he stood face to face with this the greatest crime of his life. The beating of his own heart startled him.

Suddenly the arm of the murderer was seized from behind, and his weapon sent hurtling through the air.

With a yell of rage which set the wild echoes of the night to ringing far and near, Oglethorpe bounded to his feet and cast one look upon the face of the being who had foiled him in his evil design.

And that glance was enough.

Standing by the side of the form of Arthur St. Clair with her locks streaming over her shoulders, was Molly Grame.

The eyes of the fair young girl penetrating into the very soul of Oglethorpe, seemed like the gaze of doom.

A groan burst from his lips.

Then he turned and fled from the scene.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ON THE VILLAIN'S TRACK.

The despairing cry of Oglethorpe aroused the sleeping St. Clair.

Springing to his feet he stared in wonder, first upon the retreating form of the midnight marauder, then down into the colorless face of the girl beside him.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he at length asked. "By the light of this fire I see you man disappearing now. What brought him here? And you, why this look on your features?"

"You have been in danger."

"In danger! From what source?"

"At the hands of the man you saw just now."

"That danger was removed by you. How can I thank you, kind lady?"

The strange man extended his hand.

The girl placed her own in it.

"I believe I did frighten him away," she said. "But no thanks are necessary. I am glad you escaped unharmed. That fact is enough of itself to repay me."

"I am happy indeed to have such a preserver. Pardon me, but I must know your name. Will you grant me this request?"

"Molly Grame."

"Molly Grame!" exclaimed St. Clair, in astonishment. "The cousin of Laura Doane. Come nearer the light. Now I do remember you. We have met once before."

"Yes; and the brave work you did for Laura and I has not yet been sufficiently rewarded."

"Then it never will be. Is not such a brave deed as this sufficient reward? Speak no further of that."

The girl shuddered as the thought of the result had she not appeared to stay the hand of Oglethorpe as she did.

"You spoke just now of danger from the man who has just left us. Who was he?"

A look of sadness came into the eyes of the girl.

"Can you not think? Have you no enemy who seeks your life?"

"I have. But I wish to know if you came near enough to him to get a glimpse of his face. Was it Fontneroy himself?"

"No. Do you think he would be bold enough to venture here? Never. Base as he is, he is a coward still."

"I see you know him well. But, who, then, was it?"

"You know a man named Oglethorpe?"

"Ah! Then it was as I thought. Doubled villain! you are the man chosen for this foul crime, are you? Once more, Fontneroy, you show your cunning in choosing an instrument to execute your will. But you have failed!"

Half to himself were the last words spoken. "Now, tell me how you came out here in the depths of this forest."

"Sir," said Molly Grame, proudly, "I am not ashamed to tell you this. I know I can trust you. I have a lover, Phil Lamonte is his name. He has been hunted by this same fiend Oglethorpe. This you know but too well. The peril impending over him impelled me hither. While on the way to Nashville I crossed the track of Oglethorpe and knew that evil was in his heart. I have shadowed him since noon to-day. This is the second time I have met him, though he has not seen me till this hour, and twice I have thwarted him in his foul schemes. I tracked him to this place, and you know the result. Now, sir, I must away again. This will not end the plots of Oglethorpe. I must find Phil Lamonte and warn him of the danger he is in. He is now in Nashville with General Buell. Thither must I go."

"Not alone!"

"Why not?"

"Brave girl! I cannot permit it. I know what lurks between this place and yonder city. I beg, you will not refuse my offer to attend you."

The girl hesitated.

"I have met with no serious difficulty up to the present, sir. I do not anticipate any."

"But I may be able to assist you in ways you know not of at present. Do not, I beg, refuse this request."

"You are kind. I will not deny your position."

"Thanks. We will follow this scoundrel. He will bring us to the man you love."

"I believe he thinks him dead."

"But does not know it? Then, trust me, he will pursue him till he learns the truth."

"I fear you are right," said the girl, seriously.

Leaving Molly standing by the fire, St. Clair hastened to bring his horse forward.

"Please accept a place upon my horse," he said. "You must have found the way troublesome enough on foot."

"But you—I can't allow you to go on foot to save me from trouble. I am strong."

"So am I. By giving me my own way in this matter you will please me much. I am an obstinate fellow."

The girl yielded, and was soon seated upon St. Clair's horse.

"Now, I know the bridle-path down the mountain better than you do, so I will walk on ahead. Follow me closely. Are you ready?"

"If you are."

"Then forward."

Back over the trail along which Oglethorpe had crept on his way to commit the deed he had so ably planned, the two hastened.

The guide, relying upon his horse to follow him and upon the girl to keep her seat, struck into a pace half a walk and half a run, slackening his speed only when they approached the place where Oglethorpe's band was encamped.

St. Clair had judged rightly when he said that Oglethorpe would now hunt Phil Lamonte till he knew what had become of him. Terrified by the appearance of Molly Grame, who seemed to him like a very Neptune, he became for the time almost beside himself with desperation.

Hovering near the camp, it was but a short time before St. Clair and Molly heard a voice they distinguished but too readily, saying:

"Up, boys, and away! Back to Nashville. There's work for us yonder. I am uneasy to-night. I cannot get that cursed Lamonte out of my head. I fear he has escaped us even now. We must know his fate, if burned in that old tenement, or still abroad to cause us trouble. Quick, now; not a moment must be lost."

Speedily lights twinkled here and there among the trees, and men fitting to and fro could be seen from the hiding-place of the couple.

"Dare you remain here for a minute alone?" asked St. Clair, in a whisper.

"I dare."

Like a flash he was away.

What was his intention? The girl could not imagine.

Five minutes slipped away. Still the guide did not return. The heart of Molly Grame began to tremble for him.

Had he been discovered?

Suddenly a yell woke the stillness.

What did it mean?

The next instant a horseman came tearing through the bushes.

"This way, Molly! Lose no time, for the hounds will be after us in a second. I wanted a horse. I've got it, but I had to fight for it, and was discovered."

Discovered!

The word sent a chill through Molly, brave as he was.

But without a sign to betray this emotion, she urged her horse in close pursuit of that of St. Clair.

Not a dozen yards had they advanced when a volley of bullets sang about them.

The sensation was not pleasant.

For the time being they were the pursued instead of the pursuers.

St. Clair hoped by a few sharp moves to throw them off their guard and compel them to abandon the chase.

Turning his course toward the highway, side by side with Molly, he shot through the murky night till the stream had been reached which ran through deep defiles and darkly shaded valleys.

The discovery that the bridge was gone threw St. Clair off his guard for a moment.

"This is bad," he said. "Once on the other side of the stream, I believe we could

have evaded our pursuers. But this will not do. Already in the distance I hear the sound of horses' feet. It is a bold plan. I would not dare to undertake it did I not see you are a fearless rider. Come."

Plunging into the furious current the young man rode down the stream.

With characteristic bravery the girl imitated his example.

Several times the water almost swept their horses out from under them.

Struggling desperately, the animals regained their equilibrium and obeyed the whip and spur of their riders.

In this way the two descended the stream till they reached a point where positive danger attended further advance.

Perceiving this, St. Clair drew his horse toward the bank, and soon they stood once more upon solid ground, their animals panting heavily.

"It was a hard thing to do; but I believe by it we have succeeded in throwing Oglethorpe off our track. When I am sure of that, we will again become the pursuers. How have you stood the ride?"

"Fear not for me. I am at home in the saddle. Daily I scour the country upon horseback. That is, I used to until our neighborhood became infested with the lawless bands which the Confederate army brought."

"I take it you are not in sympathy with the Confederates?"

"And you are right?"

"But your cousin—is not the case different with her?"

"It was, I regret to say. As to the present, I think it safe—"

"Sh!" whispered St. Clair. "Unless I mistake, even here we are not safe. Can it be our ruse has not been successful?"

Bending down from his saddle, the young man listened intently.

"It is as I feared. The fiends are searching the shore for us."

"Let them come!" said Molly, pluckily. "We may as well meet them here as anywhere."

"It looks to me as if there is not much choice left us in the matter. It would be madness to attempt to venture again into that vortex of water. Just here the current strikes against this rocky cape, and we should be dashed down to death."

The position was indeed critical.

On all sides but one they were shut in by a wall of solid rock rising high above their heads.

In the one direction mentioned, a narrow path run along the stream where a man might, with great caution, pick his way on horse.

"For myself I would not care," St. Clair whispered. "In this place I could defy half of Beauregard's army. I hoped to spare you the danger."

"Sir," was the girl's reply, "do not think of me, or, if you do, look upon me as an ally. I will do my best, and I can handle a weapon with some skill."

"You are brave as bravery itself!" said St. Clair, approvingly. "You will have a chance to test your skill, I imagine. You are armed and ready."

"Yes."

The words had hardly left the lips of St. Clair when the Confederates appeared stealthily groping along the bank of the stream.

When there stood two men inside the natural fortress, St. Clair said:

"Take the first man."

Two shots rung out.

Two howls broke from the lips of the approaching horseman.

"Bravo, Molly! The day is ours!" exclaimed St. Clair. "They will not face such music as that long."

Silence prevailed for some time.

St. Clair and his courageous companion watched the narrow defile keenly, momentarily expecting further signs of an attack. Soon it came, but in a manner which they scarcely thought possible.

From the bank high above their heads came half a score of death messengers, which spattered on the water of the stream at their feet.

St. Clair grasped the arm of Molly, and drew her back under the rocky ledge which projected far enough to afford a secure roof. From that direction there was evidently nothing further to fear. But the Confederates had not abandoned their original plan of dislodging our friends, and they had no more than reached their shelter under the ledge, when cautiously peering around the rock, which half hid them from the objects

of their pursuit came several men, this time on foot.

"Wait till they are fairly in sight," was St. Clair's whispered instructions.

The next instant he said:

"Now!"

Again the two reports woke the still night.

And once more the cries which followed showed that the shots were not in vain.

Impressions deep and loud came to the ears of St. Clair, followed by prolonged silence.

An hour passed by, and all this time Phil Lamonte was drawing nearer the roaring stream on the other shore.

"Either they have given up the siege or they are lying in wait for us just beyond the defile. I will learn which is true."

Carefully as a son of the forest he stole along in the shadow of the rocks until he could look through the opening.

Outside naught was to be heard for some time, then, suddenly, the young man caught the click of muffled oars some distance up the stream.

What new project had the Confederates on foot?

The moon, which had been sailing under clouds, at that moment broke from its covering, and by its dim rays St. Clair saw about to push out from the shore, a boat, in which sat three men.

Between them lay the form of a man.

What could it mean?

He must know. Some evil scheme, no doubt, was about to be carried into execution.

How could he reach the singular trio and their burden?

If he had a boat!

Might there not be other boats concealed near there?

This one must have lain not far distant.

He began a thorough search along the bank.

Success crowned his efforts: for hidden under a thicket of elders was a boat large enough to carry two persons.

Evidently this place had been the point where some one crossed and re-crossed the stream since the bridge had been washed away.

Hastily dragging the boat from its concealment, St. Clair returned to the spot where he had left Molly.

"Fasten the horses securely and come here, quickly," he said, bringing the boat to the shore. "Some base plot is afoot among our pursuers. They have yonder in a boat the body of some one. Who it is we must know."

Unquestioningly the girl obeyed, and in an incredibly short space of time joined St. Clair in the boat.

Though the current was running at a dreadful rate around the rock just below, the strange man handled the oars as if they had been feathers, and the boat shot through the madly dashing waves like an arrow from a bow.

Taking care to keep on the windward side, he approached the boat containing the three so quietly that he could see the face of the prostrate man they bore.

Drawing in his oars, he whispered:

"Once more, Molly, you must try your hand. Those fiends are about to commit murder. We must prevent it. Fire!"

Molly, true blue, and steady of hand, sent her bullet straight through one of the men who held aloft the body of their prisoner poised in mid-air for the fatal plunge!

## CHAPTER XIV.

### TIGHTENING THE WEB.

Laura Doane sat in her room at the splendid Southern mansion.

Her mind, as indexed by her face, was not on pleasant things.

Her dark eyes flashed dangerously, and she tapped the toe of her dainty boot impatiently against an ottoman as she leaned easily back in her chair.

"The villain," she said, between her shut teeth. "Did he think he could play with me as with some toy, and then cast me aside for a new object of fancy? If he did he made a mistake. He shall learn that Laura Doane can hate as well as love, and that it is not so far from the one passion to the other that base villainy as he is guilty of cannot span the breach. Ha! even as I speak of him, he comes! It may as well come now as ever. But, stay; why this strange feeling at my heart? I will wait—will tell him I cannot see him to-day."

She touched the bell-pull as a man rode up

the grave walk, and dismounted at the door.

"Tell Colonel Fontneroy I cannot see him to-day," the girl said, when a servant appeared in answer to her summons. "I am unwell."

The servant turned away.

"Esther, come back," continued the proud girl, her cheeks glowing with unwonted brilliancy. "Perhaps you had better show the colonel up to the parlor, and I will come down. He may have something important to tell me."

"Deed, missus, I tink you'd better kep' to your fust 'pinion," said the sable messenger.

"Don't keep him waiting, Esther," was the response, as the servant tarried to see whether her argument would not induce her mistress to return to her former decision.

"This interview shall be our last," Laura said, in a low tone, preparing to descend to the parlor, "and I will make the most of it. I have been a friend to the Confederacy. Now I will be its bitterest foe! Look well to yourself, Colonel Fontneroy, lest you betray too much this morning."

Tripping down the stairs, she met the colonel with outstretched hand and a smile.

The Confederate officer's eyes rested upon her with a piercing gaze. He was striving to read her heart. Did she know—had she seen St. Clair?

If she had, nothing in her features or manner indicated it. The luster in her eyes and the blush on her cheek he attributed to her pleasure in meeting him.

"You are better?"

"Were I not I would not be here."

"Are you sure you are strong enough to ride so far? It seems to me you should have been patient a day or two longer."

"The cause I have espoused needs me. I have no time to rest. Then, too, it would have to be something more than a scratch like that to keep me longer from you."

There was a meaning in the tone which spoke more than Fontneroy's words, and the look he gave the girl spoke volumes.

Laura's face wore an expression at that moment which puzzled her visitor. It was hardly of disbelief, hardly of scorn.

But she remained silent, and her suitor continued:

"I rather expected you would come to see me, at least once while I was shut up with this wound. I thought I had a right—"

"A right?"

"Pardon me, Laura. But had I not such a right? Surely the past seemed to warrant it."

Again that peculiar look; but Laura remained silent.

"If my manner has not been sufficiently expressive to indicate my feelings toward you, Laura, let me now speak without reserve. Need I say that my heart is wholly yours, that I love you madly?"

The girl sprang up and walked away to the opposite side of the room, where she stood with her eyes resting upon vacancy, though she appeared to be looking from the window.

The words of this man had power to send a thrill over her even yet.

Could it be true? Was this the man St. Clair had warned her against?

Conquering herself, she came back.

"Colonel Fontneroy, this is not the time for such talk as this. You must see that while yet the horrors of war surround me it is useless to speak of the future."

There was a gesture of impatience from Fontneroy.

"This matter will all be over in a few months. We have now a project on foot which will practically put an end to the war. Your argument is without foundation, in fact. I must press you for an answer. Is it yes or no, Laura? Dearest, it cannot be no. Let me hope so, at least!"

The girl was quivering with emotion. She had loved Fontneroy with her whole being. It cost her more than she had dreamed possible to resist his advances.

Shaking off the spell which she felt creeping over her, she said, while she permitted the Confederate colonel to take her hand:

"You may be mistaken in assuming that the war is so nearly over. When the plan you have on foot has been tried, and it is known what its result is, then it will be time to predict its effect. But, colonel, what is the project you speak of?"

The colonel tried to pierce the depths of the beautiful eyes. What was the girl's motive in asking that question? Simple curiosity?

"Laura, this is a matter which has been breathed aloud only in the councils of our

officers. Our plans are being perfected in utter secrecy. Can I trust you?"

"Trust me! Have you ever had a reason to doubt my fidelity to the cause?"

"No; but this is such an important thing, I am placing my honor at stake. You could bring upon me eternal disgrace."

"If you cannot trust the woman you say you love now, how would it be by and by?"

The colonel averted his eyes. He could not meet the searching gaze of Laura.

"I do trust you, and I will prove it." He then laid before her the scheme then nearly matured, of crushing the Union army under General Grant, near Pittsburg Landing, entering into the details fully, and forgetting in his enthusiasm that he had betrayed the secret of the campaign.

The expedition had been partly planned by him, and naturally he took pride in rehearsing its features and telling what its result would be.

Laura drunk in the colonel's words with a strange determination growing stronger and stronger within her.

When he had completed the history of the surprise intended for the Union troops, Laura said:

"A bold enterprise, indeed. But what if news of it should reach the ears of General Grant before you have time to execute it?"

There was something in the question which sent terror into the breast of Colonel Fontneroy.

"Such an event is not to be thought of. Every step has been guarded. Only by the hand of a traitor could our project be brought to failure. It would be death to that traitor, for he would be hunted down like a dog. Why do you ask such a thing as that?"

The girl rose and stood proudly before the colonel, whose face was pale and anxious.

"Colonel Fontneroy, you speak of a betrayal, and say it would prove disastrous to your cause. What would you think of a man who betrayed the heart of a confiding woman?"

There was no doubting Laura's intention now.

When it was too late, Colonel Fontneroy saw it.

"Laura, good Heaven! what do you mean? Why do you look at me thus? It cannot be you intend to betray me now?"

"You ask if I intend to betray you! You, whose every word is spoken to deceive! For, know that I have learned your villainy. I have seen Arthur St. Clair."

The colonel staggered to his feet, his eyes bloodshot and wild.

"Woman, beware what you say!" he hissed. "You make me almost beside myself. What have I to do with St. Clair? He is my enemy. His hand sent the bullet which came near taking my life. He hates me. He has lied to you, and you have believed him."

"Why should I not? If you can stand here before me and tell me truly that you have not ruined his life I will believe you still. Heaven knows I have tried to think he was dealing unjustly with you. Can you say it? I wait your reply."

Fontneroy's face, white as death, told what his lips could not—that it was true—that he could not deny the girl's accusation.

"I tell you," he stammered, weakly, "he is my enemy. Why should you believe him? instead of me! Laura, come here and tell me you are not in earnest."

"But I am in earnest!" cried Laura. "You did what St. Clair charges. I believe it, and I shall hate you forever for it. Love gives place in my heart to hate. I will never forget the villainy you played toward him and the lies you told to me."

"Beware—beware! I tell you, how you trifle with me," said Fontneroy, between his shut teeth. "I will not answer for myself if you do not cease."

The Confederate attempted to control himself, but was failing fast.

Laura stepped toward the door leading out of the room.

"I fear not your scorn!" she exclaimed. "You cannot harm me. I bid you good-morning."

Fontneroy sprang between her and the doorway, attempting to check her in her escape, but she glided swiftly by him, and his hand clutched empty air.

"Laura Doane," he cried, furiously, "stop where you are, I command you!"

As he spoke the glitter of a pistol could have been seen beneath his hand.

It was now diamond cut diamond between Laura and Colonel Fontneroy.

The girl did not see this act of the officer's, for she was already out of sight, leaving the

colonel alone in the hall muttering to himself.

A few minutes later, white with passion, Fontneroy rode back to Corinth.

Hardly had he disappeared when a cloaked figure emerged from the Doane mansion, unattended, and took the road leading toward Pittsburg Landing.

From beneath the ample folds of the hood there peered the black eyes of the beautiful Laura Doane.

The web which the Confederates under the leadership of General Beauregard were weaving was now being drawn tighter and tighter around the unsuspecting Unionists encamped between Pittsburg Landing, on the left bank of the Tennessee River, and the Shiloh Meeting House, in the forest about two miles from the same stream.

Beauregard, who had been lying at Corinth, had been joined by General Johnston and his troops after they had fled from Nashville.

He also had for his assistants Generals Polk, Bragg, Hardee and Breckenridge.

Seeing that Grant's great hope was to reach and occupy Corinth, and that until the arrival of General Buell he would scarcely attempt an attack, the Confederate general determined to become for the once aggressive, and strike his opponent unawares a blow, which would not only send him backward in defeat but revive the drooping spirits of the entire South.

Colonel Fontneroy, foreseeing that unless immediate action were taken, all would be lost through his own folly in revealing their plans to Laura Doane, now urged an advance without delay, giving as his reason the belief that Buell would come up quicker than they supposed, and defeat all.

Convinced by this argument, General Beauregard determined upon carrying into execution at once the famous *coup d'état*, which came so near to proving the greatest success of the Confederacy.

Through the eternal drizzle of that gloomy day in spring the Confederates marched in separate columns, under their respective leaders, out of Corinth, and concentrated near Pittsburg Landing.

So stealthily was their movement that they reached a point only four miles distant from the Union forces before they were discovered.

On April 5, 1862, they halted to await the arrival of Price and Van Dorn from Central Arkansas.

The force under Beauregard had been swollen from eleven thousand to forty thousand.

Fontneroy, whose reputation was now at stake, tried to convince General Beauregard that nothing would be gained by waiting for further reinforcement.

Prompt and decisive action was his continued appeal.

But Beauregard waited. And thus the two mighty armies lay like panting tigers, ready for the plunge which was to send many a poor soldier, blue and gray, to the bloody grave.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A FEARFUL LEAP.

Phil Lamonte struggled up in the boat, bound though he was, and leaned eagerly forward in the attempt to catch a glimpse of the persons who had so unexpectedly befriended him.

"Who are you?" he asked, quickly.

"Friends!" was the reply.

"No need to tell me that," responded our hero. "I know it already."

"Is not that sufficient?" asked St. Clair, as he severed with a single stroke the cords which had fettered the limbs of Phil.

"For some it might. Not for me. I must know whom to thank."

"Then thank pretty Molly Grame here. To her more than any one else you owe your escape. I am in her debt also."

Phil bent down, and by the pale light of the moonbeams struggling through the clouds looked into Molly's face.

How his heart leaped!

Molly, his perserver!

It must be true, then, that she did care for him, if she were willing to risk so much for his sake.

"Molly Grame! Well, this is indeed a happy surprise to me. How can I express my gratitude? Yet you, sir, must have had no small part in bringing this meeting about."

And he turned to St. Clair.

"You are right," said Molly, "for more has depended on him than on me. Only he is too modest to admit it, that is all."

"Nay, Miss Grame, I cannot let you speak thus. However, it is enough that we have reached you in time. It was almost too late."

"No one realizes that more fully than I," said Phil, solemnly. "In a moment more I would have been under the waves. I hope to be able to show how thankful I am sometime, if not now. If I mistake not, I recognize in you the man who has already proved such a true friend to me. I am right, am I not?"

"We have met before."

"I hope you will not deny me now the pleasure of knowing your name. It would rob me of half the happiness I would otherwise feel not to know whom I have to thank for this rescue."

"I am Arthur St. Clair."

He spoke so sadly that neither Phil nor his companion questioned further.

"Arthur St. Clair!" he continued, reflectively. "The name sounds almost as strange to me as if I never had heard it. It has been a long time since I have listened to it from other lips. I am truly a lonely man, a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"Oh, speak not thus sadly," said Molly, a tear-drop glistening in her eye. "I know not your past, but I can assure you that in the future you shall not be a wanderer if we can help it. Do I not speak for you as well as myself, Mr. Lamonte?"

She turned to the young man beside whom she stood.

"You do, I assure you," was the reply.

"I thank you more deeply than I can tell, for I believe you mean what you say. Forget what I said just now. Only a momentary weakness forced it from me. We now have too much before us to allow us to waste time uselessly. Every moment is fraught with danger. We may expect to hear from our friends on shore very soon."

"True," said Phil, starting suddenly, as he thought of the work which lay before him, and felt thankful Oglethorpe had not thought to have him searched. "I especially have need to be away instantly."

"What shall we do with our prisoner?" asked Molly, pointing to the form of the Confederate who had formed one of the trio which had brought Lamonte out into the stream, but which at this moment lay trembling in the bottom of the boat.

"He shall meet the fate he attempted to force upon our friend, Mr. Lamonte," said St. Clair, sternly.

"That is—"

"A cold bath in the water."

Molly shuddered at the words. She was unused to such scenes as this sentence brought to mind.

"It seems severe," she half pleaded.

"The tables are simply turned, that's all."

"But he was acting under orders. That makes his crime less grave."

"You plead well for such a knave," said Phil. "Seeing I am the party lately about to have been the victim of this rascal, let me add a mitigating clause to his sentence. His hands shall not be bound as they bound mine."

"I accept," responded St. Clair.

The Confederate, who had up to the present kept silent, now began to beg piteously. But his plea was unavailing.

In another instant he was foundering in the dark water, while St. Clair, seizing the oars, sent the boat flying toward the point where the horses were secured.

With difficulty he brought the craft to the shore, as the current dashed heavily around the rock near by, forming a truly dangerous landing.

When he did succeed in reaching shore, he leaped out, and after seeing Phil and Molly safe on land he ran to the secluded place where the horses had been left.

They were gone!

"Fiends!" he muttered, "they now have us at an awkward disadvantage, indeed."

Hastening back to Phil, he said:

"We have, indeed, trouble ahead. Our horses, which we left, as we thought, in perfect security, have been taken. We must continue our fight on foot."

This was truly a sorry plight. What could be done?

There were the boats. But of what service could they be?

Phil especially had no use for such a course. His route lay toward Pittsburg Landing.

Molly, brave little body though she was, felt for the moment very discouraged.

The prospect was far from encouraging, in her mind.

To add to their trouble at that moment a

yell broke upon their ears, coming from the bluff overhead.

Had a secret way been discovered by which the Confederates hoped to reach the natural fortress in which Phil and his companions now were?

No.

Yet why that cry of triumph?

Before either of the two men could determine this question, half a dozen men leaped from the darkness, not four yards from the spot where our friends stood.

How had they reached the ground?

A rope dangling from the top of the bluff solved the problem.

By means of that rope the Confederates had slid, hand over hand, down the sides of the perpendicular wall of rock, and now stood almost face to face with the objects of their pursuit.

It was a moment of thrilling peril.

"Follow me!" whispered Phil, as he leaned down and clasped the form of Molly Gramme in his arms. "We will give these rascals a chance to chase us. If they overtake us, then let them look out for themselves."

To the athletic young man the burden he bore formed little obstacle to his flight.

Rushing along the narrow pathway through which St. Clair and Molly had entered, and closely pursued by St. Clair, he turned abruptly and hastened up the steep bank toward the forest lying along shore.

So rapid had been his action that as yet the Confederates had not yet made their appearance in the rear. Either they had not noticed the escape, or they were waiting for reinforcements from above.

Not long did they remain in doubt, if they had been deceived by Phil's dashing movement, for almost at the next instant there came from the border of the stream a round of shot which whizzed in close proximity to the fleeing Unionists.

This lent new strength to Phil's energy, and up, up he climbed, so swiftly that St. Clair, strong as he was, and accustomed to active exercise, panted wearily long before the top was reached.

At last the trio found themselves fairly on level ground.

Not here did Phil check his speed, but plunged at once still further and further away from the river.

Now and then shouts came from behind, and it was plain to be seen that the chase was soon to become a hot one.

But hist!

The thunder of horses' feet along the edge of the bluff fell on the ears of the retreating party.

Danger was closing around them on every hand.

Shutting his teeth hard together, Phil leaped madly on, still bearing in his arms the form of Molly.

The verge of the forest was soon reached.

Its friendly shadows gave a sense of security to the trio.

Surely, here they would be able to throw into confusion, if only for a few brief minutes, their pursuers.

Hotly rode the Confederates now, at their head the evil Oglethorpe.

With him it was almost life or death to either capture St. Clair or end his existence. Of the presence there of Phil Lamonte he knew nothing.

Confiding in those he had dispatched in the boat with the man he hated, he believed him at that moment safely beneath the waves of the stream below.

Phil could hear the clatter of hoofs growing plainer and plainer in the rear.

Evidently the Confederates were gaining on them.

Something desperate must be done, and done quickly.

Already he knew that the rebels had gained the forest.

He could distinguish the tones of Oglethorpe, as he commanded his men to separate and search the wood closely.

Look whichever way he might, naught but an interminable waste of dense forest trees met his gaze.

Huge monarchs of a century's growth reared their lofty heads a hundred feet in the air on every hand, while down their sides great limbs reached out in every direction forming a shelter which the sunlight seldom penetrated.

Suddenly the quick eye of Phil discovered a place of escape which was furthest from his mind.

He had halted for an instant under one of the giant forest trees, listening with bated breath and bounding heart to the signs of pursuit which fell faster and faster upon his ear.

Turning his gaze upward for the purpose measuring the distance to the lowest branch, he saw a wide opening in the trunk of the tree, half concealed by a leafy bough which drooped over it.

"I believe we shall elude them after all," he said, in a low, but excited tone. "Look up yonder. Do you notice that hole in the trunk of this tree? Unless I mistake, it is hollow."

"If that be true, is it not out of our reach? It must be ten feet from the ground. How can we gain it?"

"I propose to try it, anyway. St. Clair, mount to my shoulder and see if you can catch hold of the edge of the opening."

The young man stooped a little as he spoke, and St. Clair sprang upon his shoulder.

Then straightening up, Phil lifted his companion as high as he could.

St. Clair easily reached the opening, and thrust his arm far into the hollow space. There was no doubt about the matter; there was room for half a dozen within the tree.

Springing inside, he was rejoiced to find that it was but a foot or two down before his weight rested, apparently on solid wood.

"It is all right," he whispered. "There is plenty of room in here."

"Then reach down and help Molly," was Phil's answer, as he raised the girl toward the opening.

St. Clair did as instructed, and in another instant she stood beside him.

Phil then paused to gain breath for a leap upward himself.

Stepping back a pace or two, he was about to spring toward the hole when a hand clutched him from behind, and before he could make a move to help himself he was thrown prostrate upon the ground!

Glaring into his face were the dark, baleful eyes of Oliver Oglethorpe.

Seeing who the man was whose escape he had prevented, the Confederate exclaimed:

"You here! Am I awake or sleeping? I thought my me! left you under the water out yonder; yet I find you here. How much longer will you trust yourself in my way? Not once more, unless my hand betrays me now. I'll finish this work myself and have done with it."

Thus speaking, he pulled a pistol and pointed it toward the breast of Phil.

Just then the Union scout gave a kick quicker than a flash, and struck the legs of Oglethorpe, knocking them from under his body, sending him headlong upon his face.

No sooner had he done so than he was surrounded on every side by Confederate horsemen.

The chance for escape by means of the hollow tree was now very small indeed. In fact it could not be thought of longer. Elsewhere must he turn for safety.

Hardly knowing whither he was going the young man darted away from the tree. He must draw attention away from that, or his friends inside would be placed in imminent danger.

Not ten steps had he taken when he found his passage barred by a stout rebel, who disputed the way with a drawn sword.

There was a sudden gleam of light. Phil's unerring revolver had spoken.

The way lay open before him.

Straight toward the stream he was marking his course.

"After him, quick!" yelled Oglethorpe, regaining his feet. "The devil seems to help the rascal! But he shall not escape us! Fifty dollars to the man who shoots him! After him!"

Phil knew everything was now at stake, and the words of Oglethorpe aroused him to superhuman efforts.

The thunder of horses rushing pell-mell through the forest, and the yells of excited riders mingled to make the scene one of thrilling interest.

Lights began to flash here and there among the trees.

Several Confederates discharged their weapons at random in the darkness, and the bullets went hurtling through the foliage around him.

It was useless to think of facing such a mob of infuriated beings.

He knew that no mercy would be shown him in a moment like that, and that hope of safety lay only in flight.

So at a pace which carried him onward almost as fast as a horse could have done, Phil Lamonte passed the edge of the forest, and dashed through the narrow strip of cleared ground lying between it and the river.

When he rushed out upon this open field he came fully into sight, and a yell of triumph burst from the throats of the pursuing party.

A round of shots sung in close proximity to him.

He was being pressed beyond his strength. Still he paused not.

The verge of the bluff now yawned at his feet.

With a glance back at his foes, the intrepid youth leaped into the water fifty feet below.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE CONFEDERATE'S PLOT.

Standing on the edge of the cliff, and gazing into the blackness beneath his feet, Oliver Oglethorpe said:

"It is just as well. If he is mad enough to take his own life, so be it. It simply saves us the trouble. Boys, we can now go back to camp. Our work here is done. No man could make that leap and live. We all know that. We've seen the last of Phil Lamonte." As he spoke, he turned his horse's head away from the stream.

Riding ahead a few paces, he muttered to himself.

"Now, Miss Molly, we'll see who has the game. With your lover dead, and you and the colonel's old enemy up a tree, the prospect begins to look brighter. Lucky I discovered the fellow just as he was going to make that leap. I'm sure we shall find the other two up where he was trying to get."

Finding his way back to the hollow tree, Oglethorpe dismounted, at the same time saying to the two men who were standing guard beneath the opening:

"You have obeyed orders and kept close watch here?"

"We have," was the reply. "Not so much as a mouse has stirred since we have been in this place. I guess you're barking up the wrong tree this time, sure."

"We can tell better after we've explored the recesses of this tree. I'm going in myself. Here, lend me a hand, one of you."

Oglethorpe leaped upward by the assistance of his followers, and soon was sitting on the edge of the hole, peering into the cavity before him.

Nothing but inky darkness stared him in the face.

He shouted, loudly:

"Halloo in there! You may as well surrender. We've hunted you down, and you might as well hope to escape the crack of doom as to slip through my fingers now. Oliver Oglethorpe is a man who never makes a mistake in the long run."

There came from the yawning cavity no answer. Only the dull echo of his own voice responded.

"Trying a still game, are they?" continued the Confederate officer, listening a moment. "That won't work. Hand me that lantern, Dick. We'll throw a little light on this subject. I'm thinking that will rout them out of their hiding place."

The man accosted as Dick handed the lantern he had held up to his leader, who took it, and stretching his arm out in the hollow of the tree, let the rays of the lamp fall into the opening.

Then an exclamation of deepest surprise burst from his lips.

The place was empty!

Below him there gaped a deep abyss, apparently without bottom, from which not the slightest sound arose.

Above his head the hole gradually gave way to solid wood, and finally came to an end not more than twenty feet beyond his reach.

Here was a mystery which the intellect of Oglethorpe could not fathom.

Could it be possible that after all he had been mistaken, and that Phil alone had tried to escape by means of this hole? He did not believe it.

He had seen the two men, one of whom was bearing a woman's form, run across the cleared space on this side the stream. They must have taken refuge here. But where were they now?

It was a question he could not answer in any way.

"By my soul! They have cheated me in spite of fate!" he muttered, as he swung himself to the ground. "No one would have been fool enough to jump into that bottomless pit, that's certain. See here, Dick. Have you lied to me?" he said, turning sharply upon the rebel soldier. "If you have, it will go hard with you. I want the bare facts about this matter. Did you let those prisoners escape?"

"As we live, captain, no one has made his appearance from that hole since we have been here," was the solemn response. "I swear it. We watched it narrowly, know-

ing how important it was we should do so; and I'm sure I'm not mistaken."

"Well, that certainly is strange," said the Confederate. "I cannot understand it. We might as well give up the chase. We have been outwitted this time, sure. But I'll be even with them in the end. I always win in the end."

Mounting, he called out to his companions, who had now gathered around the old hollow tree.

"Back to camp, boys. You needn't try to keep track of me, but meet me at the old place to-morrow night. We'll have business with the Yanks in a day or two, and we all want a hand in the fun. You may run onto those ransons we have been looking for to-night. Remember that I will pay the man roundly that shoots the fellow and brings me the girl."

His spurs to his horse as he finished speaking and disappeared in a moment, while his followers in a troop began beating about the forest in the hope of discovering the couple upon whose heads a reward had been placed.

Day was just breaking when Oglethorpe presented himself at the quarters of Colonel Fontneroy. He had determined to announce that his mission had succeeded. It was a bold game, since he in truth was ignorant of the whereabouts of the man whose life he had been sent to destroy.

"You have succeeded?" asked the Confederate colonel, anxiously, as he grasped the hand of Oglethorpe.

"When did I ever fail to succeed? Trust me to carry out your plans, and I promise nothing shall stand in your way. Your enemy is removed."

"Forever?"

"Forever!"

Oglethorpe returned the searching gaze of Fontneroy without a sign of flinching. He must not betray himself now. The stake was too great.

"You are a reliable man, Oglethorpe. I value your worth more and more highly, the better I become acquainted with you. You have done me great service, and I appreciate it. You can depend upon me to do all I can to gain a promotion for you. As for the other matter—the affair with Molly Grame—you are not in a hurry about that. The times are too full of interest to our common cause, the cause of the South, for either of us to think very seriously of such matters now; when the time comes, however, I shall be a zealous friend in your behalf. I promise it."

The Confederate's face at that moment wore an easier look than had rested upon it for many a long day. It meant much to him to know that Arthur St. Clair would never again rise up before him, his eyes sinking down into his soul.

All might yet go right with him in his love making.

He resolved at least not to admit the decided repulse he had suffered at the hands of Laura.

"Thank you, colonel. I don't doubt you will see me through. That thought has helped me a great deal in the work of the past few days."

The colonel started.

He did not like to hear any suggestion of the plot he had employed this man to execute.

"Not so loud, Oglethorpe, please," he said, casting a scared glance about the room. "You know this thing must never fall upon other ears than ours. It would mean death to us if it should. But you are tired now. I have other work for you to do. I will explain, then you must go and rest."

"Ah! what's on foot now?"

"Such a surprise for General Grant as he never before experienced. Our troops now lie up near Pittsburg. As yet we believe their presence is not dreamed of in the Union camp. I say we believe this; we want to know whether it is so or not. I wish you to find out. Will you undertake it?"

"You mean that you want me to go inside the Union lines and find out positively whether Grant suspects an attack?"

"Exactly."

"It is a dangerous thing to do."

"I know it, and I have for that reason chosen you. If you can't do it, I know not whom I can send."

"When do you wish me to start?"

"As soon as possible. In an hour—two hours, if not so soon. The attack must be made within twenty-four hours, if at all."

"I'll go, colonel," was Oglethorpe's reply.

"I am almost tired out, but I am ready to do

my best for you and the country I love. Have you any further instructions?"

"Only this—I want to know as accurately as possible the number of men now under Grant's command. The exact geographical location of his camp and the points most vulnerable. Make full notes of all these things, and such else as you deem important. Bring them to me, and I pledge you my word as a soldier, you shall receive the recognition you merit. This plan of attack is partly mine. I have no little influence with our commander-in-chief, and whatever I ask will be granted."

"Should these notes fall into the hands of the Unionists—"

"But they must not! Destroy them first. But I have taken steps to guard against that. See here."

The colonel drew from a closet in the room a pair of high cavalry boots.

Pressing a secret spring in the heel of one them, part of the leather flew back.

The heel was hollow.

"Conceal your papers here. They will be perfectly safe. Even in case you are discovered, there can be no possibility of this hollow heel being found."

"It is an ingenious device. I will risk wearing them," said Oglethorpe putting on the boots.

"Be careful of yourself," continued the Confederate officer, "and all will be well."

In half an hour Oglethorpe, disguised as a Union trooper, rode out of the Confederate camp and took his course toward the Tennessee.

"Fontneroy asks me to do much," he said, in an undertone, as he swung out upon the road, "but a day of reckoning comes by and by. Then this will be made right. He is in my power. I will let him know it if worst comes to worst."

Fontneroy, watching the departure of Oglethorpe muttered, as he stood by the open window:

"Fool! I wonder if he thinks I would let him hold me in his power! He knows my secret, and would not hesitate to betray me if he thought it for his interest to do so. I would be untrue to myself did I not take steps to protect myself. Look well to yourself, Oliver Oglethorpe. You know too much."

There was a smile of feendish glee on the face of Fontneroy as he seated himself at a table and rapidly wrote.

These were his words:

"GENERAL:—Young Oglethorpe has done what I predicted that he had in mind some time ago. I have watched him closely and have only this moment reached the point where I can safely speak. He has espoused the Union cause. I have positive knowledge that for some time he has been gathering up such points regarding our intentions as he thought would be most useful to the Unionists. Not a quarter of an hour ago he left our camp, in the uniform of a Northern soldier. The information he bears is concealed in the heel of his left boot. The right one is empty; the left one is not. Enough has been said by me to decide you to secure his arrest at once as a traitor and spy. Such a course would be the only safe one under the present circumstances. Yours, respectfully, FONTNEROY."

Concluding this letter, the colonel summoned a trusted messenger and dispatched it in haste to General Beauregard.

Left alone once more the Confederate seized his hat and hurried away.

There was a look of shrewd villainy upon his countenance.

He was playing a deep game.

Less than an hour a squad of men filed on horseback out upon the highway and took the same way Oglethorpe had taken a short time previous.

Their leader had instructions to pursue, overtake and arrest him as a traitor-spy.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ON THE WRONG ROAD.

Meantime, Oliver Oglethorpe was riding furiously toward the camp of General Grant.

While he had really at heart nothing but his own interests, he was deceived enough to think that his success in this new undertaking would materially enhance his prospects for military advancement as well as for gaining the heart and hand of pretty Molly Grame, and he nerved himself for the task before him right valiantly.

Galloping along the highway a thought suddenly occurred to him.

A Union general was approaching with reinforcements for Grant. The presence of the troops under him might have great weight upon the result of the impending combat.

Could he not in some way manage to delay the arrival of this general, and still do the work assigned him?

The idea took firm possession of the young

man's mind, and at the next turn in the road he branched off and pressed at the highest possible rate of speed in the direction from which the Unionists were advancing.

It was noon when he came in sight of the Union forces.

As yet, no definite plan had presented itself by which he could accomplish his design.

Several schemes had run through his mind. None had been adopted. He had decided to let chance suggest the course he should pursue.

And fortune favored him, as it has many an evil designer in the past.

He found the Unionists halted at the meeting of two ways.

Here was an opportunity.

The Union general, and every man under him was a stranger in that section of the country.

Seeing Oglethorpe in Union uniform, they naturally took him for a friend.

"Can you tell us which of these roads leads to Pittsburg Landing?" asked the general, his face wearing an expression of anxiety. "I judge you may be more familiar with this country than we are."

"I am proud to be of service to you, sir," was Oglethorpe's response. "You are right in thinking I am no stranger in this locality. I can guide you straight to the quarters of General Grant, if you wish. The road to the left hand leads out into the country; the other will bring you to Pittsburg Landing and Grant's camp."

The Union general thanked Oglethorpe with true gentlemanly courtesy.

"Do you come recently from the Union lines?"

"This morning's sun saw me there," was the reply.

"You can tell me the situation, then?"

"General Grant is anxiously waiting your approach and that of General Buell. He then intends to push on to Corinth."

"Ah! then we must be on again at once." And the general immediately gave orders for the advance.

Oglethorpe, chuckling at his success, watched the Union troops till fairly upon the road he had pointed out to the general, then watching his opportunity, he slipped away toward Pittsburg Landing, leaving the Union troops to wander far out of their proper course.

Who shall measure the effect of this action upon the great contest at Pittsburg Landing?

Had these troops succeeded in reaching the spot where his superior officer lay waiting his approach at the time he would have done, had he not been misguided by Oliver Oglethorpe, the historian might have written a far different story of that struggle.

But fate had already a punishment in store for the wily Confederate.

The feet of the Union army had not carried them out of the reach of his ears when he saw rapidly approaching from Corinth a troop of men whose dress told on which side they fought.

Not suspecting danger, Oglethorpe rode to meet them.

As soon as they had surrounded him the leader said:

"We arrest you for a spy!"

A look of disbelief, not unmingled with terror, swept over Oglethorpe's features.

"Arrest me! A spy!" he gasped.

"That was our instruction."

"But there must be some grave mistake. See here, Captain Drury, you know me well. Surely you will not jest with me about such a matter as this."

"What are you doing in that uniform?"

"I am on my way to carry out a piece of work intrusted to me by Colonel Fontneroy."

"Would you mind letting me examine your boots, Oglethorpe? I confess I have always thought you straight; but some one has led the general to believe that you are not; in fact, that you've turned traitor."

"Of course you may examine me as carefully as you like," said the surprised man, throwing himself from the saddle. "You'll find I am all right. I'd like to know who the enemy is that has told the general such an infernal lie about me! Not a man under the stars and bars has a truer heart than I have."

Shortly, Oglethorpe had his boots off and was waiting the result of the examination.

"Captain Drury, I can trust you with the secret of these boots. See here. This spring under the spur throws back the heel. It is hollow. I am going to bring back from the Union side full particulars of the number of

men they have. You see it is empty. Great Heaven! What is that?"

Oglethorpe had thrown open one of the heels as he exclaimed:

"It was crammed full of paper!"

"This looks suspicious, to say the least," said Captain Drury, pulling the papers from their place of security.

"It's a plot against me. I know this charge against me is false!" cried Oglethorpe wildly. "Read the papers. They are all right," he continued, more hopefully. "It must be so."

The Confederate captain straightened out the wrinkled papers and began to read.

"They are addressed to General Grant," he said, "and give him a full account of the intended attack upon him at Pittsburg Landing. I must do my duty, Oglethorpe, and take you back to the general. This is all a mystery to me, but there is nothing else to do."

The young man was dumfounded at the discovery, and again and again protested his innocence.

"Yes; take me at once to Colonel Fontenroy," he said. "He knows the secret of these boots, and that not a breath can be raised against my loyalty. I am willing to go with you."

But upon reaching Corinth the colonel was not to be found.

He had not been seen since morning.

General Beauregard, having learned that the suspected man had been arrested, commanded an immediate trial.

Upon the earnest appeal of Oglethorpe, however, he was imprisoned to wait the return of the colonel.

Chafing sorely, and lamenting his fate, the prisoner paced up and down his cell all night long, hoping hourly that Fontenroy would appear and secure his immediate release.

He did not come.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IN A PERILOUS POSITION.

With a splash, Phil Lamonte struck the water of the stream into which he had leaped from the rocky cliff when so closely pursued by the Confederates.

Sinking beneath the surface he did not reappear for some time, and when he did he was in such a dazed condition that he hardly knew where he was or what to do save to himself.

His scattered senses began to come to him after a while, however, and he at once struck out for the shore.

So rapidly was the current running at that point that it was with the greatest difficulty that he made the slightest progress.

Several times he was almost within reach of the bushes growing along shore, when the current would draw him almost breathless back, where he swam panting and nearly exhausted for some time.

Meantime he was drifting down the stream more rapidly than his benumbed faculties led him to believe; and after the space, perhaps, of ten minutes, he found himself floating in still water, under a high, sheltering bank, which rose almost perpendicularly above his head.

Exerting himself to the utmost, he succeeded in swimming near enough to the edge of the stream to clutch the branch of a tree which grew low down to the water and draw himself up to the dry ground.

Lying quietly there for some time he regained sufficient strength to enable him to rise and look about him.

The situation was not an encouraging one certainly, and in the darkness he could see no way out of it.

The sky had become overcast, and a few heavy drops of rain fell upon the branches of the trees along the stream, heralds of the coming storm.

This helped to make Phil's position far from enviable, though he was already soaked through and through by reason of his recent voyage in the water.

But our hero knew no such thing as inaction. Much was dependent upon him.

He feared, and the fear lent wings to his feet, that already he would be too late in delivering the message from General Buell.

He must go on—must reach the Union lines before he rested.

These thoughts aroused him fully, and with his old-time activity he started on a run back up the stream.

Not far had he progressed when the mouth of a dismal cave yawned before him.

With no other thought than that of curiosity, the young man walked a few paces into the cave and listened.

For a time naught but the ceaseless drip of

water trickling from the roof of the cavern was to be heard.

But suddenly from some point far within there came the sound of human voices.

Here was something which might be worth investigating; and fearlessly the scout advanced, pausing every few paces to listen for a repetition of the sound.

The cave, widening the further it extended under the bank, was becoming lower and lower; overhead he could almost touch his hands. The floor began to rise by degrees. A few steps more and he heard the voices again.

Running as rapidly as he could in the direction indicated by the noise, he again waited breathlessly.

After a moment he heard a voice which sent a thrill through his whole being.

It was that of Molly Grame.

Half in terror and half in astonishment Phil made his way onward.

What was the meaning of this new revelation?

How had Molly come in that cave?

Had he not left her in safety in the heart of the hollow tree?

A singular event indeed had befallen St. Clair and Molly, whom we last saw in the hollow tree.

They had caught the cry of Oglethorpe as he discovered Phil Lamonte, but they heard little else from the outside world.

As they stood thus listening, St. Clair bending his head out of the opening so that he could see the position of the two rivals outside, ready to leap down should his help be needed, and Molly, waiting with clasped hands the result of the struggle, all at once something beneath their feet seemed to give way, and they felt themselves slowly sinking below the surface of the earth.

Frantically Molly clutched the arm of her companion, but uttered no cry of alarm.

Even under these thrilling circumstances her bravery did not forsake her.

Deeper and still deeper sunk the mass of wood, rotten and damp, which had formed the inside of the tree, carrying with it a thin shell of earth which alone had sustained it before the added weight of the couple had been placed upon it.

Faster and faster now became their speed.

Would there be no end to this awful journey in the dark?

The air rushed swiftly by them, and there was a dull roaring somewhere in the distance.

In Heaven's name, what was this mystery?

Had the earth swallowed them up forever?

Suddenly with a crash that hurled them stunned together on the ground their ride through space came to an end.

Struggling to his feet, St. Clair called out: "Molly, Miss Grame, are you hurt? Quick, tell me."

The girl, slowly raising herself on one elbow, replied:

"I don't think I am. I think no bones are broken. But do you suppose this trip is over, or are we liable to go on again pretty soon?"

The dazed manner in which she spoke made the young man tremble lest she might be really more seriously injured than he had hoped; yet despite his anxiety there was something ludicrous in the words she used.

Groping to the spot where she lay, St. Clair gently lifted Molly to a sitting posture.

"I fear you are not unhurt," he said. "Are you sure you are not?"

"As sure as I can be of anything here," was the answer. "I half expect to start out again on this wonderful trip into the bowels of the earth."

"No; we have, I think, reached bottom," said St. Clair. "And what will be the outcome of our adventure is what troubles me at present. As soon as you are able to travel we had better set out on a tour of exploration."

"I am ready, then," said Molly, rising instantly, with all her former vigor. "I am anxious to solve this problem as soon as possible. What do you think became of Phil?"

Her own surroundings were not so grave that she had not a thought for the daring young man she loved so well.

"That is more than I can say. I can only hope for the best. He was in a desperate strait; but he is able to cope with keener men than Oliver Oglethorpe. Are you sure you are able to go on now?"

"I am strong again; the fall did give me quite a shock, I admit. I will soon be entirely over it. But you—are you uninjured?"

"My good fortune has not forsaken me. I am all right; take my arm and we will proceed."

Setting out thus they wandered aimlessly about under ground for some time, without making any apparent progress toward finding a way out from this dungeon.

The horrible thought would ever and anon force itself upon the minds of both that they were entombed forever.

The fancy was far from pleasant.

Still, on and on they walked, now and then stumbling heavily in the almost palpable darkness.

Despair was beginning to fasten itself upon their hearts, when from some place out in the black space before them there came the sound of a voice.

"Hello!"

"Thank God! it was a human voice."

"Hello!" answered St. Clair. "Who are you? Come this way; we're lost. Can you help us?"

There was a moment of silence.

It seemed an age.

Then footsteps came crunching the sandy floor of the cave.

"Am I mistaken?" questioned the voice now quite close; "or am I near St. Clair and Molly Grame?"

"You are right," responded the stranger, not yet recognizing the tone of the approaching man, while Molly exclaimed, her heart bounding to her mouth:

"Phil, it is you; I know it. Come this way and tell us how in the name of all that is wonderful you came in this terrible place."

"I might as well ask you the same question," said Phil, a great feeling of relief springing up within him; and coming forward he clasped the hands of both his friends in a grasp that spoke volumes.

He now had companions.

That means much to a man in misfortune. We pass the explanations that ensued, and follow our friends to the entrance of the cave which Phil, having carefully noted the direction he took on going in, was able to find readily enough.

With a sigh which told how great a load had been taken from her mind, Molly said:

"I hope never to have such an adventure again. I would much rather face this drizzling storm than grope about in such an awful place as that."

"I must go on," said Phil. "I am not sure that you had not better remain beneath the shelter of this cave till morning; the way is so dark and gloomy."

"I am ready to share it with you," said Molly, quickly.

And Phil, leaning down in the darkness, found a pair of ruby lips ready to meet his.

"I surely shall not remain here alone," said St. Clair. "So it seems we are fated to go on together for a time at least. But can you tell which way to turn?"

"If you are ready, follow me," was Phil's only answer.

In a short time they were once more on the road to Pittsburg Landing.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### PITTSBURG LANDING.

April 6, 1862.

Although it was the Sabbath day, General Grant, the stern Union commander, sat among his papers, hard at work.

Notwithstanding it was yet long before daybreak, and through camp naught was to be heard but the tread of sentinels pacing up and down their lonely beats, this man, who never worried, who never knew the beginning nor end of a day, toiled on.

As he sat thus, an attendant thrust his head through a crack in the door and said, in a quiet tone, as if afraid to disturb the general.

"Pardon me, general, but there is a woman here who says she must see you at once. We can't get rid of her. What shall we do?"

"A woman. Wants to see me," repeated General Grant, looking up for a moment from his table. "Let her come in. The best way to get along with women is to give them their own way. Show her in."

"Yes, sir."

Presently the door opened again, and a beautiful girl stood before the general.

Grant started slightly as his eyes rested on this unexpected sight.

He had looked simply for some half-crazed creature, such as constantly followed the army.

"Well?"

"I am Laura Doane," said the new-comer. "I have just come from near Corinth."

"Corinth! Ah! Beauregard is there."

And he gazed sharply upon his visitor now. His interest was awakened.

"But he will not long be there."

"He won't?"

"No, General, he intends to attack you soon—this day, perhaps. Even now his troops lie at Pittsburg Landing, or very near there. The plan is to surprise you and crush you here beyond recovery."

The old, undisturbed look came back to the features of the general. He was incredulous.

"Girl, you are beside yourself," he said. "Do you suppose, if all this were true, my trusty scouts would not have brought me something of it? The idea is absurd. Surprise me!"

"Even you may be surprised, General Grant," cried Laura, firmly. "I know what I speak is true. I have it from the lips of the man who planned the attack. I tell you to be on your guard."

The general laughed a little.

Yet it was plain to be seen that the words of the girl were beginning to take a hold upon him.

What if Beauregard should attack him as this stranger intimidated?

The thought was unpleasant.

"Well, my fair young friend, I promise you that I will give this matter thought, and if I find you speak advisedly, you shall not repent coming here through the dark. I will remember the name of Laura Doane."

Too late was it even then to give the matter future thought.

Even as the general spoke, the door of the apartment in which he sat was hurled open, and a young man entered.

It was Phil Lamonte.

Almost breathlessly he cast down upon the table the dispatches, torn and crumpled, which he had borne from Buell.

"I am too late, general," he said, pacing up and down the room, his cap in his hand. "Heaven knows I could not help it. I have done my best."

The general, without exhibiting a sign of surprise, tore open the package and began to read.

Before he had finished a single line he turned toward a bell.

At that moment there came from without a wild cry of mingled alarm and terror.

The avalanche was descending.

Let us take a look about the Union camp at that moment.

The scene was one to impress itself forever upon the memory.

The gray morning light was just beginning to break over the eastern hills.

In their quarter many officers were yet fast in the arms of sleep, oblivious of the impending tornado, while some, half-dressed, were in quiet leisure completing their toilet.

Part of the soldiers were washing. Some were engaged in preparing their morning meal. Others had finished their duty, and were eating breakfast.

Everywhere order and a real Sunday morning quietude reigned over all.

Still at that very instant a tornado was sweeping toward that peaceful camp.

Already its mutterings could be heard in the distance.

A moment transformed all.

Hark!

With a yell a picket came dashing in!

"The enemy is upon us!"

Then another scout made his appearance.

What a change!

In the twinkling of an eye, soldiers sprung up and rushed in confusion to and fro.

Officers hastily threw themselves into the saddle.

The bugle sounded to arms!

The next moment shells came screaming through the forest, and a shower of bullets sung among the tents.

It was indeed a scene of terror.

Hardee threw his forces with fearful violence upon the troops of General Sherman, who, half bewildered, and hardly knowing whither to turn, dealt terrific blows everywhere.

Half dressed, many out of their own organizations and poorly equipped, the Unionists contested every inch of the way against their antagonists, but were forced back step by step in confusion.

Then fearful results ensued.

This division having been overwhelmed, that held by General Prentiss was attacked.

The result was the same. The Union column was shattered and the ground strewn with dead and dying.

General Prentiss, with a large portion of his brave boys fell into the hands of the enemy; and with sharp cries of victory, the Confederates rushed like infuriated demons into the camp.

Then the struggle became desperate indeed.

Almost hand to hand the opposing forces fought for ten long hours.

Now one side held the disputed ground, now the other.

It was Northern patriotism, love of country and liberty, against belief in a false principle.

Earnest men, and calm against deceived yet impulsive, hot-headed partisans.

Step by step, almost inch by inch, the Union troops were beaten back.

With skill almost unparalleled, General Grant directed his forces, and with bull-dog tenacity strove to hold his own.

It was useless.

Pushing their antagonists slowly before them, the enthusiastic Confederates occupied point after point, from which the Unionists had been dislodged, until only the camp of General W. H. L. Wallace, who had fallen in the thickest of the fray, now in command of General McArthur, remained in the hands of the Unionists.

General Grant now rested, with the Tennessee swollen and turbulent at his back.

The day was lost to the Union troops.

Who shall picture the weary heart with which the commander acknowledged his impending defeat?

It was terrible.

From the throats of the overjoyed Beauregard's men went up a shout of victory.

The news was sent clicking over wires to Richmond.

He had fulfilled his pledge made on the evening of the fifth, when he said to his associates in council, pointing toward the Northern army:

"Gentlemen, we sleep in the enemy's camp to-morrow night."

Was his cry of victory justified?

Ask the calm historian who wrote the story of those two bloody days, and he will tell you that instead of sitting down in General Grant's camp, if Beauregard at twilight of the sixth of April, had struck one more strong blow the day might have been really gained, the palm of triumph indeed rested in his hands.

But this he did not do.

Feeling too sure of the final issue, he dealt his iron-willed foe a feeble stroke, which was easily parried.

And the result of the awful struggle at Pittsburg Landing on that gloomy night still remain an open question.

## CHAPTER XX.

### UNDER THE BARS.

That night, while the Union troops, worn out by the terrible conflict of the day, were resting wherever they happened to be, their leader was planning to recover the ground which had been lost.

Not a shadow of despair could be traced upon his features as he sat in his tent.

There was the same imperturbable look on his face, the same given air of determination.

The hour of nine had arrived.

A minute or two afterward a young man rode hastily up to Grant's quarters and demanded admittance.

The light of the lantern held in the hand of the suspicious sentry outside, revealed the face of Phil Lamonte.

"I tell you I must see the general!"

The tone was impressive.

Hearing the voice, the general called out:

"Pass that man immediately!"

Apologizing, the sentry stepped aside and allowed our hero to pass.

"What do you bring me to-night?"

"Good news, I think."

"It is—"

"That General Buell will arrive to-night."

"Ah! That is indeed refreshing. From what source do you learn this?"

"I left him not two hours ago."

"So late as that! Then he must be very near. You think he can reach us in time to help us?"

The general peered curiously up from under his eyebrows at the young man.

"I know he can. General, this hour to-morrow will see us hot upon the heels of those men yonder."

And he pointed toward the rebel army.

"You seem enthusiastic."

"I am," was the proud response, "and I know the worth of my leader."

Grant bowed politely.

"If the history of this day were to decide my reputation as a soldier, I fear your confidence would be shaken. But now that you are here I wish to give you a dangerous piece of work. Are you ready for it?"

"Anything you entrust me to do shall be done, or I will die in the attempt."

"True grit," smiled the general.

It was plain to be seen that he held Phil Lamonte to be a hero.

"I shall ask you to go into the very heart of the Confederate camp."

Phil started a little, but recovered.

"If you said into the tent of Beauregard himself, I would undertake it."

"I am not sure that the task will not call you there. What I wish you to do is to ascertain as accurately as you can the precise strength of the Confederates, and their geographical location. This can best be learned from some one in command, say the generals. Now this will take some time. I want to make an early attack. I have just learned through a scout from General Lew Wallace, that he was led astray at a cross-road, and went far out of the way. With his force added to that of Buell, I think we can wrest from the hands of Beauregard the victory he almost won to-day."

"I am sure of it," said Phil, rising as he spoke. "I will try to do what you ask. In order not to lose too much time, I will signal you at four o'clock from the rebel camp."

"Dangerous. Don't be careless."

"If I throw a red, followed by a blue light, wait till I come. If a red alone, then open the attack on the Confederate left as soon as you can."

"Your idea is that if you show the blue you have something I must know before the fight begins?"

"That's it."

"I understand, and shall watch for your signals. Be careful. You are brave; don't try to go too far, and come to me when the day is ours."

"My signals will show you that I think we can defeat the Confederates. Have you confidence enough in me to take it for granted that I am right?"

"I believe you will not ask me to make too great sacrifices. Too many of my brave boys have gone down to-day to make me thoughtless of them. Poor fellows! God knows, I pity them and their dear ones at home."

In the eyes of the strong man something like a tear shone.

He brushed it silently away.

"Good night, general," said Phil. "At four o'clock, if I am alive, you shall know the situation over yonder."

"Good-night!"

And out into the darkness went the intrepid youth.

He had before him a task more trying than he had entered upon in all his life.

Yet not once did he wish his leader had left the duty to some one else—not once did he wish it were over.

Not more than two hours or so after Phil Lamonte separated from the Union general there passed along the road leading from Corinth to the camp of the Confederate army, a countryman, driving a sorry specimen of a horse to which was attached a dilapidated wagon, the inside of which was full of boxes and barrels of various sizes, and all were apparently crowded with such articles as potatoes, cabbage, poultry, and other things of a like nature.

As the driver approached the picket-line he drew up, and slowly dismounting from his seat in the vehicle, left his horse standing in the highway and went limping toward the Confederate who barred his way.

"Halt!"

The tones of the sentry rung out clear and distinct on the night air.

"Halt yourself!" was the response of the stranger, as he kept on his way till he stood exactly in front of the Confederate soldier.

"What do I want to hold up for. I'd like to ask yer?"

"You cannot pass this line to-night. That's why I challenge you."

"I can't?"

"No, sir. We have strict orders. No one can enter camp to-night."

"Well, you see, as how I am no one, and so I must be an exception. I rather think I ought to be."

"What is your business?"

"Why, I've a load o' truck out here that I've brought up all the way from Corinth to sell you fellers, stuff to eat, mostly."

"Your a huckster, then?"

"You've guessed right; I am. I used to be around camp before you moved up, every day. An' I thought may be you'd be glad to see me after the big scrimmage to-day. Say, stranger, I'm all right. I've got a pass to enter the lines. Want to see it?"

The countryman fumbled about in the breast of his coat and fished out a dirty card which he held up before him.

The soldier flashed a bulls-eye upon the piece of paper, and muttered:

"Beauregard's hand, sure enough."  
Then turning the light full into the man's face he eyed him for several seconds cautiously.

"It's a strange time of night for this business," he said, at length. "No one will deal with you now. Wait till morning, and then I'll see whether this card is all right or not."

"I've got to be home by daybreak, stranger; and, besides all that, I know the boys inside want the stuff I've got. Why, in that there wagon there's some nice fresh leaf cabbage, turkeys, an' no end o' vegetables. Now, I wouldn't be so free an' easy with every man, but I rather like you. It's a fact, hang me if tain't; an', seem' it's your, that is 'twixt you an' me, see here!"

With these words the farmer pulled out one side of his great-coat, and displayed a bottle, which sparkled in the light of the lantern.

"That's genuine, that is. Tain't every man that can squeeze such red-eye as that out o' ther grain. Haven't drap?"

He extended his hand toward the picket.

But no arm was reached out in return.  
"Now, see here, stranger," said the picket, "you may be all right; I don't know. But you mistake your man when you try to bribe me to let you pass the line. If I am a Confederate, I am trying to do my duty. You shall not enter our camp to-night, save over my body."

There was a sudden movement on the part of the countryman.

A blow struck with crushing force. The next moment the way was clear, for the man's comrades were asleep on their post, wearied with the day's battle.

"So be it, then," muttered the farmer, as he leaped at one bound far beyond the picket line. "It was a hard thing to do. He was an honest man, but I must pass the sentries."

Taking shelter under some low bushes near the road, the stranger swiftly threw off his country garb, and there stood in his stead a man clad in Confederate gray.

The face was that of Phil Lamonte.

Without losing a moment the young man took his way up into the heart of the Confederate camp, the sentries allowing him to pass, as he had the countersign.

"That part of the matter is over, at any rate," he whispered. "I had hopes to succeed through that simple ruse; but I fell in with a man who ought to be on the other side. Now for the next step that will be more difficult, I imagine."

Proceeding without molestation till he was fairly inside, Phil made the entire circuit of the Confederate camp, sharply noting the position held by the various divisions, and estimating as nearly as possible their probable number.

Some time was consumed in this way, and the young man perspired heavily, so rapidly had he worked.

"So far, good. I couldn't ask for better success. It must be past midnight, and I have yet much to do. Now for the test of my skill. If I fail now all will be, indeed, lost."

In the course of his search Phil had carefully noted the spot on which stood the headquarters of General Beauregard.

Thither he now directed his steps.  
Now and then he met soldiers who gazed upon him suspiciously.

They did not understand how he should be moving about at that hour.

But his calm demeanor and undisturbed manner carried him safely through till he reached the tent of the Confederate commander.

Before he took a step further a female figure flitted past him.

He caught one glimpse of her face, and darted after her.

What was Laura Doane doing there?

## CHAPTER XXI.

### BEARDING THE LION IN HIS DEN.

Silently as a shadow, the beautiful girl stole across the opening which lay between the quarters of General Beauregard and the tent occupied by Colonel Fontneroy.

A single word to the sentry at the door gained her admittance.

He had seen her many times before while the army lay at Corinth.

Without introduction, Laura made her way inside and stood in the presence of her former lover.

He was sitting, with head bowed over some papers, apparently deep in thought.

When at length he looked up and his eyes rested on the pale face of the girl, he started back, violently exclaiming:

"You here! Heaven! how you startled me. What brings you into our camp at this hour?"

"If you had a right to know probably I would tell you. As it is, I will not. I will simply say that the momentary triumph you enjoy so thoroughly will be turned to sorrow soon."

"Girl, are you mad? Why do you look upon me with such a wild gaze? Come and sit down by me, and talk more rationally. If you have come to tell me that you repent of your course toward me—"

"I repent! Colonel Fontneroy, you do not yet know me. I repeat of taking my heart from the keeping of a demon like you? I might better ask whether your conscience does not smite you for the past and its awful deeds."

The girl's piercing eyes fastened upon the colonel, caused him to quail and move uneasily.

"Laura, I wonder if you believe that tale still. Don't you see how absurd it is? How could I hold my present position and be the villain I am represented? Tell me that. Would I not lose my rank instantly? Certainly I would. I tell you again this is all the work of an enemy. I know him. Arthur St. Clair is my avowed foe. He hates me, envies me, lurks in every secret place to wrong and slay me."

"He is a man. I trust him fully. You, not he, lie. I know it. Why do you not deny the charges he makes? A single word would do it. You cannot; you dare not."

"I will, if you will give me time; that's all I ask, but you are not willing to grant it. I am here with a great responsibility resting upon me. The success of this campaign lies almost wholly upon my shoulders. Its failure means my ruin. Wait till it is over, Laura. Come and help me."

The girl, much as she had once loved Fontneroy, was now unmoved by his appeal.

Had her heart been of stone she could not have listened with sterner countenance, nor with eyes flashing more indignantly.

"There was a day, she said, when you could have deceived me by such words as these. That time has gone forever. I know you, and I hate you, Colonel Fontneroy, with deadly hate!"

"Aha! my lady becomes tragic!" sneered the officer, turning pale as he spoke.

He remembered, but too well how she had discomfited him at their last interview.

"You hate me, you say. So be it; but before you scorn me further you shall feel my power. Recollect where you are—in the very heart of our camp. Remember, too, how you betrayed my confidence when in your home I laid bare to you the details of the plan we had in view of attacking General Grant here; a plan we successfully executed, in spite of your betrayal. I can cause your arrest as a spy."

"But you will not. You dare not!" exclaimed Laura, her cheek mantling as she spoke. "I am indeed in the Confederate camp, and you may cause me to be apprehended as you say; but the moment you do so I will tell the story of your perfidy toward Arthur St. Clair, and your betrayal of your trust. Go on, if you dare."

"You shall see whether I dare or not," hissed the enraged officer, for the moment losing control of himself.

He believed that he had sufficient influence with General Beauregard to counteract anything Laura might say against him, and he resolved to put her beyond reach for all time.

He saw he had lost his hold upon her. She was now an enemy.

The colonel stepped toward the opening to summon assistance, but not three paces had he taken when Laura confronted him.

A drawn shilet gleamed in her hand.

"Stop!" she cried. "I am no longer to be trifled with by you. You shall know that though a woman I am yet capable of defending myself against such a coward as you! I am determined. You shall not carry out your intention, save over my dead body!"

For an instant Colonel Fontneroy cowered before this woman.

He dreaded to meet the gaze of her searching eyes.

He knew she had spoken the truth. He was indeed a craven dastard, and he was guilty, as she charged.

But quickly he recovered.

Who was this that stood between him and the accomplishment of his purpose?

A woman!

What! A woman thwart him?

Never!

He sprang quickly upon her and hurled her quivering back against the tent pole, pinioning her hands in a grasp of iron.

Thus they stood face to face.  
Just beside the Confederate officer at that moment there came a step, and a clear voice rung in his ear.

"Unhand that woman, villain, or I will dash you to the ground!"

As if shot through the heart, Fontneroy released his hold and fell back quivering beneath the glance of the man who uttered this command.

He saw the manly form of Phil Lamonte.

"Is this the way you treat your guests?"  
"She is no guest. She is an enemy. What right have you to interfere with my wishes? Who are you, sir, that you enter my presence unbidden? You presume too far."

"It is the duty of every man to protect weak woman when he finds her in the hands of a man like you. As to who I am, you shall know. I am Phil Lamonte, a scout of Grant's army."

"Of Grant's army!" cried the Confederate, starting back in alarm. "What brings you here?"

"You will know to-morrow morning. Till then I shall not answer you. Now, I want you to make amends for the ungentlemanly conduct I have just witnessed on your part toward this young lady. Down on your knees and beg her forgiveness."

"Oh! don't ask him to do that, please," said Laura, with a gesture of scorn. "I do not wish it. He is beneath my notice."

"Down!"

The tone sent the colonel shivering to his knees, and he stammered an apology.

"Now," continued Phil, severely, "I want you to go a little further. I see you have pencil and paper. Sit down there and prepare to write."

Silently Fontneroy obeyed, praying some one would chance to look in upon them.

"Are you ready? Then write. Address your letter to General Beauregard."

"To General Beauregard! In Heaven's name, what is this you are compelling me to do?"

"You will know soon enough. Proceed as I dictate."

There was no way of escape.  
The hand of Phil held a revolver which gleamed ominously in his eyes.

This is what he wrote:

"MY DEAR GENERAL:—The bearer is a warm personal friend of mine who has just come from Richmond—Captain Ernest, by name. He desires to know officially through you what our success to-day has brought us, what it has cost, and whether you have any fear that the future may bring us reverse, you can speak freely with him, I would accompany him, but I am unavoidably detained in my quarters. I presume I shall go in early in the morning. FONTNEROY."

The colonel sunk weakly back in his chair as he wrote the concluding word.

"Is that all?"  
"No," was the uncompromising reply.

"There is another sheet; address it as you did the other."

"Fiend, have you no heart? I cannot write further."

"Go on!" thundered Phil. "It must be done. Write now as I dictate."

Then, with a hand shaking as if struck with a sudden palsy, the rebel colonel wrote out the story of the wrong he had brought upon St. Clair, and his base advances toward Laura Doane, and finished by stating that he had determined to flee the country to escape the memory of his crimes. That he had become the Benedict Arnold of the South, and betrayed the Confederate army into the hands of General Grant.

With a groan the colonel completed his terrible task.

"Great Heaven, pity me!" he moaned. "This is more than I deserve! Man, are you utterly without soul? Think what this means to me! It is ruin—nay, death! I cannot live and face such a thing as this!"

"I only compel you to make such atonement as you know you should yourself make, but which never would be made of your own free will," was the calm reply, as Phil took the sheet last written and folded it carefully.

"Miss Doane, this I leave with you. Keep it safely. This other one I will use. I shall leave you in charge of the colonel for a short time till I have made my call on the general. Otherwise, he might take steps to defeat my plans. But I'll put him in a position to do you no further harm."

Speaking thus, Phil, still watching the Confederate, produced a stout cord, and bound him hand and foot, yet sitting in his camp-chair.

"He is safe now, Miss Laura. Guard him

carefully, however, and if he attempts to cry out, use this."

He handed the girl a pistol.

Thus equipped, Laura took her station in front of the man who had desecrated her.

It was a novel situation.

In a moment Phil was gone.

Ten minutes afterward he was at the quarters of the Confederate general demanding admittance.

This was quickly granted upon the production of the letter of Colonel Fontneroy.

Late though the hour was, and flushed as was General Beauregard with the victory he had gained, he was deeply buried in work.

Summoned by the members of his staff he was briskly planning to press the contest, so auspiciously begun, to a successful end.

Now and then messengers were summoned and dispatched with orders.

Standing quietly for a few minutes Phil watched the face of the general closely. He could discern upon his features at times a look of the deepest anxiety, becoming at intervals even the expression of alarm.

Not a single trace of these varying indices of emotion escaped the sharp eyes of the spy. From them he was making up his estimate of the actual condition of things on the Confederate side.

When at length a propitious opportunity presented itself Phil handed the general Colonel Fontneroy's letter, still keeping his gaze riveted upon his countenance.

He saw a shadow fall over Beauregard's face—a shadow which deepened till it became a very cloud.

"Ah!" thought our hero, "after all, then, you tremble! Aye and well you may; for ere the morning sun lights up these hills, the victory will be wrested from you."

"Your letter of introduction entitles you to my fullest confidence, sir," said the general, motioning aside several officers who were pressing to his table. "Fontneroy would ask nothing unreasonable, and I will state the situation frankly. It is desperate. Yes, desperate."

He paused for an instant, and his hands moved restlessly among the papers before him, while his eyes were staring into space.

"Don't speak discouragingly, I beg of you, general," responded Phil. "All Richmond, nay, the entire South, looks toward you at this hour, with intense hope. Upon Shiloh depends the issue of this war. You must know it."

"I do know it. But what more can be done? If I had a few more men I could crush Grant forever, and that would end the matter; but we have lost heavily to-day, how heavily no one but we ourselves know. If Grant had but a suspicion how weak we are at this moment—but I fear it would make little difference. While we have seen our forces decimated, and know full well that there can be no way of strengthening them, he is being hourly reinforced."

"Ah! By whom?"

"Buell is here; Wallace also. They were on the way yesterday. You must see how dangerous is our position. Still I have hope. I am doing all in my power to create the impression that I am stronger than the facts will warrant. It is my only hope."

"Must I then convey such tidings as these back to Richmond? I had hoped differently."

"When do you return? A day may decide matters, beyond a doubt."

"I leave you to-night," replied the young man, consulting his watch. "In fact, I should this moment be on the way. Let me thank you, general, for your kindness. You have helped me wonderfully in obtaining the true state of affairs, which is hard to discover after a battle. I must bid you good-night."

He leaned toward Beauregard as he concluded, and whispered:

"When next a man comes to you with a letter from Fontneroy, take time to ascertain the facts under which it was obtained."

Leaving Beauregard lost in wonder at the meaning of these strange words, Phil darted out into the night, and made his way back toward the quarters of Fontneroy, where he had left Laura Doane keeping her watch over the man she hated.

Time was flying. It lacked not more than two hours of the time for the appointed signal.

He must relieve Laura of her task, then he would prepare to send the promised news to General Grant.

Bounding into the tent he looked hurriedly about him.

The place was vacant.

No sound met his ear.

Turning to leave the tent he heard a hurried whisper just outside.

"We have the rascal now, boys! Surround the tent. Let him not escape alive!"

Before Phil could spring through the opening two men met him face to face.

The scout then mounted his horse, and, though closely pursued, managed to reach the field of battle in time to take an active part.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## STILL DEEPER INTO DANGER.

"Don't make a move to draw your weapons. At your peril you stir from your tracks till we command you."

The officer who spoke these words, thrust close up into the face of the Union scout the cold muzzle of a revolver.

There was no mistaking the tone. It bespoke no appeal.

"This is, indeed, a surprise, gentlemen," said Phil, with an expression of well-feigned astonishment. "Can it be you made a mistake in this matter? Certainly it would seem so. What is the charge against me? I cannot conceive."

"Come, now, this is useless. We know you. You are no Confederate. Your uniform is but a disguise. You are a Yankee spy."

"Why do you say that?"

"We have our orders from Colonel Fontneroy himself."

"From Fontneroy? You must be mistaken. Why, I hold here a letter written in the colonel's own hand, introducing me to General Beauregard himself. See, here it is."

He held the letter up.

"Let me read it," said the officer. "Come up, gentlemen, and listen."

Throwing the light of a lantern upon the letter, the officer read it aloud.

"What does that sound like to you? The words of a man who has no confidence in another? I tell you, you have made a mistake. Why does not the colonel come here and confront me, otherwise? You see how absurd this thing is. I am surprised."

"Your question shall be answered," said a voice not far distant. "I am here, and charge you with being just what I said—a Yankee spy. Men, do your duty; I command it!"

Every eye was at that moment turned toward the colonel, as he made his way through the crowd.

Taking advantage of the moment, Phil struck the lantern from the hands of the Confederate, plunging the place in darkness. Then springing to the rear of the tent, quick as lightning he cleaved the heavy canvas with his knife from top to bottom, and disappeared through the rent thus made.

A yell of rage run around the mob of cheated soldiers.

In their eagerness to hear the information which the letter, ostensibly written by Colonel Fontneroy conveyed, they had left the tent unguarded, save in the very front.

"After him!" yelled Colonel Fontneroy, madly. "He must not slip through our fingers now. Shoot him, if you must, but stop his flight."

Thus inspired, the crowd gave chase—some on foot, some on horse, all shouting, howling, cursing.

As if wings had been lent him, our hero leaped over the ground, bending his steps toward the Tennessee, which was sweeping leisurely along a short distance from the Confederate camp and through the heavy forest.

Soon he knew by the crashing of bushes in the rear that the Confederates had entered the forest; and he again nerved himself for the contest.

So tangled were the low thickets, however, that his flight was seriously impeded, and he knew by the sounds which came, borne on the air from behind, that he was rapidly being overtaken.

"I'll make an effort to throw them off the track for a short time, at least," muttered Phil, reaching up and grasping the branches of a thick tree, under which he was at that moment standing.

Drawing himself quickly up, he ascended high into the top of the cypress, and with pistols in hand, waited the coming of the crowd.

Not an instant too soon had he resolved upon this action, for the Confederates came tearing down through the thickets, and went rushing past.

"The whole Confederate army seems to be out after me," smiled the young man, as he stealthily lowered himself to the ground.

"Well, they'll have something to do before they catch me. I'm sure of that."

So silently did Phil move that no one, ten feet away, would have dreamed what was going on in the branches of the cypress.

As soon as he was on the ground, the scout, halting for a brief period to take his bearings, hastened away, taking a course about at right angles from that which his pursuers were following.

"They will soon be doubling on the trail, for the edge of the forest in that direction lies not far ahead," thought Phil. "What I do, must be done quickly."

In this our hero was fully right.

It was not long before the rebels, reaching the clearing which lay beyond the road, and not finding the object of their search, turned back and began a systematic hunt, leaving no spot or corner unexplored.

They had spread out also, so that Phil realized with considerable anxiety that they were likely to cut off his retreat even now.

He could not play the ruse which had succeeded so well a few minutes before.

These thoughts now awoke in the breast of the daring scout no little apprehension lest he should not reach the open space by the river in time to send up the signal to the Union general.

Wondering thus, he sought in his pockets for a match, and lighting it, looked at his watch.

Half-past three.

Only thirty minutes left.

Hastily extinguishing the match, he prepared to advance once more.

The light had scarcely ceased to flicker when a voice so near to him that he started back in surprise, said:

"Thank you for that illumination, my dear sir," said the voice. "Now, just stand where you are. Don't move. I am covering you with a weapon that has never failed me."

Without a word in reply, the scout crouched low in his tracks, and waited.

From the sound made by this unseen foe he knew that he was mounted.

He could hear the steady tramp coming through the darkness.

Suddenly, with the bound of a tiger, Phil sprang upon the horse which the Confederate rode, and seizing his hands, fastened them to his sides.

Alarmed by this unexpected act, the soldier uttered a wild cry, which rung through the forest.

Knocking his weapon from his hand, the scout snatched the sword which he saw hanging at the belt of his antagonist, and hurling him, stunned and breathless, to the ground, dashed away from the place.

It was a bold move, yet so far, it had proved a safe one.

He now had an advantage which led him to hope for the speedy accomplishment of his plans.

Toward the Tennessee he guided the captured horse.

But the forest seemed alive with his enemies.

His face wore the look of a man who understands that he confronts death, but who has determined to meet it, if need be, without flinching.

A few seconds longer and he knew by the shout which went up that he had been discovered.

"Halt!"

The tones were those of Colonel Fontneroy. Instead of obeying the command, the intrepid scout lashed his steed furiously, and plunged madly against the sea of death.

Right and left he struck with his saber, and wherever the blows descended, the yells which followed told what execution he had done.

Crack! crack! rung out his revolver at intervals, and he saw the body of soldiers melt away like dew under the sun of a summer day.

A few feet further.

On, brave youth!

Strike again, and once again!

At last, thank fortune, the line was pierced, the knot cut, and our hero stood clear on the outside.

But, bark!

A perfect rain of leaden messengers sung through the leaves.

Was he safe yet?

Not a thread of his garments had been cut.

And now, forward to the river.

"Away! brave steed, away!" shouted Phil. "God bless you, my noble horse, for bringing me through that fearful struggle! I never will part with you till death. On, on, faster, on!"

As if fully understanding the words of praise which its new-found master spoke,

the strong beast, nerved to the utmost, cleft the darkness, and in the twinkling of an eye carried him beyond the verge of the forest. Once more the scout pulled out his watch, panting heavily.

Four o'clock!

The hour had come.

Upon the grass beside the rolling Tennessee the scout kneels and draws from his bosom the rocket he has carried through the scenes of this venturesome night.

He scratches a match on a stone beside him.

The scout hovers the spark, and tremblingly holds it to the fuse of the rocket.

It hisses.

Then holding it high in air he sends it far above the hill-tops.

It is done.

The red stars flashes like a meteor, and bears its tidings to the Union general waiting outside.

The strange red light has not yet died out of the sky when the boom of a canon wakes the far-off silence.

General Grant has seen the signal. He knows its meaning.

Again the crimson tide of battle will roll down upon Pittsburg Landing.

When it recedes it will leave the turf wet with the blood of freemen, but the war of the rebellion will be decided.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

##### A WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

A step or two backward.

Laura Doane, keeping her vigil by the side of the Confederate colonel, anxiously noted the flight of time, and momentarily longed for the return of Phil.

It was a trying position in which to place a girl of her passionate nature.

The colonel for some time remained silent, regarding the girl, and inwardly chafing at his imprisonment.

But at length he broke out into a thrilling appeal.

"Laura," he began, "I did not think you so heartless as this; indeed, it seems to me your real character, your own heart is not leading you on in this matter. It cannot be that you actually hate me, as your actions indicate. Some one is urging you on to injure me."

The girl remained quietly looking into his face for a time. Then she replied:

"Then you think me dead to all true womanly emotion, do you? That I can listen to the tale of the wrong you have done one of my sister women, and still remain constant in my devotion to you? If you do, then you have not yet learned the nature of Laura Doane."

"But, Laura, must I again tell you that this is not true—that it is but the evil tale of an enemy? I am not guilty as you seem to believe. Why cannot you take my word instead of that of a stranger?"

"Colonel Fontneroy, there are some things a woman needs not to be told. I did love you once, deeply, fondly; but my affection brought me no peace of mind. Even there rose up between us a barrier. What that unseen thing was I could not tell. I know now; I have known it ever since I learned the story of your infamy to Arthur St. Clair and his innocent wife. As plainly as if I had seen the whole tragedy enacted do I discern the course you took to accomplish your base designs. You have never uttered one word in denial—you cannot!"

"I can—I will. Hear me—"

"Stop! You shall not perjure yourself now. It is useless."

The colonel turned his face away.

"Laura, I tell you truly I do love you better than any other one in all the world—better than I ever can love anyone else. You see me now in weakness, and hear my honest avowal. Believe me when I speak, and tell me if you cannot accept my affection."

The beautiful girl's face became whiter than the driven snow.

Again she was being put to the test.

Would she yield?

"I cannot."

"Speak not thus, Laura. More depends upon your answer than you think. Yield, I pray you!"

"It is impossible."

Something like a groan escaped Colonel Fontneroy.

Silence ensued.

"I have only one request further to make, Laura. I am burning with fever. My thirst seems intolerable. At the foot of the bank not twenty rods from here there is a clear spring. If I had some of its water—do you think you would dare to go?"

Laura gazed keenly upon the colonel. Was it indeed true that he was ill? His face did seem flushed.

Now that he might be suffering, the old fond affection came rushing back.

Narrowly did the colonel watch the effects of his words upon the girl. Would she grant his request?

"I will try to find the spring," was her answer. "Can you tell me where to get a pitcher?"

"Lift the cover of that box yonder. There, do you see it?"

"Yes," replied Laura, as she took the pitcher and started for the water.

Her footsteps had not died away in the distance when Fontneroy threw himself to a sitting posture, and managing to crawl to the door of his tent, called loud enough to reach the ear of a sentinel pacing a short distance away.

"Help! help! Come here quickly!"

At the sound of this appeal the soldier sprang to Fontneroy's side.

"Sever these cords, will you? Curse them, how they have cut into my flesh. Ha! ha! I'll cheat you yet, my fair she-devil!"

The cords were severed speedily and the Confederate rose with a bound.

"Now, see here," he continued; "I can trust you, I think. I want a little help. You saw Laura Doane leave this tent a moment ago?"

"I saw a woman."

"When she returns, she must be captured. Do you understand? I am willing to pay you well for your assistance. Here."

He slipped a coin into the palm of the soldier.

"Stand in the shadow of this tree, and the moment she makes her appearance, seize her."

"Your word is my law, colonel," was the response, and the two men secreted themselves and waited.

It was but a minute before the girl's form appeared, approaching quickly.

She had allowed her sympathy to supplant her better judgment for the time being, and was now eager to serve the man she pitied.

As she neared the spot, a hand was thrown over her mouth, completely smothering her voice, and the next instant she felt a grasp of iron on her wrists.

"Now, my pretty fiend, we will see who is master of the situation," laughed Fontneroy. "It was a clever ruse, was it not? I couldn't play it again, doubtless. But now we will go. Perhaps, after all, you may be induced to change your mind and accept me at last."

Again he laughed sardonically.

"Bring her along, will you? I'll be responsible to the officers of the guard. I think I know of a quiet place where she can reflect for a while. She may change her mind regarding her suitor by and by."

Hereupon the colonel turned upon his heel and walked away, closely followed by the soldier conducting Laura, who made no attempt to escape, but submitted, with flashing eyes, to the insults applied to her.

A little way outside the camp there stood an ancient farmhouse, now deserted and cold.

Toward this Fontneroy took his way with his prisoner.

Leading her to the rear of the building, the two men passed through the door left partly ajar, and entering, roamed about till they found a secure room high from the ground, and cheerless enough.

Into this they thrust the proud girl, and left her still bound as they had brought her thither.

She heard the key grate dismally in the rusty lock, and listened to their footsteps, becoming fainter and fainter as they hurried away.

When all was still, Laura tried to discover some place of escape.

The attempt was useless.

Could she have discovered a way out, it would have been impossible for her to have made it available, pinioned as she was.

Night wore slowly away and found her restlessly pacing up and down the limits of her prison.

A stern look had gradually settled down upon her face.

She had slain the last vestige of her affection for Fontneroy. He had proved unworthy of even her pity. And when pity ceases to move a woman, the last avenues to her heart has been closed.

Lost in thought, Laura scarcely was conscious of a noise at the single window of the room, and it was only when the figure of a man raised itself above the sill that she started from her reverie.

"Laura."

Surely she knew that voice.

Quickly she ran to the window.

There outlined against the glass she saw St. Clair.

"Mr. St. Clair! Thau Heaven for your timely appearance."

With one quick movement the strange man, still in disguise, shattered sash and pane, and stood beside the girl.

"Tell me you are unhurt."

"I am."

"My heart rejoices to hear it. I feared it might not be so."

"I cannot understand how you happened to find me."

"I have searched for you, Laura. All this night long I have earnestly sought you."

"And Molly—know you aught of her?"

"She waits a short distance outside. Poor girl, she is almost beside herself with distress and apprehension for you."

"Dear girl. I long to see her once more."

"Come, then. But first, Laura, forgive me for addressing you thus. I cannot go from here without knowing whether I may not at least call you friend. I am unworthy; I know it. I have been a lonely man, but I cannot deceive myself. You are very dear to me. When this war is over, may I not come to you with hope that you will receive me kindly? I am not handsome. You yourself see it. I am rough, but my heart is tender."

"Wait," said Laura, gently, "till the time you mention is here, then come to me with your question."

"That is all I ask," said St. Clair.

Then, lifting the girl in his arms, the strong man stepped out of the window, and let himself down to the ground by means of an old ivy vine which clambered up the side of the houses.

We pass the scene of the meeting with Molly, and hasten to the stirring events taking place elsewhere.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### IN THE MORNING TWILIGHT.

With countenance unmoved by the volcano over whose crater he was treading, the Union general stood almost alone in the gray light of that eventful morning, watching for the signal from Phil Lamonte.

Not for an instant did he remove his keen eyes from the place where he knew the Confederates lay, unsuspecting of his intentions.

General Buell had now arrived, and his forces had marched to the position a signed then.

The deceived Wallace had also discovered his grievous mistake, and hastening on the double-quick, his division had been honored with the privilege of opening the contest on the extreme Confederate left, in case the Union scout's signal was favorable.

It was already understood by Wallace that no sooner should the rocket be seen than he should command his guns to speak.

Pacing to and fro under a wide-branched tree, with his coat buttoned close up to his throat, the general soliloquized:

"It is placing a good deal of confidence in that young scout. But I don't think he will deceive me. Faces are the indices of character. In his I read sterling integrity. If this thing turns out all right, he shall not be the loser for the work he is now doing. Let's see. What is the hour? Four o'clock this minute. Now for the signal."

If possible, the general gazed more sharply than ever before in the quarter he had been watching so closely for the last half-hour.

"Ha! there it is! Lamonte is prompt, at least. Now what color does he show?"

As the meteor-like thing shot higher and higher, General Grant intently looked for the color.

"Victory is mine!" he exclaimed. "It is a red alone. Now, Wallace, to the work!"

Mounting his horse, the general dashed to the front.

A moment later the thunder of cannon on the left woke the morning echoes.

Here, in person, Beauregard was in command.

He could not trust his most careful general to guide his forces there against the heroic Unionists.

What a day that was! Has American history another like it?

It was a struggle not simply for the old field held by Grant. It was life or death for the leaders who were directing the fight.

Each knew it, and each was determined not to yield. And their men seemed to enter as fully into the spirit of the battle as their commanders.

Like tigers they fought.

From the left where the contest was opened, the battle extended further and further along the line till at last it became general. One continuous roar of artillery mingled with the rattle of musketry and the hoarse cries of the contending forces rent the air.

Here is a line which the Confederates resolve to hold in spite of everything.

They gallantly withstand charge after charge, and the Unionists recoil, leaving hundred of brave boys who never will meet the shock of war again.

Gallantly the Unionists come up again to the red-hot mouths of those guns. Gallantly they parry the deadly blows of saber and bayonet.

Strengthened by fresh forces they press closer up to the guns, their faces ashy white, their teeth set for victory or death.

See!

Now the Confederate line wavers.

It rallies!

Wavers again!

Then come shouts of dismay, commingled with commands, harsh and confused, as officers rush up and down striving to bring together the shattered column.

It is too late.

Catching the little vantage ground they have gained, the boys in blue pushed doggedly onward.

Cheers rise above the noise and din of the combat.

Every man has become a hero.

Now hand to hand and foot to foot the struggle goes on.

Once more the Confederate line is broken. In spite of command or entreaty the rebels begin to fall back.

The day is won.

Oh! the scenes that then followed.

Can ever man forget them?

Lost to the Confederates was everything.

In vain they strove to regain their lost vantage ground.

It was Shiloh!

Through a blinding storm of sleet and chilling rain they fled toward the heights of Monterey, fixing their course in the direction of Corinth.

During that retreat, a distance of nine miles only, three thousand Confederate soldiers died.

Their entire loss was more than ten thousand.

Strewn along that dismal route they lay, their last battle over.

In their retreat Breckenridge covered them with a force of twelve thousand men.

Not five times ten thousand could then have saved the day to them.

It was irretrievably lost.

But the victory was dearly bought to the Unionists.

Fifteen thousand of the Union troops had been killed, wounded or made prisoners.

But the bloody traces soon vanished. The slain left on the field of battle were buried; not a dead horse was left unburied. The vessels sent down the Tennessee bore hundreds of the wounded and sick boys in blue.

In the midst of that awful combat two men could be seen everywhere.

They were Phil Lamonte, and Arthur St. Clair who had both returned in time to take part in the battle.

As if borne to command, they flew hither and thither, reorganizing the shattered ranks of Union troops.

Once when the line of blue wavered and seemed about to give way, Phil dashed to the very front, his head bared to the air, and his hair flying wildly in the wind, and thrusting himself upon the Confederates, cried:

"Hold—hold, for your lives! One more charge! It will win the field for us! Steady, on the left! Hurrah! the enemy trembles. A step forward now! They yield! They fly! The day is ours!"

And he spoke the truth.

Looking into the face of such a hero what band of men could stand?

In time to witness the young man's daring and to hear his words of encouragement, General Grant rode up.

Intently he watched him for some time till the serried ranks of the Confederates gave way. Then, muttering to himself, he summoned him.

"That man is the lion of this battle. But for him I believe it might have been doubtful whether we could have carried the field."

Shortly the scout came galloping up.

"You sent for me, general," he said.

"Yes."

"Your wish!"

"I want to thank you personally. More than a little is owing to your bravery."

"Well?"

"You shall be a colonel from this day on."

"A colonel! I a colonel? General, I am not worthy the honor. Indeed—"

"I know best about that."

"There are thousands of boys out yonder who are braver and truer than I."

"You are modest. I appreciate it."

"I must speak further, then. I am no Yankee. I was born on the other side. In the village just below, of Southern parents, I had my birth."

"That does not detract from your merits, I believe. Please object no further. It is settled with me. Come and see me next week. Your commission will be ready."

It was plain to be seen that Phil was made more proud than he would have been willing to confess by this honor which General Grant had bestowed upon him.

It meant much to him that this skillful commander should have watched his course during that rain of shot and shell, and marked him as one deserving of advancement.

"I need not tell you, general, that I am grateful for this sign of confidence from you. I shall try to merit it."

Saluting the general with these words, the young man was about to ride away, when Grant called out:

"Stay! Who was that brilliant soldier I saw with you to-day? A man, rough in exterior, but bold as Caesar."

"His name is St. Clair, general."

"When you come to me next week bring him with you."

"Gladly will I do so. I know he is more fitted to command than I."

Separating from his superior officer, Phil hastened toward a point elevated above the field of battle, where, in a safe position, Molly Grame and her cousin had watched with breathless interest the scenes below.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### LAST WORK OF THE AVENGER.

Under the branches of a murmuring pine a short distance from the scenes of the tragedy where the sun of that April day crept down to rest over the western hills, there lay a man whose uniform indicated rank in the Confederate army.

He was wounded—wounded to the death. And as he moaned in agony upon the carpet of green, deeply stained with his life-blood, one could catch, now and then, a word he uttered.

Listen.

"This is what it comes to, then. Death alone, unwept, unknown! Ah! Laura Doane, your prophecy has been fulfilled. Evil has overtaken me. I am near the end."

Then there was silence, as the soldier remained gazing up into the dull sky, his gaze appearing to pierce the thin veil which hung between him and eternity.

"I am dying of thirst!" he whispered, hoarsely. "If Laura were only here now, I would not deceive her, but wait for the water she brought."

Just then a footfall aroused him, and starting up, his eyes fell upon the face of Arthur St. Clair.

"You here? Come to taunt me when I am defenceless, I suppose. Go on! I don't want to see you."

The colonel turned his face away from those eyes which seemed piercing deep into his soul.

"Wretched man," was the reply, "you mistake. I shall not make your sufferings any harder to bear than they naturally would be."

"You come to pity me, then!"

"No, Fontneroy; I want to do anything I can to make you easy. For you are going out."

"I know it—who better? But I can't bear it. You are kind to me; you, of all men. It cuts me to the quick."

"I heard you cry for water. Here is my canteen. I just filled it at a spring below. Drink deeply."

The wounded man grasped the canteen, and held it long to his lips.

When it fell from his fingers, he turned toward the man who had thus striven to lengthen out his life, and said, in a stronger voice:

"Take off that disguise, will you? I want to see what you are like now."

Without a word St. Clair reached up and removed his false hair and beard.

The face which was thus revealed was handsome, despite the lines of sorrow written there.

For several minutes the dying Confederate regarded him in silence.

"I have been a demon to you."

There was no response.

"It is not strange that you hate me. When I first knew you, you were happy. Yes, and so was she. I changed it all."

"Let us talk of other things."

"Not yet. I must go on. I want to ask one last favor of you."

"You have but to name it."

The Unionist drew off his heavy coat, and making it into a pillow, placed Fontneroy's head upon it.

"Thank you; that is much easier. Before I ask your kindness further tell me if you know by whose hand I received this shot?"

"Do you suspect me?"

"I thought—that—"

"It might be my last blow. No; I can honestly tell you that the shot was not mine. The one which you received at Corinth a short time ago was. I am ashamed to say it, Fontneroy, I cannot deny that my life for some time past has been darkened by the old days. If you have much to repent of, so have I. I have watched you all day, Fontneroy. Twice my weapon was leveled upon you. I thought I would take into my own hands the execution of the law which belongs to one higher in command than any man can ever be. There came before my eyes the tearful face and pleading looks of one we both know, and I could not send the bullet. To-night I came here to ask you to forgive me. Will you—can you?"

"I forgive you! Oh! this is the keenest thrust of all. I, who have dropped into your life, which was pure as crystal and sweeter than that of any man I ever knew, the stone which turned its fountain into gall and made it seethe like a raging whirlpool, I forgive you. St. Clair, why this cruel satire?"

"I swear that I speak naught but my honest wish. I mean all I have asked. The fire which raged in my heart has burned out and left it all the freer from dress."

The dying Confederate closed his eyes for a moment, and no word passed his lips.

"I shall know that you are sincere if you grant the request I ask," he said, at length.

"Speak on."

"I cannot undo the past. I have done you a wrong which no man has power to remedy. My own life has been made black by it. I became a very demon after I had broken up your home. It may be that in the time to come what I am about to do will not make the stain upon the page of my soul's history any the blacker. There is only one thing I can do. Have you pencil and paper?"

"Yes."

"Take them and write. A few hours ago Lamonte compelled me to do the same at his dictation. I shall not force you now; it is beyond my power, nor would I if I could."

"It was a dangerous thing to do; yet in the light of to-day's conflict, looking from my standpoint, it was justifiable."

"Perhaps."

The Unionist produced writing material, and kneeling beside the officer, whose strength seemed now going fast, prepared to write the last wishes of Fontneroy.

With sinking breath and hurriedly the colonel proceeded to state that, inasmuch as he had committed a great crime against Arthur St. Clair, and knowing that the death angels were hovering over him, he did, by that last act of his sin-blighted life, make said St. Clair his sole heir-at-law, bequeathing to him all his lands, goods and chattels, now situated in Atherton Highlands, Tennessee, believing that to be the fullest reparation he could make for the deed he had committed.

This done the Confederate colonel reached up a hand, trembling and thin, for the pencil.

"Fontneroy, I beg you will not do this," said St. Clair. "I am just as fully convinced now that your heart is right toward me as if I now saw your signature to this paper. Let the past go."

"No—no," was the husky answer. "I must do it. I shall feel easier, then. Give me the pencil."

Reluctantly the other obeyed.

Taking the pencil between his stiffening fingers, Fontneroy wrote, in characters almost illegible, his full name.

"There. I am satisfied now. This is not a sudden freak on my part, St. Clair. It has been long on my mind. You believe me, don't you?"

There was something irresponsibly sad in the tone.

St. Clair put his hand up and brushed away something which looked very like a tear.

"I do believe you," he said. "I believe you

fully, and I have no words with which to speak of this last act of yours. Be sure that if any deed of yours has clouded my happiness the cloud will ever hereafter be like that in yonder sky, at this moment lighted up by the sun's last rays. Do you see it? Let me lift you higher."

St. Clair raised his old-time foe to a sitting posture, and turned him toward the fading sunset.

"Only one thing more do I crave, my friend. Ah! It seems like days gone by to call you friend. Would to Heaven that time could come again!"

"What more can I do for you? Speak freely, Fontneroy."

"It is beyond your power to comply with this wish, I fear. It is of Laura Doane I was thinking. It may be—nay, I know it is true—that I have done cruel things to her. I think I have been almost beside myself of late. If I could hear her say she had no ill-feeling toward me—"

"Your request may be granted. I left her with two friends not far away a short time ago. If you will wait, I will see if they can be found."

The officer set his teeth hard together. "Go!" he said.

Hastening away at the top of his speed, St. Clair soon discovered Laura with Phil Lamonte and Molly, standing upon a knoll, looking over the field of carnage.

Returning with them quickly he said, as he gently took the dying man's head once more in his arms:

"She is here, Fontneroy. Can you see her?"

"Faintly. The daylight is going. It brings on a long night, Laura; put your hand in mine. I loved you truly. My passionate heart hurt you cruelly. Forgive me! Can you? Speak quick!"

"I do," said the girl firmly, her cheeks pale as ashes.

"That's all. Higher, St. Clair! Raise me up."

The Unionist obeyed. There was a gasp and a shudder. That was the end.

Breaking through the clouds, the sunlighted up with a sudden splendor the dome of the Southern sky. For a moment it lingered.

Then the golden rays died out. It was night.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### GATHERING UP THE THREADS.

Three years afterward.

War has given place to silver-winged peace. We gather up the threads of our story at a time when the North, though jubilant with the victory it has won, is, nevertheless, sad with weeping for the brave boys in blue who laid down their lives under the Southern pines, and when the South, conscious of defeat, crushing and complete, also mourns day and night for the dear ones it, too, has lost.

Phil Lamonte and Arthur St. Clair were both made recipients of the highest honors from General Grant, who did not forget the work they did at Pittsburg Landing, nor his promise made to the former after the battle was over.

Many a time when the leader was in need of a reliable scout he sent for Phil and made his wishes known.

Laying off the epaulets and sheathing his sword, the young man donned the garb of a common soldier, or, perhaps, if necessity demanded, assumed the attire of a private citizen.

He followed the fortunes of his superior officer till the last gun was fired and the sword slung upon the wall, let it be hoped, never to be stained by the blood of civil strife.

The laurels he won were many, but they were shared with his gallant soldier-in-arms, St. Clair.

The home of Laura and Molly became the asylum for men of both parties in need of comfort.

Union, Confederate or colored refugees found shelter beneath the roof of the grand old mansion, and not unfrequently soldiers from both armies visited there.

And no one said nay.

Molly, staunch little patriot as she was, often argued with her stately cousin that it was wrong for her to aid and abet the rebellion by caring for the troops engaged therein.

Laura, in turn, retorted that she considered sick and suffering soldiers who wore the gray just as worthy of assistance as those

who were clad in the blue, and perhaps more so.

Anyway, it was not the common soldier who was to blame; the leaders were at fault, if fault there was.

So Molly kept on caring for those from the North, and Laura, lent a kind hand to the friends on the other side.

Sometimes they worked together without a word of reluctance.

Who shall say how far they were wrong in this?

Mine shall not be the pen to write aught of censure to either.

The great struggle is over.

Men erred on one side as well as on the other.

One day there rode to the door of the Doane mansion a man bronzed with the sun and heavily covered with the dust of travel, and it was envy to recognize the handsome face of Phil Lamonte.

There tripped to meet him a maiden, whose blushing cheek and laughing eye bespoke the joy she felt at meeting this bearded soldier.

"At last!"

The voice was Phil's.

"You have come to stay? Tell me that."

"That depends."

"Upon what?"

"You, little treasure. I have come to ask whether you care for me to stay or not."

"I care! Phil Lamonte, you know I care. You are a pretty fellow to ask me such a thing."

"I thought—that is—I never have heard you say that you love me."

"Well, hear it, then. Truly, truly I do care for you more than for any one else in the world!"

"There's certain sound about that, anyway," said Phil, laughing at the girl's earnestness. "But it's highly satisfactory to me, I assure you; and let me tell you, little one, that all the love you can wish is yours. My heart has loved you, and you only."

Bending down, he kissed her tenderly upon the lips.

A footstep aroused them.

"Isn't this rather too public a place for such demonstrations? I am inclined to object upon the ground that the effect will be demoralizing."

"St. Clair, old fellow, you here?" exclaimed Phil, heartily, as he saw his chum come round a splendid shrub, bearing the beautiful Laura upon his arm.

"Of course. Why not I as well as you? The day of surprises is not over yet, I fancy."

"So it seems. St. Clair, let me give you the pleasure of shaking hands with my future wife."

"It is indeed with pleasure I accept this invitation," answered St. Clair, coming forward. "I am made happier, however, by being able to reciprocate. Allow me to present the lady who is to bear my name in the near future."

There were general congratulations, and a happy time followed.

Rapidly must we pass to the end of our story.

Phil Lamonte took his bride away to the old ancestral homestead near Corinth not long after the war closed.

Needless is it to say that theirs was a happy home.

St. Clair disposed of the Fontneroy property in Arthur Highlands, and went to the Doane plantation, becoming one of the most wealthy men of the vicinity.

The shadow which had darkened his past life rolled away, leaving the sky all the brighter for the storms it brought with it.

Toward the close of a rainy day in autumn there came to the Lamonte mansion a man wretchedly clad, prematurely bowed and old before his time.

Knocking at the door he begged for some bread.

When his hunger had been appeased he requested the maid to call her mistress, saying that an old acquaintance wanted to speak with her for a moment.

Somewhat surprised by this request Molly, however, came down to meet her visitor.

For a moment she saw nothing to recognize in the unkempt and broken-down man, who rose with a show of politeness to greet her.

The stranger saw this and said:

"I see you don't remember me, and I don't wonder at it; for I am all used up—a mere shadow of what I once was."

The voice brought back to Molly the name of his owner.

"Mr. Oglethorpe, can it be? Why what has happened to you? You are so changed no one would have recognized you."

"Evil has befallen me. I am no longer the

man I once was. I am so abject a person that I doubt if I ever can recover my former self."

"Say not so," said Molly, in pity, looking upon the dirty creature bowing before her. "There is always a chance for mending. What can you do?"

Perhaps it was fancy, but the kind hearted Molly imagined that even there could be seen some-thing of a prouder bearing in Oglethorpe, and he seemed more manly.

"Do! I can do anything I ever could if I had a chance, and could feel my work appreciated. That's the great trouble. No one cares for me; no one believes in me."

"How did you come in this way. What happened to you?"

An expression, almost vindictive in its nature, swept over the man's face.

"I think it all grew out of a thing that Confederate colonel, Fontneroy, did. I was fool enough to trust him. He pretended that he wanted me to do some work for him as a messenger. He betrayed me into the hands of General Beauregard. I was arrested and imprisoned as a spy. Barely did I escape death. In the night I found my way out of the cell in which I was shut up. Since then I have almost hated everyone. It has been a curse to my existence. I think if I could be somewhere where I could forget the past I might become a man again."

Molly's face was grave. "I will speak with my husband about it. We may be able to do something for you."

A cloud settled over Oglethorpe's face, as the girl spoke of her husband. It cut him to the quick to think what he had lost.

Molly was true to her word; and Phil, as anxious as she herself to give the man a chance to redeem himself, placed him in charge of his hands.

Under the genial influence of that happy home, Oglethorpe seemed to outgrow his old evil nature. Boast he ever would; it was characteristic. But he became a respectable citizen.

The war over, the genial hand of prosperity began to touch the South with her wand, and places laid waste by the devastation of battle once more bloomed.

[THE END.]

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