

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

the same. In other words, if, after a survey of the situation, you think best—why,” the captain’s voice dropped to a hoarse whisper, “pull that flag down, Lieutenant Boggs, pull her down.”

III

It was an hour by sun now. Lieutenant Boggs and his devoted band of ten were making their way slowly and watchfully up the mighty chasm—the lieutenant with his hand on his sword and his head bare, and bowed in thought. The Kentuckians were on their way—at that moment they might be riding full speed toward the mouth of Pigeon, where floated the flag. They might gobble him and his command up when they emerged from the Gap. Suppose they caught him up that tree. His command might escape, but *he* would be up there, saving them the trouble of string-

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

ing him up. All they would have to do would be to send up after him a man with a rope, and let him drop. That was enough. Lieutenant Boggs called a halt and explained the real purpose of the expedition.

"We will wait here till dark," he said, "so them Kanetuckians can't ketch us, whilst we are climbing that tree."

And so they waited opposite Bee Rock, which was making ready to blossom with purple rhododendron. And the reserve back in the Gap, under Lieutenant Skaggs, waited. Waited, too, the Army of the Callahan at the mouth of the Gap, and waited restlessly Captain Wells at the door of his tent, and Flitter Bill on the stoop of his store—waited everybody but Tallow Dick, who, in the general confusion, was slipping through the rhododendrons along

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

the bank of Roaring Fork, until he could climb the mountain-side and slip through the Gap high over the army's head.

What could have happened?

When dusk was falling, Captain Wells dispatched a messenger to Lieutenant Skaggs and his reserve, and got an answer; Lieutenant Skaggs feared that Boggs had been captured without the firing of a single shot—but the flag was floating still. An hour later, Lieutenant Skaggs sent another message—he could not see the flag. Captain Wells answered, stoutly:

"Hold yo' own."

And so, as darkness fell, the Army of the Callahan waited in the strain of mortal expectancy as one man; and Flitter Bill waited, with his horse standing saddled in the barn, ready for swift flight. And, as darkness fell, Tallow Dick was cautiously

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

picking his way alongside the steep wall of the Gap toward freedom, and picking it with stealthy caution, foot by foot; for up there, to this day, big loose rocks mount half way to the jagged points of the black cliffs, and a careless step would have detached one and sent an avalanche of rumbling stones down to betray him. A single shot rang suddenly out far up through the Gap, and the startled negro sprang forward, slipped, and, with a low, frightened oath, lay still. Another shot followed, and another. Then a hoarse murmur rose, loudened into thunder, and ended in a frightful—boom! One yell rang from the army's throat:

"The Kentuckians! The Kentuckians! The wild, long-haired, terrible Kentuckians!"

Captain Wells sprang into the air.

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

"My God, they've got a cannon!"

Then there was a martial chorus—the crack of rifle, the hoarse cough of horse-pistol, the roar of old muskets.

"Bing! Bang! Boom! Bing—bing! Bang—bang! Boom—boom! Bing—bang—boom!"

Lieutenant Skaggs and his reserves heard the beat of running feet down the Gap.

"They've gobbled Boggs," he said, and the reserve rushed after him as he fled. The army heard the beat of their coming feet.

"They've gobbled Skaggs," the army said.

Then was there bedlam as the army fled—a crashing through bushes—a splashing into the river, the rumble of mule-wagons, yells of terror, swift flying shapes through

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

the pale moonlight. Flitter Bill heard the din as he stood by his barn door.

"They've gobbled the army," said Flitter Bill, and he, too, fled like a shadow down the valley.

Nature never explodes such wild and senseless energy as when she lets loose a mob in a panic. With the army, it was each man for himself and devil take the hindmost; and the flight of the army was like a flight from the very devil himself. Lieutenant Boggs, whose feet were the swiftest in the hills, outstripped his devoted band. Lieutenant Skaggs, being fat and slow, fell far behind his reserve, and dropped exhausted on a rock for a moment to get his breath. As he rose, panting, to resume flight, a figure bounded out of the darkness behind him, and he gathered it in silently and went with it to the ground,

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

where both fought silently in the dust until they rolled into the moonlight and each looked the other in the face.

"That you, Jim Skaggs?"

"That you, Tom Boggs?"

Then the two lieutenants rose swiftly, but a third shape bounded into the road—a gigantic figure—Black Tom! With a startled yell they gathered him in—one by the waist, the other about the neck, and, for a moment, the terrible Kentuckian—it could be none other—swung the two clear of the ground, but the doughty lieutenants hung to him. Boggs trying to get his knife and Skaggs his pistol, and all went down in a heap.

"I surrender—I surrender!" It was the giant who spoke, and at the sound of his voice both men ceased the struggle, and, strange to say, no one of the three laughed.

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

"Lieutenant Boggs," said Captain Wells, thickly, "take yo' thumb out o' my mouth. Lieutenant Skaggs, leggo my leg an' stop bitin' me."

"Sh—sh—sh—" said all three.

The faint swish of bushes as Lieutenant Boggs's ten men scuttled into the brush behind them—the distant beat of the army's feet getting fainter ahead of them, and then silence—dead, dead silence.

"Sh—sh—sh!"

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With the red streaks of dawn Captain Mayhall Wells was pacing up and down in front of Flitter Bill's store, a gaping crowd about him, and the shattered remnants of the army drawn up along Roaring Fork in the rear. An hour later Flitter Bill rode calmly in.

"I stayed all night down the valley,"

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

said Flitter Bill. "Uncle Jim Richmond was sick. I hear you had some trouble last night, Captain Wells." The captain expanded his chest.

"Trouble!" he repeated, sarcastically. And then he told how a charging horde of dare-devils had driven him from camp with overwhelming numbers and one piece of artillery; how he had rallied the army and fought them back, foot by foot, and put them to fearful rout; how the army had fallen back again just when the Kentuckians were running like sheep, and how he himself had stayed in the rear with Lieutenant Boggs and Lieutenant Skaggs, "to cover their retreat, suh," and how the purveyor, if he would just go up through the Gap, would doubtless find the cannon that the enemy had left behind in their flight. It was just while he was thus telling the

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

tale for the twentieth time that two figures appeared over the brow of the hill and drew near—Hence Sturgill on horseback and Tallow Dick on foot.

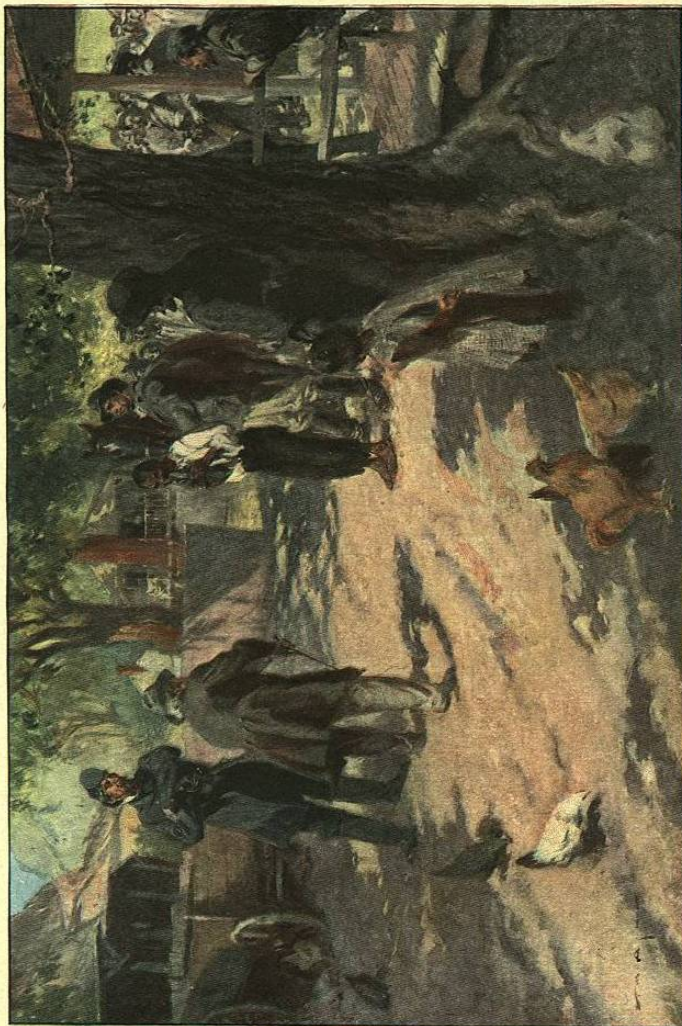
"I ketched this nigger in my corn-fiel' this mornin'," said Hence, simply, and Flitter Bill glared, and without a word went for the blacksnake ox-whip that hung by the barn door.

For the twenty-first time Captain Wells started his tale again, and with every pause that he made for breath Hence cackled scorn.

"An', Hence Sturgill, ef you will jus' go up in the Gap you'll find a cannon, captured, suh, by me an' the Army of the Callahan, an'——"

"Cannon!" Hence broke in. "Speak up, nigger!" And Tallow Dick spoke up—grinning:

[64]



"Speak up, nigger."

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

"I done it!"

"What!" shouted Flitter Bill.

"I kicked a rock loose climbin' over Callahan's nose."

Bill dropped his whip with a chuckle of pure ecstasy. Mayhall paled and stared. The crowd roared, the Army of the Callahan grinned, and Hence climbed back on his horse.

"Mayhall Wells," he said, "plain ole Mayhall Wells, I'll see you on Couht Day. I ain't got time now."

And he rode away.

IV

THAT day Captain Mayhall Wells and the Army of the Callahan were in dispute. Next day the awful news of Lee's surrender came. Captain Wells refused to believe it, and still made heroic effort to keep his shattered command together. Looking for recruits on Court Day, he was twitted about the rout of the army by Hence Sturgill, whose long-coveted chance to redeem himself had come. Again, as several times before, the captain declined to fight—his health was essential to the general well-being—but Hence laughed in his face, and the captain had to face the music, though the heart of him was gone.

He fought well, for he was fighting for

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

his all, and he knew it. He could have whipped with ease, and he did whip, but the spirit of the thoroughbred was not in Captain Mayhall Wells. He had Sturgill down, but Hence sank his teeth into Mayhall's thigh while Mayhall's hands grasped his opponent's throat. The captain had only to squeeze, as every rough-and-tumble fighter knew, and endure his pain until Hence would have to give in. But Mayhall was not built to endure. He roared like a bull as soon as the teeth met in his flesh, his fingers relaxed, and to the disgusted surprise of everybody he began to roar with great distinctness and agony:

“ 'Nough! 'Nough!”

The end was come, and nobody knew it better than Mayhall Wells. He rode home that night with hands folded on the

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

pommel of his saddle and his beard crushed by his chin against his breast. For the last time, next morning he rode down to Flitter Bill's store. On the way he met Parson Kilburn and for the last time Mayhall Wells straightened his shoulders and for one moment more resumed his part: perhaps the parson had not heard of his fall.

"Good-mornin', parsing," he said, pleasantly. "Ah—where have you been?" The parson was returning from Cumberland Gap, whither he had gone to take the oath of allegiance.

"By the way, I have something here for you which Flitter Bill asked me to give you. He said it was from the commandant at Cumberland Gap."

"Fer me?" asked the captain—hope springing anew in his heart. The parson

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

handed him a letter. Mayhall looked at it upside down.

"If you please, parsing," he said, handing it back, "I hev left my specs at home."

The parson read that, whereas Captain Wells had been guilty of grave misdemeanors while in command of the Army of the Callahan, he should be arrested and court-martialled for the same, or be given the privilege of leaving the county in twenty-four hours. Mayhall's face paled a little and he stroked his beard.

"Ah—does anybody but you know about this ordah, parsing?"

"Nobody."

"Well, if you will do me the great favor, parsing, of not mentioning it to nary a living soul—as fer me and my ole gray hoss and my household furniture—we'll be

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

in Kanetuck afore daybreak to-morrow mornin'!" And he was.

But he rode on just then and presented himself for the last time at the store of Flitter Bill. Bill was sitting on the stoop in his favorite posture. And in a moment there stood before him plain Mayhall Wells—holding out the order Bill had given the parson that day.

"Misto Richmond," he said, "I have come to tell you good-by."

Now just above the selfish layers of fat under Flitter Bill's chubby hands was a very kind heart. When he saw Mayhall's old manner and heard the old respectful way of address, and felt the dazed helplessness of the big beaten man, the heart thumped.

"I am sorry about that little amount I owe you; I think I'll be able shortly—"

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

But Bill cut him short. Mayhall Wells, beaten, disgraced, driven from home on charge of petty crimes, of which he was undoubtedly guilty, but for which Bill knew he himself was responsible—Mayhall on his way into exile and still persuading himself and, at that moment, almost persuading him that he meant to pay that little debt of long ago—was too much for Flitter Bill, and he proceeded to lie—lying with deliberation and pleasure.

"Captain Wells," he said—and the emphasis on the title was balm to Mayhall's soul—"you have protected me in time of war, an' you air welcome to yo' uniform an' you air welcome to that little debt. Yes," he went on, reaching down into his pocket and pulling out a roll of bills, "I tender you in payment for that same protection the regular pay of a officer in the

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

Confederate service"—and he handed out the army pay for three months in Confederate greenbacks—"an' five dollars in money of the United States, of which I an', doubtless, you, suh, air true and loyal citizens. Captain Wells, I bid you good-by an' I wish ye well—I wish ye well."

From the stoop of his store Bill watched the captain ride away, drooping at the shoulders, and with his hands folded on the pommel of his saddle—his dim blue eyes misty, the jaunty forage cap a mockery of his iron-gray hair, and the flaps of his coat fanning either side like mournful wings.

And Flitter Bill muttered to himself:

"Atter he's gone long enough fer these things to blow over, I'm going to bring him back and give him another chance—yes, damme if I don't git him back."

[72]

THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

And Bill dropped his remorseful eye to the order in his hand. Like the handwriting of the order that lifted Mayhall like magic into power, the handwriting of this order, that dropped him like a stone—was Flitter Bill's own.

[73]