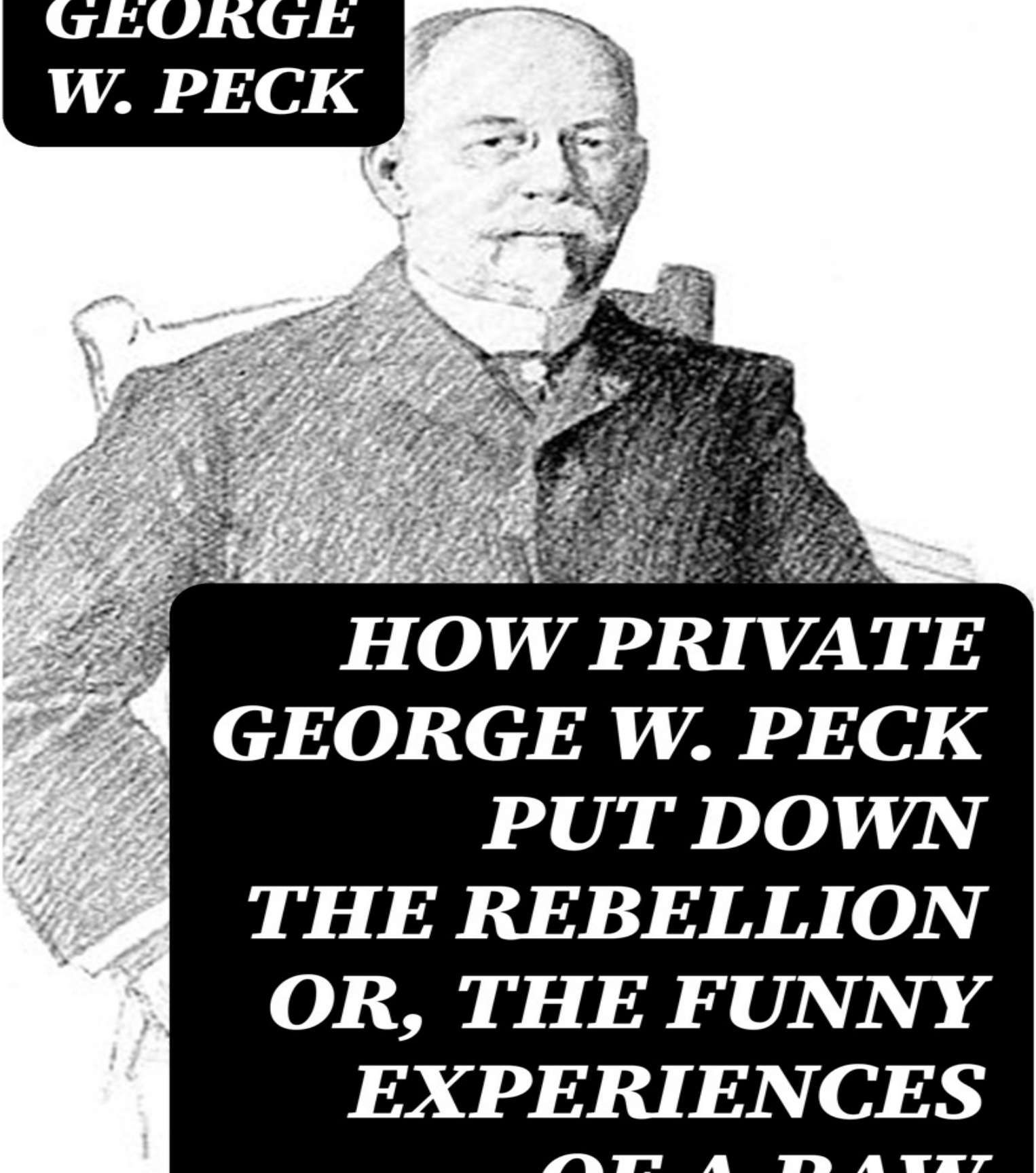
GEORGE W. PECK



HOW PRIVATE GEORGE W. PECK PUT DOWN THE REBELLION OR, THE FUNNY EXPERIENCES OF A RAW RECRUIT - 1887

George W. Peck

How Private George W. Peck Put Down the Rebellion or, The Funny Experiences of a Raw Recruit - 1887

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CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAPTER I.

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The War Literature of the “Century” is very Confusing—I am Resolved to tell the True Story of the War—How and Why I Became a Raw Recruit—My Quarters—My Horse—My First Ride.

For the last year or more I have been reading the articles in the *Century* magazine, written by generals and things who served on both the Union and Confederate sides, and have been struck by the number of “decisive battles” that were fought, and the great number of generals who fought them and saved the country. It seems that each general on the Union side, who fought a battle, and writes an article for the aforesaid magazine, admits that his battle was the one which did the business. On the Confederate side, the generals who write articles invariably demonstrate that they everlastingly whipped their opponents, and drove them on in disorder. To read those articles it seems strange that the Union generals who won so many decisive battles, should not have ended the war much sooner than they did, and to read the accounts of battles won by the Confederates, and the demoralization that ensued in the ranks of their opponents, it seems marvellous that the Union army was victorious. Any man who has followed these generals of both sides, in the pages of that magazine, must conclude that the war was a draw game, and that both sides were whipped. Thus far no general has lost a battle on either side, and all of them tacitly admit that the whole thing depended on them, and that other commanders were mere

ciphers. This is a kind of history that is going to mix up generations yet unborn in the most hopeless manner.

It has seemed to me as though the people of this country had got so mixed up about the matter that it was the duty of some private soldier to write a description of *the* decisive battle of the war, and as I was the private soldier who fought that battle on the Union side, against fearful odds, *viz*: against a Confederate soldier who was braver than I was, a better horseback rider, and a better poker player, I feel it my duty to tell about it. I have already mentioned it to a few veterans, and they have advised me to write an article for the *Century*, but I have felt a delicacy about entering the lists, a plain, unvarnished private soldier, against those generals. While I am something of a liar myself, and can do fairly well in my own class, I should feel that in the *Century* I was entered in too fast a class of liars, and the result would be that I should not only lose my entrance fee, but be distanced. So I have decided to contribute this piece of history solely for the benefit of the readers of my own paper, as they will believe me.

It was in 1864 that I joined a cavalry regiment in the department of the Gulf, a raw recruit in a veteran regiment. It may be asked why I waited so long before enlisting, and why I enlisted at all, when the war was so near over. I know that the most of the soldiers enlisted from patriotic motives, and because they wanted to help shed blood, and wind up the war. I did not. I enlisted for the bounty. I thought the war was nearly over, and that the probabilities were that the regiment I had enlisted in would, be ordered home before I could get to it. In fact the recruiting officer told me as much,

and he said I would get my bounty, and a few months' pay, and it would be just like finding money. He said at that late day I would never see a rebel, and if I did have to join the regiment, there would be no fighting, and it would just be one continued picnic for two or three months, and there would be no more danger than to go off camping for a duck shoot. At my time of life, now that I have become gray, and bald, and my eyesight is failing, and I have become a grandfather, I do not want to open the sores of twenty-two years ago. I want a quiet life. So I would not assert that the recruiting officer deliberately lied to me, but I was the worst deceived man that ever enlisted, and if I ever meet that man, on this earth, it will go hard with him. Of course, if he is dead, that settles it, as I shall not follow any man after death, where I am in doubt as to which road he has taken, but if he is alive, and reads these lines, he can hear of something to his advantage by communicating with me. I would probably kill him. As far as the bounty was concerned, I got that all right, but it was only three-hundred dollars. Within twenty-four hours after I had been credited to the town from which I enlisted, I heard of a town that was paying as high as twelve-hundred dollars for recruits. I have met with many reverses of fortune in the course of a short, but brilliant career, have loaned money and never got it back, have been taken in by designing persons on three card monte, and have been beaten trading horses, but I never suffered much more than I did when I found that I had got to go to war for a beggerly three-hundred dollars bounty, when I could have had twelve hundred dollars by being credited to another town. I think that during two years

and a half of service nothing tended more to dampen my ardor, make me despondent, and hate myself, than the loss of that nine-hundred dollars bounty. There was not an hour of the day, in all of my service, that I did not think of what might have been. It was a long time before I brought to my aid that passage of scripture, “There is no use crying for spilled bounty,” but when I did it helped me some. I thought of the hundreds who didn't get any bounty.

I joined my regiment, and had a cavalry horse issued to me, and was assigned to a company. I went up to the captain of the company, whom I had known as a farmer before the war commenced, and told him I had come to help him put down the rebellion. I never saw a man so changed as he was. I thought he would ask me to bring my things into his tent, and stay with him, but he seemed to have forgotten that he had known me, when he worked on the farm. He was dressed up nicely, and I thought he put on style, and I could only think of him at home, with his overalls tucked in his boots, driving a yoke of oxen to plow a field. He seemed to feel that I had known him under unfavorable circumstances before the war, and acted as though he wanted to shun me. I had drawn an infantry knapsack, at Madison, before I left for the front, and had it full of things, besides a small trunk. The captain called a soldier and told him to find quarters for me, and I went out of his presence. At my quarters, which consisted of what was called a pup-tent, I found no conveniences, and it soon dawned on me that war was no picnic, as that lying recruiting officers had told me it was. I found that I had got to throw away my trunk and knapsack, and all the articles that I couldn't strap

on a saddle, and when I asked for a mattress the men laughed at me. I had always slept on a mattress, or a feather bed, and when I was told that I would have to sleep on the ground, under that little tent, I felt hurt. I had known the colonel when he used to teach school at home, and I went to him and told him what kind of a way they were treating me, but he only laughed. He had two nice cots in his tent, and I told him I thought I ought to have a cot, too. He laughed some more. Finally I asked him who slept in his extra cot, and intimated that I had rather sleep in his tent than mine, but he sent me away, and said he would see what could be done. I laid on the ground that night, but I didn't sleep. If I ever get a pension it will be for rheumatism caught by sleeping on the ground. The rheumatism has not got hold of me yet, though twenty-two years have passed, but it may be lurking about my system, for all I know.

I had never rode a horse, before enlisting. The only thing I had ever got straddle of was a stool in a country printing office, and when I was first ordered to saddle up my horse, I could not tell which way the saddle and bridle went, and I got a colored man to help me, for which I paid him some of the remains of my bounty. I hired him permanently, to take care of my horse, but I soon learned that each soldier had to take care of his own horse. That seemed pretty hard. I had been raised a pet, and had edited a newspaper, which had been one of the most outspoken advocates of crushing the rebellion, and it seemed to me, as much as I had done for the government, in urging enlistments, I was entitled to more consideration then to become my own hostler. However, I curbed my proud spirit, and after the nigger cook

had saddled my horse, I led the animal up to a fence to climb on. From the remarks of the soldiers, and the general laugh all around, it was easy to see that mounting a cavalry horse from off the top of a rail fence was not according to tactics, but it was the only way I could see to get on, in the absence of step-ladders. They let me ride into the ranks, after mounting, and then they laughed. It was hard for me to be obliged to throw away all the articles I had brought with me, so I strapped them on the saddle in front and behind, and only my head stuck out over them. There was one thing, it would be a practicable impossibility to fall off.

Page 16. MOUNTING MY ARAB STEED FROM THE TOP OF A RAIL FENCE.

The regiment started on a raid. The colonel came along by my company during the afternoon, and I asked him where we were going. He gave me an evasive answer, which hurt my feelings. I asked his pardon, but told him I would like to know where we were going, so as to have my

letters sent to me, but he went off laughing, and never told me, while the old soldiers laughed, though I couldn't see what they were laughing at. I did not suppose there was so much difference between officers and privates, and wondered if it was the policy of this government to have a cavalry regiment to start off on a long raid and not let the soldiers know where they were going, and during the afternoon I decided to write home to the paper I formerly edited and give my opinion of such a fool way of running a war. Suppose anybody at home was sick, they wouldn't know where to write for me to come back. There is nothing that will give a man such an appetite as riding on a galloping horse, and along about the middle of the afternoon I began to get hungry, and asked the orderly sergeant when we were going to get any dinner. He said there was a hotel a short distance ahead, and the colonel had gone forward to order dinner for the regiment. I believed him, because I had known the orderly before the war, when he drove a horse in a brickyard, grinding clay. But he was a liar, too, as I found out afterwards. There was not a hotel within fifty miles, and soldiers did not stop at hotels, anyway. Finally the orderly sergeant came along and announced that dinner was ready, and I looked for the hotel, but the only dinner I saw was some raw pork that soldiers took out of their saddle bags, with hard tack. We stopped in the woods, dismounted, and the boys would cut off a slice of fat pork and spread it on the hard tack and eat it. I had never supposed the government would subject its soldiers to such fare as that, and I wouldn't eat. I did not dare dismount, as there was no fence near that I could use to

climb on to my horse, so I sat in the saddle and let the horse eat some grass, while I thought of home, and pie and cake, and what a condemned fool a man was to leave a comfortable home to go and put down anybody's rebellion. The way I felt then I wouldn't have touched a rebellion if one lay right in the road. What business was it of mine if some people in the South wanted to dissolve partnership and go set up business for themselves? How was I going to prevent them from having a southern confederacy, by riding an old rack of bones of a horse, that would reach his nose around every little while and chew my legs? If the recruiting officer who inveigled me into the army had come along then, his widow would now be drawing a pension. While I was thinking, dreaming of home, and the horse was eating grass, the fool animal suddenly took it into his head to lay down and roll, and before I could kick any of his ribs in, he was down, and I was rolling off, with one leg under him. The soldiers quit eating and pulled the horse of me, and hoisted me up into the space between my baggage, and then they laughed, lit their pipes and smoked, as happy as could be. I couldn t see how they could be happy, and wondered if they were not sick of war. Then they mounted, and on we went. My legs and body became chafed, and it seemed as though I couldn t ride another minute, and when the captain came along I told him about it, and asked him if I couldn t be relieved some way. He said the only way was for me to stand on my head and ride, and he winked at a soldier near me, and, do you know, that soldier actually changed ends with himself and stood on his head and hands in the saddle and rode quite a distance, and the captain said that was the

way a cavalry soldier rested himself. Gracious, I wouldn t have tried that for the world, and I found out afterwards that the soldier who stood on his head formerly belonged with a circus.

I suppose it was wrong to complain, but the horse they gave me was the meanest horse in the regiment. He would bite and kick the other horses, and they would kick back, and about half the time I was dodging the heels of horses, and a good deal of the time I was wondering if a man would get any pension if he was wounded that way. It would seem pretty tough to go home on a stretcher, as a wounded soldier, and have people find out a horse kicked you. I never had been a man of blood, and didn't enlist to kill anybody, as I could prove by that recruiting officer, and I didn t want to fight, but from what I could gather from the conversation of the soldiers, fighting and killing people was about all they thought about. They talked about this one and that one who had been killed, and the hundreds of confederates they had all shot or killed with sabres, until my hair just stood right up. It seems that twelve or fifteen men, more or less, had been shot off the horse I was riding, and one fellow who rode next to me said no man who ever rode that old yellow horse had escaped alive. This was cheering to me, and I would have given my three hundred dollars bounty, and all I could borrow, if I could get out of the army. However, I found out afterwards that the soldier lied. In fact they all lied, and they lied for my benefit. We struck into the woods, and traveled until after dark, with no road, and the march was enlivened by remarks of the soldiers near me to the effect that we would probably never get out of the woods alive.

They said we were trying to surround an army of rebels, and cut them off from the main army, and the chances were that when tomorrow's sun rose it would rise on the ghostly corpses of the whole regiment, with jackals and buzzards eating us. One of the soldiers took something from his pocket, about the size of a testament, pressed it to his heart, and then kissed it, and I felt as though I was about to faint, but by the light of a match which another soldier had scratched on his pants to light his pipe, I saw that what I supposed to be a testament, was a box of sardines the soldier had bought of the sutler. I was just about to die of hunger, exhaustion, and fright at the fearful stories the veterans had been telling, when there was a shout at the head of the regiment, which was taken up all along the line, my horse run under the limb of a tree and raked me out of the saddle, and I hung to the limb, my legs hanging down, and

CHAPTER II.

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I Am Rudely Awakened from Dreams of Home—I Go on Picket—
The Foe Advances—A Desperate Conflict—The Union—Confederate Breakfast on the Alabama Race-Track—A Friendly
Partin

The careful readers of this history have no doubt been worried about the manner in which the first chapter closed, leaving me hanging to a limb of a tree, like Absalom weeping for her children, my horse having gone out from under me. But I have not been hanging there all this time. The soldiers took me down, and caught my horse, and the regiment dismounted and a council of war was held. I suppose it was a council of war, as I noticed the officers were all in a group under a tree, with a candle, examining a map, and drinking out of a canteen. I had read of councils of war, but I had never seen one, and so I walked over to the crowd of officers and asked the colonel if there was anything particular the matter. I never saw a crowd of men who seemed so astonished as those officers were, and suddenly I felt myself going away from where they were consulting, with somebody's strong hand on my collar, and an unmistakable cavalry boot, with a man in it, in the vicinity of my pantaloons. I do not know to this day, which officer it was that kicked me, but I went away and sat under a tree in the dark, so hungry that I was near dead, and I wished I *was* dead. I guess the officers wished that I was, too. The soldiers tried to console me by telling me I was too fresh,

but I couldn't see why a private soldier, right from home, who knew all about the public sentiment at the north in regard to the way the war was conducted, should not have a voice in the consultations of officers. I had written many editorials before I left home, criticising the manner in which many generals had handled their commands, and pointed out to my readers how defeat could have been turned into victory, if the generals had done as I would have done in their places. It seemed to me the officers of my regiment were taking a suicidal course in barring me out of their consultations. A soldier had told me that we were lost in the woods, and as I had studied geography when at school, and was well posted about Alabama, it seemed as though a little advice from me would be worth a good deal. But I concluded to let them stay lost forever before I would volunteer any information. It was crawling along towards midnight, of my first day in the army, and I had eaten nothing since morning. As I sat there under the tree I fell asleep, and was dreaming of home, and warm biscuit, with honey, and a feather bed, when I was rudely awakened by a corporal who told me to mount. I asked him what for, and told him that I didn t want to ride any more that night. What I wanted was to be let alone, to sleep. He said to get on the horse too quick, and I found there was no use arguing with a common corporal, so the boys hoisted me on to the horse, and about nine of us started off through the woods in the moonlight, looking for a main road. The corporal was kind enough to say that as soon as we found a road we would put out a picket, and send a courier back to the regiment to inform the colonel that we had got out of the woods, and the rest of

us would lay down and sleep till morning. I don't think I was ever so anxious to see a road in all my life, because I *did* want to lay down and sleep, and die. O, if I could have telegraphed home, how I would have warned the youth of the land to beware of the allurements held out by recruiting officers, and to let war alone. In an hour or so we came to a clearing, and presently to a road, and we stopped. The corporal detailed me to go up the road a short distance and stand picket on my horse. That was not what I had expected of the corporal. I used to know him before the war when he worked in a paint shop in a wagon factory, and I had always treated him well, and it seemed as though he ought to favor me by letting somebody else go on picket. I told him that the other boys were more accustomed to such work than I was, and that I would resign in their favor, because what I wanted was rest, but he said I would have to go, and he called me “Camp and Garrison Equipage,” because I carried so much luggage on my horse, a name that held to me for months. I found that there was no use kicking against going on picket duty that night, though I tried to argue with the corporal that it would be just as well to all lay down and sleep till morning, and put out a picket when it got light enough to see. I was willing to work during the day time for the government, but it seemed as though it was rushing things a little to make a man work day and night for thirteen dollars a month. So the corporal went out on the road with me about a quarter of a mile, and placed me in position and gave me my instructions. The instructions were to keep a sharp lookout up and down the road for Confederate cavalry, and if I saw anybody approaching to sing out “halt!”

and if the party did not halt to shoot him, and then call for the corporal of the guard, who would come out to see what was the matter. I asked him what I should do if anybody came along and shot me, and he said that would be all right, that the boys would come out and bury me. He said I must keep awake, for if I got to sleep on my post I would be court-martialed and shot, and then he rode away and left me alone, on a horse that kept whinnying, and calling the attention of possible Confederates to my position.

I do not think any reader of these papers will envy me the position I was in at that time. If I remained awake, I was liable to be killed by the enemy, and if I fell asleep on my post I would be shot anyway. And if I was not killed, it was probable I would be a murderer before morning. Hunger was gnawing at my stomach, and the horse was gnawing at my legs, and I was gnawing at a hard tack which I had found in the saddle-bag. Every little while I would hear a noise, and my hair would raise my hat up, and it would seem to me as though the next minute a volley would be fired at me, and I shrunk down between the piles of baggage on my saddle to be protected from bullets. Suddenly the moon came out from behind a cloud and around a turn in the road a solitary horseman might have been seen coming towards me. I never have seen a horse that looked as high as that horse did. He seemed at least eighteen feet high, and the man on him was certainly twelve feet high. My heart pounded against a tin canteen that I had strung around my shoulder, so I could hear the beating perfectly plain. The man was approaching, and I was trying to think whether I had been instructed to shoot and then call for the corporal of the

guard, or call for the corporal and then ask him to halt. I knew there was a halt in my instructions, and wondered if it would not conciliate the enemy to a certain extent if I would say “Please Halt.” The fact was, I didn t want to have any fuss. If I could have backed my horse up into the woods, and let the man go by, it seemed as though it would save precipitating a conflict. It is probable that no military man was ever in so tight a place as I was that minute. The enemy was advancing, and I wondered if, when he got near enough, I could say “halt,” in a commanding tone of voice. I knew enough, then, to feel that to ask the stranger to halt in a trembling and husky voice would give the whole thing away, that I was a recruit and a coward. Ye gods, how I suffered! I wondered if I could hit a man with a bullet. Before the war I was quite a good shot with a shotgun, shooting into flocks of pigeons and ducks, and I thought what a good idea it would be if I could get that approaching rebel into a flock. The idea seemed so ridiculous that I laughed right out loud. It was not a hearty, happy laugh, but it was a laugh all the same, and I was proud that I could laugh in the face of danger, when I might be a corpse any minute. The man on the horse stopped. Whether he heard me laugh it is impossible to say, but he stopped. That relieved me a great deal. As he had stopped it was unnecessary for me to invite him to halt. He was welcome to stay there if he wanted to. I argued that it was not my place to go howling around the Southern Confederacy, ordering people to halt, when they had already halted. If he would let me alone and stay where he was, what sense was there in picking a quarrel with him?

Why should I want to shoot a total stranger, who might have a family at home, somewhere in the South, who would mourn for him. He might be a dead shot, as many Southern gentlemen were, and if I went to advising him about halting, it would, very likely cause his hot Southern blood to boil, and he would say he had just as much right to that road as I had. If it come right down to the justice of the thing, I should have to admit that Alabama was not my state. Wisconsin was my home, and if I was up there, and a man should trespass on my property, it would be reasonable enough for me to ask him to go away from there, and enforce my request by calling a constable and having him put off the premises. But how did I know but he owned property there, and was a tax-payer. I had it all figured out that I was right in not disturbing that rebel, and I knew that I could argue with my colonel for a week, if necessary, on the law points in the case, and the courtesy that I deemed proper between gentlemen, if any complaint was made for not doing my duty. But, lordy, how I *did* sweat while I was deciding to let him alone if he would let me alone. The war might have been going on now, and that rebel and myself might have been standing there today, looking at each other, if it hadn't been for the action of the fool horse that I rode. My horse had been evidently asleep for some time, but suddenly he woke up, pricked up his ears, and began to prance, and jump sideways like a race horse that is on the track, and wants to run. The horse reared up and plunged, and kept working up nearer to my Southern friend, and I tried to hold him, and keep him still, but suddenly he got the best of me

and started towards the other man and horse, and the other horse started, as though some one had said “go”.{*}

* [Before I get any further on this history of the war, it is necessary to explain. The facts proved to be that my regiment had got lost in the woods, and the scouting party, under the corporal, who had been sent out to find a road, had come upon the three-quarter stretch of an old private race track on a deserted southern plantation, instead of a main road, and I had been placed on picket near the last turn before striking the quarter stretch. A small party of Confederates, who had been out on a scout, and got lost, had come on the track further down, near the judges' stand, and they had put a man, on picket up near where I was, supposing they had struck the road, and intending to wait until morning so as to find out where they were. My horse was an old race horse, and as soon as he saw the other horse, he was in for a race and the other horse was willing. This will show the situation as well as though I had a race track engraved, showing the positions of the two armies. The Confederates, except the man on picket, were asleep beside the track near the quarter stretch, and our fellows, except myself, were asleep over by the three-quarter pole.]

I do not suppose any man on this earth, or any other earth, ever tried to stop a fool horse quite as hard as I did that one. I pulled until my arms ached, but he went for all that was out, and the horse ahead of me was buckling in as fast as he could. I could not help wondering what would happen if I should overtake that Southern man. I was gaining on him, when suddenly eight or nine men who were sleeping beside the road, got up and began to shoot at us. They were the friends of the rebel, who believed that the whole Union army was making a charge on them. We got by

the shooters alive, and then, as we passed the rickety old judge's stand, I realized that we were on a race track, and for a moment I forgot that I was a soldier, and only thought of myself as a rider of a race horse, and I gave the horse his head, and kicked him, and yelled like a Comanche Indian, and I had the satisfaction of seeing my horse go by the rebel, and I yelled some more. I got a glimpse of my rebel's, face as I went by him, and he didn't look much more like a fighting man than I did, but he was, for as soon as I had got ahead of him he drew a revolver and began firing at me on the run. I thought that was a mean trick, and spoke to him about it afterwards, but he said he only wanted me to stop so he could get acquainted with me.

Page 28. ON WENT THE TWO NIGHT RIDERS.

Well, I never could find any bullets in any of the clothes strapped on the back of my saddle, but it *did* seem to me as though every bullet from his revolver hit very near my vital

parts. But a new danger presented itself. We were rapidly approaching the corporal and his men, with whose command I belonged, and they would wake up and think the whole Confederate army was charging them, and if I was not killed by the confounded rebel behind me, I should probably be shot all to pieces by our own men. As we passed our men they fired a few sleepy shots towards us, and took to the woods. On went the two night riders, and when the rebel had exhausted his revolver he began to urge his horse, and passed me, and I drew my revolver and began to fire at him. As we passed the judge's stand the second time a couple of shots from quite a distance in the woods showed that his rebel friends had taken alarm at the frequent charges of cavalry, and had skipped to the woods and were getting away as fast as possible. We went around the track once more, and when near the judge's stand I was right behind him, and his horse fell down and my horse stumbled over him, and I guess we were both stunned. Finally I crawled out from under my horse, and the rebel was trying to raise up, when I said, “What in thunder you want to chase a man all around the Southern Confederacy for, on a dark night, trying to shoot him?” He asked me to help him up, which I did, when he said, “Who commenced this here chasing? If you had kept whar you was, I wouldn't a had no truck with you.” Then I said, “You are my prisoner,” and he said, “No, you are my prisoner.” I told him I was no hand to argue, but it seemed to me it was about a stand off, as to which was 'tother's prisoner. I told him that was my first day's service as a soldier, and I was not posted as to the customs of civilized warfare, but I was willing to wait till

daylight, leaving matters just as they were, each of us on the defensive, giving up none of our rights, and after daylight we would play a game of seven-up to see which was the prisoner. That seemed fair to him, and he accepted the situation, remarking that he had only been conscripted a few days and didn't know any more about war than a cow. He said he was a newspaper man from Georgia, and had been taken right from the case in his office before his paper could be got out. I told him I was only a few days out of a country printing office my-self, the sheriff having closed out my business on an old paper bill. A bond of sympathy was inaugurated at once between us, and when he limped along the track to the fence, and found that his ankle was hurt by the fall, I brought a bottle of horse liniment out of my saddle-bags, and a rag, and bound some liniment on his ankle. He said he had never seen a Yankee soldier before, and he was glad he had met me. I told him he was the first rebel I had ever met, and I hoped he would be the last, until the war was over. By this time our horses had gone to nibbling grass, as though there were no such thing as war. We could hear occasional bugle calls off in the woods in two directions, and knew that our respective commands had gone off and got lost again, so we concluded to camp there till morning. After the excitement was over I began to get hungry, and I asked him if he had anything to eat. He said he had some corn bread and bacon, and he could get some sweet potatoes over in a field. So I built a fire there on the track, and he hobbled off after potatoes. Just about daylight breakfast was served, consisting of coffee, which I carried in a sack, made in a pot he carried, bacon fried in a half of a

tin canteen, sweet potatoes roasted in the ashes, and Confederate corn bread, warmed by holding it over the fire on a sharp stick. My friend, the rebel, sat on my saddle, which I had removed from my horse, after he had promised me on his honor to help me to put it on when it was time to mount. He knew how to put on saddles, and I didn t, and as his ankle was lame I gave him the best seat, he being my guest, that is, he was my guest if I beat him in the coming game of seven-up, which we were to play to see if he was my prisoner, or I was his. It being daylight, I could see him, and study his character, and honestly he was a mighty fine-looking fellow. As we eat our early breakfast I began to think that the recruiting officer was more than half right about war being a picnic. He talked about the newspaper business in the South, and before breakfast was over we had formed a partnership to publish a paper at Montgomery, Ala., after the war should be over. I have eaten a great many first-class meals in my time, have feasted at Delmonico's, and lived at the best hotels in the land, besides partaking pretty fair food camping out, where an appetite was worked up by exercise and sporting, but in all my life I have never had anything taste as good as that combination Union-Confederate breakfast on the Alabama race track, beside the judges stand. After the last potato peeling, and the last crumb of corn bread had been “sopped” in the bacon gravy and eaten, we whittled some tobacco off a plug, filled our pipes and leaned up against the fence and smoked the most enjoyable smoke that ever was smoked. After smoking in silence a few minutes my rebel friend said, as he blew the smoke from his handsome mouth, “War is not so

unpleasant, after all.” Then we fell to talking about the manner in which the different generals on each side had conducted things. He went on to show that if Lee had taken his advice, the Yankees would then be on the run for the North, and I showed him, by a few well-chosen remarks that if I could have been close to Grant, and given him some pointers, that the Confederates would be hunting their holes. We were both convinced that it was a great mistake that we were nothing but private soldiers, but felt that it would not be long before we were called to occupy high places. It seemed to stand to reason that true merit would find its reward. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and said if I had a pack of cards we would go up in the judges stand and play seven-up to see whether I was his prisoner, or he was mine. I wanted to take a prisoner back to the regiment, at I thought it would make me solid with the colonel, and I played a strong game of seven-up, but before we got started to playing he suggested that we call it a stand-off, and agree that neither of us should be a prisoner, but that when we got ready to part each should go hunt up his own command, and tell the biggest lie we could think of as to the fight we had had. That was right into my hand, and I agreed, and then my friend suggested that we play poker for money. I consented and he put up Confederate money, against my greenbacks, ten to one. We played about an hour, and at the close he had won the balance of my bounty, except what I had given to the chaplain for safe keeping, and a pair of pants, and a blouse, and a flannel shirt, and a pair of shoes, which I had on my saddle. I was rather glad to get rid of some of my extra

baggage, and when he put on the clothes he had won from me, blessed if I wasn t rather proud of him. A man could wear any kind of clothes in the Confederate army, and my rebel looked real comfortable in my clothes, and I felt that it was a real kind act to allow him to win a blue suit that I did not need. If the men of both the armies, and the people of both sections of the distracted country could have seen us two soldiers together, there in the judges stand, peacefully playing poker, while the battles were raging in the East and in the West, that would have felt that an era of good feeling was about to dawn on the country. After we had played enough poker, and I had lost everything I had that was loose, I suggested that he sing a song, so he sung the “Bonnie Blue Flag.” I did not think it was right for him to work in a rebel song on me, but it did sound splendid, and I forgot that there was any war, in listening to the rich voice of my new friend. When he got through he asked me to sing something. I never *could* sing, anyway. My folks had always told me that my voice sounded like a corn sheller, but he urged me at his own peril, and I sung, or tried to, “We'll Hang Jeff Davis to a Sour Apple Tree.” I had no designs on Mr. Davis, honestly I hadn't, and it was the farthest thing from my thoughts to hurt the feelings of that young man, but before I had finished the first verse he took his handkerchief out and placed it to his eyes. I stopped and apologized, but he said not to mind him, as he was better now. He told me, afterwards, in the strictest confidence, that my singing was the worst he ever heard, and gave it as his opinion that if Jeff Davis could hear me sing he would be willing, even anxious, to be hung. If I had been sensitive

about my musical talents, probably there would have been hard feelings, and possibly bloodshed, right there, but I told him I always knew I couldn't sing, and he said that I was in luck. Well, we fooled around there till about ten o'clock in the morning, and decided that we would part, and each seek our respective commands, so I put some more horse liniment on his sprained ankle, and he saddled my horse for me, and after expressions of mutual pleasure at meeting each other, and promises that after the war we would seek each other out, we mounted, he gave three cheers for the Yanks, and I gave three cheers for the Johnnies, he divided his plug of tobacco with me, and I gave him the bottle of horse liniment, he turned his horse towards the direction his gray coats had taken the night before, while I turned my horse towards the hole in the woods our fellows had made, and we left the race track where we had fought so gamely, eat so heartily, and played poker so disastrously, to me. As we were each about going into the woods, half a mile apart, he waved his handkerchief at me, and I waved mine at him, and we plunged into the forest.

After riding for an hour or so, alone in the woods, thinking up a good lie to tell about where I had been, and what I had been doing, I heard horses neighing, and presently I came upon my regiment, just starting out to hunt me up. The colonel looked at me and said, “Kill the fat prodigal, the calf has got back.”

CHAPTER III.

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I Describe a Deadly Encounter—Am Congratulated as a Warrior
With a Big “W”—The Chaplain Gives Good Advice—I Attend Surgeon's Call—Castor Oil out of a Dirty Bottle—Back to the Chaplain's Tent—I am Wounded in the Canteen.

The last chapter of this history left me facing my regiment, which had started out to hunt me up, after my terrible fight with that Confederate. The colonel rode up to me and shook me by the hand, and congratulated me, and the major and adjutant said they had never expected to see me alive, and the soldiers looked at me as one returned from the grave, and from what I could gather by the looks of the boys, I was something of a hero, even before I had told my story. The colonel asked me what had become of all the baggage I had on my saddle when I went away, and I told him that I had thrown ballast over-board all over the Southern Confederacy, when I was charging the enemy, because I found my horse drew too much water for a long run. He said something about my being a Horse-Marine, and sent me back to my company, telling me that when we got into camp that night he would send for me and I could tell the story of my capture and escape. I rode back into my company, and you never saw such a change of sentiment towards a raw recruit, as there was towards me, and they

asked me questions about my first fight. The corporal who had placed me on picket, and stampeded at the first fire, was unusually gracious to me, and said when he saw a hundred and fifty rebels come charging down the road, yelling and firing, he knew it was no place for his small command, so he lit out. He said he supposed of course I was shot all to pieces. I didn't tell him that it was me that did all the yelling, and that there was only one rebel, and that he was perfectly harmless, but I told him that he miscalculated the number of the enemy, as there were, all told, at least five hundred, and that I had killed fourteen that I knew of, besides a number had been taken away in ambulances, wounded. The boys opened their eyes, and nothing was too good for me during that march. We went into camp in the pine woods late in the afternoon, and after supper the colonel sent for me, and I went to his tent. All the officers were there, and as many soldiers as dared crowd around. The colonel said the corporal had reported where he left me, and how the enemy had charged in force, and he supposed that I had been promptly killed. That he felt that he could not hold his position against such immense odds, so he had fallen back slowly, firing as he did so, until the place was too hot for him, and now he wanted to hear my story. I told the colonel that I was new at the business, and may be I did not use the best judgment in the world, by remaining to fight against such odds, but I meant well. I told him I did not wish to complain of the corporal, who no doubt was an able fighter, but it did seem to me that he ought at least to have waited till the battle had actually commenced. I said that the first charge, which stampeded the corporal and his men,