



The Red Badge of Courage

Chapter 1

THE COLD PASSED SLOWLY FROM THE EARTH, and the lifting dawn revealed an army stretched across the hills, resting. As the hillsides changed from brown to green, the army awakened and began to tremble with eagerness at the talk of battle. A river, yellow-colored, curled at the army's feet. At night, when the stream had become a sorrowful blackness, one could see across it the red, eye-like glow of enemy campfires in the distant hills.

Once a certain tall soldier went to wash a shirt. He came rushing back from a brook waving his shirt like a flag. He was breathless with a tale he had heard from a good friend.

"We're going to move tomorrow—sure," he said importantly. "We're going up along the river, across, and come around behind them."

To his listeners he told a loud and careful story of a very smooth battle plan. When he had finished, the blue-clothed men scattered into small arguing groups.

“It’s a lie! That’s all it is—a thundering lie!” said another soldier loudly. His smooth face was red and his hands were pushed angrily into his pockets. He considered the matter as a wrong against him. “I don’t believe the old army’s ever going to move. I’ve been ready to go eight times in the last two weeks, and we haven’t moved yet.”

The tall soldier felt required to defend the truth of the story he himself had introduced. He and the loud one almost started fighting about it.

There was a youthful soldier who listened with eager ears to the words of the tall one and to the varied remarks of his friends. After listening to discussions concerning marches and attacks, he went to his tent. He wished to be alone with some new thoughts that had lately come to him.

The youth was in a condition of shock. So they were at last going to fight! Tomorrow, perhaps, there would be a battle, and he would be in it. For a time he had to labor to make himself believe. He could not accept with certainty a sign that he was about to take part in one of those great affairs of the world.

He had, of course, dreamed of battles all his life—of uncertain and bloody fights that had excited him with their vastness and fire. In dreams, he had seen himself in many struggles. He had imagined people secure in the protection of his fierce bravery. But, awake, he had regarded battles as bloody marks on the pages of the past. He had put them as things of the past with his imaginings of heavy crowns and high castles. There was a portion of the world’s history which he regarded as “the time of the wars.” But it, he thought, had disappeared forever.

He had wanted several times to join the army. Tales of great movements shook the land. There seemed to be much glory in them. He had read of marches, advances, battles, and he had wanted to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures filled with breathless deeds.

But his mother had prevented him from going. She looked with little favor upon the quality of his war spirit. She could calmly seat herself and give him many hundreds of reasons why he was more important on the farm than on the field of battle. She had had certain ways of expression that told him that her statements on the subject came from a deep belief.

At last, however, he had taken a firm position. The newspapers, the talk of the village, his own imaginings, had excited him to an uncontrollable degree. They were in truth, fighting finely down there. Almost every day the newspapers talked of victory.

One night, as he lay in bed, the winds had carried to him the ringing of the church bell. Someone was pulling the bell rope wildly to tell the news of a great battle. This voice of the people, joyful in the night, had made him tremble in excitement. Later, he had gone down to his mother's room and had told her, "Ma, I'm going to join the army."

"Henry, don't you be a fool," his mother had replied. She had then covered her face with the blanket. There was an end to the matter for that night.

Nevertheless, the next morning he had gone to a town that was near his mother's farm and had joined a regiment that was forming there. When he had returned home, his mother was milking a cow. Four others stood waiting. "Ma, I've joined," he said to her hesitatingly. There was a short silence. "The Lord's will be done, Henry," she had finally replied, and had then continued to milk the cow.

When he had stood in the doorway with his blue soldier's clothes on his back, and with the light of excitement and expectancy in his eyes, he had seen two tears leaving their trails on his mother's tired face.

Still, she had surprised him by saying nothing about his returning. He had privately been ready for a beautiful scene. He had prepared certain sentences which he thought could be used to produce great emotion. But her words destroyed his plans. She had steadily cut potatoes and spoken as follows: "You be careful, Henry, and take good care of yourself. Don't think you can beat the whole **rebel** army at the start, because you can't. You're just one little fellow among a lot of others,

and you have to keep quiet and do what they tell you. I know how you are, Henry.

“And always be careful when you choose your friends. There are lots of bad men in the army, Henry. The army makes them wild. They like nothing better than taking a young fellow like you, who has never been away from home much and has always had a mother, and teaching him to drink liquor and curse. Stay away from them, Henry. I don’t want you ever to do anything, Henry, that you would be ashamed to tell me about. Just act as if I were watching you. If you keep that in your mind always, I guess you’ll come out all right.

“You must always remember your father, too, child. And remember he never drank a drop of liquor in his life, and seldom cursed, either.

“I don’t know what else to tell you, Henry, except that you must never avoid your duty, child. If a time comes when you have to be killed or do a bad thing, Henry, don’t think of anything except what’s right. Many women have to endure such things in these times, and the Lord will take care of us all.

“Don’t forget your shirts, child, and try and keep warm and dry. Good-bye, Henry. Be careful, and be a good boy.”

He had, of course, not been patient during the speech. It had not been quite what he expected. He departed, feeling a kind of relief.

Still, when he had looked back from the gate, he had seen his mother kneeling among the potatoes. Her brown face, upraised, was marked with tears, and her body was shaking. He had lowered his head and gone ahead, feeling suddenly ashamed of his purpose.

From his home he had gone to the school to say good-bye to many friends. They had gathered about him with wonder and admiration. He had felt the difference now between himself and them, and had been filled with calm pride.

There was a dark-haired girl at whom he had gazed steadily, and he thought she grew sad at the sight of his blue uniform. As he had walked down the path between the rows of oaks, he had turned his head and seen her at a window watching his departure. He often thought of it.

On the way to Washington, his spirits had risen. The **regiment**

was fed and praised at station after station, until the youth had believed that he must be a hero. As he enjoyed the smiles of the girls and was given attention by the old men, he had felt growing within him the strength to do splendid deeds.

After long journeyings with many pauses, there had come months of boring life in a camp. He had had the belief that real war was a series of death struggles with little time for sleep and meals. But since his regiment had come to the field, the army had done little but sit still and try to keep warm.

He was brought then gradually back to his old ideas. Struggles as in ancient times were ended. Men were either better or more fearful.

He had grown to regard himself merely as part of a vast blue display. His main job was to take care of his personal comfort as well as he could.

Now there was a more serious problem. He lay in his tent thinking about it. He tried to prove to himself that he would not run from a battle.

Before now, he had never felt obliged to consider too seriously this question. In his life he had accepted certain things, never doubting his belief in final success, and thinking little about methods. But here he was faced with an immediate situation. He had suddenly wondered if, perhaps, in a battle he might run. He was forced to admit that—in the matter of war—he knew nothing about himself.

He jumped from his bed and began to pace nervously back and forth. “Good Lord, what’s the matter with me?” he said aloud.

After a time the tall soldier came into the tent. He began to put some articles in his bag.

The youth, pausing in his nervous walk, looked at the busy figure. “Going to be a battle, sure, is there, Jim?” he asked.

“Of course there is,” replied the tall soldier, whose name was Jim Conklin. “Of course there is. You just wait until tomorrow, and you’ll see one of the biggest battles that ever was. You just wait.”

“Do you really think so?” asked the youth.

“Oh, you’ll see fighting this time, my boy—real fighting,” added the tall soldier, with the manner of a man who is about to enact a bat-

tle for the benefit of his friends.

“Well,” remarked the youth, “this story will probably have the same result the others did.”

“No, it won’t,” replied the tall soldier. “No, it won’t.”

The youth remained silent for a time. At last he spoke to the tall soldier. “Jim!”

“What?”

“How do you think the regiment will do?”

“Oh, they’ll fight all right, I guess, after they once get into it,” said the other with cold judgment. “They’re new, of course, but they’ll fight all right, I guess.”

“Do you think any of the boys will run?” continued the youth.

“Oh, maybe a few of them will run, but there’s that kind in every regiment, especially when they first go under fire,” said the other in a kindly way.

“Of course it might happen that the whole regiment might start to run, if they met some big fighting at the beginning. Or they might stay and fight. But you can’t depend on anything. Of course they haven’t ever been under fire yet, and it’s not likely they’ll beat the whole rebel army in one battle. But I think they’ll fight better than some, and maybe worse than others. That’s the way I see it. Most of the boys will fight all right after they start shooting.” He placed great weight on the last four words.

“Did you ever think you might run yourself, Jim?” the youth asked. On completing the sentence he laughed as if he had meant it as a joke.

The tall soldier waved his hand. “Well,” he said seriously, “I’ve thought it might get too uncomfortable for Jim Conklin sometimes. If a lot of boys started to run, I suppose I’d start to run, too. And if I once started, I’d run like the devil. But if everybody were standing and fighting, well, I’d stand and fight, I would. I know I would!”

The youth felt grateful for these words of his companion. He had feared that all of the other men possessed a great confidence. He was now a little reassured.

Chapter 2

THE NEXT MORNING THE YOUTH DISCOVERED THAT HIS TALL FRIEND had been the fast-flying messenger of a mistake. There was much laughter at the latter by those who had yesterday been firm believers of his views. And there were even some remarks about his foolishness by men who had never believed his story. The tall one fought with a man from Chatfield Comers and beat him badly.

The youth felt, however, that his problem was in no way lifted from him. There was, in fact, a continuing worry. The story of coming battle had created in him a great concern for himself. Now, with the question in his mind, he became again a part of the blue display.

For days he worried. He finally decided that there was only one way to prove himself: go into battle, and then watch his legs to discover their virtues and faults. To gain an answer he must have gunfire, blood and danger. So he waited eagerly for an opportunity.

Meanwhile he continually tried to measure himself by his companions. The tall soldier, for one, gave him some assurance. This man's calm unconcern gave him a measure of confidence, for he had known Jim Conklin since he, Henry Fleming, had been a child. Still, he thought that his friend might be mistaken about himself. Or, perhaps, Jim Conklin might be a man who had always lived in peace and privacy but was, in reality, made to shine in war.

The youth would have liked to have discovered another who doubted himself. A sharing of mental notes would have been a joy to him.

Then one morning the men were whispering and starting again the old reports. In the darkness before the break of day their uniforms glowed a deep purple color. From across the river the red eyes were still

watching. In the eastern sky there was a yellow spot, like a rug put down for the feet of the coming sun.

From somewhere in the darkness came the sound of feet. The youth could occasionally see dark shadows that moved like huge devils. The regiment waited for what seemed a long time. The youth lost his patience. It was unbearable the way these affairs were managed. He wondered how long they were to be kept waiting.

At last he heard from along the road at the bottom of the hill the sound of a horse. It must be the coming of orders. He bent forward, scarcely breathing. Then a horseman stopped before the colonel of the regiment. The two held a short, sharp-worded conversation. The men in the front stretched their necks to see and hear.

As the horseman turned his animal and started away he shouted over his shoulder, "Don't forget that box of tobacco." The colonel murmured a reply. The youth wondered what a box of tobacco had to do with war.

A moment later the regiment went marching off into the darkness. The air was heavy and cold. The wet grass, marched upon, sounded like moving silk.

Soon they passed into a roadway and moved forward easily. A dark regiment moved in front of them, and from behind also came the sounds of marching men.

The rushing yellow of the developing day continued behind their backs. When the sun rays at last struck full upon the earth, the youth saw that the land was marked with two long, thin, black columns which disappeared over the top of a hill in front, and in the rear disappeared in a forest.

There was much discussion among the soldiers. The youth took no part. As he walked along in the careless line he was busy with his own personal problem. He could not stop himself from thinking about it. He was in low spirits and threw searching glances about him. He looked ahead, often expecting to hear the sound of shooting.

But the long lines moved slowly from hill to hill without a bit of smoke. The sky overhead was a lovely blue.

The youth studied the faces of his companions, ever watching to see emotions similar to his. He found none.

Considering himself as separated from the others, he was saddened by the light and merry speeches among the men. The regiment marched to the music of laughter.

At nightfall the column broke apart and went into the fields to camp. Tents grew up like strange plants. Campfires, like red flowers, lit the night.

The youth talked with his companions as little as possible. In the evening he wandered a few paces into the dark. From this little distance the many fires, with the black forms of men passing back and forth before the red rays, made strange and devilish effects.

He lay down in the grass and it pressed tenderly against his face. The moon seemed to be hung in a treetop. The liquid stillness of the night closing upon him made him feel vast pity for himself. There was a gentleness in the soft winds; and the whole feeling of darkness, he thought, was one of sympathy for himself in his sorrow.

He wished that he were home again, going from the house to the farmyard, from the farmyard to the fields, from the fields to the farmyard, from the farmyard to the house. He remembered he had often cursed the cows. But from his present point of view, there was a crown of happiness about each of their heads. He would have sacrificed all the uniforms on the continent to be able to return to them. He told himself that he was not made to be a soldier. And he thought seriously about the many differences between himself and those men who were moving around the fires.

He went slowly to his tent and stretched himself on a blanket by the side of the sleeping tall soldier. He stared at a fire's red, shaking shadow on the white wall of his tent until, tired and ill from his continued suffering, he fell asleep.

Chapter 3

IN THE MORNING THEY WERE CALLED OUT EARLY, AND HURRIED ALONG a narrow road that led deep into the forest. It was during this rapid march that the regiment lost many of the marks of being new.

The men had begun to count the miles upon their fingers, and they grew tired. "Sore feet and not enough food, that's all," said a loud soldier. There were hot faces and angry words. After a time they began to throw away the bags they carried on their backs. Some dropped them unconcernedly down; others hid them carefully, planning to return for them at some convenient time. Men took off their thick shirts. Soon few carried anything but their necessary clothing, blankets, canteens, and guns. "You can now eat and shoot," said the tall soldier to the youth. "That's all you want to do."

There was sudden change now among the men. The regiment was no longer the heavy, slow army of theory, but the light, speedy army of reality. The regiment, relieved of a burden, received a new strength.

But the regiment did not yet have the appearance of experienced soldiers. Regiments who had been in battle were likely to be very small groups of men. And the letters on the flags were still new and beautiful. The youth returned to his theory that he was part of a blue display.

One gray dawn, however, the youth was kicked in the leg by the tall soldier. And then, before he was entirely awake, he found himself running down a forest road among men who were already breathing heavily from the first effects of speed. His canteen repeatedly struck his leg. His gun fell off his shoulder at each step, and his cap felt uncertain upon his head.

He could hear the men whisper broken sentences: "Say, what's all

this—about?” “What are we hurrying—this way for?” “Billie—stay off my feet—you run—like a cow.” And a soldier’s loud voice could be heard: “What the devil are they in such a hurry for?”

From a distance came a sudden sound of gunfire. He was surprised. As he ran with his friends he tried hard to think; but all he knew was that if he fell down those coming behind would step upon him. All his power seemed to be needed to guide him over and past objects. He felt carried along by a mob.

The sun spread revealing rays. And one by one, regiments burst into view like men just born of the earth. The youth realized that the time had come. He was about to be measured. For a moment—facing his great test—he felt like a baby, and the flesh over his heart seemed very thin. He seized time to look about him carefully.

He instantly saw that it would be impossible for him to escape from the regiment. It enclosed him. And there were iron laws of custom and law on four sides. He was in a moving box.

As he realized this fact, he thought that he had never wished to come to the war. He had not joined the army by his own choice. He had been dragged by a merciless government. And now they were taking him out to be killed.

The regiment slipped down a hill and crossed a little stream. As they climbed a hill on the other side, guns began to roar. Here the youth forgot many things as he felt a sudden curiosity. He hurried up to the top with a great speed.

He expected a battle scene.

There were some little fields surrounded by a forest. Spread over the grass and among the trees he could see moving lines of men running here and there and firing. A dark battle line lay upon a sunstruck clearing. A flag blew in the light wind.

Other regiments climbed up the hill. The **brigade** was formed in line of battle. After a pause the brigade started slowly through the forest, behind small groups of soldiers who melted into the scene to appear again farther forward. These were always busy as bees, deeply concerned in their little battles.

The youth tried to observe everything. He did not use care to avoid trees and branches, and his forgotten feet were always striking against stones or getting caught in the low bushes. He saw that the figures ahead and their noises were red and shocking against the gentle land of softened greens and browns. It looked like the wrong place for a battlefield.

The fighters in front interested him. Their shots into bushes and at distant trees spoke to him of sorrows—hidden, secret.

Once the line of men came upon the body of a dead soldier. He lay upon his back staring at the sky. He was dressed in an ugly suit of yellowish brown. The line opened to avoid the body. The dead man forced a way for himself. The youth looked sharply at the ashen face. He wanted to walk around and around the body and stare; it was the desire of the living to try to read in dead eyes the answer to the Question—the Question of Death.

During the march the eagerness which the youth had developed when out of view of the field rapidly reduced to nothing. His curiosity was quite easily satisfied. If an exciting scene had caught him with its wild action as he came to the top of the hill, he might have gone running forward. This advance upon Nature was too calm. He had opportunity to think. He had time in which to wonder about himself and to attempt to question his feelings.

The quick thought came to him that the generals did not know what they were doing. Suddenly those close forests would reveal countless guns pointing at him. Iron-like enemy brigades would appear in the rear. He and his friends were all going to be killed. The generals were fools. The enemy would soon eat the whole army. His angry eyes searched about him, expecting to see the sure approach of his death.

The line, broken into moving parts by the ground, went calmly forward through fields and forests. The youth looked at the men nearest him. And he saw, mainly, expressions of deep interest, as if they were looking for something. Most of the men appeared quiet and thoughtful. They were going to look at war, the red animal—war, the blood-drinking god. And they were deeply occupied in this march.

The youth slowed his pace, with frightened glances at the sky. He was surprised by a young officer of his regiment—a lieutenant—who began to beat him with a sword, calling out in a loud and unfriendly voice: “Come, young man, get on there. No falling behind here.” He changed his pace with proper speed. And he hated the lieutenant, who had no respect for fine minds. He was a mere animal.

After a time the brigade was stopped in the shady light of a forest. The busy fighters ahead were still shooting.

Many men in the regiment began piling tiny hills in front of them. They used stones, sticks, earth and anything they thought might protect them from a bullet. Some built quite large ones, while others seemed satisfied with little ones. In a short time there was quite a wall along the fronts of the regiments. Soon, however, they were ordered to leave that place.

This shocked the youth. He forgot his worries about the advance movement. “Well, then, why did they march us out here?” he demanded of the tall soldier. The latter, with calm faith, began a heavy explanation, although he had been compelled to leave a little protection of stones and earth to which he had devoted much care and skill.

When the regiment was moved to another position, each man’s regard for his safety caused another line of small hills. The men ate their noon meal behind a third line of hills. They were moved from this one also. They were marched from place to place with apparent lack of purpose.

The youth had been taught that a man became another thing in a battle. He saw his preservation in such a change. Therefore, this waiting was painful to him. He had no patience. He considered that the generals lacked purpose. He began to complain to the tall soldier. “I can’t wait like this much longer,” he cried. “I don’t see what good it does to make us tire our legs for nothing.”

He wished to return to camp, knowing that this affair was only a blue display. Or he wanted to go into battle and discover that he had been a fool in his doubts, and was, in truth, a man of customary courage. The strain of present circumstances he felt to be unbearable.

The tall soldier ate his bread in a carefree manner. “Oh, I suppose

we must go around the country just to keep them from getting too close, or to develop them, or something.”

“Well,” cried the youth, still nervous, “I’d rather do almost anything than march around all day doing no good to anyone and just tiring ourselves.”

In the afternoon the regiment went back over the same ground it had traveled in the morning. The land then ceased to threaten the youth. He had been close to it and become familiar with it. When, however, they began to pass into a new region, his old fears came back.

Once he thought that it would be better to get killed immediately and end his troubles. Regarding death thus out of the corner of his eye, he knew it was nothing but rest. He was filled with a momentary surprise that he should have made a great problem over the mere matter of getting killed. He would die; he would go to some place where he would be understood. It was useless to expect respect from such men as the lieutenant. He must look to the grave for understanding.

The gunfire increased. With it was faraway cheering. Then the youth saw soldiers running. They were followed by more gunfire. After a time the hot, dangerous flashes of the **rifles** were seen. Smoke clouds went slowly across the fields. The noise grew into a roar.

A brigade ahead of them and on the right went into action. It was as if it had burst apart. And thereafter it lay stretched in the distance, behind a long gray wall, at which one had to look twice to make sure that it was smoke.

The youth forgot his plan of getting killed. He stared speechlessly. His eyes grew wide with the action of the scene. His mouth was open a little.

Chapter 4

THE NOISE IN FRONT GREW TO A MIGHTY ROAR. THE YOUTH AND HIS companions were frozen to silence. They could see a flag that whipped in the smoke angrily. Near it were moving forms of troops. There came a rushing stream of men across the fields. Another group, changing position at a fast pace, scattered them right and left.

Bullets began to whistle among the branches of the trees. Showers of pine needles and pieces of wood came falling down. It was as if a thousand axes were being used.

The lieutenant of the youth's regiment was shot in the hand. He began to curse so magnificently that a nervous laugh went through the regiment. It relieved the tightened senses of the men.

The officer held his hand carefully away from his side so that the blood would not drop upon his trousers.

The captain of the regiment, putting his sword under his arm, produced a handkerchief and began to bind the lieutenant's wound. And they argued about how the binding should be done.

The battle flag in the distance danced about madly. It seemed to be struggling to free itself from a frightful pain. The clouds of smoke were filled with flashes.

Fast running men came through the smoke. They grew in numbers until it was seen that many brigades were running away. The flag suddenly sank down as if dying. Its motion as it fell was a movement of despair.

Wild shouts came from behind the walls of smoke. A mob of men rushed past like wild horses. The experienced regiments on the right and left of the youth's regiment—the 304th—immediately began to

call out bitter jokes. With the passionate song of the bullets and the bursts of gunfire were mixed loud remarks and bits of advice concerning places of safety.

But the new regiment was breathless with terror. The youth looked along the blue line of his regiment. The men were motionless, stone; and afterward he remembered that the flag bearer was standing with his legs apart, as if he expected to be pushed to the ground.

The commander of the brigade was rushing around screaming. His horse often threatened the running men, but they escaped with unusual luck. In this rush they apparently could not hear or see. They paid no attention even to the largest and longest of the curses that were thrown at them from all directions.

Frequently, over this wild scene could be heard the jokes of the experienced soldiers. But the running men apparently were not even aware of this attention.

The battle look that shone for an instant on the faces in the mad current of men made the youth feel that forceful hands from heaven could not hold him in place if he could get simple control of his legs.

The sight of this mad river had a floodlike force that seemed able to drag sticks and stones and men from the ground. But the youth and his regiment had to keep their place. They grew pale and firm, and red and shaking.

The youth accomplished one little thought in the middle of this madness. The frightful thing which had caused the other troops to run had not then appeared. He determined to get a view of it. And then, he thought he might very likely run better than the best of them.

Chapter 5

THEN SOMEONE CRIED, "HERE THEY COME!"

There was movement and murmuring among the men. They displayed a feverish desire to have every possible bullet ready. Boxes were pulled around into different positions, and arranged with great care. It was as if seven hundred new hats were being tried on.

The tall soldier, having prepared his rifle, produced a red handkerchief of some kind. He was putting it about his throat with careful attention when the shout was repeated up and down the line, "Here they come! Here they come!" Guns were made ready.

Across the smoky fields came a brown mass of running men who were giving loud screams. They came straight on, bent near the ground and swinging their rifles in all positions. A flag rushed along near the front.

As he caught sight of them, the youth was momentarily frightened by a thought that perhaps his gun was not loaded. He stood trying to remember the moment when he had loaded, but he could not.

A hatless general pulled his horse to a stop near the colonel of the 304th. He waved his hand in the colonel's face. "You have to hold them back!"

The colonel answered nervously. "A-all r-right, General. All right, by God! W-we'll do our—we'll d-d-do—do our best, General."

The general rode away. The colonel, perhaps to relieve his feelings, began to shout angrily at the men. The youth, turning quickly to make sure that it was safe behind, saw the colonel looking at his men with a bitter expression. He seemed to be sorry that he was associated with them.

The man at the youth's elbow was murmuring, as if to himself:

"Oh, we're in trouble now! Oh, we're in trouble now!"

The captain of the regiment had been pacing excitedly back and forth in the rear. His talk was endlessly repeated. "Save your fire, boys—don't shoot till I tell you—save your fire—wait till they get close—don't be crazy fools—!"

The youth frequently, with a nervous movement, wiped his eyes with his arm. His mouth was still open a little.

He got the one glance at the enemy-filled field in front of him, and instantly stopped wondering if he had loaded his gun. Before he was ready to begin—before he had announced to himself that he was about to fight—he threw the rifle into position and fired a first wild shot. Suddenly he was working at his gun like an old soldier.

He suddenly lost concern for himself, and forgot to look at a threatening fate. He became not a man but a member. He felt that something of which he was a part—a regiment, an army, a cause, or a country—was in danger. He was melted into a united personality which was moved by a single desire. For some moments, he could not run away, no more than a little finger can revolt from a hand.

If he had thought the regiment was about to be destroyed, perhaps he could have cut himself away from it. But its noise gave him assurance. It roared and shot with a vast power.

There was an awareness always of the presence of his companions about him. He felt the battle fellowship, more powerful even than the cause for which they were fighting. It was a strange fellowship born of the smoke and danger of death.

Soon he began to feel the effects of the war—a burning-up feeling; even his eyeballs felt like hot stones. And a burning roar filled his ears.

Following this came a red anger—like a worried animal, a well-meaning cow troubled by dogs. He had a mad feeling against his rifle, which could only be used against one life at a time. He wished to rush forward and kill with his fingers. He wanted a power that would enable him to make a world-sweeping motion and brush everything back. His lack of power became clear to him, and made his anger like that of a

fenced beast.

Buried in the smoke of many rifles, his anger was directed not so much against the men who were rushing toward him, but against the waves of battle smoke that were pouring down his dry throat. He fought fiercely for relief for his senses, for air.

There was a fire of anger, mixed with a certain expression of purpose, on all faces. The tall soldier was cursing in a loud voice. Suddenly another shouted, "Well, why don't they help us? Why don't they send supports? Do they think—"

The youth in his battle sleep heard this as one who is half-awake.

There was an absence of apparent heroes. The men bending and rising in their hurry and anger were in every impossible position. The steel rang out as the men ceaselessly employed the hot rifles. The rifles, when loaded, were pulled to the shoulders and fired without apparent aim into the smoke.

The officers neglected to stand in brave positions. They were leaping back and forth, roaring directions and encouragements. Often they nearly stood upon their heads in their eagerness to observe the enemy on the other side of the smoke clouds.

The lieutenant of the youth's regiment had found a soldier who had run screaming at the first of the shooting. Behind the lines, these two were acting a little private scene. The man was crying and staring with sheepish eyes at the lieutenant, who had seized him by the shirt and was hitting him. The lieutenant pushed him back among the rest with many blows. The soldier went dully, with his animal-like eyes upon the officer. Perhaps there was to him a strength expressed in the voice of the other—hard, with no sign of fear in it. He tried to reload his gun, but his shaking hands prevented him. The lieutenant had to assist him.

The men dropped here and there. The captain of the regiment had been killed in an early part of the action. His body lay stretched out in the position of a tired man resting, but upon his face there was a surprised and sorrowful look, as if a friend had done something unkind to him.

The crying man was hit by a shot that made the blood stream

widely down his face. He put both hands to his head. "Oh!" he said, and ran. Another screamed suddenly, as if he had been struck by a club in the stomach. Farther up the line, a man standing behind a tree had his knee broken by a bullet. Immediately he dropped his rifle and grasped the tree with both arms. And there he remained, hanging despairingly and crying for help so that he might let go of the tree.

At last a joyful shout went along the trembling line. The firing fell from a roar to a single shot. As the smoke slowly cleared away, the youth saw that the enemy had been stopped. They were scattered into small groups. He saw a man climb to the top of the fence and fire a last shot.

Some in the regiment began to shout madly. Many were silent. Apparently they were trying to think of themselves.

And then, the youth thought that at last he was going to faint. He became aware of the bad air in which he had been struggling. He was dirty and wet from the labor and heat. He grasped his canteen and took a long drink of the warmed water.

A sentence was spoken up and down the line. "Well, we've held them back. We've held them back; so we have!" The men said it joyfully, looking at each other with dirty smiles.

The youth turned to look behind him and off to the right and off to the left. He experienced the joy of a man who at last finds time in which to look about.

Under foot there were a few awful forms motionless. Arms were bent and heads were turned in unbelievable ways. It seemed that the dead men must have fallen from some great height to get into such positions. They looked as if they had been thrown out upon the ground from the sky.

A small line of wounded men was going slowly toward the rear. It was like a flow of blood from the torn body of the brigade.

To the right and to the left were the dark lines of other troops. Far in front he thought he could see lighter masses extending in points from the forest. They suggested unnumbered thousands.

From a hill came the sound of cheering. Smoke rose slowly through the trees.

The guns were sounding with thundering effort. Here and there were flags, the red putting bits of warm color upon the dark lines of troops.

The youth felt the old excitement at the sight of the flags. They were like beautiful birds strangely untouched by a storm.

He listened to the noise from the hillside, to a deep steady thunder that came from afar to the left, and to the lesser shots which came from many directions. And he realized that they were fighting, too—over there, and over there, and over there. Before, he had supposed that all the battle was directly under his nose.

As he gazed around him, the youth felt a flash of surprise at the blue, pure sky and the sun shining on the trees and fields. It was wonderful that Nature had gone quietly ahead with her golden process in the middle of so much devilment.

Chapter 6

THE YOUTH AWAKENED SLOWLY. HE CAME GRADUALLY TO A POSITION from which he could regard himself. For moments he had been examining himself as if he had never before seen himself. Then he picked up his cap from the ground. He moved in his jacket to make it feel more comfortable, and kneeling, tied his shoe. He thoughtfully wiped his face.

So it was all over at last! The great test had been passed. The red frightful difficulties of war had been mastered.

He went into a passion of self-satisfaction. He had the most delightful emotions of his life. Standing as if apart from himself, he viewed that last scene. He thought that the man who had fought thus was magnificent.

He felt that he was a fine fellow. He saw himself with those virtues which he had considered as far beyond him. He smiled in deep pride.

Upon his companions he smiled with tenderness and good will. "It's hot, isn't it?" he said cheerfully to a man who was wiping his face with his arm.

"You're right!" said the other, smiling sociably, "I've never seen such foolish hotness." He lay down comfortably on the ground. "Oh, yes, and I hope we don't have any more fighting till a week from Monday."

There were some handshakings and deep speeches with men whose faces were familiar, but with whom the youth now felt the bonds of tied hearts. He helped a cursing companion to bind a wound of the foot.

But, suddenly, cries of surprise broke out among the men of the new regiment. "Here they come again! Here they come again!" The

man who had lain upon the ground started to get up and said, "Oh!"

The youth turned quick eyes upon the field. He saw forms begin to come in masses out of a distant forest. He again saw the flag speeding forward.

The bullets, which had ceased to trouble the regiment for a time, came flying again, and struck the grass and the branches of the trees. The gunfire looked like strange war flowers bursting into fierce growth.

The men murmured. The glow left their eyes. Their dirty faces now expressed a deep sorrow. They moved their stiffened bodies slowly, and watched in quiet anger the fast approach of the enemy.

They complained each to the other. "Oh, this is too much! Why can't somebody send us help?"

"We're never going to live through a second battle. I didn't come here to fight the whole rebel army."

The youth stared. Surely, he thought, this impossible thing was not about to happen. He waited as if he expected the enemy to suddenly stop, ask his pardon, and leave. It was all a mistake.

But the firing began somewhere in the line and ran along in both directions. The sheets of flame developed into great clouds of smoke that rose and dropped in the gentle wind near the ground, and then rolled through the line as through a gate. The clouds were colored an earth-like yellow in the sunlight, and in the shadows were a sorry blue. The flag was sometimes lost in this mass of smoke, but more often it stood out, sun-touched, splendid.

Into the youth's eyes there came a strange look. His neck was trembling with nervous weakness and the muscles of his arms felt stiff and bloodless. His hands, too, seemed large and useless. And there was a great uncertainty in his knees.

The words that companions had spoken before the firing began to come back to him. "Oh, this is too much!" "What do they think we are?" "Why don't they send help?" "I didn't come here to fight the whole rebel army."

He slowly lifted his rifle and, seeing the field through the smoke, he fired. He stopped then and began to look as best he could through

the smoke. He caught changing views of the ground covered with men who were all running like devils and shouting.

A man near him, who had been working feverishly at his rifle, suddenly stopped and ran, screaming. A lad whose face had worn an expression of high courage threw down his gun and ran. There was no shame in his face. He ran like a rabbit.

Others began to run away through the smoke. The youth turned his head, shaken by this movement as if the regiment were leaving him behind. He saw the quickly moving forms.

He shouted with fright and turned around. For a moment he was like a chicken. He lost the direction of safety. He was threatened from all points.

He began to speed toward the rear in great leaps. His rifle and cap were gone. His open coat flew in the wind. The canteen was swinging out behind him. On his face was the terror of those things which he imagined.

He ran like a blind man. Two or three times he fell down. Once he struck his shoulder so heavily against a tree that he went down head first.

Since he had turned his back upon the fight his fears had been greatly increased. Death about to strike him between the shoulders was much more awful than death about to hit him between the eyes. When he thought of it later, he got the impression that it is better to view the terror than merely to hear it. The noises of the battle were like stones; he believed himself about to be crushed.

As he ran on he mixed with others. He saw men on his right and on his left, and he heard footsteps behind him. He thought that the whole regiment was running away.

The sound of these following footsteps gave him his one small relief. He felt that death must first choose the men who were nearest it; they would be those who were following him. So he displayed the eagerness of a mad runner in his purpose to keep them in the rear. There was a race.

He experienced a shock when he came within view of a group of gunners in action. The men there seemed to be completely unaware of

the coming danger. They were fighting with a distant enemy and were wrapped in admiration of their own shooting.

He saw a brigade going to the relief of tired soldiers. He climbed up a small hill and watched it moving, keeping formation in difficult places. The blue of the line was edged with steel color, and the bright flags shone. Officers were shouting.

This sight also filled him with wonder. The brigade was hurrying quickly, to be eaten by the mouths of the war god. What kind of men were they? Oh, they were some strange and wonderful sort! Or else they didn't understand—the fools!

The youth went on, slowing his pace since he had left the place of noises.

Later he came upon a general seated upon a horse that lifted its ears in an interested way at the battle. The quiet man looked dull upon such a splendid animal.

A moment later the youth saw the general jump excitedly in his saddle.

“Yes, by heavens, they have!” The officer leaned forward. His face was aflame with excitement. “Yes, by heavens, they've held them! They've held them.”

He began to roar at the officers near him. “We'll beat them now! We'll beat them now! We've got them!”

The general's face shone upon the earth like a sun. In his eyes was a desire to sing a song. He kept repeating, “They've stopped them, by heavens!”

His excitement made his horse jump forward, and the general merrily kicked and cursed at it. He did a little dance of joy on horseback.

Chapter 7

THE YOUTH LOWERED HIS HEAD AS IF HE HAD BEEN DISCOVERED IN A crime. They had won after all! The crazy line had remained firm and come to victory. He could hear cheering.

He stretched his neck and looked in the direction of the fight. A yellow cloud lay on the treetops. From beneath it came the sound of gunfire. Deep cries told of an advance.

He turned away, shocked and angry. He felt that he had been wronged.

He had run, he told himself, because certain death approached. He had done well in saving himself, because he was a little piece of the army. He had decided it was the duty of every piece to save itself if possible. Later the officers could fit the little pieces together again and make a battle line. If none of the little pieces were wise enough to save themselves from death at such a time, where would the army be?

It was all clear that he had proceeded according to very correct and admirable rules. His actions had been sensible—full of wisdom.

Thoughts of his companions came to him. The thin blue line had taken the blows and won. He grew bitter about it. He had been overturned and crushed by their lack of wisdom. They had held the position when clever thinking would have shown them that it was impossible. He, the wise man who looks far into the darkness, had run away because of his superior mind. He felt a great anger against his companions. He knew it could be proved that they had been fools.

He wondered what they would remark when later he appeared in camp. His mind heard wild laughing. Their dull minds would not enable them to understand his sharper point of view.

He began to pity himself fiercely. He had been badly used. He was crushed beneath the feet of an iron injustice. He had proceeded with wisdom and sense, only to be defeated by hateful circumstances.

A dull, animal-like revolt against his companions, against war, against fate, grew within him. He walked along with his head down, his brain suffering and full of despair. When he looked up, trembling at each sound, his eyes had the expression of a criminal who thinks his guilt and punishment are great, and who can find no words.

He went from the fields into a thick forest, as if determined to bury himself. He wished to stop hearing the shots which were to him like voices.

After a time the sound of rifles grew faint, and the large guns roared in the distance. The sun, suddenly apparent, shone among the trees.

The sound of death was far away. It seemed now that Nature had no ears. The scene gave him assurance. This was a place holding life. It was the religion of peace. It would die if its calm eyes were compelled to see the blood. He believed Nature to be a woman with a deep unwillingness to see suffering.

Chapter 8

THE TREES BEGAN SOFTLY TO SING A SONG OF EVENING. THE SUN SANK until dark orange rays struck the forest. There was silence except for the singing of the trees.

Then, upon this stillness, there suddenly broke a vast burst of sounds. A roar came from the distance.

The youth stopped. He was turned to stone by this mixture of all noises. It was as if worlds were being torn apart. There was the tearing sound of rifles and the breaking thunder of great guns.

His mind flew in all directions. He pictured the two armies meeting each other. He listened for a while. Then he began to run in the direction of the battle. How strange to be running toward that which he had been so careful to avoid!

As he ran, he became aware that the forest had stopped its music, as if at last becoming able to hear the foreign sounds. The trees stood quiet and motionless. Everything seemed to be listening to the earth-shaking thunder.

At last he was where he could see long gray walls of smoke. The voices of the guns shook him. The rifles sounded in long uneven bursts. He stood watching for a moment. His eyes had an expression of surprise. He stared in the direction of the fight.

Again he proceeded on his forward way. The battle was like the sound of a huge and awful machine to him. Its powers and processes interested him. He must go near and see it produce death.

He came to a fence and climbed over it. On the far side, the ground was covered with clothes and guns. A newspaper, folded, lay in the dirt. A dead soldier was stretched with his face hidden in his arm.

Farther away there was a group of four or five other bodies. A hot sun had burned upon the spot.

In this place the youth felt that he was an outsider. This forgotten part of the battleground was owned by the dead men, and he hurried with the crazy fear that one of the bloody forms would rise and tell him to go.

He came finally to a road from which he could see troops moving in the distance. Below him was a blood-spotted crowd dragging itself forward. The wounded men were cursing, shouting, and weeping. In the air, always, was a mighty roar that seemed to move the earth. With the brave words of the big guns and the cruel sentences of the small guns, cheers were mixed. And out of this region of noises came the steady flow of the wounded.

One of the wounded men had a shoeful of blood. He jumped along like a schoolboy in a game. He was laughing crazily.

One was insisting that he had been shot in the arm because of the commanding general's bad management of the army. One was marching grandly, and upon his face was a mixture of merriment and suffering. He was singing a bit of a song in a high and trembling voice.

Another had the gray look of death already upon his face. His lips were curled in hard lines and his teeth were pressed together tightly. His hands were bloody from where he had pressed them upon his wound. He seemed to be awaiting the moment when he would fall forward. He walked along, his eyes staring into the unknown.

There were some who proceeded full of anger at their wounds, ready to attack anything as a cause.

An officer was carried along by two soldiers. He was hurt. "Don't be so rough, Johnson, you fool," he cried. "Do you think my leg is made of iron? If you can't carry me properly, put me down and let someone else do it."

He shouted at the men in his path, "Make way there, can't you? Make way!"

They slowly parted and went to the sides of the road. As he was carried past they made bitter remarks to him. When he shouted angrily

in reply and threatened them, they cursed him.

The youth joined this crowd and marched along with it. The torn bodies expressed the awful machinery in which the men had been caught.

The march was continually broken into by messengers, and sometimes by hurrying brigades that came quickly upon them, with officers shouting orders to clear the way.

There was a **tattered** man, covered with dust and blood from hair to shoes, who walked quietly at the youth's side. He was listening humbly and with eagerness to the stories of another soldier. The tattered man's face wore an expression of admiration. He looked with unspeakable wonder. His mouth was open like a small boy's.

The other soldier, seeing this, remarked, "Be careful, fellow, or you'll be catching bees."

The tattered man moved back.

After a while he began to approach the youth, and in a different way try to make him a friend. His voice was gentle, and his eyes appealing. The youth saw with surprise that the soldier had two wounds, one in the head, bound with a bloody cloth, and the other in the arm, making it hang like a broken branch.

After they had walked together for some time the tattered man gathered sufficient courage to speak. "It was a good fight, wasn't it?" he asked quietly. The youth, deep in thought, glanced at the bloody and sad figure with its lamblike eyes. "What?"

"It was a good fight, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said the youth shortly. He quickened his pace.

But the other came speedily after him. He apparently thought that he needed only to talk for a time, and the youth would realize that he was a good fellow.

"It was a good fight, wasn't it?" he began in a small voice, and then he gained the strength to continue. "I never saw fellows fight like that. How they did fight! I knew the boys would like it when they once started. The boys haven't had a fair chance up to now, but this time they showed what they could do. I knew it would happen this way. You can't

beat those boys. No, sir! They're fighters, they are."

He breathed a deep breath of humble admiration. He had looked at the youth for encouragement several times. He received none, but gradually he seemed to get interested in his subject.

"I was talking once with a rebel boy from Georgia. We were doing night guard duty on opposite sides of a stream. Well, that boy, he said, 'Your fellows will all start running when they first hear a gun.' 'Maybe they will,' I said, 'but I don't think so.' And I said, 'Maybe your fellows will all start running when they first hear a gun.'" And the dusty man laughed. "Well, our boys didn't run today, did they? No, sir! They fought and fought and fought."

His tired face was filled with a light of love for the army which was to him all things beautiful and powerful.

After a time he turned to the youth. "Where were you hit, old boy?" he asked in a brotherly tone.

The youth felt instant terror at this question, although at first its full importance did not enter his mind.

"What?" he asked.

"Where were you hit?" repeated the tattered man.

"Oh," began the youth, "I—I—that is—oh—"

He turned away suddenly and slipped through the crowd. His face was red and his fingers were moving nervously at one of his buttons. He bent his head and studied the button as if it were a little problem.

The tattered man looked after him in surprise.

Chapter 9

THE YOUTH FELL BACK IN THE LINE UNTIL THE TATTERED SOLDIER WAS not in sight. Then he started to walk along with the others.

But he was among wounds. Blood was flowing from the mob of men. Because of the tattered soldier's question he now felt that his shame could be viewed. He was continually glancing around to see if the men were looking at his guilt.

At times he wished he were wounded. He believed persons with torn bodies were unusually happy. He wished that he, too, had a wound—a red badge of courage.

The dying soldier he had passed earlier was now at his side. The man's eyes were still staring into the unknown. His gray, frightening face had drawn attention in the crowd. The men, slowing to his pace, were walking with him. They were discussing his wound, questioning him and giving him advice. He refused their help, telling them to go and leave him alone. The shadows of his face were deepening and his tight lips seemed to hold inside the cry of great despair. There was a stiffness in the movements of his body. As he went along, he seemed always looking for a certain place, like one who goes to choose a grave.

Something in the manner of the man as he waved away the bloody and pitying soldiers made the youth scream in terror. Hurrying forward, he laid a trembling hand upon the man's arm. As the latter slowly turned his pale face toward him, the youth cried:

"God! Jim Conklin!"

The tall soldier made a little smile. "Hello, Henry," he said.

The youth stopped and stared strangely. He finally spoke: "Oh, Jim—oh, Jim—oh, Jim—"

The tall soldier held out his bloody hand. There was a strange black and red combination of old and new blood upon it. "Where have you been, Henry?" he asked. He continued in a dull voice, "I thought maybe you got killed. Today has been a bad one. I was worrying about it.

The youth still cried sadly, "Oh, Jim—oh, Jim—oh, Jim—"

"You know," said the tall soldier, "I was out there." He made a careful movement. "And Lord, what a show. And I got shot—I got shot. Yes, I got shot." He repeated this fact in a surprised way, as if he did not know how it happened.

The youth put forth anxious arms to help him, but the tall soldier went firmly on as if moved by another force. Since the youth's arrival as a support for his friend, the other wounded men had ceased to display much interest. They occupied themselves again in dragging their own sorrows along.

Suddenly, as the two friends walked, the tall soldier seemed to be overcome by a terror. His face turned ashen. He grasped the youth's arm and looked all about him, as if fearing he would be heard by the others. Then he began to speak in a shaking whisper:

"I'll tell you what I'm afraid of, Henry—I'll tell you what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid I'll fall down—and then you know—those heavy wagons—they will run over me. That's what I'm afraid of—"

The youth cried out to him excitedly, "I'll take care of you, Jim! I'll take care of you! I promise to God I will!"

"Will you, Henry?" the tall soldier begged.

"Yes—yes—I tell you—I'll take care of you, Jim!" spoke the youth. He could not speak correctly because his heart seemed to be filling his throat.

But the tall soldier continued to beg in a lowly way. He now hung to the youth's arm like a child. His eyes rolled in the wildness of his terror. "I was always a good friend to you, wasn't I, Henry? I've always been a good fellow, haven't I? And it isn't much to ask, is it? Just to pull me out of the road? I'd do it for you, wouldn't I, Henry?"

He paused in pitiful fear to await his friend's reply.

The youth had reached a state of sorrow where his tears burned

him. He tried to express the depth of his feeling, but he could only make strange motions.

However, the tall soldier seemed suddenly to forget all those fears. He became again the determined and awful sight he had been. He went forward. The youth wanted his friend to lean upon him, but the other always shook his head and strangely protested. "No—no—no—leave me alone—leave me alone—"

His look stared again upon the unknown. He moved with unknowable purpose, and all of the youth's offers he brushed aside. "No—no—leave me alone—leave me alone—"

The youth had to follow.

After a while he heard a voice talking softly near his shoulder. Turning, he saw that it belonged to the tattered soldier. "You ought to take him out of the road, son. There's a regiment coming down the road fast, and he'll get run over. He's not going to live more than about five minutes—you can see that. You ought to take him out of the road. Where does he get his strength from?"

"Lord knows," cried the youth. He was shaking his hands helplessly.

He ran forward then and grasped the tall soldier by the arm. "Jim. Jim!" he begged, "come with me."

The tall soldier weakly tried to pull himself free. "Huh," he said, emptily. He stared at the youth for a moment. At last he spoke as if with a shadow of understanding. "Oh! Into the fields? Oh!"

He stared blindly through the grass.

The youth turned once to look at the riders and guns of the regiment. He was pulled from this view by a sharp cry from the tattered man.

"God! He's running."

Turning his head quickly, the youth saw his friend running and falling toward some little bushes. The boy's heart seemed to tear itself free from his body at this sight. He made a noise of pain. He and the tattered man began to follow.

When he came to the tall soldier he began to beg with all the

words he could find. "Jim—Jim—what are you doing—what makes you do this—you'll hurt yourself."

The same purpose was in the tall soldier's face. He protested in a dulled way, keeping his eyes on the unknown place of his determination. "No—no—don't touch me—leave me alone—leave me alone—"

The youth, shocked and filled with wonder at the tall soldier, began fearfully to question him. "Where are you going, Jim? What are you thinking about? Where are you going? Tell me, won't you, Jim?"

The tall soldier turned around. In his eyes there was a great appeal. "Leave me, can't you? Leave me alone for a minute."

The youth drew back. "Why, Jim," he said, in a blind way, "what's the matter with you?"

The tall soldier turned and struggling dangerously, went forward. The youth and the tattered soldier followed, as fearful as if they had been whipped, feeling unable to face the wounded man if he should again turn on them. They began to have thoughts of a holy affair. There was something in these movements of the dying soldier like a mad religion. They were afraid. They held back as if he might use, if he wished it, an awful power.

At last, they saw him stop and stand motionless. Hurrying to him, they saw that his face wore an expression telling that he had at last found the place for which he had struggled. His thin figure was straight; his bloody hands were quietly at his side. He was waiting with patience for something that he had come to meet. He was at the place. They paused and stood, expectant.

There was a silence.

Finally, the chest of the dying soldier began to lift with a strained motion. It increased in force until it was as if an animal were within and kicking fiercely to be free.

This sight of gradual death made the youth breathless. And once, as his friend rolled his eyes, the boy saw something in them that made him sink crying to the ground. He raised his voice in a last call.

"Jim—Jim—Jim—"

The tall soldier opened his lips and spoke. He made a motion. "Leave me—don't touch me—leave me—"

There was another silence while he waited.

Suddenly his form stiffened and straightened. Then it shook strangely. He stared into space. To the two watchers there was a strange and vast dignity in the firm lines of his awful face.

He was attacked by a gradual strangeness that slowly filled him. For a moment the shaking of his legs caused him to dance a sort of awful dance. His arms beat wildly about his head in an expression of devilish delight.

His tall figure stretched itself to its full height. There was a slight tearing sound. Then he began to fall forward, slow and straight, in the manner of a falling tree. The left shoulder struck the ground first.

"God!" said the tattered soldier.

The youth had watched, unable to move. His face had expressed every suffering he had imagined for his friend.

He now jumped to his feet and, going closer, gazed upon the gray face. The mouth was open and the teeth showed in a laugh.

As the blue jacket fell away from the body, he could see that the man's side looked as if it had been eaten away by a wolf.

The youth turned, with sudden burning anger toward the battlefield. He seemed about to deliver a speech.

"Hell—"

The red sun shone in the sky.

Chapter 10

THE TATTERED MAN STOOD THINKING.

“Well, he had a lot of spirit, didn’t he?” he said finally in a small, surprised voice. “A lot of spirit.” He thoughtfully moved one of the lifeless hands with his foot. “I wonder where he got his strength from. I never saw a man do anything like that before. It was a strange thing. Well, he had a lot of spirit.”

The youth wanted to scream out his grief, but his tongue lay dead in his mouth. He threw himself again upon the ground in sorrow.

The tattered man stood thinking.

“Look here,” he said, after a time. He gazed at the body as he spoke. “He’s gone, isn’t he, and we might as well begin to think about ourselves. This is all over. He’s gone, isn’t he? And he’s safe here. Nobody will touch him. And I must say I’m not enjoying any great health myself these days.”

The youth, awakened by the tattered soldier’s tone of voice, looked up quickly. He saw that the man was standing unsteadily on his legs and that his face had become a kind of blue.

“Good Lord!” the youth cried, “you’re not going to—not you, too?”

The tattered man waved his hand. “Not die,” he said. “All I want is some soup and a good bed. Some soup,” he repeated dreamily.

The youth arose from the ground. “I wonder where he came from. I left him over there.” He pointed. “And now I find him here. And he was coming from over there, too.” He indicated a new direction. They both turned toward the body as if to ask it a question.

“Well,” the tattered man spoke at last, “there isn’t any use in our

staying here and trying to ask him anything.”

The youth nodded an agreement. They both turned to gaze for a moment at the body.

The youth murmured something.

“Well, he was quite a fellow, wasn’t he?” said the tattered man as if in answer.

They turned their backs and started to walk away.

“I’m beginning to feel very bad,” said the tattered man, suddenly breaking one of his little silences. “I’m beginning to feel very bad.”

The youth said, “Oh Lord!” He wondered if he were to be the suffering witness of another death.

But his companion waved his hand reassuringly. “Oh, I’m not going to die yet! There’s too much depending on me for me to die yet. No, sir! Not die! I can’t! You ought to see the children I’ve got at home.”

The youth glanced at his companion and could see by the shadow of a smile that he was making some kind of fun.

As they walked heavily along, the man continued to talk. “Besides, if I died, I wouldn’t die the way that fellow did. That was the strangest thing. I’d just lie down, I would. I never saw a fellow die the way that fellow did.”

The tattered soldier continued. “Tom Jamison lives next to my house at home. He’s a nice fellow, he is, and we were always good friends. He’s clever, too. Well, when we were fighting this afternoon, all of a sudden he began to curse and scream at me. ‘You’re shot!’ he screamed.

“I put my hand to my head and when I looked at my fingers, I saw, sure enough, I was shot. I gave a shout and began to run, but before I could get away another one hit me in the arm and turned me all the way around. They were all shooting behind me and I ran. I think I’d be fighting still, if Tom Jamison hadn’t told me I was shot.”

Then he made a calm announcement. “I don’t believe I can walk much farther.”

They went slowly along in silence. “You look quite bad yourself,” said the tattered man at last. “I think you’ve got a worse wound than you think. You ought to take care of your hurt. Where is it located?”

But he continued talking without waiting for a reply.

"I saw a fellow get hit in the head once," the tattered soldier said. "And everybody shouted out to him, 'Hurt, John? Are you hurt much?' 'No,' he said. He looked surprised, and he kept telling them how he felt. He said he didn't feel anything. But, by God, the next thing that fellow knew, he was dead. Yes, he was dead—stone dead. So, you want to be careful. You might have some queer kind of hurt yourself. You can't ever tell. Where is yours located?"

The youth had been uncomfortable since the beginning of the subject. He now gave a cry of impatience and made an angry motion with his hand. "Oh, don't talk to me!" he said. He was angered at the tattered man, and could have killed him. His companions seemed always to play unbearable parts. They were ever upraising the shadow of shame on the stick of their curiosity. He turned toward the tattered man. "Now, don't talk to me," he repeated with a despairing threat.

"Well, Lord knows I don't want to worry anybody," said the other. There was a little tone of despair in his voice, too, as he replied, "Lord knows I've got enough problems of my own to think of."

The youth, who had been having a bitter argument with himself, here spoke in a hard voice. "Goodbye," he said.

The tattered man looked at him with complete surprise. "Why, friend, where are you going?" he asked unsteadily. The youth, looking at him, could see that he, too, like the other one, was beginning to act dull and animal-like. His thoughts seemed to be jumping about in his head.

The other was speaking in a trembling voice. "Now—now—look here, you Tom Jamison—now—I won't allow this—this isn't right. Where—where are you going?"

The youth pointed distantly. "Over there," he replied.

"Well, now, look here," said the tattered man, talking in a crazy way. His head was hanging forward and his words were pushed together. "This isn't right, now, Tom Jamison. This isn't right. It's not right—for you—to go away with a bad hurt. It's not—not—right—it's not."

In reply, the youth climbed a fence and started away. He could hear the man begging.

Once he turned angrily, "What?"

"Look—here, now, Jamison—now—it's not—"

The youth kept going. Turning at a distance, he saw the tattered man wandering about helplessly in the field.

He now thought that he wished he were dead. He believed that he wished to be one of those men whose bodies lay spread over the grass of the fields and among the trees of the forest.

The simple questions of the tattered man had been like knives cutting into him. They showed a society that digs pitilessly at secrets until all is apparent. His companion's steady questions made him feel that he could not keep his crime hidden in his heart. It was sure to be uncovered by one of those who are always finding those things which are meant to be forever hidden. He admitted that he could not defend himself against this. It was not within his power.

Chapter 11

HE CLIMBED A LITTLE HILL, HE SAW THAT THE ROAD WAS NOW A crying mass of wagons, horses and men. Fear was pushing it all along. The youth felt a bit comforted by this sight. They were all moving back. Perhaps, then, he was not so bad after all. He seated himself and watched the terror-filled wagons. They were running away like soft, heavy animals.

Soon a forward-going column of marching soldiers appeared in the road. It came quickly. The commands to get out its way had the sound of great importance in them. The men were going forward to the heart of the noise. They were to meet the eager rush of the enemy. They felt the pride of their onward movement when the rest of the army was trying to escape down this road. They pushed aside wagons with an attitude that nothing mattered as long as their column got to the battle in time. This importance made their faces serious. And the backs of the officers were very straight.

As the youth looked at them, the black weight of his worry returned to him. He felt that he was regarding a line of finer beings. The separation between himself and them was as great to him as if they had marched with guns of flame and flags of sunlight. He could never be like them. He wanted to cry because he wanted so much to become better than he was.

Also, varied ills had begun to cry out. In their presence he could not continue his desire to fly high on the wings of war. They made it almost impossible for him to imagine himself as a hero. He fell.

He discovered that he had an awful need for water. His face was so dry and dirty that he thought he could feel his skin break open. Each

bone of his body hurt, and seemed to threaten to break with every movement. His feet were like two sores. Also, his body was calling for food. It was more powerful than direct hunger. There was a dull, weight-like feeling in his stomach, and, when he tried to walk, his head seemed to swim. He could not see well. Small spots of green floated before his eyes.

While he had been experiencing many emotions, he had not been aware of his hurts. Now he was at last compelled to give attention to them, and his self-hate was increased. In despair, he declared that he was not like those others. He now admitted that it was impossible for him ever to become a hero. He was a fool. Those pictures of glory were pitiful things. He murmured from his heart and moved away.

A certain desire within him kept him in the area of the battle. He wanted to see, and to get news. He wished to know who was winning.

Again he thought that he wished he were dead. Thinking of the dead, he made himself feel very angry at some of the dead men, as if they were guilty for thus becoming lifeless. They might have been killed by lucky chances, he said, before they had had opportunities to run away, or before they had been really tested. But they would be praised for bravery. He cried out bitterly that they had stolen their crowns, and their robes of glory were false. However, he still said that it was a great pity that he was not as they were.

When he thought again that it was not possible for the army to be defeated, he tried to think of a fine tale which he could take back to his regiment. With it he could avoid the anger he expected to receive.

But it became impossible for him to invent a tale he felt he could trust. He thought of many, but put them out of his mind, one by one, as no good. He was quick to see the weak places in them all.

Also, he was much afraid that some unkind remark might strike him mentally low before he could tell his protecting tale.

He imagined the whole regiment saying: "Where's Henry Fleming? He ran, didn't he? That's awful!" He thought of several persons who would be quite sure to give him no peace about it. They would doubtless question him and laugh at his slow hesitation. In the next battle they would watch him to see when he would run.

Wherever he would go, angry and cruel stares would follow him. As he imagined himself passing near a crowd of companions, someone would say, "There he goes!"

Then, as if the heads were moved by one muscle, all the faces would turn toward him with wide, knowing smiles. He seemed to hear someone make a joke in a low voice. At it, all the others would laugh and laugh.

Chapter 12

THE COLUMN OF SOLDIERS THAT HAD RACED ALONG THE ROAD WERE hardly out of the youth's sight before he saw dark groups of men come rushing out of the forest and down through the fields. They were bursting from their coats, throwing away their things. They came upon him like frightened cattle.

The youth was filled with terror. He stared in pain and wonder. The fight was lost. The army was going to be eaten. War, the red animal—war, the blood-drinking god—would have what it wanted.

Within him something wanted to cry out. He had the desire to make a speech, to shout, but he could only get his tongue to call into the air: "Why—why—what—what's the matter?"

Soon he was in the middle of the mob. They were leaping and running all about him. Their pale faces shone in the weakening sunlight. They seemed, most of them, to be very big men. The youth turned from one to another of them as they came along. His senseless questions were not heard. The men gave no attention to his appeals. They did not seem to see him.

The youth, after rushing about and asking questions, finally caught a man by the arm. They swung around face to face.

"Why—why—" started the youth, struggling with his tongue.

The man screamed, "Let me go! Let me go!" His face was ashy pale and his eyes were rolling uncontrolled. He was breathing with difficulty. He still grasped his rifle, perhaps having forgotten to let go of it. He pulled away, and the youth was dragged several paces.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"Why—why—" repeated the youth.

“No!” shouted the man. In his mad anger he fiercely swung his rifle. It crushed upon the youth’s head; The man ran away.

The youth’s fingers had turned to water upon the other’s arm. The energy was struck from his muscles. He saw flaming wings of lightning flash before his eyes; There was a vast roar of thunder within his head.

Suddenly his legs seemed to die. He sank to the ground. He tried to get up. In his efforts against the pain he was like a man fighting with a creature made of air. There was a cruel struggle.

At last, with a forceful movement, he got upon his hands and knees, and from there, like a baby trying to walk, to his feet. Pressing his hands to his head, he went, struggling to stay straight, over the grass. He went like the tall soldier.

Once he put his hand to the top of his head and carefully touched the wound. The sudden pain made him draw a long breath through his teeth. His fingers were covered with blood. He regarded them with a glassy stare.

He hurried on. The day had turned to darkness and he could hardly see where to put his feet.

His wound now pained him very little. He was afraid to move rapidly, however, for fear of hurting it. He held his head very still and took great care not to fall. He was filled with worry and fear that any sudden mistake of his feet in the dark would bring more pain.

His thoughts, as he walked, were completely upon his hurt. There was a cool, liquid feeling about it and he imagined blood moving slowly down under his hair. His head seemed to be swelling to a size that made him think his neck would be too small.

He began to think about things of the past. He thought of certain meals his mother had cooked at home, in which foods he particularly liked had been served. He saw the loaded table. The pine walls of the kitchen glowed in the warm light from the stove. Also, he remembered how he and his friends would go from the schoolhouse to a shaded pool. He saw his clothes thrown upon the grass. He felt the waves of the water upon his body. The branches of the overhanging trees softly sang in the wind of youthful summer.

Then he was overcome by a dragging weakness. His head hung forward and his shoulders were bent as if he were carrying a great burden. His feet slowly dragged along the ground.

He argued with himself about whether he should lie down and sleep or force himself to keep going.

At last he heard a cheerful voice near his shoulder: "You seem to be in a bad way, boy!"

The youth did not look up, but he agreed with thick tongue. "Uh!"

The owner of the cheerful voice took him firmly by the arm. "Well," he said, with a gay laugh, "I'm going your way. The whole crowd is going your way. And I guess I can help you a bit." They began to walk along like a drunken man and his friend.

As they went along, the man questioned the youth and helped him with replies, like one managing the mind of a child. Sometimes he told stories.

"What regiment do you belong to? What's that? The 304th? I thought they weren't fighting today— Oh, they were? Well, almost everybody got their share of fighting today. I thought I was dead any number of times. There was shooting here and shooting there and shouting here and shouting there, in the darkness, until I couldn't tell which army I was with. It was the most mixed-up thing I ever saw, in these forests. It will be a wonder if we find our regiments. There they go with an officer, I guess. Look at his head dragging. He's had all the war he wants, I imagine. I hope we can find our regiments tonight. It's not going to be easy. But I guess we can do it."

In the search that followed, the man with the cheerful voice seemed to possess a magic way of doing things. He came through the forest with strange luck.

The forest seemed filled with men running about in circles, but the cheerful man led the youth without mistake until at last he began to laugh with joy and self-satisfaction. "Oh, there you are! See that fire?"

The youth nodded.

"Well, that's where your regiment is. And now, goodbye. Good luck to you."

A warm, strong hand took the youth's weak fingers for an instant, and then the boy heard a cheerful whistling as the man walked away. As he who had been so kind to him was thus passing out of his life, the youth suddenly realized that he had not once seen his face.

Chapter 13

THE YOUTH WENT SLOWLY TOWARD THE FIRE INDICATED BY HIS departed friend. As he went, he thought of the welcome his former companions would give him. He was sure they would laugh at him. He had no strength to invent a tale; it would be an easy victory for them.

He wanted to go into the darkness and hide, but his ills forced him to seek the place of food and rest, at whatever cost.

He swung unsteadily toward the fire. He could see the forms of men making black shadows in the red light. As he went nearer he saw that the ground was covered with sleeping men.

Suddenly he met a black figure, aiming a rifle. "Stop there!" He was surprised for a moment, but he thought that he recognized the voice—nervous now—of the loud soldier. As he stood trembling before the rifle, he called out: "Hello, Wilson, you—you here?"

The rifle was lowered to a careful position, and the soldier came slowly forward. He looked into the youth's face. "Is that you, Henry?"

"Yes, it's—it's me."

"Well, well, old boy," said the other, "well, I'm glad to see you! I thought you were dead." There was real emotion in his voice.

The youth found that now he could hardly stand upon his feet. There was a sudden sinking of his strength. He felt he must hurry with his tale to protect himself. So, before the soldier said anything more, he began:

"Yes, yes. I've—I've had an awful time. I've been all over. Far over on the right. Awful fighting over there. I had a frightful time. I got separated from the regiment. Over on the right, I got shot. In the head. I never saw such fighting. Awful time. I don't see how I got separated

from the regiment. I got shot, too.”

His friend had stepped forward quickly. “What? Got shot? Why didn’t you say so first? Poor fellow, we must—wait a minute—I’ll call Simpson.”

At that moment another soldier appeared. “Who are you talking to, Wilson?” he demanded. His voice was angry. “Who are you talking to?—Oh, hello, Henry, are you here? Well, I thought you were dead four hours ago! Great heavens, they keep coming in every ten minutes! We thought we’d lost forty-two men, but if they keep coming this way, we’ll have the whole regiment back by morning. Where were you?”

“Over on the right. I got separated—” began the youth.

But his friend had interrupted. “Yes, and he got shot in the head, and we must help him right away.”

He rested his rifle on his left arm and put his right around the youth’s shoulder.

“It must hurt bad!” he said.

The youth leaned heavily upon his friend. “Yes, it hurts—hurts a lot,” he replied. There was a shaking in his voice.

“Oh,” said the second soldier. He put his arm around the youth and led him forward. “Come on, Henry. I’ll take care of you.”

As they went together, Wilson called out after them: “Put him to sleep in my blanket, Simpson. And—wait—here’s my canteen. It’s full of coffee. Look at his head by the fire and see how it is. Maybe it’s a bad wound. When someone else comes to take guard duty, I’ll be over to see him.”

The youth’s senses were so deadened that his friend’s voice sounded from afar and he could hardly feel the support of Simpson’s arm. His head was hanging forward upon his breast. His knees shook.

Simpson led him to the light of the fire. “Now, Henry,” he said, “let’s have a look at your head.”

The youth obeyed and sat down, and the other, laying aside his rifle, began to look into the bushy hair of his companion. He had to turn the youth’s head so that the full glow of the fire light, would shine on it. He whistled through his teeth when his fingers found the blood

and the unusual wound.

“Ah, here we are!” he said. He anxiously searched further. “Just as I thought,” he added after a while. “You’ve been brushed by a bullet. It’s raised a queer swelling, as if some fellow had hit you on the head with a club. The blood stopped flowing a long time ago. The worst about it is that in the morning you’ll feel as if the world’s biggest hat wouldn’t fit you. And you may get a lot of other sicknesses, too, by morning. Still, I don’t think so. It’s just a bad hit on the head and nothing more. Now, you just sit here and don’t move. I’ll send Wilson to take care of you.”

Simpson went away. The youth remained on the ground. He stared with an empty look into the fire.

Within the glow of red and orange light from the burning sticks were other soldiers, breathing heavily, or lying deathlike in sleep. A few pairs of legs were spread out, stiff and straight. The shoes displayed the mud or dust of marches.

The youth sat in a sorrowful position until his friend, Wilson, came, carrying two canteens. “Well, now, Henry, we’ll have you fixed in just about a minute.”

He had the busy manner of a new nurse. He moved around the fire and stirred the sticks. He made his patient drink from the canteen that contained the coffee. It was to the youth a delightful drink. He put his head far back and held the canteen long to his lips. The cool liquid went smoothly down his hot throat. Having finished, he sighed with comfortable delight.

Wilson watched his companion with a look of satisfaction. He later produced a huge handkerchief from his pocket. He folded it and poured water from the other canteen onto it. This he bound over the youth’s head, tying the ends in a queer arrangement at the back of the neck.

“There,” he said, moving off and studying his deed, “you look like the devil, but I guess you feel better. “

The youth looked at his friend with grateful eyes. Upon his paining and swelling head the cold cloth was like a tender woman’s hand.

“You don’t scream or say anything,” remarked his friend admiringly. “You’re a good one, Henry. Most men would have been in the hospital long ago. A shot in the head is no joking matter.”

The youth made no reply, but began to play with the buttons of his jacket.

“Well, come now,” continued his friend, “come now. I must put you to bed and see that you get a good night’s rest.”

The other stood up carefully, and the young soldier led him among the sleeping forms lying in groups and rows. Finally Wilson bent and picked up his blankets. He spread the rubber one upon the ground and placed the woolen one about the youth’s shoulders.

“There now,” he said, “lie down and get some sleep.”

The youth, obeying quietly, got carefully down. He stretched out with a murmur of relief and comfort. The ground felt like the softest bed.

But suddenly he said, “Wait a minute. Where are you going to sleep?”

His friend waved his hand impatiently. “Right down there next to you.”

“Well, but wait—” continued the youth. “What are you going to sleep on? I’ve got your—”

The young soldier answered: “Be quiet and go to sleep. Don’t be making a fool of yourself,” he said firmly.

After this the youth said no more. A wonderful sleepiness had spread through him. The warm comfort of the blanket surrounded him. His head fell forward and his arm and his eyes slowly closed. Hearing guns from the distance, he wondered—not really caring—if those men sometimes slept. He gave a long sigh, curled into his blanket, and in a moment was like his companions.

Chapter 14

WHEN THE YOUTH AWOKE IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT HE HAD BEEN asleep for a thousand years. He felt sure that he opened his eyes upon an unexpected world. A splendid dawn could be seen in the eastern sky. The night air had made his face cold, and immediately upon awakening he moved further down into his blankets. He stared for a while at the branches overhead, moving in the wind of the day.

The distance was filled with the noise of fighting. There was in the sound an expression of a deadly continuance, as if it had not begun and was not to cease.

About him were the groups of men that he had seen in the shadows the night before. They were getting a last bit of sleep before the awakening.

He heard then the noise of wood burning in the cold air, and turning his head, he saw his friend busy about a small fire. A few other figures were moving, and he heard the hard sound of ax blows.

Suddenly there was a hollow noise of drums. A distant horn sang faintly. Similar sounds, varying in strength, came from near and far over the front. The horns called to each other.

The groups of men in the forest moved. There was a general uplifting of heads. A murmuring of voices filled the air.

The youth sat up. He rubbed his eyes, and then putting up his hand felt carefully of the cloth over his wound. His friend, seeing him awake, came from the fire. "Well, Henry, old man, how do you feel this morning?" he demanded.

The youth sighed again. In truth, his head felt like a big ball, and there was an unpleasant feeling in his stomach.

"I feel pretty bad," he said.

"Sorry!" exclaimed the other. "I hoped you'd feel all right this morning. Let's see the handkerchief—I guess it's slipped." He began to look at the wound in rather a rough way until the youth spoke sharply.

"Why can't you be more easy?" he said angrily. "I'd rather have you stand back and throw guns at it. Now go slow, and don't act as if you were nailing down rugs."

His friend answered softly, "Well, well, come now, and get some food. Then, maybe, you'll feel better."

At the fireside, the young soldier took care of his friend's needs with tenderness and care. He sat down and watched, with pleasure, the youth's eager mouthfuls.

The youth noticed a remarkable change in his friend since those earlier days of camp life. Wilson no longer seemed to be continually regarding the greatness of his virtues. He was not angry at small words that cut into his self-satisfaction and pride. He was no more a loud young soldier. There was about him now a fine inner strength. He showed a quiet belief in his purposes and his qualities. And this inner sureness apparently enabled him to give no attention to little words of other men aimed at him.

The youth thought. He had always regarded his companion as a loud child, with a careless daring grown from his inexperience; thoughtless, demanding, and filled with a false courage. The youth wondered where those new eyes had been born; when his companion had made the great discovery that there were many men who would refuse to be commanded by him. Apparently, the other had now climbed a mountain of wisdom, from which he could see himself as a very tiny thing. And the youth saw that ever after it would be easier to live with his friend as a neighbor.

His companion balanced his coffee-cup on his knee. "Well, Henry," he said, "what do you think our chances are? Do you think we'll beat them?"

The youth considered for a moment. "Day before yesterday," he finally replied, with daring, "you would have said you could beat the

whole rebel army by yourself.”

His friend looked surprised. “Would I?” he asked. He thought. “Well, perhaps I would,” he decided at last. He stared humbly at the fire.

The youth was quite shocked at this unusual reply to his remarks. “Oh, no, you wouldn’t really,” he said quickly trying to undo what he had done.

But the other made a small motion. “Oh, never mind Henry,” he said. “I believe I was quite a fool in those days.” He spoke as though many years had passed.

There was a little pause.

“All the officers say we’re going to win,” said Wilson. “They seem to think we’ve got the rebels just where we want them.”

“I don’t know about that,” the youth replied. “What I saw over on the right makes me think it was the opposite. From where I was, it looked as if we were getting a good beating yesterday.”

“Do you think so?” inquired the friend. “I thought we were beating them yesterday.”

“Not a bit!” said the youth. “Man, you didn’t see any thing of the fight!” Then a sudden thought came to him. “Jim Conklin is dead.”

His friend was shocked. “What? Is he? Jim Conklin!”

The youth spoke slowly. “Yes. He’s dead. Shot in the side.”

“Really! Jim Conklin—poor fellow!”

There was another little pause.

“The regiment lost over half its men yesterday,” remarked the friend finally. “I thought they were all dead but they kept coming back last night until it seems that we lost only a few. They were scattered all over, wandering around in the forest, fighting in other regiments—just like you did.”

“Oh,” said the youth.

Chapter 15

GUNS WERE ALWAYS TO BE HEARD, FILLING THE AIR WITH A THUNDERING sound. This part of the world was strange and never without battle.

The youth's regiment marched again. The men took positions behind a curving line of rifles along the edge of the forest. Before them was a flat place, filled with broken tree trunks. From the forest beyond came the dull noise of soldiers firing. From the right came the noise of a fast battle.

The men sat quietly, awaiting their turn. Many had their backs to the firing. The youth's friend lay down, buried his face in his arms and, almost instantly, it seemed, he was in a deep sleep.

The youth leaned his breast against the brown earth and gazed over at the forest and up and down the line. Trees cut off his view. He could see only a short distance. A few idle flags were placed on the earthen hills. Behind them were rows of dark figures with a few heads looking curiously over the tops.

Always the noise of fighting came from the forest in front and to the left, and the battle on the right had grown to frightful size. The guns were roaring without an instant's pause for breath.

Before the sun was bright, the regiment was moving carefully through the forest. The hurrying lines of the enemy could sometimes be seen through the trees and little fields. The enemy soldiers were shouting and happy.

At this sight the youth forgot personal matters and became greatly angered. He shouted in loud sentences. "We're being led by a lot of fools, by God!"

“More than one fellow has said that today,” declared a man.

Wilson, recently awakened, was still very sleepy. He looked behind him until his mind took in the meaning of the movement. Then he sighed. “Oh, well, I suppose we were beaten,” he remarked sadly.

“Well, don’t we fight like the devil? Don’t we do all that men can?” demanded the youth loudly.

In his reply, the friend’s voice was firm. “No man dares say we don’t fight like the devil. No man will ever dare say it. The boys fight like hell. But still—still, we don’t have any luck.”

“Well, then, if we fight like the devil and don’t ever win, it must be the general’s fault,” the youth said grandly and decidedly. “And I don’t see any sense in fighting and fighting and fighting, and yet always losing because of some old fool of a general.”

A man who was walking at the youth’s side then spoke slowly. “Maybe you think you fought the whole battle yesterday, Fleming,” he remarked.

The words cut the youth. Within he was reduced to nothing by this speech. His legs shook. He gave a frightened glance at the man.

“Well, no,” he hurried to say. “I don’t think I fought the whole battle yesterday.”

But the man seemed to have no deeper meaning. Apparently, he had no information. It was merely his habit to speak this way. “Oh,” he replied in the same tone.

The youth, nevertheless, felt a threat. His mind refused to go nearer to the danger, and thereafter he was silent. The man’s words took from him all thought of saying anything that would make him noticeable. He became suddenly a quiet person.

There was low-toned talk among the troops. The officers were impatient and angry, their faces clouded with the tales of bad luck. The troops, coming through the forest, were sad. In the youth’s regiment, once, a man’s laugh rang out. A dozen soldiers turned their faces quickly toward him in blame.

In a clear space the troops were at last stopped. Regiments and brigades, broken by battle, grew together again and lines were faced

toward the enemy.

“Good God,” the youth complained, “we’re always being led around like dogs! It makes me sick. Nobody seems to know where we go or why we go.”

At this time there was a flood of speech from the young lieutenant, who felt obliged to place some of his own unhappiness upon his men. “You boys keep quiet! There is no need to waste your breath in long-winded arguments about this and that and the other. You’ve been screaming like a lot of old chickens—all you have to do is fight, and you’ll get plenty of that to do in about ten minutes. I never heard such foolish talking,” he said to them, turning his head for a final remark.

There was a wait. The strained moments that go before the battle passed slowly. In the regiment a strange kind of hesitation could be seen in the attitude of the men. They were tired and weak, having slept little and labored much. They rolled their eyes toward the advancing battle as they stood waiting for the shock—waiting to be hit.

Chapter 16

THIS ADVANCE OF THE ENEMY SEEMED TO THE YOUTH LIKE A CRUEL hunting. He began to express his anger. He beat his foot upon the ground, and looked with hate at the rising smoke that was approaching like a flood. There was a maddening quality in this apparent determination of the enemy to give him no rest, to give him no time to sit down and think. Yesterday he had fought and run away. There had been many adventures. Today he felt that he had earned opportunity for rest and thought. He was sore and stiff from his experiences. He had had enough, and he wished to rest.

But the rebels seemed never to grow tired; they were fighting with their old speed. He had a wild hate for the enemy. Yesterday, when he had imagined the world to be against him, he had hated the world. Today he hated the army of the enemy with the same great hatred. He was not going to run all his life, like a cat hunted by dogs, he thought. It was not good to push men so hard.

He leaned and spoke into his friend's ear. He threatened the forest with a movement of the hand. "If they keep coming after us, by God, they'd better be careful. We can't sit here and let them do much more."

The friend turned his head and made a calm reply. "If they keep coming after us, they'll force us all into the river."

The winds of battle had swept all around the regiment until one enemy rifle, instantly followed by others, flashed in the front. A moment later the regiment roared forth its sudden and brave answer. A thick wall of smoke settled slowly down. It was often cut by the knife-like fire from the rifles.

To the youth, the fighters seemed like animals thrown for a death struggle into a dark hole. There was a feeling that he and his companions were always pushing back the attacks of fierce creatures who were slippery. Their gunfire seemed to have no effect upon the bodies of the enemy; the latter seemed to avoid them with ease, and come through, between, around and about them with unopposed skill.

He had taken a position behind a small tree, with a determination to hold it against the world. He had not thought it possible that his army could succeed that day, and thus he felt the strength to fight harder. But the group had moved in all ways, until he lost directions and locations, except that he knew where the enemy was.

The flames burned him, and the hot smoke baked his skin. His rifle grew so hot that ordinarily he could not have held it in his hand; but he kept firing it. When he shot at some changing form through the smoke, he made a fierce sound, as if he were delivering a blow with all his strength.

When the enemy seemed to move back, he went instantly forward, like a dog who, seeing his enemy slowing, turns and insists upon being followed. And when he was compelled to move back again, he did it slowly, angrily, taking steps of despair.

Once, in his fierce hate, he was almost alone and kept firing when all those near him had ceased. He was so completely busy that he was not aware of a silence.

He was surprised by a rough laugh and a sentence that came to his ears. "You fool, don't you know enough to stop when there isn't anything to shoot at?"

He turned then and looked at his companions. During this moment of silence they all seemed to be staring at him with surprise. Turning to the front again, he saw, under the lifted smoke, a deserted ground.

He was uncertain for a moment; then he understood.

He turned to his companions and fell upon the ground. His flesh seemed strangely on fire, and the sounds of the battle continued in his ears. He reached blindly for his canteen.

The lieutenant was shouting. He seemed drunk with fighting. He called out to the youth: "By heavens, if I had ten thousand wildcats like you, I could finish this war in less than a week!"

Some of the men murmured and looked at the youth in wonder. It was clear that as he had loaded and fired and cursed without stopping; they had found time to watch him. And now they looked upon him as a war devil.

His friend came over to him. There was some fright in his voice. "Are you all right, Fleming? Do you feel all right? There isn't anything the matter with you, Henry, is there?"

"No," said the youth with difficulty. His throat seemed full and it was hard to talk.

These happenings made the youth think. He realized that he had been a beast. He saw that fighting like this had been fine, wild, and in some ways easy. He had been a magnificent sight, no doubt. By this struggle he had mastered fears which seemed to him like mountains. They had fallen like paper, and he was now what he called a hero. He had not been aware of the process. It was as if he had slept and, awakening, found he was a nobleman.

He lay back and enjoyed the stares of his companions. Their faces were black from the burned gunpowder. Their breathing was loud and hard. And from these dirty faces, they looked at him.

"Good work! Good work!" said the lieutenant. He walked back and forth, restless and eager. Sometimes his voice could be heard in a wild, strange laugh.

When he had a particularly serious thought about the science of war, he always spoke to the youth.

There was a strange joy in the talk of the men. "I guess this army will never see another new regiment like us!"

"Lost a lot of men, the enemy did!"

"Yes, and in about an hour they'll lose a lot more!"

The forest still carried its burden of noise. From under the trees came the rolling sound of the guns. A cloud of dark smoke went up toward the sun, now bright and gay in the blue sky.

Chapter 17

THE TIRED MEN RESTED FOR SOME MINUTES, BUT DURING THEIR PAUSE the struggle in the forest grew greater and greater until the ground seemed to shake from the rushing of other men. It seemed difficult to live in such a place. The chests of the men strained for fresh air, and their throats needed water.

The youth's friend thought he remembered a stream nearby, and he was permitted to go for some water. Immediately canteens were given to him. "Fill mine, will you?" "Bring me some too." "And me too." He departed, heavily loaded. The youth went with his friend, feeling a desire to throw his heated body into the stream and drink and drink.

They made a hurried search for the water, but did not find it. "None here," said the youth. They turned without delay and began to go back.

A moment later a general on horseback was directly in front of the two soldiers. Another officer, riding with the skill of a cowboy, moved his horse to a position directly in front of the general. The two unnoticed soldiers moved nearer to hear the conversation. Perhaps, they thought, some great things would be said.

The general, whom the boys recognized as their commander, looked at the officer and spoke coolly, without emotion. "The enemy is getting ready for another attack," he said. "I fear they'll break through there unless we manage to stop them."

The other officer cursed his nervous horse and then spoke. "It will mean heavy losses," he said shortly.

"I suppose so," remarked the general. Then he began to talk rapidly. The two young soldiers could hear nothing until finally he asked,

“What troops can you use?”

The officer thought for an instant. “Well,” he said, “I had to order the 12th regiment to help the 76th and I haven’t really got any extra troops. But there’s the 304th. I don’t need them very much.”

The youth and his friend exchanged glances of surprise.

The general spoke sharply, “Get them ready then. I’ll watch developments from here, and send you word when to start. It’ll happen in five minutes.”

As the other officer started away, the general called after him in a serious voice. “I don’t believe many of them will get back.”

With frightened faces, the youth and his companion hurried back to the line.

These happenings had occupied an unbelievably short time, yet the youth felt they had made him old. New eyes were given to him. And the most surprising thing was to learn suddenly that he was very unimportant. The officer spoke of the regiment as if he spoke of a brush. Some part of the forest needed sweeping, perhaps, and he merely indicated the brush in a tone properly uncaring about its fate. It was war, no doubt, but it appeared strange.

As the two boys approached the line, the lieutenant saw them and became angry. “Fleming—Wilson—how long does it take you to get water? Where have you been?” But he stopped when he saw their eyes.

“We’re going to attack—we’re going to attack!” cried the youth’s friend, hurrying with his news.

“Attack?” said the lieutenant. “Well! Now, this is real fighting!” Over his dirty face there went a proud smile. “Attack? Well, by God!”

A little group of soldiers surrounded the two youths. “Are we, really?” “Well!” “Attack?” “What for?” “What at?” “Wilson, you’re lying.”

His friend spoke. “No, he’s not—he’s not lying. We heard them talking.”

A moment later the officers began to hurry among the men, pushing them into a closer mass and into a better line. They were like men struggling with sheep.

They were surrounded by the noises of war. The world was inter-

ested in other matters. The regiment had this small affair to itself.

The youth, turning, gave a quick, inquiring glance at his friend. The latter returned to him the same kind of look. They were the only ones who possessed the information. “—heavy losses.” “—don’t believe many will get back.” An awful secret! But they saw no hesitation in each other’s faces, and they nodded a silent agreement when a man near them said in a small voice, “We’ll get eaten.”

Chapter 18

THE YOUTH STARED AT THE LAND IN FRONT OF HIM. EVERY BUSH seemed to hide terror and power. He was not aware of the series of orders that started the attack, although from the corners of his eyes he saw an officer waving his hat. Suddenly he felt a straining among the men. The line went slowly forward like a falling wall, and with a sigh that was meant to be a cheer, the regiment began its journey. The youth was pushed for a moment before he understood the movement at all, but then he jumped ahead and began to run.

He looked at a distant group of trees where he had decided the enemy were to be met, and he ran toward it. He had believed the whole time that it was only a matter of finishing something unpleasant as quickly as possible, and he ran hard. His face clearly showed the strain. His eyes were held in an awful stare. And with his dirty clothes, the torn cloth with its spot of blood on his head, his wildly swinging rifle, he appeared to be a mad soldier.

As the regiment went from its position into a clear space, the forest in front awakened. Yellow flames leaped from many directions. The forest made a fierce sound.

The line moved straight for a moment. Then the right side started forward; it in turn was passed by the left. After this, the center came to the front until the regiment was like a moving wave of water. An instant later the opposition from bushes and trees burst upon the men and scattered them.

The youth, light-footed, was in front without realizing it. His eyes still watched the group of trees. From all places near it the shouts of the enemy could be heard. Little flames from rifles leaped out. The

song of the bullets sounded in the air.

All around, men fell in pain. The regiment left an awful trail of bodies.

They had passed into a clearer place. The straining pace ate the energies of the men. As if by agreement, the leaders slowed their speed. Among some larger trees now, the men watched and waited for some of the distant smoke to move and show them the scene. Since much of their strength and their breath was gone, they returned to fear.

The youth thought that he had run miles, and that he was in some new and unknown land.

The men now had opportunity to see some of their friends dropping with screams and shouts. A few lay near, silent or crying. And now, for an instant, the men stood, their rifles in their hands, and watched the regiment get smaller. They were in a state of shock. They stared blankly at the sight, and lowering their eyes, looked from face to face. It was a strange pause, and a strange silence.

Then, above the sounds of guns, arose the shouts of the lieutenant. He came suddenly forward, his young face filled with anger.

"Come on, you fools!" he screamed. "Come on! You can't stay here. You must come on!" He said more, but much of it could not be understood.

He started rapidly ahead, with his head turned toward the men.

"Come on!" he was shouting. The men stared at him with dull eyes. He was obliged to stop and come back. He stood then with his back to the enemy and shouted curses into the faces of the men. His body shook from the force of his voice.

The friend of the youth moved suddenly forward. Dropping to his knees, he fired an angry shot at the forest. This action awakened the men. They acted no more like sheep. They seemed to think suddenly of their rifles, and at once began firing. At the shouts of the officers they began to move forward. The men stopped every few steps to fire and load, and in this manner moved slowly from trees to trees.

They went painfully forward until they reached an open space. Here, behind trees, the men stopped, as if threatened by a giant wave.

Again the lieutenant began to shout and curse. Once he seized the youth by the arm. "Come on," he roared. "Come on! We'll all get killed if we stay here. We only have to go across that field. And then—" the remainder of his idea disappeared in curses.

The youth stretched forth his arm.

"Cross there?"

"Certainly. Just across the field! We can't stay here," screamed the lieutenant. He put his face close to the youth. "Come on!" It was as if he planned to drag the youth by the ear into the attack.

The youth felt a sudden unspeakable anger against his officer. He pulled away fiercely and shook him off.

"Come on yourself, then," he shouted.

There was a bitter demand in his voice.

They ran together down the line of the regiment. The friend hurried after them. In front of the flag the three men began to shout, "Come on! Come on!" They danced and leaped like madmen.

The others waited in doubt for a moment. And then, with a long cry, the reduced regiment moved forward and began its new journey.

Over the fields went the rushing mass. It was a handful of men thrown into the faces of the enemy. Toward it instantly would leap the yellow flames. Blue smoke hung before them.

The youth ran like a madman to reach the trees before a bullet could find him. He put his head low. Within him was born a love, a despairing love, for the flag which was near him. It was a creation of beauty, secure from harm. It was like a woman, red and white, hating and loving, that called him with the voice of his hopes. Because no harm could come to it, he gave it power. He stayed near, as if it could be a saver of lives.

Then he was aware that the soldier carrying the flag jumped suddenly, as if struck by a bullet. He slowed, and then became motionless.

The youth leaped at the flag pole. At the same instant his friend came from the other side. They pulled at it. For a moment there was a fierce struggle—the dead man seemed to be fighting in awful ways for the possession of the flag.

It was over in an instant of time. They pulled the flag free, and as they turned again, the lifeless body fell forward with bowed head. One arm swung high, and the curved hand fell with heavy protest on the friend's shoulder.

Chapter 19

WHEN THE TWO YOUTHS TURNED WITH THE FLAG, THEY SAW THAT much of the regiment had moved back. It moved back slowly, with faces still toward the forest and rifles still replying to the fire. Several officers were giving orders with screaming voices.

“Where in hell are you going?” the lieutenant was shouting. And a red-haired officer was commanding, “Shoot into them! Shoot into them!” The men were trying to do opposite and hopeless things.

The youth and his friend had a small argument over the flag. “Give it to me!” “No, let me keep it!” Each felt satisfied with the other’s possession of it, but each felt the need to declare, by an offer to carry the flag, his willingness to further risk himself. The youth roughly pushed his friend away.

The regiment fell back to the trees. There it stopped for a moment to fire at some dark forms that had begun to follow it. Then it marched again, curving among the trees. By the time it again reached the first open space, the men were receiving fast and merciless fire. There seemed to be enemy mobs all around them.

The youth went along with slipping, uncertain feet. With pride he kept the flag straight. He called to the others. To those he knew well he made special appeals, begging them by name. Between himself and the lieutenant there was felt fellowship and equality.

But the regiment was a broken machine. The two men shouted at a forceless thing. The soldiers who had heart to go slowly forward were continually shaken by a certainty that others were going back. Wounded men were left crying on this sorrowful journey.

There was smoke and flame always. The youth, looking once

through a sudden clearing of smoke, saw a brown mass of troops. The youth walked straight ahead and, with his flag in his hands, took a stand, as if he expected an attempt to push him to the ground. He passed over his forehead a hand that trembled. His breath did not come freely.

The officers labored hard to bring the men into a proper circle to face the enemy. The ground was uneven and torn. The men curled into hollows and fitted themselves behind whatever would turn away a bullet.

The youth noticed with surprise that the lieutenant was standing with his legs far apart and his sword touching the ground. The youth wondered what had happened to his voice, because he no longer cursed.

There was something strange in this little pause of the lieutenant. He was like a child who, having cried, raises its eyes and looks upon a distant toy.

The silent men were suddenly strengthened by the eager voice of the lieutenant screaming, "Here they come! Right on to us, by God!" His other words were lost in a wild roar of thunder from the men's rifles.

The youth's eyes had turned instantly in the direction indicated by the lieutenant, and he saw the soldiers of the enemy. They were so near that he could see their faces. Their uniforms were rather gay, being light gray with touches of bright color. And, their clothes seemed new.

These troops had apparently been going forward, their rifles held in readiness, when the lieutenant had discovered them. Their movement had been interrupted by the shooting from the blue regiment. It seemed that they had been unaware of the closeness of their blue enemies, or had mistaken the direction.

Almost instantly they were hidden from the youth's sight by the smoke from the busy rifles of his companions. He strained his eyes to learn the results of the shooting, but the smoke hung before him. There appeared to be many of them, and they were replying quickly. They moved toward the blue regiment, step by step. He seated himself sadly on the ground, with his flag between his knees.

But soon the blows of the enemy began to grow weaker. Fewer bullets tore the air, and finally, when the men paused they could see only dark, floating smoke. The regiment lay still and watched. The smoke rolled away enough to show a lonely ground. It would have been an empty space except for a few bodies that lay in odd positions.

At the sight of this scene, many of the men in blue began to dance with joy. Their eyes burned, and a cheer of gladness broke from their dry lips.

It had seemed to them that events were trying to prove that they must lose. The other battles had tried to prove that the men could not fight well. Then this small battle showed them that their chances were not hopeless, and thus they had proven themselves.

Eagerness was theirs again. They looked about with pride, feeling new trust in the rifles in their hands. And they were men.

Chapter 20

SOON THEY KNEW THAT NO FIGHTING THREATENED THEM. ALL WAYS seemed once more opened to them. The dusty blue lines of their friends were seen a short distance away. Far away there were great noises, but in all this part of the field there was a sudden stillness.

They felt that they were free. The small group took a long breath of relief and gathered itself to complete its trip.

In this last length of journey, the men began to show strange emotions. They hurried with nervous fear. Some who had been brave in fiercest moments now could not hide their anxious feelings. It was perhaps that they did not wish to be killed in unimportant ways after the time for proper military deaths had passed. And so they hurried.

As they approached their own forces there were some rough remarks by another regiment that lay resting in the shade of trees.

“Where do you think you have been?”

“What are you coming back for?”

“Why didn’t you stay there?”

“Was it warm out there, sir?”

“Going home now, boys?”

“Oh, look at the soldiers!”

There was no reply from the hurt and shaken regiment. The youth’s tender emotions were deeply burned by these remarks. They turned when they arrived at their old position, to regard the ground over which they had rushed.

The youth was shocked. He discovered that the distances, compared with the large measurings in his mind, were small indeed. The trees, where much had happened, seemed unbelievably near. The time,

too, he realized, had been short. He wondered about the emotions and events that had been crowded into such little spaces. Tricks played by the thoughts of the moment must have enlarged everything, he felt.

It seemed then that there was some bitter justice in the speeches of the other regiment. He looked down upon his friends lying upon the ground, breathless with dust and heat. They were drinking from their canteens, fierce to get every drop of water.

However, to the youth there was considerable joy in thinking of his own performances during the attack. There had been very little time before in which to admire himself, so now there was much satisfaction in quietly thinking of his actions. He remembered things that in the battle had sunk unnoticed into his mind.

As the regiment lay catching its breath, the officer who had named them to make the attack came up on his horse. He stopped the animal with an angry pull near the colonel of the regiment. He immediately began blaming the colonel in strong words, which came clearly to the ears of the men.

“What an awful job you made of this thing, MacChesnay! Good Lord, man, you stopped about a hundred feet before a very fine success! If your men had gone another hundred feet you would have made a great attack, but as it is—what a lot of mud diggers you’ve got!”

The men, listening quietly, now turned their curious eyes upon the colonel. They had a real interest in this matter.

The colonel straightened himself, and put one hand forth in speech-making fashion. He wore a hurt look; it was as if a minister had been blamed for stealing. The men were excited.

But suddenly the colonel’s manner changed. He shook his head. “Oh, well, general, we went as far as we could,” he said calmly.

“As far as you could? Did you, by God?” said the general. “Well, that wasn’t very far, was it?” He looked with cold anger into the other’s eyes. “Not very far, I think.” He turned his horse and rode stiffly away.

The news that the regiment had been blamed went along the line. For a time the men were surprised by it. They stared at the disappearing form of the general. They thought it must be a huge mistake.

In a short time, however, they began to believe that in truth their efforts had been unmeaningful. The youth could see this weigh heavily upon the entire regiment, until the men were like chained animals.

The youth developed a calm philosophy for these moments. "Oh, well," he declared to his friends, "he probably didn't see any of it, and got angry. He probably decided we were wrong just because we didn't do what he wanted."

Several men came hurrying to them. Their faces showed that they brought great news.

"Henry, you just should have heard!" cried one eagerly.

"You should have heard!" repeated another, and arranged himself to tell his story. The others formed an excited circle.

"Well, sir," the storyteller proceeded, "the colonel met the lieutenant, who was standing near us—it was the best thing I ever heard! The colonel said to the lieutenant, 'Mr. Hasbrouck, who was that lad that carried the flag?' There, Fleming, what do you think of that? The lieutenant said right away, 'That's Fleming, and he's a good soldier!' The colonel said, 'He is, indeed, a very good man to have! He kept the flag right in front. I saw him. He's a good one,' said the colonel. 'Yes, sir!' said the lieutenant, 'he and a fellow named Wilson were at the front of the attack.' 'Well,' said the colonel, 'they deserve to be major-generals!'"

The youth and his friend endured the joking that followed with the greatest pleasure—they knew that their faces became a deep red from the emotions they felt. They exchanged a secret glance of joy and pride.

They quickly forgot many things. The past held no pictures of error and defeat. They were very happy, and their hearts filled with grateful warmth toward the colonel and the youthful lieutenant.

Chapter 21

WHEN THE MASSES OF THE ENEMY AGAIN BEGAN TO COME FROM THE forest, the youth felt great self-confidence. He stood, tall and calm, watching the attack begin against a part of the line that made a blue curve along the side of a nearby hill. His view was not hidden by smoke, so he had opportunity to see parts of the hard fight.

A short distance away, he saw two regiments fighting a separate little battle with two other regiments. The battle had a set-apart look. The firing was unbelievably fierce and rapid. Apparently these busy regiments were occupied completely in this battle.

In another direction he saw a magnificent brigade marching with the intention of driving the enemy from a part of the forest. They passed from sight and soon there was a mighty noise in the forest. The brigade, after a little time, came marching out again, in no way divided.

The battle between the four regiments lasted for some time. Then the gray-colored regiments moved back, leaving the blue lines shouting. The youth could see two flags shaking with laughter in the middle of the remaining smoke.

Finally there was a stillness, deep with meaning. The blue lines stared expectantly at the silent forests and fields before them.

The youth's regiment came forth with a new fierceness when it was time again to fight. The men burst out in angry pain at the first scatter of bullets. They bent their heads in hatred behind their guns. Their eager arms unceasingly loaded the rifles. The front of the regiment was a wall of smoke, broken by flashing points of yellow and red.

A strong section of the enemy line came within dangerous distance. They could be seen plainly—tall men with excited faces, run-

ning toward a fence.

At sight of this danger, the men suddenly ceased their talking. There was an instant of silence before they raised their rifles and fired.

But the enemy was quick to gain the protection of the fence. They slipped down behind it with remarkable ease, and from this position they began carefully to shoot the blue men.

The youth was determined not to move, no matter what might happen.

Blue figures began to drop. Some fell down at the feet of their companions. Others, wounded, moved away; but many lay still, their bodies turned into impossible shapes.

The youth looked around for his friend. He saw him. The lieutenant, also, was in his position in the rear. He had continued to curse, but with a voice rapidly growing weak.

The colonel came running along behind the line. There were other officers following him. "We must attack!" they shouted. "We must attack!" They had strained voices, as if expecting a refusal by the men.

The youth, upon hearing the shouts, began to study the distance between him and the enemy. He made a guess. He saw that to be firm soldiers they must go forward. It would be death to stay in the present place. Their hope was to push the enemy away from the fence.

He expected that his companions would have to be forced to make this attack. But as he turned toward them, he saw that they were giving quick and unquestioning expressions of approval. At the words of command, the soldiers began to push forward in eager leaps. There was new and unexpected force in the movement of the regiment. It was a blind and despairing rush by the men in dusty blue, over grass and under a bright sky, toward a fence. From behind it spoke the fierce guns of the enemy.

Chapter 22

THE YOUTH KEPT THE BRIGHT FLAG IN THE FRONT. HE WAS WAVING HIS free arm in fast circles, screaming appeals, urging forward those who did not need to be urged. It seemed that the mob of blue men throwing themselves on this dangerous group of rifles was again suddenly wild with a spirit of selflessness. It looked as if the mob would merely succeed in becoming a great spread of dead men on the grass in front of the fence. But they were in a state of madness.

The youth thought of the bullets only as things that could prevent him from reaching the fence. There were quiet flashings of joy within him that he had such thoughts.

He put forth all his strength. His eyesight was shaken by the effort of thought and muscle. He did not see anything except the smoke and the fire, but he knew that in it lay the old fence of an absent farmer—the fence protecting the hidden figures of the gray men.

As the smoke rolled away, it revealed men who ran, their bodies turned to send back bullets at the blue line.

But behind one part of the fence there was a determined group that made no movement. They were settled down firmly. A flag waved over them and their rifles continued to fire.

The youth centered his eyes upon that other flag. Its possession would give great pride. He jumped crazily at it. He was determined that it should not escape if wild grasps could seize it. His own flag was pointing toward the other.

The blue men came to a sudden stop and fired their guns rapidly. The group in gray was broken by this fire, but it still fought. The men in blue rushed upon it.

Among the gray was the flag bearer, who had been badly hurt by the last rain of bullets. Over his face was the look of death, but upon it were the hard lines of determined purpose. He held his precious flag close to him and was struggling to go the way that led to safety for it.

The youth's friend went over the fence in a single leap and made a jump at the flag. Pulling it free, he lifted up its red colors with a mad cry of victory, just as the flag bearer turned his dead face to the ground.

There was some long grass. The youth rested in it, making the fence support his flag. His friend, full of joy and glory, holding his treasure with pride, came to him there. They sat, side by side, and praised each other.

Finally the youth arose. "Well, what now, I wonder?" he said.

His friend also rose and stared. "I think we're going to go back across the river," he said.

They waited, watching. Within a little while, the regiment received orders to go back the way it had come. The men got up from the soft grass.

They traveled slowly across the field through which they had run in their mad attack.

The regiment marched until it joined others. The brigade marched through a forest to the road. Soon they were in a mass of dust-covered troops. At this point, they all curved away from the field and went off in the direction of the river.

The youth breathed a breath of new satisfaction. He finally touched his friend. "Well, it's all over," he said to him.

"By God, it is!"

They thought about it.

Gradually the youth was able to more closely understand himself and what had happened.

He understood that the shooting was in the past. He had been in a land of strange battle and had come through. He had been where there was red blood and black passion, and he had escaped. His first thoughts were thoughts of joy at this fact.

Later he began to study his deeds, his failures, and his accom-

plishments. At last his acts passed before him clearly.

The youth felt happy and without guilt as he remembered, for his public deeds were things of great and shining beauty.

It was a pleasure to think of these things. He realized that he was good.

Nevertheless, the memory of his running from the first battle appeared to him.

He thought with shame of the tattered soldier who, broken by bullets and losing blood, had worried about an imagined wound in the youth. The tattered soldier had given his last strength to Jim Conklin. And, tired and hurt, he had been left alone in the field.

For an instant, the youth's heart seemed frozen at the thought that his actions might be discovered. And for a time this steady remembering of the tattered man took all joy from the youth. He saw his error always before him, and he was afraid it would stand before him all his life.

But gradually he gathered strength to put the sin at a distance. Then he regarded it with what he thought was great calmness. It would become a part of him. He would have to live with the realization of a great mistake. And from it he would learn to be gentle with others. He would be a man.

His eyes were now open to new ways. He found that he could look back upon his earlier ideas of the glory of war and see them differently. He was glad when he discovered that he now hated them. He had come from his struggles with a better understanding of the world.

With this recognition came a new assurance. He felt a quiet manliness, calm but strong and healthy. He had faced the great death, and found that, after all, it was only the great death. He was a man.

It rained. The tired soldiers marched with effort through the brown mud under a low, dark sky. Yet the youth smiled, for he saw that the world was a world for him. He had freed himself of the red sickness of battle. The awful dream was in the past. He had been an animal burned and wounded in the heat and pain of war. He turned now with a lover's desire to thoughts of calm skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—

an existence of soft and everlasting peace.

Over the river a golden ray of sun came through the masses of gray rain clouds.