

THE YANKEE IN GRAY

BY CHARLES B. LEWIS "M. QUAD."

CHAPTER IX.

When the troop had disappeared up the dusty highway, Kenton returned to the house to say goodbye to its inmates, and half an hour later he had turned his face southward, satisfied that he had secured all information possible for a scout to pick up. The farmer posted him as to where he would likely strike the Confederate outposts and warned him what highways to avoid, but on that very day McClellan was pushing his cavalry forward and seizing new territory. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon as Kenton, who had been traveling in the fields and under cover of the forest, was about to cross a highway he heard the click, click of a carbine, and a voice called to him:

"Halt where you are, or you are a dead man!"

It was a Federal vidette, dismounted and posted among the bushes which fringed the highway. Kenton looked up to find himself covered by a carbine. Both were on the same side of the road. He had approached the vidette in rear, and had exercised more vigilance would have detected his presence in time to avoid him. The men were not over 30 feet apart when Kenton got the summons to halt.

Many of the Federal troops were still dressed in the gray uniforms supplied by their respective states, while the Confederates had a variety of uniforms, and it was difficult to detect one side from the other. The vidette had done his duty in halting the prowler, but he was not sure what sort of game he had bagged.

"Throw up your hands!" he commanded as he advanced.

Kenton obeyed. He was armed only with a revolver, and as that was hidden from sight he appeared defenseless.

"Now, then, who are you?" asked the Federal as he came to a halt scarce six feet away.

"I might ask you the same question," replied the scout, making a great effort to appear cool and indifferent.

"I know you might, but I guess you won't. Answer my question!"

"I have information to give."

"What is it?"

"Which side are you on?"

"Oh, it makes a difference, does it? Well, I'm a Confederate. What's your news?"

Kenton looked about him in an uneasy manner as if he had fallen into a trap and contemplated making a bolt to escape.

"Say, you look like a reb, but act like a Yanke," laughed the man as he loggared his carbine. "I guess you've got news, and I guess you want to go to headquarters."

"Will you kindly tell me which way to go to strike headquarters?"

"I'll do better'n that—I'll go with you to the picket post and see that you are passed along. Have you been scouting?"

"Yes."

"Seen any rebels?"

"Plenty of them."

"Well, come along, and I'll ride down the road with you to the post. We are posted along here in hopes to catch a reb scout who's been sneaking along our front for two or three days. What did you say your name was?"

"Kenton."

"And mine's Fisher. Hear anything about when we are going to move?"

"Not a word, though the army seems to be all ready."

"It is ready, and why McClellan doesn't push down and walk all over the



"Throw up your hands!" he commanded as he advanced.

Confederate army is a puzzle to me. Seems as if he was waiting to let them get a good ready. Everybody is giving him hail Columbia, but I suppose he knows what he's about. What command do you belong to?"

The pair had been slowly walking side by side down to where the cavalryman's horse was hitched to the trunk of a tree. The Federal had quite accepted Kenton as belonging to his side and was planning to do him a good turn by guiding him to the reserve. Kenton must avoid that. He had hoped to do it by stratagem, and he had excuses already on his tongue when asked for his command. Answer he must, but as he did not know the exact location of a single Federal regiment his answer would probably betray him. He was hesitating when the trooper replied:

"What regiment do you belong to, and where is it stationed?"

"I'm independent," replied the scout as he suddenly snatched at the carbine and twisted it out of the other's grasp.

"Now throw up your hands! Up higher! I see you have a revolver, but if you drop your hands by so much as an inch I shall fire on you! Forward March into the woods!"

"By George, but you don't tell me you are a rebel!" exclaimed the astonished and bewildered cavalryman.

"I don't know yet whether I am or not," replied Kenton. "I'm a Virgin-

ian and in the Confederate army, and whether we are rebels or patriots is a question I haven't settled. Keep to the left."

"And you may be the very rebel scout we were hoping to capture!"

"You are pretty near right about that. Keep right on—I'm coming! Now halt and keep your hands still up!"

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the man as he was disarmed and permitted to face about.

"How far is it to the nearest Confederate outpost?"

"About two miles down this road."

"How many videttes between us and the post?"

"Three or four. You are not going to kill me out here in cold blood?"

"You may rest easy on that score," replied Kenton. "A year hence war will mean devastation, destruction, murder and assassination, but men's hearts are not brutalized yet. I must reach the Confederate outpost, but I can't do it by the road."

"I don't think you could fool all the others as you did me," said the cavalryman, with a sickly smile.

"The question is what to do with you? If I set you at liberty, you'll raise an alarm."

"Guess I would—in fact, I know I would."

"And I have nothing to tie you up with until I can get safely away."

"That's so. You remind me of the chap who caught the bear and doesn't let go."

"I must take you along with me to the Confederate outpost. We shall cut across the fields and woods to reach it. You go ahead, and I will follow. It is needless."

"I'm no fool!" blurted out the Federal. "When I'm down and the other fellow has got his thumbs in my eye and my nose in his jaws, I know enough to cave. You won't have to shoot me, and I want to ask a favor of you."

"Well?"

"Don't walk me in a prisoner."

"I'll see about that. Let's go on."

They struck through the woods, crossed an old field, skirted a meadow and entered another piece of woods. As they were traversing this they came upon a negro cutting firewood, and he informed them that the Confederate outpost was only 20 rods below them on the highway.

"At this stage of the game one prisoner more or less is of no earthly consequence," said Kenton as he looked at the cavalryman. "I'm going to let you return."

"And I've concluded to be taken prisoner and sent to Richmond," replied the man.

"For what reason?"

"Plain as a pumpkin on a gatepost. If I go back without my arms, what can I say? I'd just have to admit that a Johnny reb came along and played me for a sucker and got the best of me. That would mean ridicule and disgrace forever. If I don't go back until exchanged as a prisoner, I'll be all right. I'll sort of give out that I was tackled by about six of you, you know."

"I am sorry that I was obliged to deceive you to save myself," said Kenton after a moment of thought, "and there is no need to disgrace you. Here are your weapons, and you are free to return to your post. The war has not fairly begun yet. There will be hate and bitterness and rancor after awhile, and there will be few opportunities to extend cordialities."

"Say, Johnny, that's a square deal!" joyfully exclaimed the Federal as he received his weapons, "and I want to shake hands with you! Put it there! Can't tell but what we may meet again before this row is over, and if we do I hope it'll come my way to do the fair thing. So long to you!"

Kenton watched him out of sight and then walked down to the highway to find himself at the post of a vidette. He was directed back to the reserve, his pass examined, and he was then within the Confederate lines and ready to push on to Manassas and Jackson's headquarters. When his information had been laid before the stern faced man, whose title of "professor" had been changed to that of "general" within a few brief months, he quietly said:

"You have done excellently. My command is ordered into the valley. I shall have further need of your services in this line, but you may return to your company at present."

CHAPTER X.

No part of the south witnessed so much of the wreck and misery of war as the Shenandoah valley. Its highways, fields and forests, its houses, barns and sheds, its every breeze by day and night for three long years, echoed the fierce shouts of contestants and the groans of wounded men. Nature made it a garden. War converted it into a vast graveyard.

The Federals had begun their march up the valley from Harper's Ferry. Jackson was ordered over to bar the way. Historians may write with prejudice and politicians speak in bitterness. Let us be fair and conscientious, even if we cannot be neutral. Jackson's first battle was on the broad fields of Kernstown. All historians who have written for the future have pronounced him a wonderful man in the science of war. Before his command was fairly in the valley Royal Kenton and others were far ahead, scouting for information. Their reports decided Jackson on moving swiftly up and attacking the Federals as they reached Kernstown. He was beaten back and fairly routed, but that was to be the first and only time.

As Jackson's own brigade swept forward into the fight Kenton was in the ranks of the Shenandoah guards. On his right was Steve Brayton, on his left Ike Baxter. He had known but little of his company since detailed for scout duty. He divined that Captain Wyle's bitterness had intensified, and that the



Royal Kenton a prisoner.

proportion of the northern people are doubtful, and some of the most influential of the northern papers contend for the right of secession."

"The general could not gain any ground. The government was rushing troops

into the field, and battles were being fought, but the principle was still being discussed, and men eminent as jurists, statesmen and journalists were still divided. Kenton was dismissed to be returned to his fellow prisoners. Only one guard accompanied him.

Half way between headquarters and the spot where the prisoners were being held under guard they encountered two men bringing in a wounded man on a stretcher. The victim proved to be the guard's brother. For a moment he forgot his prisoner, and when he had recovered from his excitement over the discovery he no longer had a prisoner. Kenton had walked off into the darkness and made good his escape.

And now as the night drew on apace and the cold rain steadily beat down upon the battlefield parties of men went forth in search of the wounded. They cared not for the dead. At the front there is but little sentiment or sympathy for the wounded. They are cared for because many of them will recover to fight in some other battle. They were found in the open fields, in the furrows half full of water, in the deeper ditches skirting the forest, among the trees and bushes dripping with the rainfall. Some cried out in the darkness with the broken voices of lost children; others prayed or cursed or wept. And here and there, with their faces upturned to the sky of night and eyes half open, were dead men, a thousand or more. The morrow would do for them. The dead of a battlefield ask nothing. The living give them a covering of a few inches of blood soaked soil, and give that grudgingly.

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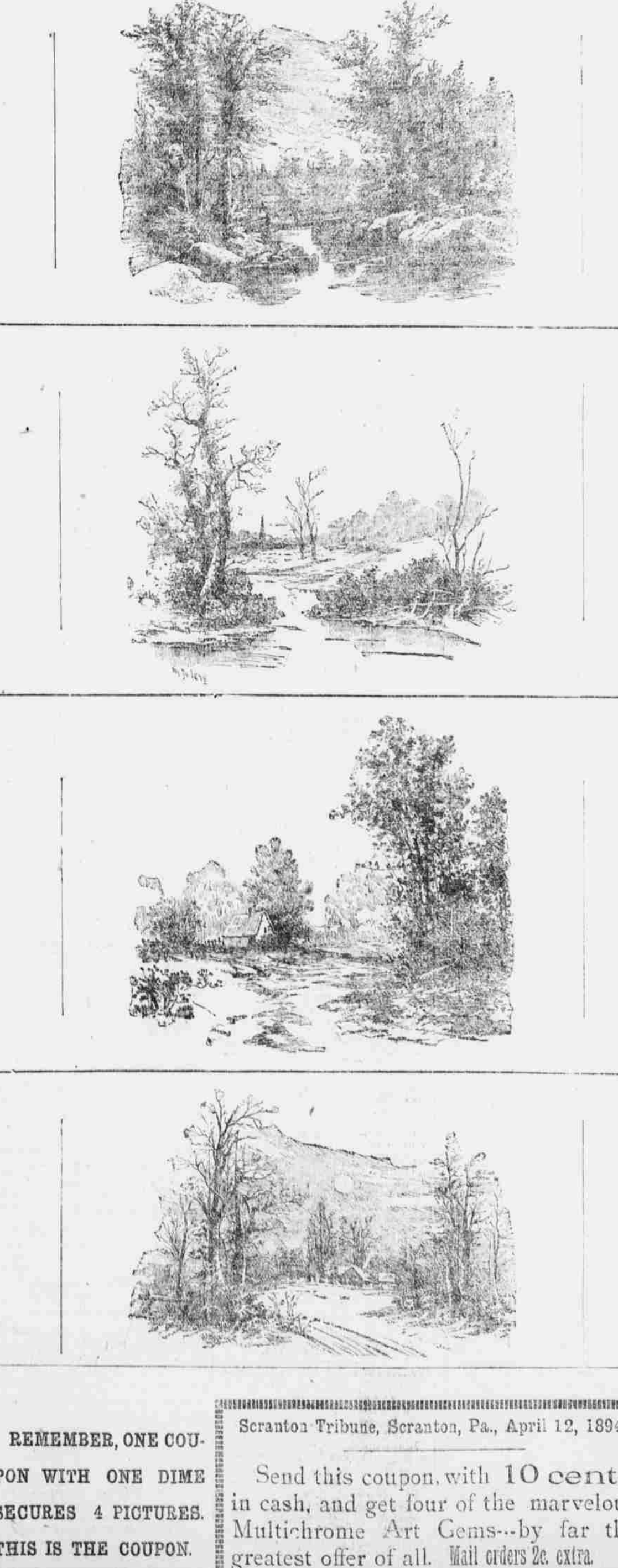
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