



CHAPTER XXVIII.

The courier dispatched by the captain of the Federal troop reached the lines in due time and handed the message to General Custer, whose brigade was in winter quarters, but scouting and reconnoitering almost daily. An order had been issued by the general in command of the army in the valley outlawing all Confederate irregulars and directing special attention to Mosby's band.

Within half an hour after receiving the courier Custer dispatched two companies of the Sixth Michigan cavalry, with instructions to push forward at a gallop, and 30 minutes later he followed them with the First and Fifth regiments and a battery of artillery. The flying column found old Uncle Ben patiently waiting by the roadside and stopped long enough to hear his story.

He gave them the lay of the camp occupied by Kenton and Brayton and was left behind to wait for the main column. Perhaps the besieging force was in earnest in making the statement which fell from the lips of the flag of truce man as an alternative. They had suffered so severely to try another charge up the narrow way, and the fusillade maintained for hours had been lead thrown away. Ike Baxter had indeed been sent away for re-enforcements and a piece of artillery, and the guerrilla portion of the force was thirsting for revenge and rife for the most desperate deed. The girl had defied them, and her lover had killed two or three of their number, and somebody must be made to suffer.

The sergeant in command of the squad of Confederate cavalry had no control over the guerrillas, but when, as they waited to hear from the men behind the rocks, he heard them planning to wreak their vengeance on Uncle Ben, he did all in his power to dissuade them. They seemed to abandon the idea, but under pretense of "having a talk" four or five of them slipped away and started for the house. They were within 20 rods of it and had already divided up the wicked work to be swiftly accomplished when the flying squadron turned a bend in the highway and was upon them. They turned to flee, but half a dozen revolvers cracked, and they were dead men as the last set of four jumped over their bodies lying on the highway. Not a trooper slackened his rein or a horse broke his gallop.

"Halt! Dismount! Forth men hold horses! Deploy to the left! Forward and fire at will!"

It was a complete surprise to the Confederates, who had collected in a body to hear what answer might be made to the message sent in. They made a show of defiance, but after a fight of five minutes, during which they lost 10 or 12 men, they threw down their arms and surrendered. This event was known in the camp almost as soon as outside of it, and the officers which Steve Brayton altered as he perched himself on the rocks were plainly heard as far as Rest Haven.

"Yank, old boy, we was in on the top limb now," chuckled Steve as he leaped down and shook Kenton's hand. "Bein as I've got sorter used to the sight of Yankee uniforms, I reckon I'll drop over thar and tell 'em about yo' and see what's goin to be done."

"But tell them of Miss Percy first," replied Kenton, whose anxiety was far greater than he had dared betray to his comrade.

The prisoners were conducted to the highway and surrounded by a guard, and then the senior captain accompanied Brayton back to the camp. They were not long in deciding what should be done with Kenton. They would remove him to Rest Haven, temporarily at least, and the prisoners would be held there until the main column came up. A rude litter was soon constructed, and Kenton was placed thereon and borne away.

A feeling of dumb despair crept over Marian Percy as she entered the house after Uncle Ben's departure and looked upon her dead. The event was not entirely unexpected, and yet it was a great shock to her, surrounded as it was by such trying circumstances. The mother dead, Mrs. Baxter gone, her lover wounded and besieged by bloodthirsty men, Uncle Ben gone after help, an almost certain knowledge that the worst was yet to come—what wonder that the girl was stricken and helpless? The report of every musket reached her ears,

and now and then as the firing died away a little her heart stood still at the thought that Kenton and his comrades had been captured by those who thirsted for their lives. She could only weep and pray as the hours dragged away. Hope came to her only when she heard the clatter of iron hoofs on the frozen road and looked out to behold the two companies of Federal cavalry sweeping up the highway to the rescue. Uncle Ben had been in time, and she murmured, "God bless him!" as she raised what it meant. The dead guerrillas lay in

plain sight as the troopers pushed on, and she shuddered as she realized what might have been. The dead were forgotten for a moment in her anxiety for the living. There had been no firing for the last 10 minutes. Had the camp been captured? Had help come too late? She stood in the open door and held herself on her feet while she listened. A sudden crash of musketry told her what she was yearning to know. The Federal troopers had attacked, and they were strong enough to beat off or annihilate the besiegers. Half an hour later she was crying and sobbing and saying to the men who bore the litter:

"Carefully now! Bring him right in this way! I am so glad! I was afraid that he was dead!"

The prisoners were confined in the barn. Of the entire force not one had escaped except Ike Baxter, and that only because he was absent. There were a dozen or more dead men to bury, and after awhile a detail was sent back to perform the work. A dozen dead, but not wounded. If you were in the valley that winter, you will recall the bitterness existing between the "irregulars," who were practically bushwhackers and guerrillas, and the Federal cavalry. No prisoners were taken on either side. If a Federal detachment was cut off, never a man returned to his lines. If a courier was captured, he was shot in his tracks or hung to the limb of a roadside tree. There was no more mercy shown on the other side. The capture of an armed man in citizen's dress or half uniform meant that he had only 15 minutes to live at the furthest. If he claimed to belong to Mosby's band, he courted death the sooner. Men who fell in a fight went down to be buried there.

Custer with his troopers found Uncle Ben eagerly awaiting them. The old man was given a seat in an ambulance, and within a few minutes the general had heard his story. The order was given to push on at a faster pace, and the command reached Rest Haven just as the prisoners had been placed under guard. A surgeon accompanied the column, and while he was busy dressing Kenton's wounds General Custer was holding an interview with Marian Percy. The result of this was an order that the dead woman and the wounded man should be taken back to the Federal lines—the one for burial, the other for proper medical treatment. Whatever Marian wished to take away would be transported for her, and the place would be abandoned.

Steve Brayton had come out of the affair a greater hero than he had ever hoped to be. Although frankly acknowledging himself an escaped prisoner and now again captured by the enemies of his cause, every Federal who understood how he had fortified the camp and defended it to save a wounded and almost helpless fellow Confederate insisted on taking him by the hand and tendering him hearty congratulations. Even General Custer himself did not withhold a word of praise after learning from Marian and Kenton of Brayton's bravery and self sacrifice.

"Waal, general, I dunno about all this," replied Steve, with a good deal of embarrassment. "Reckon I was the means of gittin that Yank into the Confederate service, and now it looks as if I was the means of gittin him out and myself along with him. We uns hev been dry outter the southern army by that time up at the camp, and if yo' uns don't take keer of us I reckon we uns will hev to hunt a care sunwhar and hide away till the war is over."

The packing up had been accomplished, and the dead woman was about to be carried out of the house when the burial party was driven in by a strong force of Confederates. Ike Baxter had galloped into the Confederate lines, only five or six miles away, with information that speedily sent two companies of cavalry down the road as re-enforcement.

One of these was Captain Wyle's, and he smiled grimly as he recalled the circumstances of his last ride over this highway.

Ike Baxter had come into camp on a previous occasion to report that Kenton and Brayton were hiding out near Rest Haven, and that he had been nearly killed by Uncle Ben while trying to follow him to the hiding place of the fugitives. Captain Wyle would wash his hands of the affair, but a detachment was sent away with orders to hunt down and bring in the prisoners. Steve Brayton might be brought in, but he very well knew that Kenton would not be, whether found wounded and helpless or not. After the detachment had accomplished its work he would seek a meeting with Marian Percy, but not before. She could not hold him responsible for the action of others.

As the Confederates came down the road in pursuit of the burial party Custer ordered forward three or four companies, and the pursuers became in turn the pursued. But not for long. A heavy force of troopers in gray were coming up, and even a child could have told what that look on General Custer's face portended. For long weeks he had tried to bring on a cavalry fight. The hour had come!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Recipes For Shoe Dressing.

Here are two recipes for making a dressing for shoes. No. 1 is as follows: Take 2 drams of spermaceti oil, 3 ounces of good molasses and 4 ounces of finely powdered ivory black and stir them together thoroughly. Then stir in half a pint of good vinegar, and the dressing is ready for use. It gives a bright, clean surface and makes the shoes look almost like new.

The second dressing is for rainy weather and is said to make the shoes waterproof: Take an ounce of beeswax, an ounce of turpentine and a quarter of an ounce of Burgundy pitch. Put them in to half a pint of cottonseed oil and melt together over a slow fire, being careful that the mixture does not take fire.

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Scranton Tribune, Scranton, Pa., May 2, 1894.

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