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THE BUTLER CITIZEN.

VOL. XXVII. BUTLER, PA., FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 1890. NO 11

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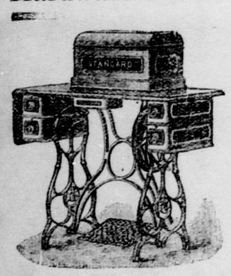

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THE SALDAGNIA GHOSTS.

GEORGE W. HOSMER IN HARPER'S WEEKLY.

I.

On the top of South Mountain, as we drove the gray fellows from pillar to post, the stone walls there making exceedingly tough defences, we came to one very bad place in the line. There was a little old stone farm-house inside the angle formed by two stone walls, the house being on our side of the fence. Gray infantry fired at us over both lines of wall; but our fellows to the right and left soon got an enfilading fire along the other side of both walls, and the infantry there skipped, but the fellows in the house held on. We could see that they would be supported in order to stop our headway, for we were close upon the heels of a retreating division. There were evidently as many fellows in the house as it was convenient to have there; and our artillery was not handy. Some of our fellows got axes and battered the door down, but fell in front of it. And then there was a critical moment. Inside was a cool and resolute crowd of old rebs, every man with his gun pointed at the doorway and his finger on the trigger, all resolved that the first-comers should pay for the house.

"Who'll draw that fire?" said the captain.

"I will," said Talbot, of our right company—a bright stripling of a fellow, slight, handsome, and very daring.

"Bayonets, boys!" said the captain; and the fellows inside the house could hear the jingle of the steel as we fixed bayonets as plainly as we could ourselves, and understood what was up, and made ready for it. "Now, then, Talbot," said the captain; and Talbot dashed forward at a run, and up the two little steps into the doorway. But on the second step he put his foot into a pool of blood that had come from one of the men killed there, and slipped, so that his figure was for one brief instant upright in the doorway, and he fell with his face to the door. But every trigger inside was pulled at the instant he was seen in the aperature, and because he fell they all fired over him. As the sound of the volley ceased, the captain shouted "Forward!" and our boys went in with a rush, and we had the house. Talbot had not a scratch, but this fact did not detract from his glory, for he had gone as if to certain death. From this incident, and others not unlike it that occurred from time to time, we came to know what kind of a fellow Talbot was; and when there was any tough job in hand, we were very apt to imagine Talbot as one especially fitted to do it. There grew around him an atmosphere of this sort of opinion, and this atmosphere went with him in his promotion all the way up to the division staff. It seemed, therefore, a very natural thing when the general said one night, "Send Talbot to find those fellows."

This was in May, 1863. We had retreated from the south side of the Rappahannock River. Just why we had retreated, nobody knew then, and probably nobody knows now. We had the First, Second, Third, Sixth, and Twelfth corps all in good fighting trim. Stonewall Jackson's corps had collided with our Eleventh Corps, and hurt it; but even if the Eleventh Corps had been annihilated we had a magnificent army without it. Yet the army had retreated, and our division, which had had no fighting, had lost a brigade somehow. Either in the haste of the movement orders were not sent to that brigade, or the man bearing the order had been killed on the way by a chance shot. We only knew when our division went into camp on the north side of the river that the Third Brigade was not with us. Brigades were not very large then, but they were good. Hard fighting and hard marching all the year before had worked us down to a fine point; so that what was left of the old force was of the best quality, and the recruits sent to us had been judiciously spread through veteran regiments, and the force was pretty even. There were at least 1500 good fellows in the lost brigade, and an effort to communicate with them before the enemy learned of our retreat had to be made. This was the service upon which Talbot was sent that night. As he rode away over the pontoon-bridge on his hardy bay, the officer asked him to try and pick up a couple of his fellows who were astray somewhere—Major Ingersoll and Lieutenant Crane; but we all feared that the picking up had been done by the enemy, and that Talbot was only one more good man to be added to those lost by this mischance. From the bridge to Catharine Furnace, near where the regiment had been left, was a good seven miles; part of the way by fair roads. That part was easy enough. From any hole by the road-side a hidden rebel might have taken a chance shot at the single officer without fear of discovery or punishment, but there was seldom any danger of that sort in Virginia. Talbot went safely and easily enough until he could not keep in the road, and then his trouble began. Occasionally he came bolt up against an abandoned wagon, crippled by having been driven into a mud-hole; two or three times he was nearly plunged over his horse's head by the animal's sudden descent into the road-side ditch to avoid some obstacle in the road unseen by his rider. It seemed the darkest night the world had ever known. There was a dense opacity in the air that was not diminished by the littlest ray of light from any source whatever, and that human vision could no more penetrate than it could a black marble wall. Not a glimmer of a road-side fire showed anywhere. Not a dim candle from a negro hut was visible. There was neither moon nor stars, and that general reflection from the whole heavens which sometimes lessens the total gloom of bad nights was not on duty. Talbot, having the ordinary proportion of human nature in him, did not neglect the opportunity afforded by the occasion for a dress parade of maledictions, involving in them his own ill-luck, the military system of marching up hill only to march down again, the Southern Confederacy, and the nights of "the sunny South." He did, however, get on for perhaps three miles, and then he discovered that he was off the road. Ordinarily a horse may be relied upon to keep in the road, but even this trait of equine sagacity has no value in war. Man depends upon the horse in this particular because the horse's instinct teaches him the way to his home. In war he has no home. If even his instinct as to the road is of any value apart from the relation of the road to his home, war, in our country at least, so nearly obliterates roads that even the keenest instincts might be at fault. In that country there were always roads enough, and they all ran crosswise—through fields, over rough hills and broken bits of woodland, and through the rivers; and the fences that are sometimes a guide had long since fed the bivouac fires. Apparently the captain had reached some point where the road turned off at a right angle, and he had kept straight on, not perceiving the turn. He found that he was in the fields, and in pretty wet ground, for his horse went to the fetlocks at every step. If he could have guessed whether the road out of which he had turned had twisted to the right or the left, he would have had some vague basis for the effort to find it again, but as he could not guess out this problem his uncertainty gave him a choice of directions as far as the poles apart. He might be presently laboring up the front of the fortified hills, or he might before he knew it be tumbling over twenty feet of bluff into the river. Finding his horse distressed a bit by the bad ground, he halted to breathe that excellent animal and bait his own imagination.

In this moment he formulated a few silent objections to the glory of the man who invented the compass. "For," he said, "the dogs, the wolves, the panthers, and other night prowlers do not get lost across the country. Why? Because they have in their brains some instinct of direction that is a living equivalent of the compass. Man must have had that once in his brain also. He could hardly be inferior to all the beasts. But some fellow without confidence in himself made a machine to have things easy, and all the rest of us have acquired so much the habit of depending upon the machine that we have lost that secret of nature. But come, old Cinnamon, we must get on."

He gave a light touch to his horse, and thus called upon, the honest animal responded by turning abruptly to the left, and making a rush up an almost perpendicular bank, eight or ten feet high, and forward from the brow, apparently through a strip of woods, for Talbot received many a stroke from the low-hanging branches. Half blown, the horse stayed his short course in what was evidently open ground again, which the captain naturally thought might be the road, because he imagined the horse would not have taken this independent initiative without some reason.

"Well done, old Cinnamon," he said, as he patted the horse's neck; "that was a good move."

But here again all was gloom, silence, and desolation. Yet as he sat and listened he could imagine that he actually did hear some faint sounds. Was it imagination only, or were there voices? Imagination has a ready way of working often without facts, and he could not determine whether the voices he seemed to hear were in the air or altogether in his brain, but he pushed cautiously forward, giving the horse the rein. Presently he was reasonably sure that he heard men talking, and a few seconds later he caught a glimmer of light.

Here was perhaps a camp fire, and some of our stragglers around it; yet it might be an advanced post of the enemy. He went forward, therefore, with the precaution that the case called for. Because to stumble upon the enemy's outpost in these circumstances would involve very ugly incidents. Guided by the difference in the air that even a remote and perhaps very little fire made, he heard the talking distinctly, and recognized that it was the conversation of Northern men; for, as between our men and the Confederates, accent, dialect, and intonation made distinction as easy as would the apparently broader difference of another language. He got so near without attracting attention as to see the men and hear what they said.

They were three stragglers of our army, rather more than half tipsy, and in the pleasant indifference to time and chance which it is the virtue of commissary whiskey to produce, and were holding a prolonged consultation over the case of a horse that one of them had in his charge, and which had gone down in a hole where they were, having broken or otherwise crippled one of his legs in the fall. It was a battery horse, and two of the men were artillerymen, the other an infantryman; apparently the chance comrades of this gloomy way.

"Boys, I don't like to leave that horse," said one artilleryman.

"Well, we got to leave him or ourselves," said the other.

"Why 's only one more old hoss," said the infantryman. "Haven't we left 'em everywhere, all over? Haven't we filled Virginia with 'em?"

"No," said the first batteryman; you're wrong, pardner. That ain't only one more old hoss: that wasn't no common horse. He's a good soldier of the Union, that horse. Him and me's been in many battles together."

"Well," said the other artilleryman. "I wish it was his mate, the black one. That black horse didn't care a cuss for the Union. But this was a good one. He'd pull like a soldier when the gun was in a hole; and how he would swing things when his gun was wheeled to unlimber! He was a hero."

"Yes, he was a good one," said the other. "It's a great wrong to call him only one more old hoss. There wasn't any nonsense about him. He was a veteran. He was just like an old soldier. An old soldier don't get up and yell for enthusiasm, like a youngster, but when the tough times come, he's there; and it was so with that horse. He faced the music at Fair Oaks, at Gaines Mill, at Malvern Hill, and There's many a man would expect to be Governor of his State if he had done half as much for the Union as that 'ere horse has done."

Talbot now went ahead, and as he came close to the fire, the boy a started to their feet, and the infantryman put up his piece and cried: "Halt! Who goes there?"

"Attention, company!" said the captain; and the soldier, with the promptitude of a piece of machinery in which you have touched the spring, brought the butt of his piece to the ground, and placed himself in the attitude of attention.

"You are staying out late, boys," said the captain. "Our army is all over the river, and the enemy may be here at any moment."

"That's what I been tellin' 'em for an hour," said one of the battery fellows; "but they say they can't find the way."

"Captain," said the infantryman, "lemme tell you how it is. You see, I belong to the Twenty-second Indiana Regiment."

"Where is your regiment?"

"That's jis what I want to find out. I was out in the woods 's afternoon and had a good sleep, when I waked up, went into camp; but there wasn't any camp. The camp was there, but the army was gone. Then I started down this way, and over hauled some fellows on the road that I knew. They was next to us out in front. They told me all the army was moved 'cept our brigade. Said they saw my regiment out there. So I turned around and went that way. It was awful rough, and dark as pitch; but I got there, and the regiment wasn't there neither."

"Sure you were in the camp?"

"Sure as shootin', captain."

As this soldier's regiment was in the lost brigade, this information was important.

"And the regiment was not in its camp?"

"Regiment was gone. My colonel ain't the kind of a man to get left. I know that if there's any marchin', or any fightin', or anything else, he's a fellow to be up and hustlin'. He's a good man as good as they make 'em. Now, captain, I'll do jist what you say. If you tell me I ought to go out to the lines again, I'll go."

"Why, the enemy's there now," said one of the battery fellows.

"Shoot the enemy! I want to get to my regiment."

"Well," said Talbot, "you'd better rush for the river, all of you."

"That's jis what Major Ingersoll told me."

"Where did you see Major Ingersoll?"

"Just along the road here a little ways. The major and Lieutenant Crane are on the piazza of a little house, waiting for the moonrise to find their way."

"And it's my opinion," said the artilleryman who had grieved over his horse—"it's my opinion that a Confederate moon ain't to be depended upon."

Ingersoll and Crane were the fellows Talbot had been asked to look out for. They, it appears, had been outside the lines when the troops moved, making a call upon some ladies. Talbot was very glad to get this news of them, and felt sure they could give him a straight account of the brigade, as they were the last from the front, for he did not know just how much he could believe of the straggler's story. But before going forward he insisted that the three stragglers should get in motion, for he understood that half tipsy fellows once started are as persistent in going ahead as they are in staying when once at rest. He was very much surprised to see them take the road in what seemed to him a wrong direction, but found upon touching this point that they knew just where they were, and that he, when he found them, had been actually going toward the river.

As he had in the directions of the soldiers a reasonably sure guide to the place where the other officers were, he jogged along condently and with a light heart, for the accidental encounter with these tipsy comrades had lightened his labor.

II.

Half a mile from the point where he left the soldiers, Talbot came upon Ingersoll and Crane in the road. An unknown horseman, approaching at night on doubtful ground, is watched, upon the theory that he may be an enemy, it is safe to assume that he is one until the contrary is shown: and thus the others prepared for defence, but hearing them near, Talbot hailed them by their names, and was recognized at once. They could give him good news on the subject of his errand. They knew exactly the position of the brigade. They had gone through its lines in the afternoon. They had returned at the same point only an hour ago, and the brigade was not there. They did not know what road it had taken, but nothing could be more certain than that it had followed the army.

But now how were they all to get to the river the easiest way?

"Well," said Ingersoll, "that is what has troubled us ever since since it became so very dark. We have in the road here an ancient person of African origin who proposes to help us out of our scrape, and his plan seems to us a good one. We are, it appears, near to the Saldagnia ruin, and an easy road goes the whole distance, while from the ruin to the river there is also an easy way. We propose to wait at the ruin until moonrise, which is only about an hour, and then, if we cannot reach the shore, we can swim our horses over. The rebs won't push in here until daylight."

Talbot agreed to act with them on this plan, and they went on together, talking over the experiences of the night, the colored man keeping exactly in front of the nose of Ingersoll's horse, and showing the road. They rode for some time in that way, and then Talbot made a singular discovery. He perceived that a fourth horseman was riding with them. The guide was on foot, but another horseman was in the company. It was a bewildering fact that made a strange, unpleasant impression on the mind. The captain made this discovery by observing that at the very moment when the voices of Ingersoll and Crane showed that one was in front of him and the other behind him, there was yet one more rider, almost keeping step with him, close at his side.

Talbot could not make up his mind what to do about this. Perhaps this other horseman was not the only one there. There might be a party; they might have some evil intention, and it might be dangerous to give an an alarm that would certainly precipitate whatever was impending. How could he give notice to the others without informing this fourth rider that his presence was observed? Before he could determine this point a solution came.

"Gentlemen," said a loud, clear voice, "I would like to say a word, if you please."

There was a sudden halt of every one.

"Who said that?" said Ingersoll.

"Stranger has the floor," said Talbot.

"But who in the deuce is he, and where does he come from?" said Crane.

"Gentlemen, I will answer your questions. My name is Wrayburn. I am a civilian, and a peaceful citizen of Virginia. I have been at the house of a relative on the north side of the river, and the armies were between that place and my own house. Taking advantage of the military movements the other day, I started to go to my home; for I thought your army would be by this time far south of this, and that this region would be clear. As it has not turned out that way, my ride home is not so easy. I am an old man, and have a pass from the commander of your army. Just now, on the road here, I found myself suddenly in your company. You did not perceive me; and as I heard that you were going by the way of the Saldagnia ruin I was glad, for I am going the same way. But I discovered that I was hearing conversation not intended for my ears, and I determined to declare myself, first that I might not unintentionally play the spy upon you, and next that I might not put myself in a false position."

"Why, that's all right," said Ingersoll. "Does anyone object?"

"I do not," said Talbot.

"Nor I," said Crane.

"Gentlemen, you are very courteous and kind," said the old gentleman; and they rode on. In a very short time they reached the ruin, as the colored man had promised Ingersoll; and the arrival anywhere without an accident on such a night was good reason for a feeling of satisfaction. The ruin was a sort of landmark in that region. It was all that was left of a house that had apparently been as large as an ancient abbey, and built in that style. There were ranges of ruin that indicated the general plan of the outer wall, and across, in one direction or another, traces of wall which divided the ground covered into the semblance of great halls or cozy chambers or secret towers. Here and there was enough left of the main walls to show the full sweep of Gothic windows. The edifice had been of hewn stone, and its remains covered the ground in such a way that an effort to ride in or around it without a guide would have been dangerous to the horses' legs. They had all seen the ruin often enough and visited it, but only the colored man knew all the paths, and they followed him into a part of it pretty well surrounded by high walls. He had chosen this place apparently in the unconscious exercise of a secretive instinct, for they had all reached the agreement that there was no reason to apprehend the appearance of the enemy before daylight. Here they dismounted and hitched their horses, while the colored man kindled a little fire, for in this May night a little fire was a comfortable thing to be near. As they gathered around the little flame and got sight of one another, the Virginian drew forth a very re-assuring-looking flask, with a metal cup fitted on the outside at the bottom. He poured a small portion of the contents of the flask into the metal cup and drank, by way of showing it was not poison, and then passed the flask and cup to the major, and so it went around, and they became acquainted. As soon as the colored man had done what he could in these various ways, to make the officers comfortable, he asked civilly if they needed him any more. As they did not expect to move until there would be light enough for them to find their way out, they let him go, the richer for some loose change.

Major Ingersoll, as seen by the light of this little fire, or by any other light, was a fellow of reassuring and pleasant aspect. He was a man of forty, with gray hair and beard, all cut very close, the gray making a happy harmony with his blue eyes, and not less happy contrast with the smooth brown of his skin. He was a man of sturdy rather than of graceful person, with that repose in act and speech—that total want of the element of irritability—which is a guarantee of sound nerve and brain; a fellow used to looking death in the face, and not to be much moved by lighter reasons; yet amiable at that, and ready for any fun that was on foot.

Crane was a queer fellow. His name was not Crane, and all those who daily called him by this name were well aware that it was not his; yet this was a camp compromise. He was a Russian or a Pole, and was possessed of a name pronounceable only in his own country, and being a very practical fellow, had adopted a name that should be easily to the ears and tongues of our people, and while he was at it, chose the easiest he could find. He was a short, round, tough fellow, very brave, and very superstitious, polite, ceremonious, proud and haughty. Crane said, as he sat on a convenient stone beside the fire, "Mr. Wrayburn, I wish to request from you a favor."

"Certainly, sir; I shall be happy to do you any in my power."

"In my country there are also many ruins just like this, and to every ruin there is a story. This ruin has been a palace. Splendid people have lived here—fine gentlemen, beautiful ladies; that is very evident. This ruin must have a story, and I have all the time a great curiosity to know it. Can you tell me this story.

"Well, sir, I am sorry to disappoint you," said Mr. Wrayburn, "but these ruins have no story. It was, as you have said, a grand old house, and the home of a notable family which came to a very melancholy end, and the country people say the ruins are haunted by the ghosts of those who lived there, as they say of all ruins, but there is no story in all that."

"There I told you so. That is the beginning of the story—the melancholy end of the family—the haunted ruins. Do you believe in ghosts?" said Crane.

"Why, no, sir; I can hardly say that I believe in ghosts as visible realities. I do believe in ghosts as part of the machinery of the popular imagination; as things or fancies that affect the common mind, as part of the common religion or superstition of ages. Some strange and unexplained appearances have been seen in these ruins. What they are, I know not. The people in such a case always say ghosts, and the people are very apt to be wrong in every case."

"Who were they that lived here?" said Ingersoll

"The name was Saldagnia, sir. It does not sound like an English name, but is rather Portuguese or Spanish. They were not Virginia people, indeed—that is, they were not of any of our known Virginia families. Only two generations of them lived here."

"Where did they come from?"

"That was never known with any certainty. They came to us here from New Orleans; from what place before that, it was found impossible to learn. There was a story, however, that their enormous wealth had been acquired in the slave-trade."

"Then they were very rich?"

"Oh, yes; there was no fortune in these parts that would compare with theirs. Indeed, to have built this house would have impoverished any Virginia family."

"Evidently it was a great house."

"Everything was on the most magnificent scale, sir; a stone castle, or palace rather, as the gentleman said, built by foreign artists, furniture fit for the houses of kings, and a hospitality on a footing with the rest of it. The whole valley was always astir with the entertainments and festivities here when the owner was here; but a good part of the time he was away, at New Orleans, Paris, London or elsewhere."

"And you mentioned that all this splendor came to a melancholy end," said Talbot. "What was that end?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Saldagnia had one son, a fine young fellow, with the same lavish extravagance and generous tastes as his father, and the same ardor in his love for horses. But this young gentleman was not so popular with the other youngsters of the neighborhood as his father would have liked. He had not grown up here, you see, and had some contempt, perhaps, for the simplicity of Virginia life. Mr. Saldagnia's wife was never here; she had died before the father had determined to make his home permanently in Virginia. But there was a great deal said about a very beautiful slave woman who was part of the household, one of those women that are very nearly white, and though there was not a trace of such parantage in young Saldagnia's appearance, the opinion became accepted as the truth that that woman was his mother. Nothing can be more hurtful than such an opinion of a taint in the blood, and this opinion became known to young Saldagnia himself, and poisoned his life."

"Retribution for the slave trade," said Crane.

"Perhaps sor, si," said the old gentleman.

"On a certain day young Saldagnia appeared at one of our local race meetings on one of the finest horses ever seen in the country. Some ladies, admiring this horse, asked his name. Saldagnia said he had no name, and gallantly requested the lady to name him. She, at a loss, asked Mr. Sparks, a genteman near her, to suggest a name. 'Why,' said Sparks, 'you might call him Sambo,' and they all laughed. Sambo was, you know, formerly a name for a half-breed person, and that laughter went to the heart of young Saldagnia, who preceived that every one observed the sneer.

"Well," said Crane, "he should have shot that fellow as soon as he could get him away from where the ladies were."

"He challenged him that afternoon, sir."

"That was good."

"Some of Sparks' friends said if there was any reason for Saldagnia to take offence at what Sparks said, it must be that he was the son of a slave; and if he was the son of a slave, Sparks could not meet him. But Sparks declined to argue the case. He said he would fight, and chose rifles for the weapons. There were both deadshots, and Saldagnia's seconds objected to the weapon. Negotiation followed instead of a fight, and on the last day of the race meeting Sparks posted Saldagnia as a coward. They all went to Richmond that afternoon, and that night in that city young Saldagnia first learned this fact that his opponent had posted him. He sought him immediately, found him, and shot Sparks dead on sight."

"Well, he should have fought with rifles," said Crane.

"And what followed then?" said Ingersoll.

"Saldagnia was indicted for murder, and tried on that charge. His father's vast wealth came into play in feeing great lawyers to defend him. The jury disagreed, and he was tried again, and then there were appeals, and so forth, an interminable litigation that entirely exhausted the old gentleman's wealth, and he died here with a broken heart. Young Saldagnia was never hanged, but he disappeared. Then this house stood for a long while unoccupied, and one night in a great storm it was struck by lightning and burned, leaving the ruins about as you see them. Naturally the imagination of those living hereabout has peopled these ruins with the spectres of the old man and the slave mother, and the festal array of visitors, and all that, for superstition gloats over any opportunity to indulge the imagination in that way."

"Well, Mr. Wrayburn, you began by saying there was no story; yet you have told us a very interesting one about all those people."

"These incidents are so well known here that it did not strike me they could be new to any one."

"Well, I never heard a word about all this before; and a hundred thousand men have been near here all winter, and I do not believe one of them ever heard of it. This is a big country, sir."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Wrayburn, rising; "but I can distinguish, gentlemen, that there is a little difference in the color of the atmosphere—the effect of the coming moon. In half an hour I shall have plenty of light, and therefore, with your permission, I will take the road."

And so, with a few ceremonious words, they bade him good-night, and the old gentleman rode away.

III.

And now the moon, as if struggling to keep Mr. Wrayburn's appointment for it, was above the horizon, but hidden by the heavy clouds that had made the gloom of the early night so deep. Through rifts in these clouds an occasional gleam cast a vanishing veil of light upon the ruins, and once or twice the moon shone in full splendor upon the tumbling architecture for several minutes at a time. Our friends had never seen it by moonlight before, and its beauty as thus seen was like a revelation to them of the glory of decay. Perhaps the romantic story they had heard of its history heightened the charm, for the mind and the moonlight have the same witchery to give dignity and poetical grandeur to what in plain daylight is only a broken stone or a shattered column.

There came a moment when the moon was dimmed again, but not altogether hidden; and Ingersoll stirred the dying fire, so that it flared up into a little flame, by the light of which they could see each other's faces, and a glance passed between as if each needed to be reassured by the comfort of some familiar association of humanity.

Suddenly Crane's eyes became fixed upon a distant point of the ruin; there was a change in his demeanor, he said, or almost gasped, "There; what is that?"

"He sees ghosts now," said Ingersoll. And they would have laughed, but did not feel very merry, and saw that Crane, between the ghost stories and the moonlight, was very uneasy.

"No, boys; this is no fun. What is that? It is very queer."

At that moment the glimmer of moonlight in the upper air did not penetrate to those wells of gloom, the recesses of the ruin, and in the depths of one of these was seen what might have been a light, if ordinary light were blue and ghastly and illuminated a perspective trail rather than a point in space, for this was a queer, unreal, ghostly sort of a glimmer that seemed to come out of the heavy dead-wall, and trail around at the foot of it in the great hall of the ruin.

And then there was stranger still; for in the flare of the light they could see moving shadows; but the shadows had a demoniac and unreal demeanor, for Ingersoll, whose common-sense had not been driven from its position, tried to explain the appearance by a thought of the enemy, and saw upon scrutiny that that would be folly.

Ill-defined in the dim gleam that seemed to go with it, and not clearly seen when the moon came to its best, a mass of grotesque forms moved under the influence of some law, and disposed itself in a half-circle at one end of the great hall, and there was stationary; and then some sounds arose from it—strange, wailing, melancholy, moaning, pathetic sounds.

And then the mass was agitated, but in unison, as if it might be dancing; but the movement had not the spirit or vigor or gayety of a dance. It swayed the mass to and fro; it swept it in a slow whirl around and around; and above the mass swinging arms seemed to strike the air, and a monotonous wail arose almost like the death cry at an Indian funeral—a poignant, affecting sound of very human sorrow.

Crane was on his knees, his eyes bulging from their sockets, speechless with a dread he could neither understand nor control; Talbot was uneasy, and Ingersoll puzzled to his wits' ends.

And now the moon, freed for a little from the drapery of clouds, lit the scene, and they could see things really in the form of human figures before them, and one figure became somewhat defined. It seemed to be a woman—a very tall woman, made taller in appearance by a high perpendicular coif or fantistic head-dress. She seemed to come out of the gloom, and to advance to a point between the ends of the semicircle. At that point was a remnant of the base of a stone column about four feet high and flat on top. On that stone, as if it were an altar, she placed what seemed to be a box; and then she withdrew to some distance, and went around this stone with a measured pace, vaguely resembling the movement of a minuet, swinging her arms in grotesque motions, like a witch at an incantation, and each time that she went around it she intoned that same moaning wail they had heard before. And then the whole company seemed to come into her train and move with her, making strange geaticulations; and as they did this they became apparent, and our friends could see them, but yet could not see what they were, for the most notable thing about them was that there were no faces; they were in human form, but not a human face was to be seen. The general outline gave a place for human heads, but the places where the faces might be were covered, as if with veils or other light drapery.

Crane, as a man sensitive to ghostly things, gave indication of their presence. Never were the magnetic rods that indicate the subterranean location of a murdered man's money thrown into such a terrible condition of agitation as he had shown; and the state of collapse that he had now reached impressed painfully the others.

Neither Ingersoll nor Talbot had the same faith as Crane, and they wrestled with the case a little, but found no rational way to account for it. Speculate as they would upon the possibilities of things that might make this appearance, they could find no natural explanation, and were forced upon the conclusion that they were in the presence of the supernatural. For a time—they never knew how long—they remained thus fascinated by the strange scene, and then there was a sudden change. There arose a commotion. The company of spectres lost its relation of harmony. For the orderly measured movements and sense of dignity of the priestess, or whatever she was, there was substituted an air of alarm, and the decorous demeanor of the semicircle of spectres lapsed as if under an impulse of dismay. They swept swiftly out of the open space in which they had displayed themselves, into holes, crannies, or crevices of the wall; and their departure was more surprising even than the first appearance, for our friends had only time to observe this effect of commotion and consternation, and, lo! they were gone.

The officers themselves seemed to recover the power of speech at the same time.

"If they are ghosts," said Ingersoll, who was not entirely sure but that Crane and the people were right—"if they are ghosts, why should they skedaddle in that way?"

"Yes; what should they fear?" said Talbot. "I never heard that ghosts feared anything but daylight; and certainly they were frightened, and there is no daylight now."

"No," said Ingersoll; "but there is moonlight enough for us to move by. Let us get away, because, if they are not ghosts—"

"Yes; if they are darkies on a voudoo spree—"

"They may have been frightened by the coming of things that ought to frighten us also."

As this was said, and they got the half-paralyzed Crane on his feet, their ears were filled with noises that were unmistakably military—the word of command, the hurried movement of horses, the jangle of arms. From the windows just above, and very near them, substantial figures pointed long arms at them in a rather ghostly way, but at the end of each arm was a very unghostly revolver, and the whole room filled up in a minute with Confederate cavalry.

They drew their swords, stood upon their defence, and were saluted with the sharp and peremptory demand, "Surrender!" There never was a more complete surprise. If the ghosts, or whatever the things were that they had seen, had been planned to paralyze their perceptions while the enemy's men crept down under them, the surprise could have been more successful, and Talbot was for a moment inclined to the fancy that that was the truth of the case. But here they were caught, surrounded, and cut off by a force of cavalry so large and so ready that there was not even a chance to fight, and they accepted their fate.

Ingersoll and Talbot made out from what they heard in the course of the next half-hour, as the enemy's fellows talked among themselves, that this cavalry had been encamped on the high ground back of the river at daylight; that they had seen the lights, had heard the voices from the ruin, and had recognized in all this a voudoo night; that the colored people of the country round had gathered to celebrate the strange rites of snake worship which their ancestors had brought from Africa, and that the cavalry had stolen down to surprise the darkies, and had thus caught the prisoners by accident. There was not any consolation in this, but they could not reproach themselves for the failure to understand the singular scene they had witnessed, because neither of them had ever had much experience of the ways of Southern darkies. But Ingersoll and Crane felt much worse over their capture than Talbot did for his part, as they had good reason to. He had been on a perilous service under orders, and was captured while on duty; they had left the lines on a lark during the day, and were taken while absent without leave. They did not know how they would be carried on the rolls, and they gnawed their hearts in silence as they lay for half an hour under guard. They had been promptly robbed as soon as taken, for their horses were superior to any in the cavalry, and were confiscated for that reason; and troopers, under the pretence of searching for arms, had taken their watches and money, for all had been done so suddenly that they had not even had the thought to resort to the ordinary soldier's device of hiding their valuables. Preparations were made about half past two to send the prisoners to the rear under guard, as the cavalry were about to go forward, and then there was another sudden change.

With a sudden effect like that of an explosion, there was a rattle of guns in a half-dozen points at once, all around the outside of the ruin, and the drums sounded that quaint, half-lilting, rapid movement, the advance in double-quick time. Our fellow's hearts were in their throats as the cavalry fellows stopped and looked each other in the face, and wondered what this might mean. They did not wonder long. Some of the cavalry outside saw infantry in motion, saw what infantry it was, and put spurs to their horses. Others caught at this hint, and there was a general skedaddle in the dim light, and in five minutes the ruin was in possession of the lost brigade.

The brigade had come on slowly through the early night, when the commander discovered that he had been left, and made a long halt without fires on the road half a mile above the ruin, because the fellows in advance discovered that there was a cavalry camp on the road ahead of them, and the time had been employed in the endeavor to find another road leading to the river. They did not know how much cavalry there was, and supposed that they had gotten in between the advance-guard and the main body of some rebel division on the march.

While here they also heard the noise of the darkies, and this helped them to a knowledge of their position.

As they watched the cavalry camp they saw the cavalry move, and were able to count it, and discovered that they were about two small companies. Then, supposing that the object of the cavalry was to effect some surprise, it was thought that it might be a happy chance to make it a double surprise party.

Thus the brigade had moved stealthily on the same line with the cavalry, its commander clearly perceiving all the opportunities of the occasion, and so they had happily arrived, and Ingersoll, Talbot, and Crane were very happy fellows, though they had a night somewhat painfully crammed with experience.

As they all rode over the bridge together, Crane said to the commander of the brigade, "Joe, oh, Joe, you never were so much in the right place in your life as when you were lost!"

The New Congressman.

Turner, the iceman recently elected to congress from one of the New York districts, has confessed that he does not feel as comfortable in his new seat in congress as he did upon his ice wagon. Thereupon the funny papers have already begun telling him to keep cool.

Amos Cummings has written in the *Sun* a vivid sketch of the woes of the member in his first term, which doubtless Mr. Cummings draws up from the deep salt well of experience. There are 120 new congressman this year.

Months will be required before the new member learns the staircases, labyrinths and passages of the huge Capitol building, and even after months he will sometimes need a guide to show him the way. This will be more apt to occur after a lunch in the senate restaurant with some of his constituents. It will take more than months for him to get the hang of the rules of the house. If he attends to business strictly he will have almost no time for social pleasure.

He will be put on a committee, perhaps two, and he can tell no more than a dead man what committee it will be. If he is a skilled lawyer, perhaps he will be one of the gentlemen appointed to look after our great American navy.

Stick close to your desk and never go to sea,
And you'll all be the ruler of the queen's navee.

During the first term he will be snubbed and sat upon from the word go by experienced members. He will not be permitted to make a speech, even though the question is one about which he is the only man in the house who knows anything. A general who commanded the troops that destroyed a certain property during the war was serving his second term. A bill came before the house in which this very matter was involved. The general, who alone knew about it, wished to give some information to the house. He put the case to the chairman of his committee, and asked to address the house half an hour. His chairman replied in that lordly manner long official residence at Washington gives:

"When we want you to talk we'll let you know."

The new congressman finds himself upon a bed of coals and not of roses, says Mr. Cummings. He will be awfully annoyed by women, for one thing. But if at the end of his first term, balancing accounts, he concludes that on the whole he has had more fun than bother, he goes in for it again.

Most of them do go in for it again, including Mr. Cummings.

A New Treatment and Possible Cure for Cancer.

The anonymous correspondent of the *Lancet*, whose suggestion of the combined use of papain and thallin in cancer was noticed in a recent number of the London *Medical Recorder*, turns out to be Dr. J. Mortimer Granville. He has since supplemented his first statement by a further communication, in which he says that if the solvent or digestive power of the papain is to be brought to bear on the morbid growth, it must not be exhausted by being first mixed with food. He therefore recommends very frequent administration of the papain and thallin and their combination in the form of pills. The aim is to get absorption of the drug, not local action on the stomach. In cancer of this organ, Dr. Mortimer Granville gives, besides the pills, papain suspended in water with thallin and an alkali. With the view of further preventing exhaustion of the papain, he directs that the patient shall be fed as exclusively as possible on a vegetable diet, and that the pills shall be taken before meals or in the interval between them. He has not found that the thallin given as described exerts any injuriously depressing effect on the organism as a whole. The vitality of the morbid growth seems (the italics are Dr. Mortimer Granville's) to be depressed by saturation with the thallin and papain locally; this is effected by applying a strong paste of the two drugs in combination, or, where practicable, by their inunction. The results obtained so far are said to be encouraging, and "make it clear that the method will deserve a full and fair trial by the profession."—London *Medical Recorder*.

A Cure for Diphtheria.

The following remedy is said to be the best known, at least it is worth trying. At the first indication of diphtheria in the throat of a child make the room closey, then take a tin cup and pour into it a quantity of tar and turpentine, equal parts. Then hold the cup over a fire so as to fill the room with fumes. The little patient, on inhaling the fumes, will cough up and spit out all the membranous matter, and the diphtheria will pass of. The fumes of the tar and turpentine loosen the matter in the throat, and thus afford the relief that has baffled the skill of physicians.

He got Even.

Young Wife—I am going to make a nice cake for supper.

Young Husband, with recollection of the last one—Ahem, I did intend to bring a friend home to-night.

Young Wife—Well, so much the better. The more the merrier.

Young Husband—All right. I will fetch