

Castlemon Harry

True To His Colors



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CHAPTER I

ALL ABOUT THE FLAG

"Rodney Gray, I am ashamed of you; and if you were not my cousin, I should be tempted to thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Never mind the relationship. After listening to the sentiments you have been preaching in this academy for the last three months, I am more ashamed of it than you can possibly be. You're a Yankee at heart, and a traitor to your State. Let go those halliards!"

"I'll not do it. Look here, Rodney. Your ancestors and mine have fought under this flag ever since it has been a flag, and, if I can help it, you shall not be the first of our name to haul it down. Let go yourself, and stand back, or I will throw you over the parapet."

"But that flag doesn't belong up there any longer, and I say, and we all say, that it shall not stay. Here's our banner; and if there's a war coming, as some of you seem to think, it will lead

us to victory on every battle-field."

An exciting scene was being enacted in and around the belfry of the Barrington Military Institute on the morning of the 9th of March, 1861; and it was but one of many similar scenes which, for some time past, had been of almost daily occurrence in many parts of the South. It had been brought about by the efforts of a band of young secessionists, headed by Rodney Gray, to haul down the academy flag, and to hoist in its place a strange banner – one that nobody had ever seen or heard of previous to the 4th of March, the day on which Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States. The students who were gathered on the top of the tower at the time our story begins were Southern boys without exception, but they did not all believe in secession and disunion. Many of them were loyal to the old flag, and were not ready to see it hauled down, and a strange piece of bunting run up in its place.

Those were exciting times in our country's history, you may be sure. Rumors of war filled the air on every side. Seven States had rebelled and defied the authority of the government, and for no other reason than because a man they did not like had been elected President. A new government had been established at Montgomery, and formally inaugurated on the 18th of February. Jefferson Davis, President of the seceded States, had been authorized to accept the services of one hundred thousand volunteers to serve for one year, unless sooner discharged, and they were to be mustered to "repel invasion, maintain the

rightful possession of the Confederate States of America, and secure the public tranquillity against threatened assault." Every schoolboy who has paid any attention to his history knows that there was not the slightest excuse for calling this immense army into existence. The disunion leaders repeatedly declared that Northern men would not fight, and they seemed to have good grounds for thinking so; for, although Fort Sumter was surrounded by hostile batteries, no attempt had been made to send supplies to Major Anderson and the gallant fellows who were shut up in the fort with him, and more than five weeks passed after the formation of the Confederate government before President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand militia to "suppress unlawful combinations, and to cause the laws to be duly executed." But this unnecessary act of the Confederate Provisional Congress had just the effect it was intended to have. It "fired the Southern heart," and immediately every man, woman, and boy "took sides." The papers had just brought the glorious news to Barrington, and the students at the military academy were in a state of intense excitement over it.

Even at this late day there are boys – bright fellows, too – who believe that when the war broke out every one who lived in the South was a rebel; but this was by no means the case. The South was divided against itself, and so was the North. Horace Greeley, in his "Recollections of a Busy Life," tells us that in the beginning there were not more than half a million "Simon-pure" secessionists to be found among the five millions

and more of whites who lived south of Mason and Dixon's line. Of course subsequent events, like the War and Emancipation proclamations, added to this number; but even at the end there were Union-loving people scattered all through the seceded States, and they clung to their principles in spite of everything, fighting the conscript officers, and resisting all the efforts that were made to force them into the rebel army. The Confederates called these plucky men and boys traitors, although they denied that they were traitors themselves. They hated them with an undying hatred, and when they captured them with arms in their hands, as Forrest captured the garrison at Fort Pillow, they made short work with them.

If it is true that a majority of the Southern people believed that a State had the right to withdraw from the Union when things were not managed in a satisfactory way, it is equally true that there was a party in the North who held the same opinion. They said, "Let the erring sisters go" if they want to, and declared that "Whenever any considerable section of our Union shall deliberately resolve to go out, we shall resist all coercive measures designed to keep it in." These were the rabid Abolitionists, who were perfectly willing that the nation should be destroyed rather than that it should continue to exist half-slave and half-free. One of their leaders, who afterward became a Union general, declared, "If slavery is the condition of the perpetuity of the Union, let the Union *slide*," for slavery must in no case be allowed to continue. The Southern planters

wanted that their "peculiar institution" should be taken into the territories, while the Abolitionists demanded that it should be blotted out altogether; and to these two parties we are indebted for our four years' war.

There was still another secession party on both sides of the line, who thought the government had no power to keep the Southern States in the Union if they did not want to stay, and that if allowed to go in peace they would soon get tired of trying to manage their own affairs, and drift back into the Union of their own free will. It was better that the Union should be peacefully sundered than that there should be a war about it. But another party said that such talk was treason; that the Constitution was ordained to establish a "more perfect Union," which was to be "perpetuated"; that no State, or combination of States, had any right to try to break up the government because they could no longer run things to suit themselves; and that there was not room enough for another flag on this Continent. This was the good old Union party, and fortunately it was resolute enough and strong enough to run the starry banner up to the masthead and keep it there. This was what Marcy Gray, a North Carolina boy, had done on this particular morning on the roof of the Barrington Military Institute, and he had done it, too, in spite of all the efforts his cousin, Rodney Gray, backed by nearly all the young rebels in the school, had made to prevent it. Ever since the day on which the news came that South Carolina had passed the ordinance of secession, that flag, which up to this time had been raised and

lowered only at certain hours, had been a bone of contention. For long years it had floated over the academy, and no one had ever had a word to say against it; but the moment it became known that one of the Southern States had decided that she would not stay in the Union if Mr. Lincoln was to rule over it, there was a great change in the feelings of the students regarding that piece of bunting. What an excitement there was on the morning of the 21st of December, when Rodney Gray rushed into the hall with his Charleston *Mercury* in his hand!

"Hurrah for plucky little South Carolina!" he shouted, striking up a war-dance and flourishing the paper over his head. "Listen to this, fellows: 'The Union is dissolved. Passed at 1:15 P.M., December 20, 1860, an ordinance to dissolve the Union existing between the State of South Carolina and other States united with her under the compact entitled 'The Constitution of the United States of America.'" There it is in black and white. She's out, and of course all the other Cotton States will go with her. The Stars and Stripes have been pulled down in the city of Charleston, and the State flag is flying over all the public buildings. Let's follow their example, and haul that flag down from the tower. Come on, Marcy."

These two boys, Rodney and Marcy Gray, were very popular among their fellows, and had been looked up to as leaders ever since they arrived at the dignity of memberships in the first class and company. They were cousins, and both were Southern born. Marcy was a "Tarheel," because he came from North Carolina,

and Rodney was called a "Pelican," Louisiana being his native State.

Rodney's father was a rich sugar-planter who did not want to have anything to do with Northern men, some of whom would have taken his slaves from him if they had possessed the power, and thus deprived him of the means of working his fine plantation; and it was natural that his only son should follow in his lead. Rodney believed in State Rights, and preached his doctrines as often as he could find any one willing to listen to him. His Cousin Marcy had no father (he was lost at sea when the boy and his older brother, Jack, were quite young), and he believed as his mother did – that slavery was wrong, that the Union was right, and that those who wanted to destroy it were fanatics who did not know what they were about. But Marcy was not a passive Unionist. On the day South Carolina began threatening secession, he declared that she ought to be whipped into submission; and he had never ceased to proclaim his principles in spite of the lowering looks he saw and the threats he heard on every side. The boys declared that they would send him to Coventry; that is, withdraw from all fellowship with him; but when they came to try it, they found to their surprise and disgust, that they would have to go back on more than half the school, for some of the best boys in it promptly sided with Marcy. The latter had many friends, and the Union sentiment was strong in the academy; but on the morning that Rodney Gray read the extract from the *Charleston Mercury*, showing that

South Carolina had made no idle threat when she threatened to secede if she could not have her own way, then the real test came. Many of the boys were astonished and shocked, for they had never believed that things would come to such a pass. The mail having just been distributed, they all had papers, but they did not stop to read them after listening to those ominous headlines. They shoved them into their pockets and went slowly out of the building, while Rodney and his fellows, who were almost beside themselves with exultation and excitement, made a rush for the stairs that led to the tower. On the way Rodney stopped to exchange a few words with his cousin.

"You didn't think it would come, did you?" he exclaimed, walking up to Marcy and snatching away the paper on which the latter's eyes were fastened. "But you see it has, don't you? It seems that those furious threats about secession were not all talk, don't it? But seriously, Marcy, I know you stand where every other Southern boy stands, and that you are with us heart and soul. All I ask of you is to say so. Why don't you speak? Which side are you on, any way?"

But Marcy did not utter a word. Although he looked straight at his cousin he did not appear to know that Rodney was talking to him, for his mind was busy with other matters.

"Tell him you're neutral," suggested Dick Graham, whose home was in

Missouri, and whom we may meet again under different circumstances.

"That's what I am going to be, for I don't think my State will follow in

South Carolina's lead."

"But I am not neutral," replied Marcy, arousing himself at last. "I am for the Union all over, and I'm sorry we haven't a Jackson in Washington at this moment to say that it must and shall be preserved. I hope Buchanan will send ships enough into Charleston harbor to blow that miserable State out of water."

"Let him try it, and see how quickly the other Cotton States will arm to help her," exclaimed Bob Cole, who was one of Rodney's friends and followers. "Coerce a sovereign State? The President can't do it. The Constitution does not give him the power."

Bob Cole did not know it, and neither did any of the other boys who were standing around listening to his fiery words, but that was the very argument the frightened chief magistrate was going to put forth in his next message to Congress.

"The President will only make a bad matter worse if he tries any fool thing like that," continued Bob, who, like most of the boys of that section of the country, had heard these matters discussed so often that he had them at his tongue's end. "I tell you that the events of yesterday are an entering wedge. We are tired of the company of those Yankees up North, and now we are going to get rid of them and have a government of our own; see if we don't. Why should we not? The people up there do not belong to the same race we do. They are regicides and Roundheads –

plodding, stingy folks, in whose eyes a dollar looks as big as a cart-wheel. The race who settled Virginia and scattered all over these Southern States, were cavaliers and money spenders, and their descendants are the same. We've wanted to get rid of them ever since 1830, and now we are going to do it. Patrick Henry warned us against forming a partnership with them in the first place."

"Whom do you mean by us and we?" demanded Marcy, who had listened in silence to this speech, which was addressed to the boys gathered in the hall rather than to himself. "You don't live in South Carolina."

"No, but I do," said Ed Billings, elbowing his way to the foot of the stairs on which Bob had perched himself when he began his address. "I go with my State, and you will have to go with yours or show yourself a traitor."

"A traitor to what?" inquired Marcy.

"To your State," Billings almost shouted.

"My State hasn't seceded yet; but if she does, and I go with her, how will I stand in regard to the old flag – the one that waves over this academy?"

Billings tried to answer, but his voice was drowned in the wild shouts that arose from the assembled students.

"Haul the flag down!" they yelled, almost as one boy.

"No, no," cried some of the more reasonable ones, after they had taken time to think twice. "Let's wait upon the colonel and request him to have it taken down."

"There's one thing I want you all to bear in mind," added a tall fellow, who hearing the tumult in the hall had come back to see what it was all about. "Those colors shall not come down without the colonel's orders, and I'll mix up promiscuous with any chap who lays an ugly hand upon them."

So it seemed that the old flag had defenders even here; and although it may not have had a very sincere friend in the person of the head of the school, he positively refused to order it down, or to permit the students to pull it down. It would be time enough to attend to that when they learned what the State was going to do. The boys went away disappointed; but the most of them believed that the day would come when they could work their sweet will with that "emblem of tyranny," as they had already begun to call it.

From that time forward there were none in all the length and breadth of the land who kept a closer watch upon passing events than did the three hundred students of the Barrington military academy; but it is a question whether they did not imbibe a great many false ideas along with the news they read. The Southern press never did deal fairly with its readers. All dispatches favorable to the secessionists and their cause were published, as a matter of course; but those that were not favorable were either suppressed entirely, or distorted out of all semblance to the truth. They began this course in the early days of the Confederacy and kept it up to the end, one of their generals forging a telegraph dispatch, in which he announced that he had

won a great battle, during which he killed and captured twenty thousand Federals, and destroyed four of Porter's gunboats.

For three months the flag that floated over the academy held its place. Persevering and daring attempts were made to steal it at night, but they were every one frustrated by the vigilance and courage of the boys who had not yet lost all love for it, and for the memory of those whose deeds it commemorated. When the colonel announced that he would take charge of the bunting at night the Union boys thought it would be in safe hands; but it turned out afterward that they were mistaken.

The tension of brain and nerve to which the students were subjected during the next few weeks was something to wonder at, and every day added to their suspense and anxiety. South Carolina sent commissioners to other States, urging them to join her in the secession movement, and one of them shouted to the citizens of Georgia: "Buy arms, and throw the bloody spear into the den of the assassins and incendiaries, and God defend the right!" But Stephens said in reply: "I tell you frankly that the election of a man constitutionally chosen president is not sufficient cause for any State to separate from the Union." And yet in a very few weeks this same Alexander H. Stephens was vice-president of the Confederacy. Mississippi went out of the Union first, and others followed, until there were seven of them to organize a new government under a new flag. Then it was that the first open attempt was made to haul the old banner down from the academy flag-staff; but it was promptly met, and although

Rodney Gray and his followers had been reinforced by nearly all the students belonging to the seceded States, the Union boys were strong enough to drive them down stairs, through the hall, and out of the building. They tried to be as good-natured as they could about it, but there were a few fights that took place before the peaceable ones could interfere, and the result was that Rodney Gray and some others found themselves in the guard-house. But they were never brought to trial, for, after that, events came thick and fast, and the rigid discipline to which the students had hitherto been subjected was so greatly relaxed, that it was a wonder the school held together as long as it did. Before the Confederate Congress adjourned it passed the act of which we have spoken, authorizing President Davis to accept the services of one hundred thousand one year's men, and then the excitement was at fever heat.

This act was passed on the 7th of March, and on the evening of the next day the papers brought the news of it to Barrington. There was also one other act of the Confederate Congress which excited some comment, but, with the exception of Rodney Gray, no one at the academy gave it a second thought. When you hear what that act was, and what Rodney did about it, you will perhaps realize how very much in earnest the disunionists were, and how their unreasonable hostility toward those who did not believe as they did led them to forget their manhood, and do things they would not have dreamed of in their sane and sober moments.

The same mail that brought these papers brought also several

mysterious packages, each of which contained an article that none of the Barrington people had ever seen before. One of them was addressed to Rodney Gray. He ran the guard and went to the post-office after it; or, rather, he climbed the fence in full view of the sentry, who turned his back and walked off without making any effort to stop him. The thing he found in that package was what brought on the fight between him and Marcy, to which reference was made at the beginning of this chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGE BANNER

The military academy was located a little over two miles from Barrington, which was a wealthy and aristocratic place of about three thousand inhabitants. It was a square stone building, flanked with towers at each corner, and looked something like a little fortress when viewed from a distance. In the days when military discipline had been enforced, the mail was brought to the academy regularly every morning and evening; but after the presidential election the students became so very restless and impatient that they could not wait for old darkey Sam and his slow-going mule to bring them their letters and papers. They threw the regulations to the winds, and openly defying courts-martial and every other form of punishment, climbed the fence in plain sight of the sentries and went to town in a body. At least that was what some of them did; but a few of the more obedient and easy-going ones, like Marcy Gray and his particular friends, asked for a pass when they desired it, and if they didn't get it they had self-control enough to remain within bounds.

Rodney Gray and the boys who went to Barrington with him on the day we have mentioned saw that there was "something

up" the minute they reached town. Blue "nullification" badges, and red, white, and blue rosettes were seen on every side, and strange banners were waving in the air; those who had no flag-staffs in their yards or on their houses hanging the colors out of their upper windows. Heretofore the students had sometimes seen men and women walking the streets with small Union flags pinned to their breasts; but there was not one in sight now.

"What's in the wind?" exclaimed Rodney, after he had taken a glance around and noted these little things. "And what sort of a flag is that up there on Mr. Riley's office?"

"It must be the new Confederate banner, that made its appearance for the first time on the 4th," replied Dick Graham, who was one of the party.

"Hurry up, fellows," cried Ed Billings, catching the two by the arm and quickening his pace. "We're going to hear great news this evening, and I am impatient to know what it will be. Hold on; now we shall hear all about it."

Just then a couple of young ladies with whom they were well acquainted came up; the boys lifted their caps to them, and Ed continued, pointing first to the red, white, and blue rosettes with which they were decorated, and then at the new colors that were fluttering over their heads:

"Anything exciting been going on lately? And what has become of all the little Union flags we saw yesterday?"

"No doubt they have been concealed to await the time when the Yankees shall come marching through here with fire and

sword," replied one of the girls.

Such talk was common enough in the South in those days, and the people learned it not only from their own leaders, but from secession sympathizers who lived in the North. Fire and sword were just what Jefferson Davis intended to give the States that did not belong to the Confederacy. This is what he said in his speech at Montgomery on the evening of February 15:

"If war must come, it must be on Northern, not on Southern, soil. A glorious future is before us. The grass will grow in Northern cities where the pavements have been worn off by the tread of commerce. We will carry war where it is easy to advance, where food for the sword and torch await our armies in the densely populated cities."

Ex-President Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire made use of nearly the same language when he wrote to Davis, assuring him that, "If there is any fighting it will be within our own borders and in our own streets." Turn to your history if you want to see how these confident predictions were fulfilled.

"Well, if those Yankee flags are not brought to light until the Yankees themselves come marching through this State, you will never see them again," said Rodney, with emphasis. "If the Northern people fool with us we will keep them so busy on their own ground that they will never think of coming down here. But what's the use of talking about war! They'll not fight. I only wish they would, so that we might show them how easy it would be for us to whip them. But is that our flag up there? And what is

the meaning of those ribbons?"

"Oh, haven't you heard? Well, you'll know all about it when you get your paper. The president has been empowered to call for an immense army of our gallant – "

"Bosh!" sneered Rodney; and then he apologized for the interruption and for the expression he had used.

"But we need an army to hold possession of our coast defences, do we not? All the government property in the Confederacy has been seized, and now that we have got it, we must hold fast to it."

"Certainly; but we don't need an army to do that. Our school battalion, if the boys were only united, could do it and not half try."

"If they were united?" repeated one of the girls. "You do not mean to say that there are traitors in that school?"

Rodney replied that was just what he did mean to say. He declared that the academy was a hotbed of treason, and Cole and Billings confirmed his words. The girls were surprised to hear it.

"And even the colonel hasn't the pluck of a cat or a mind of his own," continued Billings. "He doesn't seem to know where he stands."

"Every one in town wonders why that flag has been permitted to float so long, and now I know," said one of the girls. "The colonel is friendly to it; but still, if you young gentlemen had half the courage we have given you credit for, you would have pulled it down long ago."

Rodney winced. He did not like to confess that he and his friends had tried their best to haul the flag down, but the Union boys had prevented them from doing it; for he knew the girls would laugh at him. They might do even worse than that. They might tell him that he need not trouble himself to call upon them any more (for things had come to that pass already), so he brought forward the best excuse he could think of on the spur of the moment.

"But the colonel will not allow it," he protested. "He says it will be time enough to bother with the flag when we find out what the State is going to do."

"But I don't see how you can march under those colors when your own gallant Louisiana has followed South Carolina out of the Union."

"I confess we don't like it," said Cole, "but a good soldier always obeys orders, you know. Wait until the State acts, and then you shall hear from us."

"I hope to hear from you before that time, although this State is bound to go with the others. I should be ashamed to acknowledge that I live within her borders if she shows such a want of spirit as to be willing to remain in the Union after all that has happened. The next time you come to see me, Mr. Cole," said the young lady sweetly, "I shall expect you to tell me that that flag has been hauled down in spite of all opposition, and that our own Confederate flag has been hoisted in its place."

"So that's our flag, is it?" said Rodney, casting a glance of

pride toward the Stars and Bars that waved from several buildings within the range of his vision. "I thought as much. When did it get here?"

"We received a score or more of them by this day's mail, and our patriotic citizens lost no time in giving them to the breeze," was the reply.

"But the trouble is, we haven't any flag of that sort at the academy," said Cole. "So how are we to run it up in place of the Stars and Stripes?"

"My sister and I will see that you have the flag, if you will promise to hoist it," answered one of the girls. "We are at work upon one now, and will have it ready for you to-morrow at this hour, provided you can tell us that the old flag has been hauled down. Tomorrow, mind. Shall we expect you?"

"I'll be around," replied Cole, but he did not talk as glibly as he usually did, for he was thinking about something else. To-morrow at that hour. By gracious! that was bringing the thing straight home to a fellow, wasn't it? That meant a fight, sure; and the Union boys were not only as brave as boys ever get to be, but their fists were as hard as so many bricks. Cole knew that by experience. And if he could not tell her that the old flag had been hauled down, he need not take the trouble to call at her house. The young lady did not say so, but Cole knew well enough that that was what she meant.

"The commandant is one traitor, but who are the others?" she asked, after a moment's pause. "You said in effect that the school

is full of them. The colonel does not often honor us girls with his visits, but the young gentlemen do sometimes, and we should like to know who the traitors are, so that we can be at home or not, as circumstances seem to require. Give us their names, please."

Rodney's companions would have thought twice before complying with this request, but Rodney himself did not see anything surprising in it. The girls were ardent secessionists, and of course they did not care to associate with those who stood up for the Yankees and for the flag they worshiped. The cousin whom he had always loved as a brother was beneath contempt now, for he was a traitor to the South, and undeserving of the slightest show of respect from any one who had the least respect for himself.

"Well, there's that lovely relative of mine for one," said Rodney promptly.

The girls could hardly believe that they had heard aright. They looked at each other in silence for a moment, and then they looked at Rodney.

"I didn't think that Marcy Gray was such a coward," said one, at length.

"Oh, you are 'way off the track!" exclaimed Dick Graham, who, although he afterward went into the Confederate Army and became a partisan ranger, never forgot the warm friendship he cherished for Marcy Gray. "That fellow is nobody's coward, and you wouldn't think so if you could have seen him when –"

"Look here, Dick," interrupted Rodney, who was afraid that

Marcy's friend was about to say something compromising. "It is very easy for a fellow to say that he is for the Union when he is so far away from the North that he can not, by any possible chance, be called upon to fight for the opinions he pretends to hold, but has Marcy the courage to show by his acts that he is sincere in what he says?"

"Well, yes; I think he has," answered Dick. "When you fellows had that fight over the flag – "

"That isn't what I mean," exclaimed Rodney, impatiently.

"What was it, Mr. Graham?" asked one of the girls, who rather wanted to see Marcy Gray's courage vindicated, if there were any way in which it could be done. "What did he do? Did you really have a fight at the academy over the flag? Go on, please, and tell us all about it."

Rodney tried to speak, but Dick was not to be put down. He knew that Rodney was determined to say something to his cousin's injury if he could, and Dick Graham was not the boy to stand by and see it done without raising his voice in protest.

"Yes; some of the boys tried their level best to get the flag," said

Dick, "but its defenders were much too numerous and strong for them.

During the struggle there were some middling heavy blows passed, and, if

I mistake not, Rodney came in for a few that he'll not soon forget."

Rodney tried to laugh it off as a joke, but it was easy to see that he was about as mad as he could hold.

"Now go on and describe the part you took in that fracas," said he, as soon as he could speak.

"Who? Me? I didn't take any part in it. I don't fight. I'm neutral. You see Missouri hasn't gone out of the Union yet, and I don't intend to make a move until she does. See? I was not saying a word for myself, but for Marcy, who isn't here to take his own part."

"What I want to get at is this," continued Rodney. "If Marcy is so devoted to the Union, why does he stay here, flinging his obnoxious doctrines in our faces every chance he gets? Why doesn't he go North and join the Yankees?"

"He doesn't fling his doctrines in our faces," Dick interposed. "He stands up for them when he thinks it necessary, and so would I if I believed as he does."

"I admire him for that," said one of the girls.

"Oh, do you?" exclaimed Rodney, who was sure of his ground now. "Will you continue to admire him when I tell you that he hoped the Yankees would send a fleet into Charleston harbor that would blow South Carolina out of water?"

No, the girls could not admire Marcy Gray or anybody else who talked that way. If that was his doctrine, he had better quit the South and go among those who believed as he did.

"I was sure you would say so; and that was the point I was trying to reach," continued Rodney. "That was what I meant

when I asked if he had the courage to back up his opinions."

"I am sorry to hear that of Marcy," said one of the girls, and her face showed that she meant every word of it. "He is such a splendid horseman and looks so handsome riding with his battery! And to think that he sympathizes with our oppressors. I can't realize it. I must have a serious talk with him, for unless he comes over to our side, he will be liable to arrest if he stays here much longer."

"It's a wonder to me that he hasn't seen trouble of some sort before this time," observed Billings. "He doesn't haul in his shingle one inch, but blurts out his views wherever he happens to be, and the first thing he knows somebody will pop him over."

"I shouldn't like to be the one to try it," Dick Graham remarked. "Marcy will not take a whipping quietly."

"I didn't mean that he would get into trouble here in Barrington, although I am afraid he will, but with the government," said the girl. "One other thing our Congress did was to pass a law requiring all those who sympathize with the North to leave the limits of the Confederacy within ten days."

"But don't you know that this State hasn't joined the Confederacy yet?" asked the practical Dick.

"If I should forget it, you would be very likely to remind me of the fact," was the reply; "but she will join it before many days have passed, and then where will Marcy be?"

"That's the best news I have heard in a month," declared Rodney, speaking before he thought. Then, seeing that his

companions looked surprised, he hastened to add: "I say it is good news, for when Marcy hears of it he will understand that he must quit his nonsense and come out boldly for one side or the other. If he is with us, all he has to do is to say so; and if he isn't, he'll have to pack up and clear out."

"Oh, we hope he'll not do that," said both the girls in a breath. "Tell him to come and see us, and we will turn him from the error of his ways. Here we are at our gate. Thanks for your escort."

"Why don't you ask us to come in?" inquired Cole.

"Because we have given you something to do first. Pull down that flag and run the banner of the Confederacy up in its place, and then you may come as often as you please."

"Well, shall I tell Marcy to keep his distance until he has made up his mind to hoist the right sort of colors?" said Rodney.

"By no means. We must have a talk with him, and if we fail to win him over, we shall know how to punish him."

"That was rather a snub for you, old fellow," said Billings, as the boys raised their caps to the girls and once more turned toward the post-office. "They are sweet on Marcy, and don't mean to throw him over just because you have taken a sudden dislike to him."

"It was a snub for Cole as well," replied Rodney, hotly. "He will never see the inside of Mr. Taylor's house again, for those girls have imposed upon him a task that is quite beyond his powers. Couldn't you get along without wagging your jaw so freely?" he demanded, turning fiercely upon Dick Graham. "For

two cents you and I would mix up right here in the street."

"Why, what in the world did I say?" asked Dick, in reply.

"You disgraced the school by telling those girls, almost as plainly as you could speak it, that we Southerners are in the minority there."

"If she got that impression, she got a wrong one," said Dick quietly. "I said that the defenders of the flag were too many and too strong for you fellows who tried to haul it down, and that's the truth. I stood up for Marcy because I am his friend, and you ought to be."

"I am a friend to no boy, cousin or no cousin, who talks as he does," said Rodney spitefully. "I despise a traitor, and the fellow who sticks up for him – "

Dick stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, rested his clenched hands upon his hips, and waited for Rodney to finish the sentence. For a second or so it looked as though the two boys were going to "mix up" directly; but Cole and Billings interposed.

"This will never do," said the latter. "If you are determined to have a fight, hurry and get your mail, and then we'll go back to the academy and fight the Yankees and their sympathizers. That's what we've got to do tomorrow, if we run that new flag up on the tower, and we might as well get our hands in first as last. Cole, you go on with Dick, and Rodney and I will follow."

Dick laughingly declared that as he was not spoiling for a fight he could get on very well without an escort, but still he did not raise any objection when Cole took him by the arm and led him

away. Rodney slowly followed, with Billings for a companion, the latter using his best arguments to make the stubborn Rodney see that he could not hope to gain anything by showing so much hostility toward his cousin, who was popular both at the academy and in the town, and that the Taylor girls, from whom they had just parted, didn't think any the more of him for what he had said. Rodney saw that plainly, and it was another thing that made him angry; but he was careful not to let Billings know it. He took no little pride in his horsemanship, and was confident that he made a very fine looking sergeant of artillery; but none of the girls had ever told him so, and he couldn't bear to hear Marcy praised either. He was envious, as well as jealous, and when Rodney got that way, he was in the right humor to do something desperate.

"That new law will fix him and Graham, too," he said to himself. "I'll take pains to call their attention to it the minute I get back to the academy, and if they don't take the hint and make themselves scarce about here, I will set somebody on their track. There are a good many traitors in and around Barrington, and I wonder that they haven't been driven out before this time. I'll rid the school of those two, I bet you; but before they go I'll pick a quarrel with them and whip them out of their boots."

This confident assertion recalls to mind something that was said by the Confederate General Rosser on the morning of the 9th of October, 1864, just previous to the beginning of the fight known in history as "Woodstock Races." Having formed his line of battle, Rosser sat on his horse watching the movements of his

old schoolmate, General Custer, who was busy getting his own forces in shape to attack him. Finally Rosser turned to his staff and said:

"You see that officer down there? That is General Custer, of whom the Yanks are so proud, and I intend to give him the best whipping to-day he ever got; see if I don't."

When Custer was ready to fight he made his charge; the valiant Rosser fled before it, and never but once stopped running until he reached Mount Jackson, twenty-six miles away. It was a trial of speed, rather than a battle, and that is the reason the engagement is called "Woodstock Races." The Confederates lost everything they had that was carried on wheels, and the Union loss was but sixty killed and wounded. Rodney Gray was not as much of a braggart as Rosser was, but if he had tried to carry his threat into execution he might have been as badly whipped.

CHAPTER III

CHEERS FOR "THE STARS AND BARS."

If any boy who reads this series of books believes that secession was the result of a sudden impulse on the part of the Southern people, he has but to look into his history to find that he is mistaken. They had not only been thinking about it for a long time, but, aided by some of Buchanan's treacherous cabinet officers, they had been preparing for it. The Secretary of the Navy ordered the best vessels in our little fleet to distant stations, so that they could not be called upon to help the government when the insurgents seized the forts that were scattered along the coast; and the Secretary of War took nearly a hundred and fifty thousand stand of arms out of Northern arsenals and sent them to the South. He did it openly and without any attempt at concealment, and the Southern papers publicly thanked him for so doing. The *Mobile Register* said, in so many words, that they were much obliged to Mr. Floyd for "disarming the North and equipping the South."

After such acts as these on the part of government officials, it is not surprising that private citizens began to take their local affairs into their own hands. A regular system of espionage and

ostracism was established all over the South. Everybody who was known or suspected of being opposed to slavery and disunion was not only closely watched, but was denied admission to homes in which he had always been a welcome visitor. Free negroes were given to understand that they could either clear out, or remain and be sold into bondage. Northern men – even those who had long been engaged in business in the South, and whose interests were centered there – were looked upon and treated with contempt, and their lives were made miserable in every way that the exasperated and unreasonable people around them could think of.

But, of course, things did not stop here. These suspected persons very soon became the victims of open violence. Some were taken out of their houses at night and whipped; others were tarred and feathered; and more were hanged by self-appointed vigilance committees, or killed in personal encounters. Up to the time of which we write there had been none of this violence in and around Barrington, but it was coming now. Almost the first thing that attracted the attention of Rodney Gray and his companions when they went into the post-office was a notice that had been fastened upon the bulletin board. It took them a minute or two to elbow their way through the crowd of men and boys who were gathered in front of it, reading and commenting upon the startling intelligence it contained, and when they succeeded they read as follows:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

At a meeting of the citizens and voters of Barrington, held this day,

March 9, 1861, it was unanimously

Resolved: That the excitement at present existing among the people renders it prudent for us to appoint a committee of the citizens of Barrington to recommend what measures (if any) should be adopted for the purpose of suppressing any unlawful or riotous outbreak in the town; and that the following named are hereby appointed a "*Committee of Safety*" who are respectfully requested to adopt such measures, or to recommend any measures for adoption by the citizens generally, as may seem to them proper and necessary for the preservation of good order.

Then followed a long list, containing the names of nearly all the prominent and wealthy men of the place.

"Humph!" exclaimed Dick Graham, contemptuously. "The fellows who got this up wasted time and ink to no purpose. There has been no outbreak in Barrington, and none threatened."

"How does it come that you are so well posted, Dick?" said a friendly voice at his elbow; and when he faced about Dick's eyes met those of Mr. Riley, one of the men whose names appeared on the list. "The gentlemen who framed that resolution did not mean to convey the impression that there had been any riotous proceedings in and around Barrington," he continued. "But if

they had desired to create an uproar and excite the fears of the women and children, they might have said that there has been an outbreak threatened; and it would have been nothing but the truth. You boys, who are all the while shut up in the academy, can not be expected to know all that is going on in the country."

"Who has threatened any outbreak?" inquired Dick incredulously. "And when is it coming off?"

"Look here," said Mr. Riley, lowering his voice. "You remember the John

Brown raid, don't you?"

"Seems to me I have heard something about it. But you are not afraid of him, are you?"

"I am not joking," replied Mr. Riley earnestly. "Brown laid out a regular campaign before he started in at Harper's Ferry. He had a map, and on it had marked several localities in which the negroes were greatly in excess of the whites. Those towns and villages were to be destroyed, after the blacks had been coaxed or forced into his army, and Barrington was one of them."

"Well, what of it?" exclaimed Dick. "He didn't get here, did he?"

"Of course he didn't; but he spread such a spirit of discontent among the niggers that we have been shaky ever since. And the events of the last few weeks do not tend to quiet our fears, I assure you."

"When is this insurrection, or whatever you call it, coming off?"

"We don't know when to expect it, but we mean to be ready for it at any hour of the day or night. We have positive evidence that there are about half a dozen too many Abolitionists, and altogether too many free niggers, in and around Barrington."

"When did you find it out?"

"We've always known it; but we never felt so very much afraid of them before. I don't mind telling you, although I should not want to post it on the town pump, that we have had spies out for the last three or four days."

"That's what I thought you were getting at. But who are they?"

"There's Bud Goble, for one."

"Aw, Great Scott!" exclaimed Dick, and even Rodney looked disgusted. "I hope you haven't put the least faith in anything that lazy, worthless fellow has said to you."

"He may be too lazy to earn an honest living, but he is far from worthless in an emergency like the present," replied the committeeman. "He is with us all over, and has been very active since these troubles began."

"I don't see why he should be so very active. He never owned the price of a pickaninny in his life. But I'll tell you what's a fact, Mr. Riley: Bud Goble has got something against every Northern man in Barrington and for miles outside of it, and he will do anything or swear to any number of lies – "

"Don't you give the Committee of Safety any credit for common-sense or prudence?" demanded Rodney, who, although he appeared to be listening to the conversation, was busy thinking

over a project that had suddenly suggested itself to him. "You don't suppose that anything will be done to these suspected men until they have had a fair trial, do you?"

"That's the idea," said Mr. Riley, with a smile. "Rodney, you have your share of common-sense, whether the committee have or not."

"A fair trial?" repeated Dick, who was like Marcy Gray in that he never "pulled in his shingle one inch"; in other words, never backed down from his principles, no matter who might hear what he had to say about them. "Who'll try these suspected men? Judge Lynch; who will order them to be strung up before they can say a word in their own defense. I tell you such work is all wrong."

"Don't let your excitement run away with your reason, Dick," said Mr. Riley soothingly. "There's been no innocent person harmed yet, and, moreover, such a thing never happened in this county."

"No, but it is going on all over the South; and I tell you that there are plenty of people of the Bud Goble stamp who would do the same thing right here if they were not afraid," said Dick earnestly.

"Put him out! He's a traitor!" cried one of the academy boys; and "put him out," was echoed from all parts of the post-office. But the boys who uttered the words were all Dick Graham's friends, and an attempt to put him out would certainly have resulted disastrously to somebody.

"Of course I understand that this is all sport," said Mr. Riley. "But seriously, Dick, the time may come when it will be anything but safe for you to express your sentiments with so much freedom."

"I assure you I appreciate your kindness in giving me a friendly word of caution, and thank you for it," replied the boy, "but this is a free country, and I shall say what I think, regardless of consequences. Wait till the time for fighting comes and see – "

"See what?" interrupted Billings. "There isn't going to be any fighting."

"Don't fool yourself. There'll be fighting before this thing is over, and more than you redhot secessionists will want to see – mark that! And when it comes we'll see who will do the most of it, I or men like Bud Goble, who have taken advantage of this time of excitement to get innocent folks into trouble."

Having had his talk out Dick turned to work his way to the window to get his mail; but before he got there a wild shout arose from the crowd of students who blocked his path, and a moment afterward a brand new Confederate flag fluttered over their heads. Rodney Gray had received a package from home and this was what he found in it.

"I say, Graham," he exclaimed, as soon as he could make himself heard, "doesn't the sight of this make you ashamed of the sentiments you have just uttered?"

"Not a bit of it," was the prompt response. "Missouri hasn't recognized that flag yet. When she does, I will fight for it as long

and as hard as you will."

"Will you join us in a hurrah for it?" continued Rodney.

"No, I won't."

"Three cheers for the Stars and Bars!" shouted Ed Billings. "Long may that flag wave, and may it never be polluted by the touch of a hated Yankee."

The cheers that followed were not cheers; they were whoops and yells – very much like those with which the charging Confederates so often saluted our blue-coats on the field of battle. Dick had half a notion to see if he could not get up a little counter-enthusiasm in behalf of the Stars and Stripes, but was afraid the attempt might result in failure; so after he had secured his mail, he went out on the porch and sat down to read those acts of the Confederate Congress calling for one hundred thousand volunteers, and ordering all who sympathized with the North to leave the limits of the Confederacy within ten days. His secession paper told him all about them, the editor enlarged upon and applauded them, and Dick was forced to the conclusion that things were getting serious; how serious, he little dreamed until four weeks more had passed away.

Dick spent half an hour over his paper and letters, and then Rodney Gray appeared. He had found a stick somewhere and fastened his flag to it. Although these two boys had had some sharp verbal contests during the last three months, they kept up an appearance of friendship, which was real so far as Dick Graham was concerned. The latter could not "swallow Rodney's

disunion doctrines," as he often declared, but for all that he had a sincere regard for him, and always spoke of him as one of the finest fellows in school. Perhaps we shall see whether or not Rodney paid him back in kind.

"Give it a cheer, why don't you?" said Rodney, waving his flag over

Dick's head. "Where in the world have you been?"

"Right here, waiting for you."

"Well, come up the road a piece. There's a squad there, and we have been counting noses."

"How many noses do you want, and what do you want them for?" inquired Dick, putting his paper into his pocket and getting upon his feet. "What new nonsense are you up to?"

"There's no nonsense about this, I tell you. It's business. We want as many noses as we can get, and the boys behind them must be true blue. The fellows said I would be wasting time if I came after you, but I want to hear you say so with your own lips before I shall believe it. You have said more than once that if Missouri goes out and joins the Confederacy, you will go with her, haven't you?"

"You bet, and I say so yet. My State, or any State, has the right to go out of the Union as she came into it – of her own free will; and if those fellows up North are going to fight to keep her in, I shall fight to help her out. That's me; but you see Missouri hasn't yet – "

"I have heard that until I am tired of it," interrupted Rodney.

"Missouri hasn't gone out yet, but she's going; and in the meantime, what about that flag at the academy? Are you in favor of letting it stay there?"

"That depends entirely upon the colonel," answered Dick. "If he says haul her down, down she comes. If he says let her stay up, up she stays. That's me."

"And will you continue to march and drill under it, now that we have a flag of our own?" demanded Rodney.

"That also depends. If the other boys drill under it and march after it, I will. In fact, I don't know but I shall do it any way, whether the others do or not. I don't know what you mean when you speak of a flag of our own. I don't recognize that thing you are carrying over your shoulder. The old flag is my flag, and will be as long as Missouri stays in the Union. I don't see the least use in rushing things. You and your friends are taking a good deal upon yourselves when you presume to act in advance of the State."

"Well, you see what the business men of Barrington think of the situation, don't you? That notice in the post-office looks and sounds mighty innocent, but reading between the lines –"

"So you read between the lines!" exclaimed Dick. "I did the same, and I tell you that that Committee of Safety is a fraud. Bud Goble has been carrying tales about some innocent men whom, for personal reasons, he does not like, and Mr. Riley and a few other hotheads are trying to find some excuse for driving them out of town. There'll be outrages here the first thing you

know and they will be committed under cover of that business men's meeting, and with the connivance of those whose names are signed to that list."

"Do you mean to say that all those prominent men are such ruffians?" cried Rodney, in great excitement. "Why didn't you say as much when you were talking to Mr. Riley? You dared not do it."

"I didn't think of it; but I will wait here while you run back and tell him."

Dick looked sharply at his companion as he said this, and was surprised to see the usually self-possessed Rodney turn as red as a beet. It was plain that he had been touched in some tender spot by these chance words.

"What's he been up to?" was the question Dick Graham propounded to himself. "If I had known that I was going to hit him as hard as that, I wouldn't have said a word. He has been doing something sneaking, and I did not think that of Rodney Gray." Then aloud he said: "I didn't mean to hint that you would do such a thing, but you have been about half-wild during the last few weeks, and I don't believe you know all the time what you are doing."

"Well, if I'm crazy, I have the satisfaction of knowing that there are a good many like me in the South," replied Rodney, with a light laugh; and he uttered nothing but the truth. Taken as a body the Southern people certainly acted as if they had lost their senses. Among all those who rejoiced over South Carolina's

reckless act there were few who saw that "it was but the prelude to the most terrible tragedy of the age – the unchaining of a storm that was destined to shake the continent with terror and devastation, leaving the Southern States a wreck, and sweeping from the earth the institution in whose behalf the fatal work was done." You may be sure that Rodney Gray did not see this sad picture, for just at that moment there were few things he could see except the elegant silk banner that waved above his head, and which he was determined to hoist at the academy flag-staff the very next morning.

"Here are the fellows," he added, as he and Dick came up with the squad who were gathered on a street corner waiting for them.

"And a fine-looking lot of lads they are," was Dick's comment. "Rebels the last one of them."

"Washington was a rebel, young fellow," replied one of the students, "and that is what he would be if he were with us to-day."

"Well, seeing that he isn't here to decide the matter, don't let's waste time in talking about it," said Cole. "The question is, Is that flag at the academy going to stay up or come down – which?"

"It's going to come down," replied Billings, very decidedly. "We've got a handsomer flag to take its place. Let's cheer it, and see how many of that crowd on the other side of the street will take off their hats to it."

The cheers were given with a will; and this time Dick Graham joined in – not because he cared a cent for the Stars and Bars, but just to help make a noise. The result was all the boys could

have desired. The cheers were answered and hats were lifted in all directions, and handkerchiefs and red, white, and blue rosettes were waved from the windows of neighboring houses.

"Every one in sight made some demonstration," said Rodney gleefully.

"Dick, you are out in the cold."

"I don't feel very forlorn over it," was the reply. "How do you know but that some of those who cheered your old rag are Union at heart? But what are you fellows going to do, and what do you want of me?"

"We intend to hoist Rodney's flag on that tower to-morrow morning immediately after roll-call, and we want to know if you are in."

"No; I'm not in. I'm out. That's me."

"There, Rodney," exclaimed one of the students. "I hope you are satisfied now that you wasted time when you went after Dick Graham. He's a Yankee."

"You're another," retorted Dick.

"Do you still claim to be neutral?"

"I do, for a fact. You see, Missouri –"

"Oh, Dick, have a little mercy on a fellow, and don't say that again," cried half a dozen voices at once.

"Well, then, what do you want me to say? I'll not help you pull down the flag, if that is what you are after. I say, let her alone and she will come down of herself when the sunset gun is fired."

"We don't want her to come down of herself," answered

Rodney. "We want the satisfaction of hauling her down."

"Very well, go and do it; but don't come to me whining over the broken heads you will be sure to get before you are through with the business. If you will let the orderly run her down, I will help steal her, so that she can't be run up in the morning; but being neutral, Missouri not having gone out of – "

"That scheme won't work at all," Rodney declared, with some disgust in his tones. "Don't you know that the colonel takes charge of the bunting every night?"

"I believe I have heard something to that effect."

"And don't you know that he keeps it locked in his bureau?" chimed in

Billings.

"Having been on duty at headquarters a time or two I am not ignorant of the fact," answered Dick. "All I ask of you is to do as I say, and I'll get the flag."

Of course the boys were impatient to know what they could do to help, and Dick at once proceeded to unfold his plans; but as they will be revealed presently we do not stop to tell what they were. Some of the combative ones among the students did not like the scheme at all, for there was not enough danger and excitement in it; and if it succeeded, they would be deprived of the pleasure of listening to the praises which they were sure the Barrington people would lavish upon them, when it should become known that they had hauled the flag down after a desperate battle with the Northern sympathizers who had tried

to protect it. But these were in the minority. The others had no desire to provoke a fight with Marcy Gray and his friends, and it was finally decided that Dick's plan was the safest and best.

"That rather interferes with your arrangements, Cole," said Ed Billings, as the boys paired off and bent their steps toward the academy, Rodney Gray leading, with the flag in his hand. "Those girls were particular to say that the next time you came to see them you must bring word that the flag had been hauled down. I don't know whether or not they will be quite satisfied when you tell them that it was taken from the colonel's room, after it had been pulled down in the proper way."

Cole wasn't certain on that point, either; but he had said all he could against the adoption of Dick Graham's plan, and that was all anybody could do.

CHAPTER IV

RODNEY'S THREAT

"Now, fellows," said Rodney, as soon as the line had been formed, "who knows a song appropriate to the occasion? We want to let the folks in advance of us know that we are coming, so as to see what they will do and say when they behold the banner of our young Republic."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the boys. "Strike up something, somebody." Every one looked at Dick Graham, who was the finest singer in the squad, and the latter, after a moment's reflection, cleared his throat and sang as follows:

"We are many in one while there glitters a star
In the blue of the heavens above,
And tyrants shall quail 'mid their dungeons afar,
When they gaze on the motto of love.
By the bayonet traced at the midnight of war,
On the fields where our glory was won —
Oh, perish the hand or the heart that would mar
Our motto of 'Many in One.'"

A more disgusted lot of boys had never been seen in

Barrington than Rodney and his friends were when Dick finished singing the above, which was a part of two verses of "*E Pluribus Unum*." Of course the members of the squad all knew the song, but they did not suppose that Dick would have the audacity to mix it up in this way. If they had suspected how the song was going to end, they would have drowned him out in short order.

"That's about the biggest sell that was ever perpetrated on a party of confiding students," said Ed Billings, as soon as the whoops and yells of derision with which the patriotic words were greeted had died away. "Can't some good Southerner sing something that will hit the spot?"

Nobody could; for if any of the Confederate songs, which afterward became so popular on both sides the line, were in existence, they had not yet reached Barrington; so the only thing left for the boys to do was to keep step to "hay-foot, straw-foot, boom, boom, boom!" which they chanted with all the power of their lungs. Dick Graham congratulated himself on having said a word for the Union, and paid no sort of attention to the good-natured prods in the ribs which he received from the boys who were marching beside him. He stoutly affirmed that he had uttered nothing but his honest sentiments, and hoped that every one who took a hand in marring "our motto of many in one" would get whipped for his pains.

The students were well acquainted with the people living along their line of march, and were more than satisfied with the enthusiastic greetings given to them and their flag. When

they filed through the gate into the academy grounds the sentry presented arms, and the commandant, who was standing at his window, turned away. The boys saw it, and told one another that the colonel was coming to his senses, and that he would not interpose his authority when they were ready to run up the Stars and Bars on the following morning.

"You fellows are making a heap of fuss about nothing," said Marcy Gray, as his cousin halted beside the camp-chair in which he was sitting and waved the flag over his head, while the rest of the squad trooped up the wide steps that led into the hall. "Take that thing away. The time may come when you will be sorry you ever saw it."

"It shall gleam o'er the sea 'mid the bolts of the storm,
O'er the battle and tempest and wreck,
And flame where our guns with their thunder grow warm –"
sang Rodney. "Look here, old fellow: Couldn't you get up spirit enough to give us a cheer?"

"I don't think I could," replied Marcy. "Did you fellows all have passes? I thought not. If things were as they used to be you would find yourselves in the guard-house in less than ten minutes."

"We are aware of it," answered Rodney; "but if things were as they used to be, we should not have climbed the fence and gone to town without permission. But these are times when rules don't count. There is your mail, and if you will take a friend's advice, you will read that paper carefully. I think there is something in

it that concerns you."

"What is it, and where is it? Tell me all about it, and then I shall be spared the trouble of looking it up."

"Well," said Rodney, as if he hardly knew how to give his cousin the desired information, "Congress has passed a law commanding all Northern sympathizers to leave the limits of the Confederacy within ten days."

"Has this State gone out?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then I don't see how that law concerns me. I am not in the Confederacy, am I? As long as the State does not tell me to go, I shall stay where I am until mother writes me to start for home. Has your father written for you yet?"

"No; but I am looking for a letter every day, and I don't see why I don't get it. But it will come fast enough if the Yankees begin preparations for war, as some lunatics seem to think they will."

"Those same lunatics are about the only sensible people there are in the South to-day. The Northern States will not stand by with their hands in their pockets and see this government broken up, and you may depend upon it," said Marcy earnestly. "If they don't hang a few on both sides the line, there will be a war here the like of which the world has never seen."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Rodney, snapping his fingers in the air.

"And some of it will be in your State and mine," continued Marcy.

"Haven't you read our president's speech?" demanded Rodney, almost fiercely. "He says that if war must come, it will be fought on Northern soil."

"It takes two to make a bargain. The Northern States are stronger than we are, and they would be fools to consent to any such arrangement."

"You'll see that it will be done, whether they consent or not," answered Rodney. "Of course they don't want us to separate from them, for they have made a lot of money out of us with their high protective tariff and all that; but how are they to help themselves when there are no laws or ties of blood to hold us together? Although we speak the same language, we do not belong to the same race that they do; we are better every way than they are, and we're not going to be bound to them any longer. The slaveholders of the South ruled the old Union for sixty out of seventy years of her existence, and now that the reins of power have been snatched from their hands, they're not going to stand it. We'll have a nation of our own that will lead the world in everything that goes to make a nation. If North Carolina goes out, what will you do?"

"I shall go home, of course, for mother will need me. Our blacks will all leave us the first chance they get –"

"Bosh!" said Rodney, again. "The niggers know who their friends are, and I'll bet you there are not a hundred in the South today who would go over to the Yankees if they had the opportunity."

"Whether they run away or not, mother will need somebody on the plantation, and I am the only one she can call on, for Jack is at sea," replied Marcy.

"And, what's more, he may never get back," added Rodney. "We shall have a navy of our own pretty soon, and then, if the Yankees declare war against us, every ship that floats the old flag will have to watch out. We'll light bonfires on every part of the ocean. If your State secedes, you will go with her, of course?"

"Of course I'll not do any such thing."

"Marcy Gray, are you really a traitor? Be honest, now."

"Not much. I am true to my colors – the same colors that your grandfather and mine died under."

"But grandfather never dreamed, when he fought under that flag, that it was going to be turned into an emblem of tyranny," answered Rodney impatiently. "I'll bet you he would not fight under it now; and neither would Washington. But how will you fare when you get home? There are plenty of secessionists in your county, and they will have not the first thing to do with you."

"I don't care whether they do or not," replied Marcy, hardly realizing how much meaning there was in his cousin's last words. "Mother will have something to do with me, I reckon; and so will Jack when he returns; and if the neighbors choose to cut me because I am true to my colors, why I don't see that I can help it."

"Will you fight for the Union?"

"I hope I shall not be called upon to choose sides; but you may be sure

I shall not fight against it."

"Well, go your road, and I will go mine; but you will yet see the day when you will wish you had done differently. By the way," added Rodney carelessly; "those Taylor girls hinted that they would be pleased to see you at their house; but you don't want to air any of your disloyal sentiments in their presence, for if you do, they will be likely to tell you that you needn't come again. My paper says that is what the Richmond girls are doing, and our Barrington girls are following suit. And, Marcy, you had better haul in a little, for if you do not, you will get into trouble. The citizens are waking up, and there has been a Committee of Safety appointed to look out for all disturbers of the peace."

"I think such a committee is needed," was Marcy's quiet rejoinder. "The disturbers of the peace are secessionists without exception, and if the committee will shut up every one of that sort they can get their hands on, they will do the public a service. But as I don't care to be snubbed, I don't think I shall go out of my way to call upon those Taylor girls."

"Of course you will do as you please about that. I have simply delivered their message," said Rodney, as he passed up the steps and through the wide archway, waving his flag and making the hall ring with his shouts as he went. "Rally on the center, boys, and yell defiance to the Regicides and Roundheads. Keep your eye on the stairs, Billings, and if the kurn does not come down when he hears the racket, we are all right for to-morrow morning."

For a few minutes the greatest confusion reigned in the corridor. The secessionists yelled themselves hoarse over the Stars and Bars, and, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, pledged themselves to enlist with the defenders of their respective States within twenty-four hours after they reached home. Then followed a counter-demonstration for the Stars and Stripes, led by the tall student, Dixon, of Kentucky, who was backed up by nearly all the boys from the States that had not yet joined the Confederacy. The noise was deafening, but the colonel did not come out of his room to put a stop to it, and that confirmed Rodney in the belief that he was "all right for tomorrow morning." His friends were greatly encouraged, and one of them, when the evening gun was fired, jerked, rather than pulled, the old flag down from the masthead; and he would have been glad to show his contempt for it by trampling it under his feet, had it not been for the presence of the guard, who paced the top of the tower in plain view of the open door of the belfry.

It was necessary to keep a sentry there now, for when the students found that they could not do as they pleased with the flag, they watched for an opportunity to pull the halliards out of the block at the head of the flagstaff. Of course the rope could and would have been restored to its place, but not without considerable trouble. The staff was so very slender that the lightest boy in school would have thought twice before attempting to climb it, and therefore the staff would have had to come down. Marcy Gray and his friends, who seemed to have a

way of finding out all about the plans that were laid against the flag, thought it would be best to ask the colonel commanding to have a guard placed over the halliards, and this was accordingly done.

Although the sentry who was on duty at this particular time had the reputation of being a good soldier, he was not as friendly to the flag as he might have been; consequently he offered no remonstrance when the orderly gathered the colors up in a bunch and started downstairs to deliver them to the head of the school. But there were parties on the watch, as the orderly found when he reached the upper hall, for there he encountered the tall Kentuckian, Dixon, who at once took him to task.

"What made you wuzzle the flag up in that shape?" he demanded, in no friendly tones. "Put it down here on the floor and fold it as it should be, or off comes your head."

The orderly looked at Dixon, and then at the boys who stood behind him, but he could not see a single one of Rodney Gray's followers among them. Having no one to back him up he dared not refuse to obey the order, for he was well aware that he would get into trouble if he did. He folded the flag, and the tall student went with him to make sure that he delivered it to the commandant in good order. He saw it placed on the bureau in the colonel's room, and then posted off to tell Dick Graham all about it.

Supper was over at last; darkness came on apace, and as usual the students gathered in the corridors to discuss the situation.

They did not seem to remember that there was a law forbidding this very thing, and the guards did not remind them of it, or try to send them to their rooms, for, besides being interested parties themselves, they knew by past experience that the boys would not pay the least attention to their commands.

These discussions were always conducted with more or less noise and hubbub, according to the humor the debaters happened to be in, but now one and all seemed bent on raising a row. They all talked at once, fists were flourished in the air and pretty close to the noses of some of the disputants, and finally the lie was passed, and Rodney Gray and several other students in the lower hall proceeded to "mix up" promiscuously. Dick Graham was not among them. He stood at the head of the stairs, where he could see all that was going on without being seen himself. When the leaders of the opposing sides ceased their arguments and came to blows, and on being separated by their respective friends surged through the door toward the parade, where the matter in dispute could be settled by a fair fight, Dick sprang into life and action and hurried to the commandant's room.

"Sounds something like a row below," said the orderly in a careless, indifferent tone. "Who's in for a black eye this time?"

"Run in and tell the colonel to come out, or there'll be a riot here before he knows it," replied Dick hastily. "Don't your ears tell you that the fellows are all fighting mad, and that the thing is going to be serious?"

Well – yes; there was something of a racket below, but the

orderly said he didn't care for that, provided the Southerners would use up all the traitors in the gang. However, he thought it best to go in with the report, in order to save himself from being hauled over the coals for neglect of duty. When the colonel came out of his quarters, buttoning his uniform coat with one hand and settling his cap on his head with the other, he found Dick standing at the top of the stairs with his hands in his pockets, and a face as innocent as a child's.

"Graham, I am glad to see that you have nothing to do with this disgraceful performance," said he.

"Who? Me, sir?" exclaimed Dick. "I don't fight, sir. I'm neutral, sir.

You see Missouri – "

But the colonel could not wait to hear Dick say that his State had not yet gone out of the Union. He went down the stairs, along the hall, and through the archway with all haste, and then Dick went, too; but he went down the back-stairs, around the corner of the building, and brought two boys to his side by giving a peculiar whistle.

"Everything is all right so far," whispered Dick. "But there's no telling how long the fellows will be able to keep up the farce, now that the colonel has gone down there, so we must be in a hurry."

"Did they do it well and without exciting suspicion?"

"First rate. Couldn't have done it better. If I hadn't been in the plot

I should have thought they were in dead earnest."

While Dick talked he led the way at top speed to the tool-house, and he and his companions vanished through the door. When they came out again they brought with them a light ladder that had been stored there for safe keeping. Moving at a run, they carried it around the building and placed it against the wall under the commandant's window. The sash was raised, and the evening breeze was gently rustling the curtains.

"Do you know whether or not the colonel was alone in his room when you sent the orderly in to fetch him out?" whispered one of the boys. "Suppose he left somebody in there?"

"Or suppose he left his door open and the orderly should chance to look in?" said the other.

"It's too late to think of those things now," replied Dick, placing his foot on the lowest round of the ladder and turning his head to listen a moment to the tumult of voices that came from the direction of the parade-ground. "The fellows are at it yet, and if they can only keep the colonel with them two minutes longer we'll have the flag easy enough. But, mind you, I'll not see it abused."

"It's an enemy's flag," observed one of his companions, who was rather surprised to hear Dick say this. If he was still friendly to the colors, why had he offered to steal them for Rodney Gray?

"No odds if it is an enemy's flag," replied Dick. "We all thought a heap of it once, and I don't know but I think as much of it as I ever did. I say, dog-gone State Rights anyhow."

This showed how much of a rebel Dick Graham was; and there were plenty of others just like him in the South – boys and men, too, who had been taught to believe that the founders of the Republic never meant that the sovereignty of the States should be surrendered to the general government, because they said so in the Declaration of Independence. "These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent *States*," wrote Thomas Jefferson, and all the Northern and Southern delegates agreed with him. If they had intended to form one State or one government, they would have said so in language too plain to be misunderstood. That was Dick's way of looking at it, and he was honest in his belief that the authorities at Washington had no right to order him from his own State to keep another State in the Union when she wanted to leave it. Dick went into the Southern army after a while, as we have said, and so did many others who thought as he did; but their hearts were not in the work, and they were glad when the war ended and the old flag once more waved over our entire country.

"Now," continued Dick, "look out for yourselves. If you see anybody coming, make tracks for cover and leave me to take care of myself. There is no need that more than one of us should get into trouble over this nonsensical business."

So saying, Dick ran up the ladder, pushed aside the curtains, and, finding the room deserted, clambered in and seized the flag, which he found on the bureau just where the tall student told him he would find it. He made his escape with it, the ladder was taken

back to the tool-house, and no one was the wiser for what had been done. If the students who presently followed the colonel back from the parade-ground had looked closely at Dick, they might have seen that his coat stuck out a little more about the breast than it usually did, but perhaps they did not notice it. At all events they said nothing about it.

"What was the row about this time?" inquired Dick, as Rodney came to the head of the stairs where he was standing.

"Politics; nothing but politics," replied Rodney. "But we didn't have time to find out which side was in the right, for the kurn came down and put a stop to the fun. Did you get it?" he asked in a lower tone, first making sure that no one except those who were "in the plot" were near enough to overhear his words. "Bully for you. Now we will see what Marcy and the rest of the traitors will say when they find another and handsomer flag floating at the masthead in the morning. Where is it?"

Dick tapped the breast of his coat.

"All right, hand it over. There's nobody around except those we can trust."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I mean to put it where no one will ever see it again, and that is in the kitchen stove," answered Rodney.

"That's what I was afraid of. Well, I don't want it to go in the kitchen stove, and therefore I must decline to give it to you."

"Why, what in the name of sense do you want to keep it for?"

"To show as a proof of my loyalty and devotion to the

Confederate States of America," replied Dick gravely. "I need some sort of an heirloom to hand down to my grandchildren, don't I?"

Of course Rodney was angry, and he had half a mind to "mix up" with Dick then and there and take the flag away from him. But the latter was a strong, active fellow, and plucky as well, and Rodney wasn't quite sure that it would be safe to attempt it. While he was thinking about it Bob Cole spoke up.

"Let me have the flag," said he, "and I will promise you, on the honor of a soldier, that you shall have it again as soon as it has served my purpose."

"What do you want to do with it?"

"Well, if you must know, I want it to set me right with my best girl. She as good as told me this afternoon that I need not call at her house again until I could tell her that the flag had been hauled down. I want to show it to her to prove that it has been done."

"But it hasn't," objected Dick. "It has been hooked out of the commandant's room, and that's not hauling it down by force. You can tell her that she will never see it hoisted again, and that assurance will have to satisfy her. If she should get her hands on it you would never see it again, and neither would I. When it can float over an undivided country, as it has in the past, and you rebels have been whipped into subjection, then – "

"I say – whipped!" exclaimed Billings.

"Subjection!" Rodney almost howled. "That will never be. Southerners die, but they don't submit. Dick Graham, you are a

traitor, sure enough. You think more of that rag to-day than you do of the rights of the State you claim as your home."

"There's where you are wrong," replied Dick. "I don't quite believe in

State Rights, but my father does, and that's enough for me, and whenever

Missouri gets ready to – "

"When she gets ready to join the Confederacy you won't have the pluck to go with her," exclaimed Rodney hotly. "But there's one thing about it. Our own flag goes up on that tower after roll-call in the morning, and I'll pitch the first fellow over the parapet who tries to pull it down."

"Well, good-by, if you call that going," said Dick, good-naturedly.

The boys all followed Rodney down the stairs and Dick was left alone. He felt of the flag to make sure it was safe, and after looking up and down the hall to see that no one was observing his movements, he went into Marcy Gray's room, where Marcy himself found him a few minutes later.

CHAPTER V

THE PAID SPY

It must not be supposed that the students who did not side with Rodney Gray were entirely deceived by the demonstration that had taken place in the corridor. Noisy political discussions were of too common occurrence to attract the attention of Marcy and his friends, the most of whom were sitting quietly in their rooms, and they gave no heed to what was going on below until the shuffling of feet announced that there was a fight in progress. Then they rushed out in a body, but a single glance at the boys who were struggling in the hall was enough to show them that their services were not needed. The combatants were all secessionists. There were a few "neutrals" among them – Dixon for one – who were trying to restore order, and who finally succeeded in getting them out of the building, but there was no Union boy there who was in want of assistance.

"What's in the wind now, do you reckon?" said Tom Percival, whose father had cast his ballot against secession with one hand, while holding a cocked revolver in the other. "That's a put-up job, and there's something behind it."

"I believe you're right, Tom," said Marcy. "Let's follow them

and see what they are going to do."

There was right where he and his friends made a mistake. They went to the parade ground and looked on while the colonel read Rodney and a few others a severe lecture, and Dick Graham was left free to carry out his part of the programme. Then they went back to their dormitories fully satisfied that if Rodney had hoped to gain anything by getting up that fight, he had failed to accomplish his object. When Marcy opened his door he was surprised to find Dick sitting at the table with a paper in his hand.

"What are you doing here, you rebel?" he demanded.

"Rebel yourself," replied Dick. "You stand ready to go back on your State and I don't. But what is the use of this nonsense? You and I understand each other. Look at that."

"Dick, where did you get it?" exclaimed Marcy, when his visitor drew the flag from under his coat.

"I found it on the colonel's bureau and took it and welcome," answered

Dick.

"When did you do it?"

"Just now."

"Where was the orderly?"

"He was at his post; but he didn't have anything to do with it, and will be as surprised as anybody when he finds that the flag is gone. We got a ladder and went in at the window."

"We? Who?"

"I did. You don't expect me to tell you who held the ladder

while I went up, do you?"

"We knew that that fight was a put-up job, but of course we couldn't imagine what it was got up for. If we had seen or heard anything to set us on the right track, you never would have got your hands on that flag."

"Don't you suppose we knew that?" demanded Dick. "Having no taste for a knockdown and drag-out, we were rather sly about it. But what's the difference? You know as well as I do that it was bound to come down sooner or later, and perhaps it would have been lowered by some one who would not have been as careful of it as I have been. Imagine, if you can, what would have been done to it if the news had come that this State had joined the Confederacy! There hasn't been an ugly finger laid on it since I got it."

Marcy took a turn about the room and then faced his visitor and looked at him in silence.

"I am sure I don't know what to make of you," he said, at length. "Which side are you on? I don't believe you know yourself."

"Haven't I told you time and again that I'm neutral?" demanded Dick.

"You see Missouri – "

"You never saw two dogs fight in the street without wanting one or the other of them to whip," interrupted Marcy. "There can't be such a thing as a neutral in times like these. You are opposed to the flag, and yet you don't want to see it in possession

of those who would insult or destroy it. You handle it as though you loved it."

"I did once, and I don't hate it now, or anybody who stands up for it," answered Dick, thoughtfully. "I am going to give it to you on one – "

"I wondered why you brought it in here," said Marcy. "I shall be glad to have the flag, and to-morrow morning we'll – "

"Good-night," said Dick, getting upon his feet.

"Hold on. What have I said or done to send you away in such a hurry?"

"What will you do to-morrow morning?" asked Dick, in reply.

"We'll run the colors up where they belong, and stand by to see that they stay there. What else should we do?"

"That's what I thought you were going to say; but you must promise that you'll not think of it, or you can't have the flag. You see," continued Dick confidentially, "I am not exactly hand and glove with Rodney and his crowd, but I come pretty near to believing as they do, and that was one reason I offered to steal the flag. If I hadn't done it, they would have hauled it down by force, or tried to, and that might have raised a sure-enough row; no sham about it."

"I am quite sure it would," assented Marcy.

"That's what I was afraid of, and I think it a good plan to put the fighting off as long as we can. I haven't anything against the flag and never shall have, not even when Missouri – "

"Never mind Missouri," Marcy interposed. "Tell me why you

are going to give me the flag."

"Simply because I know you think a good deal of it, and will take care of it," answered Dick. "It will be something to be proud of one of these days, I tell you. After we rebels get the licking we are bound to get in the end – "

"If you are so sure of it, why do you favor secession?" inquired Marcy.

"Who? Me? I don't favor it. I never so much as hinted at such a foolish thing, because a blind man ought to see what is going to come of it. Before the thing is over our niggers will all be gone, our homes will be in ruins, our fields grown up to briars, and we'll be as poor as church mice. You'll see. I say that the Southern States ought to stay in the Union; but if they are resolved that they won't do it, the government at Washington has no shadow of a right to compel them. That's me, and that's why I tell you that when Missouri – "

"Why don't you give me the flag, if you are going to?" said Marcy. "Some of the teachers might come in, and how should I account for your presence here?"

"In any way you please. I am not particular. Hold on a bit," said Dick, as Marcy tried to take the colors from his hand. "I must have your promise first. You must say, in so many words, that you will not attempt to hoist it in the morning, and further, that you will not let anyone know I gave it to you. A certain fellow wants to shove it in the stove – "

"That's my cousin," interrupted Marcy.

"And another wants to show it to his girl, who told him to-day, in my presence, that if he had the pluck she had given him credit for, the colors would have come down long ago."

"That's Bob Cole," said Marcy.

"I was taught never to tell names, and tales, too. I knew that if I gave the flag to either of those fellows I would never see it again. I have marched and drilled under it for almost four years, and shouldn't like to hear that it been abused in any way; but if you and I live to see the end of the terrible times that I believe are coming upon us, I *should* like to hear that it had been run up again. That's why I am going to give it to you; but I must have your promise first."

"It's a bargain, and there's my hand on it," answered Marcy, without hesitation. "That flag shall never go up to the top of the academy staff again if I can help it, and while I remain in this school I'll never say you gave it to me. Now hand it over, so that I can hide it before anybody comes in."

Dick was rather surprised at the promptness with which the required promise was given. Almost without knowing it he handed Marcy the flag, and saw him place it in his trunk and turn the key upon it.

"Say," he exclaimed, when he found his tongue, "what are you up to?"

"I am going to leave the flag there until I can think of some good hiding-place for it," replied Marcy.

"That isn't what I mean, and you know it. I didn't think you

would be so very willing to make the promise, and I am afraid there is something back of it."

"I have said all you asked me to say, have I not? Well, I assure you I shall remember it, for I am not in the habit of breaking my word. The next time these colors float it will be in a breeze that is untainted by any secession rag, I bet you. Then, whether you are living or dead, I shall think of you, Dick. You and I have always been friends and I know we shall continue to be so, no matter where we are or what flag waves over us."

"You don't owe me any thanks," said Dick hastily, and in, rather a husky voice. "I don't want the old thing, for I may have to fight against it someday; but I didn't want to see Rodney and his crowd trample it under their feet before they destroyed it. You're right, we shall always be friends, no matter – dog-gone State Rights anyhow. That's me. Good-night."

"Just one word more before you go," said Marcy. "Where did Rodney get the secession flag he has been prancing around with ever since he came from town?"

"It came through the post-office, but who sent it I don't know. You ought to have heard the fellows whoop and yell when he took it out of the package."

"Does he labor under the delusion that he is going to run it up on the tower in the morning?" continued Marcy.

"You can't prove that by me," was Dick's response. "Good-night."

"Yes, I can prove it by you," thought Marcy, as his visitor went

out, closing the door behind him. "Your face and your actions said plainly enough that that is what Rodney means to do; but I'll bet you he will be astonished when to-morrow comes. He and his crowd must take us for a lot of dunderheads."

Marcy waited until he thought Dick had had time to reach his own room, and then he opened the door and went out into the hall. He was gone about half an hour, and when he came back he was smiling all over, and rubbing his hands together, as if he felt very well satisfied with what he had done during his absence. Then he drew a chair to the table, turned up the lamp, and devoted himself to another reading of the letters and papers he had that day received from home. While he was thus engaged some things were happening a few miles away that eventually came very near raising a "sure-enough fight" at the academy, and opened the eyes of the "citizens and voters of Barrington" to the fact that they had not done a wise thing when they employed some of the most worthless members of the community to keep watch of those who did not wear red, white, and blue rosettes and hurrah for President Davis.

About the time the Missouri boy and his comrades made their successful raid on the commandant's room, one of the paid spies of whom Mr. Riley had spoken during his conversation with Dick Graham went to the post-office in Barrington and was handed a letter addressed to himself. An ordinary observer would have seen at a glance that the writing on the envelope was disguised, but Bud Goble, who seldom saw writing of any

sort, did not notice it. He straightened up as if he had grown an inch or more when he found that he had a correspondent who was respectful enough to address him as "Mister," and rose immensely in his own estimation when he opened the letter and with *much* difficulty spelled out the following:

"This is verry privat and perticular bisness and i wouldnt think of speaking to nobody but you about it who are one of the most promnent and respeckted sitizens of barington."

This was nothing but the truth, according to Mr. Goble's way of thinking; but up to this time he had never met any one whose opinions agreed with his own. If the business to which his correspondent referred was so very "private and particular," it would never do, he thought, to read the letter there in the post-office, while there were so many men standing around; so he straightway sought the privacy of his own dwelling – a little tumble-down log cabin with a dirt floor and stick chimney, which was situated in the outskirts of the town.

"One of the most respected and prominent citizens of Barrington; that's what I be," muttered Bud Goble, as he stumbled along the dark road toward his domicile. "I always knowed it, but there's a heap of folks about here who have always been down on me, kase I haven't got any niggers of my own and have to work for a livin'; but I'm to the top of the heap now, an' what's more, I'll let some of 'em know it before I am many hours older. I wisht I knew what's into this letter, kase it's mighty hard work for me to read it. If it's anything about them babolitionists

an' the doctering they're preachin' up among our niggers – Well, they'll not do it much longer, kase I am about ready to take some on 'em outen their beds at night an' lay the hickory over their backs. There's money into it, kase Mr. Riley an' the rest of the men that's onto the committee said so; an' I'm onto every job where there's an honest dollar to be made."

Bud Goble was a fair type of that class of people who were known to those among whom they lived as "white trash." Even the negroes, particularly those who belonged to wealthy planters, looked upon them with contempt. Too lazy to work, they lived from hand to mouth; and not one out of ten of the many thousands of them who went into the Confederate Army knew what they were fighting for. To save his life Bud Goble could not have told what all this excitement was about. He had a dim notion that somebody wanted to free the slaves, and the idea of such a thing made him furious; although it is hard to explain why it should, for, as Dick Graham said, he had never owned the price of a pickaninny. He had got it into his head that if the negroes were made free he would be brought down to their level and compelled to go to work, and that was something he could not bear to think of.

Bud Goble did not know what secession meant, but he was strongly in favor of it, because the majority of the wealthy and influential citizens in and around Barrington favored it; and taking his cue from them, he not only turned the cold shoulder upon those who were suspected of being on the side of the Union,

but went further and became their deadly enemy. Mr. Riley and the other members of the Committee of Safety knew all this, and yet they employed him, the most vindictive and unreliable man in the neighborhood, to keep them posted in regard to what the Union men and free negroes were doing and saying. It is not to be supposed that men of their intelligence would put much faith in his reports, but they furnished an excuse for resorting to high-handed measures, and that was really what the committee wanted.

Meanwhile Bud Goble was making the best of his way homeward, guided by the blaze from a light-wood fire on the hearth which shone through the open door. It was not such a home as the most of us would care to go to at night, for it was the most cheerless place in the country for miles around. Even the humblest cabin in Mr. Riley's negro quarter, half a mile away, was a more inviting spot. And as for the family who occupied it – well, a benighted traveler, no matter how tired and hungry he might be, would have gone farther and camped in the woods rather than ask supper and lodging of them.

"Now, Susie," exclaimed Mr. Goble cheerfully, addressing a slouchy, unkempt woman who sat in front of the fire with her elbows resting on her knees and a dingy cob pipe between her teeth, "punch up the blaze an' dish up a supper while I read my letter an' see what's into it."

"Who's been a-writin' a letter to you?" queried the woman, without changing her position.

"That's what I don't know till I read it. It's something about them babolitionists that our gover'nment has ordered to get outen here, I reckon. But I'm powerful hungry. I aint had a bite to eat sense I left in the mornin'."

"Well, then, where's the meal an' bacon I told you to fetch along when you come home?" inquired Mrs. Goble. "I told you plain as I could speak it that there wasn't a drop of anything to eat in the house; an' here's the young ones been a-howlin' for grub the whole day long."

"Land sakes, if I didn't forget all about it," said Goble regretfully. "But how on earth am I goin' to get grub when I aint got no money to pay for it? Our committee didn't give me no money to-day kase I didn't have nothing to tell 'em. 'Pears like all the traitors keep mighty glum when I'm around. See two or three of 'em talkin' together, an' they shet up the minute I begin to sidle up to 'em."

"You aint wuth shucks to work for that committee," replied his wife impatiently. "If I was a man an' had the job, I'd tell 'em something every hour in the day."

"How could you when there wasn't nothing to tell, I'd like to know?"

"I'd find plenty, I bet you. You haven't disremembered how them babolitionists an' the free niggers used to talk, about the time John Brown was makin' that raid of his'n, have you?"

"Course I aint; but them's old stories now. They've kept mighty still tongues in their heads sense that time."

"No odds if they have. They was Union then, an' they're that same way of thinkin' now; an' the talk that would have hung 'em then, if our folks hadn't been jest the peaceablest people in the world, would get 'em into trouble now if it was brung up agin 'em."

"An' would you tell them stories all over agin if you was me?" exclaimed

Bud Goble.

"I wouldn't do nothing else."

"Jest as if they happened yisterday?"

"Toby sure. You want money, don't you? an' that there committee of yourn won't give you none 'ceptin' you can tell 'em sunthin', will they?"

"Now, that's an idee," exclaimed Mr. Goble, gazing admiringly at his wife. "I never onct thought of that way of doin'."

"You never think of nothing till I tell you what to do," said Mrs. Goble sharply. "You've had no end of good jobs that you could have made money on if you'd only worked 'em right, but you won't listen to what I tell you. I don't reckon you see how you could make money two ways ouden the job you've got now, do you? You might go to all the Union folks, niggers *an'* whites, an' tell 'em that if they don't give you some clothes for your fambly to wear, an' grub for 'em to eat, you will have that there committee of yourn after 'em, mightn't you?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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