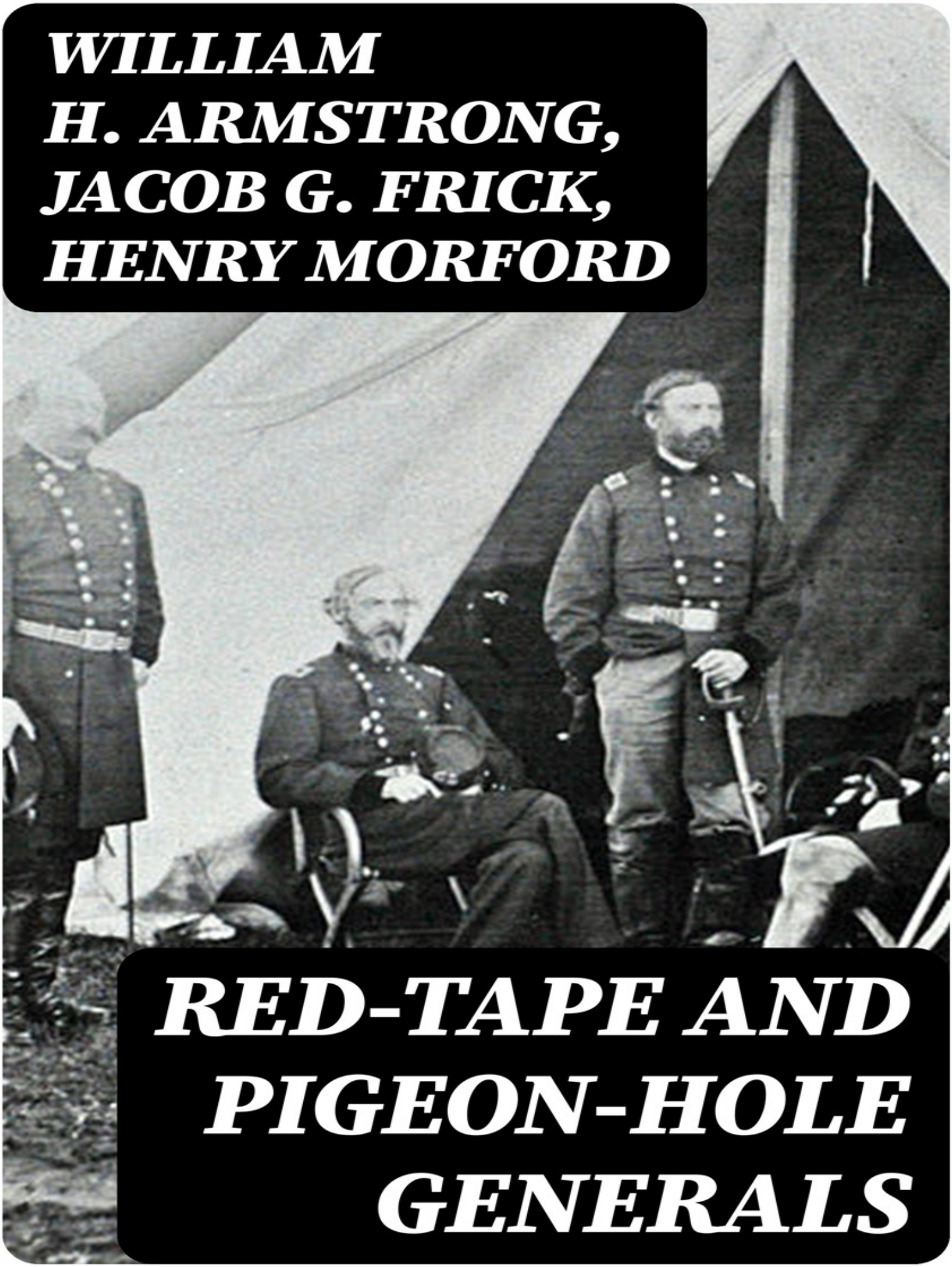

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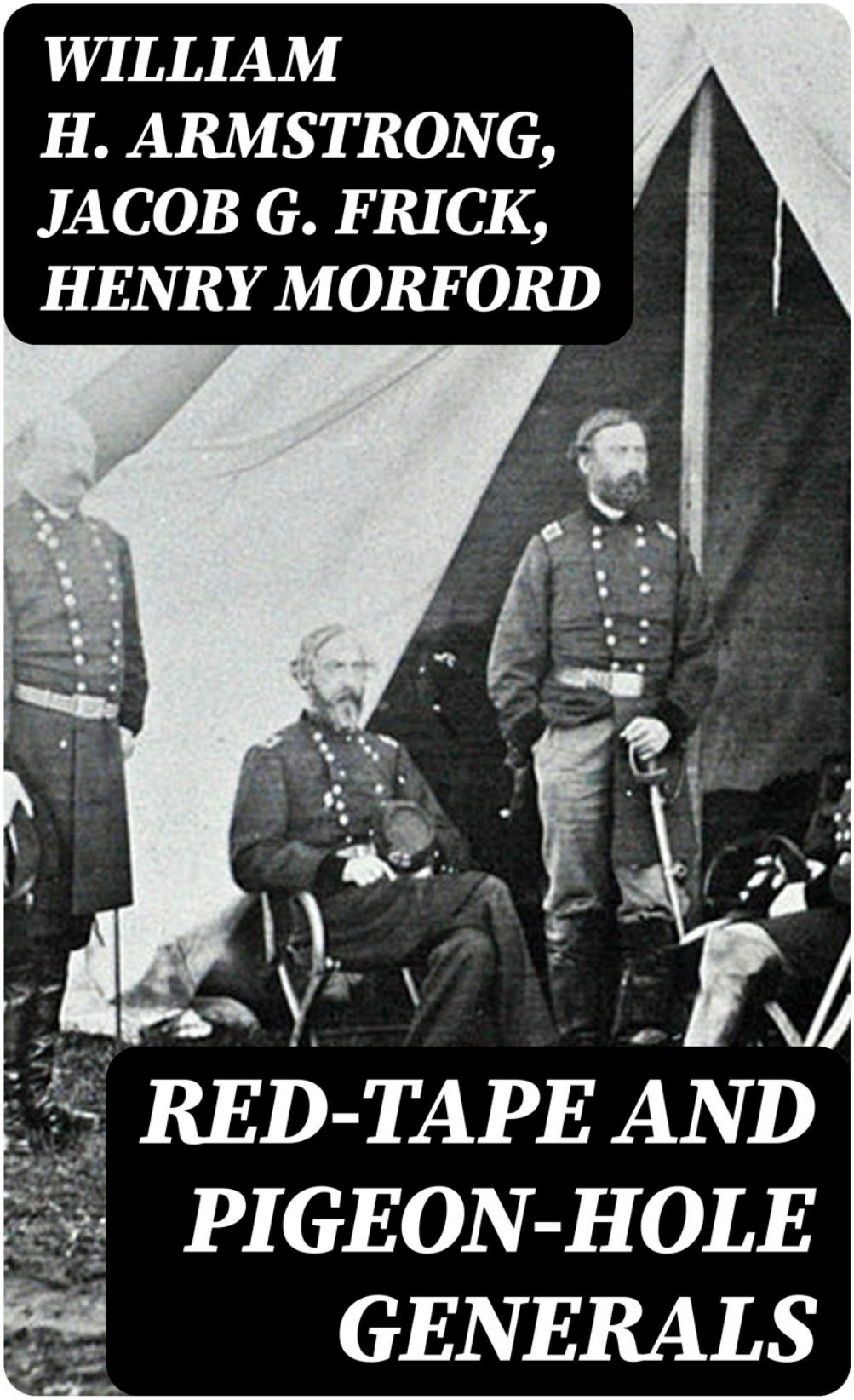
RED-TAPE AND PIGEON-HOLE GENERALS



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RED-TAPE AND PIGEON-HOLE GENERALS

William H. Armstrong, Jacob G. Frick, Henry Morford

Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals

As Seen From the Ranks During a Campaign in the Army of the Potomac

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PREFACE.

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"Greek-fire has shivered the statue of John C. Calhoun in the streets of the City of Charleston,"—so the papers say. Whether true or not, the Greek-fire of the righteous indignation of a loyal people is fast shattering the offspring of his infamous teachings—the armed treason of the South, and its more cowardly ally the insidious treachery that lurks under doubtful cover in the loyal States. In thunder tones do the masses declare, that now and for ever, they repudiate the Treason and despise the Traitor. Nobly are the hands of our Honest President sustained in prosecuting this most righteous war.

In a day like this, the least that can be expected of any citizen is—duty. We are all co-partners in our beneficent government. We should be co-laborers for her defence. Jealous of the interests of her brave soldiery; for they are our own. Proud of their noble deeds; they constitute our National Heritage.

If these campaign sketches, gathered in actual service during 1862–3, and grouped during the spare hours of convalescence from a camp fever, correct one of the least of the abuses in our military machinery—if they lighten the toil of the humblest of our soldiers, or nerve anew the resolves of loyalty tempted to despair, the writer will have no reason to complain of labor lost. Great latitude of excuse for the existence of abuses must be allowed, when we consider the suddenness with which our volunteers sprang into ranks at the outset of the Rebellion. Now that the warfare is a system, there is less reason for their continuance. Reformers must, however, remember, that to keep our

citizen-soldiery effective, they must not make too much of the citizen and too little of the soldier. Abuses must be corrected under the laws; but to be corrected at all they must first be exposed.

Drunkenness, half-heartedness, and senseless routine, have done much to cripple the patriotic efforts of our people. The patriotism of the man who at this day doubts the policy of their open reproof can well be questioned. West Point has, in too many instances, nursed imbecility and treason; but in our honest contempt for the small men of whom, in common with other institutions, she has had her share—we must not ignore those bright pages of our history adorned with the skill and heroism of her nobler sons. McClellanism did not follow its chief from Warrenton; or Burnside's earnestness, Hooker's dash, and Meade's soldierly stand at Gettysburg, backed as they were by the heroic fighting of the Army of the Potomac, would have had, as they deserved, more decisive results.

The Young Men of the Land would the writer address in the following pages—"because they are strong," and in their strength is the nation's hope. In certain prospect of victory over the greatest enemy we have yet had as a nation—the present infamous rebellion—we can well await patiently the correction of minor evils.

"Meanwhile we'll sacrifice to liberty,
Remember, O my friends! the laws, the rights,
The generous plan of power delivered down
From age to age by your renowned forefathers,
(So dearly bought, the price of so much blood;)

Oh, let it never perish in your hands!
But piously transmit it to your children.
Do thou, great liberty! inspire our souls,
And make our lives in thy possession
happy.
Or our deaths glorious in thy just
defence."

February, 1864.

RED-TAPE

AND

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PIGEON-HOLE GENERALS.

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CHAPTER I.

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The Advent of our General of Division—Camp near Frederick City, Maryland—The Old Revolutionary Barracks at Frederick—An Irish Corporal's Recollections of the First Regiment of Volunteers from Pennsylvania—Punishment in the Old First.

"Our new Division-General, boys!" exclaimed a sergeant of the 210th Pennsylvania Volunteers, whose attention and head were turned at the clatter of horses' hoofs to the rear. "I heard an officer say that he would be along to-day, and I recognise his description."

The men, although weary and route-worn, straightened up, dressed their ranks, and as the General and Staff rode past, some enthusiastic soldier proposed cheers for our new Commander. They started with a will, but the General's doubtful look, as interpreted by the men, gave little or no encouragement, and the effort ended in a few ragged discordant yells.

"He is a strange-looking old covey any how," said one of the boys in an undertone. "Did you notice that red muffler about his neck, and how pinched up and crooked his hat is, and that odd-looking moustache, and how savagely he cocks his eyes through his spectacles?"

"They say," replied the sergeant, "that we are the first troops that he has commanded. He was a staff officer before in the Topographical Corps. Didn't you notice the T.C. on his coat buttons?"

"And is he going to practise upon us?" blurts out a bustling red-faced little Irish corporal. "Be Jabers, that accounts for the crooked cow road we have marched through the last day —miles out of the way, and niver a chance for coffee."

"You are too fast, Terence," said the sergeant; "if he belongs to the Topographical Corps, he ought at least to know the roads."

"And didn't you say not two hours ago that we were entirely out of the way, and that we had been wandering as crooked as the creek that flows back of the old town we are from, and nearly runs through itself in a dozen places?"

The sergeant admitted that he had said so, but stated that perhaps the General was not to blame, and added somewhat jocosely: "At any rate the winding of the creek makes those beautiful walks we have so much enjoyed in summer evenings."

"Beautiful winding walks! is it, sergeant! Shure and whin you have your forty pound wait upon your back, forty rounds of lead and powdher in your cartridge-box, and twenty more in your pocket, three days' rations in your haversack, a musket on your shoulder, and army brogans on your throtters, you are just about the first man that I know of to take straight cuts."

It was a close warm day near the middle of September. The roads were dusty and the troops exhausted. Two days

previously the brigade to which they belonged had left the pleasantest of camps, called "Camp Whipple" in honor of their former and favorite Division Commander. Situated in an orchard on the level brow of a hill that overlooked Washington, the imposing Capitol, the broad expanse of the Potomac dotted with frequent craft, the many national buildings, and scenery of historic interest, the men left it with regret, but carried with them recollections that often in times of future depression revived their patriotic ardor.

Over dusty roads, through the muddy aqueduct of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, hurried on over the roughly paved streets of Georgetown, and through the suburbs of Washington, they finally halted for the night, and, as it chanced through lack of orders, for the succeeding day also, near Meridian Hill. Under orders to join the Fifth Army Corps commanded by Major-General Fitz John Porter, to which the Division had been previously assigned, the march was resumed on the succeeding day, which happened to be Sunday, and in the afternoon of which our chapter opens.

A march of another day brought the Brigade to a recent Rebel camp ground. Traces of their occupancy were found not only in their depredations in the neighborhood destructive of railroad bridges, but also in letters and wall-paper envelopes adorned with the lantern-jawed phiz of Jefferson Davis. The latter were sought after with avidity as soon as ranks were broken and tents pitched; the more eagerly perhaps for the reason that during the greater part of their previous month of service they had been frequently within sound of rebel cannon, although but once under their fire. During the previous day, in fact, they had marched to the music of the artillery of South Mountain.

That night awakened lively recollections in the mind of Terence McCarty, our lively little Irish corporal. His duty for the time as corporal of a relief gave him ample opportunity

to indulge them. He had belonged to the old First Pennsylvania Regiment of three months men, that a little over a year before, when Maryland was halting between loyalty and disloyalty, had spent its happiest week of service in the yard of the revolutionary barracks in the city of Frederick. Terence was but two short miles from the spot. Brimfull of the memories, he turned to a comrade, who had also belonged to the First, and who with others chanced to stand near.

"I say, Jack! Do you recollect the ould First and Frederick, and do you know that we are but two miles and short ones at that from the blissed ould white-washed barracks, full of all kind of quare guns and canteens looking like barrels cut down; and the Parade Ground where our ould Colonel used to come his 'Briskly, men! Briskly,' when he'd put us through the manual, and where so many ladies would come to see our ivolutions, and where they set the big table for us on the Fourth, and where—"

"Hold on, corporal! you can't give that week's history to-night."

"I was only going to obsarve, Jack, that I feel like a badly used man."

"How so, Terence?"

"Why you see nearly ivery officer, commissioned and non-commissioned, of the ould First has been promoted. The Colonel was too ould for service, or my head on it, he would have had a star. Just look at the captains by way of sample —Company A, a Lieutenant-Colonel, expecting and desarving an eagle ivery day; Company B, a Lieutenant-Colonel; Company C, our own Lieutenant-Colonel; Company D, a Brigadier for soldierly looks, daring, and dash; Company E, a Captain in an aisy berth in the regular

service; Company F, a Colonel; Company G, a Major; Company H, a Lieutenant-Colonel; Company I, I have lost sight of, and the lion-hearted captain of Company K, doing a lion's share of work at the head of a regiment in Tennessee. Now, Jack, the under officers and many privates run pretty much the same way, but not quite as high. Bad luck to me, I was fifth corporal thin and am eighth now—promoted crab-fashion. Fortune's wheel gives me many a turn, Jack! but always stops with me on the lower side."

"I saw you on the upper side once," retorted Jack roguishly.

"And whin? may I ask."

"When, do you say? why, when you took about half a canteen too much, and that same old colonel had you tied on the upper side of a barrel on the green in front of the barracks."

"Bad luck to an ill-natured memory, Jack, for stirring that up," replied the corporal, breaking in upon the laughter that followed, "but I now recollect, it was the day before you slipped the guard whin the colonel gave you a barrel uniform with your head through the end, and kept me for two mortal long hours in the hot sun, a tickling of you under the nose with a straw, and daubing molasses on your chaps to plaze the flies, to the great admiration of a big crowd of ladies and gentlemen."

Jack subsided, and the hearty laughter at the corporal's ready retort was broken a few minutes later by a loud call for the corporal of the guard, which hurried Terence away, dispersed the crowd, and might as well end this chapter.

CHAPTER II.

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The Treason at Harper's Ferry—Rebel Occupation of Frederick—Patriotism of the Ladies of Frederick—A Rebel Guard nonplussed by a Lady—The Approach to Antietam—Our Brigadier cuts Red Tape—The Blunder of the day after Antietam—The little Irish Corporal's idea of Strategy.

The Brigade did not rest long in its new camp. The day and a half, however, passed there had many incidents to be remembered by. Fish were caught in abundance from the beautiful Monocacy. But the most impressive scene was the long procession of disarmed, dejected men, who had been basely surrendered at Harper's Ferry, and were now on their way homeward, on parole. Many and deep were the curses they uttered against their late commanders. "Boys, *we've* been sold! Look out," cried a comely bright-eyed young officer of eighteen or thereabouts. "That we have," added a chaplain, who literally bore the cross upon his shoulders in a pair of elegant straps. When will earnest men cease to be foiled in this war by treacherous commanders? was an inquiry that pressed itself anxiously home.

But the thunders of Antietam were reverberating through that mountainous region, distinctly heard in all their many echoes, and of course the all-absorbing topic. At 3 P. M. orders came to move a short distance beyond Frederick. The division was rapidly formed, and the men marched joyously along through the streets of Frederick, already crowded with our own and Rebel wounded, to the sound of lively martial music; but none more joyously than the members of the old First, whose recollections were brisk of good living as they

recognised in many a lady a former benefactress. Bradley T. Johnson's race, that commenced with his infamously prepared and lying handbills, was soon run in Frederick. No one of the border cities has been more undoubtedly or devotedly patriotic. Its prominent ministers at an early day took bold positions. The ladies were not behind, and many a sick and wounded soldier will bless them to his latest hour. The world has heard of the well deserved fame of Florence Nightingale. History will hold up to a nation's gratitude thousands of such ministering angels, who, moving in humbler circles, perhaps, are none the less entitled to a nation's praise. "Great will be their reward."

To show the spirit that emboldened the ladies of Frederick, a notable instance is related as having occurred during the Rebel occupation of the city under General Stuart. Many Union ladies had left the place. Not so, however, with Mrs. D., the lively, witty, and accomplished wife of a prominent Lutheran minister. The Union sick and wounded that remained demanded attention, and for their sake, as well as from her own high spirit, she resolved to stay. Miss Annie C., the beautiful and talented daughter of Ex-U. S. Senator C., an intimate friend of Mrs. D., through like devotion, also remained. Rebel officers, gorgeous in grey and gilt lace, many of them old residents of the place, strutted about the streets. The ragged privates begged from door to door. Mrs. D., and her friend had been separated several days—a long period considering their close intimacy and their present surroundings. Mrs. D. resolved to visit her, and with her to resolve was to execute. Threading her way through the crowded streets, heeding not the jeers or insults of the rebel soldiery, she soon came in front of the Cooper Mansion, to find a rebel flag floating from an upper window, and a well dressed soldierly looking greyback, with bayonet fixed, pacing his beat in front. Nothing daunted, Mrs. D. approached. "Halt," was the short sharp hail of the sentinel,

as he brought his bayonet to the charge. "Who is quartered here?" asked Mrs. D., gradually nearing the sentry. "Maj.-Gen. Stuart," was the brief reply, "I want to visit a lady acquaintance in the house." "My orders are strict, madam, that no one can cross my beat without a pass." "*Pass or no pass, I must and will go into that house*," and quick as thought this frail lady dashed aside the bayonet, sprang across the beat, and entered the hall, while the sentry confused, uncertain whether he should follow or not, stood a minute or two before resuming his step. From an upper window Gen. Stuart laughed heartily at the scene, and was loud in praise of her tact and pluck.

But all this time our division has been moving through the streets of Frederick, in fact has reached what was to have been its camping ground for the night. The reader will excuse me; older heads and more exact pens have frequently, when ladies intervened, made much longer digressions.

The halt was but for a moment. An aide-de-camp, weary-looking, on a horse covered with foam, dashed up to the division commander, bearing an order from the commander-in-chief that the division must join its corps at Antietam without delay. The fight might be renewed in the morning, and if so, fresh troops were needed. The order was communicated through the brigade commanders to commanders of regiments, while the subordinate field officers went from company to company encouraging the men, telling them that a glorious victory had been gained, that the rebels were hemmed in by the river on three sides, and our army in front; that there was but one ford, and that a poor one, and that the rebels must either take to the river indiscriminately, be cut to pieces, or surrender. In short, that we had them.

These statements were received with the most enthusiastic applause. As the Division proceeded on its march, they were confirmed by reports of spectators and wounded men in ambulances. What was the most significant fact to the men who had seen the thousands of stragglers and skulkers from the second battle of Bull Run, was the entire absence of straggling or demoralization of any kind. Our troops must have been victorious, was the ready and natural suggestion. The thought nerved them, and pushing up their knapsacks, and hitching up their pantaloons, they trudged with a will up the mountain slope.

That mountain slope!—it would well repay a visit from one of our large cities, to descend that mountain a bright summer afternoon. A sudden turn in the road brings to view the sun-gilded spires of the city of Frederick, rising as if by enchantment from one of the loveliest of valleys. Many of the descriptions of foreign scenery pale before the realities of this view. When will our Hawthornes and our Taylors be just to the land of their birth?

Scenery on that misty night could not delay the troops. The mountain-top was gained. About half way down the northern slope of the mountain the Division halted to obtain the benefits of a spring fifty yards from the road. A steep path led to it, and one by one the men filed down to fill their canteens. The delay was terribly tedious, and entirely unnecessary, as five minutes' inquiry among the men, many of whom were familiar with the road, would have informed the Commanding General of abundance of excellent water, a short mile beyond, and close by the wayside. Pride, which prevails to an unwarranted extent among too many regular officers, is frequently the cause of much vexation. Inquiry and exertion to lighten the labors of our brave volunteers would, with every earnest officer, be unceasing. A short distance further a halt was ordered for coffee, that "sublime

beverage of Mocha," indispensable in camp or in the field. Strange to say, our brigadier, who habitually confined himself closely to cold water, was one of the most particular of officers in ordering halts for coffee.

South Mountain was crossed, but in the dusky light little could be seen of the devastation caused by the late battle. "Yonder," said a wounded man who chanced to be passing, "our gallant General lost his life." The brave, accomplished Reno! How dearly our national integrity is maintained! Brave spirit, in your life you thought it well worth the cost; your death can never be considered a vain sacrifice!

Boonsboro' was entered about day-break. The road to Sharpsburg was here taken, and at 7½ A. M., having marched during that night twenty-eight miles, the Division stood at arms near the battle-ground along a road crowded with ammunition trains. Inquiry was made as to the ammunition, and the number of rounds for each man ordered to be increased immediately from forty to sixty.

"Pioneer! hand me that axe," said our brigadier, dismounting. "Sergeant," addressing the sergeant of the ammunition guard, "hand out those boxes." "The Division General has given strict orders, if you please, General, that the boxes must pass regularly through the hands of the ordnance officer," said the sergeant, saluting. "I am *acting* ordnance officer; hand out the boxes!" was the command, that from its tone and manner brooked no delay. A box was at his feet. In an instant a clever blow from the muscular arm of the hero of Winchester laid it open. Another and another, until the orderly sergeant had given the required number of rounds to every man in the brigade. "Attention! Column! Shoulder Arms! Right Face! Right Shoulder Shift Arms!" and at a quickstep the brigade moved towards the field.

After passing long trains of ambulances and ammunition wagons, the boys were saluted as they passed through the little town of Keetysville by exhortations from the wounded, who crowded every house, and forgot their wounds in their enthusiasm. "Fellows, you've got 'em! Give 'em h—l!" yelled an artillery sergeant, for whom a flesh wound in the arm was being dressed at the window by a kind-hearted looking country woman. "Give it to 'em!" "They're fast!" "This good lady knows every foot of the ground, and says so." The good lady smiled assent, and was saluted with cheer upon cheer. Dead horses, a few unburied men, marks of shot in the buildings, now told of immediate proximity to the field. A short distance further, and the Division was drawn up in line of battle, behind one of the singular ridges that mark this memorable ground. Fragments of shells, haversacks, knapsacks, and the like, told how hotly the ground had been contested on the previous day. The order to load was quickly obeyed, and the troops, with the remainder of the Fifth Corps in their immediate neighborhood, stood to arms.

A large number of officers lined the crest of the ridge, and thither, with leave, the Colonel and Lieut.-Colonel of the 210th repaired. The scene that met their view was grand beyond description. Another somewhat higher and more uniform ridge, running almost parallel to the ridge or rather connected series of ridges on one of which the officers stood, was the strong position held by the rebels on the previous day. Between the ridges flowed the sluggish Antietam, dammed up for milling purposes. Beyond, on the crest of the hill, gradually giving way, were the rebel skirmishers; our own were as gradually creeping up the slope. The skirmishers were well deployed upon both sides; and the parallel flashes and continuous rattle of their rifles gave an interest to the scene, ineffaceable in the minds of spectators.

"Do you hear that shell, you can see the smoke just this side of Sharpsburg on our left," said the Colonel, addressing his companion. "There it bursts," and a puff of white smoke expanded itself in the air fifty yards above one of our batteries posted on a ridge on the left. Two pieces gave quick reply. "Officers, to your posts," shouted an aide-de-camp, and forthwith the officers galloped to their respective commands.

"Boys, the ball is about to open, put your best foot foremost," said the Colonel to his regiment. The men, excited, supposing themselves about to pass their first ordeal of battle, straightened up, held their pieces with tightened grips, and nervously awaited the "forward." Beyond the sharp crack of the rifles, however, no further sound was heard. Hour after hour passed. At length an aide from the staff of the Division General cantered to where the Brigadier, conversing with several of his field officers, stood, and informed him that it was the pleasure of the Division General that the men should be made comfortable, *as no immediate attack was apprehended*. "No immediate attack apprehended!" echoed the Colonel. "Of course not. Why don't we attack them?"

The aide flushed, said somewhat excitedly: "That was the order I received, sir."

"Boys, cook your coffee," said our Brigadier, somewhat mechanically—a brown study pictured in his face.

The field officers scattered to relieve their hunger, or rather their anxiety as to the programme of the day.

"Charlie," said the Lieut.-Col., addressing a good-humored looking Contraband, "get our coffee ready."

The Colonel, with the other field and staff officers, seated themselves upon knapsacks unslung for their

accommodation, silently, each apparently waiting upon the other to open the conversation. In the meantime several company officers who had heard of the order gathered about them.

"I don't understand this move at all," at length said the Colonel nervously. "Here we are, with a reserve of thirty thousand men who have not been in the fight at all, with ammunition untouched, perfectly fresh and eager for the move. The troops that were engaged yesterday have for the most part had a good night's rest and are ready and anxious for a brush to-day. The rebels, hemmed in on three sides by the river—with a miserable ford, and that only in one place, as every body knows, and as there is no earthly excuse for our generals not knowing, as this ground was canvassed often enough in the three months' service. Why don't we advance?" continued the Colonel, rising. "Their sharpshooters are near the woods now, and when they reach it, they'll run like Devils. Why don't we advance? We can drive them into the river, if they like that better than being shelled; or they can surrender, which they would prefer to either. And as to force, I'll bet we have one third more."

The Colonel, an impressive, fine-looking man, six feet clear in his socks, of thirty-eight or thereabouts, delivered the above with more than his usual earnestness.

The Adjutant, of old Berks by birth, rather short in stature, thick-set, with a mathematically developed head, was the first to rejoin.

"It can't be for want of ammunition, Colonel! This corps has plenty. An officer in a corps engaged yesterday told me that they had enough, and you all saw the hundreds of loaded ammunition wagons that we passed in the road close at hand—and besides, what excuse can there be? The Rebs I

understand did not get much available ammunition at the ferry. They are far from their base of supplies, while we are scant fifteen miles from one railroad, and twenty-eight from another, and good roads to both."

"Be easy," said the Major, a fine specimen of manhood, six feet two and a half clear of his boots, an Irishman by birth, the brogue, however, if he ever had any, lost by an early residence in this country. "Be easy. Little Mac is a safe commander. We tried him, Colonel, in the Peninsula, and I'll wager my pay and allowances, and God knows I need them, that he'll have his army safe."

"Yes, and the Rebel army too," snappishly interrupted the Colonel.

"I have always thought," said the Lieut.-Col., "that the test of a great commander was his ability to follow up and take advantage of a victory. One thousand men from the ranks would bear that test triumphantly to-day. It is a wonder that our Union men stiffened in yesterday's fight, whose blue jackets we can see from yonder summit in the rear of our sharpshooters, do not rise from the dead, and curse the halting imbecility that is making their heroic struggles, and glorious deaths, seemingly vain sacrifices."

"Too hard, Colonel, too hard," says the Major.

"Too hard! when results are developing before our eyes, so that every servant, even, in the regiment can read them. Mark my word for it, Major; Lee commenced crossing last evening, and by the time we creep to the river at five hundred yards a day, if at all, indeed, he will have his army over, horse, foot, and dragoons, and leave us the muskets on the field, the dead to bury, farm-houses full of Rebel wounded to take care of, and the battle-ground to encamp upon—a victory barely worth the cost. Why not advance, as

the Col. says. The worst they can do in any event is to put us upon the defensive, and they can't drive us from this ground."

"If old Rosecranz was only here," sang out a Captain, who had been itching for his say, and who had seen service in Western Virginia, "he wouldn't let them pull their pantaloons and shirts off and swim across, or wade it as if they were going out a bobbing for eels. When I was in Western Virginia ——"

"If fighting old Joe Hooker could only take his saddle to-day," chimed in an enthusiastic company officer, completely cutting off the Captain, "he'd go in on his own hook."

"And it would be," sang out a beardless and thoughtless Lieutenant—

"Old Joe, kicking up ahind and afore
And the Butternuts a caving in, around
old Joe."

The apt old song might have given the Lieutenant a little credit at any other time, but the matter in hand was too provokingly serious. Coffee and crackers were announced, the field officers commenced their meal in silence, and the company officers returned to their respective quarters.

The troops rested on their arms all that afternoon, at times lounging close to the stacks. Upon the face of every reflecting officer and private, deep mortification was depicted. It did not compare, however, with the chagrin manifested by the Volunteer Regiments who had been engaged in the fight, and whose thinned ranks and comrades lost made them closely calculate consequences. Not last among the reflecting class was our little Irish corporal.

"Gineral," said he, advancing cap in hand, to our always accessible Brigadier, as he sat leisurely upon his bay —"Gineral! will you permit a corporal, and an Irishman at that, to spake a word to ye?"

"Certainly, corporal!" the fine open countenance of the General relaxing into a smile.

"Gineral! didn't we beat the Rebs yesterday?"

"So they say, corporal."

"Don't the river surround them, and can they cross at more than one place, and that a bad one, as an ould woman whose pig I saved to-day tould me?"

"The river is on their three sides, and they have only one ford, and that a bad one, corporal."

"Thin why the Divil don't we charge?"

"Corporal!" said the General, laughing, "I am not in command of the army, and can't say."

"Bad luck to our stars that ye aren't, Gineral! there would be somebody hurt to-day thin, and it would be the bluidy Butthernuts, I'm thinking." The corporal gave this ready compliment as only an Irishman can, and withdrew.

At dusk orders were received for the men to sleep by their arms. But there was no sleep to many an eye until a late hour that night. Never while life lasts will survivors forget the exciting conversations of that day and night. "Tired nature," however, claimed her dues, and one by one, officers and privates at late hours betook themselves to their blankets. The stars, undisturbed by struggles on this little planet, were gazed at by many a wakeful eye. Those same stars will look down as placidly upon the future faithful historian, whose duty it will be to place first in the list of

cold, costly military mistakes, the blunder of the day after the battle of Antietam.

CHAPTER III.

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The March to the River—Our Citizen Soldiery—Popularity of Commanders how Lost and how Won—The Rebel Dead—How the Rebels repay Courtesy.

An early call to arms was sounded upon the succeeding morning, and the Division rapidly formed. The batteries that had been posted at commanding points upon the series of ridges during the previous day and night were withdrawn, and the whole Corps moved along a narrow road, that wound beautifully among the ridges.

The Volunteer Regiments were unusually quiet; the thoughts of the night previous evidently lingered with them. The American Volunteer is no mere machine. Rigorous discipline will give him soldierly characteristics—teach him that unity of action with his comrades and implicit obedience of orders are essential to success. But his independence of thought remains; he never forgets that he is a citizen soldier; he reads and reflects for himself. Few observant officers of volunteers but have noticed that affairs of national polity, movements of military commanders, are not unfrequently discussed by men in blouses, about camp fires and picket stations, with as much practical ability and certainly quite as

courteously, as in halls where legislators canvass them at a nation's cost. It has been justly remarked that in no army in the world is the average standard of intelligence so high, as in the American volunteer force. The same observation might be extended to earnestness of purpose and honesty of intention. The doctrine has long since been exploded that scoundrels make the best soldiers. Men of no character under discipline will fight, but they fight mechanically. The determination so necessary to success is wanting. European serfs trained with the precision of puppets, and like puppets unthinking, are wanting in the dash that characterizes our volunteers. That creature of impulse the Frenchman, under all that is left of the first Napoleon, the shadow of a mighty name, will charge with desperation, but fails in the cool and quiet courage so essential in seeming forlorn resistance. In what other nation can you combine the elements of the American volunteer? It may be said that the British Volunteer Rifle Corps would prove a force of similar character. In many respects undoubtedly they would; as yet there is no basis of comparison. Their soldierly attainments have not been tested by the realities of war.

There was ample food for reflection. On the neighboring hills heavy details of soldiers were gathering the rebel dead in piles preparatory to committing them to the trenches, at which details equally heavy, vigorously plied the pick and spade. Our own dead, with few exceptions, had already been buried; and the long rows of graves marked by head and foot boards, placed by the kind hands of comrades, attested but too sadly how heavily we had peopled the ridges.

While the troops were *en route*, the Commander-in-Chief in his hack and four, followed by a staff imposing in numbers, passed. The Regulars cheered vociferously. The applause from the Volunteers was brief, faint, and a most uncertain

sound, and yet many of these same Volunteer Regiments were rapturous in applause, previous to and during the battle. Attachment to Commanders so customary among old troops—so desirable in strengthening the morale of the army—cannot blind the intelligent soldier to a grave mistake—a mistake that makes individual effort contemptible. True, a great European Commander has said that soldiers will become attached to any General; a remark true of the times perhaps—true of the troops of that day—but far from being true of volunteers, who are in the field from what they consider the necessity of the country, and whose souls are bent upon a speedy, honorable, and victorious termination of the war.

A glance at the manner in which our Volunteer Regiments are most frequently formed, will, perhaps, best illustrate this. A town meeting is called, speeches made appealing to the patriotic, to respond to the necessities of the country; lists opened and the names of mechanics, young attorneys, clerks, merchants, farmers' sons, dry-goods-men and their clerks, and others of different pursuits, follow each other in strange succession, but with like earnestness of purpose. An intelligent soldiery gathered in this way, will not let attachments to men blind them as to the effects of measures.

About 10 A. M., our brigade was drawn up in line of battle on a ridge overlooking the well riddled little town of Sharpsburg. Arms were stacked, and privilege given many officers and men to examine the adjacent ground. A cornfield upon our right, along which upon the north side ran a narrow farm road, that long use had sunk to a level of two and in most places three feet, below the surface of the fields, had been contested with unusual fierceness. Blue and grey lay literally with arms entwined as they fell in hand to hand contest. The fence rails had been piled upon the north

side of the road, and in the rifle pit formed to their hand with this additional bulwark, they poured the most galling of fires with comparative impunity upon our troops advancing to the charge. A Union battery, however, came to the rescue, and an enfilading fire of but a few moments made havoc unparalleled. Along the whole line of rebel occupation, their bodies could have been walked upon, so closely did they lie. Pale-faced, finely featured boys of sixteen, their delicate hands showing no signs of toil, hurried by a misguided enthusiasm from fond friends and luxurious family firesides, contrasted strangely with the long black hair, lank looks of the Louisiana Tiger, or the rough, bloated, and bearded face of the Backwoodsman of Texas. A Brigadier, who looked like an honest, substantial planter, lay half over the rails, upon which he had doubtless stood encouraging his men, while lying half upon his body were two beardless boys, members of his staff, and not unlikely of his family. Perhaps all the male members of that family had been hurried at once from life by that single shell. The sight was sickening. Who, if privileged, would be willing to fix a limit to God's retributive justice upon the heads of the infamous, and in many instances cowardly originators of this Rebellion!

Cavalry scouting parties brought back the word that the country to the river was clear of the rebels, and in accordance with what seemed to be the prevailing policy of the master-mind of the campaign, immediate orders to move were then issued. The troops marched through that village of hospitals—Sharpsburg—and halted within a mile and a half of the river, in the rear of a brick dwelling, which was then taken and subsequently used as the Head-Quarters of Major-General Fitz John Porter. A line of battle was again formed, arms stacked, and an order issued that the ground would be occupied during the night.

In the morning the march was again resumed by a road which wound around the horseshoe-shaped bend in the river. When approaching the river, firing was heard, apparently as if from the other side, and a short distance further details were observed carrying wounded men and ranging them comfortably around the many hay and straw stacks of the neighborhood. Inquiry revealed that a reconnoitring party, misled by the apparent quiet of the other side, had crossed, fallen into an ambuscade, and under the most galling of fires, artillery and musketry, kept up most unmercifully by the advancing rebels, who thus ungraciously repaid the courtesy shown them the day after Antietam—had been compelled to recross that most difficult ford. Our loss was frightful—one new and most promising regiment was almost entirely destroyed.

The men thought of the dead earnestness of the rebels, and as they moved forward around the winding Potomac—deep, full of shelving, sunken rocks, from the dam a short distance above the ford, that formerly fed the mill owned by a once favorably known Congressman, A. R. Boteler, to where it was touched by our line—they reviewed with redoubled force, the helplessness of the rebels a few days previously, and to say the least, the carelessness of the leader of the Union army.

The regimental camp was selected in a fine little valley that narrowed into a gap between the bluffs, bordering upon the canal, sheltered by wood, and having every convenience of water. The rebels had used it but a few days previously, and the necessity was immediate for heavy details for police duty. And here we passed quite unexpectedly six weeks of days more pleasant to the men than profitable to the country, and of which something may be said in our two succeeding chapters.