

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

THE BOBOLINK.

Come with me: let us leave this darkened room from which God's blessed sunshine is so carefully excluded: let us pass into the sweet pure outer air; let us feel its balmy breath upon our cheek, and inhale its freshness. We will stand upon this grassy knoll strewn thick with the gold of the dandelion and the purple of the violet.

Yonder above the tops of the trees rises the rounded summit of Mount Johnstone, farther to the left the irregular outlines of Rougemont and Belœil, and farther still, eastward, the blue ethereal hills of Vermont. Through the rifts of this tree beneath which we stand, patches of blue sky and silver cloud appear; at our feet a little brook ripples musically; on its surface myriad sunbeams dance; and yonder on the maple a bobolink has perched, and with black dilated eyes and outstretched throat, is pouring forth a flood of molten melody.

I.

O bobolink,
Oft times I think
When on my ear your sweet voice falls,
A spirit bright
From worlds of light
From earth to woo me gently calls.

II.

For in each trill
A something still
Of Eden music echoes clear,
And through the air
It wafts me where
The fadeless bowers of bliss appear.

III.

The maple bough
That holds you now
Has blushed and bared to living red;
It heard your song
And bore your strain,
And love's own colour o'er it spread.

IV.

Sweet bobolink,
Sing on for think
Songs so divine are wasted here;
Earth's heart of pain
Shall catch the strain
And hear faith's whisper—Heaven is near.

* In the spring the young leaves of the maple are of a carmine tint which gradually changes to a soft and tender green as summer advances. Of their autumn glories it would be superfluous for me here to speak.

EROL GERVAZE.

CAPTURED BY CONFEDS.

AN INCIDENT OF THE AMERICAN REBELLION.

TRAVELLING in the United States at the breaking out of the great rebellion, and wishing to see something of war service, I accepted a captain's commission offered me in a cavalry regiment belonging to Tarbet's division.

We were lying near Winchester, in the Shenandoah Valley, just before Sheridan made his celebrated ride; the Confederate General, Early, covering this town, and occupying the crossing of Opequan Creek.

The company I commanded held the extreme left of Tarbet's division; and in front of this we were thrown out on picket duty, along the skirts of a tract of woodland.

In advance of the line, upon which I had placed my sentries, ran a narrow but very deep creek—a tributary of the Opequan—but with a fordable crossing close to the spot I had fixed upon for my temporary quarters.

I had just returned from visiting the picket sentries, and was warming myself at a small camp fire we had kindled. Although in the month of September it was a raw chilly morning, with a drizzling mist fast thickening into rain.

Suddenly I heard the tramp of cavalry, with the clank of bits and sabres. The sound seemed to come from the rear. Within a hundred yards of the place where our fire had been kindled, ran the stream above mentioned. At the ford it was crossed by a narrow wood road; which turned sharply on the other side—thence running parallel with the creek in the direction of Berryville. It was down this road the sounds appeared to come; and, although nothing was more natural than that our scouting parties should be out in that direction, I felt alarm, upon hearing the tread of approaching troopers.

Turning to my sergeant, a wiry six-footer from Maine—the only man near me who was awake, I said:

"Totten, what troops can those be?"

The sergeant was not only awake, but remarkably "wide-awake;" and with head bent down, and ear close to the ground, was already listening intently to the hoof strokes of the approaching horsemen.

As I spoke, he started to his feet, saying in an excited tone:

"By jiminy, cap! them 'ere don't sound like our horses; not half o'them air 'hod!"

Before he had finished speaking the horsemen were into sight, filing round a bend of the road; and, without any hesitation whatever, headed toward the creek crossing, in front of our camp fire. Every man of them had a blue cavalry cloak, and most wore the Union cavalry hat. There were five of us altogether round the fire; Sergeant Totten with three privates, all fast asleep—and myself. Our horses were hitched close by, saddled and ready for any emergency; revolvers in holsters, and carbines slung from a neighbouring tree, with an Indian rubber blanket carefully spread over them to keep off the rain. The position we occupied was quite an isolated one—being over half a mile from the next relief station; connected, to be sure, by a chain of picket sentries, who would have been in sight of each other, but for the dense undergrowth of the wood in which we were stationed. As it was, unless when they came into the open space, they could not see what was going on, beyond fifty yards on either side of their post.

The suddenness with which the party of horsemen—now in full sight—had come upon us, was, no doubt, the principal reason why I felt suspicious of their character. I had done so, even before sighting them.

They must have emerged from the woods, and struck the road, but a short distance above the bend; for the tramping first heard was not that of a gradually advancing troop, but

clear, distinct, and suddenly close at hand. Anyhow, there they were, right at the crossing of the creek—their approach unnoticed by any of our pickets. I challenged them at once, in a loud sharp voice, holding my revolver in hand:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friends!" was the immediate and ready reply, as they pulled up in compliance with the challenge.

"Dismount, one friend! Advance and—"

The last word had hardly parted from my lips; their leader had actually thrown one of his legs over his horse's croup, as if to advance as ordered; when, with a muttered word of command, he turned back into his saddle; and in a second's time the whole party had dashed across the creek, up its bank, and were amongst us!

I fired my revolver, bringing down one of their horses; and, at the same time, called out to my companions. Too late—it was of no use; we were only five, totally unprepared and taken by surprise; they were a score at least, all ready and aware of their advantage.

With the instinct of habit, however, one of the sleeping men upon hearing the shouts and shots, sprang up and rushed towards our horses. In doing so, he was ruthlessly shot down; and seeing that this would be the fate of all, if we offered resistance—cut off, and overpowered as we undoubtedly were—I at once cried out, "Hold your fire; we surrender!"

In ten minutes from the time this blue-coated troop of guerrillas came in sight, we were captured; our arms taken from us; ordered to mount our horses; and were galloping at a slapping pace along a poorly constructed clay road, leading towards the Shenandoah, with six of Mosby's rough riders on each side of us.

It was a neat thing, no doubt, for the Confeds—a feat, skillfully and daringly carried out.

The chagrin and shame I felt at being thus overreached, made my blood fairly tingle to my finger-ends. There were four of us captured—Sergeant Totten, two privates, and myself—their own dismounted man, whose horse had been shot, having appropriated the one belonging to our comrade they had killed.

I had little hope that any effort would be made to rescue us. The alarm would, no doubt, be given; but too late for pursuit to be of service. Before a sufficient force could be collected to make it safe, we should be carried far out of reach of rescue.

As we rode along, I managed to count the party of Confeds. They were twenty-one in all—nineteen men and two officers; he in command being a handsome black-eyed fellow with a pleasing cast of countenance, and riding one of the most splendid chargers I ever saw. Indeed, all of them were upon good stock, and our northern horses made but a poor show beside them. The party was evidently a picked one—selected for some special duty. Before they came upon us, they must have ridden hard and long; for, although their horses were still equal to the sharp pace at which we were going, they laboured heavily and showed most unmistakable signs of fatigue.

We must have ridden at least ten miles in silence, not a word having been spoken by any one; when suddenly the officer in command, checked his horse, and, wheeling round, cried out:

"Take it easy now, boys!"

We had reached the bottom of a steep rocky hill, the path over which was nothing more than the bed of a wet-weather stream, full of boulders and ruts. Here we were ordered into single file; and, after scrambling for about three-quarters of a mile, we gained the summit. The road again became better; running along a broad table land densely covered with a stunted growth of black-jack, and scrub oak. As we silently rode on, the black-eyed leader of the "Rebs" brought his horse alongside mine, and said quite good-humouredly:

"Captain, I was sorry to disturb you so early this morning; but to tell the truth, we were as much surprised to see you, as you at sight of us. When we came upon you, we had no idea that we were anywhere near your lines."

I was still in a savage humour with myself, and answered bitterly, and sternly:

"It was a pity that you did not strike our lines a trifle higher up; you would then have had a fairer chance for fight."

"Oh!" answered he, laughing, "I was not at all ambitious of that; and am quite thankful to get away as I did."

"It was odd," I remarked, looking at him steadily, "for one of Mosby's officers to be blundering so near the Shenandoah. They have the reputation of knowing this country thoroughly."

"And they deserve it," he answered. "Most of them have spent their whole lives hereabouts, and have hunted and tramped every foot of the valley. Unfortunately for you," he added with a smile, "I have but lately joined the command, and blunder now and then; otherwise, I can assure you, we would never have ventured to awake you as we did this morning. My orders were to do anything but that. Once in, however, I thought the boldest way out would be the best."

"It did not require much boldness," I retorted, "to lead twenty men on five—three of them asleep, and two unarmed."

"No," said he; "but how could I tell there wasn't a whole squadron of you at hand? However, here we are now at 'Granny Kitt's,' and I guess we had better have some breakfast."

He was a social, pleasant fellow, this Confed captain, and I have no doubt I should have found him an agreeable companion, had the manner of our introduction been different.

We had now arrived in full view of the Shenandoah river, and at the end of the table land. Here there was a log-cabin, at a little distance from the road, with some cultivated fields around it. At the door stood an old negress; who threw up her arms in great excitement, as we approached, greeting our captors with profuse curtsies and congratulations.

"Lud ha mercy, massa Cap'n Garber! So you're ben and gone an done it dis time shoo an satin. Fo' Yanks—bress de Lord—and dar horses and guns too—an one o' dem a jient," she added, laughing, and pointing at poor Totten, who by some mischance was mounted on a very small horse; which, with his long legs nearly touching the ground, gave him a rather ludicrous appearance.

"Yes, Granny," replied the captain, "I've been getting up an appetite this morning, and am as hungry as a Texan. What have you got for us to eat?"

"Lor, massa, nuffin but some milk and corn dodger."

"That won't do for stomachs so hungry as ours," answered the captain. "Boys," he cried, turning to his men, "I think I see some provender in the enclosure behind the house; you have permission to make the most of it. I shall give Granny

some Confederate scrip for the damage; and she can hand it to the owner, when he comes home."

To a Confederate partisan nothing could have been more welcome, than this licence for free forage; and in less than three minutes' time, half a dozen of them were over the fence and had "roped" a cow, to be killed for their midday meal; while another half dozen were making havoc among the hens and ducks belonging to the little plantation.

The four prisoners were placed together on a log near the cabin-door; on the sill of which the Confed captain and his lieutenant had seated themselves. They talked in a low tone; but my hearing is wonderfully acute—never more than at that moment—and by listening attentively, I made out from their conversation that our guard would soon be reduced to six men, with only the lieutenant to command them. I had not before taken much notice of this subordinate officer; except to perceive that he was a very young man with a sallow and sinister cast of countenance, and a most unmistakably contemptuous look in his eye, whenever he glanced at us. But now, as a remark of his reached my ear, I turned round on the log, and took his measure more fully.

He was a mere boy in appearance; of tall, gaunt frame, with a pair of small weasel-like eyes. He was evidently a very different sort of person to his handsome, frank-spoken superior. A bitter, remorseless enemy I could easily see; and one who would shoot us down, as readily as he would pick off a squirrel, if we gave him the slightest provocation for doing it. Nevertheless, I rejoiced at hearing that we were soon to be left to his tender care; for I had hopes from his youth, as also his evident over-confidence in his own great merit as a soldier. I knew he would be found off his guard ten times for once his seemingly careless captain would be likely to make a slip.

In the meantime the saddles had been taken off the horses, and a detail of men was engaged in attending to their wants. Water was given them from a draw-well near by with a bag of corn brought out from the cabin, and distributed in a log-trough which ran all along the building.

The old negress still kept up her garrulous enjoyment, making many remarks at our expense. Every now and then, she would appear in the doorway, clap her hands, and slap her knees, repeating with apparent delight,

"Bress de Lord! fo' Yanks all took togadder!"

After a time, she brought out a bucket of water, and an old tin cup. Placing them near us on the ground, and kneeling down beside them, she bent over the bucket, pretending, as I could see, to skim out with the cup some imaginary object in the water. Just then, I heard her say in a low tone, and as if talking to herself:

"God lub you, Lincoln sagers! Don't mind what dis old fool nigger say. She only skeert to say nothing else. Look out I tell you, for dat Massa Barker; he kill you all ef you don't."

Having cornered what she had been trying to capture in the water, she threw it on the ground; and, filling the cup, offered it to me with a grin.

Here then was a friend in disguise, after all. I knew at once that the lieutenant was the "Massa Barker" who was such a terrible fellow in her eyes; and I knew, also, that her warning was not to be made light of. I resolved to get carefully, and avoid running risks where the odds would be hopelessly against us. But I had fully determined, and sworn in my own heart, that with the slightest glimmer offering a chance of success, I would risk heavy odds to escape.

I caught Totten's eye, as my thoughts ran thus. There was a decisive wicked look in it, that fully answered mine; and I knew I had a fearless comrade for whatever I might undertake.

About one o'clock in the afternoon, we again started forward—descending the hill towards the Shenandoah. But, before reaching the river, the captain with the bulk of his party drew off from us, taking a road leading down a stream, and leaving his stern lieutenant with six men as our guard.

As the horses picked their way slowly down the rough road, I managed by degrees to increase the distance between the leading file of rebels and myself; so that Totten and I had the chance of exchanging a word or two, unheard by either our comrades or captors.

"Totten," said I, "you don't want to go to the Libby prison, if you can help it, I suppose?"

"By jiminy!" he replied, this being his usual form of affirmation, "I'd just as soon have a bullet sent through me. At least I would willingly run the risk of a dozen rather than go there."

"I am afraid that young Reb will give us but a slight chance to escape."

"I don't know about that; he may think so little of our pluck as not to give us credit for enough to make the attempt. Jiminy! if I had a square blow at that yellow scoundrel of his, wouldn't I show him stars. Do you notice the way he speaks to and looks at us, as if we were meaner than dogs?"

"Sergeant, could you manage to sprain your ankle at our next stopping-place? They are going to change horses soon. I overheard one of them say so. If I have to wait on you, and bathe your damaged ankle, and all that—"

I had no chance to finish what I intended saying. The lieutenant at that moment rode up, and kept alongside of us.

On reaching the bottom of the hill we came to a clearing—in the centre of which stood a farm-house. It was a large log building with two wings, and an open space between them roofed over—one of the wings only having the appearance of a dwelling, the other without any windows, only an entrance from the open space between.

We were ordered to dismount as soon as we had ridden into the enclosure in front of the house. Then, after hitching our horses to a long rack, we were taken through the open passage to another inclosure in the rear, which was several feet below the level of the ground in front. Totten and I were walked along, side by side; and, just as we came to the steps leading down into the back yard, he stumbled, and fell violently forward in an unsuccessful attempt to recover himself. Two of the Rebs who were striding before us with their rifles in hand, turned round on hearing the noise. When they saw the sergeant scrambling in the dust they burst out laughing, and seemed greatly to enjoy the sight.

Totten had fallen with such violence, and so natural, I really imagined he had seriously hurt himself. I was sure of it when, on raising him up, he dropped down again with a groan, crying out, "Cap, I've sprained my ankle darned badly."

The lieutenant now came up, and roughly inquired the cause of the rumpus. On getting satisfied, he ordered us to be