

carefully back, choosing ground that was moist.

In the little clearing the flying "Fury's" cavalier was clanking, first upon the corduroy and then upon the sod, straight to where Bess stood—pale, trembling, throwing glances into the dim woods, and fearful at her second cavalier, who caught her hands in his and drew her nearer.

When he had put his arms about the faintly-resisting form—hot words of love on lip—he chanced to glance towards the ground at her feet.

"Why, Bess! At the corner of the Burlington road were hoof-marks in the sod—very fresh! Here beside us are hoof-marks—equally fresh! Bess, Bess! you know I love you. To-night we fight—a desperate attempt—I wanted you, to say—"

Suddenly he saw that her eyes were turned in the direction whither had gone the deep mark of hoofs. Then he flung her away from him, flew to saddle, and set off spurring and swearing into the blackened woods.

Not far!

Cavers, of the first coming, was coming again, and was once more near at hand.

Ten paces! Then—

The charger of Cavers reared and plunged. Two swords hissed out and up. Two curses rang out far and wide amidst the rasp of darting steel.

"Lieutenant Chester perhaps prefers pistols. In that case he need but say so," cried Cavers, with lightning thrust of sword.

"On the contrary, Sabres! Lieutenant Cavers's taste is admirable. I shall not attempt to improve his choice."

When Cavers's shako was cut in two upon the ground and Chester's right sleeve was blood-soaked, Cavers stole, cleverly, a glance at his watch and began to speak.

"Ah! hah! There is a little affair that is not to be overlooked, Lieutenant Chester. Be good enough, I beg of you, in case you manage to kill me, to report to Colonel Harvey that

I have obeyed orders in so far as a king's officer and gentleman could."

At the side of the corduroy something toppled to the ground with a heavy, dull thud and lay unmoving.

"Ah, brave Bess!" murmured both dragoons at once.

Then bloody-armed Chester bowed to his antagonist with an odd smile.

"My dear Cavers, I was just about to make a like request of you. Be assured I shall not fail you. Certainly, I purpose to obtain the right to do the reporting."

"If I do not remove your head in the meantime," Chester retorted.

Cavers rose in his stirrups, so speaking, and delivered a terrible "cut one" that rapped harmlessly upon the thick hilt of Chester's blade and well-nigh pitched its deliverer headlong to the corduroy.

"Nobody but a Lincoln dragoon could have struck such a blow," said Chester.

"Nor parried such," said Cavers.

The chargers reeked in crimson sweat. The eyes of the cavaliers were starting.

The silent thing on the grass by the highway gave no sign.

"Perhaps Lieutenant Cavers, being tired a little, would prefer pistols now himself. Or perhaps—"

Then Chester stopped abruptly and saluted like a marshal of Louis Fourteen—smiling bitterly.

Cavers smiled, too, and looked westward and then at his small watch of gold.

"Ah! hah! that *ensemble*. There was, I had thought, to be no bugle," cried Chester.

"Nor I!" cried Cavers; and then continued: "Nevertheless, it is Harvey's bugle. Death! I meant to have asked little Bess as to the rising of the moon. But I fear she cannot say any longer."

"No, I fear not. Therefore let us go to Harvey and be shot. Perhaps the Yankees will do it for us, which one would you prefer?"

"One would prefer that.