

## CHAPTER III

### VICKSBURG

SEVERAL days later, having crossed at Vidalia and passed through Natchez, he came to Vicksburg. "The —th Virginia?"

"Camped, I think, in a vacant lot near the Court-House. Fine regiment!"

"Yes, fine regiment. Why is the town so dressed up? I have not heard so many bands since General Lee reviewed us on the Opequon."

"Similar occasion! The President and General Johnston are here. They came from Jackson yesterday. This morning they inspect the defences, and this afternoon there will be a review."

"Give me all the news. I have been in another world."

"Grant and Sherman are preparing to swoop. The first is at Oxford with fifty thousand men, the second has left Memphis. He has thirty-five thousand, and the Gunboat Squadron. We're in for it I reckon! But the town's taking it like a birthday party. — When I was a boy my father and mother always gave me a birthday party, and always every boy in town but me was there! Can't skip this one, however! — They say Forrest is doing mighty good work east of Memphis, and there came a rumour just now that Van Dorn had something in hand. — You're welcome!"

The fair-sized town, built up from the riverside and over a shady, blossomy plateau, lay in pale sunshine. The devious river, yellow, turbid, looping through the land, washed the base of bluff and hill. Gone was the old clanging, riverside life, the coming and going of the packets, laughter and shouting of levee and wharf, big warehouses looking benignantly on, manœuvres of wagons and mules and darkies; gone were the cotton bales and cotton bales and cotton bales rolling down the steep ways into the boats; gone the singing and singing and casual sound of the banjo! There was riverside life now, but it partook of the nature of War, not of Peace. It was the