

THE BEGINNING OF THE END 441

the same condition the two previous days and nights. I regret to be obliged to state that under these circumstances, heightened by assaults and fire of the enemy, some of the men had been without meat for three days, and all were suffering from reduced rations and scant clothing, exposed to battle, cold, hail, and sleet. . . . The physical strength of the men, if their courage survives, must fail under this treatment. Our cavalry had to be dispersed for want of forage. Fitz Lee's and Lomax's divisions are scattered because supplies cannot be transported where their services are required. I had to bring W. H. F. Lee's division forty miles Sunday night to get him into position. Taking these facts in consideration with the paucity of our numbers, you must not be surprised if calamity befalls us." Bad in February, it was no better in March.

Back to the trenches before Petersburg came, because they were needed, sundry troops that had fought in the Valley. Back came what was left of the Golden Brigade, and what was left of the Sixty-fifth Virginia. But November and December and January, well-nigh all of that winter, Richard Cleave, carried across the mountains after Cedar Creek, lay at Greenwood, a desperately wounded soldier. In February he began to gather strength, but the latter half of that month found him still a prisoner in a large, high, quiet room, firelit and still.

On a grey afternoon, with a few flakes of snow in the air, turning from the window toward the fire, he found that Unity was his nurse for this twilight hour. She lifted her bright face from her hands. "That was a very sad sigh, Richard!"

He smiled. "Unity, I was thinking. . . . I have not been a very fortunate soldier. And I used — long ago — to think that I would be."

"Is there such a thing as a fortunate soldier?"

He smiled again. "That depends. — Is there such a thing as a fortunate war? I don't know."

His mother entered the room. "It's Cousin William, Richard. He wants to come in and talk a little while."

Cousin William appeared — seventy, and ruddy yet, with a gouty limb and an indomitable spirit. "Ha, Richard! that's more like! You're getting colour, and some flesh on your bones! When are you going back to the front?"