

# Who Only Stand and Wait

By Donal Hamilton Haines

Continued from Last Week

A few moments longer they talked, and then the officer started off. "Come into the house, where there's a light," he ordered. "I've got to make a map of this. Your country maps are worthless."

Before they entered the house, a file of cavalymen left their horses and crept down the hill, where they hid themselves in the tall rushes along the creek. The officer watched them go, then entered the room. Without paying any attention to Mr. Gibbs still standing where his son had left him—he swept aside some of the dishes, drew up a chair, and produced a sheet of paper.

"Now," he said to John, commencing to sketch in the map, "you tell me if I go wrong."

The two men watched him in fascination while he drew in the farm, the creek, dotted out the wood-lots, cross-hatched the marshy places, with a question now and then as to standing grain, thickets, and anything which to his trained mind spelled "cover." At the end of half an hour he sat up in his chair and pushed the forage cap back on his head.

"Fine!" he ejaculated. "fine! Your farm makes a perfect battle-field. The line of that creek was built to be defended!" He took off his cap, ran his long fingers through his hair, and pointed out each detail of his plan on the map with his pencil as he talked. "I'll put three guns just inside the fence of that wood-lot to the right of the lane," he explained. "You say those woods are open enough to get gun-teams through?" John nodded. "All right. Then I'll hold one company in the woods as supports, I'll put one gun on the hill overlooking Howard's Lake, and two companies along the line of that fence. The other gun will go on that wooded knoll over by Limekiln, with the fourth company along the line of the creek. That'll leave me a full company—and my flanks are safe! Think of that!"—and he looked at them with flashing eyes—"perfect distribution without endangering your flanks! Why, man, your farm's a regular prize!"

The two men looked at him blankly. Mr. Gibbs had been eyeing the map with a scowl for some time. Finally he extended a blunt forefinger and placed it on a square of paper marked "field."

"You can't take your soldiers in there!" he said.

The officer looked at him in interested surprise. "Why not?" he asked.

"There's standing corn in there," explained Gibbs.

The officer threw back his head and roared. "That's good, that is!" he said, when he could get his breath. "Standing grain, is there? Man alive, don't you know this is war?"

Mr. Gibbs's slow anger was rising. He thumped on the table with his big, hard hand.

"I don't care what it is!" he stormed. "All the profit I make this year's comin' off that corn, an' I ain't goin' to have it trampled—war 'r no war! I've got 'no trespassin' signs up!" he finished triumphantly.

The major stared at the angry farmer incomprehensibly. Some glimmer of the impassable gulf between their points of view struck him.

"We'll see," was all he said. Mr. Gibbs, however, was not satisfied.

"I'll put a load o' rock-salt into anybody I catch in there!" he continued noisily.

"That'll do now," said the officer, then swung on the younger man abruptly. "I'll have to requisition your farm and the next forage to-night," he explained. "I'll leave fifty men here. They can sleep in the barns. I'm going to take out a scouting party before daylight to-morrow; I'll want you to go along."

Inside the kitchen, when he had gone, the two men sat and looked at each other dumbly; then the father broke into a long, rambling tirade, under which his son simply sat with bowed head. At length John grew restless under the monotony of his father's complaints.

"Ch, what's the use o' talkin'?" he

demanded testily. "We can't do any-thing."

The clock ticked loudly in the still room, then the old man rose, grumbling, put his pipe on the shelf, and strode off up the stairs to bed. John sat alone gazing out of the window. A rumble of wheels sounded from the road, and the collic commenced to bark noisily. John looked out of the window and saw a black bulk, which he knew must be artillery, coming up the lane. The officer opened the door without knocking.

"Get a couple of lanterns, will you?" he ordered. "I want to place my guns to-night."

The door of the stairway opened, and the two men saw the white face of the young woman. She looked from her husband to the soldier in terror.

"What is it, John?" she asked in a low voice.

For the fraction of a second he hesitated. "Oh, nothin'," he answered shortly. "Go on to bed; I'll be in in a few minutes."

All through the evening the young major labored, placing his five companies of cavalry and the single battery, giving as much attention to the placing of each man as though he were planning a decisive battle between huge armies.

Somewhere around eleven o'clock John trudged wearily back up the lane. Shadowy figures moved about on all sides of him as he walked. There were long rows of horses in the fields near the house, munching at his own fodder. From the barns came the sound of voices, and a trooper's head was peering out of the loft-door. A clatter of hoofs sounded from down the lane as a squad of the cavalymen crossed the bridge. In the clear night air, John could even hear the noise of pick and shovel where the three guns of the battery were being put into position in the wood-lot. In the yard a number of the men had spread their blankets under the shelter of the bushes and were sleeping. One had stretched himself out on the porch. John glanced at him casually as he went into the house—a black-haired man, his shirt open at the throat, showing a cord running about his neck and disappearing on his breast.

Hardly had John opened the door when his wife, a shawl thrown over her night-clothes, threw herself weeping on to his shoulders.

"I'm so frightened," she whimpered, "so frightened. Why do you let all these soldiers run around the farm? It isn't their land. They haven't any business here! And if they start shooting—I shall die. You know I mustn't have anything happen. Can't you make them go 'way'?"

He patted her shoulder gently. He did not know whether to try to explain to the frightened girl all that war meant and did.

"They'll go in the morning," he assured her. "They just want a place to sleep. They're tired, same as we are. There won't be no shootin'."

Together they climbed the stairs and entered their room. John waited until he was sure that his wife was asleep, then he rose and went to the window. He sat staring out at the familiar scene. In the intense blackness details did not stand out, but he knew every stick of the fences, every stump of the wood-lots and stone of the fields. He could imagine just where the men and guns of the little army lay. But it was not wholly of the men and horses out in the darkness that he was thinking. Presently he took his clothes and shoes and stole back down the dark stairs. He lighted the lamp and dressed, shivering in the cold room. He pulled out the requisition slips the officer had given him, a dog-eared bank book, and a sheet of paper. For an hour he added, subtracted, and calculated, the pencil between his teeth.

"If I only knew how much they were goin' to spoil," he muttered, "I'd know how to figger."

There was a hammering on the locked door. John opened it and faced the major.

"Got to break up the bridges to the

south-east if there are any," the latter explained. "How many are there?"

"Two," said John.

"Well, you go on with the men and show 'em where they are."

"I—all right," answered John.

Outside the house a little knot of men waited for him. In silence they plodded down the lane, went through the fence and into the fields. It was still perfectly dark, but they could hear movements down in the marsh where the men lay.

John led them to the first bridge—a mere footway over the narrow creek, where it flowed out of the lake a mile from the farm-house. The major sniffed at the insignificance of the structure and the shallow water.

"Quicksand," explained John, and the bridge went down under the axes. The bridge joined the Gibbss' farm to another, and John estimated that the repairing would take three days.

"Where's the other bridge?" demanded the major.

John explained in detail. The other bridge was on the main travelled road; people living along it would have to go ten miles out of their way to reach the city—and everybody was hauling grain.

The major shook his head when he learned that the stream was not fordable for guns. "Down with it," he commanded. "You farmers aren't doing much to help things, anyhow!"

They finished the work of destruction and started back on the winding walk to the farm-house.

"Why aren't you in the army?" the major demanded suddenly.

John plodded forward several yards without turning his head. The other men were several paces behind them.

"If you wasn't in them clothes," he said to the major in a low voice, "I'd tell ye 'U mind yer own business!'"

The darkness hid the major's face, which had turned very red. He seriously considered whether or not it was worth while to sound this farmer's logic. He had distinct theories on the subject himself and wished to know the other side of the question. He had opened his lips for another question, when, faint in the distance to the west of them, sounded the unmistakable crack of a musket.

"Run!" commanded the major. "Take us by a short cut if there is one!"

At a steady trot they panted up a hill, crossed a field of wheat-stubble, and plunged into a thicket. Another and still another shot sounded. In his anxiety the major outstripped his guide, and John heard him swearing roundly as he tore through a tangle of blackberry vines. They reached the shore of Limekiln Lake after being halted by the flankers of the little force. In the east the ink sky was touched with a grey pallor. The marsh was manifestly alive; nothing was to be seen or distinctly heard, but there was motion among the cat-tails, and strange sounds which did not come from mallard, snipe, or muskrat.

"Better turn your stock loose on the other side of the main road," warned the officer, as he hurried toward the bridge at the foot of the lane.

John walked part way to the house and then stopped and leaned weakly against the picket fence. From where he stood he could see and hear nothing. He wondered whether the women had heard those first scattering shots. The look of abject, animal terror he had seen on his wife's face a few hours before would not leave his mind. It was not yet four o'clock in the morning, and already the firing had commenced. Mary might not live through a day of it. And yet he could not leave to take her away; he must watch the farm; there is no telling what might happen. And his father and mother! Another musket-shot sounded, much closer at hand. John was galvanized into sudden action.

"That wa'n't farther away'n the Mill-pond!" he gasped, as he started running up the lane. "I'd better get them cattle out!"

As he reached the house he saw a light in his father's window. The soldiers in the yard had been joined by the men who

had slept in the barns; they stood about in clusters, smoking, talking, and laughing. A file of them passed him, moving down toward the marsh. The short cavalry carbines glinted in the light from the upper window. The window was opened and his father's head was thrust out.

"You out there, John?" he called, and, when his son answered, "What's all that shootin'?" he asked.

"Hurry up an' get down here," answered John shortly. "The fightin's started, an' we got to get the cattle out o' the way."

Without waiting for his father, he hurried toward the barns. A soldier watched his haste curiously.

"All this racket sour the milk?" he asked, with a cheerful laugh.

John gave him a dull glance as he hurried past. This man could make light of all that might happen! The possible butchery of the helpless cattle struck him as something funny! A sudden gust of firing, a rattle of hasty shots which purred into a rolling crash of volleys ripped suddenly through the air.

"You'd better hurry," advised the trooper calmly.

John hurried into the barn and went from stall to stall, slipping the halters from the horses. He opened the gate leading from the barnyard into the lane, and the cows shambled out, lowing, and stood huddled together in helpless terror. John looked through a crack in one of the sheds and saw his father in his shirt-sleeves striving to turn the horses and cattle toward the main road, while two or three cavalymen watched without offering to help, joking among themselves. He drove the squealing pigs out into the yard, where they added to the confusion by making frantic, grunting rushes this way and that, and then halting, long noses close to the earth and pointing one way. A corporal, coming up the lane with a drove of led horses behind him, began shouting hoarsely.

"Get those damned things out o' the way!" he bawled, leaning from his saddle. He drew his sabre and began laying about among the cattle, using the edge of his blade mercilessly. John and his father looked with staring eyes, unable to move.

"What d'ye mean, clutterin' things up this way, huh?" the corporal yelled at John.

A blundering heifer staggered against the corporal's horse, which reared, plunged, and set the led horses snorting with fear. The corporal strove to check his own animal and let go the bridle of the first led horse. In an instant the riderless animals went careering off through the orchard. The corporal's face grew black with anger. He ripped out a string of oaths.

"Kill every one of them damned things!" he yelled. "What the hell d'ye want to turn yer cattle out here for? Think we've got time to chase horses?"

He struck blindly at a brindle cow. The animal staggered to its knees, the blood spurting down its face, then rose with a bellow, rushed madly across the lane, crashed into the wall of the house, and fell in a trembling heap. Two or three troopers drew their blades and assisted the shouting corporal. The yard became a perfect shambles, the cries of the animals rising above the blows of the sabres. Then the three six-pounders in the oak woods went into action with a roar that drowned every other sound.

Mr. Gibbs walked weakly to his son and laid a trembling hand on his shoulder.

"John," he whimpered, "come on into the house—please!"

Beneath his hand the man felt his son's body trembling. John's face was as white as chalk, but suddenly it grew red and his frame ceased quivering and straightened.

"No!" he shouted. "They're killin' our stock!"

He launched himself in blind fury at the corporal, who was beating a big hog to death in the angle between the corn-crib and an old wagon-box. The soldier heard the farmer's yell and turned. With as little concern as he had shown in the

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