

CEASE FIRING

can't hold a candle to it . . . Whoa, there, Whitefoot! Whoa, Dick!"

The second gun had come upon the raft of logs. A log slipped, a wheel went down, gun and caisson tilted — artillery and infantry surged to the aid of the endangered piece. A second log slipped, the wheel beneath the caisson went down, the loaded metal chest jerked forward, striking forehead and shoulder of one of the aiding infantrymen. The blow was heavy and stretched the soldier senseless, half in the black water, half across the treacherous logs. Amid ejaculations, oaths, shouted orders, guns and caisson were righted, the horses urged forward, the piece drawn clear of the bayou. Down came the rain as though the floodgates of heaven were opened; nearer and nearer flapped the dusk. . . .

Edward Cary, coming to himself, thought, on the crest of a low wave of consciousness, of Greenwood in Virginia and of the shepherds and shepherdesses in the drawing-room paper. He seemed to see his grandfather's portrait, and he thought that the young man in the picture had put out a hand and drawn him from the bayou. Then he sank into the trough of the sea and all again was black. The next wave was higher. He saw with distinctness that he was in a firelit cabin, and that an old negro was battling with a door which the wind would not let shut. The hollow caught him again, but proved a momentary prison. He opened his eyes fully and presently spoke to the two soldiers who hugged the fire before which he was lying.

"You two fellows in a cloud of steam, did we lose the gun?"

The two turned, gratified and congratulatory. "No, no, we did n't lose it! Glad you've waked up, Edward! Caisson struck you, knocked you into the bayou, y' know! Fished you out and brought you on till we came to this cabin. Company had to march away. Could n't wait — dark coming and the Mississippi gnawing holes out of the land like a rat out of a cheese! The boys have been gone twenty minutes. Powerful glad you've come back to us! We'd have missed you like sixty! Captain says he hopes you can march!"

Edward sat up, then lay down again upon the pallet. "I've got a singing head," he said dreamily. "What's involved in my staying here?"

His comrades laughed, they were so glad to hear him talking.