

CHAPTER III.

A FORTUNE OF WAR.

Rodney was awakened early by the drawling crow of a neighbor's rooster, for the monarch of Mrs. Merton's flock had long since been sacrificed to the family necessity along with such of his feminine followers as were not prompt in their daily contributions of eggs or engaged in rearing broods of chicks.

He bounded to the floor and was inside his pants in less time than it takes the average boy to dress for a circus, and with much the same feeling of intense and joyous excitement which such an anticipation usually inspires in the juvenile mind.

He ate his breakfast of corn-cakes in silence, and even neglected some of his chores in his haste to see the shoemaker and secure his good offices with the newspaper man.

The sight of the white canvas tents and stacks of glistening arms of the "regular" troops, about which a uniformed line of pickets were pacing to and fro upon their beats, gave Rodney a more thrilling sense of the actual presence of war than even scouts had in their more unpretentious and plebeian dress had inspired.

He leaped and ran with boyish abandon, not slackening his speed until at the very door of the shoemaker's shop.

"Why, what's the matter, son?" exclaimed "Two-