

The Daily Short Story

A CHANGE OF PROGRAMME

(By Captain F. A. Mitchell)

GENERAL HASSETT, commanding the 4th division of the 1st corps of the Army of the Cumberland, was a military man from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. He was a colonel in the regular service.

It was the general's personality that insured obedience to his orders. He was born to command. He was nearly twice the age of those to whom he gave orders, and this, with the double star on his shoulder strap, insured his great respect from them. If he had ordered a soldier to commit harakiri the man would not have consulted the army regulations to learn if the order was legitimate. The strongest hold that the general had on his troops was a real kindness of heart that underlay his external sternness.

Captain Garland of General Hassett's staff was twenty-two years old and handsome as a picture. Moreover, he was a favorite with all who knew him. The country girls along the line over which he passed, who had never seen anything above those indigenous to the soil on which they lived, welcomed him like flowers under a hot sun. The captain had nothing to do with this except smile, and he smiled on them all alike. Indeed, he was unconscious of the blights he was leaving behind him. One day the general said to him:

"Captain, we will march from here soon and proceed to M., thirty miles south. I desire that you proceed in advance and find a site for our headquarters camp. Take a couple of orderlies with you and set out at once."

Within half an hour the captain was riding along the turnpike headed southward, the two orderlies riding at the regulation forty paces to the rear.

Garland selected for his general's headquarters a vacant lot on the southern extremity of the town next to a residence. But before appropriating it he dismounted before the house to ask if it would be agreeable to the occupants to have a camp there. He was received by a middle-aged lady, who heard his request—made simply through politeness—for he could camp where he liked—and seemed uncertain what to say in reply.

"We are to have a wedding here before long," she said at last. "Do you suppose that a camp on the lot beside us will in any way interfere with it?"

"Not at all, madam. On the contrary, the presence of the general commanding the troops which are to occupy this point will be a protection to you."

"In that case, you have my consent."

The young man rose, bowed and was about to leave when the lady asked him when the troops would arrive. He replied that they would come in a few days. When she asked where he would stay in the meantime and he replied that he would bivouac on the lot he had chosen she was moved with compassion and invited him and his men to stop at her house. Garland accepted the invitation, but his men preferred the lot. They had their rations in their haversacks and were soon engaged over a fire, while the captain supped in the house.

It was at supper that Garland met Miss Lucille Rutledge, the bride expectant. She was one of those willowy southern girls with peach complexions to be found only in the southern states. Southern ladies during the war whenever they would come in contact with their enemies almost invariably treated them with politeness, often with consideration. Miss Rutledge made a slight inclination to Garland, though it was her mother who caused him to feel at ease by conversation.

During the chat Garland asked if music had been provided for the wedding, whereupon Mrs. Rutledge informed him that no music was to be obtained. There had been an amateur orchestra in the town before the opening of the war, but the players were now all in the Confederate armies.

"In that case," said Garland, "our general will, I have no doubt, be pleased to direct the band of one of his regiments to furnish music for the occasion. One of our bands, that of the 4th regulars, is the best in the service, and if you prefer an orchestra one composed of the players can easily be made up by the bandmaster."

At this Miss Rutledge looked at Garland to express her admiration of the offer, and for the first time their eyes met. Whatever of antagonism for a Federal officer had been with the young lady went out like a candle and was replaced by something very different. It was impossible for antagonism to exist under the gaze of the captain's eyes, which expressed only kindness and admiration.

Garland took his meals and slept in the house, waiting for the arrival of the command. Having nothing to do, he sat during the day on the veranda, entertained either by Mrs. Rutledge or her daughter, usually by the daughter, for the mother took upon herself the preparations for the approaching wedding.

One day while Garland and Miss Rutledge sat on the veranda a man rode up on horseback and handed the latter a letter. She tore it open and read it hastily. Then she rose and went into the house. Garland could hear her talking with her mother, but not what was said. Mrs. Rutledge was evidently much excited, not to say angry. The young lady did not appear again on the veranda, but sent a note by a negro to the messenger who was waiting without.

Garland did not see either of the ladies again till supper time, and then only the mother. She sat with a stormy brow till the meal was ended, not speaking a word, then revealed the cause of her irritation. The wedding for which she had been waiting for weeks, months even in some respects, was indefinitely postponed. The bridegroom wrote that owing to the approach of the Federal army his affairs were in a deplorable condition and he must remain on his plantation to take care of them. "But this is not the real reason," added the lady—"at any rate, not the only one. We have heard recently that a widow has been setting her cap for my daughter's fiance, and we suspect that she has captured him."

Communications had been kept up between Captain Garland and the army to which he belonged. He had written a brother aid-de-camp of the approaching wedding, that he had offered music for the occasion and that he hoped the command would reach M. in ample time for him to redeem his promise. The matter had been talked over at the mess table in presence of the general, who evinced an interest in it, saying that Garland's offer must be made good and if the command did not march in time for the wedding half a dozen musicians should go anyway.

But one night an order came from the department commander to move the next morning at daylight. When the sun rose every regiment and battery was in the road ready to move, and the order "Forward!" was given.

It so happened that General Hassett reached M. on the day before the wedding was to have taken place. Garland was sitting on the veranda with Mrs. and Miss Rutledge when he heard a clattering of horses' hoofs and the general with staff and escort came down before the captain could vocate. Seeing his aide, the general

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rode up to the house, dismounted and strapped to the jingling of spurs and rattling of side arms to where the three sat.

"Happy to meet you, ladies," he said, removing his forage cap and bowing low. "I presume this young lady is the bride to be. Captain, I was about to send the music when the order came to move."

All this, of course, was very embarrassing. Mrs. Rutledge, thinking it better to have the changed conditions known and over with, spoke up: "General, there is to be no wedding."

"No wedding. Why not?"

"There is no bridegroom."

"But there is a bride."

"Yes, there is a bride, but her fiance has deserted her for another."

The general looked sympathetically at Miss Rutledge.

"There shall be a wedding," said the general decidedly. "I command here, and since the preparations are made and the music provided the wedding shall take place."

All looked astounded at this, and the general proceeded: "Captain Garland, hold yourself in readiness to act as bridegroom on this occasion. When was the marriage to have taken place?"

"To-morrow at noon," replied the captain, a smile breaking over his face.

"Very well. You will report here in person to-morrow at 12 o'clock for duty—I mean—"

"You're not going to force me on the bride, are you, general?" asked Garland.

"The bride! Oh, I forgot that. Of course not. All is subject to the will of the bride."

Now, if there were not cases in which love acts like lightning this story would have a very abrupt and unnatural ending. The little god had begun his work at the first meeting of Captain Garland and Miss Rutledge and had been galloping on ever since. Garland looked at the young lady, and the young lady looked at Garland. And these looks were a mute proposal and acceptance.

The next day the wedding took place, the band playing both the "Star Spangled Banner" and "Dixie." And this is how one southern girl was brought north as a wife by a Federal army.

VON KLUCK, MASTER OF THE ART OF WAR

Has Shown Great Resource as Well as Hardihood in His Operations

Paris, Sept. 12.—The admirable discipline and censorship were revealed by yesterday's communications which showed that the only ones outside of the military authorities who knew of the whereabouts of the great battle were the Germans.

The latter learned of it none too soon and their diversion from the route to Paris, heretofore attributed to fear of the Paris defence works, was simply a clever manoeuvre to escape a desperate situation.

The Germans penetrated France in three columns, but the force consisted of five armies and at least 800,000 men. The plan evidently was for a quick direct attack on Paris by General von Kluck, while the armies of Wurtemberg and Saxony and the Crown Prince dealt with the other armies of the allies.

The audacious commander of the German right wing, surprised by the resistance of the allies at Guise and Compiègne was rendered cautious and must have discovered the presence of the army of Paris on his flank. He showed his resourcefulness by a sharp counter movement against this protecting force.

The critics give Von Kluck full credit for skill as well as hardihood, and referring to General Joffre's plans, say it is a match between masters in the art of war.

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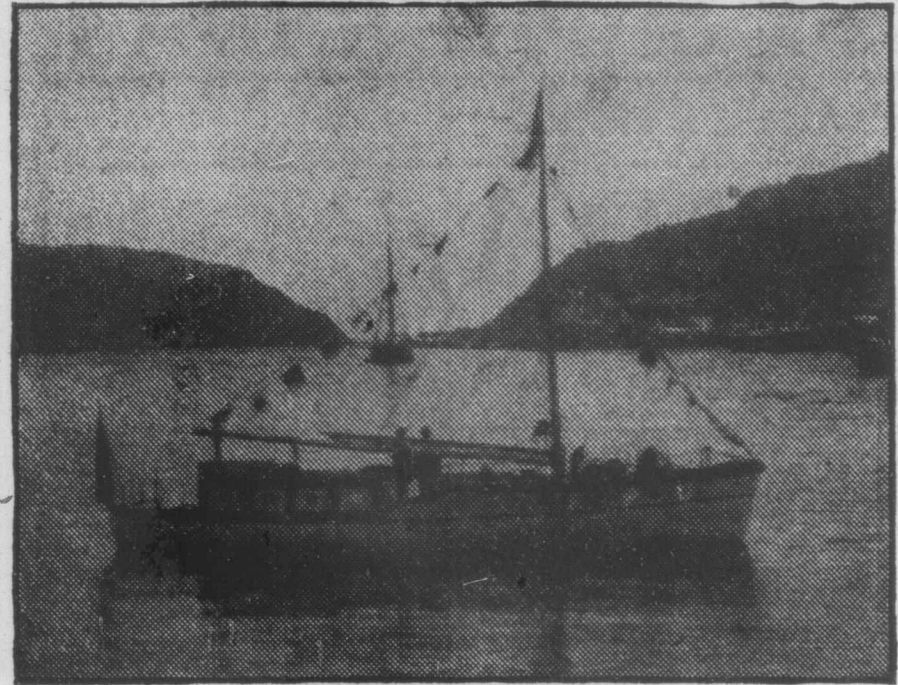
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