

It was towards the middle of the afternoon that a negro came out from the bush, with a white rag waving over head, and on being admitted within the lines he informed the Captain that a large body of the enemy, led by a Texan Major, was lurking close at hand for the purpose of making a swoop, and cleaning out the baggage. The negro's information was just in time. Capt. Fitz gave it credit, and at once prepared for a vigorous defence. The Texans broke from the cover of underbrush with a whoop and a howl, thinking, doubtless, to fall upon the wagons before the company could be aroused and got into line; but they discovered their mistake when a compact wall of armed men appeared between them and their coveted prize, as though arisen bodily from the ground, and a sheaf of flame blazed in their faces, and a storm of bullets burst upon them.

The only hope of the marauders had been, in making the attack unexpectedly, and when they found themselves thus met, they turned and fled full as rapidly as they had advanced; but they left their leader behind them, shot down by the first discharge, and before any of his friends had discovered his fall, or, at all events before they could return to help him off, Capt. Fitz had gone out with a squad of his men, and brought him in,—him and three others who had been so severely wounded that they could not retreat.

This officer, commander of the attacking force, was Major of a Texan battalion—an independent body, acting well nigh upon the sole responsibility of its chief, and on the present occasion he had made his adventure

with not more than forty men, his plan having been to “gobble up” whatever of property they could lay hands on, and make off with it, being well assured that our folks would never follow them into the bush. He was a man of middle-age; a tall, muscular, handsome man, and proud as Lucifer, and full as self-reliant and arrogant. When first brought in, he refused to give his name; refused aid of any kind, only asking, with a fierce oath, that the “—— Yanks” would keep out of his way, and out of his sight. But, by and by, the pains of thirst overcame him, and he was forced to yield. If you have ever seen men dying of gun-shot wounds, you know how their systems crave water—water to supply the suddenly reduced volume of the circulation.

By chance there were hospital stores in one of the disabled wagons, and Capt. Fitz found therein a bottle of wine. This he added to the water—for the water was poor enough—and gave to the sufferer to drink. As the man was lifted to a sitting posture by one of the soldiers, his eye caught a tiny Red Cross which our Captain wore upon the left breast of his vest. He swallowed a generous draught, and then, with a new light gleaming upon his paling face, he asked, huskily:—

“What is that?”

Capt. Fitz simply lifted away the lappet of his blouse, so as to show it more plainly.

“Are—are—you—a Knight Templar?” the Texan whispered.

Fitz answered in the affirmative.

“So am I,” said the sufferer. “And I am more.” And he tried to raise his hands to remove something from his neck, but had not the strength;