

A Virginia Girl in the First Year of the War

C. C. Harrison

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THE only association I have with my old home in Virginia that is not one of unmixed happiness relates to the time immediately succeeding the execution of John Brown at Harper's Ferry. Our homestead was in Fairfax, at a considerable distance from the theater of that tragic episode; and, belonging as we did to a family among the first in the State to manumit slaves — our grandfather having set free those which came to him by inheritance, and the people who served us being hired from their owners and remaining in our employ through years of kindest relations — there seemed to be no especial reason for us to share in the apprehension of an uprising by the blacks. But there was the fear — unspoken, or pooh-poohed at by the men who served as mouth-pieces for our community — dark, boding, oppressive, and altogether hateful. I can remember taking it to bed with me at night, and awaking suddenly oftentimes to confront it through a vigil of nervous terror of which it never occurred to me to speak to any one. The notes of whip-poor-wills in the sweet-gum swamp near the stable, the mutterings of a distant thunder-storm, even the rustle of the night wind in the oaks that shaded my window, filled me with nameless dread. In the day-time it seemed impossible to associate suspicion with those familiar tawny or sable faces that surrounded us. We had seen them for so many years smiling or saddening with the family joys or sorrows; they were so guileless, so patient, so satisfied. What subtle influence was at work that should transform them into tigers thirsting for our blood? The idea was preposterous. But when evening came again, and with it the hour when the colored people (who in summer and autumn weather kept astir half the night) assembled themselves together for dance or prayer-meeting, the ghost that refused to be laid was again at one's elbow. Rusty bolts were drawn and rusty fire-arms loaded. A watch was set where never before had eye or ear been lent to such a service. Peace, in short, had flown from the borders of Virginia.

I cannot remember that, as late as Christmas-time of the year 1860, although the newspapers were full of secession talk and the matter was eagerly discussed at our tables, coming events had cast any positive shadow on our homes. The people in our neighborhood, of one opinion with their dear and honored friend, Colonel Robert E. Lee, of Arlington, were slow to accept the startling suggestion of disruption of the Union. At any rate, we enjoyed the usual holiday gathering of kinsfolk in the usual fashion.

The old Vacluse house, known for many years past as the center of cheerful hospitality in the county, threw wide open its doors to receive all the members who could be gathered there of a large family circle. The woods around were despoiled of holly and spruce, pine and cedar, to deck the walls and wreath the picture-frames. On Christmas Eve we had a grand rally of youths and boys belonging to the "clan," as they loved to call it, to roll in a yule log, which was deposited upon a glowing bed of coals in the big "red parlor" fire-place, and sit around it afterwards, welcoming the Christmas in with goblets of egg-nog and apple-toddy.

"Where shall we be a year hence?" some one asked at a pause in the merry chat; and, in the brief silence that followed, arose a sudden spectral thought of war. All felt its presence; no one cared to speak first of the grim possibilities it projected on the canvas of the future.

On Christmas Eve of the following year the old house lay in ruins, a sacrifice to military necessity; the forest giants that kept watch around her walls had been cut down and made to serve as breastworks for a fort erected on the Vacluse property, but afterwards abandoned. Of the young men and boys who took part in that holiday festivity, all were in active service of the South, — one of them, alas! soon to fall under a rain of shot and shell beside his gun at Fredericksburg; the youngest of the number had left his mother's knee to fight in the battles of Manassas, and found himself, before the year was out, a midshipman aboard the Confederate steamer Nashville, on her cruise in distant seas!

My first vivid impression of war-days was during a ramble in the woods around our place one Sunday afternoon in spring, when the young people in a happy band set out in search of wild flowers. Pink honeysuckles, blue lupine, beds of fairy flax, anemones, and ferns in abundance sprung under the canopy of young leaves on the

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forest boughs, and the air was full of the song of birds and the music of running waters. We knew every mossy path far and near in these woods, every tree had been watched and cherished by those who went before us, and dearer than any other spot on earth was our tranquil, sweet Vauclose. Suddenly the shrill whistle of a locomotive struck the ear, an unwonted sound on Sunday. "Do you know what that means?" said one of the older cousins who accompanied the party. "It is the special train carrying Alexandria volunteers to Manassas, and to-morrow I shall follow with my company." An awe-struck silence fell upon our little band. A cloud seemed to come between us and the sun. It was the beginning of the end too soon to come.

The story of one broken circle is the story of another at the outset of such a war. Before the week was over, the scattering of our household, which no one then believed to be more than temporary, had begun. Living as we did upon ground likely to be in the track of armies gathering to confront each other, it was deemed advisable to send the children and young girls into a place more remote from chances of danger. Some weeks later the heads of the household, two widowed sisters, whose sons were at Manassas, drove in their carriage at early morning, away from their home, having spent the previous night in company with a half-grown lad digging in the cellar hasty graves for the interment of two boxes of old English silver-ware, heirlooms in the family, for which there was no time to provide otherwise. Although troops were long encamped immediately above it after the house was burnt the following year, this silver was found when the war had ended, lying loose in the earth, the boxes having rotted from around it.

The point at which our family reunited within Confederate lines was Bristoe, the station next beyond Manassas, a cheerless railway inn; a part of the premises was used as a country grocery; and there quarters were secured for us with a view to being near the army, a few miles distant. By this time all our kith and kin of fighting age had joined the volunteers. One cannot picture accommodations more forlorn than these eagerly taken for us and for other families attracted to Bristoe by the same powerful magnet. The summer sun poured its burning rays upon whitewashed walls unshaded by a tree. Our bedrooms were almost uninhabitable by day or night, our fare the plainest. From the windows we beheld only a flat, uncultivated country, crossed by red-clay roads, then knee-deep in dust. We learned to look for all excitement to the glittering lines of railway track, along which continually thundered trains bound to and from the front. It was impossible to allow such a train to pass without running out upon the platform to salute it, for in this way we greeted many an old friend or relative buttoned up in the smart gray uniform, speeding with high hope to the scene of coming conflict. Such shouts as went up from sturdy throats when the locomotive moved on after the last stop before Manassas, while we stood waving hands, handkerchiefs, or the rough woolen garments we were at work upon! Then fairly awoke the spirit that made of Southern women the inspiration of Southern men for the war. Most of the young fellows we were cheering onward wore the uniform of privates, and for the right to wear it had left homes of ease and luxury. To such we gave our best homage; and from that time forth, during the four years succeeding, the youth who was lukewarm in the cause or unambitious of military glory fared uncomfortably in the presence of the average Confederate maiden.

Thanks to our own carriage, we were able during those rallying days of June to drive frequently to visit our boys in camp, timing the expeditions to include battalion drill and dress parade, and taking tea afterwards in the different tents. Then were the gala days of war, and our proud hosts hastened to produce home dainties dispatched from the far-away plantations — tears and blessings interspersed amid the packing, we were sure; though I have seen a pretty girl persist in declining other fare, to make her meal upon raw biscuit and huckleberry pie compounded by the bright-eyed amateur cook of a well-beloved mess. Feminine heroism could no farther go.

And so the days wore on until the 17th of July, when a rumor from the front sent an electric shock through our circle. The enemy were moving forward! On the morning of the 18th those who had been able to sleep at all awoke early to listen for the first guns of the engagement of Blackburn's Ford. Abandoned as the women at Bristoe were by every masculine creature old enough to gather news, there was, for them, no way of knowing the progress of events during the long, long day of waiting, of watching, of weeping, of praying, of rushing out upon the railway track to walk as far as they dared in the direction whence came that intolerable booming of artillery. The cloud of dun smoke arising over Manassas became heavier in volume as the day progressed. Still, not a word of tidings, till towards afternoon there came limping up a single, very dirty soldier with his arm in a sling. What a heaven-send he was, if only as an escape-valve for our pent-up sympathies! We seized him, we washed him, we cried over him, we glorified him until the man was fairly bewildered. Our best endeavors could only develop a

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pin-scratch of a wound on his right hand; but when our hero had laid in a substantial meal of bread and meat, we plied him with trembling questions, each asking news of some staff or regiment or company. It has since occurred to me that this first arrival from the field was a humorist in disguise. His invariable reply, as he looked from one to the other of his satellites, was: "The — Virginia, marm? Why, of coase. They warn't no two ways o' thinkin' 'bout that ar rig'ment. They just kivered tharselves with glory!"

A little later two wagon-loads of slightly wounded claimed our care, and with them came authentic news of the day. Most of us received notes on paper torn from a soldier's pocket-book and grimed with gunpowder, containing assurance of the safety of our own. At nightfall a train carrying more wounded to the hospitals at Culpeper made a halt at Bristoe; and, preceded by men holding lanterns, we went in among the stretchers with milk, food, and water to the sufferers. One of the first discoveries I made, bending over in that fitful light, was a young officer I knew to be a special object of solicitude with one of my fair comrades in the search; but he was badly hurt, and neither he nor she knew the other was near until the train had moved on. The next day, and the next, were full of burning excitement over the impending general engagement, which people then said would decide the fate of the young Confederacy. Fresh troops came by with every train, and we lived only to turn from one scene to another of welcome and farewell. On Saturday evening arrived a message from General Beauregard, saying that early on Sunday an engine and car would be put at our disposal, to take us to some point more remote from danger. We looked at one another, and, tacitly agreeing that the gallant general had sent not an order, but a suggestion, declined his kind proposal.

Another unspeakably long day, full of the straining anguish of suspense. Dawning bright and fair, it closed under a sky darkened by cannon-smoke. The roar of guns seemed never to cease. First, a long sullen boom; then a sharper rattling fire, painfully distinct; then stragglers from the field, with varying rumors. At last, the news of victory; and, as before, the wounded, to force our numbed faculties into service. One of our group, the mother of an only son barely fifteen years of age, heard that her boy, after being in action all the early part of the day, had through sheer fatigue fallen asleep upon the ground, where his officers had found him, resting peacefully amidst the roar of the guns, and whence they had brought him off, unharmed. A few days later we rode on horseback over the field of the momentous fight. The trampled grass had begun to spring again, and wild flowers were blooming around carelessly made graves. From one of these imperfect mounds of clay I saw a hand extended; and when, years afterwards, I visited the tomb of Rousseau beneath the Pantheon in Paris, where a sculptured hand bearing a torch protrudes from the sarcophagus, I thought of that mournful spectacle upon the field of Manassas. Fences were everywhere thrown down; the undergrowth of the woods was riddled with shot; here and there we came upon spiked guns, disabled gun-carriages, cannon-balls, blood-stained blankets, and dead horses. We were glad enough to turn away and gallop homeward.

With August heats and lack of water, Bristoe was forsaken for quarters near Culpeper, where my mother went into the soldiers' barracks, sharing soldiers' accommodations, to nurse the wounded. In September quite a party of us, upon invitation, visited the different headquarters. We stopped overnight at Manassas, five ladies, sleeping in a tent guarded by a faithful sentry, upon a couch made of rolls of cartridge-flannel. I remember the comical effect of the five bird-cages (an article without which no self-respecting female of that day would present herself in public) suspended upon a line running across the upper part of our tent, after we had reluctantly removed them in order to adjust ourselves for repose. Our progress during that memorable visit was royal; an ambulance with a picked troop of cavalymen had been placed at our service, and the convoy was "personally conducted" by a pleasing variety of distinguished officers. It was at this time, after a supper at the headquarters of the "Maryland line" at Fairfax, that the afterwards universal war-song, "My Maryland," was set afloat upon the tide of army favor. We were sitting outside a tent in the warm starlight of an early autumn night, when music was proposed. At once we struck up Randall's verses to the tune of the old college song, "Lauriger Horatius," — a young lady of the party from Maryland, a cousin of ours, having recently set them to this music before leaving home to share the fortunes of the Confederacy. All joined in the ringing chorus, and when we finished a burst of applause came from some soldiers listening in the darkness behind a belt of trees. Next day the melody was hummed far and near through the camps, and in due time it had gained and held the place of favorite song in the army. No doubt the hand-organs would have gotten hold of it; but, from first to last during the continuance of the Confederacy, those cheerful instruments of torture were missing. (I hesitate to mention this fact, lest it prove an incentive to other nations to go to war.) Other songs sung that evening, which afterwards had a great vogue, were one beginning

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"By blue Patapsco's billowy dash," arranged by us to an air from "Puritani," and shouted lustily, and "The years glide slowly by, Lorena," a ditty having a queer little quavering triplet in the heroine's name that served as a pitfall to the unwary singer. "Stonewall Jackson's Way" came on the scene afterwards, later in the war. Another incident of note, in personal experience during the autumn of '61, was that to two of my cousins and to me was intrusted the making of the first three battle-flags of the Confederacy, directly after Congress had decided upon a design for them. They were jaunty squares of scarlet crossed with dark blue, the cross bearing stars to indicate the number of the seceding States. We set our best stitches upon them, edged them with golden fringes, and when they were finished dispatched one to Johnston, another to Beauregard, and the third to Earl Van Dorn, — the latter afterwards a dashing cavalry leader, but then commanding infantry at Manassas. The banners were received with all the enthusiasm we could have hoped for; were toasted, feted, cheered abundantly. After two years, when Van Dorn had been killed in Tennessee, mine came back to me, tattered and smoke-stained from long and honorable service in the field. But it was only a little while after it had been bestowed that there arrived one day at our lodgings in Culpeper a huge, bashful Mississippi scout, — one of the most daring in the army, — with the frame of a Hercules and the face of a child. He was bidden to come there by his general, he said, to ask if I would not give him an order to fetch some cherished object from my dear old home — something that would prove to me "how much they thought of the maker of that flag!" After some hesitation I acquiesced, although thinking it a jest. A week later I was the astonished recipient of a lamented bit of finery left "within the lines," a wrap of white and azure, brought to us by Dillon himself, with a beaming face. He had gone through the Union pickets mounted on a load of fire-wood, and while peddling poultry had presented himself at our town house, whence he carried off his prize in triumph, with a letter in its folds telling us how relatives left behind longed to be sharing the joys and sorrows of those at large in the Confederacy.

The first winter of the war was spent by our family in Richmond, where we found lodgings in a dismal rookery familiarly dubbed by its new occupants "The Castle of Otranto." It was the old-time Clifton Hotel, honeycombed by subterranean passages, and crowded to its limits by refugees like ourselves from country homes within or near the enemy's lines — or "fugees," as we were all called. For want of any common sitting-room, we took possession of what had been a doctor's office, a few steps distant down the hilly street, fitting it up to the best of our ability; and there we received our friends, passing many merry hours. In rainy weather we reached it by an underground passageway from the hotel, an alley through the catacombs; and many a dignitary of camp or state will recall those "Clifton" evenings. Already the pinch of war was felt in the commissariat; and we had recourse occasionally to a contribution supper, or "Dutch treat," when the guests brought brandied peaches, boxes of sardines, French prunes, and bags of biscuit, while the hosts contributed only a roast turkey or a ham, with knives and forks. Democratic feasts those were, where major-generals and "high privates" met on an equal footing. The hospitable old town was crowded with the families of officers and members of the Government. One house was made to do the work of several, many of the wealthy citizens generously giving up their superfluous space to receive the new-comers. The only public event of note was the inauguration of Mr. Davis as President of the "Permanent Government" of the Confederate States, which we viewed, by the courtesy of Mr. John R. Thompson, the State Librarian, from one of the windows of the Capitol, where, while waiting for the exercises to begin, we read "Harper's Weekly" and other Northern papers, the latest per underground express. That 22d of February was a day of pouring rain, and the concourse of umbrellas in the square beneath us had the effect of an immense mushroom-bed. As the bishop and the President-elect came upon the stand, there was an almost painful hush in the crowd. All seemed to feel the gravity of the trust our chosen leader was assuming. When he kissed the Book a shout went up; but there was no elation visible as the people slowly dispersed. And it was thought ominous afterwards, when the story was repeated, that, as Mrs. Davis, who had a Virginia negro for coachman, was driven to the inauguration, she observed the carriage went at a snail's pace and was escorted by four negro men in black clothes, wearing white cotton gloves and walking solemnly, two on either side of the equipage; she asked the coachman what such a spectacle could mean, and was answered, "Well, ma'am, you tole me to arrange everything as it should be; and this is the way we do in Richmon' at funerals and sich-like." Mrs. Davis promptly ordered the outwalkers away, and with them departed all the pomp and circumstance the occasion admitted of. In the mind of a negro, everything of dignified ceremonial is always associated with a funeral!

About March 1st martial law was proclaimed in Richmond, and a fresh influx of refugees from Norfolk claimed shelter there. When the spring opened, as the spring does open in Richmond, with a sudden glory of

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green leaves, magnolia blooms, and flowers among the grass, our spirits rose after the depression of the latter months. If only to shake off the atmosphere of doubts and fears engendered by the long winter of disaster and uncertainty, the coming activity of arms was welcome! Personally speaking, there was vast improvement in our situation, since we had been fortunate enough to find a real home in a pleasant brown-walled house on Franklin street, divided from the pavement by a garden full of bounteous greenery, where it was easy to forget the discomforts of our previous mode of life. I shall not attempt to describe the rapidity with which thrilling excitements succeeded each other in our experiences in this house. The gathering of many troops around the town filled the streets with a continually moving panorama of war, and we spent our time in greeting, cheering, choking with sudden emotion, and quivering in anticipation of what was yet to follow. We had now finished other battle-flags begun by way of patriotic handiwork, and one of them was bestowed upon the "Washington Artillery" of New Orleans, a body of admirable soldiers who had wakened to enthusiasm the daughters of Virginia in proportion, I dare say, to the woe they had created among the daughters of Louisiana in bidding them good-bye. One morning an orderly arrived to request that the ladies would be out upon the veranda at a given hour; and, punctual to the time fixed, the travel-stained battalion filed past our house. These were no holiday soldiers. Their gold was tarnished and their scarlet faded by sun and wind and gallant service — they were veterans now on their way to the front, where the call of duty never failed to find the flower of Louisiana. As they came in line with us, the officers saluted with their swords, the band struck up "My Maryland," the tired soldiers sitting upon the caissons that dragged heavily through the muddy street set up a rousing cheer. And there in the midst of them, taking the April wind with daring color, was our flag, dipping low until it passed us.

Well! one must grow old and cold indeed before such things are forgotten.

A few days later, on coming out of church — it is a curious fact that most of our exciting news spread over Richmond on Sunday, and just at that hour — we heard of the crushing blow of the fall of New Orleans and the destruction of our ironclads; my brother had just reported aboard one of those splendid ships, as yet unfinished. As the news came directly from our kinsman, General Randolph, the Secretary of War, there was no doubting it; and while the rest of us broke into lamentation, Mr. Jules de St. Martin, the brother-in-law of Mr. Benjamin, merely shrugged his shoulders, with a thoroughly characteristic gesture, making no remark.

"This must affect your interests," some one said to him inquiringly.

"I am ruined, voila tout!" was the rejoinder — a fact too soon confirmed.

This debonair little gentleman was one of the greatest favorites of our war society in Richmond. His cheerfulness, his wit, his exquisite courtesy, made him friends everywhere; and although his nicety of dress, after the pattern of the boulevardier fini of Paris, was the subject of much wonderment to the populace when he first appeared upon the streets, it did not prevent him from going promptly to join the volunteers before Richmond when occasion called, and roughing it in the trenches like a veteran. His cheerful endurance of hardship during a freezing winter of camp life became a proverb in the army later in the siege.

For a time nothing was talked of but the capture of New Orleans. Of the midshipman brother we heard that on the day previous to the taking of the forts, after several days' bombardment, by the United States fleet under Flag-Officer Farragut, he had been sent in charge of ordnance and deserters to a Confederate vessel in the river; that Lieutenant R — —, a friend of his, on the way to report at Fort Jackson during the hot shelling, had invited the lad to accompany him by way of a pleasure trip; that while they were crossing the moat around Fort Jackson, in a canoe, and under heavy fire, a thirteen-inch mortar-shell had struck the water near, half filling their craft; and that, after watching the fire from this point for an hour, C — — had pulled back again alone, against the Mississippi current, under fire for a mile and a half of the way — passing an astonished alligator who had been hit on the head by a piece of shell and was dying under protest. Thus ended a trip alluded to by C — — twenty years later as an example of juvenile foolhardiness, soundly deserving punishment.

Aboard the steamship *Star of the West*, next day, he and other midshipmen in charge of millions of gold and silver coin from the mint and banks of New Orleans, and millions more of paper money, over which they were ordered to keep guard with drawn swords, hurried away from the doomed city, where the enemy's arrival was momentarily expected, and where the burning ships and steamers and bales of cotton along the levee made a huge crescent of fire. Keeping just ahead of the enemy's fleet, they reached Vicksburg, and thence went overland to Mobile, where their charge was given up in safety.

And now we come to the 31st of May, 1862, when the eyes of the whole continent turned to Richmond. On

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that day Johnston assaulted the portion of McClellan's troops which had been advanced to the south side of the Chickahominy, and had there been cut off from the main body of the army by the sudden rise of the river, occasioned by a tremendous thunder-storm. In face of recent reverses, we in Richmond had begun to feel like the prisoner of the Inquisition in Poe's story, cast into a dungeon with slowly contracting walls. With the sound of guns, therefore, in the direction of Seven Pines, every heart leaped as if deliverance were at hand. And yet there was no joy in the wild pulsation, since those to whom we looked for succor were our own flesh and blood, standing shoulder to shoulder to bar the way to a foe of superior numbers, abundantly provided as we were not with all the equipments of modern warfare, and backed by a mighty nation as determined as ourselves to win. Hardly a family in the town whose father, son, or brother was not part and parcel of the defending army.

When on the afternoon of the 31st it became known that the engagement had begun, the women of Richmond were still going about their daily vocations quietly, giving no sign of the inward anguish of apprehension. There was enough to do now in preparation for the wounded; yet, as events proved, all that was done was not enough by half. Night brought a lull in the cannonading. People lay down dressed upon their beds, but not to sleep, while their weary soldiers slept upon their arms. Early next morning the whole town was on the street. Ambulances, litters, carts, every vehicle that the city could produce, went and came with a ghastly burden; those who could walk limped painfully home, in some cases so black with gunpowder they passed unrecognized. Women with pallid faces flitted bareheaded through the streets, searching for their dead or wounded. The churches were thrown open, many people visiting them for a sad communion-service or brief time of prayer; the lecture-rooms of various places of worship were crowded with ladies volunteering to sew, as fast as fingers and machines could fly, the rough beds called for by the surgeons. Men too old or infirm to fight went on horseback or afoot to meet the returning ambulances, and in some cases served as escort to their own dying sons. By afternoon of the day following the battle, the streets were one vast hospital. To find shelter for the sufferers a number of unused buildings were thrown open. I remember, especially, the St. Charles Hotel, a gloomy place, where two young girls went to look for a member of their family, reported wounded. We had tramped in vain over pavements burning with the intensity of the sun, from one scene of horror to another, until our feet and brains alike seemed about to serve us no further. The cool of those vast dreary rooms of the St. Charles was refreshing; but such a spectacle! Men in every stage of mutilation lying on the bare boards with perhaps a haversack or an army blanket beneath their heads, — some dying, all suffering keenly, while waiting their turn to be attended to. To be there empty-handed and impotent nearly broke our hearts. We passed from one to the other, making such slight additions to their comfort as were possible, while looking in every upturned face in dread to find the object of our search. This sorrow, I may add, was spared, the youth arriving at home later with a slight flesh-wound. The condition of things at this and other improvised hospitals was improved next day by the offerings from many churches of pew-cushions, which, sewn together, served as comfortable beds; and for the remainder of the war their owners thanked God upon bare benches for every "misery missed" that was "mercy gained." To supply food for the hospitals the contents of larders all over town were emptied into baskets; while cellars long sealed and cobwebbed, belonging to the old Virginia gentry who knew good Port and Madeira, were opened by the Ithuriel's spear of universal sympathy. There was not much going to bed that night, either; and I remember spending the greater part of it leaning from my window to seek the cool night air, while wondering as to the fate of those near to me. There was a summons to my mother about midnight. Two soldiers came to tell her of the wounding of one close of kin; but she was already on duty elsewhere, tireless and watchful as ever. Up to that time the younger girls had been regarded as superfluities in hospital service; but on Monday two of us found a couple of rooms where fifteen wounded men lay upon pallets around the floor, and, on offering our services to the surgeons in charge, were proud to have them accepted and to be installed as responsible nurses, under direction of an older and more experienced woman. The constant activity our work entailed was a relief from the strained excitement of life after the battle of Seven Pines. When the first flurry of distress was over, the residents of those pretty houses standing back in gardens full of roses set their cooks to work, or better still, went themselves into the kitchen, to compound delicious messes for the wounded, after the appetizing old Virginia recipes. Flitting about the streets in the direction of the hospitals were smiling white-jacketed negroes, carrying silver trays with dishes of fine porcelain under napkins of thick white damask, containing soups, creams, jellies, thin biscuit, eggs a la creme, broiled chicken, etc., surmounted by clusters of freshly gathered flowers. A year later we had cause to pine after these culinary glories, when it came to measuring out, with sinking hearts, the meager portions of milk and

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food we could afford to give our charges.

As an instance, however, that quality in food was not always appreciated by the patients, my mother urged upon one of her sufferers (a gaunt and soft-voiced Carolinian from the "piney-woods district") a delicately served trifle from some neighboring kitchen.

"Jes ez you say, old miss," was the weary answer, "I ain't a-contradictin' you. It mout be good for me, but my stomick's kinder sot agin it. There ain't but one thing I'm sorter yarnin' arter, an' that's a dish o' greens en bacon fat, with a few molarses poured onto it."

From our patients, when they could syllable the tale, we had accounts of the fury of the fight, which were made none the less horrible by such assistance as imagination could give to the facts. I remember that they told us of shot thrown from the enemy's batteries into the advancing ranks of the Confederates, that plowed their way through lines of flesh and blood before exploding in showers of musket-balls to do still further havoc. Before these awful missiles, it was said, our men had fallen in swaths, the living closing over them to press forward in the charge.

It was at the end of one of these narrations that a piping voice came from a pallet in the corner: "They fit right smart, them Yanks did, I tell you!" and not to laugh was as much of an effort as it had just been not to cry.

From one scene of death and suffering to another we passed during those days of June. Under a withering heat that made the hours preceding dawn the only ones of the twenty-four endurable in point of temperature, and a shower-bath the only form of diversion we had time or thought to indulge in, to go out-of-doors was sometimes worse than remaining in our wards. But one night, after several of us had been walking about town in a state of panting exhaustion, palm-leaf fans in hand, a friend persuaded us to ascend to the small platform on the summit of the Capitol, in search of fresher air. To reach it was like going through a vapor-bath, but an hour amid the cool breezes above the tree-tops of the square was a thing of joy unspeakable.

Day by day we were called to our windows by the wailing dirge of a military band preceding a soldier's funeral. One could not number those sad pageants: the coffin crowned with cap and sword and gloves, the riderless horse following with empty boots fixed in the stirrups of an army saddle; such soldiers as could be spared from the front marching after with arms reversed and crape-enfolded banners; the passers-by standing with bare, bent heads. Funerals less honored outwardly were continually occurring. Then and thereafter the green hillsides of lovely Hollywood were frequently upturned to find resting-places for the heroic dead. So much taxed for time and attendants were the funeral officials, it was not unusual to perform the last rites for the departed at night. A solemn scene was that in the July moonlight, when, with the few who valued him most gathered around the grave, we laid to rest one of my own nearest kinsmen, about whom in the old service of the United States, as in that of the Confederacy, it was said, "He was a spotless knight."

Spite of its melancholy uses, there was no more favorite walk in Richmond than Hollywood, a picturesquely beautiful spot, where high hills sink into velvet undulations, profusely shaded with holly, pine, and cedar, as well as by trees of deciduous foliage. In spring the banks of the stream that runs through the valley were enameled with wild flowers, and the thickets were full of May-blossom and dogwood. Mounting to the summit of the bluff, one may sit under the shade of some ample oak, to view the spires and roofs of the town, with the white colonnade of the distant Capitol. Richmond, thus seen beneath her verdant foliage "upon hills, girdled by hills," confirms what an old writer felt called to exclaim about it, "Verily, this city hath a pleasant seat." On the right, below this point, flows the rushing yellow river, making ceaseless turmoil around islets of rock whose rifts are full of birch and willow, or leaping impetuously over the bowlders of granite that strew its bed. Old-time Richmond folk used to say that the sound of their favorite James (or "Jeems," to be exact) went with them into foreign countries, during no matter how many years of absence, haunting them like a strain of sweetest music; nor would they permit a suggestion of superiority in the flavor of any other fluid to that of a draught of its amber waters. So blent with my own memories of war is the voice of that tireless river, that I seem to hear it yet, over the tramp of rusty battalions, the short imperious stroke of the alarm-bell, the clash of passing bands, the gallop of eager horsemen, the roar of battle or of flames leaping to devour their prey, the moan of hospitals, the stifled note of sorrow!

During all this time President Davis was a familiar and picturesque figure on the streets, walking through the Capitol square from his residence to the executive office in the morning, not to return until late in the afternoon, or riding just before nightfall to visit one or another of the encampments near the city. He was tall, erect, slender, and of a dignified and soldierly bearing, with clear-cut and high-bred features, and of a demeanor of stately

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courtesy to all. He was clad always in Confederate gray cloth, and wore a soft felt hat with wide brim. Afoot, his step was brisk and firm; in the saddle he rode admirably and with a martial aspect. His early life had been spent in the Military Academy at West Point and upon the then north-western frontier in the Black Hawk War, and he afterwards greatly distinguished himself at Monterey and Buena Vista in Mexico; at the time when we knew him, everything in his appearance and manner was suggestive of such a training. He was reported to feel quite out of place in the office of President, with executive and administrative duties, in the midst of such a war; General Lee always spoke of him as the best of military advisers; his own inclination was to be with the army, and at the first tidings of sound of a gun, anywhere within reach of Richmond, he was in the saddle and off for the spot — to the dismay of his staff-officers, who were expected to act as an escort on such occasions, and who never knew at what hour of the night or of the next day they should get back to a bed or a meal. The stories we were told of his adventures on such excursions were many, and sometimes amusing. For instance, when General Lee had crossed the Chickahominy, to commence the Seven Days' battles, President Davis, with several staff-officers, overtook the column, and, accompanied by the Secretary of War and a few other non-combatants, forded the river just as the battle in the peach orchard at Mechanicsville began. General Lee, surrounded by members of his own staff and other officers, was found a few hundred yards north of the bridge, in the middle of the broad road, mounted and busily engaged in directing the attack then about to be made by a brigade sweeping in line over the fields to the east of the road and towards Ellerson's Mill, where in a few minutes a hot engagement commenced. Shot, from the enemy's guns out of sight, went whizzing overhead in quick succession, striking every moment nearer the group of horsemen in the road, as the gunners improved their range. General Lee observed the President's approach, and was evidently annoyed at what he considered a fool-hardy expedition of needless exposure of the head of the Government, whose duties were elsewhere. He turned his back for a moment, until Col. Chilton had been dispatched at a gallop with the last direction to the commander of the attacking brigade; then, facing the cavalcade and looking like the god of war indignant, he exchanged with the President a salute, with the most frigid reserve of anything like welcome or cordiality. In an instant, and without allowance of opportunity for a word from the President, the general, looking not at him but at the assemblage at large, asked in a tone of irritation:

"Who are all this army of people, and what are they doing here?"

No one moved or spoke, but all eyes were upon the President — everybody perfectly understanding that this was only an order for him to retire to a place of safety; and the roar of the guns, the rattling fire of musketry, and the bustle of a battle in progress, with troops continually arriving across the bridge to go into action, went on. The President twisted in his saddle, quite taken aback at such a greeting — the general regarding him now with glances of growing severity. After a painful pause the President said, with a voice of deprecation:

"It is not my army, general."

"It certainly is not my army, Mr. President," was the prompt reply, "and this is no place for it" — in an accent of command unmistakable. Such a rebuff was a stunner to the recipient of it, who soon regained his own serenity, however, and answered:

"Well, general, if I withdraw, perhaps they will follow," and raising his hat in another cold salute, he turned his horse's head to ride slowly towards the bridge — seeing, as he turned, a man killed immediately before him by a shot from a gun which at that moment got the range of the road. The President's own staff-officers followed him, as did various others; but he presently drew rein in the stream, where the high bank and the bushes concealed him from General Lee's repelling observation, and there remained while the battle raged. The Secretary of War had also made a show of withdrawing, but improved the opportunity afforded by rather a deep ditch on the roadside to attempt to conceal himself and his horse there for a time from General Lee, who at that moment was more to be dreaded than the enemy's guns.

When on the 27th of June the Seven Days' strife began, there was none of the excitement attending the battle of Seven Pines. People had shaken themselves down, as it were, to the grim reality of a fight that must be fought. "Let the war bleed, and let the mighty fall," was the spirit of their cry.

It is not my purpose to deal with the history of those awful Seven Days. Mine only to speak of the rear side of the canvas where heroes of two armies passed and repassed as if upon some huge Homeric frieze, in the manoeuvres of a strife that hung our land in mourning. The scars of war are healed when this is written, and the vast "pity of it" fills the heart that wakes the retrospect.

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What I have said of Richmond before these battles will suffice for a picture of the summer's experience. When the tide of battle receded, what wrecked hopes it left to tell the tale of the Battle Summer! Victory was ours, but in how many homes was heard the voice of lamentation to drown the shouts of triumph! Many families, rich and poor alike, were bereaved of their dearest; and for many of the dead there was mourning by all the town. No incident of the war, for instance, made a deeper impression than the fall in battle of Colonel Munford's beautiful and brave young son Ellis, whose body, laid across his own caisson, was carried that summer to his father's house at nightfall, where the family, unconscious of their loss, were sitting in cheerful talk around the portal. Another son of Richmond whose death was keenly felt by everybody received his mortal wound while leading the first charge to break the enemy's line at Gaines's Mill. This was Lieutenant-Colonel Bradfute Warwick, a young hero who had won his spurs in service with Garibaldi. Losses like these are irreparable in any community; and so, with lamentations in nearly every household, while the spirit along the lines continued unabated, it was a chastened "Thank God" that went up from among us when Jackson's victory over Pope had raised the siege of Richmond.

C. C. Harrison.