

The Lost Army



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GIVING AN IMITATION OF REVOLUTIONARY TIMES.

THE LOST ARMY

BY

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ILLUSTRATED



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THE LOST ARMY.

CHAPTER I.

HARRY AND JACK—OUTBREAK OF THE WAR—TRYING TO ENLIST.

“LET ’s go and enlist !”

“Perhaps they won’t take us,” was the reply.

“Well, there ’s nothing like trying,” responded the first speaker. “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

“That ’s so,” said the other. “And if we can’t go for soldiers, perhaps they ’ll find us useful about the camp for something else.”

This conversation took place between two boys of Dubuque, Iowa, one pleasant morning early in the year 1861. They were Jack Wilson and Harry Fulton, neither of whom had yet seen his sixteenth birthday. They were the sons of industrious and respectable parents, whose houses stood not far apart on one of the humbler streets of that ambitious city; they had known each other for ten years or more, had gone to school together, played together, and at the time of which we are writing they were working side by side in the same shop.

The war for the destruction of the Union on the one hand and its preservation on the other had just begun. The election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency had

alarmed the Southern states, who regarded it as a menace to their beloved system of negro slavery. In consequence of his election the Southern leaders endeavored to withdraw their states from the Union, and one after another had passed ordinances of secession. South Carolina was the first to secede, her action being taken on the twentieth of December, five weeks after the presidential election. Ten other states followed her example and united with South Carolina in forming the Confederate States of North America, choosing Jefferson Davis as their first president. Then followed the demand for the surrender of the forts and other property of the United States in the region in rebellion. Fort Sumter was taken after a bloodless fight, in which the first gun was fired by the South; other states seceded, and then came the uprising of the North in defense of the Union.

As if by the wand of a magician the whole North was transformed into a vast military camp, where only a few days before nothing was to be seen save the arts and arms of peace and industry. Recruiting offices were opened in every city and almost in every village. Squads were formed into companies, companies into regiments and regiments into brigades, with a celerity that betokened ill for the cause of secession. The North had been taunted over and over again that it was more intent upon money-making than anything else, and nothing could provoke it into a fight. It had been patient and long-suffering, but the point of exasperation had been reached, and the men of the Northern states were now about to show of what stuff they were made.

The president issued a call for seventy-five thousand men to serve for three months, and the call was responded to with alacrity. And it was in the recruiting that formed a part of this response that our story opens.

Jack and Harry went to the recruiting office, which

was on one of the principal streets of Dubuque and easy to find. Over the doorway an immense flag—the flag of the nation—was waving in the morning breeze, and in front of the door was an excited group of men discussing the prospects for the future, and particularly the chances of war.

“It ’ll be over in a month,” said one, “and we ’ll all be back here at home before our enlistment time ’s up.”

“Yes; the South ’ll be cleaned out in no time,” said another. “Those fellows are good on the brag, but when they look into the muzzles of Northern muskets they ’ll turn tail and run.”

“Don’t be so sure of that,” said a third. “The South may be wrong in all this business, but they ’ll give us all the fighting we want.”

“You ’d better go and fight for Jeff Davis,” was the retort which followed. “We don’t want any fellows like you around us.”

“That we don’t, you bet,” said another, and the sentiment was echoed by fully half the listeners.

“You ’re all wrong,” persisted the man who had just spoken. “Don’t misunderstand me; I ’m just as good a Union man as anybody, and I ’m going to fight for the Union, but I don’t want anybody to go off half-cocked, and think we’re going to lick the South out of its boots in no time; because we can’t do it. We ’re going to win in this fight; we ’re twenty millions and they ’re eight, and we ’ve got most of the manufacturing and the men who know how to work with their hands. But the Southerners are Americans like ourselves, and can fight just as well as we can. They think they ’re right, and thinking so makes a heap of difference when you go in for war. They ’ll do their level best, just as we shall.”

“Perhaps they will,” was the reply, “but we ’ll make short work of ’em.”

“All right,” responded the other, “we won’t lose our tempers over it ; but anybody who thinks the war will be over in three months doesn’t appreciate American fighting ability, no matter on which side of the line it is found.”

This mode of putting the argument silenced some of his opponents, particularly when he followed it up by showing how the Southern regiments in the Mexican war covered themselves with glory side by side with the Northern ones. But the loudest of the talkers refused to be silenced, and continued to taunt him with being a sympathizer with the rebellion.

At the outbreak of the war a great deal of this kind of talk was to be heard on both sides ; men in the North declaring that the South would be conquered and the war ended in three months, while people at the South boasted of the ability of one Southern man to whip three Northerners. When the armies fairly met in the field and steel clashed against steel all this boasting on both sides was silenced, and North and South learned to respect each other for their soldierly qualities. One of the greatest of military mistakes is to hold your enemy in contempt, and to this mistake is due some of the disasters of the early days of the war.

And the lesson may be carried further. One of the greatest mistakes in the battle of life is to underrate those who oppose you or the hindrances that lie in your path. Always regard your opponent as fully your equal in everything, and then use your best endeavors to overcome him. Do your best at all times, and you have more than an even chance of success in the long run.

Jack and Harry listened a few moments to the debate among the men in front of the recruiting office, and then made their way inside. A man in the uniform of a captain was sitting behind a desk taking the names of those

that wanted to enlist, and telling them to wait their turn for examination. In a few moments a man came out from an inner room, and then a name was called and its owner went inside.

"Don't think you 'll get in there, sonny," said a man, who observed the puzzled look of Jack as he glanced toward the inner door.

"What are they doing in there?" queried Jack encouraged by the friendly way in which he had been addressed.

"They 're putting the recruits through their paces," was the reply; "examining 'em to see whether they 'll do for service."

"How do they do it?"

"They strip a man down to his bare skin," was the reply, "and then they thump him and measure him, to see if his lungs are sound; weigh him and take his height, make him jump, try his eyes, look at his teeth; in fact, they put him through very much as you 've seen a horse handled by a dealer who wanted to buy him. They 've refused a lot of men here that quite likely they 'll be glad to take a few months from now."

And so it was. The first call for troops was responded to by far more men than were wanted to fill the quota, and the recruiting officers could afford to be very particular in their selections. Subsequent calls for troops were for three years' service, and, as the number under arms increased, recruiting became a matter of greater difficulty. Men that were refused at the first call were gladly accepted in later ones. Before the end of the first year of the war more than six hundred and sixty-one thousand men were under arms in the North.

Jack and Harry walked up to the desk where the officer sat as soon as they saw he was unoccupied.

"Well, my boys, what can I do for you?" said the captain cheerily.

Jack waited a moment for Harry to speak, and finding he did not do so, broke the ice himself with—

“ We want to enlist, General.”

The youth was unfamiliar with the insignia of rank, and thought he would be on the safe side by applying the highest title he knew of. The gilded buttons and shoulder-straps dazzled his eyes, and it is no wonder that he thought a man with so much ornamentation was deserving of the highest title.

“ Captain, if you please,” said the officer, smiling; “ but I ’m afraid you ’re too young for us. How old are you?”

“ Coming sixteen,” both answered in a breath.

The captain shook his head as he answered that they were altogether too young.

“ Could n’t we do something else ?” queried Harry, eagerly. “ We can drive horses and work about the camp.”

“ If you ever go for a soldier,” replied the captain, “ you ’ll find that the men do their own camp work, and don’t have servants. Perhaps we can give you a chance at the teams. Here, take this to the quartermaster,” and he scribbled a memorandum, suggesting that the boys might be handy to have about camp and around the horses. They could n’t be enlisted, of course, but he liked their looks, and thought they could afford to feed the youths, anyhow.

The boys eagerly hastened to the quartermaster, whom they had some difficulty in finding. He questioned them closely, and finally said they might go with the regiment when it moved. It was not then ready for the field, and he advised the boys to stay at home until the organization was complete and the regiment received orders to march to the seat of war.

The parental permission was obtained with comparatively little difficulty, as the fathers of both the youths

were firm believers in the theory of a short war, without any fighting of consequence; they thought the outing would be a pleasant affair of two or three months at farthest. Had they foreseen the result of the call to arms, and especially the perils and privations which were to befall Jack and Harry, it is probable that our heroes would have been obliged to run away in order to carry out their intention of going to the field. And possibly their ardor would have been dampened a little, and they might have thought twice before marching away as they did when the regiment was ordered to the front and the scene of active work in the field.