

**"AS WE WENT  
MARCHING ON" A  
STORY OF THE WAR**

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"As we went marching on" a story of the war by G. W. Hosmer

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# "AS WE WENT MARCHING ON"

A Story of the War

By G. W. HOSMER, M.D.

GEORGE  
WASHINGTON

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1885

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## "AS WE WENT MARCHING ON."

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### CHAPTER I.

#### ON THE PICKET-LINE.

ACROSS our front, and not very far away, ran a road that led from Culpepper on the south toward Lost Mountain and Ashby's Gap on the north; and the Colonel passed some time every night on that road. One glorious, silent, starlight night he explored it as usual, accompanied only by Captain Pembroke, who was then acting as major—for the major had been killed at Malvern Hills. They had ridden with customary care a mile, perhaps, beyond our last picket, and toward the south, when the Colonel heard a sound ahead which he stopped to consider. He was soon satisfied there was a horseman coming down this road toward them. He heard clearly in a few moments the jingle of accoutrements, and then a voice singing the Southern doggerel, "Hurrah for the bonnie blue flag, that bears a single star." It was a Confederate soldier, therefore; but were there more behind him? Was

it a case that required a rapid ride to our lines that the men might be put under arms to be ready for any possibility, or was this merely some straggler unaware that there were Union troops near by? Or was this horseman, indeed, the bait to a trap?

Dave had often laughed at the simplicity of certain of our newly-fledged regimental and brigade commanders, who had only come down South to be caught in some easy trap and be marched away prisoners by Mosby or others of that kidney. Indeed for mishaps of that sort there was no sympathy, and the old man knew it would never do to be caught in that way.

And yet if he should ride away from this possible trap and give an alarm in camp!

An old soldier does not put his men under arms after taps for slight reasons, and never on suspicion. Hasty and inconsiderate alarms are common where soldiers are new to their duty; but they did not occur in old Dave's camp. In the few moments before the stranger came into view over the hill in front, the Colonel judged that it would be safe to see clearly what was behind this night-rambler, and then if he was alone they would take him; for a prisoner is an article of value in all cases where information in regard to the movements of the enemy is so scarce as it was with us at that period. He may not mean to tell you anything, but he cannot help it. The mere name of his regiment or division tells what troops are near you.

And a soldier is always proud to tell the name of



his commander, because he glories in the achievements of his own corps. Between Manassas and Gainesville, in that very campaign, one of our companies got a fellow who wouldn't say a word—held his mouth as tight as a bear-trap. But when he was asked, with an indifferent air, what army he was in, he lifted up his head and said, "General Longstreet's, sir." Well, that fact was of wonderful consequence to us. It had been supposed that we were on Stonewall Jackson's flank, and that he was cut off; but here was Longstreet in front. That fellow saved our army from wasting five thousand men in a vain battle: yet his fixed purpose was not to give any information.

Dave, who knew all the value of a prisoner, consequently led Pembroke into the shadow of the woods, and they waited for the stranger, who came in sight in a very little while.

He was a handsome figure in the starlight. He sat with an easy and gallant air a tall bay, whose fine limbs they saw would bother them greatly if she had a chance to run for her rider's liberty, and whose restiveness showed that an easy gait was taken for some other reason than consideration for her.

Confederate soldiers whose uniforms could be fairly called fresh or brilliant were seldom seen on our front at any place or time; for they were not put near, apparently, till the tough experiences of a soldier's life had dimmed the bravery of the first suit, and a second suit was an unknown fact. But this soldier's suit was less dingy than common. His

gray seemed to have a gloss of newness; and his buttons and gold lace and other frippery, though their glitter was perhaps exaggerated by the deceptive illumination of the stars, seemed to declare themselves ignorant of the vicissitudes of a campaign.

Dave consequently indulged doubts whether this could be one of Lee's men. If he was, he had joined Lee's army lately, and the army was not far away; for this fellow seemed to come out of a bandbox. Yet there was about him so much of the style of an old soldier he could not be a mere recruit. Altogether, there was enough in the circumstance to mystify our two friends hidden in the shadow of the wood by the roadside; but this puzzle did not distract their thoughts from the principal doubt of the moment. Was he alone? They soon felt sure that he was, for the road was clear for several hundred yards behind him, and no sound came from that direction.

But deliberation was soon cut short, for just as the stranger came opposite our hidden friends his keen nag turned her nose almost as if she were a pointer to Dave and Pembroke in the shadow, and she gave an energetic snort, and Pembroke's horse whinnied an answer; whereupon the stranger drew up suddenly, and scanned for a second that point of animated gloom by the wayside; but before he had resolved the doubts in his mind, or determined a line of action, Dave gave the word, and the two charged together, and with cocked pistols held

against his head at either side almost before he knew it, he had no discretion. To surrender was the only possible course for a rational creature.

The prisoner now rode into our lines between his captors. His light-heartedness was gone; and that buoyant gayety which had found vent in the popular refrain was replaced by a despondency so sudden and deep as to seem to old Dave almost unmanly. He thought the natural fortitude or bravado of a youngster—even if not reinforced by the defiant spirit of an enemy—should enable one to face an always imminent mischance with more resolution than appeared in the prisoner. Dave thought it natural that a soldier should be in the dumps in such circumstances; but to be so terribly down as this fellow was seemed to him to imply some more than ordinary apprehension: and from that to the notion that it was necessary to know particularly all about this prisoner was not far.

“Why,” said Dave, “if you had been taken as a spy inside our lines, and were to be hanged in half an hour, you could not be more broken up.”

“If it were only facing death for myself,” said the reb, quietly, “I am too familiar with that experience to heed it a great deal.”

“Ah! then there is more in the case than your life or death?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Your capture concerns the welfare of others?”

“Yes, sir; at least of another.”

Dave’s mystification was only made deeper. Was