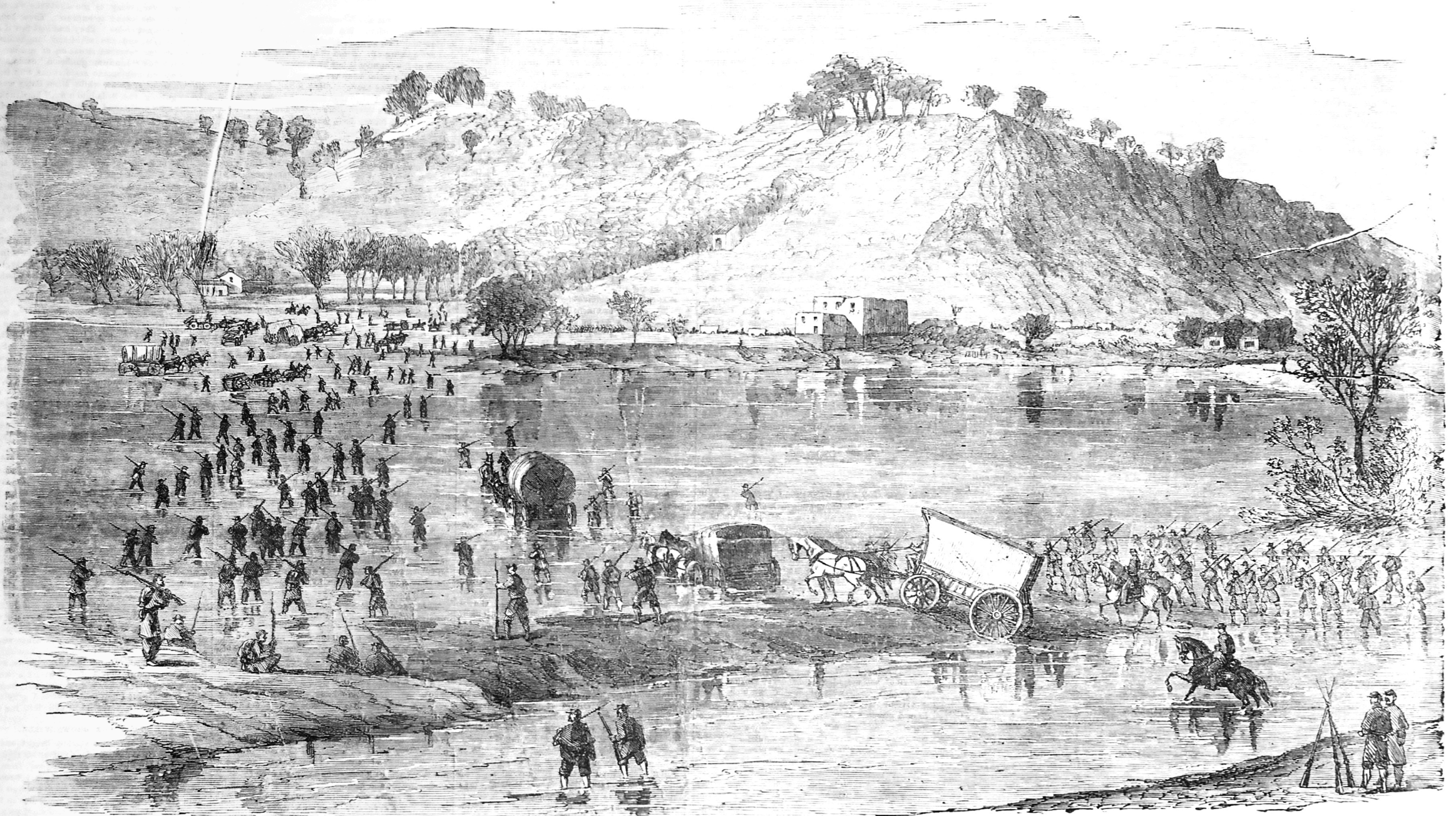




PER ANNUM.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1862.

VOL. 1—NO. 52.



GENERAL'S HUMPHREY'S AND PORTER'S DIVISIONS CROSSING THE POTOMAC RIVER AT BLACKFORD'S FORD, TO ADVANCE ON SHEPHERDSTOWN.

(Written for The War Press.)

LIFE ON THE MOUNTAINS.

A TALE OF THE WAR—BY ESSEX.

[REGINALD HALE'S STORY CONCLUDED.]

It was long on that ever-memorable night before I even attempted to sleep. My mind was in such a tumult of emotion, that repose was impossible. To have discovered that the lovely companion of my solitary life was a woman, and that woman young and beautiful; and to be alone with her in this inaccessible cave, far away from any possible intrusion, placed me in a situation romantically novel, to be sure, but at once pleasant and painful. That I loved her I did not attempt to conceal from myself, and this love made her constant society, her near vicinity, a delight and an intoxication; but how did she feel towards me? I dared not hope that my affection was reciprocated; and even if it were, I knew that the strange embarrassments of her position must be very trying to a girl of the shrinking modesty that I saw so plainly was one of her most charming attributes. So I paced up and down the narrow limits of the front chamber of the cave, pausing occasionally to listen, and trusting, from the quiet of the next room, that Josephine was sleeping peacefully, while all the while my heart and brain were in a wild tumult, in which, despite every drawback, an intense happiness that I had never known before predominated, giving a rosy color that I would not destroy to all my dreams of the future. It was only from the very exhaustion of emotion that I slept at last.

When the morning broke and shed as much light as ever came into our dim cavern, I awoke with a new feeling of joy and of interest in life. Need I say that my first thought was of my poor wounded companion? All was still quiet in her room, and I feared at first to disturb her, but having made my own toilette as well as circumstances permitted, and began to prepare our breakfast, I at last ventured to call.

"Joe," I said—"Joe?"

"What, Reginald?" was the instant response.

"You are awake, then; and may I come in?"

"Certainly."

So I went once more to her bedside, bringing with me a lighted candle. She was still frightfully pale, but there was less of a look of suffering on her face than the night before. She greeted me with a sweet smile.

"I am better," she said. "The wound is less painful than it was, though it burns terribly still, but I think by-and-by I shall be able to go near the mouth of the cave with your aid."

I was so happy that she was better, that I could not help expressing my joy in fervid words, that brought a color to her cheek for a brief moment. Then I went away to the fire I had built in the cavern we had used for a kitchen since Ben fitted it up; thence I brought the cup of tea I had prepared, thinking this an occasion when it was justifiable to break into our small stock, and some crackers which I had toasted; they were very hard, I fear, but Josephine ate them with some compliments to please me.

As all was quiet outside, I ventured, after a while, to open the door of the cave, letting in fresh air and the beautiful light; and no one can tell how precious light is till they have been shut up, as we were, many days in a cave, where the darkness seems tangible. Then Josephine let me carry her out and place her as comfortably as I could in one of our chairs, propped up and supported by all the shawls and cushions we had. There she reclined, looking very lovely, while I "cleared away the breakfast things," as she called it. Almost since her first coming to the cave she had been wont to assist me in this, and I had found great help in her neat, light fingers. Now, however, that I did it for the first time alone, I was glad to see her amused by my awkwardness, on which she made one or two pleasant sarcasms. All this delighted me, as I saw the returning color in her cheeks and the light in her eyes, till, sitting down by her after a while, and taking her hand, I was horrified to find she had fever.

"I am so warm, Reginald," she said, plaintively, "and the wound burns so!"

"You have fever, dear Joe," I replied, "and you must be very careful."

"How frightened you look!" she went on, "but you need not be; I feel much stronger, and you know we are to go to-day."

"Oh, no, dear Joe, you must not think of that."

"Yes, Reginald," she persisted, "we must go to-day. You know I cannot stay here now."

I knew what she meant, although she did not say it—that since I had discovered her sex, it was terrible to her to remain there alone with me. I hastened to say, "You remember, Joe, that I am your brother, and as such you

must try to regard me; you are safe here as with a brother."

"I know that, Reginald; I am sure of it; only we must go."

The fever was evidently increasing every moment; she was not herself. While I sat there holding her hand, she fell into a doze, and an hour later, when she awoke, her eyes were strange and glassy, and I saw only too plainly that her brain was affected.

"Father! Father!" she said, "why does not my father come?"

"Dear Joe," I said, tenderly, my heart breaking with distress, "do not excite yourself, try to be quiet." But she did not know me.

"Let go my hand," she exclaimed, snatching it away, "you are a rebel! Ha! ha! ha! I know you have sworn to ruin us! And is it not enough have killed my father? My father! my father! my dear, dear, father! see how he lays there all pale and gory! Look at him! Is not that enough? Oh you cruel, cruel wretch! Does rebellion change a man's whole nature, and make him cowardly and cold and cruel; that you, who once boasted of your chivalry, can now kill as old man and insult a young girl!" So she went on, now looking at me, and then again afar off, as at some imaginary enemy.

"Yes, cold and cruel, cold and cruel. You have killed my father, and now you would kill me; no, not me, it is Reginald." How my heart beat as I heard my name thus uttered!

"My Reginald—he who was so kind, and tender, and true—you would kill him because I love him—I love him!"

How beautiful she was as she uttered these words, that thrilled me with mingled joy and sadness! Her eyes were bright and sparkling; her cheeks glowed with the scarlet flush of fire; her parted lips displayed her pearly teeth, and her tossed hair fell away in flowing masses from her white brow. She loved me then. Fever had wrung from her that which health would have made her conceal. My own dear Josephine!

Full of the most yearning tenderness, I tried to persuade her to let me carry her to the bed.

"No! no! no!" she shrieked. "I must go away; I cannot stay alone in the cave now!"

She started to her feet and took three steps forward; then she staggered, and would have fallen had I not caught her and carried her away to my bed. She was exhausted with

that last effort, and lay quiet, in a half stupor, while I went out and gathered some of the leaves like those with which Ben had bound my wound. With these I swathed the poor shoulder, which, indeed, looked somewhat angry and inflamed, and then, when all was done which I could do, I sat down to watch the sick-bed of my darling.

I loved her with a strong, true love, that was already part of my life, and she loved me, her own sweet lips had said it, yet there she lay, far from home and friends and kindred, with no female hand to soothe her sick bed, with no comforts to alleviate her sufferings, no physician to prescribe, no medicines to heal. Again and again, during those long hours, when she either raved in delirium or lay still in heavy sleep, I was almost on the point of going away to seek aid, even if I must ask it from rebels; surely they would respect a sick, perhaps, dying girl, and I would willingly go to captivity, or even death, to save her.

If it had not been that I durst not leave her so long, I think I should have rushed out distractedly to the nearest help, she was so alarmingly ill all that weary day and night. But youth and a good constitution work wonders. When I next dressed her wound it was better, and when she awoke in the second morning the light of reason had returned to her lovely eyes.

"I have been very ill, Reginald, have I not?"

"Yes, dear Joe, but don't talk now, be quiet and you will soon be better I hope."

She was very docile, lying in a still, dreamy state, and taking what I prepared for her without much question. It was now that I felt the want of those comforts that when we were well we had not cared for; the little food that was left was of the simplest and plainest description, and I would have given a year of my life for the milk, and eggs, and bread that once had been so plentiful for both of us. A forgotten art did, indeed, come to my aid now, and I succeeded, with sures such as I used to set in boyhood, in catching some small birds; these, with tea and crackers, were what I nursed Josephine back to life with.

For slowly, but surely, she recovered; the wound healed wonderfully when the pain had passed away, and, intoxicated with the joy of hope, I saw her every day grow stronger, until once more she could walk about the cave without my aid. During all this time we had chatted together happily and pleasantly, but

no word had been said of the secret dear to both of us; and yet I think this affection was plain in every action and word of mine.

Those were blissful days, but they could not last forever. Our provisions were all gone, and for one day we lived wholly on the birds I had caught. Josephine knew this, and as we sat together at the entrance of the cave, towards evening, she said:

"Reginald, to-morrow we must go."

"Yes, Joe, if you are able."

"I am able, I think," she sighed.

"You are very glad, are you not, dear?"

Another long-drawn sigh, and she answered wearily: "I suppose I should be, but you know I have no home."

"Then you will be really sorry to leave the cave?"

"Yes," she answered softly; "for after this you know I shall go to my friends, and you will go away."

"And does that thought pain you, Joe?" She did not reply, and I could not longer restrain myself. "Oh, my own darling, not let that distress you. It is for you to say that we shall never part. I love you, Joe—I love you with all my heart! Then promise to be my wife."

She looked at me quickly, with joy gleaming through the blushes that suffused her beautiful face. "Do you indeed love me, Reginald? I thought it was only as a brother."

I caught her in my arms, and, in broken words, told all the long-pent-up affection of my heart, listening to her answering confession with the rapture which only those can feel who love purely, and for the first time.

We were so absorbed in our new-found happiness that we sat there so unconscious of the outward world that we never heard a coming footstep, and were unaware of the approach of any one till a dark shadow fell across the entrance of the cave, and in the dim twilight I saw the form of a man advancing.

I started up, and drew the pistol I always carried. Josephine uttered a faint cry. I raised the weapon, but my arm was arrested by a well-known voice—

"Reginald! you here yet?"

The pistol fell from my amazed grasp, as I recognized Mr. Weston, my beloved pastor, whom I had supposed long ago dead.

In another second I was clasped in his manly embrace.

"You are surprised, Reginald; but I have yet another delight for you," and at the same moment two warm arms stole around my

neck, and I looked into the face of my sister Mary!

I was so overcome with the revulsion of feeling, the delight of discovering that those dearest were alive and well, whom I had supposed long ago to be sleeping in their cold graves, that I very nearly fainted. But joy does not kill, and in a few minutes I was hugging and kissing Mary, half wild with delight.

"We were carried off to prison," replied Mr. Weston, to give me time to recover my senses a little. "But we were at once transferred to the hospital. Mary's wound was not mortal, though very dangerous. My own was comparatively trifling. As soon as I was well enough, I laid a plan of escape which we were only able to execute to-night, as Mary was never before strong enough."

I noticed even then that he spoke of my sister as "Mary." He had never before used that familiarity. I looked at her now for the first time calmly. She was pale and thin, but she looked very happy, and met my look with a bright smile.

"We came here hoping to find some traces of you, and intending to rest here for part of the night. Reginald, we were married by the hospital chaplain when I thought I was dying."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" I said, shaking both their hands fervently, "May you live long to be happy together!"

All this time Josephine had stood so far drawn back in the shade that she was quite invisible, and Mr. Weston now said:

"But what has kept you here so long, and who is the young man I saw with you?"

This led to the explanation of my strange experience since we parted, and in a few words I told it all, whispering to my sister to be very kind and tender with my intended bride.

Then we all went into the cave, and Mr. Weston and Mary were so kind in their greetings, that I believe Josephine felt at once that she had found new family ties to, in a measure, replace those that had been so rudely broken.

Mr. Weston had brought with him a small stock of provisions, and as those in the cave were, as I have said, exhausted, we thought it advisable to start at once. He brought the welcome intelligence that Nashville was occupied by the Union army, and, as that was but a short journey distant, we believed that we might with safety attempt it.

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE.]