

His hands are black with the powder, and he's certainly earned the reward he'll get—this one has.

Making a desperate effort to control my feelings, I glanced once more at the prisoner, and to my intense joy I discovered that I had been mistaken. The resemblance was startling, but—this was not my son! I felt as though I had just awakened from some horrible dream, and as I gazed at the young man before me my heart was filled with an immense compassion. He was younger than Jean, and reminded me of my boy before his promotion as lieutenant.

What is your name and age? I asked, speaking as sternly as I could.

Leopold Fournier. I am nineteen, and I engaged as a volunteer when the war broke out.

Poor fellow, was my inward comment; a young, enthusiastic lad carried away by any wild doctrine, provided it were high-sounding and generous.

Were you this morning in the house in which you had just been arrested, and did you, as they tell me, fire on the army? I asked.

I was in the house this morning, Colonel, and I fired on the army.

I was hoping that he would have denied the charge brought against him, but his confession was clear and frank enough for anything, and he did not speak in a boasting way, either. I could not help thinking that my boy, in a similar danger, would have acted in just the same way.

Fortunately for me the prisoner's voice did not sound like Jean's, but it was clear and sympathetic. I did my utmost to find some extenuating circumstances.

Why have you revolved against the Government of your country? I asked.

He did not make any answer at all to this question.

Do you regret your mistake? I continued with a sympathetic glance, which I hoped might influence him. Were you threatened by your comrades, and did you join them in self-defence?

He threw back his head proudly at this question.

I am never afraid of anything, he answered, and then, laying great stress on his words, he continued:

If the Commune has been a mistake it has been a very fine mistake, and I am not ashamed to have had a hand in it.

What was I to do? The boy before me was acting up to his convictions—he was absolutely sincere and heroic. My men were listening to every word, thirsting for retribution. As for me, the longer I looked at the young prisoner, whose life was at stake, the more I saw in him the brother, the comrade of my own son.

The situation horrified me. I could not fail in my duty as colonel in the army for the sake of this boy's life. By handing him over to another judge I simply gave him up to certain death. In order to gain time I went on questioning the handsome lad before me. He looked so brave and noble, it seemed terrible that he had thus been led astray by vile, hateful politics.

I learned that he was the only son of a widow, and she, poor woman, simply lived for him.

I encouraged him to state his opinions, and tried to prove to him that he had been led away by his ideals and that he could not excuse the excesses of his party. He owned that much had been wrong, but that sheer desperation had been the cause of the evil.

Do you know, I said, coming very near to betraying my mortal anguish, that I shall have to condemn you to death?

Yes, I know that, he answered simply.

I was in utter despair, and went on talking, incoherently, as it seemed to me, for my lips refused to frame the death sentence. My one anxiety was to put off the fatal moment.

And so, I said, you do not regret this life; you do not care for anyone or anything? What about your poor mother who is waiting anxiously for your return, and who will discover to-morrow that her son is dead? She will hear that you have literally committed suicide, that you had no pity for her—because you know it is suicide, this death you had sought—

This time my arrow had struck home, and the young rebel could not, and did not even attempt to hide his emotion.

Poor mother! he said, his voice faltering in spite of himself. If only I could keep the news of my death from her. If only she could go on expecting to see me back home she would at least have that hope in her life, instead of despair.

A sudden inspiration came to me.

Well, I said, supposing I were to allow you to go to her and to make her think that you are obliged to leave France—

Oh—will you—will you really? he asked eagerly. Yes, if you will give me your word of honor that you will be back here to-night.

I give you my word of honor, Colonel, he said.

I immediately scribbled a few words which should serve as a passport for him, and I took no notice of the murmur of disapproval I heard around me.

He'll never come back, whispered the sergeant to one of the other men.

Ah, I only hoped that he would not. I hoped that in face of his mother's grief he might sink the proud heroism that he had maintained in my presence.

He did come back, though—at night he arrived tired and breathless, for he had been running in order to keep his word.

I am late, he said, but it was so hard to get away. My poor mother kept begging me to stay. It was as though she guessed the truth—

They led him away, and the sentence was pronounced by another judge. My incomprehensible weakness and indulgence had been blamed in high quarters.

He was, of course, condemned to death. I begged for mercy, but it was all in vain. An hour after the firing which had sent the brave boy into eternity I had sent in my resignation.

I had enough.

SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS

On the fifteenth of October, 1863, writes M. B. G. in an exchange, I received instructions to proceed at once to Richmond. I was furnished with the proper credentials to obtain from President Davis the necessary passport to the headquarters of General Bragg, then camped near Chattanooga. I was attached to a London daily, and was hastening to furnish my paper with the news of the capture of Rosecrans and Burnside. When I reached my destination, Bragg was in possession of the Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. The Union forces were entrenched in Chattanooga Valley, but practically hemmed in by Bragg's forces. General Bragg remarked that I would have very little fighting to report, because the army of the Cumberland was defeated and was then actually starving—in a state of siege—and that its capitulation was but a matter of a few days' delay.

After a few days we learned that General Grant had arrived in Chattanooga, and had assumed command of the entire force. But Bragg heard the news with indifference, believing that reinforcements would hasten the capitulation, and by the strangest coincidence Grant shared the same opinion. I soon learned that Bragg was a great soldier, but that campaign furnished proof that Grant was both a great soldier and a great commander.

This was my first experience as correspondent within the Confederate lines, and I took advantage of Bragg's inactivity to study the character of his army. I was attached to Colonel John J. Sullivan's regiment, and, strange to say, though the blood of O'Sullivan Beare flowed through his veins, he was not a Catholic. And I may remark here that in the Southern army I met hundreds with purely Irish names, but they had all forsaken their faith. This is unaccountable. I met my countrymen in every condition in the North, in large cities, in the fastnesses of the pine forests, in the plains of Montana, in the depths of the mines, in the sunny slopes of the Pacific, in danger, in temptation, remote from the friendly counsel of co-religionists, away from the help and guidance of their priesthood, and yet in all, and through all, they clung with unshaken tenacity to the faith. Why have they become recreant in the Southland?

The camp fires of the Confederate army, as a rule, had no social quality. Perhaps the determination of the Southern army was too grim to permit them to be sociable; they were always quiet and cheerless when they were grouped together to rest, while from the camp fires of the northern soldiers the night breeze would bear the notes of sentimental songs about the absent lovers, homes, and mothers; the weird and passionate tones of 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' or the defiance breathed in the 'Star Spangled Banner.' On November 21, the Colonel informed me that the Catholic chaplain had just arrived, and desired to see me at his tent; that an esteemed friend of my father's was his guest.

The chaplain's orderly was in waiting to escort me. We soon arrived at the tent. Two men were seated inside on a rough bench. One was tall and gaunt, with classical features, and penetrating deep blue eyes, and his brown hair fell in profusion over his shoulders. He arose to greet me, and I grasped the hand of the poet-priest of the South—Father Ryan. His companion also arose; he was strong of