

membered no more, but, dropping his sword, and stooping with low-bent head, he ignominiously bolted back through his struggling company to the rear and safety. The men followed like sheep, with the exception of Sergeant Burke, who dropped behind a convenient rock, and with the caution learned by many an Indian skirmish, 'lay low' under the fusillade. In the twinkling of an eye the once famous Governor's Guards were wildly fleeing back the way they had come, pursued by the never-ceasing flood of bullets and the victoriously derisive cheers of the unseen enemy. A dozen fallen figures dotted the path whence they fled. They rushed back into the arms of the advancing regiment, now coming up at the double-quick to learn what had happened forward. The panting fugitives were stopped by the cold-eyed colonel, whose white moustache and imperial bristled with rage. With virtuperative and comprehensive language and the flat of his sabre he soon quelled the tumult, and restored in a measure the morale of the frightened men.

Captain Talbot stood with bared head, panting and terror-stricken, before his superior officer. The old veteran glared at him with a freezing sneer, in which disgust, pity, and a fierce desire to kill the miserable culprit struggled forth for the mastery. Finally he said, with choking voice:

'Talbot, report to the General under arrest.'

The disgraced officer slunk to the side of the road, and, with his head in his hands, heard the regiment rush past to wounds and death. Private soldiers as they ran, shouted ribald jeers at him, and an excited lieutenant, waving his sword swore at him violently and spat on his breast as he passed.

Presently they were gone, but the Officer Who Ran still sat by the road. Oh, the bitter misery of that moment to that proud soul! Something seemed to snap in his brain, and out of the blackness ran flickering tongues of flame, on whose tips little red devils sat, and shouted, 'Shame! Shame! Shame!' Overhead the whirring bullets cut the leaves. In the distance the rattle of the Krags was interspersed with the 'puff, puff' of exploding shrapnel and the droning whistle of impact shell. At intervals the hearty American cheer floated on the wind down the road. The enemy were being gradually, but surely, pushed up the mountain. The unfortunate officer thought of his home, his father, his mother. He then seemed to be in a dark and noisome dungeon, behind the bars of which he saw his parents looking at him, one with a stern and strong countenance, the other with pitiful tears and outstretched arms. He groaned aloud, like a lost soul in torment. At that last piercing thought desperation seized him; he hated himself and the whole world; the kind of madness that fills the desert-born fanatic possessed the Officer Who Ran. A maniacal fury shook him. Jumping up, he frantically snatched an abandoned rifle and rushed after his comrades.

Overtaking the charging line, he saw, in a scarlet haze, the maelstrom of the battle. On his right a corporal's knees suddenly seemed to be paralysed; he rolled in the mud with a pained and astonished expression on his face. A sweating soldier on his left clapped his hand to his stomach and gently sank to a sitting posture in the long grass; his smoking rifle fell from his grasp and clattered among the rocks. A little in advance, three cursing men were frantically hacking and tearing at a barbed-wire fence; one of them threw down the nippers with a shriek of pain—blood spurted from his hand; another suddenly crumpled up and fell forward on the slack wires, where he hung, an inanimate object, gently waving to and fro. A hatless orderly rushed passed on a foam-flecked, plunging horse; one hand gripping a trumpet with the mouthpiece shot away, gesticulating impotently to heaven. A grizzled sergeant's angry face suddenly changed to an expression of great peace as he fell and rolled down a little declivity, a smile on his lifeless lips, his hands convulsively clutching the brown, sunburnt earth. Faintly from somewhere in the distance, came the blare of the regimental band. Shrill bugles ever blew the forward, and the beating of the drums smote the hot, palpitating air. A soldier near him staggered drunkenly, gasping stentorously, his hands holding his shattered jaw. A horse with its spine cut by a jagged fragment of shell neighed piteously, hammering the ground with its forefeet. Behind the charging line in the distance a battery silhouetted against the sky-line emitted tiny flashes at ten-second intervals, followed by the demoniacal scream of the shells overhead; manikins ran back and forth in furious haste serving the toy guns. A heedless youth threw down his rifle and clutched his throat, gasping for breath, a spouting red flood pouring from his lips, he fell sprawling and lay still. A galloping Gatling, clung to by powder-blackened figures, rushed like a whirlwind through the lines, crushing alike the wounded and dead. Over all a pitiless, coppery sun beat down with brazen fury. Off to the west a black thunder-cloud hung like a monstrous funeral pall over the land, and through its titanic bulk the forked lightning played to and fro. Hell itself seemed to be let loose at the foot of that mountain. It hailed bullets. A rent appeared in the blue tunic of the Officer Who Ran, and through the tear a crimson splash widened and spread on his naked shoulders.

A quarter of a mile ahead flapped a great red and yellow flag of Spain, and all along in front lay the little brown, linen-clad soldiers in their trenches, the light scintillating on the bayonet tips as they volleyed a sparkling line of gleaming red at the thin line of advancing Americans. A faint orange-colored smoke hung over the muzzles of their rifles and rose and floated in eddying, whirling drifts. On top of the hill a square stone blockhouse vomited jets of yellow flame at many

apertures. Near it a machine-gun snarled and spat bullets with devil-like repetition; in the infernal din it made a loud buzzing noise like a gigantic swarm of angry bees. The Officer Who Ran saw, as if in a dream, a Spanish general in glittering uniform, on a white horse, riding back and forth behind the trenches, waving his sword and shouting orders to his men. He seemed in the distance as a boy on a hobby-horse, shrilly yelling commands to tin soldiers, enforced with a mimic sword. At that sight battle-madness descended on the Officer Who Ran, fear fell from him like a cast-off garment, and an ecstasy of heroism lifted him as on a roseate, silver-lined cloud. Throwing aside his empty rifle, with blazing eyes and widespread nostrils, his long fair hair glinting in the sun, with a hoarse shout he ran, bare-headed, at the trenches. He was leading the charge. A few moments and he had reached the breast-works. Some of the Spaniards were throwing down their arms and frantically scrambling out of the trenches, others were firing their last cartridges, with the raving, shouting Americans only a few yards away. Captain Talbot put his foot on the vamp and reached up to grasp the red and yellow flag. The Spanish general on the white horse fired a pistol in his face, and he fell headlong with the captured standard in his arms.

With a sobbing intake of the breath, like a strong swimmer about to plunge into an icy flood, a ferocious, roaring, irresistible human wave, the men in khaki poured over the parapets into the red corpse-strewn pits, and with the bayonet slaughtered the fleeing foe.

The battle was won.

The Caribbean moon rose above the shadowy hills and cast her pale rays down into the valley. A gentle rain fell from heaven as if Nature wished to pitiably wash away the crimson stains of combat. Peace and silence reigned along the lines, broken only by the hoarse challenge of the sentries and the flickering torches of the hospital corps and the burial squads slowly moving over the field in search of the wounded and the dead.

The cold-eyed colonel and the fussy little brigadier were riding along the captured position. They came to a burial squad with bared heads, standing around a dead officer, whose face in the ghastly light was a hideous crimson splotch, but the bullet-torn, blood-stained colors of the beaten enemy were tightly clenched in his stiffened fingers.

'Tis Captain Talbot, sir,' said Sergeant Burke reverently.

'God rest his gallant soul,' said the cold-eyed colonel, taking off his hat.

'Amen to that,' said the brigadier.

Was it moisture caused by the stinging smoke of the torches, or a tear wrung from a lion-heart, that sparkled under the thick gray brows of the cold-eyed colonel, and splashed down his weather-beaten face?

On Decoration Day, in the little town back in the States, a stern old man and a sad-faced woman in black strew with fragrant flowers the green grave of the Officer Who Ran.

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