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"HOUP-LA."

CHAPTER V.

Meantime, having seen that his revolvers were in perfect order, Bootles set about dressing himself for his expedition. He discarded his spurs and sword, and, indeed, everything which might serve to attract attention to him or make him an object more easily discernible in the darkness of the night.

There were among other things lying upon the makeshift table, a tin of milk biscuits, a jar of potted game, and a bottle nearly full of sherry. He poured out a tumbler full of the wine, and hastily spread some of the potted game upon the biscuits, then continued his preparations, eating as he moved about the tent.

"What a long time that boy is," he thought, impatiently.

Tom was not usually so long about his master's errands, and his master, not unnaturally perhaps, wondered at the being so then, when there was so much need for haste. However, he pulled on his long cloak, which covered him up from head to foot, and slipped a dark blue cloth polo cap upon his head—this was safer than to wear the gold-laced forage cap of an officer.

And then, just as he was going to button his cloak, he remembered the pocket book, and turned to take it.

But it was gone!

But it was gone!

Bootles stood for a moment staring at the place where he had laid it down in the stupefaction of intense surprise. He had put it down *just there*, beside his flask, and with his gloves! He was certain of it—he could positively swear to it.

What on earth had got the thing!

He roused himself from his bewilderment, and turned all his pockets out, ran to the brass-bound revolver case and examined it; back to the table, and tossed everything that was upon it over and over. Made quite sure, in fact, that pocket book and dispatch were alike missing, and not to be found.

He felt it was no use staying there, wasting his precious time in ransacking boxes and turning out pockets which he had not touched that day. The colonel must be told at once; so, with a mighty effort, Bootles pulled himself together, and went out with a sinking heart to tell the tale of his own shame and dishonor.

For thus did he, in the agony and distress of mind which overwhelmed him, designate the carelessness, or the unsuspiciousness, which had allowed him to trust the honesty of others. He never for a moment suspected young Tom of being the thief, but he did think it just within the bounds of possibility that, while he had been bending down over the case of revolvers, some one had quietly crept in and carried off the pocket book.

But it came out after a while—after Bootles had got through that terrible interview with the colonel—terrible because of the pain it gave to both of them—after he had given up his sword and his parole of honor, and then had passed the night in his tent alone, lying miserably in his hammock with his arm flung across his eyes. Then it all came out! How the flask, a handsome silver thing, with crest and monogram embossed upon it, had been found as soon as morning light broke over the camp, not twenty yards away from his tent, how young Tom had never been at all to get the brandy for which his master had sent him, then how young Tom was missing, and had never been seen by any one in the camp since the sentry on duty outside the colonel's tent had accosted him with "Ello, young Out-La, and what may you be a-doing off?" Lastly—and worst confirmation of all—how the missing pocket book had been found just outside the most advanced outposts.

There could be no further doubt that Tom Snow was the delinquent—nobody had the slightest doubt about it, not even Bootles himself, though he stoutly declared his belief in the lad, and maintained that nothing could make him think young Tom was a traitor, except the most absolute and positive proof that such was the case. For once Lacy was absolutely angry with his best friend.

"My dear chap," he said, in tones which were distinctly tones of remonstrance, though he tried to make them those of calm reasonableness, "what—or—more proof can you want or have? The boy was sent to get your flask filled with brandy; he did not get it filled with brandy or anything else, but it is found instead only a few yards from your own tent. The boy is gone—the—er—dispatch is gone too. Nobody else in the whole camp is missing. It is wreatly, Bootles, perfectly absurd to twry to shield the young wrascal any longer. The dispatch—er—could not go by itself—it's absurd—it—er—isn't in reason."

"In reason or out of reason, I don't and won't believe that the boy has sold me," Bootles asserted obstinately.

"But he has stolen the dispatch," Lacy persisted.

"Oh, nonsense! What on earth should he do with it when he had got it?"

"Why, hand it over to Awrabi, of course. What else should he do with it?" retorted Lacy, sharply.

"Oh he has never done that, though some one also may. That is likely enough," answered Bootles carelessly.

But Bootles knew very well in his heart that it must have been Tom and no other who had taken the pocket book from off his table, though he did not for a moment believe that the lad had sold him.

The true solution of the mystery was that the boy, by listening outside the colonel's tent, had, according to his idea, gathered the object of the mission with which his master had been charged, and with that knowledge had also gleaned a very correct idea of the danger which must attend it—that he had stolen the dispatch, and was now in hiding, with the ignorant idea that if it were not there to be taken, his master could not take it. That young Tom had actually set off from the Scarlet Lancers' camp to carry that paper across the five miles of difficult and dangerous country which lay between the two British camps was an idea which never entered for a moment into Bootles' calculations.

But his opinion was not shared by any one else, at least no one else hit upon that idea as a solution of the mystery of Tom's conduct, and Bootles did not tell any one what he thought; he only stoutly maintained that he did not believe, and that he never would believe, short of positive proof to the contrary, that the lad had sold him.

So that miserable morning dragged its slow length along. What a long, long day it was! The entire camp seemed paralyzed by the loss of that paper, which had contained instructions for a simultaneous attack upon the city and the rebel forces on the third day from the date of sending the dispatch. It was useless to send out a duplicate; for not only was the cypher probably already in the hands of Arabi, but the vigilance of the rebels would be greatly increased, and so render it impossible for a messenger to pass between the two British camps.

Towards evening, when the shades of night were gathering around, an attempt was made to signal to the other camp by means of electric light. Hitherto their trials in this respect had been but dismal failures, and it was as a last resort that the Scarlet Lancers attempted it now.

To their intense surprise, however, the answering flashes came back with precision and evident understanding, very different from the confused answers they had received before. This time there could be no mistaking their meaning, and apparently those on the distant shore were experiencing the same enlightenment.

"*All right!—Got your message.—Will act as you direct.*"

The signalist put the message together, and the group of officers who were standing round him stood, staring blankly into one another's faces, struck dumb with astonishment and surprise.

"Are you quite sure?" asked Hartog at length of the officer who was in charge of the signal.

The signalist—a very smart engineer—laughed.

"Yes. Quite sure," he answered.

"Then that boy carried the message to save Bootles!" Hartog exclaimed.

"By—Jove!" ejaculated Lacy, "and I've been vigorously blackening the poor little fellow's character al—l day—every time I had a chance. I—er—feel beastly ashamed of myself."

"Ask again—ask who took the message, an' if he is there now?" suggested Hartog to the engineer, who—complied willingly enough, and sent the inquiry flashing across the rapidly darkening sky, in which the brilliant stars were beginning to shine out one by one.

Then the reply came back in a series of vivid flashes:

"*A boy left camp at return journey with reply before daylight.*"

"Then the rotten hays got him," Hartog cried, excitedly. "Poor little chap, they've got him sure enough."

The news spread through the camp in next to no time, and within half an hour, young Houp-La had as many good words spoken for him as during the day he had had bad one. Everybody had something pleasant to say in favor of the brave little lad, who had thus heroically risked his life, and, poor fellow, had probably already lost it, for the sake of the master whom he loved with the fidelity of a dog.

As for his master, he went straight to the colonel and asked, with a strange huskiness in his throat and a blaze in his blue eyes, that a searching party might be sent out at once, and as far as was safe, in case the lad had been disabled and could not reach the camp.

"Certainly, certainly—and co yourself, if you care to do it, Ferrers," said the colonel, hurriedly, brushing his hand across his eyes. "Go yourself, if you care to do it. I have much pleasure in returning your sword. I am sure I sincerely hope the lad has come to no harm. 'Pon my soul, he is the hero of the campaign—'pon my soul he is," and then the kindly colonel shook his favorite Bootles full of "Thank you, sir," and went out without another word, chiefly because there was a lump in his throat which made speech difficult.

It was not long before a party was ready to start, with Bootles at its head, to search for the missing boy. Nor was it very long before they found him—perhaps a mile from the rebel outposts—lying behind a clump of trees, faint and ghastly pale, his mouth parched and dry, and his sharp, young face drawn and distorted with pain.

Bootles was the first to hear his moan, and turned the light of the bull's-eye he carried upon the piece whence the sound came. In another moment he was down upon his knees beside the prostrate form of the half unconscious boy.

Young Houp-La vaguely recognized his master as he tenderly raised his head upon his arm.

"*Water!*" he gasped, painfully.

Bootles filled the cup which formed the lower half of his flask with water, which one of the searchers had brought, and held it to the poor parched lips. It seemed to put new life into him, for he lifted his head and looked wildly round.

"Tell the captin I got there safe. The answer is in my waist coat pocket. I couldn't get back as well. One o' them Arab devils potted me. I crawled as far's I could, but I couldn't get no further, though I see the camp lights jes' ahead." Then he perceived that Bootles was bending down over him, his kind face convulsed with grief and emotion.

"Is that you, sir?" he said, in a tone of gentle relief and satisfaction. "Don't take on about me, sir. I ain't worth it."

"Where are you hurt, my boy?" Bootles asked in a choking voice.

"Somewhere about the groin, sir. It's no use trying to name it," seeing that two of the men had opened a stout blanket and were preparing to receive him. "It's all over with me now. Don't you put yourself out about me, sir. I ain't worth it."

"Try and drink a drop of this," said Bootles, holding the cup once more to his lips. It had brandy in it this time.

"It ain't no good, sir," he persisted, but he swallowed the brandy and water, and then they raised him very gently and lifted him on to the rug. Not so gently, though, but that he groaned and moaned piteously with the pain, and slipped off into delirium again, talking wildly all the way back to camp of the success of his expedition, and how the commanding officer of the other camp, who had received the dispatch from him, had patted him on the shoulder and called him a brave lad, and bade him God speed and a safe return.

And then, when at last they got him into camp and on to an ambulance cot, he came to his own senses again for a little time, and bade them send for the colonel that he might give the dispatch into his own hands.

"You're not angry, sir?" he said, imploringly, as the colonel took the paper. "I knew the capt'n couldn't go safe where I could, and I thought as low it wouldn't matter so much if aught happened to me. You're not angry with me, are you, sir?"

"No, my boy, certainly not," answered the colonel, huskily. "You are the bravest lad in the army. I am proud of you, very proud."

Tom Snow drew himself up as straightly as he could against his master's breast, where he had been lying ever since they put him down upon this bed, and endeavored to salute the commanding officer.

"I got there," he said, looking round at the faces about him, "and I got back 'ome again. It don't any of it matter now," and then he slipped off again and wandered on about the heat and the glare of the sunshine, of his awful thirst, and the pain of his wound. At last he tried to turn his head round to look at Bootles.

"Are you there, sir?" he asked, in a clear and sensible voice.

"Yes, my boy," answered Bootles, pressing the lad's head against his cheek, and holding him quite tight against his heart, as if he could not bear to let the all-powerful enemy, who was fast stealing upon them, wrest that faithful young life away from him.

The minutes passed slowly away and in these silence reigned throughout the tent suddenly Tom spoke again:

"I ain't in no pain now, sir," he said with a satisfied sigh, "but I'm orful tired."

"Try and sleep a little," said Bootles.

"Yes; I think I'll try. I'm orful tired."

Then there was silence again—a silence longer, deeper, more profound than that which had been before—broken, indeed, only by the sound of the boy's sharp-drawn breath. Then that, too, grew fainter and less labored, and Bootles held the slight form yet closer in his arms—held it till the last faint sigh had fluttered through the white-rimmed lips—held it, even though he knew perfectly well that the brave hero-soul had slipped away—held it closer and closer still, because he did not dare to look on the brave white face which had been faithful even to the very end, and had paid a debt of gratitude even by the sacrifice of life.

It was Lacy who approached him first.

"You'd better come away now, Bootles, old fellow," he said persuasively. "You can't do the poor little chap any good now."

Bootles allowed one of the doctors to unfold his arms and take the little body from him. Then he stood up and looked down upon it as it lay still and silent upon the bed, the sharp, young face at rest and peaceful now.

"I knew he hadn't sold me," he said in a shaking voice. "God bless him! he loved me better than himself;" and then he turned away and strode out into the darkness alone.

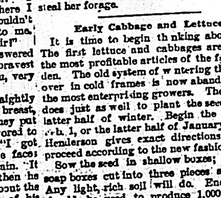
THE END.

Mrs. Treat, in her "Home Studies in Nature," says of bluebirds: When a pair of bluebirds succeed in rearing three broods in a season, in the autumn these broods unite and s ay with the parents, making a little flock of about fourteen. All the autumn through they keep together, feeding on the same bushes—pokeweed and the other wild berries—and upon stray insects. The first cold days of December send them to the cedar swamps, where great numbers congregate. Here, too, large flocks of robins keep them company. But each mild day brings the bluebirds from their retreat back to their unforgotten home, and there is nothing more fascinating in bird life than to see the frolics of the young birds and the grave demeanor of the parents. The young visit the various houses in which they were reared, sometimes two or three entering at the same time, and all the while keeping up their low, sweet twitterin, as if conversing.

Speaking of George Woodbury's "Life of Poe," a critic says: And yet a sadder or more disheartening story could not well be told. There is hardly a gleam of brightness to relieve the sombre shadow of a life that might and ought to have been so full of beauty and of worth. Poe was certainly one of the divinely gifted, and yet moral weakness and feebleness of purpose made him a wreck from the start. He was made up of the most contradictory elements; his nature was many-sided; but there was a fatal flaw in it all. The most charitable thing to think of him is that, if not actually insane, he always trembled on the verge of insanity, and was often irresponsible both for his words and actions.

A Cow's Necklace.

The illustration shows the approved method among breeders of blooded stock of marking cattle. It is by a neat twisted chain about the neck, with a brass tag attached. The chain is sometimes covered with leather to keep from wearing the hair off.

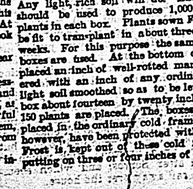


COW'S NECK CHAIN.

The chain is about two feet long. At one end is a ring, at the other a straight linked piece of chain about fourteen inches long. At the end of this is a slender link that will pass through the other links in the straight piece. A brass tag, with the owner's name and the animal's number, is soldered into the ring end of the large chain. The straight-linked piece is drawn through this, doubled upon itself and padlocked. Swedish padlocks are the best. Each has a key to itself, with a brass tag fast to it, bearing the same number as the tag upon the chain. In this way the calf is marked for life, in the safest, surest way. The chain can be let out as the animal grows. In herds, this suggestion will be found of great value.

Stanchions for Cattle.

The use of permanent neck chains, locked on around the necks of breeding animals and young blooded stock, affords an excellent means of fastening the animals in their stalls. A chain and snap are attached to the stall, by which, the snap being caught into the ring of the neck chain, the animals are fast-ned. A better way is shown in the accompanying sketch of a cow stable. Two round stanchions are placed three feet apart for each stall, and are the only indictions of subdivisions or stalls in the stable. A



CATTLE STANCHION.

chain about eighteen inches long, having a snap at one end, is attached by a ring to each stanchion. Both chains are made fast to the ring in the "necklace," and should have very little slack. If the stanchions are of hard wood, and smooth, the rings will slide easily up and down, but should not come within a foot of the floor. The cows will have free motion of the head to either side, can lie down and get up easily, but have very little motion forward and back, hence will keep on the platform and keep clean. They are besides kept perfectly devoted each to her own affairs, as she cannot reach over to either neighbor, to quarrel or to steal her forage.

Early Cabbage and Lettuce.

It is time to begin thinking about this. The first lettuce and cabbages are among the most profitable articles of the farm garden. The old system of wintering the plants over in cold frames is now abandoned by the most enterprising growers. They find it does just as well to plant the seed in the latter half of winter. Begin the planting Feb. 1, or the latter half of January. Peter Henderson gives exact directions how to proceed according to the new fashion:

Sow the seed in shallow boxes; ordinary soap boxes cut into three pieces are good. Any light, rich soil will do. Enough seed should be used to produce 1,000 to 1,500 plants in each box. Plants sown Feb. 1 will be fit to transplant in about three or four weeks. For this purpose the same shallow boxes are used. At the bottom of each is placed an inch of well-rotted manure, covered with an inch of any ordinary rich, light soil smoothed so as to be level. In a box about fourteen by twenty inches about 150 plants are placed. The boxes are then placed in the ordinary cold frames, which, however, have been protected with manure. Frost is kept out of these cold frames by putting on three or four inches of dry leaves or manure before the soil freezes up, and by placing the sash on the frames two or three weeks before they are to be used. Place the boxes as closely together as possible. In a bright sun the plants should be shaded for a few days until they take root. Most important of all is to cover the sashes with straw mats at night so securely that no frost will reach the plants in the cold frames. Plants grown in this way will be in fine condition for transplanting in the open air in two months from the date of sowing. The greatest care must be taken to keep the frost away from the plants and to preserve the proper ventilation and temperature.

How to Arrange an Apiary.

J. W. Margrove, of Hiawatha, Kan., in The American Bee Journal, tells how he arranged his apiary, as follows:

"I would like to describe the arrangement of my apiary last season. It may be old, but it was new to me. I laid it out in the form of a hollow square, placing the hives five feet apart from center to center, all facing outward; then I could do my work in the apiary and be all the time behind the hive, and not, as heretofore, stand behind one row and in front of the next row. I never like to insult a colony of bees by standing for in its doorway, for two reasons: First, I think it very impolite to do so; and, second, the bees often have a very sharp way of resisting such impertinence. If I had more hives than would fill the entire square I would form a second square inside of the first, only reversing the entrances, having them face inward. Then I could pass around the entire apiary and be in the rear of each hive. I paid particular attention during the season, and could detect no difference in those facing north from those facing to the east, or, indeed, any of the others; all did about equally well where the internal conditions were the same. I think that the plan is a good one, especially where one is limited for room, as a great many colonies could be kept in a very small space."

Candlemas Day.

"Half of your wood and half of your hay,
Candlemas day, Candlemas day."
—(Old Saw.

"If Candlemas is fair and clear
There'll be twa winters in the year."
—(Scotch Saying.

Candlemas day is the 21 of February or ground hog day. It gets its name from a ceremony in the Roman Catholic church. Lighted candles are carried in procession on that day—"a candle mass." But the festival is older than the Christian religion. The Romans burned candles on this day to Februa, the mother of Mars. From that goddess the month of February gets its name.

The meaning of the old saw to farmers is that winter is half over at the beginning of February. Often the longest part of the cold season, certainly the most trying part, comes through February, March and April. Stock of all kinds, the new lambs, the hens that raise the spring broilers, will need generous feeding and warm quarters for many weeks to come.

We flatter ourselves that our farmers, those who read this column, still have half of their winter's provisions left. They are intelligent, and know that Mother Earth's sleep is only half over at the beginning of February.

WATCH THE ASSESSMENT ROLLS.

Last Session the Local Legislature passed a Franchise Act which widely extended the Franchise and wisely gives votes to a large number who never had the right to vote before. The Provincial voters' lists are entirely based upon the assessment rolls. Unless a man's name appears on the Assessment roll, it will not appear on the voters' lists. Therefore it is of the greatest importance that every man to whom a vote is given by this new Franchise Act should be assessed. Particularly notice the law as it applies to three classes, namely: wage earners, householders and landholders' sons.

As to wage earners the Franchise Act provides that:—

"Every male person upon the last revised assessment roll as a wage earner, who resides at the time of the election in the local municipality in which he tenders his vote and has resided there continuously since the completion of the last revised assessment roll of the municipality, and who has during the twelve months next prior to being so entered, derived personal wages or income from some trade, occupation, calling, office or profession, of not less than two hundred and fifty dollars shall be entitled to vote."

And it further provides that:

"The fair value of the board or lodging received by such person in townships as part of his wages shall be considered or included as part of the $250.

The amount for which the wage earner is assessed is not taxable. His name is placed upon the assessment roll for the sole purpose of giving him a vote. The wage earner must take an affirmation in form provided by statute, and the assessor is compelled by law to have these forms printed (at the expense of the municipality), and to take them with him when engaged in his work of assessing. Every householder in each township municipality has a vote. This opens the door for many new voters. Every landholder's son also votes, and the word "son" includes "stepson," "grandson," and "son-in-law," and the word "landlord" includes "tenants," so that the sons of tenants may vote. Formerly the right of farmers' sons to vote was governed by the amount for which the father was assessed, and it still is so in the Dominion Franchise Act. By the Ontario Act of last session, however, where the parent is assessed either as owner or tenant in cities or towns for $400, and in villages and townships for $200, all the sons who are twenty-one years of age, and who have resided with their parents for the past twelve months, are entitled to be placed upon the assessment roll as landholder's sons. The expression "landholder's son" also includes in its meaning a step-son, grandson, or son-in-law, who may have so resided with the assessed landholder. Six months' temporary absence during the year does not prevent the name from being entered. It is very desirable that every one entitled to vote should have his name entered on the assessment rolls in the first instance and not trust to an appeal afterwards which will involve considerable trouble.

American Crop Reports.

ROCHESTER, N. Y., March 6.—Reports to the American Rural Home, from 5,000 correspondents in all parts of the country say the winter wheat crop continues generally in a favorable condition. The March freezing and thawing have not developed as yet any widespread or serious damage. Some spring wheat is sown, but the area is small. The ground generally is in good condition. The cotton crop is still very largely in the hands of the producers. The winter packing season is over. There is a decrease in the weight and quality of hogs.

OUR VOLUNTEER FORCE.

OTTAWA, March 6.—A feature of the blue book of the minister of militia, just brought down, is Gen. Sir Frederick Middleton's report. Sir Frederick wants the number of volunteers reduced and the corps better drilled. He wants the Snider rifle, in favor of the Martini-Henri, abandoned, and the sword bayonet generally adopted. He thinks the system of rifle practice wholly defective, particularly in the rural districts, and he wants the Dominion artillery and rifle association put on a more strictly military footing and a qualified musketry instructor secured for every volunteer camp. In this connection he suggests that two or three militia officers should be sent to England for a course of instruction at the School of Musketry at Hythe. He considers that revolver pract