

I ask myself, Is this a dream?
Will it all vanish into air?
Is there a land of such supreme
And perfect beauty anywhere?

Sweet vision! Do not fade away;
Linger until my heart shall take
Into itself the summer day,
And all the beauty of the lake.

Linger until upon my brain
Is stamped an image of the scene;
Then fade into the air again,
And be as if thou hadst not been.

Henry W. Longfellow.

A REBEL'S RECOLLECTIONS.

VII. THE END, AND AFTER.

It is impossible to say precisely when the conviction became general in the South that we were to be beaten. I cannot even decide at what time I myself began to think the cause a hopeless one, and I have never yet found one of my fellow-Confederates, though I have questioned many of them, who could tell me with any degree of certainty the history of his change from confidence to despondency. We schooled ourselves from the first to think that we should ultimately win, and the habit of thinking so was too strong to be easily broken by adverse events. Having undertaken to make good our declaration of independence, we refused to admit, even to ourselves, the possibility of failure. It was a part of our soldierly and patriotic duty to believe that ultimate success was to be ours, and Stuart only uttered the common thought of army and people, when he said, "We are bound to believe that, anyhow." We were convinced, beyond the possibility of a doubt, of the absolute righteousness of our cause, and in spite of history we persuaded ourselves that a people battling for the right could not fail in the end. And so our hearts went on hoping for success

long after our heads had learned to expect failure. Besides all this, we never gave verbal expression to the doubts we felt, or even to the longing, which must have been universal, for the end. It was our religion to believe in the triumph of our cause, and it was heresy of the rankest sort to doubt it or even to admit the possibility of failure. It was ours to fight on indefinitely, and to the future belonged the award of victory to our arms. We did not allow ourselves even the poor privilege of wishing that the struggle might end, except as we coupled the wish with a pronounced confidence in our ability to make the end what we desired it to be. I remember very well the stern rebuke administered by an officer to as gallant a fellow as any in the army, who, in utter weariness and wretchedness, in the trenches at Spottsylvania Court House, after a night of watching in a drenching rain, said that he hoped the campaign then opening might be the last one of the war. His plea that he also hoped the war would end as we desired availed him nothing. To be weary in the cause was offense enough, and the officer gave warning that another such expression would sub-

ject the culprit to trial by court-martial. In this he only spoke the common mind. We had enlisted for the war, and a thought of weariness was hardly better than a wish for surrender. This was the temper in which we began the campaign of 1864, and so far as I have been able to discover, we remained in it to the end. Even during the final retreat, though there were many desertions soon after Richmond was left behind, not one of us who remained despaired of the end we sought. We discussed the comparative strategic merits of the line we had left and the new one we hoped to make on the Roanoke River, and we wondered where the seat of government would be, but not one word was said about a probable or possible surrender. Nor was the army alone in this. The people who were being left behind were confident that they should see us again shortly, on our way to Richmond's recapture.

Up to the hour of the evacuation of Richmond, the newspapers were as confident as ever of victory. During the fall of 1864 they even believed, or professed to believe, that our triumph was already at hand. The Richmond Whig of October 5, 1864, said: "That the present condition of affairs, compared with that of any previous year at the same season, at least since 1861, is greatly in our favor, we think can hardly be denied." In the same article it said: "That General Lee can keep Grant out of Richmond from this time until doomsday, if he should be tempted to keep up the trial so long, we are as confident as we can be of anything whatever." The Examiner of September 24, 1864, said in its leading editorial: "The final struggle for the possession of Richmond and of Virginia is now near. This war draws to a close. If Richmond is held by the South till the first of November it will be ours forever more; for the North will never throw another huge army into the abyss where so many lie; and the war will conclude, beyond a doubt, with the independence of the Southern States." In its issue for October 7, 1864, the same paper be-

gan its principal editorial article with this paragraph: "One month of spirit and energy now, and the campaign is over, and the war is over. We do not mean that if the year's campaign end favorably for us, McClellan will be elected as Yankee President. That may come, or may not come; but no part of our chance for an honorable peace and independence rests upon that. Let who will be Yankee President, with the failure of Grant and Sherman this year, the war ends. And with Sherman's army already isolated and cut off in Georgia, and Grant unable either to take or besiege Richmond, we have only to make one month's exertion in improving our advantages, and then it may safely be said that the fourth year's campaign, and with it the war itself, is one gigantic failure." The Richmond Whig of September 8, 1864, with great gravity copied from the Wytheville Dispatch an article beginning as follows: "Believing as we do that the war of subjugation is virtually over, we deem it not improper to make a few suggestions relative to the treatment of Yankees after the war is over. Our soldiers know how to treat them now, but *then* a different treatment will be necessary." And so they talked all the time.

Much of this was mere whistling to keep our courage up, of course, but we tried very hard to believe all these pleasant things, and in a measure we succeeded. And yet I think we must have known from the beginning of the campaign of 1864 that the end was approaching, and that it could not be other than a disastrous one. We knew very well that General Lee's army was smaller than it ever had been before. We knew, too, that there were no reinforcements to be had from any source. The conscription had put every man worth counting into the field already, and the little army that met General Grant in the Wilderness represented all that remained of the Confederate strength in Virginia. In the South matters were at their worst, and we knew that not a man could come thence to our assistance. Lee mustered a total strength of

about sixty-six thousand men, when we marched out of winter-quarters and began in the Wilderness that long struggle which ended nearly a year later at Appomattox. With that army alone the war was to be fought out, and we had to shut our eyes to facts very resolutely, that we might not see how certainly we were to be crushed. And we did shut our eyes so successfully as to hope in a vague, irrational way for the impossible, to the very end. In the Wilderness we held our own against every assault, and the visible punishment we inflicted upon the foe was so great that hardly any man in our army expected to see a Federal force on our side of the river at daybreak next morning. We thought that General Grant was as badly hurt as Hooker had been on the same field, and confidently expected him to retreat during the night. When he moved by his left flank to Spottsylvania instead, we understood what manner of man he was, and knew that the persistent pounding, which of all things we were least able to endure, had begun. When at last we settled down in the trenches around Petersburg, we ought to have known that the end was rapidly drawing near. We congratulated ourselves instead upon the fact that we had inflicted a heavier loss than we had suffered, and buckled on our armor anew.

If General Grant had failed to break our power of resistance by his sledgehammer blows, it speedily became evident that he would be more successful in wearing it away by the constant friction of a siege. Without fighting a battle he was literally destroying our army. The sharp-shooting was incessant, and the bombardment hardly less so, and under it all our numbers visibly decreased day by day. During the first two months of the siege my own company, which numbered about a hundred and fifty men, lost sixty, in killed and wounded, an average of a man a day; and while our list of casualties was greater than that of many other commands, there were undoubtedly some companies and regiments which suffered more than we. The reader will readily

understand that an army already weakened by years of war, with no source from which to recruit its ranks, could not stand this daily waste for any great length of time. We were in a state of atrophy for which there was no remedy except that of freeing the negroes and making soldiers of them, which Congress was altogether too loftily sentimental to think of for a moment.

There was no longer any room for hope except in a superstitious belief that Providence would in some way interfere in our behalf, and to that very many betook themselves for comfort. This shifting upon a supernatural power the task we had failed to accomplish by human means rapidly bred many less worthy superstitions among the troops. The general despondency, which amounted almost to despair, doubtless helped to bring about this result, and the great religious "revival" contributed to it in no small degree. I think hardly any man in that army entertained a thought of coming out of the struggle alive. The only question with each was when his time was to come, and a sort of gloomy fatalism took possession of many minds. Believing that they must be killed sooner or later, and that the hour and the manner of their deaths were unalterably fixed, many became singularly reckless, and exposed themselves with the utmost carelessness to all sorts of unnecessary dangers.

"I'm going to be killed pretty soon," said as brave a man as I ever knew, to me one day. "I never flinched from a bullet until to-day, and now I dodge every time one whistles within twenty feet of me."

I tried to persuade him out of the belief, and even got for him a dose of valerian with which to quiet his nerves. He took the medicine, but assured me that he was not nervous in the least.

"My time is coming, that's all," he said; "and I don't care. A few days more or less don't signify much." An hour afterwards the poor fellow's head was blown off as he stood by my side.

One such incident — and there were many of them — served to confirm a

superstitious belief in presentiments which a hundred failures of fulfillment were unable to shake. Meantime the revival went on. Prayer-meetings were held in every tent. Testaments were in every hand, and a sort of religious ecstasy took possession of the army. The men had ceased to rely upon the skill of our leaders or the strength of our army for success, and not a few of them hoped now for a miraculous interposition of supernatural power in our behalf. Men in this mood make the best of soldiers, and at no time were the fighting qualities of the Southern army better than during the siege. Under such circumstances men do not regard death, and even the failure of any effort they were called upon to make wrought no demoralization among troops who had persuaded themselves that the Almighty held victory in store for them, and would give it them in due time. What cared they for the failure of mere human efforts, when they were persuaded that through such failures God was leading us to ultimate victory? Disaster seemed only to strengthen the faith of many. They saw in it a needed lesson in humility, and an additional reason for believing that God meant to bring about victory by his own and not by human strength. They did their soldierly duties perfectly. They held danger and fatigue alike in contempt. It was their duty as Christian men to obey orders without question, and they did so in the thought that to do otherwise was to sin.

That the confidence bred of these things should be of a gloomy kind was natural enough, and the gloom was not dispelled, certainly, by the conviction of every man that he was assisting at his own funeral. Failure, too, which was worse than death, was plainly inevitable in spite of it all. We persisted, as I have said, in vaguely hoping and trying to believe that success was still to be ours, and to that end we shut our eyes to the plainest facts, refusing to admit the truth which was everywhere evident, namely, that our efforts had failed, and that our cause was already in its death struggles. But we must

have known all this, nevertheless, and our diligent cultivation of an unreasonable hopefulness served in no sensible degree to raise our spirits.

Even positive knowledge does not always bring belief. I doubt if a condemned man, who finds himself in full bodily health, ever quite believes that he is to die within the hour, however certainly he may know the fact; and our condition was not unlike that of condemned men.

When at last the beginning of the end came, in the evacuation of Richmond and the effort to retreat, everything seemed to go to pieces at once. The best disciplinarians in the army relaxed instead of tightening their reins. The best troops became disorganized, and hardly any command marched in a body. Companies were mixed together, parts of each being separated by detachments of others. Flying citizens in vehicles of every conceivable sort accompanied and embarrassed the columns. Many commands marched heedlessly on without orders, and seemingly without a thought of whither they were going. Others mistook the meaning of their orders, and still others had instructions which it was impossible to obey in any case. At Amelia Court House we should have found a supply of provisions. General Lee had ordered a train load to meet him there, but, as I have stated in a previous paper, the interests of the starving army had been sacrificed to the convenience or the cowardice of the President and his personal following. The train had been hurried on to Richmond and its precious cargo of food thrown out there, in order that Mr. Davis and his people might retreat rapidly and comfortably from the abandoned capital. Then began the desertion of which we have heard so much. Up to that time, as far as I can learn, if desertions had occurred at all they had not become general; but now that the government, in flying from the foe, had cut off our only supply of provisions, what were the men to do? Many of them wandered off in search of food, with no thought of deserting at

all. Many others followed the example of the government, and fled; but as irregularly large proportion of the little whole stayed and starved to the last. And it was no technical or metaphorical starvation which we had to endure, either, as a brief statement of my own experience will show. The battery to which I was attached was captured near Amelia Court House, and within a mile or two of my home. Seven men only escaped, and as I knew intimately everybody in the neighborhood, I had no trouble in getting horses for these to ride. Applying to General Lee in person for instructions, I was ordered to march on, using my own judgment, and rendering what service I could in the event of a battle. In this independent fashion I marched, with much better chances than most of the men had to get food, and yet during three days and nights our total supply consisted of one ear of corn to the man, and we divided that with our horses.

The end came, technically, at Appomattox, but of the real difficulties of the war the end was not yet. The trials and the perils of utter disorganization were still to be endured, and as the condition in which many parts of the South were left by the fall of the Confederate government was an anomalous one, some account of it seems necessary to the completeness of this series of papers.

Our principal danger was from the lawless bands of marauders who infested the country, and our greatest difficulty in dealing with them lay in the utter absence of constituted authority of any sort. Our country was full of highwaymen, — not the picturesque highwaymen of whom fiction and questionable history tell us, those gallant, generous fellows whose purse-cutting proclivities seem mere peccadilloes in the midst of so many virtues; not these, by any means, but plain highwaymen of the most brutal description possible, and destitute even of the merit of presenting a respectable appearance. They were simply the offscourings of the two armies and of the suddenly freed negro population: deserters from fighting reg-

iments on both sides, and negro desperadoes, who found common ground upon which to fraternize in their common depravity. They moved about in bands, from two to ten strong, cutting horses out of plows, plundering helpless people, and wantonly destroying valuables which they could not carry away. At the house of one of my friends where only ladies lived, a body of these men demanded dinner, which was given them. They then required the mistress of the mansion to fill their canteens with sorghum molasses, which they immediately proceeded to pour over the carpets and furniture of the parlor. Outrages of this kind and worse were of every-day enactment, and there was no remedy. There was no State, county, or municipal government in existence among us. We had no courts, no justices of the peace, no sheriffs, no officers of any kind invested with a shadow of authority, and there were not men enough in the community, at first, to resist the marauders, comparatively few of the surrendered soldiers having found their way home as yet. Those districts in which the Federal armies were stationed were peculiarly fortunate. The troops gave protection to the people, and the commandants of posts constituted a government able to enforce order, to which outraged or threatened people could appeal. But these favored sections were only a small part of the whole. The troops were not distributed in detached bodies over the country, but were kept in considerable masses at strategic points, lest a guerrilla war should succeed regular hostilities; and so the greater part of the country was left wholly without law, at a time when law was most imperatively needed. I mention this, not to the discredit of the victorious army or of its officers. They could not wisely have done otherwise. If the disbanded Confederates had seen fit to inaugurate a partisan warfare, as many of the Federal commanders believed they would, they could have annoyed the army of occupation no little; and so long as the temper of the country in this matter was unknown, it would

have been in the last degree improper to station small bodies of troops in exposed situations. Common military prudence dictated the massing of the troops, and as soon as it became evident that we had no disposition to resist further, but were disposed rather to render such assistance as we could in restoring and maintaining order, everything was done which could be done to protect us. It is with a good deal of pleasure that I bear witness to the uniform disposition shown by such Federal officers as I came in contact with at this time, to protect all quiet citizens, to restore order, and to forward the interests of the community they were called upon to govern. In one case I went with a fellow-Confederate to the head-quarters nearest me, eighteen miles away, and reported the doings of some marauders in my neighborhood, which had been more than usually outrageous. The general in command at once made a detail of cavalry and instructed its chief to go in pursuit of the highwaymen, and to bring them to him, dead or alive. They were captured, marched at a double-quick to the camp, and shot forthwith, by sentence of a drum-head court-martial, a proceeding which did more than almost anything else could have done, to intimidate other bands of a like kind. At another time I took to the same officer's camp a number of stolen horses which a party of us had managed to recapture from a sleeping band of desperadoes. Some of the horses we recognized as the property of our neighbors, some we did not know at all, and one or two were branded "C. S." and "U. S." The general promptly returned all the identified horses, and lent all the others to farmers in need of them. These things gave us confidence and promoted good feeling.

After a little time most of the ex-soldiers returned to their homes, and finding that there were enough of us in the county in which I lived to exercise a much-needed police supervision if we had the necessary authority, we sent a committee of citizens to Richmond to report the facts to the general in command of the district. He received

our committee very cordially, expressed great pleasure in the discovery that citizens were anxious to maintain order until a reign of law could be restored, and granted us leave to organize ourselves into a military police, with officers acting under written authority from him; to patrol the county; to disarm all improper or suspicious persons; to arrest and turn over to the nearest provost-marshal all wrong-doers, and generally to preserve order by armed surveillance. To this he attached but one condition, namely, that we should hold ourselves bound in honor to assist any United States officer who might require such service of us, in the suppression of guerrilla warfare. To this we were glad enough to assent, as the thing we dreaded most at that time was the inauguration of a hopeless, irregular struggle, which would destroy the small chance left us of rebuilding our fortunes and restoring our wasted country to prosperity. We governed the county in which we lived until the establishment of a military post at the county seat relieved us of the task, and the permission given us thus to stamp out lawlessness saved our people from the alternative of starvation or dependence upon the bounty of the government. It was seed-time, and without a vigorous maintenance of order our fields could not have been planted at all.

It is difficult to comprehend, and impossible to describe, the state of uncertainty in which we lived at this time. We had surrendered at discretion, and had no way of discovering or even of guessing what terms were to be given us. We were cut off almost wholly from trustworthy news, and in the absence of papers were unable even to rest conjecture upon the expression of sentiment at the North. Rumors we had in plenty, but so many of them were clearly false that we were forced to reject them all as probably untrue. When we heard it confidently asserted that General Alexander had made a journey to Brazil and brought back a tempting offer to emigrants, knowing all the time that if he had gone he must have made the

trip within the extraordinarily brief period of a few weeks, it was difficult to believe other news which reached us through like channels, though much of it ultimately proved true. I think nobody in my neighborhood believed the rumor of Mr. Lincoln's assassination until it was confirmed by a Federal soldier whom I questioned upon the subject one day, a week or two after the event. When we knew that the rumor was true, we deemed it the worst news we had heard since the surrender. We distrusted President Johnson more than any one else. Regarding him as a renegade Southerner, we thought it probable that he would endeavor to prove his loyalty to the Union by extra severity to the South, and we confidently believed he would revoke the terms offered us in Mr. Lincoln's amnesty proclamation; wherefore there was a general haste to take the oath and so to secure the benefit of the dead president's clemency before his successor should establish harsher conditions. We should have regarded Mr. Lincoln's death as a calamity, even if it had come about by natural means, and coming as it did through a crime committed in our name, it seemed doubly a disaster.

With the history of the South during the period of reconstruction, all readers are familiar, and it is only the state of affairs between the time of the surrender and the beginning of the rebuilding, that I have tried to describe in this paper. But the picture would be inexcusably incomplete without some mention of the negroes. Their behavior both during and after the war may well surprise anybody not acquainted with the character of the race. When the men of the South were nearly all in the army, the negroes were left in large bodies on the plantations with nobody to control them except the women and a few old or infirm men. They might have been insolent, insubordinate, and idle, if they had chosen. They might have gained their freedom by asserting it. They might have overturned the social and political fabric at any time, and *they knew all this too*. They were intelligent

enough to know that there was no power on the plantations capable of resisting any movement they might choose to make. They did know, too, that the success of the Federal arms would give them freedom. The fact was talked about everywhere, and no effort was made to keep the knowledge of it from them. They knew that to assert their freedom was to give immediate success to the Union cause. Most of them coveted freedom, too, as the heartiness with which they afterwards accepted it abundantly proves. And yet they remained quiet, faithful, and diligent throughout, very few of them giving trouble of any sort, even on plantations where only a few women remained to control them. The reason for all this must be sought in the negro character, and we of the South, knowing that character thoroughly, trusted it implicitly. We left our homes and our helpless ones in the keeping of the Africans of our households, without any hesitation whatever. We knew these faithful and affectionate people too well to fear that they would abuse such a trust. We concealed nothing from them, and they knew quite as well as we did the issues at stake in the war.

The negro is constitutionally loyal to his obligations as he understands them, and his attachments, both local and personal, are uncommonly strong. He speedily forgets an injury, but never a kindness, and so he was not likely to rise in arms against the helpless women and children whom he had known intimately and loved almost reverentially from childhood, however strongly he desired the freedom which such a rising would secure to him. It was a failure to appreciate these peculiarities of the negro character which led John Brown into the mistake that cost him his life. Nothing is plainer than that he miscalculated the difficulty of exciting the colored people to insurrection. He went to Harper's Ferry confident that when he should declare his purposes, the negroes would flock to his standard and speedily crown his effort with success. They remained quietly at work instead, many of

them hoping, doubtless, that freedom for themselves and their fellows might somehow be wrought out, but they were wholly unwilling to make the necessary war upon the whites, to whom they were attached by the strongest possible bonds of affection. And so throughout the war they acted after their kind, waiting for the issue with the great, calm patience which is their most universal characteristic.

When the war ended, leaving everything in confusion, the poor blacks hardly knew what to do; but upon the whole, they acted with great modesty, much consideration for their masters, and singular wisdom. A few depraved ones took to bad courses at once, but their number was remarkably small. A few others, with visionary notions, betook themselves to the cities in search of easier and more profitable work than any they had ever done, and many of these suffered severely from want before they found employment again. The great majority waited patiently for things to adjust themselves in their new conditions, going on with their work meanwhile, and conducting themselves with singular modesty. I saw much of them at this time, and I heard of no case in which a negro voluntarily reminded his master of the changed relations existing between them, or in any other way offended against the strictest rules of propriety.

At my own home, the master of the

mansion assembled his negroes immediately after the surrender; told them they were free, and under no obligation whatever to work for him; and explained to them the difficulty he found in deciding what kind of terms he ought to offer them, inasmuch as he was wholly ignorant upon the subject of the wages of agricultural laborers. He told them, however, that if they wished to go on with the crop, he would give them provisions and clothing as before, and at the end of the year would pay them as high a rate of wages as any paid in the neighborhood. To this every negro on the place agreed, all of them protesting that they wanted no better terms than for their master to give them at the end of the year whatever he thought they had earned. They lost not an hour from their work, and the life upon the plantation underwent no change whatever until its master was forced by a pressure of debt to sell his land. I give the history of the adjustment on this plantation as a fair example of the way in which ex-masters and ex-slaves were disposed to deal with each other.

There were cases in which no such harmonious adjustment could be effected, but, so far as my observation extended, these were exceptions to the common rule; and even now, after a lapse of nine years, a very large proportion of the negroes remain, either as hired laborers or as renters of small farms, on the plantations on which they were born.

George Cary Eggleston.

THE MARGUERITE.

PRETTY flower that June remembers,
 Blossom that July forgets,
 While my hand thy cup dismembers
 Pity me and my regrets;

For of all thy wreathèd glory
 But one ray remains to fall,
 And that petal tells the story
 That I am not loved at all.

A. R. Grots.