

Military Order 
of the
Loyal Legion
of the
 United States



COMMANDERY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.



WAR PAPER 80.

Aid to the Enemy.



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PREPARED BY COMPANION

Second Lieutenant

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U. S. Volunteers,

AND

READ AT THE STATED MEETING OF APRIL 6, 1910.

Aid to the Enemy.

Into that beautiful story of Kentucky character and adventure, "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come," the author has woven real incidents and personages of the Civil War period, and in one chapter tells of telegraph despatches from General Ward, the Union commander, that were intercepted by that noted and daring Confederate cavalryman, Col. John Morgan of Kentucky. This incident occurred in the fall of 1862, when General Ward's Brigade was stretched along the limestone pike leading south from the capitol city of Kentucky, and I, a young lieutenant, was serving as aide-de-camp on his staff. A simple incident of civil war, in which, acting under orders, I was a participant, occurred at this time and it was vividly called to mind while reading the captivating story of John Fox, Jr.

Taps had just been sounded and the camp was quickly quieting down on a chill November evening, when an orderly came to my tent telling me that a messenger from the pickets posted southward had arrived with a message for the officer in command. The mounted man's story was that a carriage, conveying two women, coming from the south had been halted, and was held for orders. The women wished to enter our lines, he stated, and desired to interview the officer in command. Telling me this much he handed me a slip of paper, upon which, as I now recall, two names merely were written. General Ward's tent was still lighted and I reported the matter to him at once, handing him the note as I finished. He appeared much concerned as he read the names by the flickering light of a

candle, and after a time asked, as if he had not understood, "What did you say they wanted, Lieutenant?" and I repeated what the messenger had said. There may have been more in the note than I now recollect, but after some further reflection the General directed me to proceed in person to the outpost and question the women as to their object and purpose in seeking to enter our lines, and where they came from, incidentally suggesting that I might be able to obtain some information relative to the movements of the enemy in our front. We were following General Bragg's army on his retreat from before Louisville.

Ordering my horse and directing two of the headquarters escort to accompany me, we soon reached the inner picket post, where, standing in the roadway, I saw a dilapidated old vehicle, a decrepit appearing horse, and with the lines loosely hanging in his hands, and peacefully asleep on the front seat, an aged colored man, whose venerable appearance well fitted the ensemble. The guards had built a small fire near the wayside and by its inconstant light I made out the indistinct forms of the two women crouched in the rear seat and secluded by the carriage curtains. They were anxiously awaiting the return of the messenger, and as I rode up and returned the salute of the sergeant and his men the elder of the two rose, asking whether I was to conduct her and her daughter to headquarters. My reply was that I must first know something about them and their object in seeking to enter our lines, coming from the camps of the enemy so near us. This appeared to discomfit her, but she commenced telling me her story, which, briefly stated, was that while residing near Louisville they had been in the south visiting when hostilities began, and circumstances had so far forced them to remain within the Confederate lines, but their condition and lack of means now necessitated their

return to relatives in the north who could care for them. She stated that General Ward knew who they were, and concluded with tears, and in an excited manner, demanding that I conduct them to him at once! As she ceased, for the first time her companion rose, and, removing a veil, leaned forward, revealing the features of a beautiful girl. Though indicating care and anxiety and the trace of recent tears, her face had all the lines of young and graceful girlhood. She, too, told me of their trials and hardships under conditions existing in the south, and in an ingenuous way joined her entreaty to the appeal of her mother that I secure them permission to enter our lines in order to reach relatives in the north. The rather imperious manner and demands of the mother had not impressed me so favorably, but the distress of the daughter and her feeling tale of their circumstances and needs enlisted all my sympathy as she sank back with a look of hopeful expectancy in her tearful eyes. My youthful ardor was all aroused and I was all too ready to champion so lovely a suppliant! Each had, however, rather evaded reply to any of my suggestions in relation to the movements of the enemy, from whose lines they came, and I made no rash promises, leaving them in care of the pickets as I rode quickly back to headquarters.

General Ward was himself a Kentuckian, a gallant soldier and man of kind heart, and as I rode I had no thought but that he would permit the women to remain and see him in the morning. I was disappointed, however, for without comment, after hearing my report, he surprised and confused me by directing that I return at once and send the two women back with orders not to attempt to enter our lines again! My brief volunteer service of twenty months had doubtless not been impressed by the stern requirements of war, with the enemy in front of us, and I presume disappointment was expressed

by my countenance, for as I turned slowly to leave the General added: "Sentiments of sympathy and friendship cannot be indulged in times like these; we must not trust to appearances." Perhaps he was thinking of the dispatches intercepted by Colonel Morgan. I do not know!

But again riding toward the outpost in the now raw, wet night, the chilly air hanging as heavily and depressing as my feelings were over the peremptory orders of my superior, I must confess even now I was in an insubordinate mood. I was but twenty-two then and as I rode on in the rain my thoughts were of the fair young girl hopefully awaiting my return, and what my message meant to her. Orders, duty, discipline for the moment mingled in my mind, and I thought if it were only a task of danger again instead of what seemed to me a hardship to be meted out to two weak women!

On a February day the winter before I stood in the ranks of my regiment ordered to lead the charge to be made upon the entrenched works of the enemy on the crest of the hill three hundred yards away, and when the signal—three cannon shots quickly fired—rang out, the left wing moving in column marched from a bit of woods into the opening and, followed by the right wing in same order, moved into line with colors on the right, facing the foe behind their log-crested defences above who at once began firing. The regiment was ordered not to fire until within the works and, with caps off guns and bayonets fixed, heedless of the balls and bullets pouring down, moved steadily forward and upward, climbing the steep hill over fallen trees and brush, on and up it went, the line of men in dark blue advancing against the firing and white line of smoke from the works of the enemy. They reach the ditch in front, they climb the bank and pass over, other troops follow, and for the first time the fire of the foe is returned and all is covered

with smoke, for the firing and fighting is fierce; but it soon slackens, for the enemy has fled to a new line of defence and the day is gained, the battle won, and 'cheers upon cheers rend the air! But in a few moments all is hushed and still, for, as the pall of smoke rose, over two hundred of the 2nd Iowa, dead and wounded, among whom I lay in the tangled paths below, told the cost of the victory.

But this was the wage of war and all in the day's work, and thought and action are quick in war time, and again, as I rode on, it was the fortune of war, and these two, unwilling victims maybe, had taken their chances as well, and as I drew rein at the picket post it only remained for me to carry out my orders.

The guards were serving their charges with hot coffee they had prepared when I returned, and which the ladies assured me was the first real coffee they had tasted for a long while, and while they wept again when they learned my instructions, the kindness of the soldiers and my own evident sympathy seemed some solace, and as their faithful old black driver turned his horse in the road and they drove away to the southward in the gathering gloom of the night, and out of all further knowledge of mine, they did not appear altogether disconsolate.

For some days I was chaffed a good deal by the members of the staff for my apparent sympathy for "the young rebel," as they termed her, but the brigade soon marched southward in pursuit of Bragg's army and the incident passed from their minds. When I left the staff the next summer to return to my own regiment General Ward told me he knew the elder woman well, and while he doubted her ability to render any material aid to the Confederates, he knew her to be an ardent sympathizer in their cause, and did not wish to take any chances by admitting her to our lines, and he could not well separate

them by admitting the daughter. To my remark that I regretted the girl had been so chaperoned, the General laughingly said he did not know but that he would yet have to charge me with having afforded aid and comfort to the enemy.

If it were a romance I am relating, it should conclude with a chapter telling how I later learned the further fate of my visitors on the pike, and after the war had ceased won the heart and hand of the fair young rebel, but my story is a true one, and of her—wife of all the years—who too came into my young soldier life is another story, and when our granddaughter begs a story—“When you were a soldier, grandpa”—I needs must tell her over again the story of Donelson, and when wounded and in hospital, how her grandmother came to minister; and then I must, too, again tell her of the refugees on the pike so many years ago; and when the tales are told, into her eyes and mine there comes a far-away look, as if into the misty past, and of wondering too—how in the great struggle of civil war, battles and bullets, and youth and hearts were by fate and circumstance mingled and woven into the destiny of many of our lives.