
A LITTLE UNION SCOUT

A Little Union Scout

By

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GABRIEL TOLLIVER, THE MAKING OF A STATESMAN
AND WALLY WANDEROON

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I

A young lady, just returned from college, was making a still-hunt in the house for old things—old furniture, old A Little Union Scout china, and old books. She had a craze for the antique, and the older things were the more precious they were in her eyes. Among other things she found an old A Little Union Scout scrap-book that her mother and I thought was safe under lock and key. She sat in a sunny place and read it page by page, and, when she had finished, her curiosity was aroused. The clippings in the old scrap-book were all about the adventures of a Union scout whose name was said to be Captain Frank Leroy. The newspaper clippings that had been preserved were queerly inconsistent. The Northern and Western papers praised the scout very highly, and some of them said that if there were more such men in the army the cause of the Union would progress more rapidly; whereas the Southern papers, though paying a high tribute to the dash and courage of the scout, were highly abusive. He was "one of Lincoln's hirelings" and as villanous as he was bold.

The girl graduate at once jumped to the conclusion that there was a story behind the old scrap-book, else why should it be preserved by her father, who had been a Confederate soldier? This idea no sooner took shape than she became insisently inquisitive. As for her father, the very sight of the scrap-book awoke the echoes of a hundred experiences—long and dangerous rides in the lonely night, battles, sharp skirmishes and bitter sufferings.

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The story, such as it was, took shape in my mind, and I am afraid that the young girl had small difficulty in persuading me to tell it. Memory brought before me the smiling features of Harry Herndon, my life-long friend and comrade, the handsome face of Jack Bledsoe, one of our college mates from Missouri, and the beautiful countenance of his sister, Katherine Bledsoe. These and a hundred other faces came crowding from the past, and the story was told almost before I knew it.

When Harry Herndon and I went to the wars we were somewhat belated. The excitement of '61 found us at college, where we had orders to remain until we had finished the course, and the orders came from one whom we had never dared to disobey—Harry's grandmother. And then, when we were ready to go, she cut in ahead of our plans and sent us to the West with letters to General Dabney Maury, whom she had known when he was a boy and later when he was a young officer in the regular army.

We were not ill-equipped for two raw youngsters; we had Whistling Jim, the negro, three fine horses, and more money than I had ever seen before. We went to General Maury and were most courteously received. The Virginia Herndons—Harry belonged to the Maryland branch—were related to him—and he liked the name. We caught the barest glimpse of service at Corinth, and were fortunate A Little Union Scout enough to be in a few skirmishes, where we distinguished ourselves by firing at nothing whatever.

In the course of a few weeks General Maury was made commander of the Department of the Gulf, with headquarters at A Little Union Scout Mobile, where we saw service as clerks and

accountants. For my part, the life suited me passing well, but Harry Herndon fretted so that we were soon transferred to the command of General Forrest, who was sadly in need of men. As it happened, we had little difficulty in finding our man. We had heard that he was in the neighborhood of Chattanooga, giving his men and horses a much-needed rest; but on the way news came to us that, in spite of his brilliant achievements A Little Union Scout in the field, he had been deprived of the choicest regiments of his brigade—men whom he had trained and seasoned to war. After this mutilation of his command, he had been ordered to Murfreesborough to recruit and organize a new brigade.

Toward Murfreesborough, therefore, we made our way, falling in with a number of Forrest's men who had been on a A Little Union Scout brief visit to their homes in Alabama and were now returning to their command. As we shortly discovered, the Union commanders in Tennessee mistook General Forrest's A Little Union Scout movement to the neighborhood A Little Union Scout of Chattanooga for a retreat; for, shortly A Little Union Scout after he moved in that direction, an ambitious Federal officer asked and received permission to enter Northern Alabama with a force large enough to worry the Confederate leader if he could be found. The organization and equipment of this force required a longer time than the Federal commander had counted on, and by the time it was ready to move General Forrest, with the remnant of his command, was A Little Union Scout on his way to A Little Union Scout Murfreesborough.

In some way—the sources of his information were as mysterious as his movements—General Forrest learned that a Federal force was making its way toward Northern Alabama, and he did not hesitate to give it his attention. Within a very short time he had followed and overtaken it, passing it on a road that lay parallel to its line of march. Then it was that the Federal commander began to hear rumors and reports all along his route that Forrest was making a rapid retreat before him. It was stated that his men were discontented and that the condition of his horses was something terrible.

One day, along toward evening, the Federal commander went into camp in the neighborhood of a wooded hill that commanded the approach from the south. He felt sure that the next day would witness the rout and capture of the Confederate who had for so long harassed the Federals in A Little Union Scout Tennessee. As he came to the hill he passed within a few hundred yards of Forrest's men, who were concealed in the woods. A Little Union Scout The Federals went into camp, while Forrest, leaving a part of his command in the enemy's rear, silently passed around his right flank.

Now, it happened that Harry Herndon and myself, accompanied by Whistling Jim and the companions we had picked up on the way, were coming up from the south. It happened also that we were following the road A Little Union Scout leading through the valley to the left of the hill on which the opposing forces were stationed. It was very early in the morning, and as we rode along there was not a sound to be heard, save the jingling of our bridles.

The valley had more length than breadth, and was shaped something like a half-moon, the road following the contour of the crescent. We had proceeded not more than a hundred yards along the road within the compass of the valley when a six-pounder broke the silence with a bang, and a shell went hurtling through the valley. It seemed to be so uncomfortably near that I

involuntarily ducked my head.

"Marse Cally Shannon," said Whistling Jim, the negro, addressing me, "what you reckon make dem white folks bang aloose at we-all, A Little Union Scout when we ain't done a blessed thing? When it come ter dat, we ain't ez much ez speaken ter um, an' here dey come, bangin' aloose at us. An' mo' dan dat, ef dat ar bung-shell had 'a' hit somebody, it'd 'a' fetched sump'n mo' dan blood."

Whistling Jim's tone was plaintive, but he seemed no more frightened than Harry was. Following the bang of the gun came the sharp rattle of musketry. We learned afterward that this firing occurred when the advance guard of the Federal commander collided with Forrest's famous escort. We had no idea of the result of the collision, or that there had been a A Little Union Scout collision. We had paused to make sure of our position and whereabouts. Meanwhile, the little six-pounder was barking away furiously, and presently we heard a strident voice cut the morning air: "Go and tell Freeman to put his battery right in on that gun. I give you five minutes."

"That's our man!" cried one of the troopers who had fallen in with us on our journey. Joy shone in his face as he urged his horse forward, and we followed right at his heels. In a moment we saw him leap from his horse and throw the bridle-reins to a trooper who was holding a string of horses. We gave ours to Whistling Jim to hold and ran forward with the man we had been following.

We came right upon General Forrest—I knew him from the newspaper portraits, poor as they were. He was standing with his watch in his hand. He looked us over with a coldly critical eye, but gave us no greeting. He replaced the watch in his pocket and waved his hand to a bugler who was standing expectantly by his side. The clear notes rang out, and instantly there ensued a scene that baffles description. There was a rush forward, and Harry and I were carried with it.

I could hear loud commands, and shouting, and the rattle of carbines, muskets, and pistols made my ears numb—but what happened, or when or where, I could no more tell you than the babe at its mother's breast. I could only catch glimpses of the fighting through the smoke, and though I was as close to General Forrest as any of his men—right by his side, in fact—I could not tell you precisely what occurred. I could hear cries and curses and the explosion of firearms, but beyond that all was mystery.

I had time during the *mêlée* to take note of the actions of General Forrest, and I observed that a great change had come over him. His face, which was almost as dark as an Indian's A Little Union Scout when in perfect repose, A Little Union Scout was now inflamed with passion and almost purple. The veins on his neck stood out as though A Little Union Scout they were on the point of bursting, and his blazing eyes were bloodshot. Above the din that was going on all around him his voice could be heard by friend and foe alike. I cannot even describe my own feelings.

A courier rode up. He had lost his hat, and there was a spot of blood on his chin. He reported that the Federals were making a desperate effort on the extreme right. "He's tryin' to git away!" yelled Forrest in a voice that could be heard all over the field. "Tell Freeman to take his guns

thar and shove 'em in right on top of 'em. We've got the bulge on 'em here, and we're coming right along."

And, sure enough, we began to find less and less resistance in front of us, and presently I could see them running out into the valley, filling the road by which we had come.

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