

Bonnets and Bugles Series · 6

THE GALLANT BOYS OF GETTYSBURG

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1

An Urgent Plea

Be still, Daisy! I'm sick and tired of fooling with you!"

Leah Carter, seated on a three-legged stool, slapped the glossy hide of the surprised Daisy, who turned to look at her and utter a long, low moo.

Leah endured the gaze of the enormous brown eyes of her favorite cow, then sighed heavily. Patting Daisy's heaving side, she said, "I'm sorry, Daisy—it's not your fault. I'm just not fit to live with today."

A rebellious expression on her face, she leaned her head against Daisy's flank and began milking again. Streams of white liquid drummed into the tin bucket, and soon frothy milk half filled the pail.

"That's enough for now. You'll need the rest of your milk for Suky." Daisy nodded her head as if in agreement, and Leah stroked the animal fondly between the horns.

"I'll bet if it were *your* birthday," Leah muttered, "Suky wouldn't forget it." Again Daisy mooed sympathetically—or so Leah took it. Her lips pursed, and she touched the curving horns for a moment, then whispered, "It's pretty bad, Daisy, to have your fifteenth birthday and not a single soul even notices it!"

She opened the gate, and Daisy ambled out of the stall, where she was greeted enthusiastically by her calf. Suky at once began having his evening

meal. Leah watched for a moment, then picked up the bucket and started for the house.

Leah was a tall girl—too tall, she thought, calling herself “tall and gawky.” Actually she was not gawky, though she was taller than most girls her age. She wore a pair of faded blue overalls that had once belonged to her brother, Royal, and noted that she was beginning to fill them out more than she had the previous year.

Her eyes were an odd color, sometimes seeming to be light green but at other times light blue. A relative who had been to sea once remarked, “Your eyes are just the blue-green color of the ocean at certain times of the year, Leah.” Her braids, a rich blonde, came down almost to her waist. Leah was an attractive young woman—and on her fifteenth birthday she had hoped someone might even tell her so.

Reaching the fence that surrounded the barn, she slipped through the gate muttering, “At least somebody could say, ‘Happy birthday,’ you’d think!” Leah kicked at Max, the black-and-white shepherd dog that came loping up to greet her with his red tongue lolling. Her foot merely grazed him, but he let out a yelp and backed away, eyeing her cautiously.

“Get away from me, Max!” she said and then at once felt terrible. The two were very close, and she at once bent over saying, “I’m sorry, Max. Here. You can kick me if you want to—or bite me.”

Max clearly had no desire to do either of those things. Being reassured by the note in her voice, he came forward again, tail wagging furiously. He licked her face, and, in an effort to get away, Leah stepped into a slight hole in the ground.

“Noooo!” she cried, finding herself falling. She tried to balance the milk, but as she went down full length, it sloshed down the front of her overalls. “That does it!” she muttered and threw the bucket blindly as far as she could.

“Whoa! What’s going on, Leah?”

Leah looked up to see Ezra Payne, who had approached without her noticing and now came running. He put a hand out, saying, “Here, let me help you up.”

“I can get up by myself!”

Leah scrambled to her feet and felt her face flush with embarrassment. She stared at the boy defiantly. “Well, go on and laugh. I can see you want to.”

Ezra Payne was seventeen with warm brown eyes and mahogany colored hair. Since he had come to live with the Carters, the two had grown to be very good friends. Ezra could never forget that she had practically saved his life.

Ezra had escaped from a Confederate prison camp close to Richmond, and it was Leah who found him almost dead with fever. She hid him on her uncle’s farm and, along with Jeff Majors, arranged his escape. Ezra was an orphan with no family at all and had been glad to stay on and work for Leah’s parents as a hired hand.

Leah was usually good-tempered, but now her brows were pulled down in a frown, her lips in a thin white line. She seemed to be daring him to laugh.

Ezra hesitated, then protested, “Why, I wasn’t laughing.” He brought back the bucket, saying mildly, “Everybody falls down once in a while.”

Leah wanted to snap at him. She had already lashed out at Daisy and at Max—but that had not been very satisfactory. She had carefully hinted to Ezra more than two weeks earlier that her birthday was on June 15. Yet he had not said one word. But then, neither had anyone else! She said almost bitterly, “The older I get, the clumsier I get.”

She started toward the house.

Ezra walked along by her side. He acted almost afraid to speak. He was a mild-mannered young Northerner, and living in Kentucky had been a trial for him. Leah knew that. He had learned that Southerners had a great deal of pride, and now Leah, angry and with the front of her overalls soaked with milk, must have looked rather formidable.

“Well,” he said cheerfully at last, “your pa’ll be back pretty soon, and maybe you and me can go with him on another trip to take stuff to the soldiers.”

Leah’s father was a sutler. He sold supplies and Bibles to the soldiers of the Union army. Leah had gone with him on earlier trips and so had Ezra. Ordinarily the thought of such a trip would have pleased her, but she said stiffly, “I don’t want to go out on any old wagon.”

Actually she would love to do that very thing, for following the army had been adventurous and a great deal of excitement. Her father believed that God had called him to distribute Bibles and tracts to the troops, and Leah had thrown herself into this work with a great deal of pleasure. Now, however, she was upset and simply shook the braids that hung down her back in an angry gesture and walked up the front steps.

Ezra followed close behind her. “I think we’re gonna have fresh pork chops for supper.”

“I don’t want any old pork chops!”

She marched into the house and started for her room, but her mother called, “Leah, come into the dining room, please.”

Rebelliously Leah shot a glance at Ezra, who was standing watching her. Then she flounced down the hall and into the large dining room, expecting to see her mother.

“Happy birthday! Surprise! Surprise!”

Leah stopped as abruptly as if she had run into a wall. The dining room was packed with people. With a startled gaze, she saw a huge cake sitting in the middle of the table, while on each side were piled colorfully wrapped gifts. Her mother stood behind the table along with her nineteen-year-old sister, Sarah. Sarah’s arm was around ten-year-old Morena. Several neighbors were there, including the sons and daughters of the families that lived close, and Leah felt absolutely awful.

Ezra came in to stand beside her. He grinned broadly, catching her eye. “Well, you’re all dressed up for your birthday party, Leah.”

Leah looked down at her faded, ragged blue overalls soaked with milk, and she blushed. “This is awful!” she said.

She turned to go, but Ezra caught her by the arm and held on. “What’s wrong?” he asked. “You look all right to me.”

Mary Carter, Leah’s mother, stepped out from behind the table. “This was mean,” she said, but there was a smile on her lips. “But we wanted to surprise you.”

“Well, you surprised me all right,” Leah said ruefully. She felt ashamed of the way she had been acting and managed a smile. “Let me go change clothes, and I’ll be right back.”

She ran back to her room, but when she opened the door and stepped inside she stopped abruptly. There on the bed was the most beautiful dress she had ever seen. It was light green with small white flowers, and it was made of silk. Leah knew her mother had made it, laboring over it secretly, and she squealed with delight. Stripping off her old overalls, she quickly washed her face at the washstand, then slipped into the dress.

Now she saw at the bedside a pair of brand-new shoes, the ones she had longed for for a long time, high-topped, light tan shoes with high heels. She pulled on stockings, then put on the shoes and quickly arranged her hair in front of the mirror. She was shocked at how mature she looked in the new dress. And it fit perfectly!

The party was a complete success. Besides the new dress from her mother and the shoes from Sarah, there were smaller gifts from the others. One that took her breath away was handed to her by Ezra. It felt heavy, and with excitement she pulled the paper off. When it was peeled away, she took a deep breath and said, “Ezra, it’s beautiful!”

It was a wooden box made of walnut, exquisitely carved and finished with a high sheen. She lifted the lid and saw that the inside was lined with green felt. When she looked up, Leah’s eyes were glowing. “It’s beautiful!” she repeated.

“You can keep all your jewelry in there,” Ezra said, rather embarrassed.

One of the boys from the next farm grinned. "Or all those love letters you get from Jeff."

A laugh went around the room, and Leah flushed. She stroked the lid of the box and said, "We always had our birthdays together—Jeff and me—before the Majorses left for Virginia."

Sarah came over and put her arm around her younger sister. Sarah was a beautiful girl. She had dark hair, dark blue eyes, and a creamy complexion. She said, "You'll have your birthdays together again when this war's over."

The mention of the war threatened to dampen everyone's spirits, and Mrs. Carter quickly said, "Now, let's have some more ice cream. Ezra, you can turn the crank."

When the party was over and everyone was gone, Leah sat on the front porch with Ezra. The two had been quiet for some time, and finally Ezra said, "Have you heard from Jeff lately?"

"I got a letter two weeks ago."

"What did he say?"

"He said he thought there'd be more fighting soon." She turned to face him and shook her head. "I worry so much about him—and about Royal."

Ezra had given his parole not to return to the Union army, but Leah knew he remembered some of the terrors and hardships of the war.

He said, "Well, I guess all we can do is pray for them."

Leah reached over and patted his hand. "Yes," she whispered, "I guess that's all we can do."

Sarah was standing at the window when a tall, rangy man on a tall, rangy mule pulled up in front of the gate. A smile touched her lips. She had

always thought that Pete Mangus and his mule resembled each other a great deal. Pete carried the mail in the mountains close to Pineville, Kentucky.

Sarah hurried out to meet him. The sun was high in the sky, and this spring of 1863 had been the mildest that people in Pineville could remember. "Hello, Pete," she said. "You have some mail for us?"

"Shore do." Pete fumbled in the leather bag slung over the mule's shoulders and came up with a small packet of letters. He shuffled through them and nodded. "Got two. One's from your pa, looks like. And the other is the one you been looking for, I reckon." Pete grinned down at her and handed her the letters. "That young Rebel you're so sweet on shore keeps the mail hot, don't he? But you was sweet on him before him and his family left to go South."

Sarah sometimes got upset with Pete, who felt that his status as mailman enabled him to know all the private business that went on between those who exchanged letters. However, everyone in the valley knew that she and Tom Majors had been, as Pete put it, "sweet on each other" before the war. Now, however, Tom was in the Confederate army, and her own brother was in the Union army. A great problem, but that's the way it was.

She longed to open the letter from Tom at once but knew that Pete would demand to know exactly what it said, so she said, "Stop on your way back, and I'll give you some of the gingerbread I'm making."

"Shore will!"

Sarah hurried into the house and opened Tom's letter, which was brief. Sitting at the kitchen table,

she read it slowly, savoring every word. As she read, she could see Tom's face. He was tall and dark and handsome like his father, Nelson Majors, a Confederate captain, and like his brother, Jeff, who was a drummer boy in the same army.

Sarah's lips grew tight, for Tom wrote of the hardships that the people of the South were enduring. She knew he did not do this to arouse pity but simply to relate the facts. He did not mention the fighting that was to come, but her heart contracted as she realized that a young man in the Confederate army—or the Union army for that matter—had little chance of escaping without at least being wounded.

The last paragraph said,

I love you more than I ever did, Sarah. I'd give anything if we could get married and raise a family. I know that can't be, the way things are, but I can keep hoping anyway. Don't forget me.

Love, Tom

Sarah put the letter down and sat for a long time staring at it. There was a sadness in her that she could not contain. Finally, with a sigh, she folded the letter and picked up the other one. It was not from her father.

She did not recognize the handwriting at first, and when she opened the letter she looked at once at the signature at the bottom of the page. "Abigail!" she whispered and smiled. But when she began to read, the smile left her face almost instantly.

Abigail Smith had been her best friend since early childhood. She had married a young man

from the North named Albert Munson. It had been one of the saddest moments of Sarah's life when her friend moved away to Pennsylvania. Now as she read Abigail's letter, lines appeared around her eyes as she frowned at the fine script:

Dear Sarah,

You'll be glad to hear that I am going to have a baby. You remember how much we always talked about how nice it would be to have a baby to take care of—well, Al and I are very happy to announce that we're going to be a mother and a father.

But I must also tell you something else, Sarah. I've tried not complain since I've been here, but I've been so lonely. I was spoiled when I was home, and here I've had rather a hard time. Albert has been gone with his regiment, and he has almost no family. I have met several people and have tried to make friends, but the Northern people here are suspicious because I come from the South.

What I'm trying to say, Sarah, is that I'm going to have this baby—and I'm terribly afraid because I don't have a single close friend to be with me. I know it is awful to ask this, but is there *any* way that you could come and stay with me at least until the baby comes? I have the money to send you for your fare, and it would mean so much to have my best friend here during this hard time. Please try to come. I'm depending on you.

Sarah put down the letter and frowned. She had been apprehensive about her friend's marriage,

for Abigail had indeed been spoiled. Sarah had liked Albert at once, but he was very young and apparently had very little money.

She got up and walked through the house aimlessly. She sat for a while beside Morena, smoothing her sister's blonde hair and helping with the game she was playing. Morena was ten physically, but would never be more than two or three years old mentally. She was a sweet, very beautiful girl and won the hearts of all who saw her.

As Sarah guided the youngster's hands in a simple game that involved a stick and a ball, she tried to imagine what it would be like to be in a strange place with none of your own family and be expecting a first baby. And even as she sat there, she made up her mind.

I'll have to go to be with Abigail. Somehow I just have to!

Sarah said nothing to anyone until late that night. Just when her mother was getting ready to go to bed, Sarah stopped her. "I want to talk to you, Ma."

"What is it, Sarah?"

Sarah took Abigail's letter from her pocket and handed it to her mother.

Mrs. Carter read it quickly and looked up. "You want to go to her, don't you?"

"I have to, Ma. She's the best friend I've ever had—and she's so alone and so frightened. Will it be all right?"

"It will be all right with me." Then a thought seemed to come to her, and she said, "One thing troubles me. They say that the Confederate army might be planning to invade the North again. Do

you suppose they would get as far as Pennsylvania?"

"Oh, I don't think so," Sarah answered quickly. "But in any case, I'll have to go."

Mrs. Carter had the same blonde hair and green eyes as Leah. She was a warm-hearted, strong woman, and now she made an instant decision. "Your father may worry about you, as I will—but I think it's the right thing for you to do."

Two weeks after that conversation, Sarah settled into her seat and looked out the open window of the wood-burning train. Her father was on the platform, and her mother, and Leah, who was holding Morena's hand. They all waved furiously, and as the train picked up speed, she called out, "Don't worry about me! I'll be all right!"

She could not hear their answer as the train left the small town station, but she waved until they disappeared from sight. Then she listened for a while to the clicking of the steel wheels over the tracks and felt a touch of fear. It was a long way to Pennsylvania, and she had never gone anywhere by herself—not this far at least. But then she thought, *I'm nineteen years old, and God will take care of me!*

These two facts reassured her, and Sarah Carter leaned back and watched the trees rush by as the train moved steadily north.

Bonnets and Bugles Series · 7

THE BATTLE OF LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

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MOODY PUBLISHERS
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1

Home Again

As soon as Leah Carter dumped the bucket of field corn into the trough, all seven suckling pigs came running across the lot. She smiled at their squeals, and as their pink snouts pushed into the corn she laughed at their eagerness.

“You have the worst manners of any pigs I ever saw! Look at you, Jacob—shoving your brother out of the way! Now you stop that!”

Leah had named all of the pigs after characters in the Bible, and now she saw that she had named them well. The one named Cain was snapping at the one she had named Abel. She caught Cain’s tail and dragged him backward.

“You give your brother a fair share of that corn!” she scolded.

But Cain was true to his name. He snorted and bit at her wickedly, and when she released him he plunged back into the mass of squirming piggish bodies.

Leah gave up on the pigs and leaned on the fence to watch as they chewed and grunted. “You look like some of the Franklin family at the church picnic. I never saw such greed!” she said aloud.

But there was a smile on her face for she loved animals and took pleasure in raising them. Somewhere down the line she knew they would all either be sold or end up on her plate as pork chops.

However, she had learned to forget this—or at least put it out of her mind.

A slight July breeze blew Leah's hair and cooled her face. She was a tall girl of fifteen and saw herself as gawky. Her mother had said, "You're going to be *stately*, Leah, not a giantess!" and another time Ma had said sharply, "Stop stooping over! God gave you a tall, good figure—now don't be ashamed of being tall."

Leah, like many young girls her age, was too conscious of her appearance. Actually she had nothing to be ashamed of. She had light blonde hair, very fine, that hung to her waist when it was not braided and coiled around the back of her head as it was now. Her eyes were a light green that sometimes seemed almost blue. One of her uncles, who had been to the ocean, said, "Leah, your eyes are just the color as the sea at certain times of the morning—not quite blue, not quite green, just a little bit of each."

She had an oval face with a shapely wide mouth, and her complexion was fair. She had a few freckles across her nose—which she hated.

Leah drifted off in thought, wondering how Jeff Majors would think of the way she was growing up. Jeff was one year older. They had birthdays on the same date, June 15, and until the time that the Majorses left Kentucky, they had spent every birthday party together.

The thought of Jeff's leaving saddened Leah. "I hate this old war," she muttered. Her brother, Royal, had gone to fight for the Union, while Jeff's family had gone to Virginia to side with the South. Now Jeff was a drummer boy in the Confederate army—his father was a major—and, strangely

enough, Jeff's older brother, Tom, was back here with the Carters after having had his leg shattered at Gettysburg.

For a while Leah thought of the days when she and Jeff had roamed the hills hunting birds' eggs and chasing possums and raccoons, or fishing. "I wish the war was all over," she said, "and everything could be like it was again. I wish—"

Suddenly strong arms wrapped around Leah, pinning her arms to her side and squeezing her so that she could not get her breath. She was lifted clear off the ground, and she squealed in sudden fear. The arms merely tightened, and she felt a face press against the back of her head—and then she got a resounding kiss on her right cheek!

"Is that you all got to do—stay out here and watch pigs, Leah?"

Leah felt herself released, and she whirled to see Royal standing before her, grinning.

"Royal!" She threw her arms around him and pressed her face against his chest, and his arms closed around her again. Fear that he would be hurt or even killed in battle had been with Leah every day her brother had been gone. And now he was back!

Trying to put an angry expression on her face, she said, "Royal, I could shoot you! Why didn't you tell us you were coming home?"

"Didn't know it," he said airily.

Her brother was not tall—not over five eight or nine—but he was strongly built. He had a cheerful face, hair only a little darker than Leah's, and amazingly light blue eyes. They looked like cornflowers, Leah once told him. He was called "the Professor"

by the soldiers in his unit, for he had spent one year in college and usually had his nose in a book.

He reached out and pinched Leah's chin. "Anyway, I wanted to surprise you," he said.

"Have you been to the house to see Ma and Pa?"

"No, just got here. Come on—you can take me in."

Leah grabbed Royal's hand as they walked toward the house. She fired questions at him, which he answered as best he could. They climbed the steps to the white two-story farm home, entered through the front door, and went down the wide hall that led to the kitchen.

"Ma—Pa—look who's here."

Dan and Mary Carter rushed to Royal and embraced him.

"Why, Son, what a great surprise!" Mr. Carter said. "How long can you stay?"

His father was thin, with the sickly look of the chronically ill. He had brown hair, faded blue eyes, and a firm mouth under a scraggly mustache. He had been shot up badly in the Mexican War and now was a sutler. He followed the Union army in his wagon, carrying supplies such as paper, pins, needles and thread, and special foods that the soldiers liked. Leah sometimes went with him.

"How long can I stay?" Royal repeated. "Long enough to eat you out of house and home, Pa." He hugged his mother with one arm and shook his father's hand at the same time. "Ma, I'm expecting to be fed like the Thanksgiving turkey before he becomes the dinner!"

Mrs. Carter was an attractive woman. She had the same blonde hair and blue-green eyes as his sis-

ter Leah, and there was a strength in her that everyone recognized. "I might know you'd come home hungry," she said. "You sit right down there. I'll start making one of those cherry pies."

"Make one just for me, Ma."

"You start the pie, Ma," Leah said. "Come, Royal—I've got a surprise for you."

Their parents looked at her as if they knew what was on her mind. "You bring him back soon," Mrs. Carter said.

"Where are we going?" Royal asked as Leah hauled him by the hand out of the kitchen and through the back door.

"You'll see." She pulled him down the steps and then turned him to face the huge walnut tree that shaded the backyard. Underneath it a small group sat on a quilt spread on the ground—Royal's other sisters, Sarah and Morena, and a man playing with a year-old blonde baby.

At the sight of the man, Royal dropped Leah's hand and yelled, "Tom—Tom Majors!" and ran across the yard.

Tom Majors looked up. Tom had been Royal's best friend since boyhood. He was wearing a checked red-and-white shirt and gray trousers.

Royal crossed the yard in bounds, dropped down beside his friend, and beat him on the shoulders. "Tom, you old son of a gun, what are you doing here?"

The last he had heard, Tom was a sergeant in the Confederate army, and Royal couldn't imagine how he had gotten back to neutral ground in Kentucky—right here at his own home.

Suddenly a cry rose from Tom's lips, and Royal stopped abruptly and drew back. Tom Majors was

dark complexioned, but now his face was pale, and there was pain in his eyes.

“What’s wrong, Tom? I didn’t hurt you, did I?” But even as Royal spoke, he saw that Tom’s left leg was missing below the knee. He stood up quickly. “Well—say—I’m sorry—I didn’t know, Tom.”

Tom Majors pulled himself to his feet. Reaching out, he took the pair of crutches that was leaning against the tree trunk and settled them under his arms. “That’s all right, Royal,” he said quietly.

Silence fell over the group then. The girl beside him—Royal’s sister Sarah—was the first to recover. “I’m so glad to see you, Royal,” and as he put his arms around her, she kissed him on the cheek. “How long can you stay?”

“Maybe a couple of weeks,” Royal said. He was still stunned by Tom’s injury, and his mind swirled as he tried to think of what to say. Finally, being an honest young man, he turned to his friend and asked, “Where did you get hit, Tom? Gettysburg?”

“That’s right.”

Royal waited for him to say more, but Tom Majors simply pressed his lips tightly together.

“Well, I’m glad it wasn’t worse,” Royal said quickly. “How did you get here?”

“Jeff and Sarah brought me. I was hurt too bad to travel back to Virginia. She’ll tell you about it. I’ll be seeing you around, Royal.” Tom put out the crutches and swung his body along, his face hidden. He disappeared around the house, and Royal stared after him.

Then Royal felt a hand and looked down to see his eleven-year-old sister Morena tugging at him. She too had blonde hair, but there was a blankness in her blue eyes. She had developed into a beautiful

child physically, but mentally she never had matured.

Royal swept her up in his arms. “Morena,” he said, “you are getting prettier all the time.”

She laughed and patted his cheek.

Sarah and Leah stood quietly waiting as he played with the child.

And then he looked up. “Tell me about it.”

Sarah said quietly, “It was a miracle really, Royal. I’d gone to Gettysburg to be with Abigail Munson. She was having her first child and was pretty much alone. I was there when the battle took place. Tom and Jeff were there with the army. When Tom lost his leg and couldn’t travel, we had to do something. It was impossible to get back to Virginia. Both he and Jeff would have been captured.” Her blue eyes were thoughtful as she remembered that time. “I bought a wagon and team—we traveled at night, dodging Union patrols until we got back here.”

“Tom’s changed, Royal,” Leah said. “His leg is healing, but he seems to have given up. He just won’t take an interest in anything—he’s not the Tom we knew.”

Royal glanced in the direction where Tom had disappeared. “Maybe I can help him,” he said. “We were always real close.”

Sarah hesitated. “I hope you can.”

The thought came to Royal that Sarah was closer to Tom than anyone else—they had been almost engaged before the war started. He studied her face and knew that, if Sarah could not help Tom, it would be difficult for anyone to help.

“Well, I’ll do the best I can—we all will,” he said. Then he knelt beside the baby on the quilt. “Look at

Esther—she’s growing like a tadpole turning into a frog.”

“That’s awful, Royal!” Sarah protested. “To call a child a frog! She’s the prettiest baby that ever was!”

Esther was the only sister of Tom and Jeff. Her mother had died giving birth to her, and since all the Majors men were in the Confederate army, the Carters, their old neighbors, had taken the child to raise.

Royal picked her up, and she squealed. He said, “She *is* good-looking, the best-looking female on the place.” He winked at his sisters. “But don’t tell Ma I said so.”

At supper that night there was great rejoicing. Mrs. Carter loaded the table, with help from her two daughters: pork chops, fresh ham, fried chicken, mashed potatoes, candied yams, green beans—and two luscious cherry pies in crumbly crusts.

Royal finally leaned back after his third piece of pie. “It would be a sin to eat any more of this,” he declared.

“It was a sin about a half hour ago, I think, Son.” His father grinned at him. “I believe we have all committed gluttony tonight.”

“Tell us some more about the army, Royal,” Leah said eagerly.

“Well, Tom here could tell you more than I could. For us it’s been either bored to death or scared to death.”

Sarah was sitting next to Tom. “What do you mean?” she asked.

Royal had noticed that Tom had scarcely touched his food. He’d been mostly just pushing it around with his fork. He had not said ten words

either. But at mention of the war, his hand closed tightly on his fork, the knuckles growing white.

"I mean it's either weeks or even months of drilling—the same old thing every day. Then you go into a battle, and for about one day or two you're scared to death. Is that the way it was with you fellas, Tom?"

"Just about." Tom's face was pale, and his voice was low. He did not contribute anything else to the conversation although he had been through every major battle.

Since Tom had been on the opposite side, from time to time Royal had had nightmares that one day on the battlefield he would face a young fellow in a gray uniform and that fellow would be his best friend, Tom Majors.

Leah obviously saw that Tom was not going to participate in the conversation. "Come on into the parlor, Royal," she said. "I want to show you some pictures. A traveling photographer came, and we all had our pictures made."

"But I haven't had my coffee yet."

"I'll bring it to you," his mother said. "You go on in. You girls too. I'll do the dishes."

The girls protested, but not very much. Sarah finally said, "You come too, Ma. We can all wash the dishes later."

The parlor was a pleasant room with whale oil lamps on the heavy walnut tables. Royal and his sisters seated themselves on the horsehide sofa, Royal in the middle with Leah and Sarah on each side. Morena came to sit on his lap, and across the room Tom sat, holding the baby, Esther. He stroked her hair gently and, as the others exclaimed and laughed over the pictures, he seemed to be far away.

Perhaps he was thinking about his father, now a major in the Confederate army, and his brother, Jeff, a private—wondering if they were about to go into another battle. He glanced down at his pinned-up left trouser leg, and a spasm of pain crossed his face.

From across the room Royal saw it, and his heart constricted. He said nothing, but it hurt him to see Tom Majors, who had always been the most cheerful young man at any party, just sitting there, cut off from all the rest of them.

Finally the women went back to the kitchen to do the dishes, and Mr. Carter yawned and said, "I've had a long day—I'm going to bed. It's good to have you home, Royal," he said, and then he left.

Royal sat on the sofa with Morena beside him. She was content to hold his hand and stroke it lovingly. He smiled down at her. The only language she really understood was the expression on someone's face or the tone of voice.

"You're mighty pretty, Morena," he murmured. Then he looked across at Tom and Esther. "She sure is a beauty, Esther is."

"Yes, she is. She looks like Ma," Tom said. He smoothed the blonde hair and touched the silky cheek with his finger. Esther grabbed it and pulled at it vigorously. This brought a smile to Tom's face, the first of the evening.

For a while the two men talked, but it was an effort. No matter how much Royal spoke, Tom answered only in monosyllables. At last Tom rose, put the baby on the floor, and said, "I guess I'll go to bed too. It's good to have you back, Royal."

Royal sat beside Morena, listening to the thump of Tom's crutches echo from the hall. Then he heard

a door slam. Finally he picked up Esther, and he and Morena went into the kitchen, where his mother dried her hands and carried the baby off to bed.

When it was past everyone's bedtime, Royal was left for a few moments alone with Sarah.

"It's real bad, Sarah," Royal said quietly. "Is he always like this?"

"I haven't seen him smile hardly twice since he got here," Sarah answered slowly.

"But surely he knows that life's not over!"

"He acts as though it is. He never talks about what is going to happen. He doesn't talk about anything."

"But there are ways that he can be helped. There are artificial legs. He could get one of those."

Sarah turned and faced her brother. "Ezra has tried to talk him into that."

Ezra Payne, Royal thought. Their hired hand, who was very clever with tools. Although young, he could make almost anything out of wood.

"Ezra could make one too. But Tom won't listen."

"But we've got to convince him."

"You remember Gus Springer?"

"Sure, I remember Gus." A light came into Royal's eyes, and he said, "Why, yes—*he's* got an artificial leg, and he gets around great."

"Yes, he does—and I asked him to come out and talk to Tom, and he did."

"Well, how did it go? You know Gus. He can do almost anything—you hardly know he's lost a leg. But—" Seeing the look on his sister's face, Royal asked quietly, "He wouldn't listen to Gus?"

"No, and he got angry with me for asking him here." Sarah's eyes filled with tears, and she abrupt-

ly dashed them away. “I—I don’t know what we are going to do about Tom.”

A feeling of helplessness filled Royal Carter. He put his hands on Sarah’s shoulders. “We’ll do something,” he said firmly. “God saved Tom’s life. He’s not through with him yet!”

Bonnets and Bugles Series 8

ENCOUNTER AT COLD HARBOR

GILBERT MORRIS

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

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1

Jeff Makes a Decision

A pale yellow sun looked down on the streets of Richmond as Jeff Majors made his way along the line of shops. From time to time he saw his reflection in a plate glass window. What he saw was a tall young man wearing an ash-gray uniform with a shock of black hair coming out from beneath his cap. At seventeen he looked older. He already had shoulders broader than most of the men in his company, and there was a sureness about his movements.

After passing several shops, he turned into one and greeted the short, fat storekeeper with a quick nod.

“Howdy, Mr. Bennett!”

“Why, hello, Jeff!” Mr. Bennett was quick to wait on him, for there was only one other customer in the store, a man with one arm missing, who stood looking sadly at the empty shelves that composed most of the store. “What can I do for you today?”

Casting his eyes around the depleted shop, Jeff said, “Not much, it looks like, Mr. Bennett. You’re about out of stock.”

“Well, in that you’re right.” The storekeeper nodded glumly. He dropped his head, stared at the floor, then shrugged his bulky shoulders. “If some of them blockade runners don’t make it through pretty soon, I’m gonna have to close up.”

Jeff was well aware of the shortage of goods in wartime Richmond. Ever since the War Between

the States had started, the Federals had thrown a blockade of naval vessels around the coast of the South. It had grown steadily stronger until now only the boldest captains would risk their vessels, for if they were captured they would lose everything they had.

"I guess it's pretty tough, but we'll make it!" Jeff's eyes continued to run around the shelves as he said, "I need some butter. Looks like you got some of that."

"Sure have." Bennett picked up a yellow mound of butter that had been carefully molded. "Woman that keeps cows on the outside of town, she brought this in just this morning. Real fresh."

"How much?" Jeff asked.

"Well, I'll have to get fifteen dollars for it."

Jeff stared at the man. "*Fifteen dollars* for a pound of butter? Why, that's outlandish!"

Bennett licked his lips, then shrugged. "I know it is, and if Confederate money keeps on losing its value, by this time next week it'll be thirty dollars. Better stock up while you can, Jeff!"

Taking the shopkeeper at his word, he collected a few supplies. As Mr. Bennett put them in a box, Jeff pulled a thick fold of bank notes from his pocket. Peeling off several, he said, "Used to be you had to bring your money in your pocket and take your groceries off in a box. If things don't get better, it looks like I'll have to bring the money in a box and take the groceries home in my pocket."

Mr. Bennett took the cash and managed a smile. "Won't be long before we'll whip the Yankees. Then things will get back to normal again." He stared at the money dolefully, then put it into a cigar box beneath the counter. "Tell your pa I said hello!"

“I’ll do that, Mr. Bennett!”

Jeff left the store and continued down the street. There was a mournful air about the streets of Richmond that had not been apparent when he and his family had first arrived here from Kentucky. Then, war fever had been at its height. Bands had been playing, and pretty girls had been handing out cookies and glasses of lemonade to farm boys as they flooded into Richmond to fight the Yankees.

As Jeff crossed the dusty street, his mind went back to his old home in Kentucky. *Wish I was back there!* he thought, then shook his shoulders and pushed the thought away. “Can’t be thinking about things like that,” he murmured aloud. Still, thoughts kept coming to him, mostly thoughts about his boyhood when he and Leah Carter had roamed the hills, fishing, hunting, and looking for birds’ eggs. “Sure do miss Leah,” Jeff muttered. Then, when he saw a man looking at him strangely, he grinned and said, “Just talkin’ to myself!” and laughed as the man smiled.

Many of the men on the street hobbled along on crutches, missing a leg. Many had only one arm. Some had patches over one eye, and their faces were scarred. It was a depressing sight, and Jeff had never gotten used to it.

A large black-and-tan hound thumped his tail against the floor of the post office as Jeff stepped toward the door. Leaning over, he patted its head. “Wish me and you could go out and hunt coon, boy.”

The tail thumped again, and Jeff pulled the dog’s long ears.

Inside the post office, he waited his turn, studying the notices posted on the walls. The mail did not

get priority in the Confederacy, and sometimes it took weeks for a letter to get to its destination. However, when Jeff got to the window and said, "Any mail for Nelson Majors or his family?" he was pleased to see the postmaster nod.

"Yep, got one right here! Just come in!" He handed Jeff a letter and twisted his head to one side and winked. "From your sweetheart, I'll bet!"

Jeff looked at the envelope and saw that it was Leah's handwriting. "That's right!" he said. "Prettiest sweetheart in the whole Confederacy!"

As he turned away, the thought came to him that actually Leah was not *in* the Confederacy. Kentucky had not come out to fight for the South. It was for that reason the Majors family had left there to come to Richmond, where Jeff's mother died shortly after their arrival.

He moved to one side of the walk and leaned against a hardware shop. Across the street, a blacksmith was making a rhythmic clanging as he hammered out a white-hot piece of steel. He heard the hum of voices as people passed and the sound of horses' hooves as men rode by or drove past in wagons and buggies of every sort.

Jeff opened the letter and eagerly read it:

Dear Jeff and all,

I trust that this finds you well. It seems so far away from the war here in Kentucky. The woods are quiet, and there are no sounds of guns, and even Pineville doesn't seem touched by the terrible struggles going on where you are. However, I must be more cheerful. Esther is fine. She is the prettiest, happiest little girl in the whole world! She would love you, and you would love her!

She babbles like a magpie. She is so pretty. She has the same blonde hair and blue eyes your mother had. I think she's going to look just like her when she grows up.

I'm worried about your brother. Tom's discouraged again. For a while he was doing better, but he's much quieter than he used to be. He was always so happy and laughed all the time, but now he hardly says anything. He helps Ezra and my father with the work around the farm, but he goes off by himself for long times.

Ezra made him a fine, wooden leg, as I told you the last time. We finally got him to put it on, and though he limps some, it works fine . . .

Jeff looked up as a drover passed with a wagon full of goods. The man yelled and cracked his whip over the heads of the oxen, which were straining to pull the heavy load. Jeff watched for a moment.

Tom and Sarah, Leah's sister, had planned to get married, but the war had driven them apart. Leah's brother, Royal, was in the Union Army. Tom had served with his father and Jeff in the Army of Northern Virginia until he lost a leg at Gettysburg.

Jeff looked down and read the rest of the letter, devouring the news of the farm and all the things that were going on back home. Finally he sighed, folded the letter, and stuck it into his inside pocket.

He walked on through town and out to the camp just south of Richmond. The sound of bugles, and men drilling, and the many other noises that go with an army camp came to him, but he was so accustomed to them he hardly noticed.

When he got to where his company was sta-

tioned, he glanced up at the flag that indicated the officers' headquarters.

The corporal on guard outside the tent winked at him. "Hello, Private Majors! You want to see your pa—I mean Colonel Majors?"

"If he's not busy."

"Just go right on in! He said he's been looking for you."

Jeff found his father, Col. Nelson Majors, sitting at a portable desk and staring at a map that was laid out before him. Jeff thought again how fine his father looked. He was a dark-skinned man with hazel eyes and a black mustache. At the age of forty-one, he had hair that was still totally black. Looking up, he grinned. "Hello, Jeff. Did you get something to eat?"

"Yes, I did, Pa—I mean Colonel. It cost the world, though!" He put down the box and exhibited his purchases. Then he handed over the remains of the cash and said, "It was the best I could do. The store's about out of everything."

Colonel Majors leaned back and took a deep breath. Balancing himself on the back two legs of his camp chair, he put his hands behind his head and stared up at the tent roof. "Well," he said thoughtfully, "it's not good—but it's better than what we'll get when we take to the field."

At that moment, a tall, rangy captain walked through the door and saluted.

The colonel returned the salute and said, "Well, Captain Dawes, how do the new recruits look?"

Dawes lounged at ease in front of the desk and shrugged his shoulders. "Not like much, Colonel. I guess all the good ones have already been scooped up. Some of them we got in this bunch are either

too old to do much good or so young I hate to see them coming on.”

Jeff said instantly, “I’m as old as some of them, Pa—Colonel.”

“Now don’t you start on me, Jeff! You’re not joining the Regulars! You’re going to be a drummer boy at least a few more months. Let’s hear no more of it!” Colonel Majors looked down at his map. “Not much question about what’s going to happen next, is there, Captain?”

Dawes bit his lower lip. “Reckon not, sir. I hear Grant’s got an army of a hundred thousand men ready to feed into this here war. I wish we had half that many!”

“Then we’ll just have to do better. Every man will have to cover a little more ground and fight a little harder. We knew all this would happen when the war started.”

Then the two men talked about the battle that was to come.

Throughout the early years of the war, the South had won battle after battle, but the superior weight and the manufacturing power of the North were now ready to roll. Every time a Southern soldier fell, he left a gap in the ranks. When a Northern boy was taken, all General Grant had to do was reach into the city and pick up a recruit. Many in the North were tired of the war, but President Lincoln was now sure he had found a fighting general.

“I’ve heard about Grant,” Colonel Majors said. “They say he’s merciless!”

“Yes, sir, and now that we’ve lost Stonewall Jackson, it’s going to be harder. After Gettysburg, we’re down mighty thin! Where do you think they’ll hit?”

“Right up in this area, and we’ll be moving out soon, Captain Dawes, so get these men trained as quick as you can! That’s all!”

“Yes, sir!”

Colonel Majors waited until the captain had left the tent, then said, “It’s going to be mighty tough, Jeff.”

“We can whip ’em, sir!”

A smile flashed across Colonel Majors’s lips, then he said slowly, “You know what I’ve been thinking about? Kentucky.”

“Oh, and I just got a letter from Leah. Wait’ll you hear what she says about Esther!” Jeff handed the letter to his father and waited until he had finished reading. “She sounds like a beauty, doesn’t she? Says she looks just like Ma!”

A frown creased the colonel’s brow, and his lips drew down tightly. He moved uneasily in his chair, then finally got up and walked to the tent flap. He stared out for such a long time that Jeff wondered what he could be thinking.

Finally his father turned back and said, “Jeff, I think so much about Esther—and about your mother.”

“Well, I do too, and I know Tom does.”

“I don’t feel right about letting the Carters do all the raising of my daughter. It just seems like I’ve let your mother down somehow.”

“But you couldn’t help it, Pa!”

After Mrs. Majors’s death, it had been the Carters back in Kentucky who volunteered to raise baby Esther until such time as the Majors men could get settled. That meant, of course, when the war was over, but being separated from the child had been hard on all of them.

“Maybe after this next battle the Yankees’ll quit and go home. Then the war will be over, and we can get her back again.”

Jeff’s words did not seem to reach Colonel Majors. He returned to his chair and said thoughtfully, “It’s hard not being able to have your child. I think about it all the time. I wish there was some way that we could take her, but I guess there’s not.”

Uncomfortable, Jeff moved toward the tent door. He did not like to see his father so downcast.

After bidding the colonel good-bye, he went to his own unit, where he was surrounded by his squad and took part in the activities that went on, including cooking supper. But after eating, he sat by himself for a long time in the tent that he shared with the other young men. Finally he clamped his jaw and said, “There’s *got* to be a way! Lord, please show me what to do!”

He waited for a moment as if he expected the Lord to speak out of heaven. Then he laughed aloud at himself. “Well, I *know* what I’m going to do! I’m going to write Leah!”

He found a scrap of paper that had already been used for a letter, crossed out the used side, and then with a stub of pencil began to write:

Dear Leah,

There’s something I want you to think about. You see, my pa and I miss Esther an awful lot . . .

Bonnets and Bugles Series · 9

FIRE OVER ATLANTA

GILBERT MORRIS

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

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1

Leah Makes a Decision

With a grunt, Leah Carter tugged at the buttons on the back of her dress. She struggled so violently that her face turned red, but no matter how hard she tried she simply could not fasten the garment.

“I’m getting to be nothing but a great big cow!” In a gesture of despair, Leah ran her hands through her blonde hair and stared at her image in the mirror. “Nothing but a big cow!”

Her full lower lip extended in a pout. Impatiently she pulled the dress over her head, held it up, stared at it angrily. She knew that it was foolish to be angry at the dress.

She glanced then at the homemade calendar on the wall and noted the date. June 20, 1864. The memory of that day a year ago came to her, and she lowered the dress slowly and sat down on the edge of the bed. The cornshuck mattress whispered and rustled.

“It was just a year ago today that I got this dress,” she whispered. “I was so proud of it—and Jeff was too.” She held up the garment. It was royal blue with beautifully executed bone buttons at the back, white cuffs, and a white collar to match. She remembered how Jeff had taken her for a walk down the streets of Richmond and how he had whispered, “You’re the prettiest girl in Richmond, Leah Carter!”

As Leah remembered, a dreamy look came into her blue-green eyes. She thought of Jeff Majors and wished that the dress still fit.

Then she thought of the party she was invited to at Lucy Driscoll's house tonight, and she threw the dress across the room. It sailed through the air, hit the wall, and dropped in a crumpled heap on the worn, blue-figured carpet.

Leah walked around the confines of her small bedroom, coming finally to stand at the window. She stared at the tall oaks lining the dusty road that led to Richmond in one direction and to the Driscoll house in the other. It was a fine day, and soon Jeff would be coming down that road to take her to Lucy's party. She felt a sudden twinge of jealousy.

"I bet Lucy will have a dress sent all the way from France on one of the blockade runners," she muttered. She turned from the window, walked over to the large, polished, walnut wardrobe, and stared inside again, although she knew it was hopeless. She pawed through her few dresses and wished that she had the green dress that she had left at her home back in Kentucky. And then she shook her head. *That one would be too small too!*

The big black-and-white cat lying in the center of her bed lifted his massive head and looked at her with golden eyes. He said, "Wow?" which always made Leah laugh.

She laughed now. Then she fell across the bed and ran her hand over the cat's smooth, glossy fur. "You're all right, Cap'n Brown!" she said. He seemed to be wearing a black-and-white suit with the white of his neck forming a white cravat. He had been placed in the barn to catch rats and mice, but Leah had taken him into the house and for some reason

had decided to call him Cap'n Brown. She picked up the cat, and he purred as she stroked his ebony fur, lifting his head to be tickled under his chin. "I know what you want," she said. "You want to be brushed."

"Wow," Cap'n Brown said, and Leah again laughed. She found his brush and began giving him long, easy strokes. Cap'n Brown arched his back with pleasure as the brush traveled down his lanky body.

"I wish my hair were as easy to fix as yours," she said, reaching up to touch her blonde locks. She had washed her hair with rainwater just that morning, and it was still slightly damp, the ends of it curling. She realized that she had to do something with it.

"I can't be brushing you all the time, Cap'n Brown." She tossed him off her lap.

He landed lightly on the bed, stared at her, then yawned and curled up and immediately went to sleep.

With a sigh, Leah went back to the wardrobe and chose the only dress that would do at all for the party. It was one she had made only four weeks earlier, so she knew the fit was right. The trouble was that it was not intended to be a party dress.

She held it up to the light. "It's just a plain, old brown dress," she said, "but it's either that or wear overalls." Quickly she slipped it on, looking longingly again at the royal blue dress that was so pretty.

She sat down then at the little desk beside her spool bed and pulled a small book toward her. This was the journal for which she had spent twenty-five Confederate dollars earlier in the year. If I were buying it now, she thought, it would cost fifty dol-

lars or seventy-five or perhaps even a hundred. Confederate money was practically worthless.

"I'm glad I bought it when I did," she murmured, then dipped a quill into the glass inkwell and began to write. It was a pleasure to write in her journal, and she loved looking back and seeing what she had been thinking six months ago. Some of it made her laugh, and other writing embarrassed her for she was able to see her own foolishness.

The turkey quill scratched across the page as Leah wrote in tiny, ornate script, dipping the pen from time to time into the ink, which also was growing scarce. She stopped after a time and reread what she had written:

Am I a girl—or am I a woman? Just now I tried on the blue dress that fit me perfectly a year ago, but now I can't even squeeze into it. I'm no taller than I was then, and I thank the Lord for that! I'm tall enough already at five feet seven, which is plenty. But I've filled out so that I've got to wear my brown dress, and it was never meant for a party. But I'm going to Lucy's party, no matter what!

She sat at the desk, dreamily thinking of what her life had been like. Looking back through the journal, she saw entries about things that had taken place when she was at home with her family in Pineville. She read again, with pleasure, about bringing Jeff's baby sister, Esther, to be with his family here in Richmond.

She read references to the Majors family and to Jeff himself, who had been her best friend all her life. They had the same birthday, and now Leah thought

of how Jeff, at eighteen, had changed from a lanky, wild-haired boy to a fine-looking man like his father, Col. Nelson Majors, and like his older brother, Tom.

The Majors family had moved South at the beginning of the Civil War. Then Colonel Majors's wife died, leaving the small child that she named Esther. And now the three Majors men were all in Richmond with the Confederate army.

Leah's lips curled upward as she thought of baby Esther, whom she had cared for and who had taken up so much of her life. Not a baby now, for she was three years old and talking more every day.

She thought also of the future. Colonel Majors and Eileen Fremont planned to be married soon, and Esther would have a new mother. Jeff, at first, had been opposed to his father's taking another wife. But he had come around and now seemed to love Eileen Fremont as much as he had disliked her before.

Leah began to write again:

I know that Lucy will have a beautiful dress, and she's so little and pretty that she makes me look even more gawky and bigger than I am. And Jeff, he's just like all the rest of the boys. Just dazzled by Lucy. What chance do I have? I'll have to wear a dress that isn't pretty, and I won't get to dance a single time with Jeff, and I'll just sit in a corner, and nobody will even notice me!

Slowly Leah leaned back, wiped the quill on a piece of cloth kept for that purpose, and put the brass cap on the ink bottle. She sprinkled a little fine, white sand over the writing to dry it, blew it off, and then read what she had written. Something

about it, she knew, was wrong, but she could not understand what. What she thought was, *I'm seventeen years old, and that's a woman—but sometimes I don't feel grown up. So what am I? A little girl or a woman?*

The Driscoll home was ornate, large, beautiful, and, Leah knew, filled with expensive paintings and decorations. As Jeff stopped the team in front of the big portico with its eight white columns, again she felt intimidated by it all. She watched as a tall slave came out and took the lines from Jeff.

The man flashed his white teeth. “Yes, suh, I will take care of this team. The party’s startin’. You better get on in!”

“Thanks.” Jeff got down and went around to Leah’s side and put up a hand.

She took it, noting that he looked very handsome indeed in his ash-gray Confederate uniform. He had begun the war as a drummer boy at Bull Run but now was a full-fledged private in the Stonewall Brigade. His black belt and boots and the red sash around his trim middle made him look very athletic. She glanced at his hair, the blackest she had ever seen, and thought again, *He’s the best-looking boy I’ve ever known.*

All the way to the Driscoll house, Jeff had talked about going back to duty. He still moved his left arm rather awkwardly, for he had been slightly wounded at the siege of Petersburg. General Grant, with thousands of Federal soldiers, was still drawn up in front of that city, and the Confederates were fighting in a desperate attempt to keep them from coming through and taking Richmond.

However, Jeff now seemed able to put this from his mind. His grin flashed, and he held Leah's hand for just a moment longer than necessary, leaning over to wink at her. "You're going to have a good time at this party," he promised. "Everybody will be here."

Leah smiled quickly. "I hope so, Jeff. Don't leave me all alone, now."

"Oh, you won't need me. There'll be plenty of fellas coming to ask you to dance. Let's go in."

Leah and Jeff entered the palatial mansion and moved down the hall toward the sound of music. When they stepped into the ballroom, she saw that the large room was filled with young people and decorations hung from the chandeliers and on the walls. Across one end stood a long table, draped with a white cloth and topped with gleaming china. Cut crystal glasses caught and reflected the light from the chandeliers.

The dancing had already started, for Lucy Driscoll would have nothing less for her birthday than a dance. The music was provided by a five-piece band, and the dresses of the young women looked like green, red, blue, and yellow lights as they moved about the room.

"This beats starving in the trenches at Petersburg," Jeff said. Then his eyes narrowed. "There's Lucy."

As Leah had guessed, the girl was wearing the most beautiful gown that money could buy. Lucy's dress was baby blue silk with a small, woven floral design. It had a square neckline, edged with a white lace frill. The lace-frilled sleeves were very short and puffed. The overskirt touched the floor and was looped up at the sides and held in place by large

white silk bows. It was worn over a large hoop. Her fair hair was coiled high on her head with long ringlets hanging down the back. She had on short, white silk gloves and a pearl choker.

“Let’s go wish her a happy birthday,” Jeff said.

Leah seized Jeff’s arm and clung to him. She had the impulse to turn and run, for she felt like a crow at a meeting of brilliantly colored bluejays and cardinals and canaries. Her brown dress, though serviceable enough for church, was totally out of place here. She wanted to cry.

I wish I’d never come, she thought and gritted her teeth. *As soon as I can, I’ll get away where nobody can see me.*

“Why, Jeff, how nice to see you—and you too, Leah.”

Lucy Driscoll was small and shapely and charming. Her hair was as blonde as Leah’s, but whereas Leah was tall and strong-looking, Lucy was diminutive and made the most of it.

“You look great, Lucy.” Jeff smiled, taking her hand. He bent over and kissed it, then laughed. “I been practicing up on that.”

“I bet it was with Leah here,” Lucy said archly. “Has he been practicing his charms on you, Leah?”

“No,” Leah said shortly, “he hasn’t!”

Jeff shifted uncomfortably. “To tell the truth, that was my first attempt. Anyway, I been practicing up on my dancin’, even though it was all by myself.” The music started up again just then, and he said, “Could I have this dance, Lucy?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I already promised it to Cecil.”

A thin young man about Jeff’s age, who had been standing off to one side listening, stepped forward. He had chestnut hair and bright eyes and wore the

uniform of a first lieutenant. "Go ahead. I'll make the sacrifice for you, Jeff."

"Well, that's nice of you, Cecil—I mean, lieutenant. I keep forgetting you've been commissioned, sir."

"Oh, let's forget that," Cecil said, "at least while we're here." He seemed to be the only officer present among several young soldiers and many civilian boys not yet old enough to enlist. He turned to Leah. "May I have this dance, Leah?"

Glad to get away and feeling very warm toward the young man, Leah said, "Of course." She soon was sweeping around in a waltz with Cecil Taylor. He was not the best of dancers, but she liked him.

"Sorry about that," he said after a misstep. "I'm just never going to learn to be good at this."

Leah smiled at him. "You're doing fine."

Cecil was only an inch or two taller than Leah herself. She had grown fond of him on her first trip to Richmond. At that time he had proved to be a friend when Lucy had been somewhat less than friendly. His father was a wealthy planter. His mother was from one of the finest—that is to say, wealthiest—families of Virginia.

Leah glanced around the ballroom. "There aren't as many here as I thought there would be," she remarked.

"No, it's not like it used to be. I remember when fellows would come from all over the county for a party like this. But I guess a lot of 'em are in the army now. And besides, there just aren't enough horses to get us where we want to go." He looked down at her, interest in his friendly blue eyes. "I'm so glad you could come," he said. "I was afraid you might have gone back to Kentucky."

"I suppose I'll have to pretty soon. I came to bring Jeff's little sister here, but now that it looks like his father's going to remarry, they won't need me anymore as a nurse for her."

"That'll be a sorry day for me when you go back. As a matter of fact, I've missed you a lot."

"Will you be in the fighting soon?"

"I don't know. I've put in for it, but they keep me here as an aide in the War Department." Cecil sounded disgusted, and he missed another step, almost stumbling. "Sorry about that."

"What do you hear from your brother, Royal?" he asked after the music stopped and they were at the refreshment table. He was pouring her some lemonade from a tall pitcher.

Leah said, "He's in Chattanooga, but I don't think you'd want to hear about the doings of a Yankee soldier."

"If he's your brother, I would!" Cecil sipped his lemonade and made a face. "This doesn't have enough sugar in it. Here, let's sweeten it up with some of these cakes." He picked up some small white cakes coated with sugar and bit into one. "The Yankees whipped us pretty bad at Chattanooga, but I don't think they'll ever take Atlanta."

"I just wish it was over," Leah said, "and that we didn't have to hear about war all the time."

Across the ballroom, Jeff stood talking to Lucy. He was enjoying himself tremendously. He was also looking forward to having some of the refreshments, for food had gotten scarce in the Confederacy. Looking down at Lucy, he said, "That's the prettiest dress I've ever seen, I think. You sure look nice."

“Why, thank you, Jeff.”

“I haven’t seen you wear that one before.”

“No, it came in on a privateer last month. Daddy bought it for me. Had to pay too much for it, I think.”

“It was worth it.” He led her toward the refreshment table. “Sure wish there wasn’t anything to do but go to parties, and drink lemonade, and eat cake. Sure beats soldiering.”

“Leah looks nice,” Lucy said idly.

“What? Oh, yes, she does.”

“She’s so tall, though. I hope she doesn’t grow any taller.”

“I don’t know. She looks pretty healthy.”

“Oh, yes, she’s healthy all right. Look, she and Cecil are trying to dance again. Cecil isn’t much on a dance floor, I’m afraid.”

Jeff glanced over as Cecil almost tripped over Leah’s long skirt.

Lucy said, “Well, I hope he doesn’t fall down and drag Leah with him. That would humiliate her, wouldn’t it . . .”

“This is too much to ask a lady to put up with,” Cecil said.

Leah was somewhat embarrassed, but she said, “No, you’re not going to get any better if you don’t practice.”

The evening went on and on, and Lucy and Jeff—it seemed to Leah—danced almost every dance together. She herself kept going back to Cecil, who stood much of the time against the wall. “Come along, Cecil,” she would say, taking his hand.

The more she saw Jeff laughing down at Lucy Driscoll, the more unhappy she became. *If I can’t*

have the prettiest dress, I'll have to do something else to get Jeff's attention, she thought.

Leah was not a scheming girl. But having come to the party in such poor style, and then seeing Jeff so taken with Lucy Driscoll, she decided that she had to do something. She toyed with an idea. *If he's going to pay all that much attention to Lucy, then I'm going to make him jealous. I'll make him jealous of Cecil.*

The thought pleased her, and she moved closer to Cecil, saying, "You do look nice in your uniform, Cecil. I think officers of the Confederacy are so dashing, and I'm sure you're going to be a perfect hero when you get your chance."

Leah had never paid such attention to Cecil before, and he seemed dazzled by her compliments. "Why, Leah, I didn't know you felt like that!"

"Oh, I do! Now, let's try again. One, two, three. One, two, three. That's it! You're going to be the best dancer when I get through with you, Cecil Taylor."

Leah hardly saw the pleased look that came into Cecil's eyes. She looked across the room at Jeff and Lucy, thinking, *I'll make him so jealous, he won't even see Lucy Driscoll.*

Bonnets and Bugles Series · 10

BRING THE BOYS HOME

GILBERT MORRIS

MOODY PUBLISHERS
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1

The Net Closes

Corporal Majors!”

Jeff stopped abruptly as a harsh voice came across the frozen air. He turned slowly, guiltily. As he expected, he saw his father, the colonel, standing outside his tent, glaring at him.

Jeff snapped to attention and brought his right hand up to a salute, touching the forage cap as he had been taught. He had been a drummer boy for two years in the Stonewall Brigade, but now at seventeen had been mustered into the regular service and appointed a corporal.

“Yes, Colonel,” he said. His lips were so cold that he found it difficult to speak. He brought his hand down, knowing he was in big trouble.

Col. Nelson Majors walked up to his soldier son. They looked alike, these two. They had the same coal-black hair and black eyes. Jeff was fully as tall as his father, though much slimmer.

“Where have you been, Corporal?”

After a slight hesitation, Jeff said, “Into Richmond, sir.”

“How many times does that make that you’ve been to Richmond in the last week?”

“Three times, Colonel.”

“Well, that’s about three times too many!”

Nelson Majors was ordinarily a soft-spoken man, but today his face was drawn with tension.

The siege of Petersburg had drained all the energy out of him. He had been wounded at the beginning of the siege and had not gotten his full strength back. He held himself up straight and said sternly, "Corporal, just because you're the son of the commanding officer doesn't give you any special privileges! I thought I'd made that clear to both you and your brother!"

"I'm sorry, sir." Jeff had no excuse. He had gotten permission from his lieutenant to go to town, but he knew that he had taken a shortcut. He was well aware that his father was never one to permit one of his sons to merit special attention, and now he made no defense.

"You can stand guard for an extra watch, Corporal Majors."

"Yes, sir."

Jeff returned his father's angry salute, and when the colonel ducked back inside the tent, he made his way down through the camp to the front lines.

Here were trenches protected by large logs and anything else that would stop a musket ball. They were not quite deep enough for a man to walk upright, so Jeff kept his head down. As he wound through the fortifications, from time to time he heard the explosion of a musket and the screaming of a minié ball as it split the air. Both sides were firing, and their trenches were less than two hundred feet apart in places.

A mortar exploded somewhere behind the lines, and he dropped down flat. When the dirt settled, he got up and continued his journey, finally arriving at the location where his squad was detailed to hold off the Yankees.

“Hello, Jeff. You bring anything good back to eat?”

Sgt. Tom Majors, Jeff’s older brother, was sitting on a cracker box. He’d been talking to Charlie Bowers, the undersized drummer boy who had entered the service the same time as Jeff but was one year younger.

“Well, yes, I did,” Jeff muttered. He flung down the bag. “There! You can have it!”

Charlie stared at him with his wide blue eyes. “What’s the matter, Jeff? You look all put out.”

“Pa—I mean the colonel—just bawled me out for going into Richmond.”

“You had permission, didn’t you?” Tom asked as he picked up the bag.

“Sure, I did. From the lieutenant. But that wasn’t good enough.”

Tom was barely listening. He had opened the bag and was pulling out its contents. “Cookies!” he said. “My, I haven’t seen a cookie in years, it seems like!”

Jeff, however, was not thinking of cookies. “I don’t see why he has to pick on me! What difference does it make whether I’m here or not?” he grumbled. He plopped himself down on a log that formed a part of the fortification and watched as the other two soldiers eagerly went through the rations. He refused the cookies. He had filled up on cookies when in Richmond.

Charlie said, “I think you’re crazy, Jeff—turning down cookies just because you’re upset with your pa.”

Tom was munching happily, making a chocolate cookie last as long as he could. Then he said, “You

know Pa's pretty tense, Jeff. He's got a lot of responsibility here."

"That's right," Charlie said. "We're trying to hold too much of the line. Spread out all thin-like. Why, if the Yankees made a run at us, I don't know if we could hold 'em or not."

Jeff knew that both were right, and it was not his father's fault.

"Well," he muttered, "I guess it was worth it. Leah and I cooked up all this stuff, and I ate all I could so the rest of you could have what I brought back. But food's getting so scarce there that they couldn't give us much."

"Seems they found a chicken anyhow." Tom bit down on a fried chicken leg. "It beats anything we've had here lately."

The three soldiers were tired and dirty. A siege was a nasty sort of way to run a war, Jeff thought. There was no glory in it—no flags flying, no bands playing—just day after day risking death every time a man raised his head.

"The net's closing in," Tom said, glancing toward the Federal fortifications. "General Grant is getting more reinforcements all the time, and we're getting thinner. There's only one end to that."

Jeff nodded. "I reckon you're right, Tom. And Pa's got too much to do. I shouldn't have gotten sore at him like that."

Colonel Majors had been fortunate enough to commandeer a horse that would hold his weight. He was in Richmond, on his way home for the first time in days.

"Come on, boy. You can make it just a little farther." He urged the weary animal down the street.

Richmond was a pitiful sight, he thought. The mortars and the big guns of the Federals had arched over their deadly missiles, blowing large chunks out of the city.

He rode through the heart of town and saw that little was left of the daily life he remembered. When he'd first come here from Kentucky to join the Confederacy, Richmond had been a busy, prosperous city. Now, only a remnant was left of all of that. He saw bombed-out buildings, burned houses, holes in the street big enough to hide a horse. And he saw little hope in the eyes of those who were still trying to keep the Confederate war machine going.

Finally he reached home, a small, white frame house, which so far had been spared the destruction of the inner city. He slid off the bony animal, slapped him with some affection, and said, "You did a good job, boy. I'll see if I can find you some fodder." He tied the horse to the hitching post, then opened the door and called out, "Hey, where's my welcoming committee?"

Instantly he heard a child's voice, and then a blonde girl, no more than three years of age, came like a whirlwind. She hit him full force, and he laughed, picking her up and holding her high in the air.

"Well, here's my Esther!" He kissed her rosy cheek. His wife had died bringing Esther into the world, and for most of her life the child had been in the care of Dan and Mary Carter in Kentucky. Now, however, she was here to stay, and she had a new mother.

"Nelson, you're home!"

Eileen Fremont Majors greeted him with almost as much vigor as the child. At twenty-nine, she had

brilliant red hair, green eyes, and, he knew, a great love for her new husband.

Nelson kissed her and then said, "You smell better than anything I've smelled in the last three weeks!"

Eileen ran her hand through his hair. "I'm glad you're here, dear. Come on. I know you're hungry. I'll fix you something to eat."

He followed her into the kitchen, noted the pleasant warmth of the wood stove, and sat down, saying, "I wish I could carry that stove back to the front lines with me."

"I'm afraid we don't have much to cook on it, but the fire's nice."

"How's the firewood holding out?"

"We'll manage."

Eileen busied herself making a meal, and soon it was set before him. "Only two eggs," she said, "but we got a piece of bacon yesterday, and here are some biscuits that I made this morning."

As her husband ate, Eileen sat beside him. Esther demanded her father's attention, and he pulled her up onto his lap and began to tell her stories, which she loved. After a time, however, he said, "Now, you let Daddy have a little time with Mommy, all right?"

"Will you tell me more stories after you talk to her?"

"Sure I will, sweetheart." He kissed her firmly, and she toddled off happily to play. "Where's Leah?" he asked.

"Oh, she's out fishing again."

"In this weather? She'll freeze to death!"

"She doesn't seem to mind, and the fish come in handy. Until the water freezes over, she says she'll keep at it. We'll have fish for supper."

Then Eileen plumped herself down in her husband's lap. "There," she said. "I've missed this lap of yours."

"I've missed having you in it." He stroked her hair. "I've missed you more than I should. I couldn't keep my mind on my business."

Eileen hesitated, then said, "I've got some more business for you to think about."

"What's that?"

"How would you feel if you had to buy another plate for the table?"

For a moment Nelson could not understand what she meant. He saw that she seemed somewhat apprehensive. And then the meaning of her question came to him. His black eyebrows went up with astonishment. "You don't mean that we're going to have a baby?"

"Yes! That's the business at hand." Eileen looked at him carefully and then said, "I hope you don't mind, Nelson."

"Mind? Why would I mind? I think it's wonderful!"

She obviously had been concerned about how he would take the news. Life during wartime was hard enough without any complications. She seemed to desperately need his assurance. "I'm so glad," she whispered. "I was afraid you wouldn't like it."

"Of course I like it, and don't you worry a bit. We'll make out fine."

Eileen whispered, "I hope it'll be a boy. That would be good, wouldn't it?"

"That would be very good!"

The dead of winter had not stopped the Yankee determination to take Richmond. Gen. Ulysses S.

Grant kept Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia off balance constantly. Lincoln had been reelected, General Sherman had captured Atlanta, and Savannah had surrendered. Now Sherman was on his way north to join Grant in a full-scale attempt to seize Richmond, which would end the war.

Even the promise of spring's coming could bring no hope to Lee's men. They were freezing and starving daily. Death, disease, and desertion slowly destroyed the once proud Army of Northern Virginia. In one five-week period, more than three thousand men simply walked off to go home and did not return.

General Lee knew that the biggest problem that winter was food. He said, "Unless the men and animals can be fed, the army cannot be held together and our present lines must be abandoned."

Colonel Majors was one of the officers called to a special staff meeting one day, and he saw that General Lee looked tired and worn. *He's become an old man!* Nelson thought with some astonishment. *This war is killing him!*

General Lee was indeed worn out and was suffering from the heart condition that would eventually kill him. However, there was always a dignity in the man, and as he explained to his officers how grim the situation was, that inherent strength that had kept the Army of Northern Virginia intact was still there.

"I must inform you gentlemen that our plight is severe," he said quietly. "As you must know, the Federals are increasing their strength daily while we are growing weaker with each hour."

"We can hold out, General," one of the officers spoke up at once.

“I pray so, but we must face reality.” He went on to speak about the lines that had been cut and about the lack of food and ammunition.

When he dismissed the men, Nelson slowly walked back to his own sector, where he found Tom waiting.

“What did the general say, Colonel?” Tom was still learning to adapt to the use of an artificial limb. After losing a leg at Gettysburg, he had been mustered back into the service as a courier. It was intended that he would serve on horseback, but now he was in the trenches with the rest of the men.

His father frowned. “I’ve never seen General Lee like this. He’s always been such a tower of strength, but now it seems that he has lost hope.”

“If *he’s* lost hope,” Tom said, “I don’t think the rest of us can do much better.”

The colonel felt the biting air cut through his uniform. “I don’t think so either. It’s just a matter of time, Tom. We’ve got to realize that.”

Tom rubbed his hands to warm them. His thoughts seemed far away.

Finally his father said, “I could guess what you’re thinking.”

Tom looked up and smiled guiltily. “Are you a mind reader now, Colonel?”

“I know my boys pretty well. You’re thinking about Sarah.”

Tom bowed his head. He and Sarah were practically engaged, but she was back in Kentucky and he was here in the frozen trenches—and he had been maimed by the war. “I still don’t reckon Sarah would want a one-legged man, Pa.”

“Don’t be foolish, son!” Nelson said. “A leg is not a man!” But he knew Tom had not fully gotten over

the loss of the leg. His older son had always been strong and athletic and now felt he was not the man he'd been.

Tom looked out over the fortifications, thinking. Slowly he turned back to his father, saluted, and then limped toward the trenches to take his place in the line.

The colonel watched him go and thought, *That boy's hurting—and he's wrong about Sarah. But I guess every man has to learn to get along with his own handicaps.*

He walked away, wondering how to make the food go a little farther, how to make the lines stretch a little longer, and how to keep the Yankees at bay for just one more day.