In their hearts they were saying:"Another twenty-four hours and Lee will be here!"

There was reason enough for the President's bent head and slow walk. For nearly three days now there had been no word of news from the Army of the Potomac. It was as if it had dropped into an abyss - the silence was inexplicable, terrifying. They knew that at midnight of Tuesday Grant had started his army of veterans from Culpepper only some 60 miles away, on what they were daring to hope, in spite of three years of repeated efforts and failures, would be the final move on Richmond. He had moved across the "Rapid Ana" - that they knew - but what had he done all day Wednesday? All day Thursday? And what was he doing today? How could it be that an army of 150,000 men, with an open country between it and Washington and an open river, could be lost?

Where was the army? men had begun to ask on Wednesday. Why was there no news? And with every hour of Thursday the tension, the alarm, the despairing rumors had increased. Extras had appeared in the City of New York saying that Burnside and his corps had been beaten and destroyed. But, if that were true, Washington knew nothing of it. Men could not go about their work. Congress fumed and fretted. In the Departments the clerks gathered in little groups, looking from their windows towards the Potomac and Arlington as if expecting to see a cloud of grey coatsswarming upon them.

All day Thursday, all night Thursday, all day Friday Congressmen and cabinet officers had come and gone, come and gone

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to and from the White House, seeking what comfort they could from the President. And he - well, he had staked everything on Grant. And now Grant had disappeared.

His mind was heavy with foreboding as he followed the graveled path from the White House to his own particular chair in the telegraph office of the War Department. The boys all knew him there. For three years there had been a succession of them that had watched for his almost daily visit and who all their lives thereafter were to tell how, pulling open a drawer in which the yellow tissue telegrams of the day awaited him, he would go over them - sometimes one long leg curled over the chair, sometimes both long legs propped on thedesk - how he would ponder as he read, and now and then rise and go to the military map on the wall, tracing positions with his long finger, visualizing the movements reported - how sometimes he would stop and comment, tell a story. They loved his coming, these young telegraph operators; but today their hearts were heavy for him - they had no news. The only thing that lay in his drawer was a telegram from Grant, three days old. It had come in early in the afternoon of ~~Tuesday~~ Wednesday: "The crossing of the Rapidan effected. Forty-eight hours now will demonstrate whether the enemy intends giving battle this side of Richmond."

The forty-eight hours were past - and nobody knew whether the enemy had given battle or not.

"Nothing, Mr. President," the operator at the desk told him. "nothing that amounts to anything. A man came in to Union Mills

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a little while ago, claiming he had left the army early this morning. He wanted to talk to Mr. Dana, but he was not here. Then he asked to send a telegram to the Tribune. Secretary Stanton refused to let us use the wire for a newspaper and demanded the message. The fellow said he would not give it unless we first sent a dispatch to his paper. The Secretary says 'of course he is a spy, and ordered him to be shot in the morning.

A change came overthe President's face as he listened. He sat straighter, his eyes lost their dull look. "Ordered him to be shot?" he said.

"Yes, Mr. President."

"He is at Union Mills?"

"Yes."

"Ask him if he will talk with the President."

Union Mills was a little Virginia settlement, twenty miles or so from Washington, on the military road to Culpepper. A government telegraph station, established there early in the war, was still in operation. It was not much to look at - this station - a small room, used only by the operator and those who came in for messages. Just now, however, there was an extra occupant. On a cot at the side of the room there was stretched as disreputable and suspicious looking figure as one ever sees. A slight figure - a boy you would say. He could not haveweighed over 130 pounds. He was clad in the rough

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butternut garb of a Virginia plantation hand, heavy brogans on his feet, the bottoms of his trousers tied over their tops with hempen cord. He wore a faded cap, he was unshaven and from head to foot he was plastered with red Virginia mud. If you had looked close you would have seen that two fingers were gone from his left hand.

He lay quiet enough. No one could have imagined from his despairing relaxation the turmoil of disappointment and rage inside his heart and head. He was sentenced to be shot in the morning - sentenced by the Secretary of War, whom he heartily hated. But that was not what enraged him. His wrath was that he, ~~whom he had just discovered to be~~ the first man to get through from the army with news, had not been allowed to send a dispatch to his paper, his beloved Tribune. Here he was with the scoop of the war, and the Secretary had refused to let him use the wire - refused even though he promised to give him, when the dispatch was sent, all that he knew - refused and ordered him to be shot as a spy. Well, he would be shot before he would give Stanton a word. It didn't belong to Stanton - he was not his man, he was the Tribune's man. And Stanton was a bully, anyway. Had not Stanton said that no men men should be allowed with the army? And had he not had to run away and sneak in. No, he'd die, but he would never give that man the satisfaction of having news that belonged to his paper.

And so he lay quietly storming within. He did not understand telegraphy - this young boy - but lying there, absorbed in his thoughts, he suddenly was conscious that the ticking instrument was

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calling for him - Wing - Henry Wing - Henry Wing - Henry E. Wing, it said.

All his life he had had hunches. He knew there were things that men did not see with their eyes and feel with their hands. That instrument was asking for him, and he sat upright. And as he sat up the operator said. "The President wants to know if you will talk with him. He wants to know if it true that you have come from the army."

"Tell him, Yes."

"He wants to know if you will tell him what news you bring."

"Tell him if he will first send one hundred words to the Tribune. I will tell him."

The answer came back, "Write your hundred words and we will send it at once."

And so he wrote, scribbing fast the words of his message.

Back in Washington the revived President received it at his desk, and he read between the lines the truth - a spirited young correspondent, caring first for his trust, resenting, as he knew newspaper men did, the arbitrary and irrascible decisions of his great Secretary of War, read as if it were all written there before him. His eyes twinkled, his lips puckered into something like a smile - "Wasn't that like Stanton?" and "Wasn't it like a boy?"

He did not wait for consultation. He ordered that the message should go, not only to the Tribune but to the country, and again questioned Henry. "If I send an engine for you, will you come

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to Washington?" And Henry Wing back in Union Mills was good enough to say, Yes.

An hour later a little military train was on its way to Union Mills, carrying in its rickety passenger car, Charles Dana, first assistant secretary of War, with a good sized escort. Dana was to see Wing, and if possible go on to the army. The train was to bring the young correspondent back to Washington.

Between one and two o'clock of Saturday morning, May 7, the train came into the capital on its return trip, and Wing, unwashed, unbrushed, but entirely unconscious of the fact, stepped into a waiting carriage and was driven to the White House. The cabinet awaited him - Mr. Lincoln at his desk sitting upright, watching the door, the Secretaries grouped about - Seward, Stanton, Wells, Chase - tired and anxious men - men who all day had drifted from Department to White House, from White House to their homes, only again to make the round. In the dull light of the shabby room they looked sallow, old, hopeless. The hours of doubt and growing anxiety which they had to endure, the country's rising tide of angry blame, that sense of impotence which the night brings, had taken away all official dignity. They looked just what they were - wretched human beings entrusted with vast responsibility, come to the moment when they were conscious of their own puniness.

The messenger for whom they were watching came in. They were used to strange figures, these men, but scarcely to the dirt and rags of Henry Wing. Henry's first consciousness of his condition

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came in that moment when he saw the look of half dismay that crossed the face of the President. But it was only for a moment - the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, had recognized him as his constituent, and rising said, "You are Henry Wing from Litchfield?" And so he was introduced.

What had he to tell them, Mr. Lincoln asked. When and where had he left Grant?

Sitting in the dimly lighted room, with the whole Administration of the United States around him, he told his story, rising to point out now and then on the big military map which hung on the wall, the movements of Grant's army, up to the time he had left. What he told them was but little more than he had put into his message. It had been midnight on Tuesday that they had moved out from Culpepper - the whole army of 125,000 men - (it was now Saturday morning). They were going after Lee - that everybody knew. To get at him in his comfortable winter quarters they must cross the Rapidan, a nasty stream, only three fords. He, Henry, was with the second corps, Hancock's. They had done well and passed out of the tangle into the open country near Chancellorsville - a good place for a battle. They had entrenched and were expecting the other corps to come up - Warren's and Sedgewick's.

Nobody had thought of a battle until the whole army was through the Wilderness - that is, nobody on the Union side; but Lee thought otherwise. He had come out of his entrenchments and had attacked them Thursday morning, with half the Union army still

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bottled up in the Wilderness.

They had fought all day and at night when they came together nobody knew quite how the battle had gone, they only knew at headquarters that the whole army was still on the south side of the Rapidan and that General Grant had ordered an attack the next morning.

"Lee was still in position?" they asked him.

"Yes, he was still in position."

"And when did you leave?"

"Four o'clock Friday morning."

"The battle had not begun?"

"No, the battle had not begun."

"Then you know nothing of what has happened in the last twenty-four hours?"

"No," he knew nothing.

Henry Wing was conscious of the inadequacy of his news. It was not what had happened Thursday that they wanted now to know, but what had happened Friday. And why now, Saturday morning, they had no news of what had happened. It was almost as if they put him aside as they rose oneby one, said "Good night, Mr. President," and left the room. The President himself seemed so overwhelmed with uncertainty that he was scarcely conscious that Henry Wing had lingered behind.

"You wanted to speak to me?" said Mr. Lincoln.

"Yes, Mr. President. I have a message for you - a message

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from General Grant. He told me I was to give it to you when you were alone."

In an instant the President was all awareness, intent - "Something from Grant to me?"

"Yes," blurted out Henry. "He told me I was to tell you, Mr. President, that there would be no turning back."

The harried man had waited long - three whole years - for such a word - the one word that could have brought him help in his despair; and sweeping his long arm around the boy he gathered him to him, and bending over pressed a kiss on his forehead. "Come and tell me about it," he said.

Theysat down, and suddenly all of Henry's journalistic discretion was gone. Here was one who had the right to know, and so he told him of the horrors and uncertainties of that day in the Wilderness - men fighting without knowing where they were going - fighting in groups not in masses - of Hancock unsupported, of Warren's over-caution, bottling up the troops that Hancock had expected would support him - of a day gone wrong from start to finish. He told him how when night had come and commanders and correspondents had gathered at headquarters, there had been angry charges, one general accusing another. There had been Meade's decision that they should fall back north of the river, re-establish their lines and try again later, and how General Grant had come in with his quiet but final, "No, we shall attack again in the morning."

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He told how, when at four o'clock Friday morning, he had presented himself at headquarters and announced to the General that he was carrying out news to his paper, he had led him aside and looking at him intently had said, "You think you can get to Washington?" He had had no doubt of it, nor did the General's question arouse any doubt.

"Then," said General Grant, "if you do see the President, see him alone and tell him that General Grant says there will be no turning back."

His story was told. It was four o'clock in the morning, and the President, rising, said, "It is time for you toget to bed, Henry. You look as if you needed rest, but come to see me tomorrow afternoon." And Henry Wing who had not had more than three hours' sleep at a time for some five days now, stumbled out of the White House, down to the National Hotel where he kept a room, and upstairs to throw himself, Virginia mud and all, across the bed and to fall into a sleep of utter exhaustion.

He took time for only one ceremony - to look at his face in the glass, with something like awe, and to pass a reverential hand over his cheek. Had he dreamed it, or was it true that the President of the United States had kissed him, there on that spot?

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Day had scarcely broken on the morning of Saturday, May 7, before the streets of Washington were ringing with the cries of newsboys. Not for many, many weeks had they been out so early, not for many weeks had Washington sprang from its bed at their cry. "News from the Army," was what they called. "Grant found." The calls floated up ~~from the street and~~ penetrated my a room where across a bed a dirty, sprawling figure lay. It came like a call to duty: "Henry Wing! Henry Wing! ~~This is your news.~~ Your work is not done, you must see the Tribune."

Henry was on his feet in an instant, throwing off his plantation disguise, pulling on his correspondent's uniform, dashing down and out. It was hardly six o'clock when he reached the Tribune office, then on the second floor of a 14th Street building near Pennsylvania Avenue. He found the stairs blocked with excited men - men whose names he knew - Senators, department chiefs - all pushing their way in and questioning one another eagerly, "Is it true?" "What is known?"

Henry wormed his way up the stairs, through the wrestling crowd, into the room; and there, on top of a table, was his chief, Sam Wilkinson, declaring excitedly that the news was a fake, that Henry Wing had not come out, that somebody was deceiving the country.

"Here I am, Mr. Wilkinson!" shouted Henry. And the anxious crowd, stilled for an instant by the cry, looked: more than one of them recognized Wing.

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Such a shout as went up! They caught him in their arms and passed him over their heads to the table beside his chief; and there, ~~in a more or less bashful and hesitating way~~, with many interruptions, he told them the truth, that he had left Grant's army south of the Rapidan at four o'clock on Friday morning, that it had fought all day Thursday, that Lee still held his position, that when he left Grant was to attack again in the morning, that he had been all day getting out, that when he reached Union Mills and asked for Mr. Dana and that a message be sent to the Tribune, that Stanton had refused him the lines and ordered him to be shot as a spy. Such a groan as went up! And how had he escaped?

"The President found it out and sent a train for me," he said proudly.

There were cheers and cheers. Sam Wilkinson, overwhelmed with pride, that one of his staff had not only achieved the biggest scoop in the whole history of the war but had done something dearer to a newspaper man's heart, had beaten out their enemy, Stanton. The crowd, unable to express itself better, took up a collection, passing a hatful of bills to Henry.

Having thus relieved their feelings they slowly dribbled down to the street and back to their several breakfast tables.

"And now, Henry," said Mr. Wilkinson, "what are you going to do?"

And Henry, conscious of duty fulfilled and also of great

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weariness, said, "If you don't mind, Mr. Wilkinson, I will go back to the hotel and get some sleep. I want to get rested because the President has asked me to come and see him this afternoon."

"And I will go with you," said his chief.

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It was late on Saturday afternoon when Henry Wing, once more a confident, handsome, almost dapper youth, presented himself at the White House and was admitted with his chief to the President's office.

"I see you've cleaned up, Henry," said Mr. Lincoln. "What are you going to do now?" And very promptly Henry replied, "I am going after Jess."

"Jess?" said the President, "Who is Jess?"

"My horse. I left him tied in the thicket down near Warrentown. The bushwackers Confederates were too thick for me to get through with him any further, and I promised him to go back. I never break a promise to a horse, Mr. President."

"You had to leave him?" said the President. "You had difficult in getting out? You better tell me about it, Henry."

And so Henry told the story of what had happened between four o'clock of Friday morning and ten o'clock of that night, when the President had rescued him from Mr. Stanton's sentence.

"It was this way, Mr. President," he said. "After the battle, we all came to Grant's headquarters. My chief said, somebody must take a dispatch to the Tribune. Of course the older men could not

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do it, they wereneeded. I was only the cub, and I knew it was up to me to try, and so I said I would go. It was midnight then, and I went around where Jess was. Jess, Mr. Lincoln, is the finest horse in the army. I told them to feed him and feed him well at three o'clock, and that I would ride out at four. I thought maybe Jess might not get any more oats until we got to Washington, and it's about seventy-five miles.

I had it mapped out how it would be easy enough to get through. Over near Culpepper there was a Union man I knew. I had seen him only a couple of days before. He knew every road and path between the river and Washington. I was counting on him to give me directions. I did not realize that as soon as our army got across the Rapidan, Lee's scouts and Moseby's men had begun to come in.

"I knew from the way Jess acted as soon as we were across the river that it was none too safe. Jess knows things, Mr. Lincoln - knows danger - feels it. And he steals around like a cat when things are not safe. That's the way he acted yesterday morning. It made me a little careful. Still, I was counting on my friend. When I told him what I wanted he called me a fool. "Do you know you haven't a chance in the world to get to Washington looking like that? Don't you know that the woods are full of Confederates and that by this time they probably hold half the stations on the railroad? You will never get therein the world in those clothes."

"Well, of course, I had on the <u>Tribune</u> clothes, and,you know, Mr. Lincoln"- and Henry looked himself over [illegible]cently - "you know

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they are rather conspicuous."

They certainly were. The Tribune took pride in having its correspondents out-shine those of other papers. Its representatives wore knickerbockers of the finest corduroy, jackets of buckskin, high topped boots of the finest leather, conspicuous gauntlets, broad soft hats - most becoming to a youth as handsome as Henry Wing.

"'They would spot you across country,' said my friend. 'The only chance of your getting there is to go as a Confederate carrying news to Confederate friends in Washington, news that Lee has defeated Grant, that in twenty-four hours he will be on his way to the city. That is all that will get your through the bands that will dispute your way.'

"He told me to rip off my clothes, and he gave me what you saw me in last night, Mr. Lincoln. I guess they would pass my anywhere as a field hand."

"I think they would," said Mr. Lincoln.

"Well, I started out, but had gone only a few miles, when, sure enough, I ran plumb into a troop of Moseby's men. I stopped to talk and told my story. There was great hurrahing, and in no time they had an escort ready. There were Yankees still in the neighborhood, they said. I would not be safe. And so I started out with Moseby's men for escort. Things would have gone very well if we had not ridden right into Kelly's Ford. You have heard of Kelly,

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I expect - everybody knows there isn't a more bitter secessionist in Virginia. Kelly knew not more than forty-eight hours before I had been there and talked with him, so I told the escort I was all right, that they needn't bother any further. But Kelly was too sharp. He saw me and jumped for Jess' bridle. Jess was too quick for him, he gave one great bound and rushed for the river, not the ford but the deep water. Jess knows more than I do every time.

They fired on me but itwas too late. I knew now, if my road was clear, nothing could stop Jess until we reached Washington; but the road was not clear. You haven't any idea how the enemy has filled it up - cavalry, wagons, scouts. They kept holding me up, and though I got by every time by telling a story that set them hurrahing, I knew that could not last, that I must leave Jess and take to the railroad ties.

"You see, by this time I was only about thirty miles from here, and I thought I could make it, so I led Jess into a thicket down around Warrentown. I tied him loose, poured out all the oats I had, put my arms around his neck and promised to come back. That is what I want to do now, Mr. Lincoln."

"But how did you make the rest of the journey?

"Pretty well until I reached Manassas Junction, where I found the enemy strong. They said they were glad of the news, but they would get it to Washington themselves, I needn't go on. I said, 'All right,' but when it began to be dusk I crawled out and sneaked up the track to Bull Run where our people are, and they sent me to

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Union Mills.

"At Bull Run I found out what I had not guessed before, that I was the first man in from the army, that no paper had had any news, that even Washington had no news, and that the whole country was stirred up by a rumor that Grant was defeated and Lee would soon be in Washington.

"It had never occurred to me that I could not get through some word to Alexandria. I tried to buy a horse, but no one would sell me one - I offered $1000. for a hand-car and a man to run me up, but they said it was a military road and no civilian could be accommodated.

"You can imagine how I felt - having news and knowing I ought to get it to the Tribune before anybody else had it. Then I had an idea. You know Mr. Dana is an old Tribune man, and so I went to the military telegraph office at Union Mills and asked them to telegraph him that I was just in front the front, that I had left Grant at four o'clock that morning, and that I wanted to talk to him.

"Well, they didn't tell Dana, they told Stanton. You know what happened, Mr. Lincoln."

"Yes, I know what happened. And now you want to go for Jess?"

"Yes, I must go for Jess."

"Well, Henry, I think we owe you something. I will have to help you about that. I don't like to think of your making the run you did yesterday without a guard. You must remember we don(t know what has happened down there since you left. If you wish I will give you

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an escort, an engine and a car."

If there was a happier man in Washington that night than Henry Wing, knowing that the next morning there would be awaiting him at Alexandria an escort to take him to the spot where he had hidden his beloved horse, there is no record of it. And if there was a prouder group of men in Washington than the newspaper men who gathered about him and patted him on the back and feasted him, there is no record of it. One of their craft was the hero of the hour.

The next morning, Sunday, May 8, the expedition to rescue a horse, which the President of the United States had promised to a cub reporter of the New York Tribune, started out from Alexandria. It carried a battery, soldiers and a box car, well equipped with water and oats.

And it was no uneventful journey. The train ran safely through the hostile scouts at Manassas Junction though not unchallenged, but from there on every mile of the way was fought for until finally they came to the point where Henry thought he had taken to the ties.

Here he left the train. He must find his way the best he could to the particular thicket where he had left Jess. He had a horrible fear that he might mistake the road - thickets were so alike. There was a growing anxiety, too, as to what might have happened to Jess in the forty-eight hours since he left him. Had he been discovered and shot orstolen? Had hunger and thirst driven

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him to break or gnaw away his halter, or had he kept his post, as Henry believed he would if unmolested?

His anxiety was almost unbearable as he crawled out from the underbrush to the spot where he calculated he had left Jess, and raised his eyes to look.

There the horse stood - head stretched out, eyes alert, ears forward, legs far apart, not a muscle moving, not a sound - the very picture of intentness. And when he saw Henry it was as if he would spring to meet him, for with one snap of his white teeth he bit almost entirely through the leather strap which held him. All this he might have done before, but, no, he was waiting for the man. The man had come. Life might depend on instantaneous getting away and he himself cut the strap that theremight be no delay, so Henry Wing believed. With tears streaming down his cheeks, the youth threw his arms around Jess' neck, while Jess muzzled his neck, whinnying softly his delight.

Quickly and quietly they came out, Henry leading the horse. He could not mount an animal that for forty-eight hours had had little food and no drink. But there was a great feast when that box car was reached - a great feast and a great petting and great rejoicing. But never such rejoicing as when that night Henry Wing rode Jess into a comfortable stall in a Washington stable.

But the story was not over. Henry Wing had had his great day, and while he was gone that Sunday in his search for the horse, the newspaper men of Washington, Whitlaw Reid at their head, Uriah

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Painter, Sam Wilkinson, all the big ones, had planned that the next day should be Jess's. The Tribune was to give Jess to Henry as his own property. The men had taken up a collection and had bought him the finest saddle and bridle the town afforded, and they had arranged that at ten o'clock of Monday morning, dignitaries of the cabinet led by Lincoln himself, should meet on the White House lawn and inspect the horse, now the hero of the hour.

And so it turned out. The reception was held, and to cap its climax Mr. Lincoln asked the privilege of mounting and riding Jess. If ever a boy's cup of pride and happiness was full, it was then. Indeed, it would have been hard to find a happier group than that which gathered around Jess the morning of Monday, May 9, in Washington, for news was through now officially from Grant. The Army of the Potomac had not turned back, the Army of the Potomac was going forward. Possibly at no hour in all the tormented three years through which he had been going had Abraham Lincoln felt greater relief. "And now," he said to Henry as he dismounted from Jess and bade him good-bye, "you go back to Grant?"

"Yes, Mr. Lincoln, I go back."

"Good," said the President. "You will be coming to Washington some times and remember this, that when you do come, I want you always to come and seeme. I shall want to talk with you."

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