

THE SHADES OF THE WILDERNESS

A STORY OF LEE'S GREAT STAND

by

JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER



NEW YORK AND LONDON
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1916

Rosings Digital Publications



2013

FOREWORD

“The Shades of the Wilderness” is the seventh volume of the Civil War Series, of which the predecessors have been “The Guns of Bull Run,” “The Guns of Shiloh,” “The Scouts of Stonewall,” “The Sword of Antietam,” “The Star of Gettysburg” and “The Rock of Chickamauga.” The romance in this story reverts to the Southern side and deals with the fortunes of Harry Kenton and his friends. It takes them on the retreat from Gettysburg, gives the hero a short period of social life in Richmond, describes the great battles of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania, and ends with the deadlock in the trenches before Petersburg.

The Civil War Series

The Guns of Bull Run

The Guns of Shiloh

The Scouts of Stonewall

The Sword of Antietam

The Star of Gettysburg

The Rock of Chickamauga

The Shades of the Wilderness

The Tree of Appomattox

HISTORICAL CHARACTERS IN THE CIVIL WAR SERIES

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States.
JEFFERSON DAVIS, President of the Southern Confederacy.
JUDAH P. BENJAMIN, Member of the Confederate Cabinet.
U.S. GRANT, Northern Commander.
ROBERT E. LEE, Southern Commander.
STONEWALL JACKSON, Southern General.
PHILIP H. SHERIDAN, Northern General.
GEORGE H. THOMAS, "The Rock of Chickamauga."
ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON, Southern General.
A.P. HILL, Southern General.
W.S. HANCOCK, Northern General.
GEORGE B. McCLELLAN, Northern General.
AMBROSE B. BURNSIDE, Northern General.
TURNER ASHBY, Southern Cavalry Leader.
J.E.B. STUART, Southern Cavalry Leader.
JOSEPH HOOKER, Northern General.
RICHARD S. EWELL, Southern General.
JUBAL EARLY, Southern General.
WILLIAM S. ROSECRANS, Northern General.
SIMON BOLIVAR BUCKNER, Southern General.
LEONIDAS POLK, Southern General and Bishop.
BRAXTON BRAGG, Southern General.
NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST, Southern Cavalry Leader.
JOHN MORGAN, Southern Cavalry Leader.
GEORGE G. MEADE, Northern General.
DON CARLOS BUELL, Northern General.
W.T. SHERMAN, Northern General.
JAMES LONGSTREET, Southern General.
P.G.T. BEAUREGARD, Southern General.
WILLIAM L. YANCEY, Alabama Orator.
JAMES A. GARFIELD, Northern General, afterwards President of
the United States.

And many others

IMPORTANT BATTLES DESCRIBED IN
THE CIVIL WAR SERIES

BULL RUN
KERNSTOWN
CROSS KEYS
WINCHESTER
PORT REPUBLIC
THE SEVEN DAYS
MILL SPRING
FORT DONELSON
SHILOH
PERRYVILLE
STONE RIVER
THE SECOND MANASSAS
ANTIETAM
FREDERICKSBURG
CHANCELLORSVILLE
GETTYSBURG
CHAMPION HILL
VICKSBURG
CHICKAMAUGA
MISSIONARY RIDGE
THE WILDERNESS
SPOTTSYLVANIA
COLD HARBOR
FISHER'S HILL
CEDAR CREEK
APPOMATTOX

CHAPTER I

THE SOUTHERN RETREAT

A TRAIN of wagons and men wound slowly over the hills in the darkness and rain toward the South. In the wagons lay fourteen or fifteen thousand wounded soldiers, but they made little noise, as the wheels sank suddenly in the mud or bumped over stones. Although the vast majority of them were young, boys or not much more, they had learned to be masters of themselves, and they suffered in silence, save when some one, lost in fever, uttered a groan.

But the chief sound was a blended note made by the turning of wheels, and the hoofs of horses sinking in the soft earth. The officers gave but few orders, and the cavalymen who rode on either flank looked solicitously into the wagons now and then to see how their wounded friends fared, though they seldom spoke. The darkness they did not mind, because they were used to it, and the rain and the coolness were a relief, after three days of the fiercest battle the American continent had ever known, fought in the hottest days that the troops could recall.

Thus Lee's army drew its long length from the fatal field of Gettysburg, although his valiant brigades did not yet know that the clump of trees upon Cemetery Hill had marked the high tide of the Confederacy. All that memorable Fourth of July, following the close of the battle they had lain, facing Meade and challenging him to come on, confident that while the invasion of the North was over they could beat back once more the invasion of the South.

They had no word of complaint against their great commander, Lee. The faith in him, which was so high, remained unbroken, as it was destined to remain so to the last. But men began to whisper to one another, and say if only Jackson had been there. They mourned anew that terrible evening in the Wilderness when Lee had lost his mighty lieutenant, his striking arm, the invincible Stonewall. If the man in the old slouch hat had only been with Lee on Seminary Ridge it would now be the army of Meade retreating farther into the North, and they would be pursuing. That belief was destined to sink deep in the soul of the South, and remain there long after the Confederacy was but a name.

The same thought was often in the mind of Harry Kenton, as he rode near the rear of the column, whence he had been sent by Lee to observe and then to report. It was far after midnight now, and the last of the Southern army could not leave Seminary Ridge before morning. But Harry could detect no sign of pursuit. Now and then, a distant gun boomed, and the thunder muttered on the horizon, as if in answer. But there was nothing to indicate that the Army of the Potomac was moving from Gettysburg in pursuit, although the President in Washington, his heart filled with bitterness, was vainly ask-

SHADES OF THE WILDERNESS

“That was quite a victory,” he said.

“Not important! Not important, Leonidas!”

“And why not, Hector?”

“Because you’ve left the way to your king easier. I shall promptly move along that road.”

“As Grant moved through the Wilderness.”

“Don’t depreciate Grant, Leonidas. He never stops pounding. We’ve fought two great battles with him in the Wilderness and a third at Cold Harbor, but he’s still out there facing us. Can’t you see the Yankees with your glasses, Harry?”

“Yes, sir, quite clearly. They’re about to fire a shot from a big gun in a wood. There it goes!”

The deep note of the cannon came to them, passed on, and then rolled back in echoes like a threat.