

T O W A R D M A N A S S A S

ley figured later he had fallen in love at least a dozen times.

The country didn't change much at first and it was still all Union. They made their way—sleeping like lords and eating like kings, Charley thought—across Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and down into Maryland, and there were crowds all the way, even when the train didn't stop.

Charley saw his first coloreds when they moved into Maryland. They looked poor and had poor clothes and he thought about slavery then and how it must be strange to own a person so they had to do what you wanted. He'd never considered it before and wondered what would happen after the war when the Union had whipped the Rebels. Would they be allowed to keep their slaves? The war wasn't initially about slavery; the troops were going to stop the "lawbreakers and wrong thinkers" that were trying to "bust up the Union." They

He thought he would remember the train ride forever. Most of the men had never been on a train and certainly few of them had been on one this plush. The seats were soft and cushiony and the food—especially compared to the rough fare at Fort Snelling—was delicious.

They rode across Wisconsin and down into Chicago and everywhere they stopped there were huge crowds gathered to cheer them on. Girls gave them hankies and sweets and Char-

talked about it at night while the train moved east and south, and never did they speak of slavery. Just about the wrongheadedness of the Southern "crackers" and how they had to teach Johnny Reb a lesson.

A woman of color came up to him when the train was stopped in Maryland, just before Baltimore, and handed him a sweet roll and said, "Thank you for what you're doing. I hope God keeps you safe from harm and brings you back to your family."

She was crying. Charley thanked her and ate the cake and smiled at her and wondered why she was crying and wanted to ask why she was glad he was going to fight the South—she was, after all, part of the South—but they had to reboard the train then and he never found out why the colored woman was crying. He did see as the train moved off that a white woman came out of the house and grabbed the colored woman by her dress and dragged her back in-

side. Then she turned and shook her fist at the train.

She's a Reb, he thought, and it surprised him, though he didn't know why he should be surprised that a woman who owned another person would be a Reb. They were in Maryland and had been warned to watch out for Rebels and their sympathizers, but it was still his first experience with a Southerner. He watched the house from the open window as the train pulled away, hoping for another sight of the woman.

Now the country was changing. There had been farms all along, and towns, but the trees seemed more spaced here, the pastures more open, and Charley began to see "poor" farms. He'd heard the men talking about them, the poor whites, but he still wasn't quite ready for the sight when the train slowed for a hill and passed a shack that was little more than boards tacked to some poles. The children running

around out front were only half clothed and a man and a woman were sitting in rags. All the soldiers talked about the poor white trash and how these were the people they had come to fight, people who couldn't get out of their yards, let alone fight a proper army.

It made him very conscious of his own home. Even without a father there, the house was in good shape and kept up and there was a well-tended garden, good food, clothes that covered bodies. He wondered how the Rebels thought they could fight a war when their people couldn't dress themselves. It made him sad to see the children barely clothed. What would happen to them in winter? They did not have much of a winter here, he knew—nothing like Minnesota's—but it would still be cold. He turned from the window just as a man next to him, a private named Swenson, said, "You could throw a cat through their house without hitting a wall."

"They don't have anything," Charley said. "Not a thing."

The man nodded.

"This ain't going to be much of a war. I don't see how they can fight. They don't have any clothes."

"Hell, it'll probably be over before we get to Washington," Swenson said, and Charley nodded but stopped talking because he did not like profanity, even of a low order, and there was much of it around. He thought of a surgeon who had spoken to them and told them to try to wear clean clothing going into battle in case they were hit by a rifle ball. If the cloth was carried into the wound, clean cloth would cause less infection. He had thought of it and taken a bullet from one of the paper cartridges and pushed it against his sleeve. It didn't seem possible that the bullet could be made to go through the sleeve, into him, *into* him, carrying the fabric with it.

He thought it must be the same with profanity and immoral thinking. Charley believed in Heaven and Hell and God and Jesus and wanted to be with God if he was killed. If he had profane thoughts as he went to war, they might infect his soul as the dirty clothes would infect his wound. And while he did not think he would die, did not think he would even be hit or hurt, did not think of it at all, still it was best to be careful.

He stared out the window and thought of all the things he would tell his mother and his brother, Orren, when he wrote the next letter.

I'm a man now, he would write, and seeing and doing a man's things out in the world. I've seen things you wouldn't believe. . . .

He leaned back, closed his eyes and let the gentle rocking of the train take him to sleep.

BULL RUN

M*ake it stop now!* Charley thought, or thought he was thinking until he realized he was screaming it: "*Make it all stop now!*"

Death was everywhere, nowhere. Bullets flew past him with evil little snaps and snickers as they cut the air. Next to him Massey's head suddenly left his body and disappeared, taken by a cannon round that then went through an officer's horse, end to end, before plowing into the ground.

This can't be, he thought. I can't be here. This is all a mistake. A terrible mistake. I'm not supposed to be here.

He had forgotten to fire. The officers had marched them out into a field in perfect order and told them where to aim and fire, and he had raised his rifle and then the whole world had come at him. The Rebel soldiers were up a shallow grade a hundred yards away, behind some fallen trees, and they had opened on Charley and the others before anyone could fire.

It was like a blade cutting grain. He heard the bullets hitting the men—little *thunk-slaps*—and saw the men falling. Some of them screamed as they fell. Most were silent. Many were dead before they hit the ground. Many were torn apart, hit ten or twelve or more times before they had time to drop.

The men left standing with Charley fired, then the survivors of that round reloaded and

fired again, and Charley aimed in the general direction of the Rebels and pulled his trigger, firing blind.

The black powder smoke clouded from the rifles and the rebel guns on the hill and it was impossible to see or to understand anything.

I don't know anything, Charley thought—the words jerked through his mind before he thought them.

Somebody screamed over the sound of the gunfire, and the man next to Charley turned to the rear and began walking away as calm as if he was going for a stroll in a park, his rifle at right shoulder heft.

Charley followed him, dragging his own rifle along the ground. He must know something I don't know, he thought—must have heard something—but the man hadn't gone four steps before he was struck in the back several times and dropped on his face.

Bullets filled the air. Charley heard them go-

ing past his ears like horizontal hail and he decided to lie down. If he didn't lie down he would be hit, ripped, torn to pieces.

It was only slightly better on the ground. He heard the same sounds, the same bullets, but the bodies in front of him protected him. He could hear bullets hitting them.

Two bullets met directly in front of his eyes, jammed together and fell to the ground, as one. That sight was more horrifying than the death he'd seen. How many bullets, he thought, would have to be flying around for two of them to collide in midair?

Something jerked at his foot, pulling it sideways. He was sure he'd been hit, didn't see how it was possible to *keep* from being hit, but when he turned he saw Lieutenant Olafson tugging at his leg. The officer had been hit in his left upper arm. He was still holding a saber in his left hand and was jerking at Charley with his right.

"Get up, boy. We're to fall back." The cords in his neck bulged with the strain of screaming over the noise.

"Back?"

"In good order we're to fall back to the trees. Come on, son, up now and move. Help some of the others."

Somehow Charley's arms worked to push him off the ground. He stood and started walking when everything in him wanted to run; started walking "in good order" even when the lieutenant was hit in the chest and head and went down, obviously finished, but with legs still moving, still pumping, still pushing the dying body around and around on the ground; Charley started walking, not running, even when his mind prayed to God, told God, demanded of God:

I am not supposed to see this, God. No person is supposed to see this. How can You let this happen?

Charley walked amid the explosions of shot and the ripping of bullets until he was clear of the smoke and saw other men walking with him. Impossible, he thought, that they could walk as they did, in rank; impossible that they had lived, could have lived through what had come at them, was still coming at them.

Many of the men crouched as they moved, as if in a heavy rain, and Charley found himself doing the same, and when he was still some twenty yards from the line of trees ahead he crouched more and then ran—could not stop himself from running—until he was there, in the trees, a large maple at his back, and finally, sucking air until his lungs seemed to be on fire, finally he stopped and leaned over, his hands on his knees, and vomited, heaving until he was empty and then heaving more, until he felt as if his stomach would come up, until he felt his very soul would leave him.

NIGHT

Officers moved among the men and told them what every man knew was a lie; told them they'd done well, had stood up to Rebel fire and given it back. But even Charley knew—and he thought he knew nothing—that they'd been whipped from the field. They'd been ordered to cross a meadow and take the hill and the Confederates had torn them to pieces, made them withdraw “in good order,” made them run.

But the officers moved through the trees