

PROLOGUE: IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

*Gloria Victis!*¹

“For the principle of State rights and State sovereignty the Southern men fought with a holy ardor and self-denying patriotism that have covered even defeat with imperishable glory.”

—Dr. Charles E. Stowe, son of the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ca. 1900.

I came to my senses in a dim cell. Hands manacled, head throbbing, dizzy . . . thought I’d vomit. I didn’t! Blood oozing from my head. Couldn’t diagnose any other injuries. How to escape? I ran a finger around the top of my right boot. The skean dhu was gone.

The only light glimmered through gratings in an iron-bound door. Manacles chained to log wall, floor of rammed earth. The guard would be the only weak point . . .

I must have passed out again.

Rough prodding in the ribs . . . blue . . . Yankees! Brain and skin prickled. Everything in me flamed for attack. I sprang, but the irons caught me mid-way.

One guard startled back. The other jammed his Spencer into my sternum.

“Give up, Reb! You’re caught. Get up slow.” He kept that carbine on me while the scaredy one unlocked the manacles.

Dizziness and headache were less. Under guard, crossing the parade, I was memorizing all I observed: log palisade, gates, log cabins, North Star, good cover under the edge of a big cistern lid . . . Then they nudged me into a stark little room.

“Dismissed.”

¹Latin: Glory to the vanquished!

Silhouetted by the lamp behind him, an officer rose from his field desk, well over six feet tall. Brown hair, a few silver strands glinting. Beneath level brows, intent brown eyes missed nothing. Moustache, knifed off at the lines around a wide mouth.

“MacLeod!”

“Good evening, Lieutenant Drummond.”

MacLeod

I gave him the dignity he’s earned—all he has now—gave him time to collect his thoughts. Selfless duty showed its cost. He was gaunt, his gray uniform ragged. Blood matted his black hair. He still had the steady steel-blue eyes under winged brows, the eagle’s rapt attention, the austere demeanor. Features in balance, nose no longer overwhelming the rest, his beardless face retained the roundness of boyhood. He’d grown. He stood only a couple inches short of six feet now.

I wanted to embrace him for joy he was alive, but first I had to save his life.

“Sit down.”

“Not with a confounded spy!” was the nearest to a curse I’d ever heard him utter.

“We prefer to call it the Bureau of Military Information.”

“You betrayed us!”

“Were your men there?”

“No.”

“Then you must review your conclusion.”

“You weren’t in uniform! Why take me now, not then?”

“I have reasons.”

“What do you want with me?”

“I want you to enlist in this company.”

“I shall not betray my country.”

“Lieutenant . . . General Lee surrendered in April.”

A slight flinch. His face went pale. Tightened mouth showed him choking off emotion. I drew him past it.

“You kept your allegiance, but it’s over.”

“What of my men!”

“They’re safe.”

“How do you know!”

“My source is truthful.”

“Thanks be to God. They’re the hope and future of their families.”

“Returning to the subject of *your* future, do you know there’s a price on your head and a military court ready to hang you in Virginia?”

“What am I worth? To whom?”

“Two thousand dollars, to the General.”

“He must have hated the funeral worse than I thought. The court?” He spoke as if the topic mattered less than dust.

“Crimes of war.”

“I’ll go back. When the truth is established, Drummond honor will be, too.”

“It will only get you hanged! The spirit of vengeance is abroad, more so, since President Lincoln was assassinated. They won’t hear the truth, much less act upon it.”

“I shall have tried. Truth has power in itself. If I’m the scapegoat, Abercain won’t be.”

His expression was anguished. He still needs to mourn, but not now. Self-preservation never tempts him, so I turned to duty—and made my words barbs.

“Have you ceased to care about your countrymen!”

“I’m willing to die for them.”

“Will you live for them! Many have lost home and livelihood, so they’re coming west. The Army guards their travel. They still need your protection.”

I could see the idea beginning to seep in.

“I shall call for your decision after supper tomorrow.”

I ordered the guard to take him first to the surgeon. I could only pray I’d convinced him. God made clear my duty to foster him, a year ago, but my only powers are reason, and fatherly affection. Those earned his confidence till he heard what he thought was betrayal. Cold rationality isolates him now as it did at first. He might accept military subordination, but my heart still yearns for a son.

“How easily I could get rid of this and be at rest! I have only to ride along the lines, and all will be over. But *it is our duty to live*—for what will become of the women and children of the South if we are not here to support and protect them?

—General Robert E. Lee, Confederate States Army, April 9, 1865

Lieutenant Drummond

The surgeon knew his work and did it with deft hands. He cleansed the wound, swabbed on something that burnt, and gave me bitter medicine. The guard didn’t put me in irons again. I sat, leaning against the wall. The pain began to fade.

I thought I’d outrun the pursuit, here in the foothills of the Laramie Mountains, but they ambushed me. I downed one before they clubbed me from behind.

How should a Stoic reason out *this*! Set passion aside. Define the decision

Heart and mind safe from shock in the orderly haven of logic, I lined up the facts.

First point: enlisting would cost three years. Escape to Virginia would be easy. How to spend the next three years? The Army would be military routine and warfare. I know those too well. In Virginia I'd be hanged . . . or set free to carry on life at home. Either would suit me.

Glenlochie is good land. Was it confiscated as spoils of war? Was Abercairn . . .

. . . Abercairn . . .

Haven and new beginning for the Scots who founded it.
Cradle, matrix, nourisher of her sons' spirits ever since.
Home-place, heart's home, dearer than life to her defenders.
Where I hope my bones will rest with my family's.

Was Abercairn under martial law? A letter to ask would endanger whoever I wrote to. If I were hanged, I'd be free eternally. If the General's thirst for vengeance on me were satisfied, he might leave Abercairn County unmolested.

Next point: responsibilities. Accountable only to myself and God, no family nor kin needing support, Mr. Ogilvie steward and trustee. My duty to God is obedience to His commandments. The second Great Commandment resolved the debate: "Love thy neighbor as thyself!"

I couldn't be sure of helping my neighbors if I returned. Worse, the General's malice would make me a danger to them. As a soldier, I could protect those who moved west. I had to agree to MacLeod's demand.

My breath went out in a big sigh. I'd done a soldier's duty, but expected to go home when the war was over. I longed for respite. More warfare was weariness heaped upon exhaustion. It dismayed and incensed me.

A few night birds called. A wolf howled far away. Water in a pail smelled sweet and tasted sweeter. The first dipperful never hit bottom. I drank a second. I stretched out on the floor, arms pillowing my head, and gazed into the darkness.

“Dear God,” I whispered, “what do You want me to do?”

Into my spirit, in words of power, came commands not to contrive my own death, and to protect my countrymen. I resigned myself to carrying the double burden of life and duty—again.

“When our idolized leader sheathed his sword at Appomattox the world grew dark to us. . . . It was as if the foundations of the earth were sinking beneath our feet.”

—Lt. Randolph H. McKim, First Maryland Infantry, Confederate States Army

The Confederacy died the instant I heard of the surrender. Da’ and Douglas died in her service. The blow stunned me. I’d believed in victory when hope was vain, and fought on. In bitterness of soul too profound for rage, this void in my life blotted out the pain of my empty stomach. The battle for Southern independence had been the sinew knitting my life together for a quarter of my years. The cord was severed. I was adrift.

I dozed, but wakened, chilled through, the nightmare haunting my mind. It’s as familiar as the chasm that cuts me off from the world around me. Thunder and flash of battle . . . carnage of death and wounds . . . mutilated bodies . . . ground slippery with blood. I was treading around corpses and the groaning wounded, looking for Da and Douglas. Douglas rose laughing from his dead body.

“Come on, wee brither! We’ll show the Yankees they can’t kill Scots!”

My father didn’t rise. Douglas disappeared. Only their bodies . . . sacrificed for nothing.

In loneliness too overwhelming for prayer, I kept seeing them fall. “When the war is over, I shall mourn my dead,” I’d told Dominie Gilchrist, above their graves. It’s over. I walk alone through life I still don’t want. The Dominie said, “God does not afflict willingly. Remember that. It will bring ye peace.”

It's not peace, it's desolation. But the commands to live and protect are clear.

Surely God has some reason

The horrible scene repeated itself over and over in the darkness. I felt a sob convulsing my vitals and bit on my hand so I wouldn't howl. I summoned up all the self-mastery Da ever taught us, to choke down sorrow and remember . . . before. My father's kindness never failed. He understood us—better than we wanted to be understood, sometimes. He taught us unwavering faith in God, and all our manly skills. He gave steadfast discipline coupled with constant affection. I remembered adventures and jokes I shared with Dougie—he hated his baby name, so I teased him with it—the scrapes we got into, how we sometimes got out out and sometimes got caught. Brothers like two halves of a single life.

The truth I fought to bury, made me break: they're gone from earth forever. Dry, gasping sobs choked my breath. I buried my head in my coat to muffle my noise. It would shame me if the guards heard.

A big, hollow hole in me. Of themselves, my arms clamped around my middle to keep it from spilling out and eating me up.

'My heart's torn out, I miss them so much!' I cried to God.

I don't know how long I wept.

The trumpet sounded First Call at first light. Shivering from the mountain cold, I gave dutiful thanks to God for the new day, washed my face, combed my hair. The wound that downed me hurt to touch.

I paced the ten-foot square of the cell. MacLeod blindsided me last night. I reasoned cynically, I'd have to make the best terms I could. So fast I almost stepped on it, someone shoved food through the grating and banged it shut again. Do they think I bite!

I savored coffee, warming my hands on the tin cup. Over beef and bread, I gave thanks.

How bad did MacLeod want me to enlist? What could he be induced to offer? The officer corps is the only respectable way a gentleman can live in *their* army. To gain fullest respect, I must earn my commission at West Point. That would be my price.

I was trapped, but I wasn't ready to surrender. I longed to go home to whatever awaited, but I didn't dare disobey God again.

MacLeod

If possible, the boy looked colder, more dispassionate.

“What do you want me to do as a member of your company?”

“Garrison duties, scouts, Indian-fighting.”

“That last will help me find my grave.”

“Your life is too valuable to waste.”

“I don't see it so.”

“Not only Southern people need your help. The Indians won't be quickly pacified. We need experienced soldiers to train and lead the recruits. I'll appoint you a non-commissioned officer as soon as I can, and promote you when you're ready for it.”

“That's not enough.”

“What is?”

“A commission, earned at West Point.”

“I wish that were possible.” From a pigeonhole of my desk, I handed him a paper.

Chapter CXXVIII.—Act of July 2, 1862.—To
prescribe An Oath of Office . . . every person
elected or appointed to any office of honor or profit
under the Government of the United States . . . civil,
military, or naval . . . shall . . . take . . . the
following oath . . . “I, A. B., do solemnly swear . . .

.that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the
United States

He looked grim when he raised his eyes. The law bars him from the officer corps. I hid sympathy, but I hated it, too. I want to share my occupation with a son who's developed the mind of a soldier.

"It would require a special Act of Congress to award you a commission, let alone an appointment to the Military Academy. If the law ever permits, I'll do all within my power to see that you're commissioned."

"Does your interest in the Information Bureau extend to such matters?"

"I decline to answer. I'm a line soldier now."

"Then how can you secure me a commission?"

"There are factions. Mine is powerful."

"How can I trust *your* word!"

I ignored the slur on my honor. He has reason to doubt it exists.

"Would you accept my oath sworn upon the Word of God?"

"Yes."

I handed him my Bible and placed my hand upon it.

"I, James MacLeod, do solemnly swear to do all in my power to secure for Torquil Drummond an officer's commission in the United States Army, in return for his enlistment in M Company, 16th Cavalry Regiment, so help me, God."

"How long do you think it will take?"

"I don't know. Till it's possible, I'll put you in the company."

"As well put me in the lions' den." His mouth wryed with contempt.

"Did you think it would be easy! Do we have an agreement?"

“One thing more. Why are you doing this?”

“I’ll tell you the full story at a better time. I will not see you destroyed. In that, I am obeying God, using the means at my disposal. Have we an agreement!”

“ . . . yes . . . ”

I took a bundle of papers from the desk. “How old are you now?”

“Seventeen.”

“Enlistment age is eighteen. I’ll sign as your guardian.”

A hard-eyed look. “A legal formality only, I presume!”

“A formality,” I had to concede. We filled the blanks. I tried to joke kindly. “You look half dead.”

“And smell entirely so.”

I gestured toward my back room. “Everything you need is set out.”

Torquil

Hospitality from a man I tried to kill? I don’t trust it.

Sleeping chamber: bed, cot, table, coal-oil lamp, shelf of books. Clothing and weapons on wooden pegs, washstand and galvanized iron tub, big buffalo rugs on the rammed-earth floor. Lean-to kitchen east, kettle steaming, door to the outside, north. My saddle pockets and hat on the cot, my saddle and weapons under it—he left me the means to kill him!

Ridding myself of travel dirt and dried blood was a long job of work. I had no spare clothing, but he’d laid citizens’ clothing on the cot. He looked up from writing when I returned, defiantly wearing the clean shirt and my uniform, but he never so much as raised an eyebrow.

“If you want to keep your buttons and insignia, cut them off and put them away. It’s unlawful to wear them. Burn the uniform. Put the rest of your clothing in the pot to boil.”

“It’s not worth keeping.”

“If it can be mended, it will save you money on your clothing allowance. I presume you’ll want your uniforms fitted. The company tailor can do your mending, too.”

“Yankees do everything in grand style!”

“Grander when we’re commissioned. You can look forward to that.”

A future? Mockery!

Giving up my distinctions grieved my soul and drove home defeat. Broken from gentleman’s estate to enlisted servitude! I kept my buttons and second lieutenant’s bar. Like making solemn sacrifice, I folded my uniform and laid it in the flames. My orders went last.

When I emerged in citizen’s clothing, MacLeod had more to say, but I . . . couldn’t.

“Officially, I’m detaining you for interrogation. Unofficially, you need rest and food before you stand the physical examination. You will lock on that ball and chain when you go beyond these walls.”

He handed over the key. My face must have showed I was incredulous.

“We’re not all barbarians because we wear blue!” His voice whip-cracked, then softened:

“Are you hungry?”

“Yes.”

“Go see what you can forage. You’re welcome to whatever’s there.”

“Thank you.”

I felt like a pauper invited to raid a treasury. I set beef hash and something that looked like vegetables on the cookstove, tore off chunks of soft bread and almost swallowed them whole. I chided myself for greed and started frying some bacon.

MacLeod

Our prayers are answered. I wish I could kill the fatted calf for joy that the lost is found! He's grown a jaw you could wreck a dinghy on, which balances his features very well. There's not much left of him but whipcord and willfulness, —but he's here, alive, and foraging in my larder. Continue to pray for him, for I'll soon have to put him in the company and let him fend for himself. But God gives such good gifts! Good night.

I put the partially-written sheet in an envelope with its predecessors and went to the kitchen.

Torquil ate at the table against the west wall.

“Are you finding enough?”

Stiff courtesy: “Yes, thank you.”

The trumpeters sounded Retreat. The post fell into twilight as the sun set behind the mountain. I'd assigned another officer to command Dress Parade.

“I have some questions.” I sat down.

“Ask.” He tensed, but kept his voice even.

“How is Robbie getting along?”

“When I left, he was well.” He didn't relax. “He invented a harness so he could ride, and rode with us from Christmas on. He married Miss Carmichael as soon as he could stand at the altar.” He tried to swallow a yawn. “Excuse me.”

I smiled inside and made soothing conversation. “Are they staying at his home or hers?”

“At Glenlochic.” Brusquely, as though to excuse generosity: “It needs to be lived in. She's with child.” He suppressed another yawn and sat up straighter.

“Why don't you turn in?”

“I shall, since you excuse me. Good night.”

“Good night. Sleep well. You're safe here.”

Torquil

I lay on my back and thanked God in dutiful faith for the daunting change in my life, and in genuine gratitude for the luxury of sleeping warm, full-fed, and safe. Somehow, my spirit believed MacLeod's word and rebuked the rest of me expecting deadly danger. I floated down into dreamless slumber.

"I . . . propose . . . to make desolation everywhere."
—General William T. Sherman, United States Army

" . . . Sherman made his vastly praised
contribution to preserving the Union largely against
defenseless civilians."
—Clifford Dowdey, historian

MacLeod

I'd taught about the Regular Army and had him read the *Regulations*. "Questions?"

"What's the name of this post?"

"Camp Sherman."

He looked contemptuous. "What's the strategic situation?"

"The Indians are fighting white immigration and the military presence to guard it, and seeking vengeance for the massacre in Colorado Territory last year. A volunteer force attacked a peaceful village of Cheyennes. The Cheyenne have since joined with the Sioux and Arapaho against us."

"How do they fight?"

"When and how they want to, usually by outnumbering us. A war party moves faster than we do."

"What's your strength?"

"One company."

"How do you fill the positions *Regulations* prescribes and still have enough men to take the field?"

“Edicts.”

“Like a Roman governor issued when he took command of a province?”

“Exactly.” I was glad he retained enough of his schooling to understand the reference. “This isn’t a regimental post, so some duties fall to the lower ranks. Do you understand yours?”

“Same as I’ve done.”

“Not quite. You won’t have the independence you had in the volunteers. You’ll have to toe the mark—right strictly! The *Regulations* are the law by which your life is now governed.

“You’re not ready for my cutthroats, so I’m putting you in fourth barracks. There’s not a bad heart among them. Most of them enlisted together, from the same county in Ohio.

“You also need to know Yohanson and DuChemin are here.”

Torquil

My insides wadded up. It isn’t over. Why is he trying to save my life, but keep me vulnerable to deadly enemies?

“Won’t they turn me in for the reward?”

“They don’t know about it. I’m acting as my own adjutant and chose not to reveal those orders. My scouting parties observe all travelers and report to me. I’d intended to ride out myself and ask you privately to make our agreement.”

He knew if he tried to approach me, I’d have shot him! What is he plotting!

Salt in the wound, to put on the blue uniform. Departing, I quirked my mouth with contempt to hide apprehension and show him I wasn’t conquered. I mocked a salute.

“*Moriturus te salutamo!*”

“*Mortem tuam delenda est! Vale!*”²

²Torquil: “I, about to die, salute you.” (Roman gladiators spoke this salute to the highest-ranking man in the audience before combat in the arena.)

MacLeod

Whether he likes it or not, I have legal backing for my personal authority. For his good, I'll exercise it, but I hope for a stronger bond. I watched him cross the parade, wide-shouldered, long-legged, thin as a splinter, as regally as if going to his coronation. I wondered what he'd make of the farm boys, and they, of a very young Virginia gentleman.

MacLeod: "Your death must be destroyed! Be well!"