

the one thought of which he was conscious was to kill, kill, kill!

To those blue-clad men, burning with the memory of their sufferings and their wrongs, it seemed as if nothing could stand before them; but British regulars were trained to meet such an advance, and the red line was as a wall of adamant. Between the attack and the repulse there seemed to Richard scarcely breathing time; for they were repulsed, and, fighting still, were driven back through that narrow defile, expecting every moment that Lee would send them succor so that they might again take up the offensive. But instead of reinforcements, there came that strange order to retreat. Retreat? had there not been some mistake? The officers looked at each other incredulously, suspiciously, half-inclined to disobey. Then full of rage and doubt they repeated the orders of the couriers, and the regiment fell back sullenly, clashing against other regiments who had not struck a blow, but to whom had also come that mysterious order to fall back. What was the matter, what was this paralyzing hand that had been laid upon them? No one could tell; but men retreated looking longingly over their shoulders at the enemy. Confusion grew almost into panic as those still further away saw the retiring columns pursued by the Redcoats, and knew not the cause nor what dire disaster had befallen.

Then suddenly upon the field there came the Achilles of the cause, and the rout was turned.

"The General—thank God!" the officers sobbed; and the men cheered as those who are drowning cheer a saving sail.

Richard was too far off to hear the fierce protest and rebuke heaped upon Lee, but in a few minutes an aide galloped up to his regiment and cried out to Wayne:

"General Washington says you and Ramsey are to hold the enemy in check here upon this hillside until he can re-form the rear."

And the blue line swung about and steadied—and met the English face to face; and Richard Clevering's battle-cry rang

full and clear amid the yells that well-nigh drowned the roar of the musketry. Desperation had made the men invincible; again and again that red wave from the open space before surged against them, broke and recoiled and gathered again like some strong billow of the ocean that rolls itself against a headland—fierce, blind, futile.

Then came the climax of the splendid tragedy. Upon Wayne's right was a battery from which a great gun sent its deadly challenge to the foe. Again and again its whirring missives tore great gaps in the red ranks, until Clinton gave orders to silence it at any cost.

Careless of danger, unconscious of his impending doom, the gunner loaded his piece anew, and lifted the rammer to send the charge home. Behind him stood his wife, who had left the safety of the wagons to bring him water from a wayside ravine, for the sky was like copper and the dust blew in suffocating gusts. She saw the shifting of the enemy's gun, the turning of its deadly muzzle full upon the knoll where they stood. But there was no time for so much as a warning cry; for instantly the flame leaped out, and a groan went up from the Continentals as they saw the dust fly from the knoll and their own brave gunner swing sidewise and then fall dead. Two men sprang forward to take his place, but some one was before them—some one with the face of an avenging Nemesis. There was the flutter of a skirt, a woman's long black hair streamed backward on the wind, and Moll Pitcher stood in her husband's place like an aroused lioness of the jungle. Fury gave her the strength of a Boadicea, and the rammer, still warm from the dead man's grasp, went home with a single thrust; the flame flashed over the pan, and with a roar that shook the heavens the big gun sent back the death it had witnessed. When the smoke had lifted the breathless men saw the woman, one hand still upon the great black gun, stoop down and kiss the dead husband she had avenged—and all down the Continental line eyes were wet and throats were cracked and dry with cheering.