

HE THRUST ME UNDER THE TOPPLING MASS
(Page 59.)

AT

THE SIEGE OF QUEBEC

BY

JAMES OTIS

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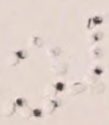
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AT THE SIEGE OF QUEBEC

CHAPTER I

THE EXPEDITION

EPHRAIM MARSTON and I would have entered the army when the news was brought to us, in the summer of 1775, that the Britishers had shot down American people at Lexington and Concord, but that Ephraim's mother set her face against it, and I was bounden by more ties than those of kinship to do her bidding faithfully.

She it was who had given me a home two years before this news came to us, when, my mother having died a twelvemonth previous, Ephraim's father and mine were killed by the Indians near about Castine.

It was not for me to ask, although I had often wondered regarding it, why my parents should have journeyed from Boston town into the wilderness of Maine, but of that flitting it is not necessary for me to speak here, because all I intend

to set down is that which concerns Ephraim and myself from the time we saw soldiers ascending the Kennebec River, bound, as we were told, to capture Quebec.

Then we resolved to cast our lot in with them.

Poor Ephraim's mother was not there to say us nay.

The good God had taken her from us, and two days had passed since we covered her with the earth at the south side of the clearing, by the river-bank, with none to aid us in the mournful work.

We were standing by her grave after eight-and-forty weary, tearful hours had gone by, each one recalling to us more keenly our loss, when suddenly a mighty sight came before our vision; such an one as we had never so much as dreamed of before.

Well it was this spirit of war should have broken in upon our grief just when it did, else would Ephraim have been distraught with despair, for his mother was to him, as to me, mother, friend, and the whole world besides.

The day was drawing to a close; tears were streaming from our eyes as we bent over the grave which covered from mortal sight all that

was dear to us in this world—save each other—when the sound of paddles broke the stillness, for our grief was too deep to be other than silent, and we sprang up thinking the Indians were upon us.

Then we saw that which held us speechless with amazement not unmixed with fear.

From around the bend there came two—three—a dozen boats in company, filled with white men in such garb as we had heard that soldiers wore.

They came on with many a laughing shout and careless word, as if there was nothing in these woods of Maine to do them harm, and the rays of the setting sun lighted each musket-barrel until it was as if the bateaux bristled with points of fire.

Even while we gazed yet more boats sailed into view, and then it seemed to our wondering eyes as if all the inhabitants of the province were coming toward us, so great was the press of numbers.

As for myself, I stood with eyes and mouth open, too much absorbed in that before me to give heed to the torrent of questions which flowed from my friend's lips, nor was it possible

to do other than stare until the foremost of the boats drew up at the bank directly at our feet.

At the moment it seemed that these fancifully-appareled and prodigiously-armed men had come for no other purpose than an interview with Ephraim and myself, and I can smile now that such a wild thought should have entered my mind, but yet, at the time, I verily believed it to be true.

Later, and within the hour, I came to know that it was our clearing which had tempted the men of the expedition to land, not the ill-kempt, awkward boys who stood like rudely-hewn statues, gazing at the warlike array.

For many miles on either side of the river ours was the only habitation, and that gap which Ephraim and I had helped make in the forest the only place in the vicinity where such a body of men could have encamped.

We were greeted many times by the newcomers, now in kindly tones, and again in a spirit of raillery, but, because of my absorption, it was to me as if no one had spoken, until a lad hardly older than myself, armed with a rifle the like of which I had never before seen, leaving his companions, came toward us with a

certain courteous manner which caused me to believe him one who would become a friend.

Yet I spoke not, nor did Ephraim, until the lad stood by my side with outstretched hand, and asked :

“ Why do you two remain here with weapons in your hands, as if to receive an enemy ? ”

Then it was I found my tongue, but instead of answering his question as was my duty, since he spoke us so fairly, asked whence came such a vast army, and he laughed heartily, with an air of good-humor which won my confidence, as he said :

“ If you call this a vast army, you should see the American troops at Cambridge. We are only a detachment—a small one—and because of that shall win all the greater honor and glory when we have accomplished our mission. But why are you two not soldiers now when true men are needed, if we would gain our independence ? ”

In as few words as might be I explained that she who was the same as mother to us both had begged that we remain with her, and when my reply was made the lad looked around questioningly as he asked :

“ Where may she be now ? Surely the sight

of American troops will move her to desire that you two should do so much in aid of the Cause as lays in your power.”

It was as if this question brought to Ephraim with redoubled force the sorrow which, for the instant, had been stilled by the wondrous spectacle, and tears gushed from his eyes as, half turning, he pointed to that mound of earth over which we had so lately been weeping.

The stranger lad, grieved at having so unwittingly opened a fresh wound, seized Ephraim's two hands in his, saying, with such feeling in his voice as touched one's heart to the quick:

“Forgive me! When did she go to Heaven?”

“The day before yesterday we laid her in the ground, and were at her grave when your boats came in view.”

“Are you two alone now?”

Ephraim could not reply because of the sudden flood of grief which overwhelmed him, and I made answer that we were alone, save for the remembrance of her who had been comrade as well as mother.

“Then you shall come with me,” the lad said quickly, and in the tone of one who would be obeyed. “I am of Captain Morgan's Virginia

Riflemen, and we march under the leadership of Colonel Benedict Arnold to the capture of Quebec, thereby striking a signal blow at that nation which would oppress us.”

“You march to Quebec through this country?” I asked, filled with amazement.

“Ay, lad, if it so be you can call it marching when we sail up a noble river like this with no more labor than is required to work the oars or paddles.”

I looked first in wondering bewilderment at the bright, joyous lad, and then at the heavy boats hauled up on the shore, asking myself was it possible such a body of men could make their way through the wilderness to the St. Lawrence River, for both Ephraim and I well knew what lay between our clearing and their destination.

“You think the journey may prove a laborious one?” the stranger lad asked. “All the better if it be so, for thereby we shall show to the Britishers what we are willing to do in defense of our rights.”

“Were I bidden to make the passage with no more burden to bear across the portages than our birchen canoe, my heart would fail me ere yet I started,” was the reply made without due

thought, otherwise I should not have dampened the ardor of this boy whom I already looked upon as a friend.

Ephraim and I, while hunting, had traveled many miles up the river, and knew full well the wilderness which lay between the upper waters of the Kennebec and the St. Lawrence.

Well versed in woodcraft though we were, both would have hesitated at attempting a passage through the wilderness, not only because of the difficulties which nature had placed in the path; but for fear lest our rifles should not provide us with a sufficiency of food.

How much less likely, then, that such a vast assembly would find provisions in the trackless forest.

The advance of each day would serve to frighten the game for many miles around, and a large quantity must be taken to provide all these people with food.

“You fear to incur the hardships of the march?” the boy said questioningly, looking first at Ephraim and then at me.

“Were Jason content to join you, and I doubt not but that he is,” Ephraim made haste to reply, “he would not consider the hardships

which might come to himself. He has ever shown a willingness to bear not only his own, but others' burdens, and is now questioning, as I am, what may be the result, for we know well all that awaits you in that portion of the country which must be traversed."

"Colonel Arnold is a brave man, and one who has already shown to the people of the colonies what he can do; but even though he were not in command I would say to you that our captain, Daniel Morgan, will lead us right gallantly over all difficulties. That which seems impossible to you now will be but trifling when Captain Morgan of the Virginia Riflemen shows the way. Will you join us?"

I looked at Ephraim and read the answer in his eyes.

There was nothing to detain us longer at the clearing, and many reasons why we should leave this place we had always called home, chiefest of which was that other thoughts might come in our minds to drive away the despair of grief which was settling upon us.

"We will join you," I replied, "and take our full share of all hardships and all the dangers, but I misdoubt if the passage can be made."

The stranger clasped our hands in token of friendship, and leading us forward to where a party of men were reclining on the shore, said in a low tone:

“I will take you to Sergeant Potterfield that he may know we have gained two recruits in the wilderness, which is auspicious for the success of the undertaking; but before I do so you shall tell me your names.”

I gave him the information, and he introduced himself as Percy Randolph, a name which I bethought me fitted him right well, for he was a comely youth such as would win the favor of the ladies as well as the men.

Young Randolph held a private conversation with Sergeant Potterfield before presenting us, and I doubted not he was explaining to that officer why we had consented to take up such a harebrained march as this promised to be.

When the sergeant spoke to us it was in a kindly tone. While not seeming overly well pleased with us as soldiers, he promised that we might in time, should we be diligent and faithful, become a valuable addition to that body of men whom I afterward came to know held themselves in high esteem, and with good justice.

Such was our manner of enlisting in the American army, although I then understood that at some more fitting season we should be regularly mustered into service.

On that night we three, looking upon ourselves as comrades, slept in the home made so desolate by the going out of her who was at once its head and its light.

During the hours of darkness Ephraim and I made our few preparations for departure.

Such of the household goods as merited the care we packed in the cellar, little expecting the marauding Indians would fail to discover them; but doing toward their preservation all that was in our power.

Otherwise than this the interior of the home was not disturbed, and when we left it next morning at break of day to take our places in one of the boats, it was as if we walked out of the house intending to return at nightfall.

Better had it been for us that we repented of the going forth, and retraced our steps when the close of that first day came.

The company to which we had attached ourselves numbered, so Percy Randolph told us during the early portion of this day's journey,

about twelve hundred men, nearly nine hundred of whom were from New England.

There were also companies of Pennsylvania Riflemen, and Morgan's Virginia troops, known as "sharpshooters."

Very much of that which he told was not understood by Ephraim and me, owing to our ignorance regarding what had been done by the colonists since the massacres at Concord and Lexington.

This much, however, was clear to our minds: Major General Richard Montgomery, he who had served in the British army; who fought with Wolfe at Quebec in 1759; who had come to America in '72 and espoused our cause from the first, was to march, and possibly had already begun the journey, from Ticonderoga against Montreal.

Should he succeed in his designs against that city, he would form a junction with the forces to which we were attached, for the purpose of attacking Quebec.

Of Colonel Arnold who led our expedition, I knew but little.

Percy explained, however, that he had been among the first to offer his services at Cam-

bridge, being then the captain of a company belonging in New Haven, Connecticut, where was his home, and had been present at the taking of Ticonderoga.

He was said to be a brave man; but from what I had then seen of him it appeared to me he held himself aloof from the troops, as if considering he was even higher in rank than his commission warranted.

However, it was sufficient for us that Percy Randolph believed we had in Captain Morgan one of the most gallant men to be found in the army, and again and again did the lad assure us that the Virginia Riflemen would have such an opportunity of proving their valor as could not come to any other detachment in the expedition.

To these, and to the other matters I have mentioned, neither Ephraim nor I gave much heed during this first day's journey, for our minds, when not back at that lonely grave in the clearing, were fully occupied with what lay before us.

However determined we were to take upon ourselves a full share of all the privations and hardships which might come, we misdoubted the power of our leaders, great though they might

be, to conduct so vast a body of men through such a wilderness as lay before us.

We gave all our thoughts to the difficulties of the journey, believing could they be surmounted the taking of Quebec would be but a simple matter.

Our bateau was sixth in the line as we paddled up the river, and before noon came Ephraim and I had an opportunity of proving that, however poor material there might be in us for soldiers, we could be of service to the expedition while it remained in this section of the country.

Those who had been hired as guides to the troops were, of course, in the foremost bateau, and we were not yet ten miles from the clearing when I observed that they were making their way along that side of the stream which would lead us into shallow water among the dams built by the beavers, for Ephraim and I had set our traps in this region every winter since we could remember.

It was not with any intention of casting discredit upon the guides, or even to acquaint our companions in the bateau with what was being done amiss, that I said to Percy :

“More than two miles in distance could be

saved and much trouble avoided did we pull up the other bank of the river rather than this, since speedily we shall find ourselves where there is not water enough to float even a birchen canoe."

Captain Morgan himself was in the bateau alongside ours, and hearing this incautious remark from a lad like myself, who had best have remained silent, asked sharply :

"Do you know the river hereabouts?"

"We have trapped on it, Ephraim and I, all our lives," I replied, regretting having given voice to my thoughts, and added, "I do not presume to venture an opinion as against the guides, sir, but spoke carelessly, giving no heed to the position in this company which I should occupy."

"Not so, lad. If it happens you know we may be running contrary to the true course, it is your duty to speak. Why do you complain that we remain on this side the stream?"

"I was not complaining, may it please you, sir; but simply remarked that we shall soon find ourselves among the beaver dams, when it will be necessary to retrace the course for some distance because of the floating timber."

“Pull ahead with that boat as the lad directs,” the captain said to Sergeant Potterfield, who was at the helm. “Let him take what course he will, and we shall soon know if his knowledge of the river be all he claims.”

I was overwhelmed with confusion because this had much the appearance as if I would force myself on the attention of the commanders, and seeing that I hesitated for an instant, Ephraim whispered :

“Give your orders like a man, Jason, lest they think we, who have lived on the river, are ignorant concerning it,” and his hand tightened on mine until I was heartened to cast aside the timorousness which had come upon me when I found myself thus in charge of the bateau.

Sergeant Potterfield looked at me inquiringly, and knowing that this would prove us braggarts or lads to be depended upon, I motioned with my hand the direction in which he should steer.

A cry from the bateau in which were the guides, warning us to remain in line, caused Captain Morgan to shout that we were not to be interfered with in any way ; but I noted

the fact that none of all the expedition followed us, since the course we took seemed to be roundabout.

“There looks to be water enough on that side,” the sergeant said, and I knew he misdoubted our knowledge of the stream.

“Ay,” Ephraim replied, “it looks to be ; but wait till we gain yonder bend, and then you shall learn who knows this river best, Jason, or the guides.”

Before we reached this point of which he spoke, and we were proceeding but slowly because the men at the paddles believed they were expending much useless strength by being thus under the guidance of a boy, the foremost bateau came to a standstill, and we heard a medley of shouts and commands, the purport of which Ephraim and I knew full well.

They had struck the beaver dams, and before those in the rear were aware of what had occurred, there was a crowding together of the craft until the confusion became great.

“It were well if you took the lead, lad,” Sergeant Potterfield said in a tone of approval, much different from that which he had previously used when speaking to me. “It is

certain you know the river hereabouts better than those who are paid to show us the way."

"Ephraim and I have trapped in this direction for many years, and are almost as much at home here as in the clearing," I replied, determined to take no particular credit to myself lest I incur the enmity of those who were at fault.

Now our bateau was brought to the bank that we might wait until the others had come up, and the sergeant invited me to a seat by his side, which I could not refuse although it was but little to my liking, for in thus leaving Ephraim it was as if I would profit by the knowledge we shared in common, while credit should have been given him as well as myself.

However, I could do no less than obey the invitation, which was at the same time an order, and had hardly taken my seat before the boat in which was Captain Morgan came alongside.

"How far up the river are you acquainted?" he asked, looking directly at me.

"Ephraim and I may know it for a matter of thirty miles; but no more than that, sir," I replied.

"And is one as well acquainted with it as the other?"

“We have always been here together, sir.”

“Then let Ephraim take command of this boat, while you remain in that, and so long as we are in such portion of the stream as you two are familiar with, we will depend upon you as guides.”

I would have remonstrated at this honor because of the ill-feeling it might arouse, but there seemed to be no other course than to obey.

Ephraim looked back at me meaningly when he clambered into Captain Morgan's boat, and I understood that there were in his mind thoughts similar to mine.

Well would it have been for us if I had kept to myself the fact that we knew more regarding the river than might be learned near about the clearing, for then we should not have set out by making enemies, as we did in thus obeying Captain Morgan's command.

CHAPTER II

JEALOUSY

ONE who had never seen the Kennebec could have guided the boats three or four miles beyond where the mistake had been made, for the stream was free from obstructions, and the channel plainly marked out.

Therefore it was that Ephraim and I had but little to do save join in the conversation around us now and then, and to look wise.

As we continued on up the river I had ample time to realize what might be the result of our having been placed in charge of the company, so to speak.

We were ignorant boys, and strangers to every one. It could not be that the guides employed for the expedition would lie silently under such a slight as had been put upon them, and Ephraim and I must be the sufferers in case of trouble.

The more I reflected upon the matter the greater uneasiness did I feel, and finally, when

Percy Randolph came aft near me, owing to Sergeant Potterfield's change of position, I welcomed the opportunity to speak with him regarding my fears.

"You are converting mole-hills into mountains," he said, with a merry laugh after I had laid the case before him. "If the hired guides are ignorant of the stream they should welcome your coming, since it relieves them of all responsibility, for Captain Morgan has displaced them from office."

"It is that which causes me fear," I replied. "Having come thus far to the point of our course, and done it with no other mishap than that of putting two or three boats ashore, they cannot fail to be sore over being sent to the rear."

"If they are such thick-heads, let them feel sore. Captain Morgan, not you, is the one responsible for the change."

"Yet Ephraim and I are the persons who will suffer if the guides turn rusty, because we are really only hangers-on, and they would not dare attempt any retaliation on the captain."

"After having been with us Virginians a few days you will understand that a slight put upon

one of our company is the same as if it was offered the captain himself. Never fear, Jason Bartlett, that you will come to grief because of having obeyed orders."

Percy would not consent to realize how it was possible, in a hundred little ways, for the guides to work us harm, and it might have been worse than useless for me to recount all I had turned over in my mind, therefore we did not continue the conversation.

The bateau to which Ephraim had been sent was nearly alongside of ours, and, to change the current of troubled thought, I began discussing with him the best camping-place for the night.

"Give us plenty of room, lads, if it so be that is possible," Sergeant Potterfield cried, cheerily. "We have been twisted up among the trees these three nights, with never a chance at straightening our legs until arriving at your clearing, and would fain have more play for elbows."

"Five miles from here, where the shore is sandy so the boats may be hauled up with safety, we shall find a bit of intervale land which has been cleared up by the freshets. Would it serve you to camp there?" I replied, and he said in a tone of satisfaction :

“That it will, if the captain thinks we may call a halt at such time.”

Knowing Colonel Arnold was in command of the expedition, it surprised me not a little that such questions should be submitted to Captain Morgan, rather than his superior officer, but Percy, as if reading my thoughts, explained that upon our captain devolved the duty of leading the advance, therefore the choice of halting places and command of the guides was his.

I heard the captain questioning Ephraim as to the intervale of which I had spoken, and from such words as could be caught now and then, understood that we should stop at the place suggested.

The movement of the troops was slow; there were always some of the boats far in the rear because of slight accidents or laziness of those at the paddles, and the command was sent along the line for the craft to push on in close order.

But for this fact the five miles could have been paddled, even against the current, in less than two hours; whereas, because of the stoppages to allow the hindermost time in which to

come up, we made little more than a mile and a half an hour.

“If we move at such a snail’s pace now that there is nothing to obstruct the passage, what will be the gait when everything is against us?” I asked myself, and unconsciously spoke aloud, hearing which, Percy asked quickly:

“In what way shall we find things against us?”

“We must make portages from this river to the Chaudière, and with so much baggage to transport, it seems to me, who have never had such an experience, well-nigh impossible. There are places where a man unhampered can hardly make his way through the forest, and how we shall fare then I know not.”

While speaking I observed that Sergeant Potterfield pricked up his ears at the words, and hardly had I ceased when he came aft, taking a seat by my side.

“There must be no attempt at disheartening the men,” he said in a low, stern whisper. “Your duty just now is to guide us, not give words to foolish fears.”

It was on my lips to assure him I had not even spoken of the more serious dangers to be

encountered, when, the supply of provisions having been exhausted, we should be forced to depend upon game for subsistence, but fortunately I remembered it was not for me to air my views, and remained silent, my cheeks reddening because of the reproof he had administered.

“I have offended the guides and the sergeant without yet having been a day on the journey,” I said to myself, “and at such rate I may count on being at enmity with the entire company before the St. Lawrence River is in sight.”

From that moment I held my peace, speaking only when it was necessary to reply to a question, and even then taking good care not to express an opinion on anything regarding the expedition.

The men spoke of the portages to be made as if they expected to travel over a highway, whereon would be found no obstructions and the most to be apprehended was the fatiguing labor of transporting the baggage and boats, while I could have described places where a man without a burden would sink knee-deep in the bogs, or be forced to work his way inch by inch up rocky slopes covered with treacherous moss.

I saw nothing of the guides whom we were leading, until the halting place decided upon was reached, and then one of them came to me as I stood on the shore watching the arrival of the fleet.

“Was this place chosen by you, or did the captain know of it from others?” he asked, in anything rather than a friendly tone.

I explained courteously how it chanced we landed there, and motioned for him to look around, as I added:

“Surely here they can get all the elbow-room needed. Five times the number might camp at this place without treading on each other’s heels.”

“If you knew more of what you profess, you would understand that this is no fit spot in which to spend the night.”

“Why not?” I asked innocently; but instead of replying to the question, he inquired how I gained my knowledge of the river.

“We have lived here all our lives,” Ephraim, who had just come up, said quietly. “Hereabouts we have trapped and hunted since before father died.”

“And because of having set snares, and shot

a rabbit or two, you believe yourselves capable of playing the guide to a military expedition?" the man asked rudely.

"Nay, we do not think so. We know nothing whatever concerning the work; but only led the way when ordered to do so."

"It would have been more to your advantage if, instead of trying to make it appear you were of great importance, you had held your peace, as boys should in the presence of their elders," the guide said angrily, and as he strolled away Ephraim looked at me in surprise.

"He is disgruntled at having been displaced by us," I said, with a smile, not thinking it best to give voice to all the fears which beset me. "When we have run the length of our rope, and are no longer familiar with the stream, he and his comrades will take the lead again."

"It will be many days, at this rate of traveling, before we are in parts strange to us," Ephraim replied, confidently, and it was on my tongue's end to suggest that we profess ignorance of the localities when the next day's journey was at an end; but Percy interrupted us.

He had come to propose that we three camp together, and since this was to the liking of both

Ephraim and myself, we set about making a shelter for the night.

There appeared to be no scarcity of provisions, although I observed that they were not dealt out with a lavish hand, and we had a most appetizing supper—we three, who were to be comrades during this campaign at least.

After the meal was finished, and we had nothing better to do than lie idly in front of the small fire Ephraim had built for its cheeriness, Percy told us of what was being done by our people in order to gain their independence.

Young though he was, he had already seen much service, and made plain many things connected with warfare, which, until this moment, had puzzled me not a little.

To Ephraim and myself, who had never been away from that clearing on the Kennebec where now only the dead remained, it was as if Percy had traveled over the greater portion of the earth, and I hugged to myself the idea that during the journey I would so draw him out as to make myself familiar with all he had seen.

He was telling us of his home in Virginia, from which colony the commander-in-chief of our army had come, when two of the guides

l lounged up to our fire as if for the purpose of hearing Percy's descriptions of strange lands.

During five minutes or more they remained silent listeners, and then suddenly one of them asked of me how far I had traveled on the river, and if I knew the course to Quebec.

Because the men acted in a sulky fashion, and not as if they would become comrades, I distrusted their purpose.

To their questions I replied courteously, but in the fewest words needed, hoping the disinclination I showed to converse would cause them to cease what was little less than a harsh examination.

Ephraim, however, most likely with the thought that the time had come when they could be made friends, not only gave all the information they professed to desire, but volunteered much despite my warning looks.

“And you count on goin' to Quebec?” one of the men asked, after he had learned from Ephraim everything concerning us, and my comrade replied with a show of surprise because of such a question :

“Of course we count on it, seeing we have joined the army.”

“But you are not regularly enlisted.”

“We have given our words, which is the same as if we had signed the rolls a dozen times over.”

“Indeed there’s a big difference,” the elder of the two men replied with a coarse laugh. “In one case it means your life if you give the troops the slip, an’ in the other you’re free to do as you choose.”

“But we choose to stay where we have pledged ourselves to remain,” Ephraim replied, stoutly, and I could see that he was growing weary of such converse.

“Better change your mind,” and I felt certain there was a threat in the man’s tones, none the less menacing because of being unspoken. “Take my advice an’ go back to the clearin’. You’ve started out by tryin’ to do too much, an’ are bound to come to grief if you stay in this company.”

“What do you mean by that?” young Randolph cried, leaping to his feet in a way that showed his spirit, and caused me to believe now more than ever that he would be a true comrade.

“Just what I say!” and the guide showed signs of ill-temper. “If that ain’t plain spoken enough I’ll say it’s safer for them cubs to go

back where they belong, instead of tryin' to take the bread out of honest men's mouths."

"Meaning that you fear if they remain you may not get as much pay for pretending to lead the way to Quebec?" Percy demanded.

"When we engaged with Colonel Arnold it was with the agreement that we should be asked only to do the guidin', and that's what we count on doin'. It'll go hard with them as tries to turn us out of our job."

"But we have done nothing of the kind," I replied, determined to let Percy see I could hold my own if need be. "It so chances that we know every turn in the river hereabouts, and surely can do no man harm if our knowledge may be used for the benefit of others. We don't claim to be guides, neither do we want the office."

"If we did claim to be such we'd know our ground before venturing on it," Ephraim said, hotly, and I was sorry he should have taunted the fellows with their ignorance, even though it had been so plainly shown.

This roused the men out of the bounds they had set their ill-temper, and the youngest cried excitedly, shaking his fist at both of us:

“Take good care you are not in camp with us at this time to-morrow, you whelps, or there’ll be a different tune to sing.”

“Do you dare threaten the soldiers of our company?” young Randolph shouted, now in a white heat of passion, and, fearing lest there should be an open brawl, I seized him by the arm as I entreated that he remain silent.

“Do not take our quarrel upon your shoulders,” I said, with all the force in my power. “If we have unwittingly angered these men against us, there is no reason why you should share in the possible danger.”

“Indeed, there is!” he cried, trying to shake off my grasp. “It was I who urged you to join the force, and it is I who am responsible for your treatment.”

For a minute—certainly hardly more than that—the guides remained as if ready for a fray, while Ephraim and I did our utmost at calming Percy; and then, seeing that the angry voices had attracted attention, the men slouched away.

Although feeling positive the fellows would work Ephraim and me some harm if an opportunity presented itself, I made light of the

matter while trying to soothe Percy, assuring him that it was only jealous talk, which would soon blow itself out; but he knew even better than I that mischief might come if immediate steps were not taken to prevent it.

After a certain time he appeared to grow calm, but instantly we released our hold on his arms he walked quickly away.

“Do not fear I shall seek out those worthless rascals. They have presumed to threaten members of the Virginia company, and the captain should know of it.”

It would have been more to my liking had the matter been allowed to drop then and there, so far as we were concerned; but it was not for either my comrade or myself to prevent him from going whithersoever he chose while in his right mind, therefore we remained silent.

When we were alone, Ephraim and I, he said with a feeble attempt at a smile:

“Although we are not soldiers, Jason, it appears in our power to provoke considerable fighting.”

“And through no will of our own.”

“Think you what that guide said may be depended upon?”

“ You mean so far as his making mischief for us? I fear something of the kind may be tried, although it is possible Captain Morgan will be able to prevent it.”

“ But why should they be so angry, simply because we pointed out the most direct course?”

“ It is mainly jealousy, with perhaps a well-grounded fear that they may be dismissed because of ignorance, although I hardly understand how that could be, since there are none here to take their places.”

“ If it should be necessary we could show the way to the first portage.”

“ Ephraim,” and I spoke more sternly than I felt in order to impress the words upon his mind, “ even though we could guide the troops through to the gates of Quebec, you must not allow anything of the kind to escape your lips, lest, the commander hearing of it, we should be set at the task. Thus far we have done nothing against any man, and we might be accused of such fault if those guides lost employment through us.”

“ I really believe you are afraid of them, Jason.”

“ If you must know the truth, I am,” and

instantly the confession escaped my lips I regretted the words, for it had not been my purpose to trouble Ephraim with forebodings.

I saw his cheek whiten and his lips quiver slightly, whereupon I added lamely :

“Perhaps I ought to have said, I would be afraid of them if we gave good cause for anger. When twenty more miles have been traversed we must say the water-way is no longer familiar to us, and then those who have been hired as guides can play the part.”

I was yet trying to drive from my comrade's mind that which had been left there by my own hasty words, when young Randolph returned.

“I have spoken with Captain Morgan, who commended me for coming to him at once. He will take charge of the matter, and I warrant you we shall hear no more insolence from ignorant guides.”

“It is to be hoped he will not say anything to them regarding the matter,” I cried, and Ephraim could now see from my face how disturbed I was.

“It is to be hoped he will do so, and to good purpose. I warrant you, Jason Bartlett, Captain Morgan is not the man to allow anything

of the kind pass unnoticed. I have to thank you both for preventing me from doing that which I was tempted to by my anger, for now we have done nothing to provoke ill-feeling among those who accompany the expedition."

I thought, but took good care not to put it in words, that considerable would have been done to provoke ill-feeling if the captain reproved the guides for having made threats, and the trouble which did not look larger than a man's hand during the forenoon was by this time such a cloud as made me timorous.

Percy, however, positive he had arranged everything in proper manner, and that there was no longer reason to fear the jealous ones would attempt to carry out their threats, was in high good humor.

He regaled us with stories concerning his home in Virginia, and spoke at great length of Captain Morgan, whom he insisted was in every sense of the word a brave man.

Although my mind was in such a ferment that I failed to catch all of interest he related, I can remember quite readily that portion regarding Daniel Morgan, our captain.

He was born in Pennsylvania, so Percy declared, and while quite young emigrated to Virginia, where he worked on a plantation in Berkley County, after which he was employed as a teamster by Nathaniel Burrel, Esquire. When Braddock's expedition set out Daniel Morgan was a member, and during that campaign was shot through the back of the neck by an Indian, the ball coming out of his left cheek. While the troops were in the field Morgan was convicted of insolence to a British officer, and flogged with five hundred lashes, all of which was unjustly done, as was proved later, when the officer did all in his power to make amends for the wrong.

At his home in Berrystown, Morgan was noted for fighting—not in an angry spirit, but in order to measure strength with his antagonist, and if all Percy said be true, of which I have no doubt, our captain was seldom vanquished. It was this trait which caused the leading men of Frederick County to give him command of this company of sharpshooters the members of which were all reputable youths of known and tried courage.

When young Randolph concluded the recital

I no longer wondered at his faith that the captain would speedily reduce the jealous guides to subjection ; but at the same time I feared quite as much as ever, that before this could be done Ephraim and I would be worsted.

It was not possible we could run to our commander with every petty trouble, or that we could encourage Percy in so doing, and meantime the guides had it in their power to do us much mischief without laying themselves open to punishment.

Then again, and this fear in my mind was very strong, if through any mistake we erred ever so slightly, greater blame would be laid on us because we had presumed to know so much regarding the country thereabouts, and, as can be seen, I had good food for troubled thoughts.

There was amid all this whirl in my mind one bright ray, however, which was that in eight-and-forty hours Ephraim and I were to declare it no longer possible for us to lead the way, and thus the responsibility would be lifted from our shoulders.

CHAPTER III

TREACHERY

IF it was within my power to wield the pen in such manner that I could set down for others in a way to be understood, those things I saw during the march to Quebec, I should begin by picturing the encampment on this first night after Ephraim and I left our home and our dead.

As I have said, we were halted on a tract of intervale land around the border of which, on the rising land, was a fringe of small growth, and beyond, on every hand, the forest.

In the centre of this cleared place were eight tents, occupied, as I understood, by Colonel Arnold and the officers next highest in rank under him.

Between these tents and the growth of foliage were innumerable camp-fires, built by the cooks for the purpose of preparing the evening meal, and just within the line of trees had bivouacked, in like manner as my comrades and myself,

groups of men, who for the time being ceased to be soldiers.

Save in the centre of the clearing, there was no semblance of military formation such as I had read was necessary, although no danger threatened. Each group appeared free to do as fancy dictated, and it was not difficult to picture the result in case the savages made an attack upon us.

Nor was it safe even for so large a body to neglect such precautions as the most careless hunter would have taken.

While there was no actual warfare between the settlers and the savages, one could never guess when their fiendish natures might prompt them to the shedding of blood, and a very small party of Indians could, while the men were encamped as I have described, work great havoc.

I gave words to my forebodings, but young Randolph treated the fears lightly, arguing that there was not any body of Indians in the province sufficiently large to attack a company such as ours, with any hope of getting away alive, and, as I was forced also to admit, he declared that however bloodthirsty a savage might be, his first thought was regarding his own peril.

Accompanying the expedition were many dogs, some of which were brought by their owners, but a greater portion being a part of the outfit, and it was to these brutes that our officers looked for the guarding of the encampment.

Made timorous as I had been by the action of the guides, it was nearly midnight before I could compose myself to sleep, but when my eyes were finally closed in the unconsciousness of slumber they did not open again until the beating of drums at early daybreak summoned the men to the duties of a new day.

Although the officers did their utmost to hasten the preparations for departure, the sun had been up fully an hour before the first boats left the shore, and judging from what I could see as I stepped on board the foremost craft, I believed as much more time would elapse ere the laggards of the company were in line.

On this morning I was given charge of the bateau in which was Captain Morgan, and in the craft with Ephraim was Lieutenant Heth, of the Virginia Company.

It was not plain sailing as it had been on the previous afternoon, for now we were where the river narrowed until it was hardly more than a

stream, and here and there were fallen trees which had been overturned by the spring freshets, forming dangerous obstacles in the path.

It was necessary to clear away many of these ere the boats could pass, and this work required so much time that before the forenoon was half spent the hindermost crafts were crowded upon the leaders in such a manner as to seriously interfere with the advance.

Ephraim and I were on the logs the greater portion of the time, for it was impossible to move them properly while in the boats, and, therefore, could pay but little attention to the general movements of the fleet; but more than once did I suggest to Captain Morgan that the main body be forced to stay at a proper distance, otherwise some of the more heavily laden craft would be overset by the swiftly running current.

Twice did I hear him give positive orders to this effect; but his words passed unheeded, and then it was I observed the mischief-makers.

The paid guides of the expedition had distributed themselves among the boats in the rear, and were urging even the laggards to press forward, hoping by this means to throw the fleet

into such confusion that it might appear as if Ephraim and I were at fault.

Save for the fact that serious danger was threatened, I would have held my peace ; but I understood that something must be done at once to check the mischief, for the obstructions were more numerous further on, and I, therefore, held a short conversation with Ephraim.

“ Why are you loitering ? ” Captain Morgan asked impatiently. “ Can you not see we are being overrun by the fleet ? ”

I had purposely remained talking with my comrade longer than was necessary in order that the captain might broach the subject himself, and this having been done Ephraim and I paddled toward his boat.

Then, while all the fleet remained motionless, save for those crafts in the rear which were being urged on by the mischief-makers, I explained to the captain how difficult of passage was the river a short distance above, and concluded by asking respectfully that every boat, save those actually engaged in clearing the channel, be forced to stay at such distance in the rear that we should be able to work without hindrance.

“I will attend to that,” he said curtly, “and in the meantime do you continue at the work without loitering. If more men are needed to assist you, tell me.”

“If we had a dozen who understand such work it might be done more quickly; but those who are not accustomed to running logs would be more of a hindrance than a help,” I replied, and at once Ephraim and I continued the labor.

I observed, without seeming to do so, that the captain’s boat pulled through the fleet, and immediately afterward the greater number of craft dropped a few rods down-stream, but to the surprise and annoyance of both Ephraim and myself, the entire party of paid guides, ten in all, came forward to aid us in the work.

“These men should be able to do what is required, if all they say be true,” Captain Morgan announced as he approached with the party, “and there is no further fear of your being crowded.”

This said, he gave orders that his boat be allowed to drop back with the current until it was an hundred yards below us.

I fully realized that now had come the moment when Ephraim and I would have trouble,

and so spoke to him when we had a fitting opportunity for converse.

“Be careful,” I added. “Do not allow them behind you, and watch out sharp every moment of the time!”

“It is hardly likely they will attempt to make mischief in the light of day, and while the fleet is so near,” he replied carelessly, and then it was no longer possible for us to speak together privately, for two of the guides had come very near us.

During an hour or more the work progressed as smoothly as if a harsh word had never been spoken.

Although these guides were unfamiliar with the Kennebec River, it was certain they were well versed in the work of running logs, and together we cleared the stream of obstructions until it was possible for the fleet to advance at a remarkably rapid pace.

For a time Captain Morgan kept close watch over us all, as if apprehending trouble, and then, seeing no good reason for such care, he fell back to the barge which conveyed Colonel Arnold and the officers high in rank.

We had arrived at a bend in the stream where

the floating trees had jammed in such a manner as to entirely close the channel, and much time would be necessary to clear a way.

It was nearly noon, and the man who had threatened us the evening before, said to me in a friendly tone:

“I allow we’ve got a tough job on hand, an’ one that won’t be finished for a couple of hours even if we have good luck.”

To this I could not but assent, and Ephraim was of the opinion that the work might require the remainder of the day, as he stated.

“Then it won’t be a bad idea for the troops to land,” the guide suggested. “There’s no good reason why they should stay cooped up in the boats, an’ it will freshen ’em up a bit to stretch their legs on shore.”

“Suppose you so explain to the captain?” I suggested, and he replied, still speaking me fairly:

“You are the one to give such a hint, seein’s you’re in command of this work.”

It was so reasonable, and all the guides had turned to in such a cheerful fashion, that, like a simple, I began to think all jealousy had been laid aside, and therefore did as he proposed.

Captain Morgan appeared to think it necessary he should view the obstructions before giving the orders to land, and went up the stream with me until he could see what barred the passage.

One look at the pile of logs was all he needed to convince him I had spoken truly.

“To my mind, we shall spend the night here,” he said in dismay.

“We should finish the work in two hours,” I replied. “There is a strong current around the bend, and once we have loosened the key-logs the whole mass will quickly disappear.”

“Meaning that they’ll float down the river?”

“Yes, sir; and in that case it will be well if the boats are out of the channel.”

“It will, indeed,” he replied emphatically, and paddled to the rear, where, on glancing back a few moments later, I saw the fleet making for the shore.

Ten minutes after the stream was cleared of boats, and we were attacking the jam vigorously.

For half an hour many of the more curious soldiers stood near-by watching our work, and then, failing to understand why we chopped at

the submerged trees at the foot of the pile instead of at the top, where a green hand would have begun, one by one they joined their comrades, until we who labored were alone, with the idle ones twenty rods or more in the rear.

The guides had behaved in a most friendly fashion toward Ephraim and me, working industriously, asking our advice now and then, or making such suggestions as showed they well knew what should be done, until I had dismissed from my mind all thought that they might try to do us mischief.

By dint of much work we had cleared away the lower part of the jam in such manner that the one trunk which held the whole in place could readily be come at, and when it was severed the whole would go away down the stream in short order.

“We’ll get through with our job in considerably less time than was allowed,” one of the guides, whom I had heard called Bart Green, said to me as we discussed how the task might best be performed.

“It cannot be more than an hour since the troops went ashore, and in thirty minutes the stream at this point should be clear,” I replied,

“That one log must be cut close at the middle—”

“And then it’ll be a case of standin’ from under, for the whole pile will melt away like frost.”

“True, and there will be some danger for him who does the work,” I said, looking around at the other guides.

No one volunteered for the task save Ephraim, and he was by my side instantly I spoke.

“You are not to go down there,” I said, forcing him back. “I can best do the work, but it will be more safely done if there is another with me.”

“Why shouldn’t I be that other?” he asked jealously.

“Because you have never had experience in such matters, and it needs one who has been in a like place before.”

“Then I reckon I’m your man,” Bart Green cried, and I noted the fact that he looked around oddly at his companions, but at the time I believed he only did so in order to learn if any other was willing to volunteer, for it was not such a task as a man would hanker after.

Now, in order for a better understanding of

the situation, it must be known that when we who descended directly under the mass of timber had hewn the key-log sufficiently, it would give way beneath the pressure from above, and the whole jam topple down and over very suddenly.

Those who had unloosened the key must make their way up among the falling mass so quickly as to reach the top before the outer end swung around, otherwise their death might be near at hand.

Twice had I aided in unlocking such a jam, but experienced lumbermen had directed my movements, and it was but natural I should feel timorous, though I would not allow either Ephraim or the guides to understand what was in my heart.

The time had come when I must prove myself equal to these men in such work, because of what had been in the past, and I made my way down over the mass with no show of fear, however weak may have been my heart.

Bart Green followed without hesitation, and his manner of approaching heartened me wonderfully, for I knew he was accustomed to such labor, otherwise had he not stepped so confidently.

It had already been decided as to which of the many logs should be severed, therefore when we were under the jam there was nothing to delay us.

“It is that timber which is doing the mischief,” Green said as we stood an instant surveying the mass. “Do you cut there, an’ I’ll tackle here,” and he pointed to certain places equally distant from the middle of the log, about twelve feet apart.

As he spoke his axe descended, and seeing the chips fly I set about my portion of the task, determined he should not outdo me.

Above, but nearly in a place of safety, stood the remainder of the party ready to give us a helping hand in case it became necessary.

Our vigorous blows shook the jam, telling how quickly it would go when once started, but we gave no heed save to the hewing of the log, understanding that it must be cut in both places as nearly as possible at the same time.

There was only in my mind the thought of keeping pace with him, and my portion of the work was not half done when that side of the jam on which he was standing suddenly began to swirl threateningly, while the log beneath me remained stationary.

“Is it giving way?” I cried, plying my axe all the more rapidly, but without looking up.

“No; she yet holds. It’s only a few loose timbers that are working around.”

Trusting in his statement I continued at the task, until suddenly, while he was saying he had not finished his share of the work, the shore side of the jam gave way, and instantly the logs from above began to descend.

Without losing the grasp of my axe I leaped upward, jumping from one sliding timber to another, and in a fair way to escape the down-pour, when my leg was seized from below, causing me to miss my foot-hold.

There was death in delay, and on the instant I believed Green was trying to save himself by endangering me, but in one quick glance as I fell backward it was possible to see that he had freed himself from the peril by leaping upon one of the outermost logs which even then was nearly detached from the rest.

Like a flash of light came the thought that he was trying to compass my death, and I flung the axe toward him, but without avail.

The tool fell into the river some distance beyond where he stood, and, as I put forth every

effort to regain a foot-hold, he thrust me back again under the toppling mass.

Then came a sudden shock as if I had been dealt a heavy blow on the head, and I lost consciousness for an instant.

It could not have been longer than while one might have counted ten that I was thus deprived of my senses, otherwise had I been drowned outright, for when next I knew myself it was possible to hear shouts of men as though I was at that moment opposite the point where the soldiers had landed.

When one is hand in hand with death the senses are quickened, and I understood that I was beneath a mass of logs being carried downstream faster than a man could have run, but yet not completely submerged, because a portion of my face was pressed between two timbers in such manner that it was possible for me to breathe.

My only hope was that by remaining passive until the mass should be separated by the current I might be freed from the deadly weight, and all my efforts were directed toward holding myself in the same position yet a little while longer.

The shouts from the shore could still be heard, and then came a voice from directly above me, crying :

“Look out for the boy. He is behind me somewhere !”

Green was standing upon the logs directly over my head, and for the instant I fancied him honest in what he had said ; but immediately afterward came the thought that none could know better than he where I was.

He had pulled me backward when I would have clambered over the falling logs to a place of safety, and now it was his purpose to make certain I should drown.

In fact, his own welfare depended upon my death, after what he had done, and now I understood that I had more to struggle against than the timbers and the waters.

To have made an outcry at that moment would have been to tell him I was not pressed beneath the surface, and he would do all in his power to stifle my cries forever.

In reading over what I have here set down it all sounds tame and unexciting as compared with the reality, yet it is not in my power to clothe in words the horror of that time.

Betwixt me and life was a space of air barely more than two inches in height, and should the logs roll together ever so slightly I would be deprived even of that.

As it was I had been completely submerged more than once by the washing of the current against the mass, as I then believed, but when it was no longer possible to hear the cries of those on shore, and I knew we ought to be in that portion of the stream where the waters ran smoothly, this swinging motion continued, much to my distress.

Then I suddenly realized the cause of it all. Green, in order to make more certain of my drowning, was leaping here and there on the frail raft in order to rock it to and fro, believing thereby to prevent me from coming to the surface while we were in view of the soldiers.

It was his brute strength against my wits, and never a beaver could have been more wary than was I.

Husbanding my breath that I might the better remain under water while it could not be avoided, I succeeded in retaining consciousness, although at the expense of much strength.

More than once was I forced to swallow huge draughts of water, and as the time wore on, each second seeming to be five minutes at least, I understood that my share in this unequal struggle could not be continued much longer.

Then suddenly came the sound of voices close at hand, and the logs above me rocked violently to and fro, after which all was still.

There was a hymn of thanksgiving in my heart as I understood that one of the boats had come to the rescue of Green, believing him to be in deadly peril, and at last I was at liberty to save myself.

Arguing that it might have been only some of the guides who had come to Green's relief, and I should be exposing myself to yet greater peril by making any attempt at coming nearer the surface, I remained quiet.

Now that the logs were motionless, save as the current forced them down-stream, there was no longer any difficulty in breathing, and not until it seemed to me as if ten minutes or more had passed did I make any effort at bettering my condition.

Then, diving down, I swam beneath the surface at angles with the current so long as

possible, and on coming up found myself within a few yards of the shore.

To gain the land was a light task, and as I scrambled out on the shore no living being could be seen.

I had come unharmed through as villainous an attempt at murder as was ever made, but in such a state of exhaustion as to be able to do little more than crawl under the bushes where I might be concealed from view in case my enemies were bent on making yet more certain that their end had been fully accomplished.

How long I remained here it is not possible to say—it was as if a stupor came upon me, but certain it is that the shadows were fast lengthening when I began to reason with myself as to what should be done.

But for the fact that Ephraim remained with the expedition, sorrowing because of my supposed death, I would have returned to our home, leaving to such as had tried to murder me the glories of war.

To abandon him was out of the question, for I had promised the dear woman who was dead that I would be a brother to him, and the only idea in my mind was to follow the soldiers

until it should be possible, while remaining concealed from the others, to bring him away with me.

The troops would move but slowly; in one night I could travel as far as they would in two days, therefore I had no reason to hasten my steps, yet I did so in order that Ephraim's grief because of my supposed death might the sooner be banished.

CHAPTER IV

A HUNTING PARTY

WHILE slowly following up the bank of the river, knowing full well that all save the guides themselves would believe that what had occurred was the result of an accident—for I questioned even if those nearest could have seen Green when he caused me to lose my foot-hold—I had no thought but that Ephraim would remain with the troops.

Not once did the thought come to me that he might be unwilling to go on, now he believed me dead, and I pictured to myself the entire company moving on up the river as if a lad by the name of Jason Bartlett had never been known to them.

Therefore it was that I stood still in surprise and fear when I heard from the stream above where I stood, the sound of paddles.

“Green is coming back to make certain I did not escape with my life,” I muttered, and then, after standing irresolutely a few seconds, during

which time the noise of paddles sounded nearer and nearer telling that the boat was coming toward me swiftly, I sought a hiding place amid the bushes where I could see those who passed while remaining concealed from view.

My surprise can well be imagined when, looking out from among the leaves, I saw Ephraim and Percy in a bateau paddling downstream vigorously.

The boat was nearly opposite where I had hidden myself before I gathered my wits sufficiently to understand that they must be stopped, and then, with a low cry to attract attention, I stepped out into full view.

Both the lads set up shouts of joy at seeing me alive, and would have continued them but for the fact that I pressed my finger on my lips in token for them to remain silent.

I was not minded Bart Green should be put on his guard, for now he would take any chances, however desperate, to close my mouth forever, lest I bear witness against him, and there was a dimly formed plan in my head to return home after swearing Percy to secrecy.

As soon as the bateau could be paddled in to the shore the lads leaped to my side, and from

the expression on their faces, as well as the firm grip each took on my hands, I knew here were at least two who rejoiced because I was yet alive.

“Why this mystery?” young Randolph asked impatiently, when I again checked his loudly-spoken words of delight.

“Because it must still be believed by the guides that I am dead,” was my reply, and then I explained how it chanced I had been carried down by the falling logs.

“That treacherous Green tried to murder you!” Percy exclaimed in amazement, and added an instant later, “He shall swing for such work as that!”

It was as hard to restrain him from thoughts of vengeance as it had been to prevent him from engaging in a brawl at the time the guides threatened us; but I finally succeeded, and then came the question of what should be done.

Percy insisted there was no other course than for me to return to the encampment, and I soon came to understand that Ephraim was of the same mind.

Both argued that my word to Captain Morgan must not be broken because of what he had no part in, and otherwise made it so plain that

presently I began to believe both duty and honor demanded my return, however disagreeable, and perhaps dangerous, it might be to me.

When this was decided upon I questioned if we should go back at once, or wait until the following day, for so much did I dislike to return that I was ready to seize on any pretext for delay.

“You shall go with us, and in the boat,” Percy replied to my suggestions. “If it so please you, treat the matter as an accident when it is spoken of by any one save the captain—he must know the whole truth.”

Thus it was I allowed myself to be persuaded against my will, and the three of us paddled upstream, overtaking the main body only after it had bivouacked.

We had made no effort at any great speed, and therefore it was nightfall before we stepped ashore.

Because of the darkness the soldiers whom we passed did not recognize me as the boy whom all believed dead, and we had gained that portion of the encampment occupied by the Virginia company before my face attracted attention.

Then we met Bart Green squarely as he was

coming from an interview with Captain Morgan, and at the moment the light of a camp-fire shone directly upon me.

My clothing was yet sodden with water, my hair plastered to my head, and most likely the glare of the flames gave me an unnatural color, for he leaped back a pace as if believing he had seen a ghost, after which he stood like a statue of terror while one might have counted ten, I looking calmly at him all the while without speaking.

Then with a great effort he controlled himself, and said in a tremulous voice:

“You frightened me, lad. I believed you were carried down by the logs.”

“So I was, Master Green,” I replied, speaking him fairly and in the most friendly tone, for I was minded to have him believe I had no suspicion he had done aught against me. “I must have been under the main body of the jam; but when the current forced the logs apart I came to the surface in time to get my breath.”

“Did these lads pick you up?” he asked, turning toward Percy and Ephraim.

“No; I did that for myself. They went down-stream to find my body—”

“And succeeded,” said Percy with a laugh, understanding I would keep Green in ignorance that his murderous intent was known.

“Well, I’m glad to see you safe,” the lying guide said with a long indrawing of the breath, as if he had just taken a plunge into cold water. “It was a narrow shave for us both.”

“Indeed it was. How did you escape, Master Green?”

“My mates put after us when the jam gave way, an’ picked me up about a mile down stream. We looked everywhere for you, but seein’ nothin’, made up our minds you’d been struck by one of the logs when they toppled over.”

“It may be that was what did happen. I can’t be expected to know very much about it, for I must have lost my head when I found myself falling.”

“I reckon so,” Green replied, but his lips were yet trembling and the color had not come back to his cheeks.

I believed we had succeeded in deceiving the fellow, and it might be that he had been so thoroughly frightened as not to dare make another move toward taking my life; but his comrades were yet my enemies, and I resolved

then and there never to play the part of guide again while with the expedition.

Our next interview was with the captain, and here, much against my will, Percy told the whole story; but I made haste to add before the hot-headed Virginia officer could give any orders:

“If you please, Captain Morgan, it must all remain a secret between us.”

“And why, pray? Am I to sit still while my men are being murdered by these louts?”

“No real harm has been done, sir, and if you should undertake to punish Green, his comrades must also have their share, for I am convinced all were in the plot. Now it is no longer possible for Ephraim and me to act as guides, because we have come so far up the river, and should these men leave you because of what may be done to them on my account, the whole party must turn back, for it would be folly to go on without experienced woodsmen in the lead.”

“You argue well, lad, yet lose sight of the fact that murder has been attempted, and that one of my company was selected as the victim.”

“But it is the victim himself who begs you to keep the whole affair a secret, and I do so for

my own safety, lest worse befall me if punishment be inflicted upon them."

The captain made no reply until, thinking enough had been spoken, I was on the point of leaving him, when he said abruptly :

"To-morrow you two lads will travel in my boat, since you no longer know the river, and see to it you are not alone for a single moment with either of those villains."

There was little need for him to lay this command upon me. For the safety of my own skin I intended to keep as far as possible from my enemies, although after once more being given the duty of leading the troops they might forget the fancied cause for complaint against me.

Even though the guides were attached to our portion of the troop, Captain Morgan's company leading the advance, we saw nothing more of them on this night.

Beyond a question they all knew I was yet alive, for Green would not have failed to give that startling information instantly he met his comrades; yet none of them came up to congratulate me on my escape, as did hundreds of the soldiers, many of whom I had never so much as spoken to before.

We three comrades chose as our camping-place a hollow near to where the captain lay, and roundabout us were members of the company in such numbers that even a savage could not have made his way to us without awakening many of the men.

“If simply because of jealousy those fellows can find it in their hearts to commit murder, we must take every precaution,” Percy said with a laugh which told that he was doing more than he really thought necessary. “While we are in the midst of men from my own colony I have no fear an assassin will find it possible to work mischief.”

Despite the fact that we lay thus secure, I did not close my eyes in sleep until past midnight, and Ephraim, who was by my side, tossed to and fro restlessly, showing that even in his dreams was he disturbed by the villains.

When we were awakened by the drums next morning Captain Morgan told Green and his comrades that they must lead the way once more, and Ephraim and I were told off as members of the captain's crew.

There was little work to be done by us at the paddles.

The guides found the stream choked by fallen trees, as, indeed, I knew they would, and while they tugged and strained at the obstacles young Randolph, Ephraim, and I lounged in the bateau at our ease.

To pass away the time while we were simply holding our own in midstream against the current, or lying under the bushes which overhung the bank where we could find moorings, Percy told us of the voyage from Cambridge to Newburyport, which was begun on the sixteenth of September; of the journey by vessel up the Kennebec within two days' march of our clearing, and wove into the narrative so many incidents which might have escaped a less observing lad, that both Ephraim and I were highly entertained.

On this day I noted the fact that the rations were much smaller than had previously been served out, and there came a sinking of my heart as I asked myself what would be the result if the supply of provisions did not prove sufficient for the journey?

During the afternoon we sailed no more than two miles, and this progress was so slow that instead of encamping at sunset Colonel Arnold

gave orders for us to push ahead until midnight.

The guides asked for assistance, and twenty men were detailed to go in advance with them, but neither my name nor that of my comrade was among those read out by Sergeant Potterfield.

This night march did not cause us in the boats any great fatigue, for it was possible to catch a nap now and then, besides which, there was little labor to be performed.

When a halt was finally called very many of the troops elected to remain in the boats, and we three lads were of the number.

The dew was heavy, and a bed on the wet ground seemed less inviting than the boards of the boats, even though our limbs were cramped painfully, forced as we were to remain so long in one position.

Breakfast next morning was not satisfactory because of its lack of quantity; but it would have been childish to grumble, and before noon we had such an opportunity to stretch our legs as was much to my liking.

Captain Morgan had been in consultation with Colonel Arnold while we were halted an

hour or more waiting for the guides to find a channel at a place where an experienced hand should have made one with but little trouble, and on his return he called Ephraim and me to the shore, asking when we were arrived there:

“You boys must have hunted along this river many times.”

I told him we had, but was not minded to give over-much information lest it might be his purpose to send us in the advance again.

“And it would not be difficult for you to come up with the troops at any time, in case you should loiter behind?”

“I will engage to remain here five days, and then come upon the party one week from this hour.”

“Is there much game hereabouts?”

“It is plentiful if one, or a dozen, were in search of food; but for such a company as this, I do not think all that could be found would make even such a meal as we had this morning.”

“Every little helps, lad. We are advancing so slowly that the commander fears we may be put on short allowance unless some means can be devised for replenishing the larder. You,

knowing the country well, might take command of a dozen or more idle men who can be spared as well as not, and whatever you shoot will be so much of a gain. How say you?"

"I am willing to do whatever seems best to you, sir, and so I answer for Ephraim."

"Very well. Randolph shall be of the party, and you three may select the others. The only orders I have to give are that you stray not so far but that the encampment can be gained as often as once in every eight-and-forty hours, and turn back if there appears to be any danger from savages."

This last caution need not have been given to me, for a copper-colored face with a bunch of feathers above it was enough to drive me to shelter without loss of time, no matter how pressing might be the employment on hand.

The idea of spending our time hunting was pleasing to the three of us, and particularly so to me, since by such work I should be away from those whom I had good reason to fear.

Percy looked to me to name the soldiers who were to accompany us; but not knowing many of the men I begged he would take that duty upon himself, and he readily did so.

Had we been minded to do so, I believe of a verity we might have had the entire Virginia company at our heels when we set forth, so eager were the men for the sport; but more than a dozen in the party would have lessened rather than increased our chances of finding game, and the limit was set at that number.

Among those whom Percy had bidden to what he called "the hunting party" was a man much older than our captain, and he at once attached himself to me, saying as he did so:

"When in the wilderness it is well to make friends with him who can lead you out."

"Then there is no reason why you should be more friendly with me than with Ephraim, for he knows this section of the country as well as I."

"I'll keep you both in sight, and thus be on the safe side. Who is to command?"

I looked at Percy, believing him to be in charge of the party, but he replied quickly:

"Captain Morgan gave strict orders that you and Ephraim were to be obeyed, and thus you now have all of us in your power."

I would have been better pleased if my comrade and I could have served simply as guides;

but by this time we were out of the boats, and it might have seemed childish had I laid the matter before the captain.

However, I knew there would be little reason for giving any commands, save in regard to the direction in which we should travel, and that was speedily arranged to the satisfaction of all.

In order to find game it would be necessary to make our way in advance of the troops, and to this end we pushed ahead through the forest, walking fully three miles to every one the boats could be sailed.

The old man—at least he seemed old to me, although I fancy he was not more than forty years of age—who walked by my side told me his name was Enoch Severance, and having thus introduced himself began to ask what might have seemed impertinent questions, but for his kindly manner.

It was when I had given him all possible information regarding Ephraim and myself that he said abruptly, looking at me sharply meanwhile:

“Did you understand that we are expected to furnish food for the whole company?”

“It was not so said by Captain Morgan.”

“Yet we are out hunting, or shall be after getting far enough in advance of the boats!”

“Perhaps the officers crave a change of fare.”

“And think you there is no other reason why we are thus sent out for meat?”

I made no immediate reply, not deeming it seemly in me, a new-comer, and not even a regularly enlisted soldier, to say what might be twisted into a complaint, and observing that I hesitated Master Severance added, with a meaning look:

“Perhaps it were better if I should ask whether you believe it possible for us to find meat in such abundance that all our company can be fed?”

“Game is plentiful in these parts, sir; but even though each of us carried back a deer, which is as much weight as we can bear through the forest, it would not serve to give half the number one full meal.”

“But shall we be able to find even that many deer during every day’s march?”

“I think not, for we must constantly keep ahead of the boats, and the animals will grow wary after much hunting.”

Then he questioned me closely regarding the

obstacles we might be confronted with while making the portages, and I answered him to the best of my knowledge, whereat he fell to musing, remaining silent so long I thought his had been but an idle purpose when he asked for my opinion.

When he did finally speak, it was in so earnest a tone that I was startled out of my composure by the words:

“What will be the end, if almost at the beginning of our difficult journey we are on short allowance?”

I could not answer the question in any fashion satisfactory to myself, though I had pondered over it many times since the rations began to grow smaller, and like a simple replied:

“That is for the commanders to say.”

“But if they fail to do so we are no more likely to see Quebec, unless as prisoners, than we are to reach home again.”

I fell silent, not being willing to voice his forebodings although they were strong in my thoughts, and we walked on at the head of the troop with such fancies in our minds as were not heartening, until signs of deer were seen, when straightway all else save the game was forgotten.

I had opposed Percy when he suggested that some of the dogs be brought with us, for of such hunting Ephraim and I were ignorant, therefore it now became necessary to stalk the game, and as we started I whispered to my comrade:

“Take good heed of the direction, Eph, for we must not fail to meet the boats by to-morrow night.”

“There’s little fear of that, so they stay on the stream,” and off the boy dashed eager to display his skill as a hunter, which every one who knew him admitted to be great.

It is needless to set down here all which was done during the remainder of that day, for after the chase is ended one likes not to remember the slaughter, and it was little else.

Enough if I say that when we made camp amid the pines at sunset we had the carcasses of five deer hung on as many trees, and from one was cut such a supply of meat as served, when broiled over the coals, to make a meal than which the king himself may have no better.

As I reckoned, we were not above five miles from the stream, and just before sunrise next morning it would be possible for us to get as

much more game as we should be able to carry through the woods.

Ephraim and I slept in each other's arms, with a cheery blaze at our feet, for the air was so chill that heat was needed, and our slumbers were not disturbed by dreams of the villains who were willing to turn assassins because of jealousy.

CHAPTER V

MUTINY

WHEN we of the hunting party finally rejoined the expedition after an absence of eight-and-forty hours we found the troops at the first portage with the work not yet half completed.

They hailed our coming with cheers of delight, for we were literally loaded down with game, and, as I afterward learned, during our short absence the size of the rations had been still further lessened.

Therefore the prospect of a dinner of fresh meat was sufficient to cause no little excitement.

But although we had brought as great a burden as it was possible for us to stagger under—even more perhaps than we ought to have carried, the supply was as nothing compared with the demand, and on reporting to Captain Morgan, as I was in duty bound to do, being, so to speak, the leader of the hunting party, I said to him respectfully :

“If you attempt to divide equally that which

we have brought, sir, there will not be for each as much as might be put in a hollow tooth. The rank and file, and I judge them by myself, are accustomed to rough fare, therefore why should not the game be apportioned among the officers?"

"You may well give that advice, since doubtless you are full to repletion with fresh meat," the captain replied, eying me curiously.

"In good truth, I am sir. After a tramp of twenty miles one does not lie with an empty stomach when the trees near-by are hanging with carcasses of deer. Those who hunt travel far, and must be well fed."

"I was not laying any reproach on you or your comrades for having first helped yourselves to what you would help us; but the thought was in my mind that much mischief might be brewed were the officers of the expedition to take the fruits of the hunt, denying to the rank and file their full share."

Even I, who at times was far from being quick-witted, understood what might be the result if my advice was followed; yet I knew that the meat we brought would be as nothing when divided into twelve hundred parts, and this Captain Morgan also understood, for

after a short pause he said to me in a cautious tone, evidently not intending his words should be overhead, even by Ephraim who stood a short distance away :

“It is well the men themselves understand how poor, when compared with the number to be fed, is the supply you have brought. Therefore I would suggest, lad, and mind you this is but a suggestion, that you yourself cut from the venison a certain portion for each of the officers, ranking them from Colonel Arnold down to the lieutenants, and after that has been done lay the remainder of the meat where the soldiers themselves may divide it.”

I set about obeying this suggestion, for it was to me little less than a command, knowing full well that when the share for each of the officers had been cut the amount remaining could have easily been devoured by our dogs, and the brutes yet be hungry immediately after the eating.

Ephraim assisted me in the labor, while Master Severance and Percy distributed the portions.

We were watched eagerly by a large number of men, and as they saw the choicest cuts being carried away I heard murmurs of dissatisfaction,

low at first, but rising higher and higher as the game was lessened in quantity, until I began to fear we should be forcibly prevented from thus playing the part of carvers.

“The officers, who do none of the work, are to be fed generously, while we who perform the labor may go hungry,” I heard Bart Green say to one of his comrades in a tone so loud as to show he intended it for all within the sound of his voice.

I did not so much as raise my head, fearing lest these men, even upon so slight a provocation as the distribution of the meat, might make another attack upon me, and motioned Ephraim to remain silent likewise; but there was a great sense of relief in my heart when, the work having been finished, we who had done our duty as butchers walked away to join the remainder of the hunting party, for it was seemly we should bivouac together while thus forming a separate command as it were.

The greater portion of the troops remained near where the meat was lying on the ground, impatient for its further distribution, and I heard some one say as we walked past a sullen-looking group:

“It’s a fine thing to be favorites with the commanders of the expedition, for then you may go hunting and lie down with full stomachs, whereas those who are not so favored can do no more than nurse their hunger.”

“There is no reason why, having been turned into beasts of burden, we should be put on short allowance when there is plenty of food to be had in the forest.”

I lingered not to hear what further remarks would be made.

The spirit of insubordination could be seen and heard on every side, and yet the weary journey was hardly more than begun—the first portage had not yet been traversed.

I reported to Captain Morgan, as was my duty, that the remainder of the game was ready for distribution among the men, and then rejoined the hunting party, who had made for themselves a shelter of boughs.

Then, when the scanty provisions were dealt out, we began our preparations for supper, for although we had had our fill of meat during the long tramp after game, no food had passed our lips since early in the day.

My messmates were discussing the situation

of affairs among themselves, and Master Severance said in a low tone as I came up :

“It is well you finished your work so soon, lads ; otherwise, I misdoubt if it had been possible to complete it.”

“Meaning that the grumblers might have interfered ?” I said, inquiringly.

“Ay, and even more. I am not laying claim to being a prophet, but am much mistaken if all remains as peaceable in the encampment when the second supply of game be brought in.”

“That you may well question, Master Severance,” I replied, “for there are in my mind many doubts as to whether any more venison reach the camp.”

“Are you growing sick of playing the part of hunter ?”

“Like yourself, I am no prophet ; but I question whether any meat will be found by this time to-morrow. The men are already grumbling because we of the hunting party have full stomachs, and more than one will do his best at bringing down a deer on the morrow.”

“In which case every one must go hungry,” Percy said, grimly. “The game is not so

abundant that all of the expedition may turn hunters with any hope of success.”

Then, as if looking forward to serious trouble, our messmates began questioning Ephraim and me as to the way before us.

Although I would have withheld that which I knew regarding what must be met before we should arrive at the Chaudière River, it was impossible to feign complete ignorance, and before the men were at the end of their questions, we had almost unwittingly revealed the fact that no less than fourteen more portages, many harder to traverse than this first one, yet remained between us and the stream we must reach in order to enter the waters of the St. Lawrence.

Among ourselves, and we hunters had already begun to fancy we were an independent company of the expedition, the possibility of ever making a junction, in anything like an orderly fashion, with General Montgomery's forces was seriously questioned.

However, that was a matter for the future to decide, and, heavy with sleep, Ephraim and I laid down upon the ground in the midst of the company where there was little chance any mischief might come to us from the guides.

Our slumber was as profound as though no danger menaced, and at the first beat of the morning drum I leaped to my feet so refreshed by the night's rest as to have almost forgotten the fears we entertained the evening previous.

The first man whom I saw stirring was Captain Morgan, and to him I addressed the question as to whether we should continue our work as hunters or remain with the command to assist in the labor of the portage.

"The orders stand as first given," he replied. "You will continue the search for game, reporting every eight-and-forty hours, unless—"

He hesitated, and then added in an odd tone:

"Unless it should be deemed advisable to discontinue the work."

I fancied I could supply the words which were first in his mind; but it was not for me to find bugbears.

My duty was to obey without question, and as I aroused Ephraim all the forebodings of the evening came back with redoubled force.

The rations served out on this morning were hardly more than sufficient to remind a man he was hungry.

I thought to myself that if those of the

expedition who were forced to carry heavy burdens to and fro across the portage during the day were fed no better than ourselves, there was indeed good cause for grumbling, and grave reasons why every one should be disheartened.

We did not linger to eat our scanty store of provisions in the camp; but set out with the utmost haste, as if fearing pursuit.

When in the woods so far from the encampment that no sound could reach us, it was as if we were free, and like one who has escaped a great danger I pushed on at my best speed, light at heart as I was of foot.

When we encamped that night it was on the trail where the troops would make the third portage, and even though they advanced more slowly than had been the case, it was here we ought to find them four-and-twenty hours later.

The result of this day's work was but two deer, twenty or thirty rabbits, and perhaps as many partridges—less than one-third as much as had fallen before our rifles on the first day we had been sent out as a hunting party.

It would be dry reading were I to set down

all the conversation we held when, having fully satisfied our hunger, we laid before the cheery blaze of the camp-fire talking of the expedition and its purpose.

I should simply repeat what has already been said, for with us the subject was of such vital importance that we could talk of little else.

More than the British forces whom we hoped soon to meet, did we fear that spirit of insubordination which had appeared so plainly at the encampment before we left the last time, and it can well be fancied that but little else had place in our thoughts.

The game we had taken was hung upon the trees near-by when we left the camping-place next morning, for it was there we intended to return—there we expected to find the troops.

We traveled many miles on this day, meeting with but little game, as was to be expected, for now that we were between the two streams deer were not as abundant, therefore when the time had come that we should turn our faces toward the rendezvous, our burdens were light.

All we had shot during this day, and what had been left behind at the last camping-place, would not make up in amount more than two-

thirds as much meat as had previously been carried in.

But our duty had been done whatever might betide, that much I knew as a fact, and it afforded me great satisfaction.

While making our way through the dense forest we did not speculate as to what would be the result of our coming, for it was as if each one knew, and the knowledge was painful.

Contrary to my expectations, the troops were not to be seen when we arrived at the third portage.

The advance had been even more slow than I supposed.

“They are yet at the second carry, and we have four miles more to travel,” Ephraim said as we involuntarily halted, and I, eager to have the journey finished, looked around for the meat we had left upon the trees.

It was no longer there.

Not even so much as a rabbit remained, and I knew that men, not animals, had robbed us of the supply.

“Some of the troops have been out hunting on their own account,” I said, striving to make it appear as of but small moment.

“Wolves and bears may have done the mischief,” Master Severance suggested, and Ephraim pointed to the ground as he replied :

“Even though animals could have gotten at the game, it is certain they would have eaten it here, and we ought to find both fur and feathers, whereas there is nothing to be seen.”

Then Percy suggested that perhaps Captain Morgan had sent the men ahead, fancying we might have left the fruits of our labor in this place, and although such a supposition was not probable, I made feint of accepting it.

With our poor loads, hardly enough to have provided one meal for fifty hungry men, we set out toward the second portage, Ephraim and I leading the way, for we knew the trail well.

When we were thus alone he would have spoken with me regarding his fears of what might have happened, but I checked him.

Then, after we had tramped for half an hour in silence, and were so far in advance of our messmates that the conversation could not be overheard, he said thoughtfully :

“It is useless to blind our eyes to what will happen, or may already have taken place among the troops, Jason. Why should we continue on

with this expedition? It is not serving the cause to move thus at a snail's pace, knowing that by so loitering all must starve, or be frozen to death when the winter comes upon us."

"All that has come into my mind, Ephraim, and I regret that we ever left the clearing, save it was to make our way to Boston town, where troops are needed. This is but a wild-goose chase at best, and mayhap a dangerous one, yet are you and I so fully committed that we cannot in honor say we will do this or we will do that, other than what our commanders may order. It is the same as if we were regularly enlisted men, and here we must remain because it is our duty, having once pledged ourselves."

Ephraim was not the lad to make contention when the matter was placed fairly before him, and he realized as well as did I that we had no other choice than to continue as had been begun.

The night was fully come when we saw among the trees at the beginning of the second portage, the lights of the camp-fires, and knew that the troops had done but little work since we left them.

Even though we had been accustomed to this camp-life only a few days, Ephraim and I

understood that mischief was brewing when we moved along past the men.

There was no cheery conversation to be heard; no peals of laughter; no merry jests.

Those of the men who did not wear a sullen look, appeared distressed.

Here and there we heard mutterings of menace, and observed a group whispering together as they glanced at us; but nowhere, not even among the officers, was there to be seen that which we had observed on the night the expedition encamped in the clearing.

As was my duty, I made a report at once to Captain Morgan regarding the theft of the game, and gave strict account of what we had brought with us.

The hope that he had sent for the meat was speedily dashed when he questioned me closely as to how it had been left, and then, wearing a look of deepest concern, turned abruptly away, walking toward the tents which marked Colonel Arnold's headquarters.

Not having been dismissed I was at a loss to know whether it was proper to rejoin my comrades, or remain where I had been left until the captain's return, and while I stood thus debating

in my mind Ephraim came toward me at full run.

“There is serious trouble brewing,” he cried, guardedly; yet not in so cautious a tone but that several soldiers standing near-by heard him and hurried away.

“What is going on?” I asked quickly, fearing the worst.

“The troops have surrounded our party, and insist that the game be given up to them. I fear blood will be shed, for the hunters are guarding the meat with loaded rifles, and those who oppose them are likewise armed.”

While one might have counted twenty I stood irresolute, not knowing in which direction duty lay, and then like a flash came to me the thought that out of this matter would grow more serious trouble than a forcible attack on the meat—that it was an affair which should be dealt with by those in command of the expedition, not by us of the hunting party.

Fearing lest Ephraim should in his zeal do that which might be unwise—perhaps unwarranted—I forced him to come with me to headquarters, and despite the challenge of the sentry ran unannounced into Colonel Arnold’s presence.

At sight of us entering thus hurriedly and rudely he looked up with a frown, and as seemed to me was about to administer some severe reproof; but I checked it by the word I brought.

“The soldiers are bent on seizing the game; our party are defending it, and much mischief may be wrought speedily.”

Having in this stupid fashion delivered myself, I turned, still grasping Ephraim by the hand, and ran out as swiftly as we had entered, waiting a short distance off until Captain Morgan should appear.

“We ought to be with our comrades,” Ephraim cried, trying to urge me forward, and still further excited by seeing in the gloom dusky forms running from every direction toward that place where the hunting party had halted.

“They will not be so reckless as to resist,” I said, my mind divided between two opinions. I was eager to do as he wished, yet feared to outstep both right and duty. “It is as if all the soldiers in the camp were bent on seizing the game, and what may ten or a dozen avail against them?”

“Yet our place is there,” Ephraim insisted. “They are our companions, and you are their leader.”

This last remark decided me.

Whatever should be the result, I determined that having been placed in command of the party I would not be absent when trouble threatened, and yielded to Ephraim’s clutch upon my arm, running at my best pace toward the dark mass which surged here and there among the trees.

It was one thing to say we would rejoin our companions, and quite another to do it, because of the press of mutineers on every hand, each struggling toward that pitiful amount of meat which, if divided equally, would have hardly made a mouthful for every one.

We fought our way through the throng, not with blows, but by dint of pushing here and pulling there, using our shoulders as weapons, and the butts of our muskets to force an opening; attracting no particular attention because each man was attempting to do the same thing, and almost deafened by the cries of rage and defiance which came from every portion of the gathering.

Long before we succeeded in making our way to where the little party stood at bay did I hear Captain Morgan's voice in loud command; but so great was the din that his words could not be distinguished.

On every hand came threats, not against the hunters themselves, who were simply doing their duty, but directed toward the officers who had led the expedition, insufficiently provisioned, thus far into the wilderness, where starvation stood before them.

I knew not what good might come of withholding the pitiful supply of meat; but understood from that which I had heard regarding warfare that it was a soldier's duty to obey and not to question, whatever might betide, therefore, even though the men were hungry, was the taking of the game in itself a crime.

There had been no actual violence offered our party when Ephraim and I finally stood in their midst, and instantly we were arrived Master Severance said in a tone of sorrow rather than reproof:

“This is no work either for you or us, my lads. It is Captain Morgan who should be here.”

“It was the summoning of him that caused me to delay in coming,” I replied.

“Then he knows what is being done?”

“He himself is already near at hand. I heard his voice but a moment ago. What think you will be the outcome of this?”

“You can see for yourself, lad. If we stand by this meat as in duty bound, blood must be shed. If we give it up without a struggle, the mutineers have so far gained the day that the trouble will continue to increase until no one can say what may be the result.”

“But we must—”

I could not finish what I had begun to say, for just at that moment a sudden rush was made which threw me headlong into Master Severance's arms, and as all our little party were forced back a few paces I heard a voice which I believed to be that of Bart Green, shouting:

“Kill them! Kill them! Shoot down the boys who would starve their betters that the gentlemen officers may have full stomachs!”

CHAPTER VI

RETREAT OF THE COWARDS

INSTANTLY Green, if indeed it was he, as I have no doubt, raised his murderous cry, the anger of the hungry soldiers increased until it was a perfect fury, and no small force of men, however heavily armed, could have withstood the onslaught which followed.

Rushing toward a common centre, the mutineers met almost directly above us, for we of the hunting party were thrown to the ground before it was possible to discharge a weapon, and then the throng surged to and fro, trampling under-foot that which had caused the disturbance.

“It would be the act of fools should we open fire upon them!” Master Severance had said half a dozen seconds before we were overthrown, and I was of the same opinion, for these men were frenzied by hunger.

“Prevent bloodshed, if possible!” I cried, and Percy added:

“By standing firm we may be able to hold our own until the captain can get here!”

We stood firmly enough, but the onward rush was resistless, and, as I have said, we went down before it like grain under the hands of the reaper.

It seemed to me that no less than a dozen men had scrambled over my body before I could rise, and then I was alone in the crowd.

I could see no member of the hunting party near, and, as can well be imagined, my first thought was for Ephraim, whom I feared might not have come out of the press as fortunately as I had.

“Ephraim! Ephraim!” I shouted at the full strength of my lungs, but I might as well have joined the others in their cries for food as to have thus spoken my comrade’s name, since my voice could not have been heard twelve paces away, so deafening was the din.

Some of the less excited soldiers began to understand that the game we had brought in was being trodden under-foot, and made every effort to save that which all needed so sadly, but in less time than it has taken me to write thus much of the mutiny, the meat had been trampled into a shapeless mass.

To have made my way out from amid the hooting, yelling crowd was impossible, and I did all which lay in my power toward separating them, by telling those nearest that the game was already destroyed—that there was no longer any reason to continue the commotion, since neither officers nor men would benefit by the labor of the hunters.

It required much time to make this fact known to any considerable number of the maddened soldiers; but once it was understood the rage of all seemed to increase, and murderous threats were openly made against the commanders of the expedition.

How long I remained in that unreasoning, unreasonable press of men I know not, but it seemed as if more than an hour had elapsed before I succeeded in freeing myself, although as a matter of course I had been thus held prisoner only a short time.

Once master of my own movements I ran to and fro searching for Ephraim, but seeing nothing of him, and I was nearly as distraught as the mutineers, when young Randolph seized me by the arm.

“Our company is in line!” he shouted, forced

to do so in order to make himself heard amid the tumult. "Come with me quickly, or you will be counted as a mutineer."

"Where is Ephraim?" I asked wildly.

"With us, where he belongs. Seeing you running around like a mad man I believed you had lost your senses, and craved permission from Lieutenant Heth to come and fetch you."

"And I really was beside myself for a while," I said, able to breathe more freely now I knew Ephraim was safe. "The mutineers themselves are no more than crazy men, and God grant this may not be turned suddenly into a fearful tragedy!"

"It will take but little to do that while both officers and men are in a blind rage," and Percy literally pulled me along to where the Virginians were standing in line like true soldiers.

I had never been in the ranks since we joined the company, and did not know my place, but on catching sight of Ephraim at the side of Master Severance, I hastened to that spot.

A hearty grip of his hand and my mind was suddenly cleared of the veil of anger and terror which had enveloped it.

So that Ephraim was unharmed all else

seemed as nothing, so far as we two were concerned.

“How long have you been here?” I asked, and without waiting for an answer began examining my rifle to make certain it had come to no harm while I was but as a foot-ball for the mutineers.

“When we were first overborne by the crowd Master Severance aided me to regain my feet, and we answered the earliest call to form in rank.”

“Where is Captain Morgan?” and I looked around, content now at knowing the rifle was uninjured.

“Yonder, talking with Colonel Arnold.”

After gazing in the direction pointed out by Ephraim I cast my eyes curiously about me, and the scene which presented itself was well calculated to intimidate one who had had much more experience in such matters than myself.

The encampment had been made on the shore of a small pond, where a growth of pine trees toward the north formed a barrier against the wind, which now gave promise of a storm.

Here and there at irregular intervals were small camp-fires in such numbers that one could

readily distinguish the forms of the men, and by aid of these lights it was possible to gain a fairly good idea of what was going on.

The mob, for I can call that assemblage of soldiers by no other name, was at the upper end of the pond, and about an hundred yards distant from the Virginia company.

Immediately in our rear were the headquarters tents, and between them and us stood the commanders of the expedition as if uncertain what should be done.

The mutineers, surging to and fro, had moved some distance from the first scene of the disturbance, and where they had been, the dogs were snarling and fighting over the remnants of the meat which had cost us so much labor to procure.

The tumult had not subsided in the slightest degree.

The frenzy of the men was finding outlet in noise; but I understood that the first incautious word on the part of our commanders would bring about murder, for the taking of life under such circumstances could be no less than that.

“What will be the end?” I asked of myself, and unconsciously spoke the words aloud.

“Either a fight among ourselves, or the abandoning of the expedition,” Master Severance replied gravely. “Do you note, lad, how few are standing in rank? All save those in line must be counted as mutineers.”

In addition to our own company, whose ranks I judged were full, not above an hundred men had anything like a military formation, and I said in a low tone, lest Ephraim should overhear me and become alarmed:

“If it is to be a fight we shall most likely get the worst of it.”

“Anything in that line would be fatal to all. We are now so far into the wilderness that nothing except the strictest discipline can save us, even though we were to turn toward home at this moment.”

The officers remained in a group by themselves, apparently doing nothing, and I was angered because they stood there idle and silent, though I could not say what I would have them do.

“Think you, Jason, we shall be ordered to shoot?” Ephraim asked of me in a trembling voice, and I was at a loss to make reply.

Thick-headed as I was, it had not come into

my mind that we might be ordered to kill our companions, and in my perplexity I turned to Master Severance, asking him :

“Suppose you were ordered to fire into yonder crowd with intent to kill?”

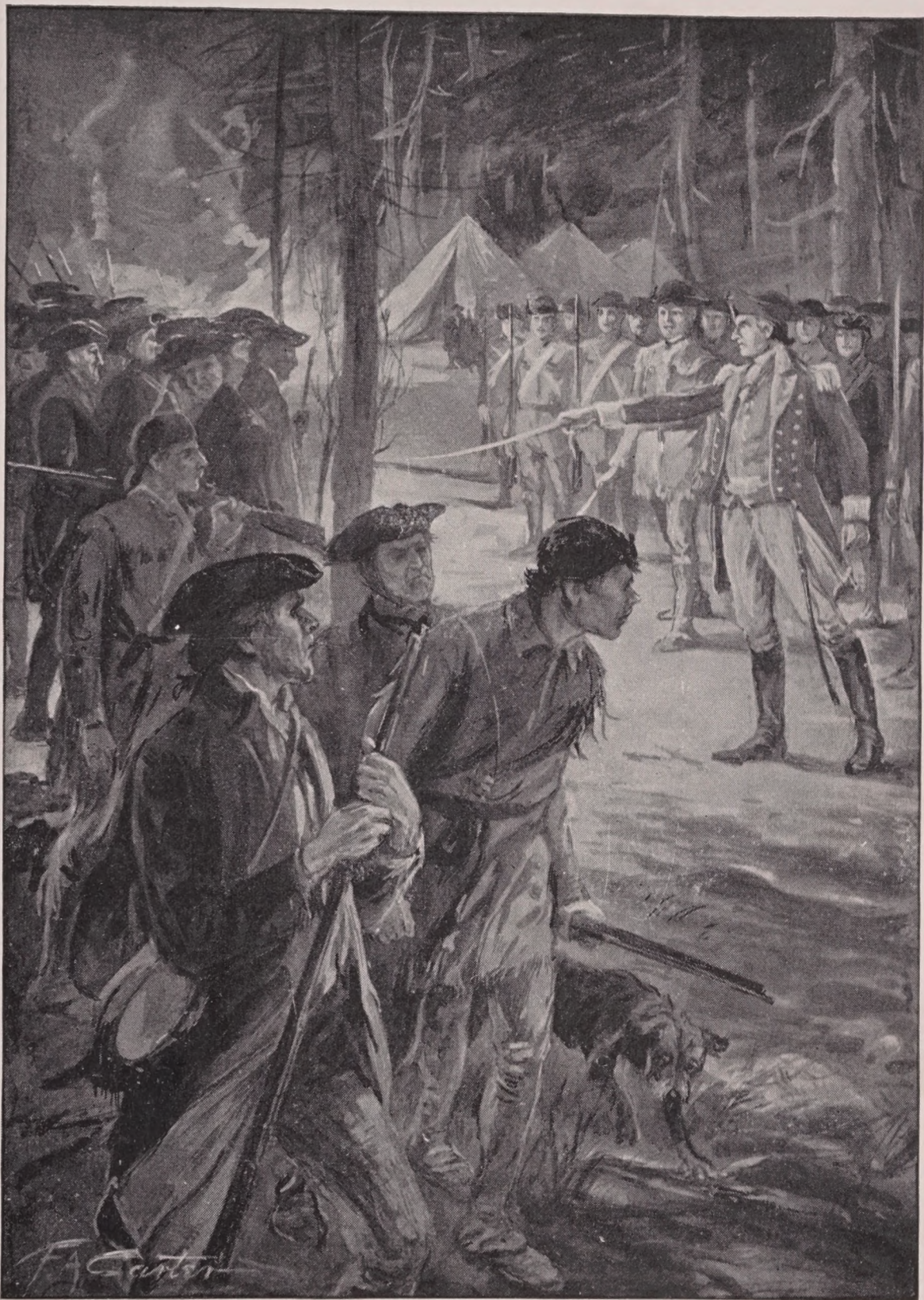
“I should obey the order,” was the quick reply. “We are soldiers, and as such bound to do as our superior officers command. It is not for us to question, or even so much as say to ourselves whether a thing be right or wrong.”

The thought of what I might be obliged to do, caused my heart to grow faint, and I was no longer angry because our commanders remained inactive.

Now my greatest fear was lest they should attempt to quell the insubordination by the only means at their command.

Ten minutes passed and the scene had not changed, save that the cries of the mutineers were fainter and less ferocious.

“The colonel is bent on letting them blow off a bit before tackling the crowd,” Master Severance said with a chuckle of satisfaction. “He is acting a wise part, for in less than an hour half that gathering will be ashamed of having



COLONEL ARNOLD STEPPED FORWARD

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thus misbehaved, and the balance can be taken care of without much trouble.”

As was shown, this was exactly the method Colonel Arnold had adopted in dealing with the mutiny.

As long as the men contented themselves with noise he remained inactive, and in two hours from the commencement of the trouble, no more than three hundred mutineers remained in a body.

The others had slunk away to their respective commands, and now a line of soldiers in proper military formation almost entirely surrounded the encampment.

The time had come when some decisive step should be taken, as I understood when Colonel Arnold and several officers marched forward until they were within a few yards of the mutineers.

At the same moment orders were given for the different companies to advance, and soon we were all where the commander's voice could be readily heard.

“It's to be words instead of bullets,” Master Severance muttered, “and Colonel Arnold has shown himself a wise officer.”

Even the mutinous ones paid respectful attention when the colonel stepped a few paces toward them, and, waving his hand to show we were all included in the term, began to address us as "soldiers."

He first spoke of the object to be attained, of the belief in the hearts of General Montgomery's troops that we were advancing to their aid, and of the enemy to be vanquished.

Then he explained why we were short of rations, and urging that relief could be had once we had gained the Chaudière River, but stating plainly the suffering which must be manfully endured until we should arrive there.

The conclusion of this soldierly appeal staggered us all, for he said, and these words I remember as plainly as if they had but just been spoken in my hearing :

"We want no unwilling associates. Those of you who shrink from the hardships, the privations, and the cruel suffering which may come upon us who advance, can retrace your steps from this point. We shall not be able to supply you with rations, but the stream has been opened, and you may take with you boats enough to transport all who wish to go back.

The current will bear you swiftly on, and even while we who stay are fighting against starvation, you will be in a land of plenty. There must be no more scenes like the one we have just witnessed; therefore all who choose to retreat will step toward the water's edge. Those who do not thus signify their intention will be forced even to the death to observe proper discipline."

When he ceased speaking no one moved; it seemed to me as if I dared not so much as breathe.

Then came a voice from the crowd of mutineers:

"What supply of provisions will be given those who go home where they belong?"

"The rations which are served out to-morrow morning, but not so much else as a crumb."

"You turn us adrift to starve!"

"No man is forced to go; those who remain will share and share alike."

"The officers getting the meat and the privates the bones!" a jeering voice cried, but to this Colonel Arnold gave no heed.

"Advance toward the water's edge, or take your places in the ranks. There can be no delay!"

Even in the gloom I could see that the mutineers were consulting among themselves, and within five minutes not less than two hundred had advanced in token of their desire to return.

Many of our company began to jeer, and cry "Cowards!" but Captain Morgan soon put an end to any such demonstrations, and Colonel Arnold went to his tent after giving whispered orders to several of the officers.

Then, and it was the first time since I had been with the expedition, sentinels were stationed in the camp; but it was not for our protection against a possible enemy.

The mutineers were to be kept by themselves, as it was right such cowards should be, and all communication cut off between the two bodies of men.

This done we broke ranks, and each set about talking with his neighbor, for sleep was a stranger to us all just then.

We now knew that what we had guessed at before was no more than half the truth.

The situation was more desperate than the most cowardly had feared, for instead of being kept on short allowance, we would soon be without any allowance whatever, save what we

could get from the forest, and none but men well-nigh frenzied would put much faith in the possibility of such a supply.

We of the hunting party gathered by ourselves, and although every one of us stood firm in his determination to do a soldier's full duty, some of the words spoken privately would have sounded like mutiny in the ears of the officers.

"The Virginia company will push forward so long as the command is given to that effect," Master Severance said, speaking to us all, "for there are no cowards among us; but it is not the speech of a timid man when I declare that the officers are the ones who should set the example of turning back. Even though a few hundred leave us now, those who remain will be in no better condition, for there is not game enough to be found between the two rivers to supply Captain Morgan's command alone."

"Why discuss what can't be remedied?" young Randolph cried in a cheery voice that heartened us all. "It makes me hungry to hear such talk, and I am even minded to draw my morning ration now and devour it before going to sleep."

He was a brave lad, and did his full duty in

trying to raise our spirits; but words were of little avail when we knew how desperate were the straits to which we had been reduced, and as I think of it now while my stomach is full, even though it be on prison fare, I wonder greatly that the ranks of the cowards were not increased five-fold before a new day dawned.

Over and over again were Ephraim and I called upon to tell what we knew concerning the journey before us; but we could give no information beyond the seventh or eighth portage, and, at the best, our accounts of the country were discouraging.

Within the past eight-and-forty hours many of the soldiers had gone on the sick list because of insufficient food and over-work, and when, in addition to carrying the baggage and boats, these poor fellows must be transported in some fashion, I was fain to believe all of us would soon turn back, even the most courageous.

I had looked to see Ephraim disheartened by the knowledge of what might come to us; but he bore up as bravely as Percy, and these two did very much toward preventing me from losing all hope.

We laid down late in the night; but it was

not to sleep, and I question if there were fifty men in camp whom the drums awakened.

Ephraim proposed that we who had acted as hunters should now do our share of labor at the portages, allowing those who were fagged out to take our places in the work of searching for game; but to this Lieutenant Heth would not listen.

“You two are the only ones familiar with this section of the country, and must act as guides to the hunters, therefore Captain Morgan will see no reason for changing the orders already given.”

“The regular guides could surely be depended upon to bring a party through the woods to almost any given point,” I suggested.

“All save one are in the ranks with the cowards,” he said gravely.

“Who remains?” I asked anxiously.

“He whom they call Bart Green.”

My dismay at hearing this can well be fancied.

It seemed like a cruel freak of fortune, that out of the ten or more my particular enemy was the one who elected to remain behind!

Could I have had my choice I would have welcomed gladly any two of the others as

companions, rather than the man who had proven that he was ready at but trifling provocation to do murder.

However, I could not change the situation, much as it might displease me, and I tried manfully to put all thoughts of Green from my mind.

The rations served on this morning were so small as to provoke hunger rather than satisfy it, and immediately they were received the mutineers set about their preparations for departure.

Captain Morgan had charge of our share of the work, and the Virginia company was drawn up near the shore to quell any possible disturbance.

It had been decided by the commander during the night to take advantage of this opportunity to send back such of the invalids as could not get on without assistance, and some of these required no slight amount of persuasion before they were willing to sail with the mutineers, even though it would most likely be death for them to remain.

As a matter of course the cowards retained their muskets or rifles, and were allowed five charges of ammunition to each man.

With the blankets the captain was not so generous, even though many of the men claimed to have brought as personal property two or three each.

The order was strict that but one be taken, and from this there was no appeal.

They were given all the boats, save so many as would be needed to transport our force and the baggage, and thus we got rid of a goodly portion of what would have been awkward burdens at the portages, together with many of the sick and disabled.

Every member of the expedition was allowed to witness the departure, and I question not but that had others wished to join the ranks of the cowards no one would have said them nay.

While remaining on the shore the fellows were obliged to keep silent, so far as holding any conversation with those who were to push ahead was concerned; but once they shoved off we were greeted with derisive cries and taunting epithets until my fingers itched to send a bullet among them.

The officers of the expedition were the men most shamefully abused by these fellows, but not a word was said in reply, and certain am I

that more than one of us felt a decided relief when the cowards were finally gone.

The question of food was the all-important one now, and when the weary, hungry men set about making the portage, we of the hunting party were ordered off in search of game, with instructions to return at night-fall.

This time our hearts were not lightened when we were alone in the forest with the hum of voices lost in the distance.

Each member of the party was weighted down with a sense of responsibility, knowing as we did that upon our exertions depended the very lives of our companions in arms.

Never had I hunted as keenly as on this day.

Nothing with feathers or fur that came within range escaped me, and my companions were none the less zealous.

At sunset we had joined the troops once more, and although we brought but few deer our burdens of smaller game were heavy.

No man among us had satisfied his hunger during the day.

We all felt that it would be cowardly to do so while our companions were starving, and we tramped from morning until night without

other food than had been served by the quartermaster's assistants, returning to take our share with the others.

More progress had been made on this day than during any twelve hours since leaving the clearing.

The men, fully understanding the desperate situation, realized that they must push ahead with the utmost rapidity or starve in the wilderness, and worked with an energy born of such knowledge.

Captain Morgan was appointed to divide the game, which seemed a beggarly amount when in front of the hungry soldiers, and I can vouch for it that no one had more than another, whatever his rank.

During the short evening, for we hunters were well worn with our labors and had no inclination to converse while we might be sleeping, I heard it said that the question of killing and eating the dogs had been seriously discussed among the troops.

Afterward I came to think I was womanish to feel sick when this meat was spoken of; but then it gave me such a nausea that I closed my ears with my fingers.

My companions were soon in converse regarding this new article of food, and to my surprise I learned that more than one of them had already come to believe the curs must serve us in the stead of more dainty meat.

“I should as soon think of eating my boots,” Ephraim said disdainfully when his opinion was asked, and Master Severance replied in a tone so grave I understood he fully believed all he said:

“That is exactly what you may yet be forced to do, lad, and find in them something to stay the stomach. How long can we count on being able to find as much meat as will give this body of men one small meal each day?”

“Unless we advance faster than we have done thus far our work as hunters will amount to but little, for already the game grows wary,” I replied.

“We must travel more slowly, rather than faster, because the men will grow feeble, and before a week has gone by we shall be chewing leather for the grease to be found in it.”

Such conversation was well calculated to make us even more dispirited than was warranted by the circumstances, and I rolled over in my blankets determined to listen no longer.

CHAPTER VII

DIRE DISTRESS

WHEN we had gained permission of our jailer for me to thus employ the time, I said to myself I would set down in this account all the experiences of the march from Cambridge to Quebec which came to my knowledge.

Having reached this point my heart fails me.

Should I describe in detail all I saw and heard during the two weeks which followed after the faint-hearted ones turned their faces homeward, it would be simply a record of such dire distress from lack of food, lack of clothing, and, in fact, lack of almost everything necessary to the members of the expedition at such a time and place, as would pain the hardest heart.

I have sat here in my cell this last hour asking over and over if it is well to try to picture even faintly the suffering which came upon Colonel Arnold's expedition, during the journey from the head-waters of the Kennebec

River until we were well toward the mouth of of the Chaudière.

Finally I have decided to tell in the fewest words necessary to set forth the facts, of the general suffering, and not make mention of each case which came directly under my notice, for some of them were so painful that they draw tears from my eyes at this moment, while I myself am a prisoner in the hands of the British.

To see the strong man labor day after day, growing weaker from lack of food, but still struggling to do his utmost for love of the Cause; to see him plodding on over the frozen ground, his clothing torn to tatters by the thorny bushes, with shoes cut from his feet by the sharp rocks, and thus, half-clad, half fed, stagger on until death overtakes him, is something of which the details ought not be set down, although it is well all should know what we underwent in trying to make good the word we had given.

From the day the cowardly ones left us we were abandoned even by the deer.

The hunting party, of which I made one, went out every morning, returning at night with but a beggarly amount of small game—

many times with no more than we ourselves could have eaten for the noonday meal.

The weather as the season advanced became unusually inclement.

Being constantly employed in forcing our way through the woods and across the many portages encountered, there was hardly a man of the expedition whose coat remained whole, and I venture to say among us of the rank and file not one had a pair of serviceable shoes to his feet when the Chaudière River was finally reached.

Men fell out of the line of march headlong into the bushes from sheer exhaustion, and when one would have assisted them, the only prayer was that they be allowed to die at once, and die they did, like as beasts in the shambles, a score or more every day, until our trail was marked by corpses—not such dead as we lay reverentially in the ground with loving hands; but gaunt skeletons with bitterest despair imprinted upon their pinched and worn faces.

Men who would have scorned to flinch from the most serious wound, cried with running tears for one scrap of meat, and fought like wolves for the smallest fragment of a tiny bird or a squirrel.

As the days wore on our number constantly and rapidly decreased, until we who remained alive questioned each morning whether we should be in this world at sunset.

I came to long as fervently for dog meat as I had heartily rejected it when the proposition was first made; but by this time every cur had been cooked, and for eight-and-forty hours at a stretch did we subsist, working meanwhile to the utmost of our strength, on such roots as could be torn from the frozen earth, or leaves that had as yet escaped the frost.

I would gladly have starved to death if thereby it had been possible Ephraim be relieved from suffering; but, alas, we were forced to starve together, and let me set it down here to the dear boy's credit, that never once during that terrible time of distress did I hear a single complaining word from his lips.

Nor was young Randolph one whit behind him in bravery.

The lad from Virginia wore a cheery smile while the pangs of hunger gnawed at his stomach, and he was ever ready with an encouraging word when those near at hand faltered from sheer weakness of body.

We were clannish in those dreadful days, a dozen or more banding themselves together as if by closest companionship they could best ward off starvation, and all idea of military formation was lost as we staggered on across one portage after another, dragging the burdens when we were too weak to carry them, and abandoning everything not absolutely necessary for the final success of the expedition.

The invalids, and there were many who carelessly made a hearty meal of the acorns which could be found quite abundantly, thereby causing additional distress and mortal illness—these I say dragged themselves along our line of march until it was no longer possible to advance one foot before the other, when, crawling under the bushes to hide the last agony with the instinct of a brute, or propped against a tree that it might be possible for the fast-dimming eye to see the band until the very end, died pitifully, and he who shall return over that trail this coming spring may never lose his way even though he travel at a run, because of the human bones which mark our path.

But enough of this woeful tale which for us was dragged out in thirty-three periods.

Thirty-three times did the sun rise upon our misery and as often set, we little expecting to see it again.

During this time death had claimed victims to the number of two hundred, and one would have said when our boats were finally launched upon the waters of the Chaudière that not one of all that party could survive until the morrow.

Yet were we spared—spared some of us that we might die with our faces to the foe, others to languish in prison, and the remainder—Heaven grant they may find their way home again, even though such may not be my fortune.

It can well be supposed that during this time of dire distress we who had formed friendships for each other were knitted yet more closely together by suffering, and those who were at enmity with their companions forgot for the time being all thoughts of revenge or mischief.

Therefore it was that neither Ephraim nor I came in contact with Bart Green.

We, that is to say, the hunting party, had remained together as comrades even when it was no longer of avail for us to roam through the forest in search of game, and consequently

had little or no intercourse with the other members of the expedition.

We had our burdens apportioned to us, and we crossed the portages or made our way through the water-courses as best we might, comparatively alone, for where there was so much suffering which could not be relieved, each did his best to shut it out from view—not with any selfish purpose, but because it saved his heart additional pangs.

Arriving at the Chaudière River the current carried us toward the destination with but little labor on our part, and well it was so, for even the strongest among us could not have wielded a paddle continuously for one hour.

Hunger was not appeased; but yet I suffered less from it because of the knowledge that we were approaching some portion of the country where food might be procured—the country we had hoped to conquer, but from which now we expected relief.

Once on this river we stood good chance of finding deer, and at the close of the first day's drifting with the current, for we paddled but little owing to feebleness, Captain Morgan came himself to where we were lying upon the ground

cowering under our blankets, hunger making us more sensible to the cold, and gave orders that on the following morning we were to resume our duties as hunters.

“You should find much game here,” he said, “and whatever you first bring down it shall be your duty to cook and eat without delay, regardless of us, for strength will be needed if you are to spend the day in the forest.”

“But where are we to overtake the expedition?” Percy asked. “The boats will drift faster than we can walk, and if much time is spent searching for meat we shall be left behind.”

“The commander has given orders that the men remain here eight-and-forty hours to recruit, if indeed that may be possible when we are growing weaker daily for lack of food, but I have great hope you will bring us good cheer from the forest. Therefore we shall stay at this encampment not only throughout to-morrow, but the next day, and here you are to return.”

It was as if God directed our steps when, faint nigh to exhaustion, we set out from the camp as the first gray light of day appeared in the eastern sky.

We were not yet one mile from the river, each of the party advancing an hundred paces or more to the right or left of his companion, when Ephraim discharged his rifle, and the echoes had not ceased before he burst into a mad, exultant cry, such as I would have said could come from none other than a crazy person.

“A buck! A buck!” he shouted, and instantly all of us dashed toward him as he ran swiftly forward, until we arrived at the game pierced through the heart by a rifle-ball, when we plunged our knives into the carcass in a delirium of joy.

I am glad now it is possible to say with truth that at this moment we forgot not our famishing companions in the camp.

While cutting out such portions of the meat as could be most expeditiously prepared, young Randolph suggested that all of the carcass save what we should claim be sent back to the river at once, and lots were drawn to decide who should carry the burden.

The choice fell upon the strongest of the party, and without waiting to partake of the food, but carrying his portion in his hand as if fearing he might be deprived of it, the Virginian

set out, leaving us to cook the first scrap of meat which we had had for more than twelve days.

A fire was built as quickly as our trembling fingers could work the flint and steel, and so ravenous were we, once the odor of burning flesh assailed our nostrils, that the venison was hardly more than blackened by the flame before we began to devour it.

The luxury of that first meal after the long period of starvation was a sensation such as I had never known before, although the portion set out as my share seemed but to whet my hunger.

Insufficient in amount though the food was, it refreshed us to a wonderful extent, and when, after a delay of not more than ten minutes, we were ready to continue the hunt, each of us set out as do men who have enjoyed a long repose.

“It is as if I had had both sleep and food,” Ephraim said to me as we began the work. “One more meal like that and I can almost believe I shall forget how hungry we have been.”

This day passed to us like a sweet dream, and to those in camp it must have been one of

most devout thanksgiving, for twice before the sun had set did we send back game until, with what we brought in at sunset, it all amounted to eleven deer, four-score rabbits, and as many partridges.

I saw Bart Green tearing and snapping at a half-roasted portion of a buck's leg, much as a dog rends a bone, and I said to myself if there be such a thing as heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head, then have I done that same by this guide who so treacherously tried to murder me, for although it may not have been my bullet which brought down the flesh that was saving him from starvation, I was one of the party who fetched it in, and mayhap he realized it.

Because of this supply of food which had invigorated all, even though each one's portion was much too small for his necessities, the commander of the expedition decided that the party should push forward a matter of five miles that same night, and there make camp while we, having a new hunting field, went to procure more game.

This part of the programme was carried out faithfully, and on the second evening after reaching the Chaudière River I warrant every

one of our hunger-stricken company felt renewed life and vigor.

From that day we progressed steadily on our course, traveling slowly in order to regain strength, and all, saving our party of hunters, gaining rest hour by hour.

We worked to our utmost powers, and, as was but right, fed ourselves more generously than we did those who remained comparatively idle, having as a reward the knowledge that we were bringing life and health to our companions in arms.

Then came the day when we were arrived at the habitations of men, and the journey through the wilderness was a thing of the past, bloody and desperately painted, but yet possible now to look back upon as something that had been endured—not a time which we must live over again.

Beef cattle were seized in the name of the American colonies, and from that hour we knew not hunger in its most terrible form, although many times were our rations sadly disproportionate to our appetites.

Regarding our descending of the Chaudière River there is nothing to be said save that we

feasted and rested, meeting with no opposition from the inhabitants whom we met, knowing no bickerings among ourselves, but journeying onward with little labor as those should journey who have purchased by their sufferings such respite.

It was late in the afternoon of the thirteenth of November when we were arrived at the St. Lawrence River, within a matter of five or six miles from the city of Quebec on the opposite side—a city we had braved so much to attack.

The troops now reduced to seven hundred—perhaps a few more—were in good bodily condition, and, although the number was small as compared with the task before us, we were full of confidence in our power, for had we not encountered far greater dangers than that of assaulting a fortified city?

Now we were drawn up in military line, and for the first time since the faint-hearted ones had created a mutiny in camp, were we addressed as soldiers.

Although Ephraim and I were not regularly enlisted men, the fact of our having shared the dangers and sufferings of the long march had made it seem to us as if we were indeed mem-

bers of the Virginia company, and I warrant, ignorant though we were of the art of warfare, we had at heart as much interest in a good showing of that company as even the captain himself.

When we halted on this day with the knowledge that ere another four-and-twenty hours had passed we would be fronting the enemy, Master Severance sat himself down near where Ephraim and I were cleaning our rifles, and I asked of him that question which had been in my mind since the hour we knew beyond peradventure the remainder of our band would complete the journey :

“How may it be that Ephraim and I, ignorant of all a soldier’s duty, shall, on the Plain of Abraham, or wherever we may confront the foe, play our part equally with our companions?”

“And wherefore should you not?” Master Severance replied kindly. “You have the courage and the willingness, which must go far toward balancing your ignorance. I guarantee, lads, that you bear up with the best of us, even though you know not the manual of arms.”

“We may be able to stand shoulder to shoulder as we are minded to do ; but it is of a soldier’s duties I speak.”

“When it comes to a matter of that, lad, we are none of us in this expedition, barring perhaps such an one as Colonel Arnold, who may be called a soldier. Wait until you shall see the British troops, and then will it be known what that word means. We are not an army, nor should we be though our number were seven thousand instead of seven hundred.”

“Then how may we oppose an army?”

“By the righteousness of the Cause, and our own courage. So that you stand shoulder to shoulder with your comrades is all that the best of us can do when the fighting begins.”

“And think you we shall have a battle, Master Severance?” I asked, growing timorous for a moment.

“Ay, lad, how else can it be? Those who defend Quebec are not likely to surrender when a ragamuffin troop like ours makes its appearance before the city, and should we gain that post our blood, and much of it, must be the price. I do not say this to dishearten you, lads, for after what has been undergone without a murmur he would be a villain who should try to do that; but it is best you know what lies before us, and well you should understand that many

of us must yield up our lives on yonder plain. But the death will be a pleasure compared to the ending of our comrades whom we left in the wilderness, for it will come quickly, though sharply, and in the heat of battle, where one thinks of but little save the end to be attained."

Master Severance spoke in so kindly a tone, and with so much of feeling as if toward us two, that I was heartened greatly by his words, even though they were of possible death.

When Ephraim and I were laid down side by side for an hour's rest before we should begin the journey across the river, which it had been determined was to be made after nightfall, the lad said to me, gripping my hand hard :

"If it so be, Jason, that in the coming battle I am taken and you are left, remember always that during those terrible hours in the wilderness you were to me as father, mother, and brother. Never could a friend be more true, or a comrade more friendly."

It was as if the dear lad were preparing for death to hear him speak thus, and I begged that he say no more, claiming we were quits so far as kindness toward each other went, for

when the days were darkest his show of affection for me went far to uphold my heart, and but for him I might have fallen by the wayside like many others whose bones lay uncovered on our trail.

We formed in ranks by the river's side shortly after sunset on this thirteenth of November, and Colonel Arnold spoke to us such words as perchance he thought we needed to strengthen our courage, after which all embarked, our company leading the way in five boats, Ephraim, Percy, and myself in the same craft with Captain Morgan.

There were none to dispute our progress, and I believed we had come upon the city secretly until I overheard a converse between Captain Morgan and Lieutenant Heth, which surprised me greatly, for until this moment I had been ignorant of the fact.

“If word had not been sent in the hope it might reach our friends, I would have more heart in this matter, believing we were come upon them unawares,” the captain said, and I pricked up my ears, asking myself where had a messenger been found in the wilderness.

“It may not be the Indian has betrayed us,”

Lieutenant Heth replied, and then I remembered that one day when we returned from the hunting it was said by our companions who remained behind that a party of savages had visited the encampment.

“It may not be,” Captain Morgan said doubtfully, “yet to my mind no word should have been sent, then were there no chances for betrayal. The lightest whisper now will put the garrison on their guard, whereas did we come before them out of the night they might capitulate through sheer terror, because of our sudden appearance.”

“What has been done cannot be undone,” the lieutenant said hesitatingly; “and mind you this be no reproof, but it is not for us to question that which the commander would do.”

“True for you, Heth, yet we may speak as man to man now and then, and I argue that even though the messenger fulfilled his duty faithfully, there was so little to be gained by giving notice of our arrival to any of General Montgomery’s forces, that we could well dispense with it in order to make certain there should be no treachery.”

“Do we attack to-night?” and I thought the lieutenant asked the question in order to change the subject, rather than to gain information.

“I would say yes were my wishes consulted; but Colonel Arnold is an experienced soldier, having had many important commands, while I know little save how to fight. Our force cannot hope to strike much dismay to the Britishers’ hearts by merely showing themselves, whereas to make our first appearance with a heavy blow would be greatly in our favor.”

When this short converse was ended I whispered to young Randolph that I believed there had been some difference of opinion between the commander and our captain.

“So there has been if I mistake not,” he replied. “No longer ago than this afternoon, when it was decided we should attempt crossing the river to-night, did I see Captain Morgan in private consultation with the commander, and it appeared then to me as if there was much difference of opinion. Now we know what it was, and I dare wager Colonel Arnold is in the wrong.”

“In which case Quebec may not be ours, even though we have struggled so long and painfully

to reach the gates," I said half to myself, whereat Percy fired up, asking indignantly if I believed any body of men short of five times our number could resist us.

To this I had no reply, although it seemed to me much as though we had no right to reckon ourselves more than a match for an equal force, since there were many in our company like Ephraim and myself, who had no knowledge whatever of warfare, save such as might have been gained from the words of others.

However, argue as we might upon our ability to do battle, nothing could be decided until we were put to the test, and there was every indication that before many hours passed we who had crossed the wilderness would soon know whether righteousness of Cause could outbalance ignorance of military manœuvres.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

WHILE we were crossing the river Captain Morgan began to speak of what Wolfe had done before this city of Quebec, reminding us we were now advancing to the very place where that general had led his troops to a glorious victory; but even while recalling those thrilling deeds I observed that he held private converse now and then with Lieutenant Heth, concerning, as I believed, the possible treachery of the messenger in whom Colonel Arnold had placed confidence.

This last matter took such a hold on my mind that when we were landed on the opposite shore and stood to our arms waiting for the remainder of our forces to come up, I questioned Master Severance regarding it.

“Ay, lad, I have heard the colonel sent a message by a friendly Indian to General Montgomery himself, or some officer on his staff; but it was while we were hunting, therefore I know nothing more than has been told me.”

“How did the colonel know the Indian was friendly to our people?”

“That I cannot say. Mayhap the two had met before. As you know, even though you may not have seen, more than one red man has been met since we began to descend the river.”

I had gained no information more than I had already been in possession of through the conversation between the captain and the lieutenant, and my mind was ill at ease, for whenever the subject of our expedition had been mentioned in my hearing, great stress was laid on the fact of our being able suddenly to appear as if having sprung from out of the forest, which surprise would be greatly to our advantage.

Should we be deprived of that through treachery, there seemed to me little hope our small band would make any great havoc among the enemy.

However, I realized that I would cut a poor figure as a soldier if I grew faint-hearted now the direst distress had been overcome, and we were where action was possible; therefore I plucked up courage by talking with Ephraim regarding what we hoped to do.

Under cover of the darkness the troops landed silently as a party of spectres, two miles or more above the city, and when all were in line the whispered word of command to move was given.

After having been cramped so long in the boats a goodly number of our companions made but poor showing at marching, though we hunters found it no more than child's play to climb up the steep ascent which led to that ground where the blood of heroes had already been lavishly spilled.

It was not yet day when we were arrived on the heights, and there in line of battle we awaited the rising of the sun, all, save perhaps the commanders, believing that within a few hours we would engage in deadly combat.

We shivered in the frosty night air, yet knew it not, for—and I am now judging the others by myself—all our faculties were absorbed in the one thought of what the coming of the sun might mean for us.

When the first gray light had grown so strong that it was possible to see my companions' faces, I looked eagerly around to learn their temper, and nowhere were any signs of faltering apparent.

Small in numbers though we were, every man seemed bent on giving a good account of himself when we found ourselves face to face with the red-coats, and I was heartened by this brave show of determination.

Then, slowly at first, came the red light of a new day, and suddenly the sun showed himself, flinging shafts of gold on our ragamuffin troop like unto harbingers of hope, and faces which had been grim were almost radiant with exultation, that, having overcome so many and serious dangers, we were first at the rendezvous.

No one appeared to think it strange we had arrived in advance of General Montgomery's forces.

Not a man bewailed the fact that we were but seven hundred, unsupported, and without supplies save as we might be able to gather them from the country roundabout.

Now we began to see heads above the fortifications, as the Britishers came from their beds to look at us; but there was no show of surprise or fear, and Master Severance muttered so loud that I heard the words distinctly though he was fourth from me:

“They have already heard of our coming,

and the fight with the wilderness has been in vain."

"Why are you certain?" Percy asked in a whisper, for the silence was so profound at this moment that one must needs be brave to break it.

"But for the fact that we had been expected, there would be a scurrying to and fro among those red-coated gentry; but yet they look at us as calmly as if we were members of a peep-show whose coming has been heralded in advance."

More than Master Severance was of the same mind, as could be told by the murmur of voices along the line, and so great did this speedily become that Sergeant Potterfield warned us of the Virginia company to hold our peace.

Then, suddenly from out the group of officers around Colonel Arnold one advanced with a white flag, and before him marched a drummer and a bugler.

With beating heart I watched them as they walked boldly to the very gate of the citadel, where it seemed to me they held a parley with those behind the walls.

"What is the meaning of it?" I asked Master Severance, for it must be remembered that I was ignorant of all the usages of war.

“Our commander has demanded the surrender of the city and its works,” the old man replied.

“And will he be obeyed, think you?”

“I warrant he himself has no hope of such an ending to the parley. It is a vain display which will come to naught but laughter, so far as the Britishers are concerned. Having had time to make preparations for defense, the enemy will force us to pay for what we get.”

Almost as he ceased speaking I saw the officer and his escort returning, and again our people began to murmur.

Then, as if the sole purpose of coming to this place had been to advertise our whereabouts, we were marched hither and yon, constantly moving further from the fortifications, until the word to “halt and break ranks” was given.

All save Ephraim and myself appeared to understand the meaning of what looked to us like the beginning of a retreat, and again I approached Master Severance with questions.

“It means that we are not to make an attack until General Montgomery’s troops have arrived,” he said kindly. “Here we shall stay as best we may, and I warrant you young chaps

will be eager to act as foragers in order to warm your blood, for this is no sheltered encampment."

It was as if the Virginia company had been forgotten, for no order came to us during this day, and we busied ourselves by setting up such shelter against the snow and wind as could be formed of boughs and bushes brought from the surrounding country.

"We were allowed to forage in the forest, because no others dared do the work," Percy said grumblingly as he, Ephraim, and I shivered behind the makeshift for a camp near the close of the day. "Now when we might be doing such duty as would keep us from freezing to death, the colonel's favorites are detailed for the task."

"How know you any men have been sent out?" Ephraim asked.

"I saw them when I dragged the first load of boughs up here, and Green, the murderous villain, was of the number."

"Perhaps they were but on their way to look after the boats."

"No fear the crowd I saw would do such common work, and besides, Green himself

shouted to me that we would no longer be allowed to get all the cream."

"Did he dare thus accost you?" I cried in a rage.

"That he did, and now is come the time when you had best have a sharp eye out on him, Jason. He has never forgiven you for coming to life when he believed you dead, and may yet work mischief."

"Surely he can't have such thoughts in his mind after so long a time, otherwise I would have seen signs of it while we were in the forest."

"Then he was slowly starving to death, and our company were bringing in the greater portion of the small supply of food. Now that he is well fed, his currish nature comes uppermost, and if he sees the chance to do you an ill turn will take advantage of it. I heard Sergeant Potterfield say that Green stood well with our commander, because he remained by the party when the other guides refused to accompany us longer."

I was not so much disturbed by what young Randolph told me, as by the fact that the villainous guide had dared taunt my comrade with

our being left unsummoned when a service was required, and it rankled in my mind until my eyes were finally closed by sleep that night.

It was bitterly cold there where we had been halted, and the supply of wood to be obtained so small and costing so much in labor that our fires were hardly more than sufficient to give us light.

Food was forthcoming in reasonable abundance, however, and surely we who had endured starvation with but few murmurs could brave the weather cheerfully.

Percy and I lay either side of Ephraim on this night, and all our blankets were heaped above us, yet the frost found its way to our fingers and toes until we were forced to arise many times to take exercise lest we freeze.

Those who stood guard were not to be pitied, for they could at least keep themselves warm by tramping to and fro, while we were obliged to remain inactive.

When the morrow came we saw the second demand made for the surrender of the city; but knew full well, even as the officer went forward with the flag, that it would be refused, for what had we been able to do that the enemy should

stand more in fear of us than on the day previous?

A detachment of the Virginia company was detailed for guard duty on this morning, and I was among the number.

Percy and Ephraim had been ordered to accompany Captain Morgan on a reconnoissance above the town, and for the first time since joining the expedition, were we three comrades separated.

I was first on the beat, and posted over against that portion of the plain where I could have a full view of those of our people who were gathering wood.

It was where no great danger might be apprehended, otherwise I would not have been stationed there; but I remained as vigilant as if it was the most important post on the plain.

The exercise of walking to and fro with a rifle on my shoulder warmed my blood until I felt in a particularly cheery mood, and our situation seemed somehow to have grown more hopeful, when suddenly Bart Green stood before me.

For the instant surprise held me dumb.

From the moment when he saw me after I had been believed dead, the villain had not so

much as looked in my direction when we chanced to be in the same neighborhood, yet now it appeared as if he would speak.

I remained silent, understanding that the first word would tell me whether he had come as an enemy or a friend, and was not long kept in ignorance.

“This is better than starving in the wilderness,” he said, with the air of one who speaks to a comrade.

“Yet we may be nearer death,” I replied gravely.

“No more so than you were when the jam broke.”

I looked at him steadily, minded he should broach whatever subject he had in his thoughts without aid from me.

He colored under my gaze; shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and finally, as if unable to control himself longer, cried in a rage:

“You may think I have forgotten that you and your comrade tried to cast discredit on me as a guide! You knew that by causing us to be dismissed you might get the money which had been promised us, and did your best to work the mischief.”

“You are saying that which you know to be untrue,” I interrupted. “Ephraim and I have always lived on the river, and were well acquainted with the obstructions near-about our clearing. We only consented to guide the expedition over that portion which was familiar to us, after which you and your mates were to take the lead, as indeed you did.”

“So that is the way you have fixed it up?” he asked with a grin that caused my anger to rise almost beyond bounds.

“I have fixed nothing; that is the truth, and the same now as when you tried to murder me.”

Now anger got the better of him again, and his face was white with passion as he cried:

“I thought you would lead up to that!”

“And why should I not? I have held my peace when to speak would have cost your life, and surely I may do so now when we are alone.”

“Think you a lie would have cost me my life?”

“It is not a lie.”

“I say it is! One made out of whole cloth!”

“If there be no truth in it, why did you say you expected I would ‘lead up to it’?”

He understood he had bungled, and with this

knowledge his anger rose yet higher, until he had but little command over his speech.

“What has failed once may yet be successful, you whelp! If you do not rue the day when such a slight was put upon me and my mates, it will be because I do not live long enough to pay off the score! Don’t think one mistake will balk me; the next time I shall be more careful!”

“Look here, Bart Green,” I said deliberately, holding my rifle leveled for I intended he should remain until my speech was ended, otherwise I was in a mood to stop him with a bullet, “I have held my peace to save you from being hanged; but now that you threaten to make another attempt at killing me, the commander shall know all.”

“Think you such a charge would be believed after so many days have passed? If I had done what you say, the story would have been told at once. I thought you meant to do so; but finding that it was to be kept a secret I realized my safety, otherwise I should have turned back with my mates. I stayed by the party in order, first, to get the money which had been promised, and secondly, that I might wipe off the score against you!”

I was staggered by the venom of the creature.

Deep in his heart he knew that neither Ephraim nor I had done him an ill turn, and yet because what we did for the good of the expedition might have chanced to be to his disadvantage, he was eager to commit murder!

I also understood that it would be of no avail for me to accuse him to the commander at this late day, and my anger began to give way to fear, but he saw it not.

Gathering myself together with no slight effort, I spoke to him firmly:

“Hark you, Green, I am bound to protect my life, and the second time you attempt to take it the odds may be more nearly even. After your threat I shall not wait for you to show signs of mischief, but will shoot you like a cur at the first suspicious move. Have a care that you walk straight while in my company, for from this moment I am prepared to kill you at the slightest provocation, and after that has been done I shall be held harmless for having rid the world of such a worthless cur!”

Then, without giving him chance to speak, I walked up my beat, knowing full well he would not dare to strike while my back was turned, for

the other members of the guard were too near at hand.

When, having paced to the length of the post, I retraced my steps, I saw him going down the slope toward the thicket.

From there he might shoot at me without great danger of being known to have done so, even though it was day; but I would not show I was timorous by telling the captain of the guard what had been said.

I even feared he would make some such attempt, yet I managed to hold a firm rein over my timorousness, and continued to do duty as sentinel until relieved from the task.

When I returned to the poor barricade against the wind which we called our camp, I found there my comrades, and so full was my heart with forebodings that it was impossible I could hold my peace regarding the interview with the assassin Green.

Percy and Ephraim were troubled beyond measure by the news I brought, and showed deepest concern, for both believed the matter even more serious than I myself was disposed to admit.

“Some decisive step must be taken before

another sun sets," Percy cried. "It was a grave mistake to remain silent at the time he tried to kill you, and because of that the danger is all the greater now."

"We must see to it Colonel Arnold knows what has been done," Ephraim suggested. "He surely will believe the story, even though we are late in the telling."

To such a course I objected, because it savored too much of cowardice to run to our commanding officer as if we were unable to look after ourselves, and so I told my comrades.

"But this is no common case," Ephraim insisted. "If it was anything concerning our comfort, or for the relief of mind, it would be different. You are threatened by an assassin who can find an hundred chances of carrying out his threats, particularly if there should be a battle."

"Yet you and I ought to be a match for a man like him!" I replied, and Percy cried hotly :

"Why do you not count me in? Why did you not say the three of us should be a match for him? Am I not a comrade?"

"Indeed you are, and a true one; but there

is no reason why we should drag you into this mischief.”

“Is that treating me as a comrade? If danger threatens one of you, I should likewise be in peril, and all that concerns you, concerns me. I have—”

He was interrupted by the coming of Sergeant Potterfield who, halting directly in front of us, said stiffly :

“Captain Morgan would have speech with you three at headquarters, and at once.”

“To what purpose, Sergeant?” Percy cried as the soldier was turning away.

“If I knew I should not anticipate the captain’s orders. You have an odd idea of a sergeant’s duty, Master Randolph, if you think he goes around the camp bawling any news which may have come to him under orders of secrecy.”

This speech sounded oddly in my ears, and I fancied it betokened important work for us.

Usually the sergeant was most friendly; but now his rank sat upon him so stiffly he apparently could not unbend in private.

“It stands us in hand to make a visit to headquarters, and though nothing more come of it, we shall be sheltered from this biting

wind at least for so long as we are there," Ephraim said cheerily as he scrambled to his feet.

It always heartened me to hear my comrade speak in such fashion when we were uncomfortable either in mind or body, for it showed that he was not downcast, and while one can hold his courage troubles always grow smaller.

Therefore it was that all thoughts of Bart Green were put out of my mind for the moment, and we walked rapidly across the plain, for the wind was biting cold and our clothing had in them so many tatters that one needed to move lively to escape being frosted.

We found Captain Morgan and Lieutenant Heth the only occupants of the tent, and both had evidently been waiting especially for us.

"Well, lads," the captain cried, as if greeting comrades, "are you weary with these days of idleness?"

"We are, indeed, sir," Percy replied promptly, and added, although to my mind the words had better been left unspoken, "since we have been dismissed from the foraging party time hangs heavily, with nothing to do save listen to the wind whistle through the rents in our garments."

“Are you ready for a bit of dangerous work?”

I think we all spoke at the same time, so welcome was the thought of being actively engaged.

“It seems necessary that General Montgomery have news of our arrival, and since a few days past the commander has grown suspicious of Indian fidelity. A journey to Montreal would not be a pleasure trip, and much danger might attend those who traveled the road as Americans; but yet a messenger must be sent.”

“And you are giving us the opportunity to act as the messengers, sir?” young Randolph asked eagerly, and I fancied I could see a gleam of pride in the captain’s eyes.

“If you volunteer I readily grant leave of absence; but it is not a mission on which I would order a man.”

“We have already volunteered, and most heartily,” I made haste to say, and both Ephraim and Percy grasped my hands to show that they were of the same mind.

“If our men were like our boys, Heth, I warrant you I could take Quebec in four-and-twenty hours,” Captain Morgan said to the lieutenant, and his words were all the praise the most greedy among us could have desired.

CHAPTER IX

OUTWITTED

It was thus decided that we should make an attempt to gain speech with General Montgomery.

There was no necessity of formally asking for leave of absence, and instead of spending the time in playing upon words we set about learning in what manner we had best make the journey.

Percy asked the question boldly of Captain Morgan, who replied in this wise :

“It is not for me to say in any way as shall seem like giving directions, how you are to proceed. It is best you settle the question between yourselves after gathering such information relative to the course as may seem necessary. For my part I would say, and mind you this is only a suggestion to be cast aside if any other method seems more easy of accomplishment—I should say the journey might be made with less danger by water than by land, although it will

require you to paddle against the current the entire distance, and in case of delay you will be forced to go ashore in search of game for food. Whereas, if you travel on the trail, the hunting could be done without loss of time ; but it appears to me probable more enemies would be met."

"I am in favor of taking the water-way if it so be we can procure a light canoe," Percy said, looking at me as if to read from my face whether I approved of this plan.

Both Ephraim and I were in favor of the boat journey, and speedily made this known, at which the matter was settled.

It only remained to make the final preparations.

"You are not to be hampered by orders in any way, save that you shall proceed to Montreal with all safe dispatch, and once there report the news of our arrival to General Montgomery, if it so be you find him," Captain Morgan said after we were agreed among ourselves as to the manner in which the venture should be made. "Sergeant Potterfield is empowered to procure such articles as you may deem necessary, and you will call upon him for the outfit."

It appeared to me as if the captain intended that these words should close the interview, and I turned to leave the tent, for it was my purpose to set out that very night since there was no good reason for delay.

The commander of the Virginia company checked me by extending his hand to each of us in turn, and this ceremonious leave-taking was not at all to my liking, for it seemed much as though he questioned whether we might ever meet again.

Lieutenant Heth was no less kindly toward us than the captain, and I felt considerably disturbed in mind when we finally went out from the tent.

But not so with my companions.

Both were heartened wonderfully by the prospect of immediate action, and the fact that danger might be incurred served but to give for them an added spice to the venture.

One would have said at seeing them that it was some pleasure excursion on which they were bent, and not a journey through a country peopled by our enemies.

That Sergeant Potterfield knew wherefore we had been summoned was shown by the fact

that he met us as we came out of the tent, and stood at "attention" like one who expected to be called upon for a favor or a service.

"Can we have a birchen canoe, Sergeant?" Percy asked, not waiting to salute.

"So you have decided to go by water?"

"Yes, it promises a more speedy passage."

"Is there anything else you may need?" the sergeant asked as he turned to me, and after stopping an instant to reflect, I replied:

"We have our rifles and sufficient ammunition. So that you provide us with four or five days' rations we should be fully equipped."

"When do you start?" he asked, and Percy said before I could make reply:

"Within an hour. There is no reason why we should linger, and in this weather work at the paddles is a pleasure compared with conversing here on the heights."

"The rations and canoe shall be in readiness at the cove where we first landed, within thirty minutes."

Then the sergeant saluted us gravely as if we had been his superior officers, and walked swiftly away, Ephraim saying as he disappeared in the gloom, for the night had now fully come:

“One would think that we were going into the very jaws of death, judging from the respect which is suddenly shown us.”

“I do not think it will be quite so bad as that, yet the journey cannot be made without peril,” I replied with a faint smile, for although I rejoiced at being employed, there was no great gladness in my heart because of the fact that we were to venture ourselves in the enemy’s country, where to be apprehended might mean for us the death of spies.

“By this time General Montgomery may have captured Montreal,” Percy suggested.

“Even though he has, the number of Britishers between here and there cannot have been greatly lessened, and no large force would be required to effect our capture.”

“Why must you seek to find cause for discomfort?” Ephraim asked petulantly. “It is a relief that we have employment, and since we have decided to go, our condition will not be improved by your searching after bugbears.”

“You are right, Ephraim,” and thus recalled to a more manly part, I resolved to treat the venture as did my companions, like unto something greatly to be desired.

And in good truth I was more relieved at this going forth among brave enemies than I should have been at remaining in camp knowing an assassin was constantly dogging my footsteps.

However great the danger might be, it was hardly more than I myself would most likely be exposed to while remaining with the command, where I doubted not Bart Green would carry his threat into execution at the first favorable opportunity.

We took leave of Master Severance, whom we had all come to look upon as a comrade, and also of the others who had belonged to the hunting party; but further than that no mention was made by us of our departure.

Alone, for we entreated Master Severance not to accompany us, we made our way down from the heights in the darkness, where was found, true to his word, Sergeant Potterfield standing guard over a canoe which I observed was partially laden with provisions.

Into her our blankets were thrown, and as we would have taken our places the sergeant delayed us a moment to say :

“While it seems necessary you should start in good season, lads, I question whether you be wise in setting forth at night. The hours ’twixt now and daylight can make but little difference in the success of your mission.”

“In that I do not agree with you, Sergeant,” I made bold to say. “While it is dark we have little fear of being hindered by either friend or foe, and it were better, according to my way of thinking, that we took our sleep while the sun shines.”

“As you will, lads, as you will. The venture is yours, not mine, or any other man’s in the command, and so also is the danger. Therefore it is but right you yourselves direct the manner in which it is to be done. God bless and send you a happy return.”

Here was another solemn leave-taking; but I put from my mind the forebodings it caused, and taking the bow paddle left my comrades to decide who should be the idle one during the first stage of the journey.

Young Randolph insisted on aiding in the work, and since Ephraim had nothing to do until it should come his turn, I proposed that the lad muffle himself in all the blankets,

for the air was biting cold, and he who took not exercise stood good chance of being frosted.

Before the morning came I had reason to question whether this venture we were making was more than a commonplace journey, for we met no craft upon the river, and, thanks to the lightness of our canoe, pushed ahead at a more rapid pace than we could have accomplished while walking over the highway.

Not until the sun had fully risen did we halt, and after having built a fire at some distance back from the bank of the river where the smoke would not readily be seen, our canoe in the meanwhile being concealed among the pine boughs, we prepared such a breakfast as was possible from the rations provided.

The cold no longer seemed as intense. Our blood was tingling because of the exercise, and all three were in the best possible spirits, for this happy beginning of the journey promised well for the end.

It was decided while we ate an exceedingly hearty meal, to push on at least two hours longer before stopping for sleep, and this we did, meeting with no further adventure than had been ours during the night.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun was near to setting, we were ready to resume the journey, and once more throughout the hours of darkness we plied the paddles until, when the sun rose for the second time after our departure, we had placed a greater distance between us and the city Colonel Arnold hoped to capture than any of us had counted on when we left the camp.

The ice, which had already begun to form along the banks of the river, prevented us from landing at any place which our fancy might dictate, and therefore was it necessary in choosing a camp to go where we could do so with the least danger of damaging the frail craft.

On this morning we paddled an hour longer than had been our intention, because of the difficulty in finding an open shore.

Then it was that we were almost startled by seeing the smoke of a camp-fire at the very location we had decided to make camp, and we approached warily, but grew more bold on seeing but three persons ashore—two Indians, and a white man, who, from his garb, I judged to be a farmer.

“It is a peaceable-looking party,” Percy sug-

gested, "and since the odds are even in case they should prove unfriendly, I am in favor of joining them. We may paddle many miles before finding as good a place in which to camp."

Ephraim was also content to take the chances, which I myself considered slight, and the canoe was pulled toward the shore, our arrival causing but little surprise, most likely because we had been observed some time previous.

Addressing myself to the farmer, when I saw that neither of my companions were minded to act the part of spokesman, I apologized for intruding upon him by saying if our coming caused offense we were ready to move on.

"No; the shore is as much yours as mine, and we would indeed be churlish to refuse in this weather a share of the camp-fire. Draw in, and if it so be you hunger, we have provisions."

None could have spoken us more fairly, and I said to myself that here was an honest man whom it was our good fortune to meet, if it so chanced he was traveling our way, for we might join forces, and thus, because of numbers, be in less danger of interference from evil-disposed persons.

Percy was not minded to be beholden to the stranger for food, and, while I thanked the farmer for his generous offer, brought our rations from the canoe, throwing them down in front of the fire to show that all were at liberty to share the store.

The party had already breakfasted, so the farmer said, as he declined with courteous thanks young Randolph's mute invitation.

"We ourselves have food in plenty, and would willingly divide with you if your journey promises to be longer than ours."

"Are you traveling up or down the river, sir?" I asked.

"Down," he replied. "Can you give me the news from Quebec?"

There was no thought in my mind that I might be indiscreet in replying fairly to the farmer's question, and therefore said without hesitation :

"The American troops are before the city, and have demanded its surrender."

"Americans from—from whence come these troops?"

"Through the wilderness from Massachusetts."

“And by whom commanded?”

“Colonel Benedict Arnold.”

“Know you their number, young sir?”

Because of these questions asked so rapidly, and the blackening of the farmer's face as I replied glibly, giving information which I should have bitten my tongue out before allowing it to escape my lips, caused me to suddenly realize the stupidity of which I was guilty.

“That I cannot say, sir,” was my reply, and both Percy and Ephraim looked up quickly, in surprise most likely that I should have so suddenly changed my tune.

On his part the farmer appeared in nowise disappointed because the information was withheld, though he must have known it could readily have been given, and instead of questioning me further regarding the Americans, he spoke of the severity of the weather, or the possibility that the ice would soon make the river impassable for boats.

He continued in such conversation as one would expect from a farmer, until the shadow of suspicion which had fallen upon me was dispelled, and I looked upon him once more as at first.

We had partaken of our breakfast. Ephraim added to the store of fuel, and Percy was making ready a bed by trimming the tops of fir boughs, when the farmer, arising as if to depart, asked in a careless tone :

“Think you, young sir, I shall be interfered with by the Americans if I try to enter Quebec?”

“Is it your purpose to go to that city, sir?” I asked, forgetting my manners.

“Ay, if it so be I can. Business which is important calls me there, but I would not care to venture an encounter with the soldiers.”

“I cannot say whether any would be prevented from entering the city; but it does not seem likely our forces—I mean the American forces—would allow people to go at will in and out of what is much the same as a besieged city.”

“I can but make the attempt, and if any trouble is likely to arise therefrom I shall be at liberty to return, for surely the American soldiers cannot be afraid of one man.”

“They will at least treat you courteously, sir, and of that I have no question,” Percy said, ceasing from his labors that he might take leave

of one who had really acted the part of host to us, and as soon as might be thereafter, the farmer and his Indians, the last of whom had not so much as spoken during our stay, departed on their way down the river.

This meeting seemed to us so natural and unimportant that we made no mention of it among ourselves when we were alone, save to speculate as to whether the traveler would be denied entrance by our troops.

Then we set about taking advantage of the opportunity for rest, and had but just wrapped ourselves in the blankets when the sound of paddles brought me to my feet suddenly, as I said, laughingly, to my comrades :

“It seems proven in our case that it never rains but it pours. We have met with no one until this morning, and now the river is teeming with travelers.”

The camping-place we had taken possession of was in full view of any who might be passing in boats, and I was not surprised when, on looking out from amid the bushes, I saw, heading directly toward the camp-fire, this last craft whose coming had interfered with our plans for slumber.

It was a canoe containing but one man, who acted as if knowing full well in which direction he wished to go until perceiving me, when he ceased paddling suddenly to look about him with an air of perplexity.

I was in nowise disposed to open the conversation, and he in turn was backward about speaking until the canoe had drifted so far down the stream that Ephraim and Percy could be seen by the voyager.

“Have you encamped here all night?” he asked, courteously.

“Only since an hour,” Percy shouted.

“And came you up the river?”

“We did.”

“Have you seen Sir Guy?”

“Who?” I asked in surprise, for I was not prepared to hear a nobleman’s name mentioned in this solitude.

“Sir Guy Carleton. He was to have encamped hereabouts last night.”

“Had he two Indians with him?” I asked.

“Yes, and journeyed in a canoe like unto mine.”

“Then he has just gone down the river,” I replied, and instantly the stranger bent himself

to the paddles with such purpose that the light craft was speedily beyond view around a rocky point.

Then I turned toward the camp-fire as if intending to lie down again, giving no heed to the name I had heard ; but started in something very like alarm on observing that Percy was sitting bolt upright with a look of amazement on his face.

“What is the matter ?” I cried.

“Repeat the name the stranger spoke,” he said sharply.

“It was Sir Guy Carleton, as I understood it.”

“And know you who that same nobleman is ?” Percy cried.

“I thought he was a farmer ; but it seems that I hit wide of the mark.”

“He is, or was lately, the commandant of his majesty’s forces at Montreal,” young Randolph said, speaking as if with difficulty. “We have entertained him in considerably more than royal fashion since, although but little information was given, that little was all he needed to know.”

I stood literally transfixed with surprise and fear, and during the time of silence which came

upon us all realized what an opportunity we had lost, through ignorance, of doing such a stroke of work as would have won for us the greatest praise, not only from the commanders of the expedition, but from our countrymen.

We had met the British general while he had with him but two attendants, and could as readily have made all the party prisoners as to have breakfasted with them.

This thought was in my mind when Ephraim cried like one who has made a discovery :

“ We could have done the British officer no better turn than by explaining all we did, and yet our captain thought us lads of such discretion that we should be entrusted with this mission.”

“ Better had we been put on guard duty, for then our tongues could have worked no harm.”

Again came a time of silence, broken only when Percy started up with the cry :

“ Why do we sit here? It may not be too late to make this nobleman our prisoner !”

He ran toward the water's edge as if bent on setting out at once in pursuit ; but I checked him.

“ The opportunity is lost and cannot be regained. Those two Indians could easily outstrip us in the race, and now that the British

general knows who we are, as surely he could not have failed to discover, it would be next to impossible for us to come upon him, besides which, this last stranger is now added to the force. No, no, Percy, we have made our bed and must lie upon it. Half an hour ago we might have covered ourselves with glory; now there is nothing to do but to bear the shame as best we can."

"I would rather do battle against him with the certainty of being worsted than remain inactive after having thus been outwitted!" young Randolph cried in a rage.

"Our mission is yet to be accomplished, and we have no right to delay it because of having proven ourselves so credulous. If we do not need rest, let us push on up the river, and by making extra speed try to atone for the fault committed."

"Yes, yes, let us go on!" Ephraim cried impatiently. "It would be impossible to sleep now after all we know."

I was of the same opinion.

Action, not rest, was what I needed to drown the chagrin which was mine, and ten minutes later, moody and silent, we were paddling at our best speed toward Montreal.

CHAPTER X

A JOYFUL MEETING

THE exercise of paddling was not only to our benefit, but it served as an outlet for the anger which we felt because of the stupidity displayed, and, as I have said, slumber was very far from our eyelids, even though we had indulged in no sleep since the day previous.

Each of us found good opportunity to reflect upon the blunder, since there was no attempt at conversation, and as I turned over in my mind the events of the morning I was filled with amazement that all three of us should have been so dull.

One or the other might have been drawn into a conversation heedlessly; but it surely seemed as if his comrades should have noted the fact at once—that either Percy or Ephraim ought to have had their wits about them sufficiently to check me when I began to speak too freely.

Over and over again did I reproach myself with having made a blunder which was almost

grave enough to be a crime, and for the time being it seemed to me that should the expedition prove a failure, I was the one directly responsible.

But reproaches would not mend matters, unfortunately, and the only course left us was to perform the mission with the utmost dispatch, which we were surely doing on this morning.

Not until noon did either member of the party show signs of fatigue, and then it was Percy who gave up his paddle to Ephraim—I had continued to work one from the moment we left the scene of our blunder—and said as he seated himself in the stern :

“Because we made fools of ourselves this morning, there is no reason why we should continue in our folly.”

“By which you mean—”

“That we should make camp until night, and for several good reasons. We are taking too many chances by thus traveling in the day, and, what is more to the purpose, all hands need rest. Suppose Sir Guy Carleton has gone down to Quebec? He cannot drive our people away, and it may prove that he has only put himself in a way to be made prisoner. We are fretting

as if everything had been lost through us, whereas, as a matter of fact, the situation has not been changed. The Britisher would have continued on even though no information had been given him. Look here, lads, how does it happen that the commandant of Montreal has abandoned his post? What else save the capture of the city would have sent him down the river alone, and in disguise?"

We three lads stared hard at each other while one might have counted ten, and then, each with the same thought in his mind, we began to cheer heartily.

It seemed that General Montgomery must have succeeded in this portion of his mission beyond a peradventure, and if Montreal had fallen before his troops, why should not Quebec be taken when the two commanders joined forces?

There was much to cheer us in the thought, and when it had been well turned over in our minds we were willing to cease the mad paddling in order to prepare for the work of the night, which could be done in no other way than by taking due care of our bodies.

At the first convenient landing-place we ran

the canoe upon the shore, and Percy stepped out to learn if we might make comfortable camp at that spot.

We had halted in a bend or cove which was sheltered by trees from the wind, and I was expecting his report each instant, when Ephraim uttered a cry of dismay, as he pointed toward the entrance of the little harbor.

Looking quickly around, I saw to my amazement and fear a bateau filled with armed men coming directly toward us.

“Pull in!” I whispered excitedly, for by this time our craft had swung out a few yards from the shore. “They must be some of Carleton’s troops.”

While speaking I bent to the paddle in earnest, incited by the thought that unless we could make good our escape in short order we would be prisoners; but before I had the light canoe fairly headed toward the shore there came the cry :

“Drop that paddle, or we shall fire!”

“They are taking aim at us,” Ephraim whispered.

I knew the strangers were not half a musket-shot away, yet did not obey instantly, and as I

dipped the paddle for another stroke, the same voice shouted :

“ Halt! or we shall kill you !”

It would have meant death to hesitate longer, and I held up both hands to show we yielded, but at the same time hoping that by some lucky stroke of fortune we might yet escape.

Alarmed by our cries, Percy appeared from amid the foliage, and as he saw the new-comers I heard him mutter :

“ Another and yet worse blunder !”

“ Go back !” I whispered hoarsely. “ Save yourself while there is time !”

Before he could have acted upon the suggestion even though he had been willing to abandon us, the spokesman from the boat cried :

“ Make no effort to give us the slip, you fellow on shore, or it will go hard with all hands !”

There was nothing for it but to wait with such patience as could be summoned to our aid until the strangers should do their will.

Even though we were apparently in such grave danger, I reflected with satisfaction that this sudden interruption to our voyage was not the result of carelessness.



“HALT, OR WE SHALL KILL YOU”
(Page 184.)

Whether we had remained at Sir Guy Carleton's camping-place, or continued on without proposing to make a halt, the outcome must have been the same, since we could not have guarded against such a surprise at this, save a kindly fortune had permitted us to see them first, and at a point where it would have been possible to secrete ourselves.

I expected that the occupants of the boat were clad in red uniforms, yet when the bateau drew nearer I observed with surprise that they had little appearance of being soldiers, and straightway a great hope sprang up in my mind.

"Be careful how you reply to their questions," I whispered to Ephraim. "It is possible we may give them the idea we live hereabouts, in which case they can hardly want to detain us as prisoners."

"After what happened this morning I am likely to be careful with my speech," the lad replied quickly, and my face reddened as I realized that it was myself, not him, who needed a caution. "I did not mean to taunt you," he added. "Either of us would have made the same mistake, and it only fell to your lot be-

cause the Britisher addressed his words to you.”

By this time the strangers were alongside, and I gazed at them curiously, for they had the appearance of friends rather than enemies.

“Where are you lads bound?” the leader of the company asked, and I replied:

“Up the river hunting.”

“Where do you live?”

“A long bit below.”

“Near Quebec?”

“We came from the other side of the river,” I said, liking not to tell a deliberate lie although our liberty might be the price.

“Don’t think to fool me,” the spokesman said sharply. “Unless you give a true account of yourselves your hunting trip will soon come to a sudden end.”

His speech was so unlike a Britisher’s that I asked eagerly:

“First tell us who you are, sir? That can do no harm since we are already the same as prisoners.”

“American troops from Montreal.”

“I was right! I was right!” Percy cried gleefully. “General Montgomery took the

city, which explains why Sir Guy was on his way to Quebec!"

The men whom we had previously believed to be enemies looked in astonishment at the lad on shore who was dancing to and fro in high glee, and the leader asked quickly:

"Tell me whom you are?"

I should have declared myself immediately but for the blunder of the morning, which had taught me cautiousness, and instead of replying, I asked:

"Will you say to me on your honor, sir, that you are from the American army?"

"We are, indeed, on my honor as a gentleman. It is as your comrade says: Montreal is in our hands, and we are on our way down the river in the hope of communicating with friends."

"And we," I cried, so overjoyed as to be able to speak only with difficulty, "are from the American army at Quebec, on our way to deliver a message to General Montgomery!"

"When did you gain the St. Lawrence?" the spokesman asked, while his men made quite as extravagant demonstrations of satisfaction as had been exhibited by Percy.

I gave him the information, and then related the events of the morning, whereat the rejoicing of the men gave place to lamentations that we had not been quicker-witted when such an opportunity was within our grasp.

Then at the invitation of the officer, who introduced himself as Captain Sinclair of New York, we all went ashore, where we lads soon heard what had been done by the forces under General Montgomery.

As we learned, it was owing to the illness of General Schuyler that this talented Irishman, who had fought with Wolfe at Quebec in '59, was given command of the expedition, and thus far his march had been one of triumph.

After reducing Fort Chamblee he had, on the third of November, captured St. Johns, and, nine days later, entered Montreal as victor. At this very time he was making preparations for the assault on Quebec, and had sent detachments of troops to different portions of the province to gather provisions in sufficient quantity that there might be no delay once both portions of the expedition were set down in front of the city.

Captain Sinclair had been sent down the river

to summon Colonel Arnold to Point aux Trembles with his forces, where it was General Montgomery's desire he should remain until joined by all the troops belonging to the expedition.

“Now that we have met you, I see no reason why either party should proceed further on their respective missions,” Captain Sinclair said, when he had described the situation of affairs as I have here set it down. “We will report your arrival to General Montgomery, and you shall deliver these orders to Colonel Arnold.”

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a package properly addressed, which he handed to me; but I was puzzled to know if we might thus exchange messages.

Our orders had been to see General Montgomery, and although this meeting seemed to do away with the necessity of our traveling further, there was a doubt in my mind as to whether we were not in duty bound to continue on.

I so expressed myself to Captain Sinclair, at the same time asking for his advice, which he gave me much as follows:

“The question does credit to you, since it shows your appreciation of a soldier's fidelity to

orders; but I myself am doing that which I counsel you. My instructions were to see Colonel Arnold, yet much valuable time may be saved by delivering the message to you, and the result will be the same, with less chance one or the other of us may be overcome by the enemy."

"Yet you know not, save by our word, if we be as we represent ourselves."

"True, my cautious lad, and yet I will stake my life on it. No spy could play the part as you have, and I am as well satisfied as if Colonel Arnold himself was here."

After this it would have been downright rudeness for me to have entertained doubts, more especially since both Ephraim and Percy were satisfied with the exchange of missions.

This matter having been settled, we lads were besieged with questions as to our march across the wilderness, and while replying to them I saw tears in the eyes of more than one soldier who listened to the terrible tale of suffering and death.

We who had participated in all the horrors were not ashamed of displaying our feelings as we spoke of the lingering deaths witnessed on

that march, and our hearers were equally affected.

“Such a story would move the heart of any being save a king’s, and he can hear of what his oppressed people are doing to preserve their manhood, without so much as the tremor of an eyelid. May Heaven forgive him for his lack of feeling!” Captain Sinclair cried as we came to an end of the sorrowful narrative.

When our tale was told I insisted that we from Quebec should gain some sleep before returning.

It had been nearly four-and-twenty hours since slumber visited our eyes, and we needed to be fresh for the return journey, even though the current would spare us the labor of paddling.

Captain Sinclair declared his men should guard us while we slept, and thus watched over by those who served a common Cause, our rest was profound, despite the terribly serious blunder made that morning.

The night had come before we were awakened, and then supper was ready for us.

We had only to eat it in order to be in condition for the journey, and since our course lay down-stream instead of up, there was good

reason to believe that by the following afternoon we of the Virginia company would be with our comrades once more.

The mission which our superior officers had believed might be so dangerous, had proven not only a peaceful one, but almost without incident worth recording.

With the knowledge that we would soon meet at Point aux Trembles, we parted, my comrades and I to drift down the river, while the captain's party must perforce paddle up at the expense of no slight amount of labor.

It was decided between us that we would not make another halt, but, should the journey be prolonged, two might sleep at a time while the other steered, and in this wise the voyage was made, we stepping on shore in the cove from which we set out in six-and-twenty hours from the parting with Captain Sinclair and his companions.

Our troops yet occupied the heights, as we knew from the camp-fires, and the sentinels who stopped us at the water's edge.

A portion of our own company were doing guard duty at this particular spot, therefore we had no difficulty in passing the lines, and thus

it was we clambered up the steep hill secretly, so to speak.

It was perhaps nine o'clock in the evening when we were come to that point nearest the citadel.

There was no moon, but by the light of the stars it was possible to distinguish surrounding objects quite clearly, and we stood for a moment half hidden by a jutting rock to observe the city we hoped soon would be ours.

Not more than an hundred paces away we noted the figure of a man who moved to and fro as if aimlessly, although I fancied his trend was constantly toward the British works.

I doubted not but that he was one of our sentinels, and would have taken no further heed had not young Randolph suddenly plucked me by the sleeve, as he pointed toward the figure.

“Well?” I asked, and would have said more but that he covered my mouth with his hand.

“Do not speak aloud,” he whispered. “Look well at that fellow, and say who he is?”

I gazed with but mild curiosity until struck by a resemblance, and then it was Bart Green's name I spoke.

“It is he,” Ephraim added, his attention having been attracted by Percy’s words. “What is he doing there?”

“On guard duty, no doubt,” I replied, and would have moved on, not caring to watch this enemy from behind a shelter as if afraid of being seen by him.

“Green is no soldier,” Percy said sharply, forgetting now to whisper. “None save an enlisted man would be stationed as sentry on this exposed post!”

It was as he said, and now I no longer scorned to spy upon the fellow’s movements.

That the assassin was making his way toward the British works there could be no doubt, and I began to understand that he moved in a zig-zag course in order to learn if he was being watched.

Should he be stopped by one of the guard, it would be a plausible tale if he said he was searching for fuel, as I had seen many of our men doing.

There was a chance this was his only purpose in thus strolling where the wintry wind was bitter enough to make a man wish for shelter, and, having one, hesitate about leaving it on

such a quest, but it was in my mind to make certain as to his business.

If the fellow really was a traitor, willing to sell information to the British, we might yet atone for our blunder in talking so freely before Sir Guy.

My comrades were as eager on the scent as I, and when Green had so far progressed toward his possible destination that we could no longer see him from our hiding-place, we crawled out into the open on our stomachs, wriggling along as readily as an Indian could have done, until we saw him within twenty yards of the fortifications.

Here he stopped, looked around searchingly, and suddenly darted toward the walls, where he was lost amid the shadows.

Now we listened intently, hardly daring to breathe lest some movement should escape our ears, and after five minutes or more we heard a low, cautious cry.

This was repeated twice before being answered, and so faint was it one would have said some one inside the walls had called.

A tiny flash of light appeared above the gate, and then I could have sworn I saw a dark mass being drawn up the solid face of masonry.

“Has he really gone inside?” Ephraim asked in a whisper, and I knew he must have seen the same as I.

“That is what we shall soon know,” Percy said in a tone of determination as he rose to his feet.

“What are you about to do?” and I laid my hand on his arm.

“I will know if Green be a traitor, or we deceiving ourselves.”

“We shall go with you,” Ephraim said, and I had no other choice than to accompany them.

There was every danger we might be shot down by the sentinels on the walls, or even by our own men who should mistake us for the enemy, but we reckoned not our peril.

All else was forgotten save making certain the assassin was as ready to betray his country as he had shown himself willing to commit murder.

“There is less to fear if we go swiftly,” Percy said, and before I well understood his purpose he shot across the plain like an arrow from its bow, Ephraim and I following as best we might, but yet a long distance in the rear.

I could see the brave fellow dash into the shadow at the point where Green had dis-

appeared, and by the time I was at the line of darkness he reappeared an hundred yards away.

Ephraim and I ran to meet him, and still continuing the pace, we three dashed on, back to the hiding-place at which we had first halted.

“I went close by the wall,” he said, speaking with difficulty because of his heavy breathing, “and it is certain he is not there. It was he whom we saw being drawn up the fortifications. The traitor has gone over to the enemy!”

“In which case his absence must be noted by Captain Morgan in the morning.”

“Yes, and until then we will hold our peace, for it is not well we should be the first to cry traitor after having accused him of being an assassin.”

I was not quite of Percy's mind, and yet there was no good reason why I should refuse to do as he wished.

The guide having deserted and joined the enemy, there was no urgent haste in making known all we had learned, for even though Colonel Arnold himself was aware of what had been done at the very moment Green disappeared, he could not have prevented him from giving valuable information to the Britishers.

Having thus decided, we continued on to that portion of the plain where our company had last bivouacked, and were soon standing face to face with Sergeant Potterfield.

“Have you failed in your mission?” he asked, even before we had time to salute him properly.

“By no means, sir. We met—”

“Have you made a report to Captain Morgan, or any other commissioned officer?” he cried sharply, checking me in my speech.

“You are the first whom we have met, sir. We arrived hardly half an hour since.”

“Then do not give information to those who have no right to receive it. The officers who sent you should first hear what is to be told.”

I was abashed by this reproof, for it was nothing less, and would have excused myself, but that he interrupted again.

“Come with me to headquarters, where Captain Morgan will most likely be found, and after you have made a report to him I shall be more than thankful to listen to the story.”

In silence we did as he commanded, and hardly were we announced by the guard before word came that we should enter.

Colonel Arnold himself was there.

CHAPTER XI

MYSTIFICATION

WHEN we entered the tent Colonel Arnold was standing nearly in the centre, with the other officers around him, among whom I saw Captain Morgan.

While we were following Sergeant Potterfield, Percy had said to me, "You are to act as spokesman," and I, not relishing the idea of making such a display of myself at headquarters, had asked why it should be me more than himself.

"Because it was to you Captain Sinclair intrusted the packet, and, besides, when all is said and done, Jason, I think you can present the matter more clearly than I."

"But surely any one could give a short account of the quiet journey we have made," I said, and he added with a grim smile:

"Ay, Jason, any one could do it; but to my thinking it will require a smooth tongue to set right the part we played with the British commander."

That which we saw Green do, had for the moment driven from my mind all thoughts of the disagreeable recital which must be made if we gave a complete account of our journey, and not until we stood before Colonel Arnold did I thoroughly realize what a poor figure we must necessarily present in the narrative.

Then it was that words did not come freely at my bidding.

When we stood before the leaders of the expedition, instead of giving an account of ourselves immediately we had saluted in proper fashion, I bethought myself of the packet, handing it at once to Captain Morgan, who, in turn, after reading the inscription, gave it to the commander.

Colonel Arnold looked at it in surprise, opened the missive, glanced at the signature, and then gazed at us searchingly.

I was about to explain how it had come into our keeping when he once more turned his attention to the letter.

But a few moments were required for him to master its contents, and it seemed to me his eyes brightened wonderfully as he said, in a low, triumphant tone :

“Gentlemen, Montreal is in our possession. General Montgomery entered the city on the twelfth of November.”

During several moments we messengers seemed to have been entirely forgotten as the officers congratulated each other upon the welcome tidings, and then I could see questioning surprise written on the face of first one and another.

“How came you by this packet?” Colonel Arnold asked sternly. “There has not been sufficient time for you lads to have journeyed to Montreal and return.”

Now the story must be told, and I blundered ahead with it as best I might, recovering from the confusion which had beset me, as the story proceeded; but becoming woefully ashamed when I arrived at that portion which treated of our meeting with Sir Guy Carleton.

The commander and his staff listened most attentively while I repeated as nearly as might be the exact conversation which occurred between the supposed farmer and ourselves.

Before continuing the tale I attempted to excuse myself for having been so completely outwitted; but Colonel Arnold said indifferently, and almost harshly:

“It was such a mistake as any inexperienced person like yourself might have made, and mayhap even one of these officers present would have fallen into a like error, since there was no reason to anticipate a meeting with any single member of the British army. You may proceed.”

His manner of speaking acted upon me very much as a dash of cold water would have done, and I hurried over the remainder of the story as best I might, desiring only to bring the interview to as speedy an end as possible.

As was agreed upon, I said nothing regarding that which we had seen after coming ashore, and when I concluded the commander dismissed us with scanty thanks, addressing his words to our captain.

“These lads will be excused from camp duties until we are on the march again.”

Then turning to those who attended him, he added:

“Gentlemen, I wish to call your attention to the orders received from General Montgomery.”

Seeing that we lingered, for neither of us understood the commander's words to be a dismissal, Captain Morgan stepped forward and led

us from the tent, saying when we were on the outside :

“ You have done bravely, lads, even though no dangers were encountered, for when the journey was begun I had grave doubts as to whether you would succeed in getting through. Thanks, however, to the good fortune which has attended General Montgomery’s forces, all difficulties were removed from your path. Do not lay seriously to heart the fact that you were outwitted by Sir Guy, for had I been in your place it is doubtful whether I had acted more wisely, since the last man I should have expected to see unattended on the river is the commander of the British forces.”

Then saluting us he returned to headquarters, and we walked slowly toward the poor shelter we called our camp, disappointed and dissatisfied, although perhaps it would have been difficult to explain exactly why.

Arriving at that portion of the plain where the Virginia company were fighting off the frost by means of small fires built here and there, we were given such a greeting by our comrades as went far toward atoning for the lack of friendliness in the interview just had,

and the noise of the welcome accorded to us soon attracted to that point many others of the command, all of whom seemed to consider it their duty to take us by the hand in way of welcome.

Then it was that our hearts were warmed indeed, and Percy in his joy cried exultantly :

“ Gentlemen, Montreal has been captured by General Montgomery’s forces. We met a messenger from the general on the river, and he was bringing the glad tidings—”

He was interrupted by shouts of joy and triumph on every hand, and while this tumult was at its height I saw come within the circle of light cast by one of the camp-fires a figure which caused me to start in surprise and bewilderment.

There before me stood Bart Green, whom I could have sworn was at that moment within the British fortifications.

I seized Percy by the arm, literally forcing him away from the friend with whom he was speaking, and pointed to where the traitor was standing, listening eagerly to all which was said.

His bewilderment was no less than mine, and

while we remained there looking at the guide, as though he were something uncanny, Ephraim joined us.

His gaze, directed by ours, fell upon the villain, and thus we three stood like statues, doubting the evidence of our own eyes until there was no longer chance for disbelief.

“It must have been some other whom we saw,” Ephraim finally said, as if he could find relief in such thought.

“But I tell you there was no mistake,” Percy exclaimed emphatically. “I am as certain that man was with the enemy half an hour since as I am that we stand here!”

With the words there came to me a perfect solution of the secret and mystery.

“He is carrying on the trade of a spy, and simply paid a visit to the Britishers for the purpose of unfolding his budget of information.”

At this point we were interrupted by our excited companions, who insisted on learning more regarding the news we brought, and during the next half-hour was told and retold the story of our journey, not even excepting that portion where we played the simples before Sir Guy Carleton.

It was midnight before quiet reigned in the encampment, and I doubt if the soldiers would have ceased even then their words of joy and satisfaction at the intelligence we had brought, but for the fact that it was whispered from one to another, no man seeming to know from whence came the information that we should break camp at sunrise next morning.

My comrades and I, however, could well understand the meaning of this sudden movement, thanks to what Captain Sinclair had told us, and Percy said as we laid down behind our shelter of brush:

“Any encampment will be better than this, and but for one thing I should welcome the change from this Plain of Abraham to Point aux Trembles.”

“There is no fact that can make me sorry to leave this wind-swept place,” Ephraim said emphatically. “I thoroughly believe were we to remain a week longer more than half the command would be frozen to death.”

“I would willingly brave the frosts a few days longer in order to unmask that villain Green,” Percy said emphatically, and I asked without stopping to reflect upon the question:

“Why not do so now?”

“How may we? There is but our word against his, and the traitor would swear us down until he was black in the face, that he might save his neck from the halter.”

This I could understand full well, now Percy had suggested it, and I also realized that because of the charges we had previously made against him to Captain Morgan, our word would have less weight, since it might be argued that we accused the man of being a traitor for purposes of revenge.

Then again, and herein certainly lay a chance for question, we had seen him only in the night, when it was his figure and manner rather than his face that we claimed to recognize, and such identification was by no means sufficient when a man's life would hang in the balance.

All this I said to my comrades, and while we lay there silent and thoughtful with little desire for sleep, Sergeant Potterfield, making the rounds of the camp, passed near-by.

“There is a man whom we can trust,” Ephraim whispered. “An old soldier who will know better how to deal with this case after one moment's reflection than we should did we discuss it for an hour.”

“Ephraim is right,” I added to Percy. “Shall we call the sergeant?”

Instead of replying he rose to a sitting posture, and spoke softly the officer’s name.

On the alert as he was, the sergeant readily heard the summons, and came toward us.

“It would be better if you lads spent the time in sleeping, rather than holding converse among yourselves, for I doubt not a long march lays before us on the morrow.”

“Ay, Sergeant, even twenty miles,” Percy replied. “Captain Sinclair told us of the rendezvous which had been appointed, and it is at a place called Point aux Trembles, a most heathenish name, so I think, for a Christian country.”

“In which case we shall have use for the boats, instead of plodding our way over the frozen trail,” the sergeant said with satisfaction. “But that is no reason why three lads who have just come from a long journey should be chattering like a flock of magpies.”

“Yet you shall say we have good cause once our story has been told, and it is resolved between us to lay before you a certain question of duty which we have failed to decide,” Percy said gravely.

“The day is better for discussion than the night,” and the sergeant made as if he would move away, but Percy detained him.

“It may be too late on the morrow, therefore we beg to tell you now that which is to remain a secret among us four until it shall be decided otherwise.”

Then, without giving the soldier an opportunity to refuse to share the knowledge we had gained, Percy hurriedly told all that had been seen on the plain immediately after our arrival, and continued with an account of the attempt at assassination.

Sergeant Potterfield listened most attentively, never so much as breaking the silence by exclamations of surprise, and not until our comrade had finished did he speak.

Then it was to say :

“I doubt not, lads, but you are honest in your belief, and that there be a traitor in the camp, yet, having seen the man only in the gloom of night, there are many chances for mistake.”

“You do not think it was Green who visited the fortification ?” Percy asked sharply.

“I would believe him a traitor sooner than

any one who is enlisted as a soldier, and can say I question not all you have told me; but the time is not come, according to my belief, when he may be charged with treachery. It is well you have repeated this, for now there will be four instead of three who watch him carefully, and I warrant you, lads, should he attempt any more such sport with the halter, between us we shall have good proof of his villainy."

"But we are about to leave this place, and he will have no further opportunity of communicating with the enemy," Percy objected, seeming suddenly to have become desirous of immediately charging Green with his crime.

"Then it will not be possible he can do us any harm while the troops are at this place with the odd name of which you spoke. But we shall return here, lads—that goes without saying—and then will Master Green be eager to seek out his employers again, but I warrant you the next time he ventures into the fortifications we shall be close at his heels. Keep your eyes open and your mouths shut, and the assassin cannot escape us."

Then, as if unwilling longer to hold a conversation on the subject, the sergeant stalked

away, and was soon lost to view in the darkness.

Left alone we three did our best to dismiss the unpleasant matter from our minds, and gave every attention to sleep.

It seemed as if I had but just closed my eyes when the beating of drums aroused me, and one had no more than time to collect his senses before the encampment was a scene of confusion.

A full day's rations was hurriedly served out to each man, and, as when we marched through the wilderness, the Virginia company led the advance in the journey to Point aux Trembles, therefore we were on the river two hours or more before the last of the troops were embarked.

And as we were the first to start, so were we the first to land, an hour before sunset, with, as Sergeant Potterfield put it, the choice of camps before us.

In this selection of an abiding-place for perhaps many days, we hesitated not at being selfish once our company was disbanded, and I am very certain that Percy, Ephraim, and I were soon the most comfortably lodged among the rank and file.

We made for ourselves a camp in the midst

of a small, dense thicket of firs, which covered perhaps twenty square feet of ground, and it only remained to throw over the tops of the bushes, and to weave around the sides a certain amount of brush, after which we had a camp that the commander himself must have envied.

Before the last of the troops landed our fire was burning brightly in front of the natural shelter, and many were the opportunities we had for bartering our claim.

We were not minded to deprive ourselves of so comfortable a shelter in exchange for rations or trinkets; but held steadfastly to our own, enjoying hugely the possession.

On the morning after our arrival a heavy snow-storm set in, and this served to make more sheltered our abode, for the green boughs were soon covered with a mantle of white, through which the wind could not penetrate, and, freezing shortly after it fell, we soon had a house of ice with a sweet-scented lining of green.

Ten days did we spend in this place, hourly expecting the arrival of General Montgomery's forces, and during such time I question if we once met Bart Green face to face.

From a distance one or the other of us, or

Sergeant Potterfield himself, kept well informed of the guide's movements, even though it was not possible he could work treachery while we were so far from the enemy.

Nor was anything done on his part to cause suspicion.

One would have set him down as equally loyal to the Cause with any of his companions ; but this fact did not weaken our belief in his villainy, because we understood that he simply lacked the opportunity.

Then the troops from Montreal arrived, to the number of five hundred, led by Major General Richard Montgomery in person, and we lads knew our comfortable habitation must soon be exchanged for the wind-swept Plain of Abraham, for with such a force there could be no question but that the assault on Quebec was to be made immediately.

I doubt not but that all the men were as willing to move as were we three lads, even though our quarters were so snug there.

Provisions were not being brought in by the soldiers in such quantities as at first, and we understood that the country roundabouts was becoming exhausted of supplies.

It is true hunting parties secured a certain amount of small game each day; but this was as a drop in the bucket compared with what was needed for seven hundred men, and when the force was brought up to twelve hundred, a speedy movement became necessary, otherwise we might come once more to feel the terrible pangs of hunger.

It was on the twenty-ninth of November that our expedition, now seeming to be of respectable size, set out on the return to Quebec, consuming but one day on the journey.

Although there was no reason why we should think Colonel Arnold was other than a brave man and an able soldier, I doubt not but that all the troops felt as did my companions and myself, that with such a commander as Major General Montgomery we had much greater show of success.

He had been trained as a soldier in the British ranks; was an officer of education, and had already shown what he could do for the colonies as well as for the king.

Now that he had adopted America as his home—since '72—he would fight for us as he had fought for his majesty. We believed it was much the same as though the city of Que-

bec had already capitulated, despite the fact that the Britishers were of superior numbers, and would be behind fortifications while we must struggle in the open.

Therefore it was that when we landed and climbed up the heights for the second time, we were in our own minds already victors, and looked to see Sir Guy Carleton sue for peace when General Montgomery went through the form of demanding the surrender of the fortifications.

But the Britishers were not to be frightened as easily as we hoped, and the bearers of the flag received no more courtesy than had those who went out from Colonel Arnold.

Contrary to the usages of war, as Sergeant Potterfield assured us, the officer carrying the demand was fired upon from the wall of the citadel.

Now this had been done a battle was inevitable, unless we were willing to accept defeat without striking a blow.

It may well be fancied that from the moment we began the ascent of the heights the guide Green was under our closest scrutiny, and when the bearers of the flag of truce were fired upon I was within a dozen feet of the

fellow, where I could see his face light up with joy and triumph at the insult which had been put upon us.

If there had been any doubt in my mind before this as to his treachery, it would have been dispelled when he grinned in delight, and I was forced to keep firm control of my temper, otherwise his visit to the fortifications might have been made known then and there.

“It is to be a regular siege,” Sergeant Potterfield said to my comrades and myself on the following morning as we were lounging about the plain despite the severity of the weather, and for no other purpose than to make certain Green remained in his quarters. “It is to be a siege, and you lads will soon know what war means, for I doubt much that either General Montgomery or Colonel Arnold will rest content with trying to starve the Britishers out. We shall have fighting, and plenty of it before the city capitulates.”

“But it will finally be conquered, and by us,” Percy said confidently.

“Ay, lad, so it seems, yet are they stronger than us in numbers, and doubly stronger because they fight behind walls; but I venture to

prophecy that before many days have passed we shall walk the streets of Quebec as conquerors, and lodge ourselves in the comfortable dwellings of the enemy. It is but a short time at the longest that we must freeze out here."

Sergeant Potterfield was not alone in his belief that the success of our expedition was already assured.

Every man with whom I talked held the same opinion, and it would have been strange if Ephraim and I, ignorant of such work, had a thought otherwise than was shared by our companions in arms.

The terrible agony which had been undergone in the wilderness grew fainter in our minds as we pictured what was to be, and the frost which assailed us was less biting when we looked toward the city, saying to ourselves that in a few days we would be quartered here or there as fancy dictated.

But never once did we so much as speculate upon defeat; never once say to ourselves that instead of being lodged in such or such a house, free to come and go as we chose, we might find the same quarters my comrades and I now occupy—in a common prison.

CHAPTER XII

HIRAM BURCHARD

It was on the second day of December that our troops began a bombardment of the city from five mortars, and those of us who knew the hour set for the first shot eagerly watched the effect, but were not well rewarded.

Ephraim and I had believed these engines of destruction would speedily batter down the walls, such tales did our companions tell regarding the damage that had been wrought with them ; but after the first shot we understood, despite our ignorance of such affairs, that the mortars would do but little toward reducing the city.

The balls did not appear to make any impression on the fortifications when they carried as far, and the greater number we saw shot off failed to come within fair distance of the target.

Yet this did not discourage us, and I am now speaking for my two comrades and myself, because we counted on the six-gun battery brought down from Montreal by General Montgomery.

“Our mortars are too small, and the enemy have good cause to laugh at our efforts,” Percy said after we had watched the effect of half a dozen shots; “but the song they sing will be changed once our battery is at work.”

While we stood near the gunners, discussing as to what the future would bring forth after we had so far invested the city as to come upon them at will with the heavy guns, Sergeant Potterfield passed by near at hand, and beckoned for us to follow him.

This we did, as a matter of course, knowing he desired to speak with us regarding the secret we had confided to him, and when we were at such a distance from all the others, that there was no possibility our words would be overheard, he said:

“Without being forced to explain to Captain Morgan why I wished you to be relieved from duty, I have thus far succeeded in so arranging matters that you could keep close watch on Green; but now comes an interruption, and it happens at a time when he is most likely to attempt to communicate with the enemy.”

“What do you mean by an interruption?” I asked quickly, thinking that perhaps an assault was to be made at once.

“There is work of a delicate nature to be performed, and no less than Colonel Arnold himself has selected you for the task, therefore it is reasonable to suppose he does not blame you severely for the failure to capture the British commander when it might have been accomplished.”

“Work of a delicate nature!” I repeated, not understanding the meaning of the term. “What do you mean by that, Sergeant?”

“This time I am as ignorant as either of you, save that the captain desires speech with you three at once.”

“Do you think we are to be sent away?” Percy asked.

“So it seems, and I am distressed because it will not always be possible for me to keep an eye on the traitor.”

“But we shall miss the fighting if we are sent away,” Percy cried in disappointment.

“There is no reason why you should grieve long on that score, lad, for unless matters take a turn for the better with us right speedily, we shall spend the winter in front of this city.”

“But the assault?” I asked, sharing Percy’s disappointment at being forced to leave just

when it seemed most likely there would be hot work.

“Think you an assault will be made against those naked walls? Had the mortars done the work expected of them a breach would have given us a chance; but now we must remain inactive for a while?”

“The battery has not yet been brought up,” Ephraim suggested.

“Our six guns cannot be depended on to demolish the walls in any short time, and you lads will have ample opportunity to go on half a dozen missions before the fighting becomes very hot. The brunt of the trouble will be at the captain’s quarters, if you loiter here talking with me while he awaits your coming.”

This admonition speedily caused us to think of other matters than the capture of the city, and after urging upon the sergeant to keep as close a watch on Green as might be possible, we scuttled away to Captain Morgan’s quarters.

He was in a friendly mood when we entered, but I fancied from the expression on his face that he had a look of disappointment, although I could not have said why he should be in such mind.

“I have another service for you, lads,” he said when we had saluted him, “and this time there appears to be but little danger attending it, therefore I order you to go instead of suing for volunteers. Colonel Arnold, satisfied with what you did before, has mentioned you personally as the ones whom he wishes sent. Make your preparations for leaving the camp as soon as may be possible, and return here, when full instructions will be given.”

Except that we might have a trial of patience, I could see no good reason why he should not have told us then and there what kind of service we were to be sent on; but he had not, and neither my comrades nor I cared to try the experiment of asking for further information.

However lengthy an expedition we might be bound on, our preparations for departure could not be made to consume much time, since we had simply to bundle up our blankets, strap on powder-horns and shot-pouches, and see to it that our rifles were loaded.

It could not have been more than ten minutes from the time we had left the captain before we were in the tent again, awaiting orders.

“Promptness is an excellent quality in a soldier,” he said with a smile of approval, “and I shall be sadly disappointed if you lads are not the equals of any in the company by the time this campaign is at an end. But it was not to hear such words that you were ordered to make ready for a journey. General Montgomery has, as you know, demanded the surrender of the city, and our flag was fired upon. It is believed that the inhabitants have been kept in ignorance of the fact that our commander is ready to offer fair terms if the town be delivered up to us. Sir Guy Carleton may fear their temper is not sufficient to withstand such test, and has therefore seen to it that our proposal be kept secret.”

He paused an instant, and I wondered greatly why we should have been summoned to hear what was at the best but a supposition on the part of our commander; but I speedily became enlightened as he continued:

“To make known to the people of Quebec that they neither will be robbed or maltreated, but held secure in possession of all their rights if the city is surrendered within a reasonable length of time, is what you are expected to do.”

“Are we to go within the walls, sir?” Percy asked in surprise.

“I do not fancy that would be possible, unless you were taken there as prisoners; but it may be you can persuade some of the people in the vicinity, who could readily enter from the north, to carry the message. To that end you will cross the river to Point Levi, and there endeavor to find a reliable man whose word will be believed by the citizens of Quebec, to exhibit privately to the leading men of the town this written assurance from the general.”

As he spoke he handed me a document signed with a seal, and I stood stupidly holding it in my hands, not knowing where to put it, until he said with somewhat of impatience:

“It is to be carried about your person, not used as a banner.”

My face reddened as I placed the document quickly inside my coat, and Percy asked, for the purpose of covering my confusion as he afterward confessed:

“Have you no orders to give, sir, as to how we shall set about the work?”

“I do not think it would be wise to do so, because no one can say how you may first come at

an opportunity of performing the mission. It is necessary you gain the confidence of a reputable farmer or trader, and then, in addition to offering him pay for the service, impress upon his mind the suffering which must ensue, not only to those in the city but among all in the vicinity, should the siege be prolonged. If we are opposed, the troops must be fed, and the stores of the farmers will be seized. In fact, there are many valid reasons which you lads can give as to why it will be for the good of the people if the city surrenders quietly and quickly. Here is a purse of money with which to further persuade him whom you may be able to send."

He handed me a small deer-skin wallet which appeared to be well filled with gold, and this I made haste to put with the document, not minded to be railed at again.

We were instructed not to take any rations with us, but to pay for lodgings and food liberally when we were where a sight of our money might be of benefit in the mission.

"Take a stout boat, for the ice is plentiful in the river, and I shall hope to see you again within four or five days at the longest."

Then he saluted as a signal that the interview was at an end, and I led the way out, the captain detaining us only long enough to say :

“ You are to tell no one in the camp, except Sergeant Potterfield, of your purpose in going. It will be necessary to explain somewhat to him in order that you may leave our lines, therefore seek him at once.”

We were not overly well pleased with the service required, as could have been told by the expression on the faces of all three as we halted involuntarily a few paces from the captain's quarters.

It would have been more to our liking had we been given some important work in what was being done, and, besides, to leave the camp now might be to lose our opportunity of unmasking a traitor.

“ There is no good to be gained by complaining,” I said sharply on seeing that Ephraim was about to speak. “ I reckon we all feel the same ; but that won't change the order, so let us to the work as quickly as possible, trusting Green will have grown more careless by the time we return.”

“ I can at least say that this seems a foolish

piece of business," Percy cried petulantly. "If the soldiers are not minded to surrender, I do not understand that the citizens can do anything in the matter."

This thought was also in my mind, but before I could reply Sergeant Potterfield, who must have been waiting near-by for us, approached, and we laid the subject before him, according to Captain Morgan's permission.

"It's a wise move," he said, without hesitation. "Should the inhabitants of the city insist upon surrender, Sir Guy might find his position most uncomfortable. Instead of speculating about what you know very little, it will be better to set out on the journey, for the river is so full of ice that you cannot reach the other side before dark if much time be wasted now."

Thus reduced to silence, for all three of us had every confidence that the sergeant knew whereof he spoke, we bent our way down the height toward the water.

Here, from among the little fleet which had brought us from Point aux Trembles, Sergeant Potterfield selected the smallest and stoutest bateau as the one best suited to our purpose, and we were soon pushing and pulling at the ice

cakes in order to open a passage from the shore.

“Don’t forget to keep your eyes open!” Percy shouted as the sergeant lingered on the bank to see us well under way, and he replied cheerily :

“I’ll answer for it that no great mischief is done in your absence. Take care of yourselves, and do not put too much faith in all whom you meet.”

I turned, having been standing with my back to the shore, as he said this, for I fancied there was a hidden meaning in his tone, and as I did so there before me, nearly two hundred yards up the ascent, was Bart Green, who must have heard at least this portion of our conversation.

It was not possible to warn the sergeant an eavesdropper was near, but I whispered to my comrades :

“Don’t turn your head lest he understand we are speaking of him. Green is on the hill where he can hear and see everything.”

“Much good may it do him,” Percy said with a laugh. “If he could follow, I might feel a bit shaky, but as it is he will be powerless to do us harm.”

“If he has any suspicion that we took him to be other than he appears, now is the time when he will make another visit to the city.”

“And that we cannot prevent, so it isn't best to worry over it. Sergeant Potterfield is no simple, and the assassin will find it anything rather than an easy matter to hoodwink him.”

I was of the same opinion, therefore the fact of Green's presence at the moment of our departure caused me no more than annoyance.

Yet, while thinking the matter over as we forced our way but slowly through the floating ice, I knew right well that should he succeed in getting word to the Britishers of our having left the camp, and by watching our movements it would be possible to say exactly where we went, such steps might be taken as would cause us considerable trouble.

I finally put it out of my mind by the reflection that the scoundrel must first get past our sentinels before it would be possible to work us harm, and with Sergeant Potterfield on the alert I did not believe Green could succeed readily.

To make our way across the river was a more difficult task than we had expected.

The current was strong, and now and again

the bateau, caught by several cakes of ice at the same moment, would be forced far out of the course before we could bring her around; but we finally succeeded in our purpose, and the sun was just disappearing from view when we stepped ashore at Point Levi.

Remembering what Captain Morgan had said about our enlisting in the service reputable men whose words would be listened to by the inhabitants of Quebec, we looked around for a pretentious dwelling, and soon found what seemed to us a most likely place.

A house larger and more elegant than any I had ever seen, save in the besieged city, with substantial out-buildings which told that the owner was well-to-do in this world's goods, was before us.

My comrades being satisfied with the selection made, we knocked at one of the rear doors, and the summons was answered by a surly-looking young man whom we afterward learned was the son of the owner.

According to the plan as mapped out by Captain Morgan there was to be no concealment of person or purpose, and I stated plainly to this ill-favored fellow, who was not many years older

than myself, that we were members of the American army who craved bed and food, with the ability to pay for both.

Without bidding us enter, or making any reply to what had been said, he closed the door in my face, which seemed much like a refusal, as I understood manners, and I was on the point of turning away discomfited, when Percy said with a laugh :

“ Wait a few moments. If I am not mistaken he has but gone to carry our request to the master of the house.”

“ It looks more to me as if he did not intend to waste words, but proposes we shall freeze here on the doorstep, if it so be we haven't sufficient wit to seek other lodgings,” I grumbled, yet at the same time did as my comrade suggested.

Percy was correct in his surmise, as was shown very shortly when an old gentleman, as kindly-looking as the other had been ill-favored, reopened the door and bade us enter.

“ We are ready to pay for whatever you may be pleased to serve us with, sir,” I said, thinking the best way to win his regard was to prove we were not beggars.

“Well and good; I shall not refuse honest money for honest goods, yet a pauper should not be turned from my door on a night like this. Enter, and with welcome.”

Obeying this pleasing invitation, we were ushered into a spacious kitchen.

It appeared as if large enough to have quartered the entire Virginia company, and at one end roared a fire so huge that the whole apartment was lighted brightly by the cheery flames.

A table was spread generously with food, and the odor of meat cooking assailed our nostrils so strongly that straightway we were ravenously hungry; but for fear of showing myself ill-bred, I would have begged the housewife and two young women, whom I took to be her daughters, to satisfy our wants as soon as might be.

The ill-favored man, with another none the more comely to look upon, occupied stools at one end of the fireplace, but neither drew back as we approached to enjoy the grateful heat, until sternly ordered so to do by the master of the house, when they gave way with exceeding ill grace.

The farmer, for so his dwelling and out-

buildings proclaimed him, asked our names, and on receiving the information said bluntly :

“ I am called Hiram Burchard, and these 'ere be my family, all of which, savin' mother an' me, were born in this country.”

Having thus introduced himself he straight-way began questioning us about the army, asking of the march through the wilderness, the reason for breaking camp and then returning, and such other matters as had excited his curiosity.

To all of his questions we returned truthful replies, adding also the news that Montreal had been captured.

It was a long converse we held before the evening meal had been made ready, and from all he said I judged he was indifferent as to whether the king or the colonies were victorious, providing neither he nor his were disturbed.

The boys, however, differed decidedly from their father, and showed the keenest desire to see the invaders driven out of the country, but Master Burchard did not allow them great opportunity of airing their views, for no sooner did one begin to predict as to what Sir Guy Carleton would do with the Americans, than

the master of the house bade him to remember that a fool was most often known by his much speaking.

Not until supper had been eaten did we broach the real purpose of our visit, and even then only after we had painted in glowing colors the distress which would fall upon the inhabitants hereabouts if the siege was prolonged.

It may be Master Burchard would have closed with our offer if we had made it without preamble, but I enjoyed the thought that it was because of the skillful manner in which we worked up to the subject that we gained his consent so readily.

“So that you pay me for the time I shall spend, an’ because I believe war should be avoided when it can be without cringing, I’m ready to go. The only question in my mind is whether the folks of Quebec will believe I have the power to promise anything in General Montgomery’s name.”

“All this has been provided for,” I said, drawing from my pocket the document signed and sealed by the general, and as I did so the purse fell to the floor.

Master Burchard was so eager to look at the terms which the commander of the American forces was ready to make that he gave little or no heed to the purse as I replaced it in my pocket; but I noted the fact that his sons watched me narrowly.

“It sounds honest, an’ I have no question it is. With that in my keepin’ the people cannot but believe I speak the truth, though none have ever had cause to doubt me, an’ I’ve lived here nigh to thirty years. I’ll set out at sunrise tomorrow.”

This decision had hardly been made when Master Burchard’s sons arose as if in a rage, and stepping in front of their father spoke words which were very near to threatening, all the while declaring he should not act the part of lackey to the American general, whom they called “a traitor to the king.”

Master Burchard listened in silence, and I had already said to myself that he would be frightened from his purpose, when he burst out upon them.

Had the fellows been capable of shame that which he said would have overwhelmed them; but they sat like stupids while he berated

them soundly, threatening to flog both then and there if another disrespectful word was spoken.

“You lads shall remain here until my return,” Master Burchard said to us when he had finished with his sons. “I’m not likely to have any trouble about getting into the city, an’ in eight-an’-forty hours will be back.”

It was much to my liking, this remaining in the farm-house, and I also knew it was our duty to make certain the work had been performed before presenting ourselves again to Captain Morgan.

Therefore it was that all three of us agreed very heartily to the proposition, and after this Master Burchard fell silent, whereat Percy suggested that we stow ourselves away for the night.

Instead of a blanket on the floor, which would have pleased me mightily after having slept on the frozen earth, we were conducted to a room over the wood-shed, where was a broad bed of feathers and so many furs for covering that while under them one could never guess it was cold, even though the air was biting sharp enough to freeze raw spirits.

“Two days won’t be any too long in a place like this,” Ephraim said gleefully when we were alone, “and if Master Burchard finds it necessary to stay away twice that time I’ll not mourn, unless peradventure our people make an attack upon the city meanwhile.”

“In addition to having found snug quarters for ourselves, the business on which we were sent has been done in proper fashion,” Percy added, and thus satisfied from every point of view we laid ourselves down upon feathers for the first time since becoming members of the army.

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

MASTER BURCHARD must have given orders that we be allowed to sleep as long as we chose on the morning after our arrival, for no unusual noises came to us in this shed-chamber, and when I, who was the first to awaken, leaped out of the rest-inviting bed, the sun was already high in the heavens.

I was ashamed to think that I who professed to be a soldier had played the laggard in the farmer's house, more especially since, had he not reconsidered the matter, Master Burchard must have set out for Quebec while we were slumbering, and this was but a sorry way of bidding him "God-speed" when he had gone about our business.

Arousing my comrades without delay, I set forth the matter to them as if desirous they should share my mortification, and no time was wasted in dressing.

In the homes of the rich where many fires

are kept, I have heard that they wash their faces and hands in the sleeping chambers, but at Master Burchard's, and where Ephraim and I had spent our days, none were too proud to make that portion of their toilet in the kitchen, and according to my way of thinking it is not only more comfortable to wash one's skin near a glowing fire, but savors of good breeding, since it shows absence of undue pride.

When we came down from the shed-chamber and met the mistress of the house and her two daughters, I spoke her as fairly as might be, explaining that it had been so long since we knew the comforts of a bed that we might be pardoned for having thus played the laggards, and she, kind soul, understanding no doubt that we were ashamed of having thus idled the hours away, said in a motherly manner :

“Bless your heart, lad, there was no reason why you should not have stayed there until noon-day, since, as my good man tells me, you are to remain until the morrow. I warrant it is not often soldiers have a chance to enjoy a bed of feathers, and when that good fortune does come to them it would be almost wicked if they did not make the most of it.”

Then she pointed out to us where we might wash our hands and faces, pushed the chairs nearer the spacious fireplace as intimation where we should sit once our toilet had been made, and bustled around right merrily, as if it were a pleasure rather than a labor to prepare the morning meal for us idlers.

When my toilet was made I looked around for the ill-favored young men who had impressed me so disagreeably the night previous, but failed to see them.

It might have been taken as ill-bred for me to ask questions concerning any members of the family, therefore I held my peace, believing, however, that the sons had gone to ferry their father across the river, in which case it might be late in the day before they returned, for the air was more bitterly cold than when we came across, and much new ice had formed.

A plentiful supply of ham broiled on hardwood coals, with fried eggs, and potatoes roasted in the ashes, made for us raw recruits a breakfast long to be remembered, and when we had eaten much more perhaps than was necessary, we felt no inclination to do other than loiter in front of the fire, which idling was made all the

more pleasant by the company of the daughters of the house who sat down near at hand as if considering it their duty to entertain us.

It can well be supposed that the conversation was mainly regarding the effort which the colonies were making to throw off the British yoke, and during it we learned that the sympathies of the female portion of the family were with us who were struggling for independence, while the young men held themselves as loyal subjects of the king.

As has been said, Master Burchard himself was indifferent so long as he was not likely to suffer in pocket, and we soon came to know that his wife, as was but proper, shared a portion of his views.

The hours spent in this homelike kitchen, from the time breakfast had been eaten until the arrival of the sons caused an unwelcome interruption, will be long remembered by me, for they were both pleasant and sad.

Pleasant because of the interest the women displayed in our welfare, and sad because such a scene carried Ephraim's thoughts and mine back to the home we had once known, but which was now lost to us forever.

When the lads, who because of their stature and the young crop of hair upon their faces might well be called men, entered at about noonday, our pleasure in thus playing the part of visitors was sadly marred, for these fellows gave us clearly to understand that they were enemies, and I doubt not that only the fear of their father's anger prevented them from ordering us out-of-doors forthwith.

Seating themselves, one on either side of the fireplace, they speedily by black looks put an end to the pleasant conversation, and the women folks at once set about getting dinner, urged thereto by the surly inquiries now and then as to when the meal would be ready.

Under the plea that we needed exercise after our unwonted indolence, my companions and I went out-of-doors, and to our surprise learned that a storm of snow was beginning to rage.

The wind was in the northeast, blowing with such force that this side of the river was almost entirely free from ice, while cityward the shores appeared to be lined with an impenetrable mass.

The white particles, frozen hard as they fell, stung one's face like needles, and descended in

such volume as promised soon to make the roads impassable.

“It is well Master Burchard did not plan to return this day, otherwise his voyage might be a perilous one,” Ephraim said as we made our way toward the river. “If this storm continues we are likely to stay here longer than was counted on.”

“It is hardly possible our friends would make an assault in such weather, therefore we can rest content, knowing we are not needed on the other side,” Percy replied in a tone of satisfaction. “We have gotten into a pleasant haven for riding out the storm, and for my part I care not how long it may rage.”

“So I would voice those same words but for the two kill-joys in the kitchen; they are like unto death’s heads at a feast, and even the pleasant and innocent conversation such as we were holding comes to an end with their entrance. Providing they remain there guarding the fireplace, the remainder of this day is like to be as long as the first portion has been short.”

It would have been foolish to stay out in the blinding storm very long because of those loutish lads, and after tramping about ten minutes or

more we were well content to return to the hospitable kitchen.

A dinner even more generous than had been the breakfast; an afternoon of idleness, and, because of the two boys on either side of the fireplace, spent almost in silence, concluded the day.

The night came quickly because of the storm, and when we drew up to the table for the third meal I ventured to remark that Master Burchard would have found it difficult to return, even had such been his intention.

“What should prevent him from crossing the river if he was so minded?” one of the boys asked as if in anger.

“The wind, the ice, and the current, according to my way of thinking,” I replied, speaking in what I intended should be a careless, friendly manner.

“Neither one nor the other could stay me were I bent on coming this side,” the fellow said with the same disagreeable tone. “I doubt not but that the ice be packed on the other shore so as to make good walking out to the open water, and he who has strength to wield a paddle should be able to put a boat across, pro-

viding he keeps straight in the path of the wind."

"I doubt not it could be done by you who are accustomed to the river; yet it would not be a pleasant task, and I should elect to remain there rather than make the attempt," Percy said with a laugh, after which we all fell silent, giving attention only to that which was before us.

Never but once from the time they first entered did the two boys leave their seats by the fireplace, and then, as I supposed, they went out for half an hour or more to attend to the beasts in the barn, which latter building was a matter of fifty yards from the house.

After supper the women turned their attention to sewing and knitting; the two boys continued their scowling, and at an early hour I proposed to my comrades that we seek our bed, saying, because it seemed to me some excuse was necessary for leaving the family, that we might not for many days have the pleasure of again lying upon feathers.

The chamber over the shed was cheerless by contrast with the kitchen. The flooring of plank had many a crack through which I could have thrust my hand, and the eddying snow,

finding its way through the insecure outer doors, whirled and danced in the room, forming little mounds here and there which served to render the air disagreeably damp.

“Our companions on the plain are having a cheerless time of it this night,” Ephraim exclaimed, throwing off his clothing hastily and burying himself beneath the furs. “Fancy what such a shelter as we put up must be, when the snow finds its way in even here.”

“There is no reason why we should make ourselves uncomfortable with imagining the sufferings of the troops,” Percy said petulantly. “We would bear our share were we with them, and it was not to escape the storm that we came hither.”

“Nay; but I was making this place appear all the more cheerful by the contrast,” Ephraim replied gently.

“It has not that effect with me, since it seems as if we had no right to remain thus snug while our companions are fighting, almost unprotected, against the storm.”

I thought this straining at a point, in view of the fact that we had been ordered to come to this place, but made no remark, and soon all

three of us were snuggled beneath the furs after a fashion which was much to my liking.

Owing to the heavy slumbers of the night previous and the idleness of the day, we were not in the mood for sleep.

Try as I might, slumber would not come to my eyes, and I believe two hours or more had passed when Percy sprang up to a sitting posture, gripping me by the shoulder as he whispered:

“Did you hear that?”

“What?” and I listened intently.

A moment later came that which could be none other than the cry of a human voice, repeated no less than three times.

“Some traveler who has lost his way, and seeks shelter,” I said carelessly, and was about to lay me down again when the outer door of the shed directly beneath our chamber was pounded upon vigorously.

“It can be none other than a traveler, and I would Master Burchard were home to admit him, for I doubt if those surly lads give very hearty welcome,” Ephraim whispered, and an instant later we heard sounds from the kitchen which told that the inmates of the house were aware of the summons.

Then rays of light shot up through the cracks in the floor; we heard the noise of footsteps, and as the outer door was opened the wind came up in gusts like to blow the coverings from the bed.

“Who are you?” we heard one of the sons ask, and then the slamming of the door, stamping of feet, and a sudden dying away of the wind, told that the new-comer had entered.

Without knowing why, I strained my ears to listen to the reply, and when it came it was as if my heart ceased beating:

“I am from Quebec—a messenger from Sir Guy Carleton.”

“This farm is like to be a battle-ground if soldiers of both armies continue to visit us,” I heard young Burchard say, but with less gruffness of tone.

“You mean the three lads who came yesterday?” the new-comer asked as if fully aware of all our movements, and the son of the house said quickly:

“How know you that? Have you seen my father?”

“No; is he not at home?”

“He went to Quebec this morning.”

“For what purpose?”

“To carry a message from General Montgomery of the American army to the citizens of Quebec.”

There was silence for an instant, after which the new-comer asked:

“And the lads? Did they go with your father?”

“They are yet here.”

“It is well,” the stranger said emphatically in a tone of satisfaction, and I was startled as I fancied the voice sounded familiar.

“Did you hear him?” Percy whispered in my ear. “Did you hear Bart Green?”

“Think you it is he?”

“I am certain of it; but there need be no chance for guesswork.”

As he spoke he slipped softly out of bed, Ephraim and I following, and regardless of the snow which covered the planks we stretched ourselves out at full length over the widest cracks, where we might have unobstructed view of the shed below.

There was no longer any room for doubt.

Before our eyes stood the assassin, and he knew we were within the house.

While gazing upon him as he shook the snow from his outer garments I remembered with dismay that our rifles were in the kitchen, at one end of the fireplace where were also those weapons belonging to the inmates.

We were defenseless in case of an attack, and for the moment it seemed to me that we had unwittingly delivered ourselves up to Green.

“I have been told by those in Quebec that you and your brother are loyal to the king,” Green said to young Burchard, when he had shaken himself free from the weight of snow.

“Aye, that we are, although the rest of the family have a friendly feeling for the enemy.”

“Then whatever may be accomplished must be done without the knowledge of any save you two,” Green added as if speaking to himself.

“Whatever may be accomplished?” the young man repeated as if in bewilderment. “How may anything be done on this side of the river to serve the king?”

“Much, my friend, if you are disposed to aid in that task set me by Sir Guy Carleton.”

“I am ready to do whatsoever I may; but speak plainly, man, and more quickly, for if we

linger here my mother and sisters, growing curious to learn the cause of the delay, may break in upon us."

"It is only with the messengers from Montgomery that I have to deal. They bear upon their persons documents which the British commander would know the nature of, and it is my purpose to make them prisoners."

"That may easily be done so you keep the secret from all save my brother and myself, for I doubt not that mother and the girls would do good battle against the three of us, should they know we counted on breaking the laws of hospitality."

"In time of war, Master Burchard, the laws of hospitality may be thrown aside. An enemy is an enemy wherever you find him, and when it is in the king's service one need not question whether he take his guest to the bed-chamber or the jail."

"You may count on my brother and myself to do what we can to serve his majesty. Come with me to the kitchen, and have a care lest you betray your purpose to my mother and sisters. Wait till they have gone to bed, when we can discuss the matter among ourselves."

“But the lads from the American army, having seen me, will take alarm.”

“They have long since been asleep, and once we are in the kitchen I will take good care they disturb us not.”

Then, having barred the outer door, young Burchard led Green into the house, and we remained spell-bound with fear, heeding not the fact that we were yet upon the floor where the frosty wind sought out and found every portion of our unprotected bodies.

I had no thought of moving until Ephraim said in a whisper, his teeth chattering with the cold as he spoke :

“It profits us but little to remain here, and the danger will be no less if we seek shelter under the furs.”

Without remark Percy and I acted upon this suggestion, and once we were protected from the chilling air, fear came upon me with redoubled force.

Before either of my comrades could speak I realized to the utmost our defenseless position, and knew that shut up here in the chamber without weapons, it was but little we could do to oppose the will of three men well armed and

one of them not only willing, but eager to commit murder.

Had it been an honest Britisher who proposed to take us prisoners, I would have consoled myself that it was but the fortune of war, and terror such as now came upon me would have had no place in my thoughts; but to be delivered to this traitor who had sworn vengeance upon us, was horrible to contemplate.

“Are we to stay here until it shall please those villains to work their will upon us?” Ephraim asked after a long time of silence.

“It is not to be supposed they intend making any move thus early in the night,” Percy replied as if he had been turning the matter over in his own mind until having decided upon some course of action. “They do not know we overheard their speech, and believe that when it shall so please them we may readily be taken. Now, as it appears to me, we have ample time to form some plan, and if that traitorous guide succeeds in getting us into his power it will be our fault.”

I confess now, as I have to myself more than once both before and since that night, that Percy Randolph has more ready wit than I.

To me there seemed no possible way out of our difficulties, except we were willing to rush into the blinding storm, in the darkness where death must surely come whether we tried to recross the river, or make our way through the country.

“If we had our rifles here I should say there was a chance of escape,” Ephraim whispered. “But as it is I see no hope.”

“In that case you would be willing to take desperate chances?” Percy asked, and I replied quickly, speaking for both Ephraim and myself:

“To be captured by him means death, for there is no hope he will deliver us up to the British commander. We should be murdered outright.”

“That is true, for even though he did not dare commit the deed in this house, it would be an easy matter once he had us in his boat fettered. Therefore it is, I say, better to die fighting than be dropped overboard like a litter of kittens.”

“You have some plan in your head, Percy,” I said petulantly. “Tell it at once rather than speculate upon what this traitor will do when he has the best of us.”

“Here is what I have thought, and though you say it be crack-brained, there is in the plan one chance of success: Those fellows will stay in the kitchen until the mother and daughters have gone to bed; then Green will explain what he wants to do, and this, he will pretend, is to bear us back to the British camp. The two Burchards are ready to aid in such work, believing it only honest warfare; but may perhaps say to him there is no reason for hampering themselves with prisoners until morning, or just before day. Now I am allowing that the three will get some sleep betwixt this hour and the time for Green’s departure.”

“But we shall not know when they have gone to bed.”

“Because of their desire to keep all this a secret from the mother and daughters, I question whether any of them go to bed—that would be too good fortune. To my belief they will take such rest as may be possible in the kitchen.”

“Then how are we to gain any benefit, even though they should?”

“I propose within an hour to dress myself, creep down to the kitchen door where it will be

possible, by listening, to have an idea of what the fellows are doing. Should they sleep we may gain an entrance, and be able to seize the weapons without arousing them. If the night passes and they remain awake, I say let us make a bold rush in the chance of gaining that end of the fireplace where stand the rifles. Once there we have the upper hands, and if we fail our condition will be no worse than should we remain here until Green comes to carry us away."

It was a bold scheme with the odds decidedly against us, yet as Percy had said, any chance, however small, was better than remaining idle while they worked their will, and I asked Ephraim if he would be ready to make the attempt.

"I am bound to follow you two, although I see no hope we shall succeed. To my mind the best chance we have is that the struggle in the house will arouse the women folks, who, taking sides with us, may, perhaps, be able to frustrate Bart Green in his designs."

CHAPTER XIV

FOR LIBERTY

ONCE we had decided upon action there was no time lost by us, even though it was not probable the struggle would be begun for several hours.

As I turned the matter over in my mind I said to myself that we must move cautiously, waiting for an opportunity as a cat waits for a mouse, and restraining our impatience until the odds were in our favor as nearly as might be.

Although Ephraim had little hope the plan would be successful, save as it might serve to array the women on our side, he was no laggard in making ready.

Careful to move silently, for at any time the Burchards might come into the shed to make certain we had not been aroused, the three of us slipped out of bed and began to dress.

But for the excitement in our hearts we should have suffered much from the cold, for the air was full of frost, but even though my

fingers were benumbed before the dressing had come to an end, I would not have known it save for the difficulty of using them.

My teeth chattered, though whether from cold or fear I could not say, and I even found myself questioning which it might be.

It would have heartened me had I been able to talk with my comrades, but I did not dare do so lest our enemies might be listening, and in silence we pulled on first one garment and then another until all were ready.

Now we stood listening for sounds which should betoken what Green and the two Burchards were doing, but the silence remained unbroken save for the howling of the storm.

It was Percy's plan we proposed to carry out, and his was the right to say how we were to proceed, therefore I stood by the side of the bed silent and motionless waiting until he should give the word for action.

The seconds seemed like minutes, and when it was to me as if half an hour had passed, young Randolph stepped cautiously toward me until his lips were at my ear.

“We will creep softly down stairs to the kitchen door. There it should be possible to

make out what the scoundrels are doing. You are to stand close behind me, and Ephraim shall bring up the rear. I intend to lead the way; but it is not possible to say at this time how the attack can be made, therefore each must act as seems best to him when we dash in. Remember, however, that everything depends upon our being able to gain possession of the weapons."

There was little need to remind me of that.

From the moment he gave words to the idea my mind had dwelt upon the fact that unless we could first gain the spot where stood the rifles it were better the plan had never been attempted, for then we would be wholly at Green's mercy, whereas by remaining in our room, barricading the door as best we could, and making stout fight, the women might be brought over so far as to prevent violence until the master of the house returned.

Percy opened the door cautiously and in perfect silence, but we need not have feared its creaking, for the storm outside would have drowned any ordinary noise.

"Can't we find anything here that might serve us as weapons?" Ephraim asked in a

tremulous voice, and Percy replied almost sharply :

“There is nothing in the room save a couple of stools, and we must go empty-handed. It is for the best, because even the seconds will count in such a case as this is likely to be, and time might be lost were we hampered with clubs.”

Then he moved toward the open door once more, and I followed close at his heels, Ephraim clutching at the skirts of my coat that he might make certain of copying every movement.

To our ears the stairs creaked ominously as we descended, step by step, and clutching the hand-rail firmly to relieve the planks of our weight as much as possible.

At each step we stopped to listen, our hearts beating so violently that I pressed my hand over mine lest the noise should be heard by those below.

From the kitchen not a sound was to be heard until we were standing close against the door, and then I could distinguish the murmur of voices, at times rising so loud that here and there a word could be made out.

If the women were present they did not join

in the conversation, for only the gruff tones of the men came to our ears, and so animated did the speakers appear to be that I doubted not Mistress Burchard and her daughters were in their private rooms.

It was positively painful to stand there with nothing save the door between us and our armed enemies, and had I been leading the party the suspense would soon have ended, even though by waiting our chances of success should be increased.

Percy was a good soldier, as he proved himself that night.

He stood in the attitude of a listener until my legs were cramped from remaining so long in one position, and I could feel Ephraim shifting uneasily from one foot to the other, yet Percy made no more movement than if he had been hewn from stone.

Then it seemed to me that the hum of voices died away.

I could hear no noise save the roaring of the storm, and Percy gripped my hand hard in token that the moment for action was nigh.

“Be ready!” I whispered with my mouth close to Ephraim’s ear, and at the same time

mentally bracing myself for the struggle which must come.

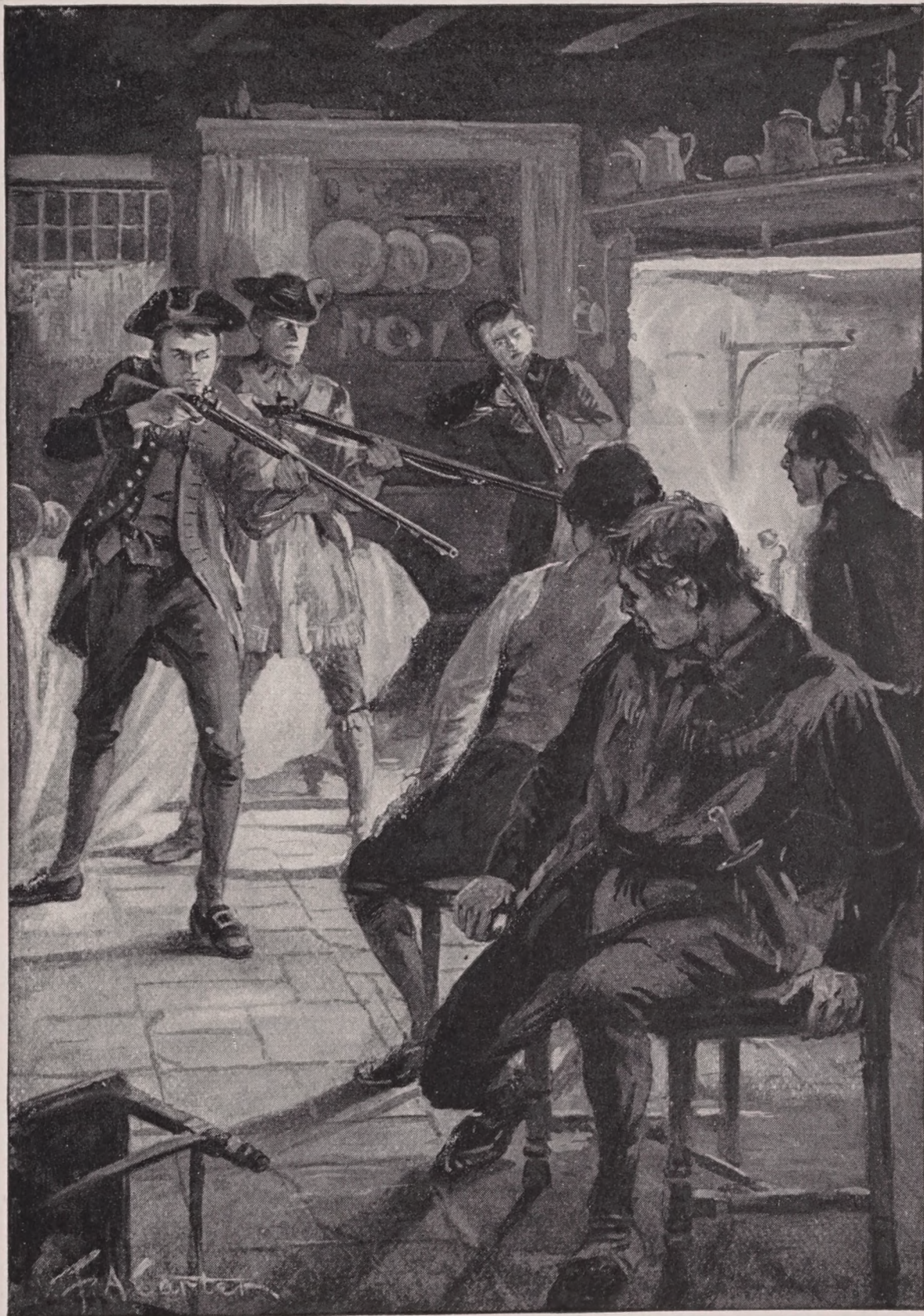
I knew rather than saw that Percy's hand was on the latch, and thinking he waited until Ephraim and I had been warned, I let him know we were in shape for whatever might come.

Percy raised the latch and at the same instant threw himself against the door with all his strength lest peradventure it should be locked on the inside, and in another instant it was as if we stood in a glare of light, so sudden was the change from blackest darkness to the room illumined by the huge, burning logs.

For a single instant I was in a measure bewildered, but even during that time I continued to move forward at our comrade's heels, and then a loud cry of triumph burst from my lips, for we were at the weapons before the three men fully understood who had entered thus rudely.

Percy seized the first rifle that came to hand, and levelled it at the three who sat blinking like owls.

Not more than five seconds passed before Ephraim and I were doing the same thing, and we must have made a brave show as we stood where the fire-light fell upon us, presenting



WITH MY RIFLE AIMED AT HIS HEART
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such a front to the discomfited enemy as would have caused them to remain quiet even though their number had been ten times as great.

I was looking full at Bart Green, with my rifle aimed at his heart, and he understood as well as did I, that at the first movement he would be a dead man.

I knew beyond a doubt that either Ephraim or I could put a bullet into a buck's eye at a distance of an hundred paces, and had no question but that Percy was equally as good a marksman, therefore the villains would have but little show for life if we opened fire on them at such short range.

“What is the meaning of this?” the elder Burchard stammered after perhaps a minute had passed, during which time I saw Green's face change from a livid white to a ghastly gray color.

“It means that we do not intend your friend shall take us from this house on the pretense of delivering us up to the British! It means that we overheard all your speech when this traitor arrived, and have taken due steps to prevent your carrying out the plot against our lives!”

Percy ceased speaking because now that he

had gained the upper hands his rage was so great as to well-nigh overpower him, and I thought it well to take up the subject where he left off.

“You two Burchards are honest enemies, I doubt not. You serve the king, and we the colonies. Both have a right to our opinions if we are ready to back them with our lives; but I question if you would play the traitor, or gather with assassins knowingly. Let me introduce this visitor to you. His name is Bart Green; he engaged with Colonel Arnold’s portion of the expedition as guide at good wages, and yet was totally ignorant of the country over which we traveled. When my comrade and I pointed out a better course than he was pursuing, we being familiar with the river, he tried to murder me—we were cutting a jam of logs, and as the pile fell he seized me by the leg, throwing me down, and then rode on the mass underneath which I was, for the purpose of drowning me. Then, since having arrived here, he has sold information to the enemy, eating of our bread and taking pay from our people even while he betrayed them. That is the man with whom you have joined forces this night, and

had you aided him in making us prisoners, murder would been done before we were well off from this shore."

"I'll kill you yet!" Green cried in a fury, making as if he would rise to his feet, but sinking back very suddenly when I ran my eye along the rifle barrel. "You whelps are carrying things with a high hand, but my turn will come!"

"It is come now," Percy said quietly but sternly. "You will leave this house when we do, and we shall not part company until you are in General Montgomery's presence. Then you can explain your business inside the city on the night we returned from the journey up the river."

Green looked even more ghastly than before, if that could be possible, at thus learning his sins had found him out, and I saw him straighten up as if pulling himself together.

I stood on the alert, knowing full well he would never submit to be taken even now without making some sort of a fight, and determined he should not outwit me.

The Burchards stared at us as if not understanding how we could have come upon them thus suddenly, and Percy took it upon

himself to defend us against what might be construed as a breach of hospitality.

“To thus take possession of a visitor in your house, and at the same time treat you much as prisoners, may not seem fair when we ourselves are but guests, yet we would not be considered amiss by your father. We announced ourselves as soldiers of the American army, ready to pay for our entertainment, and during the absence of the host it is decided we shall be delivered over to one who would murder us in cold blood. If you will say how your mother and sisters may be summoned, we would defend our proceedings before them.”

“There’s no need of bringing women into the matter,” the elder Burchard said in a surly tone. “We’re not such sticklers at politeness that you need make excuses. I can’t blame you for defending yourselves in any fashion, more especially if all you say against this man be true.”

“It’s every word a lie!” Green screamed.

“If you have any doubts as to who speaks the truth,” I said as a sudden thought came to me, “see to it that this assassin turns out the contents of his pockets. There will be found

about him an undertaking from Colonel Arnold, or some other officer of our army, to pay him such or such an amount of money for his services as guide."

As I spoke Green clutched unconsciously at his coat, and I knew that his hand was upon such a document as I had guessed at.

"Let him draw out that which is beneath his fingers," Percy added, and a single look at the scoundrel's face would have been enough to convict him of lying.

"I doubt not that you have spoken the truth," Burchard said after a short pause. "He told us he came from Sir Guy Carleton, and as that general's messenger we were ready to treat with him."

At this moment Mistress Burchard and both her daughters entered the kitchen, having, most likely, been aroused by the sound of our voices, for no one had taken especial heed as to whether he might be overheard.

I saw the good woman start in alarm on noting our positions, and at once begged she would come forward that we might explain why we thus held her sons and their guest under our rifles.

For a moment she hesitated, evidently believing we were unscrupulous lads who had gained an entrance to the house for the purpose of robbery, but a few whispered words from her daughters, and she did as I had requested.

I looked meaningly at Percy, for I much preferred he should tell the story, and he did so in a manner such as any gentleman might have envied, concluding by saying:

“There seems to be no other way, if we would preserve our own lives, but to hold these men here until the storm shall permit of our leaving the house.”

“But surely my sons would not raise a finger to aid such as this man!” and she pointed to Green.

“It may be they are in doubt as to the truth of what we have said, or it is possible, being at heart loyal to the king, one or the other would believe he was doing a service to his majesty’s cause by carrying us into Quebec as prisoners.”

“They would never dream of such a deed while you are here as their father’s guests.”

“That is for them to say,” and young Randolph turned with a courtly air toward the sullen boys.

Neither made reply, and our comrade said to the good woman, after waiting some time for one or the other of her sons to speak :

“It seems they are in doubt, and that being so it becomes necessary for us to stand guard over them. No injury will be inflicted unless an attempt is made to overcome us, in which case we must fire upon them. There is no reason why you should lose your rest by remaining here.”

“May I speak privately to my sons?” she asked.

“Surely you are at liberty to do as you please while in your own home.”

Mistress Burchard called the elder boy to her at such a distance from us all that the converse could not be overheard, but we took good care to keep our eyes on him. Not that we believed for an instant his mother would do aught treacherous, but because we had not the same faith in the surly lad.

Green meanwhile sat staring into the fire, his brows knitted until they met above his eyes, and I knew there was mischief in the villain’s mind.

“That fellow will make a move of some kind before long,” I whispered to Percy. “He has

taken this matter too quietly to suit me, and I warrant he has already concocted a plan whereby we are to be outwitted.”

“He must be a smarter man than I have ever given him the credit of being if he outwits me, understanding as I do that it is our lives or his. Do you and Ephraim keep watch of the others, and I’ll give all my attention to the murderer. I hope it may not be necessary to shoot him down, for I want to take the fellow into camp, but I shall take good care my aim is true if it does become necessary to fire.”

I whispered to Ephraim that he should cover the younger Burchard, whom I believed would willingly have given his parole not to interfere with us or Green in any way, but for his brother, and thus it was only necessary each of us should guard a man.

Judging from the expression on the faces of the two, I decided that the mother was not finding it a simple task to bring the sullen lad around to her way of thinking, therefore was in no wise surprised when he returned to his seat by the fireplace, and she went to her daughters, who were in one corner of the room looking like frightened hares.

During half an hour we nine people remained there silent, never so much as moving, each evidently occupied with his own thoughts, and we on the alert for, and expecting, mischief.

Then I said to Percy and Ephraim, caring little if all should hear me :

“ This promises to be dull work ’twixt now and morning, and who shall say that even then we can set out for the other side of the river ? The storm shows little signs of abating.”

“ There seems to be no other way for us,” Percy replied carelessly, as if it mattered little to him how long we might be forced to remain on guard.

“ What would you have us do ?” the elder Burchard asked.

“ Give us your word of honor that you will make no attempt to deprive us of our full liberty, or to assist the prisoner whom we claim. That having been done you may go whithersoever you please ; but we must be allowed lodgment here until the storm clears away so that it may be safe to venture on the river.”

As Percy spoke I saw Green look meaningly at the Burchards, as if to say they should give the parole, and instantly regretted that the proposition had been made.

I am confident the elder Burchard and the assassin exchanged glances of a friendly and confidential nature, and then the young man said, still speaking in a sullen tone :

“ I promise all you demand, both for myself and my brother.”

“ Will he promise the same ?”

The younger boy nodded, but this did not satisfy Percy, who insisted on a spoken pledge, and after this was given the Burchards arose, as if weary with having remained so long in one position.

Mistress Burchard, looking relieved because matters had been thus arranged, came forward to replenish the fire, and lest she should be forced to pass between us and our prisoner, Percy and I stepped forward to Green's side.

“ Why not tie him hand and foot ?” Ephraim asked. “ Since it has been promised that none shall interfere with us, there seems to be little sense in guarding him from a distance.”

Once this was suggested Percy and I wondered why we had not thought of it before, and Ephraim asked Mistress Burchard if she would lend us something for the purpose.

“ It seems a terrible thing to aid in rendering

a man helpless; but yet in this case it appears necessary," she said, and straightway brought what I believed to be the rope whereon she hung her clothes to dry.

Green looked as if he meditated making a spring upon us when the rope was in our hands, but I placed the muzzle of my rifle within half a dozen inches of his head, and he remained passive as a lamb while we trussed him up in such a fashion that it was not possible for him to do much more than wink.

Then we pulled him to one side where he might not be in the way of the others, and seated ourselves near-by, still retaining all the rifles.

"You seem to be mightily afraid of one man, if you don't dare to trust him after he's tied hand and foot," the elder Burchard said as he paced to and fro at the end of the room, and I liked not the tone in which he spoke, although it would have been impossible for me to explain why.

"We are afraid of him after a certain fashion," Percy replied with a cheery laugh, for his heart was light now we had so completely turned the tables. "It would grieve me sore if

he gave us the slip, and we don't count on being guilty of carelessness."

Burchard thrust his hands deep in his pockets and continued pacing to and fro as if to say it was no affair of his now the paroles had been given, and again I distrusted him.

Mistress Burchard, good soul, eager to do something hospitable, brought a supply of cold food to the table, and said when she had done so :

"I doubt not but that some of you may be hungry before morning, therefore this shall be to refresh you."

"Did this man have food?" I asked.

"That he did, and in plenty."

"Then my comrades and I should be able to fast until morning, for only to think of what we had for supper affords us a hearty lunch. It is such a meal as we have not enjoyed for many a long day."

"It is terrible to think of the suffering which one wicked king can cause," the good woman said with a sigh, and then as if suddenly realizing that hers was a divided family, she added as a salve to her sons' opinions, "I'm not saying anything against his majesty, but only thought

what evil might be done if we had such an one to rule over us.”

Shortly after this the women folks retired to their chambers, understanding no doubt that it was useless for them to join in our vigil, and the elder Burchard resumed his seat by the fire.

By my advice Ephraim laid down on the floor to get some sleep, and Percy would have had me follow the example, but I was not minded to leave him awake alone, for, although I could not have explained how it might be done, I was looking forward to some attempt at mischief, and so whispered to young Randolph when he insisted upon my doing as he bade.

“If these Burchards keep their paroles, and I believe they will,” he said, speaking in a tone so low that none but me could hear, “there is no reason why more than one should stand guard. Green is helpless, therefore what do you fear?”

“I cannot say, yet the feeling is strong upon me that we are not out of danger.”

“There is no chance other visitors will come while the storm rages so furiously—”

“You can say nothing to persuade me into doing other than I have said, Percy. It may

be a foolish whim, and God grant it is; but I must remain on guard with you. Even though I laid down, it would not be to close my eyes in rest, because of the foreboding."

"As you will," he replied lightly. "I am not in the mood for sleep as yet; but when my eyelids do become heavy you shall see how readily I will leave you to the task of watching the assassin."

Then we fell silent, and naught could be heard save the roaring of the wind, or the swirl of the snow against doors and windows.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST STRUGGLE

LISTENING to the storm and keeping one's eyes fixed on the prisoner, as it seemed to me was necessary, soon became most monotonous work, and despite the gravity of the situation my eyes grew heavy with slumber.

The fire burned low and was replenished by the elder Burchard, who, in order to procure more fuel, passed of a necessity betwixt us and the prisoner, but this gave me little concern now we had his parole.

I fancied that the younger Burchard slept, and it caused my eyes to grow yet more heavy as I saw him nodding in his chair; but because of all I had feared did I resist the temptation to yield to the drowsiness which was creeping over me.

Midnight came.

Again Burchard threw on more fuel, and I again envied his brother, who was now snoring.

The prisoner's eyes were closed, as if he had

yielded to the restful unconsciousness of slumber, and Percy could no longer resist the influence.

“I’ll camp down by the side of Ephraim, if it so be you are still determined not to take a nap,” he said to me, and I urged him to do as he proposed, declaring positively that I had no intention of seeking repose during this night.

Soon it seemed to me that I was the only conscious person in the room, and the desire to close my eyes for a few seconds at a time was so great I believe of a verity I should have yielded to it had I remained in the chair.

In order to fight off the inclination I began pacing to and fro in front of Green, having first removed my shoes to avoid disturbing the slumbers of my comrades, and still carrying the rifle in my hand.

I allowed myself to take no more than half a dozen steps either side of the prisoner lest my back should be turned toward him too long at a time.

Even while taking all these precautions there came into my mind the thought that I was acting foolishly, since as matters were arranged the traitor was apparently as safe as though we

had already delivered him to the American forces.

Then it was, at this moment when I was feeling most secure in mind, that that which I had vaguely anticipated occurred, and to this day I am at a loss to understand exactly how it could have happened.

I had walked past the prisoner and was just on the point of turning to retrace my steps, when a faint rustling sound sent the blood bounding in my veins.

Fortunately, so far as my life was concerned, instead of continuing to turn I darted forward a few paces instinctively, having been taught the trick by old woodsmen in the forest, who, startled as I had been, make change of position so that in case a wild beast is in the act of springing upon them, they may escape.

It was a wild beast who was springing upon me, and the slight sound which attracted my attention was most likely caused by Green's feet as he shuffled along with upraised stool, intending to beat my brains out.

He must indeed have been in the act of striking when I leaped forward, for the improvised weapon came down on the floor with a

crash that shivered it into a dozen pieces, and he plunged headlong as does one who, having put all his strength into the blow and missed his aim, is carried forward by his own impetus.

Before the scoundrel had recovered himself I wheeled, and almost at the same instant fired at random.

The crashing of the stool, the report of the rifle, and the howl of pain which came from the traitor's lips made such an uproar in that hitherto quiet room as would have quickened the senses of a dying man, and in an instant every one save Green was on his feet.

The wretch had fallen under my fire; and not knowing whether the wound might disable him, I raised the rifle as a club ready to beat out his brains should he make a second attack upon me.

Even at this instant when all was confusion, I noted the fact that the two Burchards, who had sprung to their feet as quickly as did my comrades, sat down again without asking any questions, while Ephraim and Percy, after seizing their weapons, demanded to know what had occurred.

“That is what I cannot exactly tell,” was my

reply, and I then added as they repeated the questions, "In some way Green succeeded in freeing himself of his bonds, though I can swear no one has been near him except when young Master Burchard replenished the fire. I heard a noise behind me as I walked to and fro to keep my eyes from closing in slumber, and darted forward just in time to escape the murderous blow he had aimed with the stool. Then I fired, and if he be killed by the ball it is not the taking of his life I shall regret; but the fact that we have thus been prevented from carrying him into camp a prisoner."

"I should say he was hurt badly," Ephraim cried, solicitous even for our deadly enemy, and the boy would have kneeled over Green but that I warned him against such indiscretion.

"Be careful, lad! He is a viper who will strike even while you are endeavoring to aid him."

Ephraim was ever unmindful of his own welfare when a human being might be in distress, and heeding not my caution kneeled down by the side of the villain who for the second time had accomplished, in his heart at least, my death.

“He is past mischief now at all events,” my comrade said after a brief examination. “The bullet has shattered his arm, and unless speedy help be given he will bleed to death.”

The crimson pool upon the white floor of the kitchen told that Ephraim had not been mistaken, and instantly Percy and I sprang to do what we might toward saving the worthless life of the traitor; but all the while keeping keen watch over the Burchards.

Some one had unquestionably severed Green's bonds, and it could have been none other than one of these sullen fellows who had pledged his honor not to interfere 'twixt us and the assassin.

Before we could do anything toward staying the flow of the life current Mistress Burchard, alarmed by the report of the rifle, came into the kitchen excitedly, and knowing she would play the part of surgeon better than could either of us, I hurriedly explained in the fewest words what had happened.

She gave one quick glance at her sons, which caused me to believe there was the same suspicion in her mind that had come to my own, and at once devoted all her attention to the wounded man.

And it was quite time he received aid, for the throbbing flow of blood told that an important artery had been severed, and had he been left unattended five minutes longer I question if earthly aid would have availed.

Mistress Burchard must have had experience in such injuries, for she deftly wound a ligature above the wound; took from the pile of kindlings which had been laid near the fireplace a bit of light wood which she used as tourniquet, and, when sufficient pressure had been obtained, called Ephraim to her assistance while she tied the artery.

Then with some such simples as a housewife always has in readiness, she dressed the wound in proper shape, receiving not so much as even a look of thanks from the fellow whose worthless life she had thus saved.

Once all this had been done, and the wounded prisoner laid on some blankets near the fire, we three turned our attention toward learning how he escaped from his bonds.

The rope was cut in half a dozen places as though a keen knife had been passed between his body and the bonds, severing the whole at one quick thrust, and to me all was plain.

The elder Burchard when he replenished the fire, most likely at the second time, had thus freed the guide despite his word of honor given voluntarily.

He professed not to be looking at us as we thus investigated the matter, and when all was made clear I held up the severed ropes to Mistress Burchard.

“My comrades were sleeping. I was on guard, and no one went near the prisoner save the elder of your sons. Green’s hands were so secure that unaided he could not have done this thing, and yet we had the parole of one who has thus acted treacherously.”

Percy stepped forward, rifle in hand, as if about to make reprisals, but I checked him.

“It is necessary now that we remain on the alert, and the sons of our host must consider themselves in a certain degree prisoners until it is possible for us to depart.”

Neither of the sullen-looking boys made any reply to this speech.

I would have been better pleased if they tried to defend themselves, for then had the danger seemed less.

Now I was more timorous than before, for we

had to deal with those who would break their solemn word without hesitation.

Neither Ephraim nor Percy had any more desire for sleep, and we three sat armed and ready for an encounter, facing the two Burchards, from that hour until daylight.

Now and then the mistress of the house ministered to the wants of Green, whom we could see was suffering severely; but he spoke not a word to her.

With the coming of the day our thoughts were on the possibilities of returning at once to camp; but the outlook was far from encouraging.

The storm no longer raged as furiously as during the night; but it was still of sufficient fury to render most dangerous the passage of the river, and my heart sank as I thought that another four-and-twenty hours might elapse before we could leave this place, where we had received most generous hospitality and been also most treacherously treated.

The two daughters came down stairs and set about preparing the morning meal in silence.

The Burchard boys had neither moved nor

spoken. Two wooden images could not have been more indifferent, or seemed more lifeless, than they.

When the day was fully come Percy walked out-of-doors, and, after an absence of five minutes or more, returned.

“The wind has hauled around to the westward. The ice on the opposite shore appears to be broken up,” he said, and then looked at me inquiringly.

“Do you mean that we should attempt the passage?” I asked in surprise.

“It would be better than remaining here,” he said in a low tone “Before Master Burchard shall return, who can say whether these faithful subjects of the king may not get the better of us? It is a long vigil we would be forced to keep, and between now and to-morrow morning neighbors of the same mind as these two fellows may come in, when we would find ourselves in a dangerous position.”

I realized now for the first time that there might be others in the vicinity whose sympathies were the same as the Burchard boys, and the dangers which would attend us while crossing the river seemed as but trifling compared with

those to be encountered if we stayed longer in that house.

“It shall be as you say,” I replied. “Make all preparations while I remain here on guard, and then give your orders.”

Ephraim, hearing these last words, started up in alarm, and asked if we were so insane as to think of crossing the river amid the ice, in a bateau, while the snow was yet falling.

“Go with Percy,” I said sharply; “but do not remain absent many moments. Have a look around, and I will be guided by what you two shall decide.”

The elder Burchard at this point aroused himself to glance at his brother in an odd fashion, as it seemed to me, and I said to myself that we could not get out of the dwelling any too soon to please me.

My comrades were absent less than ten minutes, and on returning Percy announced:

“We will set out at once. The boat is in readiness, and it only remains to be said how we can most safely go from here to the river.”

I knew of what he was thinking.

Once our backs were turned these Burchards might spring upon us, even though we should

take their weapons, and this last I was not minded to do, for it savored of theft, or, at the best, of unwarranted interference with the family whose master had thus far shown himself our friend.

“How may we go there?” I asked in perplexity of Percy. “I trust not these boys if their rifles are left behind, and yet am troubled as to whether we may carry them away.”

This I had spoken so loudly that all in the room could hear, and the two to whom I referred exchanged wicked glances.

Then it was that Mistress Burchard came to our relief.

“My husband will be grieved that his sons have broken their words to those whom he treated as guests,” she said. “Leave with me the weapons belonging to the house, and I pledge you my word of honor that they shall not be used against you.”

I believed the good woman to be sincere and honest, but there was a doubt in my mind as to whether she would be allowed to keep her promise; yet it seemed our only course, and with the sanction of my comrades I accepted the proposition.

It yet remained to pay that amount of money which had been agreed upon should be the price for Master Burchard's services in going to Quebec to make known there what General Montgomery desired the inhabitants should be informed of, and I counted out the same, explaining to the good woman, as I laid the coins in her hand and added one for our entertainment, that she should bear witness to her husband that we had discharged all our obligations faithfully.

"You have been ill-treated in his house, and he will atone for it; but surely you are not minded to go before having broken your fast?"

"We are faint-hearted at staying longer than is absolutely necessary, lest there be others in the neighborhood of like mind with your sons who will work us harm should they come to this house while we are here," I said, and from the look on her face I understood that my suspicions were not without foundation.

She no longer urged us to remain, but bringing out from the pantry a generous supply of food insisted we should take as much as might appease our hunger should we be delayed on the journey, suggesting that because of the storm

the passage across the river might require many hours.

In so far as this we did as she desired, and then Mistress Burchard gathered up the rifles, carrying them to some other portion of the house.

When she returned after a space of perhaps ten minutes, I asked, not because I doubted her word, but to assure myself:

“Is it not possible your sons might get at the weapons despite your will?”

“Never, unless they are willing to use violence against their mother, and even then I shall be able to hold them in check until you are at a safe distance from the shore.”

This she said so that the boys might hear, and I for one was satisfied with her word.

I did not like the idea that the sullen lads should be left to their own devices while we were making our way to the boat; but it was an evil which could not well be avoided.

Percy, at my request, took upon himself the duty of watching these fellows, and I ordered Green to rise to his feet.

He made no attempt at obeying, and, after repeating the demand several times, I came to un-

derstand it was not his purpose to aid in the journey.

“If we cannot carry, we may drag him,” I said, and even though the man was wounded I made little effort at tenderness.

Seizing Green by the shoulders I directed Ephraim to take his legs, and between us we half-carried, half-pulled him from the house out in the snow, but before we were well clear of the dwelling the pain of such traveling was so great he begged for opportunity to get on his feet, promising to do as we commanded.

Percy had backed out of the kitchen, holding his rifle ready for immediate use, and thus he continued on to the shore, but the Burchards did not make their appearance, neither could we hear such sounds as should have come had there been any struggle in the house.

After being pulled to his feet Green walked as rapidly as we would have him, and I warrant no time was lost in plowing our way through the huge drifts of snow.

Once at the river's edge I was appalled at the idea of making the passage across those angry waters in so light a craft as the bateau; but it seemed to me our lives might pay the

forfeit of delay, and the waves appeared less cruel than such men as we had left behind.

Green begged lustily that the venture be not made, swearing by everything a man should hold sacred that he would make no attempt at escape if we would remain until the storm subsided, and had we known him less well it might have been his entreaties would have availed, for none of us were eager to make the passage against the warring elements.

No longer time than has been required in the writing of these words was spent in embarking.

When we pushed off from the shore, the prisoner lying in the bottom of the boat, Ephraim holding the steering paddle, and Percy and I wielding the ashen blades most vigorously, it seemed that each succeeding wave would upset the little craft, and we would find a common grave with the assassin.

This battle with the elements I cannot set down understandingly, for I knew only so much as that during each second of the time I plied my paddle with every ounce of strength in my muscles, never once looking up, lest peradventure the blade should slip, and we thus lose way, which might have been fatal.

Although the air was biting cold, and both Percy's face and mine frosty before the passage was made, our bodies were bathed in perspiration when, at the end of a three-hours' struggle, we forced the bateau amid the ice cakes in the cove until assistance could reach us from the shore.

Sergeant Potterfield, fearing for our safety since the storm had risen, was on the alert, and while we were struggling to force the little craft toward the shore against the frozen, grinding mass, he with half a dozen men stood ready to give aid.

Thanks to them we were landed ere yet it was noon, and not until our boat had been pulled high up on the shore did the sergeant learn whom we had brought with us.

"I could have sworn that traitor was still in camp!" he exclaimed. "Where did you find him?"

Then as I would have made answer he checked me suddenly by saying:

"No, lad; I meant not those questions. Make no reply until you shall have reported to Captain Morgan. It was my surprise at seeing him that brought forth what a soldier should not have allowed himself to speak."

It appeared to me as if the sergeant was too great a stickler for military discipline ; but this troubled me little now, overwhelmed as I was by joy that we had returned in safety, for every moment since the time of leaving the Burchard house had I expected death, and that we came out of the struggle with the river alive seemed so wonderful as to be almost a miracle.

The sergeant and his men took charge of our prisoner, leaving us at liberty to go directly to headquarters ; but I had much sooner have flung myself down in the snow to rest, for now that the strain was over it seemed as if further action had become impossible.

Painfully we toiled up the steep ascent, and arriving at headquarters begged an interview with Captain Morgan of the Virginia company.

It seemed to us, exhausted as we were, that half an hour passed before we were given admittance, and then amid a group of officers who had evidently been in consultation, I saw but one face—our captain's.

He it was who advanced several paces in a kindly fashion, and appeared to understand at once in what condition we were.

“ You may delay the making of the report, lads, if it so please you.”

I hardly understood what he said, but at once began the tale, hurrying my words one after the other until, when all was said that need be, for the first time in my life a faintness as of death came, and I knew no more.

CHAPTER XVI

A TRAITOR'S DEATH

WHEN next I knew myself I was lying in a tent with Percy and Ephraim near at hand, and tears of vexation leaped into my eyes as the thought came that the soldiers would now make sport of me for having been such a baby.

“Are you all right now?” Ephraim asked solicitously, and I replied in a petulant tone:

“I am except for the fact that I shall never be able to hold up my head again among the men.”

“Why?”

“Did I not fall in a swoon?”

“Yes, and God be thanked it was no worse!”

“What could be worse than to thus prove myself such a weakling, when I am trying to make others think me a soldier?”

“That which you have done since we set out from this encampment shows you to be no weakling, and I did not hear one of the officers who were present express surprise at your having

fainted when the strain of mind was so suddenly relaxed."

"But for the fear you might be dying, I should have fallen in much the same shape," Percy added with a laugh. "It was a big load on a fellow's mind, the making of another's home our castle, and the journey across the river was enough to weaken the nerves of a strong man."

"Are you certain the soldiers are not laughing at me?"

"I'll swear it, and here's good proof: We are to be housed in this tent for a spell, at any rate. To-night, when you're yourself again we'll bank it up with snow, and our quarters will be almost as comfortable, and vastly more safe, than the chamber over Master Burchard's shed."

"How long have I been lying here like a simple?"

"Five minutes, perhaps. We have but just rought you into the tent, and the captain has sent a messenger to summon Sergeant Potterfield to us."

"For what purpose?"

"I know not, unless he believes we need a

nurse. No less than Colonel Arnold himself gave orders that we be provided with the best of shelter, and relieved from duty for eight-and-forty hours. After that time has passed, I take it we are to shift for ourselves again."

Both Percy and Ephraim were in such high spirits that I could not have remained downcast any longer, even though I had shown myself twice as weak, and when Sergeant Potterfield entered we were quite jolly.

"Hello!" he cried with a grin. "There must have been some mistake regarding the orders I received, which were to look out for three invalids; but you're—Why hasn't some one taken the frost out of your cheeks?"

Without waiting for an answer the sergeant darted out of the tent, returning almost immediately with a quantity of snow, and we were forced to submit as he smothered and chilled us with the icy particles, meanwhile rubbing the frozen flesh vigorously.

I knew while we were crossing the river that the air was stinging cold, but I was so feverish and excited at the time that the thought of being frost-bitten never entered my mind.

While the sergeant was thus ministering to

our necessities we plied him with questions, all of which were readily answered.

He said Bart Green had been put under close arrest, and asked us, if we felt like talking on the subject at that time, to explain how and where we found him.

Percy told the story unaided, save when he was prone to praise me too highly, after which I insisted on giving my version. Then when both of us had come to an end, the sergeant said sharply :

“ I only hope he may get his just deserts, which is neither more nor less than the halter, and from what the captain has let fall I don't believe he'll escape a traitor's doom. At night-fall of the day you went away I found him loitering around near those of our outposts most convenient to the citadel. Had I come upon him secretly he would have had a chance of showing his purpose ; but he saw me at the same moment I discovered him, and lounged back to his quarters as if his only purpose was a stroll through the snow. I gave strict orders concerning him to all the guard, instructing the men that he be allowed to betray himself before any interference was made, and also directed

that the fact be reported to me instantly he attempted to leave camp. Unless there are more traitors than one among our troops I do not understand how he could have been absent so long without my knowledge. I was dumfounded at seeing him in your boat.”

“Think you Master Burchard might have played us false?” I asked, now prone to suspect every one who had not been well tried.

“I do not believe it; but it may be possible we shall receive tidings from him. Two men have been sent down the river with orders to approach the city from the north in the hope of gaining entrance, and if they do their work as spies half as well as your task has been performed, we shall likely know whether he earned the gold you left for him.”

Then we were told what had been done by the troops in our absence, and learned that the six-gun battery had opened upon the city; but thus far no great damage was wrought on the fortifications.

“If Quebec is ever ours it must be by an assault, for with the present force and implements we shall never effect anything of importance by a siege.”

“Are you growing downhearted, Sergeant Potterfield?” I asked, noting that the expression on his face was mournful.

“No, lad, I shall never be that while we are in front of the enemy; but I cannot prevent myself from being saddened at times when I think how little is likely to result from all the lives and suffering this expedition has cost.”

“Montreal was taken,” I suggested.

“Ay, lad, but not by the forces that paid with their bodies the price of a passage through the wilderness. Our men should have the satisfaction of accomplishing something after having endured so much.”

I now understood as well as if it had been told in words that he was doubtful of success, and when so brave a man as Sergeant Potterfield was downcast, how must the rank and file look upon the situation?

Just at nightfall the heavy booming of guns was heard, and I asked of the sergeant, who yet remained in our tent, if it could be possible an assault was being made.

“Not a bit of it, lad. The men are warming themselves up a little, and it is well they should, even though the city may not suffer. If your

messenger is there, a cannon ball falling into the streets now and then will serve to give greater weight to his arguments.”

I believe of a verity we three slept every moment of twelve hours on this night, and when morning came we were so refreshed that it seemed little less than deliberate skulking to remain thus snugly housed while our companions were exposed to the wintry blasts.

“It will not be difficult to find other inmates for these quarters,” Percy said with a mock sigh when I spoke the thoughts which were in my mind. “By repeating to Captain Morgan what you have just said to Ephraim and me, there is no doubt but we will be sent out to do our share in trampling down the snow.”

“And are you willing that I should do so?” I asked, not content to take the lead in this matter unless it might be agreeable to my companions.

“Go ahead, and Ephraim and I will take advantage of the time to enjoy ourselves a few moments longer, for it isn’t likely we’ll find other quarters like these until we’re inside the city.”

On reporting to the captain that we were fully recovered and ready for duty, he looked

at me oddly for a moment, and then said with his queer laugh which was hardly more than a chuckle :

“It is a pity other members of this force are not as willing to brave discomforts as you three lads. When this campaign is over, if you are still minded to be of the army, it shall be my care to see that you have higher rank than that of privates. Report to Sergeant Potterfield.”

From the day we three of the Virginia company won commendations from our officers for returning to duty when we might have played the part of invalids many hours longer, until the month of December was well-nigh spent, there was nothing smacking of adventure which came in our way.

Every day was full of hard work, bitter suffering, and disappointment because no headway was made in the siege ; but our lot was with our companions, and the duties we performed the same as any soldier might expect under the circumstances.

Yet there were many matters which should be related before we come to that battle where such, and so much, gallant blood was spilled, and they can be told better, perhaps, if I set them

down without trying to confine myself to the exact time at which they took place.

Bart Green was brought before a military tribunal within eight-and-forty hours after our arrival, and, as a matter of course, we were called upon to give evidence against him.

To the surprise of us three who had captured him, a dozen men came forward and testified to facts which warranted the belief that he had communicated with the enemy, and he refused to make any reply, urging stupidly that since he had not enlisted the officers of the expedition had no right to arraign him.

There could be but one outcome to the trial, as all with whom I talked felt certain.

He was convicted and sentenced to be hanged on the morning of the second day, on that portion of the plain where the enemy could witness the execution.

But for the knowledge of the mischief he might have wrought the Cause, we three who brought him into camp would have felt as though, in a certain measure, his blood was on our hands, and Sergeant Potterfield argued with me a full hour before I could shake off a feeling of remorse.

When I came to see the matter in its true light, however, a great relief came upon me, though not for any worldly gain would I have witnessed the execution.

The hangman was spared disagreeable labor, however.

At midnight before the hour set for the execution, he was found dead—stabbed through the heart with a bayonet.

For a while we believed he had plucked up courage enough at the last to take his own worthless life, and had, if that could be possible, a trifle more respect for him ; but after the surgeon made an examination of the body it was said he had been murdered while he slept.

Among the camp-followers who had come with General Montgomery's troops from Montreal were two dissolute men, with whom it was said Green had a violent quarrel shortly before he disappeared to visit Hiram Burchard's, and since these fellows were missing on the morning the crime was discovered, all believed them guilty.

I question if there was a soldier in the encampment who did not feel relieved when it was known there would be no execution, for it

seemed an ill omen to hang one of our own force, even though that one was a traitor.

Those who had been sent as spies to enter the city from the north, accomplished their purpose and returned to camp on the twenty-second of December.

Among other matters they reported having seen Hiram Burchard, who had remained in the beleaguered city a full week, performing his mission most faithfully regardless of the threats made by the officers of the army to put him under arrest if he persisted in urging the people to demand that the city be surrendered.

Thus it was known that the inhabitants of Quebec were fully aware of the terms offered by General Montgomery, yet no propositions for surrender were made us.

The military were either strong enough to resist the demands of the citizens, or the latter had no stomach for joining the colonies against the king.

We three of the Virginia company met that Captain Sinclair who had saved us the long journey, many times during the siege, and but for the fear it would smack too much of boasting, I would set down the many flattering offers

he made us to join his troop after the business here had been brought to a close.

Even though we had been at liberty to make the exchange then and there, his propositions would not have been accepted, for we admired our captain beyond the power of words to express, and were resolved to fight by his side so long as we remained in the army.

The work of the siege went on in due form, but even inexperienced soldiers like myself and Ephraim, could see plainly that the men had lost heart.

All knew, or thought they did, that our efforts would be of no avail so long as we remained at a distance, peppering the walls with our small missiles, and doing no harm save when a red-coat incautiously offered himself as a target to our sharpshooters.

The six-gun battery was of hardly more service than the mortars, and even for these we had not ammunition sufficient to keep up a continuous firing.

As a rule we saluted the Britishers in the morning, pitching a shot sometimes into the city itself.

At noon we fired a few rounds to let them

know we were not asleep, or stingy with powder, and at night the same thing was repeated something after the fashion of bidding them "rest well," which I doubt not they did much better than we, who were oftentimes covered entirely with snow by the wind.

More than a dozen times did we, meaning Ephraim, Percy, and myself, awaken in the morning to find ourselves and our hut two feet or more beneath the surface, and often before the work of "digging out" was well completed, the snow would bury us again.

It was as if the wind blew all the time across that place, and never was it less frosty than to be absolutely painful when it struck one's face.

Until arriving here I had thought there could be no spot in the country where the cold ran riot longer, or with more earnestness, than at our clearing on the Kennebec River; but before the siege was ended I came to think of home as being sunny and warm the year round.

As the days wore on, and the month was nearly at an end, bringing us no nearer the capture of the city than when we first sat down before it, the men began to grumble.

All realized how feeble were the best efforts

we could put forth against this strongly fortified town, and the greater number clamored for an assault, arguing that at such work they might have an opportunity of proving their mettle, while now there was nothing to be done save sit still and freeze.

Day by day this feeling grew stronger until one heard but few opposing the idea, and yet these few, as I noted with dismay, were those soldiers who had had the most experience.

It was the raw recruits like ourselves, who cried the loudest to be put face to face with the enemy.

As a matter of course we three of the Virginia company discussed the question quite as often as any one else, but only once did we have an opportunity of doing so with Sergeant Potterfield.

He was the man, next to our captain, who might say what he pleased without fear of being called a coward, and I was most eager to learn what he thought of an assault.

“If we had been ordered to make one, lad, I'd keep my mouth shut, for a soldier has no business to chew over commands which have been given. But no such word has come to us,

nor do I believe it ever will, unless big reinforcements arrive to help us out."

"Why won't it be given?" Percy asked quickly.

"Because General Montgomery is too good a soldier not to know what would most likely be the result, and yet he is in a hard place just at this time."

"Do you mean because he must put up with the frost the same as we all do?" I asked.

The sergeant fairly glared at me because of asking such a silly question, and then continued much as if I had not spoken :

"After taking Montreal, and since our portion of the forces have traveled so far, the people of the colonies most likely are insisting that we make some kind of a move. If the general should retreat without having done more than pound at the walls, injuring them naught to speak of, he would be accused of fear. The only thing which worries me is that he may be forced, by what he knows to be public opinion, into the assault."

"Then you think it would be useless?"

"I won't go so far as that, lad ; but you can judge for yourself. It is said the enemy out-

number us nearly two to one, and our spies who have just come from the city report that there can be no doubt regarding it. We know, unless our heads are all turned, that the Britishers are the best soldiers, because they have been trained to warfare. Now, take all together, remembering that even during an assault they will still be fighting under cover, and ask yourself what the chances are. This much I do believe most devoutly : That we have officers second to none to lead us, but they are not all we need."

Having every confidence in the sergeant's opinion on military affairs, I began to think we should be defeated if an attack was made upon the city, but to this Percy would not agree.

He argued that our troops, even though lacking discipline, would fight the better owing to the justness of their cause, and, having overcome such obstacles as we found in the wilderness, were able to cope with even a much larger force of Britishers.

I have set down here all our hopes and fears with what seems, as I read it over, like a vast number of words ; but yet I cannot take out a single one, lest by so doing those who read the lines may fail to understand our position.

The privates considered themselves as having a right to discuss and criticise the conduct of military affairs, thus showing how sadly they lacked a soldier's training, and all felt the most intense personal interest in the result.

Before the last days of the month came many of the braggarts were silenced, and the deeper-thinking men began to understand that the true position of affairs was as Sergeant Potterfield had stated.

The majority concluded that an assault would not be wise, yet to a man we believed that one would be made, and were resolved to take no heed of life if thereby a victory might be brought out of what now seemed like a defeat.

CHAPTER XVII

AN APOLOGY

It was while we were thus divided in opinion, so to speak, one day saying to ourselves that the city must be attacked at all hazards, and the next, declaring that it would be folly to throw our troops against the fortifications, that I came very near being startled by receiving from Sergeant Potterfield an order to report at Captain Morgan's headquarters without delay.

Now that the snow was so deep in the country roundabout I could not believe this summons portended another mission for us three of the Virginia company, and I had still remaining sufficient modesty to permit of my understanding that we lads would hardly be consulted regarding an attack upon the enemy, therefore was I both puzzled and troubled because of the command, but without being able to say why it should disturb me in any way.

“Do you know what is wanted, sergeant?” I

asked of the soldier whom we three now looked upon as a true friend.

“I have just come on duty, and haven't so much as an idea; but judging from the manner in which the captain spoke, I should say it mightn't be wise to make any delay.”

“We three slept out of our own quarters last night, and it may be the captain intends to haul us over the coals for so doing,” I said, still lingering when I should have hastened to obey the command.

“Why did you do that?”

“The wind took our shelter up bodily, and swept it half across the plain late in the evening. We could not rig up another in the darkness, so quartered ourselves with some of the New York men till morning.”

“If any notice was to be taken of that, I should be the one to make an inquiry, therefore you may set it down as not being of so trifling a nature. Mayhap you lads have been derelict in some duty which has come under the captain's notice.”

“That cannot be, for I am positive—”

“It will do no good to argue the matter with me, who am ignorant regarding the reason of

the summons; but this I do know for a verity, that unless you scuttle away right lively there'll be a wiggling in store. Captain Morgan counts on being obeyed promptly."

I lost no time in speculating; but started toward headquarters at once, and on arriving there found I had wasted my breath and been alarmed when there was no reason, all of which has taught me, I hope, to face promptly whatever may come without stopping to dread it, as one does when forced to take a plunge in cold water, or to swallow a nauseous draught.

After being admitted to Captain Morgan's quarters the first person I saw was Master Hiram Burchard, and without waiting to salute my superior officer I sprang toward him with outstretched hand, overjoyed at thus having an opportunity to explain why we had for a certain time taken forcible possession of his dwelling.

"So you are acquainted with this gentleman?" Captain Morgan said, before either Master Burchard or I could speak.

"Indeed I am, sir. He it was who undertook to carry General Montgomery's message to the citizens of Quebec. It was at his house we were lodged when we made a prisoner of Green."

“Then, sir, you are detained no longer,” the captain said, as he turned to the visitor. “I did not doubt your statement, yet it was my duty to have proof of your identity from my own men.”

“I blame you not for the precaution, Captain Morgan. Although having had but little experience in matters concerning warfare, I have already had good reason to know that a military camp cannot be visited by any gossip who may want to gaze at the soldiers. Shall I withdraw?”

“That is as you please. If you desire an interview with this lad it may be more to your comfort to use my tent as the meeting-place, and if it be private matters—”

“I have nothing to say you should not hear, sir,” Master Burchard replied with a bow, and then turning to me he grasped my hand once more. “I was forced to stay in the city longer than I counted on, lad, and was sore at heart when I returned home, to learn how you had been treated by mine. I have visited the camp for no other purpose than to beg your pardon.”

“That should not be, Master Burchard,” and

I spoke with feeling because it hurt me that one so much my elder had undertaken so disagreeable a journey for such a purpose. "We, and I can speak for my comrades as well as myself, understood that you were in nowise at fault."

"But my sons were, and I have come to apologize for them. You were my guest, but not treated as such by those who should have considered my honor even before the interests of the king, whom they serve only with their tongues. I could have it in my heart to forgive them for consorting with him whom you call a traitor, but even they cannot make amends for violating their sworn word."

I knew he referred to the attempt at liberating our prisoner, and understood that Mistress Burchard must have told the story, yet it was not pleasant to see the old man humbling himself before one so young as myself, therefore I said quickly :

"I pray you will speak no more regarding it, sir, more especially since we came out of the adventure unharmed," and then, to change the subject, I spoke of his visit to the city.

"Aye, lad, I did my part as agreed ; but without avail."

“Did they refuse to listen to you, sir?” Captain Morgan asked.

“They were ready enough with their ears, captain; but backward so far as action went. With any other commander than Sir Guy Carleton, I venture to say the citizens would have put up such a remonstrance against the siege that even the military authorities must have heeded them; but to appeal against his decision is what they dare not do.”

“Are the people favorably disposed toward us?”

“I cannot say they have any great leaning one way or the other, sir, so far as masters go. It is war, and what war brings in its train which they fear.”

“But we would make them free and independent.”

“And also impoverish them.”

“How so? We do not exact tribute from any man; it is to prevent it that we are in arms against the king.”

“What profits it whether the king or the commons levy taxes, so that they must be paid? If we supply money to fight for independence, it is the same as if we paid that which George

demands, and yet with this difference, that if we fail in the undertaking, then must we pay double. I would not argue this in your own camp, captain, but that you put the question squarely at me, and my words are the same as those used by the people of yonder city. It is the working classes who must support the soldiers, whether they wear the uniform of the king or the colonies.”

“Then you do not believe the citizens of Quebec would welcome us?”

“They would if you came as conquerors; but there is hardly a man who believes it worth the hazard to raise his hand in your favor.”

“Can you tell me of the defenses at St. John’s gate? What number of guns have the British there?”

“I know not, sir, and even though I did, it would not become me, who have been admitted to both camps, to give information to one side or the other. If I replied to your question, then you might have good reason to believe I would repeat to Sir Guy all I may have learned here.”

“You are right, Master Burchard. I should not have asked the question,” and Captain

Morgan stepped back a few paces as if to intimate that he would take no further part in the converse.

“I would see your comrades, lad, if it so be I may. Should that not be permitted, will you walk to the river with me, for I count on going home at once.”

“Take Master Burchard wherever he pleases to go, and you three lads are excused from duty to act the part of hosts,” Captain Morgan said with so much of right good feeling in his tone that the old man was touched.

“I bid you good day, sir,” he said, holding out his hand. “I have never set myself against this attempt of the colonies to rule themselves, but even though I had, I could now have it in my heart to wish you God’s blessing in the enterprise.”

The captain made no reply to this, but gripped Master Burchard’s hand hard, and the two parted forever, as both then believed.

We found my comrades without delay, and after the old man had said to them much the same as to me, we wandered about the encampment an hour or more, after which Master Burchard, escorted by us, went to the river side.

Before he would be content we were forced to repeat many times that we absolved him from all blame in what had taken place in his home, and then, bearing our messages of friendly feeling to Mistress Burchard and her daughters, we aided him in dragging his bateau over the shore-ice, which for more than two hundred yards was firm enough to bear the weight of a yoke of cattle.

It was like parting with an old friend when we shook him by the hand for the last time, as we all supposed, save it might be we took the city and were quartered therein for a season, and my heart was the stouter for his coming.

This day was the twenty-ninth of December.

When we clambered up the hill to the encampment the heavy clouds were hanging low, and there was a promise of snow in the air.

Percy predicted that a storm was near at hand, and I, thinking only of self, replied:

“I care not how soon, or in what volume it may come. With plenty of it on the plain we shall be able to build such quarters as will keep off the wind.”

“But too much may interfere with our work,” Percy said gravely. “Even as it is we are

hampered much in dragging the guns from one point to another."

"There is no reason why there should be any change in the battery. Even at seven hundred yards distance our balls do no more than chip off here and there bits of the wall, and we may as well continue the bombardment from one point as another."

Then we discussed for at least the hundredth time the chances of success in assaulting the city, and the argument ended only when we stood face to face with Sergeant Potterfield, who betrayed signs of unusual excitement.

"Has anything gone wrong?" I asked quickly, fearing some disaster had come upon him.

"That is to be seen, lad; everything thus far is as it has been; but those who are in favor of storming the city are soon to be satisfied, and I predict we shall have all the fighting the greatest gluttons among us can desire."

"Storm the city?" I repeated, as if not understanding his words.

"Ay, it is decided to make the attempt, and the plan is already made. The Virginia company have no reason to complain because of the part assigned to them."

“Where are we to be in the assault?” Percy asked eagerly.

“We advance against the lower town along the St. Charles, with Colonel Arnold at our head, and General Montgomery himself leads another column by the river bank. Colonel Livingston is to make a feint at St. John’s gate, while Major Brown proceeds against Cape Diamond. These last two forces but create a diversion for our benefit, and, as is our right, we shall have the hottest work.”

We three were silent a full moment, and it was little wonder speech seemed impossible just then so far as Ephraim and I were concerned.

There would be a battle and a desperate one, and we, who had never so much as witnessed an engagement of any kind, were to be in the front ranks.

As I look back at that moment it seems strange that the only thought in my mind was as to whether my courage would be sufficient to hold me in the ranks.

I had a wholesome dread of bullets, and shrank from the idea of marching up to a long line of muskets aimed directly at me, with the certainty that they would be discharged.

How much more terrible would it be to advance in the face of cannon, with death on the one side, and dishonor on the other.

“When is it to be?” Percy asked, and I observed that his voice faltered slightly.

“On the morning after to-morrow, before daybreak.”

“Think you we shall win the day, Sergeant Potterfield?” Ephraim asked, and I believed he put the question in the hope of strengthening his courage.

“That is what we must all believe, otherwise is the battle lost before it has been begun. Remember, lads, that you are fighting for life, and the more execution you do the better your chances. It is not certain that death will come to either of us four; but I am positive we shall not bring dishonor upon the Virginia company. Forget that I have been faint-hearted regarding the assault, and think only that upon each individual member of the force depends the fortunes of the day.”

I turned away fearing lest my comrades should read from my face the fear which was in my heart, and noting the movement, Sergeant Potterfield understood its meaning.

“To my mind there is no more danger, nay, not so much, for you three lads in the assault, as when you set out with smiles upon your lips to make the journey to Montreal, before we knew that city had been taken,” he said cheerily, hoping to hearten us. “I warrant you can come no nearer death than when you were in that house yonder with Green plotting your murder, and yet you bore yourselves nobly.”

“There the danger was thrust upon us, and on the day after the morrow we shall walk willingly into it,” Ephraim replied, but with a more steady voice.

“Ay, lad, I’ll warrant you walk willingly into it, and certain I am you will give good account of yourselves. See to it your weapons are in order, and that you carry a plentiful supply of powder and ball.”

With this the kindly officer and gallant soldier walked away, bent no doubt on cheering others as he indeed had us, and we three faced each other in silence.

Then, after a long time of reflection during which I could think of nothing save the peril before us, Percy said merrily :

“We stand here as if the Britishers were

already advancing. There are yet eight-and-forty hours in which we are to freeze outside the city, and that we shall do in good truth if we fail to set about making a new shelter. I am not minded to quarter with strangers during these two days; but together, where we may say that which is in our minds without fear of being called cowards."

Action was what we all needed just then, and we began the task, working desperately hard to fight off gloomy thoughts.

Before nightfall we had made for ourselves a new hut of snow and pine branches, builded with as much care as if we expected to occupy it throughout the entire winter, instead of only a few hours, after which less than six feet of ground might be the most we could claim, and a great deal more than we would get.

We were not to be on guard duty this night, and instead of talking about the coming battle while we lay snugly wrapped in our blankets, we spoke of the clearing on the Kennebec; of Percy's home far away in Virginia, and of her whom I doubted not was at that moment in heaven looking down upon us.

Sleep finally came to us all, and when we

awakened next morning it was to see the storm clouds hanging over us as threateningly as on the night before, while the air was damp and heavy with the promise of snow.

I can hardly recall to mind how that day was spent, even though so short a time has passed since then.

There was but little argument among the troops regarding the possibilities of the future.

Now and then some braggart would declare the British were certain to flee instantly we made our appearance; but the older heads laughed such speech to scorn, and I afterward observed that those who then talked the loudest were the first to get a stomach full of fighting.

We three had seen but little of Master Severance since the siege began; but on this day he sought us out, and I mind well that he spent the greater portion of the afternoon in our hut, recalling to memory the sufferings we had endured while marching through the wilderness.

Then, when it was time to go to his post, for he was of the guard on this night before the assault, he said bravely:

“Let this be in your minds when we set out

to storm the city, lads; all which may be encountered will be as nothing compared with what we faced 'twixt the Kennebec and the Chaudière Rivers."

From that moment until we were ordered to fall into line, my comrades and I remained by ourselves.

During the first portion of the night we slept now and then, but only to dream of that march through the wilderness, or of the moment when we first learned that Green had come to the Burchard house to compass our death, and the summons to take our places in the ranks was more of a relief than something to be dreaded.

The wind was howling and screeching across the plain, but we had no idea the snow had begun to fall until we came out from our shelter armed for battle, at midnight, and then we found ourselves enveloped in the swirling clouds.

It was a tempest, rather than an ordinary storm, and so heavy was the downfall that one could not see a camp-fire an hundred paces away.

"Think you we shall make the attempt in such a smother?" Ephraim asked, and I answered:

“It does not seem possible, and yet I hope we may.”

“Are you so eager to be in battle?”

“I fear what may come by more thinking about it. To my mind nothing can be worse than sitting here eating our hearts out with forebodings. When we are in action there will only be the enemy before us.”

“Only the enemy!” Ephraim repeated in such a doleful tone that straightway Percy and I set up a shout of laughter, despite the pain in our hearts, and then we heard the captain cry as if to the men in line:

“There come the lads of the company with mirth on their lips to shame those of you whose faces are white.”

It was taking far more than our due if we remained silent after this compliment, and yet how could we have said that the mirth was only on the surface, called forth by a chance word—that our hearts were heavy as lead?

Therefore I doubt not but that we passed among our companions as brave lads, when, if truth had been told just at that moment, we would have been cried down as cowards.

We found place in line near Master Sever-

ance, and he held out his hand to me as I came up, but spoke no word.

The Virginia company was the first to form, much to Captain Morgan's satisfaction and our discomfort, for we were thus forced to stand exposed to all the fury of the storm, while the laggards, and I doubt not but among them were those who had boasted so loudly the day previous, came into the ranks.

Not until Colonel Arnold walked toward us equipped as if for battle did I feel certain we would storm the city that night, and I leaned forward to say to Master Severance:

“This fall of snow should be in our favor.”

“Ay, lad, so it will be if we march in close order, for I warrant the Britishers will keep their fine uniforms under cover as much as possible, and we may effect a surprise, which must go far toward off-setting the difference in numbers.”

We had thought the commander would say some word of cheer; but after conversing a moment with our captain he strode off toward that portion of the plain where I had been told Colonel Livingston's force of Canadians were forming, and we were left to hearten each other as best we might.

Sergeant Potterfield was of the mind that we lads might be weak-kneed at this final moment, and leaving his place in the ranks he came toward us, taking each in turn by the hand as he said :

“ I have no fear of what you may do when we are in front of the enemy, for we have had good proof of your mettle ; but bear this in mind during the time of waiting, which will be the worst moments of all, that we of the Virginia company are in the advance. As we fight so will those in the rear, and if we turn cowards, the day is lost. You lads may effect as much by your bearing, as a dozen might by grappling with the foe.”

Then he returned to his station, and that which he had said nerved me wonderfully.

“ We are raw recruits, Ephraim, and may not know the manual of arms ; but we are not cowards save, perhaps, way down in our hearts where it can never be known to any except ourselves, unless we give way to the fear.”

“ I would die first ! ” the brave little lad said right heartily, and then came the words we had been waiting yet almost dreading to hear :

“ Forward ! march ! ”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ASSAULT

IN order that I may tell the story of the assault understandingly it is necessary first to relate that which I have since learned, rather than confine this account only to what my comrades and myself experienced, for we were not whipped until disasters had befallen the other divisions of the storming party.

Colonel Livingston and Major Brown created a diversion, as was agreed upon, without engaging so seriously but that it was possible at any time to withdraw if it so chanced the tide of battle went against them, and regarding their portion of the assault no more need be said.

General Montgomery, at the head of the New York troops, made his way along the St. Lawrence against the lower town, his first object of real attack.

When they were arrived at a point a little above Frazer's Wharf, and almost directly under that portion of the town known as Cape Diamond,

they found a road so narrow that no more than five men could walk abreast, across which had been erected a barricade of logs, held in place by stakes driven into the ground.

At one side of this stood a small house which the Britishers had converted into a redoubt, mounting therein two cannon.

General Montgomery, gallant soldier that he was, led the extreme advance with two aids beside him, and his troops were not less than twenty paces in the rear when he approached the obstruction and began pulling with his own hands the stakes from the ground.

He was, so it has been told me, not more than thirty yards from these two cannon when they were discharged, and he and the aids were killed at the first shot, which was the only one, it is believed, fired from that point.

The soldiers in the rear advanced at double quick instantly the action seemed to have been opened, arriving just in time to see the lifeless body of their officer roll down the steep bank on to the shore-ice.

Thus deprived of a leader before having accomplished anything, and greatly intimidated by the menacing mouths of the guns directly in

front of which they must pass to continue on, this portion of the expedition retreated.

All of what I have here set down has been told me since that fatal morning.

As to what follows, my comrades and myself witnessed, and I may tell it without shame even though we be prisoners now, because this last fact alone is sufficient to prove we overcame our timorousness sufficiently to stand side by side with our comrades until, having exhausted the ammunition, we were completely surrounded.

However, this is but telling the tale backward.

Let me return to that moment when the command to march was given, and about three hundred and fifty of us followed Colonel Arnold.

The leaders needed to have sharp eyes, for the swirl of the falling snow in the gloom served to confuse one.

I lost all idea of direction, and before we had circled around the city and come up on that side opposite where we supposed General Montgomery was making a gallant stand, I believed a dozen times that we were out of our course.

Although Ephraim and I were but raw recruits, we had no difficulty in keeping our

places in such military formation as our troops presented, for there was but little effort made at marching in line as we floundered through the drifts waist-deep, or staggered blindly along when the fury of the gale forced us to shelter our eyes from the particles of ice which were whirled by the wind with such force that they struck the unprotected portions of one's body like red-hot needles.

While not marching as well-disciplined soldiers should, we pressed on in a compact body, standing shoulder to shoulder, not because of orders to that effect, but that we might find mutual support against the bitter blasts which oftentimes threatened to hurl us from our feet.

Once when Ephraim and I, having locked arms lest we be separated, fell headlong into a ditch which had been swept clean by the wind, Master Severance raised us up quickly that we might not be trodden on by those who pressed closely in the rear, and from that moment until the action began he upheld Ephraim one side while he aided Percy on the other.

Blinded by the whirling snow which in the gloom, for the day had not yet begun to break, seemed of much greater volume than it really

was, I believed the city to be yet a long distance off when suddenly the report of a musket rang out, and Master Severance muttered:

“They have seen us. Some sentinel has given the alarm.”

“Are we so near at hand as that?” I asked in surprise, and as if for reply came the rattling of musketry so close at hand that I could see flashes of fire through the veil of falling snow.

It was to me more like a slap in the face than a danger to be feared, this sharp crack of fire-arms, and beating my benumbed hands together to restore the circulation of blood, I urged Ephraim forward, eager to be at the heels of our leaders.

Now I understood that we were on a narrow path, on the upper side of which the ground rose in almost sheer ascent, and at the other, fell away into a precipitous cliff.

There could be no straying from the column. Each man must remain in line, and I exulted in the thought that the faint-hearted would not be able to turn back, save they were in the rear-most ranks.

“Can you see the Britishers?” Ephraim cried

eagerly, and there was in the tone of his voice not a tremor.

“No; and yet from the flashes of the guns they must be near at hand.”

“We have arrived at a barricade,” Master Severance cried urging us forward, and in another instant all was to me noise and confusion.

I heard here a cry of pain which told that a companion was wounded; saw there dimly in the gloom a man fall headlong as if having received his death-blow, and knew, although as one knows without hearing it, that the officers were urging us forward, while over all was the sharp rattle of musketry, with now and then the heavy booming of a gun.

We four—Master Severance, Percy, Ephraim, and I—marched shoulder to shoulder at the very heels of Captain Morgan, who in turn was but a pace behind Colonel Arnold, until the barricade was before us, and then we began to discharge and reload our weapons without waiting for orders.

Instinct seemed to tell one what to do at such a time, and instead of being timorous as I was before we started from the camp, a great flood

of anger swept over me, and I believe at that moment I would have been sensible of no bodily injury.

Now we moved forward a few paces, we four, firing a volley, and then we fell back the same distance as the bullets from the barricade came in a shower, while before our eyes, waving his sword, discharging his pistol, or leaning on the very edge of the barricade and striking furiously at those behind, was our captain, making good most gloriously the praise which had been spoken regarding him.

So exultant was I because of his daring that I found myself urging him on, and moved by a common thought we four ranged ourselves immediately behind him.

From the gun directly above the path came a shower of grape-shot which mowed down our men as it seemed to me by the score; yet touched us not because of our being further in advance, and seeing this our companions in the rear pressed forward until we were forced so near to the barricade that I rested my rifle on the topmost log as I fired into the mass of human beings whom I knew to be Britishers.

Then it was I turned my head ever so slightly,

just as Master Severance suddenly wheeled half around, clapping his hand on his shoulder, and I shouted, not even so much as hearing my own voice :

“Are you wounded?”

While one might have counted ten he searched with his hand for a hurt, and then shaking his head as if to reassure me, turned and again discharged his weapon.

Once more were we pressing so closely behind the captain that I fired over his shoulder, and he leaped to one side with a cry as of pain, causing me to believe my bullet had found lodgment in his body.

Then I saw him bend over a prostrate form on the ground, and some one near me cried :

“Colonel Arnold is killed! Colonel Arnold is killed!”

“Hold your tongue, fool!” the captain shouted, as he raised the fallen commander, who, waving his sword feebly, cried :

“Come on, lads! Press on! The day is ours if we falter not!”

So near were we to the wounded colonel that I could see that his injury must be a severe one. He stood on one foot, the other leg swinging to

and fro in such a manner as to tell plainly the bone had been shattered.

Then, as a group of men gathered around, Captain Morgan gave orders that the colonel be carried to the rear without loss of time, and stopping not to observe whether this command was obeyed, he urged us forward once more.

Our momentary delay must have caused the Britishers to think we were grown faint-hearted, for a body of them pressed to the very barricade, thrust their muskets over until I seized one which was aimed directly in my face, throwing all my weight upon it, and wrested it from its owner's grasp.

At that instant, with a shrill cry of triumph which caused the blood to bound in my veins, Sergeant Potterfield leaped upon the top of the barricade, striking here and there at the mass below him with the butt of his musket, and before one could have said "ay," Lieutenant Heth was beside him.

Had we needed an incentive it was given us now, and pell-mell we who were nearest at hand went over the barricade like sheep through a gap in the wall, and as if in the twinkling of an

eye the Britishers had turned tail, running for dear life.

What a glorious moment that was when we pursued—we raw recruits driving before us His Majesty's troops!

Had the way been open I believe of a verity we could have rushed them to the very gate of the citadel; but when about an hundred yards had been traversed we found a second and more formidable barrier in our path.

Another barricade which halted us for an instant, but not longer.

As before, Sergeant Potterfield was the first upon it, with Lieutenant Heth now by his side, and Captain Morgan only two paces in the rear, the remainder of us closing up as fast as our legs would carry us.

Again it was a hand-to-hand conflict, when I saw only such of the red-coats as were immediately in front of me, and more than once did we of the gallant Virginia company bring down a Britisher with a blow from a clubbed musket.

I knew not what orders were given, nor what, if anything, my comrades said to me in that mad, exultant rush and scramble.

To advance seemed to be the only thought in the minds of any of us.

The snow showed great blotches and trails of brown which when the sun rose would be a vivid crimson, and knowing it was the life-blood of our enemies the sight drove me to a frenzy of passion that more might be shed.

At the second barricade Humphreys of our Virginia company fell while standing by my side, and I believe of a verity that I laughed because the Britisher who had stricken him down left his own body unprotected.

Before the blow was well dealt I had sent a bullet through his heart.

Over this second barricade like racers in the steeple-chase we went, Sergeant Potterfield still leading the way, with now Captain Morgan, and again Lieutenant Heth, just behind.

The gloom of night had begun to give way before the gray light of coming day when Master Severance, Ephraim, and I ran full tilt into the leaders, and Percy, who had been several paces behind, came upon me with such force I was nigh to being knocked down.

This sudden halt had been caused by a third barricade, not formed of logs and stakes, but of



“WE HAVE THE WHOLE BRITISH ARMY IN FRONT OF US”

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red-coated soldiers, who stretched far ahead in the path, an impenetrable barrier.

“We have the whole British army in front of us!” I heard Master Severance say, and Lieutenant Heth shouted as if thinking one of us might answer the question :

“Why has General Montgomery not made his attack? Surely he has not left us alone to bear the brunt of it!” Then he added as if fearing his words might have disheartened us, “At them, lads! At them! We are here to fight, and there is no lack of opportunity!”

“Shoulder to shoulder! Close up in solid ranks!” Captain Morgan shouted.

He had hardly spoken before we heard a cry from the rear, and instantly a volley of musketry came forth from that direction as if our own troops were firing upon us.

“The battle is ended,” Master Severance cried, pulling me back when I would have advanced by the side of Sergeant Potterfield, who was moving toward that solid body of red as if to force his way through. “The battle is ended! We are beset both in front and rear. Some portion of the plan has gone awry, or we should not be so sorely pressed.”

As I read what I have here set down it seems a faltering account of that moment when one's pulses were throbbing as if the blood were bursting through the skin, and all these things were done as if in a twinkling.

From the time we overran the second barricade until we found ourselves hemmed in on the narrow road, I think not sixty seconds had passed, and yet, because of my feeble way in the telling, it would seem as if we huddled together like frightened sheep; but not so.

There had been no faltering until Master Severance prevented me from going forward, and all had pressed on until Captain Morgan shouted:

“Cease firing! Cease firing!”

Wondering why such an order had been given when more than ever did it seem necessary we should make ourselves felt, I looked back, and that which I saw stilled as if an instant the frenzied excitement which had been mine from the time the first shot was fired.

Of the three hundred and fifty who followed Colonel Arnold from the encampment on the Plain of Abraham I believe of a verity not four-score were yet standing, and as far as my

eye could pierce the mantle of falling snow in every direction, were solid platoons of Britishers.

Our little band stood between these two huge masses, who when they closed together must crush us from the sheer press of numbers even though not a shot was fired.

Then it was I understood why the command to cease firing had been given.

As Master Severance had said, the battle was over, and we who had thought to capture a city were ourselves captured.

“Who commands this detachment?” I heard a voice from amid the ranks of the enemy cry, and looking in that direction I saw Sergeant Potterfield turn back to the foe, the tears streaming down his pallid cheeks, such a picture of woe as I had never seen before.

Then our captain replied to the hail, and advancing a few paces stood with sword-point lowered as he spoke with the Britisher who had come toward him.

“What is to be done?” I asked Master Severance, and he replied in a voice trembling with emotion, although until this moment his tone had been steady and firm.

“We are to surrender, lad; surrender to those whom we had hoped would by this time be our prisoners!”

“Why do we give in? The other portion of our forces must be holding their own, else all these Britishers could not be here.”

“It is likely, lad, the other portions of our forces are more sorely pressed than we, else we should not be so beset.”

“Think you they have surrendered?”

“Who can say? Surrendered or vanquished they most certainly are.”

It was a bitter thing to have thus far penetrated into the city, and here be forced to capitulate.

During the short time we remained silent and motionless with the dead and the dying strewn closely around us, knowing full well now the passion of the battle had passed away in a certain degree, that the enemy could shoot us down to a man if we made any show of resistance—I say during this time my thoughts went with the rapidity of lightning to that force which we had seen approaching our clearing on the Kennebec, and my mind followed it up the river until we began the arduous labor of making the portages, insufficiently clad and

sheltered, and it seemed to me the very mockery of ill-fortune that we should have braved and overcome so much danger, for no other end than to surrender ourselves as prisoners.

I knew not what was said by Captain Morgan to the British officer; but within an exceedingly brief time after the parley was begun came the order for us to advance and stack arms, and we knew that this portion of the expedition, at least, had submitted to the foe.

There seemed to be among us no feeling of thankfulness that our lives had been spared; no regret for those who had fallen as none save heroes fall; but only the bitterest grief because of being thus forced to lay down our arms.

Sergeant Potterfield was not the only man whom I saw crying—not the only soldier who wept scalding tears of mortification.

On every hand were pallid, saddened faces, and hands which had not faltered in the turmoil of battle, shook like aspen leaves as they dropped on the snow the muskets which had been carried so faithfully.

“It may not be that the day is wholly lost,” I said, thinking to hearten Ephraim, and Master Severance caught up this gleam of hope.

“God grant you speak truly, lad. If General Montgomery be yet alive and at liberty, the siege of Quebec is not at an end because we are prisoners.”

During such time as we had been laying down our arms the British soldiers remained in rank, with not so much as a cry of triumph over our defeat, and because of this there came into my heart a feeling of gratitude.

When we were disarmed that portion of the enemy which confronted us were wheeled about, advanced yet further into the city, where the way was wider, and there stood with opened ranks to receive us who were ordered to move forward in double file.

Master Severance and Percy marched directly behind Captain Morgan, Sergeant Potterfield and Lieutenant Heth, after which came Ephraim and I, and the lad leaned heavily upon me as we were halted in the midst of the red-coats, who, on the alert for signs of resistance, eyed us curiously.

“Shall we be taken to jail, think you?” Ephraim whispered, and I could not answer the question, ignorant as I was regarding military matters; but it appeared to me that such could

not be the case—that having surrendered we would be put on parole to remain in this place or that, as might be most convenient to our captors.

Prisons, so I argued to Ephraim, were for malefactors, not men vanquished in a fair fight, and thus I heartened him as best I could while we stood there in the pitiless storm waiting orders to move.

Just before these last came, Master Severance turned and said in a choking voice, as he gripped Ephraim and me by the hands :

“God keep you, lads, and if it so be that we see not each other again—”

“But surely, Master Severance, we shall remain together,” I interrupted, cut to the heart by the tone of his voice.

“That is as may be, lad, yet the chances are much against our keeping each other company many hours longer ; but whatever betide I know you lads will bear it bravely as you have borne all sufferings since we came together, and I shall ever have you in my heart with a prayer that the good God may make light your burdens.”

It was as if Master Severance believed death to be near at hand, otherwise had he not spoken

so gravely, and a great fear came over me lest these should be indeed our last moments on earth.

Ephraim pressed closely to my side, gripping my hand hard, and as the order to march was given I passed my arm around him to support his steps.

The day had now fully come.

Citizens thronged the streets to witness the bringing in of the prisoners, and the red-coats gave way to words of exultation at their victory.

When we had marched a matter of a mile or more, as it seemed to me, the company was halted, and looking up quickly I saw that we were standing in front of what could be no other than a jail.

Had we been thieves or murderers it was to this place they would have brought us, and I envied those of our companions who had given up their lives amid the tumult and the frenzy of conflict.

CHAPTER XIX

IN PRISON

It was as if Master Severance's prayers were answered.

If Ephraim and I had been parted when we entered the gloomy building I think his heart, which was then full almost to bursting with grief, would have broken, and as for me, I know I could have welcomed death right gladly had I been thrust into one of those narrow rooms alone.

Therefore it is I say it seemed as if Master Severance's prayer had been answered when those who acted as jailers thrust Sergeant Potterfield, Percy Randolph, Ephraim and me together into one of the cells.

One does not expect to be comfortably lodged in prison, even though he be innocent of any crime, and yet matters could not have been arranged more to my liking, or to Ephraim's, save, perchance, Master Severance and Captain Morgan had been added to the party.

When the long, weary days drag until complaining thoughts come into my mind, I set them resolutely aside, saying to myself that it is for me to rejoice and be exceeding glad, rather than to repine because Ephraim is spared to me and I to Ephraim.

The story of how we came through the wilderness to Quebec with Colonel Arnold is here set down, and that which my comrades wished I should do for their entertainment, has been done.

There remains nothing more to be said save that I humbly crave pardon of my comrades because, although having set down these words as best I could, they are all so poor and feeble in the picturing of the brave deeds and the noble suffering which I have witnessed since being with the Virginia company.

Now that the work is finished and my comrades have said after reading it, most likely thinking to please me, that it is done in clerkly fashion, I would add a few lines to my own satisfaction.

Were I to write down all that which is in my heart, I could fill even again as much paper with words of praise and gratitude for those in

whose company I have been since we left the clearing on the Kennebec; but I remain silent lest the expressions be mistaken for flattery instead of a sincere utterance.

It is only my purpose to explain somewhat of our lives here, and of what we hope to do in the future if it shall please the Continental Congress to arrange for the exchange of us prisoners.

The day after we surrendered was made doubly sad by what seemed little less than an act of cruelty on the part of our captors, though as I view it now it has more the look of a necessity—a cruel necessity such as war only can cause.

It had been said to us that General Montgomery was killed, and we declared it could not be, speaking the words from out of the hope in our hearts that such disaster had not befallen the American army.

Then it was told us that we should not only be convinced, but ourselves give good proof that the noble soldier was indeed dead, for doubtless the Britishers wished such fact to add to the glory of their victory, and by our attesting to it there could be no question.

We had been in this prison four-and-twenty hours when the corporal's guard came to the door of our cell, and ordered us out in single file.

But for the fact that we had previously discussed such a question, and Sergeant Potterfield had declared my fears were without foundation, I should have believed we were about to be led out to execution, and even as it was I feared that the very least of my misfortune would be that of separation from my comrades.

We were marched through the long corridor, down one flight of stairs to the huge hall which formed an entrance to the building, and there, lying on the floor covered only with a military cloak, was a human body.

After we had been halted alongside of it, an officer came from the adjoining room and bade us look on the face of the dead as he removed the mantle.

We did as commanded, and so great was our grief that not one of us had so much control over his voice as would have permitted of words, for before us, enfolded in the embrace of death, was General Richard Montgomery, martyr to the cause of American Independence, as brave

a soldier as ever drew sword in defense of the colonies.

The face, even though mutilated as it was by the under jaw having been shot away, wore that serenity which one who knew the virtues of that officer would expect to see left there by death.

The tears that came into our eyes, and of which we were by no means ashamed, were sufficient proof to our captors that we identified the poor remains, and word was given that we be re-conducted to the cell.

Since that day I have learned that through the intercession of a lady, Master Cramche, the lieutenant-governor of Quebec, caused the corpse to be at least decently interred at the corner of the powder-house near Fort Louis, and it may be in time to come the descendants of those whom the gallant gentleman has served so well will give to his remains a proper resting-place.

It is now the tenth day of March in the year 1776, and we have good reasons for believing that efforts are being made toward our exchange, for one on whom we can rely, and who has visited us every week since the surrender, brought this welcome intelligence yesterday.

And now as to whom this visitor may be :

Three days after we were locked up like criminals, the door of our cell was opened suddenly, and there stood before us Master Hiram Burchard.

I was nigh to being overwhelmed with surprise, and doubtful as to why he came, until the good man, after saluting us in a kindly voice, stepped aside that one who looked like a servant and who was laden with packages, might enter.

This latter person deposited his burden on the floor, and then went out.

The door was closed and bolted behind him ; but Master Burchard remained, and to my shame it was Sergeant Potterfield who first greeted him.

Ephraim, Percy, and myself were so confused that it seemed impossible for us to speak, and we stood staring as if dumb until the sergeant bade him welcome.

Then it was that Percy found his tongue, and clasped the good man's hands, saying in a voice tremulous with emotion :

“ We humbly thank you, Master Burchard, for visiting us while we are in this sorry plight, and you have all the more our gratitude because

of venturing to thus proclaim yourself a friend to the enemy.”

“Tut, tut, lad! Such simple service needs not so many words. When we learned that that portion of the American army commanded by Colonel Arnold had been taken prisoners, my good wife and the girls set about cooking as though for a feast, and when I asked the reason for such unusual activity, I was told that they were working in your behalf. ‘If it so be that the lads who were hardly used in this house are yet alive, you shall carry to them what prisoners would most need, and it shall be our peace-offering,’ the mother said to me; and here I am.”

Then Master Burchard pointed to the parcels, and each in turn took him by the hand as the only way in which we could express the gratitude we felt.

Our hearts were tender, not wholly because of the food he brought, but for the kindly feeling which had prompted the gift.

He, however, affected to laugh at our emotion, and ere he had been our guest five minutes it was as if we all forgot our position, and were chatting with the good man as merrily as though in his own kitchen.

Since that day not one week has passed without our seeing him, and each time has he brought to us such a generous supply of Mistress Burchard's handiwork as has lightened our lot to a most wonderful degree.

Not only have we been cheered, but as many of our companions in misery as it has been possible for us to communicate with, for we have divided the store equally, in so far as has been permitted by the guards.

Although Master Burchard does not explain how it chances he is allowed thus to visit and supply us with luxuries, we have reason to believe from words let fall by one of our guards, that no less an officer than Sir Guy Carleton himself has given the permit which softens the rigors of our imprisonment in such a high degree.

Through Master Burchard we learn that Colonel Arnold, whom it is reasonable to suppose is recovering from his wound, still keeps up a blockade on Quebec, but Sergeant Potterfield is of the opinion that his efforts will come to naught because of the fact that our people cannot spare a sufficient number of troops to make an effective assault.

Twice have we seen Captain Morgan since having entered this place, and he is no less brave here than he was when we stood before the red-coats.

He holds to it that we must soon be released, either through an exchange of prisoners, or by Colonel Arnold's efforts, and it is decided between Ephraim, Percy, and myself, that we will follow the captain of the Virginia company so long as he remains in the army.

And now, in so far as may be, have I set down all that can be said of the part we took in the siege of Quebec under Colonel Benedict Arnold.

NOTE

The following is taken from Roger's biography of Montgomery :

“ Few men have ever fallen in battle so much regretted by both sides as General Montgomery. His many amiable qualities had procured him an uncommon share of private affection, and his great abilities an equal proportion of public esteem.

“Being a sincere lover of liberty, he had engaged in the American cause from principle, and quitted the enjoyment of an easy fortune and the highest domestic felicity, to take an active share in the fatigues and dangers of a war instituted for the defense of the community of which he was an adopted member.

“His well-known character was almost equally esteemed by the friends and foes of the side which he had espoused. In America he was celebrated as a martyr to the liberties of mankind; in Great Britain, as a misguided, good man, sacrificed to what he supposed to be the rights of his country.

“His name was mentioned in Parliament with singular respect. Some of the most powerful speakers in that assembly displayed their eloquence in sounding his praise and lamenting his fate. Those in particular who had been his fellow-soldiers in the previous war, expatiated on his many virtues. The minister himself acknowledged his worth while he reprobated the cause for which he fell. He concluded an involuntary panegyric by saying, ‘Curse on his virtues, they have undone his country.’

“To express the high sense entertained by his

country of his services, Congress directed a monument of white marble, with the following inscription on it, to be placed in front of St. Paul's Church, New York City :

THIS MONUMENT
WAS ERECTED BY ORDER OF
CONGRESS, 25TH JANUARY, 1776,
TO TRANSMIT TO POSTERITY,
A GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THE
PATRIOTISM, CONDUCT, ENTERPRIZE, AND
PERSEVERANCE,
OF MAJOR GENERAL
RICHARD MONTGOMERY;
WHO, AFTER A SERIES OF SUCCESS,
AMIDST THE MOST DISCOURAGING DIFFICULTIES,
FELL IN THE ATTACK
ON QUEBEC,
31ST DECEMBER, 1775,
AGED 38 YEARS.

“The remains of General Montgomery, after resting forty-two years at Quebec, by a resolve of the State of New York, were brought to the City of New York, on the eighth of July, 1818, and deposited with ample form and grateful ceremonies near the aforesaid monument in St. Paul's church.

“A silver plate on the coffin bears this inscription :

THE STATE OF NEW YORK
IN HONOR OF
GENERAL RICHARD MONTGOMERY,
WHO FELL GLORIOUSLY FIGHTING FOR THE
INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY OF THE UNITED STATES,
BEFORE THE WALLS OF QUEBEC, THE 31ST DAY OF
DECEMBER, 1775, CAUSED THESE REMAINS
OF THIS DISTINGUISHED HERO TO
BE CONVEYED FROM QUEBEC,
AND DEPOSITED ON THE EIGHTH DAY OF JULY, 1818,
IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, IN THE CITY OF
NEW YORK, NEAR THE MONUMENT
ERECTED TO HIS MEMORY
BY THE UNITED STATES.”

THE END

Comrades True



OR

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OR,

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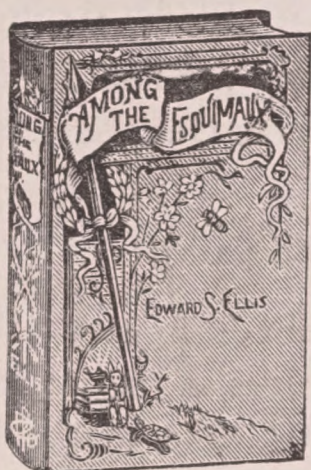
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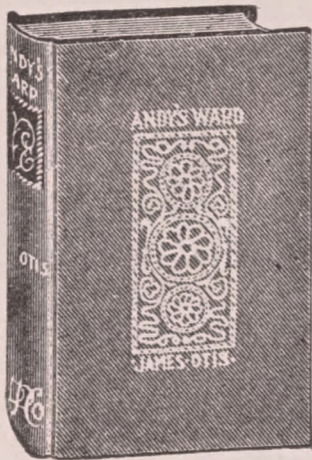
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A peculiarly fascinating narrative of the life and experiences of "Museum Marvels." They dwell in a house owned by a sword-swallower, whose wife, the "Original Circassian," is entrusted with its management. But one of the company, a dwarf, nicknamed the "Major," insists upon taking charge, and the rest of the household, including a fat lady, a giant, and a snake-charmer, stand more in awe of him than of the owner of the house or his wife.

Two boys, Andy and Jerry, are employed to wait upon this queerly assorted family. Their troubles with the dwarf and his pets, during which the boys are aided and counselled by the giant, make up the lighter portion of the story.

A tiny girl, who is even more of a dwarf than the "Major," is introduced to the household by Andy, who claims her as his ward, by virtue of a promise made to her brother when he was dying.

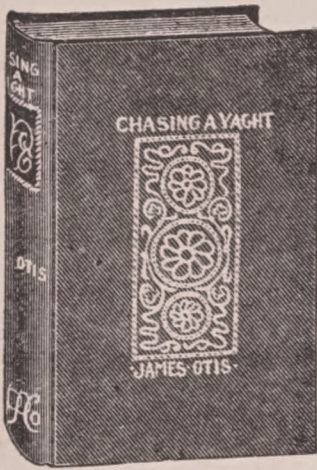
The private life of the marvels, their amusements, their wrangles, especially the laughable encounters between the "Giant" and the "Major," form a most interesting story.

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Chasing a Yacht



BY JAMES OTIS

Author of

“The Braganza Diamond,” “Andy’s Ward,” etc.

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Two boys have engaged to run a steam yacht for the double purpose of pleasure and profit, and after carefully fitting her up they launch her, only to find the next morning that she is gone—stolen—as they later discover, by two other boys who had been refused a half-interest in her. The rightful owners start in hot pursuit, and in an attempt to recapture the steamer are themselves made prisoners. It is the intention of the thieves to hold the owners prisoners until the Hudson River is reached and then put them ashore, but their plans miscarry owing to the intervention of two rather rough citizens who find their way aboard the yacht and make themselves generally at home. Fortunately one of the owners manages to effect his escape, and gaining the assistance of the authorities the little vessel is speedily restored to them.

The story is full of adventure, and the heroes are both bright and manly fellows, who make the best of their temporary hardships. The story will be found to enlist the interest at the outset, and to hold it until the last page is turned.

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The Braganza Diamond

BY JAMES OTIS

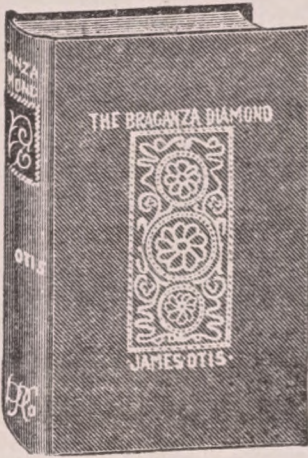
Author of

“Chasing a Yacht,” “Andy’s
Ward,” etc.

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Long before the opening events of this story the fragments of this celebrated gem are supposed to have been taken from a wreck by an old sea captain, and secreted by him on a lonely island in Roanoke Sound.

This aged captain, now quite feeble, sends for his niece and her daughter. They invite two bright boys to accompany them, and engaging a steam launch the four, in company with the owner—a trusty sailor—set out for the lonely island. Arriving there they are distressed at finding the captain already dead. To add to their discomfort they also discover that the former owners of the diamond have appeared upon the scene. The little party is forcibly made prisoner, and their captors demand that they forthwith produce the precious stone. This, of course, they are unable to do, but discovering among the old captain’s effects a curious cryptogram, they are led to hope that its solution may reveal the secret hiding place of the diamond, and thus restore to them their freedom. This theory eventually proves correct, but not until after the party has endured many hardships, and passed through many exciting experiences.

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