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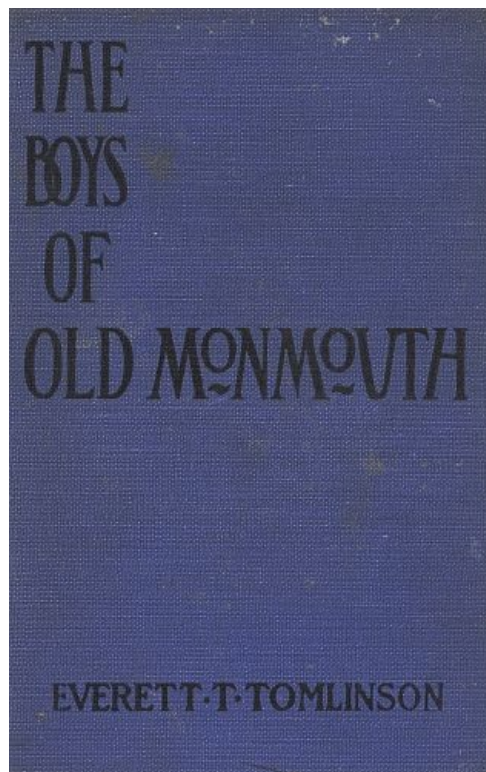
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"WHAT ABOUT THE BOY?" ([page 13](#))

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## THE BOYS OF OLD MONMOUTH

**A Story of Washington's Campaign in New Jersey in 1778**

BY

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

*Author of "Washington's Young Aids," "Guarding the Border,"  
"The Boys with Old Hickory," "Ward Hill  
at Weston," etc., etc.*



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## THE BOYS OF OLD MONMOUTH

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[1]

### CHAPTER I

#### OLD MONMOUTH

OLD Monmouth is an expression dear to the heart of every native-born Jerseyman. The occasional visitor seeking health among its whispering pines, or relaxation in the sultry summer days along its shore, where the roll of the breakers and the boundless sweep of the ocean combine to form one of the most sublime marine views on all the Atlantic seaboard, may admire the fertile farmlands and prosperous villages as much as the man to the manor born, but he never speaks of "Old" Monmouth.

Nor will he fully understand what the purebred Jerseyman means when he uses the term, for to the stranger the word will smack of length of days, and of the venerable position which Monmouth holds among the counties of the State.

[2]

Monmouth is old, it is true, and was among the first of the portions of New Jersey to be settled by the Woapsiel Lennape, the name which the Indians first gave to the white people from across the sea, or by the Schwonnack,—"the salt people,"—as the Delawares afterwards called them. But the true Jerseyman is not thinking alone of the age of Monmouth when he uses the word "Old." To him it is a term of affection also, used it may be as schoolboys or college mates use it when they address one another as "old fellow," though but a few years may have passed over their heads.

The new-comer or the stranger may speak of Fair Monmouth, and think he is giving all the honor due to the beautiful region, but his failure to use the proper adjective will at once betray his foreign birth and his ignorance of the position which the county holds in the affections of all true Jerseymen.

Still, Monmouth is old in the sense in which the summer visitor uses the word. Here and there in the county an antiquated house is standing to-day, which if it were endowed with the power of speech could tell of stirring sights it had seen more than a century ago. Redcoats, fleeing from

the wrath of the angry Washington and his Jersey Blues, marched swiftly past on their way to the Highlands and the refuge of New York. Fierce contests between neighbors, who had taken opposite sides in the struggle of the colonies for freedom from the yoke of the mother country, or step-mother country, as some not inappropriately termed her in these days, occurred in the presence of these ancient dwelling-places, and sometimes within their very walls. Many, too, would be the stories of the deeds of Tories, and refugees, and pine robbers contending with stanch and sturdy Whigs. Up the many winding streams, boat-loads of sailors made their way from the gunboat or privateer anchored off the shore, to burn the salt works of the hardy pioneers, or lay waste their lands as they searched for plunder or for forage.

[3]

The forked trees along the shore, in whose branches the lookouts were concealed as they swept the ocean for miles watching for the appearance of the hostile boat, were standing until recent years. In their last days broken, it is true, and almost destroyed by the winter storms and their weight of long years, still they stood as the few remaining tokens of that century when our fathers contended for "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor." At last the pathos and weakness of old age prevailed, and to-day there remains scarcely a vestige of those ancient landmarks.

[4]

Perhaps if the boys and girls of New Jersey had been as mindful of those old trees as the Cambridge lads and lassies have been of the spreading elm beneath whose branches the noble-hearted Washington assumed the command of the little American army, some of them might still be standing; but as it is, the most of them have crumbled and fallen and disappeared as completely as have the men who sought the shelter of their branches in the trying times of '78.

So, too, for many years stood the famous tree from whose limbs the noble patriot, Captain Huddy, was hanged,—as dastardly a deed as was committed by either side in that struggle which tried the souls of our fathers. But the trees are gone, and only a few quaint houses and venerable landmarks and heirlooms remain of those things which witnessed the contests, and deeds high or base, of that far-away time.

The lofty monument on the old battle-ground of Monmouth is surmounted by the figure of a man whose face is shaded by his hand, as if he were still striving to obtain a glimpse of the redcoats in the darkness as they hastened to gain the Highlands and the refuge of the waiting boats which were to bear them away to the safety of the great city. But it is itself essentially modern, and only in its brief records, carved by patriotic hands upon its sides, and in its figure of the granite soldier standing upon its summit, does its suggestiveness lie. It looks down upon a thriving village and out upon the lands of thrifty and prosperous farmers, and there is nothing in all the vision to remind one that the soil was ever stained by the blood of soldiers clad in uniforms of scarlet, or of buff and blue.

[5]

And yet, as fierce a struggle as our country ever knew occurred within the region. Women toiled in the fields while their husbands and sons fought, or even gave up their lives to drive away their oppressors. Yes, even in the battles some of the women found places, and Captain Molly Pitcher was only one among many who had a share in the actual struggle of the Revolution. Houses were doubly barred at night against the attacks of prowling bands of refugees or pine robbers, and many times were defended by the patriotic women themselves. Spies crept in among them, and evil men who owned no allegiance to either side seized the opportunity to prey alike upon friend and foe. At times it almost seemed as if the words spoken many centuries ago were then fulfilled, and that "a man was set at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and that a man's foes were they of his own household."

[6]

But with all the suffering and bloodshed there were many heroes and heroines, and even the boys and girls were not without a share in the struggles of the times which tried men's souls. The houses in which they dwelt may have disappeared and given place to far more imposing structures; their very names may no longer be recalled; but, after all, they displayed many qualities which the world ought not willingly to permit to die, and the heritage which they have bequeathed to us will lose nothing of its value if we go back in our thoughts and strive to comprehend more clearly the price which our fathers paid for the land we love.

In the early summer of 1778, while the feelings of the Monmouth people had been deeply stirred,—and indeed the patriots of the county had been among the foremost to pass resolutions and be enrolled among the defenders of the new nation,—there had not as yet come the intense excitement which followed the advance of General Clinton's army from Philadelphia. The long winter at Valley Forge had at last come to an end, and when the British moved out from the city,—for holding it longer seemed to be useless,—Washington had led his troops into the town almost as soon as the enemy departed. Nor was that all, for he quickly decided to follow after the departing general, and overtake and give him battle before Clinton could lead his men across the Jerseys.

[7]

The American commander knew that his own forces numbered nearly as many as those the British general had; and as, in spite of the dreadful sufferings of the winter, his men were in far better condition than they had ever been before,—thanks to the tireless energy of Baron Steuben,—he resolved to depart from Philadelphia and follow after the British.

Clinton had sent the recently enrolled Tories to New York by water, and as there were some three thousand of these alone, he soon decided that his troops must go by land.

[8]

Accordingly, the journey was begun, but the Continentals, going a little farther to the north than the line of Clinton's march, planned to gain a position in advance of the enemy by the rapidity of their movements, and then, turning about in their course, fall upon the redcoats face to face and offer them battle in some advantageous place.

The baggage wagons of Clinton stretched out in a long line of twelve miles as they followed after the army, and in other ways the British leader was somewhat embarrassed. Consequently, when he learned of Washington's plan, he quickly decided to change the direction of his march, and, by passing through "Old Monmouth," lead his army to the Navesink Highlands and there have them all embark for New York.

Washington had first offered the command of his advance forces to young Lafayette, but he was somewhat perplexed by the return of General Lee to his army, and knew not just what to do.

Lee had been captured a little more than a year before this time, through his own carelessness, near Morristown, and we may be sure that Washington was not greatly troubled by the loss. Lee had steadily opposed him, and was plotting to secure his position for himself. However, the British general Prescott, whose capture by the Americans had been effected in a manner not unlike that in which Lee himself had been taken, had been exchanged, and Lee once more returned to the American army. [9]

He was still the same Lee, sensitive, jealous, and suspected of being in league with Howe, who recently had sailed away for England to explain to Parliament the causes of his failures in the preceding year.

Much as he disliked to make the change, Lee's return compelled Washington to recognize his presence, and after some tactful efforts he removed Lafayette and gave Lee his position as leader of the advanced forces. Lee had bitterly opposed the project of following Clinton, and steadily objected to the march across the Jerseys.

Washington, however, was firm in his determination, and the march was soon begun; but the lack of confidence which he felt in General Lee must have sadly increased the troubles of the great commander, already beset by perils of so many kinds. Whether he was mistaken in his estimate of the man, we shall learn in the course of this story. [10]

Such then was the general condition of affairs as the summer of 1778 drew on. Those of the people of Old Monmouth who were at home heard occasional rumors of the advance of the two armies, but few of them had any thought of the stirring scenes which were to be enacted in their midst before the summer was ended.

It was now late in June. The summer had been unusually warm, and the men and boys, as well as the women, who were at home had labored busily in the fields, in the hope of an early as well as an abundant harvest. For those who cared to avail themselves of them, the markets in New York provided a ready place for the sale of their produce, and not only the Tories, but some of the men whose sympathies as yet had not led them openly to declare their preferences for either side, or who perhaps cared more for the prices they were likely to receive in New York for the results of their labors than they did for liberty or any such abstract quality, were not averse to loading up the boats, which many of the farmers near the shore owned, and sailing away for the city.

Down the lower bay one such boat was swiftly making its way one afternoon in June, 1778. On board were four men, three of whom evidently were in middle life, but the fourth was a sturdy lad about seventeen years of age, and it was plain that he was not in full sympathy with his companions. He took but little part in the conversation, and the expression upon his face frequently betrayed the feelings in his heart. The three men with him apparently did not give him much thought or attention, and evidently were too well satisfied with the results of their expedition to waste any time in questioning the lad as to the cause of his silence. [11]

"There's the old tree now," said one of the men as they came within sight of the landmark. "If nothing has gone wrong, we'll soon be in the Navesink."

"Yes, and back at work again," grumbled another. "For my part I think Fenton and Davenport and the rest of the pine robbers have the easiest time of all. They swoop down upon some whig farmer, and all they have to do is to take what he has worked out. I don't see why it isn't all fair enough in war."

"If it wasn't for that skull of Fagan, with that pipe stuck in its mouth, nailed up on the tree over there beyond the Court House, I'd go in myself," said the first speaker. "The grin on it is almost more than I can bear." [12]

"That'll do to frighten women and children with," said the third man, who had been silent for a time. "Fagan got a little too bold, that was the trouble with him. He carried it a little too far. I happen to know that there are some men who know enough to put a finger in, and not get it burned either."

"Perhaps you've done a little yourself in that line, Benzeor Osburn?" queried the last speaker. "I've thought sometimes you could tell some tales if you wanted to."

"And who knows but I might?" replied Benzeor. "I may be able to keep my place from being confiscated and sold, the way my brother's was two years ago, but that may not mean either that

I don't know what's to my own advantage when I see it. You'd do the same, wouldn't you, Jacob Vannote?"

"That I would," replied Jacob, "and so would Barzilla Giberson here, too. All we want is that some good man like you, Benzeor, should tell us how to do it."

"I can tell you," said Benzeor quietly. "I've made up my mind that I've held off just as long as I am going to. I'm going in, and if you have a mind to join, I'll let you in, too."

[13]

"Tell us about it," said Jacob eagerly. "What about the boy?" he added in a low voice, glancing toward the fourth member of the party as he spoke.

"What? Tom Coward? He's a coward by name as well as by nature. You haven't anything to fear from him. He's been in my home since he was five year old. He won't make any trouble."

Nevertheless, the speaker lowered his voice, and for a long time the trio conversed eagerly upon the new topic. So intent were they that not one of them noted the flush upon the lad's face at the brutal reference to him, nor saw the look of determination which came a little later in its place.

Apparently Tom was not giving any attention to the men with him in the swift sailing boat. He retained his seat near the bow, and seemed to be interested only in the waves before him. A brisk wind was blowing, and the waters betrayed the tokens of a coming storm.

The boat was pitching more and more as it sped on, and Tom watched the rolling waves, many of them capped with white and rising steadily higher and higher. The darker hues gave place to a lighter green as they rose, and the increasing roughness seemed to reflect somewhat the feelings in his own heart.

[14]

Far away in the distance stretched the long sandy beach of the Hook, becoming more and more distinct as the boat drew nearer. The gulls were flying low, and the weird cries of the sea-birds were heard on every side.

Suddenly Tom stood upright, and, after gazing intently for a moment at some object on the shore, turned to his companions and said,—

"Some one's up in the tree, and the signal's out, too."

The men instantly ceased from their conversation, and peered intently at the tree in the distance.

Evidently the sight was not altogether pleasing, for with an exclamation of anger Benzeor Osburn, who was holding the tiller, quickly changed the course of the boat, and started back in the direction from which they had come.

---

## CHAPTER II

[15]

### TOM INVESTIGATES

THERE were many exclamations of impatience heard in the boat as Benzeor changed her course, and the helmsman himself appeared to be the most impatient of all. A drizzling rain was now falling and there were many signs apparent that a stormy night was approaching.

"I wish I knew just what the warning was for," muttered Benzeor. "Fine night this, to be prowling around the bay in!"

"There was no mistake about the sign, though," replied Jacob. "There's something wrong, or we shouldn't have seen the white flag. That means there's something going on up the Navesink."

"All the more reason for going home then!" said Benzeor. "Who was on the lookout to-day? Does any one know?"

"Yes, 't was Peter Van Mater," said Tom, who up to this time had taken no part in the conversation. "He told me yesterday that he was to be in the tree to-day."

[16]

"What! Little Peter?" demanded Benzeor quickly.

"Yes," replied Tom. "I saw him out by their cornfield yesterday. He was there driving away the crows and blackbirds."

"Little" Peter was so called to distinguish him from his father who bore the same name; and although his son, a well-grown young fellow of eighteen, towered more than a half head above "Big" Peter now, the distinctive names given several years before this time still clung to them both.

The Van Mater place joined the Osburn farm, and for years Tom and Little Peter had been the best of friends. On those rare occasions when a brief break in the arduous labors on the farms had come, together they had gone crabbing, or had sailed down to Barnegat, where the sea-fowl gathered in great flocks when the proper seasons came.

Tom's heart had gone out to Little Peter as it had not to any other person. Peter's round face shone with an expression of good nature which nothing but the mention of a tory or a pine robber seemed to be able to ruffle. A reference to either of them never failed to arouse the dormant anger of the lad, and with all the intensity of his quiet and strong nature he hated both. For the Van Maters, even to the mother and the girls, were patriots of the strongest kind, and now Big Peter was away in Washington's army and had left his eldest son and namesake to protect the family and manage the farm in his absence.

[17]

And Little Peter had accepted the task with an outward assent that deceived even his own father. Only to Tom had he mentioned his true feelings, and expressed his determination to buy up his time, so that he, too, might be enrolled in the patriot army.

Tom Coward well knew that the words expressed Little Peter's feelings and desires rather than his purpose, for he was satisfied that nothing would induce his friend to desert his mother and the children in their time of need. But he had fully sympathized with Peter in his desire to buy up his time, and there were special reasons why the words meant much more to him than they did to his friend.

About a decade before this time, when one of the numerous "September gales" was raging along the Jersey shore, a great crowd had assembled on the beach watching the efforts of a schooner they could see, about a mile out on the ocean, to weather the storm. All day long the crowd had remained there, powerless to aid the stricken people on board the storm-tossed boat, for this was long before the time of the life-saving crews and their noble work along the coast.

[18]

Late in the afternoon on that eventful day, when the storm had abated somewhat, although the waves, like moving mountains of water, still came thundering in upon the beach, a boat had been manned and started forth to the aid of the people in their peril; but before the brave band could gain the schooner, she had foundered and gone to the bottom.

The men who had gone forth to the rescue had been about to return to the shore, when they thought they saw something floating over the boisterous waves toward them. When a second glance was obtained they started swiftly toward the object, and, as they drew near, saw a huge cotton bale with a woman and a little lad strapped upon it. At last, after some desperate efforts, the bodies were rescued, but that of the woman was lifeless and that of the lad was nearly so.

The rough men had brought both ashore, and, after some labor on the part of the women in the assembly, the lad had been restored, but the woman was beyond all earthly aid. Upon some of the clothing of the rescued boy the name Coward had been found, and "Tom" was improvised, for that would do as well as any other for the name of a stranger lad whose home and parents were to be, as the people of Old Monmouth thought, forever wrapped in mystery.

[19]

Tom Coward had been the sole survivor of the wreck. For days some portions of the ill-fated schooner and its cargo were washed ashore, but no clue was ever found as to her name or destination.

What to do with the rescued lad then became the perplexing problem among the simple folk of Monmouth, and it was at last solved by "binding him out" to Benzeor Osburn, which simply meant that Tom was to live with the man who had taken him until he was twenty-one years of age, and in return for the home he received he was to give his labor and life until that eventful day should arrive when he, too, would become a man.

The lad had gone, for he had no voice in the matter, and all the home he had ever known had been with Benzeor and his family. Only a faint recollection of the wreck remained in his mind, but he had heard the story many times and thought much over it in secret. Often had he visited the unmarked grave in the churchyard, where he was informed that all that was mortal of his mother lay resting. But her name and face were both alike unknown to him. In his dreams, or when he had been working alone in some of the distant fields, it would almost seem to him that something of another existence would rise before him, or that he could almost see the face of a gracious woman bending low over him whom he could call "mother."

[20]

Who he might be he could not determine. Who he was, was a matter much more easily settled, for all knew him as the "bound boy" of Benzeor Osburn; and while some of the country people might occasionally think of him as the little lad, who years before had been rescued from a sinking schooner, they seldom referred to it, and the past had been crowded out by the present. But Tom Coward had not entirely forgotten.

Benzeor had received him into his home the more readily because, as he expressed it, "all of his boys had been born girls," and he felt the need of the aid and presence of a boy about the place. And Benzeor in his way had not been unkind to the stranger lad, or at least not intentionally so, but the labor on the farms in those days had been severe, and he was a man to whom money had been the one thing needful. He did not spare himself, and certainly he had no thought of sparing those who were dependent upon him; and, as a natural consequence, neither the girls nor Tom, and much less the overworked, spiritless little mother of the family, found much to relieve the monotonous round of labor on the farm.

[21]

At first, Tom had not complained and had accepted all as a matter of course, but of late his heart had rebelled against his lot more and more. It was not that he did not appreciate the rough kindness which was extended to him, especially by the patient, uncomplaining mother and the two girls, Sarah and Mercy, who were nearest his own age. But certain undefined longings kept

rising in his soul, he knew not how, and the increasing eagerness of Benzeor "to make his place pay" had apparently driven all else from the mind of his foster father.

Perhaps more than any of these things, his interviews with his friend Little Peter had stirred his soul, for Peter had longings, too, and, as has been said, had even declared his intention "to buy up his own time." That he was a son in his own home, and was surrounded by the love of father and mother, had not made the purpose in Peter's heart appear in the least strange or unusual, for the custom was not unknown among those sturdy forefathers of ours. When they had cared for a boy in his infancy and helpless years, it was considered as no more than a just return that the years of early manhood, which would naturally be of value to the fathers in their labors on the farms, should belong not to the son but to the father. So whenever a well-grown boy felt that he would like to start in for himself, it was not unusual for him to offer, or to promise to pay as soon as he could earn the money, the amount which was considered as a fair equivalent for the value of his services in the few years before he became "of age," and could enter upon his own career.

[22]

In those days the obligation of the child to his father was emphasized. In our own time the obligation of the father to his child is considered the more important, and all that love and devotion can offer are laid at the feet of the children.

Perhaps justice lies somewhere between these two extremes, and no one of us desires to return to the harsher methods of those earlier years; but certainly the children who are so fortunate as to be born in these more fortunate times have some need of recalling the words of one who, long before the trying days of the Revolution, exhorted all to "honor their fathers and mothers."

[23]

Be that as it may, Tom Coward thought much and long over his friend Peter's project, and even went so far at one time as to hint to Benzeor that he would not be averse to entering into some such arrangement with him. But Benzeor's indignation, and the grief with which Sarah heard of the proposal, had silenced him, and he had not referred to the matter again.

None the less, however, did it remain in his thoughts, and of late the suspicion with which he had come to regard many of Benzeor's actions had increased his feeling of discontent, for Tom's sympathies were all with the colonies in their struggle.

Many a time had he and Peter talked over the matter, and the eagerness of one to serve in the army was fully shared by the other. But Benzeor's patriotism seemed all to be dormant, and as the troubles increased, his zeal to make money steadily increased also. At times he would be absent from home for days together, and more than once Tom had been awakened in the night by the sound of strange voices heard in conversation with Benzeor in the room beneath that in which he was sleeping.

[24]

Thoughts of all these things had been in Tom's mind throughout that voyage to New York, and they, as well as his youthfulness, served to explain the silence he had maintained since he had set sail. He had known, however, that Peter was to serve as the lookout that day, and when he volunteered the information it was the first time he had spoken aloud for a half hour.

The rain now was steadily increasing, and the uneasiness of the men on board the little boat became more marked. They were far from the tree by this time, and no one appeared to know just what plan to follow.

"If I was alone, I'd take all the risks," said Benzeor at last.

"You needn't stop on our account," replied Jacob. "I don't believe there's much danger in starting up the river, any way, for my part. Little Peter may not have seen anything to amount to much. If you want to chance it, go ahead."

"We don't just know what's ahead of us," said Barzilla uneasily. "It may be nothing, and then again it may not be. I wish there was some way of finding out before we risk too much."

[25]

"Why not land farther down the shore and let Tom go up and see?" said Jacob. "If Little Peter's gone, it will mean the danger's gone, too, and if he hasn't, why Tom here can find out for us and report; though for my part I'm not afraid to go up the river as it is. It's too dark for any one to see us, or it will be soon."

"That's a good suggestion," said Benzeor quickly, as he brought the boat about. "We'll land down the shore and let Tom go up for us. You're not too much of a 'coward' to do that, are you Tom?"

"I'll go," said Tom quietly, although his cheeks flushed with anger at Benzeor's antiquated and brutal pun. He had heard it many times, but never without feeling angry, although he well knew that Benzeor spoke the words lightly.

With the change in the course the wind seemed to increase. The spray was dashed into their faces, and the men were soon drenched. The sail had been shortened, but the little boat dashed ahead with ever increasing speed.

[26]

"It's a rough night outside," said Benzeor, when at last he gained the desired point on the shore. "It's lucky for us we're inside the Hook. Now then, Tom!" he added. "Bestir yourself, lad, and come back soon."



Tom leaped ashore and ran swiftly along the beach toward the tree. He was familiar with its location and knew that he could find it in the darkest night. The rain beat upon him and the darkness momentarily increased, but the wind was with him, and in a brief time he recognized the dim outlines of the tree.

Then ceasing to run, he began to approach more cautiously. He was not positive that Peter was there now, for some one might have taken his place. Certainly caution was the better part in any event.

He stopped and whistled the half dozen notes which he and Peter used as a call. He waited a moment, but as no answer was heard he advanced a little nearer and whistled again.

"That you, Tom?" came from some one in the tree.

"Yes," replied Tom.

In a moment Peter dropped from his position, and began to explain to his friend the cause of the display of the signal of danger.

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## CHAPTER III

[27]

### THE MEETING ON THE RIVER

"I'VE been here since noon," began Peter, "but it seems more like a whole day to me. I've listened to the calls of the sea-birds and heard the roar of the storm which I knew was coming, till it almost seemed to me I couldn't bear it any longer. I'm glad you've come, for I've got a chance to stretch now, and the sound of a voice will help to quiet my nerves again."

"I didn't know you had any nerves," replied Tom. "But we can't stand here in this storm talking about such things. Benzeor sent me over to find out what you meant by hanging out the white flag. You haven't seen anything suspicious, have you?"

"I have that," said Peter eagerly. "I was beginning to think that my coming here was all a piece of foolishness, when along about four o'clock—leastwise I should think it was about that time, though I didn't have any dial anywhere about to mark the time for me—what should I see but a whaleboat making for the river? You had better believe I forgot all about the time and everything else but the boat then, for I didn't know but some more of the Greens were coming up the Navesink on another trip such as they made the other day."

[28]

Peter referred to an expedition which a band of several hundred Tories from New Jersey, commonly known as the "Greens," had made a few weeks before this time. They had set forth from New York and had made a visit to some of their former neighbors and friends, and the tokens of their affection which they had left behind them had chiefly consisted of the ashes of burned homes and empty barns. The raid had been a cruel one, and its object apparently was more for devastation than for plunder, and many of the good people of Red Bank and Middletown and the adjoining towns had good cause to remember it so long as they lived. The numbers of the invaders had rendered them safe from all attacks, and the wanton destruction they wrought before they returned to New York had been the chief reason for keeping a watch stationed in the old tree every day since their visit. And Peter had received strict orders not to depart from his place of observation, if he saw anything suspicious, until he was satisfied that all danger was past. And Peter was faithful, that was well known, or he would not have been selected for the duty that day.

[29]

"Well," resumed Peter, "I watched the boat till it went out of sight up the river. There were seven men on board of her, six of 'em pulling at the oars and the seventh steering. No more boats followed her, and I shouldn't have been suspicious if I hadn't thought I recognized the man who was steering."

"Who was he?"

"He looked to me a good deal like Fenton."

"What? The pine robber?"

"Yes, though of course I may have been mistaken. I never saw him but once and that was when he was a blacksmith over by the Court House before the war. My father had sent me over there to have one of the horses shod at his shop. I don't know that I should have remembered him if it hadn't been for something he did that day. I saw him take a half-inch bar of iron and bend it almost double with his hands. That made a great impression upon me, for I didn't believe there was another man in the colony who could do that."

[30]

"Probably not," replied Tom. "But what made you think this was one of Fenton's whaleboats?"

"Nothing but Fenton himself. Of course I've heard of the stories of what he's been doing since he became a pine robber. His gang is one of the worst, you know, and the minute I set my two eyes on him I suspected it was Fenton himself."

"Why didn't you get word up the river as soon as you saw him?"

"They've got watchers farther up, and that's their business. Besides, I didn't care to have him double me up the way he did that iron bar. Then, my business was to stay here and give the warning to anybody that might be going up the stream, you see. That's why I waved the flag when I saw you coming."

"And they haven't come back yet?" inquired Tom eagerly.

"No. That's what I'm waiting for. There isn't any fun in hanging out here in the wet, I can tell you. Just as soon as I can see that whaleboat coming out into the bay again I'm done." [31]

"All right, Peter, I'll go right back and report to Benzeor. Maybe he'll take you on board and carry you home."

"Not unless I see the whaleboat again," said Peter doggedly as he prepared to climb to his seat in the tree again.

Tom hurriedly departed and started to return with his message to the waiting Benzeor and his men, who he knew would be becoming impatient by this time. As he ran along the beach the storm smote him full in the face, but in spite of the driving rain the night was not very dark. The moon was near the full and gave sufficient light to enable him to see far out over the tossing waters. He could even discern the outlines of the little boat far up the shore, and as he ran swiftly forward he was thinking of the report he was to make to the waiting Benzeor, and his thoughts were not entirely pleasing.

Fenton's deeds had become notorious in Old Monmouth. At the head of his brutal band, composed of men as desperate and reckless as he, he had pillaged and plundered throughout the county during the preceding year, and up to this time no one had been found strong enough to put a stop to his evil deeds. Any unprotected farmhouse was liable to receive one of his visits, and such a visit was seldom made without profit to the outlaws, for such in fact they were, and with their ill-gotten gains they hastened away to store them in their hiding-places among the pines. [32]

Nor was Fenton's band the only one which had its headquarters in that lonely and unfrequented region known in Old Monmouth as the "Pines." West, Disbrow, Fagan, Davenport, and many others of the lawless men, had engaged in similar occupations, and all had their hiding-places in the same wild spot, and in a measure protected and aided one another.

Up to this time Fagan had been the only one to suffer the well-deserved penalty of his crimes, and in the preceding winter a band of two hundred of the desperate patriots had assembled and driven the famous, or rather infamous, outlaw to bay. At last he had been taken, and the infuriated men, mindful not only of the sufferings of their own families at his hands, but also of their possible future sufferings as well, had measured out a stern justice to the man, and with their own hands had hanged him from the long limb of a tree which stood by the side of the road which led from Monmouth Court House<sup>[1]</sup> to Trenton. Afterwards some of the patriots who had suffered most from his evil deeds had severed the skull from the body and nailed it to the tree, and then, placing the pipe between the grinning jaws, had left the uncanny sight as a warning to all who might be disposed to follow in the footsteps of the outlaw. [33]

For a few weeks the suffering patriots found relief, but only for a few weeks.

Despite the terrible warning, the other bands of pine robbers soon renewed their labors, and now in the early summer of '78 the region was suffering more from the marauding bands than ever had been known before.

It was all a part of the horrors of war. Sometimes, when we read of the brave deeds which have made famous some of the men who had a share in the struggle, we are prone to think only of the heroism displayed. And there was many a true hero in that and in every other war which our country has waged. We are never to forget that; but there was another side which has, to a large extent, passed from the memory of the present generation. The loss of property and of life, the sufferings of the women and children in the lonely homes, the barbarity and cruelty of evil men who, freed from the restraint of law in a time when the worst passions of men were aroused, gave free rein to their avarice and all that was bad in them, have frequently been ignored or forgotten. The glory of war or the pride in true heroism cannot entirely atone for the sufferings that were only too common in the scattered homes or lonely places. [34]

And Fenton's band was one of the worst. From their strongholds among the pines, into which few men had the hardihood to enter, they would set forth on horseback some dark night, and the tale they might have told upon their return was ever one of blood and sorrow. People tortured until in their agony they were compelled to yield up their scanty savings, raids upon the flocks and herds already becoming far too small for the necessities of their owners, burning houses, and men and women deliberately shot by the outlaws, were only a few among the many results of their raids.

Not the least of the evils was the knowledge that among the people of Monmouth there were some who, while they might not openly be known as members of the bands, still gave the desired information to the leaders as to the places where possessions were secreted, or of the times when the patriots were aroused and it was best for the "Barons of the Pines," as some termed them, to remain in hiding among the tall dark trees. Professedly, the outlaws acknowledged no allegiance to either side in the struggle, but somehow it had come to pass that a stanch whig was liable to suffer far more from their depredations than his tory neighbor, and as a natural consequence the [35]

feeling between neighbors and those who had been friends was becoming more and more strained and bitter.

Thoughts of these things were passing rapidly through Tom's mind as he ran swiftly on through the storm to rejoin his companions. Fenton? Yes, he had heard of him too many times not to recognize his name and to feel well assured that a visit from him in such a night could promise little good for any of the patriots dwelling near the Navesink.

"Well, what is it, Tom?" said Benzeor, as the panting lad rejoined them. "Is it Little Peter on the lookout? He must have seen a ghost to have warned us to stay out here in the bay in such a night as this. I'm wet to the skin."

[36]

"It's Fenton," replied Tom huskily, for he had not yet recovered his breath. "Peter said he saw him and six of his men go up the Navesink about four o'clock."

"Fenton?" said Jacob quickly. "Then we're in for a night of it. We don't want to fall into the hands of that pine robber when our pockets are as well lined as they are to-night."

"I'm not so sure about that," replied Benzeor slowly. "There's ten chances to one that they won't come back before morning, and if they do they won't be likely to find us in such a storm as this."

As he spoke a fresh gust swept the rain directly into their faces. The storm certainly was increasing, and the prospect of spending a night in the bay was dreary enough to cause the most stout-hearted to hesitate. And it may have been that other thoughts than that of the storm influenced Benzeor.

At any rate he gruffly responded, "You can do as you please, but I'm going up the Navesink. If you're afraid, you can stay here or start out across the country on foot. You'll have to speak quick if you go with me, for I'm off."

Benzeor turned and grasped the bow of his boat to push her off the beach upon which she had grounded. Before he had succeeded, however, Jacob spoke up quickly and said, "We're with you, Benzeor. If you can stand it, we can."

[37]

"Get aboard then, every one of you!" said Benzeor gruffly.

Tom and Barzilla quickly took their places in the stern, while Benzeor, with the aid of Jacob, soon sent the boat out from the shore.

The sail was soon rigged and shortened, and the little party then started for the narrow mouth of the Navesink. The boat rolled and pitched in the storm, but Benzeor had her well in hand, and soon steered into the more quiet waters of the river. Tom could see the tree as they passed, and was positive that Peter could also see them, but no hail was given, and the point was soon left far behind them.

Then up the narrower waters of the river the boat sped on in her course, but not a word was spoken by any of those on board. The storm was still raging and Benzeor's attention was largely occupied in managing his craft, and the others were busied with thoughts which perhaps they did not care to express.

[38]

Tom was decidedly anxious. A meeting with Fenton and his band was something of which he was fearful, and as they sped on his fears increased each moment. Benzeor's apparent indifference had not deceived him, and deep in his heart there was a lurking suspicion that perhaps he might be able to account for it, if he felt so disposed.

However, he too was silent, and a half hour had passed and as yet no signs of danger had appeared. Benzeor was steering as close inshore as the wind permitted, and Tom was beginning to hope that they would succeed in making their way up the river without being discovered.

Suddenly Jacob, who was seated in the bow and was keeping a constant lookout ahead, shouted, "Port! Port your helm, Benzeor! Quick! Quick!"

Benzeor instantly heeded the warning, but his quick movement barely served to enable them to pass a boat which loomed up in the darkness. It was a whaleboat, and with a sinking heart Tom saw that there were six men rowing, while a seventh was seated in the stern and was serving as helmsman.

Instantly Peter's words flashed into his mind, and he knew that they had barely escaped a collision with the very boat which the lookout had discovered making its way up the Navesink late in the afternoon. The party could be none other than that of Fenton and his outlaw band.

[39]

#### FOOTNOTE:

[1] Freehold.

[40]

## CHAPTER IV

### BENZEOR'S VISITOR

"Hold on there! Hold on, I say! Stop, or we'll shoot!"

The words were shouted by some one in the whaleboat, and Benzeor evidently was about to heed the sharp command. He quickly changed the course of the boat, and as the shortened sail flapped in the wind as the little craft came about, the whaleboat came alongside and some one reached forth with a boat-hook, and the progress was instantly stayed.

Tom's heart was beating rapidly in his excitement. A wild impulse to leap into the river seized him, but before he could leave his position in the bow, two of the other crew clambered on board, and he knew that an attempt to escape would now be useless. Doubtless the men were armed, and the darkness was not deep enough to conceal him from their sight. His only hope now depended upon the actions of the men and the course which Benzeor should decide to follow. [41]

The sail was instantly lowered in obedience to the sharp command of the men who had boarded the boat, and, in great fear, the lad waited for the purpose of their captors to be declared. He drew back in his position in the bow, hoping to escape the notice of all on board, as he saw that Benzeor had arisen from his seat and stood facing the men.

"Who are you? What ye out in a night like this for? Whose boat is this?" exclaimed the one who appeared to be the leader.

"Is that you, Fenton?" replied Benzeor in a low voice.

"Ho, it's Benzeor Osburn!" exclaimed the man, peering intently into the face before him as he spoke. "I thought it was strange we didn't find you in your house. We waited an hour as we agreed to, but when you didn't put in an appearance, we thought we'd start back. Where ye been, Benzeor? What's up now?"

"I'd been back home in time if it hadn't been for the storm and an alarm we had back in the bay. I think ye'd better go back with me now, Fenton. I've got some facts that may interest you, and we can't talk them over here." [42]

"Who are these men with you?" inquired Fenton suspiciously.

"Oh, they're all right. I'll vouch for them, every one," replied Benzeor. "You haven't anything to fear from any of my friends. Come up to my house and I'll tell ye all about it."

Fenton hesitated a moment before he replied, and Tom peered intently at the man of whom he had already heard so many tales. He could see his great form, although he could not distinguish the features of his face in the darkness. His deep voice and gruff manner had not tended to allay the lad's fears, and now Benzeor's words and actions filled his heart with a new alarm. Was Benzeor about to cast in his lot with Fenton? His words betrayed the fact of their previous acquaintance, and all the recent suspicious actions of his foster father came back to him. No one in the party had yet spoken, except Benzeor and Fenton, but the recent conversation on board the boat, much of which Tom had overheard, convinced the troubled lad that no very strong protest would be made against any proposal that Benzeor might feel disposed to make. [43]

"I'm rather of the opinion," said Fenton roughly, "that it's about time you went home with me. I don't know who these fellows on board here are, and I don't care. You're the one I'm after, Benzeor, and it seems to me the time's come for you to join us or quit. You've been shilly-shallying long enough."

"Hush! Don't speak so loud!" replied Benzeor anxiously.

Fenton laughed outright at Benzeor's evident alarm, and, turning to his companions in the whaleboat, said, "I think we'd better take the boat along with us. We can land this crew anywhere along the shore, or we can sink 'em in the river, just which you please. It's too much of a storm for us to be hanging around here on the Navesink."

"Fenton," said Benzeor, rising and stepping up to the side of the outlaw, "you'd better do as I say. I've got something to tell ye, and it's worth hearing, too."

A low conversation followed between the two men which Tom, with all his efforts, was not able to hear. The result of it, however, quickly became apparent when Fenton turned to his companions and said, "It's all right, boys. You go on without me, and I'll join you to-morrow. I'm going up to Benzeor's now." [44]

The boat-hook was quickly withdrawn at his command, and the sound of the oars of the departing boat soon ceased to be heard.

The sail of Benzeor's boat was then hoisted again, and once more the little party, increased now by the addition of Fenton, began to make their way up the Navesink. Though the rain was steadily falling, the wind was favoring, and the boat, handled by the skillful Benzeor, held steadily to its way. The low shores could be seen in the distance on either side, and an occasional light betrayed the location of some lonely farmhouse, whose occupants in the confidence begotten of the storm had ventured to sit up till a later hour than was customary in those days.

Not a word was spoken on board the boat, and Fenton had taken a position near Tom from which he did not move. All were drenched, but a summer rain was something which none of them minded in such a time as that.

When an hour had passed, Benzeor ran his boat closer inshore and in a few moments landed. Then turning to his companions he said, "Come over to my house to-morrow, Jacob, and I'll give you and Barzilla your shares of the money." [45]

"We'll go with you now," replied Jacob, evidently not desiring to put off the day of reckoning too long, a desire in which Barzilla also shared.

"No, I can't fix it up to-night. You can take the bag, though, if you want to, and bring me my share to-morrow."

Benzeor's confidence in his fellows served the desired purpose, and Jacob and Barzilla speedily departed, taking with them the little bag of gold which had been received as the price of the produce they had taken to New York.

"Tom, you look out for the boat," called Benzeor, as he and Fenton started towards the little house whose outlines could be discerned in the distance.

Tom obeyed, and as he worked over the little boat, looking well to all the details, his thoughts were far more busy than his hands. The changes which he had noted in Benzeor of late seemed almost to have reached their climax. Was the man intending now to go with Fenton? All his recent absences from home came up before the lad's mind, and the strange visitors he had received there of late were not forgotten. What was it Benzeor was planning to do? He was not much like the man he had been a few years before this time, and as Tom thought over all the changes, he was troubled more and more. [46]

He knew that Sarah had not been unaware of what was going on, for many a time had they talked it all over together. Sarah had remained a steadfast champion of her father, but Tom had not failed to see that she was none the less troubled by his strange actions. His grasping disposition had become more and more apparent of late, and while he had never in the presence of his family referred to anything he had in his mind to do against the patriots, his very silence in such times was more threatening than any words he could utter. But Sarah had steadily refused to believe that her father would desert the cause for which at the outbreak of the war he had professed the most ardent attachment; still, it was impossible for her not to discover, what Tom for a long time had seen, that he was strangely silent of late.

The change in Benzeor Osburn had been so gradual as to deceive many of his friends and neighbors. All had known his "closeness," as the country people termed his love of money, but few of them had thought it would ever lead him into the position in which the man at that time really stood. [47]

Benzeor in '76 had been among the loudest in his expressions of loyalty to the cause of the colonies, and had been foremost in blaming his own brother for his "toryism." His brother's property had been confiscated, but Benzeor's had been left unmolested, so confident had all the whigs been in the sincerity of his expressions. And at the time Benzeor had meant what he said, and said what he meant. But never for a moment had he dreamed that the struggle would be such a long-continued one as it had proved to be, nor had he thought that patriotism would affect his own possessions. All that would be done would be to make a strong protest against the unjust taxation, for Benzeor had hated taxes as he did few things in this world, and then a compromise would be effected, which would permit the colonists to go on with their occupations, and the mother country would soon see that it was not to her own advantage to drive her rebellious children too far.

The first shock had come to him when the Continental Congress had declared the country to be a free and independent nation. That was going too far, Benzeor thought, and so he freely expressed himself; but still hoping that a compromise of some kind would be made, and that his own possessions would not be disturbed, he had uttered no further protests, though his voice ceased to be heard in favor of the rebellion. [48]

As further events betrayed the weakness of the patriot cause, and he had found that patriotism was likely to prove a somewhat expensive virtue, his feelings had undergone a still more decided change. At first he had entered into one or two secret projects by which he had succeeded in enriching his own pockets, and the success had so affected him that as his patriotism decreased his hopes of gains correspondingly increased; and soon from deeds for which he tried to justify himself, he had been gradually drawn into others which even his own seared conscience proclaimed to be wrong. In some of the latter he had come into contact with the outlaws of Fenton's class, and his association with them had soon banished the feeling of disgust he had formerly cherished for them, until it had even come to pass that Fenton himself was a not unwelcome guest in his own home. [49]

At first the visits had been made secretly, and the promises of rich harvests to be reaped, as the result of their evil deeds, had appealed to Benzeor more strongly than even he himself was aware. The lawless times, the constant turmoils, the bitterness between those who had recently been the warmest of friends, the ease with which raids were made, and the apparent impossibility of detection, had all combined to arouse the avaricious Benzeor more and more; and now not very much was needed to draw him still farther within the toils of Fenton and his band.

Not all of these things were apparent to Tom when at last he left the boat and started towards the house, but he had seen sufficient to make him suspicious of Benzeor, and he was as perplexed as he was troubled. All his own feelings had gone out more and more to the patriot cause, and more than once had he been sadly tempted to depart from his home without waiting for the formality of buying up his time, and he had even gone so far as to suggest to Sarah several times what he had it in his mind to do. Sarah's grief, however, and the confidence which she still professed to feel in her father, as well as the dislike in his own heart to do anything which bore any resemblance to stealing,—for so the troubled lad regarded the taking of time which did not really belong to him as the bound boy of Benzeor Osburn,—had hitherto held him back. How long such feelings would continue to sway him Tom could not decide when at last he lifted the latch and entered the kitchen.

[50]

Benzeor and his guest were seated before the fire which had been started in the wide and open fireplace, and were drying their wet clothing as they conversed eagerly together.

As Tom came in, Benzeor glanced up hastily and said, "You can go to bed, Tom. You must be wet and tired, and there is a lot of work to be done to-morrow." Benzeor's voice was not unkind, but Tom did not fail to see that his presence was not desired. He quickly lighted a candle with a splinter which he thrust into the fire and held until it was in a flame, and then went up the low stairway to his room directly over the kitchen in which the men were seated.

As he entered the room he noted the gleam which came through the open space near the rude chimney, and, placing the candle on the low table, he advanced and peered down at the men. He could see both plainly, and, after observing them for a moment, he was about to turn away and take off his dripping clothing, when he suddenly stopped. He had overheard a word which caused his heart to beat much more rapidly, and in a moment he was upon his knees striving to hear what more would be said.

[51]

He remained in the same position for an hour, and at last arose only when Fenton opened the door and went out into the darkness. Then Benzeor closed and barred the door, and started directly up the stairway.

Instantly Tom blew out his candle and leaped into bed, all wet and muddy as he was, and drew the bedclothes close up around his face.

Benzeor came slowly on and then stopped before the door of Tom's room. The lad was trembling in his excitement, for he well knew that if the man should enter and discover that he had not removed his clothing before going to bed, his suspicions would at once be aroused. And above all things Benzeor's suspicion at that time was what Tom most desired to lull.

There were wild thoughts in Tom's mind of leaping from the bed and, rushing past the man, making a break for the outside. Perhaps the man might not enter, however, and, trembling with fear and excitement, Tom waited.

[52]

It seemed to him that a long time had elapsed, and still no sound outside the door could be heard. Had Benzeor gone on? The light of his candle which still shone through the cracks disproved that. What could he then be doing?

Tom tried to conjecture what must be going on on the stairway, but the silence was still unbroken. The minutes were like hours to the frightened lad. It seemed to him as if the beatings of his heart must be heard throughout the house.

His suspense was soon ended—when Benzeor lifted the latch and Tom felt the light of the candle streaming in full upon his face.

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## CHAPTER V

[53]

### THE MESSENGER

FOR a moment Tom closed his eyes and waited for the words which he expected and feared to hear. His body was trembling and all his strength was required to prevent his teeth from chattering. If Benzeor should enter the room Tom knew that at once his predicament would be discovered, and in the present state of his foster father's feelings he was aware that he could expect no mercy at his hands.

He heard no footstep, but he felt that the light of the candle was still shining upon his face and knew that Benzeor had not departed. At last, unable to bear the suspense longer, he opened his eyes, for he felt that he must see what was going on in the room. There stood Benzeor in the doorway holding the candle with one hand, and intently regarding the apparently sleeping boy before him.

"I'll be down directly," said Tom drowsily, as if he were just awaking. "I didn't know it was time to get up. I'll be with you in a minute."

[54]

"It isn't time to get up," replied Benzeor slowly. "I'm just going to bed. I stopped to see if you were all right. Have you been asleep long?"

"I—I don't know. Is there anything wrong?" Tom still kept the bedclothes drawn tightly about his face, and although he was feigning that he had been sleeping, he was in a state of terror. If Benzeor should approach the bed he well knew what would follow.

"No, there's nothing wrong," replied Benzeor. "I just wanted to see if you were all right. It's been a hard trip, and there's much work to be done to-morrow."

Tom closed his eyes and did not continue the conversation, hoping that the man would feel satisfied and leave him to himself. Nor was he disappointed, for Benzeor soon withdrew and closed the door behind him.

Tom could hear him as he stumbled about in the adjoining room, preparing for bed. Frightened as the lad had been, he had not failed to notice the expression upon Benzeor's face. It seemed to him that fear and recklessness were combined there, and that in the recent decision which the man had made, he had bidden farewell to everything good in his nature. [55]

Benzeor had not been without his good qualities. Even then, in spite of his alarm, Tom recalled his rough kindnesses, and thought how much better in many ways his foster father had treated him than had some of the true fathers treated their own sons, for the times were rough and the one thing which was demanded of all the growing boys was implicit obedience to their elders. And this obedience had been oftentimes compelled by no gentle means. The use of the strap upon boys who were as large as their fathers was not unknown, and no one ever thought of resenting the harsh treatment. But Benzeor had seldom struck him. Tom almost wished that he had, for it would make the carrying out of the project he had already formed much easier.

Then, too, all the kindness he had received at the hands of Benzeor's wife and of the girls came back to him. It was true that this had been largely of a negative character, but in times like these through which the troubled lad was then passing, even that was not forgotten. He had toiled early and late, and knew that he had given more than a full equivalent for the scanty food and rough clothing he had received. But after all, Benzeor's home had been all the home he had ever known, and he was not unmindful of the benefits he had received. [56]

His soul now, however, was in a state of turmoil. The words he had overheard had proved conclusively that Benzeor was a changed man, and as Tom thought of the project which Fenton had presented, and into which his foster father had entered with apparent eagerness, his own indignation increased. The long waiting was past now, and the time for action, the time of which he had dreamed and thought so much of late, had come at last.

He removed the bed-clothing and sat up on the side of the bed, listening intently. Benzeor had ceased to move about in his room, and the sounds which now came indicated clearly that he was asleep. Against the little window the rain was still beating, and the darkness was so intense in the room that Tom could not distinguish any object.

For several minutes he continued in his position, undecided whether he had better make the attempt to depart from the house by the way of the stairs, or through the window in his room. If he should select the former, the stairs would be sure to creak under his feet; and then, too, there would be the bars which must be drawn from the door. There were too many possibilities of detection to make that method of departure the desirable one. [57]

If he should go through the window, all he would have to do would be to drop upon the woodpile directly beneath,—a pile which Tom knew was there, for he himself had drawn and cut the wood only a few days before this time. He decided to use the window.

Stepping slowly and carefully, he approached and quietly raised the sash. As he looked out into the night, the farm buildings could be seen, and yonder was the road he was to seek.

Hesitating no longer, the resolute boy crawled through the open window, and then, clinging for a moment to the sash with his hands, dropped upon the woodpile below. There was a noise as the wood rolled from under him, but, quickly rising, he ran to the long lane which led out to the road, and then stopped to learn whether his departure had been discovered or not.

The silence was unbroken. The outlines of the rude little house stood out in the darkness, the rain was falling steadily, and the heavy clouds hung low over the earth. Not even the dog had been disturbed, and with a lighter heart Tom turned and ran down the lane and was soon in the road. [58]

The mud was now thick and heavy, and he found his progress difficult. But as he had not far to go, he ran steadily on, and soon came within sight of Little Peter's house. There was no light to be seen within it, and he was not at all certain that his friend had returned.

He approached and stood beneath the window of the boy's room, which, like his own, was over the kitchen. Then he gave the low whistle which they both had used as a "call." At first there was no response, and when he had given it two or three times he concluded that his friend had not returned from his work as the lookout in the tree by the mouth of the Navesink. Nothing then remained to be done but to rouse the family, for Tom was determined, and was well aware that what he planned to do must be done quickly.

Approaching the kitchen door he rapped loudly upon it. Twice had he repeated the summons before a window was raised, and some one looking out upon him called, "Who's there? Is that you, Peter?" [59]

"No, it's not Peter. It's Tom Coward, and I want to get in. I've got something to tell you."

"I'll be down in a moment," said Peter's mother, for Tom had recognized the voice as her's.

Tom soon heard the heavy bars withdrawn, and in a brief time the door was opened, and then closed and carefully barred behind him.

"What's wrong, Tom?" inquired the woman anxiously. "Has anything happened to Peter?"

"I don't think so," replied Tom. "He was all right when I left him a few hours ago down by the Hook. But what I want to know now is whether you've had any word from his father?"

"Not a word, except that it's reported the army's on the march again. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know that I ought to tell you," replied Tom hesitatingly, "but the truth of the matter is that I happened to hear that he was coming home."

"You've heard something more than that, Tom Coward," said the woman now thoroughly alarmed. "I know you've heard more, or you wouldn't have come over here at this time of night and in such a storm. What is it? What is it?" [60]

Tom perceived that he had gone too far to retreat now, and so he began his story. He did not go into all the details, for as yet he did not desire to implicate Benzeor, at least in the eyes of all his neighbors.

"The way of it is this," began Tom hesitatingly. "I happened to be to-night where I overheard the talk between two men, and one of 'em was Fenton, the pine robber."

Tom could perceive the expression of alarm which swept over the face of the woman, who was still standing before him. Apparently ignoring it, however, he went on. "It seems that both of the armies are on the march across Jersey, and that Washington has halted over by Hopewell. Somehow, Fenton had got word that your husband was coming home for a day, and he's fixed up a plan to trap and take him."

"I haven't heard a word," said the woman slowly. "When was he coming?"

"To-morrow."

"And Fenton knows of it?" [61]

"Yes. And he knows something more, too, or at least he pretends to. I heard him say that you had some money hidden in an old sock, which you'd stored away in the garret."

Tom saw the woman start at his words, and knew then that Fenton's statement had been correct, although he could not conjecture how the pine robber had received his information. Little Peter's mother was a resolute woman, but even the stoutest heart might well be alarmed to hear that Fenton was aware of such possessions.

"Have you any idea when Little Peter will come home?"

"No. It's too bad to keep him out in such a night. And we need him here now."

"I'll wait till he comes," said Tom quietly. "There's no danger to-night, but I want to see him, and I don't think you'll object to my staying, will you?"

"No," said the woman eagerly. "Oh, what times these are! My husband has been in the army more than a year, and the end hasn't come yet. What will become of us? What shall we do? Tom," she added suddenly, "what was Fenton going to do with him if he caught him?" [62]

"Take him and send him to New York. You know there's a reward for every prisoner taken. But he hasn't got him yet."

"No, that's so; and what's more he won't either, if it can be prevented. Have you told Benzeor about it? Hark! There's some one at the door now!"

The woman was not mistaken, for a low tapping on the kitchen door could be distinctly heard. For a moment neither spoke, but they could not conceal their fears from each other. Just then a stronger gust of wind drove the rain with added force against the windows. The sound of the storm seemed to increase the fear of those within the house. Perhaps Fenton himself had even then come; or, as was more probable, Tom thought, his own departure had been discovered, and Benzeor had come for him. As between the two, Tom decidedly preferred to meet Fenton at that time.

Again the low rapping was heard, and Tom knew that some response must be made. "I'll open the door. Maybe it's Little Peter come back," he whispered.

"No, it isn't Peter. He wouldn't come in that way."

"I'll find out who it is," replied Tom more resolutely, although his heart was oppressed by a great fear. His hands were trembling, and he almost expected that the moment he drew back the bars a rush against the door would be made. [63]

"You stand ready to push against the door," he said as he grasped the bar. Slowly he drew it back, and standing away from the slight opening called out, "Who's there?"



No reply was heard, and the wind which swept through the open space quickly extinguished the candle, leaving them both in total darkness. For a moment Tom thought they were being attacked, and he instantly slammed the door back, and shot the bar into its place.

The rapping upon the door was quickly repeated, and the voice of some one outside could be heard. "Don't light the candle again," whispered Tom. "It'll let them see what's inside here. Who's out there?" he called in louder tones. "Who's there? You'll have to tell who you are, or we shan't let you in. Who is it?"

Another rap was the only reply, and Tom was almost decided not to heed the summons longer, but to leave the callers, whoever they might be, out there in the storm. [64]

"I'll go upstairs and look out of the window," whispered Peter's mother; and, creeping softly out of the room, she soon made her way up the stairway to the room overhead from which she had replied to Tom's own summons a few minutes before.

Tom waited and listened. The rapping was not repeated, and no sound could be heard outside the door. What could it all mean? Had the marauders gone around to some of the windows? These were barred by heavy inside shutters, and no light could be seen to reveal the presence of any one. The darkness in the room was intense, and Tom almost thought he could feel it. He was breathing hard in his excitement, but he had not left his position by the door.

Soon he heard the sound of the woman returning down the stairway. He waited breathlessly, and she soon rejoined him.

"I can't see but one man," she whispered. "He's right there in front of the door."

"Is it Benzeor?"

"I couldn't see. You'd better open the door and let him in. We can handle one."

Tom did not feel so positive about that, but bidding her light the candle, he again drew back the bar. "Come in! Come in! Quick!" he called. [65]

Some one pushed past him, and the door was instantly closed and barred again.

The candle was not yet lighted, and in the darkness he felt as if some one were about to grasp him. He could almost feel hands upon him now. He stepped farther back from the door, and waited in breathless suspense for the candle to be lighted.

After several attempts, the woman succeeded in igniting a splinter from the embers in the ashes on the fireplace, and the beams of the lighted candle quickly dispelled the darkness.

"It's Indian John!" said Tom with a great sigh of relief as he saw the man before him.

The visitor was a strange appearing being, clad in the leggings and moccasins of his race, while over his shoulders he wore a faded coat which once had done duty for some Continental soldier. His dark eyes burned as if they had caught a reflection from the sputtering candle, but with a countenance unmoved he gazed quietly at his companions in the room.

"Oh, John, what a fright you gave us!" said the woman at last. "What brings you here on a night like this?" [66]

The Indian made no reply, save to draw a letter from the pocket of the dripping, faded coat, and quietly held it forth to the woman.

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## CHAPTER VI

 [67]

### IN THE TEN-ACRE LOT

LITTLE Peter's mother instantly grasped the letter, and seating herself by the table, and drawing the candle nearer, at once began to read. Tom watched her eagerly, but she did not speak, and the expression upon her face did not betray any of the emotions in her heart.

The Indian still stood motionless in the position he had taken when he first entered the room, and except for the occasional turning of his dark eyes from the boy to the woman, so far as appearances went he might have been a statue. The rain still dashed against the windows, and the sounds of the wind outside showed that the storm was unabated. The flickering candle served to intensify the darkness, and the alarm which Tom had felt had not entirely departed.

The woman read the letter all through carefully, and then, without a word of explanation, began to read it again. Tom hardly knew what to do. He had given her his warning, and whether she would care for his further services he could not determine. He did not feel like interrupting her, and yet he feared that his presence now might not be altogether welcome, for he had no means of knowing what the message was, or who had sent it. [68]

His uncertainty was quickly dispelled, however, as the woman laid the letter upon the table, and turning to him said, "You were right, Tom. Peter is coming home; but how you found it out, I cannot even guess."

Tom did not feel at liberty to enlighten her upon the subject beyond what he had told her already, for he was sadly troubled about Benzeor and his relations with Fenton. Doubtless Benzeor was implicated, but matters had not yet gone so far that he felt he was at liberty to betray his foster father to the neighbors.

"Yes," resumed the woman, "Peter is coming home, but only for a day or two."

"Where is he? What does he say of the army?" inquired Tom.

"Washington is at Hopewell, as you said, Tom. When he found out that Clinton really intended to march across Jersey, he detached General Maxwell's brigade and some of the militia to obstruct and bother the British, and Peter was in the militia, you know. They were to keep close to the redcoats, and by their skirmishes keep them from going too fast, and so give Washington a chance to pass them, and then, when the place he wanted was found, turn about and fight. When the army crossed the Delaware at Coryell's Ferry, Washington sent Colonel Morgan with six hundred of the riflemen to reinforce Maxwell, and with the rest of his men he set out to march toward Princeton."

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"I thought you said he was at Hopewell now," said Tom.

"So he is, Peter writes, but Hopewell isn't but a few miles from Princeton, you know, and he decided to stop there and give his army a good rest. Peter writes that all the men now think that Clinton is marching so slowly on purpose, and that his plan is to let the Americans go on into the lower country and then gain the right of our army by a quick march and get possession of the higher ground on the right of our men. Peter writes that that is what all the Continentals think Clinton is trying to do, and so General Washington has halted at Hopewell. That's only five miles from Princeton, you see, and he is going to stay there a few days so that he can give his men a good rest before any engagement takes place; and he can find out what Clinton's plans are, too."

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"And while the army is waiting there, Big Peter thinks he'll run up home for a day, does he?" said Tom.

"Yes, that's just it. He's sent me word of his coming by Indian John, here. But you must have been delayed John," she said, turning to the Indian as she spoke.

"Heap wet," said the Indian quietly.

"When does he say he expects to be here?" inquired Tom.

"To-morrow; no, to-day, for it must be long past midnight now. I shouldn't be surprised to see him any time."

"Well I've given you my message, and you'll know what to do now. I think perhaps I'd better be going back home, that is, unless there's something you think I can do to help you."

"No, there's nothing more now, Tom. Little Peter will soon be here, and with him and Indian John in the house, I don't think we shall have much to fear. It was good of you to come, Tom. I shall never forget you, and I know that Peter will not, either. I am sadly troubled, but I think it will be all right."

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"Good-night, then," said Tom.

"Good-night, and thank you again for all your trouble and kindness."

Tom drew back the bar, and, opening the door, passed out into the night, little dreaming that he had looked upon the face of Little Peter's mother for the last time.

As he ran along the lonesome road, he could see that the clouds were breaking, and in low masses were swept by the wind across the sky. The rain had almost ceased now, but the air was damp and heavy and strangely oppressive. Perhaps it was the oppressiveness which affected Tom more than the excitement through which he had just passed, for the lad was much depressed as he came nearer to Benzeor's house. All the conversation he had overheard between the men came back to him, and he almost wished that he had not left Peter's mother alone with Indian John and the children. His feeling of obligation to Benzeor had mostly departed now, and as he recalled the plots of his foster father his heart was hot within him. He even thought of going over to the Court House and reporting the matter to Sheriff Forman that very night; but the hope that Benzeor still might not join Fenton in the evil project they had formed deterred him, and as he just then obtained a glimpse of the house which for more than ten years had been the only home he had ever known, his mind was recalled to his own immediate plans. At least he had given Peter's mother the warning, and if Fenton's band should make the proposed visit, in any event she would be prepared to receive them.

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At first Tom thought he would not return to his room, but would pass the night in the barn; still the fear that Benzeor might discover his absence, and be led to suspect its cause, quickly presented itself, and the troubled lad decided to go back to his accustomed place.

Carefully he climbed up on the woodpile, and grasping the sill drew himself up and passed through the open window. He stood for a moment in the room and listened intently. Not a sound could be heard, and even the long drawn-out snores with which Benzeor had been wont to proclaim to the household the fact that he had entered the land of dreams were silent now. He waited several moments, and as the silence was still unbroken he proceeded carefully to remove

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his wet clothing, and climbed into his high bed.

For the first time then he realized how thoroughly tired he was. The bed had never been more grateful to him, and a heavy sigh of relief escaped his lips. He heard the crowing of the cocks and knew that the morning could not be far away now.

Not even the exciting events of the day, or the treacherous project of Benzeor, or his anxiety for the safety of Little Peter's father, now availed to keep the wearied lad awake.

How long he slept he did not know, but it was broad daylight when he opened his eyes. Some one was pounding upon his door, and with a confused thought that Fenton was besieging the house, or that Washington had begun an attack upon Clinton's forces, he quickly sat up in the bed and listened.

The summons was repeated, and Tom at once realized where he was and what was expected of him. There was no mistaking Benzeor's rude method of proclaiming the presence of the morning, and if he had had any doubts, they would have been quickly dispelled by the words which followed.

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"Come, Tom, get up! It's high time we were at work again!"

"I'll be down in a minute," replied Tom as he leaped out of bed and hastily dressed.

While he was engaged in that occupation he tried desperately to collect his thoughts and think of some way out of the troubles which he feared were sure to come that day. Should he tell Benzeor plainly that he could no longer remain under his roof? Ought he to tell him what he had overheard the night before? Had the time come for him to declare himself and to take the open stand which he had for a long time secretly planned to do? Thoughts of Sarah and the toiling, careworn little mother of the household presented themselves before his troubled mind, and the longer he thought, the more perplexed he became.

The problem was not solved when he passed down the stairs and went out of the house to the barrel which stood beneath the corner of the eaves. He took the rude wooden bowl and filled it with water, and desperately tried to arrive at some conclusion as he bathed his flushed face.

The family were already seated at the breakfast-table, and the sounds of Benzeor's gruff voice could be distinctly heard through the open windows. The hens with their broods were moving about the yard, and the dog came and rubbed against his leg as the lad dried his face and hands on the rough towel that was hanging near the water barrel. The storm had passed, and the summer sun was shining clear and strong now.

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As he lifted his eyes and looked out over Benzeor's fertile lands, only a vision of peace and restfulness could be seen on every side. It was all so different from the storm which was in his own soul that Tom almost groaned aloud as he turned to enter the kitchen and take his accustomed place at the table.

As he entered the room, Benzeor said, "You're late this morning, lad, but I thought I would let you sleep, you had such a hard day of it yesterday. But there's no trip to New York this morning, and not likely to be one again soon."

Benzeor's manner was not unkind, and as Tom glanced at him he wondered whether the man was in any wise suspicious of him or not. Apparently he was not, but without making any reply Tom seated himself and quietly decided to wait until they were alone before he spoke of what was in his mind.

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"Tom," said Benzeor after a brief silence, "I want you to go over to the ten-acre lot to-day. The ground's wet, but the corn there needs hoeing, and we can't wait."

The "ten-acre lot" was on the border of Benzeor's possessions, and was nearly a mile distant from the house. On all sides it was bordered by woods, and was as lonely a place as could be found in all the region.

"Are you going, too?" inquired Tom, with an apparent indifference he was far from feeling.

"No. I've got to go in another direction to-day. I may not be back at night either, though I can't say as to that. You'd better take your dinner, too, Tom, and I'll leave one of the muskets for you. You can load it up with bird-shot and keep the blackbirds and crows away. They're raising the mischief this year, and corn's going to be worth money this fall, if I'm not greatly mistaken."

Tom made no reply, although his heart was beating a little more rapidly than usual. Benzeor's absence from home promised little good, and the words which he had overheard the night before came back now with redoubled force. Where was Benzeor going? And why did he send him to work in the distant field, when he was positive that some of the corn nearer the house was in far greater need of hoeing than that in the ten-acre lot?

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However, he did not voice his questions, and immediately after the breakfast was over Benzeor mounted his horse and departed up the road, going in the opposite direction to that which led to Little Peter's house.

Tom went up into the unfinished room in which Benzeor kept his guns and ammunition, but instead of taking the musket to which the man had referred, he selected a rifle, and loaded it with a ball instead of the bird-shot as Benzeor had directed. Just why he did this Tom could not have

explained even to himself, but somehow there was the feeling in his heart that he might need to be prepared to deal with larger game that day than the thieving blackbirds or the noisy crows.

"I've got your dinner all ready, Tom," said Sarah, as the boy came back with his gun into the kitchen. "Why, you've got the rifle!" she added in surprise, as she noted the weapon he had in his hands. "There's nothing wrong, is there?" she said anxiously.

"I hope not. I don't know. I thought I'd take this gun," replied Tom in some confusion.

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Sarah said nothing more, but Tom knew from her manner that she was alarmed. He would have been glad to quiet her fears, but the anxiety in his own heart rendered him somewhat embarrassed, and without saying anything more he shouldered his gun, and picking up the little pail, or "blicky," as the country people termed it, having adopted the Dutch word whether they themselves were Dutch or not, he set forth on his walk to the distant ten-acre lot.

He stopped in the barn long enough to select a hoe, and then with the added implement resumed his journey across the fields. When he came to the borders of the woods through which he was to pass, he turned and looked back at the house.

Sarah was still standing in the doorway, and as she saw Tom stop she waved at him the sunbonnet which she was holding in one hand by the strings. Tom waved his "blicky" by way of a return, and then entered the woods, which shut out the view of all that lay behind him.

The birds were flitting about in the trees and filling the air with their songs. The squirrels darted along the branches, stopping only occasionally to chatter at the intruder. High over all he could see a fish-hawk and his mate circling in the air, and Tom knew that their nest was not far away, and doubtless they were watching him to see that he did no harm to their little ones, which by this time must be well grown.

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As he came near to a marshy little pond which lay in the centre of an open place in the woods, he stopped for a moment when he heard the angry notes of a ground thrush near by. He soon saw that the bird was engaged in a fierce contest with a water snake which had crawled up the bank and doubtless had been endeavoring to make his breakfast upon the fledgelings in the nest he had discovered.

Tom watched the contest for a moment, and then advanced to the aid of the bird, which was beating the ground with her wings, and occasionally darting swiftly at her foe. His approach was instantly seen by the snake, which quickly abandoned the contest, and, squirming down the bank, slid into the stagnant water; but Tom could still see the head which was lifted above the water, and the glittering little eyes were intently watching his movements, although the rest of the long slimy body was concealed in the pond.

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"That's just like Benzeor," said Tom aloud, as he dropped his pail, and picking up a stone threw it savagely at the head he could see a few yards out from the bank.

The head instantly disappeared, and Tom turned to watch the bird, which now was hopping about in the bushes, uttering harsh little notes of relief.

"You're all right now, old lady," said Tom. "Go back and tend to your babies. I only wish I could serve every crawling thing the way I served your enemy."

He soon arrived at the end of his journey, and, placing his gun within easy reach, began his task for the day. Why he had put off his conversation with Benzeor he could not explain. But the energy with which he began his work served to afford a measure of relief for his pent-up feelings, and when the noon hour at last came he had done far more work than a morning often witnessed.

Once he had stopped suddenly when he thought he heard the report of a gun in the distance. The sound had twice been repeated, but it seemed to be muffled and far away, and as he resumed his labor he tried to persuade himself that it was only Little Peter firing at the blackbirds or the thieving crows.

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The reports had made him anxious, however, and when he had stopped for dinner he had kept his gun near him all the time. The silence served to increase his feeling of loneliness. On every side stood the forests; and the great trees, which had never as yet felt the stroke of the axe, were companions without sympathy.

With a feeling of desperation Tom soon resumed his labors. The sun passed over his head and began to sink below the tops of the taller trees. He had stopped for a moment to wipe his dripping face and gain a brief rest, when he was startled by the sight of some one emerging from the forest.

He gazed for a moment intently at the new-comer, and soon recognized Sarah. What was the trouble? Her dress had been torn by the bushes, her hair had become loose and was streaming down her back. But her disheveled appearance was not the worst, for as Tom dropped his hoe and ran across the lot to meet her, he saw that her eyes were filled with an expression of terror, and her face betrayed the wild alarm which seemed to possess the swiftly running girl.

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

"WHAT'S wrong, Sarah? What is it? What is it?" said Tom excitedly, as he drew near the almost breathless girl. "Has anything happened at the house?"

"Oh, Tom!" was all that Sarah at first could say. The reaction from her excitement and the swift pace at which she had been running had come, and the frightened girl burst into a flood of tears.

Tom looked on in helpless amazement. Sarah was usually such a strong and self-contained girl that her present distress was all the more perplexing. He looked at her a moment, feeling how utterly unable he was to comprehend the state of her feelings and how helpless he was to aid or comfort her. Benzeor might be faced; and even Fenton, in spite of the fear with which Tom regarded him, might be met; but a weeping girl was entirely outside the realm of all his previous experiences, and he stood leaning upon his gun, eager to do something to aid Sarah, and feeling a deep sympathy for her as he silently watched her. [83]

Perhaps his silence was the very best aid he could offer, for in a brief time the resolute Sarah gained control of herself, and lifting her tear-stained face to that of the troubled lad by her side she said, "Oh Tom, they've killed Little Peter's mother!"

"What!" exclaimed Tom in amazement. "Killed her? You can't mean it! Who killed her?"

"Yes, they shot her, and have carried off his father, too."

"I don't understand, Sarah," said Tom more quietly. "Tell me about it."

"Little Peter came over to our house just a little while ago to leave the children, and he told us all about it. It seems, he was the lookout yesterday down by the Hook and didn't get home till it was almost light this morning.

"He said he went up to his room and laid down upon his bed, and must have gone to sleep, but he was waked up by the sound of the voices of men in the house. He jumped out of bed and listened, and pretty soon he heard one of them tell his mother that she must hand over the money she had hidden in a stocking up in the garret, and tell where his father was. [84]

"She refused to do either, and then Little Peter hurriedly dressed and ran down the stairs, but some of the men just grabbed him and held him fast so that he couldn't do anything to help his mother. He said the men all had masks on their faces except Fenton, for he thinks it was Fenton's band that did the work, and he was sure he recognized the blacksmith."

"No doubt about that!" exclaimed Tom. "What did they do then?"

"They held his mother while some of them ran up into the garret, and pretty soon one of them came back with the stocking. They made quite a time over that, and Little Peter thought they wouldn't do anything more, but it seems they didn't find as much money in the stocking as they expected. Little Peter explained it to me by saying that his mother had divided it, and had hidden a part in the garden back of the house and left only a part in the stocking.

"For a little time they didn't suspect that, but wanted to know where her husband was. Of course she didn't tell them. How could she, when he wasn't there? Well, they searched the place high and low. They tore open the feather beds, and broke down the walls in two or three places, but they couldn't find Peter. Then they went out into the barns and searched them, but not a trace of him could they find. They must have been pretty angry by that time, for when they came back to the house they told her they knew there must be more money than they had found in the stocking, and she must tell them where it was. [85]

"Just then one of the children called out that she knew where it was for she had seen her mother dig a hole in the ground and put a bag of money in it. Two of the men then took the child out into the garden and tried to make her show them the place where the money was, but she must either have forgotten or else did not know, for the men came back into the house more angry than before, and told her mother that she must go with them and show them the place.

"Of course she refused, and then Fenton raised his gun and told her he'd give her till he could count five, to tell. She didn't say a word, and when the blacksmith had counted four he stopped a minute to give her a chance to speak. He waited, and as she only shook her head the outlaw pulled the trigger and shot her in the breast." [86]

"And killed her?" inquired Tom in a low voice.

"Yes, killed her. The bullet must have struck her heart, for Little Peter said she fell dead. They threw the body on the bed and then they turned upon Little Peter. He said he thought his turn had come then, but at that very minute the guard they had stationed down by the road came running into the house, and going up to Fenton whispered something in his ear.

"Little Peter didn't know what it was, he said, but in a minute Fenton turned to his men and gave them some directions, and they all stopped and went out of the house, that is, all except two, who were looking after Little Peter and the children.

"In almost no time Little Peter heard some one coming up the lane on horseback and stop right

before the kitchen door. He heard him jump off from the horse, and after a pause of a minute the men all made a rush out of the house. Pretty soon they came back, and Little Peter saw that his own father was a prisoner in their hands.

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"He said his father took on fearfully when he saw his wife dead, and what the men had been doing, but in a minute they bound him hand and foot, and put a gag in his mouth, and then he was as helpless as a baby in their hands.

"Little Peter said he didn't know what was coming next. He thought they'd torture him or his father into telling where the money was, or would set fire to the house; but before they could do anything the guard came running into the house again and called out that some one was coming.

"They only stopped long enough to tie Little Peter to the post of the very bed on which his mother was lying dead, and then they made a break out of the house and took their horses and were off down the lane in no time."

"How did you hear about it? How did Little Peter get away?" said Tom slowly.

"Why, in a few minutes Indian John came into the house, and he set Little Peter free. 'Twas lucky for him that he did, for Fenton might have come back, you see."

"And Little Peter came over to your house with the children, then?"

"Yes, he brought them all over, and they're at our house now. But, oh Tom, it's dreadful! dreadful! I'm so afraid they'll come to our place next, and so I ran out here to get you. Come Tom! Come right away! They may be there now!"

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Tom hesitated, not knowing just what to do. He was only a boy, and knew that alone he could do nothing against Fenton and his band. But the appeal of Sarah and the unprotected condition of the children and her mother moved him strongly, and his first impulse was to return with the frightened girl.

"Sarah," said he abruptly, "where is your father?"

"Why, you know he went away this morning, and he hasn't come back yet. He said he might not be back before to-morrow morning. We're all alone, Tom, and you must come right away. Oh, it's awful!" And Sarah buried her face in her hands again as she spoke.

It was almost upon Tom's lips to tell her what he knew of Benzeor. But the misery of the weeping girl before him was even stronger than the impression produced by the sad tale she had just related, and he could not quite bring himself up to the point of telling her what he suspected,—that her own father had been connected with the attack upon Little Peter's home. But he had decided now as to the course of action he must follow.

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"Sarah," said he gently, "there isn't the least danger in the world that your house will be attacked. I can't tell you how I know, but I know it's so."

"But we're all alone, Tom! I don't know what you mean! We're as likely to be attacked as any one. You must go back with me! We must go right away, for they may be there now! Poor mother, she was so frightened that she didn't want me to leave and come over here for you! Come! We must go right back now!"

"Sarah, I'm never going into that house again. You can tell your father that I've slept for the last time under his roof."

"Not going back with me?" said Sarah aghast, and looking up in surprise as she spoke. "Not going back?" she repeated, as if she did not fully understand what Tom had said.

"No, I'm not going back," said Tom firmly. "You know I've been thinking a good while of leaving, and after what you've just told me I know the time has come."

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The color slowly faded from Sarah's face and a different expression came into her eyes. Even her alarm was apparently forgotten for the moment, and as Tom looked at her, her eyes seemed to snap and a sneer replaced the look of sorrow.

"Tom Coward, you're afraid!" she said; "that's what's the trouble with you. You're afraid, that's what you are! You'd rather leave mother and me alone there with the children than run any risks of meeting the blacksmith! I wouldn't have believed it, but my father was right. You're a coward by nature as well as by name."

"Sarah"—began Tom, his face flushing at the words of the angry girl.

"Don't 'Sarah' me! I know you now! I never could have believed it, never! But I've heard you with my own ears, and now I know it's true! You're afraid! You're a coward, that's just what you are! Oh, you're well named, you are! Very well, sir, it shall be as you say. Perhaps we shall be better off without you than we would with you, for it would only make another child for us to look after if you should come back! I'll go back home and face Fenton and every one of his band myself! I'm afraid, but I'm no coward!"

Turning abruptly away, after giving Tom a glance which he never forgot, she started resolutely and swiftly back along the pathway which she had followed in her flight to the ten-acre lot.

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Tom looked after her in helpless amazement. Never



**"TOM COWARD, YOU'RE AFRAID!"**

before had he heard such an outburst from the gentle and even-tempered Sarah, who had been the leading spirit in Benzeor's household. The children had gone to her with their troubles rather than to their mother, and Sarah had never failed to have a word of comfort or of help for every one. Even Benzeor himself had come to depend upon her judgment in many of his affairs, and she had been as patient and gentle with him as she had been with the troubled little ones.

And to Tom she had been the one true friend he had ever known. Somehow she had always understood him, and from the days of their early childhood it had always been a matter of pride to him that he was her acknowledged champion and protector. Many a time, when he was a sturdy little lad, had he taken her part against the tormenting boys in the school. For her he had carved quaint and strange looking dolls out of horse-chestnuts, and the childish Sarah had never failed to receive them with many expressions of pleasure, and had lavished a wealth of affection upon them which was almost as pleasing to Tom as to the little mother herself. For her he had gathered the chestnuts in the autumn and the bright colored flowers in the springtime; and when, with the passing of the years, there had come to them both new feelings and new interests, he still had shared with her all those dimly perceived ambitions and longings which are ever present in the boyish heart when it arrives at that position where it can look out upon the time when

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the boy is to become a man.

Perhaps Tom had enjoyed her sympathy and interest the more because of the loneliness of his own position. But Sarah never by word or act had caused him to feel that he was only Benzeor Osburn's "bound boy," and not truly one of the household.

Tom was thinking of some of these things as he watched the departing girl, and, forgetting for the moment all the anger and shame which her last words had aroused, he called aloud after her.

"Sarah! Sarah!" he shouted. "Wait a minute! Come back! Come back!"

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Sarah apparently did not hear him, or heed him if she heard, and without once turning her head or looking behind her soon disappeared in the forest.

An impulse to follow her seized Tom, and he even ran a few steps after her, but quickly stopped. How could he explain himself to her without informing upon Benzeor? And then her sorrow would be harder for him to bear than her present anger, hard as that was. No; all he could do was to remain silent for the time, and trust that in the future some explanation might be made which should set him aright once more in the estimation of the best friend the homeless boy had ever known.

The departure of Sarah left him face to face with the perplexing problem of what he was now to do. To return to Benzeor's house was impossible; but where should he go?

Tom stood for several minutes in deep thought. There was no home which would now be open to him except Little Peter's, and that had been wrecked by the dreadful deeds of Fenton and his followers. Washington's army he had heard was at Hopewell, and that was at least forty miles away. It was to the army he had ultimately hoped to go, and perhaps the present was the very time to which he had been looking forward so long.

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The longer he thought about it the more strongly was he impressed with the conviction that his best plan would be to try to make his way to Hopewell, or to the place to which the army might have moved by this time. It was true he was without provisions, and he knew of no place in which he would be likely to obtain any, or in which he might find a resting-place for a night. Of the long journey he thought but little, for a walk even of forty miles had no terrors for him.

Tom decided to start for Washington's army, but first he must stop at Little Peter's and learn what his friend's plans were to be, and offer him such aid as it lay within his power to give.

The decision once made, Tom picked up his rifle, which now he somehow had come to regard as his own property, and started through the forest toward the distant road.

When at last he gained it and started towards Little Peter's home, he was startled as he saw some one running down the road, and his first impulse was to conceal himself in the forest and wait for the stranger to pass; but his fears were relieved when he recognized the long lope of the runner, and then knew that his old friend Indian John was approaching.

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# CHAPTER VIII

## INDIAN JOHN

INDIAN JOHN had for years been a frequent visitor in the home of Benzeor, as he had in many of the other homes of the region. He was an old man now,—how old no one knew, perhaps not even Indian John himself,—but he had lingered about old Monmouth long after the Schwonnack had taken possession of the lands and his own tribe had gradually relinquished their homes and mostly withdrawn from the region.

For months together he would disappear, and no one would know whither he had gone, although it was thought that he was on a visit to some of his kindred, who had withdrawn farther into the interior of the country; but he would soon return and resume his wandering life. At such times, Indian John would be restless and uneasy. Perhaps then he realized more fully the loss of the homes of his ancestors, and his heart would be filled with thoughts he never uttered. He continued to be friendly with the settlers, and though he never refused to accept the food which almost every housewife was willing to give him, he had never been willing to pass a night under a roof. It was commonly reported that he used a cave in the woods not far away as his abode, but he never had welcomed any one there, nor had any one ever seen the aged Indian in the place. Still the report was believed, and "Indian John's cave" was a well-known name among the boys of Old Monmouth.

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Between Tom and the lonely warrior there had been a very strong feeling of sympathy, although not even Tom himself was able to explain it. It had come about, however, as the result of an accidental meeting between them a few years previous to this time. Tom had gone down to the shore one day when a storm had been raging, and the great breakers had been rolling in upon the beach.

As the lad had walked on over the sand, he had been surprised to see the figure of a man in the distance, standing motionless, and evidently watching the tumult of the angry waters. He had not changed from his position as Tom approached, and the lad did not know that his presence was even recognized by the Indian, who seemed to be absorbed in his reflections as he looked out over the tossing waves.

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Tom had gone on and at last touched the Indian upon the shoulder. Indian John had then slowly turned his head, and Tom knew that his presence had been perceived, but for a moment neither had spoken.

Then the aged warrior, with a gesture toward the ocean, had said, "Boy no home. Warrior no home. Brothers."

It was the first time Tom had known that Indian John was aware of his own early history, and his heart had been deeply touched by the sympathy of the red man.

"Boy no home. Warrior no home. Both like waves. Driven here. Driven there. No rest. No home. Storm there. Storm here," said the Indian laying his hand upon his bosom as he spoke.

From that time, although Indian John never referred to his loneliness again, a strong bond of sympathy had existed between the two, and every time Tom had seen the old man, he thought of his quiet eloquence in the presence of that storm which they both had witnessed from the shore.

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And Indian John had been kind and thoughtful to all the white children of the region. He had made bows for the boys, and taught them their use, and as their skill had increased, his pride was as marked, although it had not been as demonstrative, as that of the youthful warriors themselves. He had taught them how to make and set their traps for the foxes and the rabbits, and how to catch the eels in the river. Apparently his happiest hours had been those which he passed with his young companions.

Highly as the boys had prized the lessons he had given them, still more did they prize the marvelous tales which Indian John could tell. To them he told what the waves were saying when they came rolling in upon the sandy shore. He knew what the tall trees were whispering when the wind swept through their branches and brought the leaves into contact with one another. The hoarse calls of the wild geese, when they passed high overhead on their long journeys in the spring and autumn, were all known to Indian John, and the screams of the eagles and the fish-hawks were all in a language which he clearly understood.

He knew, also, all the tales his fathers had told him of the first appearance of the Woapsiel Lennape in Old Monmouth, when, in the spring of 1524, John de Verrazano, in his good ship The Dolphin, had entered Sandy Hook, and had soon after written a long letter to King Francis the First of France, and had given a full account of the marvelous adventures which had befallen him, and the no less marvelous country he had discovered. He had heard, also, of the visit, in the summer of 1609, which Sir Henry Hudson had made in The Half Moon, and how that one of his crew had fallen as the first victim of the rage of the Indians at the invasion of their lands.

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The tale which Tom had always enjoyed most, however, was that of the origin of the troublesome little pests which, in the warm days of the summer, were the torment of the people, for Jersey mosquitoes were not unknown in those far-off times of the Revolution.

It seemed that ages before this time, indeed away back in the days before John de Verrazano



or Henry Hudson had come, or even the memory of the oldest warriors could run, the Great Spirit had permitted two huge monsters to appear and prey upon the red men of Monmouth as a penalty for some crime they had committed, a crime the nature of which Indian John did not know, or, if he knew, he never explained.

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In size these monsters were larger than any house. They had long slender legs which held their huge bodies higher in the air than the tallest trees could have done. They also had immense wings, which, although they were as fine in texture as the finest silk, were so large and strong that when the huge monsters used them they created such a breeze that even the strongest trees of the forest fell before them.

Their most distinguishing characteristic, however, was an immense "bill," which was as long as the tallest pine-tree and as sharp and delicate in its point as that of the smallest needle. With this they wrought incalculable destruction and suffering among the helpless people. The largest man served only as a single "bite," and the bodies of little children seemed only to whet the appetite of these savage monsters.

The helpless warriors knew not what to do. They sacrificed, and prayed, and besought the Great Spirit to free them from their tormentors, but all was without avail. Their prayers were unanswered, and the Great Spirit was not appeased.

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No man could describe the destruction wrought by the huge tormentors. Whole tribes disappeared before them, and it soon came to pass that the warriors dared not venture forth in search of food for their starving little ones, who were kept concealed in dens and caves of the earth. Watchers were stationed to give warning of the approach of the monsters, for their great bodies cast shadows upon the earth like those of the low-passing clouds on a summer day, and long before they appeared in the sky the cry of the watchman sent all within the sound of his voice to their places of refuge under the ground. Not even then were they always safe, for the monsters could bore into the ground with their bills, and often brought to the surface the body of a man, who struggled and kicked much after the fashion of a frog impaled on the beak of some long-legged heron. The torments of the people increased. The women neglected their fields, and the warriors remained in their hiding-places, while the frightened children cried for food.

At last, rendered desperate by their sufferings, the warriors of the entire region banded themselves together, and one day fell upon the monsters as they were lying asleep in a valley which their immense bodies almost filled.

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The carnage was frightful to behold. All day long the contest was waged, and the multitudes of men that fell could not be counted up for numbers. But at last the red men were victorious, and when the few remaining warriors left the field of battle, their enemies lay stretched upon the valley, dead.

Great was the rejoicing among the people. They came forth from their hiding-places, and their feasting and songs of victory were continued for two entire days. The land was freed from its tormentors, and peace and prosperity would now return, or so at least they thought.

Great was the astonishment and sorrow of Indian John's forefathers when, upon the third day, they discovered that their troubles were not ended. As decay had begun to work upon the dead bodies of the mammoth mosquitoes, little particles became loosened, and as they were lifted into the air by the summer wind, each tiny and separate atom became endowed with life and received a body in shape exactly like that of the huge monsters themselves, only they were exceedingly small in size. Day after day clouds of these tiny torments were borne away by the breezes from the valley of the dead, and, filled with a burning desire to avenge the death of their parents, they fell upon the unprotected people.

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From these there had been no relief. The camp-fires of the warriors did not avail, and although the men went valiantly forth to give them battle, their efforts were all futile, and from that day until the present time the Jersey mosquito has remained a foe to the red man and the white, and ever consumed by the one purpose, to avenge the death of the parents, who had fallen years ago in their battle with the red-skinned warriors of Old Monmouth.

To Indian John this story of the origin of the pests of New Jersey had been eminently satisfactory, and never by word or deed had he shown that he had the slightest doubt of the accuracy of the tradition which had come down to him through many generations. Tom at first had received the account with all the implicit faith of an ardent admirer of Indian John, and his first rude shock had come when Benzeor had laughed aloud upon his relating the story with all seriousness one morning at the breakfast-table. With the passing of the years other doubts as to the entire reliability of some of Indian John's stories had crept into his mind. Alas that it should be so with us all! But his strong regard for the old warrior had never ceased, and Tom's heart was glad that morning when he recognized the new-comer as his long-time friend.

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"Where have you been, John?" he said, as the Indian approached.

"See Peter."

"Have you seen him?" said Tom eagerly. "Where is he? Has he got away?"

"How?" replied the Indian quickly; and Tom at once perceived from the expression upon his face that he was aware of some but not of all the recent events in Peter's home.

As he related the story which Sarah had told him, Indian John made no reply, although his eyes seemed to blaze as he listened to Tom's words. He then explained that he had left the house soon after Tom had departed on the preceding night, to intercept Big Peter on the road and give to him the warning which his wife had bidden him to carry. But Peter must have returned by a different route from that which he had been expected to use, and as a natural result Indian John had not seen him, the warning word had not been given, and Big Peter had returned to learn of the sad death of his wife and to be carried away a prisoner by Fenton and his brutal band.

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"I don't know just what to do now, John," said Tom. "I want to go and join the army. You have been there, and perhaps you would like to go back with me."

Indian John had been with the soldiers in Washington's army, but he made no reply to Tom's words, and indeed the lad was not certain that he had heard, for he stood looking upon the ground and evidently was thinking deeply.

"Where Little Peter now?" said the Indian abruptly, looking up at Tom as he spoke.

"I don't know. Fenton didn't take him with him, though I don't know why he didn't."

"Little Peter home," said the Indian decidedly. "Go see Little Peter."

Tom hesitated. He, too, had longed to go to his friend, not only to express his sympathy but also to learn what his plans were to be, for he knew that Little Peter would not remain in his home now. Indeed, he could not, if he would, after such a scene as that which he had witnessed there. But Tom's mind was filled with thoughts of Benzeor, and a meeting with him certainly was not very desirable at that time.

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"Go see Little Peter," said the Indian again, starting on up the road as he spoke.

"All right, I'll go with you," replied Tom, as he joined his companion.

Little Peter's house was not far away, and he would not lose much time in going there. It was almost night now, and if his friend should be at home they might be able to devise some plan by which they could act together. Besides all that, Tom was more than glad to have an opportunity to express his sympathy for his friend in his sorrow.

They soon came within sight of the house, and both stopped when they saw a little group of people near the garden. Tom knew at once what their presence meant, for they were near the spot where two of the members of the family had been buried. He had seen the rude wooden headstones which marked their graves many times before this.

The few neighbors who had assembled to perform the last rites for Little Peter's mother had just returned to the house as Tom and Indian John approached. Tom at once went to his friend, and the warm grasp of the hand was all he could give. Not one of the children save Little Peter was there, and the hurried duties had been hastily performed by kind, though rough hands.

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The two boys withdrew from the house, and after an awkward silence Tom said in a low voice, "What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to leave the children at Benzeor's house. He has been very kind, or rather Sarah has, Tom. And then I'm going to start for Refugee Town; I think father may be there."

"Refugee Town?" said Tom in surprise. "Do you think that will be safe?"

Tom well knew the place. It was a spot on the outer beach of the Hook, where some of the more desperate refugees, Tories and negroes, had assembled. A few huts and tents served as their dwelling-places, and the men were supposed to be in league with the men on board the boats which the British had stationed near by, for a part of Howe's fleet was already anchored there, waiting for the coming of Clinton's men. Clinton's original plan had been to march across Jersey to New Brunswick, there embark his men on the Raritan, and sail away for New York; but the rapid march of Washington had caused him to abandon the project, and word had been sent for the fleet to be ready for him when he should arrive at the Highlands.

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Refugee Town had become a familiar name within the past few weeks.

"No, it isn't safe exactly, but I've got to do something for father. If he's taken to New York and shut up in the sugar-house I'll go with him; and if he's still there at the Town I may be able to do something, though I don't know what," said Little Peter sadly.

"But there are the children," protested Tom. "What'll become of them?"

"They're at Benzeor's, and they'll be all right. You'll help look after them, won't you?"

"I've left Benzeor's."

"Left Benzeor's? What for?"

"I'm going to join the army. It's time I was doing my share."

Tom gave no other reason. He knew the children would be safe at Benzeor's, and with what Little Peter then had it in his mind to do it would perhaps be unwise to tell him all he knew. However, he intended to tell him all, and that soon.

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"Going to join the army?" repeated Little Peter, as if he did not comprehend the words.

"Yes; you know I've been thinking of it a long time, and now that they're on the march, and coming this way, I've made up my mind that my turn has come. I didn't know but you would want to go, too, now."

"I'd like to, but I can't. I've got this other matter on hand. Come into the house, Tom, and spend the night with me. You can start in the morning as well as now, and besides it's almost dark. You can't go in the night."

Tom hesitated, but finally consented, and with his friend went into the house which so recently had been the scene of the greatest sorrow which had ever entered Little Peter's life.

Indian John followed them, but after his custom refused to remain, although he promised to return early in the morning. One of the women of the neighborhood had stayed to look after Little Peter's immediate wants, but as soon as her duties were done she departed for her own home with an eagerness she could not entirely conceal. And Tom did not blame her, for he himself was not without fear when at last Little Peter closed the doors for the night, and, after having slipped the heavy bars into their places, the two boys sought their bed in the low room over the kitchen. [111]

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## CHAPTER IX [112]

### THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT

IT was long before daylight when the boys were stirring on the morning which followed the events recorded in the preceding chapter. No one had disturbed them, and with the return of the day their courage was somewhat revived. Tom, however, had decided to start at once for the army, which he knew from Indian John's words was not many miles away. He was thoroughly familiar with all the roads in the county, for he had ridden over them many times in company with Benzeor, or when he had been sent on errands to the more remote regions by his foster father, and consequently had no fears of losing his way.

Little Peter did not urge his friend to accompany him on his expedition to Refugee Town, for he was aware of the perils that were likely to beset him on his journey. He would not listen to any of the protests of Tom, for he was fully determined to learn what had become of his father, and even share his experiences if the occasion demanded. And Tom could not find it in his heart to blame Little Peter, hopeless as he considered all his efforts likely to be. Perhaps he would do the same thing if his own father had been carried away by the pine robbers, and he found himself conjecturing how it was a boy would feel in such circumstances as those in which his friend had been placed. The feeling was one of which he knew nothing by experience, and his own loneliness seemed to press upon him with a heavier weight. [113]

However, he still said nothing to Little Peter concerning Benzeor's recent actions, for he was well assured that his friend's younger brothers and sisters could be in no place where they would so easily escape all further troubles for the present as in his foster father's house; and then all of Little Peter's plans would be changed at once if he knew the part which his neighbor had taken in the tragedy which had recently occurred.

"Perhaps Indian John will go with me," said Little Peter. "He'll be a great help if he'll go."

"That he will," replied Tom, "and I'm sure he'll be glad to go with you. I should like to go myself." [114]

"That's all right, Tom; I know you would, but you couldn't do any good, and might only get into trouble yourself. Perhaps I'll be with you in a day or two, if I don't hear anything about my father down by Refugee Town,—that is, if Benzeor is willing for the children to stay in his house. I'll have to look after them, you see, for it's likely I'll have to be father and mother, as well as big brother, now," he added sadly.

"I know, I know," said Tom; "but I'm hoping you'll have good luck, and if the army really is coming here, it may be that you'll get some help from the Continentals if you need it then. Good-by, Peter."

"Good-by, Tom," replied his friend.

Tom placed some bread in his pockets, and then started forth on his journey. Somewhere off towards Hopewell the American army must be, according to all the reports which had come, and to that place he must make his way. The time for which he had been waiting at last had come, and with a lighter heart than he had known for days the lad began his journey.

The summer morning was clear and warm. The birds were flitting about in the trees and filling the air with their songs. In spite of the heat, there was a delicious freshness in the early morning air, and as he walked rapidly forward he soon came to feel a sense of exhilaration which not even the loss and grief of his boy friend could entirely banish. [115]

By the time the sun rose red and full in the east, he had placed several miles between him and Little Peter's home, but with unabated zeal he steadily pushed onward, resolved to make the best

possible use of the early hours before the more intense heat of the day should come.

By the middle of the forenoon more than ten miles had been left behind him, but he was beginning to feel the effects of his exertions. His face was flushed and streaming with perspiration. The rough road was hot and dusty, for only a single day had been required to dry out all the vestiges of the recent storm. He was beginning to feel somewhat tired, and was about to stop for a brief rest by the roadside, when he saw some one approaching on horseback.

He quickly drew back among the trees which grew close to the road, thereby hoping to escape all notice by the stranger; but his plan was quickly changed when he discovered, as the horseman came nearer, that he was clad in the uniform of the Continental army. His relief was greater when he recognized the man as the son of one of Benzeor's neighbors, who more than a year before this time had enlisted and had passed the preceding winter in Valley Forge. [116]

He quickly resolved to hail the man as he passed, and accordingly stepped out into the road and waved his arms as a signal for the horseman to stop. The man quickly heeded, and as he drew the rein and checked his horse he peered down at the lad by the roadside, and Tom's fears were instantly relieved when he perceived that he had been recognized.

"Why, Tom Coward, what are you doing here? Nothing wrong over home, is there?"

"Yes, there is;" and Tom at once proceeded to give young Lieutenant Gordon an account of all that had occurred in the past three days.

"That's bad," said the lieutenant slowly, patting his horse's dripping neck as he spoke. "That's bad. I wish I could take a company and go over there this minute. I can't, though; it's out of the question. But the army will be here shortly now, and there may be a chance to give these pine robbers a dose then. Where are you going now, Tom?" [117]

"I thought I'd start for the army," replied Tom. "I've no other place to go to, and I've been waiting to join it a long time."

The lieutenant smiled at the lad's words as he replied, "That's all right. You're a well-grown fellow, and I doubt not they'll find a place somewhere for you in the Jersey militia. There are younger fellows than you there."

"So I hear," replied Tom eagerly. "Indian John told me the army was over by Hopewell, and had halted there, so I thought I'd put straight for that place."

"There isn't very much of the militia there now," said the lieutenant. "They're mostly regulars at Hopewell, and I doubt not have started from there before this."

"Where are the militia then?" said Tom quickly. "I've got a rifle here, and if I'm to join them I want to know where they are."

"That would be a little difficult to say just at present, my lad," replied the lieutenant, assuming a more fatherly air than the difference between their years would seem to warrant. "That would be a little difficult to say." [118]

As Tom plainly showed his disappointment, the young officer continued: "You see it's this way, Tom. It was early in the morning of the 18th when the last of General Clinton's forces marched out of the city of Philadelphia. They went by the way of Gloucester Point, about three miles below Camden, and then the entire force, with Knyphausen and his Hessians in advance, marched over to Haddonfield and halted there. We had means up at Valley Forge of finding out what was going on, and before they were fairly out of Philadelphia some of our scouting parties and light horse were in the city, and they gathered in about sixty or seventy prisoners and were back again at the Forge with the men and the news. By three o'clock that same day General Lee's division had started, and by five o'clock General Wayne's had gone, too. They lost no time over there, I can tell you."

"But I don't understand," said Tom. "Where are the militia, and what are you doing here?"

"That's what I'm explaining to you," replied the lieutenant. "Well, at five o'clock the next morning,—that was the 19th of June, you know,—Washington had the rest of the army on the march for Coryell's Ferry; but the roads were so heavy—for we've been having some great rains this month—that the divisions which had been sent out didn't cross the Delaware until Saturday morning, and the main body till Monday. And all this time the British were mighty careful, let me tell you. They thought Washington was after their baggage-wagons and stores, you see. Clinton and his main body moved out of Haddonfield on Friday, but he left Knyphausen and his Dutch butchers, as well as two brigades of the regulars behind him, while he marched eight miles up to Evesham and went into camp there. He wanted to keep his train of baggage-wagons well protected, you see, for the militia were doing all sorts of mischief. You wanted to know where they were. Well, that's where they were." [119]

"They're away down at Haddonfield, then, are they?"

"No, no. But they'd been sent out to bother the British, you see, and try to hold them back by skirmishes and a few such gentle deeds. They were tearing up bridges and firing at the regulars from the woods, and doing all sorts of things. Why, when Clinton was marching from Haddonfield to Evesham, General Leslie, who was in command of his advanced guard, fell in with a party of these very militia I'm telling you about. Leslie hid some of his men in a rye-field, and they saw [120]

Captain Jonathan Beesley. He was a captain in the Cumberland County militia, you know, and had been in the army two years,—yes, and he was one of the best men we ever had, too, let me tell you. Well, Leslie's men saw Beesley and a couple of his officers reconnoitring in advance of their companies, and they fired on them. Captain Beesley was wounded, and of course they took him prisoner and carried him with them into camp. They tried to get him to own up what Washington's plans were, but Captain Beesley just stopped them by saying they wouldn't get a word out of him. And they didn't; but the next day the poor fellow died from his wounds. They'd taken him into Hinchman Haines's house, you see, and that was where he died. I understand that they buried him there with the honors of war, and I understand, too, that they've given permission for the body to be taken up and placed in the Friends' burying-ground down at Haddonfield. It may have been done before this, for all that I know. Captain Beesley was a good man. The redcoats couldn't do too much for him."

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"But where are the militia now? That's what I want to know."

"And that's what I'm trying to tell you. This is too hot to be standing out here in the road. Let's go into the shade. I've got time enough, and it may be a bit safer there, too."

The lieutenant led his horse a short distance into the woods, and, slipping the bridle-rein over his head, he permitted him to graze, while he himself resumed his story.

"At four o'clock the next morning,—that was Saturday, the 20th,—Clinton took up the line of march, but he only went seven miles, as far as Mount Holly, and there he halted till Monday. On Sunday, Knyphausen joined him, having marched by the way of Moorestown. The next morning they all marched on to Black Horse and halted again, but at five o'clock Tuesday morning they were up and at it once more. They divided their forces there a bit, Leslie going by the way of Bordentown, Clinton keeping on along the road to Crosswicks, while Grant and the Dutch butchers brought up the rear and served as a kind of guard for the baggage-train. All this was only yesterday, the 23d, you see."

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"But where are the militia now?" protested Tom. "They are the ones I want to join, not the British. You keep telling me about them. What I want is the other side."

"Listen, then, and you shall hear. Yesterday General Dickinson, with the Jersey militia, was right there in Bordentown."

"What! when the British came up?"

"Yes, when the British came up, that is, when Leslie's division did. Not all of the militia were there, though. A good many had been withdrawn and posted where they could do the most good. There weren't very many left in Bordentown, but when they found out that Leslie was almost upon them, they made up their minds in very short order that the climate there was not the best in the world, so they cleared out and left. But before they went they left a few slight tokens of their regard. They pulled up the planks of the bridge there over Crosswicks Creek, and raised the draw so that Leslie had to find another crossing-place. Before they did that they tried to fix up the bridge, but they were fired upon, and I understand that four were killed and quite a large number were wounded."

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"Clinton, too, wasn't finding his road all covered over with roses either. About five hundred of our men met him as he came up nearer to Crosswicks, and they thought they were ready, but they weren't anything of the kind. They had cut down a lot of trees and stretched them across the road, but that didn't stop the British. They came on just as if they didn't mind marching over such little things as trees, and there was a little skirmish there, and two or three of the redcoats were killed. One of their officers was shot and they took him up to a house near by, and left him there. Of course the Americans couldn't stand there long, but they didn't run very far."

"Well, the British divisions joined then and started on again. They came to another bridge and our men had it all fixed so that they could just let it fall by one or two strokes of an axe. They had one or two little cannons there, too."

"Who did? The British?"

"No, our men. You know Sam Clevenger, don't you? Well, he stood there on the bridge with his axe in his hands when the British came in sight. He'd cut the sleepers almost through, and when he saw the redcoats coming, he lifted his axe, and the third time he struck down went the bridge and all. Then Clevenger started to run, but the British fired at him and he fell dead. They'd shot him in the back of the head. Our men then fired their cannon once or twice, but all they hit was the Friends' meeting-house. Of course the British didn't mind that, and then our men pulled back and left. That was only yesterday. I shouldn't be surprised if the British were over here by Allentown or Imlaystown now, or it may be both."

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"What! not more than ten or fifteen miles away?" said Tom excitedly.

"That's what I say. And they'll be nearer, too, before they're farther off, let me tell you."

"Why? How? What do you mean?"

"They'll never go to Brunswick or Amboy, for Washington's right in front of them, and ready to head them off. They'll just have to come this way or go back, and that they won't do, for 'Britons never retrograde.' That's one of their pet words, you know. Isn't that what John Burgoyne said,

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too?"

"I don't know anything about that," said Tom. "Then General Washington has been using a part of the militia and a part of the regulars to bother Clinton and keep him from getting to Brunswick or Amboy, has he?"

"Yes, that's just it."

"Well, I shan't have very far to go, then, to join them now."

"Oh, you're not going to join them. You're coming with me. You're just such a lad as I have been looking for, and you can help me, if I'm not greatly mistaken."

As Tom made no reply except to look up in surprise, the young officer at once began to explain to him the nature of the task to which he had referred.

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## CHAPTER X

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### THE STORY OF THE MISCHIANZA

"I'VE been sent out, as a good many others have been, to look up the bridges over the creeks" (the young officer called them "runs," as many of the Jersey men did then, and still do for the matter of that) "and find out the lay of the land. As I happened to be born in Old Monmouth, and lived here till I was a man grown, it was naturally thought I'd be pretty well informed, so you see I was selected for this special work. I don't know that I object to it, but I'd rather be back with my men."

"And that's what you've been doing, is it?" said Tom.

"Yes, I've been in that work ever since the British started out from Philadelphia. I've kept just a little ahead of the men all the way, and have gone back every night to report, and then the next day they'd follow all my plans. You see I've got a map of every road in the county here," and as he spoke the young lieutenant drew from his pocket a paper on which had been traced every road and every little stream in the region, while the places where bridges were to be found were indicated by red marks.

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"Whew!" he added, throwing back his coat. "Isn't it warm! I don't believe there's been a summer like this in years. We've had showers and thunder-storms almost every day. The air now feels as if we'd get another one pretty soon, too."

The air was exceedingly sultry, and a strange stillness seemed to be resting over all. Not a leaf was stirring, and as Tom looked up through the tops of the trees the bright blue of the sky appeared to be more intense than ever he had seen it before. Here and there separate masses of heavy clouds could be seen, which, with the sunlight streaming through them, glistened almost like silver. He knew the signs well. There was the appearance of a coming shower.

"It's too hot to go on," said the young lieutenant. "I'm almost afraid to take my horse out in such heat. I've got the most of my work for the day done, though, and I thought that perhaps you might be able to help me out, Tom. You must know every bridge in this part of the country. Now you go over this map with me, and tell me if the places are marked right. I've been gone so long I'm not sure of myself, but you ought to know. It'll save me a trip in this broiling sun, if you can help me."

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Tom took the map and looked over it carefully. He was thoroughly familiar with the roads and streams, as the lieutenant had intimated, and in a brief time he had given him all the information he possessed.

"There," said the lieutenant at last, folding the paper and restoring it to his pocket again, "that helps me out. I'd been over most of the way, and the two or three places you have told me about finishes the whole thing. I'm ready to go back and report. I think I'll take a bite, though, before I start, and wait and see what the weather is likely to be."

Going to his saddle-bags the young officer brought out the dinner which he carried with him. "Sometimes I stop at some farmhouse and get something to eat," he explained, "but it isn't always safe to trust to that, you see, so I always go provided. I want you to join me, Tom. It'll seem almost like old times."

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The horse had been tied to one of the trees, and, as the lieutenant seated himself upon the ground, Tom gladly joined him. He was tired and hungry, and the piece of bread which he had in his own pocket would keep, and, as he was aware that he might find further use for it, he was the more willing to accept the invitation which had been given him. For a few minutes neither spoke, for they both seemed to be intent upon the immediate duty.

As soon, however, as the first pangs of his hunger were relieved Tom said, "I never understood just why it was that the British left Philadelphia. They'd been there all winter, and after holding the city so long I never could understand why it was that they abandoned it without even a skirmish. What did they do it for?"

"Why, the way of it was this," replied the lieutenant, taking an unusually large bite of the bread he was holding in his hand, as he spoke. "You see, we'd been trying for a long time to get up some kind of a treaty with France. Ben Franklin, and I don't know who all, had been over there trying to work it up, and at last the Frenchmen agreed. Our Congress ratified the treaty on the 4th of last May, and that completely changed the plans of the redcoats."

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"I don't see just how that could do it," replied Tom, somewhat puzzled.

"Why it really means a declaration of war by the French against the British. I don't believe the Frenchmen care very much for us, barring young Lafayette and a few others of his kind, but they hate the British, and took this way to get even with them. It's expected that they'll send a fleet over here, and of course the redcoats have got to be ready to meet it,—that is, if they can. Well, Philadelphia doesn't amount to very much any way in war times. It isn't very easy to get into it, so the British there thought they'd better get out and go over to New York, which was a good deal more likely to be threatened by the French fleets. That's the cause of the change, my lad."

"I should think the redcoats would feel like giving up, now that the French are going to join us."

The young officer laughed as he replied: "That's just where you're mistaken, my young friend. They don't feel that way after they've sent so many armies over here and have spent so much money in discovering us, you see. And then, too, they don't object to getting a few taxes and such like things out of us, either. I've a dim suspicion that the Frenchmen may have just a bit of a dream that they may get back some of the country that dropped out of their hands during the French and Indian war. But, however that may be, we're glad to have their help now, for we need it badly enough, and will have to let the future take care of itself."

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"I don't see that any one can blame the British for wanting to hold on to us. They have spent a lot of money, and lots of their soldiers have been killed in the wars with the Indians and the Frenchmen."

"Oh no, we don't blame them," laughed the lieutenant. "We don't blame them. It's all natural enough for them to want to hold on to us, but how about ourselves? What about the Stamp Act and the tea tax? What about all their oppression and the way they've treated us? They seem to forget that we're men of like passions with themselves. Oh, it's all natural enough for them to want to keep a good hold on us, but it's just as natural for us to object to being held on to. And, Tom, such things as have happened lately, too! Why, this story about Little Peter's mother is only one of a thousand here in Jersey. I've been pretty much all over the colony—the state, I mean—and it's the same story everywhere. It's just plundering, and robbing, and worse. And then to bring over here those Dutch butchers,—that's the worst of it all! To think of hiring those butchers! Why, it just makes my blood boil to think of it! And against us, too, who are their own blood relatives! That's more than human nature can stand!"

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Tom felt the contagion of the young lieutenant's enthusiasm, but he made no reply, and his companion continued, "The redcoats had a great time when they cleared out of Philadelphia. I was there and saw it myself."

"You were there? I thought you were up at Valley Forge all winter!"

"So I was, when I wasn't in Philadelphia. I had to go there sometimes, but I never wore my uniform then. Oh no, I didn't think it was very becoming to my peculiar style of beauty, so I always left it behind me."

"What were you, a spy?"

"That isn't what we call it," replied the young officer, lowering his voice and glancing quickly about him at Tom's words, "Never mind what I was, but I was there and that's enough. I'm telling you now about the time the redcoats had when Sir William Howe gave over the command to Sir Henry Clinton. His officers got it up as a kind of a farewell, you see. They called it the *Mischianza*."

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"What's that? I don't understand."

"What, the *Mischianza*? Oh, that's an Italian word, and means a 'mix up' or a 'medley,' or some such thing; I don't know just what. But I'm telling you now what it was, and what they did. It commenced with a kind of a regatta which they'd arranged in three divisions. Up the river in front came the Ferret galley, and on board were some of the general officers and their ladies. Then came the Centre galley,—that was called the Hussar,—and carried both the Howes and Clinton and their suites, along with a lot of ladies. Behind came the Cornwallis galley, in which were Knyphausen and some of the British generals, and, of course, a lot of ladies.

"Well, sir, they looked fine, I can tell you, for I was in the crowd which watched the affair from the shore, and I saw every bit of it. On each quarter of the galleys there were five flatboats, all lined with green, and having lots of people on board. Then, in front of the galleys, were three more flatboats, and a band of music was on board of each, and they could play, too, let me tell you, if they were redcoats. Six rowed along each flank, and they were all dressed up in bright colors, and so were the ships and the transport boats, which made a line all the way down to the city. All the wharves were crowded and the people were just wild. The boats started out from Knight's wharf—that's away up in the northern part of the city, you know—and rowed all the way down to Market wharf. There they rested on their oars, the bands played 'God save the King,' the

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people shouted and sang, and I couldn't help feeling something of the excitement, though I hate the very sight of a redcoat.

"Well, they landed at the Old Fort, and the bands were still playing, and the Roebuck fired seventeen guns and then the Vigilant fired seventeen more. The grenadiers had been drawn up in a double file on shore, and the company then marched up between the lines. They had horsemen there, too, and what with the bright dresses of the ladies and the bright favors of blue and white ribbons on the breasts of the managers, who moved in front of the procession, and the uniforms and all, it was a great sight. I should have thought Lord Howe would almost have been sorry he was going to leave.

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"The avenue led up to a big lawn, which was all fixed up with arches and rows of benches, rising one above another, where the ladies were to be seated; and then they had some tilts and tournaments, something as they used to have in old England. There were young ladies there, too, lots of them, and they were all dressed up in Turkish costumes, and such like.

"Pretty soon the trumpets sounded, and then a band of knights, dressed in red and white silk, on horses all decked out in the same colors, advanced. Lord Cathcart was the chief, and he had squires to carry his lances and others to carry his shield, and two black slaves with silver clasps on their bare necks and arms held his stirrups. The band then marched around the square and saluted the ladies, and then the herald, after a great flourish of trumpets, declared the ladies of the Blended Rose were ahead of all others.

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"When the challenge had been given the third time, some other heralds and a trumpeter came in, along with a lot of knights dressed up in black and orange, and after going through a lot of motions and the bands had played, the herald proclaimed that the Knights of the Burning Mountain were prepared to contest the claim of the others. Then the gauntlet was thrown down and picked up, and the encounter began.

"After they had met four times, the two leaders, Lord Cathcart and Captain Watson, advanced and began a contest between themselves. After they had kept it up a little while, the marshal of the field rushed in between them, and declared the ladies were all right on either side, and commanded the men to stop. Then bands filed off in different directions, playing lively tunes and saluting the ladies as they marched.

"Then the whole company marched through great arches to the garden, and then up into the hall, which had been painted up to resemble Sienna marble. They had a faro table in that room and one great cornucopia all filled with flowers and fruit, and another one empty. Then they went to the ballroom, which was all painted in pale blue, and there were festoons of flowers, and I don't know what all. I never saw anything like it before. There were eighty-five big mirrors in the room, and they were all fixed out with ribbons and flowers, and as they sent back the light from the branches of waxlights, it made the room look bright enough, I can tell you. On that same floor they had four drawing-rooms, where they got their refreshments, and these rooms were all decorated and lighted up, too.

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"They kept up the dancing till ten, and then the fireworks began and the windows were all thrown open. I remember that the first of the fireworks was a great bouquet of rockets,—but that was only one, and they kept it up till twelve o'clock.

"When midnight came, the great folding doors, which had been all covered over with flowers so that no one knew they were there, were thrown open, and there was a great room all decorated and lighted up, most too wonderful to tell about; and there, too, was a great table, which they said had twelve hundred dishes on it—just think of that, will you?—and four hundred and thirty people could sit down to the table at the same time.

"They had supper then, and when they had finished that part of the programme the herald and trumpeters entered and proclaimed the health of the king and the royal family. Of course all the people there responded, and then there was a toast for the knights, and the ladies, and lots of others, and there was a great flourish of trumpets as each toast was announced.

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"Then they all went back to the ballroom and began to dance again. They kept it up till four o'clock, and I don't know how much later, for I left then."

"And you saw it all?" said Tom slowly.

"Yes, almost every bit of it; 'twas a great sight, too. The like of it has never been seen before on this side of the water, and never will be again, I'm thinking. By the way, Tom, I heard a man there called by your name. It was Captain Coward, I think—though it may have been colonel or judge; I don't just recollect."

"I'm sorry for him."

"You needn't be. Just show that the name's of no account. But I've got to start now. I wish I could take you with me, but I can't. I'll see you soon, though, so good luck to you till we meet again."

"But it's raining," said Tom quickly, as the patter of the falling drops could be heard on the leaves.

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"Can't stop for that; I'm due at five o'clock, rain or no rain. Good-by to you, Tom, and thank you



for your help. You've saved me a hard ride in such a day as this!"

The young lieutenant was gone, and Tom waited for the shower to pass. The rain continued only a few minutes, but left the air still more sultry than it had been before, and walking became much more difficult.

However, Tom started on as soon as the rain ceased, and kept steadily to his work until the sun was low in the heavens. His thoughts had been withdrawn, in a measure, from the camp at Hopewell, and he was thinking of the description which the young lieutenant had given of the Mischianza, and the brilliant scene which it must have presented. What could the poor and desperate Continentals do against men who had feasts like that? And Captain, or Colonel, Coward, who was he? Tom found himself thinking of the man, and wondering how he came to have the name.

He turned the bend in the road and saw a band of soldiers marching directly toward him, and not far away. Startled by the sight, he stopped a moment and gazed intently at them, striving to discover whether they wore red coats or buff; but they were covered with dust and he could not decide. [140]

He quickly realized that he must act, and he had just turned about, prepared to run back in the road, when he heard several shots fired at the approaching men from the woods by the roadside.

The band instantly halted and prepared to defend themselves. Without waiting to watch the contest, he once more turned to run, when he obtained a glimpse of men behind him, partially concealed among the trees and standing with their guns raised to their shoulders, and with their attention fixed upon the advancing soldiers.

Were the men friends or foes? Tom could not determine; and, trembling with fear and excitement, he stopped. He was between the opposing bands, while off on his right it was evident that other men were concealed. Thoughts of the Mischianza and of the captain with the unfortunate name were all gone now. He could not advance; he dared not retreat.

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## CHAPTER XI

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### TO REFUGEE TOWN

WHEN Little Peter reëntered the lonely house after his friend Tom departed, the full sense of his own sorrow for the first time swept over him. Up to this time the necessity of action had prevented him from fully realizing his loss. The death of his mother, the capture of his father, the provision he was compelled to make at once for his younger brothers and sisters, had so absorbed his thoughts that he had had but little time to dwell upon his own sorrow.

With the departure of Tom, however, there came the reaction, and for a few moments the heartbroken lad was almost overcome. The very silence was oppressive. The only sound he could hear was the loud and regular ticking of the tall clock which stood in one corner of the kitchen. How proud his mother had always felt of that ancient timepiece! Many a time had she told him of its history and the pride with which she had received it from her own father, when as a young bride she had first entered the new house which henceforth was to be hers. To Peter, it almost seemed as if the stately clock had been a member of the family, and its voice was almost human to him. On the summer afternoons, when he was a little fellow and his mother had been busied in her household duties, he had often stretched himself upon the sanded floor, and, resting his face upon his hands, with eager eyes had gazed up into the face of the old timepiece and listened to the swing of its long pendulum, which for him had had a language all its own. [142]

And now in the light of the early morning the old clock still stood in the corner and regularly ticked off the passing hours, as if it were unmindful of all the sad scenes to which it had recently been a witness. And yet to Peter it almost seemed, too, as if there was a tone of sadness after all in the monotonous tickings that day. Perhaps the old clock was striving to express its sympathy for the sorrowing boy, but not even its sympathy must be permitted to interfere with its duty in marking the passage of the swiftly flying minutes.

The few antiquated chairs were standing just as they had stood when his mother had been there. The brass-rimmed mirror, the one ornament of the room, which hung over the low mantelpiece, reflected the scene before it, but in all the picture one figure was wanting and would be forevermore. Overcome by the full knowledge of his loss, Little Peter bowed his head upon his hands and leaned low upon the table, and burst into a flood of tears—the first he had shed since the sad event had occurred. Indian John was forgotten, the few chores about the place were ignored, and for a time the heartbroken lad gave way to his sorrow for the loss of his mother, upon whose face he never was to look again. [143]

How long he remained in that attitude he did not know, but he was recalled to the necessities of the present by the sound of footsteps outside the door. His first thought was that Indian John had returned, and he hastily rose to greet him; but quickly he perceived that the new-comer was not his Indian friend, but Barzilla Giberson, one of his nearest neighbors. If Little Peter had looked carefully into his neighbor's face, he would doubtless have noticed that the man was [144]

evidently somewhat troubled, and apparently was not overjoyed at the prospect of an interview; but the lad was too busied with his own thoughts and sorrows to bestow a critical examination upon a neighbor's countenance, and Barzilla's evident uneasiness, therefore, was all passed by unnoticed.

"Good-morrow to you, Little Peter," said Barzilla. "The women folks wanted me to come over and say to you that you were welcome to make your home with them, if you so chose."

"Thank you, Barzilla," replied Peter. "If I were going to stay here I should be glad to do that, but I'm going away this morning."

"Sho! Ye don't say so! Where ye goin', if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"I'm going to look up my father."

"Where ye goin' to look him up?" said Barzilla, somewhat uneasily.

"I'm going down to Refugee Town first. I don't know what I'll do if I don't find him there."

"Ye won't find him there," said Barzilla quickly. "In course I don't know where he is," he hastily added, "but I don't b'lieve ye'll find him there; and, besides, that's no place for a lad like you to go to alone, for I take it ye're goin' alone?"

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"Yes, I'm going alone," replied Peter, to whom Barzilla's anxiety was not apparent.

"In course it isn't for me to say what ye shall do and what ye shan't, but I don't believe a trip there will do ye any good. Ye've got to remember that other folks has suffered, too. Yer marm isn't the only one that's been shot, and yer pop isn't the only man that's been carried off by the British."

"It wasn't the British that carried my father away," said Peter quickly.

"Twan't the British? Who was it then, I'd like to know?"

"Twas Fenton and his band, that's who it was."

"Sho! I can't believe that! I reckon ye're mistaken, Peter. It must 'a' been the redcoats."

"It was Fenton," repeated Peter decidedly.

"I can't b'lieve it," said Barzilla, rising as he spoke. "I can't b'lieve it. However, Peter, we'll look after yer place. The women folks or I will do the chores for ye, while ye're gone. It's only neighborly, ye know, and what's friends good for if they can't help in a time like this?"

"Thank you," said Peter quietly. "There isn't much to be done, but if you'll look after what there is, I shall be glad. The children are at Benzeor's house, you know."

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"So I hear. So I hear. Well, they're in good hands; ye can rest easy about that. Well, I must be a-goin'. Ye still think ye'd better go down to Refugee Town, do ye?"

"Yes."

"Well, good luck to ye. Good luck to ye. We'll look after the place," called Barzilla as he departed.

If Peter had gone to the door, he would have discovered that Barzilla had not departed to go to his own house, but that after he had entered the road he had turned quickly and started in the direction in which the Navesink lay. But as Peter did not rise from his seat, he missed all that, and, besides, in all probability he would only have been puzzled by his neighbor's actions and unable to account for the haste with which he had made the change.

Peter prepared his breakfast, and then waited for the coming of Indian John. The minutes passed, but the Indian did not put in an appearance, and the lad began to suspect that he would not return. At last, when the sun had appeared, his suspicions passed into certainty, and, resolving to wait for him no longer, he closed the house and started resolutely on the path which led down to the bank of the Navesink, where he kept his little skiff concealed.

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He soon arrived at the familiar place, and, after taking his oars from their hiding-place on the bank, pushed the little boat out into the stream and began to row. The heat of the morning soon began to make itself felt, but Peter did not cease from his labors. He was thinking of his father and where he might then be. He was hoping that he would be retained and sent to New York as a prisoner, for Little Peter was well aware of the value of the reward which was offered for every prisoner taken; but Fenton, eager as he was for money, was not likely to incur any unnecessary risk for himself by keeping any one near him who might prove to be a source of danger. And Little Peter knew that his father, especially after the recent events, was not likely to be quiet. Of what might then occur, the lad hardly dared to think. He only knew that what he was to do must be done quickly, if it was to avail, and he rowed on and on without once stopping for rest.

He had covered about half the distance he was to go, when he heard a hail from down the river. Hastily turning about at the unexpected summons, he saw a little cat-boat slowly coming up the river, and now not many yards away.

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"It's Benzeor Osburn," said Peter to himself, as he obtained a glimpse of the man at the helm.

"But who's that with him? It's Jacob Van Note. Yes, and that's Barzilla Giberson, too. What in the world"—

His meditations were interrupted by Benzeor's hail, "Where ye bound this mornin', Little Peter? There's to be no lookout to-day, is there?"

"I haven't heard of any," replied Peter, looking at Barzilla and striving to understand how it was that the man who had so recently left his house could now be with Benzeor sailing up the Navesink.

"I came down here after I left you," said Barzilla, as if he felt that he must reply to the question expressed in Peter's manner, "and I fell in with Benzeor, so I stopped and came back to tell him all about the doin's that have been goin' on since he went away. Benzeor's been gone from home two days and more, ye know."

"Has he?" replied Peter. "No. I didn't know. Benzeor, the children are at your house. Sarah said I could leave them there and she'd look after them. If it isn't all right, I'll take them away as soon as I come back."

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"It's all right. In course it's all right. Barzilla here has been tellin' me about your troubles. It's hard, Peter, but then ye know that lots of people have been served the same way. 'Misery loves company,' ye know."

As Peter made no reply, Benzeor quickly began to talk again, too quickly the lad might have perceived, if he had not been so filled with his own thoughts that all else seemed to escape his observation. "Barzilla tells me as how ye're goin' down to Refugee Town to look up yer pop. Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm tellin' ye it won't do any good. He isn't there—leastwise, that is, I don't believe he's there. In course I don't know anything about it, but it stands to reason he isn't. Ye'd better let me take yer skiff in tow, as I've done with Barzilla's, and come along back with us."

"I think I'll go on. If I don't find him there I can report to Captain Dennis. Perhaps he'll be able to help me a bit, if it's not too late."

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Captain Dennis was in command of the local militia, and he and his men already had had several skirmishes with the pine robbers. Indeed, the militia had been enrolled with the very purpose of protecting the scattered homes from the inroads of the outlaws and refugees. Thus far, however, their efforts had not met with a very marked success.

Peter did not observe the scowl which crept over Benzeor's face at the mention of the name of Captain Dennis. "Have it your own way then," said the man gruffly. "They say there's no fool like an old fool, but for downright foolishness give me the young fool every time. I'm tellin' ye that ye won't find yer pop down at Refugee Town, but ye'll have to find it out for yerself, I suppose."

Surprised as Peter was at the abrupt change in Benzeor's manner, his own purpose was not changed, and without replying he picked up his oars and began to row again. He could see the men in earnest conversation as he drew away from them, but it had not yet entered his thoughts that anything could be wrong with them. He was puzzled to account for Barzilla's unexpected presence, but his offer to look after his home in his absence was still fresh in his mind, and left no room for suspicion.

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As for Benzeor, Little Peter knew that he was considered as a strange man,—"odd," the country people termed it,—and he gave little heed to him or his words. His one purpose now was to go to Refugee Town. He had but little fear of meeting the men who had assembled there, although he knew they were all desperate and reckless. They would not harm him, he thought, and it was possible that he might find his father there, or learn of his whereabouts. Just what he would do if he should find him, he did not know. In any event, he would be with him again, and if he was to be sent as a prisoner to the sugar-house in New York, or to the Whitby or the Jersey, at least his captivity might be shared.

Accordingly, Little Peter rowed steadily forward and in the course of an hour arrived at the mouth of the Navesink. Then he landed and hauled his skiff up on the shore, striving to conceal it among the bushes which grew there. It was only a mile now across the sandy strip to the shore of the ocean, and the lad began to walk rapidly. Refugee Town was not far away, and the end of his journey would soon be gained.

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The heat of the sun was now intense. Across the sands he could see eddies in the heated air, and he felt as if he were breathing the blasts from an oven. His face was streaming with perspiration, while the touch of the sand beneath his feet seemed almost as if it would blister them.

He soon arrived at a place from which he could look out upon the ocean, and it was with a sigh of relief he felt its first cool breath upon his face. Refugee Town now was not far away, so he began to run.

He stopped as he saw two gunboats riding at anchor about a quarter of a mile out from the shore. What could it all mean? They were British vessels, their flags disclosed that; but what was their purpose in casting their anchors there?

He was upon the beach now, and stopped for a moment to gaze at the graceful vessels. He thought he could almost make out the figures of the sailors on the deck. And a little boat was just approaching the larger of the gunboats. Doubtless it had been ashore and was now returning.

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"How!"

Peter turned suddenly as he heard the exclamation, and saw Indian John standing before him. His alarm subsided as he recognized his friend, and he said reprovingly, "I thought you were going to go with me this morning, John. Why didn't you?"

"John been. Go to 'Gee Town. No fader there."

"What, my father isn't there? Are you sure, John?"

The Indian made no reply, evidently considering his first words sufficient. He was gazing intently at the boats in the distance, and Little Peter almost unconsciously turned and followed his look. At first he could discover nothing to indicate what had interested his companion; but he soon saw that the little boat, which he had thought was returning to the gunboat, was coming to the shore. Startled by the sight, he was about to inquire of John whether he knew anything concerning the vessels, when he heard a shout.

At a distance of a hundred yards up the beach he saw a motley crowd approaching. Negroes and poorly clad men were among them, and the appearance of all revealed that they were doubtless from Refugee Town.

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Their own presence was discovered at the same time, and a shout greeted them.

"Come!" said Indian John quickly; and in an instant Little Peter obeyed, and both were running swiftly over the sand along the beach.

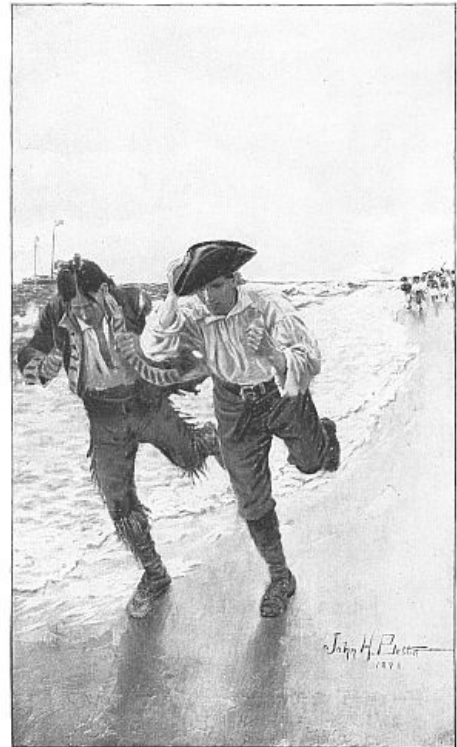
Their flight was greeted by another shout from the men behind them, and one or two guns were discharged, but the bullets passed harmlessly over the heads of the fugitives. One glance, however, showed Peter that some of the men had started in pursuit.

"They're after us, John!" he said in a low voice to his companion.

Instantly increasing their efforts, they sped swiftly on in their flight, but the shouts, which were now redoubled, betrayed that the pursuit had not been abandoned. On and on ran pursuers and pursued, while at intervals a gun was discharged and the calls and shouts could be distinctly heard.

For a half mile the flight had continued, and Peter was beginning to feel that he could go no farther. The hot air of the summer morning, the burning sand beneath his feet, as well as the weariness arising from his previous exertions, combined to sap his strength. His breath was coming in gasps now, and down his face the perspiration was pouring in streams. He felt that he could go no farther.

Another glance behind him showed that the men had not abandoned the pursuit. A half dozen of them were still running swiftly along the beach, and to Little Peter it seemed as if they were gaining upon him.



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"THEY'RE AFTER US, JOHN!"

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## CHAPTER XII

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### BATHSHEBA'S FEAST

INDIAN JOHN had been slightly changing the direction in which they were running, although Little Peter had not perceived the change. At first they had kept close to the water's edge, and at times the creeping tide had rolled up to their feet. As his companion had gradually drawn closer to the higher ridge which extended somewhat farther back from the beach, Peter had thought nothing of the slight divergence, except that the Indian was desirous of keeping a little farther from the water.

Along this ridge in advance of him, Peter saw that thick bushes and stunted trees were growing, and he thought of the possibility of finding some hiding-place there; but he was hardly prepared for the change which Indian John then made. They had just passed a bend in the ridge which shut out the view of their pursuers, and come to a little gully which the winter storms had in the course of many years cut deep into the bank. Here Indian John turned sharply, and, bidding his companion follow him, turned directly into the woods, which extended from the shore

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far back into the adjoining country.

Little Peter instantly followed, but they had not gone many yards before they came suddenly upon a wigwam in the midst of the forest. Indian John stopped, and, after a few hurried words with the Indian who was standing near and who had silently watched the approaching fugitives, beckoned for Peter to follow him, and both entered the conical shaped dwelling and threw themselves upon the ground.

The lad was so thankful for the respite, and was so nearly exhausted by his efforts, that for a time he said nothing, being only too glad of an opportunity to rest. Every moment he expected to hear the voices of their pursuers, and more than once was on the point of starting forth from the hut and resuming his flight, so certain was he that the men had discovered the hiding-place.

After a time he was positive that he was not deceived. He could hear the voices of men in conversation with the Indians, and all of his fears returned. His companion placed his hand upon the arm of the trembling lad, and Peter waited, listening intently, and fearful every moment that some one would enter the hut and summon them to come forth. [158]

The conversation lasted several minutes, and then abruptly ceased. Peter could not determine whether the strangers had departed or not; but he waited anxiously and did not speak.

The moments slowly passed and his suspense increased. It seemed to him that he must escape from the place in which he was concealed. The very air was strangely oppressive, and the ignorance as to what was going on outside the wigwam increased the anxiety of the frightened boy.

He did not know where he was, nor who were the people whose abode Indian John had so unceremoniously entered. No voice within or without the hut could now be heard, and the silence itself added to his alarm.

He could see that Indian John was seated upon the ground with his head resting upon his knees. He had not moved nor changed his position since they had entered. Motionless as a statue he remained seated, as if he were utterly unmindful of all about him. [159]

"John!" whispered Little Peter at last.

The Indian raised his head and looked at his companion, but did not speak.

"John, don't you think we'd better start on again?"

Indian John still made no reply, and his head dropped again upon his knees. Peter then perceived that his companion intended neither to speak nor to depart, and that he must wait in silence for him to explain his purpose, or to act.

The impatient lad endeavored to possess his soul in patience, but as the moments passed his anxiety and fear increased. The uncertainty, he thought, was even more difficult to be borne than was the pursuit itself, for action of some kind was then possible, while this waiting in silence was almost unbearable. Not a sound could now be heard. The very birds were silent under the burning heat of the noontime, and the grating notes of the crickets had ceased.

At last it seemed to him he could bear it no longer, and he was about to arise and go forth from the hut, regardless of consequences, when some one entered and spoke a few words in an unknown tongue to Indian John. [160]

"Come," said the Indian gently, standing erect as he spoke; and Little Peter at once followed him out into the open air.

He glanced quickly about him, but no one was to be seen except three Indians, one of whom was a man, and the others, two women. Little Peter instantly recognized them as Moluss, or "Charlie" Moluss, as many of the whites called him, and his wife and her sister.

The two women were busily engaged in preparing the contents of a small iron vessel, which was hanging from a stick supported by two forked branches, driven into the ground, and beneath which a brisk fire was burning.

One of the women was feeding the fire, while the other was stirring the contents of the hanging pot. A savory odor greeted Little Peter's nostrils, and as soon as he perceived that he was in no immediate danger he realized that he was hungry; and, with the passing of his alarm, there came an eager interest in the occupation of the two women before him.

Little Peter had seen the trio many times before this. They had their home with others of their tribe in a little settlement several miles back in the interior. This settlement was commonly known as Edgepelick, or Edge Pillock, and to it the Indians had gradually withdrawn after they had disposed of their lands, for the good people of Old Monmouth were as scrupulous as their New England cousins in not taking the lands from the dusky owners without giving a so-called equivalent for them. [161]

It is true that this "equivalent" sometimes was a barrel of cider, or a piece of bright-colored cloth; but perhaps the Indians thought that was better than nothing, and as their lands were certain to be taken from them, even such an equivalent as that which was offered was not to be despised, and so they had submitted to the unequal exchange. At all events, the exchanges had been made, and in the summer of 1778, many of the Indian families were dwelling in Edge

Pillock, and there continued to reside until the year 1802, when the men who had driven such shrewd bargains with them caused them all to be removed to Oneida Lake, in the neighboring State of New York.

Charlie Moluss, with his wife and her sister, had been frequent visitors in Little Peter's home, and he knew them almost as well as he did Indian John. Somehow, they had not been content to abide continuously in Edge Pillock, and at least twice each year came down to the shore, where they erected a wigwam, and while Moluss fished and gathered oysters and clams, the women made baskets and sold them among the scattered homes of the settlers. Doubtless this, then, was their annual visit, thought Little Peter, and their abiding place had been known to Indian John, who had sought its shelter as a place of refuge from their pursuers. And Little Peter was quite content, at least for the present, and his feeling of relief was not diminished by the savory odor which now arose from the iron vessel.

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Charlie Moluss's wife was a strikingly handsome Indian woman, and was known as Bathsheba, which the irreverent settlers had shortened into "Bath," as they had her sister's name into "Suke."

Bathsheba was considered as an Indian queen, and the respect which the Indians showed her was, to a certain extent, shared by the white people, especially by the Quakers. She was regarded as a highly intelligent woman, and the most prominent people of the region were always glad to welcome her to their homes.

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Little Peter thought of all these things as he seated himself upon the ground beside the two men, who were, apparently, as deeply interested in the occupation of the women as was he, himself. The work went steadily on, and, while Peter found that his hunger was increasing, he nevertheless listened to what Indian John told him of Moluss's success in turning their pursuers back to their camp at Refugee Town. Some of them had followed the fugitives as far as the wigwam, but had turned away after the Indian had professed his inability to give them the information they desired, and, doubtless, before this time, were safely back in "Gee Town," as Indian John termed their little settlement by the Hook.

Just why they had been pursued Indian John could not explain, but he had connected it in some way with the appearance of the boat off the shore, and Little Peter was not inclined to differ from his conclusion. He was satisfied now that his father was not to be found in Refugee Town, and he had decided to go farther down the shore to the place where he thought he would be likely to find Captain Dennis, or some of the local militia who had been stationed near to protect the salt works and strive to hold back the pine robbers, many of whom had their places of concealment not far away.

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Just at present, however, the thought of his dinner was uppermost in his mind. He eagerly watched Bathsheba and her sister in their work, and, from their movements, he concluded that his waiting time was soon to end. One of the women entered the wigwam and brought out several small wooden bowls. Into these she dipped some of the steaming contents of the iron vessel, placing each bowl upon the ground when it had been filled.

A word from Bathsheba caused Moluss to arise, and, approaching the fire, he took one of the bowls in both hands and then seated himself upon the ground and proceeded to blow with his breath upon the soup, preparatory to drinking it.

His example was speedily followed by Indian John and Little Peter, who took their bowls and seated themselves beside Moluss on the ground. An expression of deep satisfaction was manifest upon the faces of the two men, while the women, apparently proud of their success in the culinary art, looked on with evident pleasure. Little Peter also raised the bowl in his hands and blew upon it.

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"Good!" said Moluss, taking a long draught. "Good hop! Hop good!"

"Good!" muttered Indian John, following his friend's example. "Good hop! Good hop!"

"What?" said Little Peter suddenly, placing his bowl again on the ground before him as he spoke. "What was that you said, John?"

"Good! Good hop," replied the Indian, with evident satisfaction.

"You don't mean to say that hop-toads are in this soup, do you?"

"Um!" replied Indian John, with a grunt of pleasure. "Good! Little hop-hop! John like um! Good hop! John like um little hop-hop!" And, suiting the action to the word, he proceeded to take a deeper draught of the savory mixture.

All of Little Peter's hunger, however, had disappeared. He quickly arose from his seat, and, with an expression of disgust upon his face, which he could not entirely repress, prepared to pass the group and go into the forest.

A loud laugh greeted his action, and as he passed Moluss, the Indian held forth his bowl, and said, "Peter like um hop-hop? Good! Moluss like um hop-hop! John like um hop-hop! Squaw like um hop-hop! All like um hop-hop! All like um hop-hop! Peter like um, too?"

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Little Peter was not to be tempted, and the broad grin upon the faces of the women, as well as the loud laugh of the men which followed him as he turned into the forest, did not tend to

overcome his feeling of disgust. How was it possible that they could be willing to eat such filthy creatures as hop-toads? Little Peter was all in ignorance of some of the dainty viands which, under high-sounding names, are served up in our modern restaurants, and so, as a matter of course, could draw no comparison between the tastes of the rude, uncivilized savages and those of the more highly cultivated men of our own times. Perhaps he would not have compared them if he had been possessed of the prophet's foresight. He knew, however, that his own hunger had disappeared, and as he walked on he found many excuses for his uncivilized friends. They were welcome to their own customs, but they must not expect him to join them in their feasts.

He had gone so far from the wigwam by this time that he thought the repast, which had so highly delighted his friends, would be ended by the time he could walk back. Accordingly, he reversed his steps, but as he walked on his own pressing problem returned in full force. [167]

His father was not to be found in Refugee Town, of that he felt certain; for, while Indian John had not said much, he knew him so well that he was satisfied he had known whereof he had spoken.

Where, then, could he be? It was currently reported that Fenton's band had a place in the lower part of the county, to which they carried their booty and from which they started forth on their raids. It was just possible that his father had been taken there by the outlaws in their flight, but he would not long be retained there. Fenton knew what American prisoners were worth in the New York market, and, doubtless, he would find some means by which he could send him there. And the pine robber would act soon, too, for with the approach of the armies, there would be many opportunities for his own special work, and he would not long be hampered by the presence of a single prisoner, whose value would be slight compared with that of the plunder he might secure.

Little Peter decided that what he was to do he must do quickly. He would start at once for the place where Captain Dennis's men were said to be, and place the entire matter in their hands. The captain was a man whose bravery was well known in Old Monmouth, and he was ever ready to aid the scattered settlers. [168]

Captain Dennis would surely help him, too, Peter thought, and, with his heart somewhat lightened, he began to walk more rapidly. He would return to the wigwam and inform Indian John of his decision. If John would go with him, he would be glad of his aid, but, whether he went or not, the lad felt that his own problem was, in a measure, already solved.

"Little Peter, is that you?"

The startled lad looked up quickly at the unexpected summons, and saw, standing directly in his pathway, nine men. Each had a musket in his hands, but they wore no uniforms, and for a moment Little Peter could not determine whether they were friends or foes.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### WITH THE REDCOATS

THE fear in Tom Coward's heart, when he discovered that he was between the lines of the soldiers, made him almost desperate. The men before him already had raised their guns, and at any moment he expected to hear their report. When he had glanced behind him he had seen that the men there were also prepared to shoot, and he was in a position where he was likely to receive the discharges of both sides.

Along by the side of the road was a deep ditch, which had been worn by the spring floods. Just at present there was no water in it, and Tom instantly threw himself upon the ground, and, still grasping his gun, rolled toward the place. As he slipped over the side he heard the discharge of the guns, and his heart almost stood still in his terror. The bullets, however, had all gone over his head, and the lad was unharmed, although he was so frightened that even the thoughts of his own personal safety were almost driven from his mind. [170]

Shouts and calls followed the discharge of the guns, and then there was a rush of men past the place in which he was lying. From the direction from which the men had come, Tom concluded that those who were behind him had fled, and that the others were in swift pursuit of them. He did not dare to raise his head, nor try to obtain a glimpse of the combatants, but lay still in his hiding-place, hoping that in the excitement his presence would not be discovered. The shouts continued, but as they sounded farther and farther away, the trembling lad concluded that pursuers and pursued must have turned the bend in the road. If they kept on, he would soon be able to crawl forth from the ditch, he thought, and in the woods would find some place in which he might remain until all the immediate danger had passed.

Still, he did not yet dare to leave his hiding-place, and, as the moments passed, his own fears and anxiety were not allayed. His face and hands were covered with the mud which had clung to them when he had slid into the ditch. The mosquitoes gathered about him, and, do what he would, he could not drive off the tormenting little pests. The sultriness which had followed the brief storm was almost unbearable, and Tom felt as if he could not have selected a worse place in [171]

which to conceal himself. There had not been much of any "selecting" about it, he grimly thought, for he had crawled into the first shelter that presented itself. A place in the muddy ditch was to be preferred to one in the middle of the road, and between two contending bands of soldiers. Here the bullets were not likely to find him, at least for the present, and his only hope depended upon the possibility of his presence not having been heeded. Perhaps the soldiers in either band had been so intent upon watching what the others would do, that a frightened lad between their lines would not be discovered.

This hope was not strong enough to induce him to leave his shelter, and he decided to remain in the ditch until he was satisfied that all danger was past. The moments dragged on, and the silence which had followed the brief contest was unbroken. The heat was becoming more and more intense, and Tom felt that he could not remain much longer in his present position. Still, he waited and listened, but the sound of the cawing crows was all that he could hear. He counted off the minutes, and when what he judged must be an hour had passed, he concluded to remain there no longer. The men had not been heard in all that time, and doubtless must have disappeared from the immediate vicinity. [172]

The sight of the men had shown Tom that he was nearer the army than he had supposed. For a moment the thought of his former eager desire to join it came into his mind, and when he contrasted his feelings then with those he now had, his present position seemed almost ludicrous. Bespattered with mud, hiding in a ditch by the roadside, in constant fear of the return of the men, he certainly did not present the appearance of a very brave young soldier. Even Tom smiled as he thought of all this, but he was wiser than he had been a few days before this time, and the sound of guns was not exactly like that of which he had dreamed.

Tom Coward was not lacking in bravery, however, but the position in which he had found himself certainly was a trying one, and perhaps the boldest of us might have done no better had we been caught in his predicament. [173]

The time had now come, he thought, when it must be safe for him to venture out upon the road again, and, grasping his gun, he prepared to climb out of the ditch, when he suddenly paused as he thought he heard the sound of voices once more.

Yes, there could be no mistake about it; the men were approaching from the direction in which both bands had disappeared.

He crouched lower and waited for them to pass. If they were foes, it certainly would be wiser, as well as safer, for him not to attract their attention; and if they were friends he was hardly in a condition to present himself before them.

The men were coming nearer, and were almost opposite his hiding-place now. The lad's excitement returned, and he leaned harder against the muddy bank. It seemed to him as if the loud beatings of his heart would betray him.

The band had halted, and were within a few feet of the ditch. What could it mean? Had his hiding-place been discovered? He crouched still lower, and did not once look up. He clutched his gun in his hands as if he thought he could lean upon that. The suspense was intense, and almost unbearable. [174]

"Hello! Here's some one in the ditch!"

Tom's heart sank, and, as he glanced hastily upward, he saw a redcoated soldier peering down at him. The end had come, and all his efforts to conceal himself had been in vain.

"The fellow's alive," exclaimed the soldier in surprise. "Come up out of that and give an account of yourself!"

Tom obeyed, and, crawling up the bank, stood facing the men. There were thirty-five or forty of them, and, as he saw that they were clad in the British uniform, he realized that he was in the presence of the enemy. The suspense, at least, was ended now, and, as he glanced at the soldiers, in spite of the fact that he was well aware of his danger, much of his alarm had disappeared, for Tom Coward was not unlike others in being stronger to face the actual condition than the uncertainty which is connected with the approach of perils.

The men glanced curiously at him a moment and then burst into a loud laugh. The troubled boy at first could not discover the cause of their merriment, but as he glanced at his hands and saw that they were covered with the mud which was not yet dry, he realized that doubtless his face and clothing were in the same condition. And Tom's appearance was not very prepossessing at that moment. His hat was gone, his face was so completely covered with mud that any one would have had difficulty in deciding whether he was white or black, and his bearing was far from being bold. [175]

The laughter of the men continued until an officer approached and said, "Who are you? What were you hiding for?"

Tom hesitated a moment, and then replied, "I was trying to keep out of the way of your bullets."

Again the soldiers laughed, and the officer said, "You didn't differ very much from the other fellows in the band, although they took to the woods and you to the ditch."



"What band?"

"Why, those men of Dickinson's we've just driven away. You don't mean to say that you didn't belong to them?"

"I didn't belong to any band," said Tom slowly. "I was just coming across the country, and when I stepped out into the road I found I was right between you and the other fellows. I crawled into the ditch, for I was afraid that both of you would hit me."

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"Quite right, my lad, quite right. But how does it happen that you carry a rifle? The most of the Yankees are glad enough to get muskets, and here you are traveling round the country with a rifle. I'm afraid your story won't do, my lad. We'll have to take you along with us, and let you tell your story to the colonel."

Tom perceived that any further protest on his part would be useless, and, as the word to advance was at once given, he obediently took his place in the ranks and marched on with the men.

The heat was so intense that they were compelled to halt frequently for rests. A few of the men evidently were Hessians, and their high jack-boots, their heavy fur hats, as well as the short broadswords they carried, in addition to the short guns or carbines which were slung over their shoulders, seemed sadly out of place under the burning heat of the summer day. Tom did not know how the British officers had protested against the customs of their allies, so unsuitable in the country in which they were fighting; but the men from Hesse were obstinate, and, firmly believing that the equipment which had been good enough for them in the old country would certainly be good enough in the new, clung to the uncomfortable garments and unwieldy arms, unmindful alike of the jeers of their comrades in arms and the danger they incurred by the use of them.

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In the course of two hours the band arrived at a little camp in command of a man whom the leader addressed as Colonel Simcoe. Tom was at once summoned by him and taken into the presence of the colonel, or lieutenant-colonel, as he then really was.

"What have you here?" inquired the colonel, glancing at Tom as he spoke.

"We picked this fellow out of a ditch back here. We had a little brush with a band of Dickinson's men, but they didn't wait for us. We chased them a mile or two up the road; but the day was so warm, and as the rebels took to the woods, we soon gave it up and came back. We found this fellow on our return. He claims he doesn't belong to the rebels; but as we found that he carried a rifle, we thought best to bring him into camp with us. We didn't know but he might be able to give you some of the information you wanted just now."

"You did right, lieutenant. I'll talk with him later. Now tell me what you learned. Did you hear anything more about Washington? How are the roads and the bridges?"

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"The rebels have been tearing up the bridges, and Dickinson has a good many of the militia scattered along in the woods. I rather suspect they are planning to serve us as the countrymen served Lord Percy up at Lexington."

"I fancy we shall be able to put a stop to that, though your report is much like that which I have found out myself. Did you hear anything more of Washington?"

"I couldn't get a word out of anybody. I don't believe he's moved from the position he held yesterday, though."

For several minutes the men conversed, and when at last the younger officer departed, Colonel Simcoe turned to Tom and said, "Now, my lad, I'll listen to your story."

"I haven't any story," replied Tom. "I was coming through the woods back here, and when I stepped out into the road I found myself right between the two bands, and as I was afraid I'd be caught by the fire of both of them, I crawled into the ditch to be out of the way. That's why I'm covered with this dirt," he added apologetically.

"You don't need any one to confirm your words as to that," said the colonel, smiling slightly, as he spoke, at Tom's appearance. "Now what I want to know is who you are and what you were doing with a rifle? Few people here carry rifles, I find."

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Tom hesitated a moment, not knowing just what to say in reply to the question. The colonel was watching him intently, and the lad felt that he must say something. "I live back here," he said at last. "I've lived in Old Monmouth all my life. I'd started out from home to go to—to—to some of my friends, and, as I told you, I got caught between the lines."

"How about the rifle?"

"My father had the other guns and I had to take that. The last thing he told me was to take a gun and scare the blackbirds and crows from the ten-acre lot."

"Is your father a loyalist?"

"Yes."

"That's good; and now if you can answer my questions, perhaps I'll be inclined to let you go."

You say you've lived here all your life. Do you know all the roads and bridges? Could you find your way anywhere in the county?"

"Yes, sir; I think I could."

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"Tell me about the bridges. Have many of them been torn up?"

Tom did not know, but he thought of his meeting with young Lieutenant Gordon that morning, and boldly answered, "Yes, sir."

"How does it happen that your good father and the other loyalists permit that?"

"My father's not at home, and there are too many of the pa—of the rebels."

"I thought you told me your father sent you out with your gun," said the colonel quickly. "How is that? How could he send you if he wasn't at home?"

"He sent me before he left," replied Tom, his voice trembling in spite of his efforts to control it.

"Do you know where Washington is?" inquired the colonel abruptly.

"I hear he's up by Hopewell. I don't know." Tom might have added that he would be glad to learn, but his wish was not expressed.

"That's right. He *is* at Hopewell. Is there any talk about his plans? Have you heard of any rumors among the rebels as to what he plans to do?"

"Yes, sir. I hear he is planning to fall on Clinton's baggage train."

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"Sir Henry Clinton, you mean, I suppose," said the colonel sharply. "Do you think you could find your way from here to Cranberry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know every road?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then, I shall expect you to go with a party to-night and show them the way."

"But," protested Tom, "I thought you said I could go if I answered your questions."

"You'll have to stay now. Your father's a good loyalist, you say, and he'll not object to his son's remaining here for a day or two and serving as a guide. I'll see that you have some supper and are ready to start before it's dark."

Tom left the colonel's presence, and with a heavy heart turned to look about the little camp.

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## CHAPTER XIV

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### THE WAY TO CRANBERRY

It was late in the evening when Tom started from Colonel Simcoe's camp in company with the lieutenant, whose name he had learned was Ward, and the band of six men. A hearty supper had greatly refreshed the weary lad, and although he was aware that his companions were not without suspicions of him, he still had hopes that he would be able to convince them of his knowledge of the country roads, and then could leave them. His efforts to convince the colonel that he was merely a country lad, who had taken no part in the hostilities, had not been without a measure of success, and if they met with no mishap on the road, doubtless they would be willing for him to depart.

As to leading the little band into Cranberry, Tom had not the slightest objection to that, for it would be going directly toward the place where Washington's army lay, and every step was one nearer the men whom he was most eager to join.

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The entire party were mounted, and a horse was also provided for Tom. To be sure, the steed was not a remarkable one, yet, as the lad looked him over before he mounted, he was satisfied that riding would be much easier than walking, and of walking Tom had had sufficient, he thought, on that hot June morning.

"Now, my lad," said Lieutenant Ward, as the party prepared to move, "if you do well by us this night, I have two half joes for you in my pocket. On the other hand, if you fail us, or try to lead us into any trap, you shall have a good taste of the lead my men carry, or know how it feels to dance at one end of a rope with your feet a good yard from the ground. You hear what I'm saying, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," Tom replied. "I can lead you straight to Cranberry, but of course I can't tell what men we shall meet on the way. All I know is that General Dickinson has men out, just as you have."

"Never mind your 'General' Dickinson. I only wish we might have the good fortune to meet the

rebel himself. You show us the way and we'll look after any of his men we may fall in with. All we want of you is to show us the way. They won't be likely to be out on the road in the night."

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Tom by no means felt so positive concerning that as the lieutenant did, but the word to start was then given, and mounting his horse he departed from the camp with the men.

The moon was now full and hung low in the heavens like a great ball of fire. The frogs in the swamps were croaking loudly as the men rode past. The air of the summer night was almost motionless, and the heat of the day had only slightly decreased with the coming of the darkness. In all his life in Jersey, Tom had never known a hotter "spell"—as the natives termed it—than they had experienced during the past few days. A Hessian was riding beside him, and Tom could not understand how it was that he still insisted upon wearing the heavy fur hat in such weather.

So intensely warm was the night that the band were compelled to halt at frequent intervals to rest their dripping steeds. The occasional breeze was like the hot breath from an oven, and, in spite of the fact that he was riding, Tom's face was wet with perspiration. The progress was necessarily slow, but the lad soon came to Doctor's Creek, and as they found the bridge across that stream intact, the lieutenant was pleased and warmly praised the young guide.

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The Assanpink Creek was crossed not long afterwards, and as the bridge across that also was still standing, the elation of the leader was visibly increased and he ordered the men to halt for another rest. Some without removing their clothing waded into the stream, which was narrow and shallow where they were, and led their horses in after them. The heaving sides of the poor beasts were wet with sweat and foam, and the men themselves seemed to be but little better. Tom thought he had never suffered more from the heat.

After a rest of a half hour the men resumed their journey. Thus far no one had been met on the road, and the confidence of the band was steadily increasing, in spite of the fact that they were approaching the region in which the American army was supposed to be.

Five miles farther on they came to Rocky Branch and the bridge over this stream was as strong and safe as those they had left behind them.

"The half joes are likely to be yours, my boy," said the lieutenant.

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Tom made no reply, for he was thinking that something beside safe bridges might be discovered before they arrived at their destination. Only one more stream remained to be crossed, and then they would be in Cranberry. Just where they were then to go, or what was to be done, Tom did not know. Not a word had been spoken to him concerning the object of the expedition, and all that he was expected to do was to lead the band to Cranberry.

"How much farther have we to go, my boy?" inquired the leader.

"That depends upon the place you've started for," replied Tom. "We shall be in Cranberry after we've gone about ten miles farther, but it covers a good many miles. The township is a big one."

"We'll decide that after we get there. Have we any more streams to cross?"

"Yes. The Millstone river isn't very far away now."

The rests had become so frequent that morning could not be far away, Tom thought. With the appearance of the sun their dangers were likely to be increased, but he made no mention of the fears in his heart, and the band soon started on again.

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When they arrived at the Millstone, the first break in the success of the expedition was found, for the bridge was down. This plainly showed that the Americans were not far distant now, and as the lieutenant drew rein on his horse, he said,—

"This means that Sir Henry will find difficulty in getting his baggage train across here. Do you know whether the stream can be forded?"

"Yes," replied Tom, pointing as he spoke to a place a little farther down the stream. "We can wade our horses across there."

"But can the baggage wagons be driven through?"

"That I cannot say. I think not."

"We'll soon find out," said the lieutenant, leading the way to the ford.

The men all followed him, but as the water came well up to their horses' flanks, it was at once evident that Clinton would find great difficulty in getting his baggage train across. The party halted near the bank after they had crossed the stream, and the lieutenant had an earnest conversation with one of his men.

Tom could not hear their words, but he had no doubt that they were discussing the possibilities of Clinton's march by the way they had come that night.

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"We'll go on a bit farther," said the lieutenant at last, and the men obediently mounted and followed their leader.

The gray of the dawn had just appeared in the east, and the air was filled with the songs of the birds. They were now in the township of Cranberry, and the end of their journey could not be far

away, Tom thought, although he did not know what that end was to be. Thus far they had come without trouble, but with the coming of the morning, and their proximity to the American army, their difficulties were likely soon to be increased.

The men were silent as they rode slowly forward, and were keeping a constant watch on every side. The sun by this time had made its appearance, and the day gave promise of being even warmer than the preceding one. Before them they could see two rude little houses on opposite sides of the road and at the end of lanes which led back from the roadside. The one on the left Tom instantly recognized as the abode of a Quaker named Nathan Brown, or "Friend Nathan," as his neighbors called him. Many a time had Tom been there, and even then he recalled many of the quaint expressions of the gentle man who had steadily opposed all the hostilities, in accordance with his creed which forbade even the resistance to tyrants. [189]

As the lieutenant saw the two houses he drew the rein on his horse, and the party halted.

"It's time we had some breakfast," he said. "I am wondering whether we can't find something here in these houses. Do you know anything about them, my lad?"

"I know the man that lives in the house on the left. He is a Quaker," replied Tom.

"All the better for us. I think I'll let you go up to his house, and I'll send a man up to the other. The rest of us had better stay here and keep watch, for there may be some prowling rebels around here, for all that we may know."

"I'll go," said Tom quickly. "But I can leave you then, can't I? We're in Cranberry now and all you wanted of me was to lead you there."

"Yes, if you wish," replied the lieutenant. "You've done well, but you'd do better still to go back with us. The rebels are not far away, and you may get into trouble. You must do as you like, though," he added. "You've earned your pay," and he drew the two half joes from his pocket and handed them to Tom. [190]

The lad received the money, no small amount to him, and, after thanking the lieutenant, started quickly up the lane which led to Nathan's house. As he glanced behind him, he perceived that one of the men had started towards the other house, while all the others had dismounted and were still in the road, although they evidently were keeping a careful watch.

When Tom drew near the house he saw the Quaker standing in the doorway. His broad-brimmed hat and the peaceful expression upon his face were in marked contrast to the warlike men he had just left behind him in the road.

"How now?" said Nathan, as he perceived who the approaching man was. "Thee travels early, Friend Thomas; I trust all is well at thy house."

Tom quickly dismounted, and in a few words explained how it was that he happened to be there, and what the purpose of his visit was.

"Thee doesn't say so!" said Nathan in surprise. "And the redcoats even now are at my door and seek refreshment?" [191]

"They are out in the road. They want some breakfast, and I think they'll pay you for it."

"Friend Thomas, I think I can trust thee. I have known thee since thou wert a little lad. Ah, these are sad times for men of peace! The sons of Belial are on all sides. Verily, these days are days of wrath."

Tom was puzzled by Nathan's manner and made no reply. The man turned quickly into the house and soon returned with a well-filled stocking in his hands. Tom instantly surmised what the stocking contained, for he was well aware of the banking purposes to which that article of clothing was turned in many of the homes.

"Come with me, Friend Thomas," said Nathan, grasping a hoe as he spoke and leading the way into his garden. There he dug a hole, and, placing his "bank" within it, covered it again with the earth.

"But Nathan," protested Tom, "if these men search your place for money they'll find this spot, and it'll show at once you've hidden something there. The earth is all fresh and moist here, and it's dry all around it." [192]

"Yea, thou speakest truly, Friend Thomas, but I have a thought by which I may yet outwit these men of war. Tarry here till I return."

The Quaker instantly turned and again entered the house. In a moment he appeared, bearing a large bowl in each hand. One contained water, which he poured over the place where his money was concealed, and the other was filled with corn. He quickly scattered the corn over the wet ground, and then, turning towards the barn, called, "Chick! Chick! Chick! Come, chick! Come, chick!"

Instantly there was a fluttering within the barns, the doors to which were wide open, and the hens came running from every direction.

Nathan's face took on a meaning smile as he watched his flock hastening toward him for their

breakfast, and then, turning to Tom, he said, "Is it plain to thee, Friend Thomas, that it is still possible for a man of peace to outwit these sons of Belial? Now go and tell thy companions that such food as I have shall be set before them."

Tom laughed at the trick of the Quaker, and then ran back to his horse, and, mounting, started towards his recent companions, whom he could see still waiting in the road. Doubtless they were becoming impatient by this time, and, without waiting to go all the way back to the road, he stopped at a distance and called to them, beckoning with his hand for them to come, as he shouted. [193]

As soon as he perceived that the lieutenant heard him, he turned about and once more rode back to Nathan's house. He then dismounted and tied his horse to a post which stood near to the kitchen door.

As he glanced up he saw that the leader was riding alone up the lane and now was near the house. Just then he heard the sound of a horse behind him, and, turning quickly about, saw young Lieutenant Gordon dash past him on horseback.

Amazed by the sudden and unexpected appearance of his friend, he stood still and watched him as he rode swiftly up the lane directly toward the approaching men. Gordon was leaning low on his horse's neck, and Tom could see that he was grasping a pistol in his right hand.

Before the startled lad could fairly realize what was occurring, he saw the young lieutenant raise his weapon and aim it at the approaching horseman. He waited for the report, but none came. Again Gordon raised his pistol, and once more it flashed without a report. [194]

His heart almost stopped when he perceived that the other members of the band had now entered the lane and were riding towards their leader, although as yet they were far behind him. The young lieutenant had also discovered them, and, instantly turning his horse about, dashed back up the lane, with the British lieutenant in swift pursuit.

Unmindful of Tom, they swept past him, and Gordon turned the corner of the barn. Twice around the barn the men raced their horses, and then Gordon turned his horse into the open doorway and dashed through to the other side.

After him followed the leader of the British band in desperate pursuit, and then, as Tom glanced up, he saw his recent companions come shouting and hallooing into the yard which was between the barn and Friend Nathan's little house.

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## CHAPTER XV

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### THE BOAT ON THE BAR

WHEN Little Peter discovered the presence of the men before him, his first impulse had been to turn and make a dash into the woods; but the call which he heard quickly changed all that. As one after another of the band appeared, he recognized some of them as men who had been enrolled in the local militia, and his alarm for a moment subsided.

The one who had addressed him he remembered as a young man not much older than himself, who had all the summer been away from his home, busied with his friends and neighbors in protecting the salt works along the shore, and striving to hold back the outlaws from their raids in the county.

The salt works were of especial value at this time, as some of them were owned by the government and aided in increasing the scanty revenues of the poverty-stricken country. Several of them already had been burned by tories or bands of sailors, who had landed from some of the gunboats which had come to anchor off the shore for the purpose of inflicting such damage as lay within their power upon the adjacent region. [196]

"What are you doing here, Peter?" repeated the lad who had first spoken.

As Little Peter now recognized the men before him as friends, he quickly related to them the story of the sad misfortunes which had come upon his home; and the many expressions of anger and sympathy which his words called forth were not unwelcome, we may be assured, to the troubled boy.

When his brief story was told, the young man who had hailed him said, "We're on an errand that may fit into your feelings a bit. We're short one man, too. Don't you want to join us?"

"What are you trying to do?"

"We've just had word that a boat is aground off here on the bar, and we're going to see if we can't get her. We've got a whaleboat down here on the shore, and we're going to put out in her and see if we can't pull the other boat off and bring her in with us."

"But there are a couple of gunboats not more than three quarters of a mile out," protested Peter. "You can't do anything while they are there." [197]

"We can try," said the man who was acting as the leader. "We're one man short, as Lyman here has just said, and if you feel inclined to join us we shall be glad to have you."

Little Peter hesitated. It was not alone the danger of the enterprise which troubled him. He was thinking of his father and his own purpose to discover whether he had been sent to New York or not.

When he explained the cause of his perplexity, the leader said, "That's all right, Peter. We're going down to Tom's River just as soon as we've taken this boat out here. You see, our watch told us the boat is loaded with supplies, and, if we can get her, we're going to do a double deed, for we'll keep the others from having them, and we'll make good use of the stuff ourselves. Now, if you'll go along with us, you'll make another oar for us, and we'll be all the more likely to succeed. Then you can go with us down to Tom's River, and poor company will be better than none in times like these."

"I'll go," said Little Peter quickly, and the march was at once resumed.

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As they approached the wigwam, where Peter had left his Indian friends, he stopped for a moment to explain to Indian John the cause of the change in his plans.

John listened quietly until the lad had finished, and then said, "Me see um again."

Little Peter did not understand just what the Indian meant by his words, but he did not wait to inquire, for his friends were already in advance of him, and he hastened to rejoin them.

No one spoke as they silently walked on to the shore, but when they had gained the bluff, Lyman suddenly said, "There! Look there, will you? The word was all right. The boat's aground out there on the bar."

Little Peter instantly recognized the boat as the one which he had seen approaching from the gunboats, and for which the band of men from Refugee Town had evidently been waiting. Doubtless they had mistaken him and Indian John for members of the neighboring militia, and the cause of their pursuit was now explained.

The men did not hesitate now, but going to a place a little farther up the shore, they hastily removed a pile of brush and drew forth the long whaleboat which they had concealed beneath it. The boat was not heavy, and, lifting it in their arms, they bore it down to the water's edge.

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Then grasping its sides, they ran with it into the water, and, at the word from the leader, scrambled on board. In a moment they were all seated, the long oars were drawn forth, and the men gave way with a will.

Little Peter was in the bow, next to his friend Lyman. The excitement now for a time banished from his mind the thoughts of his sorrow, and even the search for his father was for the moment forgotten.

About three-quarters of a mile out at sea were the two gunboats riding at anchor, and resting as gracefully upon the water as if they had been birds. Directly before them was the supply boat, about a quarter of a mile from the shore, and not more than that distance in advance. They could see that four men were on board, and they were still striving desperately to push her off from the bar on which she had grounded.

Not a word was spoken on the whaleboat now, and the men were all rowing with long and steady strokes. The ocean was unusually calm, but every lift of the heavy groundswell disclosed to them more clearly the outlines of the boat they were seeking. Their purpose had not yet been discovered by the men on the other boat, or if it had been discovered no token was displayed. It was more than possible that they were regarded as friends coming to the aid of the unlucky boat.

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In this manner several minutes passed, the whaleboat, meanwhile, making rapid progress over the water, driven forward by the efforts of the determined men. The long, sandy shore stretched away in the distance, the masses of clouds in the sky seemed to be lined with silver as the rays of the sun shone through them, and not a sound could be heard except the heavy breathing of the men and the regular clicks of the oars in the row-locks.

In spite of the peacefulness of the scene, however, all the men in the whaleboat fully realized the desperate nature of their undertaking, and the likelihood that in a moment everything might be changed. Still, there were no evidences of action on the gunboats, and the men on the grounded boat betrayed no signs of alarm.

"There are some men on the shore up yonder," said the leader, as he saw a group standing on the beach directly opposite the boat they were seeking. "They don't seem to be able to help them," he added. "I don't believe we've anything to fear from them. Give way, men! Give way!"

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The band responded with a will, and the whaleboat darted forward with increasing speed. The other boat lay only a few yards away, and the end had almost come. The excitement on board was intense now, and, although no one spoke, the expression on every face betrayed the feelings of the men. They could see that the others were watching them, but still they manifested no alarm at the approach of the whaleboat.

As the latter ran in alongside, and the men quickly backed water, one of the sailors on the stranded boat—for such their uniforms disclosed them to be—called out, "You're just in time,

men! We thought we'd never get this tub off the bar. The tide's coming in, but we're stuck fast."

"That's just what we came for," replied the leader, as he threw a rope to the other boat. "Now make fast and we'll yank you off before you know it."

One of the sailors caught the rope and made it fast, but evidently a change came over his feelings then, for, glancing suspiciously at the men before him, the one who had acted as the leader said, "You're from Refugee Town, aren't you? You're strangers to me, but I take it for granted you're all right!" [202]

"No, sir; we're militia from Old Monmouth. We've come out here to get you and your boat, too. Here, none of that!" he quickly added, as he saw the men turn to grasp their guns. "We'll send you to the bottom before you can tell your names if you try any of your games on us."

At his command the men in the whaleboat quickly covered the others with their guns. For a moment the silence was unbroken. The advantage for the present was very decidedly with the attacking party. Not only did they outnumber the others, but they were also in a condition to act, and act quickly. The situation, however, could not long remain as it was. The gunboats were not more than a half mile away, and, doubtless, assistance would be sent as soon as the predicament of the men should be discovered.

Then, too, there were the men on the shore to be reckoned with. Apparently, they had no boat with which they could come to the rescue of the luckless sailors, but they might soon obtain one, for Refugee Town was not far away. Why they had not already gone there was not apparent. Perhaps they were trusting to the aid of the rising tide and the efforts of the men. [203]

"Pass over your guns!" said the leader on the whaleboat.

The men obeyed, and silently picked up and handed their guns to the attacking party.

"Now we'll see what can be done," said the leader, after he had deposited the weapons on the bottom of the whaleboat. "These fellows are harmless now, and we'll take our oars and see if we can't pull them off from the bar."

His men grasped their oars and began to row. The rope tightened, the boat started a little, but still stuck fast to the bottom. Again the men pulled desperately, but with all their efforts they could not move the grounded boat.

"I'm afraid we'll have to cast overboard a part of the load," said the leader, when the third effort proved as futile as its predecessors.

He arose from his seat and grasped the rope to pull the whaleboat nearer, when the four men before him suddenly united in a loud shout, and, leaping from their seats, together grasped some other guns which had been concealed beneath the sailcloth, and, turning about before their captors could recover from their surprise, stood aiming their weapons directly at their faces. [204]

"It's our turn," laughed one of the men. "You'll hand over your own guns now!"

No one in the whaleboat moved from his position. The leader still stood, leaning over the side and grasping the rope with his hands. Every one had been so startled by the unexpected summons that he seemed almost incapable of action.

"Come, be quick about it!" said the sailor, as the men still did not move.

A faint sound of a shout now could be heard from the shore, and the movements of the men there, as they ran about the beach, betrayed the fact that they were aware that something was wrong. In the distance, Little Peter could see that two barges filled with men were starting forth from the gunboats. The situation was becoming rapidly worse, critical as it then was.

"Their guns aren't loaded, men!" called the leader suddenly. "They can't harm us." [205]

Still his men did not respond. For an instant no one moved, while their fear was plainly evident from the expressions upon their faces. No one knew whether the leader's words were true or not, and in breathless suspense they waited, fearing every moment to hear the reports of the guns in the other boat.

As the men did not fire, the leader quickly shouted again, "They're not loaded, I tell you! They can't hurt us! Don't pay any attention to them!"

His words instantly served to arouse his companions, for they now knew that if the guns had been loaded they would have been discharged before this.

The sight of the barges which had started forth from the gunboats, and the increasing confusion of the men on the shore, combined to render the attacking party desperate now. Whatever they were to do they must do quickly.

The leader called to his companions to cover the others with their guns, and, drawing the whaleboat close up, said: "The boat's loaded with guns and powder! That's just what we want. Now you take your oars and push while my men row," he added, speaking to the sailors. "The first one of you that draws back will get a dose of lead. Now! Quick! Do as I tell you!" [206]

The men sullenly laid down the empty guns, and, picking up their oars, began to push against the sandy bottom. The men in the whaleboat were rowing desperately, and soon could feel that

the other boat had started.

It was not yet free, however, and the leader called again to the sailors, "Harder, men, harder! You aren't half pushing. That's right! Harder yet! Harder, I say! We'll be out of this in a minute. Give way, men! You aren't asleep, are you? Pull! Pull!"

In his eagerness, the leader laid down his gun, and, hastily grasping an oar, began to pull with his companions. Slowly the grounded boat responded to their efforts. Inch by inch it slipped from the bar, but was not yet free.

Meanwhile, the confusion on the shore was increasing. The men were running up and down the beach, waving their arms and shouting. The two barges were coming swiftly from the gunboats, and if the loaded boat was not soon dragged from the bar, it would once more be in the possession of the enemy. [207]

They were still working desperately. The perspiration stood out in great drops upon their faces. They braced their feet against the seats in front of them and put forth all their strength. The moments seemed like hours to the struggling men, but the loaded boat was slow to respond to their efforts. It was steadily yielding, however, and at last they saw the boat slide from the bar and rest easily upon the open water.

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## CHAPTER XVI

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### TED WILSON'S VICTIM

A SHOUT arose from the eager crew as they perceived the success which had crowned their desperate efforts, but an answering shout from the men in the two approaching barges quickly recalled them to the necessity for further and immediate action. Why it was that the guns of the gunboats had remained silent they could not understand, but there was no time now for investigations. It was sufficient that they had not been molested thus far; and as the leader at once gave the command for them to resume their labors with their oars, the men at once responded and gave way together, the supply boat still being towed.

The whaleboat had been built for speed, and was long, narrow, and light. Had it not been for the laden supply boat, which as yet they were not willing to abandon, they would easily and speedily have drawn away from the pursuing barges. As it was, they swept forward swiftly, and apparently were almost holding their own in the race. [209]

For several minutes the desperate efforts of the men continued. The heavy clouds had gathered in the sky, and the blaze of the sun had disappeared. The air was sultry and oppressive, and the unusual calm which rested over the waters indicated that the storm which had been threatening was fast approaching. No one glanced at the heavens, however, the set and streaming faces indicating that the immediate task in hand was sufficient of itself to occupy all their thoughts.

On and on rowed the men, and on and on swept the pursuing barges. Less than a quarter of a mile lay between them, and, heavily laden as the supply boat was, it materially decreased the speed which otherwise the whaleboat might have made. The moments passed, but the efforts were not relaxed. Together, the long oars struck the water, and the bodies of the men swayed back and forth as if they were controlled by a common impulse. The distance between the boats was not materially changed, although if any change was to be seen it was in favor of the barges.

"This will never do," said the leader at last, letting his oar go, and rising in his seat as he spoke. "Here, you men," he added, grasping his gun and facing the prisoners in the other boat as he spoke, "it's time for you to work your passage. Take those oars and pull your prettiest! Four oars are better than one, and I can do more with a gun than I can by pulling. Take your oars, every one of you, and the first one to drop will be fired on!" [210]

The four men in the supply boat sullenly obeyed, and the increased impulse of their efforts at once became manifest. The leader stood in the stern of the whaleboat facing the prisoners, and watchful of their every movement. His words of encouragement served to inspire his companions, and for a time it appeared as if they were gaining upon their pursuers.

Still, the distance between them did not materially increase, and such efforts as the men were then making could not be long maintained. Indeed, signs of distress were already becoming apparent, and Little Peter felt every time he drew in his oar as if he had not strength enough left to pull another stroke. His face betrayed the pain he was suffering, but his condition was not much worse than that of some of the other men with him in the boat. [211]

The exciting contest could not be continued much longer, and as the leader glanced about the boat he almost decided to cut the rope which held the supply boat, and, leaving that behind, seek safety in flight.

He had drawn his knife from his pocket, and was standing ready to free them from their heavy load, when the rain began to fall. In a moment the wind swept down upon them, and the storm was at hand.



From the first of the pursuing barges came a shot, but no damage was done, and the leader muttered, "That's all right. It's a farewell salute you're giving us. You might as well say good-by to us, for I take it you'll never see us again."

The waves were now rising, and the rain was falling in torrents. Between them and the shore it almost seemed as if a cloud intervened, so heavy was the downpour. The voice of the leader could hardly be heard by his men. The deep-toned thunder sounded almost continuously, and the darting lightning appeared to be all about them. In escaping from one peril they had encountered another. [212]

The barges could now no longer be seen, and, with the passing of the fear of pursuit, the men gave all their attention to their efforts to keep the whaleboat out of the trough of the rolling waves. Still, the supply boat was not cut loose, for the determined men were resolved to hold to that so long as it lay within their power to do so.

For a half hour the shower continued, and although much water was shipped, and the men were compelled to bail the boats, they behaved well. When at last the storm had passed and the low mutterings of the thunder sounded far out to sea, they all looked keenly behind them to discover the whereabouts of their pursuers.

Neither of the barges was to be seen. Doubtless, with the approach of the shower, they had both put back to the gunboats for safety. The whaleboat had weathered the storm, and the supply boat was still safely in tow.

Drenched though the men were, new strength seemed to come with the knowledge that they were no longer being pursued, and then, relieved of their fear, they continued on their way down the shore.

They frequently stopped for rest and to scan the waters behind them, but no boat could anywhere be seen. Nor was any one to be discerned upon the beach. Doubtless the men from Refugee Town had fled for safety and shelter, or, as the leader grimly said, "They were afraid of being wet, for water was something to which all the men assembled there were strongly opposed." [213]

For mile after mile they held steadily to their course, even their excitement apparently having mostly disappeared. The supply boat contained guns and ammunition, and if there was anything of which the militia stood in need, it was of that very commodity.

At first it was thought that they would put in at the entrance to Shark River, but it was soon decided to continue on their way until they should come to Manasquan Inlet, and then go up the river to a place where some of their friends were to be found. To gain Tom's River they would be compelled to keep on to Barnegat Inlet, and then retrace their way up Barnegat Bay, to the place where the river entered; and as that would require a voyage of thirty miles more, no one regretted the change in the plan.

They were all nearly worn out by their exertions, and no one knew what British vessel might be met before they could gain the shelter of Tom's River. [214]

Little Peter, in spite of his eagerness to go on to the place where he hoped to learn something concerning his father, was so weary from the work of the day, and as he had not tasted food since early that morning, he rejoiced with the others when at last the boats turned into Manasquan Inlet and began to make their way up the little stream.

The sun was now low in the western sky, and the night would soon be upon them. The shadows already were lengthening when the two boats passed out of the inlet into the waters of the river. The leader, however, had not yet given the word to rest on their oars, and Little Peter did not know where they were to pass the night.

The whaleboat kept steadily on in its course, and the wearied men were still pulling at the oars. The river was becoming narrower now, and more than one was hoping that the word would soon be given for them to land.

Suddenly, the leader called to his men, and, standing erect, pointed excitedly to a place on the shore not far in advance of them. His companions quickly looked in that direction and saw on the little point of land, around which the river swept in its course, two men standing in the water. But what was it they were doing? One of them was holding the other and frequently forcing his head beneath the surface of the river. He would hold him in that position for a moment and then lift him upon his feet again, and shake him, much as a dog might have done with a rabbit. Apparently neither had observed the approaching boats, nor had either uttered a sound which the men in the whaleboat could hear. [215]

"The fellow's drowning him!" said the leader excitedly. "He's drowning him. Give way, men, and we'll lend a hand."

The men, no less excited than their leader, instantly responded, and the boats dashed rapidly forward. The eyes of all were fixed upon the two men before them, and the leader shouted and called; but apparently, unmindful of their approach, the strange actions continued. The larger of the two men again and again forced the head of his companion under the water, and then would lift him up and repeat the shaking. So thoroughly intent was he upon his strange occupation, that he did not once heed the hail, or even glance toward the whaleboat. [216]

Nearer and nearer swept the boats, and finally, when they were almost upon him, the man ceased his efforts and glanced coolly up at the approaching men, still, however, retaining his grasp on his victim, who apparently was helpless in his hands.

A startled exclamation escaped Little Peter's lips when he saw that the smaller of the men was none other than his own neighbor, Benzeor Osburn. "Help him! Help him!" he said excitedly to the leader. "It's Benzeor! It's Benzeor Osburn! He's my neighbor! He's being drowned! He'll be killed!"

"Be still!" said the leader roughly. "It's Ted Wilson that's got him. Ted knows what he's doing. What's the trouble, Ted? What's gone wrong?" he added quickly, addressing the man who still held Benzeor tightly in his grasp.

The huge man slowly turned his head as he heard himself addressed, and Little Peter thought he never before had seen such an expression of rage upon any human countenance. His great muscular arms were bare, and his entire body seemed to express the marvelous strength he possessed. Benzeor was not struggling, and indeed there seemed to be but little hope of protecting himself from the powerful man whose prisoner he was. [217]

Little Peter could see that, although Benzeor was almost breathless, he had recognized him, but he made no effort to speak and scarcely glanced at the men before him.

"What's wrong, Ted?" repeated the leader. "What's the matter with the man?"

"The matter isn't with the man, it's with me," said Ted slowly, speaking in a deep, gruff voice, which betrayed the strong feeling under which he labored.

"You're not going to drown him, are you?"

"Naw—though the snake deserves it. Drownin' is too good for such as he!"

Ted had not moved from his position, and still was standing up to his waist in the water.

"Tell us about it. Maybe we can help you a bit."

"Naw, ye can't help any. It's my business. I don't mind tellin' ye how it came about, though. This forenoon I sold some corn and stuff up here at the mill, and got my pay in coin, too. Well, this fellow was there and he saw me get paid off, and I half suspected the reptile from the way he looked at me when he saw me take the money. Here you!" he quickly added, as Benzeor struggled slightly. "Ye want some more, do ye? Well, I'll give ye all ye want and all ye need, too," and again he thrust the helpless Benzeor's head beneath the water. [218]

"Let him up. You'll drown him!" said the leader, when Ted had held his victim several seconds under the water.

"It's no more than he deserves," replied the huge man, nevertheless lifting his victim and shaking him again. "Now will ye keep still?"

As Benzeor was unable to reply, Ted again turned to the men in the boat and said, "Well, I took that money home and gave it to Sallie. She's my wife, ye know, and I always gives her what money I get, not that it's ever very much, though. I didn't ferget the eyes o' this fellow, however, and I told Sallie,—she's my wife, ye know, and as likely a woman as there is in Old Monmouth, if I do say it as ought not to,—I told her to keep a good lookout for the pine robbers, fer I had a kind of a suspicion this here reptile might know where they was, and might get word to 'em, too.

"I took my axe and went off down into my swamp-lot to cut some wood, and left Sallie up in the house. Sallie's my wife, ye know. I felt uneasy like all the time, but I worked on for three hours or more, but I kept a-gettin' uneasier and uneasier, and, finally, I just couldn't stand it any longer and put straight fer the house. [219]

"'Twas mighty lucky I did, too, I'm tellin' you, fer when I came in sight o' the house,—ye can see it up there now," and Ted pointed to his home, a short distance up the bank, giving the unfortunate Benzeor an additional shake as he did so,—"I see somethin' was wrong. There was three or four men a-standin' out by the big maple in front o' my house, and the minit I looked I see what they was up to. Somebody was a hangin' from a bedcord they'd threw over a limb o' that very maple-tree.

"Mebbe ye know how I felt when I see it was my Sallie; she's my wife, ye know. They was a-drawin' her up and then lettin' her down, and I knew then they was tryin' to make her own up where that money was. I had my axe in my hands, and when I see what they was up to, I didn't wait very long, I'm tellin' ye. I cut Sallie loose,—she wasn't very much hurt; she's my wife, ye know,—and then I took after the rascals. They scattered in every direction, but this vermin started for the river and I after him." [220]

"You got him, I see."

"Did I get him? Let him answer for hisself."

And the angry Ted again shook the helpless Benzeor until the men wondered that his trembling limbs still held together.

## A FRUITLESS CHASE

THE surprise of Tom Coward was not diminished as the novel race continued. Twice through the open doors of the barn dashed the two riders, their horses' hoofs slipping on the rough floor and almost throwing the men from their seats. Both continued to maintain their positions, however, and would no sooner disappear from Tom's sight than they would be seen coming around the corner of the barn again, the young American lieutenant still in advance and the British officer in close pursuit.

Friend Nathan was standing in the doorway of his house, and, in spite of his peaceful professions, there was an eager expression upon his face which betrayed the fact that he was not an uninterested observer of the strange contest. Tom had not moved from his position, and his excitement had almost deprived him of the power of speech.

Again through the open doorways of the barn the riders had urged their swiftly running horses, but as yet their relative positions had remained unchanged. The British officer was leaning forward on his horse's neck and endeavoring to grasp the bridle of the young lieutenant's horse, but the quick movements of the latter had prevented him, and the mad race continued. [222]

As Lieutenant Gordon dashed around the corner of the barn, and for the fourth time prepared to enter the open door, Tom saw that the other members of the band were just entering the yard. The excited lad could no longer remain silent. His friend was beset by new perils and must be warned.

"Look out! Look out!" shouted Tom.

Young Gordon looked up and for the first time beheld the increase in the number of his enemies. Without hesitating a moment, he turned his horse toward the low fence and cleared it at a bound. Then, directly across the open lot toward the woods in the distance he urged his trusty steed, and almost before the men in the yard perceived what had occurred, he had placed a considerable distance between him and the barn.

The confusion, however, lasted but a moment, for, with a shout, several of the men urged their horses forward, and, leaping the low fence, renewed the pursuit. Those who did not follow raised their guns and discharged them at the fleeing officer; but either his movements were too swift, or their excitement prevented them from taking careful aim, for the bullets went wide of their mark, and in a very brief time the young lieutenant disappeared within the woods, and soon after his pursuers followed him. [223]

"Thee didn't seem to catch him," said Nathan blandly to the men who remained in the yard.

"They'll get him. They'll get him," replied the leader. "They'll soon run him down, never you fear. But he's a bold fellow, there's no mistake about that. What did you call out to him for?" he added, turning sharply to Tom.

"Did I call out to him?" replied Tom. "I don't just know what I did, I was so excited. I thought you had him."

"So I would, if it hadn't been for the barn floor."

Tom thought the barn floor was perhaps as much of a disadvantage to the pursued as to the pursuer, but he discreetly held his peace and said no more. [224]

"Now, old man, you can get us some breakfast. My men will be back here in no time with the young rebel, and will have all the better appetite because of their morning's work. You can feed us all, can't you?" said the officer.

"I have spoken to Rachel. Doubtless she will do her best for thee."

The men at once proceeded to place their horses in the barn and serve them freely from the Quaker's store. Then they entered the house and seated themselves at the table which Rachel had spread for them, although they first stationed one of their companions as guard.

For a time no one spoke, so busied were they in their occupation, and Tom Coward was not one whit behind any of them. He was tired and hungry, and the breakfast was doubly welcome to him. Rachel moved quietly about the room, her drab dress and broad white collar being in marked contrast to the brilliant uniforms of her self-invited guests.

"Old man," said the officer at last, "I wish you'd tell me how it happened that that young rebel was here on your place. You weren't sheltering him, were you?" [225]

"Nay," replied Nathan. "In times like these, Friends are not prone to shelter any soldiers. Our guests are only those who come without any bidding of ours."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the officer. "I fancy you mean that as a reproach for us. Well, we'll pay you for our breakfast, never you fear about that. Your scruples don't carry you so far that you object to receiving a return in good yellow or white metal, do they?"

"The laborer is ever worthy of his hire. I shall be thankful for any equivalent it may seem good

unto thee to bestow upon me."

"That's right, that's right. Trust a broad brim for that every time. I'm not complaining, old man, I'm not complaining. You don't happen to know just where the rebel army is at present, do you?"

"It is reported that Washington is on the march for this very place. Even now he may be approaching."

"Do you know that?" inquired the officer in a lower tone.

"Nay. I know nothing of their movements. It is all of the current report I am speaking to thee. I fear me that a man of peace is likely to suffer double ills between the two armies, for it is also reported that the British and their Hessian companions are also likely to march through this very region." [226]

If the officer had glanced at the old Quaker he would have discovered that there was a very keen expression upon his face as he ventured the last supposition. But as he did not look up it was all lost upon him, and perhaps if he had seen it, he would not have understood its meaning, since his host was ostensibly a man of peace.

"I'm not so sure of that," said the officer quietly. "We've come to look over the land and report to Colonel Simcoe. What makes you think the rebels are near here, and are likely to march this way?"

"I will tell thee truly. The young man whom your companions are pursuing slept last night in my barn. He informed me frankly that Washington was to pass this way"—

"And fall on our army?" broke in the officer eagerly.

"That is the natural inference for thee to draw. It's a sad day for the Friends. They are ground between the upper and the nether millstones, for I understood thee to say that the British also were to come hither." [227]

"You can understand what you please," replied the leader gruffly. "You've given me the information I most desire and Colonel Simcoe would be glad to reward you for it, but being, as you are, a man of peace, of course you wouldn't be willing to take anything from a man whose occupation is blood letting. Hello! here's the guard!" he added, rising abruptly from the table as he spoke. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," replied the guard, "except that our men are returning from the woods."

"And did they catch the young rebel?"

"No, or at least he's not with them now."

All hurriedly left the table and rushed out into the yard, Tom also going with them. The men could be seen returning across the lot, but it was at once evident that the young lieutenant was not with them.

"What's the trouble? How was it that you let the slippery little rebel get away from you?" demanded the leader, as the soldiers once more entered the yard.

"Simply because he could ride faster than we could," replied one of the band in a surly tone. "His horse was fresh and ours had been out all night."

The officer was angry, but, after a few sharp words to his men, he bade them enter the kitchen and get their breakfast. [228]

"Did thee find him?" inquired Nathan.

"No, we didn't find him. I'd chase him right into camp if it wasn't that I must hurry back to the colonel with the word you've given me. You're sure about what you told me?"

"What did I tell thee?" inquired Nathan blandly.

"About the march of the rebels," replied the officer angrily. "I half believe you're in league with them yourself, in spite of all your whining words. If I thought you were I'd leave your body for the crows to pick."

"And is that the method which seemeth to thee to prove thou art right, and that I am no man of peace?"

"Oh, never mind, old man, never mind my words. Perhaps I'm a little too hard with you. This young rebel's getting away from us has put me out of temper. What I want to know is whether you believe what you said about the rebels coming through Cranberry."

"I have given thee the words as they were given me. I am not in the councils of the 'rebels,' as it seemeth good to thee to call them, and cannot say more. It is for thee to judge, not me, who am a man of peace and not familiar with the ways of warlike men." [229]

By this time the men had finished their breakfast, and a hurried consultation followed. The decision at which they arrived was soon apparent when the leader approached Nathan, and, holding forth some silver in his hand, said, "There, take that for the breakfast you've given us."

"I thank thee," replied Nathan, accepting the money.

"Are you going back with us, lad?" said the officer, turning to Tom as he spoke.

"No. You said all you wanted of me was to point out the way to Cranberry."

"So I did, but if this old man speaks the truth,—and I'm inclined to think he does,—you'll be better off with us than you will be to stay behind when the rebels are coming. You'll have a good horse to ride, too; you must not forget that."

"I think I'll stay. I'm not afraid of the rebels, and can find my way all right." Tom's heart was beating rapidly, and the fear that permission for him to remain would not be granted was uppermost in his thoughts.

"Have it your own way, lad, have it your own way. I only spoke what I thought was for your own best good." [230]

He gave a few orders to his men, and in a brief time the band departed, riding swiftly up the road and soon disappearing from sight.

"This was not a bad morning's work, Friend Thomas," said Nathan, when at last the men were gone, jingling the silver in his pocket as he spoke.

"It was a good deal better than I ever expected to have," replied Tom.

Neither of them realized, however, the full consequences, for Nathan's words, in addition to what the officer had already discovered, caused him to return in all haste with the information he had received to Colonel Simcoe. That officer, upon receiving the word, which was corroborated by other discoveries he had made, at once reported to Sir Henry Clinton, and an immediate change in the plans of the British was made. The advance to the Raritan was speedily abandoned, the route to the Highlands was at once chosen, and it was decided that the army should march by the way of Monmouth Court House. The battle of Monmouth, which soon followed, thus became possible, and that, with all its consequences to the struggling patriots, turned upon the information which Colonel Simcoe had received, and which he speedily carried to his commander. [231]

Upon such slight events do those which we sometimes call the greater ones turn. Perhaps as we grow older and wiser we shall come to perceive more clearly the true relation which the so-called little things of life bear to the greater ones. A very wise man once declared that "he who was faithful in the little affairs of life was very greatly faithful." In any event, we have partially learned the lesson that it is a test of true greatness to be able to do little things well, and that the very best evidence of a man's being able to do the greater things is that he is willing to do the smaller ones, as they come to him, faithfully and honestly.

However, neither Nathan nor Tom was moralizing after this fashion when they entered the house after watching the departure of the British soldiers. Tom then related all his recent experiences to Nathan, not omitting the story of Benzeor's misdeeds.

The old Quaker listened attentively, and it was apparent from his frequent expressions of anger that his interest in the success of the Continentals was not entirely banished by his peaceful professions. [232]

"What thee needs now, friend Thomas," he said, when at last the lad's story was ended, "is a good rest. Rachel has a bed ready for thee."

Tom followed his friend to the room upstairs, and soon stretched himself upon the bed. How grateful it seemed to the weary lad! For a moment he gazed at the four high posts, but soon everything was forgotten and he was asleep.

How long he slept he did not know, but he was awakened by Nathan, who called to him and said, "Friend Thomas, there is some one below who desires to see thee."

Tom leaped from the bed and followed the Quaker down the stairs, wondering who it was that wished to see him. There were confused thoughts in his mind of the British officer and Benzeor, but he was not in the least prepared for the sight upon which he looked when he entered the room.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

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### A RARE BEAST

It is necessary now for us to turn and follow some of the movements of that army which Tom Coward was so eager to join.

Sir Henry Clinton fully understood that he had little to gain from an engagement with Washington's army at this time. The Americans were not holding any position which he desired to gain, their stores and equipments were of slight value, and if Washington should be defeated, the result would be that his men would simply be scattered in the surrounding region, where they

would still be free to carry on their straggling methods of warfare, and harass the British by falling upon their baggage trains and shooting at the men as they marched along the country roads.

On the other hand, Clinton's stores were numerous and of no little value. The loss of them would be a serious blow to the redcoats, while the possession of them by the Continentals would put new life into the cause of the poorly equipped patriots. And above all of these things, the danger which now threatened from the approach of a French fleet led the British commander to hasten forward to the defense of New York, which he feared was likely to be the first place to be attacked by the allies of the colonies. [234]

The very motives which caused Sir Henry to wish to avoid an engagement were those which appealed most strongly to Washington to enter into one. He had but little to lose and much to gain. A defeat for the British would mean a weakening of the defense of New York, and the long train of baggage wagons was a most tempting prize. The possession of those stores would replenish the scanty supplies of the Americans; and, as we know, Washington had eagerly pushed his army forward, hoping to gain a position in advance of the British and fall upon them in some advantageous position which he himself could select.

The main body had advanced as far as Hopewell, as we have already learned in the course of this story, but there had halted for a brief time. The weather had been unusually trying, and as a consequence the men were suffering intensely. Even the "oldest inhabitants" had never known such a summer. The thermometer had climbed well up into the nineties and then had stayed there. The frequent thunder showers apparently did not cool the air and afforded no relief, as the sultriness seemed to be increased by each one. The roads had become heavy and well-nigh impassable in places, and when at last the men had marched to the plains of Hopewell, Washington wisely halted to give them their much needed rest. [235]

Another matter led the great commander to remain there for a time. He had now gained a position which offered him a considerable advantage, and he wished to call a council of his officers to consult concerning his further movements.

Accordingly, the second of the councils since the army had departed from Philadelphia was then called, and the one question in the mind of the commander was this: "Will it be advisable to hazard a general engagement?"

General Charles Lee, who was second in command, and was by some even then suspected of being in secret league with Howe, was present, and his voice was soon heard. Lee was a Welshman, brilliant in certain ways, and had seen much service in the armies of Europe. Many had preferred him to Washington as the commander-in-chief of the American armies, and Lee himself was not averse to the idea. He affected to regard Washington with contempt, looking upon him as a man who lacked military training and of but little ability. His jealousy already had been the cause of many serious troubles, and at the present time, in spite of the fact that he had been exchanged for the British general Prescott, captured in a manner not unlike that in which Lee himself had been taken in a previous winter at Morristown, he apparently was unmindful of all the regard bestowed upon him, and was not unwilling to see Washington make some mistakes which would bring upon the leader the anger of his fellows, and perhaps open the way for Lee to gain his position. This view of the case is certainly to be preferred to that which marked him simply as a traitor and in league with the enemy, although in all likelihood both, in a measure, were correct. Probably Washington understood the man thoroughly at the time, and we may be certain that his troubles were not decreased by his knowledge. [236]

Lee was possessed of a strikingly ugly face, and his plain features were the cause of many rude jests among the soldiers who were opposed to him. But whatever his lacks in personal beauty or moral character may have been, he at least had a most persuasive tongue. His eager and impulsive manner, his commonly accredited ability, and his foreign training, which had great influence among many of his ruder and unpolished companions, caused some of the men about him to become ready listeners to what he had to say. [237]

In the council which Washington called at Hopewell, Lee exerted himself to the utmost to oppose the proposition to enter into an engagement with the advancing British. So persuasive were his words that the majority of the officers voted with him that it would not be advisable to detach more than fifteen hundred men from the main body to harass the enemy on their flank and rear, while the remainder of the army should preserve their present position relative to the British, and be governed by circumstances.

Just what Lee's motive was is not fully apparent. Whether he wished to avoid a battle or simply desired to cause Washington to fail in taking advantage of the favorable opportunity, which Lee himself must have seen had presented itself, is not clearly known. It may have been a combination of both wishes. [238]

General Wayne bitterly opposed the proposition of Lee, and generals such as Greene, Lafayette, Steuben, and others, expressed themselves as being decidedly of the opinion that, at the very least, twenty-five hundred men should be detached from the main body and sent forward to carry out Washington's plan.

Lee's motion, however, prevailed; but while Washington seemingly consented to the decision of the council, we can now see, as we look backward, that his own purpose was not changed. Perhaps he was strengthened in his opinion by the words of General Wayne and General Greene,

spoken after the breaking up of the assembly, for we know that they then expressed themselves very freely to their leader.

Apparently yielding to the expressed wishes of the majority, Washington dispatched General Scott with fifteen hundred men "to gall the enemy's left flank and rear," as he expressed it in the letters he wrote that day to General Dickinson and the president of the Continental Congress; and on the following day advanced with his army to Kingston, and halted there on the very day when Tom Coward arrived at the house of Friend Nathan Brown in Cranberry.

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As Tom came down the stairs and entered the room below, his surprise was great when he saw young Lieutenant Gordon standing before him. "Where—where did you come from?" said the astonished boy. "I thought they chased you out into the woods!"

"So they did. So they did," laughed the young officer; "but that doesn't mean that I was bound to stay there, does it? I had spent the night with Friend Nathan here, and I had such a good time I almost decided to come back for another. And then, too, I left a lad here whose face haunted me, he looked so scared and white."

"I was scared," said Tom, "for I thought they'd got you. How in the world did you ever manage to get away from them?"

"Oh, I've learned by experience," replied the lieutenant, laughing. "This was about the closest call I ever had, and once there, when my horse slipped on the barn floor, I thought I was done for; but it's all come out right, you see. When I once got into the woods I knew I was all right, and I didn't have to go very far, either. About noon I thought I'd venture back and see what had become of Friend Nathan and Tom Coward, for I didn't believe those redcoats would stay here very long after they found out that our army is over here by Kingston."

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"Kingston?" said Tom quickly. "Kingston? Why, that's only ten miles from here!"

"Correct, my son; correct. They'll be nearer yet, very soon."

Tom was excited in a moment, and eagerly began to ask many questions. The young lieutenant replied to them all, and then said to the Quaker, who had remained silent during the conversation, "And now, Friend Nathan, you feel sure that those redcoats will carry the word back to Clinton that we've turned out of our way to meet them, do you?"

"Verily, I do," replied Nathan. "It was for the very purpose of learning the plans of Washington that they dared to venture as far as this. I endeavored to learn from the soldier what effect he thought his report would have upon the British leader, but he did not speak in many words. Doubtless he considered them valueless to a man of peace. But thy surmise is correct, I doubt not."

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"Then the sooner we put out of this the better, Tom; that is, if you're still of the same mind you were day before yesterday."

"I'm ready to go," replied Tom eagerly.

The thought of the American army being only ten miles away aroused all his enthusiasm once more. He knew nothing of camp life, and the hardships were not in his thoughts. He knew that he had no place to which he could go, and now that he had left Benzeor's home he felt like an outcast. Besides, he had dreamed of joining the army, and, now that at last the longed-for day had arrived, all his curiosity and eagerness returned in full measure.

"But I haven't any horse and you're mounted," he added. "I don't see how I can go with you. You can't wait for me to trudge along on foot."

"That is something of a poser," replied the lieutenant. "No, it's a fact I can't waste much time on the road with such news as I have to carry back to camp. Perhaps my horse will carry double part of the way."

"I have a beast I might let thee have," said Nathan.

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"That's the way to talk!" said the lieutenant eagerly. "Where is this horse of yours?"

"It is out in the back lot in the woods. My heart was filled with fears of the war men, and I dared not to leave any of my property within their sight."

As Nathan still hesitated, the lieutenant said quickly, "Hurry up, Nathan! Get your horse and let us start. We've no time to lose."

"Thou knowest that I am a man of peace," said the Quaker slowly. "It is not for me to waste my property in this wicked war."

"That's the way the wind blows, is it?" laughed the lieutenant. "Well, I don't know that I can promise you very much, but I'll do what I can for you after I get back to camp. But I'll tell you what, Nathan, you'll not be the loser to give up the horse to us, and with a good grace, too. Both of the armies are likely to pass this way, and you won't have much left on your place, I can tell you. Now, if you give it up you may get something for it, and then, too, you'll have the credit of doing something for your country."

"What did the war men give thee, Friend Thomas? Did I not hear thee say that the war men

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rewarded thee for thy services?"

"Yes," said Tom quickly, drawing the two half joes forth from his pocket as he spoke. "Here they are. You can have them and welcome."

"The beast is not what would be considered a valuable one, Friend Thomas, and yet he is still capable of rendering some service to me. I will take one of thy half joes and leave the other with thee. Then thou canst see that I am suitably repaid after thou hast joined thy comrades in the war."

The young lieutenant slyly winked at Tom as the lad handed the man one of his half joes, and then said, "Hurry up, Nathan! We've got to start soon, and ought to be off now. We'll do the best we can for you, as we said. You're going to give us something to eat, aren't you, before we go?"

"It shall be according to thy desire. Rachel, if thou hast some milk and a small portion of corn bread, set it before these guests whilst I am gone for my beast."

The old man departed, and his wife carried out his request. The lieutenant and Tom at once seated themselves at the table and hastily ate the food she set before them, for neither knew when another opportunity might be found. In the ten miles which lay between them and the army of Washington many adventures might be awaiting them, and it was only the part of wisdom to make the most of the present. [244]

"I have thy beast for thee," said Nathan, soon afterwards entering the room. "He is not what might be called by thee a swift beast, but he is still possessed of some excellent qualities. Thou hast promised to see that I am further rewarded for my gift."

Tom and the lieutenant hastened out of the room to examine Nathan's "gift," and, as they saw the horse which he had tied to the post, they both stopped in surprise and the lieutenant broke into a loud laugh.

"Oh, Friend Nathan," said he, adopting the Quaker's style of speech, "thou art a friend indeed! Dost thou call that thing a 'beast'? Thou hast cheated the lad woefully. A good half joe for that scarecrow? Thou oughtest to reward Thomas for riding him, for I am of the opinion that I shall be compelled to carry him into camp in two pieces if he mounts that 'razorback.' Oh, Nathan, Nathan! Who would have believed it of thee?" [245]

The horse was old and gaunt. A spavin was apparent in one leg, while on another was a great ringbone. One eye betrayed its blindness, and, altogether, the poor animal presented a most woe-begone and helpless appearance.

"He hath not beauty, as I told thee," said Nathan soberly. "But he is of value to me, and thou hast promised to see that I am suitably rewarded."

"Oh, Tom! Tom!" laughed the lieutenant. "What a sight you'll be on the back of that bunch of bones! There's no help for it, though. Come on and we'll see what the poor 'beast' can do!"

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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RELEASE OF BENZEOR

BENZEOR'S plight was a sad one, but as he gazed about him in his helplessness the only face upon which he could discover any traces of sympathy or compassion was that of Little Peter. The lad had had no suspicion of his neighbor, and was ignorant, as we know, of the part which Benzeor had taken in the attack on his father's house. Even now it was difficult for him to believe that Ted had spoken truly. He must have been mistaken, Peter thought, as he recalled the kindness of Sarah and Benzeor's wife in permitting the children to find a shelter in their home.

Perhaps the perplexed lad's face betrayed his feelings, for just at that moment Benzeor looked up and said,—

"There! That boy knows me!" and he pointed at Little Peter as he spoke. "He knows all about me, for he's a neighbor of mine. I tell you there's been a mistake. I'm not the man you're"— [247]

Benzeor's words were suddenly interrupted by Ted, who thrust his head again under the water, and when he lifted him out once more the prisoner was sputtering and gasping for breath.

"Made a mistake, did I?" exclaimed the angry giant. "Well, mebbe I did, but I reckon the biggest one was in not keepin' you under the river all the time. Runnin' round here prowlin' on defenseless women folks and tryin' to steal what little money they've got left! Drownin' 's too good for such as you!" And, unable to restrain himself, the angry man again shook his helpless victim till it seemed as if the little breath Benzeor retained must be driven from his body.

"I—I—I'm telling you the truth," gasped Benzeor when he had recovered sufficiently to be able to speak again. "Won't you help me? Won't you save me from this—this—man?" he pleaded, turning to the men in the whaleboat. "That—that boy there knows me, and he'll tell you I—I—I'm all right. Won't you, Little Peter? Please! Please, tell them!"



"Do you know him?" said the leader to Little Peter.

"Yes," replied the lad quietly.

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"Ye don't know any good of him, do ye?" said Ted, interrupting, and tightening his grasp upon the collar of his victim as he spoke.

"He is a neighbor of mine, as he said. I never knew any bad of him. And his wife and girl are taking care of the children. I know that." Little Peter was perplexed, and his suspicions had been aroused by the discovery of his neighbor in his present predicament, but the recollection of Sarah's kindness moved him to refer to their recent actions, in the hope that he might aid her father.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Ted. "Then his wife takes care of her children, does she? She must be a wonderful woman to do that. Well, let her take care of her brats, and I'll take care of her man, and good care, too!"

As Ted acted as if he were about to renew his attentions, the leader hastily said, "The lad doesn't mean this fellow's children, but his own little brothers and sisters," and in a few words he related the story of the attack on Little Peter's home, and the sad loss which had occurred there.

"Ye don't say so!" said Ted, bestowing a glance of sympathy upon the boy. "That's bad! It is indeed! And ye say this fellow has taken yer little brothers and sisters into his place?"

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"Yes," said Peter eagerly.

"Well, all I can say is that I'd about as soon put a hawk to look after chickens, if it was my doin's."

"Yes," said Benzeor quickly, striving to take advantage of the impression which Little Peter's words had momentarily created. "Yes, the children are all at my house, and being well looked after, too. That doesn't look very much, does it, as if I was a bad man? I tell you there's been a mistake! There's been a mistake! I didn't have anything to do with the attack on this man's place. Help me! Help me!" he hastily cried out, as Ted acted as if he were about to repeat his former actions.

"Hold on a minute, Ted. Perhaps the man's got something more to say," said the leader.

"I am a-holdin' on. Can't ye see that?" replied Ted grimly, once more tightening his grasp upon the unfortunate Benzeor's collar.

"I have got something to say. Something you want to hear, too," said Benzeor eagerly, and appealing to the leader in the whaleboat as he spoke.

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"Say it," said Ted gruffly.

"The British are going to make an attack on the ship down in the bay."

"What's that you say?" said the leader quickly. "Do you mean on the Washington?"

"Yes, yes, that's just what I mean. There are a couple of gunboats off the shore here now, and they're going to land some men and get her back again."

"There are two boats off the shore, Ted. I happen to know that, for this very craft we've got along with us we took from them this afternoon," said the leader. And he briefly related the story of the capture.

"There, ye see I'm right!" said Benzeor, eager to follow up the impression his words and those of the leader had created. "Now if you'll help me out of the clutches of"—

"Keep still, you!" interrupted Ted angrily. "It'll be time enough for you to talk when I let go on ye. I reckon nobody is a-goin' to take you out o' my clutches till I get good and ready to let ye go. Now then, stand up straight and speak yer piece like a little man! How did ye happen to know the British was a-goin' to make an attack on the Washington?"

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"I heard one of the men up by your house say so."

"I thought ye didn't have anything to do with that attack on poor Sallie! She's my wife, I'd have ye know. I thought you was a-sayin' you wasn't there, and all the time I see ye, and chased ye right out o' my yard, clear down to the river! And now ye say ye heard one of the men there tell about the plan the British have on deck to get the Washington back again!"

"I didn't say I wasn't there," pleaded Benzeor. "All I said was that I didn't have anything to do with it, and I didn't."

"Ye"—began Ted, all his anger instantly returning.

"Hold on, Ted! Hold on! Let's hear what the man has to say," exclaimed the leader.

"I'll hold on, never ye fret yerself about that!" replied Ted, still retaining a firm grasp on his victim, but nevertheless abandoning the action he had evidently had in mind.

"I was there, I'm not denying that," pleaded Benzeor; "but I didn't have a gun in my hands, and I didn't touch the rope either. I fell in with the men and they made me go with them. I just

couldn't help myself. And it was while I was there I heard 'em talking about the plan to take the Love—I mean the Washington," he hastily added. "They're going to take her in the morning."

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"You mean they're going to try to take her," said the leader.

"Yes, that's what I mean; they're going to try to take her."

"The reptile may be tellin' the truth," said Ted soberly. "I had some o' the best o' the Washington's cargo myself. Ye know they brought about all that was aboard o' her up to Manasquan, and sold it here, or leastwise Marshal John Stokes sold it for 'em. I happen to know about that, and the vermin here may be tellin' the truth. Sometimes he does it by mistake, I suppose."

A few weeks prior to this time the British ship Love and Unity ran ashore near Tom's River. There were those among the people of the region who wagged their heads and winked slyly whenever they referred to the misfortune of the vessel, for it was a prevailing impression there that the pilot had not been especially favorable to the British, and more by design than by accident had grounded the vessel near the shore.

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Be that as it may, the militia had quickly rallied, and as most of the men were as much at home upon the water as they were upon the land, they seized the unfortunate Love and Unity, and brought her safely into port as a prize.

The cargo was considered a very valuable one, consisting, as it did, chiefly of sugar and various liquors highly prized by the men of those days, and, after being duly advertised, was sold by John Stokes at Manasquan.

The Love and Unity was renamed the Washington, and at this time was lying at anchor near the mouth of Tom's River, within the shelter of Barnegat Bay. As most of the men in the whaleboat, as well as the mighty Ted himself, were familiar with these facts, the words of Benzeor naturally created a far deeper impression than they might otherwise have done.

"I'll tell ye what," said Ted suddenly, turning Benzeor about so that he could look directly into his face as he spoke, "ye seem so well posted I've half a mind to let ye go."

"I'm telling you just exactly what I heard," said Benzeor, his hope of escape instantly increasing. "That's what I heard the men say."

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"And it was in the mornin' when they was goin' to come?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm a-goin' to let you off. Hold on a minit," he added as Benzeor strove to free himself. "I haven't finished yet. I'm thinkin' of lettin' ye go on one condition."

"What's that?" said Benzeor eagerly.

"I'm comin' to that pretty quick. I'm pretty comfortable here, so to speak, and don't appear to be in such a hurry as you." As the two men were still standing in the water, and Benzeor's teeth were chattering from cold or fear, the words of the huge man were perhaps not fully appreciated by his prisoner. "Ye appear to be so happy over yer information—though fer my part I don't see what ye held it back till this time fer—that I'm a-goin' to give ye a treat. I'm a-goin' to let ye go, yes, I am; ye needn't be scart about that. Ye're goin', and I'll tell ye where ye're goin', too. Ye're goin, to join the crew o' this whaleboat and go down and help them defend the Washington against her enemies. That's the condition I'm placin' on ye, and that's what I'm goin' to do with ye."

And the powerful man picked Benzeor up in his arms and placed him in the whaleboat next to Peter, who, we may be sure, had not been an uninterested observer of all that had occurred.

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"There ye be," said Ted, breaking forth into a loud laugh as he saw the dripping Benzeor hastily take his seat and glance apprehensively toward him. "Now, then," he added, turning to the leader, and still remaining in the water, which came well up to his shoulders as he placed his hand on the side of the supply boat, "if ye want me to, I'll take charge o' yer prize. You'll be puttin' straight fer Tom's River, I doubt not, and ye won't want to be bothered by an extra craft. I'll hide her in a good place up the shore, and likely enough I may come down to the bay myself in the night. Ye'll be settin' up a-waitin' fer me, won't ye?" he added, speaking to Benzeor.

As that individual made no reply, Ted again began to converse with the leader of the band, and in a few minutes all the details were arranged. The captured boat was to be left in his charge, and soon the whaleboat started down the river toward the ocean.

The sun had now disappeared from sight, but the approach of night was all the more favorable for the plans of the men. When once they were out on the ocean, they hoisted a sail and sped rapidly down the coast.

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A sail of a little more than twenty miles brought them to Barnegat Inlet, and as they entered the bay it was decided to make use of the oars again. It was almost midnight when at last they saw the Washington at anchor in Tom's River, and their hail was quickly answered.

Little Peter was so thoroughly wearied by the labors of the long day that he was rejoiced to be told that he could turn in for the night. Benzeor was to have a hammock near him, and, tired as

the lad was, he eagerly began to ply the man with questions when they had withdrawn from their fellows.

"Benzeor, I came down here to find out about father. I suppose you know he was taken by Fenton's gang and that my mother was shot?"

"I heard about it."

"It was terrible, Benzeor. I don't know what I should have done if Sarah hadn't taken the children. 'Twas good of her, and of you, too, for you know all about it, I see. I shan't forget it very soon."

As Benzeor made no reply, Peter continued: "I don't know just what to do to find out about father. The pine robbers have their quarters down here, I'm told, and I thought I'd tell Captain Dennis about it and perhaps he would send out a party to search for him. I didn't know just what to make of your being here at first, but I see you have had trouble with them, too. That was mean of Ted to treat you as he did when you said the pine robbers made you go with them. Was it Fenton's band that got hold of you?"

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"Yes; that is, I don't think so. I'm not just sure who they were."

"Couldn't have been Fenton then, for you know him when you see him, I'm sure. Benzeor, don't you think I'd better report the capture of my father to Captain Dennis and ask him if he won't send out a searching party?"

"No," said Benzeor slowly. "I don't think that will do any good."

"Why not? What else can I do?"

"Why, the fact is," said Benzeor, "I heard those men talking about your father, too."

"Did you?" said Peter eagerly, sitting up in his hammock as he spoke. He could not see his companion's face in the darkness, and perhaps it was as well for the troubled lad that he could not, for he would have seen little to comfort him expressed upon it.

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"Yes, I heard 'em. There's no use in your reporting it to Captain Dennis or to any one else."

"Why not? Why not? They haven't shot him, have they?"

"No. He's been sent to New York."

Peter said no more. The thick darkness seemed like that within his own soul. All his efforts had been worse than useless, and the troubled boy knew not what next to do.

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## CHAPTER XX

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### THE FLEET OF BARGES

THE present visit was by no means the first which Little Peter had made to Barnegat Bay and the vicinity of Tom's River. Before the outbreaking of the war he had occasionally gone there with Webberly West, the most noted hunter of deer and wolves in all the region. Great had been the pride of Little Peter when he had returned home with his first deer, some four or five years before this time; and, as he lay in his hammock that night, again and again his thoughts wandered from his present difficulties to the days when he had tramped through the region with the venerable hunter Webberly.

The old man had died just before the war began, but many of his quaint expressions and kindly acts remained in Little Peter's memory. He it was who had taught him how to dig the pits and cover them over with brush, and place the tempting pieces of meat as a decoy for the prowling wolves. Little Peter could never forget the first time success had crowned his efforts, and he had looked down upon the eyes of the wolf which had fallen into the pit. He could feel the thrill of that excitement even now.

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And Webberly had taught him also how to catch the great snapping turtles which abounded in the streams. Sometimes turtles were taken which weighed fully thirty pounds each. What savage creatures they were! and yet the old hunter had handled them as if he had known no fear. A constant war was waged upon these creatures by the settlers for two reasons, one of which was that they were highly valued as an article of food. The captive would be thrown into a barrel and for a few days fed upon the refuse from the tables, to which perhaps at times more substantial food would be added, and then when the turtles had gained the proper degree of plumpness, a feast would be made to which friends and neighbors were not infrequently invited. The eggs of the turtles also were highly valued; and so plentiful were they in the warm sand along the shore that a bushel-basket was frequently filled with them after a brief search. It was true the foxes were as eager as the men to dig out and devour the turtles' eggs, but the supply appeared to be almost inexhaustible and there were more than enough for all.

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Another reason which prompted the settlers to prey upon the huge turtles was the fact that their ducks suffered from the savage creatures. A turtle would seize a duck in his claws and tear

and devour the bird in an incredibly short time. Naturally, the owners of the ducks objected to the methods of the turtles, and a constant warfare was the result.

Peter had occasionally gone down to Barnegat with Indian John also. The Indian always seemed to know just where the clams could be found in greatest abundance, and he knew as well just how they ought to be cooked. He would dig a hole in the sand and then fill it with wood, to which he would set fire. Then the clams would be poured into the place and covered over with seaweed and brush. When a sufficient time had passed, the brush and seaweed would be raked out, and the cooked clams were considered as a great luxury. This custom of the Indians was bequeathed to the whites, and their method of cooking the clams remains in some portions of the land until this day.

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Between the thoughts of his own troubles and his recollections of former visits to the place in which he then was, not much sleep came to Little Peter that night. The knowledge that his father had been sent to New York—for the troubled lad did not think of doubting Benzeor's words—and the prospect of an attack upon the Washington on the following morning were both sources of deep anxiety to the sadly troubled boy. Only four men were on board when the whaleboat had returned; and while the addition of the ten men she brought, or eleven if Benzeor was to be included in the list of the Washington's defenders, materially increased her strength, still, the prospect of a strong defense was not very bright, and if the truth was known Little Peter was not the only one on board who passed a sleepless night.

In addition to all this, the lad was sorely troubled as to his own future movements. With his father a prisoner in New York and the children quartered for the present at Benzeor's, Little Peter could not determine what was best for him to do. To go to the city and seek to aid his father there would be worse than useless now; nor was he able to provide for his younger brothers and sisters. The problem had not been solved when at last he fell into a troubled sleep, from which he was awakened by the sound of men moving about on deck.

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Hastily arising, and noting that Benzeor already was astir, he soon made his way up to his companions. The sun was well up in the eastern sky, and the men were preparing for such a defense as might be made against any attempt to retake the boat.

Little Peter found that the most of the men did not believe that any such attempt would be made; and the suspicion with which they regarded Benzeor increased the feeling of sympathy which the lad felt for him, for to him it seemed as if his neighbor had been most unjustly treated, not only by the powerful Ted, but by the men of the whaleboat as well. He thought he had abundant cause for believing in Benzeor's honesty, for had he not received his own little brothers and sisters into his home? Surely, a man who would do that could not be bad, and his indignation against his recent companions increased as he noticed their ill-concealed dislike for his neighbor.

The men all had breakfast on board; and while a constant watch was maintained, nothing as yet had been seen to arouse their suspicion that an attack was likely to be made. Even Little Peter was beginning to think that either Benzeor had been mistaken or that the British had changed their plans, and that nothing would be done that morning. He was about to approach the leader and explain to him the necessity for his own departure, when he was startled by a cry from the watch.

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Looking out over the bay, Little Peter could see a number of barges approaching. Startled by the sight, he counted the boats until he could distinctly make out eight of them. Doubtless there were eight or ten men in each boat, and altogether there must be at least seventy in the approaching party.

The excitement on board the Washington at once became intense. The men stood together on the deck watching the little fleet on the bay. The only means by which they could defend themselves were their muskets, and it was soon discovered that these would not avail much against the enemy, for with the aid of a glass it was discovered that in the bow of one of the approaching boats a small cannon had been mounted.

A hurried consultation was held by the men on board, to which neither Little Peter nor Benzeor was invited; the former because he was considered too young to be of much account, and the latter because no one trusted him.

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"They'll get this craft now," said Benzeor, approaching the place where the lad was standing. "Perhaps these fellows will believe me another time."

There was a tone of exultation in Benzeor's voice that startled Little Peter, and turning quickly about he said, "You did speak truly, Benzeor. I wish I were out of this. We stand no chance at all."

"You needn't be alarmed. There won't be any fighting done. You took my part yesterday, and I'll not see you suffer now. I'll fix you out all right."

"You'll fix me out? I don't see what you can do. We ought to leave the ship this minute. I don't see what we're waiting for." Little Peter spoke anxiously and was at no pains to conceal the alarm he felt.

"I hope they won't run," said Benzeor quietly. His air of confidence was confusing; but as yet Little Peter was not suspicious of his neighbor.

"They don't act as if they were going to," said the lad quickly, as the assembly of the men broke

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up and all began to rush about the deck.

"Come, my lad! come!" said the leader. "Lend a hand here! And you, too," he added to Benzeor; "bestir yourself."

Benzeor's face fell, but he was in no position to refuse to obey. Such defenses as the Washington possessed were rolled together behind the rail, and it was at once evident that the men were not planning to give up the ship without a struggle.

The long whaleboat was placed in readiness to receive them, in case flight became necessary, and then the men waited for the approach of the attacking party.

The boats came steadily on, keeping well together. Little Peter found himself sharing in the excitement, but as the outlines of the men became more distinct his fears increased. What could be done against so many, for it was now seen that there were more men in the barges than at first had been estimated. The boats were spread out in a semicircle, but they were all converging toward the Washington, and plainly would begin the attack together. There were more of those small cannon also than at first had been seen; and as the boats came nearer and nearer, it was discovered that a man was standing near each and ready to fire at the word of command. [267]

The faces of the men on board the Washington were all pale now, and not a word had been spoken for several minutes. Each man was intent upon the movements of the men in the barges, and did not turn away from the sight before him. Benzeor was the sole exception, and Little Peter could not understand the meaning of the half exultant smile upon his face. For himself, he was too badly frightened to speak, and the evident fear manifested by his companions did not tend to allay his own.

The waters in the mouth of the river spread out almost as smooth as glass. The rays of the morning sun were reflected from the surface of the water and made it sparkle like silver. The occasional call of some seabird or the flight of the low flying gulls were all that broke in upon the silence, but no one heeded them. It was that slow moving but steadily approaching fleet of barges that held the attention of all.

Little Peter wondered why the command to shoot was not given, for the boats were all within range now. His own hands were trembling in his excitement, but he was eager to act. At one moment he longed to leap overboard and try to swim to the shore, and then again he would feel as if he must do something to check the approach of those men in the barges. [268]

Not a word had yet been spoken, however. The oars of the approaching men could now be distinctly seen as they rose and fell together. Steadily on and on came the little fleet, and now could not be more than two hundred yards away. Why did not the men on board do something? He felt that the time for action had come, but all were standing silent and motionless, apparently fascinated by the sight before them. The smile on Benzeor's face was almost mocking, and Little Peter saw him look from the fleet to the men on board, almost as if he were exulting in their predicament. What could it all mean? Why was not something done? Surely the time for action had come, but still no one spoke.

A hail now came from the approaching fleet, and the man who evidently was in command stood up in his place. He was still too far away for his words to be heard, and again the barges, which had halted for a moment, resumed their approach and with an increased speed. [269]

"Men," suddenly called the leader of those on board the Washington, in a low voice, "we must get out of this! We're outnumbered seven or eight to one, and it would be just murder for us to stay here. Man the whaleboat, and we'll put out for the shore."

The hopelessness of any defense was so apparent that the men instantly responded and made a rush for the whaleboat, which had been made ready for just such an emergency. In a moment the men were on board and had grasped their oars preparatory to starting for the shore, when Little Peter suddenly noticed that Benzeor was not with them.

"Hold on! Hold on a minute!" he called. "Benzeor isn't here!"

The leader, who had remained on deck to be the last to leave, turned quickly at the words and discovered Benzeor striving to conceal himself among the defenses which had been piled together against the rail.

"Here, you!" he shouted. "Come out of that and get aboard! Be quick about it! I'll wing you if you don't," he added, raising his gun as he spoke, noticing that his call was not likely to be heeded. [270]

Benzeor quickly responded, and sullenly took his place on board the whaleboat; but the men were all too intent upon their escape to bestow much attention upon him.

In a moment the leader leaped on board and gave the order to give way. The long whaleboat darted swiftly forward as the men began to pull desperately at their oars. They needed no encouragement now, for, with their departure from the Washington, their only hope of safety lay in a quick passage to the shore, which lay about a hundred yards away.

A shout from the men in the barges greeted the appearance of the whaleboat as it shot out into sight, but the hail was not heeded. One of the small cannon was discharged, and from one of the barges came a volley; but only one man was hit, and the whaleboat rapidly increased its speed.

The shore was near now, and the desperate men were putting forth all their strength. The barges did not pursue, for the sailors were intent upon gaining the ship first of all. In a few moments the whaleboat grounded, and the men leaped out and started quickly for the woods which grew close to the shore.

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Little Peter was in the rear, and as he turned back to see what would be done by the other party, he was astonished to see Benzeor turn quickly and start at full speed for the whaleboat again. In a moment he had leaped on board, and, seizing one of the oars, with a strong push sent the boat far out upon the river.

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## CHAPTER XXI

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### THE RIDE WITH THE LIEUTENANT

TOM COWARD followed young Lieutenant Gordon as he led the way to the post to which Friend Nathan had tied the steed, and then stopped and for a moment gazed ruefully at the beast. His friend's good-natured laugh broke forth again as he beheld Tom's evident hesitancy about mounting to the back of the animal; and surely to a boy who had been accustomed to ride the colts in Benzeor's pastures without saddle or bridle, and dash about the lots in sheer delight at the antics and efforts of the unbroken steeds to dislodge their rider, there was not much to inspire or impress him in the sight of the broken-winded beast which Nathan had provided. Even the horse himself appeared to be conscious of his degradation, and stood motionless and with hanging head, as if he, too, would protest against any warlike efforts on his part.

"I've only one request to make, Nathan," said the lieutenant. "I'm sure you will not object to it, but I think I'd better make it before we start."

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"What is thy request?" said the Quaker.

"If General Washington once sees that horse, he'll want it for himself. You'll not object, will you, to his use of it?"

"Nay. I think not that George Washington will care for this beast of mine," protested Nathan soberly, and apparently not suspecting that the young officer was poking fun at him. "Still, he may be able to make him of some use. Thee will not forget to see that I am suitably rewarded?"

"Never fear as to that, though I doubt not my friend Tom here will be of the opinion that you ought to pay him handsomely for the pain he will suffer after he has ridden your beast a few miles. That is, if the horse can go as far as that."

"Thy heart may rest easy as to that. He may limp when he first starts, but as soon as his joints are warmed he will do thy service."

"We'll warm his joints, then," laughed the lieutenant. "You might be warming him up now, Tom," he added, turning to his companion, "while I'm getting my horse ready. He's in the barn, and I'll join you in a minute or two."

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In a brief time the officer returned, but his steed was showing the evidences of his recent hard work, and Nathan's eyes twinkled with satisfaction at the sight, for his own horse, perhaps, might not then be at such a disadvantage, and the prospect of a "suitable" reward became more promising.

The young men quickly mounted, and, after thanking their host in a substantial manner for his hospitality, started down the long lane which led to the road beyond. Tom's horse limped painfully and caused no little delight to young Gordon, who again and again laughed aloud and offered all manner of suggestions to the lad concerning the impression he would create when the army should discover his approach.

At times Tom thought of dismounting and, turning the horse loose in the road, strive to make his own way on foot; but the creaking joints of the poor beast seemed to find relief with action, and the young riders had not gone far on their way before, to the surprise of both, Nathan's steed was proving his ability to keep up with the lieutenant's horse, which evidently had been overridden and was in no condition for a hard ride.

But, with the discovery of the service which Tom's horse might render, all the disposition to regard their journey lightly departed from the riders, and the serious nature of their undertaking rendered both of them silent. The American army could not be far distant now, but between them and it all the dangers had not disappeared. The visit of the British band at the home of Nathan Brown had indicated that other parties might be in the region on similar errands; but Tom was not thinking of these possibilities so much as was the young officer who was riding by his side.

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Tom's meditations were mostly concerning the American army. For months his strongest desire had been to join it, and now that the time had come when his desires were likely to be satisfied, he discovered that much of his eagerness was gone. Not that he had any thought of turning back, but the proximity of the two armies clearly indicated that a meeting between the forces was not improbable, and Tom's thoughts were largely of that. The glamour was all gone now, and the serious nature of his undertaking was uppermost in his mind. The silence also of his

companion did not tend to allay his fears, but the lad did not refer to them, and was doing his utmost to make his horse keep up the pace at which he was going.

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"Whew! This is a warm morning! Let's give our horses a drink and a rest," said the lieutenant at last, as he turned into a little brook that crossed the road.

Tom followed his example, and the dripping horses thrust their heads deep into the water. The sun had now appeared and the beams fell full on their faces. The air was motionless, and even at that early hour was in places quivering under the heat of the summer sun. The very birds were silent, while high overhead the heavens were like brass. On the horizon masses of dark clouds were piled, and a low, deep rumble startled both the young riders.

"Was that a cannon, or was it thunder?" inquired Tom quickly.

"Thunder. We may hear the cannon before long, though."

"Why don't we start on, then? The sooner we gain the army the better. We don't want to be caught in here between them." Tom spoke anxiously, and his fear was as apparent in the expression upon his face as in his words.

"We've got to give our horses a bit of a rest. Mine has been going hard all night, and yours won't be able to go far in such heat as this. We'll have to be careful of their strength, or we shall be worse off than we are now."

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"Have you been out all night? What have you been doing?"

"Finding out what Clinton is up to. When I was talking with Nathan I knew all the time more about it than he did."

"Did you find out?" said Tom eagerly. "What are the redcoats doing now?"

"Pretty much the same thing they've been doing right along. They're making a change in the direction they're going, unless I'm greatly mistaken. And then, too, they've done something else which doesn't promise very well."

"What's that?"

"They've drawn all their stronger forces into the rear guard and sent on the Hessians with the baggage train in front, for one thing."

"Why do you suppose they have done that?"

"Oh, they've an idea, I fancy, that we're going to try to take their supplies. They'll find out, though, that we're after men more than we are after their baggage wagons. However, that explains the change in the direction of their march, if I'm not greatly mistaken. They've put the Hessians in front and the best men behind."

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"I wish they had left the Dutch butchers there!" said Tom impulsively. "I hate the Hessians. I hate the very name and sight of them! Think of it! A lot of men just hired to come over here and shoot and kill and steal! I wish they had been left where they were, that is, if General Washington is ready for them!"

"I think you'll find him ready when the time comes," remarked the lieutenant quietly. "But about the Hessians. I don't like them any better than you do, but somehow I can't bring myself to feel about it as some of the men do. I can't see that they're to be blamed for being brought over here, or even being engaged in such work as they're doing; and I know more about that than you do, too. The ones who are the worst are not those who have come over here, but those who have sent them. Just think of a petty little prince, or king, being able to hire out a lot of his own subjects to pay off his own debts with! These men feel just the same as you or I would, I have thought. They have wives and mothers and children, and yet they have to leave them all and come over here and be marks for our bullets, whether they want to be or not. They just haven't anything to say about it. They're told to come and come they must, though there won't be so many to go back as came over, I'm thinking. At least, I'm going to do all I can to thin out their ranks, though I feel sorry for the poor fellows all of the time."

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This was a new way of looking at the hated "Dutch butchers," at least it was entirely new to Tom Coward. He had heard only the expressions of rage among the colonists which their coming had aroused, and their strange words and brutal acts had never received much mercy in the judgment which he had heard passed upon them by his acquaintances.

The anger of the patriots, perhaps, was but natural; but the employment of the Hessians has not furnished the only instance in history where the first and most apparent view has not always been the most correct one. Indeed, it frequently happens that the troubles between men, to say nothing of boys, arises from a misunderstanding; and it is the part of wisdom, as well as of justice, to look below the surface and try to discover the true conditions.

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"Then the British are to be blamed, if what you say is true," said Tom, after a brief silence. "They are the ones at the bottom of it all."

"Yes, the British are the ones who are most to be blamed. But even there, Tom, if I'm correctly informed, it's the leaders and not the people. The way I understand it is that the rank and file of the common people in England are opposed to this war, and would put a stop to it in a moment if

they could."

"If they could?" repeated Tom. "I don't understand what you mean."

"Just what I say. The very best people in England have, from the very beginning of this war, been opposed to the taxes, the use of the Indians, and the hiring of these Hessians. It's the king and Lord North and a few others of the pig-headed fellows who are doing it all. Tom, my father and my mother both came from England. As far back as I can remember they have told me stories of our old home and of the friends we have over there. Why, do you know it's been the dream of my life to go over there some day, and meet some of my cousins and see the place where my father and mother were born."

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"I didn't know you were a tory," said Tom slowly.

"Tory? I haven't a drop of tory blood in my veins, and hope I never shall have."

"But—but—you talk like one."

"Is it tory talk for me to say I don't blame the Hessians for coming over here, but those who hired them and sent them? Is it tory talk for me to say I love to think of the place where my father and mother were born, and that I should be glad to look into the faces of those who bear the same name I do, and who have some of the same kind of blood in their veins? Is it tory talk for me to say that I'm proud of what Old England has done, or rather of many things she has done, from the days of William the Conqueror until now? And that belongs to me as much as it does to them, for my own grandfather was one of the bravest men in the whole British army! This war is like one between brothers, and it's all the more wicked on that account. And it's worse yet, because the most of the Englishmen are not in favor of it at all."

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"I don't just see why you don't fight with the redcoats, instead of against them, then."

"Because this is my home and this is my country, and because the king and his court aren't fit to govern cannibals, to say nothing of men. No, sir, it's just because I do believe in all I've said that I'm fighting for my country and shall till the war is ended—which I hope will be soon!"

"And would you shoot a redcoat or a Dutch butcher?"

"Every time! It was a sad thing that the war had to come, but as come it did, it would be sadder still not to do everything in our power now to carry it through. I'm sorry for the Hessians, but I'd shoot every one of them if I could do it. I'm sorry for the redcoats, and I know they are not to be blamed, or at least some of them are not, but I'd mow them down now, every one of them, as I'd cut the grass in haying-time. Fight? Why, my lad, I'm in this war from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot! And I wouldn't stop till the redcoats cry 'enough,' or we drive them right into the Atlantic ocean, the way Parson Tennent used to tell about the pigs in Gadara being chased by the devils right into the sea. Not that I think the ones who are doing the chasing are in any way connected with the swine drivers in the parson's story," he added, laughing lightly as he spoke. "But we must be going. Our horses are rested now, and we'll be running into a thunder-storm before we see the Continentals, if we don't look out."

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The ride was quickly resumed, but Tom Coward was silent and sadly puzzled to account for his friend's words. Apparently, he was enthusiastic in his devotion to the cause of the patriots, but he had never heard any one talk in that manner before. His friends and neighbors were all hard and bitter, and the bitterness seemed to increase as the war continued. But here was his friend, fighting with all the devotion of his heart, and yet not blaming the very men he was trying hard to conquer for the part they were taking in the war.

It seemed to him all strange, and while he was deeply impressed by many of the words of the enthusiastic young lieutenant, his own feelings were of a very decidedly different character. For a half hour they rode forward as swiftly as their steeds could carry them, but the heavy clouds had meanwhile been climbing higher in the heavens, and the mutterings of the thunder had now become deeper and heavier.

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"We'll put into that barn ahead there, and wait for the storm to pass," said the lieutenant, pointing as he spoke to a rude barn by the roadside.

As the rain was now falling, Tom was glad to follow the advice, and in a few moments they approached the open door. They had not dismounted when a strangely clad being stepped forth from the barn and shouted:—

"Halt, will yez? I'll be after havin' yez give an account of yerselves, that I will."

Tom glanced up in fear and surprise, and the sight before him did not tend to allay his alarm. The soldier presented a gun, but was its bearer a man or woman? A long petticoat certainly looked like the garb of a woman, but the soldier also was clad in an artilleryman's coat, while a cocked hat and feathers crowned the head of the strange being.

Tall, broad-shouldered, and with a voice that was gruff and deep, the strangely clad soldier bore but slight resemblance to a woman, though the dress certainly seemed to proclaim the sex of the speaker.

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The rain was now falling in torrents and Tom was drenched in a moment; but in the brief silence which followed the demand of the soldier, he could not determine what course his



## CHAPTER XXII

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### A SOLDIER WOMAN

"WHY, Molly, you aren't going to keep us out here in the rain, are you?"

Tom looked up in surprise as he heard the young lieutenant's words; and while his fears were somewhat relieved by the assurance that his companion evidently had recognized the peculiar being before them, his confusion was not diminished by the reply which the strangely clad woman quickly made.

"Sure, and it's me bye! It's me beautiful bye! Come in, me darlint! What for should ye be standin' out there in the storm?"

The two dripping young soldiers speedily accepted the invitation, and entered the barn, leading their horses with them. To their surprise they now discovered that several men were also in the building, and that other horses were stalled in the barn.

The appearance of Tom's horse was greeted by a shout of delight, and the person whom Lieutenant Gordon had addressed as "Molly" approached, and, after critically examining the poor beast for a moment, said:—

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"And where in the world did ye be after findin' that? It's a pity, it is indade, to be after compellin' such poor bastes as that to be fightin' the Dootch butchers! Sure, and it's the surgeon the poor thing is after needin'."

Molly's hair was of a bright red color, her face was covered with freckles, which were like great blotches upon the skin, and her eyes were so faded as to be almost colorless; but her expression was so evidently one of good nature that Tom was compelled to join in the laugh which her words raised among the half dozen men who quickly assembled to pass judgment upon the steed which had been led into the barn.

"Oh, that's something we bought back here to carry my friend as far as the army."

"It's lucky, it is, that ye haven't very far to go, thin," laughed Molly.

"Perhaps you're right, Molly," replied the lieutenant. "How far back is the army now?"

"About a mile, I'm thinkin'."

"What? What's that you say? Only a mile from here?"

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"That's what I'm tellin' yez. The army's been marchin' in the night; but this rain will be after compellin' it to halt right in—in Gooseberry, as I'm told they call it."

"Cranberry," laughed the lieutenant.

"Cranberry or Gooseberry is all one and the same thing to me. Now, me bye, ye'll be after wantin' some breakfast, I'm thinkin'. Jest say the word and I'll be fixin' ye out, and have a bit left over for yer poor baste, which doesn't look as if he'd been livin' any too high of late."

"No, no, Molly," protested the lieutenant quickly, and, as Tom thought, with an eagerness he could not understand. "We're not hungry, for we had some breakfast before we started this morning. We did indeed," he added, as he noted the woman's apparent unbelief. "We're not hungry, but it's kind of you to think of us, and we thank you just the same as if you had fed us."

In the course of the conversation between the young lieutenant and the men in the barn, Tom learned that the main body of the army was now less than a mile away. The little band had been one of the advance parties, and the storm had compelled them to seek the shelter of the barn by the roadside.

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Meanwhile, the rain continued to fall, and long after the thunder ceased the storm showed no signs of abating. The water almost covered the road and penetrated the roof of the barn, which was far from being in a good state of repair. The heavy downpour, however, did not seem to cool the air, and the men and horses were in a sad plight. Just why they should have sought the shelter, which virtually was no shelter at all, Tom could not understand; but he asked no questions, and busied himself in listening to the conversation of the men, and watching the intrepid Molly, who to all appearances was not aware of the fact that she was not as much of a true soldier as any of the men.

After a half hour had passed the lieutenant approached the boy, who was standing before the open door, looking out upon the storm.

"Who is she? What is she?" inquired Tom, indicating by a glance of his eyes the strange woman whom his friend had addressed as "Molly."

"She? Oh, she's the wife of one of the cannoneers. She's been in the army for a long time. She's

"I didn't know there were women in the army."

"Oh yes, there have always been some. Why, even on that expedition of Arnold's to Quebec there were several women who marched all the way with their husbands, and they say they stood the long tramps and the cold better than a good many of the men did."

"Why did you call this woman 'Molly'? Is that her name?"

"Oh, in the army, or at least in this army, the women have been the ones to bring us water on the warm days, and so we call each one Molly 'Pitcher.' They've been kept busy during this hot spell, too. This woman's name I believe is really Molly, though,—Molly McCauley. Then you didn't expect to see women with their husbands in the army?" laughed the lieutenant, as he noticed that Tom was regarding Mistress McCauley curiously.

"No, I didn't. I don't think I like it."

"You'll find all sorts and kinds of people in the ranks. Some of the women have been worth more than the men. There was one up at Fort Clinton. She was very much such a looking woman as Captain Molly here, only she was a good deal more careless. They used to call her 'Dirty Kate,' because she wasn't always very neat in her personal appearance. But she was brave as a lion, and such a fighter! Why, she fired the last cannon at the British, as they came scrambling over the ramparts, which happened to be about the same time our men were leaving. Well, Kate's husband was a cannoneer, just as Molly's here is, and he was holding the match in his hand ready to fire the gun when he saw the redcoats coming, and the sight suddenly reminded him that he had some work to do outside the fort which demanded his immediate attention. Well, Kate just picked up the match her husband had dropped, touched off the cannon, and then scampered away after the men. She was a brave woman, and so is Captain Molly, here. She'd do as well as Kate did, if she had the chance, and perhaps she will before the end comes. I shouldn't want to have her fight me, I can tell you!"<sup>[2]</sup>

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Tom turned and looked again at the woman. She stood talking with her husband now, and her strange garb served to intensify her peculiarities. Her great size and evident strength were plainly to be seen, but her face beamed with good nature, and her enjoyment of the life she was living was indicated by her every word and action.

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Tom thought of Sarah, and the contrast between her gentleness and the rough appearance and masculine manners of Captain Molly aroused within him a feeling which was not altogether in favor of the soldier woman. It is true that the name of Sarah is unknown to-day, while that of Captain Molly Pitcher is recorded in all our school histories; but, after all, notoriety may not be the most valuable quality in life, and while the names of many men and women who lived quiet, faithful, honest lives may have been forgotten by their descendants, they may not have been of the less value to the world because of that fact. A good name is sometimes better than a notorious one, and an honest man, though he may be soon forgotten, may be greater than a dishonest man whose name is frequently mentioned. Few of us would desire to be like Benedict Arnold, although his name is a very familiar one to all.

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"I don't see any use in staying here," said Tom at last. "It's wet inside the barn, and it can't be much worse outside. Why don't we start on?"

Now that he was so near to the American army, the lad was eager to go forward. All his dreams and visions of the forces which were fighting against the redcoats came back to him, and his impatience to proceed increased each moment. Perhaps the sight and presence of Captain Molly, as well as the account the young lieutenant had given of her, had created a still greater desire in Tom's heart to quit the place; but, be that as it may, he was ready to go, and apparently his companion shared in his feeling.

"If you think your horse will stand up for a mile, we might do as you say," replied the lieutenant. "I think we'll be going on," he added, turning to the men as he spoke. "I've some important information to give the general, and as I don't see any signs of the rain stopping, I think we ought not to delay longer. We can't be much worse off than we are now."

"Sure, and ye'll not be after goin' out in such a storm as this!" protested Molly. "It would be a shame to take that poor baste out into the rain now. He has all he can do to stand up in the barn, to say nothin' of havin' to be carryin' a load. It's the last drop that'll be after breakin' of his back, yez know."

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The men all laughed at the woman's words, but the lieutenant was not to be deterred, and accordingly the horses were brought forth and the two men speedily mounted. Tom's horse was limping painfully when he started, and as the lad glanced backward he could see Captain Molly standing in the doorway, her hands resting upon her hips, and her broad, freckled face beaming with delight over the sorry spectacle he was well aware that he presented.

A feeling of disgust arose in his heart as he watched her. Surely she must be lacking in all the qualities which he had most honored in the women he knew. Coarseness was in place of delicacy, boldness instead of modesty, and her entire bearing was such that Tom never afterwards could hear her name mentioned without expressing his disgust. Not even the bravery of the deed which Captain Molly Pitcher did not many hours after this time, and which Tom Coward himself witnessed, entirely banished the prejudice which he entertained against the coarse, good-

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natured, manly, unwomanly woman.

The storm had ceased when, after a short ride, Tom and his companion first came within sight of the American army. All the long pent-up hopes of the lad were now about to be fulfilled, and for the first time in his life he was to look upon the men whose names and deeds had long been familiar to him. His eagerness brought a smile to his companion's face, but while he watched the lad he did not speak.

Molly Pitcher had spoken truly, and the American army had halted after a brief march from Kingston in the preceding night, and now were compelled to remain during the entire day in Cranberry. Only the advance corps had moved forward, and at that time were holding a position on the road to Monmouth Court House and within five miles of the rear of the British.

In spite of his own excitement, and that which was apparent among the men in the camp when Tom and the lieutenant entered, the lad's first feeling was one of keen disappointment. Were these the men of whom he had heard so much and from whom so much was expected? Mud-stained, worn by their recent exertions, plainly showing the effects of the intense heat, many of them without uniforms, some hatless and coatless, to the vision of Tom Coward they presented far more the appearance of a mob than of the orderly and well-trained soldiers he had expected to see. [296]

The young lieutenant had left him as soon as they entered the camp, leading the two horses away with him,—a fact over which Tom did not long lament, we may be sure. An hour passed before the young officer returned, for he was to make a report of all that he had learned, and Tom's hopes were not strengthened as he watched the men about him during his companion's absence.

Lieutenant Gordon noticed the expression upon Tom's face when he rejoined him, but, attributing it to the fear which he supposed the lad felt, he did not refer to it, and in the labors which soon followed no opportunity to explain was given by either.

General Dickinson, with the New Jersey militia, was not with the main body, as we already know, and Tom found that he could not be assigned to them. Through the lieutenant's influence, he was to be retained with the main body, and to assist in serving as a guide for the army, an office which Tom was well fitted to hold, although it was not just in accord with the plans he had formed in his own mind. [297]

Reports came into the camp during the day which clearly indicated that the advance corps was too far away to be properly supported at once in the present condition of the roads. But on Saturday morning Lafayette, with his troops, was ordered to file off by his left towards Englishtown, and in the same day the main body, under General Washington, marched out from Cranberry and encamped within three miles of the place.

This brought the two opposing armies now within eight miles of each other, while General Lee's forces, five thousand strong, without Morgan's dragoons or the New Jersey militia, were three miles nearer the British.

Such was the condition of affairs on that night of Saturday, June 27 (1778), and Tom Coward, as well as many of the men in Washington's army, slept but little, with the knowledge that on the morrow the long delayed battle would doubtless be begun.

**FOOTNOTE:**

[2] In many of our histories the "Captain Molly" of Monmouth has been confounded with "Dirty Kate" of Fort Clinton. They were, however, two women,—not one. Lossing, in the first edition of his *Field Book of the American Revolution*, referred to them as if they were identical, but the correction was to have been made for his second edition, and was in type, but through an oversight was omitted.

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**CHAPTER XXIII**

**AN INTERRUPTED JOURNEY**

THE surprise of Little Peter at the unexpected action of Benzoor was increased when the escaping man seated himself in the whaleboat and quickly began to row the long craft back toward the Washington.

"Hurrah for the redcoats! Hurrah for King George! Hurrah for the British!" shouted Benzoor defiantly.

This boldness was as surprising to Peter as the sudden departure had been; but, as he glanced toward the Washington and saw that the attacking party had already boarded her, and then realized that he himself had been left alone by his recent companions, he was quickly recalled to the necessity of action on his own part. Without waiting to observe the further movements of Benzoor or the British, he instantly turned and entered the woods; but a quarter of an hour had

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elapsed before he overtook the men, whom he found resting by the side of the road which led past the home of Ted Wilson.

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To this house the entire party now made their way, and as Ted listened to the story of Benzeor's perfidy, his anger broke forth afresh.

"I never ought to have let the rascal go!" exclaimed Ted excitedly. "I had him right there in the river, and if you hadn't interfered with me I'd have fixed him so that he never would have betrayed any one again. Now the rascal's where he can keep up his evil doings."

"He's shown where he stands, any way. That's some comfort," said one of the men.

"It may comfort you, but it doesn't me," replied Ted. "I'm a peaceable man, I am, and I never cared much about whether it was to be the King of England or the Continental Congress that ruled over me. I don't see as it would make very much difference to me, for my part. But when that rascal hangs my Sallie up on the limb of a tree,—Sallie's my wife, ye know,—why, then Benzeor Osburn has jest got to look out for himself."

Ted's anger was so evident that Little Peter almost had a feeling of sympathy for Benzeor, angry as he himself was at the treachery his neighbor had displayed.

"Are you going to follow him up, Ted?" inquired the leader.

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"Am I goin' to follow him? That's just what I'm going to do! I'm goin' to send Sallie and the babies over to your house, and I'm just goin' to leave my place here,—they can't steal that, any way,—and follow up Benzeor Osburn till I find him. I don't care if he runs clear to the other side of the Alleghany Mountains,—I've heard as how there was some mountains by that name away out west somewhere,—why, Benzeor'll wake up some fine mornin' and find himself a-shakin' hands with me. Yes, sir, this land o' ours may put up with the Hessians, but it isn't big enough to hold such a fellow as Benzeor! Hangin' Sallies! I'll put a stop to his fine work! Sallie's my wife, ye know!"

"Remember us to him when you meet him, Ted," said the leader. "You can charge him for the loss of the Washington, too!"

"His door will be free of all chalk scores when I'm done with him," said Ted savagely. "That's goin' to be my work, clearin' the land of pine robbers, just as I once cleared it of pine stumps!"

"We must start on now," said the leader. "Take your wife and children up to my house, Ted. The women can fight together against the pine robbers, if they come there."

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"They won't come there," replied Ted. "There'll be fewer of 'em when I've done my duty. There'll be no more hangin' Sallies. Sallie's my wife, ye know."

"I suspected as much from your words," said the leader. "Are you going with us?" he added, turning, as he spoke, to Little Peter.

"No," replied the lad.

"What are you going to do now? You can't get your father out of the New York prisons. You'd better come with us."

"I can't. I've other work to do."

"Have it your own way, my lad, though I think you're making a mistake not to come with us."

The band soon departed, leaving Little Peter and the huge Ted behind them. There was slight likelihood that the men who had captured the Washington would venture on shore to pursue the fugitives, and the knowledge of this fact had made all the parties feel comparatively safe.

"What are you goin' to do now?" said Ted, when he and Little Peter were left alone.

"I'm going straight to Benzeor's house. After what I have just seen, I'm afraid to leave the children there another minute. I never would have thought Benzeor was a traitor, never! But he is, there's no doubt about it now! I don't know what will become of them. I don't know where to turn, or what to do."

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Little Peter then went on to relate the story of the sad loss which had occurred in his home, Ted listening meanwhile with intense interest.

"It's Benzeor's work!" he said excitedly when the lad at last stopped. "Yes, sir! You mark my words, Benzeor Osburn was at the bottom of it all. You'll have to go in with me and help rid the land of him! The rascal! Goin' round hangin' Sallies and shootin' mothers!"

"I've all I want to do to look after my little brothers and sisters," said Little Peter quietly. "I don't know what I can do with them, but I can't leave them at Benzeor's!"

"No more you can't," said Ted. "I'll tell you what to do with 'em. Jest bring 'em all down here and leave 'em with Sallie over at the captain's. I think they'll be safe enough there."

"Thank you; but it's most too far to bring them, I'm afraid. It's a good twenty miles from here, and we haven't a horse left."

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"I wish I could let ye have one, but all of mine are gone too, except one little mule; and you'd

have to turn him round and make him go backward if you wanted to go anywhere, he's such an obstinate little beast. I'll tell you what I'll do, Peter! Just as soon as I've taken Sallie—she's my wife, ye know—and the babies over to the captain's, I'll go with ye and help ye out. That's what I'll do for ye."

"Thank you again," replied Peter, "but I don't think you had better do it. You may be needed around here, and I don't know yet what I shall do."

"Maybe you're right, Peter, maybe you're right. Well, have it your own way. When are you goin' to start?"

"Right away."

Little Peter at once bade his friend good-by and started forth on his long walk. He had appreciated the offer of the mighty Ted, but there were many reasons why he wished to be alone, for a time at least. Benzeor's treachery was still so fresh in his mind that he knew not what to do, and the excitement attending the escape from the Washington had not yet disappeared. Then, too, he did not know what the angry giant might be moved to do. Ordinarily good-natured and easy-going as the powerful man was, when once his wrath was aroused there would be no limits to what it might lead him into. And Little Peter's heart was too heavy, under the burden of his recent sorrows and present perplexities, to permit the lad to be drawn aside from the task which had presented itself to him. [304]

He had gone about half the way down the long lane which led from Ted's house to the road, when he heard some one calling to him. Looking quickly behind him, he discovered Ted himself running rapidly down the path toward him.

Startled by the sight and fearful that some new danger had appeared, he stopped, and then turned back to meet the man.

"What is it? What is it?" he called.

Ted stopped as the lad called, and, shaking one of his great fists in the air, replied, "Hangin' Sallies! Hangin' Sallies!"

"What? Have they tried it again?"

"No! Once was enough, I should think, when Sallie's my wife, ye know! I just wanted to remind ye what the password was. It's 'Hangin' Sallies,' that's what it is! Ye won't forget it, will ye?" [305]

"No," replied Peter soberly. "I'll try to keep it in mind."

"That's right! See that ye do! Hangin' Sallies, that's the word. I jest wanted to remind ye of it, that was all. Hangin' Sallies! Hangin' Sallies!"

Little Peter resumed his journey, but, until he passed around the bend in the road, whenever he looked behind him he could see the mighty Ted standing in the lane, and shaking his fist in the air if he perceived that the lad beheld him.

What a strange man Ted was, thought Little Peter as he walked on. He had known him for years, as had most of the people in Old Monmouth. His feats in the country wrestling matches had made him famous, and marvelous were the tales told concerning his almost superhuman strength. It had been related that Ted one time had lifted a great ox bodily from the ground, and Little Peter had believed the report. And yet, with it all, Ted had always seemed to him like a boy. Kind-hearted, ever willing to grant a favor or do anything within his power for another, he had never before seen him when his wrath was kindled. "Hanging Sallies!" Perhaps Ted's feelings were only natural when he had discovered the pine robbers in their cruel act. Benzeor would not be likely to escape from his hands so easily, if the angry man once held him in his grasp again. [306]

But Sallie Wilson was still alive, and the lad thought Ted's position was far better than his own. His mother shot by the pine robbers, his father sent away a prisoner, perhaps to die of starvation in those dreadful prison ships of which so many stories already had been told, and his younger brothers and sisters homeless and helpless, and all looking to him as their sole support. What could he do? Surely no one in Old Monmouth had suffered more than he, although Old Monmouth itself had known more of the evils of war than almost any other portion of our land in all that fearful struggle of the American Revolution.

"How?"

Little Peter's meditations were suddenly interrupted by Indian John, who stepped forth into the road and greeted him with his customary salutation.

"Where did you come from, John? I thought you were up in Moluss's wigwam."

"Moluss gone, Bath gone, John gone, too. Come to help friend. Find fader?" he suddenly added, peering keenly, as he spoke, into Little Peter's face. [307]

"No; my father has been sent to New York."

"Bad. What boy do now?"

"I'm going back to Benzeor's to look after the children."

The Indian's eyes betrayed the question he might have asked, but did not. Indian John soon induced his companion to abandon the road and follow him through the forests. Many a mile was saved in this manner, and, under the burning heat of the sun, the shade of the great trees was most grateful to the sadly troubled lad. There was something in the presence of the majestic trees which seemed to appeal to Little Peter. He was alone and yet not alone with such companions. Indian John also seemed to share in his feelings, and seldom spoke. For mile after mile they continued on their journey, and the shadows were lengthening when at last they stepped forth into the road, which Peter recognized, and then knew that Benzeor's house was not far away. The long journey would soon be ended now, and fresh hope came to the weary lad, as he thought that he would see the children again.

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What he should do with them, however, was a problem still unsolved, and the solution apparently was no nearer than when he had set forth on his journey from the home of Ted Wilson. With all of the anger which had come with the discovery of Benzeor's treachery, Little Peter could not bring himself to believe that either Sarah or her mother had any knowledge of his evil deeds. His confidence in them was still unbroken, and his sole hope was that they might be able to suggest some plan by which the children could be cared for. As for leaving them at Benzeor's, that was impossible; and as the lad thought again of the discovery of his neighbor's crimes, he quickened his pace, and he and his companion began to walk more rapidly along the hot and dusty road. Not more than two miles remained between them and the end of their journey, and, in his eagerness, Little Peter almost forgot his weariness and constantly urged the Indian by his side to increase their speed.

They had been in the road but a few minutes when they heard the sound of horsemen approaching from behind them. All unsuspecting of danger, Little Peter and Indian John halted, waiting for the men to pass. There were five of them in the band, and all were riding swiftly. Their horses were dripping, and with almost every step flung the foam from their mouths. Surely something must be wrong, to induce men to ride like that upon such a warm day, thought Little Peter; but his surmises were quickly driven from his mind when he recognized Fenton and Benzeor in advance of the band.

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Startled by the unexpected sight, he hardly knew what to do. The men were too near for him to hope to escape their notice now; and, even while he hesitated, he saw Benzeor quickly draw the rein on the horse he was riding and leap to the ground.

"Get him! Shoot him! Stop that boy!" shouted Benzeor.

Indian John had been keenly watching the approaching band, and as he heard the shout of the angry man, he touched Peter upon the arm, and said, "Come."

Little Peter instantly responded, and followed his companion as he started swiftly across the open lot toward the woods which lay beyond it.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

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### THE ABODE OF INDIAN JOHN

THE pursuit of Little Peter and Indian John was not long continued, nor was a single gun discharged; a fact for which the frightened lad was unable to account at the time, although on the following morning the cause for it was made clear.

Wearied though the lad was by his long journey, the shout of Benzeor had provided an impulse sufficiently strong to compel him to keep up with his companion, who was running swiftly toward the shelter of the woods which were not far away.

In a brief time the breathless fugitives gained its shelter, and then for the first time turned and glanced behind them. The men had turned back and now could be seen still standing by the roadside, near the place where Peter and the Indian had started across the lot. What they were doing could not be discovered; but, without waiting for further investigations, the flight was at once resumed, and, keeping well together, the lad and his companion ran swiftly forward, and soon the distance between them and the pine robbers had been still further increased.

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The sunlight had now departed from the forest, and the dusk had settled over all. The air was close and oppressive, and Peter's dripping face betrayed the force of his recent exertions and the excitement under which he was laboring. Already the night birds had made their appearance, and here and there among the branches of the lofty trees the bats could be seen darting about in quest of their evening meal. The very silence served to increase the feeling of utter loneliness which swept over the weary, heartbroken lad, and for a moment it almost seemed to him as if any further efforts on his part were as useless as they were difficult. Benzeor's anger promised little good for the children who had been left in his home, and fears for his little brothers and sisters were mingled in Little Peter's mind with the consciousness of his own weariness and the thought of his own forlorn condition.

Difficult as the problem doubtless was, he knew he must not give way to it, and when Indian John indicated in a few moments that the time had come when they must go on, the lad resolutely

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again turned to follow him, although he had not the slightest conception of the plan which was in his companion's mind.

Carefully they walked on through the increasing gloom, and within a half hour Little Peter heard the sounds of a running brook in the distance. He instantly recognized the locality, for many a time had he and Tom in the springtime followed the course of the "run," as the people of Old Monmouth called the stream, and the strings of fish which they had brought home with them had borne ample witness to the success which had crowned their efforts.

But none of these things were in Little Peter's mind as he followed Indian John, who had now turned and was proceeding along the bank and making his way up the stream. As they walked on, the sound of a waterfall began to be more and more distinctly heard, and soon they came out into a place from which, in the deepening gloom, the falling waters could be seen. Into the basin which had been formed by the sharp fall of the stream, a tall, large tree had fallen years before this time. Its broken roots had torn up the earth, and now stood like a barrier on the bank, and Indian John led the way directly toward this spot. [313]

As they approached, Peter discovered a hole in the rocks, but he was not prepared for the action of his companion; for, without a word, the Indian dropped upon his hands and knees and crawled into the entrance and speedily disappeared from sight.

Hesitating only a moment, Little Peter soon followed his companion, and after crawling along on his hands and knees for a number of yards, suddenly beheld a large, open space directly before him. Indian John had provided a light by this time, for he had been willing to follow the customs of his more civilized neighbors to the extent of making use of candles, and as Peter arose and glanced about him, he knew at once that he was in the cave which it was reported was the abode of the red man.

Frequently as the lad had passed the very place into which he had crawled that night, it had never occurred to him that it was anything more than a hole in the rocks that formed the bank of the "run," and his surprise was therefore the greater at the sight before him. The spot was considerably above the bed of the stream, and consequently was comparatively dry. Straw and dry leaves lay scattered about over the floor, and the sheltered place apparently was safe from all approach or danger. [314]

Indian John at once indicated to his companion that he was to pass the night there, and the weary lad was glad to accept the invitation, and soon stretched himself upon the bed of straw. The light of the candle was extinguished, and the Indian then speedily followed the example of Peter. The sounds of the running brook came faintly to the ears of the troubled lad, but that was all he could hear. The darkness was intense, and for a time the fear of other occupants of various kinds prevented Peter from sleeping, but at last even that was forgotten in the dreamless sleep that followed.

When he awoke, Little Peter at first could not determine where he was, but as the outlines of the cave were seen in the dim light which penetrated it, the experiences of the preceding day were recalled, and he quickly arose. Indian John was not in the cave, however, and as the lad now was aware that the morning had come, he hastily crawled through the passageway that led to the bank. [315]

As he regained the bank, he saw that his companion was busily engaged in roasting some birds he had shot. The sight was a welcome one, for Peter was now aware of the fact that he was decidedly hungry, and, following his companion's advice, he departed in search of some berries to add to the morning meal. In the course of a half hour he returned with his hat well filled, and, after bathing his hands and face in the cool waters of the brook, prepared at once to join his companion.

For a few minutes neither spoke, but the rapid manner in which the roasted birds disappeared showed that conversation was not uppermost in their minds.

At last, when several of the birds had been eaten, and many of the berries had disappeared, Indian John turned to his companion and said, "Boy want 'hop-hop' now? Plenty 'hop-hop.' Make um good."

"No, no," replied Peter quickly. "The birds are enough. Where did you get them, John?"

"Shoot um. Plenty birds; plenty 'hop-hop.'"

"You must have been up early this morning, John. I didn't hear you." [316]

The Indian made no reply and remained silent for several minutes. Then, turning abruptly and looking keenly at Peter, he said, "What boy do now?"

"I don't know," replied Little Peter disconsolately.

The words brought him face to face again with the problem that must be solved. The fresh cool air of the morning, the silence of the forest, and, above all, the enjoyment of the breakfast which John had provided, made him at first wish that he might remain there and forget all the troubles that were so near. But Peter was not a selfish lad, and knew that the motherless children must be provided for.

"I was going to Benzeor's," he said after a time, "but I don't know what to do now. I can't

understand what he meant by coming back here in broad daylight after what has happened. He knows that I know all about it, and that was the reason why he wanted to catch me last night. I can't go up to his house now, and yet I don't dare leave the children there, either."

"Boy go," said Indian John quietly.

"But I can't go, John. How can I? There were four men with Benzeor, and you heard what he said. It wouldn't be safe for me to go there now. I don't know what to do."

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"Boy go; Benzeor no there."

"Benzeor not there? How do you know? What makes you think that, John?"

"John been there."

"When? This morning?"

The Indian nodded his head, and then said, "Man no there. Girl there. Two, t'ree little Peters there. Boy go. All safe."

"You don't mean it?" said Peter eagerly, and standing erect as he spoke. "Come on, then, John; we'll start this minute."

"Boy go; Indian no go."

"Why not? I thought you were going with me."

"John no go. John no home, no papoose, no notin'. All white man now. All gone. Indian no stay. Boy go."

"All right, John; I won't urge you. But if you're right, and Benzeor isn't at home, you needn't be afraid."

The Indian's eyes snapped at the words, but he made no reply, and Little Peter was too eager to start now to realize the force of his own words. As he departed, he saw his recent companion standing on the bank of the brook in an attitude as if he were listening to sounds far off in the forest. Perhaps if the lad had realized that it was the last time he would ever behold the face of Indian John, he would have lingered longer; but, as it was, his desire to go to Benzeor's house and learn of the present condition of the children banished all other thoughts from his mind, and in a few moments he had started toward the road.

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He retraced his way across the open lot, and as he came within sight of the road he suddenly stopped, as he saw a mounted man there. Apparently the man was alone, and what was strange was the fact that he apparently was not moving.

Little Peter waited several minutes, but as the man still retained his position, and no one joined him, he resolved to proceed. Approaching cautiously, and ready to run at the first appearance of danger, his surprise was increased as he beheld the strange manner in which the horseman was seated on his beast. Instead of sitting with his face toward the head of his steed, his position was exactly reversed, and to all appearances he either was going in a direction opposite to that of his horse or else was riding backward.

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Puzzled to account for the strange attitude, Peter also noticed as he approached that the beast on which the man was mounted was a mule and had stopped in the middle of the road. In a moment he recognized the man as Ted Wilson, and with a shout he ran forward.

"Why, my lad, what are you doing here?" exclaimed Ted, as he beheld the approaching boy.

"It's more to the point to ask what you are doing here. What are you sitting on that mule that way for? What have you stopped for? Why don't you go ahead?"

"There are several good reasons," replied Ted blandly. "In the first place, if the mule won't go, I can't go. Then, if he stops, I have to stop, too. As to the reason for my being here, why, I'm looking for Benzeor."

"I don't know where you expect to find him," laughed Peter—forgetting his own anxiety for the moment in the ludicrous sight before him.

"Well, I got to thinking of it yesterday after you left me; and when I'd taken Sallie and the babies up to the captain's,—Sallie's my wife, ye know,—I jest made up my mind as how I'd got to look after Benzeor afore he did any more damage. Goin' around the country hangin' Sallies! The rascal! Old Monmouth never'll be safe till Benzeor Osburn has been 'tended to. And if I'm not the man to do it, I don't know who is. So Jeshurun and I decided to start out last night, and we've been travelin' ever since."

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"Jeshurun? I don't see anybody with you," said Peter, glancing quickly about him as he spoke.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Ted. "Ye're lookin' too far afield, young man. This here fellow's Jeshurun. Whoa, Jesh! Whoa!" he suddenly added, as the mule darted to one side and turned several circles in the road before his rider could stop him.

"Yes, sir; this is Jeshurun, and a more onery little beast never lived. I told ye about him yesterday, and how he'd suddenly take it into his head to go backwards for a bit. That's the



reason I ride him this way part of the time. He thinks I want to go the other way, ye see, and that's how I come it over him by jest sittin' the wrong way, too. Besides, a good twist of his tail is worth more than a bridle sometimes. Instead of controllin' him with a bridle, as any decent beast would be glad to have me do, I just have to steer him by twistin' his tail, same's I use the rudder in my boat, ye see. Whoa there, Jesh! Whoa there! What's the matter with ye, anyhow? Whoa! Whoa!"

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These last remarks of Ted were caused by a sudden movement on the part of Jeshurun, whose heels were thrown into the air, while with his teeth he almost literally bit the dust. The mule was small and the feet of his rider almost touched the ground, and the antics of the pair caused Peter to laugh aloud.

"Where did you get that name for him?" he inquired when quiet was restored.

"Oh, it came to him jest natural like. Two years ago when I bought him, and was a-leadin' him home, I got him into the yard and then he just began to make his heels fly like a pair o' drumsticks. It's likely there was some noise made by him or me, I don't jest know which, and the first thing I knew, Sallie—she's my wife, ye know—and a whole lot o' folks came a-runnin' out o' the house to see what all the rumpus was about. They was havin' meetin' in the house, though I didn't know anything about that, or I wouldn't have argued with the mule as I was doin', o' course. Well, sir, if you'd believe it, the parson had been a-preachin' about somebody in the Old Testament. His text was: 'But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness.' Yes, sir; those were his very words. Well, when Sallie—she's my wife, ye know—set eyes on this here beast, she said Jeshurun should be his name, and Jeshurun it's been ever since. Whoa there! Whoa, I say! What ye up to now?"

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Perhaps Jeshurun objected to the story, for he suddenly whirled about and started swiftly up the road. In vain Ted tried to restrain him, but after his attempts failed, he turned and shouted, "I'll see you farther on! Jesh'll get tired o' this."

As Jeshurun and his rider disappeared in a cloud of dust, Little Peter quickly recovered from his surprise and started briskly after them.

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## CHAPTER XXV

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### THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT FIGHT

THE morning of Sunday, June 28, 1778, dawned clear and warm. Not a cloud could be seen in the sky, and the air was motionless, save in occasional places where it quivered under the burning heat of the summer sun. By eight o'clock the thermometer already had indicated ninety-six degrees, and before the day was done it had risen considerably above a hundred.

The British forces had now arrived within ten or twelve miles of the Heights of Middletown, and if once they should succeed in gaining that position, all attempts on the part of the Americans to attack them would be worse than useless, for it was now as well known by Washington as it was by Clinton that British vessels were lying at anchor off Sandy Hook, ready and waiting to receive the advancing army and its stores on board, and transport all in safety to New York.

Clinton, as we already know, still believed that the Americans were seeking only to capture his stores and train of baggage wagons, and, therefore, wisely had placed them in the care of General Knyphausen and the Hessian soldiers, in advance of the place of danger, as he supposed, and also of the place where the brave leader himself took his stand with his men. All of the British grenadiers, light infantry, and chasseurs of the line were encamped in the strong position that Clinton had selected in the parting of the road which led from Monmouth Court House to Middletown, the right wing extending about a mile and a half beyond the court house itself, while the left lay stretched for three miles along the road from Allentown. Thick woods afforded strong protection to the flanks, while a swamp extended toward the rear and the left, and woods also covered their front. The British general had chosen his place wisely, and there he waited until that eventful Sunday morning.

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General Washington was well aware of all that was going on, and had determined to attack the British the moment they moved from the position they then occupied. Late on Saturday night, the commander had given orders for General Maxwell to send out parties of observation, who were to watch the British and report instantly any signs they might discover of an attempt to retreat during the night, and to keep up a constant communication with himself. General orders had also been given Lee to be prepared to attack Clinton's forces the moment they should depart from their camping-place.

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General Lee's treachery or incompetency, or both, are well known to-day, and the only cause of surprise is that General Washington should have given him such discretionary orders. The great commander must have been fully aware of Lee's true feelings, for already he had suffered much from his jealousy and his traitorous designs; but perhaps the rest of the army did not know what Washington himself well knew, and on the eve of battle he chose the lesser of the two evils, and thought he would suffer less by permitting Lee to continue to act, than he would from the

misunderstanding and confusion that might arise if he dealt with the man at that time as he justly deserved. At all events, his orders were somewhat general, and the fact that he had not given specific commands is all that remains to-day to be quoted in favor of the guilty Lee.

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It was about five o'clock in the morning when a messenger arrived in Washington's camp from General Dickinson—who, with the New Jersey militia, was nearest the enemy's lines—with the information that the front of the British line had begun its march toward the Heights of Middletown. Instantly Washington's army was put in motion, and one of his aids was sent in all haste to inform General Lee of the movement of the British, and to urge him forward to attack them at once unless some very strong obstacle should be found, and to assure him that the main body of the American army would be rushed forward to his support.

I am very certain that if my readers could somehow have been privileged to witness the march of Washington's soldiers, they would not have been greatly impressed by the sight. Many of them were without uniforms, and their flushed and streaming faces under the burning heat, while they bore an expression of determination, after all would not have been very prepossessing in their appearance. Numbers of the Continentals had either cast aside their coats or rolled them up and strapped them across their backs, so that entire ranks appeared to be marching to battle in their shirt-sleeves. However, although their personal bearing was not made more forceful by the absence of coats, their personal comfort was decidedly improved; and, as we shall soon see, their work in the battle was not hindered by their lack of bright colored uniforms.

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Meanwhile, the advanced corps under General Lee had moved from Englishtown, and was now advancing toward the British. The redcoats were also in motion, and the left wing had marched more than a mile beyond Monmouth Court House when it discovered that the American columns had out-flanked it on the north. Lee's forces had marched along the main road, successfully crossing the deep ravines and causeways. They had halted frequently to receive reports from the scouts and the men in advance as to the movements of the British, but these reports apparently were somewhat contradictory and created some confusion among the American ranks.

One of these halts had been made near the "new church," which was so called to distinguish it from the smaller structure, which until 1752 had stood upon the same site. This "new church" was of wood, its sides covered with shingles, and painted white. There such famous preachers as Whitefield, the missionary Brainerd, Tennent, and others had given their messages of peace, but it can be safely asserted that in all its long history the "old" church or the "new" had never seen such a "service" as that which was held there on that Sunday morning in June, 1778. Before the day was done bullet marks and the effect of cannon shot were apparent on its walls, and while the roof and even the steeple were said to have been covered with people on that day, who had assembled to watch the battle, probably no other congregation in all our land had ever been gathered by such summons, or had taken their seats on the roof of the building instead of in the accustomed place within the walls.

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Young General Lafayette, who had command of Lee's right, soon passed the Court House, and was advancing upon the other end of the British line on the south at the same time when the left wing was folding about Cornwallis on the north; and General Wayne, who was in command of the American centre, was also pressing strongly forward. Apparently, all things were favoring the rugged Continentals, and had it not been for Lee's cowardice or treachery, or both, they would have won the battle there and then, before Washington could come with the aid of his advancing troops.

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Some slight minor engagements had already occurred, though not one of them was of much importance; but now General Wayne discovered that most of the British forces before him had descended from the high ground they had occupied and were advancing along the same route, over the plains of Monmouth, which the Hessians had followed when they departed earlier in the morning.

Instantly the impetuous Wayne sent a messenger to General Lee requesting permission for his own "troops to be pressed on." No such permission was given, however, until it was discovered that a band of eight or nine hundred of the redcoats had halted, and, turning about, appeared to be inviting an attack. General Wayne was then ordered to take about four hundred men and advance.

Despite the smallness of the number, Wayne eagerly obeyed, when the Queen's light dragoons were sent back by Clinton to check the movement.

So excited was the little band of Americans that they instantly formed, and drove the horsemen back upon a body of foot soldiers who had been sent to their aid. A much larger body of troops were soon discovered to be moving upon General Wayne's right, but he immediately opened fire upon them with the two pieces of artillery he possessed, sent back for reinforcements, and gallantly prepared for the battle.

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During this time General Lee apparently was trying to cut off the force with which Wayne was engaged by making a detour and falling upon the line of Clinton's march between the rear of the main body and that detachment.

This action of Lee's, together with those which three of the others of the divisions of the American forces were making at the same time, led Clinton to suppose that his baggage train was what the Americans were striving to gain. As we already know, this, all the time, had been his understanding of the purpose of Washington, and now the action and movements of the various

bodies of troops strengthened his suspicion.

The first thing the British commander did was to send the Queen's light dragoons against Wayne. Then he sent a detachment from the men in advance to strengthen his own right, and next he arranged for the main body, of which Lord Cornwallis was in command, to form on the plain and prepare to attack General Lee and the various divisions which were under him at the time.

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General Wayne and his brave men were now fighting desperately, and to all appearances success was about to crown his efforts, when he was dumfounded by an order he received from Lee to make only a feigned attack, and not to press too hard against the redcoats in front of him.

Wayne did not know what to make of the order. He was chagrined and angry to receive such a word at a time when all things seemed to favor his determined band. It is said that he made use of some very forceful language, and even expressed his opinion of his superior officer in no very complimentary terms; but he was too good a soldier not to obey; and, although he could not understand what Lee meant by giving him such directions at such a time, he held back his men, hoping all the time that Lee himself would come up and grasp the victory which almost seemed to be in his hand.

General Lee had been watching the movements of the British, and perceived what Clinton was trying to do by the actions to which we already have referred. Instead of meeting them boldly, and permitting his soldiers, who were all now eager for the battle, to advance, he at once prepared to withdraw them from the field.

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Young Lafayette had just discovered a body of British cavalry advancing toward Lee's right, and, quickly riding up to his commander, he begged for permission to advance and gain their rear, and so cut them off from the main body.

"Sir," replied Lee, "you do not know British soldiers. We cannot stand against them. We shall certainly be driven back at first, and we must be cautious."

"It may be so, general," said Lafayette quietly, "but British soldiers have been beaten, and they may be again. At any rate I am disposed to make the trial."

Reluctantly Lee yielded, so far as to permit the brave young marquis to wheel his column by the right and make an attempt to gain the left of the British, but at the same time he ordered three regiments to be withdrawn from Wayne's command, thereby weakening him for reasons which neither Wayne nor any one of his men ever understood.

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General Lee then rode off to reconnoitre, as he afterwards declared, and to his astonishment discovered another large body of British soldiers marching back on the Middletown road toward the Court House. If there was one thing more than another which Lee apparently disliked at that time, it was the sight and presence of men clad in scarlet coats, and he instantly gave orders for the several corps in his division to retreat, or to make a "retrograde movement," as he afterwards explained it.

His friends claimed for him, and, indeed, Lee afterwards claimed for himself, that he had only ordered the right to fall back, and had commanded the left, under Scott and Maxwell, to advance, and his order was misunderstood; and that when Maxwell's men perceived the retreat of their comrades on the left, they thought all was ended and they must save themselves. But, at all events, proof of the truthfulness of his statement was wanting, and all his men were soon retreating toward the "new meeting-house," on the roof and steeple of which were assembled the people of the congregation.

Few of the men beside Lee himself knew why the retreat was made. The soldiers were angry and were giving vent to their feelings in terms which had not been carefully selected. General Wayne's men were the only ones who had even fired a shot, and the anger of Wayne himself was steadily increasing. Every soldier felt as if he were being robbed of success, which by right belonged to him and to his country.

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Between the "meeting-house" and the parsonage, General Washington, all unaware of Lee's disgraceful actions and the retreat of the advanced division, met a fifer, who appeared to be in great haste to leave the region.

Reining in his horse, the great commander ordered the fleeing man to halt, and then said sternly:—

"Who are you? Do you belong to the army? Why are you running in this fashion?"

"I am a soldier," replied the trembling man, "but all the Continentals are running, too."

"It isn't true! It can't be true! I'll have you whipped if you dare to mention such a thing to another living man!" cried the astonished commander.

Nevertheless, he put the spurs to his horse, and in a few minutes discovered two or three other men, who apparently were in as great haste to depart as the fifer had been.

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Instantly the trembling men halted at his sharp command, and again the excited general demanded an explanation of their actions.

## CHAPTER XXVI

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### THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH

EVIDENTLY, the reply which General Washington received from the men, who were as greatly frightened by the bearing of the commander as they had been by the sight of the redcoats, did not convince him that they had spoken truly. He had not heard any firing, except that of a few cannon a considerable time before this, and he could not believe that the picked men under Lee's command had ingloriously retreated without making even an attempt to stand against the forces of Sir Henry Clinton.

This second report, however, caused Washington to send forward two of his trusty officers, whom he ordered to ride swiftly in the direction of the Court House, and, after they should have discovered the true condition of affairs, to report instantly to him.

As the two brave men quickly obeyed and started their horses into a run, they met on the bridge the members of a regiment in a disorderly retreat. A little farther on another regiment was discovered, and soon still another appeared in sight.

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Colonel Ogden, who was in command of the last, in a towering passion declared, in reply to the question of the officers, that Lee's men were indeed retreating and that "they were flying from a shadow."

Still hoping that they would find that a stand had been made farther back, the two officers pushed eagerly forward and soon met General Maxwell and his men. That gallant officer was also in a state of great anger, and not only confirmed the report that Lee was retreating, but also added some words of his own, expressing his opinion of that officer and of the movement in words that would have caused the cheeks of the treacherous general to tingle, if he had chanced to hear them.

Still hoping against hope, the two aids pressed forward and soon met General Lee himself. His face at all times was decidedly plain, and indeed, as we know, he had the reputation of having the "ugliest face in America;" but at this time a scowl rested upon it which doubtless did not tend to increase his beauty, and he sullenly refused to reply to the questions of the men.

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The two officers did not long delay to talk to him, but still urged their horses swiftly forward, although the straggling, disorderly troops now almost filled the road, and their worst fears were confirmed each moment.

At last, in the post of danger and nearest to the pursuing British, the two officers discovered General Wayne and his men. "Mad Anthony" was certainly "mad" at that time, and while he assured the aids that the retreat was genuine and general, at the same time he declared that it was absolutely needless. He also declared that "Lee had drawn off his best men at the very time when he was facing a body of British far superior to himself in numbers, but that even then the redcoats could be beaten if a stand were made against them."

There was no time for an extended conversation, but, doubtless, the two officers understood what the exceedingly vigorous language of Mad Anthony Wayne was intended to convey, and after receiving the suggestions he sent by them to General Washington, and assured now that they had discovered the worst, they put spurs to their horses and rode swiftly back to give the information they had received to the great commander.

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Meanwhile, General Washington himself had not been idle, we may be well assured. Riding swiftly forward, he met band after band of the retreating, disorderly Continentals, and heard many expressions of anger and disgust, very like to that which had already greeted the two officers he had sent forward.

At last, in the rear of the retreating column, he met General Wayne and his angry men. Hastily summoning Mad Anthony and two or three of his officers, the great leader told them that he "should depend upon them that day to give the enemy a check," and quickly directed General Wayne to form his men, and, with their two pieces of artillery, strive to stop the progress of the redcoats.

It was just at this moment that General Lee himself rode up, and the scene which followed was one which those who witnessed it never forgot. There is no more sublime sight in all this world than the towering passion of a great man. Not pettiness, not irritability, but the just and righteous anger of a noble, large-hearted man in the presence of wickedness.

General Washington probably never before in all his life had been so angry as he was at that time. Thoughts of the cause of the country he loved, the lives of thousands of brave and devoted patriots, the sight of angry, desperate men all about him, the disappointment at the loss of what he had confidently counted upon, the loss also of that for which so many noble men had been sacrificing and toiling through many weary days and on their long marches, rushed upon him like a flood. And before him stood the guilty man who alone was to be blamed for it all. Small wonder is it that Washington was almost beside himself with rage and sorrow.

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The name of Benedict Arnold is one that is hated to-day by every American schoolboy, for, after

all, most boys can be trusted to hate evil in whatever form it presents itself. But the treachery of Benedict Arnold had at least the merit of being unmasked and comparatively open, for he took his stand boldly on the side of the redcoats, whom he at one time had fought with a bravery none can ever forget. But the memory of Charles Lee has not even that redeeming quality, for his actions on the field of Monmouth can only be explained on the ground of treachery or cowardice, and a coward is not very greatly to be preferred to a traitor. If both Lee and Arnold had fallen in battle, how much better it would have been for them and their friends, for "a good name is to be preferred above great riches," and they left neither. Perhaps the strange desire which Lee later expressed in his will, that his "body should not be interred in any church or churchyard, or within a mile of any Presbyterian or Baptist church," was not entirely out of keeping with the man himself.

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The conversation between Washington and Lee at the time they met on the retreat at Monmouth has been variously reported; but doubtless the fact that those who heard it were as excited as the generals themselves may in part account for the differences in the reports which have come down to us. We may be sure the conversation was not extended to the length which some have said it was, or that it savored largely of the high-flown expressions which have been quoted.

One of the men who was present is reported to have said that Washington in his sternest manner looked at Lee, and demanded, "What is the meaning of all this, sir?"

Dismayed by the terrible appearance of the commander-in-chief, and mortified that he should be so addressed in the presence of his soldiers, the crestfallen general could only stammer, "Sir? sir?"

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Again the enraged commander demanded the meaning of the retreat, and Lee attempted to explain. His orders, he said, had been misunderstood, his officers had not obeyed his commands, he had not thought it wise to attempt to make a stand against the British with his detachment; but the angry Washington would not stay to listen to the lame attempts at explanation, and muttering something about a "poltroon," he hastened back to the high ground between the meeting-house and the bridge, where he quickly formed the regiments which were waiting there.

Apparently thinking better of his words, he then rode back to General Lee and inquired whether he still desired to retain the command on that height or not. "If you will," he added, "I will return to the main body and have it formed on the next height."

As Lee accepted the offer, Washington said: "I expect you will take proper means for checking the enemy."

"Your orders shall be obeyed," replied Lee, "and I shall not be the first to leave the ground."

Meanwhile, the British general Clinton had also been busy. He had ordered back many of the troops which the Hessian general Knyphausen commanded, and was making vigorous attempts to compel the Americans to keep up the retreat, which Lee had ordered with such disastrous results.

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The forces under Mad Anthony had rallied at the call of their leader, and were bravely holding their position near the parsonage. The British grenadiers climbed over the fence which crossed the lot in front of Wayne, but were quickly driven back by the angry Continentals.

Again the determined British advanced, and again were driven back. Then their brave leader, Colonel Monckton, placing himself at their head, and calling upon his men to follow him, led the charge. But Mad Anthony and his men were waiting for them, and under their terrible fire the brave colonel and many of his men went down as the grass falls before the scythe of the mower. Desperate was the struggle then for the body of the fallen leader. Hand to hand, clubbing their muskets, using their bayonets any way, every way, the men fought on; but the band of sturdy Americans held both the body and the place, and as the British fell back it was not to attack Mad Anthony's men again during that day.

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Sir Henry Clinton then moved the main body of his troops against the left of the Americans, where General (Lord) Stirling was in command, but the batteries were so well handled that there also the redcoats were repulsed.

Then they turned toward the American right; but that sturdy blacksmith from Rhode Island, Nathanael Greene, was there, and no better success crowned their desperate and determined efforts. And Mad Anthony and his men had rushed to the assistance of their comrades. When his men perceived the nature of the work which was expected of them, they prepared for the action after their own peculiar manner. As we already know, many of them had cast aside their coats when they entered the battle, but now some of them stopped and deliberately rolled up their shirt sleeves. A shout greeted the men, when their action was perceived, and in a moment their companions had followed their example. Then, with cheers and calls, the unsoldierly appearing soldiers rushed into the fray, and so vigorous was their work that soon the redcoats were compelled to retreat behind the defile, where the first stand had been made in the beginning of the battle.

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There they felt secure. On either side lay heavy swamps and thick woods, while in front of them was a narrow pass, through which the Americans must go if they continued the attack.

And that was just what General Washington determined to do. Carefully he arranged for

divisions to move upon the right and upon the left, while the artillery was to be brought up and pour its terrible fire directly into the front of the position the British had taken.

The men responded with a will, but before the detachments could gain the desired position the night had come, and darkness spread over the field, wrapping friend and foe alike within its folds. Although the eager Americans could not then advance, they resolved to pass the night in the positions they then held, which were very near to the lines of the British, and renew the attack as soon as the light of the morning came.

Guards were established, and then the entire army prepared for the night. The exhausted men threw themselves upon the ground, many of them lying at full length with their arms spread wide and their faces resting directly upon the sand. Seldom have men been more completely worn out than were those hardy soldiers on that day of the battle of Monmouth. Many had fallen, and when their friends examined their bodies for the marks of the fatal bullets not a scratch could be found. [346]

The beams of the summer sun had accomplished what, in many instances, the bullets of the enemy had failed to do. All day long the sun had hung in the heavens like a great red ball of fire. Steadily the heat had risen higher and higher, until it had arrived at a point which even the "oldest inhabitants" could not exaggerate in their stories. The tongues of some of the men had swelled so that speech became impossible. The poor Hessians, condemned to wear their heavy fur hats, left many a lifeless body behind them which the heat had conquered before the desperate Americans could accomplish the same result.

For hours that night not a sign of life appeared in the American camp. Motionless as logs the exhausted soldiers lay stretched upon the ground, and the sounds of their deep breathing were all that could be heard. They had not stopped even to bury their dead, so little life did the living men apparently retain. [347]

Great was the astonishment in the American camp when the first faint streaks of the dawn appeared on the following morning, and it was discovered that not a soldier remained in the British camp. Sir Henry Clinton had permitted his weary men to rest until ten o'clock, and then, in silence, preparations were made to join the forces of General Knyphausen, who, meanwhile, had marched on and gone into camp at Nut Swamp, near the Heights of Middletown.

The British soldiers hastily had collected their wounded, leaving only forty of the poor fellows behind them, and then under the light of the moon began their march to the position which Knyphausen was holding. So wearied were the American soldiers, so heavy was their slumber, and so silent were all the movements of Clinton's men, that their departure was not discovered before the morning came, and by that time the redcoats were with the Hessians and safe from all danger of an attack.

General Washington considered a further pursuit as "impracticable and fruitless," and greatly to the chagrin of his army no attempt was made to push forward. The great battle of Monmouth had been fought. The soldiers hastily prepared to bury their dead, and so hurried were their movements that one man afterwards declared he had seen the bodies of thirteen men cast into one shallow pit which had been dug in the sand. Yet the Continentals were neither brutal nor indifferent. A British army was near them, and desperate haste was considered necessary. [348]

The results of the battle, its effect upon the redcoats and buffcoats, and those who wore no coats at all, and the parts which Tom Coward and certain other of our acquaintances had taken in the struggle, we must reserve for another chapter.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE RETURN TO BENZEOR'S HOUSE

THERE were several motives in the mind of Little Peter which made him eager to overtake Ted and the fat and kicking Jeshurun, not the least of which was the sense of protection he felt in the presence of the powerful man. Boyish as Ted was in many ways, his great size and wonderful physical strength made him a companion to be desired in the midst of such dangers as the troubled lad was compelled to face in those sad times in Old Monmouth.

Accordingly, Little Peter ran eagerly forward, hoping to overtake Ted before he should arrive at Benzeor's house, which now was not more than two miles away. Long before he came within sight of the place, he discovered Ted and his steed in advance of him, and from their motionless attitude he quickly concluded that Jeshurun had been seized with another attack of obstinacy.

His surmise proved to be correct, and as he came nearer he beheld Ted seated by the roadside holding Jeshurun's bridle in his hand, and apparently waiting patiently for the time when the little beast should decide to continue his journey. [350]

"I'm glad to see you, lad," remarked Ted, as Little Peter approached. "I left you rather suddenly back there, but when Jesh makes up his mind to start, it's time for me to go, too, and I can't always stop to say good-by to my friends. It's easier than walkin', though, but I wish I knew some way to fix the little rascal. I've been thinkin' as how, if Jeshurun kicked when he waxed fat, it might be that if he waxed thin, the kickin' would go, too, along with the fatness. I say, Little

Peter, I want to ask ye a question."

"All right, Ted, go ahead," replied Little Peter, as he fanned his dripping face with his hat and took a seat beside his companion.

"In your opinion," said Ted soberly, "is the oyster a wild animal, or a tame one?"

"What?"

"Is the oyster a wild animal or a tame one? Maybe you don't think he's an animal at all, only just an insect; but my opinion is that he's an animal, and what I'd like to know is whether he's wild or tame."

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"He isn't savage, anyway," remarked Little Peter demurely.

"I'm not talkin' about whether he's savage or not, but whether he's wild or tame. That's been a-botherin' me a good bit, and I just can't find any answer. Whoa! Whoa there, Jesh! What's the matter with ye? If ye want to start on, I'm your man." These last remarks were directed at the mule, which had begun to display some of the qualities of the famous character for whom he had been named; but his owner's words served to calm him, and Jeshurun soon stood in such an abject attitude that, to one who was not familiar with his ways, wickedness and kicking would never have been suspected of him.

"Maybe the oyster's a bird more than he is an insect," said Little Peter. "When his shell is spread out it looks something like wings."

"No, he isn't a bird, he's a animal," said Ted, "and what I want to know is whether he's a tame or a wild one."

"What do you want to know for?"

"Why, the way of it is this: Some time ago I planted an oyster-bed off the mouth of the river, and the first thing I knew my neighbors was a-helpin' themselves to it. When I said I didn't like that very much, and those oysters was mine, all the men did was to laugh. Yes, sir, jest laughed," repeated Ted, as if he felt aggrieved at the levity of his neighbors. "Then, they went on to tell me that I couldn't plant oysters, same as I did 'taties and things in my garden. Oysters was wild things and belonged to anybody that found them, jest the same as turtles and clams and wild geese did. I've been a-puzzlin' my head a good deal over it, and I can't make it out. I planted them oysters for Sallie,—she's my wife, ye know,—and as long as she had all she wanted of 'em, I didn't care how much the neighbors helped themselves; but when it comes to sayin' that them oysters I planted don't belong to me, but any one can go and take all he wants, jest as if they was clams, or gooseberries, or—or—or—saltwater, I don't know what to do about it. What do you think, Little Peter?" he added anxiously.

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"I don't know; I never thought of it before."

Absurd as the question appears to us, it was far from being so to the people of Old Monmouth in the times of which we are writing. So warm had the discussion become that it was soon after carried into the courts, and in 1808 a case was tried before the supreme court, but no definite decision was gained. In 1821 another famous trial was held, and finally in 1858 the supreme court decided that oysters were both tame and wild. Where they had grown naturally and without being planted, they were to be considered as wild and the property of any one who chose to take them; but where they had been planted, and there was no natural growth, the oysters were "tame" and the property of the one who had made the bed. Even after that decision there was trouble for a long time in Old Monmouth over the question, although to-day it is generally accepted that a man may own oysters as he does other animals.

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"I'm sorry ye can't help me," said Ted.

"So am I, but I'm not thinking of oysters just now. I want to go up to Benzeor Osburn's more than anything else."

"I'm with ye. We're so near, maybe Jeshurun will be willing to go, if he doesn't have to carry me on his back. I'll try him and see."

To the surprise of both, Jeshurun appeared to be willing to resume the journey and obediently followed Ted, who led him by the bridle rein which he slipped over the mule's head.

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In this wise they all walked on, but as they came nearer to the end of their journey, conversation ceased. Little Peter was thinking of the children and trying to devise some plan by which he might care for them. What his companion's thoughts were did not appear, but the expression upon his face had undergone a change, and from the occasional word he dropped, which sounded very like "Hangin' Sallies," the lad thought he knew what was going on in Ted's mind. What would occur if Benzeor should be found at his home, Little Peter could not determine; but he felt assured from Ted's manner that this time his neighbor would not escape so easily as he had when the angry man had given him his involuntary bath in the waters of the Shrewsbury River.

However, there was a deal of comfort for the lad in the company of his powerful friend; and as Benzeor's little house now appeared in the distance, he was more and more rejoiced that he was not compelled to approach it alone. If Indian John's words were correct, Benzeor was not there

now; but it was more than possible that John had been mistaken, or that the man had returned since his visit in the early morning.

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These possibilities were sufficiently strong to increase Little Peter's excitement, and when they turned into the lane which led up to the house his heart was beating rapidly and his breathing was hard and fast. As he glanced toward the place, he suddenly discovered some children playing in the yard and instantly recognized two of them as his own little brothers.

The children, then, were safe; and with a sigh of relief he turned to his companion and said, "There are my little brothers! They're all right, and so far it looks better."

"Hangin' Sallies!" muttered Ted; and Little Peter said no more, as he perceived that his companion's rage over the treatment his wife had received had returned with increased force.

Suddenly out from the barn beyond the house started two men on horseback, riding directly down the lane toward them. Startled and perplexed by the sight, both Little Peter and Ted stopped and waited for the men to approach. If the lad had been alone he would instantly have turned and fled without waiting to see who the strangers were; but Ted's presence restrained him, and although he was thoroughly alarmed, he waited with his companion.

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As the horsemen came nearer he discovered that they were Barzilla Giberson and Jacob Vannote, the two men who had been with Tom and Benzeor on their voyage to New York just before Tom's departure from his foster-father's home. Quickly recalling what Tom had reported of their conversation at that time, the sight of them now did not tend to allay his fears; but Ted's presence was a source of comfort, and, although he was trembling in his excitement, he did not speak.

Barzilla instantly stopped his horse as he recognized Little Peter, and, leaning forward on his horse's neck as he spoke, said, "Where's Benzeor?"

"I don't know," replied Little Peter. "Isn't he here?"

"No, he isn't here. He came back last night, but he's gone again, and the women folks pretend they don't know where he is. It's lucky for him."

"What do you want of him?"

"You and he both will know more about that after we've found him," replied Barzilla, as he touched his horse with his spurs, and both men rode swiftly down the lane and soon disappeared from sight up the road.

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Little Peter told his companion of his suspicions as they resumed their walk, and Ted quickly stopped, and, shaking his fist in the direction in which the horsemen had disappeared, said, "Hangin' Sallies! Maybe I'd better take after them, if I don't find Benzeor."

"No, no, Ted. Come on, we're almost here now."

They soon entered the yard, and as the children discovered the presence of their brother they ran eagerly to him and threw themselves into his arms.

"I want to go home. I want to go home. May we go home now?" said one of them.

Little Peter's eyes filled with tears as he lifted the child in his arms and said, "No, I'm afraid not. We haven't any home now."

"But I want to go home," persisted the little fellow pleadingly. "I don't want to stay here any longer. I want to go home."

"Hasn't Benzeor been good to you?"

"Yes, but he isn't here. I want to go home. I want to go home."

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Little Peter glanced up and saw that Ted's face was moving strangely, and that the tears were streaming from his eyes. The powerful man had a heart as tender as a woman's, and the piteous pleadings of the homeless, motherless little lad were more than he could endure.

"Here, Little Peter!" said Ted hastily. "You go in the house, and I'll look after the babies while you're gone. Here, my lads and lassies all! Come take a ride on the back of Jeshurun."

In a moment the grief of the little ones was forgotten, and, laughing in their delight, they were lifted upon the back of Jeshurun, who to all appearances had suddenly become as mild and gentle as a lamb.

Little Peter glanced back at the laughing group as he started toward the house, and then looking up beheld Sarah standing in the doorway. Her face was red with weeping and she evidently was in great distress.

"Why, Sarah!" exclaimed Little Peter. "What's the trouble? What is it?"

"My father! My father!" sobbed Sarah, burying her face in her hands.

"What's happened to him? Is he killed? Is he dead?"

"No, no. It's worse than that."

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"Worse than that? What do you mean?"

"Oh, Little Peter, don't *you* know?" exclaimed the girl, looking up again as she spoke.

Peter made no reply. He did not know just what it was to which Sarah referred, and although he had his own suspicions, he did not feel that he could refer to them in the presence of the troubled girl.

"Have you seen Tom?" said Sarah suddenly.

"No. He's in the army, I think, and I haven't been near that."

"You wouldn't have to go very far. They say they're both near here, and that there either has been a battle or there will be one soon. I wish Tom was here. If you see him, won't you tell him to come back just as soon as he can?"

"Yes, if I see him. I don't know that I shall very soon, though. I don't know what to do, Sarah. I came to see about the children."

"They're all right. They seem to be now, don't they?" she said, as a burst of laughter came from the noisy group. "Perhaps you don't want to leave them here now, though," she added, her eyes filling with tears once more as she spoke. "I wish you would leave them. It isn't much we can do for you, but we want to do what we can." [360]

There was an intensity in Sarah's manner which Little Peter could not understand. He was in ignorance of all that Sarah knew, and perhaps if he had known his reply might have been somewhat different.

"It's good of you, Sarah. I don't know what to do or where to go."

"You can stay here, too."

"No, no. I can't do that," he said hastily; and then fearing that he had said too much, added, "I'll leave the children for a little while. They'll be safe here till after the battle you tell about."

"I wish you would, Peter. You couldn't please us better. Who's that man with you?" she added, apparently for the first time becoming aware of Ted's presence.

"A man to see your father," said Little Peter evasively. "Is he home?"

"No, no," and Sarah shuddered as she spoke. "He came last night, but he didn't stay long. He went away again, and I don't know when he'll come again. It'll be a long time. I hope"—

What Sarah hoped for she did not explain, and Little Peter said, "I want to talk with Ted before I say anything more. He's the man out there with the children. I'll be back in a minute." [361]

Many minutes passed, however, before the lad returned. He called to Ted and for a long time they talked together. Ted was decidedly averse to the plan of leaving the children in Benzeor's home, and freely offered to take them with him to the place where he had left Sallie and his own little ones, also venturing to refer several times to the fact that Sallie was his wife.

Pleased as Little Peter would have been to accept the offer, Sarah's pleadings could not be forgotten, and as he felt that the children would be safe where they then were, he declined the kind offer of Ted.

"I'll tell you what, my lad," said Ted at last. "If the armies are as near here as the girl says they are, the thing for you and me to do is to go over there. They may need us, too. The most I've done so far has been to look out for that stuff the men brought up the Shrewsbury in the supply boat. That's all in good hands now, and I'm free to go. Jesh will be glad to go, too."

"But you can't leave Sallie and the babies." [362]

"Yes, I can, too. Sallie's my wife, ye know, and when I took her over to the Dennises I told her I might not be back for a week or two. She won't be disappointed, and Jesh will be tickled to pieces to join the army. Jest look at his ears now. When his ears is that way, I always know Jeshurun wants to fight the Dutch butchers."

"We've no other place to go to, or at least I haven't," said Little Peter thoughtfully. "Well, we'll do as you say. I'll go and tell Sarah."

"I'm so glad you'll leave the children," said Sarah eagerly, when Little Peter reported the decision which had been made. "It isn't much we can do, as I told you, but we do want to do everything we can for you."

"It's good of you to take them."

"It's good of you to leave them. There's one thing, though, I must tell you. We haven't much to eat in the house. There's some meal over at the mill, and father would have gone for it if he'd been home to-day. But he isn't here and I don't know what we'll do."

"You'd like to have me go over there and get it, before we start," said the boy. "Have you got your horses yet?" [363]

"Yes, there are two in the barn, and you can take the heavy wagon. It's kind of you to do it,

Little Peter, but it won't take you long, and you don't know how much it will help us just now."

"I'll go right away."

Little Peter turned and explained to Ted the cause of the delay. At first, Ted insisted upon going with him, but as the lad explained that only two hours would be required for the journey, he persuaded him to remain.

In a few minutes the two horses had been led forth from the barn, and hitched to the wagon ("geared" was what Ted called the task), and then Little Peter mounted the seat, grasped the reins in his hands, and turned down the lane, on what proved to be the most eventful ride in all his life.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

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### THE RIDE TO THE MILL

THE early morning had not yet gone when Little Peter started on his journey to the mill. He knew the place well, for many a time had he gone there for his father. It was an antiquated structure beside a pond, which had been formed by a dam built across the very brook near which he and Indian John had passed the preceding night.

The work at the mill had been somewhat interrupted since the outbreak of the war, but the increasing necessities of the people of Old Monmouth had led the miller to resume his labors, and Sarah had informed Little Peter that he would surely find him in his accustomed place.

At times, the road led through the woods, and the boy could almost touch the bushes that grew close to the sandy roadway on either side. His view was somewhat obstructed by these,—and that fact, together with the unbroken stillness that rested over all, combined to make Little Peter watchful, and somewhat fearful as well.

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The sunlight flickered through the treetops and cast fantastic shadows on the ground. The horses did not increase their speed above a slow trot, for the heat was oppressive and the sandy road was heavy; and, eager as Little Peter was to be back again at Benzeor's house, he had not the heart to urge on the toiling beasts. The mill was not more than three miles from the place from which he had started, and at the pace at which the horses were then going the lad thought he would be back in less than two hours.

He had covered about half of the way to the mill when his horses, with a sudden snort of fear, darted to one side of the roadway. Little Peter quickly drew the reins tight, and stood up to discover the cause of the alarm.

Two men stepped from the bushes into the road, and as they grasped the horses by their bits the lad at once recognized them as Barzilla Giberson and Jacob Vannoté.

"We thought you were Benzeor," exclaimed Barzilla, as he discovered who the driver was.

"I've got his horses," replied Little Peter.

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"So I see. What are you doing with them?"

"Going to the mill. You know the children are at Benzeor's house, and Sarah wanted me to go for some meal. She said there was none in the house and her father wasn't likely to be home in time to get it, so I came for it."

"Where's your father?"

"He's been sent to New York."

"So I've heard. Little Peter, do you know who made the attack on your house?"

"It was Fenton's gang, I'm sure."

"So am I, and I ought to know, for I was there myself."

"You there?" exclaimed Little Peter. He did not refer to the suspicions he had entertained concerning the very men who then stood before him; but he had never expected them to declare their actions so boldly. The alarm which he had felt, when the two men had suddenly presented themselves in the road, was greatly increased now, and for a moment he glanced quickly about as if he were seeking some avenue of escape.

"Yes, we were there," resumed Barzilla, apparently ignoring the lad's alarm. "I didn't know but you knew it, and I've felt mean enough about it, too. We didn't have anything to do with what happened there," he hastily added; "but the truth is, we thought it was about time some kind of a stop was put to the doings of the pine robbers,—so Jacob, here, and I pretended to go in with them. Of course we didn't like the work, but we hoped we could learn enough about their plans to trap them. And we've almost succeeded. We've been as busy as you have, my lad, and pretty soon we hope the murderers of your mother will be run to cover."

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Little Peter had never thought of the scheme which Barzilla mentioned, and at first he did not know whether to believe him or not. Certainly appearances were against him, but he was in no position to dispute the statement.

"Is that what Benzeor was doing, too?" he inquired.

"Benzeor? Benzeor Osburn? Don't you know what he had to do"—

"Hold on, Barzilla," interrupted Jacob. "Little Peter doesn't know about him, or he wouldn't let the children stay there."

"Why? What do you mean? Aren't the children safe there?" said Peter quickly. [368]

"Safe? They couldn't be safer if they were in China, or some other heathing land," said Barzilla. "Even Benzeor's horses are safe. There isn't such a team as that left in Old Monmouth," he added, "and if his beasts aren't touched, I don't think you need to worry very much about the young ones."

"I don't understand," said Little Peter.

"You don't need to," said Jacob quickly, "You've got enough to worry about, my boy, without bothering your head over Barzilla's words. He talks too much, anyway. You just go on and get the meal for Sarah; that's all you need to think about now."

"Yes, but Little Peter ought to know a bit more," said Barzilla doggedly. "The truth is that we've run some of Fenton's gang into these very woods. There are several of us scouring the region, and it's only fair to tell you that you may run across some of 'em if you keep on. For my part I advise you to turn back and not go to the mill at all. It isn't safe."

"Nobody'll touch him. Let him go on," said Jacob. "The children will have to be fed, and he might as well get the meal. He's safe enough."

"He can do as he pleases," muttered Barzilla. [369]

Little Peter was perplexed, for the actions and words of the men were sadly confusing. Tom had reported to him some of their previous conversations, and his own suspicions, as we know, had been aroused. If Barzilla spoke truly now, he was in no slight danger himself, while the very decided difference of opinion between the two men tended to increase his confusion.

"I'm goin' to tell you some more," said Jacob. "Last night some of Fenton's gang went over to Mr. Farr's. You know the old man, don't you?"

"You mean Thomas Farr, the old man who lives with his wife and daughter over on the road to Imlaystown?"

"That's the very man. Well, Lew Fenton and some of his gang went over there about midnight, and attacked the house. There wasn't any one in it but the old man and his wife and their daughter, and you know she's old enough to have arrived at years of discretion, to put it mildly. The old people barricaded the doors with logs of wood just as soon as they discovered who the men were.

"The pine robbers tried to break the door down with some fence rails, but when that failed, they fired a volley of bullets right through the door. One ball broke the leg of the old man, but still they wouldn't let the pine robbers in. Then the villains went around to the back door and succeeded in smashing that in. They stuck a bayonet into the old man, who was helpless on the floor, and then they murdered his wife right before his eyes. One of the men struck the daughter with the butt of his gun, but, although she was pretty badly hurt, she managed to get out of the house. [370]

"Fenton's gang didn't wait to plunder the place, but, as they were afraid she'd raise an alarm, they all cleared out. 'Twas mighty lucky for them that they did, for there was a lot of us near by. You see we'd seen Benzeor"—

"Hold on, Jacob. That's enough. Now, Peter, you see what's going on, and it's my opinion that some of Fenton's gang, and maybe Fenton himself, are in these very woods. That's why I advised ye not to go on. Now you can do jest as ye like, for you've got pretty much the whole story."

"I think you'll be all right," said Jacob. "It's only a little way up to the mill, and the children need that meal. I should go if I was in your place, and if I didn't have to keep watch here, I'd go with ye myself." [371]

"I'll go," said Little Peter quietly.

"Good luck to ye, then," said Barzilla. "We'll see you here when you come back."

Little Peter picked up the reins and at once started, leaving the two men behind him, who remained standing in the road, and watched him until he disappeared from sight. The lad's feelings, however, had undergone a very decided change. He was convinced that the story concerning the aged Thomas Farr was true, and he was also persuaded that his suspicions of Jacob and Barzilla were unjust.

Every tree now might be the hiding-place of Fenton, or some of his band. Each moment he expected to see some one step forth into the road before him and stop his horses. The very

silence in the woods served to increase his alarm. He quickened the speed of the horses, and soon they were wet with foam, as they toiled on through the heavy sand. The cry of a bird, or the chattering of a squirrel, caused the excited lad to glance fearfully in the direction from which the sound came. To his excited imagination the woods were filled with his enemies, and more than once a fallen tree or a broken branch took on the outlines of a man.

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It was with a feeling of intense relief that at last he saw the crumbling old mill before him. The sound of the water, as it dropped from the dam to the bed of the brook below, was like music in his ears; and when he discovered the miller himself standing in the doorway, he again increased the speed of his horses, and soon halted before the mill.

"I've come for Benzoor Osburn's grist," he said, as he leaped from his seat to the ground.

"They must be pretty hungry over there, from the looks of your horses."

"They are. Has any one been here this morning?"

"Not a soul. There's no work now, with all this fighting going on. Have you heard anything from the soldiers?"

"Not much, only that both the armies must be near here now."

There was nothing, however, in the presence of the old mill to indicate that war's rude alarms were to be heard anywhere in the region. The monotonous sound of the falling water, the dull hum of the big wheel, the little garden which the miller had planted near his log house close by, the dog lying asleep on the doorsill, the little urchins playing in the waters of the brook, the hens fluttering in the roadway and covering themselves with dust,—all seemed to declare that only peace and quiet were to be found in the region.

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And yet, only a few miles away two great armies had assembled, and, on the morrow the summer air would resound with the booming of cannon, and many a buffcoat and redcoat would be left lying side by side upon the plains of Old Monmouth, never again to be mindful of the struggle, or hear or heed the calls of their officers as they led the men into battle.

At that very time, if the words of Barzilla Giberson were true, the woods, which extended between the mill and the main road, concealed some of the hated pine robbers, as well as outraged patriots who were searching for their enemies.

The wagon was soon loaded, the miller's share of the grist having first been set aside, and Little Peter climbed up on the seat and grasped the reins, as he prepared to start again.

"You'd better be careful," said Little Peter. "I'm told some of the pine robbers are hiding in these woods."

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"I'm not afraid," laughed the miller. "I never harmed them and they won't harm me."

The lad related the story of the attack upon the house of Thomas Farr, but still the miller to all appearances was not deeply impressed.

"I haven't any money and they've nothing to gain by disturbing me. I grind my grists just the same, whether it's a king or Congress that rules over me, and I don't care much, for my part, which it is. I don't bother my head about such things. All I want is good water and plenty of corn, and I'm happy all the day long."

Little Peter had given his warning, so he said no more, but bidding the miller good-day, he spoke to his horses and at once departed.

His load was heavier now than when he had come, and consequently he was compelled to let his horses walk. Even then the sweltering beasts labored heavily under the intense heat, and he was compelled to stop frequently and permit them to rest in some cool and shady spot.

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His own fears had not departed, however, but every turn of the heavy wheels brought him nearer to the main road, and once there he thought he would be safe. Already one of the three miles had been left behind him, and he was about to start on, after the brief rest he had given the horses, when he was startled by the sound of something breaking through the bushes that lined the road in front of him.

Tremblingly he waited a moment, gazing with frightened face at the place in the road where the man, or animal, or whatever it was, would first appear. His suspense was not relieved when a horse and rider broke through the bushes and stopped only a few yards in advance of him.

Little Peter's face was deadly pale when he instantly recognized the man as none other than Lewis Fenton himself. He noted the great size, the broad shoulders, the powerful arms, for the pine robber was riding without a coat, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled back, disclosing the great bunches of muscles; but more than all else the brutal face terrified him.

Before he could speak or move, Fenton leaped to the ground, and leaving his horse by the roadside approached the wagon.

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"How now, young man? Give an account of yourself. Where you going? Who are you? As I live, if it isn't Little Peter Van Mater!" he added in evident astonishment.

As he spoke, he grasped the frightened lad by the shoulder and dragged him to the ground.

Then the brutal, cowardly man struck him two savage blows. The sight of the woods and even of the pine robber faded from Little Peter's eyes, and the unconscious boy dropped heavily upon the sand. Even then Fenton was not satisfied, for again and again he kicked the body, apparently not yet convinced that life was extinct.

But Little Peter suffered no pain. With sightless eyes, his blood-stained face looked up at the blue sky above the treetops, but neither the passing clouds nor the further actions of the brutal pine robber were heeded by the lad.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

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### AFTER THE BATTLE

TOM COWARD, as we know, had been selected to serve as one of the guides of the American army. The roads were not so numerous as to cause any fear of serious trouble from confusion; but boys and young men from the region were nevertheless assigned to this duty, and in some instances were said to have been so greatly excited as to have failed in finding the way themselves. To this cause some assigned the failure of Morgan's dragoons to enter the battle; but doubtless there were other causes as well which prevented that terrible band of riflemen from having a share in the struggle.

Tom had been reserved to move with the troops that were under the command of General Washington himself, and that followed the division which General Lee had failed to lead into battle. Frightened as the lad was, he still noted keenly all that was occurring about him, and had been as highly excited as any over the interview which took place between Washington and Lee when the latter was retreating. The impressions he there received were those which the people of Old Monmouth ever after retained concerning Charles Lee, for he was remembered, not for his experiences abroad or for his successes in the south, but as the man who had been the traitor in the battle.

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When the engagement began, Tom's duties as guide were ended, but as no one gave him any instructions, he was driven from one band of men to another, and while he still retained the rifle which he had taken when he had departed from Benzeor's house, he had not made any use of it.

For a time he remained within sight of the young lieutenant, and they were together when in the early part of the battle Captain Molly had done the deed which has caused her name to be remembered until this day. Molly had marched with her husband, and as the advanced batteries opened fire upon each other the intrepid woman had been running back and forth between the men and a little spring, which was near by, bringing water to her husband and his companions. Her task was no light one in the heat of that day.

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As she had started to return from one of her visits to the spring, she turned just in time to see her husband fall as he was advancing to his post, for he was a cannoneer, as we already know. Molly hastily ran to his assistance, but she at once perceived that he was dead. She heard an officer order the cannon to be moved from its position, but instantly controlling her grief, she declared her purpose to take her husband's place. Amidst the cheers of the men she did so, and so bravely and well did she perform the duty, that after the battle was ended General Greene himself presented her to the great commander and related the story of her bravery. Washington added his words of praise and bestowed upon her a lieutenant's commission. The men received the news with loud cheers, and then themselves bestowed upon "Molly Pitcher" the title of "Captain Molly," and as Captain Molly she was known thereafter.

Another story, told afterwards by the Frenchmen, reflected great credit upon General Clinton, and perhaps in a measure atoned for the action of that commander in wantonly burning so many of the houses in Old Monmouth. An American officer with about twenty of his men advanced under the English batteries to observe their position. The redcoats opened fire, and the officer's aid-de-camp fell at his side. The men, who were dragoons, instantly turned and fled,—that is, all save the officer, who, although he was directly under the fire of the cannon, calmly dismounted and advanced to discover whether the fallen man was dead or not, or whether the wound had been mortal. Quickly discovering that the man was dead, the American officer, visibly weeping, turned and remounted his horse and slowly rejoined his comrades. The officer was the young Marquis de Lafayette, and his white charger had been recognized by General Clinton, who himself ordered his men not to fire, and doubtless thereby saved the life of the brave young nobleman. It was long cherished as the one deed of mercy in the midst of a campaign and battle which left its marks of suffering and sorrow on every side.

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An instance of the other side of the British commander's character came to Tom's attention not long afterwards, when he heard of the misfortune of an old lady seventy years of age, in whose house General Clinton made his headquarters. The British officer, noticing that his hostess had caused all of her better furniture and valuables to be removed, informed her that she need have had no fears for the safety of her possessions, for he himself would protect her and them, and urged her to have them brought back again. As the old lady expressed her fears and objected, he repeated his assurances so strongly that she yielded and sent a man with a wagon to the place in which they had been concealed.

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When the wagon-load arrived in front of her door, she in person applied to the British commander for a guard; but the permission was refused and, not even giving her a change of dress for herself or her aged husband, the goods were at once confiscated, and the old lady was compelled to give up her bedroom and sleep with the negro women upon the floor of the kitchen.

Among the congregation which had assembled at the "new church" to watch the battle was one man who, instead of joining his friends upon the roof or steeple, took his seat upon one of the gravestones. Not long afterwards, a cannon-ball came speeding in that direction, and struck the unfortunate man.

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The congregation upon the roof did not wait for the customary benediction to be pronounced, we may be sure, and while the most of them hastily dispersed, a few remained to carry the wounded man into the "meeting-house," where he died within a few minutes, and the stains of his blood remained for many years upon the floor. It was within six feet of the west end of this same "new church" that the body of the unfortunate British Colonel Monckton, over which the contending forces had such a desperate struggle, was buried.

Within the vicinity of Monmouth Court House many houses and farm buildings were set on fire and burned by the redcoats, some of whom openly declared that there was no hope of conquering the rebels until "they had burned every house and killed every man, woman, and child." Just how they expected to conquer *after* they had burned the buildings and slain the people is not clear to us to-day; but doubtless the expression and the purpose alike were born of the fury of the battle, and was only one among many of the results of war, which even in its mildest forms appeals to all that is bad in men. And as the campaign in Old Monmouth presented none of the milder forms of war, such deeds, terrible as they were, were not unnatural.

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Nor were they all confined to one side, for the men in buff and blue were as much aroused as the men in scarlet, and, while naturally the anecdotes and incidents of the battle are largely those of the cruel deeds of the redcoats, doubtless if all things had been recorded, we should have found that many of those brave ancestors of ours were not entirely guiltless of similar deeds.

An unusual story was that of Captain Cook of the Virginia Corps, who was shot through the lungs. He was carried into a room in a near-by house and ordered by the surgeon not to speak. A brother officer came into the room and tenderly asked of the wounded man whether anything could be done for him. Captain Cook, in spite of his sufferings, was mindful of the surgeon's words and made no reply. Mistaking the cause of the silence, his friend departed from the house and reported to Washington that Captain Cook was dead, and then the commander ordered a coffin to be placed under the window of the room in which the brave captain was supposed to be lying dead. But Captain Cook was not dead, nor did he die until many years afterwards, and lived to visit several times the good people in Old Monmouth, who had tenderly ministered to his wants until he was able to rejoin the army.

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After the battle, many of the dead were found beneath the shade of trees, or beside the little streams to which they had crawled for shelter or for water; and many of these had perished, not from wounds, but from their labors in the intense heat of the day. Several houses at Monmouth Court House were filled with the wounded after the battle, and every room in the Court House itself was likewise filled. The suffering soldiers lay upon the straw which had been scattered over the floors, and the groans and cries of the wounded and the moanings of the dying resounded together. The faces of many were so blackened that their dearest friends did not recognize them, and as fast as they died their bodies were taken and buried in pits, which were only slightly covered by the sand.

A similar service was rendered for the enemy's dead, and among them was found a sergeant of dragoons whose immense body had been a familiar sight to both armies, for the man was said to have been the tallest soldier ever seen in all the struggle of the Revolution, and to have measured seven feet and four inches in height.

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So, side by side, or in neighboring graves, the nameless bodies of friends and foes were left for their last long sleep. The roar of the cannon, the shouts of the men, the calls of the officers, the bitter feelings of the awful war were never to disturb or arouse them again. They had done their part, and done it well; but the land for which they struggled could never mark their resting-places, nor perhaps recall the names of all. But the heroes whose names we praise would never have been honored except for the part the faithful and brave, but nameless and forgotten, heroes took. In honoring the one class, let us never forget to pay a tribute of honor and of praise to the unknown and forgotten heroes of Old Monmouth.

The loss of the Americans in the battle had been three hundred and sixty-two. That of the British, while it was reported to have been four hundred and sixteen, was doubtless much greater, for the Americans buried no less than two hundred and forty-five of the redcoats, and had no means of knowing how many had been carried away. Washington himself believed the loss to have been as great as twelve hundred.

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Who were the victors on the plains of Old Monmouth? What were the effects of the campaign upon the fortunes of the struggling States? Most American writers have claimed that the victory belonged to the Continentals because they had driven the British from the field, while many British writers have claimed that it was a drawn battle.

Certainly, Washington must have felt bitterly disappointed, for he had hoped to defeat the

enemy and capture their baggage and stores. His failure to do so was not due to the British, but to the treachery of Charles Lee. Had Lee carried out the orders given him, there can be little doubt to-day that the battle of Monmouth would have aided in putting an end to the war long before peace came.

We are not concerned by what might have been the result, however, but by what was the result. Clinton succeeded in withdrawing his troops and saving his baggage train, and with both soon after embarked (June 30) upon the ships which Lord Howe had been keeping in waiting off Sandy Hook, and thereby gained the safety of New York. But his men were greatly disheartened, and came to regard the despised "rebels" in an entirely new light. Indeed, within a week more than two thousand deserted, the most of whom were Hessians, and the confidence of those who remained was sadly broken. While it is a current saying that "nothing succeeds like success," it is also evident that nothing fails like failure, and this was as true in those trying days of the Revolution as it is to-day, and General Clinton soon found it to be so.

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Upon the Americans, the moral effect of the campaign and battle was more needed than the material effect. Valley Forge was passed now, Philadelphia had been abandoned by the British, and the Americans had found upon the plains of Old Monmouth, as they had at Trenton and Princeton, that their men were not inferior to their enemies, while their officers were among the best the world had known. The opponents and enemies of Washington, and they were many at the time both within and without Congress, were compelled to be silent, and the great commander was free to face his difficulties and dangers, which were not ended after the battle of Monmouth. That campaign had served chiefly to place behind him one more of his problems, but, as we shall see, many yet remained to try the soul of the noblest American of them all.

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**HE DISCOVERED THAT THE SOLDIER WAS HIS FRIEND**

Meanwhile, what had become of the lad Tom Coward? Alarmed by the battle, not daring to fight and yet not knowing where to withdraw, although his fear had not been strong enough to lead to such a result, he was driven about by the movements of the men, and in one of the lulls which came in the conflict, he found himself almost alone. He was near a barn which stood beyond the borders of the battlefield, and was just about to turn the corner when he stumbled over the body of a fallen man.

As he glanced down, he was almost overcome when he discovered that the soldier was his friend, the young lieutenant. A hurried examination revealed that he was still living, though he was badly wounded in the throat. The lad lifted the head of the suffering man, but a groan caused him to desist. Almost overcome by grief and fear, he turned to seek for aid.

As he looked quickly about him, he perceived a man in the distance on the border of the woods away from the battle-ground. Instantly he turned and ran toward him, and to his surprise discovered that the man was none other than Friend Nathan Brown.

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"Come, Nathan! come! Be quick! Lieutenant Gordon's over here by the barn. He's terribly wounded and may die any moment. Come and help me with him!"

The Quaker instantly responded, and without explaining how it had happened that he should be discovered so near a scene to which in spirit as well as in practice he was strongly opposed, ran by the side of the eager lad to the place where the wounded man had fallen.

## CHAPTER XXX

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### TOM COWARD'S PATIENT

THE place where young Lieutenant Gordon was lying was in the rear of the barn which belonged to the parsonage of the "new church." After the bullet had hit him, he had managed to crawl to that secluded place, but the sounds of the battle, which was still being waged in the vicinity, were not long heard by the wounded officer, for he had soon become unconscious, and the roar of the cannon and the shouts of the men were all unheeded and unheard.

"Is he dead?" said Nathan in a low voice, as he looked down upon the unconscious man.

"No! no!" replied Tom hastily; "or at least he wasn't a minute ago. No, he's still alive," he added after a hurried examination. "We must carry him away from this place."

"I see no place for thy friend. These sons of Belial are not likely to permit thee to depart

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unnoticed."

Friend Nathan was trembling, and his face betrayed his alarm. And there was much to frighten him. Clouds of smoke could be seen not far away, and the loud shouts of men and the reports of their guns could be distinctly heard. The struggle near the meeting-house was one of the most severe in all the battle, and the danger of which the frightened Nathan spoke was not unreal. But Tom's fears had departed now, and although he never fully understood the cause of the change in his feelings, the sight of his suffering friend and his determination to aid him had banished all thoughts concerning his own personal safety.

At a distance of a half mile, Tom could see a little farmhouse, and he hastily decided that the young lieutenant must be carried there. The building was on the border of the plain and on the side opposite to the place where the struggle was going on.

There would be danger in the attempt to carry him across the field, but thinking only of his friend, Tom said hastily, "We must carry him to that farmhouse yonder, Nathan. I don't know who lives there, but whoever does won't refuse to receive a wounded man, I know. You take hold of his feet, and I'll lift the head and shoulders, and we'll get him there somehow. Come, Nathan, we mustn't delay a minute." [392]

"Have it thine own way, Friend Thomas," replied Nathan, as he stooped and grasped the legs of the wounded officer.

Tom gently lifted the head of the young lieutenant at the same time, and carefully across the field the two men began to move with their burden. Their progress necessarily was slow, and the lad's fears were not allayed by the evident alarm of his companion. Nathan repeatedly glanced behind him, and several times Tom was compelled to speak sharply to recall the frightened man to their present task. The shouts and reports of the guns were increasing, and Tom's strongest desire was to avoid attracting the attention of any of the combatants.

They had safely passed beyond the orchard, and he was just beginning to hope that their efforts would be successful, when suddenly Nathan's hat was lifted from his head and the sound of a whistling musket-ball was heard as it passed above them.

For a moment, the startled Nathan looked down at his hat, and as he perceived the hole in it which the bullet had made, he instantly dropped his burden, and turning sharply about, started in a swift run across the field. [393]

"Come back, Nathan! Come back! Don't leave me here!" pleaded Tom; but Nathan did not heed the call.

His pace was a marvelous one for a man of his years, and as he bent low over the ground, as if to avoid other bullets which might be coming toward him, and sped swiftly forward, under other circumstances Tom might have felt inclined to laugh at the ludicrous sight the fleeing man of peace presented. But as it was he felt much more inclined to cry than to laugh, and, as he realized his own helplessness, he knew not what to do. If he had been alone he might have followed Nathan and gained a place of safety, but, as he glanced down upon the suffering man, who now lay stretched upon the ground, his whole soul rebelled against the thought of deserting his friend in a time like that.

What could he do? The desperate lad looked about him hoping to discover some one whom he might summon to his aid. In the distance he could see the bands of struggling soldiers, and their shouts and shots could be clearly heard. But they were all intent upon their own contest, and there was no one who would hear or heed him if he should call. [394]

He could not abandon his friend—that much at least was certain; and at last he determined to do his utmost to carry the helpless, wounded man himself. Placing his arms beneath the shoulders of the unconscious lieutenant, and striving to rest the head against his own body, he started slowly on, dragging the man with him. His progress was necessarily slow, and he was compelled to stop frequently, both for his own sake and that of his friend. Still, on and on he persistently made his way. The intense heat of the day, his constant fear that life would depart from the body he was dragging forward, the sound of the battle behind him, all combined to increase his troubles; but not for a moment did he think of abandoning his efforts for his friend.

Proceeding slowly, stopping at frequent intervals and then resuming his efforts, he steadily drew nearer to the farmhouse he had perceived in the distance. How much time had been consumed he could not determine. The minutes seemed like hours to the struggling lad. His own danger was all forgotten for the time, and the one purpose in his mind was to carry Lieutenant Gordon to some place of safety, where it should be possible to do something for the relief of the desperately wounded man. [395]

At last, only one more lot remained to be crossed, and with renewed hope Tom was about to lift his burden, which he had dropped for one of his brief rests, when he suddenly discovered a man running toward him. Startled and alarmed by the sight he quickly perceived that the approaching man was Friend Nathan, who, hatless and with a dripping face, was soon by his side.

"Thou hast put me to shame, Friend Thomas," said Nathan soberly. "Thou art a better man than I, as well as a braver. I know not why it was, but when my hat was lifted from my head, and I perceived that hole the bullet had made, I lost my self-control. My teaching has been that of peace and I am poorly prepared for the contests of war. I will give thee no cause to complain



now."

"Take hold, then," said Tom quickly. "We must get the lieutenant out of this heat, or there'll be no hope for him."

Nathan eagerly responded, and tenderly lifting the wounded man they proceeded across the lot. [396]

When they halted for their first rest, Nathan said, "I have a word to say to thee, Friend Thomas. What did Washington say to thee when he heard thy demand for a recompense for the beast I let thee have?"

"Say? He didn't say anything, because I didn't say anything to him. You don't suppose he hadn't anything more to do than to talk with a boy like me about your old, broken-winded razor-back, do you? I don't even know what has become of the beast. I know I'm glad I don't have to ride it any more."

"'Tis well, Friend Thomas," replied Nathan, although Tom thought he discovered a trace of disappointment in the expression upon his face. "'Tis well, and I would not have it otherwise. I have been humiliated by my weakness in deserting thee, a mere lad, at such a time as this. I would like also to restore to you the half-joe you paid me for my beast." And as Nathan spoke, he drew the coin from his pocket and held it forth for Tom to take.

"I don't want your money," said the lad quickly. "Take hold of the lieutenant again, and this time we'll not stop before we come to the house." [397]

Once more they tenderly took up their burden, and slowly advancing, soon approached the house. In the doorway a man and a young woman, evidently his daughter, were standing, watching the movements of the approaching men with a curiosity which the noise of the battle in the distance could not entirely dispel.

Tom's heart was lighter when he recognized the man as Jonathan Cook and the young woman as his daughter Mary.

"We've brought this man here," said Tom quickly, "to find a resting-place for him. It's Lieutenant Gordon, and he's terribly wounded. Will you let us put him in one of your beds?"

"We will that," said Mr. Cook. "We've got one poor fellow here now, and will do all we can for another, too. Take him right in here," he added, leading the way to a bedroom adjoining the living-room on the ground floor.

Tom and Nathan eagerly followed him, and in a brief time had placed the suffering man on the high bed. Although the lad was almost exhausted by his efforts, with Nathan's aid he soon removed the clothing of the young officer, and then Mary came and bathed his bleeding face, and with many expressions of sympathy listened to the story the weary boy had to tell. [398]

"I don't suppose it's been wise or safe for us to stay here," said Mary, "but we just couldn't leave the old place until we had to. We've been keeping watch all day long, and if the redcoats come this way we shall have to go. It's been a good thing we've stayed, though, for Captain Nealey is upstairs and he's almost as badly wounded as this poor man is. Oh, it's horrible, horrible!"

But intense as Mary's feelings were, they did not prevent her from bestowing a very tender care upon the unconscious young lieutenant, and as soon as Tom was satisfied that his friend was receiving better nursing than he could give, the lad went out of the room.

He discovered Nathan bathing his face and hands near the water-barrel, which stood beneath the corner of the eaves, and after he had followed his example, he began to be sensible of his own feeling of exhaustion.

"Now, Friend Thomas, thee must lie down and get some sleep," said Nathan. "I will assist Mary in her care of thy friend, and I insist that my words he obeyed. The heavy task has been thine, and my own cowardice has added to thy burdens, so that now it is thy turn to rest." [399]

The tired lad was easily persuaded, and after again going into the room in which the unconscious lieutenant was lying, he followed Mr. Cook up the stairs to a room above, and soon threw himself heavily upon the bed and fell into a deep sleep.

It was dark when he awoke, and at first it was almost impossible for him to recall the events of the day. They soon returned, however, and hastily arising, he made his way down the stairs and entered the living-room, where he discovered Nathan seated in one of the large wooden chairs. The moonlight came in through the open windows, and as Nathan perceived the lad, he said,—

"And did sleep come to thee, Friend Thomas?"

"Yes. I'm rested now. How's the lieutenant?"

"There has been no change. Mary comes every hour and bathes his face in cool water from the well, but he does not open his eyes."

"Is the battle ended? I don't hear any guns."

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"I know not. Since sunset all has been quiet, and it is now midnight."

"I'll watch now, and you go upstairs and get some sleep."

"Nay. I ought not to rest after my cowardice."

"Never mind that. You will do all the more if you rest awhile now."

Nathan was soon persuaded, and Tom took his place as watch. He could hear the troubled breathing of the suffering man, but it was the only sound to be heard. Outside the house all was silent, and as the slow hours passed, the only break which came was the occasional visit of Mary to bathe the face of the sufferer.

At daybreak, Mr. Cook brought the news of the retreat of the British, and great was the rejoicing in the old farmhouse when it was learned that at least the Americans had not suffered defeat in the battle of the preceding day.

Lieutenant Gordon was still living, although no signs of improvement in his condition could be discovered. Tom speedily decided that, as he was not enrolled in the army, there was nothing to prevent him from remaining and caring for his friend. Nathan also declared that he would return to his aid as soon as he had gone home and explained to Rachel the necessity for a further absence, and the lad did not protest, for he thought he understood the motive which prompted the action. [401]

During the day, Mr. Cook brought the reports of the battle, the hundred prisoners taken, the number of the dead and wounded, and the measures which were being taken in the scattered farmhouses and the old Court-House for the care of the sufferers.

Tom did not leave the house. His one thought now was of his wounded friend, and all that loving hearts and gentle hands could do was bestowed upon the suffering soldier, who as yet had not shown that he was aware of what was going on about him.

The long day passed and the dreary night followed, but still Tom and Mary cared for the sufferer. Captain Nealey was said to be improving rapidly, but no change as yet had come in the condition of the young lieutenant.

It was the morning of the second day, and in the early light Tom had gone out to the water-barrel again to bathe his face and hands. His heart was heavy, for apparently Lieutenant Gordon was worse, and all the efforts of the lad and Mary had produced no improvement in his condition. [402]

As Tom started to enter the house he halted upon the doorstep and looked up the road. A heavy farm wagon drawn by two horses was approaching, and as it came nearer the lad suddenly started as he thought he recognized the team. Surely those were Benzeor Osburn's horses. A moment later his suspicions were confirmed, and he knew that the lumbering wagon was his foster-father's.

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## CHAPTER XXXI

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### AMONG THE PINES

TOM's surprise was still further increased when he recognized one of the men on the seat as Little Peter, and by his side a sergeant, who was driving. It was Little Peter's condition, however, which quickly drew all of Tom's attention, for the lad was carrying one arm in a sling, one of his eyes was discolored, and the marks of suffering were plainly to be seen on his face.

Tom quickly ran out into the road, and as his friend recognized him, at a word from him the horses stopped, and the two boys looked at each other for a moment as if each was trying to understand how it was that they both were there.

"What's the matter? Were you in the battle?" said Tom, who was the first to speak.

"No, that is, I wasn't in the battle by the Court-House. I met Fenton three days ago up by the old mill, and these are a few tokens of his regard which he left with me," said Little Peter, slightly moving his wounded arm as he spoke. [404]

As Tom still looked blankly at him, the lad continued, "I suppose Fenton thought he left me dead, and it's likely I should have died if Barzilla Giberson and Jacob Vannote hadn't found me. They took me up and carried me over to Benzeor's, though I didn't know anything about it at the time. Sarah and her mother took such good care of me that I'm all right now, or at least I'm a good deal better."

"You don't look as if you ought to be here," replied Tom. "You say Barzilla and Jacob found you and took you over to Benzeor's? I don't understand."

"They're all right; I understand just how it is now."

"What, Benzeor all right?"

"No, Barzilla and Jacob. I know all about Benzeor, too," he added in a low voice.

"Where is he?"

"He hasn't been seen or heard from in four days. I don't think he'll come home again very soon. Tom, Sarah wanted me to tell you, if I saw you, that you were to come home just as soon as you could. I think she wants to explain something to you," he added, noting Tom's expression of surprise. "Since she's found out about Benzeor she feels all broken up, and wants you to come home."

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"Then she knows about Benzeor, does she?" inquired Tom thoughtfully.

"Yes, and so do I. You'll go, won't you?"

"I can't now; perhaps I will after a while," and Tom went on to explain the circumstances which seemed to make his return to Benzeor's impossible for a time.

"But how does it happen that you are here so early in the morning, and with Benzeor's team? You're almost the last person I expected to see."

"Oh, the way of it is like this. Barzilla and Jacob and some of the Whigs have been on the track of Fenton for several days now. We've got word that he's down in the pines, about two miles below Blue Ball. Several parties are out after him, for they've made up their minds to rid Old Monmouth of the outlaw, if such a thing can be done. Well, Barzilla came up to Benzeor's yesterday, and when he found I was all right again, he suggested that Ted and I report the matter to some of the officers in the American army, and get a detachment to go down there, so that's what we've done, you see."

[406]

"No, I don't see," replied Tom, looking about for the detachment of soldiers of which Little Peter had spoken. "Ted? Ted who?"

"Ted Wilson, if you please," said that worthy, suddenly rising from beneath the straw with which the wagon-box was apparently filled. "I'm the Ted what Little Peter means. Yes, sir, I'm on the lookout for those fellows that go around hangin' Sallies. She's my wife, ye know."

Startled as Tom was by the unexpected appearance of the mighty Ted, he nevertheless was compelled to laugh, as the huge man stood before him striving to shake himself free from the bits of straw which covered his face, and shaking his fist at imaginary Fentons, who went about engaged in the detestable occupation of "hanging Sallies."

"We saw General Lee yesterday, but he had so much trouble of his own that he couldn't listen much to ours," explained Little Peter, "but he managed to give us a sergeant and two men. The sergeant here is driving, and the men are with Ted under the straw."

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Tom's first thought was to inquire concerning the trouble of General Lee, which Little Peter referred to, but Ted interrupted his question by declaring, "Yes, sir, I've got two companions in my misery, cooped up here under the straw. I don't see why they don't let us sit up straight like men; but no, they must cover us all over with straw, and then put two or three barrels in the wagon-box too. 'Tisn't my way o' doin' things, for I'd take Jesh and go straight down to the pines and hang Fenton on the first tree I found. That's the way I'd do it. But I suppose I'll have to obey orders."

"That's what you will," said the sergeant, who had been manifesting signs of impatience for several minutes. "We mustn't stand here in the road talking all day. Lie down, Ted, and we'll cover you up again."

Reluctantly the huge man consented, and was soon hidden from sight by the straw which was thrown over him. The barrels were again arranged to present the appearance of an ordinary load, and then the sergeant, picking up the reins which were lying loose in his hands, spoke to the horses and started down the road.

Little Peter turned and watched Tom, who had remained by the roadside, gazing eagerly after the departing wagon, and when at last he could see him no longer, once more gave all his thought to the dangerous expedition on which he had started with his companions.

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Benzeor's horses were in much better condition than those of his neighbors, for reasons that are apparent now to all our readers, and they maintained so steady a pace that by noontime the party had entered within the borders of the pines.

The road here became rough and heavy, and the progress, as a consequence, was correspondingly slow. The tall stately trees, the whisperings of the wind, the silence of the great forest, and above all, the knowledge that they had entered upon the most dangerous portion of their journey, made all the men in the wagon anxious and watchful. Not a word was spoken now, even Ted having ceased to complain of his narrow quarters, and having no remarks to make concerning the outlaws, whose disposition led them to go about the country attacking defenseless men and "hanging Sallies."

Every tree might conceal an enemy, and at any moment the discharge of a gun might indicate that their presence had been discovered. The habitations of men had been left behind them soon after they had entered the sombre forests, and the few rude little shanties near the border, occupied by negroes and people whose reputation in Old Monmouth was not of the best, had all been passed. The vegetation was scanty, and long barren stretches of sand could be seen on every side. The sunlight only penetrated the gloom in places, and its presence served to increase the dark and sombre appearance of the unbroken forest.

[409]

Little Peter maintained a careful watch upon one side as they advanced, and the sergeant watched the other, but they seldom spoke now, and then only in whispers. The full sense of the danger of entering a region, known to be used by the pine robbers as their headquarters, was appreciated as it had not been when they started. They had no means of knowing how many men Fenton might have with him, and hard as the outlaws were against the defenseless people of Old Monmouth, doubtless they would display the honor which it is said thieves maintain toward one another, and if others should be within hailing distance when Fenton was attacked they would all quickly rally to his assistance.

[410]

And the resistance which Fenton himself would be likely to make was not forgotten. The vision of him, as he suddenly appeared to Little Peter on that lonely road to the old mill a few days previous to this time, came up before the lad now. His big and burly frame, his bared and powerful arms, the brutal and merciless expression upon his evil face, were all seen again, and the lad shuddered as he recalled his experiences with him.

"What's wrong?" whispered the sergeant quickly. "See anything?"

"Not yet."

Little Peter had not been in the region since the breaking out of the war, although before that time he and Tom had made frequent visits there. Still, he recognized the locality, and knew the place to which Barzilla had reported that Fenton had gone. It was a rude log house, built of the pine-trees, and could not be more than two miles in advance of them.

The horses were toiling now as they dragged the heavy wagon through the deep sand. Fish-hawks had their nests in the tops of the lofty trees, and occasionally Peter obtained a glimpse of the great birds as they sailed in the air far above him. A brown rabbit now and then came forth from his burrow, and after eying the intruders a moment, would go bounding away into the thickets, or else dart swiftly back into his underground home. The note of a wood-thrush now and again broke in upon the stillness with its clear, sweet whistle, and the watchful men would glance quickly about them, almost thinking that the sound was the call of the pine robbers to one another.

[411]

Little Peter's fear and the pain he was suffering from his recent encounter with Fenton made his face pale, and as the sergeant again turned to him and marked his appearance, he said, "'T was too bad, my lad, that you had to come."

"I knew the way. I had to come and show you."

"Yes, yes. I know it, but it's hard, for all that."

"We're almost there now. The place can't be more than a quarter of a mile farther on."

The sergeant did not reply, but turned quickly at the words, and peered keenly into the forest before him. No one could be seen, and the tall trees guarded well their secret. The toiling horses were pulling steadily on their load, and they, at least, felt no alarm; but Little Peter and his companion were anxious now, and were keeping their eyes steadily fixed upon the road before them.

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"There! That's the place!" whispered the lad excitedly, as he obtained a glimpse of a little clearing not far in advance of them.

The sergeant did not reply, but he tightened his grasp upon the reins, and glanced down at the gun which he had placed within easy reach. Little Peter's excitement had become intense, and he was peering eagerly ahead of him, while his breathing was quick and hard. They would soon know what the result of the expedition was to be.

The heavy wagon came out into the clearing, and drew near to the one small house, which was standing within it. The house was of logs, and corresponded exactly to the description which Barzilla had given of it. As yet, no human being had been seen, and the sergeant was just about to declare that the place was not inhabited when the door was suddenly opened and a man stepped forth to view. Evidently he had heard the sounds of the approaching wagon, and had come out to investigate.

[413]

He was a tall, broad-shouldered, powerful-appearing man. He was clad in a pair of rough trousers and high boots, which looked as if they might have belonged to some Hessian dragoon at one time, and the red flannel shirt which partially covered his chest could not entirely conceal the great bunches of muscle there. In one hand he grasped a pistol, and the expression upon his face might well have caused a man with a much stouter heart than Little Peter had to tremble.

The sergeant glanced inquiringly at the lad by his side, and Little Peter nodded his head in reply to the unspoken question. The man was Fenton himself,—the one who had robbed the widows and the fatherless, had made the midnight attacks upon the defenseless people of Old Monmouth, had hanged trembling women from the limbs of trees, and tortured his helpless victims into revealing the places where their scanty savings had been concealed. He had been the leader of bands as desperate and wicked as himself, and the suffering and woe which the good people of the surrounding region had experienced at his hands can never be told. And now the man himself stood waiting for the wagon, in which were Little Peter, himself a victim of the pine robbers' cruelty, and his companions, to approach.

[414]

"Hold on!" called Fenton. "You're movin' too fast. What ye doin' here?"

The sergeant stopped his horses, and as Fenton approached and stood near the wheel, he said, "We've come down here to look for a man we want to find."

"I reckon I'll do as well as any other. Look at me! Ye're not goin' any farther, ye might as well understand that now as any time. Got a bottle with ye?"

The sergeant drew forth a bottle of brandy and handed it to the outlaw. Fenton took it, and raised one foot upon the hub of the wheel. As he lifted the bottle to his lips, his eyes fell upon Little Peter, who had been endeavoring to conceal himself behind his companion.

Instantly recognizing the lad, he shouted, "You here? You? I thought I left ye dead up by the mill the other day! You rascal! One whipping wasn't enough, was it? I'll give ye what ye deserve now!"

Fenton reached back with one hand to grasp the pistol he had thrust into his pocket when he had taken the bottle. Quickly the sergeant kicked the foot of Ted Wilson under the straw, and instantly the men arose, and before Fenton could act, had brought their guns to their shoulders and the reports rang out together. [415]

The pine robber pitched heavily forward, and lay dead upon the sand. Oh, it was horrible, awful! A sensation of sickness, of faintness, swept over Little Peter as he looked down upon the face of the dead outlaw.

"What's that? What's that?" said Ted quickly.

It was the sound of a gun not far away. It might be the answer of other bands of pine robbers to the volley which had just been fired; and hurriedly throwing the body of Fenton into the wagon, the sergeant turned his horses about and started swiftly back up the road.

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## CHAPTER XXXII

[416]

### CONCLUSION

IN spite of the heavy sand the horses were driven swiftly, until their heaving sides and dripping flanks compelled their driver to give them a much-needed rest. Ted Wilson and one of the soldiers then leaped lightly to the ground and ran into the woods on either side of the road to ascertain whether they were pursued or not.

As the silence of the great forest was unbroken they speedily returned, and the flight was resumed. No one was concealed beneath the straw in the wagon-box now, and every one stood waiting and ready to share in the defense which at any moment might become necessary.

On past the tall pine-trees, on through the heavy sandy road, rushed the returning party, and at last, when they obtained a glimpse of the open country, they breathed a sigh of relief as they realized that the danger of immediate pursuit was gone. It was not until nearly a year after this time that they learned that the gun they had heard had been discharged by De Bow, the desperate leader of another band of outlaws as evil in every way as those whom the detested Fenton had himself led. [417]

It was near the close of the day when the party, of which Little Peter was a member, drove up to Monmouth Court-House. Carelessly, almost brutally, the sergeant and one of his companions seized the body of the dead outlaw, and flinging it from the wagon into one of the trenches the soldiers had made, shouted, "Here's a cordial for your tories and wood robbers!"

Little Peter had no share in the rejoicing which followed when it was known that the pine robber was no more. It was true, he knew Fenton had richly deserved his fate, and that no more would the defenseless people of Old Monmouth suffer from the evil deeds of his marauding band. He, too, had known something of Fenton's wickedness, for he was motherless, homeless, and almost fatherless because of him, and his own body for many days bore the traces of his meeting with him on his return from the mill; but in spite of all that, his heart was sick whenever he thought of the dead face he had seen looking up at him from the wagon-box, and the brutal rejoicings of the men who had shot him near his abode among the pines. [418]

On the following day Tom Coward returned to Benzeor's house for a brief visit, reporting a very decided improvement in the condition of young Lieutenant Gordon. A long interview between Tom and Sarah followed, and as the troubled girl explained to the lad what she had learned concerning the evil deeds of her own father, and begged him to return and aid her in caring for the family in the presence of such dangers and perplexities, Tom could not find it in his heart to refuse. The kindness bestowed upon him in the home, and the obligations to repay as best he could the care he himself had received there, were too strong to be ignored, and greatly to the joy of Sarah and her mother he yielded to their urgent pleas. He had not yet enlisted in the army, and so was free to decide the question for himself.

He was aided in making the decision by the fact that Little Peter was also to remain. His own home had been destroyed, and as there was no place to which he could take his little brothers

and sisters, there was every reason why he should accept the invitation and increase the defenses of the household.

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It was not considered probable that Benzeor would return, nor was it known what had become of the man, who had gradually and yet steadily been drawn into the power of the pine robbers, until at last he was considered by them all as one of themselves, and indeed he was. Neither the boys nor Sarah knew then whither he had gone. Tom thought he might have been killed in the battle, and it was not until more than a year had passed that word came from the missing Benzeor; but where he had been and what he had been doing do not belong to this story.

On the day following the great battle of Monmouth, General Lee had, to a certain extent, recovered from his chagrin at the public rebuke General Washington had administered to him, and in his arrogance, and as a relief to his feeling of mortification, he wrote a childish letter to the commander, demanding an apology for the words he had spoken in the presence of the soldiers.

Washington's reply to Lee's letter was as follows:—

"SIR,—I received your letter, expressed, as I conceive, in terms highly improper. I am not conscious of making use of any very singular expressions, at the time of meeting you, as you intimate. What I recollect to have said was dictated by duty and warranted by the occasion. As soon as circumstances will permit, you shall have an opportunity of justifying yourself to the army, to Congress, to America, and to the world in general; or of convincing them that you were guilty of a breach of orders, and of misbehavior before the enemy on the 28th instant, in not attacking them as you had been directed, and in making an unnecessary, disorderly, and shameful retreat."

[420]

Lee's reply to this letter, as impudent as it was childish, certainly did not tend to elevate him in the estimation of the men of his own time, or of ours. His letter was as follows: "You cannot afford me greater pleasure than in giving me the opportunity of showing to America the sufficiency of her respective servants. I trust that temporary power of office, and the tinsel dignity attending it, will not be able, by all the mists they can raise, to obfuscate the bright rays of truth."

Washington's reply to this insulting letter was to arrest Lee. The traitor was at once court-martialed and charged with disobedience of orders, misbehavior on the field, making a disgraceful retreat, and also with gross disrespect to his commander-in-chief. The trial lasted more than a month, and the result was that Lee was suspended for the term of one year. If strict justice had been measured out to the man, doubtless he would not have escaped with so light a sentence; but Washington was merciful, and although Lee did not appreciate the kindness shown him, he owed his life to the man whose heart and mind were so much greater than his own.

[421]

General Washington did not long delay in Old Monmouth after the battle. The British army had gained New York, and so the American commander moved to the Hudson, and on the 20th of July went into camp at White Plains, having left some of the militia to look well to the needs of the country in which the great battle had been fought.

And Monmouth was a great battle. Not only did the men struggle with a determination such as has been seldom displayed, but the results of the engagement itself were also marked and strong. While the two armies, after Washington had gone to the Hudson and Clinton to New York, occupied much the same relative positions as in the latter part of '76, the motives which controlled each were exactly reversed. The Americans now became the aggressors, and the British were compelled to defend themselves.

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All this was intensified by the action of France. Benjamin Franklin had succeeded in arranging a treaty between that land and ours. France was to send a fleet of sixteen war vessels under D'Estaing to our shores, and also an army of four thousand men. It was the coming of this fleet which, as we know, caused the British to depart from Philadelphia and hasten to the defense of New York, which place they thought would be first attacked. The march of the redcoats and Hessians across New Jersey gave Washington an opportunity to pursue them, and while he failed in accomplishing all that he hoped, and much that he might have done had it not been for the treacherous actions of Lee, still he virtually had won a victory. He compelled the British to retreat with great losses, he strengthened his own position, he silenced his enemies in Congress, and, above all, he aroused a new feeling of hope and determination in the hearts of the struggling Americans.

The British very promptly declared war against France, and then coolly invited the Americans to join them, promising all that the colonists had asked three years before this time. The offer had come too late, however, for now the colonies had become States, and independence had been declared, and independence the new nation would have. So the war was continued, but the part which the new allies took and the further struggles of the determined Americans belong to another story.

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It only remains to refer briefly to the experiences of our friends, whose fortunes we have followed in the course of this book.

Lieutenant Gordon at last recovered from his wound. Tom Coward divided his time between caring for his friend and the labor on Benzeor's farm. In the former task he was aided by Friend Nathan Brown until such a time as the young lieutenant could be removed to his own home.

Friend Nathan had been unable to remain away from the battle of Monmouth, and while both his feelings and professions had prevented him from entering into the struggle, still his interest had been so intense that he had started from his home to the scene of the struggle. There he met Tom, and the part he then took in caring for the wounded young officer we already know.

[424]

Neither Tom nor Little Peter was idle. There was much work to be done on both farms, and the lads aided each other. The crop on the ten-acre lot was successfully grown and harvested, and the immediate problem of food in Benzeor's household was in a measure solved.

Indian John was never seen by our boys again. Whether he had been slain by the British or the pine robbers, or had departed from the homes of his ancestors for a region into which the redcoats and buffcoats did not enter, was never known. Both Tom and Little Peter were inclined to the latter conclusion, however, and their opinion was strengthened by the fact that "Charlie" Moluss, and his wife Bathsheba, and her sister "Suke" were never seen or heard from again.

Several times the boys made their way into Indian John's cave by the brook, but they never discovered any signs of their friend. He had forever disappeared, but his stories concerning the origin of the Jersey mosquitoes, his interpretations of the roar of the ocean and the calls of the sea-birds, and above all the assistance he had rendered Little Peter in the trying days of '78 were never forgotten.

[425]

Weeks had passed before Little Peter positively learned that Benzeor's statement concerning his father had been correct, but at last he received definite information that he was a prisoner in New York. What that meant to the troubled lad, few of us to-day can understand. The sufferings on board the prison-ships and in the prison-houses of New York almost baffle description; but we may be sure of one thing, and that is that Little Peter did not sit idly down, nor rest content to leave his father where he was without making some efforts in his behalf. But that, too, belongs to another record.

Barzilla Giberson and Jacob Vannote after the death of Fenton did not find it necessary to play a double part. They believed that their efforts to run the pine robbers to cover had been successful, and that now they could boldly and openly take their stand on the side of the patriots. And take that stand they did, and their services in the New Jersey militia are known in all the region of Old Monmouth.

Ted Wilson, with Jeshurun "waxen fatter" and consequently still more inclined to kick, returned to his home after the death of Fenton. He found Sallie and the babies safe at the Dennises, but all of the mighty Ted's former indifference as to his rulers had departed. The taste of the struggle he had had seemed only to whet his appetite for more, and not many days had passed before Ted and Jeshurun once more started forth in quest of service and adventure.

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Sarah Osburn labored faithfully and cheerfully for the welfare of her enlarged household, and the boys did not fail to appreciate her kindness. Tom thought he understood the motive which prompted much of her care for Little Peter's younger brothers and sisters, but throughout the long absence of Benzeor he never directly or indirectly referred to it.

There was a brief lull in the outrages and attacks of the pine robbers after the death of Fenton, but it was very brief. Stephen Burke (or Stephen Emmons as he was sometimes called), Stephen West, Ezekiel Williams, Jonathan West, Richard Bird, Davenport, De Bow, and others were yet living, and as each was the leader of a band as desperate as himself, and as all were as reckless and brave as Fenton had been, in a brief time the suffering people of Old Monmouth found that their troubles were by no means ended.

[427]

Redcoat and buffcoat were again to contend within their borders, salt-works and houses were to be burned, gunboats were to anchor off her shore and their crews were to engage in conflicts with the patriots; whigs and tories were not yet reconciled, the pine robbers were not yet subdued. Five long and terrible years of the struggle of the Revolution were yet to come, and the sands of Old Monmouth were again and again to be dyed by the blood of fallen men.

The waves which came creeping, crawling up the long sandy shore, the tall pine-trees whose tops whispered together as they bent beneath the summer winds and winter storms, the fertile plains and noble forests of oak and chestnut, were unchanged; but the struggling men and women of Old Monmouth were yet to endure the bitter hardships and fierce contests, which the closing days of the Revolution brought to them in greater numbers than to almost any other people of our land.

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### Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

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