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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NEAL, THE MILLER: A SON OF LIBERTY ***

NEAL, THE MILLER A SON OF LIBERTY

BY
JAMES OTIS

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CHAPTER I THE PROJECT

"I fear you are undertaking too much, Neal. When a fellow lacks two years of his majority—"

"You forget that I have been my own master more than a year. Father gave me my time before he died, and that in the presence of Governor Wentworth himself."

"Why before him rather than 'Squire White?'"

"I don't know. My good friend Andrew McCleary attended to the business for me, and to-day I

may make contracts as legally as two years hence."

"Even with that advantage I do not see how it will be possible for you to build a grist-mill; or, if you should succeed in getting so far with the project, how you can procure the machinery. It is such an undertaking as Andrew McCleary himself would not venture."

"Yet he has promised me every assistance in his power."

"And how much may that be? He has no friends at court who can—"

"Neither does he wish for one there, Stephen Kidder. He is a man who has the welfare of the colonists too much at heart to seek for friends near the throne."

"It is there he will need them if he hopes to benefit New Hampshire."

"Perhaps not. The time is coming when it behooves each of us to observe well the law regarding our arms."

"You mean the statute which declares that 'every male from sixteen to sixty must have ready for use one musket and bayonet, a knapsack, cartridge-box, one pound of powder, twenty bullets and twelve flints?'"

"There is none other that I know of."

"Then I shall not be a law-breaker, for I am provided in due form. But what has that to do with your mill? I think you will find it difficult to buy the stamped paper necessary for the lawful making of your contracts unless you dispose of your outfit for war or hunting, which is the best to be found in Portsmouth."

"That I shall never do, even if I fail in getting the mill. Do you know, Stephen, that I was admitted to the ranks of the Sons of Liberty last night?"

"The honours are being heaped high on the head of the would-be miller of the Pascataqua," Kidder replied, with a laugh. "Do you expect the Sons of Liberty will do away with the necessity for stamped paper?"

"Who shall say? Much can—"

Walter Neal did not conclude the sentence, for at that instant two men passed, and a signal, so slight as not to be observed by his companion, was given by one of the new-comers, causing the young man to hasten away without so much as a word in explanation of his sudden departure, while Stephen Kidder stood gazing after him in blank amazement.

The two friends whose conversation was so suddenly interrupted were natives of the town of Portsmouth, in the Province of New Hampshire; and, had either had occasion to set down the date of this accidental meeting, it would have been written, October 26th, 1765.

As has been suggested, Walter Neal's ambition was to erect a grist-mill a certain distance up the Pascataqua River, where was great need of one, since land in that portion of the province was being rapidly settled; and, although without capital, he believed it might be possible for him to accomplish his desires.

He was favourably known to the merchants of Portsmouth, and thanks to the efforts of his friend, Andrew McCleary,—ten years his senior,—several tradesmen had intimated that perhaps they might advance sufficient money to start the enterprise in a limited way.

Neal had inherited a small amount of property from his father; but, like many of the farmers in the New World, he was sadly hampered by the lack of ready money. During several weeks prior to this accidental meeting with Stephen Kidder, he had been forced to temporarily abandon his scheming in regard to the mill, that he might try to raise sufficient money with which to pay the annual tax, already more than burdensome, upon his small estate.

As Neal hastened after the two men who had given him the signal to follow them, the most engrossing thought in his mind was as to how the amount of four pounds and seven shillings in cash could be raised without a sacrifice of the cattle from the home farm.

Ephraim Foulsham had partially agreed to advance the sum if he could be secured by a chattel-mortgage, and when Neal overtook those in advance he was speculating upon the possibility of getting the amount that day, lest execution should be issued against him.

That which he heard, however, speedily drove all thoughts of a personal nature from his mind. "Master McCleary would be pleased to see you, and quickly," one of the men said, in a low tone, when the three were where there was no other to overhear the conversation.

"Is it important I should go at once?"

"Yes; unless you would break the oath you took last night."

Neal waited to ask no more questions. Ten minutes later he was at Samuel Leavitt's store, where he knew McCleary would be found at this time of the day.

Before Neal could speak, his friend walked quickly out of the building toward the shore of the harbour, giving the would-be mill-owner an expressive look, which plainly told that he was to follow.

Not until McCleary was at a point where no one could approach him without being seen did he halt, and then Neal was by his side.

"A messenger must be sent to Boston at once," the elder man said, in a low tone. "It is not generally known that you have been admitted to our association, therefore you are the one to go."

"When shall I start?"

"At once; there is no time to be lost. Will you ride my horse?"

"My Own will serve me better; suspicions might be aroused if I should be seen on yours."

"Very true; I had not thought of that. You are to make all speed, and go direct to Master Revere's. Say to him that George Messerve, who has been appointed distributor of the tax stamps for New Hampshire, will arrive in Boston shortly, if, indeed, he is not already there. Tell Master Revere that the feeling in our section grows stronger against this last imposition every day, until there is danger lest the excesses which marked the 26th of August in Boston may be repeated here. He will understand what it is we want him to do."

"Shall I have time—"

"You will not have time for delay. Start at once, and as you perform this mission, so will you be benefiting yourself in the project of the mill."

"It does not require I should know that in order to be faithful to the trust imposed upon me. I was about to ask if I should have time to attend to raising the amount of my taxes, for I have twice been warned that they are due."

"I will see to it that you do not suffer by the delay. Go at once, and let nothing detain you; we expect the message will be delivered early to-morrow morning." Neal's home lay two miles west of Portsmouth, and without waiting to attend to the business for which he had visited the town, he hastened toward it at a rapid pace. His mind was easy in regard to the payment of the taxes, for McCleary would keep every promise made, and when he returned it should be possible to make the necessary arrangements with Ephraim Foulsham within twenty-four hours.

When he arrived in view of the log-house which his father had built twenty years previous, Walter understood that something out of the ordinary course of events had happened. The doors of the barn were open, and his mother stood in front of the building, as if in deepest distress. A portion of the rail-fence which enclosed the buildings was torn down, and the cart that had been left by the side of the road was no longer to be seen.

"You could not borrow the money?" his mother said, interrogatively, while he was yet some distance away.

"I haven't had an opportunity to see Master Foulsham. What has happened?"

"The worst, my son, that could befall us at this time. The officers have attached the cattle and the horse. Even if you can borrow money, the costs of the action will eat up all we had to live on this coming winter."

"The horse gone!" Walter exclaimed, as if in bewilderment.

"We could better spare him just now than the cattle, because of the work yet to be done."

Neal was not at that moment thinking of the farm duties, nor yet of the mill, which was more distant in the future than before, but only of the fact that it was necessary he should be in Boston on the following morning.

Hurriedly he explained to his mother why it was he must leave home, and added in conclusion,—

"Master McCleary has promised that I shall not suffer because of the delay in paying the tax, and I am certain he will keep faith with me."

"And do you intend to leave home now?"

"I must; there are those who depend upon me, and they shall not be disappointed."

"I am afraid, Walter, you are pursuing the wrong course. It is best that wiser and older heads than yours should be concerned in the struggle which must come, if the people resist this new tax."

"Father would have done as I am doing; and, since I am to fill his place, it is fit I should do what I can."

"But how will you reach Boston without a horse or money?"

Walter hesitated. By returning to Portsmouth he could get the animal which McCleary had proposed he should ride, and yet to do so would delay him greatly, in addition to the possibility of arousing suspicion against his friend.

By leaving the main road six miles farther on, and striking across a tract of wooded country, the distance could be reduced materially; but even then there would remain at least fifty miles to be traversed.

"I can walk to Salem," he said, at length; "and there, William Cotton will provide me with a horse."

"It is a desperate journey, and dangerous, if some should learn why you had undertaken it. I —"

"You would not bid me stay, mother, but rather urge me forward. I have no time to lose."

"You will at least wait until I can put up some food."

"Yes; it will be necessary to eat, I suppose. Bread and cheese will be enough, and even that must be got together quickly."

Mrs. Neal made no attempt to dissuade her son from his purpose. That which he had said concerning his father had been sufficient to silence her on the score of danger; and, when the small store of provisions were wrapped in a stout piece of cloth and placed in the pocket of his coat, she kissed him, but did not dare trust her voice to speak.

With a stout hickory stick as a walking-cane, Walter set out, and there was sufficient in his mind to provide ample food for thought during the first two hours of the journey. He was not at all certain that, now that the cost of making an attachment of his property was to be added to the amount of his tax, Ephraim Foulsham would be willing to advance the money; and, even if the sum could be raised in such a manner, it was so much increased that he could not hope to see the wished-for mill under erection until another season at the earliest.

At the end of the second hour he had accomplished at least nine miles of the distance, and could well afford to indulge in a brief halt while partaking of his food.

"Nine miles from home means eleven from Portsmouth," he said aloud, as if the sound of his own voice gave him encouragement. "By this path Salem cannot be more than twenty-four miles away, and I must make it in five hours in order to reach Boston by sunrise. It can be done if I do not allow myself too much time in which to rest my legs, and—"

He ceased speaking very suddenly, for at that instant, as if they had descended from the clouds, two horsemen stood before him.

The moss-covered path had deadened the sound of the animals' approach as they came up from the rear.

Walter recognized both the new-comers. The foremost was Samuel Haines, a man who had made an unsuccessful attempt to get the appointment to distribute stamped paper in New Hampshire, and the other James Albert, a half-breed Indian, who was well known in Portsmouth as a quarrelsome fellow, ready to take part in any business, however disreputable, so long as he was provided with an ample supply of rum.

Walter nodded familiarly to Haines, but paid no attention to the Indian.

"Wait a moment, Master Neal," the former said, gravely, as Walter attempted to pass him. "Where are you going that you cannot stop for a short converse?"

"On business which admits of no delay."

"Do you expect to walk from here to Boston before daylight?"

"Who said I was going to Boston?"

"Perhaps I guessed as much."

"Then kindly guess that I can't wait here simply for the pleasure of talking with Master Haines."

"I shan't try to do that, my rebellious friend. When Jim gets ready—"

Walter half turned to see what part the Indian was to play in this interview, and as he did so the fellow's arms were around him, pinioning his own to his side.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried, angrily, as he tried in vain to release himself.

"It means, Master Neal, that I wish to see the message you carry," and Haines, dismounting, hastily searched the prisoner's pockets.

"You have found yourself mistaken as sadly as when you believed the king would give you the dirty work of selling stamped paper," Walter said, with a laugh, noting the look of disappointment on Haines's face when he failed to find any document.

"You have been intrusted to deliver the message by word of mouth, and it will serve my purpose as well if I prevent you from calling on that seditious Revere. Here, Jim, tie him to a tree with this," and Haines drew from his saddle-bags a piece of stout rope.

It was in vain Walter struggled; taken at a disadvantage as he had been, he was powerless, and in a few moments was bound securely to a tree, while his captors threw themselves on the ground in front of him, as if to make a long stay.

"If you repeat what you were told to say to Revere, I will see to it that you are made more comfortable," Haines said, after a long pause.

"And what then?"

"We shall make certain you don't return to Portsmouth for two or three days, that is all."

"If I have a message to deliver, I will keep it to myself, instead of intrusting it to you," Walter said, grimly; but his mind was sorely troubled, for he realized that if he should be delayed here no more than four hours the information he was to give might arrive too late.

CHAPTER II

THE ESCAPE

During the hour which followed Walter's capture the two men remained close at hand, while their horses were allowed to stroll along the path, eating grass, and at the expiration of that time the animals could no longer either be seen or heard.

"Go and bring them back, Jim!" Haines said, in a peremptory tone. "It would be a hard job for us if they should stray too far."

The half-breed hesitated an instant, as if undecided whether to obey this command, and then, rising slowly to his feet, he slouched down the path lazily.

After the brief conversation which had followed the capture of Walter, neither of the men had spoken until this moment; but as soon as his comrade disappeared among the bushes, Haines said, in what he intended should sound like a friendly tone,—

"I am sorry to see a promising young man like you, Neal, led astray by these fanatics, who dream of opposing his majesty's just and wise laws. You have too much solid sense to train in any such company."

"You seem to have a remarkably good opinion of me," Walter said, grimly.

"So I have, lad, so I have. I know you have been hoping to build a mill of your own on the Pascataqua, and am interested in the project, for it is a sensible one: there is plenty of money to be made in that section."

"According to appearances now I shan't reap any very large harvest this year."

"It depends upon yourself. If you had kept proper company there would have been no attachment made to-day.

"How did you know anything about that?" Walter asked, sharply.

"I heard the matter discussed, and feel certain you would have been given more time but for your own very unwise move last night."

"Then you know—"

Walter stopped suddenly on realizing that he was about to betray a secret, but Haines finished the remark.

"That you enrolled yourself among that rabble who call themselves the Sons of Liberty? Yes; I

know it, and so do others."

"It seems I am of more importance than I fancied. I never supposed anything I did could make any difference to the good people of Portsmouth; but I was mistaken."

"It concerns right-minded people anywhere when a boy who stands on the threshold of manhood makes a grievous mistake."

"That remains to be proven."

"And it will be speedily, as you must learn to your cost. If you really want a mill on the Pascataqua, I will show you how it can be built at once."

"I should like to learn the secret."

"Abandon the evil companions you have chosen, reveal such of their plots against his majesty's officers as you are acquainted with, and I guarantee that a sufficient sum of money to put up the buildings and purchase the machinery shall be loaned you within twenty-four hours."

"I am a fool not to have understood the drift of your conversation before it reached this point," Walter said, hotly. "I had rather never own a mill than get it as you propose; and as for evil companions, I am proud to have been allowed to join them."

"You will soon regret it."

"So you have said before; but since I have little faith in such predictions, suppose you change the subject by explaining why you hold me prisoner, and how long I am to be kept in this uncomfortable position?"

"There is no reason why both questions should not be answered. You are to remain in my custody till George Messerve arrives in Portsmouth, in order that your friends may not intimidate him, and it will be necessary to stay exactly as you are several hours longer."

Walter asked no more questions. He understood it was the purpose of his captors to keep him out of sight, that McCleary might believe his messenger had gotten through to Boston in safety; and, in the meanwhile, someone else would be sent to warn the newly-appointed distributor of stamped paper of something—Walter could not divine what—which might be attempted against him.

Ten minutes passed in silence, and then the voice of the half-breed could be heard far away in the distance, calling to his comrade.

With an exclamation of impatience, Haines rose to his feet, gave a careless glance at the rope which bound Walter, and then replied to the Indian as he went quickly in the direction from which the hail had come.

Left alone, Walter looked around, as if expecting to see some one who might aid him, and then tugged and strained at his bonds, trying to wrench free either hand or foot.

The rope had been tied too securely to admit of his slipping a knot, but it was nearly new, and the prisoner's heart beat fast as he realized that by exerting all his strength it would be possible to stretch it a trifle.

If he could succeed in making his escape immediately, all might yet be well; but if he was forced to remain there until his captors returned, there was little chance he would have another opportunity.

Regardless of the pain, he writhed and twisted until bead-like drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead, and at the instant when he was convinced all efforts were useless, that portion of the rope which confined his wrists suddenly loosened sufficiently to enable him to withdraw one hand at the expense of no slight amount of skin from the knuckles.

Once he was thus far on the road to escape, the remainder was comparatively simple.

With the hand which was free he untied the knots, and in less than five minutes from the time Haines disappeared among the foliage, he was at liberty.

The only thought in his mind now was to take such a course as would best enable him to elude his pursuers, and he knew full well that the half-breed could track him where the white man would be wholly at a loss to find a trace of his movements.

"Its hard to turn back, but it must be done," he said, half to himself, as he hesitated the merest fraction of time, and then ran down the path in the same direction from which he had come.

He had hardly started when the sound of horse's hoofbeats caused his cheek to grow pale. He had regained his liberty only to lose it!

Involuntarily he glanced backward, and then a low cry of satisfaction burst from his lips.

The horse coming down the path was riderless. It was the animal Haines had ridden, and apparently much the better steed of the two.

Turning quickly, Walter ran toward the horse, seized him by the bridle before he had time to wheel around, and in another second was in the saddle.

A short riding-whip hung from the pommel, and with this the fugitive struck the animal sharply as he forced him directly into the underbrush toward the south.

Fortunately, Walter was well acquainted with this section of the country, having been over it many times with his father, and knew exactly which direction to take in order to gain that portion of the forest where it would be possible to ride at a reasonably rapid gait before venturing on the path again.

His escape, however, was not to be as simple as at first seemed. Before he was twenty yards from the starting point a loud cry in the rear told that his departure had been discovered, and this was followed almost immediately by the report of a pistol.

"If you don't do anything worse than shoot, I shan't come to much grief," he said, with a laugh. "Master Haines is not as wise a man as I have supposed him to be if he thinks it is possible to bring his game down by firing at random, for he surely can't see me."

Walter failed to realize that his movements could be plainly heard, even though he was hidden from view by the foliage, and soon the sounds of pursuit reached his ear.

"There is no need of the Indian while my horse is floundering among the bushes," he muttered to himself. "Haines has mounted the other animal,—was probably on his back before I started, and counts on riding me down. He can do it, too!" Walter exclaimed, in a louder tone. "Once he is where I can serve as a target, the chase will be brought to a speedy end."

Now he understood that if he hoped to escape he must return to the path, where the horse would have an opportunity to show his speed, and he wheeled him suddenly around, regardless of the risk of coming directly upon Haines.

Fortunately his pursuer was not as near as he had fancied, and soon he was riding at the best possible pace over the narrow path. He had emerged beyond the spot where the half-breed was stationed, and before him was nothing to jeopardize safety; it only remained to distance the white man.

Two miles were traversed in a remarkably short space of time, and then he was on that portion of the road which ran in a straight line through a sort of clearing. That it was possible for his pursuer to see him during a certain time was shown, as a bullet whistled within an inch of the fugitive's head.

"That makes two shots, my friend," he said, as if to keep up his courage. "Unless I am mistaken, you had only a couple of pistols, and by the time they are reloaded I shall be screened by the bushes again."

That his calculations were not correct was shown as a second ball passed uncomfortably close, and a third tore through his coat-sleeve, causing the warm blood to gush down over his hand.

"Only a scratch, nothing more!" he shouted, and then he was among the friendly shelter of the trees again.

The horse upon which Haines rode could not hold the pace, and when half an hour had elapsed no sound of pursuit was heard.

It was time Walter gave the captured animal a breathing spell, if he hoped to reach Salem as he had calculated, and he brought him to a standstill while he pulled off his coat to examine the wound on his arm.

It was rather deeper than a scratch, but yet nothing more serious than to cause a goodly show of blood, and Walter put on his coat again without a thought that any bandaging might be necessary.

This done, he rode on at a more leisurely pace, but listening intently for any sound betokening the approach of his enemy.

Nothing occurred to cause him alarm, and it was not yet sunset when he drew rein in front of William Cotton's store.

That gentleman was in and disengaged, as was seen when he came to the door for a view of the new arrival.

"What! Is it you, Walter Neal?"

"There is no doubt about it in my mind, although my joints are so stiff from long riding that if I was less acquainted with myself I might believe I was only a portion of the saddle," Walter said, laughingly, as he dismounted, and added, in a graver tone, "I must speak with you alone, Friend Cotton."

"I am alone now. Take your horse to the stable, and come back at once."

"I will leave him where he is; perhaps it will not be well for you to know anything about him." And then hurriedly entering the store, Walter explained why he must reach Boston without delay, after which he gave a brief account of his misadventures.

William Cotton, although a sympathizer with those who were about to offer resistance to the commands of his most gracious majesty, was a prudent man, and feared to be known as a disloyal citizen.

The fact that Samuel Haines would probably soon arrive in search of his horse caused Master Cotton no little disquietude of mind, and he said, reprovingly,—

"It is well to be zealous in a good cause, Walter; but it is wrong to commit a crime in order to compass your own ends."

"What crime have I committed?"

"The theft of the horse will be charged against you, and those who are intrusted with the execution of the law do not favour such an association as that in which you have enlisted."

"My getting possession of him was the fortune of war, not a theft. I was a prisoner, made so unlawfully, and had the right to escape as best I could."

"That argument is good here; but will be of little avail to those who look upon you as a disloyal youth, who should be deprived of his liberty."

"If I am to be charged with horse-stealing because of what has been done, it cannot be avoided now. Before I am arrested I must carry the message with which I have been entrusted, and to do so I need another horse. I had believed I could get one from you without difficulty."

"So you can, lad but at the same time you must not think hardly of me if I use proper precaution to save myself from being caught in the meshes of the law. You know where my stable is. Take an animal from there without my permission, and I cannot prevent it."

"I am to steal another horse in order that you may not get into trouble?"

"It can make but little difference to you, so long as you see Master Revere by daylight, and I must not neglect my own interests. No one has seen you, and you may be able to get out of town secretly."

Walter could not afford to waste any more time in what seemed very like quibbling, and without further parley he turned to act upon his friend's suggestion.

"It is not well that you remain in Boston any longer than may be absolutely necessary for your business," the worthy Master Cotton called after him, warningly. "There is that being done which you need not be identified with."

Walter made no reply; but when he was out of the building on his way to the stable, he muttered to himself,—

"If I was as timorous as you, Master Cotton, I should now be in the company of Sam Haines, with a rope tied tightly about me."

Five minutes later he was riding out of Salem at full speed on the fleetest horse to be found in the stable, and there was every reason for him to believe that he would, in due season, deliver the message with which he had been charged.

CHAPTER III

IN BOSTON

The light of the coming day had not yet appeared in the eastern sky when the young messenger drew rein at the edge of Charlestown harbour, and sat in the saddle, gazing curiously around, as he speculated upon the chances of being ferried across to Boston.

It was well the journey was ended, for the heaving flanks of Master Cotton's horse told that

he had been ridden so long at full speed as to be well-nigh exhausted.

Immediately on leaving Salem, Walter had debated in his mind as to the choice of roads. By making a long detour he could ride directly into the city of his destination; but it would be at the expense of considerable time, which he believed to be precious.

On the other hand, by traversing the shortest road he would, as he now did, find himself penniless, with a broad stretch of water to be crossed before the message could be delivered.

"I shall get over in some way," he had said, as he arrived at a decision, and now was come the time when that "some way" must be found.

"It is certain I shan't be able to take the horse with me," he said, after a brief time of silence, "and I must look around for a place in which he can be hidden."

By riding slowly along the shore-line, he soon found a spot where the grass was luxuriant, which was hidden from view of those on the road by a heavy growth of trees, and here he resolved Master Cotton's horse should be left to take care of itself. It was not probable the tired animal would stray very far from where food could be had in such abundance, and Walter made no other preparation for the halt than to secrete the saddle and bridle in the thicket.

Returning to the landing-stage of the ferry-boat, he waited impatiently for some signs of life on the water-front.

During fully half an hour he was forced to remain in idleness, while he mentally reproached himself for not having taken the longest road, and thereby arrived in Boston without being forced to depend upon a boat to conclude the journey.

More than once was he tempted to take possession of one of the small craft hauled up on the shore without the formality of asking the owner's permission, but the thought that he had already put himself in a position to be charged with theft deterred him from such a lawless proceeding.

Then, just as the day was beginning to break, a boat filled with sailors rowed up to the landing. All the occupants save one disembarked without paying any attention to the idle boy who was watching them intently, and the little craft was being pushed off, when Walter cried,—

"If you are going back to Boston I will gladly work the oars to pay for my passage."

"Can you row?"

"As well as you."

"Then come aboard, and let me see how quickly you can pull to the other shore."

The young messenger did not require a second invitation. He gave the boat a vigorous push with his foot as he clambered over the bow, and the man in charge had no reason to complain of his skill at the oars.

"If you want work, you should buy a boat and ply your trade as a waterman," the sailor said, when the short voyage had come to an end, and Walter leaped ashore, impatient to conclude the mission with which he had been intrusted.

"I want work that will pay," he said, halting for an instant; "but I don't intend to find it as a boatman. Can you tell me where Master Paul Revere lives?"

"Do you mean the lieutenant,—him as has set up for a goldsmith?"

"The very one."

"And you count on goin' into a shop, instead of pullin' boats, eh? I'll wager you're a sailor who has given his captain the slip."

"I have never been beyond the sight of land, neither do I care to work in a shop; but I have business which admits of no delay, and if you will give me the information I shall be very grateful."

"Do you know where North Square is?"

"I have never been in Boston before."

"Then inquire of the first one you see. It is not far."

Walter waited to hear no more, but ran swiftly on in the direction he supposed North Square might lay, and a kindly fortune guided his footsteps, for when he had an opportunity to ask the desired question, he was within a few paces of his destination.

Master Revere's shop was not yet opened, but the young messenger had little difficulty in

arousing the household, and a few moments later he was standing in a room which, although not furnished with any pretension to elegance, was more rich in ornamentation than Walter had ever fancied could be found.

Master Revere did not keep him waiting very long; he had received too many visitors at unseemly hours to make any delay, and the sun had but just risen when Walter's mission was accomplished.

"You have come in good time, young sir," Master Revere said, when the boy had repeated the message.

"The ship on which the stamp distributor for the Province of New Hampshire sailed from London arrived last evening. I will see him at once, and before noon you shall take to your friends such information as I have to give. In the meanwhile you will eat breakfast, and then my eldest son shall act as host, unless you prefer to sleep, for you have been travelling all night."

"I can sleep later, sir; but now that I am in Boston I would like to see the city."

"So you shall. You will find much that is fair and comely to look upon; but beneath all the air of bravery is the disquietude of oppression, and the sense of wrongs yet to be wiped out."

"In the province from which I have come we believe the remedy for oppression to be among ourselves, sir," Walter replied, modestly.

"So it is, lad; and may you be one not lacking in wholesome love for your country when the time for action arrives."

"I fear a boy like me will be of but little service."

"The boys may be men before the time for stirring deeds shall come," Master Revere said, much as if speaking to himself; and then he added, quickly, "You will break your fast with me."

Walter was not accustomed to such a meal as was speedily placed before him; but the novelty of his surroundings did not prevent him from doing full justice to the food.

When the master of the house set out to perform the duty expected of him by his friends in Portsmouth, young John took charge of the guest, and from that time until nearly noon Walter feasted his eyes upon such wonders as he had never even dreamed about.

His first visit was to the magnificent building presented to the city by Peter Faneuil, and then to that elm at the head of Essex Street beneath the branches of which the association known as the Sons of Liberty had sprung into existence.

Here young Revere told him what had occurred during the month of August, when on the tree he was then gazing at had been found hanging an effigy of Andrew Oliver, his majesty's distributor of stamps for the Province of Massachusetts, and a boot, symbolical of Lord Bute, with Satan peeping out of it as he displayed a copy of the Stamp Act. John also described the scenes when the more lawless members of the community destroyed the building which had been erected as the office for the sale of stamps, and the dwelling of the Lieutenant Governor was sacked.

"Does your father believe it is by such a course we can be relieved of oppression?" Walter asked in surprise, as John Revere concluded his story with an account of the violence offered to several others of the king's officers.

"By no means. He was among those who gave public expressions of regret that such deeds should have been done."

Then young Revere told of the town-meeting which was held immediately following the scenes of violence, and by the time he had concluded, the boys were on North Square again, where Master Revere was ready to deliver the message Walter was to take back to Portsmouth. "I have seen Master George Messerve," he said, "and believe he fully sympathizes with us. He has already publicly resigned the office of stamp distributor, and I doubt not will be found on our side when the decisive moment comes."

Walter understood that with the message given was an intimation for him to depart, and although he could have done full justice to a dinner, he took his leave without delay.

There is no question but that Master Revere would have been more than willing to both feed the young messenger and provide him with sufficient funds to pay his passage across to Charlestown in the ferry-boat had he any idea that Walter was penniless. The boy made no explanations, and his host could not but believe he was fully and properly prepared for the long journey before him.

Walter did not have as good fortune on his return as in the morning. When he arrived at the shore he saw several boats going to and fro, but the afternoon was considerably more than half spent before he succeeded in finding a boatman who would allow him to work his passage.

Then, when he finally landed on the opposite shore, an hour was spent in searching for the horse, which had wandered into the woods, and by the time the boy was ready to begin the return journey the sun hung low in the sky.

"It will be another night-ride," he muttered, as he leaped into the saddle. "I did hope to reach Salem early in the evening, and so I might have done had I been possessed of enough money to pay my ferriage. Master Revere would have given it to me, but I could not tell him that I, who had been received into the ranks of the Sons of Liberty, had not so much as a shilling."

He was comparatively fresh when he drew rein in front of Master Cotton's stable shortly before midnight, and although the time could well have been spent in slumber, he devoted an hour to caring for the weary steed who had borne him so bravely.

To awaken Master Cotton was not a portion of Walter's plan. That gentleman had shown himself to be of such a timid nature that the young messenger believed he would not be pleased at receiving any information; therefore, as soon as the horse had been cared for, he started out of Salem on foot, intending to make himself a bed on the ground when he should be within shelter of the woods.

As he walked rapidly on in the cool night air, feeling refreshed because of the opportunity of stretching his legs after sitting in the saddle so long, the desire for slumber fled from his eyes. There was no reason why he should halt until he felt drowsy again, and he continued on, thinking alternately of what he had accomplished, of the mill he hoped at some future time to see erected on the small tract of land bordering the Pascataqua River which his father had bequeathed him, and of the taxes to be paid by some means within twenty-four hours of his arrival.

With so much to occupy his mind, he forgot his weariness, and the hours went by without his being aware of the passage of time.

When he first realized how near he was to the starting point of his long journey, a rosy light in the east told of the coming sun, and he marveled that the night had gone so quickly.

Half an hour later, as the knowledge of distance traversed brought with it weariness, and he was about to seek a thicket where his slumbers would not be disturbed, a noise as of some one approaching brought him to a full stop.

In another instant he recognized the form of his friend, Stephen Kidder, in the distance, and he ran toward him, crying,—

"What brings you here at this hour, Stephen?"

"I left home at midnight to meet you."

"Meet me? It would have been easier to have waited I there until I arrived."

"It is to prevent your arrival that I have come," and Stephen had very much the appearance of a bearer of evil tidings.

"What is the matter? Why do you look so glum? Is my mother well?"

"Yes; but sorrowing."

"Tell me what has happened."

"Your cattle and horses have been sold by the sheriff."

"How can that be? It is not forty-eight hours since they were attached,"

"That is true; but yet they have been sold, Samuel Haines is at the bottom of the mischief, and he it was who bought them. He is now declaring you shall be arrested for stealing his horse, and Master McCleary sent me to warn you not to come home until the matter can be arranged."

"Not go home!" Walter repeated, like one bewildered. "Where, then, shall I go?"

"Your mother bade me ask you why you did not visit the land on the Pascataqua? It is not likely you would be searched for there, and I should be able to find you whenever it might be necessary."

Walter was silent a few moments, as if trying to understand all that had befallen him, and then said, slowly,—

"Haines would never dare to have me arrested. He took me prisoner unlawfully, and I had a right to make my escape if possible."

"That is very true; yet, because you are one of the Sons of Liberty, Master McCleary thinks an arrest will surely follow."

"Is it not safe for me to see my mother a few moments?"

"She herself told me to warn you against coming. That half-breed, Jim, has been seen near the farm twice since yesterday noon, and he can be there for no other purpose than to give notice of your arrival."

"But, Stephen, I can't go up the Pascataqua without some preparation. I must at least have my musket and ammunition; otherwise, I would stand a good chance of starving to death."

"I have arranged for that portion of the business. Your knapsack, well filled by your mother, and everything you may need during a few weeks in the woods, is hidden a couple of miles down the road. I brought the things as far away from the farm as I thought necessary, and then left them in the bushes."

CHAPTER IV ON THE PASCATAQUA

Twenty-four hours after Stephen Kidder had warned Walter Neal against returning to Portsmouth the latter was skirting the west bank of the Pascataqua River, within sight of the tract of land whereon he hoped to see at some day a grist-mill owned by himself.

When Stephen selected such goods as he thought Walter might need during his enforced retreat, he did not neglect anything which would possibly be useful to the fugitive, and the result was that when the young messenger started through the pathless forest, his load was so heavy as to retard his progress very decidedly.

Therefore it was that on the following morning he had not yet arrived at his proposed destination, although it was but a comparatively short distance from Portsmouth.

He had slept in the woods where night overtook him, and at the first faint light of day was making a frugal breakfast of the bread and cheese sent by his mother.

When the gloom of night had been dispersed by the heralds of the approaching sun, Walter was at that point on the river from which he could see the landmarks of his tract, and the knowledge that he was about to enter on his own possessions served to cheer his drooping spirits.

"If it is necessary to skulk around here in the woods to avoid being seen by Sam Haines, there is no reason why I should not make the most of my time," he said to himself, as hope began to spring up once more in his breast. "There is little chance I shall be able to raise any money for the mill now, when I have been defrauded of a goodly portion of my poor possessions, but I can at least make preparations for the day when I shall be in a position to carry out my plans. It is better to work than remain idle."

It was the first time since he took leave of his friend Stephen that the mental burden had been lightened, and now he pressed forward eagerly, impatient to begin the work resolved upon.

There was very much which he could do toward making ready for the erection of that wished-for mill, and he felt confident the labour would not be useless, although performed so far in advance of the building operations.

With this idea in mind, his first care was to select the most advantageous spot for a mill, and to this end he deposited his burden on the shore of the river, where it could readily be found again, after which he set about inspecting the property.

He spent several hours in this work, and had fully decided upon the location for the building when he was startled by hearing what sounded very like a human voice among the underbrush a short distance from the shore.

With his gun held ready for instant use in case any danger threatened, he went cautiously in the direction from which the noise appeared to have come, and after a brief time threw aside the weapon with an exclamation of dismay.

In a dense portion of the forest, where were several aged trees partially decayed at their base, he dimly saw the figure of a man, apparently pinned to the ground by the heavy branches of a fallen hemlock.

He was sufficiently versed in woodcraft to understand that the unfortunate had either felled a tree which had fallen upon him, or passed beneath one of the giants of the forest at the precise moment when its rotten trunk gave way under the burden of the enormous top.

A low moan from the sufferer told he was yet alive, and at the same time proclaimed that

relief must soon come if death was to be cheated of its prey.

"Hold out a few minutes longer, friend," Walter cried, cheerily. "I must have an axe before I can do very much toward getting you free from that timber."

There was no reply; the poor wretch's strength was nearly exhausted, and the boy understood that he must work, with all possible speed if he would save a human life.

"It seems that my coming here may be of more use than simply hiding from Sam Haines," he cried, as he ran with all speed toward the spot where the goods had been left. "I have been grumbling because Stephen brought an axe instead of a hatchet, but now I should be able to do very little without it."

Ten minutes later he was chopping furiously at the imprisoning branches, using due care to prevent additional injury to the helpless man, and when so much of the foliage had been cut away as to give him a clear view of what was beneath, he exclaimed in surprise,—

"An Indian! What could have brought him so near the town?"

Then he forgot the colour of the sufferer, thought not of what his kind had done in the way of savage cruelty to helpless women and children, but devoted all his strength and energies to releasing him.

The wretch was so nearly dead as to be unable to render any assistance to his would-be rescuer, and at least half an hour elapsed before Walter could drag him from beneath the heavy weight which had so nearly deprived him of life.

When this work was accomplished, it seemed to have been in vain, so far as saving life was concerned; but, fortunately, Walter did not cease his efforts. Dragging the apparently lifeless body to the river, he applied such restoratives as were at hand, and after a short time had the satisfaction of seeing the red man open his eyes.

"Better not try," he said, as the Indian attempted to speak. "You have had such a squeezing as would discourage a bear, and it will take some time to get over it. Luckily I haven't much of anything to do except take care of you, and I'll warrant we shall soon have you around as well as ever. So far as I can make out, no bones have been broken, though I doubt if you could go through the same experience again and come out anywhere near whole."

There was nothing more he could do to relieve the sufferer, and after cautioning him to remain quiet, Walter set about putting up some kind of a shelter against the elements.

A "lean-to" of brush was soon erected, and in one corner the boy made a bed of fir boughs, upon which he placed the sufferer, who, after the first attempt, made no effort to speak.

Walter divided with the Indian his store of bread and cheese, and had the satisfaction of seeing the latter eat heartily.

"I reckon you're all right if you can get away with as much food as a well person, and it's time I did something toward laying in a stock of provisions. Will you stay here while I go after game? There are partridges enough, even though deer should be shy."

"I wait," the Indian said, with a sigh as of relief; and the boy, gun in hand, plunged into the thicket.

The result of this first hunting excursion was half a dozen plump birds, and Walter had seen such signs as told he would have but little difficulty in bagging a deer on the following morning.

During the remainder of the day Walter acted as nurse and cook; but never once did the Indian speak.

Next morning, before the sun appeared, he was out to replenish the larder, returning with the hind-quarters of a deer and, when a plentiful supply of steaks from these had been broiled over the coals, the Indian ate like one in perfect health.

"You'll do now, I reckon. It doesn't stand to reason that you feel like moving around very much, therefore, you shall stay here while I go to work."

Then he set about making the foundations for a mill that might never be completed, and when it was so dark that he could no longer see to work, he felt satisfied with the progress made.

The Indian had cooked supper, and the boy showed that he appreciated the culinary efforts, rude though they were.

"You know Jim Albert?"

This question was asked when an hour had been spent in almost perfect silence by the occupants of the lean-to, and the boy was startled both, by the name and the voice.

"Yes; I know him," Walter replied, grimly, thinking of the part played in his capture by the half-breed.

"Big rascal!"

"You're right. I know it isn't just the thing to give way to revengeful thoughts, but some day that scoundrel shall answer to me for what has been done. If he and Sam Haines had remained where they belonged, I wouldn't be here hiding as if I really was a thief."

The Indian did not continue the conversation, although Walter gave him every encouragement, and at an early hour the tired boy sought the repose to be found in slumber.

When he set out for work next morning the Indian accompanied him, and during the day laboured faithfully hewing trees, or gathering rocks which were to form the foundation of the proposed mill.

"I didn't fancy having an Indian for a companion at first, but it begins to look as if finding him under that tree would be a fortunate thing for me. We are getting this place into shape very fast, and when it is possible for me to raise the money, it won't be necessary to spend very much time making ready for the more serious portion of the work."

During the week which followed, with the exception of the Sabbath, the two laboured industriously, save at such tittle as one or the other spent in hunting, and Walter could see the outlines of the structure he intended one day to build.

A large pile of rocks had been rolled together to form the lower walls, huge timbers were hewn and roughly "squared" for the framework, and a road from the riverbank to the highway, four miles distant, was "blazed" a goodly portion of the way.

During all this time, while he had laboured as industriously as if it was some project of his own, the Indian remained comparatively silent. He had told the rescuer his name was Sewatis; that he was a member of the Penobscot tribe, and acquainted with "Jim Albert," but never a word regarding the reason for being in that vicinity.

There had been no scarcity of food; the forest teemed with game, and if the labourers fancied deer, bear or birds, it was only necessary to go a short distance from the encampment in order to get it.

Almost unconsciously Walter had explained to his assistant what it was he hoped to do. There had been many times when it seemed positively necessary he should speak with some one, and to the silent Indian the boy talked freely. It was as if thinking aloud, because no reply was made unless one was absolutely required; and it is quite possible the young messenger would have been greatly surprised had some one been there to tell him he had confided more fully in Sewatis than in any other person except his mother.

More than once had Walter suggested that there was no reason why the Indian should remain if he had business elsewhere.

"I suppose you think because I pulled you from under that tree you must stay here and work, but it is all a mistake. You have already repaid me ten-fold, and I don't want you to believe there is any necessity of stopping with me."

"Me wait," Sewatis would say, whenever the conversation touched upon this subject, and by the end of a week Walter would have felt decidedly lonely without his silent companion.

"There's one thing about it," the boy said once, when the Indian had refused to leave him, "while you are here I feel as if I could learn at any time how matters are at home. It wouldn't be much of a task for you to go into Portsmouth?"

Sewatis made a gesture which signified that such a journey would be as nothing.

"I think you had better go and see my mother presently. Of course she won't be worrying about me, for she knows I am able to take care of myself; but at the same time it will give her some satisfaction to know what I am doing. You could find my mother?"

Sewatis nodded.

"And it wouldn't be too hard work for you to tell her what we have done."

Another nod, and something very like a smile on the silent Indian's lips.

"If you don't open your mouth to her any oftener than you do to me, you might stay on the farm a year without her knowing what we have been doing."

"I tell all; make heap much talk."

"Then we'll start you off about day after to-morrow. How long would you want for the journey?"

"Go to-day, back to-morrow."

"Of course you understand it wouldn't do to say a word about me to Jim Albert, or anyone whom, he knows?"

"Jim Albert, rascal!—I fix him."

"But you mustn't get into trouble while you are there, Sewatis, or I shouldn't see you back again very soon. The white men wouldn't allow any fighting in town, and there is no reason why you should settle with Jim Albert on my account."

"I fix him," Sewatis repeated; and Walter began to fancy it might not be prudent to send the Indian into the town, however eager he was to learn what Master McCleary had done in his behalf.

He argued the matter for some time with his companion, receiving; only the same reply, and then abandoned the attempt.

"It is certain Sewatis won't tell many secrets, whoever he may meet, or whatever trouble he may get into, therefore I need feel no anxiety on that score. Perhaps it will be as well to let him go, and take the chances of his not meeting the half-breed."

The next day was the Sabbath, and the two remained in camp, doing nothing save to prepare the meals.

Next morning Walter set about hewing timber, and Sewatis was sent into the forest after game, for the larder was not as well filled as it should be.

The Indian was absent the greater portion of the day, and when he returned, Walter was half a mile from the camp, up the river.

"What's the matter?" the boy asked, as the Indian approached suddenly, looking disturbed.

"White man come; down shore, huntin' for trail!"

Walter dropped his axe in dismay. He could think of but one reason why any person should seek him, and that was to arrest him for stealing Samuel Haines's horse.

"They mustn't see me," he muttered. "Go back to the camp, that they may think it is you who has been doing this work, and I will strike off into the forest."

Sewatis handed Walter the gun, and silently turned to retrace his steps.

CHAPTER V

STEPHEN KIDDER

Walter's first impulse was to bury himself in the depths of the forest, and he had already started toward the denser portion when the thought occurred to him that he was reasonably safe in the vicinity of the camp, where he would be able to learn when the newcomer retraced his steps.

"If it is a white man I'll guarantee to keep out of his way, and yet remain near enough to hear what may be said," he muttered to himself, as he halted suddenly, and then moved cautiously toward the lean-to.

After ten minutes had elapsed he could distinguish the sound of voices, and a few seconds later he was running at full speed toward the person from whom he had previously been trying to escape.

He recognized the speaker's tones, and knew Stephen Kidder had come to pay a visit, or bring the cheering news that he might return.

"Am I to go back to town?" he cried, as he came into the cleared space wherein the camp had been built; and then, seeing Sewatis standing in a threatening attitude in front of the shanty, he added, "This is a friend of mine; make him welcome."

The Indian obeyed by moving quickly out of sight among the foliage, and he had hardly disappeared when the two clasped each other's hands in a caressing way, as Stephen said,—

"I wish I had come to bid you go home; but Master McCleary says you must have patience yet a little longer. Haines still threatens to have you arrested, and the Sons of Liberty are more

obnoxious than ever in the eyes of those who pay homage to the king."

"Would Governor Wentworth, who has so often spoken in a friendly tone to me, allow an act of injustice such as my arrest would be, for I simply sought to escape from him who held me unlawfully?"

"The members of the Council are not in accord with the new ideas, and Master McCleary believes they might allow Haines, who has no slight influence among them, to do as he desires."

"Let it be so, then. When did you see my mother last?"

"Yesterday."

"And she is well?"

"Well, and contented that you should be here. She is cared for by your friends in town, and prefers that you remain until the winter comes, rather than venture back to be thrown into prison."

"You say she is cared for?"

"Master McCleary attends to it that she wants for nothing. She is now with his mother; the crops have been harvested, and there is no longer reason why anyone should stay on the farm. There have been brave doings in town since you left, and unless the Sons of Liberty are all imprisoned, it looks as if we might some day be freed from the heavy burden of taxes."

"Tell me everything!" and Walter threw himself on the ground in front of the camp, looking positively happy, now he had been assured his mother did not suffer because of his absence.

"In the first place, the New Hampshire Gazette appeared with a heavy mourning border on the day before the Stamp Act was to go into effect, and Master McCleary read aloud to the people on the street the article calling upon those who would be free men to resist this most unjust tax. If so many of the best citizens had not been abroad that night, I believe the Governor would have called the guards out; but there were too many prominent men mingled with the throng to make such a proceeding safe or possible. On the first day of November the church bells were tolled, as if for a funeral, and when a large crowd had gathered near Samuel Leavitt's store, a figure called the Goddess of Liberty was brought out on a bier, with Thomas Pickering, John Jones, Jotham Lewis and Nehemiah Yartridge acting as pall-bearers.

"All the people on the streets, myself among the number, followed the procession to where a grave had been dug, and when the image was about to be buried, Jotham Lewis called out that he thought he perceived some signs of life in Liberty. With that the statue was carried back to Master Leavitt's store, and Master McCleary addressed the assembled throng, saying that if the Goddess could be restored to health her Sons were the ones to do it. He was greeted with mighty cheers, such as must have been heard even at the Governor's house; and when the tumult had died away, Master George Messerve declared that he did not intend to accept the office the king had bestowed upon him. He then delivered his commission and instructions to the Sons of Liberty, and next morning all who are known as belonging to that association marched around the town, carrying the parchments like a banner, on the point of a sword.

"Master Messerve then took his oath before Justice Claget that he would not attempt to issue stamps, and the commission was given to the captain of the 'Saucy Mary,' who is sworn to deliver it up to the Commissioners of the Stamp Office in London immediately upon his arrival in England. You see, matters have changed considerably since the day you started out to deliver a message to Master Revere."

"If I had only been there!" Walter exclaimed, when Stephen ceased speaking from sheer lack of breath.

"You would not have seen much of the bravery, I fear. The Sons of Liberty could not attempt to prevent your being made a prisoner on the charge of stealing, however well they understand the case; or that would, as Master McCleary says, be too much like trying to overthrow all law and order, whereas they profess only to battle against injustice."

"What is injustice, if not imprisoning me on such a charge?"

"You understand what I mean, Walter. Haines does not think for a moment that you would be declared guilty; but by making the arrest he can have revenge, since you must lay in jail some time before being brought to trial."

"Yes, yes; I understand it all. But there are times when I feel bitterly the necessity of remaining in hiding, as if I was in fact a criminal. Have you any more news?"

"A messenger from Boston told of effigies of certain persons being burned, or hung on the gallows, and from the reports I think it safe to say there has been quite as much excitement in that city over the Stamp Act as in Portsmouth. People who a few weeks ago denounced the Sons

of Liberty as seditious persons, now speak of them with respect, saving as in the case of Haines and his following. Master Leavitt declares the time has arrived when the Province of New Hampshire shall rule herself, and that unless the king shows a more friendly disposition, he will lose his possessions in America; but of course anything of that kind cannot happen."

"Greater deeds have been done."

"But not by a few people against so mighty a king. I am afraid we shall all be made to suffer because of what has already been done against his majesty's commands."

"If the people can prevent the use of stamps they can do very much more; but we won't talk of such matters now. It is enough that I have with me a friend with whom I can speak, and I must make the most of your company while you are here."

"Then suppose you begin by telling me where you found the Indian?"

Walter gave his friend a detailed account of all that had happened since the two parted in the woods ten days previous, and concluded by showing him what progress had been made toward the erection of the mill.

Stephen was astonished because of the amount of work which had been performed, and said, laughingly,—

"Indeed, I begin to think Samuel Haines did you a favour when he made it necessary for you to hide in this place. At the rate you have been labouring, the mill will be in working order within a month."

"It would, for a certainty, if I had the necessary materials, which can only be procured with money. I truly believe Sewatis and I could do very nearly the whole of the task."

"There's no question about it. Shall you try to frame the building?"

"Yes, so far as to get the timbers hewn but we could not make shift to raise it without assistance, and what lumber we have in shape will not be hurt by seasoning, although I do not use it for two years. Now let me show you where I propose to locate the road in order best to accommodate those living this side of Portsmouth."

Stephen was more interested in the progress of Walter's work than in the stirring events he had just been describing, and the remainder of the day was spent by the two young men in discussing every detail connected with the proposed mill.

Shortly before nightfall Sewatis returned to camp with a fine buck, and prepared the evening meal after his own fashion, which was certainly a fashion not to be despised.

It was Stephen's intention to return to Portsmouth on the following morning, and the friends sat around the camp-fire until a late hour that evening. Walter had many messages to send to his mother and Master McCleary, and if the messenger remembered them all his memory must have been prodigious.

Finally, the young men crept into the lean-to where Sewatis lay, apparently sleeping, and very shortly after they had stretched themselves out on the fragrant fir boughs their eyes were closed in slumber.

Then, if a spectator had been in the vicinity, would have been witnessed a singular scene.

Soon after the heavy breathing of the white men told that they were in the land of dreams, Sewatis rose to a sitting posture, listened intently, although nothing could be heard save the cries of the night-birds and the usual sounds of a forest when the mantle of darkness has fallen.

The Indian lay down again; but even as his head touched the fir he began to slip softly toward the fire until his body was outside the shelter of the lean-to. Then he rolled over and over until the bushes hid him completely, and no sound came to tell of his whereabouts.

Ten minutes after he disappeared a face peered from amid the foliage, and the odour of rum might have been detected upon the air.

The sleepers were suddenly awakened by a crashing amid the underbrush, and as they leaped to their feet, awake and on the alert in an instant, Walter cried,—

"Look out, there! don't shoot! One of those is Sewatis; but who is he struggling with?"

At that moment the combatants rolled toward the fire in such a manner that the faces of both could be seen, and Stephen cried,—

"It's Jim Albert! Look out for yourself, Walter; he has come here for mischief!"

"And he seems to be getting about as much as he wants," Walter replied, grimly, as he darted forward to assist Sewatis in case it should become necessary.

The Indian did not require aid, for before either of the boys could have interfered, he was uppermost, clutching Jim Albert by the throat so vigorously that the latter's tongue was protruding from his mouth.

"Don't kill him! Don't kill him!" Walter shouted.

"Not yet; big rascal!" Sewatis muttered, as he deftly tied his blanket around the upper portion of the prisoner's body in such a manner that the intruder was helpless to do anything save kick, and that was not a pleasant form of exercise, as he soon learned, for the fire was so near that at the first attempt his toes were buried among the glowing coals.

After that painful experience the prisoner remained quiet, and in a few seconds Sewatis had him trussed hand and foot, like a chicken ready for roasting.

"Me fix him! heap big rascal!" the captor exclaimed, lying down once more as unconcernedly as if nothing out of the usual course of events had transpired.

"What do you suppose this fellow came here for?" Stephen asked, as if unable to surmise the reason for Jim Albert's presence.

"He is in the pay of Sam Haines, and tracked you, most likely, in order to discover my hiding-place."

"If that had been the case he would have been in Portsmouth again by this time."

A sudden thought came to Walter, and bending over the prisoner quickly, he searched under his greasy belt.

"That is why he came!" the boy cried, as he leaped to his feet, holding a parchment in his hand. "The halfbreed had undertaken to arrest me, and here is his warrant."

Not until Stephen had examined the document carefully was he satisfied the statement was correct, and then he said, holding the parchment over the fire,—

"We can dispose of this easily enough, but what shall be done with Jim is more than I can decide."

Before he could drop the document from his fingers Sewatis leaped from his couch, seized the warrant, and went back to his slumbers, saying, as he did so,—

"Heap big rascal! me keep talkin'-skin."

"We shall have to let the Indian take care of Jim and his belongings whether we want to or not," Walter said, with a mournful smile. "The whole affair shows me, however, that I am not secure from Sam Haines even here in the woods. He has found one messenger, and can readily get another."

"Now, don't despair. Your red friend has some scheme in his head, or I'm mistaken. He has taken such good care of the fellow that we needn't worry about him, and if I am to leave this place at daylight, it's time I got some sleep."

Stephen resumed his place on the bed, and Walter followed his example, but not to rest.

He had believed himself free from all pursuit while he remained in the forest; and during the past hour had been shown how vain was that idea.

The stillness of the night, the soothing sounds of the foliage, moved to and fro by the gentle wind, soon lulled him to sleep, despite his anxiety; and when he next opened his eyes the sun was shining directly upon him through the leaves; but neither Sewatis nor the prisoner could be seen.

Walter leaped to his feet, searched to and fro several moments in vain, and then found a trail leading eastward across the river.

Sewatis had returned to his own tribe, and with him had gone, however unwillingly, James Albert and the warrant for the young messenger's arrest.

CHAPTER VI

SEWATIS

Stephen was naturally surprised when, on being awakened, he was informed of the departure of Sewatis with the prisoner; but he did not regard it as a matter of any very great importance,

save as it indicated that the disreputable half-breed would not probably be seen in Portsmouth again.

"Most likely Jim Albert did some wrong to the members of Sewatis's tribe, and that is why the old fellow hung around here, waiting for just such a chance as he finally got. I don't see why we should trouble our heads about it."

"I am sorry Sewatis has gone. In addition to being of great assistance to me, he was a companion, and now I shall be entirely alone."

"In that way it has worked you an injury," Stephen replied, carelessly; "but on the other hand, you need not fear the half-breed will hunt you down again in behalf of Sam Haines, which is more than a fair off-set."

Walter made no reply; a sensation of utter loneliness such as he never before experienced had come over him, and he would have been better pleased to know James Albert was seeking an opportunity to arrest him, providing that by such a change in the situation of affairs Sewatis had remained.

It was useless to give words to his troubles, however, and he did his best to appear contented, lest Stephen should carry to his mother the report that her son had lost courage.

Walter prepared the morning meal; Stephen did full justice to it, and then made ready to take his departure.

"I will come again within a week or ten days. What shall I bring?"

"Powder, if you can buy it for me on credit."

"I fancy Master McCleary will provide you with plenty."

"Say to my mother that I suffer for nothing save the opportunity to see her. She knows full well what other words I would speak if she were here."

With a hearty clasp of the hands the two friends separated, Stephen to make his way through the forest ten miles or more, and Walter to resume the labour which might prove useless.

The would-be miller found it very difficult to continue at his task during that day. More than once he almost decided to remain idle until word should come that he was at liberty to return home; but then he remembered the goal he had set for himself, and laboured more industriously than before.

It was no longer possible, now he was alone, to move the larger logs, and all he could do was to hew them into shape, without an attempt to remove the timbers to the site of the mill.

The days passed slowly and wearily. The Sabbath seemed to have in it three times the usual number of hours. He indulged in hunting only when it became absolutely necessary he should have food, for the supply of powder bid fair to be exhausted before the time set for Stephen's return.

A week elapsed, and the young exile grew more cheerful. His friend must soon come. As for Sewatis, Walter did not believe he would ever see him again.

At the close of the eighth day, when the solitary supper had been cooked and eaten, more as one performs an important duty than something to be enjoyed, Walter was lying on the bed of boughs, dreaming of the time he could return home without fear of an unjust arrest, when a shadow came between his eyes and the fire.

Springing up in alarm, he seized the musket, which stood where it could be reached handily, and made ready to defend himself, for it seemed certain Sam Haines or one of his emissaries had come to carry him to jail.

Sewatis stood before him.

One would have said that the Indian had been absent but a few moments, and was wholly at a loss to understand the look of surprise on the boy's face.

"I thought you were never coming back!" Walter cried, in a tone of most intense relief.

"Come to see mill," the Indian replied, as he seated himself and began to eat a deer-steak which had been left near the fire.

"I am beginning to fear you will never see one of mine," the boy said, despondently. "I have been foolish enough to think I could borrow as much as would be needed, while money is so scarce in this province."

"Build mill next day," Sewatis said, more indistinctly than usual, because his mouth was full

of meat.

Walter understood the Indian to mean that he would continue the work on the morrow, and was not particularly interested in the proposed labour, for during the time he had been alone the possibility of ever getting a sufficient capital seemed an obstacle which could not be surmounted.

"What did you do with Jim Albert?"

"Big rascal! Jim gone Castine; never come back."

"Castine, eh? Well, you took him far enough away, at all events."

"Heap rascal fetch heap money," and Sewatis drew from beneath his blanket a bag which, on being opened, proved to be filled with gold pieces. "Hundred pound; more Jim worth alive."

It was some time before Walter could understand the Indian's meaning, and then the thought came that he had heard some one say the half-breed came to Portsmouth from the Penobscot River.

"Do you mean that there was a price set on Jim's head?" he asked, eagerly.

"Hundred pound," and Sewatis held up the bag once more. "Now build mill."

"But I have nothing to do with that," Walter cried, as the Indian pushed the money toward him.

"Build mill."

"But I surely can't do it with your money, you must understand that."

"Why?"

"Because it—you know I couldn't."

"Would from white man?"

"That is different. If Master McCleary or Master Leavitt would lend it to me, taking a mortgage to secure themselves—"

Sewatis pushed his bag toward Walter once more, and when the latter shook his head, as if to refuse the loan, or gift, which ever it might be called, the Indian rose to his feet, pulling his blanket more closely around him.

"What is the matter? Where are you going?"

Sewatis pointed toward the east, and moved slowly away.

"Come back!" Walter cried, entreatingly. "Come back and help me as you did before."

"Build mill?" and the Indian touched the bag of money with his foot.

"Do you mean that you won't stay unless I use that gold?"

Sewatis nodded.

"Suppose I did take it?"

The Indian seated himself as if to show he would remain.

It was fully an hour before Walter spoke again, and during that time he pondered over the matter in all its bearings. It seemed much like taking an undue advantage of Sewatis to use his money, and yet there could be no question but that he was pained when it was refused.

"I don't know why the fact of his being an Indian should prevent me from accepting the offer," the boy said to himself. "I would be perfectly willing to receive a loan from Master Leavitt, who has never shown half the friendship for me this red man has."

Sewatis watched him intently, and finally pushed the bag nearer.

"Yes, I will take it," Walter said, decidedly. "It is only to be loaned, and until I can pay it back you shall have half the profits of the business."

Sewatis nodded in approbation.

"And you are to stay here with me?"

"All time; now I call Injuns."

Walter was wholly at a loss to understand the meaning of this remark until Sewatis rose to his feet, uttering a cry that might well have been mistaken for a night-owl.

In response to it, half a dozen red men, each carrying a burden, came out from among the trees, and depositing their heavy loads in the lean-to, seated themselves before the fire in silence.

Sewatis motioned for Walter to look at that which had been brought, and while the latter wonderingly obeyed, he cut from the haunch of venison a sufficient number of steaks to serve as a hearty meal for the new-comers.

The boy's surprise may be imagined when he discovered that each of the packages was made up of furs, and he understood that the value of the whole lot greatly exceeded the amount of money in the bag.

"Big mill," Sewatis said, in a tone of satisfaction, and then he turned his attention to his followers, leaving Walter to speculate upon the good fortune which had come to him so unexpectedly.

The Indians remained in camp during that night, and at daybreak, after a breakfast of venison, all save Sewatis departed.

Never before had Walter worked as he did on the day succeeding the Indian's return. It was a perfect fever of industry, superinduced by the knowledge that there was now nothing to prevent the consummation of his desires save that which could be done by hands.

His companion appeared as before the coming of Jim Albert, with a single exception, and that was at the close of the fatiguing day's work, when he pointed to a slight elevation overlooking the site of the proposed mill, and said, quietly,—

"Sewatis build house there."

"So you shall, and between the two of us I reckon we can run the business as it should be."

Two days more the boy and his friend worked during every moment of daylight, and then came Stephen Kidder.

"Master McCleary is just behind me," he cried, before Walter could greet him.

"Master McCleary! Why has he come? Is there more danger for me?"

"You are free to go to Portsmouth this day. Samuel Haines has sailed for England, and there is little chance he will ever return."

Before Walter could realize the full bearing which Haines's departure would have upon his own affairs, Andrew McCleary came into view.

"It is a brave spot, my lad, and you have done well to choose it. Master Leavitt gives me great encouragement in regard to advancing the money, but stipulates that he shall be made a partner in the enterprise, you to pay him interest on the entire amount until your debt of one-half is discharged."

"I shall not need his money, for I already have a partner who neither demands interest nor a portion of the profits," Walter replied, laughingly; and then he told his now mystified friends of what Sewatis had done.

McCleary insisted upon taking the Indian by the hand as he praised him, but not a word, either good or bad, could he persuade Sewatis to speak.

The mill was built and opened for business four months after the repeal of the Stamp Act, and Sewatis insisted on pouring into the hopper the first bushel of corn brought to be ground.

This much regarding Walter Neal and his friends is known through the writings of others, and the next mention which is made of either person immediately connected with this story is found in Belknap's "History of New Hampshire" regarding the battle of Bunker Hill, where he writes concerning the three New Hampshire regiments which were mustered into the service of Congress:

"The two former were present in the memorable battle on the heights on Charlestown, being posted on the left wing, behind a fence, from which they sorely galled the British as they advanced to the attack, and cut them down by whole ranks at once. In their retreat they lost several men, and among others the brave Major Andrew McCleary, who was killed by a cannon shot after he had passed the Isthmus of Charlestown."

A letter now before the writer of this story, signed by Walter Neal and addressed to his mother at Portsmouth, tells of his service during the battle, while he was a member of the regiment to which Andrew McCleary was attached, and in it the miller says:

"Tell Sewatis that our noble friend is no more. He has given his life for his country, and when America takes her place among nations, McCleary's name will stand out bright as the sun."

THE END.

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