

Hearts Courageous

By...
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His tone had fallen. "Is it his fault, mademoiselle, if his custom is not the custom of your land, if he knows not to repress, if he must say what he feels?" He finished very low. "Is it his fault that he cannot forget that your face hid itself upon his breast for one little moment here in the forest?"

She was alternately flushing and paling, and her eyes were shining. "You must not! You must not!" she cried out with softer voice.

With the words she started walking rapidly, hastening without glancing at him. The dimness of the interlaced branches overhead parted; the trees stood sparser. Just ahead a leafy arch let in the fading sunlight and a view of yellow stubble, and beyond this showed a broad gateway—twin brick pillars crested with martlets—opening on a winding road to a great house that looked a many windowed welcome.

It sat snugged in elms on a hill from whose crest a terraced lawn fell softly into the arms of the shining, twisted river—a southern home in its high days, its dairy, meat house, ice house and granaries all dazzling white against the blue and olive of sky and wood. Spacious offices stood to the left, and wide negro quarters squatted at some distance behind it. Near by a tiny creek sparkled down to wash a tangle of islands. From adjacent fields came the piping whistle of partridges in grass.

Just before the gateway the young man's voice caught her. "For the sake of that one moment, mademoiselle," he said huskily.

She paused, looked back and held out her hand. He dropped upon one knee and touched his lips to her fingers.

"I am glad I owe my life to you," she said softly.

Gazing at him uncertainly an instant, she hesitated, then turned and ran rapidly up the winding drive. Her hand lifted his shag head from the columned porch and came leaping down to meet her, while his white dove Mammy Eryaline peering from the kitchen door, her weather beaten face dilating into a smile.

"Laud, dar come mammy's honey chile safe an' sou!" she cried to Mrs. Tillotson, who came hastily to the steps and waved her hand at the girl's fluttering signal.

"Down, Sweetlips! Down!" cried Anne as the hound leaped against her. She stopped, bethinking herself of the indenture.

She ran back to the gateway, but the young Frenchman was not to be seen. As she stood peering into the pines the breeze went playing with some torn bits of paper scattered in the ruts. She picked up several fragments and strove to decipher them. "Which term the said bond servant faithfully shall serve" she does covenant with the said Louis Armand, holder," she read.

Then she caught her breath and, forbearing to glance in the direction of the forest road, walked toward the anxious figure on the porch of the great house.

CHAPTER V.

IN the Swan tavern, which lifted its yellow Holland brick front and peaked shingle roof not far from the Yorktown river front, the candles had been early lighted that night. There, as day faded out, sipping at his ease at a table in the long parlor, sat a man of middle age whose effrontery and insolence had long ago earned him cordial hatred throughout Williamsburg. He was Captain Foy, aid to Governor Dunmore.

He looked up as another guest entered and dropped his knife clattering. "Jarrat!" he cried. "I thought you were in London!"

"So I was; so I was, but I am returned today," Jarrat answered easily. "How goes it at Williamsburg, Captain Foy? And how does Governor Dunmore with that ant hill of disloyalty?"

"He is away with the troops to quell the Indians on the Pennsylvania boundary. He will not see Williamsburg again before November. You stayed not long abroad. I heard you were gone for a year of off duty pleasing."

"These Virginians get in the blood," Jarrat simulated a sigh. "I have lost the old land love, I fear."

He did not see fit to tell the true reason of his sea voyage or that he had been more in Paris than in London. He was a more subtle servant of Dunmore than the governor's aid, who dreamed he knew all of the great man's mind.

"What has happened since I left, captain?" he finished.

The other got up, pulled the door to carefully and came back. "Jarrat, I wonder if I shall ever see you royal governor of this colony you love so well."

Jarrat had risen with an exclamation. "Sit down, man," said Foy. "Ods bods! 'Tis a fair enough ambition. Why not? You are young, and you can do much yet for Lord Dunmore. The king rewards his servants. Demme, I like you the better for aiming high! Stranger things have happened. Methinks Mistress Tillotson would not frown so upon a royal governor, eh?"

Jarrat sat down again. It is a harrowing moment when one's most secret thought is laid bare at a slash. He

wanted to hear what the other might say. "Affairs are awry here," Foy continued, "and I must overtake the governor with advice. Meanwhile there is an important matter I intend to tell you. I judge I can speak plain. You may be able to assist in a delicate undertaking, and you can rest easy Dunmore will not be ungrateful, nor will the king neither."

A keenness came into Jarrat's face. "Say on," he said.

"Very well. Here it is in a nutshell. As you perchance know, Lord Stormont in Paris has been at much pains to keep informed of the feeling in the French court. He has lately reported a growing danger. That rascally son of a tinker, Beaumarchais, whose schemes so tickled the fancy of the old king, has been buzzing about Louis XVI. to some purpose. De Vergennes, his dog of a counselor, was always itching to comfort the colonies. Well, the matter has come to a head, and France's aid is in a fair way to be pledged in the near future to the colonies. Egad, Jarrat, an the rebels' congress knew all that is in the wind at Versailles they would split themselves with joy!"

"I warrant," said the listener, non-committal.

"Louis," pursued Foy, "is pretty well assured of affairs in the north, thanks to that renegade Franklin, but as to the Virginians he is not so certain. So he is sending over one of his noble popinjays to see for him and report."

"Twas rumored in Paris that the envoy was to be the Marquis de la Trouerie."

"I have heard of the gentleman," said Jarrat, with careful deliberation. "Another young poppet of Marie Antoinette's, and a worse republican than Beaumarchais. And you think he will report that Virginia is ripe for insurrection?"

"Think! Why, the whole colony is a seethe of it. To be sure he will. Trust the courtier to smooth the king the way he would be smoothed."

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ow. A pleasant journey, captain. Leave everything to me."

"And now," said Foy, "for a bottle of old sherry."

Jarrat went to the yard to see him go and when he had disappeared turned his eye to a narrow blank window under the shingle roof.

"Louis will send another messenger when the news reaches France! When it reaches France!" he muttered. Then more slowly, "When it reaches France!" He stood musing a moment, turned and entered the door.

The radiant Frenchman that evening, returning to the Swan afoot through the late dusk fall, went up the tavern stair to find that the door of his chamber stood ajar. An exclamation of surprise escaped him. He mounted quickly and went in.

Jarrat sat there by the little table, waiting.

"Ah!" said the secretary. His eye darted swiftly to his chest in the corner. Then he crossed the room and tried the lid. It had not been opened.

"I am no common thief, curse it!" spat out Jarrat.

"No?" observed Armand, with a rising infection. "Monsieur will pardon me. I did not know." He sat down composedly. "To what do I owe this pleasure?" tentatively.

Jarrat leaned elbows on the table and regarded him. "You are no fool," he said at length. "All the better."

M. Armand wore a look of polite inquiry.

"My word for it," said Jarrat suddenly, "there are richer paymasters than Louis XVI."

The other fronted him fiercely, menacingly. "What mean you?" he cried. Jarrat laughed. "You see that I know what was the marquis' business in the colonies."

He went and closed the door.

"Now," he said, returning, "M. Armand, master secretary, clerk of a dead master, I have a proposition to make to you."

"And if," said the young foreigner slowly a half hour later, looking across into the ferret eyes—"if I do this—what you call it—masquerade; if I, the humble secretary, the clerk, as you have said it, become changed for the purposes of my lord the earl to the courtier, the noble?"

He paused. They were sitting at ease now, and on Jarrat's face satisfaction was spread thinly, like oil. The ingratiating mood became him, and his companion's distrustful look had vanished into something that smacked more of friendliness.

"Think you not," the latter finished, "that these Virginians will know the difference?"

"Blood!" scoffed Jarrat. "What know they here in the desert of French nobles? No more than my lord bishop of London's scullery maid!"

An expression of curious intentness lurked in Armand's face. He was silent, searching the other with half smiling gaze.

"And the life. Like you balls and dances with the quality? You shall be sought after. Would you set the fashions for the gallants? They will jostle the lackeys to hob with you. Gad's life! The colonials are cubs at bootlicking a lord! The fat of the land, I tell you—rides, hunts, dances, venches and a merry season!"

The secretary's eyes sparkled. "You think I would do it well?" he asked naively. "Ah, you never saw my master! He was a real nobleman. He was born so. One cannot learn it, monsieur. It is in the blood. But I? I have not the ton, the address?"

"Pshaw!" Jarrat said. "I suppose your master was fine enough, but fine feathers will do it. There's not one of them will scent the difference. I know them."

M. Armand's lids were drooped, his face thoughtful.

"You wish me," he reflected slowly, "to do two things. My master, as you have guessed—he was to be the eye of the king of France in the Virginias. Very good, you want me to be that eye. Only I shall see things always bad for the Whigs, eh? And you would have me write such letters as you shall frame, but in my master's hand, so Louis shall be fooled, so he shall think the Virginias loyal to the English crown, so he shall no longer plan to offer the aid of France."

"Sooth," applauded Jarrat, "it couldn't be plainer. You have written to your master's hand and should know his signature. Neither De Vergennes nor Beaumarchais need be the wiser, and be sure no one in the colonies will be."

"And if in spite of what were written him this foolish king should still wish to comfort?"

"Why, then the message he sends to his dear marquis will come safe to you, and we shall chuckle over it in our closets. But small chance of that. The king leaned upon your master. A dozen letters of the proper complexion and he will forget he ever dreamed of fleets a-sailing westward."

"You have the true finesse, M. le Capitaine," M. Armand said gravely. "Permit me to congratulate you."

"The reward is a tidy one," Jarrat licked the words lingeringly. "I would take you longer to earn a commission in your own country."

"In France to be an officer in the army one must prove descent from a family ennobled for at least a hundred years."

"Nor are doubloons to be plucked from the bushes by any stool pigeon."

"It is not too much, monsieur," the Frenchman interposed, "because you pay me for what I know of my master—habits, speech, writings, seal, all. I can write so that the king of France will never know he is dead—never till I choose. He will send no other; no—not till he has found it out. But when he does, what then? Shall I escape his wrath? Shall I not be an alien, an exile from my country?"

Jarrat bent toward him and spoke smilingly in the arrogance of full blood.

"Is there no compensation even for that? Look you! There be bright eyes and red lips and little waists and soft ways. There are slender fingers to be kissed, and these fingers oft hold purse strings. Love is a pretty game, and by benefit of clergy 'tis sometimes wed with broad plantations that bring golden guineas across the water."

He laughed at the look the other gave him. "Zooks!" he cried. "Why not? Think you the proudest of them all would not blush to be wooed by a noble? There are few 'my lords' in the valleys."

M. Armand sprang up, pushed the shutters of the window wide and leaned out, drawing a deep, long breath. Dark was come down over a moonless vast flooded with waves of bishop's purple, to which trees lent a deeper mystery of shadow. When he turned his face was tender, his eyes luminous.

"Virginia ladies," Jarrat continued, "are as proud as any court dames. They have the St. James sniff for the commoner. But 'tis yours to choose from them all as you use your wit."

"Mine to choose," the young foreigner said as if to himself—"mine to choose!" He looked out again into the dark, while his tempter smiled discreetly behind him. "But to win—is it always to keep, monsieur? Some time—some time the truth must come to light. She whom I would win must love me. Would she love me then?" He spoke low, rather to the outer silence than to the other.

"Pooh! When a woman has once wedded you it matters whether her husband be a hero or a rogue? When the game is over the heifer is in the stall, and there's the commission to console her. Beshrew, too, that the game is honored by the governor's approval. 'Tis a crown service, done at the solicitation of the royal governor. We shall presently set out for Winchester, where he lies with the troops. He shall guarantee this betimes there. What say you?" Jarrat's voice was contemptuous.

M. Armand turned from the darkness, his look suddenly changed. "Yes," he said slowly, "I will do it."

His visitor rose with a covert twist to his lips. "You have decided well," he said. "You have the assurance to succeed too! To flutter the farthingales you will need money, of course."

"Money?" the other smiled. "And me the Marquis de la Trouerie? Talk of money between gentlemen? Plenty of time for that—afterward."

"Better and better," said Jarrat, the old sneer returning now that the game was won. "It bespeaks good faith. I hope you shared your master's gold with our honest skipper, Elves. But you will need brave clothes. 'Tis not too much you look like a marquis at present."

M. Armand laid his finger on his lip laughingly. "Ah, that is my secret. Clothes!" He crossed to the chest, unlocked it with a key from his pocket, threw it open and began with rapidity to take out coats, waistcoats, short clothes—all of beautiful texture and heavy with lace.

"Clever robber!" said Jarrat admiringly under his breath. "A neat plucking of a useless cadaver!"

The secretary laughed gaily as he took out these, with a ribbon of foreign orders and a sword.

"Clothes!" he said again. "Let me see which I shall wear." He was lifting the exquisite garments. "I beg monsieur will turn his head away for one moment. Commie ca!"

He called to imaginary body servants: "Alphonse! My waistcoat! The flowered one—that is right. Now my coat. V'la! My sword belt, Pierre. So! The fairest lady in the world would be pleased with that. Now M. le Capitaine!"

Jarrat, looking around, could scarce repress a cry. The gray coated figure was no more. In its stead a vision invested in pale rose satin, with gold chain, jeweled and smiling, stood before him.

The secretary raised the sword and gave Jarrat the fencer's salute.

"Louis Armand is gone away, monsieur," he said, lifting eloquent shoulders. "Henceforth behold in me M. le Marquis de la Trouerie, noble of France, messenger of Louis XVI!"

CHAPTER VI.

ON a hazy afternoon following Jarrat's stroke of diplomacy a Berlin chaise, in lieu of the ruined chariot, bearing Mrs. Tillotson and Mistress Anne on a visit to Berkeley, drew through Ashby's Gap, along slopes spotted with clumps of lilac and goldenrod.

Francis Byrd rode beside the window, for he was to join Lord Dunmore at Winchester, whither the governor, in a burly fit of rage at his recalcitrant bourgeois, had betaken himself to await the gathering of troops from the northern counties for the expedition against the restless Shawnee Indians on the Setoto river.

They had met but few travelers of quality so far to the westward—for the most part wandering petty chapmen or perhaps a Palatinate trader coming from Pennsylvania. These latter drove teams of six or eight horses wearing jingling bells, and their huge Conestoga wagons were loaded with plow irons and with salt, lead and gunpowder for the lower settlers.

At the notched summit Byrd rose in his stirrups.

"The Shenando, Anne!" he cried. Below, where the unbroke sunshine spun its web, lay a gold valley clasped in hills. The near mountain walls stood all matted with burnished leaves of wild ivy and bloom of chamedaphne, its white cup shapes stained with periph red. In the wooded bottom the river shimmered with the tumbling foam of steered torrents and went



"Louis Armand is gone away, monsieur," he said.

slipping sofly over ledges and between wild acres of mottled sycamore, of drooped willow and of birch. The sun as they rode became dull saffron glob between the overlapped wedges of crimsoning hills.

"Poor dear!" sighed Anne as an extra heavy jolt brought lamentation from her nerve racked companion. "We shall soon be there, Aunt Mildred. Winchester is just beyond the next forest."

"It's been just beyond the next forest for three hours!" moaned the lady. "The colonel really must have new springs put to the chaise. This road is barbarous!"

"There is Winchester!" Anne exclaimed joyfully. "I see the flag on the fort."

This, a great square fortification with four bastions, the stockade built by Colonel Washington before the reduction of Duquesne, was gone much to ruin. It sat on the town's edge, with generous barracks rearing above the walls and soldiery grouped before the entrance. Here Byrd left them to report his arrival, and the two ladies rode to the town ordinary.

They descended to find the long parlor thickly set with guests and passed quickly through the hall to the inn yard, waiting disposition of their luggage.

"The place is overfull, it seems," Mrs. Tillotson said to the landlord.

"Oons!" he answered. "There are a-plenty of beds, though nigh all my tankards are kept well in use. 'Tis the soldiery at the fort draws them, a good thing for the King's Arms. The Indians may go a-scalping as oft as they will."

"They are all king's men within?" asked Anne.

"Aye, a proof of my loyalty. These be times," he added, scratching his grizzle head as he went in, "when 'tis hard to choose betwixt old and new things, with the Whigs so hot. As for me, though, methinks the old will outlast my time."

"Aunt Mildred," called Anne delightedly, "look! There is my Lord Fairfax's chariot!"

It stood under the wide shed, huge and ungainly. Anne went to it and patted the dark leather and laid her young cheek against the purple cushions.

"He is here, then?" she cried. "I wonder if we could see him." Drawing Mrs. Tillotson after her, she passed to the wide low window and peered within. It was flung half open, and through it came glassy tinkles and a babble of talk.

Colonial costumes were sown through the long room, and here and there were royal uniforms flagrantly crimson. Cocked hats and greatcoats lay about on the chairs, and riding whips were scattered on the tables.

Opposite them, against the farther wall, Burnaby Rolph of Westham sat squat in his oak chair where the candles glinted on his gold lace, stirring with his dress sword a punch of Jamaica rum in a great bowl. Beside him, his arm flung carelessly back, lounged Captain Foy. Now the spirit was in his mottled, sensual face, and it seemed to cloak a devil in scarlet.

The girl shrank back instinctively and held her aunt's arm more closely. Then she turned her eyes over the assembly.

"Mistress Anne!" exclaimed a voice behind her.

"Oh," she cried, turning, "Mr. Henry! How good it is to see you!"

He took her hand and bowed to Mrs. Tillotson.

"It seems as if we had not seen you for a year," Anne continued, looking up into his fallow face and then, with a hint of approval, at his dark wig and suit of minister's gray.

He saw her glance and smiled a little quizzically. "I am being fast spoiled," he said. "I have a plenty of coats good enough for me, yet once I go to the congress I must get a new one to please the eye of other folk. I am on my way back from Philadelphia now."

"Are you lodged at the King's Arms?" asked the elder lady.

"At the Three Rams. Methinks the royal tang hereabout is a bit strong for me. I have a scent for it like a beagle for a porcupine."

"Lord Fairfax is here," said Anne, "but he has not yet seen us. We shall surprise him." She clapped her hands together softly. "I wonder how he will look. We were playing eavesdropper just now, Aunt Mildred and I, only to steal a view of him. Is it very dreadful? Come with us and look."

"I shall leave her to you, Mr. Henry," said Mrs. Tillotson. "The chests are

in, so be not long, Anne. I shall wait in our chamber."

As they crossed to the window Anne stopped and looked at him questioningly.

"What of the congress?" she asked. Her voice was sharp and eager.

He shook his head a little sadly, his brows together over his deep sunk eyes. "'Tis not the time yet. The assembly is too young. They fear to take a step in the dark. It is the blind leading the blind," he said a little bitterly. "There is no open eye. Stay—there is one. He offered them a thousand men-at-arms."

"Colonel Washington!" she said under her breath.

"Aye, Colonel Washington, the best soldier in America today. The only one who sees. For the others, it is temporize, temporize, wait the king's better humor, Parson Duché, the rankest Tory of them all, opening the session with prayer."

"Why, a Philadelphia delegate named Galloway spoke for a new plan of reconciliation, with close allegiance, an American legislature and a president general appointed by the king. It came nigh to stampeding the whole convention. They see only war and the ravage of our towns—not one rood beyond that. They see not that the time and people are ripe for it. They see not that such a war cannot be fought alone—that we shall, we must have, help from Europe, that we must win."

"Oh," he said with sudden passion, his eyes burning like coals, "of such stuff is our congress made! A multitude of counselors and no leader. The sacrifice laid waiting, but no fire!"

Anne came closer to him, her fine face flushing.

"But this is not the last time," she said. "The congress will meet again. When it does Virginia should lead them. The colonies must look to us if it comes to worst. You say we have the best soldier. So shall we have the best regiments. Virginia alone of all the rest was settled by a single people. 'Tis held by gentlemen, and gentlemen fight best!" She put out her hand and laid it on his arm. "You can be the leader," she said. "You can be the fire!"

Thereafter neither spoke for a moment. From the stables a horse whinnied softly, and a gust of laughter and the sound of a falling ale pot came from the crowded parlor.

Then they moved forward and stood by the open window.

"I see Lord Fairfax," whispered Anne, "there by the door."

The old nobleman whom her smiling eyes sought out sat quietly apart, his sword across his knees, with his body servant standing behind him. His near-sighted glances, sent squinting, searched the assembly with a lurking distrust. They were king's men truly, but not gentle like those of his own time. He turned his face toward Foy as the latter, pounding the table with his sword, suddenly spoke up loudly:

"I am just come from Philadelphia, gentlemen, where the ragamuffin congress sits, and may I be flayed if I ever saw a finer lot of noodle heads! Our Virginian cocks-o-the-walk were all there, slimy from their hell broth of treason at Williamsburg. 'Ods heart! It sickens to the marrow of the bones to see that lout, Patrick Henry, strut about in Quakerdom."

Anne flinched as if she had been stung and seized Henry's wrist. "Oh," she said under her breath, "come away! 'Tis shameful!"

"No; let us hear it," he answered. "Think you I am not used to such as that?" His voice trailed a slender line of infinite scorn. "Look!"

For more than one of those there had got up and were going out at this. Even among those who sided with the king there were many who had spoken open disapproval of the stamp act days and loved Henry for that if for naught else.

Foy saw it. "Aye, let them go—let them go," he sneered. "'Tis time folk knew where loyalty lay, as they know with you and me, my lord."

A slow contempt went over that rugged old face. The baron had small love for this coupling. He despised the blackguard confidant of Governor Dunmore too heartily to bandy talk with him.

Foy filled his glass. "'Tis said in Philadelphia," he resumed, "that one of our Virginians got on his hind legs and told them he wished to God he could fight it out single handed with George. What think you of that, Rolph?"

Lord Fairfax had deliberately turned his back upon Foy, but he shifted in his seat now at the answer of one of the quality.

Burnaby Rolph, Foy's companion of the gold lace, already heavy with the punch and rocking tipsily in his chair, lifted his head and laughed drunkenly.

"Sooth," he hiccupped. "The same one offered to enlist a thousand men at his own expense and march them to relieve Boston."

Anne's face went colorless, and her fingers clasped Henry's arm with a force that made him wince. "Cruel! Cruel!" she said, for the old baron broke in, stammering with color.

"The infernal rebel!" he cried, trembling. "Is it gone so far then? Do they flout their king to his face?"

The buzz in the room ceased, and all eyes looked at the tawny old nobleman, his features working with wrath. Henry's fingers were tight closed, and Anne's white teeth bit her under lip till a spot of blood came upon it.

All in that room knew the old man. Many loved him. Not a few held lease upon his land. He was one of the last brave barons who bore his name, for the most part, whether crusaders or poets, men gentle, reckless and mindful of God—men who lived cleanly lives and died commending their souls to Jesus and bequeathing torches and sheep for their funerals. He was a man every inch of him! He blamed the

(Continued next week.)