

The Stingy Guest.

BY WILLARD BLAKEMAN.

"Tomorrow, sir, will be Christmas, and I would be happy to have you dine with us."

The words were spoken by the landlord of Frances' tavern, New York city, more than a hundred years ago.

But this is not the beginning of my story. The early part of the nineteenth century was not the early part of the twentieth nor anything like it. Therefore what I am going to tell should be prefaced by an explanation.

New York in 1800 did not extend far above city hall. Frances' tavern, located a short distance east of the old New Amsterdam fort at the foot of Broadway, was the first hostelry in the city.

A newspaper in those days was something of a rarity, and since there were no reading rooms the journal subscribed for by a landlord for the use of his guests was eagerly sought.

No sooner was it laid aside by one person than it was snatched up by another, and frequently there were several persons waiting for it.

The gentleman who had been invited to take his Christmas dinner without charge at Frances' tavern had appeared there one evening a stranger, gone into the taproom, seated himself at a table and called for a glass of brandy.

He sat sipping the beverage, waiting till the person who was at the time reading the newspaper should lay it down, and when he had done so the stranger picked it up.

The paper, once folded, was about 12 by 10 inches, with not as much matter printed on it as one would find in a column of a modern journal.

The gentleman read the news, principally a summary of what had happened in Europe a couple of months before; then turned to the advertisements. The former in this issue was a statement of the operations of Napoleon I., the latter an announcement of the sailing of a ship, an auction and a reward for a runaway slave.

When the reader had exhausted both news and advertisements he paid his reckoning, six and a quarter cents, and withdrew.

That was the beginning of the stranger's appearances at Frances' tavern. Rarely did an evening pass without his coming into the inn, calling for his glass of brandy, reading the newspaper and retiring.

His object was evidently to "kill two birds with one stone," or, rather, to get his daily dram and the news for one price.

was terrapin, but it was not touched, being considered fit only for the negro slaves. The only invited guest at the dinner did not break his customary silence. Having read the newspaper before the meal was served and having dined, he went to a side room for his overcoat and hat and gloves and walking stick.

The landlord stepped forward to help him on with his coat and as he did so slipped a silver dollar into his hand with the words: "This being Christmas, sir, I trust you will not take offense at my offering you a little gift."

The gentleman looked at the coin as though he did not quite understand what it meant, then at the donor, and muttering the only word that had ever come from him, except to order his brandy, "Thanks," he put the piece in his pocket and left the house.

That was the last time the stingy gentleman, as the servants continued to call him, appeared at Frances' tavern. The landlord was puzzled at his not coming again, ignorant whether he had taken his Christmas gift as a reproof for his parsimony or whether something had happened to him.

He always expected that his former guest would turn up some evening, call for his glass of brandy and read the newspaper as before. But the next Christmas came and went without his appearance, and the next and many others, and still the stingy gentleman did not come to Frances' tavern.

Meanwhile the city of New York had taken a start and was pushing northward. The Astor house was built, a far more imposing building than the little tavern downtown, and the landlord of the latter found himself out of the fashionable district.

He turned over the management to another and opened a house farther uptown. But he was now getting old, and his former patrons were passing off the stage.

The travelers who were flocking into the city did not know what a genial host he was, and even had they known it, they had not the same use for a genial host as when the city was confined to that region bordering on the Bowling Green.

Men were getting in too much of a hurry to require much attention from a landlord. Besides, the former keeper of Frances' tavern had not the wherewithal to put up a structure suitable for the hotel of the later period.

He threw up the sponge and advertised his furniture and fixtures for sale. From this time he sank into poverty.

One Christmas eve he received a note through the post that if he would call at a certain house near St. Mark's church he would receive a gift. There was no name signed to the missive; indeed, it was a scrawl in a very few words.

He could not think of anything he wished for Christmas, though his needs were many and there were persons on whom he would have liked to bestow gifts. It is quite possible he might not have paid any attention to the note had it not been from curiosity.

He desired to know who his would be donor was. Christmas morning being bright and crisp, he concluded that he would take a walk and go past the address given in the note.

He told his wife that he would not go inside to claim the proffered gift, but a woman takes a different view of such matters from a man, and she urged him to take measures to gratify her curiosity.

THE MAN IN BUTTERNUT.

(Continued from page 6, Col. 4.)

questioned by the officer of the post. Having orders to send any citizens coming south who had any information of the Union forces to impart, he sent Richard Venables to the general, where he told a great deal about the Yankee troops through whom he had passed.

He had a certain acuteness about him which enabled him to tell a false story, yet one that would be believed.

"How would you like to go back to those Yankee camps," said the general, "in which you haven't been and bring me information about them? You seem to have facts concerning the center, but not of the wings. Their army extends from tip to tip a good many miles."

"Waal, general, I wouldn't mind doin' that fo' you when I come back this way."

Since Mr. Venables was not a soldier the general could not make a spy of him without his consent and was obliged to wait for his return, which he said "mought be three or four days."

He was "goin' down to Chattanooga" to see his old mother, who was "powerful broke down with rheumatis." If the general would give him a pass to go there he would later bring him all the information he wanted from the Yankee "sojers."

He was given the pass and promised to be back in not over four days.

All this was dead easy—indeed, so easy that Hanc relaxed somewhat from precautions he should have taken. He visited every part of the Confederate army in or about Tullahoma—the defenses of the place, the direction of moving columns, whether army wagons were going south loaded or empty—indeed, all indications such as his general had impressed upon him by which to judge of the intentions of an opposing force.

He was led to think that, although Tullahoma was fortified, the Confederates were preparing the way for a retreat.

To learn these facts Hanc Barton, instead of going to Chattanooga to see his "pore ole mother," remained about the Confederate camp so long that he finally aroused suspicion. An officer took him in charge, and Hanc producing his pass, dated several days before, the general was informed by telegraph of his presence.

An order was returned to send the man under guard to headquarters.

But Hanc, who had not been placed under arrest, vanished before the order came. The officer who had reported him found himself in an unpleasant position and sent a whole company of cavalry riding, scattered, over the camp in search of the missing man.

Hanc's horse was not far away, and, reaching him while the Confederates were waiting for the reply to the message to the general, he had been putting as much distance as possible between himself and them.

They did not find him that day, since darkness came on within an hour after he fled; but, the fact of his disappearance having been reported to headquarters, a reply came that he must be found at all hazards.

The consequence was that separate bands of cavalry, each bearing a description of Richard Venables, were sent all over middle Tennessee, having instructions to bring him in alive or dead.

Hanc during the first night of his flight struck the cabin of a Union family and, being convinced that he could trust them, confessed what he was and asked for the wherewithal to make a change of costume.

bearing the description of the man he was after and said the hair was sandy. "Eyes kinder gray?" "Yes; gray eyes?" "Lean jaws?" "Yes."

"Ole woolen hat?" "Yes."

"You said he had on butternut clo's, didn't you?" "Yes; he had."

"Sairy," called the spy, "didn't a man pass down the road this mornin' in butternut clo's? I thort I seen one goin' by."

"Yes; I saw him too. He was goin' mighty fast."

"Which way?" cried the Confederate, spurring his horse.

"That a-way," said the woman, pointing.

In a few moments the men were riding rapidly in the direction indicated, and the spy breathed freely, as, indeed, did the others in the house who had been given a refuge.

Hastily bidding them goodby, Hanc darted into a wood behind the house and made for the north.

The next day he rode up to the Union pickets and asked to be taken in. He was sent under guard to the general, who recognized him at once.

After an hour's interview he was dismissed, and, the general calling to the members of his personal staff, began to issue orders for a movement which resulted in the capture of Tullahoma.

Higher Up.

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Natural or Acquired? "Dobbs is a mild mannered man." "Yes. I wonder if he's naturally so or married."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

as the use of the paper was gratuitous to all they could not complain.

A fine dinner was served at Frances' tavern, a dinner such as was enjoyed there in those days, and if it could be served there now would cost much more than it did then. The turkey was wild, and the venison was wild, as indeed were all the meats served. There