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THE MINSTREL.

[From the Atlantic Monthly.]
LATTER-DAY WARNINGS.
When legislators keep the law,
When banks dispense with bolts and locks,
When berries, whistles—rasp—and straw—
Grow bigger downwards through the box,
When the best select house or land
Shows leak in roof or flaw in right,
When laborers choose the stand
Whose window hath the broadest light,
When preachers tell us all they think,
And party leaders all they mean,
When what we pay for, that we drink,
From real grape and coffee-bean,
When lawyers take what they will give,
And doctors give what they would take,
When city fathers eat to live,
Save when they fast for conscience' sake,
When one that hath a horse on sale
Shall bring his merit to the proof,
Without a lie for every nail,
That holds the iron on the hoof,
When in the usual place for rips
Our gloves are stitched with special care,
And guarded with the whetstone tips
Where first umbrellas need repair,
When Cuba's weeds have quite forgot
The power of section to resist,
And cart bottles harbor not
Such dingles as would hold your fist,
When publishers no longer steal,
And for what they stole before,
When the first locomotive's wheel
Rolls through the Hoosac tunnel's bore,
Till then let 'Cummins blaze away,
And Miller's sails blow up the globe;
But when you see that blessed day,
Tis your order your ascension robe!

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE REBEL LOVER.

A TALE OF THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE SURPRISE AND CAPTURE.

It was near nine o'clock, one warm, sultry night in the month of September, 1778, that a party consisting of some one hundred men, dressed in the uniform of British light horse, rode rapidly along the road traversing the right bank of the Santee river, in South Carolina, and took their way to the dwelling of Walter Steel. They were commanded by Hugh Langsford, a bold and cruel officer in the English service—one who had been selected and placed in the position he occupied on account of his audacious heart and tyrannical disposition, for the express purpose of teaching the surrounding inhabitants due obedience to his Majesty's laws. On many occasions he had exercised his authority in the most barbarous manner, wantonly burning the houses of known patriots, and ruthlessly hanging the known, without provocation, save their own opinions. His name had become a terror to all the patriotic inhabitants of the district, the more so, as General Francis Marion, the only rebel partisan who offered any resistance to the British troops, had for some time been absent in North Carolina, leaving Langsford undisputed sway over the region.

Walter Steel, toward whose house Langsford was now making his way, was a well known sterling patriot, and had been heard to advance opinions boldly in favor of the revolutionists, and directly in opposition to King George. Many wondered how he had so long escaped the vengeance of Langsford; but there had been a charm powerful in its nature hanging around the dwelling of the aged rebel, which had so preserved his home seatless.

Mary Steel had won the admiration of the Captain, and this had ripened into love on his part, and as is usual on such occasions, he wished and strove to appear in a favorable light to her, and of course treated her father and his family with all the lenity in his power.

From the bottom of her heart Mary detested the bloody officer, but aware that her father's life depended on her actions, she acquiesced with Langsford in such a manner as induced him to believe he was the idol of her heart. But he was soon to be undeceived.

He had been called to Charleston, and had been absent from the Santee about two weeks, and at the time he is here introduced was returning with fond expectations to Steel's, having resolved to become at once united to the object of his affections.

As he was riding leisurely along the road, the distance to the farm house being about three miles, he was suddenly accosted by a man who sprang from the bushes by the way, and placed himself in front of his horse.

"Your mission is bootless," exclaimed the new comer; "return at once to Charleston."

"Who are you?" demanded Langsford, in vain endeavoring to trace the man's features in the gloom of the night.

"One who knows why Captain Langsford seeks the house of farmer Steel," replied the man. "But I tell you Mary marries another and more favored lover, who is even now at the house."

"Then his audacity shall cost him his life!" retorted the Captain fiercely, as he put spurs to his horse and galloped on, followed by his men.

"And I rather guess yours will cost you about the same!" exclaimed the man who had given the information, as he disappeared in the bushes.

A half hour sufficed for Langsford to reach the house of Steel, which was surrounded in silence, he having ordered his men to dismount when some distance from the dwelling, and leaving a part in charge of the horses, approached with the remainder on foot.

Having stationed his troopers so that no one could leave the house, he approached the parlor window, from which a light shone, and carefully peeped in. Sitting but a few feet from him he discovered Mary in conversation with a young man of some three and twenty years of age dressed in the light blue uniform of the rebel army. The first word he heard pronounced was his own name, and almost breathlessly he listened.

"I have been constrained," he heard Mary say, "for the purpose of saving my father's life, and prevent our house from being pillaged, to treat Langsford in a manner which I would soon to do were I placed in other circumstances. If you knew how I detest him, if you could feel how I loath his advances, you would see at once that policy alone dictated my conduct. No, Harry, I never loved any but you, and I would die sooner than become the wife of that blood-thirsty British demon."

And Langsford stood there and heard it all. You should have seen his brow contract, and his face turn red and pale in rotation, and beheld his teeth sink into his under lip until the warm blood ran trickling down his chin, and fell, drop by drop, upon his heaving bosom—yet he stirred not, but with every muscle quivering like an aspen, he listened for the reply.

"I believe you, Mary, and never yet have doubted the real cause of your action; but I trust there will be no more occasion for dissembling. Marion has again returned to the Santee—his blood boiling to avenge his countrymen upon this same Langsford, and woe to the puppet of English power if he leaves the streets of Charleston for the open country at present."

"But he is coming. I got a letter from him the other day, couched in the most loving terms, in which he said he should be out in a few days to claim me as his bride. I threw the abhorred letter into the fire, and wished he might break his neck first."

Langsford could stand it no longer. The warm blood had rushed into his face until it was red as scarlet; and drawing back his right hand, dashed the window in by a vigorous blow, and exclaimed in a voice of thunder—

"And he is here to claim his bride, and hang the traitor who would seduce her love!"

Saying which, he called his men to advance, and sprang into the room.

Mary Steel uttered one convulsive scream of horror, and sank lifeless to the floor; while the partisan, surprised at the unexpected interruption, retreated to the side of the room and placed his back against the wall, drawing his sabre as he did so.

"Ay, ay, my fine fellow, caught in a trap of your own setting," exclaimed Langsford, sneeringly, as he glanced at the rebel—"Seize him, men," he added, to several soldiers who had by this time crowded into the apartment, "and guard him well!"

The men advanced to obey, and concluding that resistance would be useless against such odds, the young patriot bent his knee, across which he snapped his sabre and threw the pieces upon the floor.

Langsford being left alone in the room with Mary, advanced and bent over her senseless form, which he was about raising in his arms, when Walter Steel came into the apartment. Striding up to the Captain, he placed his left hand against his shoulder and pushed Langsford somewhat rudely from the body, at the same time raising his daughter with the other.

"A father's attention is best given his daughter at a time like the present," he said sternly, noticing the scowl gathering upon the officer's brow.

"But remember, Mr. Steel, that I am not to be insulted with impunity," he growled, angrily.

"And you will recollect, Captain Langsford, that I am master of my own household," replied Steel, calmly, though a little touched by the officer's taunt. "If you have anything to say to my daughter, you must wait till she is recovered."

"Well, I have much to say, and will give you two hours to prepare her for what is to take place," said Langsford, slowly.

"Much obliged to you for your condescension," muttered Steel in an audible voice, as he bore his child from the room.

CHAPTER II.

THE REBEL PEDLER.

About an hour after the occurrences re-

lated in the preceding chapter, a figure was observed by the sentry, who was stationed in the road, in front of the house, coming quietly toward him, and as it was a bright moonlight night, he saw that the person carried two panniers of tin, suspended from a yoke over his shoulders. The sentry instantly surmised the individual to be a pedler, as there were a good many traversing the country at that time, and it being his duty to hail everything that approached his post, he instantly shouted—

"Who goes there?"

"Nothing but a pedler," was the reply, in the regular drawl of the down easter.

"Advance and give the countersign," continued the sentry.

"I'll advance if you want me to, but I'll be darned if I give anything away."

So saying the pedler approached the sentry, where he was met by the corporal of the guard, who had been attracted to the spot by the challenge.

"What have you got to sell?" he demanded.

"Better ask what I haven't got to sell," replied the pedler.

"Well, what haven't you got to sell?" replied the corporal.

"Nothin' that you want, unless it be this pint bottle of rum."

"What do you ask for it?" demanded the corporal.

"Not much. If you'll let me intew the yard among the soldiers, I'll give it to you."

"It's a bargain," answered the corporal quickly, whose orders had been positive to let no one out, but nothing had been said about not letting people in.

Giving the officer on guard the rum, the pedler passed into the yard among the soldiers, who congregated immediately around him.

"What have you got to sell, old fellow?" yelled one.

"Got any rum?" cried a second.

"Get me out a pack of cards," said a third.

"I want a jack-knife," said a fourth.

"Go tew thunder, every darned one of you," replied the pedler in a loud voice, as he put down his panniers. "Darn it to darnation, dew you think I've got forty tongues to answer you all at once. Who is that wanted rum?"

"Me," answered the soldier, stepping forward.

"Well, I haint got none," retorted the Yankee to the crest-fallen trooper. "Who's that wanted cards?" he added.

"Me," said another advancing.

"Well, here they be." And the pedler took them out. "They are fifty cents for a pack."

"Let me see them." And the trooper held out his hand.

"Darned if I do until you let me see the money to pay for 'em."

The man paid the half dollar, and the pedler was soon busy selling off his things to the troopers, most of whom wanted something.

These men unfortunately were out of money, and after endeavoring in vain to dispose of something to them, he pettishly exclaimed—

"Well, darn if you won't buy anything can't you tell me of somebody who will?"

"You see that fellow tied to that tree, don't you?" said one of the men, pointing to the rebel lover of Mary, who had been bound to a sapling near the fire.

"I rather guess I dew."

"He's to be hung in the morning, and would doubtless like to buy a black cap for the occasion."

"Thank you, mister, there's a pocket comb for you. I've got one of the darndest black caps you ever seed."

While speaking the pedler had thrown the comb on the ground, and he instantly made off for the prisoner. As he drew near the rebel raised his head and gazed upon him, but his slouched hat completely hid his features.

"They said you was tew be hung in the morning, and I thought you'd like to have a black cap tew put on," exclaimed the pedler, first breaking the silence.

"Do you come to taunt me?" demanded the prisoner quickly.

"No, darned if I dew, but this cap of mine is a darned good one, and lets people off hanging so easy."

The pedler placed a strong emphasis on the word off, which caused the prisoner again to attempt a scrutiny of his features. This time the matter was not difficult.—The hat was slipped to one side and the countenance fully revealed.

"God of Heaven! can it be possible," murmured the rebel in a guarded tone.

"Hist or all will be lost. Buy the cap, and in its top you will find a knife. My men are near by, but we number only thirty. Stratagem must be used. Cut your cords when all are asleep, and then be off."

"But Mary," said the young man in a hollow whisper.

"Shall be saved, rest assured of that."

"Thank you, General, and may God bless you for this."

"Well, I guess you can have it for that, though it's a darned little price," exclaimed the pedler aloud, observing that one of the men was approaching the spot, at the same time banding the prisoner the cap. "Take out the knife and put it in your mouth," he whispered to the youth. "They are going to search you."

And as he obeyed, the pedler screened

him with his body. The knife being small was easily held inside the teeth.

"Darn your pictur, give me the money I say!" shouted the pedler, in an excited voice, as the trooper came up beside him.

"What did you sell him?" asked the soldier.

"That black cap to be hung in goll darn him."

"Good. He'll need it in the morning. Come away with me, and I'll take you to the captain, who'll settle the bill."

"Will he? Well, he's a darned clever fellow, then, sure as shootin'." Dew you think I can sell him anything?"

"More than likely. He's to be married to-night."

"Is he? I've got some of the handsomest gloves ever you seed, white as thunder all over."

"Then I think he'll buy a pair."

"Dew you? Well you're a clever fellow, and here's a pocket comb for you."

They had by this time reached the door of the Captain's room, and the pedler was ushered into the presence of Langsford.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO INTERVIEWS.

Langsford was seated beside a table on which a lamp was burning, casting a dim light over the room, and his head was resting upon his hand, while he appeared so deeply absorbed in a reverie as not to notice the entrance of the trooper.

The man passed inside the door, scraped his feet once or twice, and finally succeeded in arousing the captain, who raised up his head, stared at them a moment, and then uttered in an audible voice,

"Well?"

"This is the pedler you wanted to see," replied the trooper, touching his hat.

"Oh, is it? Well you may retire."

The trooper did as he was directed, and as the door closed upon the retreating form Langsford resumed:

"Come a little nearer, Mr. Pedler, I want to examine your stock."

The pedler obeyed, setting his panniers down before the officer, and holding the lamp for him as he examined the goods.

The gloves attracted the Captain's eye. "I don't know as I want to buy anything you have got, but there is a young lady in the house who would doubtless like to purchase a pair of these, as she is going to be married to-night."

"They're darned fine gloves."

"No doubt of that. I will send you to her when I get through with you. But I want to ask you one question: What side do you take in the present strife between England and the Colonies?"

"Me? Why, darn it, tew tell the truth I rather favor the poorer country, though bein' nothin' but a poor pedler, and havin' tew trade with both sides, I have to be pretty much neutral."

"But do your feelings on the side of loyalty ever prompt you, when opportunity occurs, to be of service to your king?"

"Don't know but they might—never had a chance tew dew anything for the king yet."

"Well, I will give you a chance. I have every reason to believe that the arch rebel, Marion, is hovering not far from this place at the present time."

"I know he is, darn him; I've seen him this very day."

"When—where?" demanded Langsford eagerly.

"'Bout five miles from here, on the upper Santee road. I seen him cuttin' across Ben Brady's farm, with about thirty men follerin' him."

"Then my plan is laid. Go into the room where Miss Steel is, and pretend sympathy for her and offer to help her.—She will send you to this Marion for aid. Return and guide me to the spot and your fortune is made."

"I'll dew it, darned to darnation if I don't. I'll make her believe I'm her best friend, get her tew tell me where this all-fired rebel is campin' and lead you to the spot."

Taking up his things, the pedler left the apartment of Langsford, and soon reached the door of the room where Mary Steel and her father were sitting. Knocking upon the door, he soon heard the voice of Steel demanding who was there.

"A pedler, who wants to sell Miss Steel some goods," he answered.

A short consultation was heard between Mary and her father, and then the door was unlocked, and the pedler admitted.

Advancing directly across the apartment to where Mary was seated by the table, he immediately made a display of his goods before her, but she instantly exclaimed—

"I have no wish to purchase anything, but if you do me a service, I will pay you well for it."

"What is it ma'am?" asked the pedler, pulling his slouched hat still farther over his face.

"I am about to be forced into marriage with the Captain who commands the men now around the house. I hate and despise him. If you will consent to convey a message from me to Gen. Marion, he will come at once to my assistance and prevent it."

"Mary Steel!" fell from the lips of the pedler, in a soft, musical voice, which riveted the eyes of the maiden fixedly on him. The slouched hat fell slowly off, revealing to the eyes of the astonished girl the features of Gen. Marion.

"Oh, Marion, this is too much. Why run this risk—why jeopardize your life in this reckless manner?" murmured the maiden, reproachfully.

"Nay, Mary, methinks if your sharp eyes could not pierce my disguise, those who never saw me would not be likely to make the discovery. I will prevent this marriage, and teach Langsford a lesson in letters of blood! Good-bye for the present." And the general, who had resumed the slouched hat and the panniers, glided from the room.

He made his way at once to Langsford's apartment and found that officer impatiently awaiting his return.

"What news?" asked the Captain.

"Good. We've got the darned rebel, sure as shootin'." He's just three miles from here, on the up-river road."

"Do you know the spot exactly?"

"I guess I dew. I can lead you right tew it."

"Well, then, let's be off at once."

And they left the room.

A quarter of an hour afterwards the party left the house, with the exception of three troopers, who were left to guard the rebel lover.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PEDLER TELLS GENERAL.

For some time the British Captain rode on in silence, while the guide strode before on foot, taking the up-river route. About two miles from the house of Steel, the road ran between a high bluff and the Santee, skirting the foot of the hill, and leaving but a few feet between it and the stream. This pass extended for nearly a mile, when the bluff abruptly ceased, and a lovely valley, nearly half a mile wide, spread out from the river.

It was a bright moonlight night, and the sable hills glittered in the silvery rays, and the measured tread of the horses hoofs sounded out plainly upon the midnight air, as the band swept down the hill and entered the black pass. Here all became dark, the tall trees which grew on the side of the bluff effectually screening the road and shutting out the moonlight, save where here and there a straggling ray fell athwart the path and lit up for an instant the dreary road.

Just half through the pass there is a narrower spot than elsewhere, and a ravine comes down from the highlands and empties into the Santee. Across this a rude way had been dug by excavating the bank, and the road, after gaining the bottom, turned down it as though going directly into the river. The bottom of this ravine was as dark as pitch, and as Langsford and his men followed the pedler down into its depths they lost sight of him altogether.

Ordering a halt, the Captain hailed in a low voice, calling for the guide, but no answer came. Again and again did he summon the pedler, each time in a louder key, but in vain; and, with a muttered curse upon the stupidity of the guide, Langsford ordered his men to advance.

Scarcely had the body once more begun to move, than a loud crash was heard in the ravine above them; something came tearing its way through the brush which lined the steep hill side, and a large stone bounded into the ranks, crushing a horse and rider as it fell.

A moment of confusion ensued, amid which the groans of the wounded trooper could be heard, when a loud voice, which thrilled like molten lead upon the hearts of the British, was heard exclaiming:

"Right, lads—give them the others!"

And like the rush of a destructive tornado a large quantity of rocks came thundering down the hill, landing with fearful accuracy among the excited troopers, and creating sad havoc among the horsemen.

"Sold!" shouted Langsford, in a voice which rose far above the din and tumult around them, "sold by a pedler! Retreat in the rear there, and let all follow as fast as possible."

"Aye, sold," thundered a voice in reply, as the Captain ceased, "and the blood of those you have foully murdered during our absence calls loudly for vengeance. Upon them, comrades, and spare not a man!"

"Darned tew darnation if I give quarter tew a darned one," squeaked out the well known tones of the pedler. "Hurra for Yankee Doodle Dandy, and won't we dew 'em up so handy. Shute, boys, and be darned tew 'em!"

A volley of rifles followed the last order and a blaze ran along the hill side, while the messengers of death sped without mercy into the troopers' ranks, killing many and creating a terrible tumult and dismay.

Some few of those farthest in the rear made a hasty retreat, among whom was Langsford, he having pushed his way back when the first volley of stones was rolled down upon him, and fled as fast as horse speed would carry him back to Steel's, accompanied by about a dozen men.

Upon reaching the house he dismounted with his steed and rushed to the door, which he found was fastened; but a few knocks brought a person to it who threw it open, displaying one of his own troopers. The Captain entered, followed by the men who escaped with him, and the door was again secured.

This done, Langsford hastened up stairs and knocked upon the door of Mary Steel's room. No answer came, and he knocked

more rudely than before, but in vain; all within was as silent as the grave. He shook the door, but it was firmly fastened upon the inside, and he ordered a man to bring him an axe which stood at the foot of the stairs. With this he soon forced an entrance, by splitting the panels into pieces, and sprang like a famished tiger into the room. But it was empty—the prey had escaped; and cursing like a fiend, Langsford sprang to the open window, out of which he thrust his head. As he did so, the sharp crack of a rifle was heard, and staggering back, the Captain fell upon the floor, with the blood slowly oozing from a bullet hole in the centre of his forehead.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE.

We must now return to the rebel lover of Mary, whom we left bound to the sapling, with the penknife given him by the pedler secured in his mouth.

After the departure of Langsford, the three men who had been left to guard him took their stations not many feet from him, and for a few moments attentively watched every movement he made. But the troopers had ridden hard and far that day, and it was soon proposed that two of the party lay down and rest, while the third kept watch for an hour, when he should rouse one of the sleepers to take his place. Lots were drawn, and the first guard fell upon one of the three called Lazy John, from a well known propensity he had of going to sleep without being aware of so doing.

"Take care, John, or you will be asleep before we are," said one of the men as he stretched himself at full length upon the ground.

"Keep your eyes wide open, John," cried the other, as he followed his companion's example.

"Don't see the use of watching a man who's tied fast to a tree, at any rate," muttered John, as he sank upon a log near the fire.

Twenty minutes went by, and the two men who had stretched themselves upon the ground gave undoubted signs of being fast asleep. John, however, still remained seated upon the log, with his head 'n'd, 'n'd, noddin', and his body occasionally lurching to and fro, in a state of drowsiness which was the next thing to sleep, but which a slight noise would have thrown off and awakened him fully.

It was at this state of affairs that Harry Bodman, the prisoner, began his preparations to escape. The knife was taken from his mouth, and the keen blade soon severed the cords which fastened him to the tree. He then stooped down, and drawing off his boots, taking one in each hand, and noiselessly made his way to the door of the house. It was partly ajar, and on entering he quickly ascended the stairs, where he paused and drew on his boots, then advanced to the entrance of Mary's apartment and knocked upon the door.

"Who's there," demanded the well known voice of Steel.

"Walter, let me in," he answered.

The key turned instantly in the lock, the door opened, and he glided into the room.

"How did you escape?" murmured Mary, as he hastened to her side.

"You saw the pedler?"

"General Marion—he was in this room," she answered.

"He furnished me with a knife to cut the cords that bound me, and while all the men left to watch me slept, I took advantage of the opportunity to come into the house. But hark!"

They listened in breathless silence, and could plainly hear the sound of heavy firing up the Santee, which told the women were engaged.

"May God defend the right!" fervently ejaculated Mary.

"Amen!" responded a deep voice outside the window, and three distinct taps were heard upon the pane.

"Who's there?" demanded Harry Bodman, as he strode to the spot.

"Brady," replied the same voice. "Hoist the window, Bodman; you have no time to lose."

Harry threw up the sash, and the man outside sprang into the apartment. He was full six feet high, dressed in a hunting shirt of deep blue, and carried a long rifle in his hand. For an instant he gazed around him, and then exclaimed:

"You must all leave the house at once."

"Has Marion been defeated, then?" asked Mary, in breathless alarm.

"No, Miss, but a portion of the flogged British will make this house a place of defence, and in a case of that kind you are better out of it."

"But we can fasten them out," said Steele, resolutely.

"Nay, better let them trap themselves in it," replied Brady, calmly. "There is a ladder at the window by which you can go down, and in my opinion, the sooner the better. I hear the British coming already."</