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TOWANDA:

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THE FAIR COURIER.
AN INCIDENT OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

Every post in South Carolina had yielded successively to the Americans, excepting Charleston and Ninety-Six, but steadily, day after day, the siege of the latter progressed, the Americans slowly approaching the fort by a series of works constructed under the superintendance of Kosciuszko on the third day of June, the long expected reinforcement from England reached Lord Rawdon, and with the Southern Loyalists, and a portion of three Irish regiments swelled his force to two thousand men. But all his efforts to transmit intelligence to the beleaguered garrison to Ninety-Six proved unavailing.

On the 11th of June, Gen. Green received intelligence from Gen. Sumpter, of the approach of Lord Rawdon. Then with renewed diligence he pressed the siege, hoping to obtain a capitulation before the case would receive the news of the approaching snow. But the commander of the fort was always on the alert to make good his defenses, although ignorant of the near approach of aid, he would listen to no overtures of capitulation. The evening a countryman rode along the lines, exchanging with the officers and soldiers on duty. Particular notice was taken of this, as the friends of the cause were permitted to enter the camp and were there pleased. The individual here mentioned moved along, much interested in all he saw, and arrived at the great road leading directly to the town. Pausing for a few moments, he looked cautiously around him, and then putting up to his horse, dashed at full speed into the distance. Seeing that the guard and sentinels opened fire upon him, but he escaped unhurt, holding a letter as soon as he was out of danger. The person immediately opened the gates to receive a messenger, who proved to be Lord Rawdon, and brought the welcome intelligence of his approach.

Hoping still to reduce the fort before the arrival of Lord Rawdon, Gen. Green urged on the work of the siege by every means in his power, but before accomplishing his task, a messenger had returned from Sumpter with the intelligence that Lord Rawdon had passed him and was pushing on for Ninety-Six. The crisis had now come. He resolved to attack the fort, and if not successful in doing so, to retire with his army towards North Carolina, before Rawdon came up.

The 18th day of June, 1781, was the day chosen for the assault, and though the men fought with desperate courage, the fort was successfully defended, after suffering great loss. Gen. Green ordered his troops to retire. Green retreated to Broad river, where he was encamped, and Rawdon, fearing to attack him, remained unmolested. Near the place where Gen. Green was encamped, stood the unpretending residence of a countryman, in moderate circumstances, whose name was Geiger. He was a true friend of the American cause, and but for ill health that rendered him unable to endure the fatigues of the camp, would have been under arms in defense of his country. He had an only daughter imbedded with her father's spirit.

"If there was a man!" she would often say, "when intelligence came of a British Tory outrage, 'if it were only a man, that I could fight for my country.'"

On the third day of Green's encampment, near the residence of Geiger, a neighbor dropped in. "What news?" asked the farmer.

"Lord Rawdon has determined to abandon the fort at Ninety-Six."

"Are you certain?"

"Yes, Green received information this morning. Rawdon leaves Cruger at Ninety-Six, who moves as soon as possible with his bloody redoubts and his property, to take a route that will lead him to the Eliza between him and our forces. Move down the Southern bank of this river to Orange, he will thence make a junction with Rawdon at Friday's Ferry."

"Then they will divide their forces," said Geiger eagerly, "and give Green an advantage by which he will not be slow to profit. Cruger will be a day on the march before our General will make his acquaintance."

"No," replied the neighbor, "I'll hear right at Gen. Green's intention to pursue Rawdon, and strike a more decisive blow."

"Why did not he encounter him at the Saluda, when the opportunity offered?"

"Gen. Sumpter was not with him."

"No, he is now."

"And I fear, will not join him, as he so much desires. He finds no one willing to become bearer of despatches. The country between Sumpter's station, on the Wateree, is full of the enemy—who will to a certainty murder any man who undertakes the journey. I would not go on the journey if my weight in gold."

"And can no man be found to risk his life for his country, even on so perilous a service?" said the farmer in a tone of surprise not unmingled with mortification.

"The effort to reach Sumpter would be fruitless. The bravest man will hesitate to throw his life away."

"God protect those who devote themselves to the good of their country," said Geiger; "if I could hear the fatigue, I would not shrink from the service an instant."

"You would commit an act of folly," replied the farmer, warmly. "But," he added in a saddened voice, "what boots it that I am willing for the task! These feeble limbs refuse to carry me on the journey."

Emily Geiger's daughter, heard all this with feelings of intense interest, and as she had often said before, so she said, now in the silence of her spirit: "Oh, that I were a man!" But she was simply a young and tender girl, and her patriotic heart could only throb with noble feelings, while her hands were not able to strike a blow for her country.

"If I were only a man!" murmured she again and again, as she mused on what she had heard, long after the neighbor had departed.

In the mean time, Gen. Green, who had heard through messengers from Col. Lee, of the proposed abandonment of Ninety-Six, was making preparations to retrace his steps, and strike, if possible a decisive blow against Lord Rawdon. In order to make certain of his designs, and effect a junction with him before attacking the enemy. But, thus far, no one offered to perform the dangerous service.

On the morning of the day upon which the army was to commence retracing its steps, Green sat in his tent, lost in deep thought. Since taking the command of the Southern army, he had been struggling at every disadvantage, with a powerful enemy, and many citizens of the country were lost to every feeling of true patriotism; and now, having weakened that enemy, he felt eager to strike a blow that would destroy him; but with the force that he could command, it was yet a doubtful question whether an engagement would result in victory to the American arms. If he could effect a junction with Sumpter before Lord Rawdon reached Friday's Ferry, on the Congaree, he had great hopes of success. But the great difficulty was to get a messenger to Sumpter, who was distant between one and two hundred miles. While the General was musing these things, an officer entered and said:

"A country girl is before the tent, and wishes to speak with you."

"Tell her to come in," replied the General.

The officer then withdrew, and in a few moments re-appeared in company with a young girl, dressed in a closely fitted habit, carrying a small whip in her hand. She curtsied respectfully as she entered.

"The General arose as the maiden stepped inside of his tent, and returned the salutation."

"Gen. Green?" inquired the stranger.

"The officer bowed."

"I have been told," said she, the color deepening in her face, "that you are in want of a bearer of despatches to Gen. Sumpter."

"I am," replied the General, "but I find no one courageous enough to undertake the perilous mission."

"Send me," said the maiden.

"Send you?" exclaimed the General, taken by surprise. "You! Oh, no, child! I could not do that. It is a journey, from which brave men hold back."

"I am not a brave man. I am only a woman. But I will go."

Touched by such an unlooked-for incident, after pausing a moment he said—

"Will you go on this journey alone?"

"Give me a fleet horse, and I will bear your message safely."

"Alone?"

"What is your name?" inquired the officer, after another thoughtful pause.

"Emily Geiger."

"Is your father living?"

"Yes."

"Have you his consent?"

"He knows nothing of my intention. But he loves his country, and but for ill health, would now be bearing arms against her enemies. His heart is with the good cause, though his arm is paralyzed. His head most approve the act, though his heart might fail him, were I to ask his consent. But it is not for you to hesitate. Heaven has sent you a messenger, and you dare not refuse to accept the proffered service when so much is at stake."

"Noble girl!" said the General, with emotion. "You shall go, and may God speed you and protect you on your journey."

"He will," murmured the intrepid girl, in a low voice.

"Order a swift, but well trained and gentle horse to be saddled immediately," said Green to the officer who had conducted the maiden into his presence.

The officer retired, and Emily seated herself, while the General wrote a hasty despatch for Sumpter. This after it was completed he read over twice in order that it might be delivered to her, and then asked her to repeat to him its contents. She did so accurately. He then gave her minute directions in regard to the journey, with instructions how to act in case she was intercepted by the soldiers of Lord Rawdon—to all of which she listened with deep attention.

"And now my girl," said the General, with an emotion he could not conceal, as he handed her the despatch, "I commit to your care this important message. Everything depends on its safe delivery. Here is money for your expenses, and he reached her a purse. But Emily drew back saying—

"I have money in my pocket. Keep what you have. You will need it, and more, for your country."

"At this point the officer re-entered the tent, and pronounced the horse ready."

"And so am I," said Emily, as she stepped into the open air. Already a whisper of what was going on in the General's quarters was passing through the camp, and officers and men had gathered before his tent. There was no sign of fear about the maiden, as she placed her foot in the hand of an officer, and sprang upon the saddle. Gen. Green stood near her. He extended his hand as soon as she had firmly seated herself and grasped the reins of the noble animal upon which she was mounted.

"God speed you on your journey; and may Heaven and your country reward you," said he, as he held her hand tightly. As he relinquished it, the officer who had till then held the horse by the bridle, released his grasp, bearing the courier from the camp, rapidly in a south westerly direction. Officers and men gazed after her, but no word of admiration went up to the skies. On some minds pressed painful thoughts of the perils that lay in the path of the brave girl; others, rebuked by her noble self-devotion, retired to their tents, and remained in communion with their fellows on the subject that engrossed every thought; while others lost all present enthusiasm in their anxiety for the success of the mission.

About five miles from Green's encampment lived one of the most active and bitter Tories in all South Carolina. His name was Lorie. He was ever on the alert for information, and had risked much in his efforts to give intelligence to the enemy. Two of his sons were under arms at Ninety-Six, on the British side, and he had himself served against his country at Camden. Since the encampment of Gen. Green in his neighborhood, Lorie had been in daily communication with spies, who kept hovering in his vicinity, in order to pick up information that might be of importance to the British.

Some four hours after Emily Geiger had started on her journey, one of Lorie's spies reached the house of his employer. "What news," asked the Tory, who saw by the man's countenance, that he had something of importance to communicate.

"The rebel Green, has found a messenger to carry his despatch to Sumpter."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, and I have been on her journey some four or five hours."

"Yes. That girl of Geiger's went to the camp this morning, and volunteered for the service." We will not stain our pages with a record of the profane and brutal words that fell from the lips of the Tory.

"She has the swiftest horse in the camp," said the man, "and unless instant pursuit is given she will soon be out of reach."

With a bitter oath, Lorie swore that she should never reach the camp of Sumpter.

"Take Yukan," said he in a quick, energetic voice, "and kill him but what you overtake the hussey between this and Morgan's Range."

"She has nearly five hours start," replied the man.

"But you must make two miles to her one."

"Even then, she will be most likely ahead of the Range ere I can reach there."

"Very well. In that case you must start Bill Mink after her with a fresh horse. I will give you a letter, which you will place in his hands should you fail to overtake the girl."

With these instructions, the man started in pursuit. He was mounted on a large, strong horse, who bore his rider as lightly as if he had been a child. In the meantime, Emily, who had received minute information in regard to her journey, and who was moreover no stranger to the way, struck boldly into the dense forest through which she was to pass, moved along a bridle track at as swift a pace as the animal she rode could bear without too great fatigue. The important work on which she had entered and the enthusiasm with which it had inspired her, kept her heart above the influence of fear. No event of moment happened during the first day of her journey. In passing a small settlement known as Morgan's Range, which she did about four o'clock in the afternoon, she took the precaution to sweep around in a wide circle, as some of the most active and evil minded Tories in the State resided in that neighborhood.

Gradually the day declined, and as the deep shadows mingled more and more with each other, a feeling of loneliness, not before experienced, came over the mind of Emily, and her eyes were cast about more wearily, as if she feared the approach of danger. The horse at which she had proposed to speed the night was still ten miles in advance, and as the shades of evening began to gather around, the hope of reaching this resting place was abandoned; for there being no moon, there was danger of losing her way in the darkness. This conviction was so strong, that Emily turned her horse in the direction of the first farm house that came in view after the sun had fallen below the horizon. As she rode up to the door, she was met by a man, who accosted her kindly, and asked where she was from, and how far she was going.

"I hope to reach Elwood's to-night," replied Emily.

"How far away is it?"

"Over ten miles, and the road is bad and lonely," said the man, whose wife had by this time joined him. "You had better get down and stay with us till morning."

"If you will give me the privilege," returned the maiden, "I shall feel greatly obliged."

The man promptly offered his hand to assist Emily to dismount, and while he led her tired horse away, his wife invited her to enter the house.

"Have you come far?" inquired the woman, as the intrepid Emily's bonnet strings, looking very curiously in her face as she spoke.

"Your horse looked very tired. You must have ridden him a long distance."

"I rode fast," said Emily, "but still I have not been able to reach the place for which I started this morning."

"It's hardly safe for a young girl like you to take such a journey alone, in these troubled times."

"I'm not afraid. No one will harm me," said Emily, forcing a smile.

"I'm not so certain of that, child. It's only a day or two since Green passed through here in full retreat, and no doubt, there are many straggling ragabonds from his army roaming around whom it would not be safe for one like you to meet."

The woman said, "I'm not so certain of that, child. It's only a day or two since Green passed through here in full retreat, and no doubt, there are many straggling ragabonds from his army roaming around whom it would not be safe for one like you to meet."

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