

Trapping a Spy.

BY M. QUAIN.

ONE of the most active and vigilant spies whom the Confederates had during the early part of the war was a man who called himself "Captain Elliott."

During the winter of 1861-2, when the Federal troops were massed in front of Washington, waiting for the spring campaign, and the Confederates held Centerville and the country thereabouts, Washington was the headquarters of many Confederate spies.

"I've got a nice job for you," remarked the official who controlled my movements at that time, one day in January after I had returned from a weary scout towards Centerville.

"Well?" "I, want you to look up some of the half dozen Confederate spies who are lounging about Washington. They are picking up every word of information dropped, and have become so bold that they even dare to "pump" heads of departments. I am aware that they are in the city, but know none of them, or would arrest them myself. You have a little time to spare now, and make the hunting down of these rascals your sole object."

Of course, I replied, "very well," bowed myself out, and then sought my quarters. The business was a new one for me, but one in which I took great interest. I had never had any detective experience, but was not long in concluding that I could soon get on the track of some of the men. I had been in and out of Washington until well acquainted with the hotels, and principal saloons, and had quite a fair idea of how I must go to work.

The next morning, none of my acquaintances knew me at sight, and no wonder. I was no longer a citizen, unknown to fame, but a "captain in the army," sporting a brand-new uniform, and the "tallest" kind of an air. I had made up my mind that I could secure information as an officer which could not be gained in the character of a citizen. As a citizen, I must hunt up the Confederate spies—as an army officer, I hoped and intended that they should hunt for me. A long purse was part of my outfit. I knew that many officers, whose men were in camp at Arlington, Fort Michigan, and at other points, remained in the city for days at a time, boarding at the hotels and visiting the theatre, and so none would question my right to leave "my company," which formed part of a regiment stationed at Alexandria.

My first move was to Willard's, where I registered my name as "Captain Charles Lake, 'G' Co., 12th N. Y. Infantry," but in putting back the pen, I managed to drop a big drop of ink on the line, so that it blotted out the "Company," leaving one to guess to which one in the regiment I was attached. There were the names of a score of officers; fifty lieutenants, captains and colonels sat around, and no attention was paid me. Securing a cigar and a seat, I waited half an hour to get a chance to mix in with the conversation of a group of seven or eight officers. There was a lieutenant among them who said but little, but seemed to do a great deal of thinking. Every time he spoke it was to draw out some point of information. He asked after regiments newly arrived, about ordnance and naval stores, and all at once I made up my mind that he was a Confederate spy. I had hardly formed the opinion, when I read "spy" in his every action, and would not have hesitated to arrest him then and there, but for a desire to make him the bait to bring other fish to my hook. Through him I must get into the "ring."

I found no chance to get into the conversation until they changed the topic to theatricals, and then a dispute arose as to how a certain actor's name was spelled. Two of the officers became excited over the matter, and made a wager of a single bottle of champagne. A paper containing the name was soon found, and the loser ordered the bottle. Begging his pardon, I asked that he might make the order for a dozen bottles, at my expense; and after "plank-

ing down," as the soldiers used to term it, an even fifty dollars to the clerk, I invited all the crowd to a back parlor to discuss the wine. The action seemed generous to them, and I was soon in receipt of numerous friendly slaps on the back, the heartiest one coming from the spy. He declared that I was a jolly good fellow, that he hoped his company and my company might meet, that he was constant visitor at the Willard's, and flattered himself on meeting me often. I flattered myself that I would have him on his back in a couple of days, but was very clear of giving him any hint to that effect. We drank up the champagne, smoked some Havanas at my expense, and half an hour afterwards I was off to bed. Not one of the officers for a moment questioned my identity as a captain, nor did any one except the spy advert to my regiment. This convinced me what an easy matter it was for a spy to hang about Washington undisturbed and unquestioned. My suspicious friend wanted to know where the regiment was located, to what brigade it belonged, what I thought of army matters, and evidently imagined he had got hold of a fresh fish. I was desirous of catching the man with some proofs about him that he was actually a spy, and engaged in the work. This I feared I could not do. He never wrote anything down, but seemed to store it up in his memory. I had no doubt that he jotted down all points after going to his room, and then managed in some way to send the information through the lines. As it would be a tedious job to effect his capture with poofs, I determined to follow another plan. On the second day after making his acquaintance, I met him in a cafe, and asked for a private word. He cheerfully granted the request, and when I had him in a quiet corner, I opened on him:

"Lieutenant Chadsworth, I have known you only a short time, yet our acquaintance has been so agreeable that I should really be grieved to have harm come to you. But, I fear that certain malicious persons are preparing a trap for you. Not ten minutes ago, I heard you denounced as a Confederate spy, by one who knows all about you; and I fear unless you leave Washington within half an hour, you will be arrested, convicted and hung!"

He turned red, then pale, smiled, looked frightened, and when I had finished, he looked at me for a moment without speaking, and then walked straight out doors. I had given him a shot which staggered him. He must have known that I had worked up his case and was sure of my man, or else I would not have dared to handle him so plainly. After a few minutes, I left the cafe, lounged around for an hour or two, and then dropped into one of the hotels. There was a crowd of army officers and civilians in the office, and no one took note of my entrance. Casting my eyes about, I discovered my lieutenant in conversation with a person in the uniform of a captain, and two others dressed as citizens. It struck me in a moment that the other three were also spies, and I took care that they did not see me. The lieutenant seemed to be telling them of his adventure, and the four wore grave countenances. Imagining that the captain was the director of the party, I scanned his face until I was sure that I could remember him again. Just below his right ear, I noticed a good-sized mole, and this would aid me greatly in identifying him again. Without receiving notice from any of them, I slipped out doors, hurried to my room, and in a few moments had exchanged my uniform for a citizen's suit. Knowing that the lieutenant would give the others a description of me, I next proceeded to a barber's, and in a short time had exchanged my long beard for a pair of side whiskers. The change was so great that the spy himself could not have recognized me. Purchasing a heavy cane, and taking care to walk slowly, as a dignified army contractor might be supposed to walk, I went back to the hotel. Two of the four spies were gone, one of those missing being the lieutenant. I was quite sure that the two would take themselves out of the city, and now proposed to hunt down the others. The captain was smoking, and I pulled out a cigar, strolled around to his chair and asked for a light.

"You gentlemen of the army are having easy times just now," I remarked, as I handed back his cigar with a bow.

"To tell the truth, we are," he replied, as he moved a little so that I could take the chair beside him. "However, it's an awful bore, and I for one am anxious for the spring campaign."

"Yes, I suppose so," I replied; "and from what I heard to-day, I am satisfied that the campaign will open early, and be vigorously conducted. I'll bet some big movement will be made in less than six weeks."

"So?" he exclaimed giving me a keen glance, and also casting another at his companion. "Are you connected with the government?"

"No, not exactly; but, as a heavy contractor, I am brought into contact with many high officials, and am generally posted as to what is going on."

I detected a sort of telegraphic despatch between the two spies, and read their thoughts like a book. The captain immediately complained of being thirsty, and inquired if I would not step up into his room

and take a social glass. I did not hesitate to go with him, and the other party followed after. Getting up to the room, a glance around convinced me that the captain had told a falsehood when he said that he had only occupied it for two days. Everything went to show that he had been there for several days, if not several weeks.

"Stay!" said I, as we had raised our glasses for a draught, "I had forgotten that you did not know my name. Allow me to present myself as Benjamin F. Gooddale, of New York city."

"Ah! that reminds me of my own strange neglect," responded the captain; "allow me to introduce myself as Captain Mark Elliott, of the—New Hampshire Infantry."

He gave a gulp just where he should have pronounced the number of his regiment, and so I lost it. I knew that he did it on purpose, but pretended not to notice it. The other man was introduced as "Treadway," a resident of Maryland Avenue, and a warm friend of the captain's. Just as we had taken our seats, and the men were about to solicit further information from me, I suddenly remembered that I must be at the War Department at a certain hour, and had no time to linger. They were very sorry, they said, but were consoled by my assertion that I would call upon them the next day and renew my acquaintance.

"If you hear anything in military matters worth remembering, just jot it down," remarked the captain, as we shook hands. "I confess that we officers are sadly ignorant of the very matters which concern us most, and are duly thankful for any information."

I promised him that he should have all my news when next we met, and on leaving the hotel, went directly to headquarters, and made my first report. I was congratulated on my success, and told to go to any expense and use any means to frighten away the two other spies, or plan to capture them with proofs which would convict them.

During the next two days I did not go near the hotel, nor did I meet with either of the men. I satisfied myself that "Treadway" did not live on Maryland Avenue, nor yet in the city, and a search of the rolls of all the New Hampshire regiments failed to bring out a "Captain Mark Elliott." Believing, as before that if I could frighten the fellows away, it would be almost as well as arresting them, I at length wrote a note to Treadway, and sent it to the hotel by a boy. It was a note without date or signature, and read as follows:

"MR. TREADWAY.—As a true Confederate at heart, I feel it my duty to warn you that the same person is also on your track. I believe he has secured proofs to convict you as a spy. Do not delay a moment after this reaches you!"

About two hours after, I sent a friend around to the hotel, and the clerk told him that both my men had gone. I was quite elated at first, believing that I had started them for Richmond, but next came the thought that they might have only changed quarters, and would be more sly than before. If they were yet in the city, they might in some way connect the "army contractor" with the mysterious note, and so it was at least a prudent plan to adopt another disguise. Resuming my captain's uniform, I shaved off my side whiskers, and stuck a long strip of black court-plaster across my left cheek, "to cover a wound received at Bull Run," you know. For two hours, I trotted in and out of hotels and cafes, but I could not find my men. Getting weary, I gave up the chase for a time, and went back to Willard's. Getting a newspaper and an arm-chair, I secured a quiet corner, and for nearly an hour was oblivious of the noise and confusion around me. At the end of that time, supper was announced, and most of us went in. During the first part of the meal, I was thinking so deeply of my men that I gave no one any notice, but was at length made aware that I was a being in the flesh by feeling the contents of a teacup scalding my leg. The man at my left, a citizen of quiet demeanor, had overturned his cup. He at once apologized for his carelessness, and the moment of confusion passed away. With his first word, I knew that I had heard his voice before, and for the next five minutes I drummed my head to remember where I had seen him. In reaching for a biscuit, I gave him a glance, and came near rising up in my chair at the discovery. There was the mole below his ear, and another glance showed me that "Captain Elliott" was at my elbow!

The fellow had doubtless seen the note sent to his companion, and had left his hotel, changing his disguise, and taken other quarters to render himself safer. I looked up and down the table, but could not see "Treadway," and to wind up his case, will state that I never saw him afterwards, he leaving Washington as soon as he could after my note reached him. "Elliott" was the only old fox, and I was convinced that I should have much trouble with him. However, as the warnings had worked well in the other cases, I determined to try one in his. After coming out from supper, I waited until I saw him settle down in a corner, and then went to the clerk and asked if the stranger had registered.

Glancing at him, the clerk whirled the

book around and pointed to the name of "Gilbert Mason, Cleveland, Ohio." I then passed on, went to a stationer's, and wrote just such a note as the last, directing it to the man as he had registered, and writing the word "Immediate!" at the lower left hand corner of the envelope. Going out, I called a boy, and gave him a silver quarter and the letter, telling him to hand the letter to the hotel clerk. Hurrying on ahead of the lad, I had got a paper and secured a seat near the spy before the letter reached the desk. In a moment more, one of the bell boys delivered the note to "Mason," and I held up my paper so that I could watch his actions. He opened it with nervous haste, as if suspecting its contents, and I saw his hand shake and tremble as he read it. He looked all around to see if any one was observing him, and finding that he was unnoticed, he read the note through a second time. I could see that he was somewhat frightened, and had hopes that my plan was going to work, when he crumpled the note in his hand, tossed it into the fire, and compressed his lips, as if saying to himself:

"It's mere suspicion. They can't prove anything, and I will stay and brave it out!"

From that moment I knew I would have to arrest him in order to dispose of his case. He must have wondered how any one came to know him in his new disguise, but I think he came to the conclusion that some one connected with the hotel had given him warning, and that there was no real cause of his fright. He got up, went to the register, looked at the name, made some inquiry of the clerk, who shook his head in reply, and then the spy left the office. I was close on his heels as he gained the street, and intending to follow him. He went down the street two blocks, and turned into another, walked around a square, and then started off at a swinging pace. He was dodging to escape any one who might be following, but was now going to his quarters. I was always noted as a fast walker, but soon found that I must take a "dog trot" if I kept up with him. He was about half a block ahead of me, and I was about to lessen the distance, when I encountered a cart drawn by a negro, and went over it into the gutter. When I had scrambled up, my man was out of sight. I ran down to the corner, up one street and down the other, but he had dodged me. I did not give up until certain that he had made his escape, and then went back to my quarters. My reflections were not altogether agreeable. After looking over the case, I made up my mind that I had put the fellow on his guard instead of frightening him away, and that I should now have any amount of trouble to strike his trail and find him again. But I found him in a way entirely unexpected. Continued next week.

Rather Mixed.

"What's the matter, Bob?" "Sam, who am I?" "Why, you are yourself, Bob Harrison, ain't you?" "No, far from it." "Why, what's the matter?" "Well, sir, I'm so mixed up, I don't know who I am." "Don't take it so hard to heart." "I ain't; I'm taking in my handkerchief." "Well sir what's the matter?" "Why, I'm married." "Married? ha! ha! ha! why, sir, you should be happy." "Yes, but I ain't." "Why, all married men are supposed to be happy." "Yes, but how many are so?" "Well, sir, as I said before, don't take it so hard—tell us all about it." "Well; Sam, I'll tell you how it is.—You see I married a widder, and this widder had a daughter." "O, yes! I see how it is. You have been making love to this daughter." "No! I worse than that. You see my father was a widower, and he married this daughter, so that makes my father my son-in-law, don't it? Well, don't you see how I'm mixed up?" "Well, sir, is that all?" "No, I only wish it was. Don't you see, my step-daughter is my step-mother, ain't she? Well, then, her mother is my grandmother, ain't she? Well, I'm married to her, ain't I? So that makes me my own grand-father, doesn't it?"

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