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ADVENTURES OF A SCOUT.

FOR five years previous to the breaking out of the war, I was in the employ of a wholesale house in the East as an agent to introduce certain articles to the attention of Southern business men, and in this capacity, I traveled over a large portion of the Southern country. I canvassed Virginia, especially, as close as a missionary would with his tracts and Bibles. In addition to traveling by rail, I took stage routes, rode horseback, and sometimes trudged along on foot; and when the rebellion broke out, I thought myself well acquainted with almost every gap, mountain, turnpike and cross-road in Northern and Western Virginia.

The advent of civil war ruined my prospects as a commercial traveler in the South, and one day in the fall of 1861, I found myself in the hubbub and confusion of Washington, short of money, short of hope, and lacking many of the other qualifications necessary to make a man feel contented with himself and the world. I was out of a situation, and was in Washington to see what chances there were that the great excitement would bring me a job. The clerical force at the various departments of government had been augmented, merchants had increased their force of clerks, bookkeepers, were commanding their own price, but somehow a whole week slipped away without my securing a situation.

One day, as I was wandering up Pennsylvania Avenue, I ran across an old friend of mine from New York State, wearing the eagles of a colonel on his shoulders. I had not seen him for two or three years, and the meeting was a very pleasant one. After we had discussed the subject of food and drink until neither wanted more, the colonel shoved his feet over the table in front, squinted his eye at me, and brusquely remarked:

"You are rather green, you are. A man who can't make a fortune out of this excitement has no head on him."

"What can I do?" I responded. "I am not a colonel, I don't want to be a soldier, and I don't like the situation offered. Just you show me the road to fortune, and see how quick I'll travel it!"

The colonel took several strong pulls at his cigar, dove his hands deep into his pockets, got his feet a little higher, and for two or three minutes was buried in thought.

"I have it!" he suddenly yelled, drawing down his legs and jumping from his chair. "I know who has been looking for you for a whole week."

"Who?"

"General McClellan."

"What for?"

"See here, my innocent friend from the suburbs, don't stop now to ask me idle questions. The boats leaves for down river in twenty minutes. If you have any baggage to get, get it right away. You are going down on the boat, and after we're aboard, I'll tell you just what is to become of you."

He did tell me. He was aware of the fact that I had travelled extensively in Virginia and he was going to make a scout of me. A great part of the army was then strung out along the Potomac, in a line extending clear down to Tobacco Point, the river separating the two forces which were to grapple with each other in many a bloody battle during after months and years. The Confederates were in heavy force around Leesburg, and opposite this point the Union forces had been massed in considerable strength. With a wide deep river separating the two armies, there was little show for a battle, and so the respective forces were content to exchange occasional shots, and to spend their time in drill and practice for the movements which were to come before the appearance of winter.

General McClellan, as well as the half dozen minor generals holding command of forces stationed along the Maryland shore, had been anxious for some time past to gain something like accurate knowledge of the force of the enemy in and around Leesburg. One scout had been drowned while crossing the river, another had been shot by the Confederates, another captured and sent to prison, and in one way and another, all attempts to ascertain particulars in regard to the enemy had been failures. One or two deserters from the Confederates had estimated the number of troops, the number of earthworks and pieces of artillery, but their information was worth little. For a full month before the fatal 21st of October which witnessed the fearful slaughter at Ball's Bluff, McClellan was unceasing in his attempts to secure such particulars as he did finally receive, and that caused him to order over the force which was slaughtered, he acting on the belief that the Confederates had no real strength in that vicinity.

The colonel's regiment was stationed at Conrad's Ferry, above Leesburg, on the Maryland side, and we finally arrived at his camp. Before night I was introduced to General McClellan, who was passing along the shore on a tour of inspection. He questioned me long and closely in regard to my knowledge of Virginia, and particularly as to my acquaintance with the country about Leesburg; and when he had been convinced of my loyalty, he at once engaged my services at figures which would have been princely in any other occupation, where the employe was reasonably sure of having a month's life ahead of him. I knew the hardships and dangers which were a part of the duty of a scout, and it was not without hesitation that I bound myself to the adventurous life.

For the next week I was busy preparing maps and marking out roads for the benefit of the generals, and several days more in making a map for my own guide. However, I at length received orders to report to Colonel Devins, who was in command of a few hundred troops stationed on Harrison's Island, a bank of sand in mid river, and extending from just below Conrad's Ferry, down to within a mile of Edward's Ferry. The troops were a sort of advance picket to keep watch of the movements of the enemy on the Virginia shore, and their principal duties were drilling, and exchanging harmless shots with the Confederate pickets on the Bluffs opposite. I found the colonel a quick-spoken man of very plain speech.

"So you are the new scout, are you?" he inquired, as I entered his tent and reported myself.

"Yes sir."

"Well, sir, I want you to cross the river to-night, count the Confederate force from the Bluff to Leesburg, and report to me at daylight. Take your own way of doing it, but don't bring me anything but reliable news."

"Very well, sir," I replied, as I backed out of the tent, but I wanted to ask him why he didn't order me to go to Richmond and back in twenty-four hours.

The task assigned me could not be accomplished by any scout living, but I must try it.

I spent the afternoon in observing all that was to be seen on the other shore, calculating the force of the river current, attempting to locate the Confederate pickets, and only commenced my real work after sundown. It was too long a distance to swim to the Virginia shore, and I determined to make the crossing in a small skiff which had come into possession of the soldiers. The boat was a frail little thing, probably used by some duck-hunter, and the only means of propulsion was a rough paddle. But, any conveyance was safer than swimming, and I had no doubt that I should make the passage in safety.

Just at dark Colonel Devins pointed out to me what he thought my route should be to ensure a safe landing on the opposite side, and gave me some further instructions as to securing the information which he desired. He believed that the actual strength of the enemy had been greatly over-estimated, and he wanted reliable news from every camp. I knew afterwards that his theory was to cross a force, if the enemy were not too strong, drive them back, and open communication with the Union troops by way of the Drainsville turnpike, but of course he gave me no hint of this at the time.

The night was a starlight one, but yet so dark that in looking out on the river, I could not see above thirty feet in advance to distinguish any object. I did not believe that anything would be gained by waiting

for the stillness of midnight, and so, an hour after it was fully dark, I got into the boat and shoved off. The trip was not to be a scout, but a spying expedition. I must enter the Confederate camp, and if discovered, would meet with a spy's fate. As it would make no difference in case I were arrested, I did not exchange my citizen's garments for the uniform of Uncle Sam. I had never been over the ground between the Bluff and Leesburg, but I had a general idea of what it was, and about how large an army could encamp on the strip of territory.

The first thing was to make the crossing and a landing. I wanted to land somewhere along the Bluff for two reasons. First, no pickets would be stationed at the edge of the water, or so I hoped, and next, the Bluff being at least a hundred feet high, no picket posted in the grove above could catch a glimpse of me while on the river or landing. I therefore headed the skiff directly for the opposite shore, calculating about how far the current would drift me down in making the passage. I had to use the paddle very cautiously, and therefore made slow progress, but at length found the shore close ahead of me. Dipping the paddle as carefully as an Indian, I gave the skiff a jump, and was nearly knocked overboard by its running on a rock, the collision producing a sharp grating sound which could be heard many rods away. The boat had hardly stopped before I heard voices on the Bluff speaking in excited tones, and knew that I had given the pickets the alarm. I tried to shove the boat off, but it was on too hard, and the bow laid up so high that any energetic movement at the stern would tip me overboard. So, after the one effort, I sat perfectly still, not daring to grasp the paddle, which slipped from my hand and went off down stream. Just where I landed, the Bluff was not so steep as at other spots above and below, and through the darkness I thought I could make out that a path which was used by the soldiers in procuring water ran up the hill. I had scarcely arrived at this conclusion, when the voices came plainer, and I distinctly heard footsteps and the rattle of arms.

"No, I'm not mistaken!" exclaimed a voice, a moment after. "I heard the noise as plain as I hear that drum down there."

"Well, perhaps you did," replied another voice, as the footsteps came closer, "but I don't see what could have made it."

The next moment I caught sight of two objects on the path about thirty feet above me, and knew that a couple of Confederate pickets had come down to investigate the cause of the alarm. Looking up, and having the clear sky above them, I could distinguish the soldiers quite plainly, but it was an interesting query whether they could see me.

"Well, now where's the Yankee brigade which frightened you?" inquired one of the soldiers, as they both moved down nearer me.

"I don't see anything, but I won't give up that I did hear a noise, like drawing boards over a rock," replied the other, and then they stood and listened.

I was quite sure that they would not see me unless they came closer. The boat was of dark color, my garments were dark, and the shore and river must look like one dark spot to them. I was sitting down on my feet, a hand on either rail of the boat, and I trembled for fear that I would upset the frail craft, which seemed to be balanced on the rock as evenly as a pair of druggist's scales.

"Are you satisfied now?" inquired the doubting one, after they had listened two full minutes without hearing any sound beyond the ripple of the waters.

"Yes—let's go up," replied the other, and both turned to go. Just at this instant there came a crisis. I had been suffering terribly in my back and legs, owing to my having assumed what might be better termed a "squatting" position, and my mind was so relieved when they turned, that I involuntarily raised up a little. As I made the move, the craft went over, and I was emptied out with a loud splash. The splash was enough to betray me, but I added to the calamity by giving utterance to a loud "Oh-h-h!" as I went over. I realized my peril as fully as any one could, and the prompt action of the next moment saved my life. The soldiers were greatly surprised, and perhaps somewhat frightened, shouting and jumping around, as if expecting that at least a regiment was landing at their feet. As I struggled up from the water, I jerked the skiff out from shore and made a long jump with it for deep water, pushing it ahead of me. At this

moment the pickets opened fire. Their balls went over me, around me, splashed water into my face, and I had no other idea than that I should get a bullet in my head. I think each one of them had a revolver, and felt sure after getting safe away that they fired every charge they had within a minute's time. I was kicking and splashing to get into deep water, telling them by the noise where to aim, but I struck the current after a few plunges, and had sense enough to grip the skiff and float without movement.

Just as I got fairly into the current, half a dozen other soldiers came rattling down the path and opened fire, but every one of their shots struck the water beyond me. I was certain that they could not see me, and feeling little fright, had only to remain quiet a short time to make my escape. I hung a dead weight on the inverted craft, and soon floated down several rods. The current was sluggish so near the shore, but I dared not make a move. In two or three minutes more the other pickets along the Bluff got the word, and all commenced firing until I could see flashes a mile below. Some fired at the island, some down into the river, and I heard several drums beating the long roll on both sides of the stream. No one could see me, and all the bullets coming down from the Bluff were wasted, not one striking within twenty feet of the skiff. In a little time, by cautiously working my legs, I got the skiff into the current, and then headed my course for the island. The game was up, and I might as well go back and report. Having taken the alarm, and ascertained the fact of my landing, the Confederates would not be caught napping again. My only resource was to return, and either seek to cross further up or down, or wait until another night for another trial. Pushing the skiff on before, and drifting down nearly as fast as I progressed the other way, a landing was at last made, but at least a mile and a half below the camp.

The colonel was not surprised at my want of success, having seen three or four previous failures, but was considerably disappointed. He was nervous, ambitious, and exceedingly anxious for active operations. The Union army on the Potomac had been idle for weeks and months, and now that there was some slight show for a battle in his vicinity, the colonel, and indeed all other officers, were impatient of delay.

"How do you feel now?" inquired the commander, half an hour after I had reported, and soon after I had exchanged my wet garments for another suit of citizen's clothing.

"All right!" I responded; for I felt no bad effects from the trip except an anguish sensation.

"See here," he whispered, coming close up to me; "I believe you can go over there and secure the information I want. I won't ask you to return to-night, or to-morrow, but hope you will get back to-morrow night. If you will make the trip, I will give you two hundred dollars from my own pocket the hour you return."

My failure had greatly increased the risks, but of course I told the colonel that I would make a second attempt, and half an hour after was planning the new trip. It was pretty certain that I could not land again that night anywhere along the opposite Bluff, and I was soon determined not to make the attempt. There were a number of large skiffs on the Maryland side of the island, used by the soldiers to cross to the main land, and it was arranged that the colonel should give me four soldiers and a boat. Getting into the skiff about midnight, the soldiers took the oars, and the boat was headed up stream. It was my intention to proceed to a point above Conrad's Ferry, and then take to the water and make a landing on the Virginia shore, striking the bank above the beginning of the Bluff, and working my way down through the scrub forest behind it.

The current was stiff, the soldiers unused to the oars, and it was nearly two o'clock before we landed. We passed the Ferry nearly a mile, and hit the bank just where a small camp of Federals were located. I explained my mission to the colonel in command, sent the soldiers back with the boat, and then began active preparations. The colonel furnished me with two empty cracker barrels, and these I lashed side by side with ropes. I then emptied my pockets, and left with the officers every article I had except thirty-six dollars in gold, and a jackknife. At last, when all was ready, I pushed the barrels into the river, waded in after them until only my head remained above the water, and with a word of good-bye from the three or four men on the bank, was off. The river being broad and deep

at this point, the current was not so strong and swift. The barrels made a fine float, and by hanging to the ropes, I had only to keep my legs going to get along at a fair speed. A slight mist was rising from the water, and it was impossible for me to see more than a rod in any direction. I did not attempt to hold my course against the current, but headed the barrels in a direction which made progress easy, and which I believed would land me something like a mile above the Bluff.

It seemed to me that I was a full hour in making the crossing, and when my feet at last touched bottom, and I cautiously waded to the grassy bank, I was shaking like one with an attack of the Indiana ague. A rail fence ran along the river bank just beside me, and after a time I climbed up on this and took a long look in every direction. I could see further here than on the river, but my eyes were not able to discern any signs of the Confederate encampments. This fact argued well for a successful result to my expedition. I took off all my garments and gave them a wring to clear them from water, and when I had donned them again, still feeling cold, I held a boxing-match with an imaginary antagonist for about five minutes, the exercise thoroughly warming me up. Just as I got through, I heard the reports of several muskets half a mile below on the Bluffs, which were answered by the Massachusetts pickets on the island, and then I knew my location better.

What Colonel Devins most wanted was information concerning the force of the enemy opposite the centre of the island, just where the Union forces contemplated a crossing and a battle. To secure this information, I must work along down the river through the woods. Just how I was to enter the Confederate camp and secure license to perambulate among the men and fortifications, I could not tell; but, knowing that I could not secure any news by remaining where I was, I leaped over the fence and began advancing through the field. After a short walk, I struck the Bluff, and then made a "right oblique" movement and got into the woods. The colonel had told me before starting, that the ground back of the Bluff, opposite the centre of the island, was clear of trees for the space of seven or eight acres, and that here I would find earthworks. He believed that no force of account was encamped above the clearing, but that the great majority of the Confederate camp was between the clearing and Leesburg. Remembering these suggestions, I made my way through the trees with the intention of striking the clearing, trying in vain to form some sort of programme as I walked along.

After progressing about half a mile, just as I had leaped over a log lying across my course, some one sung out "Halt!" in a loud voice, and I heard the click! click! of an army musket. Knowing that I had encountered a Confederate picket, I sank down, crawled back over the log, and laid quiet, waiting for further developments. I had not long to wait. The picket shouted to know who was advancing, and threatened to fire if he did not receive a reply to his challenge. After a moment, his loud tones attracted the attention of some of his comrades, and three or four advanced towards me. I dared not rise up, and knew that any movement would betray my presence. I therefore hugged the ground closely, and directly heard their voices close at hand on the other side of the log.

"What did the noise sound like?" inquired one of the men, as the group halted.

"Just like some one falling down on a brush heap," replied the picket. "I didn't see any one, but I'll bet it was a man!"

The next three minutes were passed in listening, but I made no movement, even holding in my breath that they should not discover me. They came close to the log, one of the soldiers dropped the butt of his musket down on it within fifteen feet of my head, and remarked:

CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

A Watch that has Cost \$16,000.
W. H. Gray, of Taunton, has a gold watch that his grandfather, Capt. Wanton Howland, of Dartmouth, bought in Liverpool for 50 guineas, 70 years ago, when he was 21 years old, and, having carried it for 55 years, bequeathed it to its present possessor. The watch is still a good time-keeper, and Mr. Gray has a standing offer of \$500 for it. Reckoning at six per cent., compound interest, for the investment to the present time, the watch has cost about \$16,000.

Young ladies are now creating artificial dimples by sacrificing their four molars.