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# WITH WARREN AT BUNKER HILL.

A Story of the Siege of Boston.

HOW BEN SCARLETT ESCAPED FROM BOSTON TOWN, AS SET  
DOWN BY HIS COMRADE, AND EDITED

By JAMES OTIS.



With Eight Page Illustrations by J. Watson Davis.

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**BY JAMES OTIS.**

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# WITH WARREN AT BUNKER HILL.

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## CHAPTER I.

S I M O N F L E T C H E R .

It was on the day after the redcoats went out to Concord and were very glad to be able to get back again, that I first met old Simon Fletcher, who lived in Battery Alley near Burrough's Wharf, which last, as you may know, is near to the shipyard owned by Masters Grant and Greenwood.

Ben Scarlett, a comrade of mine who had promised to be a companion-in-arms when we should be allowed to join the minute-men—and it seemed a long, weary time to wait, for I was barely fourteen and he two months younger—made old Simon's acquaintance when Master Scarlett, Ben's father, was building the wharf near Ship Street.

He had told me many entertaining stories about Simon Fletcher, that which struck my fancy most being the fact that he had taken an active part in the siege of Louisbourg when Master Pepperill, who

was afterward made a knight for his services, showed the king's troops what Americans could do in the way of warfare without spending half a lifetime practicing the manual of arms.

I should have met this veteran some time before, but for the fact that the times were so troublous my mother, a widow who lived in a small house on Carter Street near Beechman's Lane, which had been built by my father, was greatly distressed if I went out of doors in the evening, and inasmuch as Simon Fletcher was employed at Gray's ropewalk during the daytime, I was debarred from meeting him until the news came of what had been done at Concord and Lexington, when, as it seemed to me, business of all kinds ceased for awhile.

It was Ben Scarlett who gave us information of the bloody business brought about by General Gage's orders, and I was not yet arisen from bed on that morning of the 20th of April when he made such a clamoring at the door as caused me to believe for a verity that the house was about to be searched for munitions of war.

At this time it was not as rare as you may think for an honest citizen to submit while his dwelling was ransacked by the hirelings of King George's army.

I sprang from the bed and into my breeches with-

out the loss of time, for the redcoats had an unpleasant fashion of battering at doors with the butts of their muskets if a summons was not answered immediately, and know that I presented a comical appearance when, almost trembling with fear and anger, I disclosed myself to Ben.

Just here I want to say a word about my friend, than whom none can be more true and steadfast. He is as brave as I am timorous, and ready to aid one in distress, whether he be friend or foe; outspoken to such a degree that my good mother declares his tongue will one day get him into trouble from which his legs cannot extricate him—quick to anger and equally prompt to make amends if he has done wrong. His greatest desire at this time was to join the ranks of the Sons of Liberty, which, as you well know, is an association composed of those who would aid their country in this her hour of greatest need.

But boys are not admitted to the company, and as yet neither Ben nor I would have been allowed even to so much as carry a musket, had we presented ourselves at Cambridge, where was then stationed what we proudly called “our army.”

However, I had received two months before this a promise from no less a personage than Dr. Warren himself, that Ben and I should be called

upon for any service within the ability of lads which our friends might wish performed, and we both waited somewhat impatiently for such time to come.

Therefore it was that when, half-clad, I opened the door, Ben's first salutation was:

"The day is at hand, George Wentworth, when Dr. Warren, if he remembers the promise made, will speedily be calling for us. Blood was spilled yesterday at Lexington and Concord, with even less provocation than on the 5th of March in '70, and this time neither Masters John Adams nor Josiah Quincy will be asked to defend the murderers."

Alarmed as I had been, and excited as I now became, Ben's speech was more in the fashion of a riddle than that of horrible tidings, and not until I had questioned closely after bringing him into the house and closing the door lest any of the watch should see and suspect us of uttering treasonable words, did I learn of what had been done at Concord and Lexington.

It should not be difficult to imagine how I felt. Simply because I had not lived in this world long enough by two years, I must remain at home idle while others could strike the blow against our oppressors.

Ben appeared on this morning to have resolved

not to bewail his lack of age—perhaps because he believed what he first said, that the time had come when we should be called upon to aid our friends, even though it might not be with muskets.

“There will be little work done this day,” my comrade said, after he understood I had gotten through my thick head the meaning of the information he brought, “and I have come for you to go with me to Simon Fletcher’s. An old soldier like him can best tell us what the result of yesterday’s work may be, and if it chances that he is willing, we’ll go over to Gee’s shipyard to see the redcoats when they come from Charlestown. It is said they bivouacked at Bunker Hill last night, and Lord Percy’s men were so fagged with their long march as to be unable to travel any further.”

Mother, who had heard from her room that which Ben told, now cried in affright that I must not leave the house; that if the people of Boston had arisen against the king’s troops there might be bloody work done, and those who were on the street would suffer as had been the case when inoffensive people were shot down on that 5th of March, and little Chris Snyder, who should have been at home, was killed.

But for my comrade—and there was no boy in the Province who could plead to better purpose

than Ben—I should have been forced to remain at home as if in hiding until mother's fears were allayed, and she being even more timorous than myself, the time of voluntary imprisonment might have been lengthy.

Ben urged that the town was quiet because the redcoats had received such a drubbing they would most likely remain in their barracks, while our people, who were fighting for the rights of all, might hardly venture to disturb the peace of the town until better preparations could be made for a struggle.

“We only purpose going to Battery Alley, Mrs. Wentworth,” Ben said, after he had talked as eloquently as ever Master John Hancock could have done while delivering an address written for him by Master Adams, for there were those at that time who claimed Master Hancock would not have been so eloquent had all he spoke come from his own brain.

“But you mentioned going to Gee's shipyard to see the troops come over from Charlestown,” my mother suggested.

“Yes, Mrs. Wentworth,” and Lord Percy himself could not have spoken her fairer; “but that was in case Master Simon Fletcher was willing to go with us, if father should declare it safe for us to be abroad on this day.”



“Master Scarlett is a prudent man,” we heard my mother say, as if to herself, and Ben made haste to answer :

“He is over-cautious at such a time, Mistress Wentworth, and you may be certain we’ll not be allowed to go if the slightest breath of danger threatens.”

With this assurance given, as only Ben could give it, my mother was content, and said no more against my going forth.

Day was only just breaking when we stepped into the street after I had put on the remainder of my clothing, washed my face and combed my hair as was seemly, but yet the townspeople were abroad as if it were noon.

I had lived on Carter Street all my life, but never before saw at any one time so many citizens of good repute in the highway. No member of the watch was near to report the gathering or command the excited people to disperse, therefore they talked almost as freely as if in the privacy of their own homes.

Fain would I have lingered, but Ben, who valued the opinion of Simon Fletcher even as I valued his, was in haste to meet the old soldier, and we walked at as rapid a pace as ever a dispatch-bearer coming from the Province House.

Master Simon was standing on the threshold of

his home when we turned into Battery Alley from North Street, and I confess to a feeling of disappointment that Ben, whose judgement I considered better than that of other lads, should have become friendly with such a man, although I afterward had good reason to change my hastily-formed opinion of the ropé-maker, who sometimes boasted regarding his deeds of valor at Louisbourg.

He was blind of an eye—the left one—and leaned heavily upon a staff, as if unable to stand erect as is becoming one whose limbs yet perform their office.

His hair was more tangled than the yarn he spun into rope, and on his head was a knitted woolen nightcap such as I have heard were worn by the pirates hanged many years ago in the harbor.

When I saw him on this morning I believed he was an indolent man, given over to all worldly desires; but I afterward came to know him better.

“I was standin’ here waitin’ for you, lad,” he said to Ben as we came up. “After yesterday’s work it has been in my mind that you wouldn’t rest long without payin’ a visit to old Simon. An’ who is that by your side?”

“The widow Wentworth’s son, George, Master Simon, of whom you have heard me speak.”

“Ay! Ay! The lad who claims to be so timorous.”





“And who so surely is, as none know better than myself,” I hastened to reply.

“There are none so timorous as those who proclaim themselves brave,” the old man said with a flourish of his staff such as became very familiar to me in later days. “Come in, lads, and sit ye down, for it may be you can give me more news of this bloody business than I have already heard.”

We did as he commanded, and without waiting for questions Ben repeated that with which he had already acquainted me; but adding to it so much of minor matters as to make it seem like a new tale.

“King George would do well to remember '45, and we who went with Master Pepperill to storm the fortress which was said to be impregnable,” Simon Fletcher replied with another flourish of his staff, and much shaking of his head. “We can yet show his majesty and Governor Gage that we in this Province know well how to strike for ourselves, although the times are not as they were.”

“In what way, Master Simon?” Ben asked.

“In that there is more coddlin' of the boys, which doesn't serve to make their hearts stronger. When I was young there was ne'er a thought that a gentleman must be followed by a black man if he went abroad in the streets, an' now you'll hardly

walk from here to the Town House without seeing fifty who have an African danglin' behind 'em."

"But yet they may fight as bravely as in your days, Master Simon," Ben said with a laugh which had in it naught of disrespect.

"Ay! Ay, lad! They *may*; but *will* they?"

"I am told they did yesterday."

"Those were of the farms, not of the town; but we shall see; we shall see. The time is comin', lads, which will prove it all. In '45 it was said that we who followed Master Pepperill went like fools to the slaughter; but we came back conquerors, and we can now, if it so be each one does that which he should."

"You mean we ought to have muskets in our hands?" Ben suggested, and Master Simon nodded approvingly.

"Ben and I would this day be in Cambridge but that we lack the years which it is said a soldier must have. How can we fight the better, or shed our blood more freely, if we have seen sixteen years rather than fourteen?" I ventured to ask, and Master Simon looked up quickly as he flourished his cane.

"So this is the timorous lad; the lad who distrusts himself?" and again the old man waved his staff; but whether he was shaking it at me or used it as

an imaginary sword, I could not decide, yet contrived to reply pleasantly, although it always cut me to the quick when others referred to my failing:

“If one who is afraid should go into battle, and there do his duty, he would serve his country as well, perhaps, as him whose courage was great.”

“And I am not afraid you would show the white feather, lad. Bravery doesn’t consist of a free use of the tongue. It is the man who, being afraid, yet does what he should, that plays the part of soldier well, and of such mind we had many in ’45 when we stormed the Frenchman’s fortress.”

“Why not tell George of what you and the other brave fellows did at Louisbourg, Master Simon?” Ben cried. “He has never heard the story.”

“I warrant you he has a dozen times, lad, and from you.”

“But that isn’t as if the words came from the lips of one who was there.”

“My story is in the past, lads, and there was another one begun yesterday at Concord which you in turn may tell when you are as old as I, and a new generation of lads like yourselves gather ’round to hear of what was done in ’75.”

“If that ever happens, Master Simon, I will not be chary of repeating the story whenever I see a new face before me.”

“ Well said, my lad ; it was then you counted one on the old man,” and without further urging Master Simon told in his plain way of what the boys of 1745 had done, until the blood was so quickened in my veins I believe at that moment I should have forgotten my timorousness, had the opportunity of striking a blow in aid of our country presented itself.

It was while I stood listening to the old man, almost believing I could assist in such work of valor as he described, when a marvelous thing happened, so marvelous that for the moment I bethought myself it must be a dream.

We—Ben and I—were listening intently to Master Simon, giving no heed to anything save the words which came from his lips, when the door was suddenly burst open, for, as I should have told you, we had gone into the house long ere this, and Ben’s father entered like one who is beside himself.

I was startled, and can well believe my companions were also, for never had I seen the worthy Master Scarlett so agitated.

He was panting heavily like one who has been running, and not until he had waited an instant to recover his breath did it seem possible he could speak.

Then that which came from his lips was so unex



pected, so marvelous, that, save for his having been before my eyes, I should hardly have credited it.

“Master Warren, the physician, has sent a messenger to my house requesting that my son, Benjamin, and one George Wentworth, present themselves to him without delay.”

“Father! Can it be true?” Ben cried as he sprang to his feet, and I must have looked like one half-witted as I stared at the worthy Master Scarlett, unable to speak.

“But I would have some explanation of this,” Ben’s father said, seeming to be nearly as bewildered as myself. “Since when has it been that you have served Master Warren?”

“Never, father; but if it so be that we may now, you will consent?”

“To what?”

“To that which he may ask us to do.”

“But what should be required of children when their elders stand ready for any service which may arise?”

“We cannot say, father. George and I, knowing that we were not yet of age to bear arms, dared to ask the worthy doctor if he would accept our services should they be needed, and now he has remembered us.”

“There is work which can well be done by lads

like these, while their fathers may be free to handle muskets," Master Simon said, with a grand flourish of his staff. "It is not you, Master Scarlett, who should say the boys nay."

"Neither do I propose so doing, Simon. Such a summons at this time I myself would be proud to receive, and if there was any regret in my mind it was because the boy, not I, had been chosen."

"Then you will not refuse to let me go?" Ben asked, and Master Scarlett replied in a tone which made me proud because my friend had such a father:

"Certainly not, my son. Go without delay, and do manfully that which may be required of you."

Then turning to me he asked:

"How is it with you, George? Does your mother know you sought employment of this kind?"

"She knew I went to speak with the doctor, but had no thought the time would come when my services might be required," I said, and stammered in the speaking, fearing lest my mother should refuse the permission so readily granted Ben.

"I will take it upon myself that she shall not only know what has happened this morning, but freely give her consent to your answering the summons."

Then after some wise advice, both from Master Scarlett and old Simon, Ben and I set out, going up North Street as fast as our legs could carry us, but speaking little, for each was busy with his own thoughts—and mine I fear were vain ones—for I hoped that which we were called upon to do might be some valorous deed; something such as the boys of '45 had performed.

## CHAPTER II.

## MASTER WARREN.

It was an unusual spectacle for us to see the townspeople standing in groups on the street conversing excitedly, for since General Gage had taken his seat as governor the inhabitants were not allowed such a privilege.

Even boys were commanded in the name of his majesty to disperse, as I well know, having made one of half a dozen who had once halted on North Street at the corner of Fleet, when we were bidden by the officer of the watch to go to our homes, and while we hesitated even so slight a time as one would require to draw in his breath, the brave red-coat struck me with the flat of his sword, which blow I bethought me on this day, as we hurried toward Master Warren's, I might soon be able to repay—perhaps with interest.

We spoke not as we ran—Ben and I—fearing lest an incautious word might betray our mission to some person unfriendly to the cause we would

espouse, and we be checked at the very instant when the future looked so bright.

“You shall conduct the conversation,” I said to Ben when we stood at the back door of the doctor’s house, not thinking it seemly for boys to ask admittance where Master Warren welcomed his friends.

“There is no reason why your words are not as good as mine,” my comrade replied with more heat than I thought the remark warranted. “When we are together I do all the talking, and shall earn for myself the name of Chatterbox, while you, holding your peace, will be thought wise. Master Simon says ‘his word is more weighty who speaks but little.’”

“Let it be as you will,” I replied, impatiently; not because there was any anger in my heart, but that the excitement caused by the hope we might now have an opportunity to play the part of men had set me in a tremor, and one who knew not of the agitation in my mind might well have set my words down to peevishness or irritation.

Then as Ben delayed, I raised and let fall the heavy knocker.

It was a black woman who opened the door, and when I begged to see the good doctor, she bade me tell my name and business.

I did the first, and Ben, speaking roughly because

he was not instantly given admittance when he believed he had the right to enter, told her sharply to repeat our names to her master, and that would suffice.

And so it did—for when she returned it was to bid us follow her.

At another time I would have paid more attention to that which I saw while passing through the passages of this, the most elegant building I had ever entered.

My mind continued in such a whirl that I was only conscious we were conducted through the spacious hall into a room whose walls were glittering with what looked not unlike gold, and diversified here and there by carvings too beautiful to bear description from one so unaccustomed as I to dwellings of the gentry.

It was in this apartment we found the good doctor seated before a table piled high with papers which he appeared to be destroying.

We bowed on presenting ourselves, and even though my agitation was great, I noticed with something almost akin to envy that Ben carried himself in a more manly fashion, and made his obeisance with better grace than I, although he could have had no more respect or admiration for Master Joseph Warren than was in my own heart.

“You have promptly answered the summons, lads,” the worthy doctor said, as he continued to glance over and tear up the papers; and it augurs well for my plan. Promptness in all the affairs of life is a cardinal virtue.”

I was not exactly certain as to the meaning of Master Warren’s words; but I bowed again, as did Ben, and we waited his further speech in silence.

My heart was beating so fast and loud it seemed as if I could hear it, and glancing from the corner of my eye, I noticed Ben’s face alternately paling and flushing as we stood there trying to appear calm until it should please Master Warren to speak.

He examined and destroyed five or six papers, as if forgetting we were awaiting his pleasure, and then, still continuing the work, said:

“You lads asked as a favor of me that you be allowed to serve the cause which should be so dear to the hearts of all within this Province.”

I tried to answer, but could not, and Ben also remained silent.

“You have not yet arrived at the age to be received as soldiers, yet it is possible you may be of service to the colonies. It is to be supposed you know the town well. How far into the country have you traveled?”

“I have been to Salem, may it please you,” Ben

replied ; and I made no answer, for the limit set my knowledge of the Province was bounded by Charlestown on the one side and Dorchester Heights on the other.

“It is not so far afoot I would send you,” the worthy doctor said with a smile, “nor is it a service to be recognized by the people generally that I have to propose. I have no authority to ask any one’s aid in this work which I should like to see done, although I doubt not but that General Ward would countenance the plan. The British troops who shed the blood of our people in Lexington and Concord are still in Charlestown on Bunker Hill, I am told. I would have you boys, as if from idle curiosity, loiter in the vicinity, that you may gain some information as to when the soldiers are to move and the direction they may take. Should you learn anything of importance, address yourselves to me, and I will undertake to have it sent by the proper channels to the commander of our troops at Cambridge. As I have said, all this I am presuming to do without authorization from those who conduct the military affairs, and it may be that steps have already been taken by General Ward and his officers to ascertain such facts as I would have you learn, in which case your labor will have been useless ; but there are many reasons why you could gain



more information than men, chiefest among which is that you would be less liable to be suspected of seeking knowledge. There can be no danger of life in such work, although being over-zealous, you might go so far as to bring down upon your heads the anger of some petty officer, and thereby receive a flogging or be thrust into the guardhouse. Have I made my meaning plain?"

I looked at Ben, saying with my eyes that we should do all Master Warren requested, and he made answer:

"You want us to stay as near the British camp at Bunker Hill as we can, until we know where the soldiers are going?"

"You have repeated the substance of it; it is also to be understood that if any other news of importance is learned it should be brought to me."

"We are more than willing to go, sir, and can only wish the service had in it greater show of danger," Ben said, and I understood, because it was the same in my own case—his disappointment that we had been summoned for what appeared at the moment so trifling and easy of accomplishment.

"There will be danger in plenty," replied the worthy doctor with a smile, as of approval of Ben's eagerness. "It will be no mean matter for two boys of Boston to loiter in the vicinity of those who, march-

ing out so valiantly yesterday morning, came back something after the manner of whipped curs. You will not be welcomed to the camp, and may find it more difficult than you now suppose to remain. I shall not instruct you further than what I have already done. You are to gain as much information as may be possible; but the method by which it is done must be of your own devising. You will need money; two shillings should be enough."

He made a motion as if about to take the coins from his pocket, when I, seeing Ben would make no protest, said quickly:

"What we do, may it please you, sir, is for the colonies, and we do not wish to be paid."

"Nor am I intending to do anything of the kind, lad. You will need a few pence with which to pay the ferryman, and must have food, should it so chance you remain in Charlestown many hours."

"We can act as our own ferryman, sir, by borrowing a skiff from Ben's father; and as for the food, what we require may be taken from our homes. If it should be that we were put into the guardhouse, there might be a question as to why we had so much money with us."

"You are by no means a dull lad, young Wentworth. One might almost think you of that family

whose mission in life appears to be the governing of New Hampshire.”

“His excellency, John Wentworth, is my mother’s cousin, sir.”

“Then by right of inheritance you should have a sufficient fund of caution to take you through this business. I will not press the money upon you. Go; do all you can, as I have said. It might become necessary for you to see me at some hour when visitors are not ordinarily admitted, and that you may have free access to me, take this.”

He wrote a few lines on a scrap of paper and handed it to me.

Thanks to my good mother’s teachings I was able to read writing readily, and saw at a glance the words:

“Admit the bearer to my presence without delay, regardless of how I may be occupied.

“JOSEPH WARREN.”

I put the paper carefully in my pocket as something to be treasured, for such it was, since in time to come it would show that Ben and I had been admitted to the confidence of one who loved his country well.

When this had been done Master Warren continued:

“If it so be you are successful and still remain of the mind to become soldiers, I will make it my care that General Artemus Ward knows what you have done. A service rendered the cause at this time should go very far toward atoning for the two years which are lacking in your lives before you may legally shoulder a musket.”

It was as if Master Warren having said this much forgot we were in his presence, for again he gave all his attention to the papers before him, and Ben and I stood questioning each other with our eyes as to that which should be done.

If we appeared as foolish as I felt certain we did, the worthy doctor must have believed he had two geese before him when he looked up some time afterward as if suddenly remembering we had not been dismissed.

“I must crave your pardon, lads, for my seeming neglect,” he said, as he pulled a bell, the cord of which hung conveniently near his chair. “I apprehend that it will be wise for those of us who have espoused the cause to leave Boston at an early day, and lest my going should be sudden I am putting my house in such order that those who search it will not find anything that may betray our plans.”

Then a black man entered and Master Warren

directed that we be conducted to the kitchen, there to be served with cake and ale.

“We need neither food nor drink, sir, if it please you, and we will set out at once.”

“As you will, young Wentworth,” and the doctor laughed in a manner which caused my cheeks to burn, for I fancied from his voice that he was making me the butt of his sport.

“I did not smile at you, young Wentworth,” he said quickly as Ben and I were bowing before taking our leave, “but because it pleased me you should be thus as independent of my ale and my money as the old governor himself would be. Work out the matter as seems to you wisest, remembering that success may mean the attainment of your hopes.”

Master Warren made a signal with his hand to the black man, and as we left the room I wondered much what might be the meaning of all he had said, for I failed to understand it.

In declaring Governor Wentworth to be my mother's cousin I had but spoken truly, nor did I do so boastingly, yet it appeared to me the worthy doctor found in it much for merriment.

I had no time to follow these thoughts once we were on the street again, for Ben made haste to bewail what he declared was our ill-fortune

in not being selected for some more dangerous task.

I tried to soothe my comrade by reminding him we were but apprentices in such work, and could not expect to be intrusted with matters of weighty concern before we had proved our metal; but he ceased not until we arrived at my home to bemoan the fact that we were engaged in what was of little moment.

Mother's eyes were red as if with weeping, and I knew Master Scarlett had been there to tell her of the summons which came for us, therefore I hastened to relieve her sorrow by making plain that which we were expected to do.

"If it is no more than that I have grieved without reason," she said with that rare smile of hers which I loved to see. "When do you set out, my son?"

"As soon as may be. We have but to get such food as will serve us until to-morrow, and then find Ben's father, for it is our purpose to use one of his boats."

My mother made us ready for the journey as bravely as though we were bent on pleasure; but when she kissed me good-by I knew there was a prayer in her heart for my safe return.

To ask Master Scarlett for the loan of his skiff

was only a form, as we knew, but one not to be neglected, and he granted our request without hesitation when we had explained the reason for the journey.

It would have pleased me much could I have seen Master Simon before we started, for with his experience in such business he might have given advice that would have been profitable to us in the undertaking; but Master Scarlett had it in his mind that we should make no delay, therefore we embarked without loss of time.

When we were in the skiff, fairly committed to the venture, I bethought myself it was possible we might find as much of danger before our return as Ben could wish; but made no mention of this to my comrade because it would but have served to show him how timorous I was by nature.

It heartened me that he should have had some such thought in his own mind, for he said as we were rowing against the current:

“The idea had come to me, George Wentworth, that there are sentinels around the British camp.”

“It must be so,” I replied. “Even in time of peace a commander would station his guards, and how much more careful will Lord Percy be now since his men have received one drubbing and have good reason to expect another.”

“In that case how may we loiter around the camp?”

“I know not ; but it must be done.”

“There may be some danger in trying to make our way past the sentinels.”

As he spoke I, who was pulling the after oar, turned and saw what may have been a look of anxiety upon his face.

“I am not growing alarmed,” he said with a hearty laugh ; “but begin to think that perhaps there will be as much danger in this venture as we could have desired.”

“Master Warren said we might be flogged, or thrust into the guardhouse,” I said slowly, having in my mind a picture of that soldier whom I had seen whipped on Brattle Street. “The scar of a bullet-wound is an honorable one ; marks of the cat on a man’s back are something he does not care to have seen.”

Ben did not reply ; but I understood from his labored breathing that he had begun to look upon our mission in a different light, as I had done from the moment we left Master Warren’s dwelling.

When I am uneasy in mind I wish to remain silent, and during the remainder of the journey nothing prevented my doing so, for Ben made no effort to enter into conversation.



We landed at the westernmost side of the town, and pulled the skiff up on the shore where she would be hidden by the bushes.

Then, with our small store of food bestowed about our persons in such a manner that it would not excite remark, we set out for Bunker Hill, guided on our course by the strains of martial music and the passing and repassing of red-coated messengers.

## CHAPTER III.

SAMUEL WILKINS.

THE roads which led to Lord Percy's camp were thronged with the people of Charlestown, some going out to traffic with the soldiers, carrying provisions such as would most readily sell, and others abroad only from motives of curiosity; but all giving way whenever a messenger approached bound to or from the ferry, for by this time the inhabitants of Boston and the towns roundabout had come to understand that room must be made for the red-coated messengers, or he who persisted in blocking the path would have occasion to rue his temerity.

As we went on, Ben and I, each casting about in his own mind for some plausible pretext in case we should be questioned regarding our reasons for visiting the encampment, we observed those around us without really being aware we did so, and it seemed to me at the time that we saw quite as many enemies as friends—by enemies I mean those who

were not favorable to the cause, and who looked disheartened because such a wonderful thing had happened as that the king's troops should not only have been opposed, but forced to beat a sorry retreat.

Those who were of the belief that the colonists should throw off the yoke which the oppressors had put upon them wore an ill-suppressed look of exultation that we had at last dared to strike a blow in our own behalf; but I questioned to myself as to whether many of these last could be depended upon for assistance if it should become necessary for them to openly avow their convictions, and run counter to the commands of his majesty.

From the time Ben began to realize that our adventure might not be wholly without danger, he had hardly opened his mouth to me, not because he was afraid, for Ben was a gallant lad, full of courage, and ready to attempt that which any man might do; but I think he was becoming weighted down with a sense of responsibility, and so pre-occupied in mind that he failed to note the approach of Sam Wilkins, son of that Royalist Wilkins who lived on Beechman's Lane hard by my mother's house.

I had ever distrusted Sam; in our childish games he was the one ready to take unfair advantage,

prone to beat smaller lads upon the slightest provocation, but seldom ready to encounter in just cause one of his own strength, therefore I would have passed him by with no more than a friendly salutation, but he placed himself directly in our path and we could do no less than halt.

“What brings you out here?” he asked with an ill-favored look. “The sight of a redcoat was never over-pleasing to lads of your stamp, and yet you have come far afoot to see them.”

Understanding from the expression on his face that Ben was about to make an angry reply I hastened to say, for our mission was such that we could not well afford to loiter:

“Why might we not wish to see the new camp as well as you, Sam? Even though red be not our color, we can look upon it without fear of a distemper.”

“Perhaps the doings at Lexington have made your eyes strong, and you expect to see his majesty’s troops cowed and submissive because it has been reported they were worsted in the encounter.”

“We came to the camp because we chose,” Ben said intemperately, despite my warning glances. “If it does not please you, Master Wilkins, we can step aside that you may pass on.”

Fearing lest Ben in his present mind might forget

that we could not afford to delay, and be willing to measure strength with Sam even at the risk of being apprehended by the watch, I pulled him forward, at the same time saying to the young Royalist:

“Our time is short if we would see the new camp, and there can be no good reason why we should bandy words concerning what may or may not have happened.”

Fortunately for my purpose Ben understood my meaning in forcing him along, and continued on his way silently; but when we had gone an hundred paces, I looked back and noted that young Wilkins was retracing his steps much as though following us.

That he could work us any harm did not enter my mind; but it perplexed me that he should have turned to learn where we might be going.

“He is a cur, who cannot do us mischief, much as he would like,” Ben said contemptuously, when I told him what I had seen.

There was nearly the same thought in my own mind, yet I glanced back now and then, and learned that he continued to dog our footsteps until we were within view of the encampment, when he suddenly disappeared.

“He has discovered all he wanted to know, and

will now go home," Ben said, as if impatient because I persisted in reporting Sam's doings. "Put all thought of such as him from your mind while we consider how we can best perform the work with which Master Warren has intrusted us."

There was no reason why we should spend much time in deciding upon a course of action, for the work would be accomplished in but one way, so far as I could see.

The camp lay fair before us with sentinels guarding it roundabout, and unless we were allowed to pass them our mission was a failure before it had yet well begun.

Strategy such as we could bring to bear would not avail, so I argued with myself, and proposed to Ben that we walk boldly on. If stopped, we could ask permission to go within the lines, for I saw the citizens of Charlestown moving in and out as if not hindered.

In this Ben agreed, perhaps because he could not devise any other plan, and we joined ourselves to a company who were carrying market-stuff for traffic with the troops, walking past the sentinels without challenge.

Had General Gage been there I believe more strict discipline would have been maintained; but young Lord Percy was known to hold the reins

loosely at the best of times, and now after what must have been to him a disheartening march, harassed as his troops were by the minutemen from behind hedges and walls, whose fire could not well be returned, it was not strange that his camp lay thus open to the curious.

Once within the lines Ben and I had nothing more to do than loiter here or there, giving attentive ear to such scraps of conversation as we might overhear without arousing the suspicion that we were eager listeners, and this we did for better than two hours, when I saw in the distance a squad of six soldiers with muskets in their hands approaching, and by the side of him who was in command, a lad much resembling Samuel Wilkins.

I would have called Ben's attention to this, but that I felt my eyes must have deceived me, and I remained silent until there was no longer any question.

Sam was pointing directly toward us, and I fancied the redcoats were quickening their pace as he spoke.

Then when it was too late for flight I spoke to Ben.

“The Royalist cur is coming toward us for a certainty; but how does it happen that he stands hand in glove with the king's officers?”

“I cannot believe any would listen to his chatter,” my comrade replied.

I was not in a mood to argue such a question. I felt convinced danger of some kind menaced us, and that Sam had, just then it mattered little how, brought it about.

It would have been better had Ben and I continued on our way around the camp as if not suspecting the soldiers' errand had to do with us; but he was so angry and I so filled with fear, that we allowed what was in our minds to be plainly read on our faces.

The squad was halted directly in front of us.

In obedience to a word from the officer in command, two of the men ranged themselves by our sides, and then the order to “about face” was given.

I did not intend to be led like a lamb to the slaughter without protest, therefore said to the officer as if in surprise:

“Are we to accompany your men, sir?”

As if I was not worthy a reply he said, addressing the soldiers on either side of us:

“See that they do not escape, nor hold communication one with the other.”

The command to “march” was given; with a soldier grasping each of us by the coat-collar so heartily as nearly to deprive us of breath, Ben and



I perforce went with the squad, the Wilkins cur walking where he could keep us well in view, and grinning like a simple.

We were thus conducted through a goodly portion of the camp, the civilians who were in the inclosure eyeing us curiously meanwhile, until we had arrived at a large tent, before which three sentinels were passing to and fro.

Here we and the squad came to a halt, while the officer in command advanced and spoke to one of the guards.

Sam Wilkins, thinking it a fitting opportunity to revile us, and at the same time be positive we understood he had brought all this about, advanced to within a pace of Ben, as he said with a leer :

“ You fighting characters are likely to get your spurs trimmed now.”

I feared lest Ben should make some retort which might give an inkling to our purpose in visiting the camp, and whispered :

“ Do not reply to him.”

“ Hold your peace !” the redcoat who was acting as my escort cried, shaking me so vigorously that my very teeth chattered.

Ben did not reply to Sam, but instead, kicked at him with such precision and force that young Wilkins suddenly rolled over and over in the mud to

the delight of the spectators, who had gathered in considerable numbers, and the evident relish of the soldiers.

It is not seemly to laugh at a discomfited enemy ; but I did so, and Sam, scrambling to his feet, cried in anger as he shook his clinched fist before Ben's face :

“ You shall be made to suffer for this !”

“ Yes, we'll have a settling day before long,” Ben replied, “ and then you and I will square accounts.”

There was a menace in my comrade's voice which frightened the young Royalist despite our defenseless position, and he slunk back exactly after the fashion of a cur, to which Ben had likened him.

There was no opportunity for us to speak with each other regarding Wilkins, although our escort had permitted it, for immediately we were forced forward, held even more closely than before, until we found ourselves within a tent confronting a group of officers, the foremost of whom I judged to be Lord Percy, for he it was who questioned us.

I now understood that our position was a serious one ; otherwise we would not have been brought into the presence of so exalted an officer, and my heart sank within me as though it had been made of lead.

“ Why are you two loitering around the camp ?” the general asked ; and seeing that I could make no

reply, Ben said, and I would have hugged him for his bold speaking :

“ We have no business other than many lads who are now here. We walked in without hindrance, and were not told it was a crime to look at the soldiers.”

“ Who sent you here ?”

“ We came by ourselves. There are many boys from Boston town to see the new camp.”

Lord Percy, if indeed it was he, gave the order to our captors that we be searched ; and then for the first time there came into my mind the thought of the writing Master Warren had given us.

Had I left that at home all might have been well, for we carried nothing else of importance about our persons, and now I was willing to call myself much more of a simple than I had ever believed Sam Wilkins to be.

It can readily be supposed that the paper I had folded up so carefully was soon found, and when he had read it Lord Percy said to the officer who apprehended us :

“ Take them to Boston, and see that they be securely confined there till the matter is laid before his excellency.”

I hardly knew how we were led from the tent and conducted to the water-side, so busily engaged

was I with reproaching myself for having retained that which told almost as plainly the purpose of our visit as if it had been written out in full.

I only know that Ben and I were not permitted to speak with each other; that we were thrown, rather than allowed to step, into a boat, and that we lay on the bottom of the vessel while the men who plied the oars amused themselves by kicking and otherwise maltreating us, until nearly every portion of my body was bruised and sore.

Once we were arrived at the ferry-way near Gee's shipyard, the same squad who apprehended us in the camp marched, Ben and I in their midst, with two soldiers still holding us by the coat-collars, up Prince's Street, then out Common, past the Burying Place, to the Bridewell.

I was overwhelmed with shame during this disgraceful journey lest, seeing us, those to whom we were known might suppose we had been accused of some shameful crime.

That we were prisoners, owing to what we had tried to do, I was proud of; my sorrow only arose because it could not be made known to all whom we met.

While going up Hanover Street I saw on the sidewalk Master Scarlett, Ben's father, and the fear of what might come to us was so strong on me that

I fain would have called out imploring him to aid us. But, happily, before the words had passed my lips I saw him shake his head furtively, as if to enjoin silence upon us, and held my peace; yet could not understand why I might not speak, since all must know Ben was his son, and that he had knowledge of our visit to the camp.

As we marched into the Common Ben would have said some word to me, most likely of cheer, knowing I was disheartened, but that the soldier who gripped him by the collar checked the speech ere it was yet spoken.

When we were halted in front of the Bridewell I so far overcame my anxiety that I made bold to say to the officer:

“Will you tell me, sir, for what crime we are thus taken through the streets like criminals? What have we done that we should be thus disgraced?”

“It is my duty to see you closely confined, and not to make explanation of the orders given me. For your own satisfaction I will say were I in command you would have had short shrift. It should have been a shooting party with only time sufficient intervening between the arrest and the execution to admit of half a dozen muskets being loaded.”

Could I have spoken to Ben at that instant I am afraid I might have asked him if he was now satis-

fied that danger attended us in the seemingly harmless visit to the camp at Bunker Hill, for I was almost beside myself with grief, knowing what my mother would suffer when she learned of how our feeble efforts to serve the colonies had ended.

We were forced into the Bridewell as we had been marched through the streets, by the grip of the soldiers' hands upon our collars, and thus, half-carried, proceeded through the vaulted passage, stopping only at the very end where the soldier who was acting as turnkey, although he might have been employed in that capacity only for our benefit, opened an iron door which swung on its hinges with a scream like that of terror for our helpless situation.

Then we were thrust into the dark, noisome chamber, the key was turned in the lock with a clank not unlike the report of a musket, and on the stone floor from without could be heard the measured tread, probably of the redcoat who was to guard us.

That a sentinel should be placed over us in the passage seemed a mockery, for how could we have made our way through the walls of stone, or burst open the massive door, even had there been no occupants in the building to prevent us from doing our utmost?

## CHAPTER IV.

## UNDER ORDERS.

WERE I to set down all that was said between Ben Scarlett and myself during the seven weeks we lay in the Bridewell, fearing each night lest on the following morning we should be led out for punishment or execution, a dozen such books as this would be required, and I, poor at writing, although I can readily read what others have written, would be forced to spend many months in transcribing.

It can well be supposed that we questioned between ourselves as to what General or Governor Gage, whichever you choose to call him, might do in our case, and that we agreed again and again against the probability of our being convicted as spies on the evidence of the paper written by Master Warren.

So far as Sam Wilkins had any part in the matter, we felt little fear. That Royalist cur knew nothing whatever of a certainty concerning our movements, and must have informed the officers of

the encampment that we were spies, with no other idea in his mind than of working us mischief. I dare wager there were none more surprised than he when the writing was found.

One day Ben would argue that since we were not members of the American army, nor had gone into the enemy's lines in disguise, we could not legally be executed as spies, thus apparently deriving no little satisfaction from his own argument, and certainly heartening me, for the mere possibility that we might be hanged was so horrible as to haunt my mind even during the hours of slumber.

On another day Ben, dispirited, would contend that his excellency dare do anything to the son of a man who was known to favor the cause of American independence, and insisted that the chances were we should be hanged out of hand without even so much as the formality of a trial.

Then I, although plunged into a fever of terror, would stoutly combat his gloomy forebodings, and insist we must presently be set free—that his excellency could not lawfully detain us simply upon the ground that Master Scarlett loved the colonies better than the king, or because of the writing found on our persons.

Thus the time passed. We had no idea of what might have have happened in town, and remained



in ignorance as to whether our friends had made any effort to see us, and in fact, were completely in the dark.

On one occasion after we had lain in the Bridewell for the space of eight days, an officer whose uniform betokened the rank of captain came into the dungeon in which we were confined, and used every effort short of personal violence to make us confess we had been sent to the camp at Bunker Hill to spy upon the British forces, and promised we should be set free immediately we divulged the names of those who employed us.

Fortunately this visit was made on one of those days when Ben was feeling confident regarding the future, and my brave comrade set about arguing with the captain with so much spirit that I marveled greatly from whence he had gotten such a fund of worldly knowledge.

He—Ben, I mean—divided his argument into four heads, much as Parson Matthews is wont to do with his sermon. The first was devoted to the fact that no spying could profitably be done when all things connected with Lord Percy's affairs were open to as many as chose to visit the camp; that we did not go, or attempt to go, other than in such places as the populace were allowed. Consequently there was no reason to accuse us of being spies.

Under the second head, he claimed that the writing found upon me was not evidence we had been sent by Master Warren to the British camp in search of information; that the permission to enter at all hours was given—and here Ben departed from the truth as readily as if lying were no sin—that I might have admission to the doctor's dwelling in case it became necessary for me to summon him to some one of his many patients living in our end of the town.

The third point which Ben made, and I thought it a most masterful one, was that it was illegal thus to imprison without bringing us before a court of justice; that we should be allowed to see his father in order to employ some one learned in such matters to defend us.

The fourth portion of his argument was devoted to the rehearsal of the three previous ones, and I felt certain in my mind that if we had been before an impartial judge Ben's marvelously wise way of handling the question would have effected our release without delay.

I was almost bewildered by the ease with which he parried such of the visitor's questions as it would have been difficult for me to answer, and the force with which he presented our side of the case.

But masterfully as he handled the matter it was

of no avail to us, at least so it seemed at the time, for the captain departed with the threat upon his lips that if we were not executed as spies he would take it upon himself to see we were publicly flogged.

In thinking the matter over, I believe of a verity I would rather die on the scaffold as a martyr to the cause, for such I should be were I hanged for spying about the British camp, than whipped in the streets, and during the remainder of my life carry the disgraceful scars upon my back.

To set down all this, which must be of little moment to one who cannot appreciate the suffering of mind we endured while in the Bridewell, is useless, the more so, because since then we have been in greater peril through adventures which made the visit to the British camp at Bunker Hill seem as but trifling.

The second week of June was well-nigh spent when the iron doors were opened and we at liberty to depart.

The long imprisonment—and, of a truth, I could almost have believed it had been a year—had so broken Ben's spirit that he made no protest against the unwarrantable detention; otherwise I believe he would have demanded redress, and refused to go forth into the town until it was given.

Once outside the gloomy building we ran with all speed, as if fearing General Gage might reconsider the order for our release and we be thrust into the dungeon again.

How gladdening to the heart was the sunshine! It was like coming into a warm room after being exposed to the blasts of winter. And how strange it appeared to move about at will, no longer circumscribed in our walk by massive walls of stone.

Even as we went into Beacon Street, out of Common, while yet rejoicing in our freedom, it occurred to me that a change had come over the town since I was last a part of it. The people whom we met wore a harassed, troubled look; I fancied I saw suffering written on the faces of many, but put the thought from me, thinking the long imprisonment had altered my eyes so that I could see in others only my own distress.

We went with no idea in mind than to reach our homes, as can well be imagined, through Tremont to Hanover Street without seeing a familiar face; and then suddenly, as if he had come up from the very stones of the street, Master Simon Fletcher stood before us.

A cry of joy escaped my lips, and Ben sprang forward to grasp the old man's hand, but stopped very suddenly when Master Simon moved back a

pace as if not desiring our company, and said, after looking around to make sure no one was within hearing:

“Follow me; but do not speak here.”

“I am going to see my mother, and cannot follow any man now,” I replied, hurt by the manner in which he had received us.

“Your mother is no longer in town.”

“What?” I cried in alarm, fearing for an instant the worst. I knew how dearly my mother loved me, and the terrible thought came to my heart that, because of my peril, she had been brought to her grave; but Master Simon’s next words reassured me. I breathed freely once more.

“She has gone away from Boston with Master Scarlett’s family, and you will shelter yourselves in my home to-night, or remain upon the streets. I would have you do so secretly, because there are prying eyes about now that the town is besieged, and the dimmest of them do not belong to Sam Wilkins, who was the cause of your undoing when you would have obeyed Master Warren’s commands.”

Then, with a gesture signifying that we should follow, Master Simon whirled himself around, and, leaning heavily upon his staff as if he had aged many years since I saw him last, walked, with ap-

parent feebleness but yet swiftly, down Hanover Street toward Middle.

“Since the town was besieged,” Ben said to me in a tone of wonder. “What does the old man mean by that, and why this slinking through the streets in his rear as if we had been guilty of some crime?”

“That I cannot say,” I replied sadly, for my heart was heavy because of the disappointment at not being able to see my mother that night—the first thought in my mind when the doors of the Bridewell were opened to us was that I should be clasped in her arms as soon as my legs would carry me to Carter Street.

“Does he expect us to follow as Master Hancock’s black man follows him?” and now Ben was allowing his own impatience, rather than Master Simon’s words, to make him angry.

“We had best do as he says,” I replied, putting my arm around my comrade’s shoulder, for it seemed that we had been deserted by those whom we loved. “He said the town was besieged; surely the British are inside, and who can besiege it?”

“Our friends, perhaps,” and now Ben’s eyes brightened.

“Surely, they are not strong enough to do that,” I replied doubtingly; “but certain it is, strange

things have happened since we were shut up in the Bridewell, else my mother would not have gone away while I was imprisoned. We shall know all if we obey Master Simon's command; and much more than follow him as a black man would I be willing to do, in order to learn what has occurred."

And it was not many moments before the riddle was read to Ben and myself.

The old man conducted us to the corner of North Street and Battery Alley, when he halted and looked around cautiously as if to make certain no enemy was in sight. Then he said hurriedly, yet in a kindly tone, which contrasted greatly with that used on Hanover Street:

"To cover, lads, to cover, and quickly, for I hope it may be that no one will know where you have sought shelter."

We entered his dwelling without, as we believed, having been observed, and once inside with the door barred and the shutters closed, Master Simon shook us warmly by the hands, bestowing such a greeting as he would upon his own kin.

He waited not to be questioned, but, as if knowing how eager we were for information, told what at the moment sounded like a most strange tale.

During the time of our imprisonment the minute-

men had increased until they now made up an army fifteen thousand strong, and were encamped in Cambridge under the command of General Artemas Ward.

True it was that Boston had been besieged, and by our friends.

After the drubbing which the Britishers got at Lexington and Concord, they came into town to wait for reinforcements. The camp at Bunker Hill was broken up shortly after our being made prisoners; the wounded brought into Boston by transports, and General Gage set himself down to await the arrival of more troops, which were expected under the "Three Bow-wows," as Master Simon was pleased to term Generals Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton. Then our friends had regularly besieged the city.

In less than a week from the time we were taken to the Bridewell General Putnam had marched two thousand men through Charlestown to the ferry, and then back again, as if to show the Britishers he had disciplined troops under his command—not a gathering of farmers and boys.

The house on Hog Island had been burned—this the old man repeated twice as if he found great satisfaction in relating it. A barge belonging to one of the king's ships lying off Noddle Island had actually



been captured by our people, taken to Cambridge, and from there in a cart to Roxbury.

After such a daring feat who could say the Americans had no courage—that they would not fight?

All this was cheering news to us, so lately come from prison; but that which followed was well calculated to cause apprehension in our minds.

Ben's family and my mother had left Boston when General Gage was in such a humor that he permitted it. Now, however, all was changed; and, so Master Simon said, it would be difficult for any one to go out of town unless he had sufficient money with which to bribe the British officers.

Lord Percy, it seems, must needs select as a place in which to lay his delicate limbs the mansion on Pemberton Hill owned by Master Greene, and this he took possession of by virtue of his right as a lord and one of the king's officers.

In a like manner General Burgoyne had seized Master Bowdoin's house, and General Clinton took possession of Master Hancock's mansion on Beacon Street.

Many times while he was telling this did Master Simon shake his staff, not with any flourish in a friendly fashion, but causing each wave of it to appear like a menace.

The selectmen of Boston no longer met. They came together for the last time on the 19th of April, and now our fair town was ruled by military law.

His story ended with that which I have just written, and the three of us stood in the gloom of the darkened dwelling looking at each other in surprise, consternation, and, on my part at least, fear.

I could have counted twenty before any of our little company spoke, and then it was Ben, ever brave and courageous, who cried in so loud a tone that Master Simon begged him to be more cautious :

“ I will not stay in Boston even though his high mightiness the general, or governor, whichever he wishes to be called, shall try to force me. Where did father go, Master Simon ? ”

“ He could not say when he went away, but believed he might find shelter in Roxbury with your uncle ; and there I doubt not Mistress Wentworth can also be found. ”

“ I shall go to him to-night, though I swim from Burrough’s Wharf to Nook’s Hill. ”

“ You will remain here, young Scarlett, ” Master Simon said in a tone of authority.

“ Indeed, and I will not. No man save my father shall say where I must remain. ”

“ And it is your father who has said it. These

are the words he spoke to me the night he left Boston: 'When Ben comes out of the Bridewell, and without proof they cannot keep him in prison many weeks, if it so be you see him, give the lad and his friend shelter in your house until such time as they have information to bring to the American camp.'"

"Bring information!" Ben repeated in perplexity. "How may we gain anything of that kind?"

"Those who observe the law must of a verity be permitted to walk the streets, even though they may once have been imprisoned. Your father has promised that you and young Wentworth shall remain here in order to obtain information of the enemy's movements on your own account, and to act as messengers in case I learn that which should be made known to the commander of the American Army. In other words, lad"—and now Master Simon put his two arms around our necks—"in other words, lads, we're to stay in the besieged town, keeping our eyes sharp about us, in the hope that here we may be of more benefit to the cause than would be possible at Cambridge with muskets in our hands."

"Does the commander of our army know why we are here?" Ben asked, and so overjoyed was he at the thought of aiding in the struggle which seemed about to begin that he could hardly compose himself.

“Most likely, lad, by this time. It was after a consultation with Master Warren your father decided upon what you and young Wentworth should do. Therefore I question not, lads, that it is well known to those who have information of such things why we remain here when men are needed at Cambridge.”

## CHAPTER V.

## FOR THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE.

THE remainder of this our first day of liberty after so long an imprisonment was spent in Master Simon's house listening to his minute account of everything which had happened in the neighborhood during our absence, and in laying plans for the future.

The veteran of Louisbourg appeared so confident that it would be possible for friends of the cause to do quite as much in its aid inside the town while it was besieged as with the army that Ben and I were filled with the excitement of anticipation—he most likely looking forward to that time when he could make his name famous by some valiant deed; I assuring myself that when the opportunity should present itself I would so far forget my timorous feelings as to follow him to the bitter end, even though it should lead to death itself.

Again and again did Master Simon warn us as to what Sam Wilkins might succeed in doing to injure us.

At first we turned a deaf ear to his arguments but before he had progressed to any length we realized that, coward though young Wilkins was, he had it in his power to work us a deal of harm, inasmuch as any complaint from the Royalists against those who were known to love the cause would readily be listened to by the king's minions.

It was agreed between ourselves, or rather Master Simon set it down as that which must be done, and we submitted, knowing his plans must be the wisest, that during such time as we might remain in Boston we should use the rear door of his house in coming in or going out, thus lessening the chances of being seen by the neighbors.

It was proposed that we keep secret our abiding-place, if that should be possible, and when we departed from the dwelling or came to it, we could, by making a detour through a certain yard on Ship Street, avoid being seen by those who were in the highway.

Quite naturally any one in the rear apartments of the houses on Battery or Salutation Alleys might readily perceive us as we passed to and fro; but this much could not well be avoided.

It was also agreed that we should not remain together except during such time as we were in the house.

After more regarding the doing of the townspeople had been told, and our plans for work decided upon, Master Simon explained how Ben's family and my mother had succeeded in leaving Boston without opposition from those whose only desire seemed to be the oppression of the colonists.

It was as he had said, that the meetings of the selectmen were brought to an end on the 19th of April, and from there the records of their doings came to a close; but on the 22d of the same month it appeared, according to Master Simon's statement, that a town-meeting had been held, wherein it was resolved to have a conference with the king's chief officer in the colony, both in his capacity as commander of the British forces and Governor of the Province of Massachusetts.

During that conference the general-governor decided that all those people who would give up their arms should be allowed to depart with their goods from the town, and those who, like Master Scarlett and my mother, took immediate advantage of the offer, were the wisest, for when but a small proportion of the inhabitants who wished to leave their homes had departed, he, regardless of his pledged word, withdrew the permission, and large numbers yet remained who were most eager to go.

Our council of war, as Master Simon termed it,

was not concluded until a late hour in the night, and then, although the old man would have given up his only bed to us, Ben and I lay down on the floor to get such rest as was possible, for we were so excited that slumber did not come at our bidding.

We were awake betimes on the following morning, and after a hearty breakfast of porridge were ready to begin our labors.

It was decided that I should be the first to set out, and in accordance with the plan already made I departed with no other aim in mind than to loiter around the town in such places as I would be most likely to gain information which might be valuable to our friends.

On reaching Ship Street I felt certain no one had seen me leave Master Simon's house. The sun had not yet arisen, and I could perceive no signs of life in those buildings past which I made my way.

Without consulting my comrades, I had decided to spend the day on King Street, and at Long Wharf, well knowing that there in the heart of the town I should, if not interrupted, learn such news of importance as might be known to the citizens.

Squads of red-coated soldiers were patrolling the streets diligently, although the hour was so early, and I observed on every wharf sentinels who had



most likely been stationed there to prevent the unhappy inhabitants from leaving their homes.

Not until the forenoon was half spent did I succeed in learning anything more than Master Simon had told us, and then came that which startled and at the same time pleased me, for it showed that the valiant general, and, in his own estimation, the wise governor, who had believed he could crush the colonists simply by stories of his own prowess, had come to believe the men of Massachusetts no mean foe.

The town-crier read in the public places a proclamation of the governor's, wherein he formally established martial law in Boston, and offered pardon to all who would accept of it, with the exception of Masters Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

These two were reserved, I suppose, as scapegoats for the royal officer's wrath.

However, it was neither for me to laugh at or approve of the proclamation I had heard, but rather to decide whether it was such news as would warrant my returning to Master Simon's house.

After much thought I agreed with myself to remain on the street, for the old soldier, who I doubted not was abroad in the town, must already know what had been cried in the streets, and would act upon it with more wisdom than I could, who am never quick at such matters.

Having thus settled the matter I went toward the Town House, believing there I should hear the citizens consulting together in regard to the proclamation; but before arriving at that point I saw, just ahead of me, no other than Master Simon himself, who was leaning idly against a building as if he had nothing with which to occupy his mind save the serenity of the weather.

Passing him by as I would have done had he been a stranger, I glanced out of the corner of my eye and saw him make a gesture which I interpreted to mean that we should return to his home.

Acting upon what to me was little less than a command I continued on past the Town House to Corn Hill, and then through Dock Square, on the most direct course to Battery Alley, keeping, as can well be fancied, a sharp watch for young Wilkins, or any other lad of the same ilk with whom I was acquainted.

I was successful in gaining the dwelling seemingly unobserved, and from this I drew a good augury. That I could roam unseen about the streets at will would not be difficult, I argued after this short time of trial, and like many another foolish lad, convinced myself I had so much ability as to be able to hoodwink our enemies.

Within half an hour of my arrival, while sitting

in the attic, for the room below, darkened by the closing of the shutters and door, was gloomy, Ben entered.

He also had received his commands from Master Simon, and, to my secret pleasure and gratification, had gained no other information than that of the governor's proclamation.

When Simon Fletcher returned, however, we were soon made to understand that the forenoon had been wasted, so far as we were concerned.

He had learned all that was absolutely necessary our friends should know. By boldly entering the coffee-room at the Merchants' Exchange as a patron of the place, he overheard the British officers discussing General Gage's intention of fortifying Dorchester Heights and Charlestown.

"By the way they argue about it I reckon the move is to be made in both directions very soon, an' now has come the time when you lads are called upon to do your first work for the cause."

"How?" Ben asked eagerly, and a duller lad than I would have observed the joyful excitement upon his face as he thought the moment had arrived when he might play a man's part.

"You must get speech with General Ward before this time to-morrow," Master Simon said, as if it were a pleasure excursion he was proposing, and I asked like a simple:

“Then we are to leave Boston?”

“Ay, lad, if you count on bein’ able to see our general. I doubt not the truth of that which I heard, and should say the plan had been long under discussion. Do not be disheartened if on arriving at the American camp you discover that some one else had been before you with the news. It is better an important matter like this be told twice than not at all.”

“But how are we to leave town?” I asked. “This morning as I came down Ship Street I saw a sentinel on every wharf. You said last night that it was well-nigh impossible any one could get across the Neck because of the Britishers there, and it stands to reason you don’t expect us to fight our way out.”

“As to how you shall go, lads, I will not take it upon myself to command, if you can form any plan by yourselves. My idea would be that from the neighborhood of West Hill you might be better able to dodge the redcoats; but that is as you may please. It is only for me to say that they *must* be dodged, and the information we have gained repeated to General Ward or some of his officers ’twixt now and this time to-morrow.”

Turning toward Ben I soon saw that he did not look upon the attempt to leave town as such a

difficult matter, and I was heartened greatly by his confident air; yet he spoke not a word in explanation until, after a time, I asked almost petulantly :

“How can it be done, Ben Scarlett?”

“I know not, George Wentworth, save that Master Simon says we are to do it, and we shall.”

It was enough for me that he had expressed himself thus, and I was well content to wait until he should decide upon his plan of action.

Ben and I went not abroad on this day. It was Master Simon's desire we should remain in the house lest some evil befall us before the journey could be begun; but he himself sallied out again in the hope he might learn something additional for us to carry to the American camp.

Ben spent the afternoon in study, and I was careful not to disturb him. Whatever plan he might form would be to my good, and I should follow his leadership.

It was enough if I aided him in getting away from the town; the glory belonged to him by right of courage, and I must act only as his assistant.

The night had come before Master Simon returned; but so far as gathering news was concerned he may as well have remained with us.

The townspeople could talk of nothing save the

proclamation, and but few British officers were in their usual lounging-places, which proved, to Simon Fletcher's satisfaction at least, that that which he had heard was correct.

"They're busy as bees makin' ready for the move on Dorchester Heights and Charlestown, which is what they should have done four weeks ago. Have you worked out your plan yet, lad?" he asked of Ben.

"I cannot seem to hit upon anything which promises certain success. George and I will go to the West Hill, and there let whatever may happen decide us as to our course. If no boat is to be found I shall take the chances of swimming across."

"You would never get there," Simon Fletcher said decidedly, but yet he made no protest against Ben's doing as he had proposed. "That which is to be done should be set about at once. Now there is little fear the watch will stop you; but two hours later both would be taken into custody immediately after being seen."

"We are ready, and there is no reason why any delay should be made," Ben replied, rising to his feet, and I looked to see him say good-by to Master Simon, who had shown himself as true a friend to us as he was to the cause; but my comrade did nothing of the kind.

With a gesture which I interpreted as a command to follow, he walked boldly out by the front entrance of the house, saying when we were on the sidewalk :

“It is better to come this way than try the other in the night, when we might be mistaken for thieves. If we may not walk up Battery Alley without being disturbed, there is little question of our being able to get as far as West Hill.”

Now that we were embarked on our mission, and it appeared to me such was the case immediately the door of Master Simon's home had closed behind us, neither Ben nor myself had any desire to carry on a conversation.

He was busy trying to form some plan for getting to Cambridge, while I was occupied to the exclusion of everything else in raising my courage to the sticking point.

It was fated we should not walk the length of Battery Alley without being molested.

We had advanced no more than a hundred yards in the direction of North Street when we came face to face with Samuel Wilkins, and the three of us stopped suddenly as do the works of a clock when the spring is broken.

On this occasion, and it is the only one of which I remember, I was the first to realize our situation, and I whispered feverishly to Ben :

“We must not loiter here to talk with the Royalist. The shortest delay may prove fatal to our plans.”

It was as if my companion had not heard me; his anger caused him to forget all things else, and at the moment young Wilkins was turning to flee, realizing he was in dangerous company, Ben seized him by the shoulder.

I in turn grasped my comrade in order to force him into loosening his hold; but I might as well have clutched a figure of stone.

He did not intend to let slip this chance of repaying the young Royalist for the mischief done to us, and proceeded immediately to flog him in a most thorough fashion, Sam screaming for help at the full strength of his lungs.

In an instant, as it were, the dwellers on either side of the street could be seen at the windows and in the doorways, some crying loudly for the watch, and others berating us soundly for creating such a disturbance.

As the din increased I made yet greater exertions to pull my comrade from his lawful prey, not that I would have spared Sam Wilkins a single blow; but because I feared, and with good reason, we might be clapped into the guardhouse.

Ben could have mastered both Sam and myself,



so great was his anger, and he continued to flog the screaming young scoundrel until we were surrounded by men and lads whose homes were on Battery Alley, in such numbers that it was no longer possible for us to leave the scene of the encounter without permission from the throng.

Now that it was useless to counsel my comrade to moderation, and as we were threatened with violence from those who knew Wilkins, I ceased my efforts and stood back to back with Ben, knowing full well that we must force ourselves through the circle of bystanders before the watch, hearing the uproar, should appear.

“When I give the word we must make a rush for it,” Ben whispered as he loosened his hold and Sam scrambled to his feet. “Don’t let any one stop you, but use your fists the best way you know how. Now come on!”

He leaped forward as he spoke, striking out vigorously to the right and left, and I followed his example, hardly conscious of what I did until we had left those who would have detained us far in the rear, and were running at full speed up Carter Street past my old home.

In the distance we could hear what sounded like the tramp of soldiers, and at my suggestion, on arriving opposite the place, we darted into the

burying-ground in the hope of eluding our pursuers amid the graves.

In this we were only partially successful.

A portion of those who were in pursuit continued on up the street, but a number sufficiently large to insure our capture if they pressed us hotly followed as the hounds follow a fox, and I said despairingly to Ben as we ran at our best pace :

“There is no hope but that we shall be overtaken on the hill, for there is most likely a squad of red-coats at the ferry-way.”

“One of us *must* get through,” Ben muttered from between his closed teeth. “It is no longer a question of running double. We will separate, and each do his best alone to gain Cambridge.”

As he spoke he darted off to the left, and I, sorely depressed because of this forced parting with my friend, continued on, hardly knowing where my feet carried me—conscious only of the great need for continued exertions.

I could hear dangerously close in the rear the shouts of the pursuers, and then suddenly the cries seemed further in the distance, until I realized that the bulk of the following was in chase of Ben.

And indeed they were wise in thus doing, for he was a host in himself, and the one to be stopped if they would prevent information carried to the



I THREW OFF MY COAT AND PLUNGED INTO THE TIDE.

*Bunker Hill, p. 71.*



American camp, while I was only a poor sort of a fellow for such work, who could hardly be expected to get past the sentinels.

There was in my mind the resolve, however, to prove myself worthy of such a comrade as Ben Scarlett, and I strained every nerve in the race until it seemed as if I was alone; but when I would have stopped for breath the trampling of feet sent me forward once more like a hare, and I arrived at the water's edge just as the foremost of the pursuers could be seen in the gloom.

There was no time for delay.

I had in mind only the thought that I must reach Cambridge, and without other preparation than that of throwing off my coat, I plunged into the tide with a faint hope of doing that which Master Simon had said was impossible.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE AMERICAN CAMP.

HEATED by running as I was, the waters struck me with an icy chill which for the moment seemed to paralyze every effort, and I said to myself as, having sunk beneath the surface, I arose again, that it would be impossible to swim a single yard.

The cries of the pursuers in the near distance, however, served to lend me strength sufficient to shake off the numbness which had come so suddenly.

Even while making the first stroke I realized that to return to the shore meant capture, and capture was but another term for being dragged before the red-coated officers who, knowing I had taken to the water in the direction of Cambridge, and having before them the suspicions which had previously been entertained regarding me, would doom me as a spy whether or no such a procedure might be legal.

As the case appeared to me I was in danger of drowning on the one hand or being hanged as a spy on the other, and I preferred the former death as

being less painful and so near that the agony of suspense would be spared me.

After thus resigning myself to death, as it were, I became imbued with a most intense desire for life, and swam as I never had before.

All my senses were keenly on the alert, and I understood that every ounce of strength must be husbanded, every advantage taken of the wind and tide, if I would accomplish the task involuntarily undertaken.

My shoes filled with water weighted me down, and I speedily kicked them off.

To divest myself of clothing was beyond the possibilities while I remained in the sea; but by rising often—that is, by floating on the surface—the drag of sodden garments might be counter-balanced, and this thought was reassuring.

Not until the line of shore, which looked inky black, was lost to view amid the gloom, did I relax my efforts in the slightest degree, and then the time had come when a short breathing spell was absolutely necessary. Far in advance I fancied I saw the mouth of the river where was safety for those who loved the cause and had offended the king.

Again I struck out for it, battling with the waters until well-nigh exhausted, when once more I gave myself up to the luxury of floating.

In this manner, alternately swimming and resting, it seemed as if the entire night must have passed, and yet the haven where rest might be had appeared as far away as before.

Then came a time when the struggle with the waters was as a dream; when I battled mechanically while at one time bright lights flashed before my eyes, and at another I seemed on the verge of suffocation because of the extreme darkness.

I tried to speculate as to where Ben might be, hoping such effort would arrest the stupor which was creeping over me, fettering every limb; but in vain.

I breathed a prayer for help, struggling desperately to maintain the stroke, and then it was as if I had died.

When consciousness returned I was half-sitting, half-lying in the bottom of a boat that was well-filled with men.

The first impression on my mind was that those who pursued me across the burying-ground had ended the chase upon the water, and I was a prisoner.

As the moments passed, however, and my senses became more keen, I realized that the occupants of the vessel were a portion of that very army to whom Ben and I had been sent.



This fact had hardly found lodgment in my mind when he who was standing by my side, and had evidently been trying to restore me to consciousness, asked :

“Who are you, lad, and how came you in the water? You can surely speak now, for your eyes are open, and the pulse is growing more regular each instant.”

“I am George Wentworth, may it please you, sir. In order to escape from Boston I tried my hand at swimming, but with poor success it seems.”

“And you took to the water with the idea of swimming from Boston to the Cambridge shore?” the man asked as if in astonishment.

“Ay, sir, that I did, but not of my own free will. I was pursued by the townspeople, and would have been captured but that I made the hazard.”

“Captured? And why should you be made a prisoner? A boy, not yet arrived at a soldier’s age, cannot have given General Gage grievous cause for anxiety.”

“I have already been taken into custody once, and it please you, sir, it is said a burned child dreads the fire, and I have no desire to taste again the hospitalities of the Bridewell.”

“Why were you confined there?”

In as few words as might be I told of the price

Ben and I had paid for our visit to the camp on Bunker Hill, and added :

“Master Simon Fletcher, whom it may be you know, sir, enjoined upon my comrade, Ben Scarlett, and myself to gain the American camp at Cambridge this night in order to repeat there that which he learned in Boston during the forenoon. If you know not Master Simon, you may be acquainted with Ben’s father—Master Scarlett, who left town during those few days when Governor Gage was pleased to permit the inhabitants to abandon their homes.”

“I know neither one nor the other, my lad ; but if you have information which an older head than yours has thought ought to be repeated to those of the army, I will take it upon myself to see you are landed as near headquarters as may be. Should the story you have told me prove untrue, they who question you will speedily discover the falsehood.”

“There is one, whom I have been told is at the camp, who can say if my word may be trusted, and that is the same Master Warren whose writing caused Ben and myself to be suspected as spies.”

“The doctor is there, and you will have no trouble in finding him. I did not mean by what I said, my lad, to question your honesty, and should not have used the words. They were thoughtless

and calculated to pain one who loves the cause as you seem to do. Can you tell me the news in town?"

It was on my lips to repeat to this man who had saved my life that which Master Simon thought of so much importance; but before it was possible to speak, the thought came that my mission should be accomplished ere I made public that with which I had been charged.

Therefore, instead of repeating it to this kindly stranger, I contented myself with informing him that martial law had been proclaimed in the town of Boston, and a pardon offered to all save Masters Adams and Hancock.

"General Gage will wait long for any of our people to accept his kindness," the stranger said, with a laugh. "Pardon, indeed! What have we done that it should be necessary? Driven his red-coats back when they would have murdered our brethren? Or, did we sin grievously against his excellency and the king when we captured the barge off Noddle Island?"

He worked himself into such a passion over the governor's proclamation that it was almost as if he blamed me for its utterance, and I forbore to argue lest he should repent of the promise to carry me to headquarters because I had so lately come from a

town whose ruler was willing to pardon those who demanded only their just and lawful rights.

Manned by four oarsmen, the boat, although exceedingly large and heavy, was propelled swiftly through the water, and but a short time after the conversation just set down had come to a close we arrived at the end of our journey by water.

Here, for the first time, I saw members of what was soon to be known as the Continental Army, and, thanks to the good offices of the stranger who had rescued me, I was soon in the presence of that officer whom I afterward knew to be Colonel William Prescott.

Master Simon had not said the message intrusted me should be delivered to any particular member of the army; therefore, I had no hesitation in repeating that which the old man had learned to the colonel before whom I was brought, although while doing so I believed Ben Scarlett must already have communicated the same matter, for I doubted not but that he was safe in Cambridge ere this.

Colonel Prescott showed by his bearing that he considered the information of great importance; but such a kindly gentleman was he that, before doing aught else, he inquired concerning my welfare, and praised me, to whom no praise was due, for having attempted to swim across, promising

that what I had done that night should be made known to no less a person than the commander himself, General Ward.

As was but just, I explained that all the praise was due to Ben, and stated as my belief that he probably was already at the headquarters of the army; but to this the colonel made reply:

“You are the first to arrive, my lad, and since I have before me the one who, at the risk of his own life, brought the intelligence, there is no reason why another, who is absent, should receive thanks.”

It was my duty to have remained silent, for it is not seemly to contradict one's elders; but for the instant I made bold to say:

“It is to Ben, sir, that the credit belongs, yet if it should chance that what we have done proves of such service that we may ask a favor, I bespeak one in advance.”

“What is it, lad? Did you set about this work in the hope of a reward?”

“It would have been done, sir, had there been no possibility of a reward; but yet there has been in my mind from the moment Master Simon told us of the task to be performed, that my comrade and I might do so much for the cause that you gentlemen of the army would pardon our lack of years and admit us to the ranks as soldiers.”

“Well spoken, lad. You have a brave heart, even though you seem not disposed to admit it, and all I may be able to say in your behalf shall be said with such purpose that I doubt not but the request will be granted. Is it your pleasure to remain here, or do you wish to come with me?”

“As you shall say, sir.”

“It will be better, perhaps, to stay here until my return. After knowing what you have done, the men in my command will gladly minister to your wants, and it is not impossible I may speedily bring good news to one who seems desirous of doing only that which his country requires of him.”

The remainder of the night was most pleasantly spent by me, and without thought of sleep.

Many of the soldiers who, although they could not boast of a uniform, had kindly hearts, praised me overmuch for what had been done through no real intent of mine, and nearly every one spoke some word of cheer, to me most gratifying.

I was sore at heart because Ben could not be with me at such a time, but comforted myself with the thought that he must have made the journey successfully, landing most likely at some distance from where I came ashore. I was confident so able and determined a comrade must have accomplished his purpose.

When the day dawned, however, and I had made diligent inquiry of every one to whom I could speak without giving offense, regarding Ben, but not receiving that information for which I hungered, the fear came over me that he had been captured, and my sadness was as great as the joy of a few hours previous.

Not until nightfall did Colonel Prescott return, and then it was the greeting of a comrade which he extended to me who did not deserve it.

“All that you have done is known at headquarters, my lad, and I doubt not your desire will speedily be gratified, but there must be some delay. A commander-in-chief of the forces has lately been appointed by the Colonial Congress, and Colonel George Washington, of Virginia, will soon arrive to direct affairs. Then we shall see whether the lack of two years is a vital hindrance to your shouldering a musket in defense of the colonies. For the present, however, since it would not be wise you should return to the town after so narrow an escape, you may play the soldier under my command, and it so please you.”

And it so pleased me! I could have kissed his hand for the wondrous favor bestowed upon me, but that I feared he would consider I was taking too great a liberty.

Foolish lad that I was, I expected all the accoutrements of a soldier would be given me at once, and felt almost disappointed when he said:

“You shall act as my messenger between here and headquarters until a move is made, which will not be so long-delayed as to tax your patience.”

Then he turned away to attend to his many duties, and I, who had believed that to become a soldier in the army was to set instantly about doing some deed of daring, found myself with nothing to do save loiter aimlessly around the encampment, hoping even against hope that Ben would make his appearance.

Two days did I spend here almost idle. I say *almost* idle, for twice only was I required to go to headquarters, a distance of two or three miles, which seemed as nothing.

Then came the hour when, late on the evening of the 15th, it was whispered among the men that on the morrow we should march. No one seemed to know where; but the general idea was that some place in the vicinity of the town would be fortified—perhaps Dorchester Heights, or it might be Charlestown.

Colonel Prescott had not thought it necessary to speak with me save when I was required to act as his messenger; therefore I should have felt no dis-



appointment because nothing was said by him regarding the doings of the next day, but yet in my foolish heart there was a great desire he had at least told me he expected that I do my duty.

Not that anything of the kind was necessary. For Ben's sake, if not for my own, I would prove myself worthy to be his comrade in whatsoever I was set about.

Among the men was one, older than the others and yet in the prime of life, who had been more than friendly in his intercourse because of his own son, whom he had left far away in the Province of New Hampshire, and on this night, when all was bustle and confusion owing to the preparations for departure, he found an opportunity to say, as we passed each other:

“Keep by my side to-morrow, lad, if it so be the colonel has no work for you. There is an idea in my mind that we shall see bloody doings before many hours, and it may be I can lend you a friendly hand.”

“Do you think we shall attempt to take the town?” I asked in surprise.

“Nothing quite so foolish as that, lad; but if it be General Ward's plan to fortify in the vicinity of Boston, I cannot believe the king's troops will allow us to do so unmolested, and the time is now come when we must prove our metal, or set ourselves

down with seeming content under the yoke which it has pleased the king to put upon us."

I would have asked him further questions but that I was summoned by Colonel Prescott to go once more to headquarters, and when I returned this new friend, by name Robert Grant, was lying upon the ground sleeping peacefully.

My bed was the same as his, and I lay so close for the sense of companionship that I could have put my hand upon him had I dared; therefore when the morning dawned his was the first face I saw on awakening.

During this day I began to have a better idea of what might be a soldier's duties.

Contrary to the hopes and desires of all, it was not until evening that the march was begun; but during the day, while the men were chafing because of being held in restraint, as hounds chafe in the leash when the chase is about to begin, I was so actively employed as not to share their impatience.

Four times did I go to and fro from headquarters, and when the word came for the troops to move I was so tired that it seemed as if I could not put one foot in advance of the other; yet as the men filed out into the road I forgot all weariness of limb when I took my place by the side of him who would be my friend because of his son so far away.

## CHAPTER VII.

## BUNKER HILL.

“Now we shall see whether the members of the American Congress were wise in giving to us who are soldiers the name of the Continental Army,” Master Grant said to me as we marched out of the encampment, every man apparently happy because the movement was begun. “You who have been traveling back and forth between headquarters and the camp all day should know better than we in the ranks what is to be done ’twixt now and to-morrow night.”

“Indeed I have no knowledge, sir,” I replied truthfully.

During such time as I had been engaged in carrying messages to and from Colonel Prescott I had given little heed to anything save this duty, for there was in my mind that which I heard Master Simon repeat with much emphasis on the night before I left Boston so hurriedly :

“A soldier’s duty is to obey, not to ask questions,”

the veteran of Louisbourg had said, and I resolved ever to bear this in mind, for it was my desire to be known as a good soldier.

To have made any attempt at discovering where the troops were going, or why, would have been presumptuous in one who was not as yet even a member of the army; therefore I was wholly in ignorance as to the destination of Colonel Prescott's forces.

"You can't have used your ears to very good advantage, young Wentworth," Master Grant said with an odd smile. "The rank and file know the purpose of this movement. Bunker Hill in Charlestown is to be fortified, and we of this portion of the American Army are the ones selected for the task. To build breastworks under the guns of the enemy's ships, and almost within musket-shot of General Gage himself, will not be child's play."

"Then you believe, sir, that the British will attack us?"

"Believe it, lad? There can be no question about it. General Gage possesses some soldierly qualities even though he has thus far been so chary of displaying them. Once we begin our work he will realize the mistake made in not taking possession of these points himself, and I warrant you, lad, we shall see bloody work to-morrow."

“This information was not displeasing to me. My timorous nature did not assert itself when Master Grant suggested that the British would attack us, for at that time I had but a feeble idea of the meaning of war.

A battle was in my mind a marshaling of forces to the inspiriting sounds of martial music, and the accompaniment of heavy guns.

I had entirely left out of the mental picture the dead, the dying, and the wounded who lay outstretched uttering piteous cries. I thought only of the glory, and remembered not the terrible suffering through which it must be purchased.

As we marched on I ceased to be animated by the thought of what was soon to take place; the joyous fact that I was on the high road to become a soldier despite my lack of years was soon almost forgotten as weariness of limb bore heavily upon me, and before the march was ended it seemed well-nigh impossible I could keep my place in the moving column.

To fall out of the ranks in which I had begged a place would have been disgraceful, and I struggled to keep pace with Master Grant, even as I had struggled in the chilling waters of the bay.

Arriving at Bunker Hill finally, and when to me it seemed impossible I could march any further, a

consultation was held among the officers of the command, and once more the troops were in motion, this time to proceed nearly a mile nearer the town of Boston to what I afterward learned was known as Breed's Hill.

Once there the labor of throwing up fortifications was begun without delay.

During the night I did not work with the men because my services as messenger were in constant demand, and it yet lacked nearly an hour of day when Colonel Prescott said with that rare kindness ever to be observed in him :

“Your first experience as a soldier, lad, has been hard. Lay you down for sleep. You need rest in order to take part in this day's work.”

The permission was hardly given before I threw myself upon the ground, and almost instantly thereafter slumber closed my eyelids.

It was as if I had but just lapsed into the unconsciousness of sleep when a noise loud as that of thunder, but more sharp, having in it certain heavy blows which struck menacingly on the ear, caused me to spring to my feet in alarm.

Master Grant, shovel in hand, was within a few paces of where I had been lying, and he said in a cheery tone as I looked wildly about :

“The work has begun in good earnest, lad, and

you will soon have ample opportunity to know what it means to be a soldier."

As he spoke he pointed toward the bay where the British vessels were lying, and, looking in that direction, I saw great clouds of smoke rolling high above the decks of the ships, almost obscuring their spars.

Coming directly toward me was a small object which screamed in its passage, and even as I looked it had passed a short distance over my head, followed immediately by a cry of mortal agony.

"The British fleet have opened fire upon us," Master Grant said calmly, "and the first victim of this day's business has been singled out."

During the first thirty minutes of the cannonading I was in such fear as to be well-nigh tempted to run away, and but for thoughts of Ben, who would have been mortally ashamed had he learned his comrade proved himself a coward, my legs must have taken me back in the direction from which we came.

After that time passed I did not grow more courageous, but there was no longer in the wicked screaming of the missiles the same threat to me. It was as if I had become better acquainted with them, or was less certain the mission of each was to deal death or horrible wounds to myself.

As the forenoon wore on I was surprised by suddenly realizing that I was eating the provisions with which I had been provided before leaving Cambridge. A few hours previous it had not seemed possible food would ever again be palatable.

Exactly when it was—I mean as to how far the day had advanced, I cannot say, but should think that the sun was past the meridian when Master Grant halted me as I would have passed him, and said, pointing across the water toward where I knew the ferry-way of Boston was located, although it could not be discerned because of the smoke :

“The redcoats have concluded to come out of their hole; the battle will not be long delayed.”

Delayed! I had supposed the battle was being fought!

Now could be seen dimly the British vessels coming across from the town, landing troops near Morton's Point, yet all the while our men continued to build the earthworks.

The red-coated soldiers formed on the shore, and in the meanwhile heavy clouds of black smoke began to ascend from the village of Charlestown, regarding which Master Grant said as I pointed toward it inquiringly :

“Yes, they are burning the settlement,” and even while he spoke great tongues of flame leaped into



the air, extending on either side until where before had been a cluster of houses was a roaring, seething mass of fire.

Turning my eyes from it toward where I had last seen the British troops landing, I perceived a long line of red coming directly up the hill, while behind it from the ships and batteries on the water was poured a covering of shot, which one would have said must have destroyed every living thing upon Breed's Hill.

On either side among our troops could be heard sharp cries of command. Those who had been working with pick and shovel formed in military lines, muskets in hand, and on their faces that look which men wear who confront death.

I was standing idle, as though there was nothing I could do at this terrible moment.

It was only possible for me to see that oncoming line of red—there was no thought in my mind that I was other than a spectator.

“Pick up that musket and take your place in the ranks,” Master Grant said to me sharply.

Turning as if in some horrible dream to the direction indicated by his outstretched finger, I saw lying on the ground near the dead body of a Continental soldier a musket, and as I raised it from the ground Master Grant continued :

“Take also the powder-horn and shot-pouch.”

Under other circumstances it would have been most repugnant for me to have rifled the body; but death was becoming a familiar object, and I obeyed, not taking to myself any credit for so doing, because, as I have said, all consciousness of my own identity had departed.

“Do as I do, lad, and keep close to my side. You are in no more danger while fighting than if you stood still watching.”

Strange as it may seem, I had forgotten danger, and even his words did not remind me of it.

It was as if a lifetime passed before those around me did other than stand immovable, while the British column advanced, advanced, advanced until it was as if I could stretch out my hand and touch the foremost, when Master Grant cried:

“Now!”

And he discharged his musket.

Enveloped in smoke and flame, deafened by the reports of firearms everywhere around, I was a machine, loading and discharging a musket taken from a dead man, until a great shout went up from my companions, and I awakened from the stupor to ask of him who had acted the part of friend:

“What is it?”

“The Britishers have fallen back! They have

suddenly discovered that American men can fight, even though they are not trained to such work.”

It was true. The redcoats were in retreat; but as I looked their lines were re-formed, and on they came once more—on against our noble men, who stood firm and unshaken as the rocks which meet the buffetings of the sea.

Again we discharged our weapons as rapidly as they could be loaded, and again the red line melted away until those who were left standing erect fled in dismay, while behind them on the ground, which had been brown or green, were great masses of red, like clots of blood, which one knew to be the uniforms covering those who had lost their lives in trying to oppress the rightful owners of the country.

Then we were treated to what Master Grant called a raking fire of artillery; and while that was at its height the British came toward us for the third time.

They could not have shown more courage had they, like us, been battling in behalf of their native land.

Now I was perforce a spectator.

The ammunition taken from the dead man had been spent; and when I asked Master Grant to lend me of his store, he replied as if in a rage:

“I have but one charge left, and that is as much

as the greater number of our brave fellows have got.”

Standing close by his side I saw the enemy advance again, coming so near that instinctively I raised my gun by the muzzle to beat him back who should attack me, when our people fired their last volley.

This time the red line did not waver. There was many a gap made in it, but those who remained erect dashed forward like tigers, a row of cruel bayonets pressing so closely upon us that Master Grant, seizing one, thrust it aside as he sprang upon the soldier who held it.

The redcoat was so near that, before my companion could lift his musket to use it as a club, he was seized by the fellow next the one whom he would have slain, and I saw a third dash forward to run him through.

Raising my weapon I darted to Master Grant's side—not bravely, but because I had forgotten fear—and then it was as if I struck right and left, as if the sight of blood and the smell of burning powder had suddenly increased my stature and my strength, until a numbness came upon me, and I knew no more of all that bloody fight.

When next I understood that I was George Wentworth and yet in this world, the one desire in

my mind was for water with which to quench the burning thirst that assailed me.

Then came a sensation as of terrible pain; and raising my head, as I changed my position in the hope of relieving the agony, I saw the hill round about me dotted thickly with the dead and dying, while moving here and there were small companies of Britishers, engaged, as I then believed, in killing those of our people who were yet alive.

Now the fear of death assailed me with such force that I heeded not bodily suffering.

Closing my eyes that I might not know the instant the blow was to be delivered, I awaited the supreme moment, idly wondering if the soul in leaving its body would take a painful flight.

In my hatred of the enemy I had misjudged him.

Instead of murdering wounded Americans, the squads of men whom I had seen were carrying the disabled to the shore regardless of the color of the coat the sufferer wore; and when my turn came to be thus conveyed, although the pain caused by the movement was great, I could not justly have complained of the care bestowed upon me.

To move my right hand was impossible, nor could I change my position after once having been laid upon the sand of the shore, much as I desired to do so, for the blazing sun was shining full upon my face.

Some one, most likely a woman whose house had been destroyed when the British landed, gave me water to drink, and how sweet was that draught, but yet how short !

I begged for more regardless of the fact that hundreds around me needed it quite as sadly ; but received it not, and then came a certain stupor which lasted until, with others, I was taken to the boats.

The breeze which came from over the sea was more grateful to me than can be imagined by any one save him who has been fanned by it at the moment he stood hand-in-hand with death.

It brought me to complete consciousness of my surroundings, and I heard some one near by say that it was Sunday.

But for the weakness which assailed me I would have insisted the speaker was at fault, for well I knew that the British guns had awakened me on Saturday morning.

Then how could it be Sunday ?

It seemed impossible I had lain upon the hillside all night, or that we had been behind the fortifications disputing the advance of the English until after the sun had set ; yet I came to learn later that the Continental Army, now of a certainty worthy the name, did resist the king's troops for the space of nearly four-and-twenty hours.

When those who sailed the boat ceased to ply the oars, I heard one of our suffering company say we had arrived at Long Wharf, and for an instant there came into my heart a great hope that Master Simon Fletcher might be there to take me to his home; but immediately afterward I realized that, grievously wounded though I were, it was as prisoners to the king's troops that we had come back to Boston town.

The Bridewell or the common jail, not Master Fletcher's home, would be my abiding-place until it should please our enemies to finish me offhand, or set me free.

Before many hours had passed I came to wish we were indeed within the prison walls.

It was but natural the British should give first attention to their wounded, and we who had fallen in the noble cause were laid on the planks of Long Wharf like nothing else I could bring to mind save codfish put out in the broiling sun to dry, and there we remained unattended, save as the sentinels kept at a distance those townspeople who would have tried to relieve our sufferings, so long that I could have believed a week had passed.

A strong man next me silently died while my wounds were festering in the heat, and the thought came upon me as, half-turning my head I looked

upon the corpse, that already I was in the grave.

The horror of it was too great to be borne by one so timorous as I, though had Ben lain there in my stead I doubt not but his brave heart would have kept him up, and once again all consciousness of self abandoned me.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## WOUNDED.

It seemed in no wise strange that Ben Scarlett and Master Simon Fletcher should be bending over me when I first realized myself after losing consciousness while lying on Long Wharf with the other wounded Americans.

Not until I had observed them moving to and fro freely, thus showing they were not in the power of our enemies, did I find anything in my position to excite surprise, and then I was eager to learn how I, who should have been in jail with those of the army who had been made prisoners, was among my friends.

“Are all the wounded set free?” I asked, and in an instant both Master Simon and Ben were by my side.

“I told you he’d pull through all right,” the old man said to Ben as if continuing an argument begun some time previous. “I ought to know somethin’ about gunshot wounds, seein’s I’ve had three

in my time, an' this 'ere on the lad's shoulder ain't in any wise severe enough to be dangerous."

"But he surely looked as if he was dying," Ben replied, not as yet paying any attention to my question.

"Ay, an' with good cause; I'll answer for it that he has done a man's work since our troops climbed Breed's Hill, consequently he's sufferin' as much from an empty stomach an' aching limbs as from this ere hole in his shoulder. What do you want most, lad?" he asked of me.

"A drink of water, and an explanation of how it chances I am here instead of in a British prison."

"The first we have in plenty; but the story can wait till we've perked you up a bit with a pint or more of good broth that's on the stove bubblin' an' boilin' in your honor. Meat is a scarce article in this 'ere town; but between the two of us we've hunted up a morsel that'll soon make amends for the blood you've spilled in the holiest cause this 'ere world has ever known."

"But I hear cannon. Is another battle being fought?"

"That, lad, is the music of the siege. The American troops are warnin' the Britishers to have a care. There has been more or less cannonadin' goin' on ever since the battle."

Ben leaned over me with as much solicitude as a woman could have shown, and said as he stroked my powder-begrimed hand :

“I knew you’d prove to be of good metal once the opportunity offered, even though you were constantly telling of being timorous! Fortune was unkind in not permitting me to take part in the lesson you’ve helped give the king’s troops.”

“Did our friends win the battle?” I asked , eagerly, trying to rise to a sitting posture, but forced to lie down again immediately from sheer faintness.

“The Americans fell back only when their ammunition was spent, and the redcoats can claim a victory which is said to be even worse than a defeat; but our friends, and you among the number, George Wentworth, have shown the enemy how we can and will fight. It is reported that General Howe has said the battle upon the Plains of Abraham was as nothing compared with the work of Saturday.”

“I heard Master Grant say the ammunition had been expended, but did not know how it fared with others in the line.”

Master Simon interrupted me, insisting that I should not tell my story until I had received nourishment.

“We know you must have fought gallantly,” the veteran said in a most kindly tone, “and eager as we are to learn all the particulars, I’ll still maintain that you shall do no talkin’ till you’re in better shape.”

“Surely I may hear you and Ben speak of what has happened in town since I left?”

At first the old man would have enjoined silence upon us all; but for once in my life I was obstinate, and declared I would not swallow a mouthful, however tempting might be the dish he intended to set before me, until I knew all that had taken place since the moment of parting company with my comrade in the burying-ground on Carter Street.

“I reckon he’s earned the right to have his own way this time,” Master Simon said to Ben with a grim smile, “an’ so long as he keeps his mouth shut you may out with the yarn; but once he tries to tell his own story I’ll put a stopper on him that can’t be taken off with any ease.”

Ben remained as if in a study so long that I grew more impatient than ever, and cried in a disagreeably petulant tone, as if he was beholden to me simply because I had been wounded:

“Don’t stop to think how the story shall be told, but begin at any part of the tale, so you tell everything.”

“Have no fear but that you’ll hear all,” my comrade replied with a smile. “My own part in this work has been so poor that I must perforce give it many words, else it will seem as if I had done nothing.

“When you and I parted on that night, each striving to gain the Cambridge shore, I doubled back through Hull Street, hoping to shake off those who pressed us so hard, and succeeded only too well. The foremost of the pursuers heard the splash when you leaped into the water, and so lined the bank, believing you would be forced to come back, that I could not follow your example even though nothing had prevented my going as far as the shore. But I was so surrounded that the watch would have had me in custody at once had I made the slightest move toward taking pattern after you.

“Once on Hull Street I walked slowly for the double purpose of regaining my breath, and to prevent those who might come up in the rear from suspecting I was one who had been the cause of the hue and cry. I had not walked fifty yards, and was yet breathing like a porpoise when Sam Wilkins, looking considerably worse than when we met him near this house, approached with a crowd of friends. It would have been folly to give battle to all, and equally useless to think of following you, for the

scurvy Royalists gave chase at once, therefore I was forced to play the fox through Boston.

“Thus it happened you got clear, though I feared it might be to drown, and Master Simon was certain you could not swim so far, while I was left behind in idleness. It was nearly morning when I came back here, dispirited not only by the failure, but because of the fact that I feared you were dead. Then came such word from the American camp as caused us to believe you had succeeded in the mission, and my heart grew lighter.

“There is no reason why I should try to describe the excitement felt by all our friends, when we heard cannonading early Saturday morning. Master Simon and I would have rushed out into the street intent on going to the ferry-way to see what was being done, but were confronted by handbills posted on every corner and even upon many of the houses, forbidding the people to venture on the roofs of their houses, or any high place, under penalty of death. To be seen on the streets, or to ask questions of the Britishers who passed, was dangerous, yet I would have pressed on to the ferry-way, but that Master Simon threatened to bring me back as a prisoner——”

“An’ I had good cause to make such threats,” the old man interrupted. “We were ordered to

stay in this 'ere town to gather all the information possible, an' one battle wasn't goin' to drive the Britishers out so that our presence here would be useless. To allow ourselves to be carried to jail was the same as desertin' our posts of duty; we was bound to go there if we run counter to them 'ere printed papers, for the watch was doubled a dozen times over, an' there's no street so small or poor but that they patrolled it. We couldn't have got to the corner before being gobbled up, so I forced Ben Scarlett to keep the law, seein's it was too dangerous to break it. Now you can go on with your yarn, lad."

"It was terrible to stay in here while the cannonading was going on and we knew it was our friends—with most likely you among them—who were being shot at. By keeping well back in the attic after pulling out a board from one of the shutters, we contrived to see a bit of the water, and so knew the Britishers were working hard bringing back their wounded to Boston. That showed us how savagely you folks were fighting, and Master Simon and I ached to be with you."

"While I am aching because I was there," I said, with a feeble attempt at wit.

"The night passed," Ben continued, paying no heed to my poor effort, "and the battle had not

ceased. How long the hours were during that Sunday!"

"That Sunday?" I interrupted again. "Surely another day has not passed without my knowledge."

"What do you mean? This is Tuesday."

"But I was brought to town Sunday afternoon."

"True, and, so it was said by some of the other prisoners, lay like one dead until the Britishers began to carry the unfortunates to jail early Monday morning."

It seemed incredible I could have been in another world, so to speak, for as long a time as Ben had said; but I forbore to press the subject lest it should delay the telling of his story.

"There was nothing to prevent our going out of doors on Monday, and Master Simon and I went at once to Long Wharf hoping to get some word from you, but little expecting to find you as we did. By dint of pressing hard against the guards and those who were lugging the wounded heroes out to where were wagons waiting to receive them, we got speech with a friend of Master Simon's, who told us of your plight.

"It did not seem possible we could do anything to aid you, for the redcoats were watching their prisoners as cats watch mice, and to get inside the



lines was not to be thought of; but Simon Fletcher is a rare one for strategy. When we heard the word passed along to hire or impress all the wagons which could be gotten, the order had no especial meaning for me; but to him it was very much.

“‘Watch here to see they do not take the lad away while I’m gone,’ he whispered, and immediately disappeared, leaving me wondering what sort of a bee he had in his bonnet. It was a full hour before he came back, and in that time many poor Americans had been carried wounded to jail, but you were not among the number. Then I fancied I saw you far down the wharf in the arms of two men, and at the same instant came Master Simon’s warning whistle from the rear.

“Looking around I saw him perched on an old cart drawn by a well-groomed horse, and an inkling of his plan began to creep into my thick head. Without waiting to be asked, I leaped upon the seat beside him while he was backing the restive steed down into line with many other teams, and we were hardly in the required position when you were brought out looking even more like a corpse than at this moment. Master Simon jumped to the ground, and forcing his way through the throng of Royalists cried ‘I’m willin’ to take one of the rebels to jail for the privilege of seein’ a key turned on

him; but can't afford to wait 'round here very long. This 'ere will be a free ride for the chap what is gettin' his just deserts for raisin' a hand against the best king that ever drew breath!

"I thought Master Simon had suddenly lost his senses until the redcoats dumped you into the wagon with no more ceremony or care than would have been shown a bale of tobacco, and then I could have hugged him for his quick-wittedness. Once you were in the cart I, acting as if the horse could not longer be restrained, and slyly kicking the beast to make him restive, drove out of the line shouting that I was being run away with, until Simon Fletcher leaped up beside me as nimbly as you or I could have done.

"Then you can fancy that, instead of driving toward the jail, we came to Battery Lane, you so covered by Master Simon's coat that no one could have suspected we had other than a package of some sort which we were in haste to deliver."

"Where did he get the cart?" I asked, when Ben ceased speaking, much as though his tale was concluded.

"The beast is owned by a friend to the cause, with whom I've had dealings before," the old man replied. "I didn't wait to ask permission, but brought him away from the stable without parley,

hitchin' into a cart that stood in the yard. It was a ticklish job gettin' you inside the house without bein' seen by the neighbors; but, luckily, the most of 'em, especially the scurvy Royalists, were out of doors watchin' our wounded friends as they were taken to jail; an' it stands to reason we succeeded, otherwise we'd had a visit from some of Gage's crew long ere this."

"Master Simon carried the horse back, leaving me here to care for you," Ben said, taking up in turn his thread of the story; "and since then we have hugged the house snugly, except when he went out to buy the piece of meat which is now stewing for your benefit."

"An' which you're goin' to eat as soon as may be, lad, for you've had enough of tale-tellin' to answer for one day."

"Let me set my mind at rest first, Master Simon, and then I will be as obedient to your commands as could be wished. You told me, Ben, that in the battle our men were forced to fall back. Do you know what was then done?"

"The Britishers had all the fighting they wanted for one time, and were glad enough to stop for repairs. They have burned the village of Charlestown and reduced the people of Boston to a condition little better than that of slaves. Our friends

remaining in the town are being arrested at the will of General Howe, and some of the best citizens are now in jail. No fishing-vessel can leave the harbor without paying a dollar to those who style themselves the king's servants, and food of all kinds is very scarce and high in price. But for the fact that Master—I should say, General Warren——”

“Hold on, lad!” Master Simon cried sharply, and Ben ceased speaking so suddenly that I understood at once they were keeping from me something I should know.

“What of Master Warren?” I cried. “Was he in the battle? Has General Gage dared lodge him in prison?”

I was rapidly growing excited, and Master Simon, understanding it might be dangerous because of my wound, hastened to say :

“I did not intend you should know yet awhile, lad ; but since Ben has made a mess of it by lettin' out the name, you must hear the story. General Warren was killed in the battle, an' a better or a braver man never fell before the king's soldiers.”

I was too deeply grieved for words. That he above all others whom I had seen should be singled out for death seemed passing strange, and the future

looked dark to me for the cause, now so ardent a lover of it had been sent into eternity.

“Don’t sorrow, lad,” Master Simon said in a kindly tone as he laid his hand on my head. “Many a brave man has shared the same fate, an’ he would have asked no different death. His blood will strengthen the cause, instead of weakening it, an’ the day must surely come when we shall be able to say that he has not died in vain. Try now to compose yourself, an’ after you’ve had some sleep Ben shall tell more, if indeed he has anything left in his budget after so much yarn spinning.”

I closed my eyes to think of the disasters which had come, and, despite the booming of the heavy guns which at times seemed to shake the house, was soon asleep.

When I awakened Ben, good, kind friend that he was, sat by my side, and Master Simon, in response to his summons, brought a basin of steaming broth which I was forced to swallow.

The mixture revived me wondrously, and the veteran of Louisbourg decided to dress the wound on my shoulder anew, saying as he concluded what was for me a most painful operation :

“I have seen many a man with a worse hurt toddlin’ around as lively as a cricket after a week in the hospital, an’ by the same token we’ll have

you on your feet and all right before many days have passed."

"Now may he tell me of his adventures?" Ben asked, and Master Simon replied :

"It may as well be, otherwise I'll have no peace, an' who can say he won't feel better in mind after it's over? Fire away, lad," he added to me, "an' take care you don't try to make out that you've been playin' a coward's part, for that I'll not be brought to believe."

Except as to the battle, my story was a poor one, and interrupted many times by one or the other of my companions when they believed I did not give due weight to the poor part I had played.

Ben, if he had been allowed, would have made me describe myself as having done all that was brave on the bloody day; but I, remembering how frightened I had been when the British balls were screaming and yelling over my head, refused to so give unmerited praise, and told the tale plainly, thus proving how poorly I acted the soldier.

"Its a rare story, lad," Master Simon said when I had come to an end, "an' you've opened up the way to join the army in proper shape, or Colonel Prescott's not the man I've heard said he was. Put all your mind to gettin' strong once more, an' then we'll lay our heads together to circumvent these

Britishers who would send people to bed at ten o'clock, or stop friends from talkin' together on the streets, as General Gage is now doin'. Pull yourself into shape as soon as may be, George Wentworth, an' we'll get out of Boston to the Continental Army, or I'm a Dutchman."

## CHAPTER IX.

## HUNTED.

THE thought that I, in company with Ben Scarlett and Master Simon, was to make an effort to join the Continental Army as soon as it was possible for me to travel, went far toward hastening my recovery.

The wound was not what the veteran of Louisbourg deemed serious; a musket-ball had pierced my right shoulder, but without breaking any of the bones, and Master Simon assured me that if I obeyed his instructions to the letter I should be able to go abroad within two weeks—perhaps less than ten days.

Therefore it was I bent all my energies to overcoming the evil, fancying the flesh would heal more rapidly if I remained strong in the determination that it should.

There was one matter which caused me no little anxiety, although not a word regarding it did I speak to my companions.

This was the fact that while thus disabled I was



in no wise fit to do duty as a soldier, even though my years had been sufficient, and I feared when we arrived at the American camp they would be allowed to enter the ranks, and I be refused the coveted permission.

It is true Colonel Prescott had promised to use his influence in my behalf; but that promise had been made when I was an able-bodied lad, and he could not in justice be holden to it while I was crippled.

However, I fought against such fears to the best of my ability, aided by the belief that much time must elapse after Master Simon decided I was in proper condition to travel, before we could elude the vigilance of the British troops who guarded the outlets of the town, and while we were thus delayed I should be growing stronger each day.

It was not an easy task to remain tranquil in mind while the reports of cannon told that both armies, if not really in action, were burning powder with hostile intent.

Master Simon explained that no actual fighting was being done, and this was difficult of belief when the thunder of the heavy guns rang in our ears.

Even though shut up in the house, it was possible for us to say whether those at the Neck were active, or if our people had set the pace in the vicinity of

Charlestown; but when the ships of war sent a shot in either direction it was as if the cannon had been discharged close at hand, so near to Burrough's Wharf were some of the king's vessels lying.

And all the while I feared another battle would be fought when it was impossible for me to take any part. I shuddered at the thought of witnessing scenes similar to those enacted on Breed's Hill, and yet had a feverish desire to participate in all that might be done.

It was a strange condition of mind which even now I am unable to explain to my own satisfaction.

From the hour when I was so successfully stolen from those who would have held me prisoner, Master Simon insisted upon Ben's remaining secluded in the house, lest by showing himself on the street he be followed to Battery Lane and it be suspected, because he was known to be a firm friend of mine, that I lay concealed in the building.

Nothing had been heard to warrant our believing the British officers were aware of my escape.

It was not likely, so Master Simon argued, that in the excitement caused by the unexpected battle the enemy had an accurate account of the wounded Americans brought away from the Charlestown shore, yet there was a possibility some of the red-coats remembered my face because of having seen it

when I was apprehended with Master Warren's permit on my person.

We all knew that Samuel Wilkins, scurvy royalist as he was, would do anything in his power to work us harm because of the drubbing Ben had given him; and he was to be feared, so Master Simon reasoned, even more than General Gage's minions.

Therefore it was that Ben remained quite as much of a prisoner as I; and while the veteran was absent from the house plying his calling of listener on the streets in the hope of learning that which might benefit our friends in Cambridge, my comrade and I had nothing more profitable to do than listen to the siege guns, or lay plans for the future, which last were all dependent upon our being allowed to enter the American Army.

A week passed, and I was so nearly myself that, instead of lying helpless in bed, I sat a greater portion of the time on a wonderfully contrived stool, with a back devised for my comfort by Master Simon, near the window of the attic which overlooked the water, where could be seen the ships of the enemy, oftentimes enveloped in smoke as they sent bombs into our camps.

On this particular day the veteran came in from his customary morning stroll about the streets, and was telling us of the new government formed by

the Colonists—the Territory of Massachusetts Bay, with its capital at Watertown—when we observed Samuel Wilkins skulking through the yard of that building which stood opposite the rear of Master Simon's humble dwelling.

“What business can he have over there?” Ben asked half to himself as he went nearer our window, which was screened in such manner by a frame of wood that those on the outside could not well look into the attic. “I would like to punch his head again!”

“You have done that once too often,” Master Simon said so impatiently that I gazed at him in surprise, for as a rule he was marvelously soft-spoken with us. “The Royalist whelp has taken it into his head that you are here, an' means to work mischief if it can be compassed.”

“I doubt not that he would were it within his power,” Ben replied with a laugh; “but he can have no idea either George or I are in hiding here.”

“Of that I am not so positive. Two days ago I saw him skulkin' up an' down the lane when I came in, and seein' me observin' him he put on such a hang-dog look that I knew he was plottin' mischief.”

“He won't succeed very well while we keep under cover,” Ben added carelessly; and I, who was watching Master Simon's face, understood that the



LOOKING THROUGH THE ATTIC WINDOW WE OBSERVED SAM WILKINS SKULKING THROUGH THE YARD.



old man was not easy in mind regarding the fellow who had prevented Ben from taking part in the first real battle between the Americans and King George's troops.

"You do not believe him powerless for harm," I said; and Master Simon replied, speaking as though weighing well his words:

"If he had quicker wit he might soon break up this companionship, and it troubles me not a little lest he will presently hit upon that which may upset all our plans."

"What mean you?" and now an expression of anxiety came over Ben's face.

"The scurvy little rascal, having most likely seen George when he lay wounded on the wharf, or while being brought out to the cart, knows, even though the redcoats do not, that one of the prisoners is missing. He suspects the truth as to your whereabouts, but, like the thick head that he is, thinks to discover without aid from others what he most wants to know. He is now trying to do the work, as he has been this week past."

"And much good he will get out of it by skulking around in that fashion," Ben replied, but no longer in a mirthful tone.

"Ay, lad, his work done in such a manner will amount to little while we have our wits about us,

an' so long as he blunders on by himself I have no care. It is when, having grown discouraged with the task, he concludes the job too big for him, that I most fear the rascal."

I was perplexed by the reply, and asked its meaning.

"When it is decided in his mind that he cannot discover that for which he seeks, he may go with his story to one of the British officers, and how long after that, think you, before this buildin' would be searched by a file of soldiers?"

This was a possibility neither Ben nor I had considered, and the truth of it struck us hard.

"Then why do we stay here?" I cried, speaking without having given due consideration to the words.

"Because it would be a puzzlin' matter to hit upon another place, even though we should decide to suddenly disappear," Master Simon replied gravely. "While we are in Boston town I must go upon the streets every day to learn if anything new is afoot, and think you there is no chance of my bein' seen by yonder Royalist whelp? Then again, if we were to find other lodgings this very night, it would soon get through his thick head that there was good reason for so sudden a moving, and he'd tell his story at once. While he keeps up the



search alone we have but little to fear; when he abandons it we must be on our guard."

Master Simon, having thus spoken, put an end to the conversation by going to the apartment below, where for a long while we could hear him stumping to and fro as was his wont when in deep thought, and Ben and I were very uncomfortable in mind.

"I am the one who should bear all the blame of having set that young villain to work," my comrade said bitterly after we had remained silent many moments. "But for the flogging I gave him on the night you escaped from the town, he would not now be so hot on the scent."

Although knowing this to be true, I argued he had nothing with which to reproach himself, suggesting that Sam Wilkins would have pursued the same course even though he had no personal provocation, because we were what he called rebels; but this Ben understood was false reasoning, advanced only to relieve his mind, and my efforts were vain.

On this night Master Simon did not go out of doors as was his custom, and I believe he remained under cover because of having seen the lad whom we had every reason to consider our enemy, reconnoitering the building.

Three days after this conversation, which had no

other effect than to render us all uncomfortable in mind, my shoulder gave me so little pain or inconvenience that I felt convinced the time had come when I might venture out of doors, and was discussing the matter with Ben, when Master Simon entered hurriedly by the front door.

My comrade and I sprang to our feet in an instant, knowing full well some mischief was afoot, for the old soldier was one not easily excited, save from good cause.

“Yes, it has come at last,” Master Simon said as if answering a question we had asked. “I saw the scurvy little rascal goin’ into that house on Pemberton Hill where Lord Percy has taken up his quarters, an’ there can be but one reason for the visit.”

“You believe he has gone to tell what he thinks he knows?” I asked, and it was an idle question, for I understood full well that Samuel Wilkins could have no other business with the British lord.

“Mayhap he has really discovered something,” Master Simon said, as he wiped the perspiration from his face, for the afternoon was desperately hot. “You lads may have shown yourselves at the window while thinking you remained hidden, or——”

“There is no chance that can have happened

since the day we last talked about the sneaking Royalist," Ben interrupted. "Once fully realizing that but for me he would not be hunting us down, I have been over-cautious, and am positive he has neither seen nor heard us."

"Then he has gone to give words to his suspicions. It matters little whether he carry surmises or information. Once he has had his say, there will be a search of the building. I'm allowin' that it'll be quite a spell before he sees Lord Percy, an' we've got a livin' show yet for liberty."

"What may delay him?" I asked.

"These lords an' ladies do not answer a summons at the door themselves as we common people do, but keep a company of lackeys to hold visitors at a distance until their business has been told. I'm countin' on the chance that Sam Wilkins will have to satisfy half a dozen lazy fellows in livery before he'll so much as get a sight of Lord Percy, an' in the meantime we must make one effort to give all hands the slip. How is your shoulder, lad?"

"As well as ever; the moment you came I was saying to Ben that there was no longer any good reason why I should stay hived up here on account of the hurt."

"So much the better, for we must travel swiftly, an' a cripple might balk the whole scheme."

“Are we to leave at once, Master Simon?” I asked, rejoicing secretly that Sam Wilkins had made this move, since now we should be doing something which might bring us nearer the American army.

“We’ll take the chances of waitin’ till after sunset, which is as soon as I allow the miserable Royalist will find opportunity for a private chat with the British nobleman. Ben, stand watch at the window that overlooks the lane. You should see a squad of redcoats before they turned off from North Street, an’ if it so chances any heave in sight while it’s yet light, we must make a flyin’ trip across the gardens to the water-front.”

“Have you any plan, Master Simon?” I asked eagerly, and now I had almost forgotten the dangers which menaced.

“A piece of one, lad, only a piece; but the balance may come to mind as we go along. If not, we must hide like water-rats for a spell, which I reckon can be done nearabouts Burrough’s Wharf.”

Master Simon did not say what this “piece of a plan” might be, and it would not have been seemly in me to ask him again, therefore I held my tongue while he filled his pipe slowly and deliberately as though he had no more important business on hand than that of smoking.

As the moments passed and nothing could be heard save when Ben moved stealthily from side to side in the room above, or certain grunts of satisfaction in which Master Simon always indulged when pulling at his pipe, I grew woefully nervous.

It seemed to me we were foolishly venturesome in thus remaining idle while Samuel Wilkins was plotting mischief against us, and as I turned the matter over and over in my mind the danger appeared so great that I finally tuned my courage up to the point of asking Master Simon :

“Do you think we are wise to sit here so long?”

“Ay, lad, so I figger it out, an’ a good deal wiser than we would be to make a run for it while the idle neighbors are likely to be at the windows. It may be we shall have to take the chances of their seein’ us, but so long as it’s not right-down necessary, we’ll linger here a spell.”

I went upstairs to talk with Ben, but he was so fearful lest he neglect his duty as watchman that the arguments I advanced in favor of an early flight might as well have remained unspoken.

Not until the sun had set did Master Simon remove the pipe from his mouth, and then it was to say to me, who had been trying to compose myself by his side :

“When it grows so dark that Ben can no longer

see who may be coming down the street, we will start."

"Are we going to take anything with us?"

"Not even so much as this pipe. I want the house to have an appearance as if I had just gone out for a walk, an' the redcoats may be foolish enough to wait in the hope of my comin' back."

"It seems——"

I was interrupted by a low cry of warning from Ben, and an instant later he crept softly but rapidly down the ladder.

"There is a squad of soldiers marching through North Street, and I believe Sam Wilkins is with them."

"If he'd waited half an hour longer I'd felt more friendly toward him," Master Simon muttered grimly. "Get you out of doors, lads, an' make a straight line for Burrough's Wharf. I'll join you later. It's my right to bring up the rear."

Ben and I obeyed promptly.

Opening the door cautiously we stood on the threshold only long enough to make certain no one was in our path, and then walked rapidly down the narrow passage between the gardens, stooping low to hide our bodies as much as possible behind the shrubs.

Not more than three minutes were spent in gain-

ing Ship Street, where were many people moving to and fro, among whom we could see more redcoats than was cheerful; but we continued on, slackening our pace a little lest by moving too rapidly we should arouse suspicions, and in due time stood on the wharf.

Under the shadow of a stack of empty casks we stopped to listen, although we could not have said for what.

No unusual sound was heard, and after looking carefully around to make certain no one was eavesdropping, Ben whispered:

“If they had seen Master Simon running, or caught him just as he was leaving the house, we should be able to hear some outcry, for he would surely try to warn us.”

“I fear he may linger too long. It was foolhardy to stay there till now; we should be in some place of hiding by this time,” I said petulantly, more like a spoiled child than a boy who hoped soon to be a soldier.

“He must know better than you or I. Where did he say we were to wait for him?”

“He explained nothing as to that part of the plan, and yet it cannot be he would have us remain where the first idler who comes on the wharf will discover our whereabouts.”

“There is nothing we can do but remain here; we must take our chances.”

The perspiration oozed from my skin, and my limbs trembled beneath me as I realized what a slender show for escape was ours.

My timorous nature was getting the better of courage once more, and I felt much as when I heard the British shot screaming over my head for the first time.

“It would have been as well had we remained in the house, since capture is certain,” I said, my teeth chattering so with fear that the speech was as of one who stammers; and hardly had I ceased this poor attempt at talking when loud shouts from the direction of Battery Lane caused me to start in terror.

Ben clutched my hand as he whispered:

“They have caught him!”

Animated by the same thought we turned and fled, for the instant giving no heed to the fact that we were the same as deserting Master Simon.



## CHAPTER X.

## FLITTING.

It was fortunate indeed for us that in our blind flight we ran toward the outer end of the wharf, rather than away from it, otherwise we might have found ourselves in that position we were trying to avoid.

The uproar which had caused us so much terror did not continue, although many moments passed before we realized that fact. The first outcry was the only one, and might have come from children at play; my own cowardice made it appear as having been the warning of a pursuit.

This idea did not come into my mind until we had run to the very edge of the wharf, and then, perforce, were obliged to halt and look around for a hiding-place, unless we purposed to leap into the water.

While we stood shrouded by the fast-gathering gloom from view of those on the street, I realized that which is written above, and said to Ben:

“This time we have been more frightened than hurt. If Master Simon was being chased by the soldiers we should hear a greater disturbance.”

“But what was the meaning of the noise?”

“That I know not; but it cannot have been the tumult of pursuit, else by this time there would be a hue and cry the whole length of Ship Street. We must wait here for Master Simon, lest we lose him entirely.”

Several moments passed before Ben could shake off the fear which had assailed him, and then he was once more his own brave self.

“We will stop where we are till Master Simon comes up, or it is certain he has been caught. If the redcoats should come this way we can drop into the water and swim under—I forgot your wound, George.”

“There is no reason why I cannot swim for a certain distance, so carry out whatever plan you may have, without regard to me, if it should be that we are in danger.”

“We must steer clear of the water on your account,” he said decidedly, and just then we saw dimly in the darkness the outlines of a man who was making his way directly toward us.

Although he walked smartly, and without the aid of a staff, we believed it was Master Simon,

perhaps because we desired it should be, and in this we were not mistaken.

“Did the redcoats see you?” Ben asked as the old man joined us.

“Not a bit of it.”

“But the noise we heard?”

“There is some kind of a disturbance on Lynn Street, which favors us mightily, because all the watch have gathered in that quarter.”

“How long did you wait at the house?”

“Until I made certain the redcoats were countin’ on payin’ me a visit. They had turned into Battery Lane before I left, and marchin’ at the head of a squad, as if believin’ himself a deal of consequence, was young Wilkins. By this time they are rummagin’ the house, an’ much good will it do them. But we have no business to be chatterin’ here like a flock of geese; unless we find a shelter soon, you lads will pay another visit to the Bridewell with a serious charge at your door.”

“Where are we going?” I asked, impatient to be off, for his mention of the Bridewell had sent the cold shivers down my back.

“That is as may be. There has been a skiff under this ’ere wharf for a week or more, left by a friend of mine in case we should find it necessary to leave town sudden, an’ we’ll hunt for it.”

As he spoke Master Simon let himself down over the side cautiously, and presently we heard him whisper:

“I’ve found it. You will stop to help George down, Ben, an’ then make haste to follow me, for no one can say how soon the watch will be this way again.”

“Look out for yourself, and don’t trouble about me,” I said, following the example set by Master Simon; and Ben came close behind.

After much scrambling about at risk of dropping into the water, we found our friend seated in a small skiff which was moored inside the formation of the wharf where the carelessness of the builders had left a space between the rocks.

Once we were beside Master Simon I expected he would pull out into the harbor, for I saw there were oars and a sail in the craft; but instead of doing so, he proceeded to make himself comfortable by stretching out at full length on the stern-sheets, as if intending to remain some time.

“Are we not to leave the place at once?” I asked, surprised by his loitering thus when the danger was so great.

“We are safer than we should be on the harbor, where boats are playing to and fro between the vessels an’ the shore, watchin’ for such as we,”

Master Simon replied in a whisper. "Here we will stay till past midnight, and then try our hand at skulkin'. I have feared things might come to this pass through that scurvy young Wilkins, an' made up my mind some time back how we could best give them the slip."

I was well content that we had been forced to fly, believing there now remained nothing for us to do but seek shelter with our friends in the army, which was the one place in all the world I most desired to be, unless it was with my mother.

When Master Simon replied to a question asked by Ben, I learned to my great disappointment that I was making a grievous mistake.

"I don't count on leavin' the town for many a day yet. This 'ere is our post of duty, an' we have no right to desert it till we receive different orders."

"How can we stay, now the redcoats are hunting us down?" Ben asked in surprise.

"They haven't found us yet, an' I don't allow we'll tumble into their clutches this summer, unless I'm foolish enough to be caught nappin'," Master Simon said calmly. "From our situation now, an' because we've had no trouble in gettin' on board this 'ere skiff, you'd say it was an easy matter to gain the American lines. Yet you'd find yourself mightily mistaken if we was to try it. In the first

place I've noticed, while the idee of bein' forced to make a sudden start has been runnin' in my mind, that this wharf isn't so closely guarded as some of the others; time an' time again I've seen the sentinels leave it, as if their orders were only to pay the place a visit now an' then. We can pull out of here, it is true, an' might go a long bit in the harbor without bein' noticed; but the Britishers are more careful the nearer you get to our friends. We'd soon be overhauled if we tried what George has been hopin' would be done."

"I may hope for a thing, and at the same time be content to do that which you propose," I made haste to say.

"True, lad; I've no fear of you turnin' mutineer, but it ain't hard to read what's in your mind. Howsomever, we can only go such a road as comes to hand while we're under the rule of the king, which won't be long if our people keep on fightin' as they did at Breed's Hill.

All this while we had been conversing in whispers, but now the tread of heavy, measured footsteps above our heads told that it was wisest to remain silent.

The moments seemed very long as we listened to the noise on the wharf, and each instant I feared lest should come those sounds betokening that our

hiding-place was discovered, for it would not be strange had we been observed by unfriendly eyes as Ben and I crossed Ship Street.

When half an hour had passed, to my great relief we heard those above go toward the street, and for the first time since coming out of Battery Lane I breathed freely ; it seemed certain we had escaped, for the time being at least, from those who wished to see us carried to prison.

Ben would have amused himself by conversation, but that Master Simon checked him.

“ We have said all that is necessary, an’ now the least noise that’s made the better for us.”

After these words had been spoken, and in a manner which told that the veteran was displeased, it can well be imagined we did not offend again.

Some time before ten o’clock, after which hour it was not lawful for citizens to be on the streets, the town was silent, save for the footsteps of the watch, and from the harbor came no sound.

For awhile I counted the seconds as if such employment would make the time seem to pass more quickly, and had fallen asleep over the useless task when I was startled into wakefulness by the pressure of a hand on my wounded shoulder.

It was Master Simon who had aroused me, and he whispered :

“It is time we were movin’, lad, unless we want to stay twenty-four hours longer.”

No news could have been more welcome, and I asked what he wished I should do.

“Go into the bow, an’ fend off when I push out. Then keep your eyes open for anything that looks like a redcoat.”

The night was so dark that a coat of any kind would have been swallowed up by the gloom, even though it should be close aboard; but I obeyed the command, and the skiff was forced gently out through the opening in the rocks.

The current carried us some distance from the shore before Master Simon made another move, and then I knew, more from the slight noise as he worked than because I could use my eyes, that he was raising the mast to which was attached a three-cornered sail.

The wind was not strong enough to carry us over the water at a very rapid pace; but by means of the canvas we avoided the noise of oars, and glided past the silent town like specters, rather than those willing to risk life and liberty in the effort to aid their oppressed country.

Soon we were among the British fleet; but the moments passed and the hail I was fearing to hear came not.



I knew without seeing it that we were to the westward of Clark's Wharf, and understood, when the skiff's bow sheered off, that Master Simon was putting further out into the harbor lest he run into Long Wharf.

Then we bore inshore again, creeping up so near South Battery I could discern the outlines of the fortification, and the thought came that, despite all Master Simon had said, it would not be a severe or dangerous task to gain Dorchester Bay.

We were now far beyond the British fleet; but here and there could be seen the outlines of a vessel, and I afterward learned that the idle fishing craft were anchored here where they could be kept well in view by the ships of war.

When I was least expecting it Master Simon steered the skiff in for the shore, and soon her bow grated on the sand of Wind Mill Point.

"Is this where you count on stopping?" Ben asked, and I understood from his voice that he was displeased.

"If it's not to your likin' you can go further, an', it may be, fare worse," the old man said, as if irritated by the question, and I knew it was best to hold my peace, although I would have taken refuge at any other point in the harbor rather than here where, not so many years ago, a poor gentle-

man and his servant had been cruelly murdered because it was believed they had a large sum of money in their keeping.

“If you lads hold to it that there are sich things as ghosts, then perhaps this may not be a pleasant stoppin’-place; but if it so be you’ve got as much good sense as nature generally allows one of your age, then Wind Mill Point is as harmless as Battery Lane,” Master Simon said gruffly as he motioned for me to step on shore.

I obeyed quickly, but my teeth chattered, and I did not care to look behind me while we were pulling the skiff up into a bunch of bushes which grew a dozen yards or more from high-water mark.

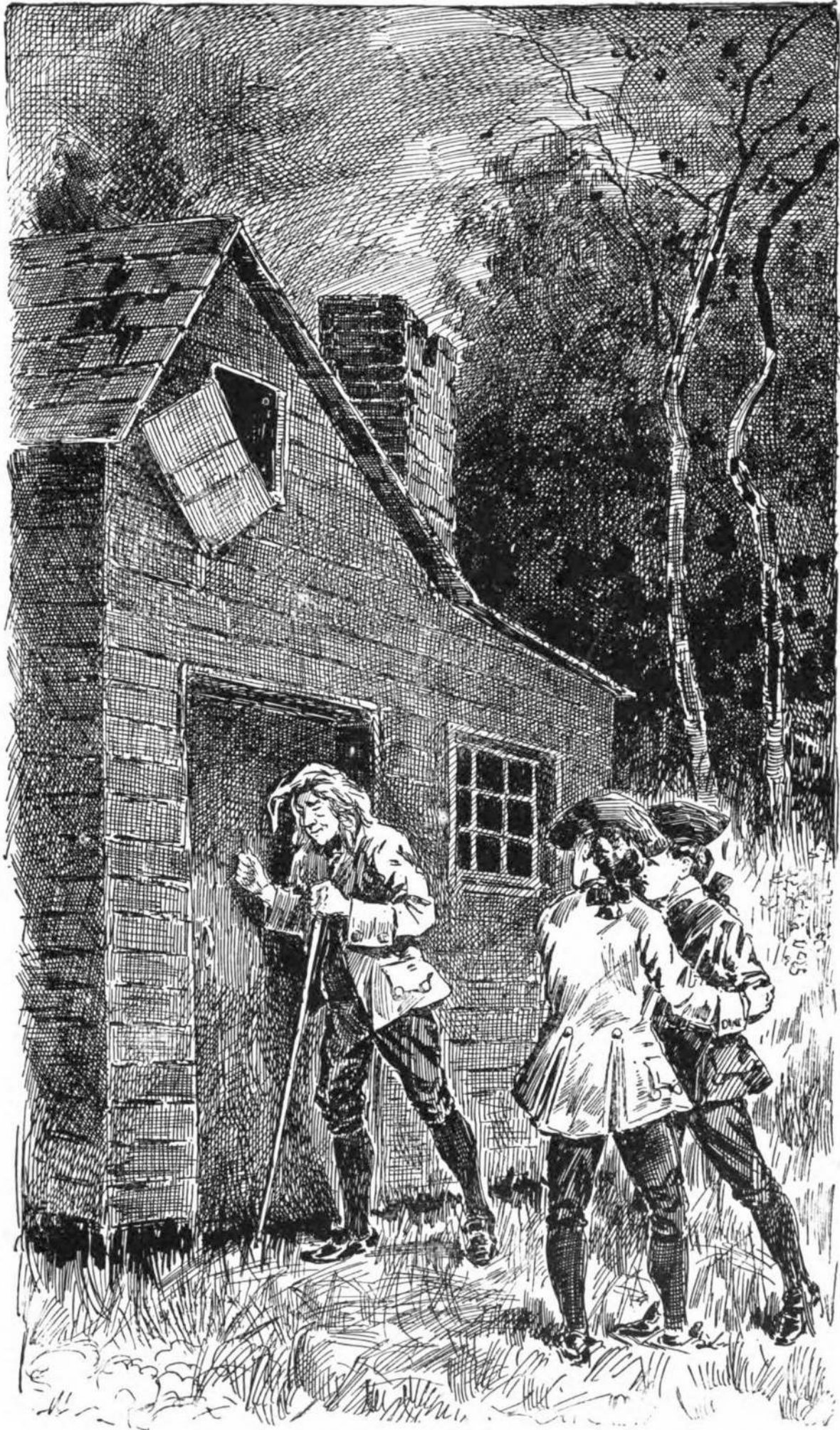
When this work had been done Ben clasped my hand, and I knew full well why he did so.

Then Master Simon commanded that we follow him and hold our peace, which we did, keeping so close at his heels that once, when he suddenly stopped an instant to listen, we ran full against him.

He led us along the beach a few yards, and then striking into the bushes made directly for the house in which the murder had been done.

“I’d rather go into the Bridewell than that place,” Ben whispered, but I made no reply.

The thought had come into my mind that we would prove poor soldiers if we allowed ourselves



MASTER SIMON APPROACHED AND KNOCKED WITH HIS KNUCKLES ON THE DOOR.



to be so sorely frightened by what was not of this world, and I did my best to appear indifferent.

Two years previous Ben and I had walked out to this lonely house, and although the sun was shining brightly we did not dare approach within a hundred paces, yet now, when there were odd sounds in the air and the darkness seemed almost thick, we were forced to go to the very threshold.

Master Simon looked first this way and then that, after which he knocked with his knuckles on the door. I was certain the summons would not be answered, for it was well known the building had been deserted since that fearsome morning when the murdered bodies were found; but to my surprise a voice cried:

“Get away, you good-for-nothing! Why do you make a noise when all men should be silent?”

“Because we’re needin’ a shelter, Israel Vaughn,” our companion said boldly, and in another moment the door was opened.

Because of the darkness we could not see to whom Master Simon had spoken, but a human voice—and there was great consolation in that to us who had been fearing lest we hear something unearthly—said in a tone of welcome:

“Come in at once. Is there any fear you have been followed?”

“No, Israel; we came by water, and the night is so black we might have boarded the flagship without knowledge of them within her until we stepped on the deck.”

“Who have you here?”

“Those of whom I spoke.”

“Then that which you feared came to pass?”

“Yes, an’ as I had reckoned. You must give us lodgment for awhile.”

“That you shall have and with welcome. Are you hungered?”

“It was noon when we last tasted food, an’ though I could well fast till mornin’, it is best George, whose wound has not yet healed, should be refreshed.”

This conversation had taken place in the darkness, and when it was concluded I fancied the host would bring a light; but he did not do so.

Standing near the door Ben and I could hear him moving around as if preparing a meal, and by the fresh odor of tobacco-smoke we knew Master Simon was seeking solace in his pipe, yet nothing could be seen.

“Sit ye down, lads,” the host suddenly said as if but just aware we remained standing. “This place has a bad name, an’ I would keep it in ill-repute. If I show a light it would be known some one lived

here, and then you and Simon Fletcher would not have as safe a hiding-place."

As he spoke he pushed toward us two stools, which we found after groping around, and Master Simon began to explain why we had left home so hurriedly.

"What are your plans?" Master Vaughn asked.

"That I cannot say rightly, not havin' made any beyond the takin' shelter here. I will leave the boys in your charge a time, Israel, for the work in town must still be carried on, though it looks mightily as if General Gage and the three bow-wows were content to wait until our people shall disclose their purpose. Have you heard from Cambridge?"

"News came from Watertown this day. General Washington, of Virginia, has taken command of the army, and is spending his time drilling the men when, according to my way of thinking, they should be routing the redcoats out of Boston."

"That is more easily said than done, Israel Vaughn," Master Simon replied in a tone of one who knows whereof he speaks. "Our friends did bravely on Breed's Hill; but that does not prove them able to cope with the king's forces now the reinforcements are so many, and much discipline is needed."

"How much did you have at Louisbourg, Simon Fletcher?"

“None, I grant you; but there we learned what might have been done had we received proper training. I would a man from this Province had been chosen to command the army, an’ we have many here who could do it bravely; but yet I hold that the new general is setting about his work after a proper fashion.”

The food was on the table by this time, as I knew when Master Vaughn bade us draw up, and while partaking of that which was so sadly needed I forgot to be afraid of ghostly visitors, although we were in that very room where it was said the gentleman’s servant had met his death.



## CHAPTER XI.

## A MISSION.

AFTER the meal had been brought to a close Master Simon and our host talked of what was being done by the American army, and thus Ben and I learned very much of which we had been in ignorance.

Until this evening I had not believed our friends in Roxbury and Dorchester were harassing the Britishers so actively as Master Vaughn made it appear.

He had been inside the American lines several times since General Gage had refused to allow the townspeople to depart from the city, and was able to tell us very much of interest.

There was one peculiarity I observed about this friend of Master Simon's, which was that he yet had a very good opinion of King George, and believed all the suffering endured by the people in the Colony of Massachusetts was attributable to General Gage, who was not governing the country according to his majesty's desire.

Master Simon must have understood, because I asked many questions on this point, that I was surprised at the views entertained by our host, and said with a hearty laugh, such as I had not heard from his lips since the night Ben and I started for Cambridge:

“I’ll lay odds you never before met one who was fighting only against the Gageites, George Wentworth.”

“What do you mean by that term, sir?” I asked, not understanding even now to what he referred.

“Master Vaughn’s enemies are those who form the king’s government in Boston, and are given the name Gageites rather than Royalists. You will notice that he is still loyal to the King George; but insists on puttin’ all his majesty’s sins upon General Gage’s shoulders. However, he has the right to believe what he pleases, more particularly since he is a stanch friend to the cause.”

“Did you call the lad’s name Wentworth?” Master Vaughn asked, and I was not so vain as to think him interested in me, but believed he spoke thus in order to change the conversation into a different channel.

“Ay, Israel, he must be a Wentworth on both sides of the house, inasmuch as his mother is cousin to the second John of New Hampshire, who is yet

governor of that colony, unless it so be the people have decided to govern themselves.”

“He still holds on to the office, but does not remain in it because of what he considers an insult to his dignity. I was visited yesterday by one who, having been shut up in this town, asked my advice as to how he could join the troops under Brigadier Sullivan. He had late news from Portsmouth, and repeated it to me. It appears the governor called, by virtue of the king’s writ, three representatives from new townships to the Assembly, and they were expelled by the members. One of them used his tongue more freely than was wise, and the people took him in hand so roughly that he fled in fear of his life to the governor’s house. The citizens of Portsmouth in a body demanded that he be given up to them, and John Wentworth dared not refuse when a cannon was wheeled in front of the door. Immediately after this affair his excellency retired to the fort, and his house was ransacked.”

“The men of New Hampshire are true Americans,” Master Simon said approvingly when our host had concluded his story, and I fancied, I know not why, that the remark was far from pleasing.

Master Vaughn did not attempt to prolong the conversation, but, a few moments later, offered to

show us where we might sleep, and right glad was I of an opportunity to lie down.

But for the weariness which assailed us, I venture to say neither Ben nor myself would have closed our eyes that night, fearing lest some horrible thing might spring upon us from out of the darkness; but the day had been so long and full of adventure that we were hardly on the sack of straw before slumber overpowered us.

When I awakened the day had dawned; the first thought in my mind was concerning the wicked deed which had been done in that house, but yet there was nothing in our surroundings to cause fear.

It was an unkempt building, showing plainly the marks of neglect, but as a matter of course nothing could be seen to recall the poor gentleman's cruel death.

As in Master Simon's home, a ladder led from the kitchen to the attic, and descending this I saw the man who had given us shelter.

His was a pleasing face to look upon; one which gave me the idea that he could be trusted fully, and when I say that in appearance he was quite the opposite of Simon Fletcher, no further description is necessary.

His gray hair and long white beard caused him

to seem very old, though he walked like a young man, and his garments were not only cleanly, but of rich material, such as gentlemen of the town wear.

He asked kindly if I had slept well, cautioned me against showing myself at the windows, and inquired as to what had been done on that day at Breed's Hill when I was wounded.

Having satisfied his curiosity to the best of my poor ability, I asked him how long we might be forced to remain there, and his reply filled me with delight.

"It is necessary some one should be sent within the next twenty-four hours to General Ward, and since your arrival it has occurred to me that you lads might be the messengers. Simon Fletcher and I may become too well known if we make the journey often."

My heart beat fast with delight, yet I was forced to restrain the joy lest Master Vaughn should think me a churlish guest, not content with his fare, and to hide my true feelings, asked:

"You say 'General Ward,' sir. I thought the army had a new commander?"

"So it has, lad; but General Ward has neither resigned nor been dismissed. He now commands the right wing, and his headquarters are on Meet-

ing-House Hill in Roxbury. It is to him I report any information I have been so fortunate as to gain."

I could not resist the temptation to repeat the good news of our possible departure to Ben, who still lingered in bed, and made my way up the ladder immediately after Master Simon descended.

My comrade was no less delighted than I, and together we went to the floor below, where our host was talking with Simon Fletcher.

"The lads can do the task as well as either you or I," he said as we came down.

"I do not like to part company with them, Israel, until George Wentworth's wound has fully healed."

"The cure will come more quickly with a change of air and scene than if he loiters here idle, and if they be such lads of spirit as appears on the surface, there is nothing to prevent them from coming back, once the message has been delivered."

"And the danger?"

"Is as nothing from here to Dorchester Neck, for the journey can be made in a skiff. Once there they are among friends who will aid them in every way."

"Be it as you will, Israel Vaughn, be it as you will. Yours is a better head than mine; but do not forget that the lads are under orders, so to

“speak, to remain with me in town, an’ I like not the idea of their leavin’ a post of duty.”

“They are not leaving it, Simon Fletcher; but simply broadening it.”

Thus it was settled that Ben and I were to set out that night, and now I no longer had any fear of the place; there was so much in my mind I ceased to think of what had been done within those walls.

The instructions given us were simple. When night should come we were to embark on a skiff owned by Master Vaughn, and row or sail to Dorchester Bay.

Once there we had only to ask the way to Meeting-House Hill, and deliver to General Ward a written message which our host was to prepare during the day.

Both Ben and I would have been better pleased had the task appeared more difficult; but we would not complain, for after having remained idle so long action of any kind, however simple, was most heartily to be desired.

The thought came into my mind that it might be possible we could visit our parents, if it should so happen we learned of their whereabouts, and I asked Master Simon if there was any reason why we must return immediately.

“Do as seems best, lads; but remember that there is work to be done here before our friends can take the town, an’ it is your duty to take full share of it,” the old man said kindly, and it seemed to me there was nothing more left to be desired.

Master Vaughn was occupied with writing the message to General Ward during the greater portion of the day, and the veteran of Louisbourg did little else but smoke from morning till night.

Had it not been for the thoughts of what Ben and I were about to do, we would have spent a sorry time in that darkened, crime-stained house.

It was decided we should start soon after nine o’clock, and as the time of departure drew nigh a sensation of timorousness came over me, despite all my efforts to banish it.

I was no sailor, and at sunset the wind was blowing so strong that the journey could be made under canvas in less than a quarter of the time which would be required if we were to trust only to oars.

Ben was familiar with boats, and Master Vaughn, who thought the enterprise one which called neither for courage nor skill, was certain my comrade could do the work even though I should be unable to aid him.

“It is only a question of tacking twice, and you are there,” he said in the tone of one who dismisses



an unimportant matter, and I would not have made objections though I had known the peril to be as great as it afterward proved.

During the evening Master Vaughn went twice from the house to where the skiff was concealed, and when he returned the second time it was to say:

“Everything is ready, lads. The night is to a smuggler’s liking; plenty of wind, and so many clouds that not a star can be seen. The only chance of failure lies in the fact that you may fail of steering a true course.”

“The points of the compass won’t escape from my mind, no matter how black it may be,” Ben replied, with such confidence in his tones that I was heartened wonderfully.

We went out of doors, and it was as if we felt our way to the shore, so dense was the gloom.

Master Simon walked by my side, and yet on raising my eyes I could not see him—I touched his coat to make certain he was there.

“You will be careful, lad, after gettin’ ashore,” he said to me in a tone as kindly as my mother would have used. “While it is in no wise likely the redcoats can be the other side of the fortifications of Boston Neck, a scoutin’ party isn’t impossible, an’ you’re to keep your eyes wide open for

danger even though you may be among friends. Your head is longer than Ben's, an' I look to you for the well-being of both."

I promised to do my best, feeling proud he should have paid me such a compliment, and there was no time to speak more, for we were arrived at the shore.

The skiff was already afloat, and Master Vaughn was placing the mast in its socket.

Ben directed that I should take my seat in the bow to keep a lookout, and I had no sooner obeyed than we were free from the shore, the little vessel heeling over under the weight of the wind until I was so foolish as to believe her sinking.

"Don't lose your courage before we are off the sand," Ben said with a laugh. "This skiff could carry more canvas than she has on her now, and we shall make a famous passage."

"I would we had walked, even though it must have been to make our way through the British lines," I said, and the words came falteringly because of my chattering teeth. "If the skiff does not overset, it is so black you cannot see which way to steer."

"I have the course in my mind, and could put her on the shore of Dorchester Neck blindfolded."

It seemed childish in me to show such fear

when Ben appeared so brave, and I held my peace; nevertheless I was sorely alarmed for our safety.

Once it seemed to me that the bow of the skiff was suddenly turned, and I cried out, asking my comrade if he had put her about.

"The wind is shifting," he said cheerily. "We must make more than one tack to reach our harbor."

"Are you still certain you know where we should go?" I asked as another tremor of fear passed over me.

"Of course I am, my simple. To hear you question so much, one would think I had never sailed a boat before."

"It seemed to me I could see something large on the right-hand side, and——"

"Why not say starboard, as if you were a sailor, instead of only a landsman who is sorely afraid?" my comrade asked banteringly.

"Because I cannot appear other than what I am while it is so dark, though I am willing to call the right-hand side of the skiff the starboard if it so be you will give heed to what I said," and perhaps I spoke sharply, for Ben replied as if grown impatient:

"You saw nothing but the shadow of your own fears. Now I am going to put her about again, so do not see more spooks."

Once more the skiff was turned sharply, and as she came up into the wind the water dashed over the bow until I was drenched to the skin, and Ben himself was for the moment alarmed, as I understood by his voice when he said :

“I didn't think we would catch it so strong, or I might have been more careful.”

“I do not heed the wetting so you hold her steady in the direction we should go,” and I had but spoken when the skiff suddenly wheeled again, careening until the waves came over the rail like to swamp us.

“The tiller slipped out of my fingers,” Ben cried to reassure me. “Come this way and find something to bail with; we have taken in more of a load than can well be carried in so small a vessel.”

As I obeyed it seemed to me the boat was turned a dozen times, so violently did she pitch first on one side and then the other; but I made no further remark lest it should vex my comrade.

While the skiff was being tossed about on the angry sea like a cork, I did my best to free her from water, but the task was vain, for more came over the side in one moment than I could throw out in five, and thinking he should know it, I told Ben of my failure.

“I was foolish to trust myself with such an help-

less," he said in so angry a voice that I was seriously hurt, and resolved to make no further remark even though we should sink.

After a time she rode the waves more steadily, and it made me rejoice to hear Ben say in a friendly way, much like his old self:

"I am sorry, George Wentworth, that I spoke so harshly. There is neither man nor boy I would rather embark with on any kind of a venture than you, and I did not tell the truth when I said you were only a helpless one."

Thus the words which had pained me were recalled, and we comrades as before with no hardness of mind between us, as I replied to Ben when the wind lulled enough to permit of my speaking.

Then we fell silent again while I could have counted twenty, and suddenly Ben said much as though in terror:

"Go forward again, and keep a lookout. I, who boasted that I could hold the points of the compass in my mind, have lost all idea of the direction in which we should sail! It may be the wind did not shift—that I allowed her head to fall off!"

"Do you mean we are lost?" I cried.

"Yes, I am out of my reckoning."

"Is there no way of finding it again?"

I would not have asked such a question had I

been better acquainted with the methods of sailing vessels.

“Not unless you could set me back at the starting-point, and then I wouldn't be such a simple as to make the effort.”

“We must stop her, and at once,” I said in my ignorance.

“Then you shall tell me how that may be done,” Ben replied sharply. “We cannot drift around the harbor at risk of running afoul of a British ship, and there is no anchor aboard.”

Now, as on that day at Breed's Hill, I forgot I was alarmed, and sat in the bow trying to devise some means of escaping from the peril which threatened, when suddenly there appeared before us a huge form as if it had that moment come from beneath the waters.

“Look out!” I cried stoutly, and at the same instant realized we were hard upon one of the war vessels, for no ship in the harbor save that of the king's was so large. “We are running into her!”

Ben saw the danger, even as I shouted.

I knew from the motion of the skiff that he tried to swing the bow around, and at the same instant we were lifted high on a wave.

Although ignorant of seamanship I understood in a twinkling that the wind was forcing us upon the

huge vessel, and sprang toward our mast with the purpose of taking it down, when the crash came.

The splintering of the skiff's timbers could be heard above the whistling of the wind as I was thrown against the rail backward. I heard a cry of alarm from Ben, and then the waters covered me.

## CHAPTER XII.

## PRISONERS.

WHEN I came to the surface, after it seemed as if I had descended to the very bottom of the harbor, lights were flashing from the deck of the ship which had proved our undoing, and the shouts of the sailors made most cheerful music in my ears, for they told of rescue, even though it should be by an enemy.

My first thought was as to whether Ben might have received such injuries when the skiff was stove as to disable him from making any effort to save his own life; but as I struck out, being a fairly good swimmer, and now having all my wits about me, I saw him working his way toward the huge vessel, apparently unhurt.

No boat had been manned, most likely because the waves were running so high; but the sailors were standing by ready to render assistance, and loud words of command told that the officers were also on the alert.

I saw one of the men thrust a boat hook out, catching the bent iron in Ben's clothing, and my



comrade was hauled up like a halibut, while I swam toward a coil of rope which had been thrown in my direction.

As it was seized by me I bethought myself of the paper intrusted to my keeping by Master Vaughn, and realized that should it fall into the hands of the enemy much mischief might be done, while, in addition, it would most likely work trouble for Ben and myself, as had that order of admission signed by General Warren.

There was no thought in my mind that I might be near drowning; and, instead of taking immediate advantage of the line, I struggled to unbutton my coat in order to disengage myself of the telltale document.

This proved to be an exceedingly difficult task, and ere it was accomplished I sank beneath the surface again, but succeeded in the effort to rid myself of Master Vaughn's message before becoming so nearly suffocated as to be in a measure unconscious.

When I arose the second time I was only dimly aware of what was being done in my behalf, but caught at the first thing which came to hand, as drowning people will, and this proved to be the rope I had previously allowed to slip from my grasp.

By its aid I was hauled to the deck of the vessel, and there, choking and spluttering, stood before a group of uniformed officers, who eyed me curiously.

Now fear again asserted itself.

We were prisoners, flung by the wind and waves into the hands of the enemy under such circumstances that they could not well fail to understand what we had been engaged in, and there was good reason to tremble for the result.

"Where did you lads come from?" one of the officers asked; and Ben replied with an arch smile which should have disarmed anger:

"Out of the water, sir."

"Be careful of your tongue, you young rebel; I am not likely to beg for a proper reply," the Britisher said sternly; and I, fearing lest my comrade should be flogged for his levity, made haste to say:

"We are of Boston, and it please you, sir."

"Of Boston, I'll admit; but where did you come from this night?"

"The town, sir."

"Have you permission to leave the docks at this time in the evening?"

I understood that we could not hope entirely to deceive the gentleman, and resolved to tell him a story which should contain as much truth as was safe for us to admit.

“We gave the sentinels the slip, sir. Our parents are in Dorchester, and we fain would join them.”

“Why did they leave you behind, when they fled from the town?”

This was a question which I had not expected, and it took me so by surprise that I could only stammer.

“Don’t attempt to invent anything, but tell me the truth or you shall smart for it.”

Try as I might, no reasonable excuse could be summoned to my mind; and since hesitation would be quite as bad as the truth, I told of our being in the Bridewell, despite Ben’s black looks.

“So, instead of profiting by the lesson of your imprisonment, you are again playing the part of spies?” the officer cried angrily, and then gave the command that we be searched.

Ben now looked frightened, expecting Master Vaughn’s message would be found, but I assured him as much as was possible with my eyes, and submitted with apparent willingness to the sailors who advanced to obey the order.

My comrade was surprised and at the same time relieved that nothing suspicious had been found upon me, and regained cheerfulness when it was his turn to be examined.

After this had been done the officers were not

satisfied we were as innocent as we would have it appear, but questioned us closely.

They had no suspicion that I had been brought into town a prisoner after the fight at Breed's Hill, and this much I hoped would remain a secret.

Ben and I replied respectfully to all that was asked, still insisting we had left the town from Burrough's Wharf with no other purpose than to rejoin our parents at Dorchester, and after remaining on the deck in our wet garments a full half-hour, exposed to the high wind which chilled us to the very bone, orders were given that we be taken below.

In my ignorance of vessels of this kind I believed we would simply be kept in one of the cabins until more could be learned concerning us, therefore my sorrow and disappointment can well be imagined when it was shown that there are prisons afloat as well as on the land.

We were thrust into an iron cage situated far below the main deck, the door of which was securely locked, and there left to our own reflections, which were far from pleasant.

The Bridewell was a comfortable lodging place as compared with this cage, hardly more than large enough to admit of a man's standing upright, and so narrow that four people of ordinary size would

have found it difficult to lie on the floor at the same time.

Suffering from the cold almost as much as if it had been mid-winter, in darkness so profound that it seemed as if I could feel it, and fearful lest the truth regarding ourselves would become known to our captors, we were most disconsolate.

It was no more than natural Ben should upbraid me, who knew so much less regarding such matters than himself, with having acted as spokesman when we were questioned.

“Why did you tell him we had been in the Bridewell under suspicion of being spies?” he asked, and although it was not possible to see his face, I knew he was angry.

“I could think of nothing else when he pressed me for an answer, and we should keep as near the truth as possible.”

“Not when there is a scaffold at the end of the story. You began all right, but made a mess of it at the last. What became of Master Vaughn’s message?”

I told him of my having thrown it away while in the sea; but it was nothing to boast of because he would most likely have done the same in my place, and then arose the question of what might come to us with the morrow.

It was not a pleasant topic, and made more disagreeable to me because my comrade bore so hard upon me for having told of our imprisonment.

I did not attempt to defend myself, for that would have been useless, but tried to cheer Ben by declaring we must soon be released.

He was so sore because of the dismal failure of our efforts to be of service to the cause that he could not see anything cheering in the situation, and after a time we fell silent.

Even though my garments had been dry, I could not have slept in that cage; but during the hours of darkness sat with my chin in my hands speculating upon what might be our fate, and a most gloomy night it was.

It pleased me when Ben finally fell asleep, for the poor fellow would suffer just so much less while in the unconsciousness of slumber, and I was careful to make no movement lest he be awakened.

I had expected to know when day dawned, for in my ignorance the idea that the sunlight never entered this place had not come into my mind, and although the hours seemed very long, it surprised me when a sailor, carrying a lantern, came from above with food.

“Will it soon be day?” I asked, and he answered with a laugh:

“It’s two hours since the sun rose for them as are on deck, my hearty, but to the one in this coop it’s always night. Here’s such rations as the king, God bless him, serves out to them who are in his service, and they won’t go hard against a rebel stomach, I’m thinkin’, for the pork is prime.”

The sound of his voice awakened Ben, who sat upright and stared about as if perplexed at finding himself in such a place.

“The best of food cannot be eaten with relish in this cage,” I said sorrowfully, half to myself, and the sailor laughed as if I had spoken wittily.

“If you’d been here as often as I have, it wouldn’t trouble you overmuch. I’m free to admit there are livelier quarters in the ship; but there’s more work goes with them.”

“Do you know what’s to be done with us?” Ben asked anxiously.

“It’s not likely the officers would explain to the crew what they’re thinkin’ of doing; but me an’ my mates allow that a couple of lads who have been fished out of the sea half-drowned ain’t in the way of gettin’ it very hot. So cheer up, my bullies, an’ take your rations while there’s a chance.”

The sailor’s words heartened me, although he had really said nothing to give us courage, and I began breaking my fast, determined to keep up as brave a

spirit as one of my nature could summon to his aid.

The food refreshed us wonderfully, and Ben, who had looked woebegone and despairing when he first awakened, began to speculate upon the future with a hopefulness which was very cheering to me.

Now he appeared to understand that it was best to have told the officer of the ship nearly the whole truth concerning ourselves, lest, if we had concealed it, the true facts becoming known later would have placed us in a yet more dangerous position.

The most serious part of the business, as we confessed to ourselves, was that Master Vaughn, believing his message had been delivered, would rest content, and thus information which should be known to the Continental Army might remain a secret.

On the night previous I had feared the wetting would work mischief to my wound, but as yet there was nothing to betoken harm to the weakened shoulder, and I looked upon this as auguring well for the future.

During the forenoon we saw no one; our cage-like prison was shrouded in densest darkness, and even sounds from the deck came to our ears muffled and indistinct.

We knew it was noon when the same sailor who had served us with breakfast arrived bringing din-



ner, and Ben questioned him eagerly as to what might be our fate.

“That’s what an old shell-back like me can’t say,” the man replied, speaking so gravely that I immediately feared he had learned more than he would admit. “Me an’ my mates allow we didn’t ship to fight agin lads, an’ if it so be there’s a likelihood you’re to be given a man’s punishment for what was only a boyish prank—one I’d have played when I was young if the king himself, God bless him, had stood in the path—why, you can count on us for a good turn.”

“Do you think they will treat us as spies?” I asked, trying my best to speak boldly.

“There’s some such talk among the men, owin’ to what my mate heard this mornin’ when word was sent ashore that you’d been taken.”

“What did he hear?” Ben asked.

“There’s no sense in repeatin’ what mightn’t have been meant for you,” the sailor replied soberly. “If it so be that we hear anything to your harm, an’ the chance comes, have your eyes open to slip anchor.”

Then the man—and I could not but consider him a friend even though he had come to the colonies to help deprive us of our rights—went away, leaving in my mind the most somber thoughts.

I argued with myself, not daring so much as mention the subject to Ben, that the sailors on board the ship believed we would be severely punished for attempting to leave town in defiance of General Gage's orders, even though we might not be sentenced to the halter as spies, and was ashamed for growing so suddenly a coward because suffering might be in store for me.

During more than an hour Ben did not speak, and I could well imagine what was in his mind.

As if each was afraid to begin a conversation which could end only with speculations upon danger to be encountered in the future, we remained silent, and this, perhaps, made us more uneasy in mind than if we had talked boldly concerning it.

Then my comrade spoke of Master Simon; of the house wherein the murder had been done, and of the fact that General Ward would fail to receive the word sent by Master Vaughn.

When he concluded silence fell upon us once more.

I looked forward feverishly for the coming of the sailor with the evening meal, and feared lest some one less kindly should be ordered to serve us, all of which anxiety might have been spared.

It was the same friendly enemy who appeared

when it seemed as if not only the day, but the night also must have passed, and by the light of the lantern he carried I scrutinized his face to learn if he brought good news or bad.

“It looks as if you might be taken ashore within an hour,” he said before either Ben or I had spoken. “My mate, who is stationed aft, heard something like that, an’ the order was passed that you should be fed early.”

“Hasn’t the sun set yet?” Ben asked somewhat impatiently.

“No, nor it ain’t likely to for half an hour.”

“I thought it was well into the night.”

“I allow the time don’t go here as it does on deck, for I’ve had many a try at it myself. Hark ye, lads, it ain’t for me or my mates to go agin the orders of this ’ere ship, for that would be what’s called mutiny, but at the same time we’re not minded to see you triced up too strong for a bit of a lark. Now if it so be the word is passed for you to be taken on shore, keep your eyes open. I ain’t sayin’ what oughter be done, but if I was in the same snarl I’d watch out for a chance to slip over the side of the boat, trustin’ that them as are rowin’ will so far help as to bungle at the oars when chase is made. It shouldn’t be any big strain for a couple of lads to swim to one of the islands in

the harbor where they could stay hid till there was a show of gettin' inside the Yankee lines."

Then, and it seemed to me as if the sailor did not dare wait to be questioned, he left us suddenly without another word.

"There's one Britisher who ain't as black as I've painted him," Ben said after we had stood facing each other some time, not giving any heed to the food.

"He believes we are to be punished severely," I said falteringly, for I could not repress the fear in my heart.

"Yes, and stands ready to help us as much as is in his power. We shall have to swim a long stretch."

"Do you believe we can escape?"

"Why not? Didn't you swim across to Cambridge——"

"I don't know how far I got before being picked up."

"You were willing to make the try when it was to carry information to our friends, and surely you can dare as much in order to save your life."

"But it may not be that we are in danger of death," I said, hoping he would agree with me, for I wanted some one to argue against my fears.

"Unless we were likely to be punished mightily

the sailors would not dare help us. That man the same as told us that if we could leap over the side those at the oars would see to it we were not overtaken, and they can readily give us the slip on a dark night."

"I wonder why they send us ashore after sunset?" I mused half to myself.

"Now don't be a simple!" and Ben spoke petulantly. "We have reason to believe we shall be taken there to-night, and what good can come of discussing the reason. It's enough for me that we'll have a chance to get out of our troubles."

"But perhaps only to find ourselves confronting death."

"Look you, George Wentworth, it is better to keep our timorousness down at such a time as this. If you choose to be taken into Boston town as the Britishers' prisoner, remain in the boat and I will make the venture alone."

"I would follow you, whatever the danger; but it seems to me well we should have before our eyes all the possible perils which menace us, for then we shall be prepared. I know I am timorous——"

"It does not please me to let my mind roam in search of troublous thoughts. I want only to remember that we may perhaps have a chance to escape."

I might have suggested that it was not certain the opportunity would present itself, but such words would only have provoked him yet more, and I held my peace.

Ben was so excited by the thought of what was in store for us that it was as if he could not eat; but I partook heartily of the food, thinking it was best to meet such danger as might come with a full stomach, rather than after a long fasting.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## FOR LIBERTY.

WE could have no idea of how the hours went while thus in the darkness, therefore I cannot say how long it was after the sailor took his departure before we were visited by four men and an officer, the last named saying as he unlocked the door of the cage :

“ They have more secure quarters on shore for rebels, and there I intend to take you. It is useless to offer resistance, and I give fair warning that at the first effort to escape you will be cut down.”

I thought this a long harangue in view of the fact that we were but two lads in a ship full of men ; but it was only in keeping with the bluster which certain of the king’s officers thought necessary to employ when addressing inhabitants of the colonies.

Among the four who accompanied the popinjay of an officer was the sailor who had already shown us so much kindness, and as the men in obedience to a command ranged themselves on either side of

my comrade and myself, I caught a meaning glance from his eyes.

It seemed certain he was to be one of the boat's crew, and if our hearts were strong enough to make an attempt at escape when the odds appeared to be against us, the look which he bestowed on me told that we should receive such aid as it was possible for the sailors to give without acting mutinously.

The officers of the ship bestowed but little attention on us when we gained the upper deck; but the marines and sailors clustered around as closely as the rules of the vessel would permit, and I fancied there was an expression of sympathy on the faces of many.

The night was dark, although there were but few clouds in the sky. The air was still, as it so often is during the summer months, and, take all the circumstances together, we could ask no better conditions for the attempt which might end in death.

"Best to die while struggling for life than be hanged," I said to myself as we clambered over the rail into a boat drawn up alongside, for I needed something to hearten me now the decisive moment was so near at hand.

The ship was lying at a point between Hancock's and Long Wharf, and a good half a mile from either.



Running the situation over rapidly in my mind, I realized it would not be safe to try for a landing on Noddle Island, and that the nearest point of refuge would be Bird Island.

There was, as I knew full well, little chance for hiding there, and we could not expect to procure food while on the small bit of land; but it would serve as a very present help to a fellow nearly spent with swimming, and from it we might gain Dorchester Point by proceeding first to Governor's and and then Castle Island.

These thoughts occurred during the short space of time necessary for me to descend into the boat, and I regretted deeply that Ben and I, while in the cage after the friendly sailor brought our supper, had not decided upon a plan of action similar to the one which came to me so suddenly.

There were in the aftermost part of the boat, in addition to Ben and myself, a young man in uniform who acted as coxswain, and the officer who had conducted us from below.

On that thwart nearest me sat the Britisher whom I called our friend, and it came into my mind he might give me the word when to make the attempt, for much depended on the moment the plan should be put into execution.

It would be useless to leap into the water while

we were so near the ship that a second boat could be quickly sent in pursuit, and also folly to wait until those on the shore should understand what might be happening.

I crowded close against Ben, glancing meaningly from him to the sailor hoping he might read what was in my mind, and at the same time holding myself ready to restrain him if he moved too soon.

Well it was that I had taken this precaution, for before we were half a dozen boat-lengths from the ship he attempted to rise suddenly, but the pressure of my hand restrained him for an instant.

Then, by the look of reproach he cast upon me, I understood that my glances, which I had believed were so full of meaning, had been misunderstood, and once more tried to convey the idea that it would be wisest to wait until the sailor had given the signal.

Ben finally began to realize there was some plan afoot, and no longer made any motion to rise; but it could plainly be seen he was dissatisfied.

Each instant we were increasing the distance between us and the ship, but objects on shore began to stand out more distinctly in the gloom, and I feared we might wait too long.

The officer turned his head to speak with the

coxswain, and as he did so my eyes were on the sailor's face.

Now it is a fact that he did move a muscle in the way of making a sign; but from his eyes—and yet they could hardly be seen in the darkness, I understood he would have me know the time had come.

Glancing quickly around to see if the officer's gaze was upon us, and finding him still occupied with the coxswain, I whispered the one word, "Come," in Ben's ear, an instant later springing over the side of the boat opposite where I had been sitting.

That my comrade followed my example I knew without seeing him, for I heard a mighty splash as I sank, and mingled with the noise came the sound of human voices.

There was an earnest prayer in my heart as I descended deeper and deeper in the waters, that my life might be spared, yet at the same moment I would have been well content to drown if it was to be that a gallows awaited me.

Do not fancy I remained inactive thinking of all these things as I went down.

I was trying to keep a general idea of the location of the town and ships in my mind, and also realized how necessary it was to swim beneath the

surface for so long a time as it should be possible to live without breathing.

Even before the downward plunge had ended I struck out with all strength, and each second as I rose the distance between myself and the boat increased.

It was as if all the blood in my body had ascended to my head when I neared the surface, and the luxury of that first indrawing of fresh air can never be understood save by one who has come to need it as badly as did I.

Half-turning, ready to strike out again without delay if need should arise, I looked back.

The boat was like unto a black mark on a dingy cloth, only to be perceived because it was a little darker than the remainder of the scene, and I knew the sailors were rowing directly away from me.

In the distance beyond could be seen the twinkling lights of the town which I must leave behind me rapidly if I would retain liberty—perhaps life itself, and near at hand a small round object on a level with my own eyes.

This last I understood was Ben's head, and, paddling only enough to keep my mouth above the surface, I waited for him.

"That was well done!" he exclaimed in a dangerously loud voice while we were yet so near

those who would pursue us, and I reminded him that the water would carry sounds a long distance, therefore it was not safe to indulge in conversation.

“They are pulling directly away from us, and couldn’t hear if we should yell,” he replied carelessly. “We are well out of the boat, and it now only remains to be seen if we can swim to the nearest shore, which is Noddle Island.”

Despite the danger which might be incurred by talking, I thought it necessary to explain why I believed it would be more wise to land on Bird Island, and we were discussing the plan when from afar off in the distance I saw a tiny spurt of flame leap up in the darkness; heard a distant report, and then the zip-zip, zipping of a bullet on the water not twenty feet away told that the British officer had fired in the direction from which our voices came.

It was a close shave, considering that the pistol must have been discharged almost at random, and warned me we were not yet safe from pursuit.

I determined to remain silent, but at the same time was firmly resolved to seek refuge on Bird Island, therefore swam at my best speed in that direction.

After five minutes had passed I stopped once more, for it was my purpose to husband strength at

the first of the journey that I might be in condition for a desperate effort in case pursuit was made, and looked around.

The boat was no longer in sight. Half a stone's throw in the rear was Ben's head, and now that it seemed safe to talk I waited until he had come up, turning meanwhile upon my back.

"We shall be as badly off on Bird Island as if we went directly to the town," he grumbled.

"Not quite, for there will be no danger of running across a Britisher."

"But we can't stay long; we should starve."

"I had thought to make for Dorchester Point, swimming first to Governor's Island, and crossing from there after we were rested."

"That is the most foolish plan I ever heard," he said angrily, and I, foolishly vexed because he spoke in such a tone while we were surrounded by danger of every kind, asked sharply:

"Then why did you follow me? There is nothing to prevent *your* going to Noddle Island."

"That is what I will do!" he cried, and now I understood he was very angry. "Nobody but a simple such as you would decide on swimming entirely around the harbor, taking the chances of drowning rather than run a little risk of being seen by the Britishers. I only followed in the hope of

making you listen to reason; but since you are so obstinate I'll go my own way."

While speaking he turned and swam in the opposite direction as if as much at home in the water as on land, while I repented most bitterly having said anything to cause him anger, although I would not have agreed to go with him to Noddle Island under any circumstances, for I believed the danger was too great.

I called after him, raising my voice as high as I dared, and it is certain he heard but would not answer.

During ten minutes I waited, hoping he would think better of parting company thus, and then sundry twinges in my wounded shoulder told that I was becoming chilled by so long a stay in the sea.

It was necessary to get the blood into circulation again by vigorous exercise, and I swam rapidly, but with a heavy heart.

Perhaps the sad thoughts in my mind prevented me from realizing the flight of time, for before I believed it possible I could have traversed the distance, the low-lying island was before me.

I had made no mistake in shaping my course, and shortly after having been thus assured, I was on the land, exhausted in mind as well as body, for the

fact that Ben had gone away in anger weighed sorely upon me.

I took off such clothes as I had on, which were few, for it must be remembered I was but scantily clad when taken on board the king's ship, and wrung the water from them as well as it could be done, after which I burrowed like a rabbit in the warm sand, covering every portion of my body save my face.

I could not well have been more comfortable, and without being aware slumber was hovering near me, fell asleep.

It was the first rays of the sun which awakened me, and I looked around with surprise at my surroundings until all that had occurred during the night came to my mind as vividly as while the events were transpiring.

That I was safe for a certain time there could be no question, and I prayed Ben might be as well off so far as surroundings were concerned.

There could be no expectation of breakfast, since I do not believe there was aught eatable on the small island, and I looked longingly in the direction of Dorchester Point.

Governor's Island seemed close at hand. There were no signs of life on the water between the two bodies of land; I was fully rested, and the journey



must be made at some time, then why not attempt it at once?

I resolved to make the effort before my heart should fail me, and debated some time as to whether it would not be best to leave my garments behind, rather than carry such a burden.

The knowledge that I must walk many miles, perhaps, after arriving where I was safe from British pursuit, decided me, and I set about making the sodden clothing into a small bundle, around which I tied my shirt.

With this hanging on my back, and fastened loosely by the sleeves of the undergarment to my neck, I plunged into the sea once more, keeping, as may well be supposed, a close watch on the surrounding waters for signs of an enemy.

Under the light of day it was not as difficult to swim as in the darkness, or, at least, so it seemed to me, and I continued on leisurely, stopping often to rest, until that which had seemed such a perilous journey was two-thirds completed when I emerged from the water on the shore of the island.

“One more turn at swimming, and I am in Dorchester!” I said to myself, and there was a deal of pleasurable satisfaction to be had from this fact.

After a short search I found a hiding-place amid the bushes where was sufficient sand to cover me, and spreading my garments out to dry, lay down thinking how rejoiced I should be at the success of the undertaking so far if only Ben were with me.

Again slumber came, and I slept during the greater part of the day, which was a blessing since it kept my thoughts from the hunger that assailed me.

Knowing I would be fed and housed shortly after landing, even though I did not find my mother at once, I was so impatient to finish the journey that I resolved to start at least an hour before the sun would set, and then, if all went well, I might find shelter with lovers of the cause that very night.

All happened as I could have wished, except that I went alone instead of in the company of my comrade, as ought to have been the case, and it was not yet nine o'clock in the evening when I stood before a house asking of its owner food and the privilege of lying in his shed.

It can well be understood I had clothed myself and put on as honest an appearance as possible before thus exploring the country; but there was yet that about me which told the good man I had been in trouble of some kind, and he asked for my story.

Not having been in this section of the Province before, and unable now to distinguish between friend and foe, I hesitated, and with good reason, until he said in a tone of kindness:

“In these troublous times even children are afraid to speak without first knowing into what kind of ears their words may fall. Mine belong to the Continental Congress and the Territory of Massachusetts Bay, not to King George. Now, can you speak, lad?”

Right willingly I told my story upon receiving this assurance, and as soon as might be afterward I was sitting at a table with food in abundance.

That I was desperately hungry, could have been understood from what I ate; and when finally the meal was finished, for it was prolonged by the good woman of the house, who brought first one thing and then another for me to taste, I told of our adventures more in detail, not omitting to speak regarding the paper intrusted to my keeping by Master Vaughn.

“Do not let the loss of that disturb you greatly,” my host said in the most kindly tone. “It is not possible the document contained any important news; and even if such should have been the case, Master Vaughn can repeat it when he learns the package has been lost.”

“How will he come to learn of that?”

“I shall see to it. Neither he nor Simon Fletcher are strangers to me, and before this time to-morrow night you can rest easy knowing they have heard of the mishap, unless it so be that our messenger has the same ill-luck you have had. In the meantime you shall go to Meeting-House Hill and tell General Ward why you could not bring the message.”

“Will it be wise to do that?” I asked, wishing above all things to search for my mother.

“I think you should do so; he will know if it was likely Master Vaughn wrote anything of great importance, and ought to be informed as soon as may be that the writing was lost. There is nothing to prevent you from going to the general?”

“Nothing save that I would find my mother.”

“There will be time enough for that after you have done what is honest and in behalf of your country. Meanwhile I will set about trying to learn where Master Scarlett’s family sought refuge, and it may be I shall succeed before you could have done so unaided.”

Therefore when I laid myself down in a generous bed that night it was with the understanding that on the morrow I should visit the right wing of the army, and my happiness would have been very great but for the parting with Ben in anger.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## ENROLLED.

It can well be supposed that my first thought on awakening in the home of Master Robert Hutchinson—for that was the name of my host—was regarding Ben, and with the thought came a flood of regret, not that I refused to follow him, but because I had not tried more earnestly to prevent the lad from pursuing what I believed a mad course.

From the position of the king's ships, which were lying off Noddle Island, to land there it would be necessary that he pass directly through the fleet; and dark though the night was, I could not believe he would be able to do so successfully.

Then, suppose he had made the venture as I suspected, in what way was he benefited by being there?

At that point he was even further from Master Simon Fletcher than I, who could have made the journey with more ease from Dorchester Point.

I did not believe he was so foolhardy as to venture into Boston town, where were no friends on

whom he could rely and many enemies, chief among them being Samuel Wilkins, who would seek to work him harm.

Therefore, as I said to him before we parted, his position on Noddle Island would be a disagreeable one, however favorably you viewed it; and I could see but little hope, even though he remained at liberty, of our meeting again for many a day.

Then came thoughts of my mother, and I could not stifle the grief which crept over me despite my efforts to banish it, at the idea that I was to do other than seek her out immediately.

Strange as it may seem, I was no longer eager to become a soldier—not that I had given over the idea, for I still said to myself I would enlist at the first opportunity; but there was no longer in my mind the glory I had once fancied.

Perhaps this arose from the fact that I had in my humble way experienced some of the privations and dangers which might, and in fact even then did, attend the members of the Continental Army.

It was idle for me to lie there after the day had dawned, speculating on such things, and I arose.

There remained work to be done, and all regrets at being parted from Ben, or desire to be with my mother once more, were vain until the task set me had been accomplished.

From the conversation held with Master Robert Hutchinson after descending to the lower room, I had good reason to believe he was serving the cause by similar duties to those which Master Vaughn and Simon Fletcher had taken upon themselves.

This was impressed upon me by the fact that he appeared to know Master Simon and his friend so well, and was possessed of much information regarding the carrying of messages to and from the town.

“Eat heartily,” he said as at his invitation I seated myself at the breakfast table. “You have a long journey ahead, and can best prepare for it by fortifying against hunger. Mother and I have been rummaging the house to find something that will serve you in the stead of the apparel you have lost.”

As he spoke he pointed toward a pair of serviceable shoes, a coat, and a hat, all of which were too good to be given away without hope of payment, as I explained to him.

“Though they were twice as valuable you would be welcome to the gift, and I ought only to regret I haven’t more to offer,” he said in the most friendly manner. “So that you are trying to do what you may for the cause, I am satisfied.”

I should not only have been ungrateful but ill-

mannered, had I made any further protest, and the matter was thus settled.

Then Master Hutchinson gave me instructions as to the most direct course by which to gain General Ward's headquarters.

There was no danger of my being stopped on the road, so he said, because such of the people as were inclined toward the king went into Boston with their most valuable effects when our people came out, therefore those remaining were loyal to the cause, and I might with safety ask any one for guidance or assistance.

The sun was not yet an hour high when I left Master Hutchinson's home, and set out feeling very brave because there was no danger to be feared.

To arrive at General Ward's headquarters it was only necessary to travel over the highway, with but little possibility of going astray, and during the journey I had no adventures worth the relating.

It is true I was stopped once by a party of men who asked my business, and when I replied that I had come from Master Robert Hutchinson's and was on the road to General Ward's camp, they made no attempt at hindrance.

Further on I overtook a company of young men who said they were on their way to enlist, and proposed I join them. This would have been dis-



tasteful to me, having so lately parted with Ben, the only real friend I had ever known, and I parried their proposal by saying my errand would admit of no delay, while they appeared to be traveling in a leisurely fashion.

At noon I asked for and received a bowl of porridge at a house by the wayside, and an hour later was at the encampment of the right wing of the Continental army.

No question was made regarding my right to enter the lines, and save for the fact that so many men were assembled, I should not have realized I was in a military camp, for I judged of such things from what I had seen when Ben and I visited Lord Percy's command at Bunker Hill.

There the men were clad in uniform, attended strictly to their duties, and looked like soldiers. Here it was as if I assisted at a gathering of the people from the neighborhood roundabout, who had assembled from friendly rather than warlike motives.

Arriving at General Ward's headquarters, which were obligingly pointed out by those of whom I inquired, I found the building—for he was lodged in Colonel Brinley's house—guarded by four sentinels wearing brown hunting shirts, with belts, leggings, and moccasins much after the fashion of the Indians.

These men, so unlike our red-coated enemies in appearance, denied me admittance until I had given the name of him who sent me, and even then held me at bay in front of the mansion until word could be taken to General Ward.

Before permission was given for me to enter I began to believe they had forgotten that I awaited the pleasure of the commander, for I loitered around until my legs were more weary from much standing than because of the journey I had just performed.

When I was finally convinced an audience would be denied me, word came that I be admitted.

The general, who must have had many weighty matters on his mind, received me as kindly as if I had been his equal, and inquired in a most friendly manner as to my reason for wishing to speak with him.

I explained that Master Robert Hutchinson had desired me to do so, and then, aided by his questions, told him all there was to tell regarding that which Ben and I had done, or tried to do, from the day we answered Master Warren's summons.

He listened in silence until I had finished, showing no disappointment at that part of the story which pertained to the loss of the message; but seemed to take a keener interest when I explained

the manner of making my way from his majesty's boat to Master Hutchinson's house on Dorchester Point.

The tale ended, he was pleased to say—and I hardly expect to be believed when I tell that he laid his hand in a most friendly fashion upon my shoulder :

“ You have done nobly, my lad, even though you failed to bring me Master Vaughn's report. I doubt not but that it can wait, though since Master Hutchinson has promised to send word regarding the fate of the message, we shall soon have it repeated. You have shown yourself worthy the boon asked for at the hands of Colonel Prescott, and, if you will, it shall be given now.”

“ Do you mean that I may enlist, sir ?” I asked, and for the moment it seemed incredible he would receive as a soldier one who had done so little as I. Had Ben stood in my place I could have better understood why so much honor should be bestowed.

“ Is not that what you wish to do ?”

The general must have thought me a simple, for I stood stammering and shaking until he had repeated the question, and then managed to say in a booby fashion :

“ If you think me worthy, sir, I shall be very happy.”

“Indeed I do, my lad, and would if not more than half of what you have told be true. You may first, however, seek out your mother, and that done, return here.”

I feared lest having waited so long to see him on this day, I might not be able to get speech with him on my return, and made bold to repeat that which was in my mind.

“There can be no question of your desire to serve in the Continental army,” he said with a smile, “and lest you should have any misgivings once the camp has been left behind, I will myself attend to this matter.”

Then calling to one of the sentinels he requested him to find a certain Major Harper and send him there, after which he told me to occupy myself with viewing the encampment, if I was so disposed, until an hour had passed, when I should again return to the house.

I followed his suggestion, not because I had any wish to see more than met my view when I arrived, but that it would have seemed discourteous not to do so, and spent the time wandering to and fro, perceiving but little because my mind was so occupied with what lay in the future before me.

Only an hour previous I would not allow myself to believe it possible for me to become a soldier

until I had again met Colonel Prescott and reminded him of his promise, but now, without having done anything to earn such a distinction, I was on the point of succeeding in my desires, and felt very happy.

Had my comrade been with me the pleasure would have increased tenfold.

At the end of an hour I returned to Colonel Brinley's mansion, carrying myself erect as a soldier should, and this time it was not necessary to remain in waiting, for the sentinels stood aside to let me pass much as though they had suddenly become friendly.

On this occasion I did not see General Ward, but was met by the officer whom I believed to be Major Harper, and he asked my name.

When I had answered his question, he said kindly:

"You are beginning young, George Wentworth, and thus far promise well. Continue as ardent in your love for the cause as you now are, and the day cannot be far distant when instead of carrying a musket you will wear a sword."

"Am I already a soldier, sir?" I asked.

"When you have written your name, if it so be you can write, and taken the oath, I think the ceremony will be complete," he said laughingly, although I

could see no cause for mirth in either the question or the reply.

I hastened, however, to assure him I could write, thanks to my good mother's teaching, and he straightway conducted me to a second apartment where I set down the name, George Wentworth, in as large letters as I could well manage, for I desired it should stand out bold and prominent even though perhaps I had no right to occupy so much space.

"It is the general's command that you be allowed a furlough for so long a time as pleases you. When ready to begin your duties present yourself to me."

"To what company do I belong, sir?" I asked.

"You are enrolled in my command; but the general does not intend you shall remain in the ranks."

"Not in the ranks?" I repeated in surprise, and then although I had no right to ask such a question, I did inquire what my duties would be, for I began to fear lest I was not to be in truth a soldier.

"The general has need of messengers, and believes you can be of great service in such capacity."

Remembering my work under Colonel Prescott I was not thoroughly well pleased with the position, thinking perhaps it had been assigned me that I might not be exposed to the same dangers as the others, but Major Harper soon reassured me by saying:



"IT IS THE GENERAL'S COMMAND THAT YOU BE ALLOWED A FURLOUGH,"  
REMARKED MAJOR HARPER.

*Bunker Hill, p. 196.*





“The general will require of you such duties as any man in the camp would be proud to perform, and it is a rare distinction you have won, my lad, if, as I learn, it has been conferred on the strength of your unsupported word.”

“I only told the truth, sir, when I said Colonel Prescott promised I should enter the army.”

“I meant not that, George Wentworth; but you related your adventures to General Ward in such a manner as caused him to believe all you said.”

“And I did not speak falsely.”

“I do not question your truthfulness, my boy; but wish you to understand that the general has taken your word without reserve. It shows how much confidence he has in you.”

“I thank him for it,” I replied, abashed because I had spoken perhaps with seeming discourtesy. “I hope he did not think from what I said that I was a courageous lad, as is my comrade, Ben Scarlett, to whom should be given all the credit for what little I have been able to do.”

“Now you are modest, George Wentworth; but of that we will not speak. Go you to your mother, and after having seen her return where there will be ample opportunity before the British have been driven out of Boston town, to do a man’s work. Do you travel far to-night?”

“I know not, sir,” I replied. “As yet I am ignorant of where my mother may be found.”

Then I told him what Ben’s father had done, and where Master Simon believed my mother was living, whereupon he proposed to conduct me to that portion of the command which had been raised in the immediate vicinity, with the hope that some one might be found who would know of Master Scarlett’s whereabouts.

And in this I was not disappointed.

Before having spoken with ten men we found him who claimed Ben’s father as an acquaintance, and directed me to the very house where he had seen my mother but two days previous.

It was only three miles from the encampment, on a course I could not mistake since the dwelling was situated on the highway leading from Roxbury to Brookline, and beyond the redoubt near the river bank.

Major Harper suggested that I refresh myself with food before setting out on the journey; but so great was my desire to see the one who of all the people in the world would give me the warmest welcome, that I insisted on going at once as strongly as I could without appearing ungrateful, with the result that in less than two hours I was once more clasped in my mother’s arms.

## CHAPTER XV.

## NEW DUTIES.

FROM the time I entered the army, meaning the day when I returned to General Ward's headquarters after a forty-eight-hour sojourn with my mother, until winter had come, there was nothing in my life or immediate surroundings worthy of being set down in these pages.

If I were an able writer like Master Adams, I might fill sheet after sheet of paper with detailed accounts of what our friends in Boston suffered during these dark days when there was no movement of either army, and when many in town suffered from hunger.

In all these months my lines had been cast in pleasant places, as compared with many whom I could mention.

I was attached in an humble capacity to the staff of General Artemas Ward, and when my duties as messenger did not fully occupy the time, I devoted all my energies to learning the lesson of a soldier,

for I knew to a certainty that the day was rapidly coming when such knowledge would not only be of benefit to myself, but to the cause.

One hour each day, unless when in attendance on the general, was given over to practice in the manual of arms, or in sword-play with Major Harper as my teacher. Another, and chiefly during the evenings, I spent in study, conning such books as I could gather in the neighborhood, and it may be said without boasting that I improved in mind very rapidly while the Continental army lay seemingly inactive before the besieged town of Boston.

There were many people both in the army and out of it, who complained bitterly because our troops accomplished nothing in all this while; but such grumblers knew naught of what they spoke so trippingly, else it might have been seen beyond a doubt that all these days of seeming inactivity were necessary to make of the colonists soldiers.

Something more than the mere willingness to fight a battle is needed by him who would take part in warfare.

Do not think that no gun was fired during the summer of '75. The British amused themselves by throwing bombs into our outposts, and there were times when we returned the compliment right

merrily; but there was no pitched battle or general movement of troops.

The lack of ammunition, if nothing else, would have prevented our soldiers from making any very serious demonstration, for although the colonists had a government and an army, they were poor in materials of war.

It is not to be supposed that my duties prevented me from thinking often of Ben Scarlett.

There was never a day passed when my mind failed to dwell upon him, nor an opportunity wasted when I might, with some chance of gaining information, inquire concerning him.

His father was as ignorant as myself regarding Ben's whereabouts; no one could say if he was dead or alive, yet I felt positive the Britishers had not killed him, otherwise it was reasonable to suppose some word would have reached us through those who passed to and from Boston and the camp quite regularly.

Many times I learned from Major Harper that Simon Fletcher and Master Vaughn still remained in the besieged town doing good work for the cause.

However, I saw neither until on a certain day, after the winter had come, when I was in attendance on General Ward, and suddenly there stood

before me, asking for admittance to headquarters, Master Simon himself.

He was not changed in the least particular from the evening when I saw him last, and I could have embraced the old man, so rejoiced was I at beholding once more his familiar face.

On his part the greeting was as if we have been separated no more than an hour.

“I would have speech with General Ward, Sergeant Wentworth,” he said after giving me a military salute as he looked at the stripes on my sleeve, for I was now wearing a uniform, thanks to the generosity of Ben’s father, and had been promoted to the rank of sergeant because of proficiency in the drill—not for any act of bravery or especial service rendered.

I returned the salute, and would then have taken his request into headquarters precisely after the manner adopted by him, but my heart overcame me.

Regardless of the fact that I was a soldier charged with the duty of announcing a visitor to the commanding general, I seized both his hands in mine, and, with tears of joy filling my eyes, gave words to the happiness which was mine at seeing him once more.

At first I thought the veteran of Louisbourg

would rebuke me for such an unsoldierly display of emotion, but perhaps there was in his heart a feeling akin to that which filled mine, for he suddenly returned the hand-clasp with such force that my fingers ached for an hour afterward, as he said :

“Lad, I’m overjoyed at seeing you once more, an’ proud that you’ve shown yourself to be a man before you’re fully ripe in years !”

This last he must have said to give me pleasure, for as yet I had had no opportunity of doing anything important in aid of the cause.

Then we spoke as old friends, not soldiers who meet while on duty, and as we talked he seemed to forget he had come to see the general, for he suffered himself to be led to the small chamber I occupied in common with Corporal Benner, and there we spoke of the past, from the moment I had left him in front of the house wherein the murder had been done.

He already knew of how I had escaped, and, as I afterward learned, had received weekly word as to myself from those messengers who came into the town from our headquarters ; therefore it was little I could tell him of my own affairs even had I so desired.

I was so eager to inquire concerning Ben that I made haste to answer the few questions he put to

me in order to ask what he could tell of my comrade.

“Save until four days ago I have not heard anything of him,” Master Simon said gravely, and straightway his face grew so serious that I knew bad news was to come.

“Is he dead?” I asked falteringly, fearing lest I was to learn he had been executed as a spy.

“No, no, lad, nothin’ of that kind, though I dare say he has suffered more than if he had been led at once to the gallows. He skulked around Noddle Island after so foolishly partin’ company with you, until starvation forced him to the house of a Royalist, who at once gave him up to General Gage, and since then he has lain in prison, with many a better townsman, deprived of everything save the right to draw his wretched breath.”

“In prison all these months!” I cried, horrified at the suffering the poor fellow must have endured while I had been so entirely comfortable and very happy.

“Ay, lad, an’ I venture to say he has been cured of his headstrong ways by this time. Ben might have made his mark in the army, as you have done, but for his willfulness in takin’ the bit between his teeth at the slightest provocation.”

“He was a true comrade,” I interrupted quickly,



determined that even Master Simon should not say aught against my friend.

"I thought well of the lad despite the faults which every one could see," the old man replied in a kindly tone that made my heart warm yet more fervently toward him, "and would do all in my power to give him relief."

"Think you nothing can be done?" I asked eagerly, believing he had some plan in mind which I might aid in the carrying out.

"You may answer the question yourself. He's in the jail where young Edes is prisoned, and where Master Lovell, so it is said, occupies a dungeon for no other reason than that he stands true to the cause. Shut in by walls, an' guarded by the king's troops, how think you he can be aided while our army lies outside the town?"

I had hoped for a more heartening answer, believing he already had some plan in mind, and this reply plunged me into the deepest gloom, noting which the old man said with more of cheerfulness in his voice :

"Rouse up, lad. No good can come of pinin', and though just now the prospects look black, a few hours may change everything. Would you like to go back to the town?"

"To what end?" I asked quickly, for Master

Simon's tone had changed so suddenly I suspected more in the question than appeared by the words.

"That is as may be. Master Vaughn was made prisoner yesterday, and I escaped but by the skin of my teeth. We two can no longer be of service in the town, and others must work in our stead."

"You have come for me?" and I was almost frightened as I asked the question.

"That I know not. It may be General Ward will not readily part with his favorite sergeant, or fear to put him on such a post of danger, for if you, now a soldier regularly enrolled, should be captured within the enemy's lines no one could save your life except General Howe himself, an' I warrant you he would not so much as crook his finger to prevent the death of a rebel in arms."

"If I went into the town I should not carry arms with me."

"Whether you had weapons about you or not would matter little. You are now a soldier of the Continental army, and should you be made prisoner within the British lines must be adjudged a spy by all the usages of war."

I understood that Master Simon had come into the camp for no other purpose than to ask that I enter the besieged town, and while I would not refuse to do anything which might be required of

me, or that promised aid to the cause, I shrank from the danger.

Seeing me fallen into a reverie the veteran arose, saying with a salute as stiff as his voice:

“Sergeant Wentworth, you will report to General Artemas Ward that Simon Fletcher would speak with him on matters of importance to the cause.”

Involuntarily I returned the salute, and thus recalled to duty went at once to the general.

It was but necessary to speak the name of the visitor to insure his immediate admission, and I reported in proper military fashion to Master Simon, who straightway entered the apartment where the general transacted his business.

It can well be supposed that my mind was in a whirl when the old man disappeared.

My courage was not great enough for the undertaking Simon Fletcher had proposed, and yet I knew duty demanded I should go if the commander gave the order, or even so much as made such a request.

I was not long left alone with my troublous thoughts.

It seemed as if Master Simon had but just entered the apartment when Major Harper called me, and said as I sprang to his side:

“General Ward desires that you shall be present

during the interview which he is now having with a visitor from town.”

As he said this the major looked perplexed, not knowing what to make of such a command, and I who could have enlightened him was too heavy of heart to explain.

Entering the room I stood at “attention” until the general said kindly :

“Sit you down, Sergeant Wentworth. Master Simon Fletcher is making a report, and I would that you should hear it.”

The veteran did not so much as bestow a glance upon me ; but when the general ceased speaking continued to repeat such information as he had gained before Master Vaughn was apprehended, and not until he told of this latter business did I give great heed to his words.

Then I heard the following :

“We returned to Wind Mill Point believing our abiding place was still a secret. Perhaps we had been there an hour when the outer door was suddenly burst in, and a file of soldiers entered. Master Vaughn was sitting between this door and the table while I remained near the window. At the first glimpse of the redcoats I leaped through the glass, not stopping to raise the sash, and after a tussle with a Britisher who was on guard outside, escaped

to the boat. A few shots were fired as I pushed off from the shore ; but in the darkness it was not possible for the soldiers to take aim, and I came out of the scrimmage scot-free. The cause and your excellency had no more faithful servant than Israel Vaughn, and it will be difficult to replace him, as must be done at once. Even though the enemy does not kill him offhand, he will be kept in jail, and thus his services are lost to you. As for myself, I am ready to return to town this night ; but I can no longer be useful because of being so well known, and if I appear on the street many times arrest must surely follow. Therefore it behooves you, General Ward, to fill our places with those who are strangers, yet have been residents of the town."

"Is this last qualification necessary?" the general asked.

"Most certainly ; one not acquainted with Boston would fail to learn all that was going on, or might be at a loss to know how to escape in case of suspicion falling upon him. Some one familiar with the streets and bypaths is needed."

"Can you suggest a person who would fill these requirements?"

"Sergeant Wentworth is such an one," and Master Simon waved his hand toward me, this

being the first intimation that he knew I was in the apartment. "Your commands to him would be obeyed."

"But I would not order any man on such dangerous duty. Should Sergeant Wentworth volunteer for the service, permission for him to go would be granted, even though I could better spare an older soldier from headquarters."

Now it was easy to understand why I had been summoned to the interview, and for a single moment my heart was sore because of having been placed in such a position.

There was no retreat, unless at the cost of branding myself the coward I knew I really was, and even delay in replying to the challenge amounted to much the same thing.

Therefore I said as the two looked at me, speaking in a brave tone although my heart was heavy with fear:

"I am ready to do whatever lays to my hand. If the cause can best be served by my going into the town, give me leave to depart at once."

Master Simon came forward as if to take my hand, but before he could do so General Ward said with feeling:

"You are a brave lad, Sergeant Wentworth, and it grieves me much to send you on such a mission."

Now was come the time when I could explain that which was in my mind, and I made answer :

“I am not brave, sir ; but a coward—although I would not that my companions in arms should hear me acknowledge it. I fear to embark in the enterprise, yet would be overcome with shame if some one was now sent in my stead.”

“God bless the boy, he can put us all to the blush,” I heard Master Simon mutter, though I understood not the meaning of his words.

“You are acting and speaking very much like a brave man who goes willingly into a danger which he does not despise,” the general said, and to my surprise he took me by the hand. “You are to venture on this service, doing all that lies in your power to learn whatever it may be essential General Washington should know, but at the same time you have my positive command not to risk your life unnecessarily. Take no needless risks, and remember that you are doing a service to the cause when you are careful of the life and liberty of so valuable a member of the army as Sergeant George Wentworth.”

Surely there never was a boy before who heard of himself such words as these, and for the moment my pride was so great that I forgot to be alarmed at what I was about to do.

I stood like one in a dream until the general told me I was at liberty to depart in order to make preparations for the journey.

In the adjoining apartment Major Harper was waiting until Master Simon's business should be concluded, and I saw in his face a question, therefore made haste to tell him what change I was about to make.

"You are going into the town again to play the part of spy?" he asked, as if doubting whether he had understood my words.

"So it has been arranged, sir."

"You have twice been apprehended by the king's men?"

"Yes, sir."

He offered me his hand in silence, and I, perplexed because he made no reply, said not a word as I returned the friendly clasp.

To make ready for the journey was a simple task because there was nothing to be done save take off the uniform in which I had had so much pride, and put on the clothing worn when I came ashore after the long spell of swimming.

While doing this my mind was busy with thoughts of mother.

Much as I desired to see her before embarking in the perilous enterprise, I would not do so lest



she discover what I intended should be kept a secret from her. That her heart would be filled with grief at the thought of the danger which would attend my new work, I knew full well, and was determined to spare her the pain as long as possible.

When I descended from my chamber Master Simon was standing in the hall at the foot of the stairs, and said gruffly, as if vexed because I had kept him waiting so long, although it had not been more than five minutes since I left the general's apartment :

“I am ready, lad, an' if it so be your pleasure we will set out.”

“When you please, Master Simon,” I replied, doing my best to speak cheerfully, for I would not have him know how full of grief and fear my heart was. “Do we go into town while it is yet light?”

“By starting now we can do no better than arrive late in the night, for we have far to walk before setting sail.”

Then he marched out of the building in which I had lived so long, and I followed close at his heels, feeling that there was little chance I should ever return.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A RESOLVE.

As we marched through the encampment more than one of the soldiers whom I knew first looked up in surprise that I was without a uniform, and then suddenly stepped back without so much as speaking.

I was at a loss to understand why this should be until I detected Master Simon making a gesture to one whom I would have been glad to greet with a last hand-clasp, and then all was plain.

The veteran was afraid my small courage would ooze entirely away if I had speech with the friends I was leaving, and wished to prevent what would ever after have been a source of shame to me.

I was at the same time irritated and pleased that he should have done this; but when, the encampment left behind, we were on the highway it came to my mind that I had acted the part of a coward in thus leaving my companions-in-arms without a word, and was almost persuaded to retrace my steps.

“There is no time for such foolishness,” Master Simon said gruffly when I gave words to my thoughts. “To gain the town under cover of darkness much speed is necessary, and leave-takings are not to be indulged in by a soldier.”

I fell silent again, knowing full well he spoke wisely, and until we arrived at the shore near Dorchester Heights, where was our gun battery, hardly more than a dozen words passed between us.

It was sunsét when we pushed out across the flats in a small fishing-boat, favored by both wind and current.

When we were well under way curiosity mastered fear, and I asked if we would go to the house where I had last seen Master Vaughn.

“No, sergeant, the place would be much too hot to hold me, an’ I’m thinking you will do well to give it a wide berth. Unless the redcoats have thicker heads than I give them credit for, that buildin’ has outlasted its usefulness so far as our purposes are concerned. A friend to the cause has given me permission to use a house owned by him on Rainford Lane near Essex Street, an’ there we’ll go before morning, unless some accident befalls.”

It was better to talk than remain silent thinking of the terrible fate the future might have in store for me, and I asked :

“What am I expected to do in the town?”

“Lounge around the streets, if it so be that can be done without too much danger. In other words, you must fill the places left vacant by Israel Vaughn and myself, for I am out of the race which is being run in Boston, now the redcoats have discovered to a certainty my connection with the American Army. You can do it, sergeant, and without too great a risk, or I'm mistaken in my man.”

This was the fourth time he had called me “sergeant” since we left camp, and it annoyed me.

“Why have you ceased to give me my own name?” I asked petulantly. “It was ‘lad,’ or ‘George’ when we were last together.”

“And because you have proved yourself a man rather than a boy, I address you by the proper title—that one which you have fully earned. It does me good, lad, to think that you've outgrown your boyish days under my tutorin', so to speak.”

Never again did I reproach the old man when he called me “sergeant,” and now I was heartily ashamed of myself for having shown irritation because of anything Master Simon might say.

Had there never been a British soldier in the Province our journey to the town, and the taking up of our new abode, could hardly have been more simple.

Master Simon headed the little craft to a point on the Neck within five hundred yards of where the enemy were stationed.

At two o'clock in the morning, when everything seemed as peaceful as if such a horrible art as war had never been known, we stepped ashore without hindrance, meeting no person as we made our way rapidly down Orange Street to Beach, and thence to the house spoken of by my companion.

It was a comfortable dwelling, and we were shown into an upper room fronting on the street, from which we could easily depart by a rear door through the yard in case it became necessary to leave hurriedly.

We lay down for a short time of slumber, neither of us being in the mood for conversation, and when I awakened it was to take up the occupation of spy.

Heretofore I had but played at it; now in event of capture a shameful death would most likely be my portion, for was I not a soldier within the enemy's lines disguised as a peaceful citizen?

My only fear, as, following Master Simon's instructions, I sallied out, was that I might meet Sam Wilkins, or one of the guard who had made Ben and me prisoners in Lord Percy's camp.

There was little doubt in my mind but that

young Wilkins would do everything in his power to make trouble for me, even though he could not have learned I was a member of the Continental Army, and in case he saw me I must defend myself, whatever the cost to him.

When a week had passed I could have laughed at the fears which beset me when leaving the encampment on Meeting-House Hill, for thus far I had encountered no danger, and the work, so I flattered myself, had been done as well and thoroughly as by Master Vaughn or Simon Fletcher.

Twice during this time I gained valuable information concerning the movements of the troops, and Master Simon had forwarded it to General Ward by some means unknown to me.

I had also seen that which made the blood seem to boil in my veins, for the Britishers were riding over us of the colonies roughshod.

The South meeting-house was turned into a riding school for the light dragoons. The North meeting-house, Master John Winthrop's home, and many another building were torn down for firewood that the redcoated fops might not suffer with cold feet when they returned to their lodgings from the assembly or ball.

In the summer, while I had been in camp, the Liberty tree was hewn down, and the wicked deed

was done by Royalists, aided by a choice company of redcoats. Job Williams was the renegade who instigated the deed and led the villains on, and it should have been he instead of a Britisher who was killed by falling from one of the branches while the dastardly business was being done.

I saw much suffering among the people, for food was scarce, and only the wealthy could afford anything more than pork and beans. I would by no means sneer at this dish, for during this winter I came to depend almost wholly upon it; but however appetizing any particular thing may be, it grows distasteful when one has it, and only it, at every meal.

The second week passed much as had the first, save that I learned nothing of importance, and then came the day when I was so frightened because of a conversation I overheard that for a time my legs bent under me, while my teeth must have chattered as if with the cold.

I was standing near the Town House, gazing around as if I saw Boston for the first time, doing my utmost to edge unnoticed nearer two well-known Tories who were discussing the affairs of the day, and I may as well say here that in such manner was obtained the greater portion of the information I gathered.

The gentlemen were speaking boastingly of what General Howe would do in the way of punishing the rebels when the winter was ended, and I felt disappointed because they were not likely to betray any secrets, when a name was mentioned which caused me to move yet nearer.

“It’s likely young Scarlett will soon be sentenced as a spy, and it is high time. I told my Lord Howe not longer ago than yesterday that he was too lenient with the rebels. A lesson which will be remembered should be given, and speedily, otherwise the so-called Continental Army will grow strong with pride, believing the king’s officers do not dare execute the king’s laws.”

“In my opinion, Lovell, Edes, Wibert and young Scarlett should all be hanged off-hand. It would have a beneficial effect such as is needed sadly by the inhabitants of this town since the rebel army has been allowed to besiege Boston, actually holding the royal forces in check.”

“There is only one of the prisoners who can be hanged without much ceremony, and that is Scarlett. He was taken, together with a companion, in Lord Percy’s camp just before the Charlestown fight, and was let off because no actual proof of his being a spy could be produced. Later, he and another lad tried to leave Boston in a small boat in



utter disregard of the governor's commands, and were captured by the crew of a war vessel, who afterward carelessly allowed the young scoundrels to escape. A week later the boy was apprehended on Noddle Island, where he had sought refuge after escaping from the king's ship, and only because of his youth has he been allowed to live."

"Is he to be tried for his life?"

"He will be brought before a military tribunal next week, and my Lord Howe assures me there is no question but that he will be executed on the following morning, for ample proof of his guilt exists."

Then the two Tories changed the conversation, and I had no desire to listen further.

I forgot it was my duty to catch every word that might be uttered in my hearing—forgot everything save the awful fact that my comrade, Ben Scarlett, was to be hanged.

There was no question in my mind but that execution would follow the farce of a trial, more especially if the Tory citizens were demanding that an example be made of some "rebel."

The king's troops had thus far been worsted in every way since the murders were done at Lexington and Concord, and now they would show their power by hanging a boy against whom no real evidence of guilt existed, save that he had been taken

into custody twice before he begged for food to save himself from starvation.

How long I remained near the Town House leaning against one of the sidewalk-chains I know not, but many moments must have elapsed, for when I realized my carelessness in loitering where I had no apparent business, the two Royalists had departed.

I returned straightway to Rainford Lane, where Master Simon, thinking because of my early coming that I had important news, greeted me more warmly than usual.

“This time it is my own affairs which bring me back,” I said sharply, much as though the old man could be blamed for what I had heard. “Ben is to be hanged next week!”

Master Simon started, and then suddenly checked himself as if afraid to display emotion.

“How heard you that, lad?”

I told him the story as it is set down here, and waited for him to speak.

He remained silent so long that, fearing he would not open his mouth lest he make my grief greater, I asked irritably :

“Do you question it?”

“No, lad—” I was glad he did not call me sergeant at that moment, or I might have said some-

thing disrespectful. "No, lad, I have no doubt it be as the Tories said, and the only wonder is that he has been allowed to live thus long. Within three days after he was taken the Royalist crew of this town demanded that he be hanged; but General Gage refused to satisfy their thirst for blood, and I hoped the boy had been forgotten. If Lord Howe made the remark you heard repeated, and there seems to be no question of it, poor Ben is as good as dead already."

"Indeed he is not, Simon Fletcher!" I shouted as if in a rage, and indeed I was, but not with the old man who had ever been my friend since that day when I first went to his home. "Can we not find honest people in this town who will assist in saving an innocent boy from such a shameful doom?"

"By honest people you mean those who are devoted to the cause, and I in turn ask you how much influence would be exerted over Lord Howe, or the Tory crew behind him, if every man, woman an' child who loves the colonies should sue for Ben's pardon? It would only render more certain his doom, because then it would seem he was a favorite with the 'rebels.' He is to be killed as an example to his friends and acquaintances, nearly all of whom are in sympathy, openly or secretly, with the Continental government."

I knew the old man had said only what was true, but my grief was not lessened.

At that moment it seemed to me as if I was strong and courageous enough to battle single-handed in his behalf.

After that foolish outburst of mine we sat looking at each other in silence until Master Simon finally said hesitatingly, as one does when telling that of which it may be unwise to speak:

“If the end is so near it can do no harm, perhaps, for you to see him.”

“See Ben?” I cried impatiently. “You know very well they would not admit me to the prison, unless it was to lock me in a cell.”

“True; but yet it may be possible to see him from the outside, as I have done more than once.”

“How?” and now I was on fire with impatience.

“He has been treated well, so far as choice of quarters goes, for I have seen him at a window which must open into his cell, or where he is often allowed to take exercise.”

“And you have seen him often?”

“Three times, it may be.”

“Why did you not tell me?” I asked reproachfully. “Surely I might have been allowed to see my comrade from a distance, even though I am playing the spy.”

“It was for that very reason I held my peace. Had you known what I have just told, how many times would you have gone there to look at him?”

“Every day at the least.”

“That is exactly what I feared, and at the end of a week the sentries must have noted your frequent coming. Then your work here was done, and Sergeant George Wentworth of the Continental Army would have been a prisoner within the same walls. It was to insure your own safety, lad, that I remained silent, nor would I have spoken now save for the fact that the poor boy has so short a time to live.”

To hear Master Simon speak thus positively of Ben's death was to make it appear as if I already saw my comrade on the scaffold, and I was not ashamed of the tears which flowed down my cheeks.

When the first bitterness of grief passed off in some slight degree, I questioned Master Simon as to where he had stood in order to see poor Ben, and received from him the fullest particulars as to how I should set about that which I had already determined to do.

The afternoon was not more than half spent; the prison in which my comrade was confined is that

one on Queen Street, and, so Master Simon declared, by making my way around to the rear where was a sort of lane or alley leading to School Street, I could gratify my desires.

There was no thought as I walked at my best pace that an enemy might recognize me.

I was conscious of little save the possibility of looking at Ben Scarlett once more, and believe I would have gone although the chances of being apprehended as a spy had been ten times as great.

Following Master Simon's instructions I had soon arrived at the rear of the prison; but that for which my eyes sought could not be seen.

There were no faces at the windows; the wretched place might have been tenantless so far as signs of life were concerned, but I knew only too well how many unhappy wretches whose only crime was a love of the colonies, were confined within those walls.

Although my visit was vain as to its purpose, the time had not been wasted.

I observed that the lane was not much frequented; that two trees grew within twenty yards of the building in the rear, and that there were shrubs enough in the vicinity to hide any one from view of those who might be passing, although they would

have afforded but poor protection against a regular search.

These facts were noted by me almost unconsciously, until suddenly there came into my heart a hope so great that I was nigh to crying out for joy.

It was not impossible my comrade might be rescued!

Even though I should attempt it and fail, what would be the loss if my life was the forfeit? There were many others who could serve the cause even better than I had done, and the place I occupied would soon be filled.

I realized fully how many chances there were against success, but yet as I walked slowly back to Rainford Lane pondering over these things in the hope of deciding upon some reasonable plan, I was resolved to make the attempt.

Master Simon might be won over to my views; but if that was impossible I would go on alone.

At the worst it could only be failure, for Ben's condition would not have been rendered more desperate, since that could not be.

When arrived at our lodgings I went straightway to meet Simon Fletcher, arguing with myself that it was best he should know at once to what I proposed to commit myself; and on standing before him I said as calmly as it was in my power to speak:

“I have been to the prison, but did not see my comrade. It is my purpose to go again and again until some plan comes to my mind, for I am determined to do whatsoever lies in my power to effect his release.”

Master Simon stared at me as if believing I had taken leave of my senses.

Then, instead of replying, he lighted his pipe and smoked vigorously for a space of ten minutes or more before breaking the silence.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## AN ENCOUNTER.

WHEN Master Simon did finally speak it was to the purpose, and although there were some portions of his remarks to which I might with good reason have taken objections, the spirit he displayed filled me with joy almost too great for words.

“The undertaking you propose is so full of peril, and offers so little chance of success, that I would be warranted in preventing you, by brute force, from doing anything of the kind,” he said, speaking slowly as if thereby I might better understand his meaning. “Not that I blame you, lad, for tryin’ to aid your comrade; such a course is but natural, and what I might have expected from one of your metal.”

The old man fell silent again, and I, thinking he had finished, was about to say hotly what I believed would be the result if an attempt was made to restrain me by force, when he continued:

“Although it is a duty I owe General Ward, as

well as your mother, I shall not try to argue you out of the notion which has gotten into your head; but, instead, will do all in my power to aid the enterprise."

It was difficult for me to believe I had heard aright, yet I gave way to the most violent demonstrations of joy.

Master Simon heeded not my extravagance, but asked in a business-like tone, much as though we were discussing the simplest question:

"Have you considered how to set about the work?"

"There has been in my mind only the thought that I must help the poor lad. I have formed no plans."

"Then that is the first task before us. It would be worse than folly to embark in the undertaking without some idea of what we are to do. Leave me alone; go out into the streets again, for we must not neglect our duty by remaining idle simply because it is our purpose to go contrary to orders."

"Surely we shall not be doing that in trying to save Ben's life. We have never been commanded to fold our arms while a friend is being murdered."

"This is war, lad, and the life of one person, or even of an hundred, must not be considered when the good of the cause may be at stake."

“But we shall not be sacrificing anything save, perhaps, our own lives, by working to save Ben.”

“It has been required of us to come into this town to do certain things, and if, while neglecting that duty, we go to the scaffold, it is a desertion of our posts as much as though we abandoned the work for our own pleasure,” Master Simon said gravely; and then he bade me continue the work of a spy while he formed a plan of action.

By this time I had begun to realize what the effort to save Ben from a shameful death might mean; but I was none the less determined to do all that lay in my power.

Now Master Simon was enlisted in the work I felt confident it might be carried through successfully, although the odds seemed so overpoweringly against us.

I walked about the town until near nine o'clock without learning anything of consequence. If General Howe contemplated a move he kept it a secret, for the Royalists whose conversation I overheard complained bitterly because the king's troops made no effort to raise the siege, which seditious language would not have been indulged in had there been any plan afoot against our people.

That Ben was to go through the mockery of having a trial at an early date appeared beyond a

doubt, for the Tories talked quite freely on this evening regarding it, as if it was something lately decided upon.

When I returned to our lodgings, having remained out of doors as late as the British laws would permit, Master Simon yet wore a serious air; but he greeted me even more kindly than was his wont.

Before speaking of that private business we were to take in hand, I repeated all I had heard, and the old man said with a grim smile:

“The same gentlemen who complain because General Howe does not move swiftly enough, would be the first to reproach if he made an attempt to dislodge our troops and failed. We’ll hope, lad, that the Continental Army will begin the dance, an’ I have full faith its commander knows what he’s about.”

Strange as it may seem my interest in the cause and all that might pertain to it was but slight on this evening.

Ben’s peril overshadowed everything else in my mind, and what a few hours before would have plunged me into a state of excitement, now passed almost unheeded.

Master Simon must have understood something of this kind, for instead of continuing the conversation, he proposed that I go to bed.

“Get what sleep you can this night, lad, for once our work has begun there can be no heed given to weariness till it has been finished, or proven a failure.”

“My eyes have been opened so wide by sorrow that it will be a long while before I shall feel the need of closing them,” I replied with a sigh which could not be restrained.

“Then we may as well abandon the enterprise,” and Master Simon spoke sharply. “I will not join issues with one who cannot prepare himself for a struggle.”

Turning quickly I laid down upon the couch, recognizing the force of his argument; but even this submission did not satisfy the veteran. He insisted that I undress after my usual fashion, and once this had been done he resumed his pipe-smoking.

While the wreaths of blue vapor curled up from beneath his grizzled mustache I knew him to be wrapped in a brown study, and was satisfied that a man well-versed in warfare should take entire charge of the rescue.

Although it had not seemed possible, I slept soundly this night, and on awakening found Master Simon moving briskly about.

“Have you remained awake all night?” I asked

reproachfully, and he made answer after his cheery fashion :

“Not a bit of it. I never preach what I don’t practice; but old eyes need less rest than young ones, and I’ve been peckin’ around this half-hour.”

“Have you decided on what we can do?”

“I’ve got a plan for what we can *try* to do, lad; but whether we’ll accomplish it or not is another story. I don’t question your courage, nor your willingness to take any chances, an’ it’s this last that makes it necessary for me to go to the jail while you stay indoors.”

“What do you mean?” I cried, perplexed by the words.

“In your eagerness to see the poor lad I’m afraid you may take too many risks, therefore I’ll do that part of the work myself, an’ if it so be he’s allowed to come to the window as when I saw him last, he shall soon know for what we’re trying.”

“It isn’t safe for you to venture out.”

“We must expect to meet a certain amount of danger, an’ I’ve decided it will be safer for me than you.”

He spoke so after the fashion of a man who will not be convinced to the contrary, that I could do no less than hold my peace, although it pained me to see him go bravely forth knowing if he met

those who had taken Master Vaughn into custody he would share Ben's prison.

Then ensued for me a long, weary time of waiting, during which I pictured to myself a dozen times over the honest old veteran a captive among those who would see in his virtues only so many faults.

Again and again I reproached myself for having enlisted him in what might well have been called a forlorn hope, and became so distressed in mind that it was with difficulty I could force myself to remain in the house thus inactive.

Not until noonday did Master Simon return, and I gave vent to a loud exclamation of joy and relief when from the window I saw him coming rapidly down the street.

It was not possible for me to tell by the expression on his face whether the business was going ill or well; but instantly he was in our chamber I questioned him eagerly:

"Yes, I saw the lad, an' at the risk of being overheard contrived to let him know we should try to give him a lift."

"Then he came to the window?"

"Yes, it is in the corridor just outside his cell, and he is at liberty to go there from early mornin' till noon, after which he's kept in close quarters."

“Then all that has been accomplished is the information given Ben?”

“Not quite, lad. After two attempts I managed to throw a file through the bars of the window, an’ with it a small ball of stout cord. You see I went prepared in case it so chanced I’d be able to speak to him.”

“But what can he do to help himself?”

“That’s what I count on his findin’ out. The brain of a man who is in danger of bein’ hanged should work to better purpose than his who has no such spur. It is certain we can’t rescue the lad without help from the inside, an’ he must do some part of the work.”

I was dissatisfied when I should have been well content, for that which Master Simon had accomplished was far more than one who had weighed all the chances could reasonably have expected.

The remainder of this day was spent by me on the street; but I learned nothing which would have interested the leaders of our cause.

It had been made public that Ben would be brought before a military court on Tuesday, and it was now Friday.

If it was to be that Master Simon could aid him in the time of his sorest trial, everything must be done in three days, and one of those was Sunday,



when it was not lawful to venture on the street for any other purpose than that of going to or from the meetinghouse.

Saturday morning, an hour after sunrise, Simon Fletcher went out of the house after first enjoining upon me the need of remaining under cover, and I spent another wretched time of waiting, knowing full well how dangerous it was for the old man to thus show himself.

When he came back, however, I felt myself well repaid for all I had suffered.

The plan was complete in his mind, and the hour set when we should begin the work.

"To-morrow, between eleven o'clock an' midnight, Ben will expect us," Master Simon said as he entered.

"But to-morrow is Sunday," I exclaimed in surprise.

"And because of that we shall be in less danger of interruption," the old veteran replied grimly. "Even though we objected to do such a work on the Lord's day, we have no choice. To wait till the night before the trial would be lessenin' our chances, an'——"

"There is no reason why we should not do what we can to save the life of a human being on the Lord's day. I was surprised you should so set the

time because we may find it more troublesome to make our way through the streets then, when every one must give good and sufficient reason why he is out of doors."

"I would rather take such chances than try to pass when there may be many of the townspeople out of doors. Ben declares he can find a way to gain the window in the corridor by midnight, and it is also possible he will succeed in loosenin' one of the bars. If not, we must do it for him."

"How are we to get up to it?"

"Between now and then I will weave a ladder of hemp, which he can hoist by the cord I gave him yesterday. After we are there it is much a matter of chance, lad, and we both know what will be the result if we are caught at such work."

"I am not permitting myself to think of failure," I said, speaking stoutly, for since my comrade was in such peril of his life I had almost forgotten my timorousness.

"So much the better, an' I'm not afraid your courage will fail you at the last, even though you have failed to weigh all the chances of defeat. In case we are discovered before the work has been done, I shall only sorrow because of you; it matters little what becomes of an old hulk like mine that is nigh to bein' stranded by age."

It made my heart sore to hear him speak in such a fashion, and I put an end to it by asking if I should go on the street once more.

“Ay, lad, do your duty, even though we’re minded to disobey orders so soon. There’s little hope you’ll hear anything of importance, an’ yet it may be we can pick up somethin’ in the way of information to carry with us to the American camp.”

“Are we to go there immediately Ben is rescued?”

“It will be a case of goin’ there or into prison. There’s little show of our stayin’ here as our own masters after to-morrow’s work has been begun.”

When I went on to the street that afternoon, there was in my mind the gloomy thought that it might be I would never walk through Boston town again except when I was taken from the prison to the scaffold. I moved about much as I fancied a dying man might, looking greedily at the blue sky, the happy, careless ones who passed me by, and every form of life, contrasting all with my own position.

It can well be fancied I was not in proper frame of mind to do faithfully the work with which I had been intrusted; but I earnestly tried to perform it.

As Master Simon had suggested, there was nothing to be learned, and I set my face homeward with the thought which would not be shaken off, that I

had nearly ended my earthly labors, when I was startled by seeing, hardly a stone's throw away, none other than Sam Wilkins.

For a single minute I hoped he had not observed me, and moved quickly aside with the idea of escaping attention, when I understood it was too late.

The young Royalist had been on the alert, and the expression of his face told he believed his hour of triumph near at hand.

Like a flash of light in the darkness there came into my mind the knowledge that this vengeful lad would unwittingly prevent us from giving any aid to poor Ben.

Now he knew I was in town there would be but one desire in his heart, and that to run me down, therefore the Britishers must soon be on the alert for Master Simon and myself.

Once this idea had taken possession of me I advanced boldly, not knowing what it might be possible to do; but determined Sam Wilkins should not carry his information to General Howe's headquarters.

On first seeing me an expression of alarm came over his face, most likely brought there by the fear I was about to do him bodily harm. Immediately afterward he must have realized how powerless I

was in the town ,and he came boldly to the meeting.

“Have you been drummed out of the ragamuffin rebel camp?” he asked with an evil leer, and it cost me a great effort to keep my hands from his face.

How do you know I was ever with those whom you call rebels?” I asked, doing my best to speak with a certain degree of friendliness.

“How do I know? Wasn't you brought in from Breed's Hill a prisoner to his majesty's troops?”

“That cannot well be, else I should not stand before you.”

“Don't try to shut my eyes!” he cried angrily. “I can't say how you got away from Long Wharf, but I do know you won't leave this town alive now you've been such a simple as to come back.

“Why should you be so envenomed against me who never did you harm?” I asked, going yet nearer him. “We were almost comrades once.”

“That was before you turned rebel. What are you doin' here?”

“Talking with Master Samuel Wilkins, may it please you,” I replied in a jovial tone, although I was being consumed with anger because I dared not treat him as he deserved.

“It seems to agree with your humor to accost me

as a friend, now you know I may send you to the gallows," he snarled.

"Why should you wish to do that? Surely I can do the king no harm."

"That you can't, however hard you may try. What are you doing here I ask again?"

"When we met I was going to my home. Will you come, and there discuss your reasons for being at enmity with me?"

He drew back at first, as indeed I expected he would, and then came into his evil mind the idea that by accepting the invitation of such a simple as I was proving myself to be, he would know exactly where to lead the soldiers.

The plan worked as I had hoped, although even then I had no thought as to how I might profit by it, and he stepped to my side without replying.

The night had come, and there were but few to be seen on those streets through which I took care to pass.

Even had Sam been so inclined he could not have raised in this portion of the town a force sufficient to take me into custody, and it would have been folly indeed had he attempted to drag me to any point where the redcoats might be summoned.

Therefore it was he could do no better than follow my bidding, and he was all the more willing to

do so believing I was delivering myself thereby into his hands.

I tried to force my brain to work as rapidly as my feet were moving, for we would soon arrive at the house where Master Simon and I were lodged; but the thoughts did not come at my call, and we had already turned into Rainford Lane from Essex Street before I had the slightest inkling of what it might be possible to do.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## A COMRADE'S PERIL.

THE plan which I carried into execution came to my mind like an inspiration at the instant we turned from the street into the lane.

There was no person to be seen; the door of the house at which we lodged was partly open, and the young Royalist at my side had apparently little fear one proscribed as was I could work him harm.

He most likely thought he would be safe, even if I should try to do him mischief, while we were in the open air.

As we came through Essex Street the one thought in my mind was that, if I could keep Sam Wilkins from carrying his information to the redcoats until after Sunday night, Master Simon's plan would not be menaced; and when I saw the open door my course was plain.

"Do you live in this lane?" Sam asked while we were yet a dozen yards from my lodgings; and I, not meaning he should give me the slip at this







I THREW MY RIGHT ARM AROUND SAM WILKINS' NECK, COVERING HIS MOUTH  
WITH MY HAND.

*Frontis.*

*Bunker Hill, p. 245.*

point, allowed him to understand that we were still some distance from our destination.

He was on the inside of the walk as we approached the house, and at the instant we were arrived opposite the door I threw my right arm around his neck, covering his mouth with my hand, at the same time pulling him backward.

It was not my purpose to allow him to fall, but simply to drop on my knee, and as he did so I clutched him around the body with my left arm.

Taken completely by surprise as he had been, there was neither struggle nor noise, and he remained wholly in my power, unable to make the lightest outcry, for I took good care he should not wrest his mouth free.

At that moment excitement lent a wondrous strength to my limbs, and I raised Sam as if he had been a baby, whispering hoarsely in his ear.

“Make any resistance and you had better have been dead before meeting me! It is your life or mine, and I shall go so far as I can before allowing myself to be taken prisoner by the redcoats.”

Sam Wilkins was ever a cowardly cur whom a lad of half his size could cow by presenting a bold front, and at my threat he was as if entirely overcome by fear.

Instead of struggling, as any lad of spirit would

have done, he gave himself wholly up, not offering to so much as groan, while I darted swiftly into the building, running up the stairs as if my burden was not a feather's weight.

Master Simon was seated before the fireplace smoking, and most likely working out his plan for Ben's rescue, when we entered.

On observing whom I had brought with me, instead of expressing surprise, as would have been but natural, he gave only one glance at Sam, and, motioning with his pipe-stem toward a stool near the fire, said quietly :

"Sit your friend down there, lad, an' stand close at hand to knock him on the head if he makes any outcry."

I obeyed, and on releasing my hold, which I confess had been very rough, the Royalist's head sank upon his bosom as though his neck was broken.

Alarmed by the thought that I had injured him unwittingly, I would have done something for his relief, but that Master Simon said sharply :

"Never fear for such vermin as he, lad. It's terror that weakens him, an' with good cause, for now he's in the keepin' of them he would have sent to the gallows had he been allowed."

Sam raised his head, and I was almost disarmed when I saw that his eyes were filled with tears; but

the veteran was not to be overcome by a show of weakness.

“How got you him?”

I told of the encounter on the street, and explained how it had been possible to thus make him a prisoner, whereat Master Simon laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks also.

“You are a quick-witted lad, George Wentworth, and one who will make his mark in this province if it so be the king’s soldiers do not lay you by the heels too soon. So you would have turned us over to the redcoats, Master Wilkins, that you might see us danglin’ at the end of a rope, eh?”

“It was not in my mind to harm you,” Sam said after some effort. “I have ever been friendly with George, and yet he treats me like an enemy.”

“As he has good cause. I warrant the king’s soldiers would have been in this room within the hour but for his neat work.”

“I promise you, Master Simon Fletcher, that I will work you no harm,” and the cowardly Royalist whined like a dog.

“An’ I promise the same, Master Samuel Wilkins,” the old man returned with a roar of laughter. “After George has proven himself so good at catchin’ game, I surely can do my part by keepin’ it safe. You will do us no harm, I warrant.”

“Would you stain your hands with my blood?” Sam cried in a fever of terror; and, indeed, he had good reason to fear we would not let his life stand in our way when so many better than he were sent out of this world with less provocation.

“The blood-lettin’ will depend on your behavior,” Master Simon replied, as he leaned back in his chair after the fashion of one who is comfortable. “We are minded to keep you with us a time, an’ if it so be you can make yourself content with such fare and under such rules as we prescribe, blood like yours—that must be more than half water—will not be spilled.”

“I stand ready to do whatsoever pleases you, Master Fletcher,” Sam cried, and I verily believe he would have fallen at the old man’s feet but that I clutched him so firmly by the coat-collar he could not move.

“Lock the door, lad,” Master Simon said to me. “Seat yourself by the fire, after giving me that pistol, for it is not seemly you should stand while one like him is seated.”

I obeyed, but you may be certain I did not remove my eyes from our prisoner, for I had good reason to distrust him, and was not minded he should play any pranks.

When all this had been done Master Simon said:

“It was well you saw that Royalist in time, lad, otherwise we might not be sittin’ here so pleasant; but his company will hinder us in the work.”

“It could not well be helped,” I said with the air of one who excuses himself, and Master Simon added quickly :

“That I freely admit; but now we have him on our hands it remains to be said how we shall dispose of him when the time for action comes.”

“It will be short work to truss him up so he can neither move nor speak.”

“True; yet by such course we take the chance of his bein’ discovered an’ set free in time to frustrate our plans. Heard you anything new?”

When I had told how fruitlessly my time had been spent the old man fell to musing, and during upward of an hour we three sat there before the smoldering fire in silence, Samuel Wilkins with his eyes fixed on the veteran, and I on the alert for any move the Royalist might make.

When Master Simon aroused himself from his reverie it was to take such steps as would render Sam’s escape impossible.

He tied the Tory’s hands and feet with bits of rope left over from the ladder he had made in my absence, and then fitted a gag of cloth to the lad’s mouth, doing the work so deftly I could not but

believe he had had experience in such labor during the time when he helped capture that French fortress which had been thought impregnable.

Sam pleaded to be allowed liberty, promising again and again with many tears that he would obey without question every order given, and make no effort to raise an alarm ; but the danger was too great for us thus to trust him.

Although it caused me sadness to hear him beg, I knew full well there was no oath he would not break if an opportunity of freeing himself came to hand, and it was simply our lives against his discomfort, therefore I did not question Master Simon's disposition of the prisoner.

He was given to understand that he would be allowed more freedom of movement during the coming day ; but now, when it was time for us to sleep, the fast binding was an absolute necessity from our point of view.

The prisoner was fed when we had our supper of porridge, and then Master Simon and I lay down on the couch ; but sleep did not visit my eyelids during the entire night, and at this one could not wonder, in view of all I had to occupy my mind.

Shortly after midnight, while my old friend was slumbering peacefully, I so far released Sam from his bonds that he could rest himself by changing



his position; but did not enter into conversation with him as he desired, for I had no wish to listen to his pleadings for liberty.

Then, when it seemed as if it had been a week of night, the morning came, and at Master Simon's command the prisoner was released from the hempen fetters; but ordered to remain in that corner of the room furthest from the window.

How this day was spent I hardly know. It was to me more like a horrible dream than a reality, and during every moment of the time I had before my eyes the image of the gallows.

Master Simon talked little, but smoked much.

Sam Wilkins, lying unrestrained upon our couch, slept, or appeared to sleep, a greater portion of the time, and no longer begged that we would set him free.

That he remained thus silent troubled me not a little, for I feared he might be hatching mischief, although what he would be able to do while we had him under our eyes was more than I could conjecture.

It was a positive relief when the night came again, and I knew the time was near at hand for us to begin that venture which might end only in death for Master Simon and myself.

However perilous the hazard, it seemed as noth-

ing compared with the suspense when I could do nothing save picture to myself the results of our failure.

Had the time been longer I believe of a verity I should have grown cowardly until wholly unfitted for my portion of the task, and even as it was I trembled so violently that Master Simon, noting it, said in a kindly way :

“It’s your mind, lad, that’s makin’ you all this trouble. But that I know you better I’d say you could be of no service this night. Danger, sudden an’ quick, is all you need to bring out what’s in your heart.”

I was pleased so brave a soldier should have such a good opinion of me, yet I knew how sadly he was mistaken, and would have convinced him of the error but that he refused to listen.

It was ten o’clock when the last idle moment had been spent, and the hour at hand when we were to make the effort which must result in the saving of one life to the cause, or the loss of three.

Master Simon bound Sam Wilkins once more, taking the utmost care that every knot should be true and the rope without a flaw.

Once he was trussed up on the bed in such a fashion that he could do no more than turn slightly from side to side, we prepared to depart.

Save the clothing on our bodies, and Master Simon's staff and pistol, we had no belongings to leave behind.

The rope-ladder I took upon myself to carry, but not openly. It was wound around my chest tightly, and my coat put over it in such a manner that keenest scrutiny would be required to show I had about me other than a lad of my age would naturally wear in such weather.

Before leaving the room I piled on the fire all the wood remaining in the sack, lest Sam should suffer with the cold, and we went cautiously down the stairs, for it was not Master Simon's intention to take into his confidence even the friend with whom we lodged.

Once on the lane the sleet and hail beat furiously upon us, and my companion whispered :

“I hadn't dared hope for such good fortune as that a storm should come this night. The clouds have been gatherin' all day ; but when the sun set and neither rain nor snow fell, I made up my mind we'd take our chances in fair weather.”

I made no reply ; my teeth were chattering so with fear that I dared not attempt to speak.

Master Simon led the way in silence, walking rapidly out Essex Street to Frogg Lane, and thence to the Common.

Once on this waste of land there was no fear of meeting any of the watch, and I breathed more freely, until, having crossed the open space, we went down Beacon Street to Tremont, the most dangerous portion of the journey.

But for the storm, which increased in violence each moment, we must have met with those who had the right to inquire concerning our errand abroad; but the hail and sleet drove under cover all who were able to seek a shelter, and no one opposed us.

Arrived at the rear of the jail, Master Simon whispered, as we stood for a moment straining our eyes to make certain no one save ourselves was in the vicinity:

“We have had rare good luck, lad, an’ may reckon it as a sign that we’ll get the best of this ’ere trick. I had counted on bein’ not less than an hour gettin’ here, on account of them we’d have to dodge, an’ we’ve come without hindrance.”

“Do not let us make any delay. There is nothing to prevent our beginning the work at once, and the waiting is the worst of the task.”

Master Simon peered intently into the darkness a moment before replying, and neither hearing nor seeing anything to cause alarm, said as he went toward the tree which grew nearest the jail:

“If Ben is on the lookout we shan’t waste many minutes; but it may be he didn’t have a chance to use the file, in which case our game is blocked.”

The thought had never come into my mind that there could be any failure on the part of my comrade to do his share of the work, and now as it was suggested while we were waiting to rescue him, I turned cold with fear.

If he could not gain the window we were come on a fool’s errand, and all hope of saving his life was at an end.

I dared not so much as breathe while we were creeping nearer the gloomy building which served to break from us the violence of the gale, and the suspense was so painful I was like to cry out in my agony.

Master Simon waved his arms to and fro, believing this movement could be seen in the darkness if any one was watching from above, and while I stood trembling and nervous I was startled by a light touch on the shoulder, which caused my heart to bound violently.

While one might have counted twenty I remained staring into the darkness, vainly trying to understand what it was I had felt, and on the point of warning Master Simon, when my hand came in contact with a light cord to which a small weight

of some kind was attached, that swung violently to and fro in the wind.

Seizing it with a prayer of thanksgiving in my heart, for I knew it had been let down by Ben Scarlett that we might understand he was on the alert, I pulled it twice smartly.

To my great joy the pressure upon the cord was returned, and I thus was in communication once more, after so long a time of separation, with my comrade.

It was several minutes before I could summon Master Simon to my side, and I dared not move further than the length of cord would permit lest I might not find it again in the darkness; but once he realized that Ben had done his portion of the work my hand was clasped heartily.

It was as if the veteran thus assured me all would go well now the prisoner had succeeded in leaving his cell.

I stripped off my outer garments to come at the ladder of rope, and as soon as it could be unwound from my body one end was fastened to the cord.

Ben Scarlett was never a thick-headed lad, and now when his life depended upon the success of his and our efforts it was as if he could read our thoughts in the darkness.

The ladder was but just made fast to the cord

when my comrade pulled it steadily upward, we paying out until the entire length had been raised in the air, when a smart tugging from above told that this portion of the work was done.

Master Simon pulled vigorously at the ropes to satisfy himself they had been made fast securely, and then we stood anxiously watching for Ben to descend.

We waited, hardly daring to breathe, until fully sixty seconds, each one seeming like a minute, had passed, but nothing was seen or heard of my comrade.

“He is either disabled, or has failed to loosen the bars of the window,” Master Simon said in a hoarse whisper, and I knew what he meant as he placed his hand on my shoulder.

Seizing the slender ladder which swung to and fro in the wind, I began to ascend, my thoughts so intent on Ben that I failed to understand how great was the peril at this moment.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A MISHAP.

At another moment, when there was ample time in which to consider the danger, I might not have found my courage sufficient to ascend the ladder of rope which swung to and fro in the wind till I was like to be shaken off; but now, intent only on rescuing Ben from the gallows, I clambered up without consciousness of the difficulties.

Arriving at the top, and it seemed to me as if a goodly portion of the night had been spent in the effort, I encountered an outstretched hand which I clutched fervently, pressing it to my lips again and again, for I knew it could be none other than Ben's.

The darkness was so dense that now I was with my comrade I could not understand why he delayed, and peered here and there until he, taking my hand, passed it over one of the bars, which I soon ascertained had been partly cut through by a file.

Even now I failed to understand all, and groped about for the tool.



Not finding it I pressed my face close to the bars and asked cautiously, for I was forced to speak above a whisper because of the noise made by the elements.

“Where is it? I will soon cut that iron through.”

“I dropped the file an hour ago, when the work was half-done. Oh, George, George, I am fated always to be the instrument of my own undoing!”

Turning quickly, for there was no time to be spent in giving such poor consolation as was in my power to the unhappy lad, I was about to descend in search of the tool when I realized how useless such an attempt would be.

I might fumble around on the ground an hour without finding that for which I sought, and in the meanwhile every second was precious. If one of the sentries, made uncomfortably cold by the chilling blast which whistled through the aperture, should come to close the window, all would be discovered and the hopes of a rescue be dashed.

Without stopping to reflect that my strength was hardly sufficient for the work, I seized the bar with both hands a few inches above where it had been partially cut, and planting both feet against the window-ledge, put every muscle and sinew into play.

Had the peril to my poor comrade been one whit

less I had failed in the effort; but I was well-nigh desperate, and my strength twice what it would have been under other circumstances.

The bar withstood the strain upon it for perhaps three seconds, and then it suddenly gave way.

I was thrown off the ledge, and realized during the brief instant I hung in mid-air that by thus falling I might give an alarm which would render all our efforts fruitless; yet I could not check myself.

It seemed as if I turned twice over in the descent; but retained sufficient consciousness to understand that no cry must escape my lips, however severe might be the pain which would come to me, and then I struck the ground with such a resounding thud as must have been heard inside the walls of the prison but for the roaring of the gale.

The determination to keep my wits about me was so strong that I retained all my faculties even though so sadly shaken, and when I felt Master Simon's hands as he came to my assistance I pressed them back that I might scramble to my feet.

Strong though my purpose was, I could not do that which I intended. One of my legs bent under me as I would have risen to my feet, and I fancied I could feel splintered bones grinding together.

Then came a sensation as of deadly faintness, but I struggled, and with good purpose, to hold myself in check, for the temptation to scream was very great.

“Are you hurt, lad?” Master Simon cried dangerously loud, and I pressed my hand over his mouth as I whispered:

“Look to Ben! He must be coming down now.”

Even as I spoke my comrade was beside me, and a great flood of joy hushed the pain, because he was freed from the Britishers’ prison. It mattered little what became of me now he was at liberty!

Ben would have spoken but that I closed his mouth with my hand as I had done Master Simon’s, and then I knew the old man was feeling of my injured leg.

“It is broken!” I heard him say to my comrade. “We have failed even at the moment of success!”

“That must not be!” I cried, struggling to rise to a sitting posture. “Leave me, and help Ben out of this town!”

“That would be to put you in his place.”

“It would be better so. If but one can escape let it be one who can do so much more for the cause than I.”

I am not certain that such was the case, but it seemed as if at that moment I felt Master Simon’s

lips on my cheek, and the touch, or that which I fancied, gave me more strength than I had ever known.

Rising on one foot, heeding not the anguish of which I was only dimly conscious, I flung my arm over the old man's shoulder, and no words were needed.

"Quick, Ben, quick!" I heard Master Simon say. "It may be we can get clear of the town before the agony overcomes him!"

With my comrade on one side and the veteran of Louisbourg on the other, I was half-carried out into School Street through the schoolhouse yard, and here the wind was like to have swept the three of us away, so furious was its rage as we came from behind the shelter of the building.

"But for this gale I'd say no man could pass through Boston town without runnin' into a red-coat; but now the king's soldiers cannot be blamed for shirkin' duty a little," and the veteran raised me higher that my useless foot might not drag so painfully upon the ground.

"Leave me here while you two get out of danger," I said, determined that hurt of mine should not be the means of sending Ben to the scaffold from which he was so nearly escaped.

"We shall all go free, or share the same prison,"



WITH MY COMRADE ON ONE SIDE AND THE VETERAN OF LOUISBOURG ON THE OTHER, I WAS HALF-CARRIED OUT INTO SCHOOL STREET.

*Bunker Hill, p. 262.*



Master Simon said sharply. "Can you hold out a bit longer, lad?"

"I will, though it breaks my heart that you should stay here with me when it is possible to escape."

"It would do more than break mine were we so cowardly as to leave you behind," Master Simon replied, and then he said to Ben: "Take all his weight you can. Between us both we should be able to carry him and yet travel at a decent pace."

"Will you try to get out of town?" my comrade asked.

"We must, lad. By morning there will be a hue an' cry raised such as has never been heard in Boston. General Howe won't take kindly to the idea that his prisoners can escape so readily, an' the Tories will be boilin' with rage. I warrant you every buildin' is searched 'twixt this an' to-morrow night."

"Where can you take him?"

"That is what I don't know now; but it is certain we must get away from the town."

"Could you sail a boat in such a gale?"

"I would make the try for it, whatever kind of a craft I had; the sea even now is a better friend than a Britisher."

"Then why not make for Borrough's Wharf?"

We know of a hiding-place which might answer our purpose a few hours, and there should be a boat in some of the shipyards."

"It's a longish walk for one hurt sore as this poor lad; but yet the venture might be made. There's more chance for us in that direction than on the Neck."

My heart sank within me as Master Simon arrived at this decision.

We must traverse nearly the entire length of the town to come at the wharf, and yet had the distance been twice as great I would not have questioned the wisdom of the plan, for what were my sufferings as compared with that which would surely come to Ben if we were captured?

We met no living being while making the journey; the gale had driven every one to shelter, and we had good reason to bless the icy wind, for without it our hope of escape would have been in vain.

I know little regarding the latter portion of that long, painful tramp, during the greater part of which I was carried by my true friends, for the pain drowned everything else so completely that I failed to feel the exultation which should have come when we gained the wharf in safety.

Now it was no longer possible for me to help myself in the slightest degree.



Master Simon and Ben contrived to get me into that hole in the foundation walls where we had hidden the night Sam Wilkins brought the soldiers down upon us, and, this done, the veteran said in a low tone to Ben, not intending I should hear:

“Keep close, lad, no matter what sounds may come, while I am gone.”

“Will you search for a boat now?”

“No; that poor lad must be attended to first. I count on gettin’ back to my old home.”

“To what purpose?”

“He must have something with which to cover him from the storm, and bandages are needed to keep the broken bones in place until we are where they can be attended to by a surgeon.”

I would have called out that they must think only of getting out of the town—that my hurts might be ministered to when we were in a place of safety, but Master Simon was gone before I could speak.

When we were alone Ben Scarlett bent over me whispering words of gratitude in my ear for what he was pleased to say I had done in his behalf, and they would have been doubly sweet but for the pain which hindered me from giving them due weight.

I understood my comrade was itching to know

how we set about rescuing him, and despite the wound I told him in a few words of Sam Wilkins, wishing now I had tried to make him more comfortable before we left the house.

“He has been many times to the prison, and but for the guards would have amused himself telling me what kind of a death I must meet. He promised to be among the throng when I was hanged, and said he would take good care my father should believe I died like a coward.”

I no longer had any feeling of sadness for such discomfort as the Royalist cur might be enduring. I had known him as a coward and a sneak, but never gave him credit for so much vileness as would prompt him to jibe one in my comrade's position.

With a view to distracting my attention, Ben told me of his long imprisonment, blaming himself severely because he had parted company with me when we escaped from the king's ship, and trying to describe the agony of mind when he understood he must suffer death as a spy, for the guards had told him he would most likely be convicted at the military trial so soon to be held.

Some of his story I understood, but a goodly portion was unheeded because of the pain which well nigh deprived me of my senses, and then

Master Simon came back, bringing with him two blankets.

“They have torn down the old house for fire-wood,” he said as he joined us, and Ben asked where he had gotten that which he brought.

“At the house of one who will not betray us. It was all the poor woman could give, and I doubt not but that she took them from her own bed. Now lad,” and the veteran turned toward me, “I must tie up your leg that it may come to as little harm as may be, an’ then there is nothin’ for it but a sea voyage. I warrant the lookout on his majesty’s ships won’t be kept very sharply this night.”

After learning he could be of no service in the work to be done, Ben urged that he be allowed to go in search of a skiff, so no time should be wasted, and Master Simon permitted the venture, saying as my comrade departed :

“A lad like him, who has always lived in this part of the town, should be better able to find what we need than an old bungler like me.”

I would have resented this disparagement of himself but for the stupor which assailed me.

I realized it was cowardly to yield so completely to pain, yet I could fight no longer against it ; but lay like one lifeless while good Master Simon, having first cut the shoe from my swollen foot,

bandaged my leg tightly in the blankets, lashing it from ankle to thigh until it was as if encased in wood.

The work was but just done when Ben appeared.

He had found a boat in which was a single pair of oars, and brought it to the wharf.

The sea was running very high, so he said, and while the craft was stanch he questioned if it would be safe for us to attempt the passage.

“If there were no oars she would be a better refuge for us than can be found in the town,” Master Simon said quickly. “I will trust the wildest seas this night sooner than the most tender-hearted Tory I have ever seen.”

There was no delay in embarking.

The skiff had been brought under the wharf, where she was sheltered from the wind, and into her I was placed by my companions, for since Master Simon’s surgical attentions I was even less able to help myself than before.

The old man would have covered me with his own coat had I permitted it; but when he thus bared himself to the winter’s storm I protested that I should tear off the blankets from my leg unless he put on the garment again, and he could do no less than comply with my wishes.

I had been laid in the bottom of the boat with

my head raised on the after seat at such height that my eyes were nearly on a level with the rail, therefore the waves, when we were clear of the wharf, looked higher to me than to my companions.

Never had I seen the waters so wild. On the night we swamped our craft against the king's ship I thought the waves as boisterous as was possible yet then they were mild as compared with their fury now.

It seemed certain we would be wrecked before Master Simon had pulled us well out into the harbor, and I believe he was of that opinion himself, for he ordered Ben to stand by ready to seize me if an accident should overtake us.

Again and again did the waters curl entirely over us; but the little vessel had no more of a load than she needed as ballast, and rode nobly although we made but little headway.

Master Simon plied the oars manfully, and the wind drove us away from the town right speedily; but not in the direction we would have chosen.

"Will you steer for Dorchester?" Ben cried after we were well past the king's fleet; and he was forced to scream at the full strength of his lungs in order to make himself heard.

"I should if it could be done; but we are bein' carried down the harbor and I can do no more than

keep her headed with the wind," Master Simon replied.

Then my comrade did that which made me feel proud because of his quick wit.

Unbuttoning his coat he stood in the very bow of the boat, holding the garment open as if it had been a sail, and the veteran rewarded him for the effort by crying cheerily :

"Well done, lad; that gives us a famous lift! Hold you there while I steer, an' it won't be long before we'll strike a better hidin' place than could be found in Boston town."

After this I must have lost my senses for a time; I can remember nothing of our sail when Ben played the part of both spars and canvas, but was next conscious of being in a sheltered spot where, although it was deadly cold, neither wind nor waves beat upon me.

"We've made land, my lad," Master Simon said as he rubbed my hands, while his own were like frost. "There's little chance we'll see a British prison this bout, for I warrant they won't come thus far searchin' after us."

"Where are we?" I asked.

"On Apple Island, as nigh as I can make out. The wind drove us down the harbor at a spankin' rate after Ben spread his sail, an' I was willin' to

put into any port rather than trust ourselves outside."

"Are we in a house?" I asked, and might have spared the question, for the wind found us so readily it could not have been possible our refuge was inclosed.

"We are hidden in the bushes, with the boat hauled up alongside us. You had dropped off, so to speak, an' I would have your wits return before Ben an' I set about puttin' a roof over our heads."

"How may that be done?"

"We shall overturn the boat and lie snug under it till the wind shifts, when another try can be made for the Dorchester shore."

There was no reason why he should remain longer by my side, for now I was fully conscious, and Master Simon set about his preparations for the night.

The overturned boat formed a roof above us, and after breaking down a quantity of bushes with which to shut out the wind that would have made its way beneath the rail, the old man and Ben joined me, lying one on either side, as if my comfort was all they gave heed to.

## CHAPTER XX.

## FUGITIVES.

HAD it not been for thoughts of what had been accomplished, the sufferings of that night when we lay under the boat shivering from cold brought by the wind, that found every crevice in the barricade of bushes, would have seemed terrible, as indeed they were.

But when the broken bones of my leg were twisted by some incautious movement, causing such pain that I could not at all times repress a groan, or the frost nipped fingers or face, I found relief in thinking of the gallows from which we had escaped.

Master Simon felt positive we were safe from pursuit, and for this belief he had good grounds.

Even though it should be discovered that we had come away in a boat, the Britishers would naturally suppose we had gained the American lines, or, failing in thus mistaking our whereabouts, would hardly attempt to search all the islands in the harbor until after several days had been spent hunting for us in the town.



Therefore it was that we spoke among ourselves as being free once more, with no danger to be apprehended save when we made the attempt to gain the Dorchester shore; and this sense of liberty went far toward soothing our sufferings.

As the morning came the wind subsided, but the air grew colder until I began to fear we might have gained this refuge only to die by freezing.

Perhaps the frost saved me from much agony, for it is certain the pain was not as great when day dawned as during the earlier part of the night; my injured limb was swollen to twice its natural size, yet it gave me only a sensation of numbness which could better be borne than the pain that had tempted me to break forth in cries and moans.

Master Simon went out from among the bushes as soon as it was light enough to permit of seeing surrounding objects, and on his return reported that we were safely hidden.

At this point on the island, so he said, the shrubbery grew rank, and half a hundred men could have lain concealed among it although the branches were bare of leaves. There was no craft in sight, nor would it have bettered our condition had there been, for we should not dare signal a vessel lest by so doing we bring our enemies down upon us.

Ben urged that we try to gain the Dorchester

shore at once, arguing that my condition would warrant our taking extreme risks, insisting also that there was less likelihood of our being noticed while the escape was not generally known.

I would not have it that my wound should prompt other action than such as would have been taken were I sound in limb, and Master Simon agreed with me.

“While I would make any sacrifice to give you relief, lad,” he said gravely, “I cannot sanction that which would imperil your life. Here we must remain in hiding till night comes again, an’ then, if it so be the wind is kindly, we’ll try our best to gain a friendly shore.”

It seemed to me a little thing, even when the pain was greatest, that by enduring the suffering I could best insure the safety of my comrades, for by this time I had come to look upon the old man as one bound to me closely as ever was Ben, and such thought never failed to give relief.

At least once every hour the veteran crept out to make certain no one was approaching by water; but he would not allow Ben to move from my side.

To take our minds from present trouble he related in minute detail his adventures at the capture of Louisbourg, and made merry when I knew full

well he suffered equally with us. Thus he proved himself as great a hero as any whose deeds are better known.

Poor Ben was less calculated to endure the frosty air than either Master Simon or myself. He had been shut up in prison so long that he could not be otherwise than delicate as a woman, yet he made no complaint.

I believe of a verity he would have rejoiced had it been possible for him to take my broken bones in exchange for his sound ones.

In the telling, the inaction of this day sounds tame and commonplace, yet to me it will live ever in my memory as a time when I saw two brave comrades displaying heroism as great as could have been exhibited on a battlefield, and more than once did I hug to myself the happy thought that they were my friends.

The night came at length, even though it had seemed as if more than once the sun stood still in the heavens, and Master Simon bestirred himself to make ready for departure.

The wind had subsided until it was no more than a pleasant breeze, although laden with frost, and could we have fitted a sail to the boat the question of gaining the Dorchester shore would have been simple indeed.

Not until an hour after sunset did Master Simon permit us to make a move, and then he had first satisfied himself there was no vessel near at hand.

“It will be no more than child’s play to row from here to the Point,” he said, as if thinking it necessary to prepare us for what was to come. “The hardest part of the task will be George Wentworth’s, who must lie on his back freezing while we warm our blood by work at the oars; but when it has been done our troubles will be at an end, for we shall be among friends.”

Master Simon and Ben launched the boat, after which they carried me on board, for now I could not aid myself even to the extent that had been possible the night before.

Ben Scarlett pleaded to be the first at the oars, and the permission was granted, he first divesting himself of his coat, which was thrown over me during such time as its owner did not need it.

I now had nothing to do save think, and I must confess, even though it be to my discredit, that my mind was filled with but one idea—the pleasure of eating.

With never a thought that we might be forced to remain in hiding thus long, Master Simon and I had given no need to the question of provisions, and I doubt much if we should have hampered our-

selves with anything of the kind had we really known what was in store for us.

The supper eaten while I fed Sam Wilkins had not been a hearty one because of my nervousness, therefore it was much as if I had not tasted food for eight-and-forty hours; but I would never have been such a coward as to give words to these thoughts while it was beyond the power of my comrades to relieve my wants.

While we lay in the bushes no one had so much as spoken of hunger; it was as if neither dared do so lest his desire should increase because of the words. Then I had listened to what my comrades said, and was thus able to keep my wants within bounds; but now when I was forced to remain idle and silent, they asserted themselves more strongly than ever.

However, I consoled myself with the knowledge that it was but a trifling discomfort as compared to what we had known, and did my best to banish desire by calling to mind thoughts of that joyful moment when I should be with my mother again.

I knew but little concerning the voyage, for I was completely covered save at such times as Master Simon and Ben changed positions, when one garment would be taken up and the other thrown over me.

I understood that nothing had been seen to excite alarm; that we were progressing as well as could be expected, and that the prospect of meeting our friends again grew brighter every moment.

It was while matters were advancing as we could have wished, and the escape from Boston town seemed to be the same as accomplished, that I suddenly forgot myself, nor did I remember anything until awakening in such a bed as I had not known since the morning I arose to give Ben Scarlett admittance when he brought the tidings of what had been done against our friends in Concord and Lexington.

A strange man in the uniform of those who serve the cause was standing by the side of the couch looking at me severely, I thought at first, and sitting near by, where I might touch him with my hand, was Master Simon Fletcher.

“He is conscious once more,” I heard the stranger say. “See to it that he be kept quiet, and given nourishing food. I will come again within the week.”

With these words the soldier, as I believed him to be, took his departure, having exchanged a hearty hand-clasp with the veteran, and I was alone with my comrade.

“I’m right glad to see you perkin’ up a bit,” the

old man said as he looked into my face. "I almost began to fear you wouldn't come around again."

"Did we land from the boat all right?" I asked.

"As nearly as might be, considerin' that you had a broken leg an' was nigh to die with the cold."

"Where are we?"

"In Dorchester, not above a mile from where we came ashore."

"And Ben?"

"He set out last night in search of a surgeon, an', that done, it was his purpose to seek your mother."

"Think you she will come here?" I asked, almost afraid to say to myself I should soon see her again.

"Ay, that she will, lad, an' as quickly as a woman may travel the distance, I warrant you."

"When will the surgeon come, Master Simon?"

"Bless your heart, lad, he has just gone. That was him who parted with me as kindly as if I had been one of his own rank. He set your broken bones in proper manner while you knew nothin' of what was bein' done, an' that much sufferin' has been spared a lad who deserves naught but good treatment in this world."

"Now you flatter me, Master Simon," I said as if I would have him cease, though the words were pleasing.

“Indeed, an’ I do not, George Wentworth. You have——”

I will not set down here that which he said lest I be accused of vanity; but it was exceeding kind in the old man to profess such an opinion of me when I had done so little for the cause, and was now disabled to an extent that would prevent my going into camp for many a day.

Then in answer to my eager questions Master Simon told me we gained the shore at daybreak, less than half an hour from the moment I lost myself, and for some time he believed me frozen to death. He and Ben, having exercise at the oars, had not suffered severely, while I, lying motionless, was thoroughly benumbed.

These two comrades carried me nearly a mile to this house where I now was, and after stopping only long enough to satisfy his hunger, Ben Scarlett set out to find a surgeon.

A good doctor who loved our cause so much as to join the army was near at hand, and having told him where I could be found, Ben continued on, therefore it was reasonable to suppose that at this moment my mother knew where I was—I might see her within the next twenty-four hours.

It was while I was talking with Master Simon that I received the great honor which will ever live



in my memory, and caused me to forget I had ever suffered.

A visitor entered the room with as little ceremony as if he had been no more than one of my friends, and Major Harper stood before me—a member of General Ward's staff was actually at the bedside holding out his hand for me to grasp.

I must have appeared to him like a simple, for not only was it impossible for me to speak, but the tears of gratitude so filled my eyes that I saw him as if through a mist; yet my heart was full of joy as never before, that he should have given me so much thought as to come.

He first talked apart with Master Simon, and this gave me time to put on a more manly face, so that when he next approached the couch I was able to thank him for his exceeding kindness.

“I should have come on my own account, sergeant,” he said with the friendliest smile I ever saw; “but General Ward did not give me the opportunity. By his orders I am here to greet you, and say we shall expect to see you at headquarters when it is safe for you to travel so far.”

Twice did I do my best to speak, and then Master Simon put into words my thoughts as well as if he had read them from a printed book:

“Sergeant Wentworth's most humble duty to

General Ward, an' he—he— Well, the lad means he's almost as proud as I am that he should be remembered at headquarters. I can speak for him, Major Harper, an' know that a truer little comrade never lived."

I was afraid the major would think it presumptuous in Master Simon to speak thus in his presence, and tried to make amends by saying:

"Master Fletcher is my good friend, and believes he sees in me much which only he would ever dream of, therefore I pray, Major Harper, that you may not be displeased."

"Why should what my old friend has said displeases me, sergeant? We know from what you have already done that he speaks only the truth, and I am expecting to see you wear a sword, unless King George thinks fit very soon to give us what we ask. Do you know that you three have set Boston by the ears, and General Howe is fuming even worse than when we won that wonderful victory at Charlestown?"

"You speak now of Ben Scarlett's escape, sir?"

"Of a truth I do. A friend to the cause succeeded in leaving town late last night, bringing us a full report; therefore we knew of what you and Simon Fletcher had done before young Scarlett arrived at headquarters, and was believing you

would soon be with us again. The Tories in town charge the worthy general with having winked at your escape, declaring it could not have been effected without aid from those in authority, and his majesty's representative finds himself sorely beset by his friends. We are hoping it may result in some show of activity on the part of the enemy, for this work of besieging the town is growing dull sport."

"Was aught heard concerning one Samuel Wilkins, sir?" I asked, for now I was so happy I wished to know the young Royalist had been released from his bonds.

"Our messenger spoke of a lad having been found in a house on Rainford Lane, who was taken before General Howe to give some testimony regarding the escape; but what he told was not made public."

"An' I doubt not but by this time Sam Wilkins is so puffed up with pride that he wouldn't call a king his grandmother," Master Simon said with a hearty laugh. "You can give over grievin' about the cur, lad, for by trussin' him up we've made him of more account than he himself ever could have done should he live to be twice the villain he is."

Major Harper was pleased to call me "sergeant" each time he addressed me, and would have me tell

the story of what had been done ; but Master Simon objected, insisting that he was the only one who would do the subject full justice.

Then to my confusion the old man made it appear as if I had laid the whole plan, when I really had nothing to do with it save obey the orders he gave, and otherwise caused it to seem that I had been of exceeding great consequence in the matter.

I could not check him, much as I wished he should tell no more concerning me than might have been spoken with absolute truth ; but his tongue would not be stayed, and my cheeks burned fiercely before the tale was brought to an end.

Then Major Harper was pleased to pay another compliment, which so heartened me that I made bold to ask if I would be allowed to act as a soldier again when the bones of my leg were united once more.

“ You are a member of the army, and must continue such until mustered out of service, my lad. Whether you remain at headquarters or not I cannot say ; but this much you may set down as true : While you are of the mind to serve the colonies those gentlemen who command the forces will be pleased to have your service. Some reward should be given you for going into Boston as a spy, even though what has been done since be overlooked,

and I do not think General Ward will forget his promise.”

Then the kindly officer took his departure, and after following him out of doors to show his respect, Master Simon came back to me.

“It sometimes happens that these timorous lads do that which causes other people to believe them brave,” he said with a laugh, as if thinking there was much wit in the remark.

“But for your boastful words no one would believe me brave, Master Simon,” I said respectfully, but yet in such a tone that he must know I was deeply in earnest. “You have meant to be my true camrade by giving me all the praise which belongs to yourself, but it is like to work me harm.”

“In what way, lad?” and I knew he was disturbed.

“Major Harper spoke twice of some reward I should receive for going into town with you.”

“Very well; and you have earned anything within the power of General Ward to give.”

“If he should try to pay me for serving the cause I would be overwhelmed with shame. May it not be that a boy can do that which is within his power for the same reason that a man does?”

“But, lad, I am not above taking pay for my

work, and it is right a soldier should. If it so be the general rewards you, it will be only that which a member of the army would be proud to receive."

I was not satisfied with the reply; but forbore to press the subject further lest I should wound the old man who had shown himself such a stanch friend of mine.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## ON THE HEIGHTS.

ON the day after Major Harper did me the honor to come to my bedside, my dear mother arrived, and she it was who nursed me during all that tedious time when I might not so much as bear my weight on that troublesome leg.

Of the joy I felt at meeting her there is no need to speak, for every lad who has had the misfortune to be so situated that he could not see his mother when he would, knows full well all the gladness and comfort which was mine as she stood by the bedside, stroking my aching head and whispering words of cheer.

Although in the setting of the broken bone I had felt no pain because of the fact that consciousness was lacking, I shortly came to know what one must suffer with such a hurt as mine ; but the distress of body was as nothing now that all anxiety of mind had been fully relieved.

Four-and-twenty hours passed before I saw Ben Scarlett again, and then he was a soldier, proud as

any peacock in a new uniform presented him by his father.

There had been no question as to his age, for when he was known to be one of those who had given General Howe such an unpleasant surprise, any company stood ready to receive him into its ranks.

“I am regularly enlisted,” he said in a tone of satisfaction, after having assured himself I was mending as fast as might be, “and what is more, Master Simon has a place in the same company; not as one who has signed the rolls, mark you, but an invited guest free to come and go as he pleases.”

“Will he really serve as a soldier?” I asked in surprise, not believing it possible the old man could endure the fatigue of marching.

“Ay, lad, he will be so much of a soldier as pleases him; but no more. You can be certain I have not lost an opportunity of telling all he has done to aid the cause and toward saving my life, therefore is it that those in camp feel themselves honored by his company. If it should so please him, I warrant you there are plenty who would take delight in even such service as cleaning his musket.”

“Have you seen General Ward?” I asked.

“Twice since I gained the camp. Once when he



desired to know all the story of how you saved my life at risk of your own, and again when he was pleased to say I might choose the company in which to enlist, much as though I, not you, had shown such bravery in Boston town."

Say what I might, Ben would insist on giving to me all the credit, when Master Simon was the one to whom it belonged, and this I believed he was all the more eager to do because of seeing that it pleased my mother, who listened intently to every word he spoke concerning me.

After sitting with me an hour, at the end of which time I could understand he was eager to display his new uniform in camp, Ben departed, and not until the next day did I have another visitor.

Then it was Master Simon, and what he said I will not here set down lest it seem as if I delight in praising myself.

After telling me of Ben's enlistment and his joining the army as an honorary member, the old man began to speak of Sam Wilkins, who had not only proven himself a coward, but, by his behavior while Ben lay helpless in prison, a cur in every sense of the word.

"When we march into Boston town, as we shall before many weeks have passed, it is my purpose to

seek young Wilkins out, and that done, I warrant you he will get a long-needed lesson," Master Simon said vindictively.

"Think you he did not receive it during the night we left him bound so fast that he could do no more than work?" I asked with a laugh.

"It might have done him good but for what followed. When General Howe summoned him I warrant you Master Sam believed the interview was brought about by his own merits, and most likely thought his advice was needed. The lesson I shall give the young Royalist will have no such ending."

There was little need for me to ask the old man what it was his purpose to do.

I could well fancy how disagreeable such an interview would be to the lad who had done his best to work us harm, and was not minded to say that which should cause Master Simon to spare him one jot.

Of the time while I was held fast to the bed it is not my purpose to write at any length, because in no wise does it effect us three who were, and would be so long as we lived, fast comrades.

Ben studied the manual of arms and enjoyed himself right well, so he confided in me, learning how to aid the cause in an intelligent manner.

I only begrudged him the ability to move around as he pleased, for I knew right well he would soon outstrip me in the race, as seemed just, inasmuch as he was a braver lad, and envy could have no place in my heart when it was Master Simon or Ben Scarlett who rose high in the opinion of our friends.

When it became possible for to walk with the aid of crutches, it can well be understood that my first visit was to the camp, and there I received such a welcome as would have made glad the heart of any man.

Major Harper showed me signal favor, and even General Ward was pleased to say he was glad to see me about.

My one fear in those days was that the army would move against the Britishers before I was in condition to take my rightful place in the ranks; but this happily did not come to pass.

The day on which I did finally present myself was marked by a happy omen, and the rejoicings of the soldiers over the completion of that work under charge of Colonel Henry Knox, at one time thought impossible, gave the air of a holiday to the camp when I resumed my duties as a soldier.

I knew not to whom should belong the credit of conceiving the plan of bringing from Ticonderoga the heavy guns which our people needed for pur-

poses of the siege; but certain it is that Colonel Knox, who was at the head of the artillery, took charge of the work, and on forty-two sleds, drawn by yoke after yoke of oxen, the cannon were brought through New York State, over the Green Mountains, to Cambridge.

It was a most gigantic undertaking, but performed so skillfully and expeditiously that its successful completion was looked upon by many of our people as an augury of good fortune to the American army.

It was, I say, on the same day this expedition arrived at Cambridge that I, with the full sanction of my dear mother, betook myself to the Roxbury camp, and here Major Harper would have given more evidence of his favor toward me by ordering that I be detailed for service at headquarters; but I humbly begged permission to remain with my comrades.

He urged as a reason why I should content myself in the immediate service of General Ward, that advancement in rank would be more certain; but I was not minded to wear a sword while my comrades remained privates, and so told him.

“As you will, lad, as you will,” he replied laughingly; “but if it should so chance that you finally prefer the easier duties here at headquarters, come

directly to me and I will see that the necessary detail be made."

I thanked him heartily for his kindness toward one so much lower in station than himself, and explained as best I could that feeling in my heart which prompted me to remain in the company of those two with whom I had shared privations and dangers.

Even though I was a sergeant, it was not necessary for me to be in the camp many hours before I realized that Master Simon held a much higher rank in the estimation of the men.

Even the captain of our company treated him with distinguished consideration, and the lieutenants were not above listening to his stories of the doings at Louisbourg, while the younger men vied with each other in waiting upon him.

It made my heart glad, this treatment of the old man who had proven himself so good a comrade, and I rejoiced more heartily than if I myself had been the object of all these attentions.

Master Simon received me, when I presented myself for duty, much as I might have expected.

Drawing himself up stiffly as I advanced after having reported to the captain, he saluted me as a superior officer, and otherwise deported himself in what was, to my mind, a very disagreeable fashion

until I told him plainly that I would have no more of it.

“If you and Ben purpose to be my comrades as in the days past, it will hearten me greatly, Master Simon Fletcher; but if you intend to treat me as if I was no less than a colonel in rank, then it were better I return to headquarters, for there am I certain to receive a friendly welcome, and my sergeant’s stripes do not prevent kindly intercourse.”

I believe of a verity the old man was afraid I would carry this threat into execution, for he suddenly unbent from his dignity, and looking around to make certain there were none so near as to overhear his words, whispered :

“You do not understand military usages, lad, otherwise the respect I have shown would not come amiss.”

“Then are there many others in this portion of the army who are quite as ignorant as myself,” I replied. “Never before have I seen a sergeant treated in such exalted fashion as that with which you have just favored me.”

“But listen, lad,” he said earnestly. “It is known in camp that no less an officer than General Ward himself sent one of his staff to inquire after your welfare when you were laid up with a broken

leg, and it is also well understood that you are a welcome visitor at headquarters."

"Well, and what may that have to do with your stiffness toward me?"

"My 'stiffness,' as you please to call it, is but respect, George Wentworth, for the lad who, under my trainin', has reason to be considered of so much importance in the eyes of the commander that he is received almost as an equal. I am proud of what you are because I had a hand in the fashionin' of your career, an' what is more, my boy, my tongue has wagged industriously in your praise until the men here in Roxbury believe there be none your equal. Therefore it is that I would practice what I preach, at least when we are in public. It ill becomes me to tell this soldier and the other that you are destined for great things, and then treat you as I would Ben Scarlett."

The old man spoke so earnestly that I would not for much gold have let him know how vexed I was at his sounding of my undeserved praises; but at the same time I was resolved he should cease to herald me as though I were other than I knew myself, and therefore said somewhat sharply:

"Look you, Master Simon, if it is your desire to give me pleasure, treat me with even less consideration than you would Ben, who is the braver lad of

the two, and will soon be my superior in rank, or I misjudge him greatly. In doing this we shall be comrades once more, and that is what I desire above all things save the success of the cause."

Master Simon held out his hand to me, and as I took it said gravely :

"No one but yourself shall ever speak in my presence of Ben Scarlett's being a braver lad than George Wentworth, for I know full well it is not the truth. If it so chances, lad, that my treating you in proper fashion be distasteful, then you shall never be offended in like manner again."

Having said this he suddenly changed his way of speaking until the same Simon Fletcher stood before me whom I had met on that day in Battery Alley, when Ben brought the news of the murder done at Lexington.

From that hour I had no cause to complain of undue ceremony as toward myself, and we three comrades messed together, Ben and I instructed day after day in a soldier's duty by Master Simon, until we were become more proficient than the majority of our companions. This last I may say without fear I shall be accused of sounding my own praises, for all the merit was due the veteran of Louisbourg, who literally forced us to continue the



studies, or the practice, when we would for our own pleasure have done otherwise.

If I have not spoken of the capture of the British brigantine, the Nancy, together with her cargo of two thousand muskets, one hundred and five thousand flints, sixty tons of cartridge paper, thirty-one tons of musket shot, three thousand round shot for twelve-pounders and four thousand for six-pounders, it is because such fact is known even to the children, and I but set it down here to show why, on or about the 1st of February, in the year '76, we at Roxbury believed the time had come when some decided action would be taken against the enemy.

Until winter set in we, meaning now the American Army, were powerless to work much harm, so Master Simon explained, because of lacking heavy cannon.

Now, however, these captured munitions of war, together with the guns brought from Ticonderoga, supplied that which we needed, and although as a matter of course we could not know the intentions of the commander-in-chief, there was in the camp the belief that we should remain inactive but little longer.

After this was decided upon by ourselves we chafed because no order for an advance came, and

on the 13th of February there happened that which aroused the spirit of anger, amounting almost to insubordination against General Washington, because we were thus kept idle.

On that day General Howe sent a force of grenadiers and light infantry to Dorchester Neck, where they destroyed every building, and our guard of six men were taken prisoners.

This wanton attack aroused us all, and many harsh words were spoken against the commanders who were so weak-kneed, for it was well known among the rank and file of the army that General Washington had called a council of war, himself being in favor of crossing on the ice to make an attack; but was overruled by his generals.

The British had shown us how readily we might have passed over the frozen channel, and could those of our officers who had opposed the commander-in-chief heard the comments upon their courage which were made in the camp at Roxbury, I warrant every cheek would have flushed with shame.

Before the month was ended, however, we were gratified by the preparations which were making for an attack, and during two weeks all labored upon a most novel contrivance which was being fashioned under the direction, as we were told, of Colonel Rufus Putnam.

Since it was this which terrified the redcoats into leaving Boston, I will here set down to the best of my ability some account of the instrument or arrangement.

Stout timbers ten feet long, with framed posts five feet apart, were fashioned, to be placed on the ground in parallel lines, and the spaces filled with fascines stoutly picketed together.

This name "fascines" puzzled me not a little until I came to learn that they were nothing more than bundles of sticks or branches tied together, and it was in the making of these that we three comrades performed our share of the labor.

Limbs of trees of any sort were cut into lengths of three feet or more, and when as much had been gathered as would fill my two arms, both ends were tied securely.

Master Simon, who kept himself well informed upon everything of a military nature, explained that this collection of posts and twigs was to be set up on Dorchester heights as a fortification, it being possible to put them in place very rapidly once they were constructed, and that the proper name for the whole was "chandelier."

It was not until Saturday night, on the 2d of March, that all the preparations were completed, and then was strewn on the ground nearabout the

camp such a collection of timbers and twigs as seemed to me would suffice to cover every inch of the heights.

“There are no more than will be needed, lad, as you shall see,” Master Simon said, when, spent with toil, we were about to seek our quarters, and he had hardly spoken when we were startled by heavy cannonading from nearabout Cambridge way.

“Is the work to be begun to-night?” Ben asked in surprise, and the veteran replied with such an air of wisdom that one would have believed General Washington himself had consulted the old man on the matter:

“All this noise is but a blind, lad, intended to keep the Britishers from mistrusting exactly our purpose. If I am not mistaken, you can sleep quietly this night so far as any movement is concerned; yet it is in fact the beginning of our capture of Boston town, for, hark you, it *will* be captured.”

“They are commencing work right early if this lot of truck which we have been laboring on so long is to be used,” Ben said laughingly; and then Master Simon made a statement which caused me for the first time since I had known him to believe he would depart from the strict truth.

“All this which you see here will be put into

place 'twixt sunset and sunrise. On one night you shall see Dorchester Heights as they are now, and in the morning the land will bristle with fortifications like unto regularly constructed forts."

To this I made no reply, not being willing the old man should see I doubted him; but Ben, being more free with his tongue, cried scornfully:

"It couldn't be done if every man in the American Army was here to aid in the work! Think you General Howe would remain idle while we were building such as you describe?"

"Ay, lad, I think so; and if he do not, then will the plan miscarry. Just now it must be in his mind that the attack is coming from Cambridge way, and toward that quarter will his attention be directed."

"Then he must be a simple!" Ben cried.

"How so, lad? Were the British troops to march out on the Neck this night and there begin to send shot and shell into our camp, would you be so wise as to say that General Howe intended to attack some other point, or should you prepare for defense here? It does not behoove a lad who could not keep himself out of the redcoats' clutches when he had a fair chance to belittle proper military maneuvers, of which he knows nothing."

Ben's face flushed, for it was a sore point with him that I had gone free the night we escaped from

the frigate, and he, following his own judgment, was made prisoner; but he held his temper bravely, and hit the old man by saying:

“I was not so fortunate as to be at Louisbourg, else might I know better the meaning of this twisting and turning where neither one army nor the other do more than burn a few houses or capture a boy now and then.”

“It would have advantaged you had you been at Louisbourg, Master Scarlett,” Simon Fletcher said sharply, and then he would have walked away disgruntled but that I ran after to force him back.

There was but little sleep for us on this Saturday night because of the continuous discharge of heavy guns, and it seemed as if the entire camp was astir, every man watching eagerly the result of our enormous expenditure of powder and ball.

The grumblers were silenced now, for there must be something behind the cannonading, as Master Simon had said, more than the desire to make a noise. We understood full well now that the time was nigh at hand when we would measure strength with the redcoats as we had on Breed's Hill, and never one could be found who did not believe our army would do greater things than it had that June day in Charlestown.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE EVACUATION.

OUR work of bundling up twigs did not seem much like the duty of soldiers, and both Ben and I believed it was time wasted, for it appeared certain a round-shot would play havoc with the frail fortifications, yet had we performed our task equally with the others, and were now ready to maintain such stations as should be given us.

The heavy cannonading from the Cambridge shore caused us to believe we would soon have an opportunity of measuring our strength with General Howe's men who had been purchased for so much a head, and we of the rank and file were in a fine state of excitement, as may be imagined.

Therefore our disappointment was all the greater when the night passed with no show of activity among the American troops other than the bombardment, in which we at Dorchester had but little share.

“It's all part of a scheme, an' a good one, I'll go

bail," Master Simon said encouragingly when he saw the impatience which Ben and I could not hide. "There's more to this business of war than startin' hammer an' tongs at the enemy, an' unless the red-coats show the white feather, which don't seem in any ways likely, we'll smell burnin' powder to our heart's content."

Such words as these cheered us for a time; but when Sabbath morning came and the cannonading ceased, it appeared to us as if that on which we had pinned our faith was like to be no more than a big noise or perhaps the artillerymen seeking to find the range.

Nor were we the only ones who fretted and fumed because no forward movement was made.

Every man with whom we talked seemed eager to show his mettle, and all appeared to think we might readily march into Boston town despite the Britishers, if our commanders would but give the word.

On Sunday afternoon, when we had decided the cannonading and our work with the fascines had been thrown away, the booming of heavy guns began again, and throughout that night the din was like to deafen one, yet we remained idly in camp.

Monday was passed much as Sunday, in grumbling and lounging, and then, about an hour after



sunset, it began to look as if the most blood-thirsty of us might be satisfied.

Twelve hundred men, we three comrades among the number, were led by General Thomas to South Boston, and those who had better information said we were to take possession of Dorchester Heights.

And this we did, being stationed on that rise of ground overlooking Nook's Hill where we could see all which was being done.

Now indeed were the impatient words checked, for the simplest among us could understand we were but the advance guard of that body of men who had been charged with the work of putting in place the beams of wood and bundles of branches which had been prepared by such willing hands.

I might write until both my paper and patience was exhausted in trying to set forth in proper fashion all which was done on this Monday night, and yet fall far short of what I would like to set forth, for during the twelve hours was done such work as struck terror to those hearts covered by a red coat, and told the world how we of the Provinces set about a task which a six-month ago would have seemed well-nigh impossible of accomplishment. Therefore it must be that I hasten over the task, refraining from setting down all which I and my comrades speculated upon at the time.

The noise of the heavy guns drowned the rumbling of wheels as our teams set out laden with the beams and bundles which were to be set in place as fortifications, and I have been told that no less than four hundred yoke of oxen were employed that night in hauling to Dorchester Heights the odd-looking material which Colonel Putnam and Master Gridley had caused to be fashioned.

Our part, and now I am speaking of the twelve hundred under General Thomas, was to stand in readiness against a sortie in case the Britishers should suspect what was being done, and try to interfere while no less than two thousand men armed with intrenching tools did the labor which was finally to give us possession of Boston town.

Shall I write of how we watched the work as it progressed until what looked like veritable fortifications arose as if by magic before our eyes, or shall I try to tell how we longed for an opportunity to hold in check any of the enemy who might sally forth?

Now we came to understand that the hours we spent in idleness were necessary for the perfection of the plan, and we hugged to our hearts the thought that before many hours had passed we would give his majesty's troops—officers and all—such a surprise as they had not had since that day

they believed it would be a simple task to overrun Breed's Hill because there was nothing to oppose them but a lot of country people armed with rifles fit only for a squirrel-hunt.

It is not to my credit that I say I hoped we might have a brush with the redcoats, for then we were in a safe position, and there was no evidence the enemy knew what was being done ; but I did long for it as a hungry man longs for bread, and yet there was no worthier part for us to play than to remain on the alert while our comrades worked.

It was near morning ; already were the timbers and bundles of twigs in such position as told what form they would presently take, when Master Simon, leaving his place in the ranks, came to where I was standing, rifle in hand, as if believing there would be opportunity of using it right soon, and said in a low tone :

“Are you satisfied, lad, that we shall have a chance of waking up the Britishers ?”

In reply I laughed aloud, nor could I have prevented such unseemly noise even had General Washington himself been near at hand.

Surprised by such action Master Simon asked me what of mirth I saw, when in a few hours, mayhap, we would be battling with death.

And I explained, straightening my face as best I might, for now had I come to understand that gravity, not laughter, most befitted the time :

“I was fancying myself near Sam Wilkins, who believes himself of no mean importance in the British camp since we trussed him up so neatly, and could see the look of perplexity when he first turns his eyes this way after to-morrow’s sun be risen. He will begin to question if General Howe be as dangerous an enemy and as powerful a friend as he has always believed him.”

“Ay, lad, that would be a sight worth seeing,” and the old man smiled grimly. “I would give much to witness it; but just now I am contenting myself with the thought that I shall meet Master Wilkins within a few hours after we march into the town.”

“And you believe we are going there?” I asked eagerly.

“Believe it, lad? Look at that ’ere wall which is risin’, an’ ask yourself what the Britishers will think of it. Don’t fear that they’ve forgotten Charlestown yet! Once Colonel Putnam’s queer plan is in shape they’ll be questionin’ of themselves which is the shortest way out of town?”

Ben and I stood side by side when the sun rose, looking in almost breathless eagerness toward the

town, and woefully disappointed as the moments passed into an hour without show of activity from the enemy.

“It begins to look as if Colonel Putnam’s plans would be a failure even though carried out exactly as he commanded,” Ben said petulantly. “The Britishers have seen these two forts since before sunrise, yet nothing has come of it.”

“What do you expect, lad?” Master Simon asked, he having come up so silently that neither my comrade nor myself fancied he was near until we heard his voice.

“I surely didn’t expect they would remain quiet after knowing we had fortified the Heights,” said Ben.

“Nor will they, Ben Scarlett, because it is not for them to choose. General Washington is the one who can dictate terms, and the redcoats must dance to his piping.”

“Then why don’t he tune up? I like not this cooling my heels outside the town when we might as well walk in at once.”

“Never you fear but that the ball will be opened soon enough, and we who hold the advantage can well afford to play with our mouse awhile. It doesn’t stand to reason General Howe will own himself beaten, although he was from the moment

this place had been fortified, without making some sort of a row."

Remembering what I had seen on Breed's Hill, I was not as eager for a battle as was my comrade, and there came into my heart a sense of deepest relief because the British were disposed to take matters leisurely.

When the forenoon was more than half spent it began to be whispered among the men that news had been brought from the town by one of our people.

Three thousand Britishers, so it was said, were to be sent to Castle William, hardly more than a mile from the Heights, some time during the day, and every preparation was being made to drive us from our position.

Among all our little army I do not believe there was one man or boy who felt other than pleasure at learning this news.

After the fight at Charlestown we knew full well that our people could do battle as sturdily as trained troops, and we itched to give General Howe's purchased men a severe drubbing.

Now it must not be supposed that we remained idle while waiting the oncoming of the redcoats.

Colonel Putnam kept the working party busy strengthening the defenses, and each moment saw



A MOST SEVERE STORM BEGAN TO RAGE, AND I COULD DO LITTLE MORE THAN  
COWER UNDER THE NEAREST SHELTER.

*Bunker Hill, p. 311.*





us more secure in our position, until by nightfall we were, as Master Simon said, "fit to fight for our lives."

Although, as my companion knew full well, I am timorous by nature, I shall always regret that it was not within our power to strike a hearty blow after so much time and labor had been spent in making ready.

However, as is well known now, we had no opportunity to show what it was possible for us to do after we had been forced into what even the Britishers themselves were compelled to admit had become an army.

It was on Tuesday, the 5th of March, that we expected to be attacked, and this same evening, when, according to the report brought by our spies, General Howe had intended to move upon us, a most severe storm began to rage, during which it would have been impossible for either army to maneuver.

We who were on guard an hour after sunset, and I was one of the number, could do little more than cower under the nearest shelter. It was impossible to see half a dozen yards in advance, so pitilessly did the wind and sleet bear down, and he who had the courage to pace back and forth on his post could do no more than keep moving—he would

never have known if an enemy came within a rod of him.

Although hardened to the weather as we were, I doubt if there was among all the troops on the Heights one man who did not suffer severely from the biting cold.

Had it not been for Master Simon, Ben and I would have shivered and groaned in such places about the works as were best sheltered from the piercing wind.

The veteran of Louisbourg would not allow us to remain idle more than five minutes at a time during the whole of that long Wednesday, but found something with which to keep us occupied, even if it might be only marching to and fro aimlessly.

He gave no heed to our protests, or when we complained of being tired, and because of that we have much for which to thank him, since neither of us were frost-bitten, while there were scores of our companions who suffered bitterly afterward from the effects of the weather.

The storm ceased Wednesday night, and during Thursday we remained idle and grumbling because the Britishers did not advance, and thus set us some work to do.

Ben, Master Simon, and I kept much by ourselves, because the old man had a whim it should

be so, and as can be fancied we discussed the situation over and over again as if we knew better than did our commanders as to what ought to be done.

On Friday morning it was said we were to fortify Nook's Hill when the night came again, and we received the information with liveliest pleasure, for even unnecessary work would be welcome in preference to being inactive.

But as it proved such precaution was not needed, for during the afternoon came a squad of redcoats bearing a flag of truce, and on being hailed the officer in command stated he had a communication from the selectmen of Boston.

Now it would not be supposed that we in the ranks could have any means of learning what was spoken privately to our officers, and yet there was little going on in the way of secrets.

Before an hour passed we knew the selectmen had sent word to General Ward to the effect that the Britishers were decided upon leaving town as soon as possible, and General Howe had said he would not destroy the place provided he was not hindered from going.

Hence it was the selectmen had sent such information to our general in order that no attack be made upon the enemy, to the end that the town might be spared.

It was brave news, this word that the redcoats had found Boston too hot for them, and we would have rejoiced exceedingly much but for the fact of our thus being deprived of a chance to teach the king's soldiers the remainder of that lesson begun in Charlestown on the 17th of June.

The grumblers complained bitterly, and even those of us who tried to take matters as they came in the belief that our commanders knew better than we, found it hard to keep closed mouths.

Master Simon, as might have been expected, argued that it was all for the best, and we should feel thankful because the blood of brave men would not need be spent in regaining possession of the town.

"I'm not allowin' but that we could whip 'em out of their boots now our army is in something like proper shape; but if General Howe refuses to come out of Boston, we might find it a hard job, to say nothing of the fact that the town would be destroyed. Don't lay it to heart because we're not to have a fight, lads, for we're better off without it, whatever should be the outcome."

"But how are we ever going to drive the Britishers out of the country if they're allowed to run away whenever we get them in a corner?" Ben asked petulantly.

“When we have the redcoats cornered in proper shape you won’t find General Washington givin’ them a show of slippin’ out; but this time they’re not in that condition. As I look at it, General Howe can come pretty nigh holdin’ his own, so, as I said before, it’s mighty handy he’s willin’ to go without kickin’ up a fuss.”

Master Simon was the only man I heard talk in such strain. All our companions insisted this was the moment when we could do as we pleased with the king’s troops, and argued that it was folly to think of saving the town when we might destroy the entire army.

However, talk as fast and hot as we might, what we said did not affect the situation by so much as the weight of a hair, and matters went on exactly the same as if with our approval.

After this there was a time when it certainly seemed as if we were bent on making fools of ourselves to please the Britishers, and even Master Simon was silent when the others were grumbling.

Our forces remained idle, doing not so much as discharging a musket, during the remainder of Friday and Saturday until sunset, when the bombardment was resumed, but only to cease at daylight.

In this manner, burning a vast deal of powder

and doing the enemy no harm, we amused ourselves for three nights, after which we were silent once more, nor did we make any move until Saturday had come again, when it was possible to say for a verity that the Britishers were getting ready to leave the town.

On this last-mentioned night we heard explosion after explosion, as if Boston itself were being torn to pieces, and Master Simon explained that General Howe was destroying what he could not carry away.

It was on the 17th of March that we saw the red-coats embarking on board the ships of war, and, as might be supposed, every one of us believed our forces would spend that night in town.

We did in fact march down on to the Neck, but were there stopped by the selectmen themselves, who told what we already knew concerning the ravages of the smallpox, and advised that none of the soldiers, save such as were not in danger of contagion, be allowed to enter.

It would have taken more than a scourge to prevent us from going into the town where we were born, and for a time some of the boldest declared they would enter even though General Washington himself should ride up to stop them.

It would have been unseemly had any riotous

acts occurred then when we were victors, and even Ben and I took a part in trying to quiet the more turbulent.

That night a small portion of the troops entered the town to patrol the streets, and we heard that General Putnam marched his portion of the army into Charlestown, where they took possession of the British fort on Bunker Hill.

We, and I now mean those of the soldiers under General Ward who yet remained outside the town, encamped near by, not a few returning to the Heights, and next morning marched in, Master Simon, Ben Scarlett, and I, side by side, among the first ranks.

As we went down Orange Street the one thought in my mind was regarding Sam Wilkins, and I said to my comrades :

“Think you we shall see that young Royalist to-day?”

“If he knows half as much as he thinks he does, the scurvy villain has run away,” Ben said angrily ; “for he must understand we shall pay off old scores if the chance ever comes.”

“I allow he has sneaked off somewhere, an’ we won’t be troubled by a sight of him,” Master Simon added ; “but if it should so be he does dare show himself, leave me to deal with him.”

Then we fell to talking of Master Vaughn, until the shouts of the people who had waited so long for our coming caused us to forget everything save the happy fact of being once more in Boston town, free to move here or there without fear of interference from redcoated bullies or fops.

Strange as it may seem, before our company had reached Newbury Street we three saw Sam Wilkins on the sidewalk, looking as if he had ever been a friend to the cause, and was entitled to all the credit of having driven the Britishers away.

On seeing us the scoundrel threw his hat high in the air, cheering, shouting, and running by the side of the moving column, to have speech with us three, whom he should have been wise enough to shun.

“Welcome back, lads!” he cried. “Welcome back! It is good to look upon you once more!”

I was so happy, with having seen on every side our friends, that I could have forgiven the fellow then and there, even though he had tried to work us much mischief; but Master Simon was not of the same mind.

“Don’t speak to him,” he said in a whisper. “Let him run and shout while he may, and before the night is come I’ll have him singing a different tune.”



“Think you there will be a chance to lay hands on him?” I asked.

“I wouldn’t have believed it could have been done but for the lack of sense he’s showin’ now. The little cur counts on making friends with us, an’ will swear himself blue in the face that he has always had the good of the cause at heart.”

“He’d have hard work trying to smooth over what he said to me in the jail, when I was forced to listen to his gibes;” and Ben cast on Sam Wilkins a look that boded no good for the Royalist.

“Don’t forget that I’m to take him in hand,” Master Simon replied warningly. “It’s for me to give him his lesson, because I’ll do it in a more thorough fashion than either of you lads would.”

Then I resolutely shut the villainous Wilkins out from my mind, although forced to hear his shrill voice above all the others from time to time, and gave myself wholly up to the pleasure which was mine in entering, dressed as a soldier, the same town I had been carried out of with a broken leg when capture would have meant almost certain death. It would be a long story were I to set down all we heard when marching into Boston, or after we had come to a halt near about Faneuil Hall, from the people who had not been able to leave before the siege began.

And indeed we needed not words to acquaint us with the mischief done by the redcoats.

The buildings that had been torn down, the fences, trees, and in fact everything which could be used as fuel that were missing, and the marks of the invaders on every hand, told what those who loved the cause must have suffered while shut up in the town.

The Liberty Tree, under whose branches we had seen the Sons of Liberty meet to take action against some fresh wrong committed by the king, was no longer to be seen, and we knew it had not been hewn down for firewood, but simply to wound our hearts.

However, we were in Boston once more, and there was no reason why we should make ourselves sad over what had been done; therefore we spoke of other matters, save when some old landmark was missing and it seemed impossible not to make mention of the fact.

After standing in ranks an hour or more a certain number of us were allowed our liberty until sunset, and once this had been done Master Simon disappeared without so much as a word to either Ben or me.

An hour passed before we saw him again, and then ere I could speak the question which was

trembling on the tip of my tongue, he said grimly :

“ I have seen Sam Wilkins.”

“ Were you with him long ?” Ben asked.

“ Not above half an hour ; but the minutes most likely seemed long to Sam.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## BOSTON TOWN.

THAT which I sat myself down to write in order that the days might pass more swiftly here in camp at Valley Forge, was finished when Ben Scarlett stepped ashore on Dorchester Point, for then he had indeed escaped from Boston town, and that tale only was my purpose.

If it should be said that too many words have been given to Master Simon and myself, I reply that it seemed necessary to so do in order to show, first, why my comrade went into the town after he was so nearly out of it, and second, that it might be understood how the work went on, so far as we two were concerned, while he lay in prison.

Since the day on which this writing was begun I have remembered very much of what happened roundabout Boston after my comrade's escape, in which he and I took part, that I would be pleased to set down, but lack of time prevents.

It is believed the British are soon to evacuate

Philadelphia, and the Marquis de Lafayette, under whose command I now am, intimates that within a few days we shall have work to do, which news comes pleasantly to my ears, who have been idling in camp during nearly the entire winter.

It is now the 16th of May, in the year 1778, and I have but just finished telling what part we boys of '75 took in the siege of Boston; not being able to set down all which is in my mind, nor may I ever do so, for in the work to come bullets will be plentiful, and who shall say that the one which is to end my life be not already in a Britisher's musket?

Our time of liberty during the remainder of this day was spent by us three in strolling about the town, seeking out old acquaintances, and in looking at the familiar places which at one time I feared we might never see again; and then we went to the Town House, where was quartered, for lack of better accommodation, the company on whose roll we had placed our names.

Here the evening was spent in such rejoicings as went far toward soothing the hearts which were sore because the Britishers had gotten out of town none the worse for what we might have done; and then Major Harper, ever the kindly, thoughtful gentleman and worthy officer, sent word that we three comrades stood excused from duty until such

time as our company was ordered to some other barracks.

We had thought much concerning the fate of Master Israel Vaughn, that friend to the cause who gave us shelter when we fled in a boat from Burrough's Wharf to Wind Mill Point, and who, as may be remembered, was taken into custody by the red-coats on that occasion when Master Simon preserved his liberty by leaping through the window.

It had been agreed among us that we would make diligent search for the old gentleman as soon after entering the city as we should have opportunity, and now was come the time to carry out that agreement.

It would have pleased me better had we conducted the search in company ; but Master Simon insisted that it was wisest to go each his own way, whereby we might cover three times as much ground in the same space of time.

Therefore it was he set out alone, while Ben and I walked toward Rainford Lane, minded to call in a friendly way to look at the place we had converted into a prison for the benefit of Sam Wilkins—perhaps I should say, it had been done for our benefit, and to the discomfort of Master Sam.

When we were come on Newbury Street to the corner of Essex, and stood there speaking of that

time when the Liberty Tree was cut down so wantonly, taking the life of one redcoat as its own was taken, I saw the face of a lad peering at us from around the corner of a house.

At first glance I gave no heed, thinking, if indeed I bestowed upon the matter any thought, that some boy was admiring our uniforms, but continued to talk with Ben Scarlett until there came into my mind an idea which caused me to wheel about suddenly.

The same lad was still watching us, and as I turned he started back with a cry of alarm that caused Ben to ask quickly :

“What is the matter, George? Who uttered that cry?”

“If I am not mistaken it was none other than Sam Wilkins. I saw his face from around the corner of yonder house, but did not recognize it at first. I had—it *is* him!” I added, as the lad peered out at us again.

“What do you want?” Ben cried sharply. “Wasn’t it enough that you should have met Master Simon Fletcher without also throwing yourself in our way?”

“I would have speech with you,” the young Royalist replied in a most humble tone, but still remaining half concealed by the building.

“Then, why don’t you come where we are? Is it to your mind that we shall follow obedient to your beck and call?”

“I am ready to go wheresoever you shall say, Master Scarlett, but I would first be satisfied that you will not flog me.”

“Which is exactly what I intend to do; so come out here and have done with it at once. It may yet be in your memory that you paid me several visits at the jail, and when I was powerless to make such answer as I wished, spoke in what you most likely thought a witty strain. Now, however, is come the time when I may reply in proper manner.”

Sam retreated to what he most likely believed as a safe distance, and there said in a whine:

“Do you want to kill me outright? That old heathen—I mean Master Fletcher—was nigh to murdering me yesterday, and it would be the work of a savage to lay hands on me again while I am so sore and bruised.”

“Be at peace with him, Ben,” I whispered. “At the best he is but a coward, and even though he would have done us deadly harm, no credit can come of flogging the fellow.”

“I am not so prone to forget, George Wentworth. That Royalist cur taunted me with the gallows, and



at a time when the shadow of it lay heavily upon my heart."

"Yet, for all that, it does not become a soldier to flog a boy who is too cowardly even to defend himself. I warrant you Master Simon paid off your score as well as his own."

At this last suggestion Ben burst into laughter, and with the mirth came back his proper temper.

"You are safe to step nearer," he cried to the trembling Sam. "The lad whom you would have betrayed to the British, knowing his arrest must bring him to the gallows, has plead for your worthless skin. Draw nigh and say what may be in your mind, after which it will be well if you do not try again to have speech with us."

Sam Wilkins came forward hesitatingly, as if afraid to trust my comrade's word, and I added:

"You need have no fear. Ben Scarlett never tells a lie, and he has promised not to lay violent hands on you this time; but it will be well to give due heed to his caution."

Hearing these words the Royalist swallowed his fears and came toward us, halting half a dozen paces away as if thinking it might yet be unsafe to venture too close.

There he stood with a half-grin, half-whimper on his face, until Ben, losing patience, cried testily:

“Speak what you have in your mind, and then begone, for too long a sight of your sneaking face is not good for an honest lad and a soldier.”

“I am come to beg you will do me no harm,” Sam whined. “I was ever a friend of yours, even when tempted to say harsh words——”

“Don’t tell lies such as Ananias himself would blush to speak!” Ben interrupted. “Neither George Wentworth nor myself are quite fools enough to swallow anything of that kind. You have come to beg we do you no harm, eh? Well, first tell me why we should not, after all you have done?”

“I could give a dozen reasons which you might not listen to ; but content myself with one. I should not be harmed further because of what that old—I mean of what Master Fletcher has already done. He flogged me with a knotted rope until, but for the clothing I wore, the skin would have been stripped from my bones. I am discolored in this fashion from head to foot,” and the Royalist stripped up his coat sleeve, showing on his arm bruises such as must have caused grievous pain.

I noted then Ben himself believed the punishment had been severe enough to wipe off the score, for he turned his head away after one glance and asked :

“Why should you beg us not to give further punishment? Mark you, Sam Wilkins, even though

Master Simon had cut your flesh into strips he could not have laid it on too heavily to suit your iniquities ; but I would know why you try to make peace with us? Surely you do not count on staying in this town now the American army has taken the place of the redcoats?"

"Where else can I go?" the fellow whined. "I have no home except in Boston, and might starve to death if forced to leave here."

"Why not enlist, and thus try to atone for your misdeeds when you believed the Britishers were so strong it would never be possible for us to do you harm?"

Sam actually turned pale at the idea of being a soldier, and his cowardice gave me an unpleasant sensation in the stomach.

"Promise what he wants, and come away, Ben," I said, plucking my comrade by the arm. "Too much of such as he is sickening."

"Will you agree to let it stand that what the—I mean what Master Fletcher has already done shall wipe off the score?" Sam asked pleadingly.

"I won't say as much as that ; but I'll promise to keep my hands off so long as you behave in something like a decent fashion. If it should so be, however, that you turn again to your friends, the Britishers, as against any of our people, I'll serve

you out in such fashion as will make Master Simon's flogging seem like love-pats."

The fellow made haste to swear he would never again be guilty of even looking at a redcoat, and would have thanked us for our promise, but that I cut him short.

"After all which has happened you can fancy we do not care for overmuch converse with you, Sam Wilkins, therefore it is best you go your way, coming nigh us no more than may be absolutely necessary."

He was only too glad to get off with our promise, and I'll warrant he had no more mind to hold speech with us than we with him.

When I had ceased speaking he turned to go down Essex Street, most likely hugging to himself the thought that he had gotten off cheaply, when Ben stopped him.

"It may be you can do us a service such as will go far toward settling scores of your own running up."

Sam turned, and at the moment I fancied I saw in his eyes that which told of treachery; but my heart was so sore against him that, as I said to myself, I could not judge impartially.

If Ben and I could have looked twelve months into the future we would not have let the Royalist

off so cheaply, for he afterward did us greater and more grievous injury than I ever believed one could do another.

“What would you have of me?” he inquired, looking at Ben, and my comrade asked :

“Does it so chance you have ever heard of one Master Israel Vaughn, he whom the Britishers made prisoner shortly after George Wentworth got happily out of the town?”

“I saw him in jail.”

“Ay, you most likely went there to revile him, as you did me,” and Ben clinched his hand so threateningly that Master Wilkins took the precaution of stepping back a few paces.

“I did not so much as speak with him, but only went to see what he might be like after I heard that old—I mean Master Fletcher—was nigh to being taken in his company.”

“Do you know where he may be now?”

“He was released from prison on Saturday, but could find no one to take him in because of being well-nigh helpless. I saw him sitting on the sidewalk against the Town House Sunday morning.”

“Have you met him since?”

“No, nor heard aught concerning him.”

We parted company with Master Wilkins very suddenly after that, and for two reasons—one be-

cause it did not please us to look upon the cowardly fellow who could turn his coat so readily, and the other in order that we might seek for Master Vaughn.

During two hours or more we walked from one portion of the town to the other inquiring diligently, and hearing much concerning the old man; but unable to find traces of his whereabouts.

From what others told us we knew Sam Wilkins spoke the truth when he said Master Vaughn had been unable to find shelter for at least four-and-twenty hours.

He was so worn and wasted by the close confinement as to be nearly helpless; yet there were so many such cases in Boston town just then that the houses of the charitable were filled to overflowing until even one more could not be provided with lodging.

The thought in our mind was that the poor old man, having begged for shelter from door to door, had finally sat himself down to die, and we might never be able to get other tidings concerning him.

“We may as well give over the search,” Ben said when we were weary with much walking. “His is but another life for which the British must one day answer, and I hope to be well in the front when the accounting is made.”

I also despaired of being successful, and was on the point of agreeing with my comrade when a happy thought came into my mind.

“We will go where we first proposed—to the house on Rainford Lane. It is likely he went there because knowing Master Simon and I were sheltered in the place, and if nothing more is accomplished, we may be able to get additional intelligence.”

To this Ben agreed, and once we were arrived our mission was happily ended.

At this place Master Vaughn asked for shelter, and had not been denied.

Here he was housed as many another friend to the cause had been, but the host himself was suddenly taken ill, and no one remained to minister to Master Vaughn's wants.

From that moment the old man did not lack anything which could add to his comfort, for Master Simon, Ben, and myself were with him constantly during the four days he remained on earth, and then we followed him to the grave, the last courtesy we could show the kindly gentleman who had as really given his life to the cause as if he had fallen on the battlefield.

As may be supposed, Ben's father returned with his family as soon as the town was freed from

infection of the small-pox, which had raged just before the evacuation, and with them came my mother.

Save for the fact that I was a soldier, and the town in possession of the Continental troops instead of redcoats; that we were likely to be a free people instead of subjects who must bow when King George was pleased to lift his finger; that many of the inanimate things we had learned to love had been destroyed, all seemed much as before the siege, and had it not been for the uniforms we wore I could well have fancied it was some other than I who had aided in Ben Scarlett's escape from Boston town.

**THE END.**



## NOTE.

From the "Siege of Boston," by H. E. Scudder, in *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1876:

"For three nights, those of Saturday, Sunday and Monday, the 2d, 3d, and 4th of March, a furious cannonade was kept up from Cobble Hill, Lechmere's Point, and Lamb's Dam, directed against Boston and intended to divert attention, for on the third night, when the sun had been down an hour, General Thomas, stationed in Roxbury, marched over to South Boston to take possession of Dorchester Heights. He had with him two thousand men with intrenching tools and material. . . . The moon was shining brightly, and the roar of cannon was heard all about them, as they set to work throwing up intrenchments. Along the road by which they had come they made a temporary barricade of hay to protect the carts as they moved back and forth, while two detachments of troops, four hundred each, were posted as watch and guard.

"The working party was under the direction of Gridley, who had planned the works at Bunker Hill, and of Colonel Rufus Putnam, a son of the general, who worked steadily for eight hours. Now, as before, the British commander discovered in the morning what the enemy had been doing while he

slept. Two forts rose before him; Dorchester Heights was occupied with works that commanded both the harbor and the town. . . . Howe at once began his preparations for attack the following night, and Washington prepared to meet it. . . . The battle was not to be fought. . . . as the day wore on and all were breathlessly awaiting the attack, the March winds began to blow, the sea to rise, and when the night had come, the time set by Howe for the attack, there was a tempest. . . . The storm continued all through the next day, and the Americans took advantage of the delay to strengthen their works. When the storm was over the situation was graver than before. The Americans were firmly intrenched, their works commanded the fleet in the harbor, and the batteries in the river could at once bombard the town. The delay had made an attack upon the hill more dubious than at first.

“Howe called a council and presented the alternative of a disastrous attack or the saving of the army by evacuation. His own judgment was decisive in favor of evacuation, and his officers agreed with him. . . . The wind and weather delayed the departure, and Washington, who had been waiting impatiently for the troops to take their leave, began to suspect that Howe might be making only a show of leaving, in order to gain time for the expected reinforcements to arrive. On the 16th of March, therefore, another forward step was taken in the fortifying of Nook’s Hill. . . . The

British cannonaded it, but the fire was not returned, and as the act was one that threatened an immediate attack, Howe so understood it and obeyed the menace. Early the next day, Sunday, the garrison at Bunker Hill embarked. . . .

“For two days restrictions were placed upon entrance and exit, until the town could be freed from the infection of small-pox, but on the 20th of March the army marched into Boston, the citizens began to flock back, the siege was raised, and a signal victory recorded for American generalship.”

From Gilman's "Story of the City of Boston :

“The close of the siege of Boston is also the close of a period in the existence of the town. Previously to that event it had been the most important place in the colonies, and the one against which the British ministry aimed their most virulent shafts. The siege reduced the population to about six thousand inhabitants, though there had been more than three times as many before, and during the period of recuperation that followed, it contained but little more than twelve thousand inhabitants, while New York had more than twice as many. The heroic age of Boston ended when Washington took possession of it for America. There was thereafter no more war within its limits ; there was no longer a struggle for a charter ; there was no odious tax to be discussed, denounced, and rebelled against ; thenceforth there was only the practice of the arts

of peace, of commercial enterprise, varied by exhibitions of patriotism when any other portion of the land was aggrieved, when the life of the nation itself was threatened. Boston was destined to grow in the lines that the fathers laid out for it, to become rich and useful ; but never again was it to have an heroic age."





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