

**A
L
T
S
H
E
L
E
R**

**Revolutionary
War Stories**

Three Short Stories

Revolutionary War Stories

Three Short Stories

- **Title Page**
- **Preface**
- 1 My Pennsylvanian**
- 2 The General**
- 3 The Red Light**
- **Credits**

Revolutionary War Stories

Three Short Stories

by Joseph A. Altsheler



Preface

Mr. Altsheler wrote only three short stories about the Revolutionary War.

One of the three, “The General,” is a favorite of the publisher.



My Pennsylvanian

I had no particular fancy for the task to which I had been assigned. Still I was not minded to give it up. In the military life the duty of obedience is soon impressed upon one, and, moreover, I had become hardened to such riskful adventures.

“You are so skilled in creeping to the edge of death and then creeping away again without giving Old Nick the chance to make a single snap at you,” said our colonel one day, “that we will keep you for such dangerous but important duty.”

Our colonel was always a man of discernment and tact. But, though I was full of pride at his words, my modesty compelled me to restrain the expression of it. It is true, some of my comrades charged that when I returned from the successful completion of such duties I was wont to assume a fine importance and to take privileges for which they would not dare to ask. But I submit that my conduct on those occasions was no more than my

services warranted. Is it not written in the greatest of all books that the laborer is worthy of his hire? And who labors harder than the soldier, in particular when his government can neither put clothes upon his back nor food within his stomach and he must forage for himself? Not that the latter is wholly without spice or reward upon occasion.

My mind was running upon these things rather too freely for the good of the business I had in hand, and the twig of an overlapping bush caught in my homespun tunic. It thrust itself in at a hole a British bullet had made not three weeks before. I was, in truth, very near the edge of death, to quote the colonel's phrase, when that bullet warmed my skin, but not so near as I was when at Long Island we held back Howe's whole force and saved our army from destruction. Jupiter, how the bullet that cut into my shoulder then stung me! I have always believed that it was a Hessian bullet, and because of it I have ever since cherished an exceeding great animosity against all Hessians. Moreover, the Hessians make most comfortable spoil, as King George clothes and

arms them to an exceeding degree of excellency.

I disentangled my tunic from the bush and crept forward again, bidding myself to be more cautious or ere long I would be swinging in a British noose, to the great gain of the British cause and the great loss of our own. To make my way silently but with speed through undergrowth was no difficult task for me. I have hunted the 'coon and the 'possum too many a night in the thick woods of the Eastern Shore when a boy to lose my skill as a man. And in truth the colonel gave me so much work of this character that I would have been compelled to recall my knowledge of wood-craft had I ever been in danger of losing it.

Presently I saw ahead of me a little clump of bushes of an exceeding great degree of density. It occurred to me that I would act wisely to secrete myself in the clump and watch about me for a while. According to my calculations, and I am wont to be precise in such matters, I was very near the doubtful space between the lines of the two armies, the strip of region which both claimed and neither held. It behooved me,

therefore, to be of exceeding caution and to look well around me. I slipped through the bushes, but not without difficulty, into the centre of the clump, and then, after I had bestowed myself with a fair degree of comfort and with my rifle across my knee, I found that I had, with my usual good judgment, secured a most admirable outlook. In front of me was a stretch of ground rather more free of undergrowth than the remainder of the forest seemed to be, and my view was better than I had anticipated.

I sat there for some time looking about me to see some signs of the British. I have always been proud of my eyesight. In truth, it was good by nature, and had received such a degree of training for work like this that no gleam of red coat could appear even for a moment among those trees without my seeing it.

I saw nothing but the trees, and heard nothing but the silence—for you can hear the silence of the woods. I began to believe that the enemy was not as alert as I—which, however, need cause wonder in the mind of no one.

The time lengthened into a half-hour, and then

I heard the faint sound of a trumpet. It came from the British lines, I knew, and it was very far away. In truth, it would not have been audible at all had not a smart breeze been blowing toward me. It is a very curious thing how sound rides the wind like drift carried on by the waves. On a clear night, with a strong wind blowing in the right direction, I have heard the sentinels exchanging the watchword in the British camp nearly a mile away.

So far as I knew, there was nothing of significance in the blowing of the trumpet, but it was a very pretty sound. It has always pleased me to hear the distant notes of military music. The sound is martial, yet it strikes upon the ear as gently and sweetly as the falling of a rose-leaf. It moves me, and yet does not make a woman of me. In truth, I have always felt that I have a fine fancy and am of a some-what poetic turn. Had it not been for the troublesome character of the times, and had I been permitted to cultivate my gift—but pshaw! the life of a soldier, cold and hungry as it often is, doubtless finds more clothes for the back and food for the stomach than the

making of rhymes ever will.

The trumpeter was playing a tune. But I thought nothing of that. The British were much given to playing defiant music when they lay near us, inasmuch as they were usually in far greater force and their arms and other equipment were of immense superiority to ours. But it was a diversion that they carried too far sometimes, for when they followed us through New York after the beating they gave us on Long Island all their trumpeters played a fox-hunting tune. Then we turned upon them and cut up their vanguard, which was a source of much mortification to Earl Howe and of a great uplifting of the spirits to us.

The playing of the trumpet ceased, without leaving me in any measure the wiser, and after biding there a quarter of an hour longer I began to think it was time for me to bestir myself. My knees were getting stiff with crouching so long in a scarce-changed position, and, moreover, it did not become me to waste time.

I had just swung my rifle around in preparation for the start, when I heard a noise among some bushes a small distance to my left. All my trained

and professional instincts were at once upon the alert. I remained quite still, listening with that intentness which is necessary when one is engaged upon such dangerous and delicate business as mine.

The noise, which sounded like the fluttering of a bird's wing among the grass and leaves, continued for a half-minute perhaps. Then there was naught but silence. I concluded that the rustling was in truth made by a bird, but I am too cautious a man to rest content with mere surmises. Battles are not won by guess. Moreover, I had a reputation to maintain.

So I remained quite still, waiting for a repetition of the noise, if perchance there should be such repetition. Many minutes passed. Few men would have had the patience to sit there as I did, but then the colonel had paid me the compliment of hinting that I was not an ordinary man. After a while my waiting was rewarded, for I heard again the sound, which was a mixture of a crackle and a rustle. But I was not able to make out the cause of it, for I could see nothing living.

The sound continued, but instead of

approaching me it moved away. I was not pleased thereat. I could not return to the camp and look my colonel honestly in the face unless I discovered the cause of that noise. There was naught for me to do but to pursue it.

It had entered into my mind that my vexatious neighbor was a rattlesnake. I have a strong aversion to rattlesnakes, and it would give me great pleasure to crush this reptile with a stone or a stick. My hunter's instinct, as well as curiosity and professional pride, was aroused. So I gathered my rifle up by my side. It is a trick that I have when scouting through underbrush. If you hold your rifle by your side parallel with your body and close to you, it becomes a part of you and therefore is not likely to become entangled in anything to your great discomfort and equal danger.

I crept out of the bushes, and did it so well that I do not think I made a noise that could have been heard even by a rattlesnake. Just beyond me was a fallen tree, the trunk of which was half decayed. Yet it was so large that what was left must have lain a half-yard high on the ground. It was just

such a place as a rattlesnake would love, and I said to myself, "Now, my fine reptile, I will find you soon enough, and smash your head off for annoying me when I am engaged in the transaction of an affair of high importance to the army and the patriot cause."

I now perceived that the sound came from beyond the tree-trunk. As I approached, it ceased, but I was confident the reptile was there, in all likelihood basking in the sun, which at that spot broke through the trees, imagining in his foolish pride that he was the king of all these woods. He would lose his crown and his head to boot, and that, too, mighty soon.

I reached the log, and then, noiselessly rising up, peeped over. I saw no snake, but what I did see was a fine fat soldier, spread out on his face and stomach, and looking about him with all the wisdom of an old gray owl. I dropped back; then I rose up again and took another look. I knew the man, upon the instant, for what he was. All that plumpness and girth of figure could belong to none but a Pennsylvanian. I also caught a glimpse of his fat Quakerish face, and nothing more was

needed.

There had always been a feud between us Marylanders and the Pennsylvanians; for the matter of that, the remainder of the army invariably took our part. The hungrier and thinner all the others grew, the fatter and more contented those Pennsylvanians looked. Where they got their provisions none of us could ever tell, but thin men were as scarce among the Pennsylvanians as fat men were among the remainder of us. And the Pennsylvanians—a plague on their Quakerish skins—made such pretensions to piety, too. I have never had any love for that kind of piety which keeps you from dividing the bread and meat in your knapsack with a half-starved comrade.

What inflamed me the more was the presence of this lump of a Quaker scouting in my own particular bit of territory. Did he think to forestall me, who was so finely skilled in such affairs? Why should any officer send such an awkward body as that to do work which required knowledge, foresight, and alertness of movement? The very proof of his unfitness for

the task was evident in the fact that he lay there like a great fat turtle sprawled out, and entirely unconscious that I was present and watching every movement he made.

He was dressed much as I was, in a homespun tunic and trousers, the ancient color of which had long since been destroyed by dirt and wear. He moved forward a foot or so from the log and looked about him. Then the right thing to do occurred to me. As I have said, I have no love for the Pennsylvanian, and this fellow in particular had thrust himself upon me in the most aggravating fashion. There he lay upon his stomach, and he offered such a noble opportunity for revenge that I could not resist it.

I raised myself above the log until I could get a good swing for my arms. Then, reversing my rifle, I grasped it with firm hands by the barrel. I paused a moment to see whether the Pennsylvanian suspected my presence, but the fat fool was so busy examining a cluster of trees that he never looked behind him. Then I swung the rifle two or three times around my head and brought the flat part of the stock down with great

force upon the anatomy of the Pennsylvanian.

There was a mighty spat, the splitting of cloth, and a yell of pain and surprise. Then the Pennsylvanian sprang to his feet, rubbing himself and looking wildly about him. But he saw nothing, for I had dropped noiselessly behind the tree-trunk. I could peep up at him, but he could not see me. He stared stupidly all around, swearing under his breath, as the Quaker militiamen mostly do, for their principles will not allow them to swear out loud. It was hard work for me to keep down any longer at the sight of his gruesome face.

After a minute of this useless staring, Master Quaker seemed suddenly to remember the business that he had come about, and that it was hardly wise on his part to stand there staring and screwing up his red face. So he dropped down behind the fallen tree, and in a few moments I heard him twisting about as if he were trying to look over the trunk and see what had smitten him with such suddenness and force. Then, still laughing to myself, I determined to give my fat Quaker another surprise.

I began to thrust my own face up. I raised it very slowly, and just as my eyes reached the top of the log I saw a thatch of red hair appearing on the other side. More of his head came into view, and then in a moment a pair of astonished eyes was staring into mine across the log.

“Hello!” he exclaimed, in a startled way.

“Hello to you!” I replied, with an air of indignation. “Is that any way to salute a gentleman, with your ‘hello’?”

“It’s a better way than you saluted me, I’m thinking,” he said, ruefully.

“Oh, that was merely a friendly tap. I don’t see that it did any harm,” I replied, examining the stock of my gun with a finely critical air.

“But I fear that it has done harm to me,” he said, with the same rueful air, though he did not appear to be angry. Those Pennsylvania fellows never know when they are insulted.

“Are you scouting?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied; “and you are too, I suppose?”

“A little,” he said, “but it’s a slow business.”

“That depends upon a man’s gift for it,” said I, as I coolly seated myself upon the log. “If he has the gift for it he can do it, and if he hasn’t he can’t, and that’s an end to it. Now, my friend, I don’t believe you have any gift for this business, and, to tell you the truth, your scouting days are over, at least for a long time.”

“Why?” he asked, in mild surprise.

I had shifted my rifle around until the muzzle covered him, and now I was ready to come to the kernel of my joke.

“ Why, it’s just this,” I said, and with great difficulty I smothered my laughter and made my voice solemn. “You take me for an American, whereas I am an Englishman. Now, if your brain is bright enough to see the point readily, you must admit that you are my prisoner, and that never was a man taken more easily.”

His jaw dropped, and he ejaculated, in the most stupid fashion, “Your prisoner!”

“Yes,” I replied, and in my enjoyment I could not restrain a little chuckle this time; “but be comforted, my good fellow. You Pennsylvania

chaps haven't much stomach for the fighting, and when you're a prisoner you can't fight, you know. There's consolation for you in that. You can't lose your life, and we won't treat you badly."

"That's true," he said, as if my words had entirely reconciled him to his situation.

But a moment later I saw a light spring up in his eye, and he shook his head as if a thought had occurred to him. Then I knew that he was planning some trick, and I was on the watch for it.

"You have made a mistake, my friend," he said. "I am an Englishman too. You don't want to make a prisoner of one of your own comrades, do you?"

But I was too old a hand to be deceived by a device of such transparency as that.

"Come, now," I said. "You Pennsylvanians—for I know your breed—are too clumsy to impose upon people with such tales. Why, your very tunic shows that you belong to the Pennsylvania line."

I pointed to his homespun garment. His face was red by nature, but it turned much redder. The man convicted himself.

“You are right,” he said; “but don’t take me into the British lines. I would not like for it to be known that I was taken in such a manner as this. It might get back to my comrades.”

“Where else do you suppose I could take you?” I asked, in a high fashion. “I haven’t a private encampment of my own, in which I could keep you a prisoner. So you must even go with me into our lines. Now get along.”

He did not make much more delay, but, very crestfallen of countenance, began to walk before me toward the encampment of the British army. I held my rifle under my arm in such convenient position that I could throw it to my shoulder on the notice of a moment. But I was far from the idea of doing such a thing. I merely intended to carry a good joke to the furthest point, and I anticipated no attempt to escape or device to annoy me on the part of the Pennsylvanian. He was too heavy and dull-witted to do aught but what I told him to do.

I was sure that no one was near. My previous examination of the forest had convinced me of that fact, and hence my prisoner and I walked upright.

“You have not had much experience in scouting,” said I, thinking to console him a bit.

“No,” he said. “I haven’t made any attempt before, and I don’t seem to prosper in such pursuits.”

“I would advise you,” I said, warmly, “to leave it alone. It requires a peculiar skill, gift I may call it, that is born in one, and cannot be acquired. Now I think that you Pennsylvanians do much better in the provision and supply department of the army. That is your place. You stay there, and leave the more important affairs, such as planning campaigns and executing delicate movements, to us.”

“I think I will hereafter,” he said, regretfully.

He seemed so much impressed by my excellent advice that my heart warmed to him as the heart of a teacher warms to his apt pupil. I was going to make some further remark of a consolatory

nature, but just then we entered a place where the wood was denser, and as we curved around a hill we met three British soldiers. These fellows were in their uniform, red coats and all, of such a newness and goodness of texture that I was filled with envy, for I had not had a new uniform now for more than two years.

Most men would have been stunned when placed in such a situation, and I myself am even willing to confess to a feeling of dismay at first. But I saw that I must act with great fortitude and brazen the matter out, risking everything on my courage and happy chance.

“Hello, comrades,” I said, cheerily. “I warn you against such incautious procedure. The rebels are thick about here, and if you are not wary you will walk into a nest of them.”

“Have you seen any of them?” asked the foremost of the three soldiers, somewhat nervously.

“Seen them?” I said, in most high and mighty accents. “I should think I had. Not only have I seen them, but I have had further dealings with

them.”

My Pennsylvanian opened his mouth and was about to say something, but instantly I was upon him with the utmost fury.

“Be silent, you damned rebel!” I shouted. “If I hear you say a word I’ll smash your head with my gun-stock. Is it not enough for you to plunge into wicked rebellion against your lawful king, who prays for your soul’s welfare every night and morning of his life, without opening your mouth to preach sedition in the presence of loyal and devoted servants of His Majesty, such as I and these gentlemen here?”

My eyes blazed with apparent wrath. The soldiers looked approvingly at me. “How did you take him?” one of them asked.

“I was scouting in the woods back yonder,” I replied, “and I surprised him crawling among the bushes, like the worm he is. I intend to take him into the camp, where an example can be made of him. He is a most unconscionable villain. From the very moment I took him he has been attempting to prate to me about the justice of his

wicked and rebellious doctrines. Half a dozen times I have thought I would have to ram his teeth down his throat and gag him with them. Be silent, you rebel! Do not defile the air with your seditious words.”

“I suppose they will hang him,” said one of the soldiers, looking at my Pennsylvanian.

“Hang him? of course they will hang him,” I replied; “and richly he deserves it, too. He is a spy. I took him within our lines. He will get his deserts, and that speedily, never fear.”

The blockheads never for a moment suspected what I in truth was, my presence of mind and dash had imposed upon them to such an extent.

“Well,” said one of them, enviously, “you have had luck, and will get a reward. I wish I was in your place.”

“It requires only skill and energy,” I said, grandly. “If you will only go over there and beat through the woods in the most wary manner, you may have equal luck. But take care: those rebels know how to shoot.”

I moved my hand to the left as I spoke, and

they walked off in that direction, each giving me a friendly nod as he went away.

I was struck with admiration at the success of my bold measures in rescuing myself from such a precarious position, and, prodding my Pennsylvanian with my gun-barrel, I told him to march on. It was evident now that we were dangerously near the enemy, and I intended to curve around to the right, in order that we might retrace our steps to the American encampment.

“You did that very cleverly,” said my Pennsylvanian, when we had plodded along a bit.

The words showed more perception than I thought him capable of, and he began to rise in my esteem.

“It was not half bad,” I said, carelessly; “but I have been in much worse fixes than that. All it requires is a little courage and presence of mind. But I guess this joke has gone far enough. We had better stop it, as we are close to the British lines.”

“I think so too,” he said. “There is an outpost just over the hill there.”

“We won’t visit them,” I said, leaning against a

tree, “for I am no Englishman at all, my Quaker friend, but an American, and I have merely been teaching you a few tricks.”

I expected him to burst out into a great sputter of indignation, but he did nothing of the kind. He sat down on a convenient stone and looked at me, an air of fine contemplation on his face.

“So,” he said, “you are not what I took you to be. You are an American.”

“That is the precise truth,” I said. “Haven’t you got into a pretty pickle, allowing yourself to be taken in such a highly ridiculous fashion by one of your own comrades? Why, the whole army will be laughing at you for months.”

“They would laugh of a certainty,” he said, in his musing fashion. “That was a hard blow you gave me. I feel it yet.”

“ Yes,” I said, “but it will not interfere with your marching. Come along now: I think we’d better be returning.”

“I don’t think I’ll go,” he said, decidedly.

“Why?” I asked.

“It’s because I told you the truth,” he said. “I am, as I said, an Englishman, and not a Pennsylvanian. It’s the first real chance you’ve given me to say so.”

There, on the border of the English encampment, I could not doubt that his words were true, even had not his tone been convincing. I felt great surprise, and in truth much chagrin too, I confess. But I have always made it a point to hide my feelings.

I looked at the man, and he looked at me, though I do not think that either could read the other’s face.

“I bear you no malice for that blow,” he said.

“ You should not,” I replied. “It was not intended for you, but for a Pennsylvanian.”

“But I got it,” he said.

“It was one of the little mistakes that will occur in the military life,” I replied, apologetically.

He seemed satisfied with that, and we relapsed into a gloomy silence.

“You are my prisoner,” he said, after waiting a

minute or two.

“You are mine,” I replied.

“I have only to give one halloo,” he said, “and a dozen comrades will come running over that hill there to take you.”

“I have only to pull the trigger of this rifle that I hold in my hand,” I said, “to blow you into the Englishman’s heaven.”

He rubbed his head and thought a moment.

“It seems to me that we are both in a tight fix,” he said, despondently.

“It looks like it,” I said, with equal despondency.

He shook his head slowly, as if the matter were too deep for him. But my mind was at work.

“There is no law against an exchange of prisoners,” I said.

“There is none that I ever heard of,” he replied, brightening up.

“I’ll give you my prisoner for yours,” I said.

“It’s a fair trade,” he replied.

“Then we may consider the bargain complete,” I said.

“It’s done,” he replied; “but we ought to ratify it in some manner.”

“It’s the custom to put these things in writing,” I said; “but we have no writing-materials.”

“I have something else,” he said. “Wait a bit.”

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and, pulling out a large black bottle, banded it to me. I drew the cork and took a long, deep, and refreshing draught. Then I handed the bottle back to him, and he took a drink of equal duration.

“You are hospitable,” I said.

“It’s no more than right that I should offer it to you,” he replied. “I stole it this morning from an American farm-house.”

“It’s none the worse for that,” I said.

Then we saluted, and he went back to his army and I went back to mine.



The General

The colonel's temper was in a shocking state. The cause thereof was manifest to the officers of the regiment, who tried to make a brave show of dignity in tattered regimentals. But the course of affairs was enough to depress the most spirited and the most patriotic, and there was not one among them who could hold his head very high without feeling that he was merely playing make-believe. The call, so widely circulated throughout that region, for recruits to help in the struggle against the "sanguinary tyrants of Great Britain," had met with no response. Not a single volunteer had come in. The country people everywhere appeared to be cowed by the enemy who had been making such head lately. The patriot cause was doomed, they thought, and they had no mind to risk life or limb in a hopeless struggle.

The colonel had abundant courage, but the reflection that he would have to report the flattest

failure of the campaign to the commander-in-chief cut him to the quick. Having full knowledge of his ill humour, the adjutant and the quartermaster kept away from him as much as their duties would permit. They were lying on the hillside discussing the matter, and round them stretched the irregular camp. The ill clad soldiers hovered over the camp fires, and the sentinels walked their beats with weary feet. The whole detachment owned but one tent, and the colonel sat in the doorway of that, his chin resting on his hand and a very sour look on his face.

Just how he passed the sentinels Norton and Howard never knew, but suddenly a diminutive form stood before them and a thin but resolute little voice said:

“If you please, gentlemen, I’ve come to join the army and help beat the British.”

He did not seem to be more than half as tall as Norton or Orwell, and his clothing was rough and poor, but he was a very eager and earnest little boy. Nevertheless Norton and Orwell could not keep from laughing heartily, and Norton said:

“A camp is no place for runaway lads like you, and I’ll warrant your father and mother will make it very unpleasant for you when they get you back home again.”

“If you please, sir,” said the boy, very gravely, “my father and mother are dead, and I’ve come to join the army and beat the British.”

“What’s the lad after, and why do you permit him here in the camp?” asked a rough voice behind them.

The colonel had seen the boy, and the sight did not improve his temper. He could not imagine who would be guilty of such an infraction of discipline as to bring a boy who might talk all over the countryside into the camp, and he drew near to find out more about it.

“He says he has come to join our army and help beat the British,” said Norton. “I suppose he has read our proclamation or heard of it. Do you scorn the reinforcement, sir?”

The colonel turned red in the face and uttered an unintelligible growl. Norton, although he was a favorite with the colonel, concluded that he had

been imprudent.

“At least,” he said hastily, “it shows that some spirit is left when the little boys want to join us.”

“Yes,” growled the colonel, “they seem to be reversing things. But the trouble is they don’t do it completely. For while all the men have turned into boys, only one boy has turned into a man. What’s his name?”

He addressed the inquiry in a more kindly tone. During the debate the boy had stood stiffly erect in something like soldierly attitude. But he listened eagerly to every word that was said.

“Johnny Shelton,” he replied to the question.

“How old?”

“Twelve.”

“Twelve! I wouldn’t have thought it,” said the colonel doubtfully. “From his appearances,” he said, turning to his adjutant, “provisions have not been more plentiful with him than they have been with us. At any rate he has been in training for the military fare.”

“Oh, yes, sir,” said the boy quickly. “I can

stand anything and do anything. Please let me be a soldier and help beat the British.”

“Hearken to him,” said the colonel. “What zeal! what enthusiasm! Norton, if you and Orwell could imitate this young gentleman’s spirited example, we might turn the tide of affairs very quickly. I’ll wager my epaulettes against a sixpence that he’ll be a general inside of a year, if he gets a chance in the army.”

“Oh, yes, sir; I know I will,” said Johnny, delighted at this encouragement. “I’d like mighty well to be a real general, and I can be if you’ll only give me a chance, sir.”

Norton and Orwell laughed again, but the colonel reproved them with a gesture.

“I’m afraid you’re too small, my lad,” he said, more gravely. “We can’t feed little boys like you to the cannon.”

“I’m not afraid,” said Johnny stoutly. “Just give me the chance, sir.”

The colonel hesitated. Then he beckoned to one of the men who had drawn near, and told him to fetch a loaded musket.

“Now, general,” he said to Johnny, “take that musket and aim at the big tree on the hillside over there.”

Johnny struggle manfully, but there was not enough strength in his thin little arms. He could not raise the musket to the required level.

“You see, you are too little,” said the colonel. “You cannot aim a gun. It is too big for you.”

Johnny burst into tears, but he remembered in a moment that they were unworthy of a soldier and quickly dried them.

“If you please,” he said, “I’ll grow, and the musket won’t.”

“But what are we to do with you in the meanwhile, general?” asked the colonel.

“There are other things useful that I can do,” said Johnny.

“Well, what are they?” asked the colonel, impatiently, for he was becoming somewhat tired of the matter.

Johnny looked around him in despair. But presently his eyes alighted on a big drum that was

lying near. Then his troubles rolled away.

“Why, sir,” he said confidently to the colonel, “I can beat that drum there and call the soldiers to battle and keep their courage up. Then I’ll do a lot to help beat the British.

“I’m afraid the drum is as much too big for you as the musket is,” said the colonel, looking at the drum. “Why, it’s about as tall as you are!”

“I know it,” said Johnny, his confidence in no wise diminished by the colonel’s depreciatory remarks. “But you just let me try, sir, and I’ll show you I can manage it.”

“Very well,” said the colonel. “Give the general a chance.”

A soldier brought the drumsticks. The lad attached the drum to his side, or rather himself to the side of the drum, and took the sticks with confident hands.

“Now listen to me,” said the general, his eyes shining, “and I’ll show you that I’m good enough to be a soldier.”

Soon all the officers and half the soldiers in the camp were gathered around the little drummer

and the big drum. Never before had they seen drumsticks wielded by such practised and skillful hands. The general beat the charge with so much vigor and spirit that the men wished the enemy would come in sight at once and give them a chance to get at them. Then, when he beat the retreat, it was hardly a retreat at all; it was so full of encouragement; it told the men they would have better luck next time, and it exhorted them to keep their spirits up and their faces to their foes. Then the general glided off into the rollicking music of a dance by the campfire and the heels of the listening men were itching to get a-moving.

While he played, the general's face was transfigured. He seemed to forget where he was. His whole soul had gone into his music and when he finished he came to himself with a kind of gasp.

“You'll do, general, you'll do,” said the colonel, and in his enthusiasm he clapped his hand upon the boy's shoulder with such violence that the little fellow reeled against the big drum. “You're worth a whole regiment. With such

music as yours to help them on the men ought to be able to march up against anything.

Norton, find quarters for him, and see that he keeps this drum.”

The general, smiling and content went

off with a sergeant, and the colonel returned to his tent.

In the course of time the general, despite his diminutive size, became, next to the colonel, the most conspicuous personage in the detachment. He marched and camped like a veteran, and always kept his beloved drum by his side. There was a-plenty of hardships for him as well as for the others, but he never complained. If food was



The General

scarce and there was nothing to eat when night came on, the General lay down on the ground and forgot his hunger in sleep. If he became footsore and weary on the march, and the big drum that dragged at his side grew heavier and heavier every step he took, he stiffened his muscles and tried to conceal the evidences of his exhaustion. So it was no wonder that the colonel gave him his distinct approval, and his title of "The General" clung to him until his real name was forgotten by the few who had ever known it.

But The General's career was not one of unalloyed glory. There were some things that rankled very much in his mind. The times were gloomy. The patriot cause was in a bad way. That fact could not escape The General's observant faculties, and though he made a brave attempt to conceal his knowledge it preyed upon him. It also kept the soldiers in a bad and despondent humor, and as The General was by far the smallest person in the detachment, they were disposed to vent some of their vexation upon his head. Their teasing took various forms. Sometimes they would steal his drum away from him and hide it.

All such things as this The General could stand, despite his love for his drum, but what cut him to the quick was the charge that he could not fight.

“Wait until we see the enemy,” said one of the soldiers to The General. “You’re spry enough now with your drum, and you beat it mighty well, but when the red-coats are comin’, and their bayonets are glistenin’, away will go your drum on one side and your drumsticks on the other, an’ you’ll think it’s a deer scootin’ off. That’s what you’ll do, General.

The General invariably resented their aspersions upon his courage by offering to fight on the spot, but nobody would fight him, and he was forced to wait for an opportunity to prove what stuff his spirit was made of. It seemed to The General that such an occasion would never come, but it did come at last.

The detachment was aroused early one morning and set off on a rapid march, for what point the general knew not. But he knew from the look on the faces of the colonel and the other officers that there was work ahead. He had also heard the order to the men to look well to their

muskets and see that their ammunition was in order.

They crossed fields and passed houses and scared-looking farmers who ran when they saw the soldiers coming, but they stopped for none of them. About noon they came to a wood and the general saw something red gleaming among the trees.

“Now,” said the colonel sharply to the general, “beat the charge as you never beat it before.”

The general seized his drumsticks and began a loud and rapid rat-a-tat rat-a-tat. The soldiers broke into a cheer and ran toward the wood, the general being borne on in the rush. A volley was fired from the trees. There were some cries of pain from his companions and the general saw two men fall. But the patriots never stopped. They rushed on toward the wood, cheering as they ran. When the general saw the men falling, he was terribly frightened at first, but he managed to keep his feet and rattled the drumsticks with all his might. In a moment they were into the wood and in the midst of the hurly burly. Through all the sputtering of the muskets and the crush of

heavy blows, and the cheers and the counter cheers, the general pounded away on his drum with an unnatural vigor born of the excitement and fever in his veins.

By and by only the patriots were cheering, for all the enemy who were not captured or slain had taken to flight. When the general had recovered from his fit of excitement and battle fever, he was sitting, limp and weak, on a log, while the colonel was complimenting him on his bravery and the spirit which he had shown.

“I thought the men would have broken once, if it had not been for that midget and the ceaseless call of his drum, I believe that they would,” he said afterward to Norton.

After this incident the general’s courage was unchallenged, wherefore life became pleasanter to him. Also it was much easier to endure hardships, for he was now honored by the men as well as the officers and had a standing in the camp recognized by everybody.

The summer passed and affairs began to mend a little. The general observed that the cloud on

the colonel's brow was not as black as it used to be, and that circumstances cheered him mightily.

One of the most important duties of the command was to forage. In a country that had been swept by both armies the task was attended with many difficulties and disappointments. But the general became quite an adept in the art, and his skill in this respect contributed quite as much as his bravery to the esteem in which he was held.

One evening just as dusk was beginning to fall and the command was going into camp, the general thought he saw the setting sun glinting along the eaves of a distant farmhouse. He said nothing about it to the soldiers, but immediately the thought of forage came into his mind. He was sure that none of them had seen the house, and if there was anything to be had there, he would get it himself, though he meant to make a fair division of the spoils.

The men scattered themselves about the ground, each making himself as comfortable as he could. The general edged away toward the wood, intending to take a short cut for the house.

It was no very difficult matter to get away, the guard being lax, owing to information that the enemy had withdrawn from that region.

The general took his drum with him for two reasons. First, the boys could not hide it while he was gone, and pester him about it when he returned; second, that drum was an instrument of many uses—one of its heads could be taken out, and slaughtered chickens and turkeys could be stowed in its capacious insides as snugly and neatly as if it were a big basket make especially for the purpose. In anticipation of such use, he removed one of the heads.

The general and his big drum were soon lost to sight among the trees and the shadows. But a sharp walk of fifteen minutes carried him through the wood, and then he came to a river. Beyond the river he could see the farm house of his desire. The colonel had known of this river, but the general did not until he was halted almost by its stream. It looked too deep to ford, and the general was sorely vexed, for he could not swim. But he was a veteran now, and made a call upon his resources. He followed the river down stream

about a half mile until he came to a place so shallow that the water barely rippled over the stones.

The general walked across and then went back up the stream. It was quite dark now, but he could see dimly the outlines of the farmhouse, which stood about a quarter of a mile to the westward of the river. He approached boldly, but he grew discouraged when he saw not signs of the coveted forage. There were no cattle about; no chickens cackled in the yard. Nowhere were signs of life. At first the general thought that the house was deserted, but presently he was reassured by a twinkle of light from one of the windows. His spirits rose and his mouth began to water at the prospect of something better to eat than the ordinary hard fare of the camp.

He crossed the yard with firm steps and knocked at the door.

“Come in,” said a masculine voice,

The general pushed open the door as he entered. As he put his foot upon the sill, several lanterns were held up and the room seemed to

him to be full of red uniforms and yellow epaulettes. The general would have cried out in surprise, but a heavy hand fell upon his throat.

“Hold your lantern closer, Melville,” said a gruff voice; “I want to see what sort of a capture we have made.”

A lantern was held so close to the general’s face that he was compelled to wink both eyes. But he could see enough to know that he was in the hands of the British and that the owner of the gruff voice was the commander of the force. The general was trapped, but he determined to present a brave front, nevertheless.

“Pouf, it is but a boy!” said the owner of the gruff voice.

“Still, Colonel Montague,” said one of the officers, “a boy might know much that we want to know.”

“That’s true,” said Colonel Montague. “Boy, who are you?”

“If you please, sir,” said the lad, “I’m the general.”

Some of the officers laughed, but Colonel

Montague grew angry.

“What nonsense is this?” he cried. “You, the general? The general in what?”

“In the American army, if you please, sir,” said the general, leaning upon his drum for moral as well as physical support.

Colonel Montague burst into a harsh laugh.

“Well, the rebels are harder pressed than we thought they were, if they make generals of such as you,” he said. “Gentlemen, we expected good luck to-night, but we little dreamed how extremely good it would be. I verily believe that we have caught the commander-in-chief of all the rebel armies himself. Behold him!”

All the officers laughed, and their ridicule recalled the lad’s memory. It was so since he had been called by any other name than “the general,” that he gave it involuntarily in reply to Colonel Montague’s questioning. Now he remembered.

“If you please, sir,” he said, “I don’t mean that I’m a general. That’s what the soldiers call me; it’s just a nickname, though I’m going to be a general sure enough, some day. My real name is

Johnny Shelton.”

“And I infer, Master John, from that instrument you have with you that you are a drummer boy in the rebel army, and that you are in training to get yourself hanged,” said Colonel Montague sternly. “You are beginning at a very early age, young man, to tread the road to the gallows.”

The general felt uncomfortable. The prospect of such an unpleasant end had never been presented to him before, and he was very far from liking it. But he did not intend to let Colonel Montague see his trouble.

“I am serving my country, sir,” he said.

“Your country,” said Colonel Montague roughly. “Who made it your country? It’s King George’s country, as you and all the other rebels will soon find out. Take him outside, Melville, and see that the men keep a good watch over him.”

The officer led the general, still clinging to his drum, to the rear of the house. Here was an extensive wood and in it were hundreds of armed men in the British uniform. The fires were

burning and the hoofs of the horses were muffled and their mouths muzzled. The general was placed with a squad of infantry, where he was compelled to endure much chaffing from the men.

“What a terror ’e is, Bill,” said one of the men to another. “I don’t wonder that we can’t put down the rebels when they have such fighters as ’e is. I know I’d run, if hever I saw ’im a-comin’.”

“And so would I, Tom,” said the other; “but look at the bloomin’ youngster’s big drum. I wonder if ’e sleeps inside of it hevery night.”

The general treated these remarks with the silent scorn they deserved. By and by they let him alone, and he calmly stretched himself out on the ground beside his drum. But he did not go to sleep. Every faculty was awake and strained. He was alarmed not for himself alone, but for the other men across the river. He had heard the soldiers around him talking in whispers, but he did not need what they said to tell him the secret. He had guessed it already, but he listened attentively to the details.

The British attack was to be made two hours after midnight, when the unsuspecting patriots would be buried in their deepest slumbers. The surprise would be complete. The British soldiers felt no doubt of that, as they knew their enemies had no idea they were so near. They expected an easy triumph and at one blow to sweep out of existence a most important portion of the rebel army. They were exultant at the thought.

But their talk filled the general with the most painful emotions, and the hands that had so often wielded the drumsticks grew clammy. But he said nothing and pretended that he was asleep.

“Better go to sleep, lads,” said the man who had been called Bill. “We’ll ’ave sharp work hafore mornin’ and we’ll need all the rest we can get.”

All the men, including Bill himself, adopted the suggestion and were soon asleep, their snores rising peacefully on the night air.

The general lay near the edge of the wood and a sentinel paced backward and forward about twenty feet in front of him. The man was vigilant

and stopped to listen whenever a bird or a cricket made a noise. The general watched him for a long time. Oh, if he would only lie down and snore like Bill and his squad! But the sentinel showed no such intention. On the contrary, he walked up and down with as firm and active a step as ever, and seemed to be awake to everything.

The general thought of all the fearful results of this surprise. The command would be cut to pieces. All his comrades killed or taken. Could the cause stand such a blow? The general, despite the fact that he was now a veteran, shed some tears and cuddled up to his drum for comfort.

The night was not very dark. The moon shone above the trees and threw silver streaks over the sleeping men. Now and then a stray beam fell upon the face of the watchful sentinel and showed his weather-beaten features.

The general guessed that it was nearly midnight when he heard a noise to the left. It sounded like the snorting of a horse, and undoubtedly proceeded from one of the animals belonging to the troop. The sentinel stopped and listened. So did another sentinel who was farther

away. The snort was repeated. The two sentinels looked doubtfully at each other. But the general's sentinel was nearer the point whence the noise proceeded. It was his duty to go and muzzle the horse more securely. He looked around at the recumbent forms and then walked lightly away. The other sentinel, continuing on his beat, soon became hid among the shadows.

The general's heart began a drum beat of its own against his ribs. He rose quickly to his feet and stepped forward, dragging with him his big drum, which he had attached to his shoulder with a strap. He had forgotten about the drum, and he was in terror lest the scraping noise it made when he dragged it over the ground would awaken Bill and his companions. But they slept peacefully on.

The general started to unloosen the strap and leave the drum behind. Then he stopped. Why should he leave his cherished drum as a trophy in the hands of the enemy? He had heard Norton tell of some old Greeks—their names he couldn't exactly remember—who thought it an irredeemable disgrace to leave their shields in the possession of their foes. He would do as well as

they did. So he gathered up his drum and, darting over the ground as quickly and noiselessly as a hare, was soon beyond the circle of the sentinels.

The general paused for a moment. He could scarcely believe that he was free. But as he paused he heard a shout behind him. Some one had missed him and given the alarm. In an instant a half dozen lights flared up. He ran on again, but tripped among some bushes and pitched forward. Then he and his drum rolled over each other down a little hillside. But when he reached the bottom he was up like a flash, dragging his drum after him, and darted off in a straight line for his own camp. Behind him he heard the rapid tramp of many pursuers.

“Confound the little rebel!” cried a voice. “We must catch him or he’ll give the alarm to the enemy. He’s off there in front of us. I heard him fall among the bushes.”

The fear of recapture took a mighty hold upon the general, and he skimmed over the ground, the great drum occasionally bumping on the stones. He would have cast it aside, but in his haste and excitement he could not undo the strap. Still he

ran so fast that once he thought he had thrown his enemy off his trail. But a moment later he heard several shouts and the torches again twinkled behind him. The general made another great effort and, rushing through some bushes, stopped aghast, for he was on the very verge of the deep river.

In the confusion of the flight he had forgotten all about the river which flowed between him and his friends. Before him it stretched wide and unfordable. Behind him came the heavy tramp of his enemies. Their torches flared higher, and they saw him now, for they raised exultant cries.

The general was trembling all over, for hope seemed gone; but at the very last moment inspiration came to him. With fingers that he nerved into steadiness he deftly undid the strap that confined the big drum to his shoulders. One of the heads was still out just as he had fixed it when he intended to put his chickens in it, and he placed the drum, with the remaining drum downward, on the stream. Then he dropped lightly into it, as if it were a canoe.

His enemies were approaching rapidly and

their torches blazed now. The general put both hands against the bank and gave a mighty shove. The drum, with the drummer inside it, shot far out into the stream, and general saw, with a rejoicing heart, that the current would continue to bear him toward the further shore. But when the water bubbled around him he trembled again. He balanced himself as nearly as he could in the center of the drum, but the stout hide head held fast beneath his light weight and floated safely on the surface of the stream.

The crashing among the bushes on the bank behind him increased, and several men in red uniforms appeared on the river's verge. There was some hesitation among them, and then one cried out:

“Fire! Fire on him! It's true as you say that he's only a boy, but we mustn't let him alarm the enemy. Fire! They may not hear our shots!”

A half dozen muskets were fired and the bullets whistled all around him. One even struck the metal hoop of his drum and glanced off into the water, but he was not touched.

“Oh, Lord,” groaned the general, “they’ll hit me the next time.”

Then he raised up his voice and shouted with all the strength of his lungs.

“Comrades! Comrades! Wake up! Wake up! The enemy are coming! The enemy are coming! Wake up!”

Again and again he repeated his cry. The muskets behind him continued to crack, and some of the bullets splashed the water in his face. Presently he felt a sensation in his shoulder, as if it had been pierced by a hot needle, but he did not cease to utter his cry of alarm, and the woods resounded with the echo of it.

Torches were now twinkling on the shore in front of him as well as behind him, and the general heard the rush of men coming to meet him. He knew they were his comrades, and though he felt his strength leaving, he strove to redouble his cries.

“It’s the general himself!” shouted the well known voice of the colonel. “Give it to ’em, my lads! Give it to ’em.”

Crack-crack-crack went the guns and the bullets whizzed over the general's head toward the men in the red uniforms on the further shore, and crack-crack-crack the men in the red uniforms replied. There was a blaze of light back and forth that half-blinded the general and he did not see how near he was to the coveted shore. But two muscular brown hands reached out, grasped the rim of the drum and drew it to the shore. Then the general fainted, and knew nothing until many hours afterward.

When the general revived he found himself lying on a mattress of coats in the colonel's own tent, and the colonel, Norton and Orwell were sitting beside him. He tried to turn over, but he felt a pain in his shoulder and saw that it was swathed in many bandages. He looked inquiringly at the colonel.

"It's all right, general," said the commander. We heard your shouts and came fully armed. We crossed afterward at the ford below and gave them a sound beating. It was a fine victory and the Congress will have to give you a medal and put a gold hoop around your drum in place of the

one that the bullet battered.

“Yes,” said Norton. “You came back to us on your drum head like the Spartan on his shield, but, unlike the Spartan, you didn’t come back dead. Now go to sleep, general, and you’ll be well in a few days.”

The general moved himself gently into a better position among the coats, and, as he closed his eyes, said, in a droll tone:

“And maybe I’ll live to be a real general yet. Won’t I, colonel?”



The Red Light

I had no love for that sort of thing, and I never will have. I greatly prefer the open battle, which to my mind is about the only decent way of making war. But I was one of those selected for the task, and, all of you know or ought to know, a soldier cannot pick his work, doing this and leaving that. Then, too, there was some animosity in me toward the English, which perhaps is not a feeling that one ought to cultivate even against an official enemy. But the English had done some very cruel things recently. Their ravages in the Chesapeake were fresh, and the massacre at the Raisin was not to be forgotten. I could not help hating them a little bit, although my sister Bertha was to marry an Englishman (and a good enough fellow Paul Leslie was), if this war ever ended.

But, having set out to do the job, I rejoiced in our success. We had planted the devilish instrument of destruction, torpedo I think they

call it, where the frigate was bound to pass. She would come on at speed, unsuspecting. She would strike the torpedo. Boom! would go something under the water, and that would be the last of the most troublesome ship on our coast and her four hundred crew. A hard fate, you say. Well, yes, perhaps, but it was this very frigate that helped to bring on the war. It was she that lay off New York harbor before the war and killed the captain of one of our peaceful merchant ships because he refused to stop and be searched while entering his home port. Plague take these impudent English! Do they think they can bully us in our own house merely because they have a thousand ships of war?

The men in the boat were doing their work with caution and skill; that was evident. The torpedo planned, there was nothing left but to toll the frigate over it. They rowed steadily toward the big ship. Standing as I was on the sand-spit, I could see the water running like melted silver off their oar-blades. A fine moon threw a broad light over the sea. Just beyond the border of light crept the frigate. Her hull looked very black, and I

could not discern human figures on her deck or in her rigging. She was a good ship, I knew, and I felt some sorrow for her approaching fate and the manner of it. I would much rather see her taken in fierce action by the Constitution or the United States than sent to the bottom of the sea by a sneaking torpedo which grovels under water and takes you unawares like a hungry shark.

My part of the work was over. I could have gone away had I wished to do so, but I preferred to remain and see the catastrophe. One does not have such a spectacle as that every day—or every night, for it must have been within an hour of midnight then.

The night and the sea seemed very peaceful. The presence of the boat and the ship did not detract from their calm. The water made a light murmuring where it broke over the shallows, but that was the only sound. There was no more lonely bit of coast.

The boat went on its direct way. Sanderson was a competent man, and would be sure to lure the ship along the fatal course. The figures of the men in the boat grew indistinct as she glided out

toward the frigate. One square, stalwart form, which I knew to be Sanderson's, was the last to preserve any sort of outline. Then the boat became a blur on the sea, which was silvered by the moon. On it went for what looked like a quarter of an hour or near about it. Then it stopped. Presently it began to move about hither and thither, as if making observations. From where I stood it seemed to be very near to the frigate, but I knew the distance was greater than it looked. Sanderson would not go too close and allow himself to be caught. That was no part of the plan.

The frigate spread more sail, veered from her course, and bore into the nearer channel. She had seen the boat, and was suspicious. What was more, if she kept on her new course she would strike the torpedo, and we would be rid of a pest. For the moment I forgot my aversion to the enterprise, all seemed to fall out so well.

Sanderson turned the boat's head and rowed up the channel. He wished to keep in deep water, where the frigate would follow. In five minutes more the boat would pass over the torpedo. I

could mark the very spot on the water where we had sunk it. It was just across there where the tiny white-cap was breaking. The light boat would pass over it safely, but the deep-draught frigate could not. It was a queer sort of deadly engine. I had never seen such a thing before; in fact, I had never heard of any; but the man who made it, a stoop-shouldered fellow from Boston, said it would be safer to sit on an exploding magazine than to be on a ship when that torpedo burst beneath it. I wondered if there would be a great noise when the thing let go, and if the water would be thrown up like the foam of Niagara.

I saw a spout of flame from the bow of the frigate, and the sound of a cannon-shot caused me to jump a little. I had heard many a cannon-shot before, but in the stillness of the night, with both sea and land to give it an echo, this made such a prodigious uproar that I felt like sticking my fingers in my ears. The frigate had begun to fire on the boat. We had not bargained for this, but a small boat moving rapidly is a pretty hard thing to hit with a cannon-ball, especially when your cannon is moving too. Thinking twice, I

concluded that the boat was not in very great danger.

The boat reached the spot beneath which the torpedo lay and passed over it and on. The frigate, a considerable distance behind, was pursuing steadily. She was now well into the nearer channel. The boat curved around a tongue of land and disappeared. Its part of the work, like mine, was ended. Sanderson had done well. It was the nature of the man to be thorough. I guessed easily that the English were hot on the chase, and would not turn back so long as they had plenty of deep water for the frigate. Her course was unbroken for two or three minutes. Then I noticed the men furling some sails and loosening out others. I could see their figures like black spots against the rigging. The ship veered about, and seemed to be tacking as much as the somewhat straitened channel would allow.

I was surprised much, and disappointed more. I could not ascribe the frigate's queer behavior to anything but suspicion, nay, more, alarm. But what had caused it? Why had she taken fright with such suddenness when everything was going

so beautifully? I much fear that I swore—under my breath, it is true, but still I swore.

The further actions of the frigate confirmed my belief. It was in truth more than suspicion, it was alarm that had taken hold of her. She lay upon the water like a huge bird with wings fluttering. I could see a group of men gathered upon her quarter-deck, evidently the commander and his chief officers in consultation. I thought I could see the gold braid upon their caps shining.



The Red Light

Perplexity was added to disappointment. It could not have been instinct that had warned them: their

alarm was too sudden for that. One of the officers raised a telescope and began to examine the land. Then I saw. Then I knew the cause of the frigate's strange behavior. The shore at that point was thickly covered with bushes, and among these bushes, at the water's edge, a strong red light was shining.

As everybody knows, red is the sign of danger

the world over. Wrath seized me. I had heard of Blue-light Tories farther up the coast, plenty of them. This was a red light. But what mattered that? It was treason just the same; it saved the enemy.

The traitor who held the light began to wave it violently as if the danger were pressing. I tried to see the man, but could not discern any trace of a figure, merely the light, which blazed out a red warning. I had a pistol, and I felt for it, but the light was on one spit of land and I on another, with deep water between. The distance was too great for a shot.

I decided to creep around the inlet and seize the sneak. I might be too late to snuff out his red light, but it would be some satisfaction to seize the miserable Tory, whoever he was. I did not believe there was more than one. Sneaks do not go in pairs.

The red light danced about, and the frigate responded. She continued to tack, and presently she bore away from the dangerous water. She had accepted the warning. We would have to save that torpedo for another time, but I was determined

that the traitor should not give another such signal. I held my pistol in my hand ready for instant use, and began to run around the inlet. I marked the red light shining in the bushes, though it was not waved about so vigorously as before. I took another look at the frigate, whose hull was beginning to sink a little behind the curve of the sea. She had escaped us, beyond a doubt.

Suddenly the red light went out. Well it might! The treason had been done, and no longer was there need for its infamous warning. But the traitor should not escape if I could help it. I hastened as much as I could, and quickly turned the inmost angle of the inlet. Unless the man with the red light had been as quick, I would overhaul him.

On this side of the inlet the ground was very rough in places, and where it was not rough it was covered with dense patches of scrubby bushes. It was hard to make speed without being very noisy, and I did not wish to alarm the chase. Moreover, the clouds obscured the moon somewhat, and there was a noticeable increase of

darkness. I thought that luck had become wholly mine enemy, but I took back the thought, for when I pushed my way through one of the densest of the thickets and topped a bit of rising ground I saw a figure some distance ahead of me. Had not my eyesight been good, the figure would have been invisible: as it was, it was rather dim. But I knew it to be a man, and I guessed it was the one for whom I was looking. I was sure of this when I pressed closer and saw something swinging from the man's hand which, by my surmise, was the lantern that had shed the red light.

The man stopped and turned about. I sank down in some bushes, for I did not wish to put him on his guard. For more than a minute he looked attentively at the frigate, now but a shapeless blot on the dusky horizon. At the distance and in the night I could not tell much about him. He looked rather tall, but seemed to be enveloped from head to heel in a long black cloak. The head, too, seemed to be covered by what resembled a wide-brimmed hat slouched over the face. A true traitor's disguise! I cocked

my pistol, and for a moment was tempted to take a shot at him. But I could not do it. True, the sinking of the frigate would have been of like character. But I was ordered to do that; I was not ordered to do this. After all, it would be better to capture the fellow.

He seemed to be satisfied that his treason had succeeded, for he walked briskly on, passing over a hill, and did not look back any more. I followed at an equal pace, never once losing sight of him. When I too passed the hill I increased my speed. I knew that there were houses a mile back of the sea, and I wished to overtake him before he could reach any of them and find possible friends.

I was gaining perceptibly, though the man himself was walking fast. He came to a brook and leaped it with nimble step. An athletic fellow, I thought. I had a few qualms then. He might prove stronger than I. But I would take him by surprise, and I could hold him safe with my pistol.

I leaped the brook also and continued to gain upon him. His long cloak caught on a bush and held him for a moment. He detached it and went on. Then, in an unlucky moment, I stepped on a

stick, and it broke with a loud snap. The man looked back and saw me. Instantly he ran. Like the traitor that he knew himself to be, he feared everybody.

I saw that it was to be a foot-race unless he would turn and fight, and his quick flight did not promise that. He ran with great swiftness, and seemed to know the ground. I was careless of noise or concealment now, and dashed after him. Nothing incites your courage so much as for a man to run from you.

I stumbled frequently, but did not fall. Once my fugitive stumbled too, and I thought I would gain much upon him, but he recovered himself in a moment and leaped lightly over the ground. Then I thought that he was gaining. I hated to use the pistol, but there seemed to be no other course.

“Stop! stop!” I shouted, “or I will fire upon you.”

But my threat seemed merely to increase the speed of the fellow. I raised my pistol once to fire, and had my finger on the trigger. Then I changed my mind. But a minute later, as it was

evident that he was still gaining, I strengthened my resolution and pulled the trigger. The report of the pistol in the dead quiet of the night sounded like a cannon-shot. But the man ran on. I had missed.

I was not expert enough to load the pistol running, and I had no other. If I took him at all it must be by main strength. I believed that the man was unarmed, or he would have returned the fire. I was excited, blood and brain, and I determined to overhaul him and have a tussle with him. At least I would see the face of the traitor.

He stumbled and fell. I could not repress a little cry of joy, for before he was up I had gained all the ground I had lost, and more too. He dropped his lantern, but did not stay to pick it up. As I dashed past, I gave it a sound kick and heard the glass smash. "You won't be a tool for traitors any more, Mr. Lantern!" thought I.

The man turned his head for the first time. Evidently he saw that I was gaining, for he swerved suddenly from the path and ran into a thicket. Then I knew that his alarm was increasing and that he hoped as a last resort to

elude me in that way. But I too came up quickly and dashed helter-skelter into the bushes. For a moment I lost him, then I saw his head appearing above the lowest of the bushes, then I lost him again.

But, though out of my sight, I did not believe he could escape me. The thicket was not large, and it lay in a shallow valley or depression. The hills around were bare, and if he emerged upon them I would be sure to see him. I believed I had him in a trap at last. Nevertheless I became wary. The man, after all, might have a pistol, and if I tore blindly through the bushes I would become an easy mark. I endeavored to creep along noiselessly and discover where he was hiding. It was a slow sort of business, for one's clothes will catch on twigs in a thicket, and stones and sticks are continually getting in the way.

I stopped several times to listen, but I could not hear him. I rose to my feet occasionally to look at the ridges around, but he did not appear there. I doubted not that he was still in the thicket. My apprehension lest he would shoot me began to disappear. I was satisfied that the man was a

craven as well as a traitor. All traitors ought to be. Nevertheless I played half-brother to prudence and reloaded my pistol.

There was a further obscurity of the moon which might be good or bad; it might help him to escape, or it might help me to creep upon him. Just beyond one of the hill-tops I could see a light twinkling in a house. It was well that I had trapped the fellow in the thicket, for possibly he might find friends there.

I sat quite still for a little while. Then I heard a faint rustle as of some one pushing through close-set bushes. It was my man, I knew, and I slipped toward the noise. It ceased, but was resumed in a moment or two, and I continued to approach. Presently I caught sight of the fugitive, bent over, but walking. He seemed very weary. I carefully cocked my reloaded pistol and stole toward him.

There was a large tree in the thicket. The man in the cloak must have conceived a foolish notion that I had given up the chase, for when he came to this tree he went around on the far side of it and sat down. He drew a long breath, half a sigh, like one who is very faint. I was convinced now

that he would be an easy capture, as he had run himself out of breath. Letting down the hammer of my pistol, I replaced it in my belt. I would use the weapon only in the last emergency. I reached the tree, and could hear him breathing, still brokenly, on the other side. But I felt very strong myself. I stopped half-way, for I heard him moving. He rose to his feet and apparently intended to resume his flight. I did not give him a chance. I sprang upon him and seized both his arms in my firm grasp. He uttered a little cry and turned his face toward me.

“Bertha!” I cried. “You! You! Can you be a traitor!”

“No,” said my sister, looking at me with calm eyes. “Paul is serving on board that ship.”



● Credits

"My Pennsylvanian"

Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, May, 1897.

"The General"

Published in three installments in *The Hartford Courant*, in 1897 on October 9, 10 and 11.

"The Red Light"

Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, December, 1897.

