

Mr. Dubeledge, I, for once will step outside my ordinary course. The most celebrated vessel of all the rascally fleet is now in the harbour. You shall see her, and sail in her too if you desire it. I have often thought that I should like to have a glimpse of the interior of this vaunted Confederacy. It is out of the question, however; it would be fearfully misconstrued: my devotion to the North is well known, and my business engagements with the northern ports are extensive. There must be much in the South to interest an observer. If I cannot visit there myself, you are not similarly circumstanced, and can go without fear or apprehension. The trip itself would be delightful, and as to danger, there is none, for the ship I have in view laughs at everything that floats on the broad Atlantic.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO TO SAVANNAH?

Decidedly not, sir! My wild-goose engagement, broad as it is, is limited to the Islands; and here, I hope, it ends and determines.

Mr. Twislayd looked at me, aghast. But he mused a moment. I observed the faintest shadow of a twinkle pass over his eye, and his equanimity was restored. "Tis lunch time," said the gentleman; "shall we go up to the house?"

The distance was short. But one single observation saw made in our walk, and that, as we entered the grounds: Mr. Twislayd remarked—"You perceive me absent and thoughtful; pray, excuse it. I have received a consignment from the last vessel from Europe that gives me great anxiety, and it is a source of serious embarrassment."

I duly expressed my regret at the annoyance. What fools men are, in the aggregate, and this sapient individual, namely, myself, in particular.

My companion ushered the way to the luncheon room. As we entered, I saw two ladies looking out of a window that commanded a view of the garden. The merchant touched my arm, and whispered—"That is the consignment I spoke to you about just now."

The ladies turned as we approached them. Be it known, that I am not of a very impressionable nature; have little of electricity or explosive material in my composition, but on the contrary, am solid and phlegmatic, as becomes one who has done little save report long weary leagues of speeches without flower or fire in all their tedious course. But ice itself would have throbbed, warmed, melted, under the prospect that burst upon me. If I had all the pens of the poets from Homer to Byron, all the cunning chisels from Praxiteles to Chantrey, and all the delicate pencils that have worked from Raphael to Lely and Reynolds, I could not portray even shadows of the beautiful beings that stood before me. Why then essay a task that could terminate but in ludicrous failure? Positively, I was transfixed to the spot on which I stood, and of all my faculties, sight alone remained. No doubt, even in an uncommon degree, I made a grand fool of myself. I could but gaze on eyes, dark and lustrous as night—if such a paradox is possible. The ladies were not blind, and my situation resulted in a momentary exhibition of pearls, such as never yet were drawn from old oceans depths. This won't do at all; I must bring Pegasus down to the mud of beaten tracks, and the mire of every day life. Fortunately, I was somewhat recovered by my friend going through the ceremony of introduction. It was unnecessary to point out that the ladies were sisters. The one was made known to me as Miss B—, the other as Miss Ellen B—. "They are," Mr. Twislayd continued, "daughters of an old and esteemed friend, now one of the most distinguished Generals of the Confederacy. I think, even the blackest of Black Republicans would not require an apology for the exercise of hospitality in such a case. The ladies are rather unfortunately situated. The gentleman who escorted them from Europe is compelled to remain here. They are very desirous to join their father, who now commands at Wilmington, and I am utterly at a loss to find a trustworthy person under whose protection I can permit them to make the voyage." The merchant looked at me with a smile in which pride and mirth and mischief all were blended.

Here was a pretty situation for any young man! But the result could not be doubtful. To serve, to oblige, or even to gain a smile from these bright flowers of the South, I would joyfully have stormed Fortress Monroe, myself the sole and only "forlorn hope." An idea, to be sure, in which was mixed up a spy, a yard-arm and a running noose, flitted across my mind, but in such a presence it could leave nor mark nor trace. Eventually, I contrived to stammer out—"If I could only think that my poor services could avail —"

"Enough, my friend," said Mr. Twislayd; "your noble offer is accepted; the ladies will ever remember your generous devotion: on myself you confer an eternal obligation. In your charge they will be safe from every danger."

This mounted me again. "Yes, sir, in their cause I will shed, to the last drop," &c., &c., &c.

The ladies thanked me with more than words. I was the proudest and happiest fellow in either hemisphere.

"This matter settled, and so satisfactorily," said Mr. Twislayd; "let's to lunch."

The ship we were to cross in was the famous blockade-runner alluded to by Mr. Twislayd. She was detained a few hours coaling, and did not sail till the following morning. We went in her, I and my wards, as the young ladies laughingly designated themselves.

We were barely clear of the land before an adventure occurred. Directly in our course, seawards, lay a ship, evidently on mischief intent. There she lay, motionless as a crouching tiger, but prepared for a spring.

"That's certainly," I heard our captain say, "the N—, — Commodore W—kes. Ease off about three points for the present and let us see what he means. This was done, and almost in the same moment the other vessel woke up and stood right across us with the intention of cutting us off; or, failing that, driving us ashore. We stood on in this course for some time, the Yankee drawing down on us; at last we found out that he was almost near enough, by seeing a puff of smoke issue from his bow port and a shot, that danced prettily over the waves, fall about a cable's length off on our weather-bow. "That will do," said our skipper, "lay her her head due south, and we'll go round him like a cooper round a cask."

Our captain, — however, too proud of his craft, — had ventured a little too much. The corvette proved to have guns of longer range than the one that had opened the ball, and in the instant that we changed our course a second time, a round shot made an ugly dent in our smoke-stack, and a shell burst so near that a splinter fell on deck. Nobody was hurt. It was now a stern chase; our gallant craft showed her heels, and though a few more compliments were sent after us, none came home, and we were soon out of harm's way, and before the dog-watch was called, the corvette could not be seen from the mast-head.

During the whole of this little affair the young ladies sat on deck — the blood of their gallant father was in their veins — and watched with much interest. Our tars looked on them with admiration, and would, I think, have done gallant deeds under their eyes. Of course, I did not absent myself from their side; the veriest coward would not have deserted such a post. I had observed that when the corvette commenced firing, there was something like a feeling of apprehension visible. I took an opportunity of enquiring of one of the officers of the ship as to the nature of her cargo. "General, sir, General," was the response. "Amongst other things we have a large quantity of medical stores — pills, of all sorts and sizes, and four or five hundred casks of powders, of various descriptions, to work them off. We have also an assortment of lancets for the surgeons, and amputating instruments that take off an arm, a leg, or even a head, in a twinkling. And what the doctors like exceedingly well — for they are always anxious to put their work out of sight, — several bundles of pickaxes and shovels."

"Thank you, sir. But I fear the Confederacy must be very sickly to require supplies on such a scale."

"By no means," said the elder of my fair friends, who was listening, "these articles are all intended for operations on the enemies of the Confederacy."

"Bless me! can it really be so? then your countrymen are as humane as they are brave."

It was on the first of the previous month that I commenced my enigmatical progress; this was the eleventh instant; and I needed no one to tell me that I had all along been groping about in a bewildering fog that increased in density at every step.

Nothing further of any importance occurred during the passage. We got across without again meeting an enemy, and made the land some thirty miles to the southward of the Savannah. We lay to till night; and, fortunately for us, it was a very dark one; and then, by hugging the land close, we crept inside the blockading fleet and got safely into port.

The General was in waiting to receive his daughters. Their separation had been long; it had extended over years; conceive then their meeting. It would require a far abler pen than mine, and as I hate boggling, will not make the attempt. Those holy sympathies, warm as the sun under which they blossomed, can scarcely be understood, much less delineated, by the native of the frigid, frozen north. I pass on.

I was introduced to the General, and handed him a letter from Mr. Twislayd. His daughters informed him of the position in which I stood, and the reasons that had induced me to accompany them. It is almost unnecessary to say that I was warmly and most cordially received. He would not listen to the idea of my making any other house than his own my home during my stay in Wilmington; and thence we at once hastened. The night was far advanced. After a slight refreshment we separated, and I went to bed. In the morning we met at the breakfast table, the General, my fair friends and myself. The General's lady was absent in the interior, and it had been arranged that my proteges were to leave almost immediately to go to her; in fact, our meal was hurried that they might be in time for the train. I was invited to accompany them to the station. We were soon ready, but when I went to the hat-rail where I had deposited my hat some hours before, it was not to be seen. The General was near me. "You miss your hat," said he, smiling; "my correspondent informed me that you attached extraordinary value, or, at least, looked upon that hat as no ordinary hat, so I took the liberty of placing it in a safe position. I will get it in an instant."

The General went to get it, but returned without it. "Dear me, how provoking! I have mislaid the key of the place in which I secured your *chapeau*, and we have not a moment to spare. Condescend to make use of one of mine till we return." "So! So! thought I;" "this wonderful hat's gone at last, and were it not for the hundred dollars I should welcome the loss." But I was mistaken, for within an hour it was on my head again.

We went to see the ladies off. They were profuse in their acknowledgements of the service I had rendered them, applauded my *valour* to the echo, wished me a safe return, bade me good bye,

(To be continued.)