

MILES WALLINGFORD

By James Fenimore Cooper

CHAPTER XXVI

"You think I'll weep."

No, I'll not weep; I have full cause of weeping; but this heart break into a hundred thousand flaws, Or ere I'll weep."

I pass over the manner and time of our being on the road between Philadelphia and New York, as things belonging to a former age, and to be forgotten. I will merely say that we travelled the South Amboy road, and went through a part of the world called Feather-bed Lane, that causes my bones to ache even now, in recollection. At South Amboy we got on board a sloop, or packet, and entered the bay of New York by the passage of the Kills, landing near Whitehall. We were superintending the placing of our chests on a cart, when some one caught my hand, and exclaimed—

"God bless me, Captain Wallingford come, life, at live!"

It was old Jared Jones, the man who had been miller at Clawbonny from infancy to the day I left home. I had supposed him to be at work there still; but the look he gave me—the tears that I could see were forcing themselves from his eyes—his whole manner, indeed, gave me at once to understand that all was not right. My countenance, rather than my tongue, demanded an explanation. Jared understood me, and we walked together toward the Battery; leaving Marble and Neb to proceed, with the luggage to the modest lodgings in which we had proposed to hide ourselves until I had time to look about me—a house frequented by Moses for many years.

"You perceive I do not return home, Jared, in precisely the condition in which I went abroad. My ship and cargo are a poor lot, and I come among you, now, a poor man, I fear."

"We were afraid that something of that sort must have happened, or such had news would never have reached Clawbonny, sir. Some of your men got back months ago, and they brought the tidings that the Dawn was captured by the English. From that hour, I think Mr. Hardinge gave the matter up. The worst news, however, for us—that of your death excepted—was that of the mortgage on Clawbonny."

"The mortgage on Clawbonny! Has anything been done in connection with that?"

"Lord bless you, my dear Mr. Miles, it has been foreclosed, under the statute I believed they call it; and it was advertised to be sold three weeks ago, when it was sold, however, to the place, mill and all, actually brought? Just give a guess, sir."

"Brought! Clawbonny is then sold, and I am no longer the owner of my father's house?"

"Sold, sir; and we have been sent adrift—niggers and all. They said the freedom-laws would soon let all the older blacks be their own masters; and as to the young ones, why, your creditors might sell their times. But Mr. Hardinge put the poor orphans into houses, near the rectory, and they work about among the neighbors, until things are settled. It's to their credit, Mr. Miles, that not one of 'em all thinks of running away. With the feelin' that's up in the country concernin' blacks, and no master to look after them, every one of 'em might be off, without rix."

"And Chloe, my sister's own girl, what has become of Chloe, Jared?"

"Why, I believe Miss Lucy has taken her. Miss Lucy is dreadfully rich, as all allow; and she has put it in her father's power to take her all the movable. Every huf (hoof) of living thing that was on the place has been put on the Wright farm, in readiness for their owner, should he ever come to claim them."

"Has Miss Hardinge had the consideration to hire that farm, with such an object?"

"They say she has bought it out of the savings of her income. It seems she is a mistress of her income, though under age. And this is the use she has made of some of her money."

"I had supposed she would be married by this time. Mr. Drewett was thought to be engaged to her when I sailed."

"Yes; there is more talk about that, than in the country; but they say Miss Lucy will never marry, until she has been of age a few weeks, in order that she may do what she pleases with the money, before a husband can lay his hand on it."

"Mr. Rupert is married, I suppose you heard, sir—and living with a noble woman in town. Some people say that he has a right in part of old Mrs. Bradford's estate, which he will get as soon as Miss Lucy comes of age."

"I did not like to pursue this part of the discourse any further, though it was balm to my wounds to hear these tidings of Lucy. The subject was too sacred, however, to be discussed with such a commentator, and I turned the discourse to Clawbonny, and the reports that might have been circulated there concerning myself. Jones told me all he knew, which was briefly as follows:

It seems that the second mate of the Dawn and such of her crew as had been put in the sloop, and who had not been impressed either in the frigate itself, or in England after they were turned ashore, had found their way home, bringing with them an account of the capture of the ship, her extraordinary appearance near the four combatants, and their own attempts to escape. The last affair, in particular, had made some noise in the journals—a warm discussion having taken place on the right of Americans to run away with an English man-of-war's boat, under the circumstances in which these poor fellows had found themselves placed. In that day, parties in America took a lively interest in the journals, and as if the country were a belligerent; and politicians, or quasi statesmen, were little more than retailers of the most ultra English and ultra French opinions. It was sufficient for the federalists to justify any act, if England did it; while the democrats had almost as strong a disposition to defend all the enormities which the policy of Napoleon led him to commit. I say almost—for, to deal hon-

estly with posterity, I do not think the French-American party was English. These had returned to their provincial dependence of thought; and well read in the English version of all political and moral truths, and little read in those of any other state of society, they believed, as he who worships at a distance from the shrine, is known implicitly to yield his faith. The English had actually a foundation in deeply-rooted opinion, and colonial admiration for the ancient seat of power, whereas the French owed its existence principally to opposition. The alliance of 1778 had some little influence among men old enough to have been active in the events of the Revolution, it is true, but they existed as exceptions even in their own party. It was the English feeling that was natural, hearty, dependent, and deep; the other having been, as has just been stated, rooted as much in opposition, as in any other soil.

The public discussions of the fate of the Dawn, as a matter of course, had drawn much speculation among my acquaintances, to my own. A month passed after month, and no letters reached America, the opinion being very general that the vessel was lost. At length, a ship from Jamaica brought in a blid story of the manner in which I had taken my vessel from Senit; and, it now being known that we were alive, and gave the vessel's name, it was ascertained that we had been wrecked for want of force to take care of the ship; and I was set down as a drowned man.

Shortly after this opinion of my fate became general among my acquaintances, John Wallingford had appeared at Clawbonny. He made no change, however, spoke kindly to every one, told the slaves nothing about his being there, and gave them every reason to suppose that they would continue under a true Wallingford regime. It was generally understood he was to be my heir, and no one saw any occasion for the acts of violence that succeeded.

But, two months after John Wallingford's visit, Mr. Hardinge, and all connected with Clawbonny had been astounded by the intelligence of the capture of the Dawn. A forcible seizure under the statute, or "statute," as Jared had called it, was commenced, and a few months later the place was publicly sold at Kingston, some bidding more than \$5,000 for it, less than a sixth of its worth. This sacrifice of real estate, however, under forced sale, was, and is, common enough in America, especially if being generally understood that the creditor is prepared to rise in his bids, as necessity presents. In my case there was no one to protest my rights, Mr. Hardinge having attended the sale prepared to reason with my cousin on the propriety and generosity of his course, rather than prepared with good appearance to extinguish the claim. John Wallingford did not appear, however, and the sale took place without further competition, than one bid of Mr. Hardinge's; a bid that he was not properly prepared to make, but which he hazarded on his knowledge of Lucy's means and disposition. A name of the name of Daggett, a relative of John Wallingford's, by his mother's side, was the ostensible purchaser, and now professed to be the owner of my paternal acres. It was he who had taken possession under the purchase, had dismissed the negroes, and sent off the personal property; and he it was who had placed new servants relative to the mill, and the mill on the surprise of everybody, John Wallingford had not appeared in the transaction, though it was understood he had a legal right to all my remaining effects, in the event of my real death. No will was proved or produced, however, nor was anything heard of, or concerning, my cousin, Mr. Daggett, a close learner on the subject from him. His right to Clawbonny could not be disputed, and after consulting counsel in the premises, Mr. Hardinge himself had been compelled, reluctantly, to admit it. Such was the substance of what I gleaned from the miller, in a random set of conversation that lasted an hour.

Of course, much remained to be explained, but I had learned enough to know that I was virtually a beggar as to means, whatever I might be feeling.

When I parted from Jared I gave him my address, and we were to meet again next day. The old man felt an interest in me that was soothing to my feelings; and I wished to glean all I could from him; more especially in relation to the mortgage on Clawbonny. I now followed Marble and Neb to the boarding-house, one frequented by masters and mates of ships, the masters being of the humble class to subordinate. We consulted the rest of the morning in establishing ourselves in town, and putting on the roundabouts; for I was not the owner of a coat that had skirts to it, unless, indeed, there might be a few old garments of that sort among the effects that had been removed from Clawbonny to the Wright farm. Notwithstanding this defect in my wardrobe, I would not have the reader suppose I made a mean or a disagreeable appearance. On the contrary, standing as I did, six feet one, in my shoes, attired in a neat blue roundabout of mate's cloth, with a pair of quarter-deck trousers, a clean white shirt, a black silk handkerchief, and a vest of a pretty but modest pattern, I was not at all ashamed to be seen.

As soon as I got rid of this gentleman, which was not long after he discovered my desire to press the delinquency of the French on his notice, Marble and I left the house on the original design of strolling up Broadway, and of looking at the changes produced by time. We had actually got a square, when I felt some one touch my elbow; turning, I found it was an utter stranger, with a very eager, wonder-mongering sort of a countenance, and who was a good deal out of breath with running.

"Your pardon, sir, the bartender of the house where you lodge, tells me you are Captain Wallingford." I bowed an assent, forseeing another application for facts.

"Well, sir, I hope you'll excuse the liberty I am taking, on account of its being so anxious to obtain the earliest information on all matters of general concernment, and I feel emboldened by duty to introduce myself—Colonel Positive of the Federal Truth Teller, a journal that your honored father once did the honor to take. We have this moment heard of your troubles committed on your Captain Wallingford, by a brigand of a French privateer, and I am prepared for the other side of the question, 'a fresh instance of Gallie aggression, and republicanism, and a character to awaken the indignation of every right-thinking American, and which can only find better among that portion of the community which, possessing nothing, is never slow to sympathize in the success of this robber, though it be at the expense of American rights and American property."

As soon as Colonel Positive had read this much, he stopped to take breath, looking at me as if expecting some exclamations of admiration and delight.

"I have suffered by means of what I conceive to be a perfectly unauthorized act of a French privateer, Colonel Positive," I replied; "but this wrong would not have been done, had I not suffered previously by what I conceive to be an equally unjustifiable act of the English frigate, the Speedy, commanded by Captain Lord Henry Bontaparte, a son of the Irish Marquis 'Thole."

"Bless me, sir, this is very extraordinary! An English frigate, did you say? It is very unusual for the vessels of that just nation ever to be guilty of an aggression, particularly as our common language, common decent Saxon accents, and Saxon English, and all that sort of thing, you know, operate against it; whereas, sorry I am to say, each new arrival brings us some fresh instance of the atrocities of the myrmidons of this upstart emperor of the French; a man, sir, whose deeds, sir, have never been paralleled since the days of Nero, Caligula, and all the other tyrants of antiquity. If you will favor, Captain Wallingford, with a few of the particulars of this last atrocity of Bontaparte, I promise you it shall be circulated far and near, and that in a way to defy the malignant and corrupt perversions of any man or set of men."

"In the Bohuykell, arrived lately at Philadelphia, came passenger our esteemed fellow-citizen, Captain Miles Wallingford."—"In 1804 everybody had not got to be esquires, even the editors not yet assuming that title of gentility *ex officio*." This gentleman's wrongs were already been said before on the readers. From his own mouth we learn the following outline of the vile and illegal manner in which he had been treated by an English man-of-war, called the Speedy, commanded by a sprig of nobility yeilded Lord—"I have left a blank for the name—"an account which will awaken in the bosom of every true-hearted American sentiments of horror and feelings of indignation at this new instance of British faith and British insolence on the high seas. It will be seen by this account, that not satisfied with impressing all his crew and in otherwise mistreating them, this seton of aristocracy has violated every article of the treaty between the two countries, as respects Captain Wallingford himself, and otherwise trodden over every principle of honor; in a word, set at naught all the commandments of God. We trust there will be found no man or set of men in the country, so deaf to the voice of reason, so devoid of sense, so outrageous in conduct; and that even the millions of England, employed as they are in the service of our country, will be ready to join with us on this occasion in denouncing British aggression and British usurpation." There, sir, I trust that is quite to your liking."

"It is a little *ex parte*, colonel, as I have quite as much complaint to make of French as of English aggression, having been treated in the manner of an English privateer, and again by a French privateer. I prefer to tell the whole story, if I am to tell any of it."

"Certainly, sir; we wish to relate all the enormities of which these arrogant English were guilty."

"I believe that, in capturing my ship, the English commander intended to publish a general notice of my capture, and to disseminate of news, who fancy it is a part of their high vocation to tell just as much, or just as little, of any transaction, as may happen to suit their own purpose. I pressed the injuries I had received from the French, on my visitor, so much the more warmly on account of the reluctance he manifested to publish them; but all to no purpose. Next morning the Republican Freeman contained just such an account of the affair as comported with the consistency of that independent and many journal, not a word being said about the French privateer, while the account of the proceedings of the English frigate was published with sunny facts and epithets that must have been obtained from Colonel Warbler's general stock in trade, as they were certainly not derived from me."

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"Bless me, sir, this is very extraordinary! An English frigate, did you say? It is very unusual for the vessels of that just nation ever to be guilty of an aggression, particularly as our common language, common decent Saxon accents, and Saxon English, and all that sort of thing, you know, operate against it; whereas, sorry I am to say, each new arrival brings us some fresh instance of the atrocities of the myrmidons of this upstart emperor of the French; a man, sir, whose deeds, sir, have never been paralleled since the days of Nero, Caligula, and all the other tyrants of antiquity. If you will favor, Captain Wallingford, with a few of the particulars of this last atrocity of Bontaparte, I promise you it shall be circulated far and near, and that in a way to defy the malignant and corrupt perversions of any man or set of men."

"In the Bohuykell, arrived lately at Philadelphia, came passenger our esteemed fellow-citizen, Captain Miles Wallingford."—"In 1804 everybody had not got to be esquires, even the editors not yet assuming that title of gentility *ex officio*." This gentleman's wrongs were already been said before on the readers. From his own mouth we learn the following outline of the vile and illegal manner in which he had been treated by an English man-of-war, called the Speedy, commanded by a sprig of nobility yeilded Lord—"I have left a blank for the name—"an account which will awaken in the bosom of every true-hearted American sentiments of horror and feelings of indignation at this new instance of British faith and British insolence on the high seas. It will be seen by this account, that not satisfied with impressing all his crew and in otherwise mistreating them, this seton of aristocracy has violated every article of the treaty between the two countries, as respects Captain Wallingford himself, and otherwise trodden over every principle of honor; in a word, set at naught all the commandments of God. We trust there will be found no man or set of men in the country, so deaf to the voice of reason, so devoid of sense, so outrageous in conduct; and that even the millions of England, employed as they are in the service of our country, will be ready to join with us on this occasion in denouncing British aggression and British usurpation." There, sir, I trust that is quite to your liking."

"It is a little *ex parte*, colonel, as I have quite as much complaint to make of French as of English aggression, having been treated in the manner of an English privateer, and again by a French privateer. I prefer to tell the whole story, if I am to tell any of it."

"Certainly, sir; we wish to relate all the enormities of which these arrogant English were guilty."

"I believe that, in capturing my ship, the English commander intended to publish a general notice of my capture, and to disseminate of news, who fancy it is a part of their high vocation to tell just as much, or just as little, of any transaction, as may happen to suit their own purpose. I pressed the injuries I had received from the French, on my visitor, so much the more warmly on account of the reluctance he manifested to publish them; but all to no purpose. Next morning the Republican Freeman contained just such an account of the affair as comported with the consistency of that independent and many journal, not a word being said about the French privateer, while the account of the proceedings of the English frigate was published with sunny facts and epithets that must have been obtained from Colonel Warbler's general stock in trade, as they were certainly not derived from me."

"As soon as I got rid of this gentleman, which was not long after he discovered my desire to press the delinquency of the French on his notice, Marble and I left the house on the original design of strolling up Broadway, and of looking at the changes produced by time. We had actually got a square, when I felt some one touch my elbow; turning, I found it was an utter stranger, with a very eager, wonder-mongering sort of a countenance, and who was a good deal out of breath with running."

"Your pardon, sir, the bartender of the house where you lodge, tells me you are Captain Wallingford." I bowed an assent, forseeing another application for facts.

"Well, sir, I hope you'll excuse the liberty I am taking, on account of its being so anxious to obtain the earliest information on all matters of general concernment, and I feel emboldened by duty to introduce myself—Colonel Positive of the Federal Truth Teller, a journal that your honored father once did the honor to take. We have this moment heard of your troubles committed on your Captain Wallingford, by a brigand of a French privateer, and I am prepared for the other side of the question, 'a fresh instance of Gallie aggression, and republicanism, and a character to awaken the indignation of every right-thinking American, and which can only find better among that portion of the community which, possessing nothing, is never slow to sympathize in the success of this robber, though it be at the expense of American rights and American property."

As soon as Colonel Positive had read this much, he stopped to take breath, looking at me as if expecting some exclamations of admiration and delight.

SAVED BY A LITTLE SCHOOL GIRL

(FOUNDED ON FACT)

Rev. Richard W. Alexander in the Missionary. It had been snowing on and on for nearly a week, and the children had made the air resound with gleeful cries. Boys were dragging sleds, and on hilly streets, it was all your life was worth to get out of the way of the "coopers," who came rushing down the slopes like whirlwinds, dashing into whatever unlucky thing happened to be on the crossing. Police were vigilant, but who can get ahead of the "small boys?" Snowballs were flying, and even the young feminine contingent were on their skates, and did not disdain to throw a snowball or two from their mittened hands.

I passed a moment to smile at the merriment of a youthful crowd such as I have described one morning, when my attention was attracted to two little girls who were standing apart; one with a worried expression of countenance, the other evidently trying to persuade or console her.

"I knew them both by sight. One was a little convert I had baptized with her parents two years before. The other was a parishioner's daughter, who smiled confidently at the priest."

"What is the matter?" I said, as I walked over to them.

"Beatrice is in trouble, Father," said the elder of the two girls. "Her uncle is dying and her mother says he has not been to church for eighteen years, and she must