

"MY HAT."

A YANKEE TALE.

(Continued from the last number.)

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; they altogether behaved in a very gracious and a very pretty manner. We returned to the General's residence and the first thing I saw was—*my hat*.

The General begged me to give him five minutes to glance over the orders of the day, and then he would show me round the place, "which will prove a very hot chestnut indeed, if the Yankees should try to lay hold of it," said he.

He did, as promised; he took me over the quarters of the troops garrisoning the town; through the encampments outside, along the lines of fortifications, dilating glowingly, on the strength of the one, and the numbers of the other, as we progressed. Ignorant as I am of matters military, I still felt great interest in what I saw; but I could not help thinking, though I said nothing, that a great deal had been done for service and *little* for show. I hope no enemy of the Confederacy will reverse these opinions. Our inspection was one of business to the General, for he ordered several changes in the position of regiments, the construction of new works and alterations in others, occupying thus nearly the whole of the day.

Arrived home, the General took me into his cabinet, and, very politely, requested me to amuse myself with the newspapers, while he looked at his correspondence. My mind was too much pre-occupied to allow me to bestow attention on what I was reading, and I frequently found myself glancing, furtively, at the General, as he ran over his letters. Several times I observed his brow assume a very severe aspect. He divided his letters into packets as he went on, and when he had finished, he took one in his hand, looking at me seriously and enquiringly. "My friend," said he, "you see these letters (there was about a dozen of them,) their contents grieve and alarm me beyond expression: they one and all, though varying much in particulars, *denounce you as a Federal spy*."

I sprang, involuntarily, from my seat, filled with horror and affright: "A Federal spy?"—this was all I could utter.

"It is too true that they *say so*; and some of them refer to your connection with Mr. Dubeledge of New York, and others, and to your taking passage to Cuba with Commodore W—kes."

"Oh! what a position has my folly betrayed me into! The Lord have mercy on me! I am no more a spy, General, than you are. But *I am* an idiot, and if I do not soon get back to Canada I shall be a madman. Pray, General, protect and save me!"

"Calm yourself, sir, calm yourself. I tell you, and without reservation, though certain circumstances, to say the least, look very suspicious, that I do not believe the accusation. And, though it were otherwise, you have laid me under an eternal obligation, and I pledge my honor—if necessary my life—for your safety. But something must be done, and quickly; you are in danger here, even under my roof: the tender mercies of the Federals have been such, that in a case where revenge offered itself, and blood could be had for blood, my commands might be despised. Give me a short time for reflection and you shall be saved."

On that we went to dinner; with what appetite, as far as I was concerned, may well be imagined. Our meal was a gloomy affair; I could not eat; the General, though polite, was silent and serious, almost stern. When we had concluded, my host asked me these questions:

"Can you row?"

I answered in the affirmative.

"Can you swim?"

Is it surprising that I reverted back to Sir Marmaduke and the scene on the Ottawa?

I replied as before.

"That will do," said the General. "Please excuse me for a couple of hours, while I make the arrangements necessary for your escape. In the meantime, do not quit the apartment for a moment."

During the General's absence, my reflections were not of the most agreeable character. I beheld myself in a fearful predicament, and escape doubtful in the extreme. I cursed my folly, but was not much relieved by the process. The idea, now present in my mind, was,—*'what next? what next?'*—and, what about my rowing?—was it designed that I should row through or round the blockading fleet, and trust to being picked up at sea; or was it thought that I could make my way to the North in a wager boat. It was, probably, contemplated that I should swim through one or other of these feats; these people seemed mad enough for anything. The General's return put a stop to reflection and conjecture.

"I have completed my arrangements," said he, "and trust they will be attended with success; a great deal depends on your own coolness and resolution. Are you ready to accompany me?"

I was quite ready.

Having adopted disguises, the General led the way to the back part of the house, and there we found a common country cart. "Please to get in," said my companion, "and remember, not a word to be spoken during our progress."

We drove off, and passing through several streets, were soon outside the town. I could see that we were going over unfrequented lanes and

by-roads; the object seemed to be to avoid military posts, especially. We had driven, as near as I could estimate, by time and pace, about six miles, but the lights in the town indicated that we were not, in a direct line, more than two away. The General pulled up on the beach, at the outlet of a small creek. "The critical moment has arrived," he said, "no hesitation or timidity, or you are lost. You see the boat that lies there; she is the fastest thing we have; and you perceive the lights, seaward: those are the blockaders; they draw in to the land at night. Lose not a moment; jump into the boat and row off to them. You will be cordially welcomed there, be sure; if anything happens to the boat, swim."

The moment I was out of the cart, the General drove off at a rapid pace. If I say that I was bewildered, in no small degree, at my situation, I shall be believed, I daresay. I jumped into the boat and seized the oars, but I had scarcely pushed off when I heard the heavy tramp of infantry at the double. It was a bright moonlight night, and I had not got more than a hundred yards from the shore, when, at the lowest computation, an entire battalion stood, in line, on the beach. I heard the ring of the ramrods, the click of the locks and the word of command. A volley was fired and the bullets struck the water on both sides of me. Another, another, and another succeeded, but I was as yet untouched and was fast drawing out of range. I flattered myself that this danger was at an end; but the next instant the shore batteries opened and a hundred guns were pounding away at a poor little yawl, and at a poor devil, who had never before seen warfare in a fiercer shape than in bloodless contests between a minister and an opposition leader. But, strange as it may appear to those who know me, my courage rose with the occasion, and I rowed on with might and main. The existence of this narrative is a proof that the balls spared me. I observed a great commotion in the blockading fleet; I could hear them getting up their anchors, and across the waters came the sound of their drums beating to quarters. On I rowed, but was suddenly pulled up by the challenge:

"Who goes there?"

"Turning round, I saw a whole fleet of boats, rowing shorewards, with all haste, and from the foremost of these came the challenge. They were soon around me, and scores of cutlasses glistened in the moon-beams. I daresay I was looked upon as a most singular apparition."

"Answer the challenge," exclaimed a stern voice.

"You want to know who I am; I don't think I can tell you. A few weeks ago I fancied myself a quiet Canadian citizen, but now I am doubtful of everything,—including my own identity."

"What's the meaning of the firing in shore?"

"They were firing at me."

"Firing at you?"

"Yes."

"This is a curious piece of business, said the officer. Make the egg-shell fast to our boat and row to the fleet. The starboard division go further in shore and look about; the larboard, keep close around us till we get alongside."

As we neared the flag-ship, to which the boat I was made fast to belonged, a voice which I afterwards found to be that of the Captain, hailed,—*"Lieutenant, what have you there?"*

"We picked up a boat and a man, sir, rowing off shore."

"What were they firing at?"

"At our prize, so he says."

"The mountain was labouring and you have caught the mouse." The Captain, it appears, was a reputed wit and endeavoured to sustain his reputation. "Get him aboard and let's see what he's like."

As soon as I touched the deck, the Captain, with an ill-concealed smile, for my appearance by no means justified the waste of ammunition that had taken place, addressed me:—

"Be so kind, sir, as to inform me who and what you are."

I related my name, country, and, with an indignation that I really felt, told of the office that had been assigned to me.

"How long have you been in Savannah?" was the next question. I gave the number of hours and, as near as I could, the minutes.

"How did you get there?"

"That, Captain," I said, "can only be understood by the relation of my adventures, and that is a long tale."

"And no doubt a sad one," said the captain; "I am impressed with the idea that it will terminate at the yard arm." He ordered me to follow him below, and directed 'all Captains to be signalled to come on board.' "Steward, give this fellow a stiff glass of grog. *In vino veritas.*" The Captain was a scholar as well as a wit.

I drank my grog, leisurely and sedately, like a man perfectly resigned to his fate, and my enjoyment was not interrupted by conversation. The Captain was, ostensibly, occupied in glancing over certain documents; really, in directing searching, though furtive, glances at me. I had not long finished my tumbler when the last Captain arrived, and I was ordered to proceed with [my] statement. I was desired, in no very milky terms, above all things to regard truth and explicitness, and, next in order, brevity.

I had no object for concealment, equivocation, or distortion. I gave a full, true, and succinct narrative of my adventures, from the hour of my making the acquaintance of Sir Marmaduke, to the moment of my arrival on board their ship.

(To be continued.)