

PRETTY MISS NEVILLE

BY B. M. CROCKER
CHAPTER XXIV

IN UNCLE'S BLACK BOOKS
"My merry, merry, merry roundelay concludes with Cupid's arrow. They that do change love for love, pray gods, they change for worse."
—Peele.

The news of my engagement created a profound sensation in our immediate circle, and I was considered sly, clever, fortunate, or fitted to adorn any sphere, according as our friends had marriageable daughters of their own or not. On the whole I gained a very considerable accession of respect from people who already saw in me the future Lady Rodester. Truly, I was nobly fulfilling Mrs. Roper's prediction. I had soared even beyond her anticipations. Major Percival was actually higher than the mark to which she had encouraged me to aspire. Nevertheless, I did not feel specially elated, nor particularly happy. Somehow, I was not in favor at home, much as I was commended abroad.

Auntie had spoken to me very seriously the morning after the disastrous picnic. She told me that she was exceedingly pained to find that I had never told Maurice of my engagement, but had let him think that I was free, and led him on to care for me, and to suppose that I cared for him. I had behaved altogether in a deceitful, unmanly manner, and there was no doubt that I was a heartless flirt, prepared to sacrifice everything to my insatiable craving for admiration and attention. "Supposing, too, it should come to Major Percival's ears!" This suggestion had no terrors for me—but I was overwhelmed by her displeasure. I could not have believed that she could have looked so austere or spoken so severely. Mrs. Vane was evidently behind the scenes and in Auntie's confidence. She informed me that Maurice had gone away on two months' leave, never to return; he was about to exchange into another battery elsewhere—"the further from Mulkapore the better," she added in a vague pointed manner. And she was now strangely cool to me; I was no longer her "dear, silly old Noah," her "pet lamb," her "Nora Creina. She treated me with stiff, conventional politeness, and made occasional very stinging allusions to lambs in wolves' clothing, and mercenary marriages. Uncle, too, was altered. My unlucky *affaires de coeur* had come to a crisis all at once. Was it not bad enough that he should hear of Maurice's proposal—that he should witness Dicky's rejection was wadded to his angry ears? But why, oh, malignant fate, did the irresponsible Globe-trotter select the same epoch for waiting on him, and asking my hand in marriage?

He no longer petted me, teased me, or inveigled me into his study to listen to shikar stories, or to dust his tiger skulls. Oh, dear no! He held completely aloof, and treated me with an air of cool, almost hostile, disapproval. "Why did you flirt with your cousin Maurice? Why did you never tell him of your engagement? Why, raising his voice suddenly, "did you make an utter and complete fool of him?" Then laying down his rifle, and looking me straight in the face, "Here," he proceeded, "within one month to my certain knowledge, you have had three proposals, and you an engaged young woman all the time! I'm ashamed of you—ashamed to think that you belong to me. You have disgraced yourself in my eyes, and fallen immeasurably in my estimation," he concluded decisively.

"Uncle, uncle, you must not say so. As far as Mr. Campbell and Mr. Dalton were concerned, I give you my word of honor that I gave them no encouragement. I did all I could to keep them at a distance, to show them that we were to be the merest friends—nothing more. And, as to Maurice—" I paused.

"Yes, and as to Maurice, you did all in your power to keep him at a distance too. Are you going to tell me that, eh?" he sneered. "Riding with him, walking with him, talking with him, dancing with him; and your aunt and I, like two old idiots, thinking that he knew all about the other fellow the whole time, and was only—I've no patience to think of it!" he exclaimed, angrily. "Bereford was ten times too good for you—that's the pure and unadulterated truth. Now mark my words, we will have no more proposals, no more entanglements; you have made your deliberate choice and must stick to it. I would not be a bit surprised," ironically, "to hear that you were thinking of getting out of your engagement with Major Percival."

Was he reading my thoughts? "But as you have given him your promise you shall certainly marry him; there will be no more playing fast and loose with any one else if I can help it, mark my words," he concluded, once more taking up his rifle and polishing away with extraordinary zeal and energy.

Here ended Uncle's lecture. I spent a very miserable time after Maurice's departure; Uncle was flint, Auntie was ice, and Mrs. Vane intensely disagreeable. At length

Major Percival announced his intention of paying a visit to Mulkapore; a bachelor friend had offered him a house-room. We could not take him in, as Mrs. Vane occupied our only spare room, and Uncle, prejudiced Uncle, had declared that "he would not have that piano-playing fellow staying in the house." My fiancé duly arrived, and was met by us at the station and brought home to dinner. I beheld him step out of a saloon carriage without any increase of beating of the heart or change of color, although I had not seen him for more than six months.

I was sensible of no emotion as he took my hand in his, excepting that I experienced a strange chill of disappointment. He seemed quite different to what I had pictured him in my mental vision, quite different to the recollections I had brought away from the hills; and yet six months was too short a time to work any really appreciable alteration in his appearance. Had the rarefied hill air sent a halo to his aspect?

No, it had not. The change was in myself. He was no longer, in my eyes, an aristocratic-looking man in the prime of life; but a portly, elderly gentleman, traveling with an enormous amount of impediments, and as solicitous about his small parcels as any old maid. His belongings included an elaborate dressing-bag, tiffin basket, pillows, French novels, umbrellas and sticks, a flask of eau-de-Cologne, and a large fan. When his mind was at length perfectly at rest about their safety, and his two servants had been reduced to the verge of imbecility, Major Percival found time to turn to me, and utter a few stereotyped phrases on the pleasure it gave him to see me again, keeping all the time a sharp lookout on the accumulating pile in front of him. His conversation was rather spasmodic, and his attention divided between his baggage and his betrothed.

"Nora, my dear girl! I have been looking forward to—Chinawamy," excitedly, "where is my traveling clock?" His anxiety allayed by the prompt production of that article, he resumed, "to this meeting for months, and—" To his servant: "Where are you going to with that white portmanteau, you fool!"

At last he was really under way, and we took our seats in the carriage with a sense of relief; my intended waving a bland but empty hand toward the crowd of clamoring coolies who had helped to carry his luggage, saying, as he leaned back luxuriously, "I never asked those fellows for their services. My own two boys were sufficient for all my requirements; and if they liked to work for the pleasure of the thing, tant mieux."

I thought such a speech savored of intense meanness; and if he was not ashamed of himself, at any rate I blushed for him when I encountered Mrs. Vane's mischievous dark eyes.

Dinner that evening was a stiff affair; and, after a short, drowsy conversation in the drawing room, Auntie and Mrs. Vane deserted the table with a vague or bare excuse, and left me to enjoy (I *deteste* with my lover. *Lover!* the word was a gross misfit for the gentleman opposite to me, who lolled back in his arm-chair, the very embodiment of luxurious self-satisfaction, pleased with himself, with his dinner, and his surroundings.

I sat at the center-table some distance from him, pretending to work by the light of a reading-lamp, and discussing of the weather and his journey in a vague or bare excuse, and left me to enjoy (I *deteste* with my lover. *Lover!* the word was a gross misfit for the gentleman opposite to me, who lolled back in his arm-chair, the very embodiment of luxurious self-satisfaction, pleased with himself, with his dinner, and his surroundings.

I sat at the center-table some distance from him, pretending to work by the light of a reading-lamp, and discussing of the weather and his journey in a vague or bare excuse, and left me to enjoy (I *deteste* with my lover. *Lover!* the word was a gross misfit for the gentleman opposite to me, who lolled back in his arm-chair, the very embodiment of luxurious self-satisfaction, pleased with himself, with his dinner, and his surroundings.

"Do you know that you are not looking at all well, Nora? You are much thinner than you were; the lines of your face have lost that nice soft contour, and are quite thin and sharpened, and your color is gone!" "Is it?" I answered, indifferently, selecting as I spoke a needful of silk.

"It is, indeed," he replied, with unusual animation, and in a tone of voice that showed me that he regarded my loss of looks as a distinctly personal grievance.

"Suppose you go and sing something," he added, with the air of a three-tailed bawhaw; "you have not lost your voice, I hope?"

I had not lost my voice, but I was very near losing my temper as I walked to the piano, and singled out my last new song. It gave me a very disagreeable sensation to find that it was valued for my looks and my accomplishments, and not for myself. How different to one's accepted idea of a lover! If Maurice had thought that I looked ill and thin, would he have grumbled at my altered appearance?

All night long I lay awake, tumbling and tossing, revolving many things in my excited brain. The more my thoughts dwelt on the future, the more wretched and miserable I felt. A pretty state of mind for the young lady who was about to make the best match of the season in her majesty's Indian empire!

I did not love Major Percival. Alas, never could love him now! I did not know if I even liked my future husband. How, then, could I marry him? I asked myself this question over and over again, and toward dawn fell into a restless slumber, with the query still unanswered. Major Percival established himself speedily in Mulkapore, lost no time in calling on the residents, and arranged his day so that a generous portion of it fell to my share.

Every morning he walked over to chotah-hazree; and every afternoon I went out driving with him in his smart high stanhope—the envy, and let us hope, admiration of all the maids and matrons in the place. Major Percival's friend had placed his turn-out at his disposal, with its high-stepping horses and gaudy eyes; and every evening, as I have said before, we drove about Mulkapore in state—that highly interesting spectacle, an "engaged couple."

We did not indulge in much conversation, as my partner was a wretched whip, and mortally afraid of our borrowed steeds.

All his mind was on the stretch on their behalf; all his thoughts anxiously bent on steering them triumphantly in and out among the various vehicles we met, and they were many. Only for the swag of the thing, he would have infinitely preferred taking me for a walk; but to be seen on foot in Mulkapore means social extinction no more and no less. At least three times a week we embellished the hand-stand in the public gardens. Our carriage safely anchored, with a syc squatting in front of either horse, my companion; temporarily relieved from the mental agony his coaching efforts entailed, would, so to speak, preen himself, adjust his glass, and look leisurely round, discharging magnificent bows in various directions. He was undoubtedly a great man at Mulkapore; a far more brilliant star than our hills, where his light had been only one of a large constellation. Here he had the hemisphere entirely to himself, and was complacently aware of the fact.

He generally sauntered over to Mrs. St. Ube's landau, and exchanged a few ideas with her. Sometimes he lingered for a considerable time, and I did not grudge his society to Mrs. St. Ube. On the contrary, I was glad to see him so well amused. I was not always a very brilliant companion, and in company with her conversation was often laborious, uphill task—to me, at any rate. In spite of our mutual taste for botany and music we had no tender confidences nor reciprocal outpourings to make to each other, like other happy lovers. Our present feelings and future hopes we never touched upon. People's dress and looks, society anecdotes, the weather, the shape of my new hat, and the state of Major Percival's liver formed our most usual topics. I could see that Mrs. St. Ube used all her fascinations to keep my cavalier literally at her chariot-wheels. Often, when he was on the eve of taking his leave, she detained him with one more little scandal, just one more piquant jest.

Each evening his visits were imperceptibly prolonged, till at last they reached to half an hour; and, as my companion returned to his vacant seat, he was often accompanied by a look of open, malicious triumph from the lady, who was evidently pleased to consider herself my rival. But I was not the least bit jealous; I did not care for my fiancé sufficiently to be a prey to the agonizing attacks of the green-eyed one. Major Percival did not dance at the various "afternoons" and small dances we attended. He was an invariable white flower, nor lounging in doorways, not enthroned among the chaperons, but a very pleasantly planted flower, sharing a sofa with Mrs. St. Ube, sunning himself in her smiles, and making pungent remarks on the company behind the wide expanse of her gigantic black fan. And here again I was not in the least jealous; his companion searched in vain for a trace of vexation in my countenance when I occasionally came up to talk to them between the dances, escorted by a recent partner. Major Percival would sometimes say, half apologetically, "You do your share of dancing and mine too, Nora; it really does me good to see you enjoying yourself so much." But I imagine that he had even a nearer source of enjoyment than my dancing, in Mrs. St. Ube's low murmurs and eloquent dark eyes.

TO BE CONTINUED

ORANGE NOTIONS OF EQUALITY

The Orangemen of Belfast have a great fear of Catholic intolerance when Home Rule is given. It is an interesting commentary on this complaint to consider the distribution of offices in the city of Belfast. The Board of Guardians pay \$84,000 in salaries of which Catholics get \$3,400. The Harbor Board pays \$56,345, and the one Catholic official gets \$1,250. The Water Board has on its pay roll one Catholic, whose wages are \$325 out of a total of \$29,000. Of the twenty-five medical officers not one is a Catholic. There are 100,000 Catholics in Belfast, more than a fourth of the population.

A SOLDIER'S SACRIFICE

It was at the close of 1776, Washington, compelled to abandon Fort Lee, was retreating through New Jersey, with Cornwallis in hot pursuit. The god of battles appeared to have definitely sided with the biggest battalions. Disaster had succeeded disaster in rapid succession and despondency prevailed among the patriots everywhere.

The American commander-in-chief had been balked at every turn, his best-laid plans had been frustrated, his most audacious coups anticipated. It was evident that the British were kept informed of the plans and movements of the little army. But how? By whom? The strictest investigation, the utmost vigilance had failed to show. The fact, as was inevitable, was gradually causing a demoralizing effect upon the force. Comrades began to regard each other with suspicion. Enthusiasm had been succeeded by uneasiness, which in turn was given place to vague terror.

Col. Edward Dayton, one of the chief's trustees and most zealous officers, had been specially charged to elucidate the mystery and had set about the task with the thoroughness that characterized all his actions. He had devised all manner of ingenious but futile schemes to entrap the traitor and had sworn to make a terrible example of him if he ever caught him.

Col. Dayton was a stern man, a martinet in all matters pertaining to military discipline, but of a kindly nature at heart. Of old Colonial stock, he had served with Washington against the Indians and was intensely patriotic. When the struggle for freedom began he had at once issued from the retirement in which he had been living in New York and hurried to the field, accompanied by his son George and Ernest Travers, a distant relative. Young Travers, who was about the same age as George, had been left an orphan and destitute when a little child. Mrs. Dayton had suggested that they could do no less than take the boy and bring him up with their own children. Her husband had readily acquiesced and had never had reason to regret his kindness. Ernest, in fact, was engaged to marry Priscilla Dayton the colonel's only other child.

The retreating army, by a series of rapid marches, had finally succeeded in baffling their pursuers and found themselves at nightfall on the outskirts of a wood. The commander-in-chief decided to call a brief halt. As a precaution no fires were allowed, but despite the bitter cold the exhausted soldiers, with the exception of those told off to guard the camp, threw themselves on the snow-covered ground and soon forgot their troubles and hardships in sleep.

Ernest Travers was among the unfortunate men detailed for outpost duty. He found himself stationed at the edge of the wood, out of sight of the camp and of every other sentry. It was dreadfully lonely. The moon was at the full, but veiled by clouds and the trees looked like fatigued veterans as brave as any other man of his inexperience, but there was something awesome in the knowledge that the lives of his slumbering comrades, perhaps the success of his country's cause, might depend upon his alertness and sagacity, and then the solitude and obscurity impressed him.

Moreover, he was worn out by many hours of forced marching, and his nervous system was shaken by weeks of fighting, excitement and fatigue. His eyes and ears were strained to catch the slightest sight or sound of anything portending danger. He started at every rustle, every moving shadow caused by the swaying of a branch in the wind, and could scarcely restrain himself from firing off his musket and running back to camp, where confidence could alone be regained by mingling with his fellows.

Under the strain of physical exhaustion, supplemented by the freezing temperature, he at length became drowsy and numb. His legs began to give way. He felt that he was slowly but surely losing consciousness, notwithstanding his efforts to fight it off. He staggered against a tree and, sliding to the ground in the shadow of it, rolled over on his face. The snow that melted upon his lips and temples revived him after he had lain there a few minutes, and he gathered his wits together sufficiently to realize the danger which the army stood of being surprised by the enemy and his own peril if found in his present position by the round. No explanation would be listened to. Accused of sleeping at his post, he would be summarily court-martialed and shot.

This thought galvanized him into activity again, and he bent his stiffened limbs in an effort to struggle to his feet. As he did so he thought he saw something moving among the trees, and his heart came into his mouth as he made that something out to be a man. His first impulse was to secure his musket, which was lying where he had dropped in a few yards away, and challenge the prowler. He checked himself, however, for he reflected that if he moved out of the shadow of the tree he would certainly be seen and the man would get clear away in the wood before he could fire at him. At the same time it occurred to him that he might be watching the spy whose identity his uncle, everybody, had vainly sought to discover. His surmise was strengthened by the fact that the man was coming from the direction of the camp, not going toward it.

However this might be, the man was plainly ignorant of the sentry's proximity. He advanced to the edge of the wood, peered rapidly in every

direction, and running along in the shadow, entered the wood again a few yards from where Travers was crouching. Leaping out upon him Ernest grabbed him with both hands. The man uttered a low, startled yell and struggled desperately to free himself. Back and forth they swayed, the sentry shouting for help until he was borne against a tree with such violence that he nearly stunned.

Suddenly the man ceased struggling. "I am lost! Here comes the guard. Don't shout. For God's sake, have mercy upon me and let me go," he supplicated, hoarsely.

Travers started as though he had been shot. Dragging the man into a clearing, where it was light enough for him to see his face, he pushed him away from him after a moment's hesitation and said:

"Run!"

The man needed no second bidding. As he disappeared in the darkness, Travers trying to calm his violent agitation, hurried back toward his post, but ere he had taken many steps, a stern voice ordered him to halt, and he found himself surrounded by the guard. One of the soldiers was carrying the musket he had dropped.

"What are you doing off post and without your musket?" demanded the sergeant.

"I—I—nothing," stammered Travers, confusedly.

"I saw something run into yonder thicket. Here, Putnam, van Zandt, Holloway, quick after him. Get him, alive or dead. Shoot at anything you see moving. You others arrest this fellow and fill him full of slugs if he attempts to break away."

The three men named darted away into the wood, while the others seized Travers, who offered no resistance. The sergeant struck a light with a tinder box and flint and explored the ground round about.

"I thought I was not mistaken," he exclaimed. "Another man has been here. The footmarks are different. Oh, if it were only daylight, so that we could follow his trail. Ah! what is this?"

He picked up a slip of folded paper. It bore a number of figures and capital letters.

"A cipher message! Oh, ho! We're on a red-hot clue this time, and no mistake."

"Sergeant," began Travers, "I—" "Silence, traitor!" commanded the sergeant. "Keep your lies for Col. Dayton and the chief. You'll need to invent a mighty plausible explanation to escape facing a firing party at daybreak."

The soldiers who had been sent in pursuit of the fugitive presently returned and reported that they had seen nothing of him. The guard then closed around Travers and he was marched back to the main command. The army was already astir and the other sentries had been called in, for Washington was very anxious to put the Delaware between him and the British. Travers' comrades looked wonderingly at him as he was brought in.

Col. Dayton listened to the sergeant's report without saying a word, and taking the cipher message examined it long and intently. His face waxed very pale and hard as he said shortly:

"Bring the prisoner here."

Travers, heavily manacled, was brought forward.

The colonel motioned to the sergeant to draw off his men, and the guard, lining up and grounding arms at a respectful distance, left uncle and nephew facing each other.

For a moment neither spoke. Travers, with head erect, eyed the old soldier calmly and waited to be questioned.

"Ernest Travers," said the colonel at last, and his voice was harsh, "when you joined the army of liberty you for the time being severed all family ties and became the servant of your country, which you swore to serve faithfully and defend with your life. Remember that you are dealing not with your uncle, but your superior officer, and the claims of relationship cannot be evoked. You are accused of a terrible crime, the punishment of which is an ignominious death. Unless you can prove to me beyond the shadow of a doubt that you are innocent, the penalty will be inflicted and pitilessly."

"The charge against you is that you are a spy in the service of your country's enemies; that you have systematically kept them informed of the movements of the army of liberty; that while on outpost duty you were caught holding intercourse with some person or persons unknown, emissary or emissaries of the enemy; that in the confusion caused by the unexpected arrival of the guard you, or the person to whom you had given it, dropped a cipher message written by you, the meaning of which is not yet known to your superior officers, but which is thought to betray military secrets of which you by some means yet to be discovered have obtained possession. What have you to say?"

"That I am innocent, sir."

"That is no answer. Facts and details are what I want, not empty phrases. I warn you again not to trifle with me. It is a matter of life or death to you."

"I was on outpost duty and saw a man advancing through the wood. I suspected that he might be a spy and tried to arrest him. He escaped as the guard came up."

"Your duty was to challenge him and if necessary fire upon him. Did you do that?"

"No, sir. From some cause or other I had fainted a little while previously and dropped my musket some paces from where I fell. When I recovered I saw the man coming

through the wood and feared that if I moved to reach my musket he would see me and get away. I sprang out upon him as he passed me."

"You fainted! A likely story, truly. At any rate, you must have seen the man's face if you struggled with him. Do you know him? Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"It was pitch dark in the wood." "Why did you say you did not know what you were doing off post duty when the sergeant caught you?"

"I was probably dazed by a blow received in the struggle, which made my head bleed, as you see."

"That proves nothing. You may have struck your head against a tree in your precipitation to return on the approach of the guard. What is the meaning of this cipher?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Who gave it to you?"

"No one; it must have been dropped by the man with whom I struggled."

"Is that the only explanation you can offer?"

"That is all, sir."

"What you have told me is a tissue of absurd, patently absurd, falsehoods."

"I admit that circumstantial evidence is strongly against me, but I assure you on my honor, sir, that I am innocent."

"The honor of a traitor and a spy!"

"No, sir; the honor of an honest man and a patriot."

"I do not believe you," said the colonel, fiercely. The sergeant's account of the circumstances in which he had arrested the young man appeared to leave no room for doubt as to his guilt. He thought upon all that he had done for him. The base ingratitude with which he had apparently been requited and the fact that a member of his family had been the traitor who had so long eluded him and wrought such harm to the patriot army maddened him.

For a moment he lost his head, forgot the dignity of his position and struck the prisoner with his clenched fist.

The news of Travers' arrest and of the charge against him had spread through the camp like wildfire and caused the greatest excitement. The men, disregarding for once the authority of their officers, rushed at the prisoner as he was marched through the lines and would have torn him to pieces had they not been beaten back by the guard, who vigorously used their muskets as clubs. As it was, when, half an hour later, he was taken before the drum-head court-martial, over which Washington himself presided, he was fearfully bruised and covered with blood. He made no defense. He seemed to be completely crushed and returned no answer at all or responded in scarcely audible monosyllables to the questions addressed to him. He agreed that his explanations of Col. Dayton were too weak to merit serious consideration when compared with the straightforward report of the sergeant, given with great embellishment of detail.

The deliberation of the court was brief. Ernest Travers was sentenced to be shot in the presence of the whole army.

There was no time to lose. The safety of the force depended upon a hurried advance. Washington's anxiety was depicted upon his martial visage. But it was imperative that the execution should be summary and as imposing as possible, in order to properly impress the troops with the heinousness of the offense and to serve as a warning to the prisoner's accomplices, for it was not doubted that there were other traitors in the camp. It was deemed impossible for any member of the rank and file to obtain unaided the information in which had been sent to the enemy, and the court had exhausted every means of inducing Travers to disclose the names of his fellow-culprits.

The army was drawn up in three sides of a square, with the commander-in-chief and his staff in the center space. The condemned man, after being marched along the front of the ranks, was placed against a tree. The muskets of the execution platform were leveled at his breast and the officer in command had raised his sword which, when lowered, would give the fatal signal, when a shriek was heard, there was a commotion on one side of the square and a soldier rushed forward calling wildly upon the men not to fire.

The general held up his hand as a signal to the officer commanding the firing party to wait. Col. Dayton had immediately spurred his horse toward the man who was the cause of this sensational interruption. The soldier clasped the officer's knee and said something to him as he bent from his saddle. Suddenly Dayton shook him off, ordered a sergeant to arrest him and, ghastly pale, galloped back to the chief, who was waiting with visible impatience and annoyance at the delay. A few minutes' earnest conversation passed between them while the army looked on in breathless wonder at it all. The colonel's report resulted in the postponement of the execution and the immediate resumption of the march to the Delaware. Meanwhile the condemned man had fainted.

The army had quietly crossed the river and was quartered in a large village. Enthusiastic recruits were pouring in from every direction, and Washington was preparing to turn back and resume the offensive in New Jersey.

Travers, imprisoned in an upper room of a farmhouse, and recovered

somewhat from the terrible emotions through which he had passed and the ill usage to which he had been subjected, but he was haggard and emaciated. He spent most of the time stretched upon his mattress. He did not know why he had been respited. None of the men who guarded him and brought him food ever spoke to him. He lived in hourly expectation of being led out to die, and indeed he would have welcomed death as a happy release from his sufferings.

On the afternoon of the fourth day of his incarceration the door was thrown open and Col. Dayton stalked in. Travers staggered painfully to his feet and the Colonel faced him with folded arms. The prisoner stood at attention, with lowered eyes and dogged listless mien, waiting to be questioned, but Dayton did not speak. Then the former looked up wretchedly, and a flush came into his white cheeks. His uncle, with heaving breast and the tears streaming down his face, was gazing at him with an expression of unspeakable tenderness and grief.

"My boy, my poor, poor boy!" he cried, clasping him to his breast. "My old heart is broken. Can you ever forgive me? Could I, as I gladly would, give my life for you, I could not recompense you for your noble sacrifice and the suffering I and mine have caused you. Oh, Ernest, Ernest, I am not deserving of your pity, yet I need it sorely."

"Don't uncle; don't talk so; you are killing me! This is the hardest of all to bear," sobbed Travers, greatly agitated.

The old man sank into the only chair in the room, and his nephew, kneeling beside him and clasping his hand, learned what had happened.

"God could not permit the perpetration of such a crime as the ignoble snuffing out of our life," said the colonel. "He has marked you for a higher destiny. In His infinite mercy He maddened with remorse him in whose stead you had suffered and would have died, forced him at the supreme moment to confess his infamy, and I, my pride justly humbled, thank Him reverently on my bended knees for having saved my wretched son from the additional guilt of murder."

The story of George's undoing is an old one—none the less pitiable for the retelling. Unknown to me he had been living a fast life with debauched and wealthier young fools than himself. To procure the money wherewith to gratify his vicious tastes and pose as their equal, he took to gambling, got heavily, hopelessly into debt, and was shown the only way to save himself and me from ruin by a boon companion, rich and in the service of the king. He succumbed to the temptation.

"In whom can a father have confidence if not in his son? When I became attached to the general staff I employed George to do clerical work for me, and in this way he was able to obtain from confidential dispatches and otherwise information valuable to the enemy. Of course I never doubted him for a minute. He feigned to second me zealously in my efforts to discover the traitor who was betraying us. The improbability of your story, the suspicious circumstances of your arrest, compelled me to judge you guilty. George confessed that agents of the king's government are posted in every hamlet. He had the list and was seeking the nearest agent, whom he supposed was stationed at no great distance from where we were encamped that night, when he lost his way in the wood and was captured by me. He did not know who you were till you dragged him into the light after his appeal to you to let him go. You were misguided, my poor boy, in releasing him."

"How so, uncle? What else could I do? It was not for his sake. Had he been my own brother I would have had no pity. But could I, by delivering him up to justice, wreck the lives, break the hearts of you and my aunt, who have been more than father and mother to me, and of my gentle little Priscilla, my affianced wife? Surely not. I had intended on returning to camp to arouse him to a sense of the enormity of his conduct, force him to quit the army, and to prove in some way, on pain of exposure, his devotedness to the cause for which we are fighting. I felt that this threat, held over his head, would keep him in the right path. But when I found myself in the unfortunate position in which I was placed, there remained only one way of repaying you—for all your kindness to me, and that was by hiding the truth. Anybody in my place would have done the same."

"I fear not, my dear Ernest. Nevertheless, when George had confessed I divined your generous motives, understood the full extent of your pardon and an officer's commission conferred upon you by the commander-in-chief, who was greatly impressed when I acquainted him with the circumstances of the case, and orders you to report to him personally when you are in condition to return to service."

"And George?" faltered Travers, making a mighty effort to control his emotion at finding himself thus suddenly raised from the lowest depths of degradation and despair to love and honor.

"George," said the old man brokenly, "blew out his brains last night. Some unknown friend smuggled a pistol to him. As for me, my life, alas! is not mine to take. It belongs to my country. But I beseech