

MILES WALLINGFORD

By James Fenimore Cooper

CHAPTER XII

"The wind blows fair, the vessel feels steady—very well, dyce [anglic, thus]—keep her away, and let John Bull follow if he dare."

"You should be very sure of your channel, Mr. Marble," I said gravely, "to take so much responsibility on yourself. Remember my all is embarked in this ship, and the insurance will not be worth a sixpence, if we are lost running through such a place as this in broad daylight. Reflect a moment, I beg of you, if not certain of what you do."

"And what will the insurance be worth, ag'in Halifax, or Bermuda? I'll put my life on the channel, and would care more for our ship, than my life is. If you love me, stand on, and let us see if that lubberly make-believe two-decker dare follow."

"I was fain to comply, though I ran a risk that I find it impossible now to justify to myself. I had my cousin John Wallingford's property in charge, and should find it difficult to get back with English cruizers, however, as soon as we got into European waters, and we took to the northwest, when about a hundred leagues from the land."

"The thirty-third day proved one of great importance to me. It was blowing fresh, with very thick weather—rain mingled with a fine mist, that often prevented one's seeing a quarter of a mile from the ship. The change occurred at midnight, and there was every prospect of the wind's standing until it showed up the Greenwich Channel, from which we were then distant about four hundred miles, according to my own calculation. Marble had the watch at four o'clock, and he sent for me, that I might decide on the course to be steered and the sail to be set."

"I was not without a hope that the two ships would pass each other without the mist; but when we were shut in, the chances were greatly in favor of its being effected. Once distant a mile from the frigate, there was little danger of her getting a glimpse of us, since, throughout that morning, I was satisfied we had not got a horizon with that much of diameter."

"As a matter of course the preparations with the studding-sails were suspended. Neb was ordered to lay aloft, as high as the cross-trees, and to keep a vigilant lookout while all eyes were watching as anxiously in the mist, as we had formerly watched for the shadowy outline of La Dame de Nantes. Marble's long experience told him best where to look, and he caught the next view of the frigate. She was directly under our lee, gliding easily under the same arch; the reefs still in, the courses in the brails, and the sparker rolled up, as it had been for the night."

usual. We crossed the Banks in forty-six, and made as straight a course for the western extremity of England as the winds would allow. For several days I was uncertain whether to go north-about or not, believing that I should fall in with fewer cruizers by doubling Scotland than by running up the channel. The latter was much the nearest route, though it was not on the maps that I determined to let these last govern. Until we had made two thirds of our distance across the ocean, the winds had stood very much at south-west, and though we had no heavy weather, our progress was good; but in 20 degrees east from Greenwich, we got north-easterly, and our best tack being the larboard, I stood for ten days to the southward and eastward. This brought us into the track of everything going to or coming from the Mediterranean, and had we stood on far enough, we should have made the land somewhere in the Bay of Biscay. I knew not where to find it, and I dotted with English cruizers, however, as soon as we got into European waters, and we took to the northwest, when about a hundred leagues from the land."

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"By George," cried the mate, "all them Johnny Bulls are still asleep, and they haven't seen us! If we can give this fellow the slip, as you say, it will be a fine thing. Wallingford, the Dawn will become as famous as the Flying Dutchman! See, there he goes on going to mill or to church, and no more stir abroad him than there is in a Quaker meetin'! How my good old soul of a mother would enjoy this! The comparison is a good one, and there was the vessel that passed each other, and the mist was thickening again. Presently the veil was drawn, and the form of that beautiful ship was entirely hid from sight, and we were not until she was a quarter of a mile off, and all our people began to joke at the expense of the Englishman. 'If a merchantman could see a man-of-war,' it was justly enough said, 'a man-of-war ought certainly to see a merchantman.' Her lookouts must have all been asleep, or it was no more than possible for us to pass so near, under the canvas we carried, and escape undiscovered. Most of the Dawn's crew were native Americans, though there were four or five Europeans among them. Of these last, one was certainly an Englishman, and, as I suspected, a deserter from the navy. He was a stout fellow, and he was not afraid to show his face, beyond all controversy, was a plant of the Emerald Isle. These two men were particularly delighted though well provided with those various documents called protections—which, like beggars' certificates, never told anything but truth, though, like beggars' certificates, they were not infrequently fitted one man up as another. It was the well-established laxity in the character of this testimony, that gave English officers something like a plausible pretext for disregarding all evidence in the premises. Their mistake was in supposing that they could make a man prove anything on board a foreign ship; while that of America was, in permitting her citizens to be arraigned before foreign judges, under any conceivable circumstances. If England wanted her own men let her keep them within her jurisdiction, not attempt to follow them into the jurisdiction of neutral states."

"Well, the ship had passed; and I began myself to fancy that we were quit of a troublesome neighbor, when Neb came down the rigging, in obedience to an order from the mate. "Relieve the wheel, Master Claw-bonny," said Marble; "you often gave some of your touches, before we reach the foot of the dance. Which way was John Bull travelling when you last saw him?" "He goin' eastward, sir," Neb was never half as much "nigger" at sea, as when he was ashore—there being something in his manly calling that raised him nearer to the dignity of white men. "But, sir, he was gettin' his people ready to make sail."

minutes, each keeping her present course, the two ships would have passed within pistol-shot of each other. I scarce knew the nature of the sudden impulse which induced me to call out to the man at the wheel to starboard his helm. It was probably from instinctive apprehension that it was better for a neutral to have as little to do with a belligerent as possible, mingled with a presentiment that I might lose some of my people by impression. Call out I certainly did, and the Dawn's bows came up to the wind, looking to the westward, or in a direction contrary to that in which the frigate was running, as her yards were square, or nearly so. As soon as the weather-leeches touched, the helm was righted, and away we went with the wind abeam, with about as much breeze as he wanted for the sail we carried."

"The Dawn might have been half a mile to windward of the frigate when the manoeuvre was put in execution. We were altogether ignorant whether our own ship had been seen, but the view we got of the stranger satisfied us that he was an Englishman. Throughout the whole of the morning, the part of the ocean which lay off the chops of the channel was vigilantly watched by the British, and it was seldom indeed, a vessel could go over it, without meeting more or less of the cruizers."

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THE PRISONERS

There was no sound in the forest except the light rustle of the snow as it fell upon the trees. It had been falling small and fine since mid-day; it powdered the branches with a frozen moss, cast a silver veil over the dead leaves in the hollow, and spread upon the pathway a great, soft, white carpet that thickened the immeasurable silence amid this ocean of trees."

Before the door of the keeper's lodge stood a bare-armed young woman chopping wood with an ax upon a stone. She was tall, thin, and strong—a child of the forest, a daughter and wife of a game-keeper's."

"A voice called from within the house: 'Come in, Berthine; we are alone to-night, and it is getting dark. There may be Prussians or wolves about.' She who was chopping wood replied by splitting another block; her bosom rose and fell with the heavy blows each time she lifted her arm."

"I don't like father to be out," said she. "Two women have no strength." The younger answered: "Oh, I could very well kill a wolf or a Prussian, I can tell you." There was nothing to be frightened at; it isn't dark yet."

"The nearest town was Rethel, an old fortress perched on a rock. It was a patriotic place, and the townspeople had resolved to resist the invaders, to close their gates, and stand a siege, according to the traditions of the city. The Prussians, under Henry, the king of Prussia, XIV, the inhabitants of Rethel had won fame by heroic defences. They would do the same, this time; by heaven, they would, or they would be burned within their walls."

So they had brought cannons and rifles and equipped battalions, and the army drilled all day long in the Place d'Armes. All of them—bakers, grocers, butchers, notaries, attorneys, carpenters, book-sellers, even chemists—went through their manoeuvres in due rotation at regular hours, under the orders of M. Lavigne, who had once been a non-commissioned officer in the dragons, and now was a draper, having married the daughter and inherited the shop of old M. Ravandan."

THE PRISONERS

The woman asked again: "What do you want?" "I have lost my way ever since the morning in the forest, with my detachment. Open the door, or I will break it in."

"The keeper's wife had no choice; she promptly drew the great bolt, and pulling back the door she beheld six men in the pale snow shadows—six Prussian men, the same who had come the day before. She said in a firm tone. "What do you want here at this hour of night?" The officer answered: "I had lost my way, lost it completely; I recognized the house. I have had nothing to eat since the morning, nor my men either."

"Berthine replied: 'But I am all alone with mother this evening.' The soldier, who seemed a good sort of fellow, answered: 'That makes no difference. I shall not do any harm; but you must give us something to eat. We are faint and tired to death.' The keeper's wife stepped back. "Come in," said she."

"They came in powdered with snow and their helmets that made them look like mermaids. They seemed tired, worn out. The young woman pointed to the wooden benches on each side of the big table. "Sit down," said she, "and I'll make some soup. You do look quite knocked up." Then she bolted the door again. She poured some more water into her saucepan, threw in more butter and potatoes; then unhooking a piece of bacon that hung in the chimney, she cut off half, and added that also to the stew. One of the six men followed her every movement with an air of awakened hunger. They had set their guns and helmets in a corner, and sat waiting on their benches, like well-behaved school children. The mother had begun to spin again, she set new terrified glances at the invading soldiers. There was no sound except the slight purring of the wheel, the crackle of the fire, and the bubbling of the water as it grew hot."

But all at once a strange noise made them all start—something like a hoarse breathing at the door, the breathing of an animal, deep and snoring. One of the Germans had sprung towards the guns. The woman with a movement and a smile stopped him. "It is the wolves," she said. "They are like you; they are wandering about hungry." The man would hardly believe, he wanted to see for himself; and as soon as the door was opened, he perceived two great grey beasts making off at a quick, long trot. He came back to his seat, murmuring: "I should not have believed it." And he sat waiting for his meal. They opened from ear to ear to take the largest of gulps; their round eyes opened sympathetically with their jaws, and their swallowing was like the gurgle of rain in a water pipe."

The two silent women watched the rapid movements of the great red beasts; the potatoes seemed to melt away into these moving fleeces. Then, as they were thirsty, the keeper's wife went down into the cellar to draw cider for them. She was a long time gone; it was a little vaulted cellar, said to have served as a hiding place in the days of the Revolution. The way down was a narrow winding stair, shut in by a trap door at the end of the kitchen. When Berthine came back, she was laughing, laughing slyly to herself. She gave the Germans her pitcher of drink. Then she took a seat at the table with her mother, at the other end of the kitchen. The soldiers had finished eating, and were falling asleep, all six, around the table. From time to time, a head would fall heavily on the board, then the man starting awake, would say to the other: "You may just as well lie down here before the fire. There's plenty of room for six. I'm going up to my room with my mother." The two women went to the upper floor. They were heard to lock their door, and to walk about for a little while, then they made no further sound."

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Health Restored Gained 29 Pounds

Many Years an Invalid—Untold Agony From Headaches

Dizziness, Sinking Spells and Excessive Weakness Disappear With Use of

Dr. Chase's Nerve Food

Nearly every woman will read with interest the letter of Mrs. Geo. Bradshaw, quoted below. It tells of years of great suffering from Nervous Headache and other symptoms arising from weak, watery blood and a starved and exhausted condition of the nervous system. Mrs. George Bradshaw, Coney Neck, Harlowe, Ont., writes:—"I am glad to state that I received benefits from Dr. Chase's Nerve Food which I failed to get any place else. I was troubled for many years, in fact from my early womanhood, with weak, watery blood, and given to dropsy. I suffered untold agonies from nervous, sick headaches, dizziness, and sinking spells, in fact was a semi-invalid for many years. I tried many kinds of patent medicines, and got no help, and tried every new doctor that came along, but all failed to help me. Doctors told me I had no blood, and that agonies from nervousness were diseased, and I had to begin taking Nerve Food. I gained 110 pounds, and to-day I weigh 130, and am 45 years old. Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, 50c a box, 6 for \$2.50, at all dealers, or Edmanston, Bates & Co., Limited, Toronto."

Free Sample of Campana's Italian Balm

Anyone suffering from chapped hands, sore lips or rough skin, may have a FREE SAMPLE of Campana's Italian Balm, by dropping a card to E. C. West, St. Toronto. All druggists sell it at 25c a bottle. Twenty-five years reputation.

Misses the "Sign of Toll"

In a talk to a club of ministers Mayor Gaynor said, among other things: "When I go to the churches, one-quarter filled, in this town, and look at the fine pews and cushions, and when in the absence of anybody who has on his hand the sign of toll, I begin to wonder if all this is not tending to a failure after all." There was a time when Mr. Gaynor was accustomed to enter churches which were very much more crowded than they are now, and when he observed many with the "sign of toll" upon their hands kneeling in company with the rich. We wonder if he himself now recalls with poignancy and with impatience the days when he, too, knelt a dutiful son of that great mother who welcomes to her temples the rich and the poor.—Providence Visitor.

If you fall, do not despair, and throw the handle after the hatchet.—Hynsman.