

# FORGING OR CONGLESSES? A ROMANCE of the Revolution

By JOHN T. MCINTYRE.

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CHAPTER XX

Tells How Nat Recrossed the River and How George Remained Behind

## SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS

**A** STRONG, hardy, well-favored New Englander, George Prentiss, comes to New York with dispatches from General Washington to General Putnam. On the wharf opposite the Brigantine Inn, at the foot of Broad street, he meets Mr. Dana and his partner, Mr. Camp, two Tory merchants, also Miss Peggy Camp, a niece of the merchant and an exceedingly handsome damsel.

As Mr. Camp, a choleric old gentleman, gets into a dispute with a lot of roughs, George rescues him and whips the ruffians. At the wharf, the evident admiration of Miss Camp, the affair is ended by the arrival of Lieutenant Herbert Camp, a nephew of the merchant, and a detail of colonial soldiers. Washington himself is expected soon in New York, and the dispatches George carries relating to his plans are therefore of great importance. The young man refuses to deliver them to Major Hyde, a cousin of Miss Camp, who is in charge of Putnam's headquarters, and insists on seeing the young fellow himself. The latter takes a great liking to the young fellow and dismisses him with an injunction to hold himself in readiness for important duty.

After leaving General Putnam, George goes to the King's Arms, the chief innkeeper of New York at that time, for dinner. To his table there comes a big, boorish fellow, who is evidently seeking a quarrel. Near them, at another table, are Mr. Camp, Miss Dana and Lieutenant Herbert Camp, and it transpires that Mr. Camp is trying to take his nephew away from the colonial cause, a threat of dishonor which the lieutenant and the strong-armed young man have been eagerly listening to the conversation, gives no further trouble to any one.

When the meal is over and the Camp party has left, George overhears the bully, named Blade, tell Major Hyde and Herbert Camp that they must take care to see that George is kept out of the city. He is so busy that he cannot pick a quarrel with young Camp, as he seemed likely to be dishonored, anyhow because of his stubbornness in dealing with the boy. Blade would get Camp's money without dealing violently with the lieutenant.

Next, George is summoned by General Putnam, who assigns him to fetch out the soldiers in the colonial army, as many men have taken service under Washington merely to keep the British out of the city. He is ordered to go to the Wheat Sheaf Inn, where Mr. Dana wanted to meet him.

On the evening of the day following George goes in the direction of Harlem heights. He learns that it is a rendezvous of colonials whose loyalty to Washington is in question. He meets Lieutenant Herbert Camp, with whom he has quite a conversation. This leads him to believe that the lieutenant thought the reason of being an inheritance of sixty thousand pounds and has resolved to cast his lot with the British. While that is going on, he is accompanied by a peddler, and he notices that George as to what ship brought him to New York. They quickly reach an understanding.

Interrupted by the entrance of a big colonial soldier, Prentiss and Camp are window by the colonials, while the supposed peddler is kept in the street. As the boys are being interrogated there is a rumble, and then, to the amazement of George, he is brought to the ground to explain why she has been spying about the inn, but the colonial soldiers quickly see that the men have no weapons and release them.

Meanwhile George finds that his bonds have partly slipped, and while the trio are being led from the inn he finds his arms, throws back the soldiers, pitches away their staked arms and the three escape through a dark hall.

New York is a city of many streets, but the colonials, the other mounts having been stamped to prevent quick pursuit. Neither George nor Peggy undertakes any attempt to come to be at the suspected inn, and the next day, in order to prevent betraying the girl and her brother, the young New Englander retreats from the secret mission, General Putnam shrewdly hinting that the reason is well understood.

Soon afterward George meets Nat Brewster, a colonial soldier in arms, who has been assigned to the task of ferreting out the traitors. After several months he discovers a plot to blow up the colonial magazines, and with each a soldier and the chief-plotters, George discovers that one of the chief-plotters is supposed to be the former colonial lieutenant, Herbert Camp.

Some time afterward George visits the Camps, where Hyde is staying. When all are supposed to have retired for the night, he overhears suspicious things that attract his attention, and he overhears Peggy saying that she knows he is after information that will ruin her father, and that she will see that he gets nothing. George then goes to his room, where he knows he is being "shadowed" by means of an old portrait which has been hung in the room, and he notices that a barrel is inserted into one of the eavesholes and a bullet whizzes by his head. He says nothing next morning, but goes to his duties as usual in the battle of Long Island, in which Washington is finally driven from New York.



(CONTINUED FROM LAST SUNDAY)

## CHAPTER XIX

Describes How George and His Friend Start Upon a Dangerous Mission



**H**E next two weeks were filled with memorable events, they saw the arrival of the British young schoolmaster, Nathaniel Hale; they witnessed the landing of the British warships into the Hudson and the landing of Clinton's heavy force at Fort Mifflin. At the same time, the American troops, led by Kips Bay, and also they saw the massing of Washington's battered Continental army upon Harlem Heights.

Then began a series of desperate, sailing parties and raids, in which the brutal Hessians had a British "protection" in the form of a small party of themselves, women and children were turned out into the winter cold with scarce enough to cover them. In a night's retention, the American troops on the west of them, but to none did the measure seem so full as for the George Prentiss. When some fresh enmity reached his ears, there always flashed upon him a "protection" in the form of a small party of themselves, women and children were turned out into the winter cold with scarce enough to cover them.

The knowledge of what was going on in New Jersey excited the most bitter hatred against the Hessians. To the Americans, both in and out of the army, these German mercenaries were little better than savages, and those citizens upon the west bank of the river, dressed of the day that they should cross the river.

But through it all, Washington and those nearest him maintained a calm and collected bearing. At all the time they strove to get their forces into shape to strike a blow that would be at once quick and deadly. The deeds of the Hessians brought horror to all who heard of them, but to none did the measure seem so full as for the George Prentiss. When some fresh enmity reached his ears, there always flashed upon him a "protection" in the form of a small party of themselves, women and children were turned out into the winter cold with scarce enough to cover them.

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his feet crunching the snow; then they caught the growling undertone of angry words.

"So there's two of them," whispered Nat.

"No, he's talking to himself."

"Nearer, came the light bearer; and they could now distinguish what he said."

"That I should live to see an English king send such a horde of rascally dogs down upon his people, dogs, did I say? They'd shame the name of dogs; a decent cur would not own them."

"The rumbling and stamping in the snow, he passed them unnoticed, a stout figure in a heavy cloak and with a broad woolen scarf bound over his hat, adown his ears and knotted under his chin. A little distance away they saw the light bear; then came the rattling of a lock and chain, and the door of a low barnlike structure creaked open. The man sat his lamp down within, stamped the snow from his feet and then closed the door. At once George began making his way toward the building, but Nat took him by the arm.

"What are you going to do?"

"I want to make sure of something, but before they crept toward the building, but before they reached it there came a low knocking.

"Who's there?" came the voice of the man who had borne the lantern. "Who comes knocking at this hour?"

"Open the door. It is I, George Prentiss."

"Stay here," whispered George to his friend. "I shall only be gone a short time. Keep a lookout."

"Very well," replied Brewster.

George stoic away toward the building; it proved to be a log structure, chinked with clay; its one window had been broken, apparently, for some boards were roughly nailed across the opening and the seams were stuffed with rags. It required but a moment for him to work an opening in one of the stumps large enough to enable him to obtain a view of the interior.

There was a low, rudely rafted ceiling, through which protruded wisps of rye straw; the room was filled with smoke; there was no chimney to carry it off, and the fire, which burned in the center, threw it directly into the room. The first thing that George saw was a prolonged fit of coughing; he could dimly make out two forms through the blue haze, but not enough to be sure. However, in a manner, his suspicions proved to be correct.

"To think," said the voice of the man with the lantern, "that I should ever be brought to this. Strangled in a hotel not fit for beasts. But I'll be even with them or my name is not Camp."

"It was he, then," breathed the watcher softly, and the smoke began to thin.

There came the flapping of a broad hat within and the smoke began to thin.

"Is this the only building left on the place?" asked the second voice.

"No, only one. Every other is burned to the ground."

"The rascals!" said the second voice.

"Rascals! They are the most murderous villains I ever saw; they are as bad as the rank and file."

There was a pause; that had flapped again for a moment and the smoke eddied and whirled.

"It's fortunate," exclaimed Merchant Camp, amidst another fit of coughing, "that you got your sister Peggy away at last."

"Herbert again!" breathed the one outside, for the first time realizing to whom the second voice belonged.

"It wouldn't have done to have left her hereabouts with the country overrun by those wretches of Hessians."

"You placed her with the Hawksworths?"

"Yes, placed her with the Hawksworths. For Hawksworth has some British army friends quartered with them—a colonel and a lieutenant general."

"Good," said Mr. Camp, vastly pleased. "She's safe enough there. But I'll say now that I trembled for her yesterday."

"It would have been best if you both had remained in New York."

"I fancy that I left there to escape persecution," said the old Tory, bitterly. "But I must say that the rebels were as much of a charity when compared with those who should be our friends."

"They tried to be just, at all events," said Herbert Camp.

"Yes, yes, I see that now, though I didn't then. But I see many things now, as a matter of fact, that I didn't see then. I once thought Mr. Washington a great villain; but now I consider him a brave and honest and able gentleman—one who has clung to his beliefs in the face of defeat; and one who will continue to so cling until the last."

**A**ND it proved that Nat was right. A half-dozen clumsy-prooked sleighs, drawn by farm horses, came lumbering slowly along the road; in the light of the lanterns that swung upon the side of each the two young men saw that the vehicles were piled high with sacks of flour, barrels of salted meat, bacon, hams and slaughtered hogs and sheep.

The drivers clump-clumped along doggedly by the side of their horses; at the front and rear of the train rode a party of horsemen.

"There is the opportunity you spoke of across this river, just as though it had been made to your order," said George lowly. "But how are we going to take advantage of it?"

"Let us follow on behind. They may stop somewhere, and we can happen along—two honest and rather thick-witted fellows that we are—and who knows but that something might turn up?"

Allowing the sleighs and the horsemen to proceed a certain distance they fell in behind and trudged in their tracks. George's mind was full of what he had just heard; but try as he might, he could not reconcile them with the facts as he knew them.

"One thing alone convicts him and shows me conclusively that his tale was merely an invention," reasoned the young New Englander, "as to the letter of the British governor Tryon to the Tory mayor of New York. In that Tryon recommended this very young man to the mayor as one to be trusted—one who had served him before and would again. And yet he has just told his uncle that he attributed the non-success of his plan to the fact that he could never gain Tryon's confidence."

Here he was aware that Nat had halted, and so drew up beside him.

"They have stopped," said Brewster. "Now it's our chance. Remember, now, you are a thick-headed lout willing to work and willing to take kicks and cuffs for your part."

Adopting a gait in character, they shuffled on and into the light of the sleigh lanterns. The train had arrived before a roadside inn of a low type. The driver was in a hurry to draw their horses to the side of this, but the drifts were deep and the horses sullenly refused to exert themselves.

The officer in command of the guard flew into a rage, and a brazen countenance shouted:

"Pigs! Have you no brains? You must first a way make. Come, now! Shall I stand for you here in the cold?"

The drivers, who were apparently farmers of consequence, impressed by the Hessians, muttered among themselves rebelliously. And it was here that the two rough fellows were forced to remain where they were. The leader of the Hessians espied them, however, and his heavy lash snapped about their ears.

"But," protested Nat in a dull sort of way, "we are going to stop here for the night."

"The time for that is long ago," said the officer, "shall I tell you again? Out with you, and be quick! Such as you may need be before we are far gone on our journey."

So out the two darted, dodging the lash, and took up places beside the sleighs, still making a pretense of protesting, and then away they went toward Trenton. The snow fell and steadily, the road grew more and more difficult; at length, at daylight, they sighted the town, and an hour later they were unloading the stores.

Thenceforward, the two young men had little difficulty in slipping away; and then began their work of observing the enemies' position, numbers and general frame of mind. Some days passed in days of hardship and hard usage. With their rough dress, their unkempt heads of hair and grimy faces and hands, they were the butt of the brutal mercenaries that they met, and they were forced to continue their arduous and laborious work; but as this permitted them to gain entrance at points where information was not to be had, they were not far from being paid for their services.

To the British and the Hessians the American army was a dispirited and broken crew of ragamuffins. They knew how to run and dodge, that was all. The Hessians, on the other hand, were steady, the steady Delaware, three regiments of Hessians under Colonel Rahl occupied Trenton and the towns nearby, and the general conduct of these filled the two spies with satisfaction.

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