

THE MEDDLING HUSSY

Continued from First page.

I once had made furious love to this very girl. "Jack! Jack! Champ!" "Oh, Priscilla. And why, mistress, are you not in bed?"

"The truth is," said she, blushing. "I've been thinking and pondering." "Of a lover?" said I, trying to phrase some pleasing, nonsensical gallantry.

"Not I, sir, of no man but of you." "Of me, Priscilla?" "Ah, of you, who have made the whole town believe in you. But not a whit."

"And why?" said I, growing impatient, for I heard General Arnold's step. "I must speak to the general, begging your pardon."

"Why?" she asked, putting the candle close to my face. "Listen, you are not what you seem!" Her voice had changed so suddenly that I lost my wit.

"You never deserted General Washington?" "Mistress Priscilla!" "You are here a spy—to betray General Arnold."

"Ah, mistress, but he is worse," said I with sudden earnestness. "He has treated you kindly, John Champagne."

"You have the fancy of a silly maid," cried I. "Let me go! I must follow General Arnold into the garden."

He extended his hand gravely, as if to shake hands with me. Outside, perhaps, Hawkins still waited. But the chance was lost for the night. The girl had overruled me. Why had I not killed her?

As he left us alone she understood my rage, for she said quietly, "I did it to save you."

"You have not told him?" "Not a word. You can still serve with the king."

"Fool!" I muttered as people do when only they are the fools. I heard her and hurried from her, fearful what she might tempt me to.

Nor could I sleep. I dared not send word to Hawkins or to the lieutenant at the end of the lane. Across the river at Hobok Colonel Harry waited vainly. Because of this girl I was still held a traitor by my comrades. And it appeared, indeed, as if they must so regard me till the end of the chapter.

For as I tossed restlessly, while it was yet pitch dark, there was a knock at the door and a single shining light. "Up, sergeant, in a hurry! You have duty. The general's expedition pulls anchor at 5 for the Virginia capes."

I saw beyond peradventure then that I had failed miserably. I should have no other chance at escape, while if I wished to avoid the spy's death I must keep up appearance and serve as a British soldier.

Outside in the hall was the girl, her eyes red by the candlelight. "Forgive me," said she. "I did it for you."

thought that my failure to capture Arnold had disgraced me with him. "Because, Champagne, I like you too well to have you risk capture by the British, who before the clock could tick, would hang you as a spy."

I told him I cared not a whit for the danger; that I wanted to fight with all the strength I had, and left after the late part I had played.

"Poor Champagne!" said he. "How badly have you treated your! But after all you have done I will not suffer you to risk a hair."

When I was insistent, he said finally that he had no option, but would refer the matter to General Washington, by whom directly I was dispatched to General Greene.

I was anxious when I came into the presence of that Virginia gentleman who now had become the greatest among Americans.

"You did us a signal service, Captain Champagne," he said kindly. "In letting me know the extent of Arnold's treachery, who I was sureman of, every one about me, and it must appear ungracious of me to tell you that out of regard for you, and your most excellent good service I must retire you—but as a captain, with a full captain's pay."

I did not wait to answer him. I cared not for the new grade, nor the money, though it was a scarce enough commodity in those days.

But the general was insistent. And in this way I ceased to be an active member of the army of the United States. In my forced retirement I was advanced in rank, yet a captain without hope of further service, at least against the British, whom I dearly wanted to fight in some capacity—a captain without a company.

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