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THE CAROLINIAN

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The Carolinian

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PART I

CHAPTER I

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TWO LETTERS

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WITH compressed lips and an upright line of pain between his brows Mr. Harry Latimer sat down to write a letter. He had taken—as he was presently to express it—his first wound in the cause of Liberty, which cause he had lately embraced. This wound, deep, grievous, and apparently irreparable, had been dealt him by the communication in the sheets which hung now from his limp fingers.

It had reached him here at Savannah, where he was engaged at the time, not only on behalf of the Carolinian Sons of Liberty—of which seditious body he was an active if secret member—but on behalf of the entire colonial party, in stirring the Georgians out of their apathy and into coöperation with their Northern brethren to resist the harsh measures of King George's Government.

This letter, addressed to him at his Charles Town residence, had been forwarded thence by his factor, who was among the few whom in those days he kept informed of his rather furtive movements. It was written by the daughter of his sometime guardian Sir Andrew Carey, the lady whom it had been Mr. Latimer's most fervent hope presently to marry. Of that hope the letter made a definite end, and from its folds Mr. Latimer had withdrawn the pledge of his betrothal, the ring which once had belonged to his mother.

Myrtle Carey, those lines informed him, had become aware of the treasonable activities which were responsible for her lover's long absences from Charles Town. She was shocked and grieved beyond expression by any words at her command to discover this sudden and terrible change in his opinions. More deeply still was she shocked to learn that it was not only in heart and mind that he was guilty of disloyalty, but that he had already gone so far as to engage in acts of open rebellion. And at full length, with many plaints and upbraidings, she displayed her knowledge of one of these acts. She had learnt that the raid upon the royal armoury at Charles Town, in April last, had been undertaken at his instigation and under his personal direction, and this at a time when, in common with all save his fellow-traitors, she believed him to be in Boston engaged in the transaction of personal affairs. She deplored—and this cut him, perhaps, more keenly than all the rest—the deceit which he had employed; but it no longer had power to surprise her, since deceit and dissimulation were to be looked for as natural in one so lost to all sense of duty to his King. The letter concluded with the pained assertion that, whatever might have been her feelings for him in the past, and whatever tenderness for him might still linger in her heart, she could never bring herself to marry a man guilty of the abominable disloyalty and rebellion by which Harry Latimer had disgraced himself forever. She would pray God that he might yet be restored to sane and honourable views, and that thus he might avoid the terrible fate which the Royal Government could not fail sooner or later to visit upon him

should he continue in his present perverse and wicked course.

Three times Mr. Latimer had read that letter, and long had he pondered it between readings. And if each time his pain increased, his surprise lessened. After all, it was no more than he should have expected, just as he had expected and been prepared for furious recriminations from his sometime guardian when knowledge of his defection should reach Sir Andrew. For than Sir Andrew Carey there was no more intolerant or bigoted tory in all America. Loyalty with him amounted to a religion, and just as religious feeling becomes intensified in the devout under persecution or opposition, so had the loyalty of Sir Andrew Carey burnt with a fiercer, whiter flame than ever from the moment that he perceived the signs of smouldering rebellion about him.

To Harry Latimer, when his generous, impulsive young heart had first been touched four months ago in Massachusetts by the oppression under which he found the province labouring, this uncompromising monarcholatry of Sir Andrew's had been the one consideration to give him pause, before ranging himself under the banner of freedom. He had been reared from boyhood by the baronet, and he owed him a deep debt of love and other things. That his secession from toryism would deeply wound Sir Andrew, that sooner or later it must lead to a breach between himself and the man who had been almost as a father to him, was the reflection ever present in his mind to embitter the zest with which he embraced the task thrust upon him by conscience and his sense of right.

What he does not appear to have realized, until that letter came to make it clear, was that to Myrtle, reared in an atmosphere of passionate, unquestioning devotion to the King, loyalty had become as much a religion, a sacrosanctity, as it was to the father who preached it.

At the first reading the letter had made him bitterly angry. He resented her presumption in criticizing in such terms a conduct in him that was obviously a matter of passionate conviction. Upon reflection, however, he took a more tolerant view. Compromise in such a matter was as impossible to her as it was to him. He would do much to win her. There was, he thought, no sacrifice from which he would have shrunk; for no sacrifice could have been so great as that which he was now called upon to make in relinquishing her. But the duty he had taken up, and the cause he had vowed to serve, were not things that could be set in the balance against purely personal considerations. The man who would yield up his conscience to win her would by the very act render himself unworthy of her. Lovelace had given the world a phrase that should stand for all time to serve such cases as his own: 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honour more.'

There was no choice.

He took up the quill, and wrote quickly; too quickly perhaps; for a little of the abiding bitterness crept despite him into his words:

> You are intolerant, and therefore it follows that your actions are cruel and unjust. For cruelty and injustice are the only fruits ever yielded by intolerance. You will never again be able to do

> anything more cruel and unjust than you have now done, for never again will you find a heart as fond as mine and therefore as susceptible to pain at your hands. This pain I accept as the first wound taken in the service of the cause which I have embraced. Accept it I must, since I cannot be false to my conscience, my duty, and my sense of right, even to be true to you.

Thus he double-bolted the door which she herself had slammed. A door which was to stand as an impenetrable barrier between two loving, aching, obstinate, conscience-ridden hearts.

He folded, tied, and sealed the letter, then rang for Johnson, his valet, the tall, active young negro who shared his wanderings, and bade him see it despatched.

Awhile thereafter he sat there, lost in thought, that line of pain deeply furrowed between his brows. Then he stirred and sighed and took up from the writing-table another letter that had reached him that same morning, a letter whose seals were still unbroken. The superscription was in the familiar hand of his friend Tom Izard, whose sister was married to Lord William Campbell, the Royal Governor of the Province of South Carolina. The letter would contain news of society doings in Charles Town. But Charles Town society at the moment was without interest for Harry Latimer. He dropped the letter, still unopened, pushed back his chair and wearily rose. He paced away to the window and stood there looking out upon the sunshine with vacant eyes.

He was at the time in his twenty-fifth year and still preserved in his tall, well-knit figure something of a stripling

grace. He was dressed with quiet, patrician elegance, and he wore his own hair, which was thick, lustrous, and auburn in colour. His face was of that clear, healthy pallor so often found with just such hair. It was an engaging face, lean, and very square in the chin, with a thin, rather tip-tilted nose and a firm yet humorous mouth. His eyes were full without prominence, of a brilliant blue that in certain lights was almost green. Habitually they were invested with a slightly quizzical regard; but this had now given place to the dull vacancy that accompanies acute mental suffering.

Standing there he pondered his case yet again, until at last there was a quickening of his glance. He stretched himself, with a suggestion of relief in the action. The thing is evil, indeed, out of which no good may come, which is utterly without compensation. And the compensation here was that, at least, there was an end to secrecy. The thing was out. Sir Andrew knew; and however hardly Sir Andrew might have taken it, at least the menace of discovery was at an end. This, Mr. Latimer reflected, was something gained. There was an end to his tormenting consciousness of practising by secrecy a passive deceit upon Sir Andrew.

And from the consideration of that secrecy his mind leapt suddenly to ask how came the thing discovered. That they should know vaguely and generally of his defection was not perhaps so startling. But how came they informed in such detail of the exact part he had played in that raid upon the arsenal last April? His very presence in Charles Town had been known to none except the members of the General Committee of the Provincial Congress. Then he reflected that those members were very numerous, and that a secret

is rarely kept when shared by many. Some one here had been grievously indiscreet. So indiscreet, indeed, that if the Royal Governor knew that Harry Latimer was the author of the raid—a raid which fell nothing short of robbery and sedition, and amounted almost to an act of war—there was a rope round his neck and round the neck of every one of his twenty associates in that rebellious enterprise.

Here was something to engage his thoughts.

If his activities were known in Sir Andrew's household, it followed almost certainly that they would be known also in the Governor's. He was sufficiently acquainted with Sir Andrew to be sure that, in spite of everything that lay between Sir Andrew and himself, the baronet would be the first to bear the information to Lord William.

And then he realized that this was no mere indiscretion. Indiscretion might have betrayed some general circumstance, but it could never have betrayed all these details of which Myrtle was possessed; above all, it could never have betrayed so vital and dangerous a secret. He was assailed by the conviction that active, deliberate treachery was at work, and he perceived that he must communicate at once with his friends in Charles Town, to put them on their guard. He would write to Moultrie, his friend and one of the stanchest patriots in South Carolina.

Upon that thought he returned to the writing-table, and sat down. There Tom Izard's letter once more confronted him. Possibly Tom's gossip might yield some clue. He broke the seals, unfolded and spread the sheets, to find in them far more than he had expected.

My dear Harry [wrote the garrulous man of fashion]—Wherever you may be, and whatever the activities that are now engaging you, I advise you to suspend them, and to return and pay attention to your own concerns, which are urgently requiring your presence. Though on your return you should call me out for daring even to hint at the possibility of disloyalty in Myrtle, I cannot leave you in ignorance of what is happening at Fairgrove. You know, I think, that soon after the fight at Lexington last April, Captain Mandeville was sent down here by General Gage from Boston against the need to stiffen the Lieutenant-Governor into a proper performance of his duty by the King. Captain Mandeville has remained here ever since, and in these past two months has acquired such a grasp of provincial affairs in the South Carolina, that he continues as the guide and mentor of my brother-in-law Lord William, who arrived from England a fortnight since. Mandeville, who has now been appointed equerry to his lordship, is become the power behind the throne, the real ruler of South Carolina, in so far, of course, as South Carolina is still ruled by the Royal Government. In all this there may be nothing that is new to you. But it will be new I am sure that a kinship, real or pretended, exists between this fellow and your old guardian Sir Andrew Carey. That stiff-necked old tory has taken this pillar of royal authority to his broad bosom. The gallant captain is constantly at Fairgrove, whenever

his duties do not keep him in Charles Town. Let me add on the score of Mandeville, who is undeniably a man of parts and finds great favour with the ladies, the following information obtained from a sure source. He is a notorious fortune-hunter, reduced in circumstances, and it is well known in England that he accepted service in the colonies with the avowed intention of making a rich marriage. His assets are not only a fine figure and the most agreeable manners, but the fact that he is next heir to his uncle, the Earl of Chalfont, from whom I understand that he is at present estranged. I do not myself imagine that a man of his aims and talents would be so very diligent at Fairgrove unless in Carey's household he saw a reasonable prospect of finding what he seeks. You will be very angry with me, I know. But I should not be your friend did I not risk your anger, and I would sooner risk that now than your reproaches later for not having given you timely warning.

There followed a post-scriptum:

If your engagements are such that it is impossible for you to return and attend to your own concerns, shall I pick a quarrel with the Captain, and have him out? I would have done so out of love for you before this, but that my brother-in-law would never forgive me and Sally would be furious. Poor Lord William would be helpless without his equerry, and he finds things devilish difficult as it is. Besides,

> I understand that, as commonly happens with such rascals, this Mandeville is a dead shot and plaguy nimble with a small-sword.

At another time the post-scriptum might have drawn a smile from Latimer. Now his face remained grave and his lips tight. A definite conclusion leapt at him from those pages. It was not a question of Sir Andrew's having informed the Governor of Harry Latimer's seditious practices. What had happened was the reverse of that. The information had been conveyed to Sir Andrew by this fellow Mandeville, of whom he had heard once or twice before of late. If Mandeville's intentions were at all as Tom Izard represented them, it would clearly be in the Captain's interest to effect an estrangement between Latimer and the Careys. And this was what had taken place.

But how had Mandeville obtained the information? One only answer was possible. By means of a spy placed in the very bosom of the councils of the colonial party.

Upon that Mr. Latimer took an instant decision. He would not write. He would go in person. He would set out at once for Charles Town, to discover this enemy agent who was placing in jeopardy the cause of freedom and the lives of those who served it.

His work in Georgia was of very secondary importance by comparison with that.

CHAPTER II

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CHENEY

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WILLIAM MOULTRIE, of Northampton on the Cooper River—who had just been appointed Colonel of the Second Provincial Regiment of South Carolina, under a certificate issued by a Provincial Congress which was not yet sufficiently sure of itself to grant commissions—was aroused from slumber in the early hours of a June morning by a half-dressed negro servant, who proffered him a folded slip of paper.

The Colonel reared a great nightcapped head from his pillow, and displayed a broad, rugged face the bone structures of which were massive and well-defined. From under beetling brows two small eyes, normally of a kindly expression, peered out, to screw themselves up again when smitten by the light of the candle which the negro carried.

'Wha...wha...what's o'clock?' quoth the Colonel, confusedly.

'Close on five o'clock, massa.'

'Fi...five o'clock!' Moultrie awakened on that, and sat up. 'What the devil, Tom...?'

Tom brought the slip of paper more definitely to his master's notice. Puzzled, the Colonel took it, unfolded it, dusted his eyes with his knuckles, and read. Then he flung back the bedclothes, thrust out a hairy leg, his foot groping

for the floor, and commanded Tom to give him a bedgown, draw the curtains, and bring up this visitor.

And so a few minutes later, Harry Latimer was ushered into the presence of the Colonel, who stood in the pale light of early day, in bedgown, slippers, and nightcap, to receive him.

'Odsbud, Harry! What's this? What's brought you back?'

They shook hands firmly, like old friends, whilst the gimlet eyes of Moultrie observed the young man's dusty boots and travel-stained riding-clothes as well as the haggard lines in his face.

'When you've heard, you may say I've come back to be hanged. But it's a slight risk at present, and it had to be taken.'

'What's that?' The Colonel's voice was very sharp.

Latimer delivered the burden of his news. 'The Governor is informed of the part I played in the raid last April.'

'Oons!' said Moultrie, startled. 'How d'ye know?'

'Read these letters. They'll make it plain. They reached me three days ago at Savannah.'

The Colonel took the papers Latimer proffered, and crossed to the window to peruse them. He was a stockily built man of middle height, twenty years older than his visitor, whom he had known from infancy. For Moultrie had been one of the closest friends of Latimer's father and his brother-in-arms in Grant's campaign against the Cherokees in which the elder Latimer had prematurely lost his life. And there you have the reason why Harry sought him now in the first instance, rather than Charles Pinckney, the President of the Provincial Congress, which the Royal Government did

not recognize, or Henry Laurens, the President of the Committee of Safety, which the Royal Government recognized still less. The offices held by these two should have designated one or the other of them as the first recipient of this weighty confidence. But to either, Latimer had taken it upon himself to prefer the man who was in such close personal relations with himself.

Whilst still reading, Moultrie swore softly once or twice. When he had done, he came slowly back, his brow rumpled in thought. Silently he handed back the papers to the waiting Latimer, who had meanwhile taken a chair near the table in mid-apartment. Then, still in silence, the Colonel took up one from a bundle of pipes on that same table, and slowly filled it with leaf from a pewter box.

'Faith,' he grumbled at last, 'you don't lack evidence for your assumption. Nobody outside of the committee so much as suspected that you were here in April. God knows the place is crawling with spies. There was a fellow named Kirkland, serving in the militia, whom we suspect of acting as Lord William's agent with the back-country tories. We durstn't touch him until he was so imprudent as to desert, and come down to Charles Town with another rogue named Cheney. But before ever we can lay hands on him, Lord William puts him safely aboard a man-o'-war out there in the roads. Cheney was less lucky. We've got him. Though, gadslife, I don't know what we're to do with him, for unfortunately he isn't a deserter. But that he's a spy only a fool could doubt.'

'Yes, yes.' Latimer was impatient. 'But that kind of spy is of small account compared with this one.' And he tapped

the papers vehemently.

Moultrie looked at him, pausing in the act of applying to his pipe the flame of the candle which the servant had left burning. Latimer answered the inquiry of the glance.

'This man is inside our councils. He is one of us. And unless we find him and deal with him, God alone knows what havoc he may work. As it is, there are some twenty of us whose lives are in jeopardy. For you can't suppose that, if he has betrayed me to the Governor, he hasn't at the same time betrayed the others who were with me, whether they actually bore a hand or merely shared the responsibility.'

Moultrie lighted his pipe, and pulled at it thoughtfully. He did not permit himself to share the excitement that was setting his visitor aquiver. He came and placed a hand affectionately on Harry's shoulder.

'I'm not vastly exercised by any threat to your life, lad—at least, not at present. Neither the Governor, nor his pilot Captain Mandeville, wants another Lexington here in South Carolina. And that's what would happen if they tried any hangings. But as far as the rest goes, you're right. We've to find this fellow. He's among the ninety members of the General Committee. Faith, the job'll be singularly like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay.' He paused, shaking his head; then asked a question: 'I suppose ye've not thought of how to go about discovering him?'

'I've thought of nothing else all the way from Savannah here. But I haven't found the answer.'

'We shall have to seek help,' said Moultrie; 'and, after all, it's your duty to Pinckney and Laurens, and one or two others, to let them know of this.'

'The fewer we tell, the better.'

'Of course. Of course. A half-dozen at most, and those men that are well above suspicion.'

Later on in the course of that day six gentlemen of prominence in the colonial party repaired to Colonel Moultrie's house on Broad Street in response to his urgent summons. In addition to Laurens and Pinckney, there was Christopher Gadsden, long and lean and tough in the blue uniform of the newly established First Provincial Regiment, to the command of which he had just been appointed. A veteran firebrand, President of the South Carolina Sons of Liberty, he was among the very few who at this early date were prepared to go the length of demanding American Independence. With him came the elegant, accomplished William Henry Drayton, of Drayton Hall, who like Latimer was a recent convert to the party of Liberty, and who brought to it all the enthusiasm and intolerance commonly found in converts. His position as President of the Secret Committee entitled him to be present. The others making up this extemporaneous committee were the two delegates to the Continental Congress, the Irish lawyer John Rutledge, a man of thirty-five who had been prominent in the Stamp-Act Congress ten years ago, and famous ever since, and his younger brother Edward.

Assembled about the table in Moultrie's library these six, with Moultrie himself presiding, listened attentively to the reasons advanced by Mr. Latimer in support of his assertion that they were being betrayed by some one within their ranks.

'Some twenty of us,' he concluded, 'lie already at the mercy of the Royal Government. Lord William is in possession of evidence upon which to hang us if the occasion serves him. That, in itself, is grave enough. But there may be worse to follow unless we take our measures to discover and remove, by whatever means you may consider fit, this traitor from our midst.'

There followed upon that a deal of talk that was little to the point. They discussed this thing; they pressed Latimer for details which he would have preferred to withhold as to the exact channel through which this information had reached him; and they were very vehement and angry in their vituperation of the unknown traitor, very full of threats of what should be done to him when found. Several talked at once, and in the general alarm and excitement the meeting degenerated for a while into a babel.

Drayton took the opportunity wrathfully to renew a demand, which had already once been rejected by the General Committee, that the Governor should be taken into custody. Moultrie answered him that the measure was not practical, and Gadsden, supporting Drayton, furiously demanded to know why the devil it should not be. Then, at last, John Rutledge, who hitherto had sat as silent and inscrutable as a granite sphinx, coldly interposed.

'Practical or not, this is not the place to debate it, nor is it the matter under consideration.' Almost contemptuously he added: 'Shall we keep to the point?'

It was his manner rather than his words that momentarily quieted their vapourings. His cold detachment and his obvious command of himself gave him command of others.

And there was, too, something arresting and prepossessing in his appearance. He was in his way a handsome man, with good features that were softly rounded, and wide-set, slow-moving, observant eyes. There was the least suggestion of portliness about his figure, or, rather than actual portliness, the promise of it to come with advancing years. His dress was of a scrupulous and quiet elegance, and if the grey wig he wore was clubbed to an almost excessive extent, yet it was redeemed from all suspicion of foppishness by the formal severity of its set.

There was a moment's utter silence after he had spoken. Then Drayton, feeling that the rebuke had been particularly aimed at himself, gave Rutledge sneer for sneer.

'By all means, let us keep to the point. After long consideration you may reach the conclusion that it's easier to discover the treason than the traitor. And that will be profitable. As profitable as was the arrest of Cheney by a committee too timid to commit anything.'

That sent them off again, on another by-path.

'Yes, by God!' burst from the leathery lungs of Gadsden, who had been preaching sedition to the working-people of Charles Town for the last ten years, ever since the Stamp-Act troubles. 'There's the whole truth of the matter. That's why we make no progress. The committee's just a useless and impotent debating society, and it'll go on debating until the redcoats are at our throats. We daren't even hang a rascal like Cheney. Oons! If the wretch had known us better, he might have spared himself his terrors.'

'His terrors?' The question came sharply from Latimer, so sharply that it stilled the general murmurs as they began to

arise again. At the mention of Cheney's name, he remembered what Moultrie had said about the fellow. An idea, vague as yet, was stirring in his mind. 'Do you say that this man Cheney is afraid of what may happen to him?'

Gadsden loosed a splutter of contemptuous laughter. 'Afraid? Scared to death, very near. Because he doesn't realize that the only thing we can do is talk, he already smells the tar, and feels the feathers tickling him.'

Rutledge addressed himself scrupulously to the chair. 'May I venture to inquire, sir, how this is relevant?'

Leaning forward now, a certain excitement in his face, Latimer impatiently brushed him aside.

'By your leave, Mr. Rutledge. It may be more relevant than you think.' He addressed himself to Moultrie. 'Tell me this, pray. What does the committee propose to do with Cheney?'

Moultrie referred the question to the genial elderly Laurens, who was President of the committee concerned.

Laurens shrugged helplessly. 'We have decided to let him go. There is no charge upon which we can prosecute him.'

Gadsden snorted his fierce contempt. 'No charge! And the man a notorious spy!'

'A moment, Colonel,' Latimer restrained him, and turned again to Laurens. 'Does Cheney know—does he suspect your intentions?'

'Not yet.'

'Latimer sank back in his chair again, brooding. 'And he's afraid, you say?'

'Terrified,' Laurens assured him. 'I believe he would betray anybody or anything to save his dirty skin.'

That brought Latimer suddenly to his feet in some excitement. 'It is what I desired to know. Sir, if your committee will give me this man—let me have my way with him—it is possible that through him I may be able to discover what we require.'

They looked at him in wonder and some doubt. That doubt Laurens presently expressed. 'But if he doesn't know?' he asked. 'And why should you suppose that he does?'

'Sir, I said *through* him, not from him. Let me have my way in this. Give me twenty-four hours. Give me until to-morrow evening at latest, and it is possible that I may have a fuller tale to tell you.'

There was a long pause of indecision. Then, very coldly, almost contemptuously in its lack of expression, came a question from Rutledge:

'And if you fail?'

Latimer looked at him, and the lines of his mouth grew humorous.

'Then you may try your hand, sir.'

And Gadsden uttered a laugh that must have annoyed any man but Rutledge.

Of course, that was not yet the end of the matter. Latimer was pressed with questions touching his intentions. But he fenced them off. He demanded their trust and confidence. And in the end they gave it, Laurens taking it upon himself, in view of the urgency of the case, to act for the committee over which he presided.

The immediate sequel was that, some two or three hours later, Mr. Harry Latimer was ushered into the cell in the town gaol where Cheney languished. But it was a Mr. Latimer very

unlike his usual modish, elegant self. He went dressed in shabby brown coatee and breeches, with coarse woollen stockings and rough shoes, and his abundant hair hung loose about his neck.

'I am sent by the Committee of Safety,' he announced to the miserable wretch who cowered on a stool in a corner and glared at him with frightened eyes. On that he paused. Then, seeing that Cheney made no shift to speak, he continued: 'You can hardly be such a fool as not to know what is coming to you. You know what you've done, and you know what usually happens to your kind when they're caught.'

He saw the rascally pear-shaped face before him turn a sickly grey. The man moistened his lips, then cried out in a quavering voice:

'They can prove naught against me. Naught!'

'Where there is certain knowledge proof doesn't matter.'

'It matters! It does matter!' Cheney rose. He snarled like a frightened animal. 'They durstn't hurt me without cause; good cause; legal cause. And they knows it. What have they against me? What's the charge? I've been twice before the committee. But there never were no charge; no charge they durst bring in a court.'

'I know,' said Latimer quietly. 'And that's why I've been sent: to tell you that to-morrow morning the committee will set you at liberty.'

The coarse mouth about which a thick stubble of beard had sprouted during the spy's detention fell open in amazement. Breathing heavily, he leaned on the coarse

deal table for support, staring at his visitor. Hoarsely at last came his voice.

'They...they'll set me at liberty!' And then his currish demeanor changed. Now that he saw deliverance assured, a certain truculence invested him. He laughed, slobbering like a drunkard. 'I knowed it! I knowed they durstn't hurt me. If they did they'd be hurt theirselves. They'd have to answer to the Governor for't. Ye can't hurt a man without bringing a charge and proving it.'

'That,' Mr. Latimer agreed suavely, 'is what the committee realizes, and that is why it is letting you go. But don't assume too much. Don't be so rash as to suppose that you're to get off scot free.'

'What...what!' Out went the truculence. Back came the terror.

'I'll tell you. When you are released to-morrow morning, you'll find me waiting for you outside the gaol, and with me there'll be at least a hundred lads of the town, all of them Sons of Liberty who'll have had word of the committee's intention and don't mean to let you go back to your dirty spying. What the committee dare not do, they'll never boggle over. For the Governor can't prosecute a mob. You guess what'll happen?'

The grey face with its shifty eyes and open mouth was fixed in speechless terror.

'Tar and feathers,' said Mr. Latimer, to remove the last doubt in that palsied mind.

'God!' shrieked the creature. His knees were loosened and he sank down again upon his stool. 'God!'

'On the other hand,' Mr. Latimer resumed quite placidly, 'it may happen that there will be no mob; that I shall be alone to see you safely out of Charles Town. But that will depend upon yourself; upon your willingness to undo as far as you are able some of the mischief you have done.'

'What d'ye mean? In God's name, what d'ye mean? Don't torture a poor devil.'

'You don't know who I am,' said Mr. Latimer. 'I'll tell you. My name is Dick Williams, and I was sergeant to Kirkland...'

'That you never was!' Cheney cried out.

Mr. Latimer smiled upon him with quiet significance. 'It is necessary that you should believe it, if you are to avoid the tar and feathers. I beg you then to persuade yourself that my name is Dick Williams, and that I was sergeant to Kirkland. And you and I are going together to pay the Governor a visit to-morrow morning. There you will do as I shall tell you. If you don't, you'll find my lads waiting for you when you leave his lordship's.' He entered into further details, to which the other listened like a creature fascinated. 'It is now for you to say what you will do,' said Mr. Latimer amiably in conclusion. 'I do not wish to coerce you, or even to over-persuade you. I have offered you the alternatives. I leave you a free choice.'

CHAPTER III

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THE GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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MR. SELWYN INNES, who was Lord William Campbell's secretary during his lordship's tenure of the office of Governor of the Province of South Carolina, conducted, with a lady in Oxfordshire, a correspondence which on his part was as full and detailed as it was indiscreet. The letters, which have fortunately survived, give so intimate a relation of the day-to-day development of certain transactions under his immediate notice that they would be worthy to rank as *mémoires pour servir* were it not that history must confine itself more or less to the broad outlines of movements and events, and can be concerned only with the main actors in its human drama.

In one of these garrulous letters there occurs the phrase:

> We are sitting on a volcano which at any moment may belch fire and brimstone, and my lord taking no thought for anything but the mode of dressing his hair, the set of his coat, ogling the ladies at the Saint Cecilia concerts, and attending every race-meeting that is held.

From that and abundant other similar indications throughout the secretary's letters, we gather that his

opinion of the amiable, rather ingenuous, entirely unfortunate young nobleman whom he had the honour to serve was not very exalted. A secretary, after all, is a sort of valet, an intellectual valet; and to their valets, we know, few men can succeed in being heroes. But with the broader outlook which distance lends us, we now perceive that Mr. Innes did his lordship less than justice. After all, no man may bear a burden beyond his strength, and the burden imposed upon the young colonial Governor in that time of crisis by a headstrong, blundering Government at home was one that he could not even lift. Therefore, like a wise man—in spite of Mr. Innes—he contemplated it with rueful humour, and temporized as best he could, whilst waiting for events that should either lessen that burden or increase his own capacity.

There is also the fact that whilst, like a dutiful servant of the Crown, he was quite ready where possible to afford an obedience that should be unquestioning, it was beyond nature that this obedience should be enthusiastic. He had examined for himself the lamentable question that was agitating the Empire; and the fact that he was married to a colonial lady may have served to counteract the bias of his official position, leading him to adopt in secret the view of the majority—not merely in the colonies, but also at home—that disaster must attend the policy of the Ministry, driven by a wilful, despotic monarch who understood the cultivation of turnips better than the husbandry of an empire. He cannot have avoided the reflection that the Government he served was determined to reap the crop that Grenville had sown with the Stamp Act, determined to