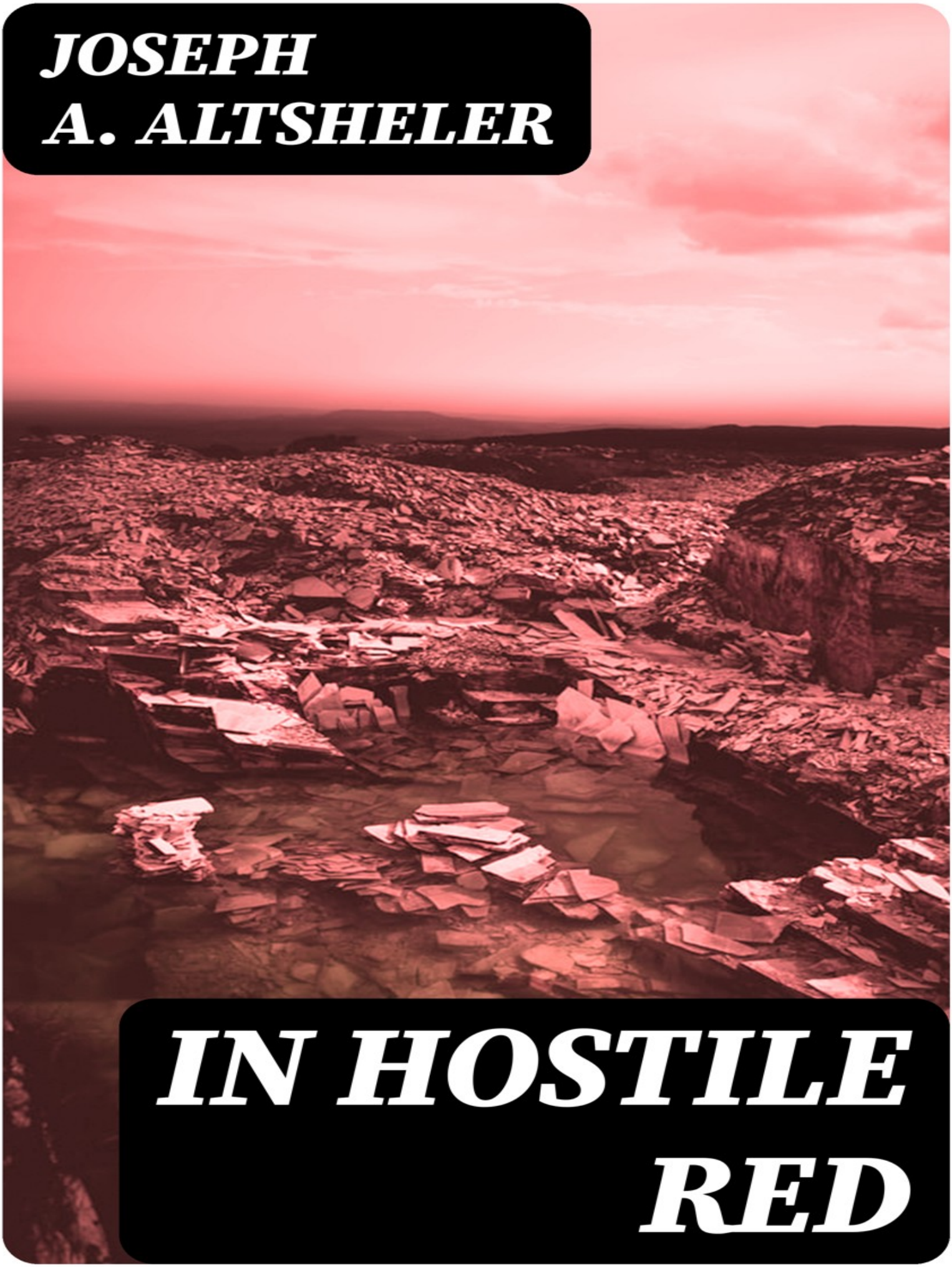
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IN HOSTILE
RED

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Table of Contents

Chapter One—*In Hostile Red*

Table of Contents

"Captain the Honorable Charles Montague, eldest son and heir to Lord George Montague, of Bridgewater Hall, Yorkshire, England," said Marcel, reading the letters, "and Lieutenant Arthur Melville, son to Sir Frederick William Melville, of Newton-on-the-Hill, Staffordshire, England. Those names sound well, don't they, eh, Chester? They roll like the Delaware."

I could not restrain a smile at the prim and choppy way in which Marcel pronounced the names and titles, just as if he were calling the roll of our company. Nevertheless, I wished to hide it, feeling some sympathy for the two young Englishmen because of the grievous state into which they had fallen. As they stood a bit apart from us, they preserved the seeming of dignity, but in truth it was apparent that beneath this cloak they were sore troubled in mind; and well they had a right to be. It was a hard fate to come all the way across the ocean with letters of high recommendation to one's commander-in-chief, only to fall into the hands of the enemy, letters and all, with the place of destination almost in sight.

"They should have stood very high in the graces of Sir William Howe had they reached Philadelphia," said Marcel, "for here are letters from some of the greatest men in England, descanting upon their military merits. Perhaps, Chester, we have saved the Thirteen Colonies with this little achievement, you and I. Because, if everything in these letters be true—and it is not for me to criticise the veracity of the writers—one of our prisoners must be an Alexander at the very least, and the other a Hannibal."

Marcel had a sprightly humor, and one could never tell how it was going to show itself. But he was not given to malice, and he spoke the latter words in a tone that the Englishmen could not hear.

"Chester," he resumed, drawing me a little farther to one side, "these young gentlemen, barring their mischance of falling into our hands, seem to be veritable pets of fortune. They are rich, of high station, and they come to join a powerful army which has all the resources of war at its command. And look at their raiment, Chester; look at their raiment, I say!"

In good truth, they were apparelled in most comfortable and seemly fashion. There is always a brave dash of color and adornment about the uniform of the British officer, and our prisoners had omitted nothing.

"Now look at our own attire," said Marcel, in tones of the utmost melancholy.

Of a verity, there was cause for his melancholy; the contrast was most piteous. Time and hard wear had played sad tricks with our regimentals, and, what was worse, we knew not when or how we were to replace them.

"I see not why we should grieve over it," I said. "The matter cannot be helped, and we must make the best of it we can."

"Perhaps," replied Marcel, fingering the letters meditatively. Then he turned and said with much politeness to Captain Montague—

"I believe you stated that you and your friend are complete strangers to Sir William and his army?"

"Yes," replied Captain Montague; "we have no acquaintance with them at all, and we fear that the unlucky capture of us you have effected will prevent us from making any very soon."

"It was mere chance, and no fault of yours, that threw you into our hands," said Marcel, very courteously; "and it may save you from being killed on the battle-field, which fate I would take to be somewhat unpleasant."

Then he drew me aside again.

"Chester," he said, assuming his most weighty manner, "sit down on this tree-trunk. I wish to hold converse with you for a moment or two."

I occupied the designated seat and waited for him to speak, knowing that he would take his own good time about it.

"Chester," he said, the solemnity of his tone unchanged, "you know what I am."

"Yes," I replied; "by descent three parts French and one part Irish, by birth South Carolinian; therefore wholly irresponsible."

"Quite true," he replied; "and you are by descent three parts English and one part Scotch, and by birth Pennsylvanian; therefore if you were to die the world would come to an end. Now, Bob Chester, still your Quakerish soul and listen. Behold those officers! Their brave clothes and well-rounded figures, which indicate a fine and abundant diet, arouse much envy in my soul, and because of it I have taken a resolution. Now having listened, look!"

He rose and bowed low.

"Lieutenant Melville," he said, addressing himself to me, "pardon this somewhat formal and abrupt introduction, but I have heard often of your family, and I know of its ancient and honorable extraction. Perhaps my own may fairly make pretensions of a similar character. Lieutenant Melville, permit me to introduce myself. I am Captain the Honorable Charles Montague, eldest son to Lord George Montague, of Bridgewater Hall, Yorkshire. I am delighted to meet you,

Lieutenant Melville, and doubly delighted to know that you also have letters to our illustrious commander-in-chief, and that we shall be comrades in arms and in glory."

"Marcel," said I, after a moment's pause, for he had taken the breath from me, "this is impossible. It would mean the halter for both of us before to-morrow night."

"Not so," he replied. "Neither of those men has a personal acquaintance in the British army. What I propose is easy enough, if we only preserve a little coolness and tact. I am tired of skulking about like a half-starved hound, and I want an adventure. It's only for a day or two. Moreover, think what valuable information we might be able to acquire in Philadelphia, and what a great service we might render to our commander-in-chief. But of course, if you are afraid to go with me, I will go alone."

So speaking, he looked at me in the most provoking manner.

Now, I hold that I am a prudent man, but the Highland fourth in my blood will get the mastery of the English three-fourths now and then, and I never would take a dare from Marcel. Besides, I had a sudden vision and I dreamed of a great service to a desperate cause, to be followed perhaps by high promotion.

"A good idea," I said. "We will go to our colonel and propose it at once."

Marcel laughed, and his manner became more provoking than ever.

"And be called a fool for your trouble," he said. "Now is your chance or not at all. Come, Bob! Our success will bring our pardon. At this moment the way of a true patriot lies there."

He pointed toward Philadelphia, and his words were most tempting.

"Very well," I said; "if you go alone you will surely be detected and hanged as a spy. Since it is necessary for me to go with you to save you, I'll have to do it."

"It is most kind of you," said Marcel; "and then if we must hang it will be pleasanter for us to hang together."

We beckoned to Sergeant Pritchard and told him our plan. He was full of astonishment and protestations. But, as he was under our command, he could do naught but obey.

The two young Englishmen were compelled to retire behind some trees and divest themselves of their fine clothes, which we donned, giving them our rags in return. All the letters and other documents that we found in their possession we put in our pockets. Then we mounted their sleek, fat horses and turned our heads towards Philadelphia.

"Sergeant Pritchard," I said, "look well to the prisoners, and see that they do not escape ere we return."

"Then they will never escape," he said. "Lieutenant Chester, you and Lieutenant Marcel could find better ways to die. I beg you to come back."

"Sergeant Pritchard," said Marcel, "we will do you the honor of dining with you, at your expense, one month from to-day. Meanwhile report to our colonel the nature of the errand upon which we are now going."

Then we bowed low to the gentlemen whose clothes we wore, and galloped off towards Philadelphia.

One can become intoxicated without drinking, and the air was so brilliant and buoyant that I think it got into our heads and created in us an unusual measure of high spirits. Moreover, we were so nobly clad and had such good horses under us that we felt like gentlemen of quality for the first time in many long and weary months. We galloped at a great rate for a half-hour, and then when we pulled our

horses down to a walk Marcel turned a satisfied smile upon me.

"Lieutenant Melville, allow me to congratulate you upon the make and set of your uniform," he said with extreme politeness. "It is in truth most becoming to you, and I dare say there is no officer in the service of our gracious Majesty King George who could present a finer appearance or prove himself more worthy of his commission."

"A thousand thanks, Captain Montague," I replied. "Such a compliment from an officer of your critical discernment and vast experience is in truth most grateful. Permit me to add, without attempting to flatter you, that you yourself make a most imposing and military figure. May these perverse rebels soon give us both a chance to prove our valor and worth!"

"The warlike words of a warrior," said Marcel. "And it seemeth to me, Lieutenant Melville, that the warrior is worthy of his wage. The country about us is fair. There are hills and dales and running streams and woodland and pasture. I doubt not that when all the rebels are hanged and their goods confiscated, the king will allot brave estates to us for our most faithful services. It will be very pleasant to each of us, Lieutenant Melville, to have fair acres in this country to add to what we may have some day in England. See that tall hill afar to the right. I think I will rear my mansion upon its crest. That curtain of wood on the slope there will make a lordly pad, while my lands will roll back for miles."

"And I trust that I shall be your neighbor, Captain Montague," I replied, "for, behold, to the left is another hill, upon which a noble building shall rise, the home of the famous soldier General Melville, Duke of Pennsylvania."

Then we threw our heads back and laughed like two boys out for a frolic.

"There is one thing that both of us must bear in mind, Lieutenant Melville," said Marcel, presently.

"What is that?" I asked.

"We must not forget the tragic end of two young American officers whom we knew, Lieutenant Robert Chester, of Pennsylvania, and Lieutenant Philip Marcel, of South Carolina."

"Ah! their fate was sad, very sad," I said.

Marcel put his face in his hands and appeared to weep.

"They departed this life very suddenly," he said, "about ten o'clock of a fine morning, on the 8th of May, 1778, in his Britannic Majesty's province of Pennsylvania, about fifteen miles east of his most loyal city of Philadelphia. The witnesses of their sudden and sorrowful demise were Sergeant Pritchard, four privates in the rebel service, and two young British officers who had just been captured by the aforesaid rebels. But such, alas, are the chances of war; we must even weep their fate, for they were so young and so ingenuous! Lieutenant Melville, will you weep with me?"

We bowed our heads and wept.

"Suppose the English officers should ask us about England and our homes and kin?" I said to Marcel. "How could we answer them without at once convicting ourselves?"

"That will be easy enough," replied Marcel, gayly. "We have brains, haven't we? And if any impertinent fellow becomes too inquisitive we can do as the Connecticut man does: we can answer a question with a question of our own. Besides, there is plenty of information in these letters that we have captured, and we can study them."

We were now approaching the British lines, but were still in a region that might be called doubtful ground, since parties from either army scouted and foraged over it.

I suggested that we halt in the shade of a convenient grove and examine the letters again with minute care, rehearsing them in order that we might be perfectly familiar with their contents. This we did, and then each tested the knowledge of the other, like a pedagogue questioning his pupil.

"I think we'll do," said Marcel. "Even if we were to lose the letters, we can remember everything that is in them."

"That being granted," I replied, "I propose that we push on at once for Philadelphia. I am amazingly hungry, and I have heard that the rations of the British officers are a delight to the stomach."

We mounted our horses and rode leisurely on. As we were drawing near to the city we expected to meet scouting or skirmishing parties, and we were not subjected to disappointment.

Presently, as our road wound around a hill we heard a clanking of spurs and the jabber of voices. Through some trees we could see bits of sunshine reflected from the metal of guns.

"A British scouting or foraging party," said Marcel. "Now, Bob, remember that we are to carry it off like two young lords, and are to be as weighty of manner as if we equalled Sir William Howe himself in rank."

We shook up our horses, and they trotted forward, Marcel and I assuming an air of ease and indifference. A dozen troopers came into our view. They were rather a begrimed and soiled lot, and it was quite evident to us that they had been on a foraging expedition, for one of them carried chickens and turkeys, and another had a newly slain pig resting comfortably across his saddle-bow. The leader

seemed to be a large swart man who rode in front and clutched a squawking hen in his left hand.

"They're Americans! They're of our own side, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Marcel. "We'll warn them that this is dangerous ground and that they may meet the enemy at any moment."

So we whipped up our horses and galloped forward with this benevolent purpose in view.

But, to our great amazement and to our equal indignation, the large man drew a horse-pistol of a bigness proportioned to his own, and fired point-blank at us. I heard three or four slugs whizzing in a most uncomfortable manner past my head, and, thinking it was time to stop, drew back my horse with a jerk.

"The confounded whipper-snapper dandies!" exclaimed the big man with the pistol. "Would they dare to ride us down! At them, lads, and knock them off their horses!"

"Stop! stop!" shouted Marcel. "What do you mean by attacking your own countrymen and comrades?"

But his only answer was a shout of derision and the cocking of pistols. Then I remembered that we were clad in the British uniform. The Americans might well believe that our protestations of friendship were but a sham. In truth, they could scarce be expected to believe aught else. With a quick and powerful jerk of the rein I wheeled my horse about. Marcel did likewise, and away we galloped, our countrymen hot at our heels and their bullets whistling about us.

It was lucky for us that the foragers were well loaded up with spoil and their movements and aim thus impeded. Otherwise I think we should have been slain. But, as it was, none of their bullets struck us, and the suddenness of our flight gave us a good start. We bent down upon our horses' necks, in order to present as small a target as possible.

"I think we ought to stop and explain," I said to Marcel when we had galloped a few hundred yards.

"But there is no time to explain," he replied. "If we were to check our speed we would be overtaken by bullets before we could make explanation. Our uniforms, though very fine and becoming, are much against us, and even if we should escape without wounds we would be taken back as prisoners to the American army."

"Then, Captain Montague," I said, "there is naught for us to do but continue our flight to Philadelphia and escape within the lines of his Britannic Majesty's most devoted army."

"It is even so, Lieutenant Melville," returned Marcel. "How does his Grace the Duke of Pennsylvania like to be pursued thus over his own domain by these wicked rebels?"

"He likes it not at all," I replied.

"But he must even endure it," said Marcel, grinning in spite of our predicament.

We had gained somewhat upon our pursuers, but we could hear the big man encouraging the others and urging them to greater speed. It was our good fortune that the country was not obstructed by hedges or fences, and it seemed that we might escape, for our horses evidently were the fresher.

I looked back and saw the big man fifteen or twenty feet ahead of his companions. He was making great efforts to reload his pistol, but was keeping a watchful eye upon us at the same time. It was plain to me that he was filled with the ardor of the chase and would not relinquish it as long as it seemed possible to overtake us. Presently he adjusted the charge in his pistol and raised the weapon. I saw that it was aimed at me, and just as he pulled the trigger I made my horse swerve. Nevertheless I felt a smart in my left arm and uttered a short cry.

"Are you hurt?" asked Marcel, apprehensively.

"No," I replied, "not much. I think his bullet took a piece of my skin, but no more."

For all that, a fine trickle of blood that came down my left sleeve and stained my hand made me feel uneasy.

We urged our horses to greater efforts, and the spirited animals responded. We had curved about considerably in the course of our flight, but I had a good idea of the country, and I knew that we were now galloping directly towards Philadelphia. I trusted that if our pursuers were aware of this fact they would abandon the chase, which threatened soon to take them inside the British lines. But many minutes passed, and they showed no signs of stopping.

"We have our pistols," said Marcel. "We might use them."

"We cannot fire on our own countrymen," I replied.

"No," he replied, "but we can fire over their heads, and it may reduce the infernal eagerness they show in their pursuit. A bullet properly directed discourages overmuch enthusiasm."

We twisted about in our saddles and discharged our weapons as Marcel had suggested. But, unfortunately for us, our countrymen were brave and not at all afraid of our pistols. They came on as fast as ever, while our movement had checked our flight somewhat and caused us to lose ground perceptibly. We began to grow discouraged.

But in this moment of depression we saw a smudge of red across a valley, and Marcel uttered a little shout of joy.

"A rescue! A rescue, most noble duke!" he cried. "See, the British troops are coming!"

Through the valley a body of British cavalry were galloping. There were at least fifty men in the party, and evidently

they had seen us before we saw them, for many of them held their sabres in their hands, and presently they raised a great shout.

Our American pursuers, seeing that they were out-numbered, turned about and took to their heels with considerable precipitation. The next moment we galloped into the middle of the British troop, and then, a curious faintness overcoming me, I slid to the ground.

Marcel, having thrown himself from his horse, was beside me in a moment, and lifted me to my feet.

"A little water, please, as soon as you can," he said to a fine stalwart officer who had also dismounted and come to my aid. "The lieutenant was wounded in a brush we had with those confounded rebels, and I fear his strength is exhausted."

"Then here is something much better for him than water," said the officer, sympathetically.

He held a canteen to my mouth, and I took a draught of as fine whiskey as I have ever tasted. It put life back into me and I was able to stand upon my feet without assistance.

A half-dozen of the British had remained with the officer who gave me the whiskey, but the others had continued the pursuit. This man, who wore the uniform of a captain, was apparently about thirty-five, and of prepossessing appearance. He looked at us inquiringly, and Marcel, who guessed the nature of his unspoken question, said—

"My friend here, who is so unfortunate as to be wounded, is Lieutenant Arthur Melville, and I am Captain Charles Montague. We landed but lately in New York, and we undertook to come across the country to Philadelphia, for we have letters to Sir William Howe, and we wished to see active service as soon as possible."

"You seem to have had an adventure, at any rate," said the officer.

"Why, it was nothing much, only a trifle," replied Marcel, airily. "If the fellows had not been so numerous, I think we could have given a handsome account of them. Melville here, before he got his wound, popped one of them off his horse with a bullet through his head, and I think I gave another a reminder in the shoulder which he will not forget very soon. But it was lucky you came when you did, gentlemen, for they were most persistent scoundrels, and I verily believe they would have overtaken us."

"It is a pleasure to have been in time to render you assistance," said the officer. "My name is Blake, Geoffrey Blake, and I am a captain in the Guards. I am something of a surgeon, and if Lieutenant Melville will permit me I will examine his arm and discover the nature of his wound."

The hurt proved to be very slight, but I readily saw how much the manner of our entry into the British lines was in favor of our plan. We had come up full tilt, pursued by the Americans, and an American bullet had grazed my arm. The chase, after all, was a fortunate accident, for it created a vast prepossession in favor of our assumed identity.

"It was an early and rather rude welcome that the rebels gave us," said Marcel, as we were examining the wounded arm, "but I fancy that we will yet find an opportunity for revenge."

"No doubt of it! No doubt of it!" said Captain Blake. "We have not been able to bring on a general battle for some time, but their skirmishers swarm like flies around us, and nothing is safe beyond the sight of our army. It was very bold of you, gentlemen, to undertake a journey from New York to Philadelphia across a rebel-infested country."

"We thought we might have a skirmish with the rebels," said Marcel, lightly, "and we had no great objection to such an encounter: did we, eh, Melville?"

"Oh, no, not at all, so long as Captain Blake and his gallant men were at hand to rescue us," I replied.

Captain Blake bowed and regarded us with a look of great favor. I saw that we were fast establishing our reputation with our new British friends as men of dashing courage and good nature. Presently the troopers who had pursued the Americans returned and reported that they had been unable to catch them.

"They disappeared in the woods over there," said a lieutenant, "and we can discover no further traces of them. And they carried all their spoil with them, too; not a chicken, not a turkey, could we retake."

"Let them go," replied Captain Blake. "At least we have saved our friends here from capture."

"Which the aforesaid friends consider to be not the least among your achievements," said Marcel.

Captain Blake laughed good-humoredly, and then we rode into Philadelphia, Marcel and I bearing ourselves like conquering heroes and guests of honor.

Chapter Two—*Feeling the Way*

Table of Contents

We made a fine cavalcade when we rode through the streets of Philadelphia. As we had stopped at the outposts in order to comply with the usual formalities, a rumor of our adventures preceded us, and, since it is not the habit of rumor to diminish the importance of things, it made notable heroes of Marcel and me. Some part of it came to our ears as we proceeded, and we found that between us we had slain at least eight rebels and had pursued a hundred others a matter of not less than ten miles.

"I fear, captain," said Marcel to Blake, "that we have achieved such a reputation for valorous conduct that we will never be able to prove the tenth part of it."

"Trust me, gentlemen, for thinking better of you than that," replied Captain Blake, who seemed to have taken a fine fancy for us. "I doubt not that both of you will be winning honors on bloody battlefields."

"If so," said Marcel, "we trust that General Blake will be there to see it."

Captain Blake, who, like most men, was not inaccessible to flattery, seemed charmed at the high promotion Marcel had conferred so readily upon him, and certain was I that we would have a fast friend in him.

"I am going to take you immediately to Sir William himself," said the captain, "as you have letters of introduction to him, and I doubt not that he will place you on his own personal staff, where you will secure fine opportunities for conspicuous service."

"I would like to see service first at a well-loaded table," whispered Marcel to me. "I was hungry before I reached Philadelphia, and the sight of all these smug and comfortable people in the streets sharpens the pangs of famine."

And in truth the people we saw were a well-fed lot, with fat cheeks and double chins, very unlike our own lean and hungry fellows, who had to fight on empty stomachs.

We arrived in a short time at the quarters of Sir William Howe, a two-story brick house that had once been a private residence, and I was somewhat astonished at the luxury and display I witnessed there. There were as many articles for ease and adornment as ever I had seen in the mansions of our most wealthy citizens, and seeing it all I did not wonder why this general should have been called "The Sluggard." It contrasted strongly with the simplicity of our own commander-in-chief's hut, and I, who had not slept under a roof in a year, felt oppressed, as if the air were too heavy for my lungs. But it was not so with Marcel, who loved his ease and basked in rich colors.

"We have made a happy change, Chester," he said to me as we waited for Sir William. "This in truth looks to be a most comfortable place, and if we do not find much enjoyment here it will be because we are men of small resources."

I was thinking of the great risks we were incurring, and made no answer. He did not notice it. He sighed in the most contented fashion, and said it was the first moment of real enjoyment he had experienced in six months. But his lazy pleasure was soon interrupted by the entrance of Sir William Howe himself. The British commander was a swart, thick man, whose plump face and figure indicated a love of good eating. His expression was indolent, and on the whole good-natured. He received us with kindness. It was evident that

some one had blown our trumpet for us already: I guessed that it was Blake.

"I am delighted to see you, gentlemen," he said. "It was in truth a daring deed to ride from New York to Philadelphia, as the rebels infest the country between. It is fortunate that Lieutenant Melville escaped with so slight a wound. I should like to hear more about your adventures, gentlemen."

Then Marcel with an air of great modesty told a most remarkable story of our encounter, how we had driven the rebels back once, and had knocked two of them off their horses, but at last under stress of numbers were compelled to retreat. I took careful note of everything he said, because if the time came for me to tell the tale alone, as most like it would, mine must not vary from Marcel's in any particular. Sir William seemed to be much pleased with the story.

"That will bear retelling," he said. "I must have you two, Captain Montague and Lieutenant Melville, at our dinner to-morrow. I am to have a company here composed of my most distinguished officers and of some of our loyal friends of Philadelphia. I shall be glad for you to come, gentlemen; and do you look your best, for there will be beauty at the banquet."

Of course we accepted the invitation with great alacrity, but a shade came over Marcel's face. The general observed it with keen eye.

"What is it that you find displeasing, Captain Montague?" he asked.

Marcel hesitated, and seemed to be in a state of perplexity.

"I fear it would anger you, general, if I were to name the cause," he replied.

"Speak out! Tell me what it is. Would you rather not come? If so, have no hesitation in declaring it," said Sir William.

But the general did not appear at all pleased at the possibility of his invitation to dinner being declined by a junior officer. At which I did not wonder, for it would have savored much of disparagement, not to say impertinence.

"It is not that, general," replied Marcel, making a most graceful genuflection. "We have already derived acute pleasure in anticipation from the banquet to which you have so graciously invited us. But, general, it is the truth that we have great need of one now. General, it pains me to have to say it in your presence, but we are starving. We have not eaten for a day. Perhaps we could have contained ourselves, if you had not spoken of a feast, but that was too much for our endurance."

The general burst into a fit of great and hearty laughter. Marcel's sly impertinence, for such it was, seemed to please him.

"Starving, eh?" he exclaimed. "Then I must see that my heroes who fought the rebels so well do not perish of hunger. Britain has not yet come to such a pass that she must deny food to her soldiers. Vivian will care for you."

He called an aide of about our own age and bade him take us to the officers' mess and give us the best that was to be found. This Vivian was a talkative and agreeable young personage. We had to tell our entire story again to him, which perhaps was not a bad thing, as it was a kind of rehearsal and served to fasten the matter in our minds. I was narrator this time, and I am confident that I followed Marcel's story so well that if the two tales had been written out a reader could have found no difference in them. It is so easy to lie sometimes.

"You are caught between luncheon and dinner," said Vivian, "but I think the cook can knock up enough for you to stay the pangs of starvation."

"I trust he may," said Marcel, devoutly, "or else he will be responsible for our deaths, and that would be too heavy a weight for a regimental cook to bear."

It was evident that the cook had faced such emergencies before, as he was nobly equal to it, and we did not restrain the expression of our gratitude when we were seated at a table in the mess-room, with an imposing meat pie, an abundance of bread and vegetables, and a flagon of wine before us.

"We can do better than this when we are warned," said Vivian.

"This is ample and most comforting," I replied; and that was about the first true thing said by either Marcel or me since we had entered Philadelphia.

There was in this mess-room the same touch of luxury and adornment, though more restrained, that we had noticed at the headquarters of the general. It was evident that his Britannic Majesty's officers lived well in the good city of Philadelphia.

"Oh, why did we not come sooner?" exclaimed Marcel, with a double meaning that I alone understood.

"The rebels seem to have hurried you along fast enough," said Vivian, with a laugh.

"We hope to reverse the case soon," replied Marcel, "and become the pursuers ourselves. Meanwhile I take great comfort in demolishing this pie."

The news of our adventure had been spread very generally about headquarters, as several officers came in while we ate. They were rather a friendly lot, and some of them I liked. Blake, our first British friend, was among them.

"I wonder the rebels had the courage to pursue you," said a very callow youth named Graves.

"Don't the rebels fight well?" asked Marcel.

"Oh, no, not at all," returned Graves, superciliously. "They take to flight at the first glimpse of a British uniform."

"Then why don't you go out and show yourself, Graves?" asked Vivian; "for they say that bands of the rebels do come alarmingly close to Philadelphia."

There was a general laugh, and Graves turned almost as red as his coat.

"There is no doubt," said an older officer, named Catron, "as to our ability to crush these rebels if we could get them into a corner. But they are most cursedly sly."

"However," said I, for I was determined to defend my countrymen despite our situation, "the rebels are the weaker, and it is the business of the weaker party to avoid being pushed into a corner. And according to all the accounts that have come to England, they seem to show much skill in this particular."

"It is true," replied Catron, "but I must persist in calling it most unhandsome behavior on their part. They don't give us a chance to win any laurels, and they won't let us go home. We are kept in a condition of waiting and uncertainty which is the most unpleasant of all things."

"Well, all that will speedily come to an end," said Marcel, "for my friend Melville has arrived, and I tell you in strict confidence, gentlemen, that Melville is the fiercest warrior since Marlborough. I doubt not that the rebels, having heard of his arrival, are even now fleeing into the wilderness across the Alleghany Mountains, that they may forever be beyond the reach of his mighty arm."

The laugh went around again, and this time at my expense.

"Perhaps, if the discourteous rebels had known that I was one of the gentlemen whom they were pursuing," I said, "it

might have saved my friend Captain Montague much exasperation of spirit and the loss of a most elegant military cloak that he brought from England with him. I assure you, gentlemen, that when we were compelled to take to flight the captain's beautiful cloak trailed out behind him like a streamer, and finally, a puff of wind catching it, left his shoulders entirely. I doubt not that some ragged rebel is now wearing it as a trophy. Ah, captain, it was a most beautiful cloak to lose, was it not?"

"And it was with that very cloak upon my shoulders," said Marcel, falling into the spirit of the matter, "that I expected to make conquest of some of these provincial maidens of whom report speaks in such glowing terms. Alas, what shall I do?"

"Oh, it will be easy enough to get it back," said a young officer, whose name, as I afterwards learned, was Reginald Belfort. "These rebels are a poor lot. They cannot stand before us."

Belfort was young and handsome, but his face expressed arrogance and superciliousness. I liked him but little.

"I know not much of the rebels from personal observation," I replied, not relishing his sneer, "but General Burgoyne would hardly have said that at Saratoga."

"No," commented Vivian, "for it would be somewhat severe upon General Burgoyne to be captured with all his veterans by such a poor lot of men as Belfort says the rebels are."

"You must not forget," said Catron, good-humoredly, "that Belfort thinks the rebels are inferior in blood. Belfort, as you know, gentlemen, has a lineage that dates back to the Conquest. He claims that these rebels are the descendants of peasants and out-casts, and therefore should admit their inborn and permanent inferiority."

"And such they are," said Belfort, still sneering. "They should be ruled by the gentlemen of England, and ruled by them they will be."

"What were the Normans themselves in the beginning," I asked, "but Scandinavian pirates and peasants? The ancestors of these rebels may have been peasants, but at any rate they were not pirates."

Belfort flushed, and for a moment could not answer. He knew that I had spoken the truth, as any one who reads history knows also.

"We have come to a fine pass," he said at length, "when a man who has just escaped by the speed of his horse from the rebels sets himself up as their defender."

"That may be," I replied, for I was still somewhat angry; "but I do not think it worth our while to depreciate men who have already taken an entire army of ours, and keep all our other forces cooped up in two or three large towns."

"Melville does not want to diminish the glory of the victories that we are to achieve," said Marcel, lightly. "The more valiant and the more worthy the foe, the greater one's glory to triumph over him."

"That is a very just observation," said Vivian, who seemed anxious to avoid a quarrel, "and I propose that the quality of the rebels and the amount of resistance they will offer to our conquering armies be left to the future. Such warlike questions will keep. Milder subjects better become the present."

"Then would not the dinner that the general is to give to-morrow be a fit topic?" asked young Graves.

"Our new friends are to be there," said Vivian. "You are lucky chaps, Montague, you and Melville, to be invited, so soon after your arrival, to one of Sir William's entertainments.

There is not a better diner in America, or Europe either, than the commander-in-chief."

"The banquet is to be blessed by beauty too," said Graves. "Our fair ally and her renegade father are to be there. Oh, but Sir William keeps a sharp eye on the old scoundrel, and well he deserves to be watched thus."

"I beg to avow ignorance of whom you mean," I said, my curiosity aroused. "You must remember that Montague and I have arrived but within the day and know not the great personages of Philadelphia."

"By 'old renegade' we mean John Desmond, merchant and money-lender of this city, who it is said has more wealth than any other man in all this rich colony, ay, even enough to set up a mighty estate in England, if he so chose," replied Vivian; "and by 'our fair ally' we mean his daughter Mary, as fine and fair a woman as these two eyes ever gazed upon. The old Desmond leans to the rebels, and 'tis said would help them with his money if he dared, while the daughter is all for us, as she should be, being a born subject of our liege King George, God bless him. And 'tis reported that it might go hard with the old rebel, but some of his sins are forgiven him for the sake of his loyal and lovely daughter."

I had not heard of the daughter before, but the name of the father was known to me. Secret assistance of money had reached our camp sometimes, and it was said that this John Desmond had sent it. Repute had it that he was a man of great mind and brain, who would have come in person to join us had not his rich properties in Philadelphia demanded his care and attention; and I could well believe that his situation was of a very precarious nature, despite his daughter's fidelity to the king.

"I am curious to see both the rebel and his loyal daughter," said Marcel, unconsciously speaking my own thoughts also.

"You may yield to the charms of the daughter," replied Vivian, "but I warn you that if you seek to retort her conquests upon her you will have antagonists, and our friend Belfort here would not be the least among them."

Belfort frowned as if he did not relish the allusion, but it was a jolly young company of officers, and his frowns did not prevent them from having but small mercy upon him.

"I am told," said Catron, "that the young lady looks very high, and it will not be an easy task to win her. I think, Belfort, that the uniform of a colonel would be an exceeding betterment to your chances. And even if you should achieve success with the lady, I know not how the glowering old Desmond will look upon you."

"It seems to me, gentlemen," said Belfort, a trifle warmly, "that you are over personal in your discussions."

"Then in truth it is a most serious matter with you, eh, Belfort?" exclaimed Vivian.

"Nevertheless the field is open to any of us who choose to enter, and I suspect that some of us do choose," said Catron. "Belfort must not expect to win a battle unopposed."

I saw that Belfort liked the discussion less and less, and that he did not fancy rivalry. Many of the British officers in America, with worldly wisdom, were already seeking alliances with our Colonial heiresses. I had no doubt that Belfort had such designs in his mind, and I took a dislike to him for it.

Our appetites had now been dulled, and Vivian, seeing it, suggested that perhaps we might like to seek repose, adding that we would not be assigned to any regular service for a day or two. We accepted the invitation to rest, as we were in truth tired. Evening was at hand and it had been a long day, filled with many adventures. The officers wished