

JANOLLES

THE
FORTUNES OF A PARTISAN OF '81

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JOHN ESTEN COOKE



E. B. SMITH & CO.

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BY JOHN ESTEN COOKE.

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I.

UNDER THE MOON.

On a May evening in the year 1781, just as the sun had disappeared, a man riding a powerful black horse emerged from the great morass known as the "White Oak Swamp" on the right bank of the Chickahominy, in Virginia, and went at a long steady gallop in the direction of James River.

An hour's ride brought him in sight of a large and imposing house. This house, known time out of mind as "Chatsworth," fronted southward toward the river, from which it was separated only by a sloping lawn and a low fence, and a single glance showed that it had once been the residence of a man of great possessions. The facade was long and elegantly decorated, the portico, extending the entire length of the building, was reached by a broad flight of stone steps, and through the trees to the right and rear were seen extensive stables, outhouses and servants' quarters. Over the gateways were armorial devices in stone; the garden fell in terraces, ornamented with edgings of box; the place, it might be seen, had once been splen-

did. But now all things were going to decay. The sward was overgrown with weeds, the fences were falling, the outhouses and quarters were deserted, and some plaster had fallen from the ceiling of the porch and lay where it fell. Everywhere, in the house, the grounds, the inclosures, were the evidences of poverty and neglect.

The man coming from the White Oak Swamp made a circuit, and halting his horse in a little clump of trees not far from the front of the house, remained for some time looking at it in silence. He was apparently from twenty-five to twenty-eight, rather low in stature, broad-shouldered, and wore a nondescript costume, half that of a civilian, half that of a soldier. There could be little doubt, however, that the latter was his true character. From his holsters protruded a pair of horseman's pistols, and around his waist was buckled a strong leather belt, sustaining a heavy broadsword. His air above all was that of the soldier—cool, resolute and commanding. His face, not unhandsome, but bronzed by sun and wind, had a peculiarly phlegmatic expression—that of a man not likely to be surprised or daunted by anything—but with this phlegm was mingled both pride and melancholy. The motionless figure seemed to suit the scene and the hour. The last flush of sunset had faded in the west; above the tree tops glimmered faintly now a thin crescent moon slowly sailing through diaphanous clouds; the murmur of the great stream came like a lullaby through the deepening gloom, and the walls of Chatsworth looked ghostly in the dim moonlight.

“Well,” muttered the horseman, “I have come on an errand which will probably result in nothing; yes, that will be the result. And yet I must hold this interview. I wonder if the fair one will insult me very grossly? Doubtless.”

He threw a keen glance around him, as though reconnoitering from habit, and touching his horse with the spur, rode up and dismounted in front of the house. An old horse-rack, leaning from age, stood near, but the man did not tie his horse there. He led the animal to an abandoned outhouse in the rear, where a door stood open, concealed him in the building, and, returning to the front of the house, went up the broad steps and knocked.

A light had just appeared in the apartment to the right, and at the sound made by the falling of the great bronze knocker, a shadow was thrown upon the tarnished lace curtain at one of the windows; the shadow remained stationary for a moment, then it disappeared, then a step was heard in the hall, and a voice said behind the door:

“Who is that?”

“A friend,” was the reply of the man.

“What friend?”

“If Miss Talbot will open she will discover,” said the man. “An enemy would find little difficulty in forcing an entrance.”

There was a short silence. Then, as though the logic of the speaker had produced conviction, the door opened, and the light from the room fell upon the horseman.

“You, sir!” exclaimed the person who had opened—a young lady—“you here, sir?”

“Myself, madam,” said the stranger coolly.

“Your business?”

“To prove myself the friend of Mrs. Talbot and her nieces.”

“Indeed!”

She was about to add something more to this chill exclamation, but apparently changing her mind turned her back and swept with a haughty air back into the room, which was occupied by an elderly lady and a young girl. The apartment had about it the same air of past splendor seen in the exterior of the mansion. The walls were heavily wainscoted in rich paneling, but the woodwork had warped and shrunk. The cornices were superb, but in many places had fallen. The marble mantle-piece had cracked from side to side. The gilding of the portrait frames had nearly disappeared, and the once fine carpet was in rags. Some old carved-back chairs, an antique center-table on which burned a single candle in a silver candlestick, and a rug in holes, were all the furniture.

The elderly lady, who was knitting with tremulous fingers, wore a frilled cap, a black dress, and a white handkerchief which passed around her neck was secured by an ancient breastpin in the front. Beyond these commonplace externals there was nothing to attract in her appearance. The younger persons were more striking. The one who had admitted the visitor was about twenty-five—tall, dark-haired, dressed with what might be called tarnished elegance, but undenia-

bly a beauty. The eyes were dark and penetrating, and the complexion superb; but the fair face was spoiled by an expression of discontent and ill-humor, which had ripened into positive scorn and anger, now as the stranger entered. Her companion was apparently about nineteen, and quite different in appearance; her hair of a rich brown, her eyes blue, her face of a pure oval, and her figure *petite* and slender. Her dress was as simple as her companion's was pretentious, and the bodice, with its long waist and opening at the neck in the fashion called "Marie Stuart," distinctly outlined an exquisitely maidenly figure. In face and form there was an indefinable grace and freshness; the girl had about her that indescribable something sought to be expressed by the word feminine. She seemed made to love and be loved—to confide and be confided in. The brilliant eyes of the elder dazzled and repelled a little—the dove's eyes of the younger drew you. And these opposing characters were seen even in their positions and attitudes. The elder sat with head erect in the full blaze of light, looking coldly straight at the new comer. The younger occupied a low seat nearly in the shadow, near the mantle-piece, her head dropped a little, and she stole from beneath her long lashes a searching glance at the visitor.

He advanced into the centre of the room, bowed, and remained standing.

II.

WHAT TOOK PLACE ON A MAY NIGHT.

The stranger remained thus erect and motionless for some moments, leaning one hand on the center table, and looking thoughtfully around him, especially at the old portraits, whose eyes seemed to fix themselves upon him in the dim light. From this fit of absence he was now aroused abruptly.

“Well, sir?” said the elder young lady, flirting her train around with evident irritation.

The stranger’s eyes fell from the portrait, and he looked at her—coolly, but with a lurking expression of satire on his swarthy face.

“You would say, madam, that it is time for me to explain the object of my visit?”

“Yes sir!”

“An unwelcome one, apparently, at least to yourself personally, madam.”

“As you please, sir!”

He looked at the young lady with grim interest, and said, coolly :

“My object in visiting Chatsworth this evening, Miss Talbot, is to inform you that this place is no longer safe for unprotected ladies, and to counsel you to leave it.”

“You are very good, sir!” was her almost scornful reply, “and where shall we go?”

“To the house of some friend in the upper country.”

“We are unprotected ladies, as you say. How are we to take this journey without an escort?”

She looked straight at him as she spoke, and evidently waited for and anticipated his reply :

“I am at your service, madam, and that of your aunt and sister, if you desire it.”

The reply came back as suddenly as a blow :

“I, for one, sir, prefer the tender mercies of the British to placing myself under your protection.”

Again the expression of grim interest came to the stranger's face ; he exhibited no other indication of any feeling whatever.

“So be it, madam,” he said quietly ; “it is for you to decide in a matter that concerns yourself. The times are troubled. Gen. Phillips is within a few miles of you on his way to Petersburg, and Lord Cornwallis is advancing, and will soon arrive. These gentlemen are gentlemen, but troops are hard to control. The horsemen of Col. Tarleton, especially, are said to be an unruly set. With or without justice they are stigmatized as robbers and marauders ; and marauders, permit me to add, madam, are bad visitors for unprotected ladies.”

The elder young lady—who alone took part in the colloquy—had listened to these words with an expression of disdain, amounting to insult. At the word marauders however, she suddenly raised her head and fixed a pair of flashing eyes upon the stranger.

“Marauders, did you say, sir ? Colonel Tarleton a marauder ?”

“His troops at least bear that repute, madam, whether deserved or not.”

“ Well, sir,” said the lady, with a curl of her beautiful lip, “ has it never occurred to you that there are other marauders in this war besides Colonel Tarleton ? ”

“ Doubtless there are such, madam,” was the cool reply.

“ Persons,” continued the lady, flushing with scorn and anger, “ persons who are neither Americans nor British, neither friends nor enemies, who prey on all indiscriminately—who, actuated solely by a base love of gold, by a low passion for plunder—”

She paused, panting. All at once the younger sister rose to her feet. Her face, too, was burning and her eyes flashing.

“ For shame, sister ! ” she exclaimed, “ to thus return kindness by insult—to meet the offer of friendship with such bitter words, such words as no lady should address to a gentleman ! ”

The elder turned her head and stared at the speaker with as much astonishment as wrath.

“ Indeed, Miss ! ” she exclaimed with a sort of explosion, “ when will you speak again ? I am to be lectured and directed in what I am to say by you ! ”

“ I do not lecture you ; but you have no right to speak thus. You do not speak for me. You shall know that at least.”

Before the astounded elder sister could reply the stranger took three steps forward, raised the hand of the younger to his lips, bowing as he did so, and said in a low voice :

“ Thanks, Fanny ! ”

He then turned to the elder and said, with perfect composure :

“Madam expresses herself so plainly that it is impossible to misunderstand. I at least do not. But I am losing time. My proposition is refused, I see. So be it. I beg to take my leave now, as I have far to ride to-night.”

He bowed, exchanged a long look with the younger sister, still erect, flushed and beautiful in her indignation, and slowly left the room. As he disappeared he looked over his shoulder—this time at the old portraits on the wall, especially at that of a very beautiful woman. As he did so, an expression of melancholy tenderness came to his face, and a breath resembling a sigh escaped from his lips.

He went out of the house, walked in the dim light of the crescent moon to the out-building where his horse was concealed, and was about to mount, when the trample of hoofs was heard approaching up the river's bank.

The stranger concealed himself in the outhouse, and looked and listened.

Suddenly a troop of about twenty-five mounted men swarmed into the grounds, and a person evidently in command leaped to the ground, throwing his bridle to one of the men, and knocked at the door. The stranger stole from tree to tree, and had just come in sight of the door, when it was opened, and the light fell on the person who had knocked. He was a young man wearing the uniform of an English lieutenant of cavalry, and a sound like a low scream was heard from the house.

“Do not be alarmed, madam,” came in response to the scream, “there is no reason whatever why you should be. I am aware that there are none but ladies here, and only beg that I may rest a moment.”

He turned to the troop, ordering “Keep your ranks—let no man stir.”

With which words he entered.

The stranger, concealed in the shadow of a large oak, remained motionless for about a minute. Then he seemed to form a sudden resolution. Stealing in the same cautious manner from tree to tree, he gained the rear of the house, silently went to a small porch at the back door, raised a window noiselessly and as silently entered an apartment in rear of that which he had just left.

All his movements had indicated a perfect knowledge of the localities, and he now stole toward the door between the two apartments, through the key-hole of which a long ray entered the dark room.

Placing himself at this key-hole, and alternately applying his eye and his ear, he looked and listened, and what he saw and heard from his place of concealment we shall proceed to describe.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE LISTENER OVERHEARD.

The British officer—a young man of about twenty-five, slender, with light hair, a joyous expression, and clad in a rich uniform covered with gold braid—was standing in the middle of the apartment, his plumed hat in his hand.

The ladies had risen and were trembling.

“I beg you will dismiss apprehension of annoyance from myself or my command, madam,” he said, in a frank, gay voice, addressing Mrs. Talbot, “and will resume your seats. I am Lieutenant Ferrers, of the British cavalry, and if you have ever heard of me you must have heard that I am not a very dangerous visitor to ladies.”

The ladies sat down; the officer remained standing.

“I have the pleasure, I believe, of seeing the family of Colonel Cartaret?”

“No, sir,” said the elder of the young ladies, speaking for the rest as in the interview with the stranger.

“Ah, then I was misinformed,” returned the smiling young officer. “Is not the name of this estate Chatsworth, the former residence of Colonel Cartaret, who espoused the English side when the present war broke out?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the young lady, who had recovered her calmness, and even began to direct the artil-

lery of her beautiful eyes upon the officer, "this is Chatsworth, but——"

"Ah! I understand now. You would say, madam, that you are neither relatives of Col. Cartaret nor sympathizers in his political views."

"We are cousins only."

"And good American sympathizers, doubtless!" came in the same gay tone. "Well, that is natural, and I am far from attributing any fault to you for being such! The fact is unimportant, and I am myself no very savage partisan. Partisan! The word reminds that I am on a little expedition to hunt up one of these same gentry; but now since you are good patriots, ladies, I cannot ask you to assist me."

"To assist you, sir? In what manner?" said the young lady.

"By giving me information. To be plain, madam, I am looking for a certain Capt. Canolles, chief of a band of—well, marauders, I may call them. Can you tell me where I can find this Canolles?" he added, laughing.

Canolles, listening within a few feet of the speaker—for the stranger secreted in the adjoining room was that personage—waited, with a grim smile on his lips, for the young lady's reply. It came promptly.

"He was in this room a quarter of an hour ago."

"In this room?" exclaimed the officer, turning quickly toward the door.

"But it is useless to pursue him. He is miles away by this time."

"He is your friend, perchance?"

"No, indeed!"

“Your enemy?”

The young lady hesitated. Then she said coldly:

“Everything connected with that person is a subject of perfect indifference to me!”

“Ah! I see, madam. Despite your patriotic views you cannot approve of Capt. Canolles—a mere marauder.”

“Who could?”

“You are right, madam. He is said to fight under no flag, to have no end in view but booty, and even to rob both sides alike.”

“That is his reputation.”

“A strange character. Who and what is he?”

“Ask him, sir!” suddenly came from the young sister, and the officer turned quickly, with a smile on his lips.

“Right, right!” he said, “and I hope soon to have an opportunity to address the question to him. To be frank, ladies,” he went on in the same gay tone, “Gen. Phillips, in whose command I have the honor of serving, desires particularly to lay his hands on this worthy Canolles. On the General’s first expedition up the river one of his sailing vessels was boarded in the night not far from this spot and the crew overpowered before assistance could reach them. Unfortunately the vessel contained a considerable sum to pay off the troops, and this was carried off.”

“Doubtless by the person you are in search of,” said the tall young lady.

“Yes, madam. The vessel was set on fire, after the crew were turned loose in the boats, and they reported

that they had heard the marauder addressed by his men as Capt. Canolles."

Canolles, listening attentively, came near uttering a low laugh.

"A daring affair," the smiling young officer went on, "and perfectly within the rules of honorable warfare, if these men—they are called "Rough Riders," I believe—fought under the American flag. But they had no flag whatever, I am informed. So the General would be extremely glad to have an interview at his headquarters with the Captain."

"In which laudable desire you aim to gratify him, sir!" came from the smiling lips of the elder of the young ladies, who continued to reply to the officer. She had not ceased to direct toward him the same flashing glances—brilliant, provoking, far from hostile—and it was easy to see that the young Briton was more and more struck by her beauty.

"Allow me to admire your penetration, madam!" he went on in his former tone. "The General ardently longs to see this same Canolles, and even has another motive. He is on his way from Brandon to Petersburg—has some more money under convoy—and we naturally have a nervous apprehension that the worthy Canolles will attempt to lay his hands on that also, since booty is his game and the main chance of his object in warfare."

Canolles, looking and listening through the keyhole, lost, suddenly, his expression of grim enjoyment, and bent close, with an ardent light in his eyes. The con-

versation had evidently assumed a new and far stronger attraction for him.

“There is no danger, I trust,” said the lady, “of another such robbery. Gen. Phillips is then on his way to Petersburg? There was such a rumor.”

“Oh, it is no secret, madam, and I may inform you of the fact without scruple. Perhaps I was less justifiable in speaking of the gold which the general conveys with him. That was somewhat imprudent.”

“Imprudent, sir?”

The officer laughed.

“You may give information of the fact to General Lafayette, who is not far distant, or—”

The officer paused, again laughing.

“Or some one may be concealed here—listening. In that room, for instance.”

He pointed to the room in the rear.

“Oh, if that is your only fear, sir, you are at liberty to satisfy yourself.”

The officer took two steps toward the door. Cannoles, bending close, did not move; but he quietly stole his hand to the hilt of his broadsword.

“Have I your permission to look, madam?” said the young officer. “Pardou me, but war is an unceremonious trade.”

“You are perfectly at liberty, sir, although that room has long been unused, and the door, I think, is locked.”

“Do you give me your word that no one is concealed there?”

“My word of honor, sir.”