

fully bruised and covered with blood. He made no defence. He seemed to be completely crushed and returned no answer at all or responded in scarcely audible monosyllables to the questions addressed to him. It was agreed that his explanations to Col. Dayton were too weak to merit serious consideration when compared with the straightforward report of the sergeant, given with great embellishment of detail.

The deliberation of the court was brief. Ernest Travers was sentenced to be shot in the presence of the whole army.

There was no time to lose. The safety of the force depended upon a hurried advance. Washington's anxiety was depicted upon his martial visage. But it was imperative that the execution should be summary and as imposing as possible, in order to properly impress the troops with the heinousness of the offence and to serve as a warning to the prisoner's accomplices, for it was not doubted that there were other traitors in the camp. It was deemed impossible for any member of the rank and file to obtain unaided the information that had been sent to the enemy, and the court had exhausted every means of inducing Travers to disclose the names of his fellow-culprits.

The army was drawn up in three sides of a square, with the commander-in-chief and his staff in the centre space. The condemned man, after being marched along the front of the ranks, was placed against a tree. The muskets of the execution platoon were levelled at his breast and the officer in command had raised his sword, which, when lowered, would give the fatal signal, when a shriek was heard, there was a commotion on one side of the square and a soldier rushed forward calling wildly upon the men not to fire.

The general held up his hand as a signal to the officer commanding the firing party to wait. Col. Dayton had immediately spurred his horse toward the man who was the cause of this sensational interruption. The soldier clasped the officer's knee and said something to him as he bent from his saddle. Suddenly Dayton shook him off, ordered a sergeant to arrest him and, ghastly pale, galloped back to the chief, who was awaiting with visible impatience and annoyance at the delay. A few minutes' earnest conversation passed between them, while the army looked on in breathless wonder at it all. The colonel's report resulted in the postponement of the execution and the immediate resumption of the march to the Delaware. Meanwhile the condemned man had fainted.

The army had safely crossed the river and was quartered in a large village. Enthusiastic recruits were pouring in from every direction and Washington was preparing to turn back and resume the offensive in New Jersey.

Travers, imprisoned in an upper room of a farmhouse, had recovered somewhat from the terrible emotions through which he had passed and the ill usage to which he had been subjected, but he was haggard and emaciated. He spent most of the time stretched upon his mattress. He did not know why he had been respited. None of the men who guarded him and brought him food ever spoke to him. He lived in hourly expectation of being led out to die, and indeed he would have welcomed death as a happy release from his sufferings.

On the afternoon of the fourth day of his incarceration the door was thrown open and Col. Dayton stalked in. Travers staggered painfully to his feet and the colonel faced him with folded arms. The prisoner stood at attention, with lowered eyes and dogged, listless mien, waiting to be questioned, but Dayton did not speak. Then the former looked up wearily, and a flush came into his white cheeks. His uncle, with heaving breast and the tears streaming down his face, was gazing at him with an expression of unspeakable tenderness and grief.

'My boy, my boy, poor boy!' he cried, clasping him to his breast. 'My old heart is broken. Can you ever forgive me? Could I, as I gladly would, give my life for you, I could not recompense you for your noble sacrifice and the suffering I and mine have caused you. Oh, Ernest, Ernest, I am not deserving of your pity, yet I need it sorely.'

'Don't, uncle; don't talk so; you are killing me! This is hardest of all to bear,' sobbed Travers, greatly agitated.

The old man sank into the only chair in the room, and his nephew, kneeling beside him and clasping his hand, learned what had happened.

'God could not permit the perpetration of such a crime as the ignoble snuffing out of your life,' said the colonel. 'He has surely marked you for a higher destiny. In His infinite mercy He maddened with remorse him in whose stead you had suffered and would have died, forced him at the supreme moment to confess his infamy, and I, my pride justly humbled, thank Him reverently on my bended knees for having saved my wretched son from the additional guilt of murder.'

'The story of George's undoing is an old one—none the less pitiable for the retelling. Unknown to me he had been living a fast life with debauched and wealthier young fools than himself. To procure the money wherewith to gratify his vicious tastes and pose as their equal, he took to gambling, got heavily, hopelessly into debt, and was shown the only way to save himself and me from ruin by a boon companion, rich and in the service of the king. He succumbed to the temptation.'

'In whom can a father have confidence if not in his son? When I became attached to the general staff I employed George to do clerical work for me, and in this way he was able to obtain from confidential dispatches and otherwise information valuable to the enemy. Of course, I never doubted him a minute. He feigned to second me zealously in my efforts to discover the traitor who was betraying us. The improbability of your story, the suspicious circumstances of your arrest, compelled me to judge you guilty. George confessed that agents of the king's government are posted in every hamlet. He had the list and was seeking the nearest agent, whom he supposed was stationed at no great distance from where we were encamped that night, when he lost his way in the wood and was captured by you. He did not know who you were till you dragged him into the light after his appeal to you to let him go. You were misguided, my poor boy, in releasing him.'

'How so, uncle? What else could I do? It was not for his sake. Had he been my own brother I would have had no pity. But could I, by delivering him up to justice, wreck the lives, break the hearts of you and my aunt, who have been more than father and mother to me, and of my gentle little Priscilla, my affianced wife? Surely not. I had intended on returning to camp to arouse him to a sense of the enormity of his conduct, force him to quit the army and to prove in some way, on pain of exposure, his devotedness to the cause for which we are fighting. I felt that this threat, held over his head, would keep him in the right path. But when I found myself in the unfortunate position in which I was placed, there remained only one way of repaying you—if it is ever possible to repay you—for all your kindness to me, and that was by hiding the truth. Anybody in my place would have done the same.'

'I fear not, my dear Ernest. Nevertheless, when George had confessed I divined your generous motives, understood the full extent of your sacrifice, and I have come with your pardon and an officer's commission conferred upon you by the commander-in-chief, who was greatly impressed when I acquainted him with the circumstances of the case, and orders you to report to him personally when you are in condition to return to service.'

'And George?' faltered Travers, making a mighty effort to control his emotion at finding himself thus suddenly raised from the lowest depths of degradation and despair to love and honor.

'George,' said the old man, brokenly, 'blew out his brains last night. Some unknown friend smuggled a pistol to him. As for me, my life, alas! is not mine to take. It belongs to my country. But I beseech God to send me a soldier's death in the heat of battle against my country's foes. He will grant my prayer if He judge best, and thus I may in a measure atone for my son's sin.'

Ken. Mayo

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