

"You might have spoiled the whole plan," he cried; yet acknowledging inwardly that he knew no one else who would have dared to thrust his neck so far within a noose. He himself had not been idle, and piecing together their bits of information, they made out that La Fayette had crossed the Schuylkill and taken a post of observation on a range of knobs known as Barren Hill, and that Howe's plan was to capture him as a brilliant close to a campaign that had been so much criticised. It became therefore instantly necessary to warn the marquis of the plot. The details Richard had gotten from the unsuspecting girl gave them all they needed to round out their plan; the one thing now was to escape and carry the information to La Fayette. This Richard found more difficult than he had imagined from their easy entrance; for they had no friendly carter and market maid beside them, and, despite the festivity, the pickets were keeping strict watch at the outposts. Finally, by creeping on their hands for half a mile behind a hedge, they managed to evade detection; but the sun was already high over the eastern horizon before they gained the banks of the Schuylkill. Keeping close to the stream and avoiding the open road they finally came upon a rowboat hidden among the reeds in a cove. This, without ceremony, they appropriated, and were soon making more rapid progress on their journey. For a long while nothing but the oars was heard; then suddenly Richard laughed aloud.

"Suppose that young gallant had come back for his cloak while I was talking with the girl?"

"You'd have had to content yourself with talking to the angels—or the imps—hereafter," growled Dunn.

But Richard laughed again. "Well, I'm glad he stayed away, for 'tis pleasanter entertaining beautiful girls. It will be great sport to say in my home letters that I, a private in the Continental army, was one of Mistress Singleton's attendants at General Howe's *fête*! Mary will get it all from Joscelyn and write it back to the

lady, and she will then know who the supposed Barry was. Who is Barry, anyhow?"

"One of the finest of the young officers that wears the red—a soldier and a lady-killer, so they tell me." Long afterwards Richard recalled the words.

Presently Dunn, who had been looking intently ahead, said: "This is the place; yonder are the two dead oaks by which I always locate Matson's ford. We will tie up here and cut across country to the hills, trusting to luck to find the way to La Fayette. Grant's guides, knowing their road, give him the advantage, for I have never been sent to this part of the country, so am ignorant of my bearings. It must be near to noon, and the British column has long ago started."

"Will they guard this ford, do you think?"

"Hardly, for it is nearer to the English than to us. La Fayette will retreat as he came, by the one higher up."

"Will he fight first?"

"He may be forced to; otherwise, no. It would be folly to deliberately engage the superior force sent against him. If we only knew the direct path!"

"If we only had some breakfast," sighed Richard.

They wanted to ask their way at the scattered cottages and of the men at work in the fields, but they knew not friends from foes. Once they lay for an hour under a plum thicket, not venturing to move, while two men, who had met in the road, stopped their horses for a talk. The afternoon was beginning to wane when they came to a secluded farmhouse, where an old woman gave them something to eat, and, thinking they were Tories, warned them that a body of Americans was said to be camped three miles to the southwest. They thanked her, but once out of her sight they turned joyfully in the forbidden direction, and in less than an hour were called to halt by two men with bayonets.

"Take us to your general, and take us quick," said Dunn.

La Fayette recognized Dunn instantly,