

The Dare Boys of 1776

Stephen Angus Cox

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Title: The Dare Boys of 1776

Author: Stephen Angus Cox

Release Date: October, 2005 [EBook #9112]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on August 15, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DARE BOYS OF 1776 *****

Produced by Curtis A. Weyant

The Dare Boys of 1776

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Stephen Angus Cox

Illustrations by R. Menci

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The Platt & Peck Co.

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Chapter I

The Clang of the Liberty Bell

It was the fourth day of July of the year 1776. There was great excitement in all of the colonies of America at that time, for on this day the representatives of the people, gathered together in the city of Philadelphia, were to decide whether the Declaration of Independence, already drawn up, should be adopted and signed. In Philadelphia, as may well be supposed, the excitement was so intense that the people suspended business. They thronged the streets, walking up and down, talking excitedly, and waiting, waiting for the decision to be made, the determination that would mean so much to them.

The people talked and gesticulated, and there was considerable arguing, some contending that the Declaration of Independence would be adopted and signed, others that it would not.

"Look, here it is almost evening," contended one of these latter, "and

nothing has been done yet. If they were going to adopt the Declaration it would have been done before this. The delay means that it will not be done."

"They are taking their time to it, that is all," replied the others. "It is a most serious matter and not to be taken up hastily and without due thought. They will adopt and sign the Declaration of Independence before the day is gone, see if they don't!"

Dick and Tom Dare, two patriot youths, brothers, from about three miles over in New Jersey, who had come to the city to hear the news, listening eagerly, were thrilled by the excitement and interest shown on every side.

"Oh, I hope they will adopt the Declaration of Independence, Dick!" said Tom. "I'm sure they will, aren't you?"

"I think they will, Tom. I hope so."

"Bah, they won't do nothin' uv the kind, Dick Dare!" cried a sneering voice at their side, and turning, the Dare youths saw Zeke Boggs and Lem Hicks, the sons of two Tory neighbors, standing there.

"Uv course they won't," added Lem Hicks. "They don't darst. They know that ef they do, they'll git into trouble with King George. They won't ring no old Liberty Bell to-day."

"Well, they just will!" cried Tom Dare, who was an excitable, impulsive youth. "They'll ring it pretty soon, Lem Hicks, and they aren't afraid of your old king, not a bit of it!"

"What's thet! Don't ye dare speak disrespectfully uv the king!" snarled Zeke Boggs, making a threatening motion with his fist. "Ef ye do, why et'll be the worse fur ye, that's all."

Instantly Dick Dare, who was the elder of the brothers, a handsome, manly youth of eighteen years, seized Zeke by the wrist, and pushed him back, at the same time saying quietly, yet firmly:

"That will do, Zeke. Don't go making any threats. You and Lem go about your business, and don't interfere with Tom and I."

"We'll go where we please," snarled Zeke, who was a vicious youth of about Dick's age, as was Lem Hicks also. "An' we'll stay heer ef we want to, too, Dick Dare, an' ye can't he'p yerself."

"That's all right," calmly; "you can stay here, I suppose, if you want to, but you will have to behave yourselves and attend to your own business. If you try to interfere with Tom and I, or to bully us, you will wish you hadn't stayed."

"Is thet so?" sneeringly. "Whut'll ye do, Dick Dare, hey?"

"Yes, whut'll ye do?" cried Lem Hicks, pushing forward and facing Dick.

Tom confronted him quickly, and met his angry glare unflinchingly. Tom was only sixteen years of age, but he was well-built and athletic for his age, and was moreover as brave as a lion, though somewhat

quick-tempered and impulsive. He put out his left hand and, placing it against Lem's chest, pushed him back.

"Hold on, Lem Hicks," he said. "Just you stand back. One at a time talking with Dick is enough. You talk to me, if you want to talk to anybody."

Lem Hicks was a hot-tempered youth also, and suddenly his rage flared to the surface. He didn't relish being pushed back by Tom, and quick as a flash, he gave the patriot youth a smart slap on the cheek.

"That thet, an' I'arn to keep yer han's offen people!" he snarled.

The blow was with the flat of the hand, and while it smarted, it did not hurt much to speak of, but it was sufficient to start impulsive Tom Dare into action, and quick as a flash out shot his fist. It caught Lem Hicks between the eyes and knocked him down flat on his back.

"There, see how you like that!" exclaimed Tom, his eyes flashing. "I guess that next time you'll think once or twice before you slap me in the face!"

With an angry exclamation, Zeke Boggs struck at Dick Dare, but that youth was on his guard, and he warded the blow off, and striking out himself, landed a blow on Zeke's jaw, downing him as neatly as had been the case with Hicks.

Instantly a crowd gathered, many eagerly asking what the trouble was about. Dick and Tom explained that the two youths who had been floored were Tories, and the sympathies of the crowd were at once with Dick and Tom, more especially when they learned that the Tory boys had picked the quarrel with the patriots.

"You did just right in knocking them down!" was the cry, and so hostile were the looks, actions and words of the crowd, that Zeke and Lem on scrambling to their feet, did not renew the fight. They shook their fists at Dick and Tom, however, and muttered threats, as they moved away through the crowd declaring that they would get even with Dick and Tom.

The patriot youths received the congratulations and commendations of the people in their vicinity with becoming modesty, and a little later moved on up the street.

They walked about for an hour or more, after that, and then took up their station as near the old State House as they could. There was such an immense crowd there that it was impossible to get within half a block of the building. In the steeple of the State House was a bell, and the old bell-ringer sat beside it, waiting for the moment when his son, stationed below, should give him word that the Declaration had been adopted, when he would ring the bell. He had been stationed there since morning, waiting, waiting, and as the day wore away and still the word to ring came not, he shook his head and muttered that they would never reach a favorable conclusion.

But he was mistaken, for when evening was almost at hand, his son came rushing out of the State House and called up eagerly and excitedly:

"They've done it, father! They've adopted and signed the Declaration of Independence! Ring the bell! Ring it, father! Ring the bell! Ring it--quick!"

With a glad cry, the old man leaped up, forgetting his rheumatism in his excitement and delight, and seizing the great iron clapper, swung it back and forth against the sides of the great brass bell, thus causing it to do what by a strange coincidence the inscription on its side said it was to do, viz.: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

Chapter II

Waylaid on the Road

As the deep tones of the old bell died away on the evening air a great shout of delight went up from the people on the streets. They leaped and danced for joy. They tossed their hats in the air. They shouted and sang. Many wept for joy. It was an exciting, a thrilling manifestation.

Dick and Tom Dare were not a whit behind any in their expressions of delight. They shouted for joy, and then in the excess of their happiness they threw their arms around each other in a bearlike hug.

"Oh, Dick, I'm so glad!" cried Tom. "I never was so happy in my life."

"Nor I, Tom. This is the most joyous hour of my life! How delighted father will be when we go home and tell him that it is settled, that the Declaration of Independence is a real and determined fact!"

"It will please him more than anything else in the world, Dick."

"Yes, yes indeed."

Then lifting up his voice the patriot youth cried out loudly, his voice ringing clear as the notes of a bugle:

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty! Long live Washington!"

The excitement was even greater after that, and instantly the cry was taken up on every hand. Thousands shouted aloud, in a thrilling, triumphant roar: "Down with the king! Long live Liberty! Long live Washington!"

People leaped and danced, and shouted till they were hoarse. They were like crazy people, but with them it was pure joy because of the thought that they were to be free, to be their own masters, independent of a tyrannical king. They had reason to be joyous and happy.

It was certainly a great day for the American people--without doubt the greatest in the history of the greatest country on the face of the Globe.

After awhile, when the people had calmed down to a considerable extent

and were beginning to disperse to their homes, Dick and Tom Dare set their faces homeward. They were soon at the river, and crossing on the ferry, walked swiftly along the road. They were eager to get back and tell their father the glad, the glorious news.

Part of the way the road led through a heavy growth of timber, and as Dick and Tom were making their way past this point, talking enthusiastically of what they had seen in the city, and never thinking that danger might lurk near, they were suddenly set upon by four youths of about their own age—no others, in fact, than Zeke Boggs, Lem Hicks and two other Tory sympathisers of the neighborhood.

"We told ye we'd git even with ye!" hissed Zeke Boggs, as they hurled themselves upon Dick and Tom. "Ye thought ye was mighty smart, there in Phillydelphy, with ever'buddy on yer side an' ag'in us, but heer its different an' we'll beat ye till ye'll wish ye had never been born! Go fur 'em, fellers!" this last to his companions.

The two patriot youths, although taken by surprise, and outnumbered two to one, were yet not dismayed, for they were brave lads, and they fought the Tory youths with all their might, so fiercely, in fact, that they held their own remarkably well. They knocked down each of the four young Tories, and gave them a thumping that they would likely remember for some time. Of course, they got hit a number of times by the youths, but they did not mind it, the smart of the blows only serving to make them settle down to their work with increased vim and determination, and the result was that the Tory ruffians presently got enough of it, and suddenly ceasing the attack and dashing in among the trees at the roadside, disappeared from view, leaving Dick and Tom Dare masters of the situation.

"Phew, that was warm work, Dick!" said Tom, wiping his perspiring face with his handkerchief.

"Yes, so it was, Tom," replied his brother. "But I believe that we made it warmer for Zeke and his gang than they did for us."

"Yes, I think we did," with a chuckle. "Say, Dick, they are better runners than fighters, aren't they!"

"I think they are, Tom. They did some lively sprinting, just now, at any rate."

"I guess they won't be likely to attack us again, soon."

"Hardly."

Dick and Tom now resumed their journey homeward, and reached there about half an hour later. It was still light enough to see their father at work in the backyard, as they entered the front gate. They ran around the house at the top of their speed, to halt a few moments later in front of their father.

"They did it, father!" exclaimed Tom, pantingly. "They adopted and signed the Declaration of Independence."

"Say you so, my son?" exclaimed Mr. Dare joyously. "Well, heaven be praised! I am glad, my sons; yes, very, very glad! It means much to everybody, and to young people like yourselves more than to older

ones, for you have practically the whole of your lives before you, while we older people have already lived the greater portion of the time allotted to us."

"It was wonderful, the interest and excitement shown by the people in Philadelphia, father!" said Dick. "They were wild with delight."

"I have no doubt of it, my son. And they had reason to be delighted. It is a great thing to feel free and independent. I feel wonderfully relieved already. I feel as if shackles had suddenly been stricken from my limbs, and I have no doubt that is the way the majority of the people look at the matter, so why should they not feel joyous?"

The three then entered the house, Mr. Dare having finished his work for the evening, and Mrs. Dare greeted her sons affectionately.

"The Declaration of Independence has been adopted, wife," said Mr. Dare, joyously. "The die is cast. There will be war now, undoubtedly, and it will result in the independence of the people of America. It cannot result otherwise, for the people will fight to the death. In the words of Patrick Henry, it will be with them, 'Give me liberty, or give me death!'"

"I am glad, Henry," said Mrs. Dare. "I am glad, and almost sorry, as well, for-I am afraid it will take you from me. You will want to enter the army, I am afraid."

"Oh, I must do so, wife," earnestly. "Every man should step to the front and shoulder a musket and fight for liberty. Yes, I must go to the war, mother. I must join the Continental Army at once."

"I feared it," sighed the woman. "But, I shall try to be brave and bear up well, for I know that it is the right thing for you to do. I would not want you to stay at home, when you were needed at the front to help fight the minions of King George."

"Spoken like my own true-hearted wife!" said Mr. Dare. "I knew you would look at the matter that way, dear."

At this moment there came a knock on the back-door, and when Mrs. Dare opened it, she saw a neighbor, Abe Boggs, the father of Zeke, standing there. This man was an avowed Tory, who was vehement in his declarations of allegiance to the king, and who had been heard often to viciously proclaim that all who were not in favor of the king, were traitors and that they ought to be hung. Knowing this, and instinctively disliking the man because she knew he was vicious and bad, Mrs. Dare's heart sank when she saw who was standing there.

The fact was, that the Dares lived right in the midst of a Tory neighborhood; that is the six or seven nearest neighbors were adherents of the king, and they neighbored among themselves, and would not have anything to do with the Dares. This did not bother the patriot family, however, for they did not like the Tory families anyway. Mr. Dare often met one or more of the men, when going about his work, however, and frequently he had arguments with them. As he was a brave man, and frank-spoken as he was brave, he always told the Tories just what he thought of their king, and thus he had angered them many times, and they had learned to hate him. Only his fearlessness, and the fact that he was known to be a dangerous man to

interfere with, had saved him from rough treatment at the hands of the Tories.

"Good evenin', Mrs. Dare," said Boggs, ducking his head. "Tell yer husban' to come out here; we'd like to see 'im."

Mrs. Dare glanced out into the yard, and her heart gave a leap, and then sank as she saw several of their Tory neighbors sanding in a group a few yards from the house. She noted, with a feeling of fear gripping her heart, that two or three of them had rifles in their hands.

"W-what do you want, Mr. Boggs?" she asked, her voice trembling. "My husband is here, but-but-we were just going to eat supper, and--"

"Supper can wait a few minutes, wife," said Mr. Dare. "I'll see what neighbor Boggs wants. Won't you come in, Abe?"

"No, we want see ye out here, Dare" replied the Tory. "Come out uv doors. We won't keep ye but a minnet."

"Oh, husband, be careful!" whispered Mrs. Dare in her husband's ear as he passed her. "Don't anger them. They have weapons in their hands, and--" With a smile and a reassuring glance Mr. Dare passed on out, closing the door behind him. He had no fear whatever of his Tory neighbors, and would have scoffed at the idea of their trying to do him injury.

Dick and Tom were washing their faces and hands and combing their hair, and did not know anything about the coming of the Tories until they entered the room where their mother was, and then Mr. Dare had been out in the yard perhaps five minutes. During this time Mrs. Dare had been on the anxious seat, so to speak. She had been listening eagerly and anxiously, fearing she might hear rifle-shots, or the sound of a struggle, but no such sounds had come to her hearing. Still, she was not feeling very much reassured when the boys entered the room, and she told them about the coming of Abe Boggs and some more of the neighbors, and how they had called Mr. Dare out, on the plea of wishing to speak to him.

"He's been out there quite a while," Mrs. Dare finished; "and I'm beginning to feel uneasy. I wish you would go out and tell father to come in, that supper is getting cold, Dick."

"Certainly, mother," said Dick, and he hastened to the door. The truth was, that a feeling of uneasiness had taken hold upon him when he heard what his mother had to say about the Tories, and, remembering the trouble he and Tom had had with Zeke Boggs and his cronies that afternoon in Philadelphia and on the road home, Dick was led to fear that the Tories had called his father out of doors with evil intent.

He opened the door and stepped quickly out, and Tom, who had also been assailed with fears for his father's safety, was close at his heels. They looked all around, but to their surprise, and to their alarm as well, there was no one in sight. Neither their father nor the Tories could be seen anywhere. It was so dark that the youths could not see any very great distance with distinctness, but they were confident that there was nobody in the back yard.

"They're around in the front yard, likely, Dick," said Tom, but his tone lacked positiveness. It was evident that he had fears that such was not really the case.

The two hastened around the house, accompanied by their mother, who had followed them to the door and had, like her sons, noted that there was nobody to be seen. And when they reached the front yard, they saw it was the same there: Not a soul was in the front yard. The Tories, and Mr. Dare as well, had disappeared.

"Oh, where can they be?" cried Mrs. Dare, almost at the weeping point. "What have they done with your father? Oh, I am afraid they have wrought him injury of some kind, sons!"

The youths were alarmed, but they pretended that such was not the case, in order to reassure their mother. They said that their father was all right.

"He has gone with them, to see about something," said Dick. "You go back in the house, mother, and Tom and I will go over to Mr. Boggs and see what has become of father. Likely he is there. You go in and stay with Mary. We won't be gone long."

"Very well, Dick," said Mrs. Dare; "but hurry, for I shall be anxious till you get back with your father."

She entered the house, and Dick and Tom hastened over to the Boggs home, which was less than a quarter mile distant. Mr. Dare was not there, and Mrs. Boggs said she did not know where her husband was, that he had left the house an hour or more before, saying he did not know when he would be back. Thanking her for the information, Dick and Tom hastened to the homes of several of the neighboring Tories in succession, and made inquiries regarding Mr. Dare, but with the same result as at the Boggs home. In none of the homes visited were any of the men of the house, and the women did not know where the men were.

Greatly worried now, but hoping they would find their father at home when they got there, Dick and Tom hastened back, and as they approached the house, they caught sight of something white on the door. When they reached the door, they found it was a piece of paper, and on taking this into the house discovered it was a rudely scrawled note, signed by Abe Boggs and six of his Tory neighbors. The note read as follows:

"To Mrs. Dare and rebel sons, Dick and Tom:

"We hev took Henry Dare prisner. He is a rebel, an we are goin ter turn him over to Captain Wilson an his compny uv British sojers, who hev ben heer fur a week past, an are goin to jine the main army on Long Island to-night. Ye kaint do nothin to git him back, so ye needn try. An ye two boys, Dick an Tom, had better be keerful er we'll serve ye worsen whut we hev yer father. We don't aim ter hev any rebels in our neighborhood. So, Dick and Tom Dare, hev a care!"

"Oh, husband is a prisoner in the hands of the British!" wailed Mrs. Dare. "Oh, this is terrible, boys! What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do!"

"Don't be frightened, mother," said Dick, soothingly. "I don't think father is in any danger. He is a prisoner, true, but the British don't kill prisoners, and sooner or later father will escape-or be rescued. That will be work for Tom and I, mother!" his eyes lighting up. "We will make it our object in life to rescue father and get him back home here, with you, mother."

The poor woman was not greatly comforted, however, and she shook her head, at the same time saying, in a hopeless tone of voice:

"What could you do, you are only a couple of boys? You could not possibly rescue father. It is useless to think of such a thing. Oh, I greatly fear I shall never see my husband again in this world! Oh, those terrible, cowardly Tories!" The good woman gave way to an outburst of uncontrollable grief.

"Yes, you shall see father again, mother," declared Dick, decidedly. "Don't worry. He is safe from personal harm, and sooner or later we will succeed in getting him located and will rescue him. Tom and I will make that our object in life."

"Yes, yes, mother," said Tom eagerly. "We'll join the patriot army, if need be, to further our ends, and while fighting for Liberty and Independence, and aiding our country in that manner, we will at the same time be on the lookout to find father and rescue him."

"Yes, that is what we will do," said Dick. "Father would have joined the patriot army if he had not been captured and taken away by the Tories, and now that he is not able to do that, we will do it in his stead. I know it is what father would wish us to do, and as Tom says, it will give us a better chance to find and rescue father."

"Oh, my sons, my sons! How can I spare you, too?" murmured Mrs. Dare. "How can I let you leave me, now that I have lost your dear father!"

"It will be only temporary, mother. You can see, when you give the matter more thought, that it is the best thing to do."

"Perhaps so, Dick, darling," acquiesced Mrs. Dare, "but it is hard!"

Throwing their arms about their mother's neck, the youths kissed her, and presently she grew more calm.

Chapter III

Ben Foster Brings Important News

"Oh, Dick, is it true that you and Tom are going to enter the army and fight for liberty?"

"Yes, it is true, Elsie. Aren't you glad?"

"Y-yes, Dick," replied Elsie Foster, hesitatingly. "I'm glad you are to be a soldier, but I-well, you might get killed you know, and-and-"

"Would you care, Elsie?"

Elsie Foster was the daughter of Robert Foster, the nearest neighbor of the Dares. Mr. Foster was a king's man, but he was different from the other Tories of the neighborhood, in that he was an honest, honorable man, and was a friend of the Dares. He had had nothing to do with the capture of Mr. Dare, and was outspoken in his denunciation of his Tory neighbors for the deed they had committed.

Dick had gone over to the Foster home to borrow something for his mother, and had met Elsie out in the yard, and the girl had greeted Dick as above. The truth was that Dick and Elsie were great friends. They were school-mates, and whenever there was anything going on in the neighborhood, such as spelling schools, skating parties, etc., Dick was Elsie's companion. Elsie was seventeen, and she had a brother, Ben, he being her twin, and a sister, Lucy, aged fifteen. The three young folks of the Dare family and the three of the Foster family often got together on evenings and had a pleasant time, but now that Dick and Tom were going away to the war, it would break into this arrangement.

When Dick asked Elsie if she would care if he should get killed in battle, she blushed and looked confused at first, and then she looked him frankly in the eyes and said, softly. "You know I would, Dick."

"I'm glad to know that, Elsie," said Dick, earnestly.

At this moment Ben Foster came running up. He was a manly-looking youth, and was lively and jolly as a rule. But now he was very sober-looking, for he realized that Dick, whose father had been captured by the Tories only the day before, was in no mood for jollity. There was an eager expression on Ben's face, however, and after greeting Dick, he asked:

"Are you really going to join the Continental army, Dick, you and Tom!"

"Yes, Ben," was the reply.

"Well, say, I'm going to go with you," declared Ben.

"Oh, Ben!" exclaimed Elsie. "What will father say?"

"Father's all right, sis. He is a king's man, everybody knows that, but he is reasonable, and lets other people think as they like. He knows that I'm a patriot, and he won't object."

Dick's face lighted up, for he liked Ben very much, and the idea of having him along was a pleasing one.

"That would be fine, Ben," he said. "But I wouldn't want you to do anything contrary to the wishes of your father."

"Oh, that will be all right," Ben assured him. "He won't care, I am sure."

"Goodness, what will Mary do if you go away?" said Elsie. Ben seemed to think as much of Mary Dare as Dick did of Elsie, and he flushed slightly at his sister's words, and then retorted:

"I guess she'll do about the same thing that you will when Dick goes-up into the attic and have a good cry."

"You're a mean brother," said Elsie in pretended anger, lifting her hand as if to slap him, "and if it wasn't that I will likely soon lose you, I would box your ears soundly."

They talked awhile, and then Dick attended to the errand that had brought him there and went home.

"I guess we will have company when we go to war, Tom" he said to his brother.

"Is that so?" with an interested ear. "Who?"

"Ben Foster."

"You don't mean it, Dick?"

"Yes. He just told me he intends to accompany us."

"But-his father's a Tory!"

"Yes, but he is a reasonable man, and Ben says that he will not object."

"Well, that will be fine. I'd like to have Ben along."

"So would I. And I guess he'll go."

"I hope he will. He's such a lively, jolly fellow that he is good company, and will help keep us from getting homesick."

"I guess, Tom, that we will be kept too busy to get homesick."

"You think there will be lots of fighting, then? You feel certain that there will be war?"

"War has really existed for more than a year, Tom. You know the battle of Lexington was fought April the nineteenth of last year, and that was the first battle of the Revolution. And since that there has been more or less skirmishing between the 'Minute Men' of New England and the British, the most important of all these being the battle of Bunker Hill, which took place on the seventeenth day of June of last year."

"Our soldiers defeated the British there, didn't they, Dick!"

"Yes, they got all the better of the battle, but their ammunition gave out and they had to retreat. Still, it was equivalent to a victory."

"That's what I thought."

"Yes, and then General Washington-who was appointed commander-in-chief of the army by the Second Continental Congress, at Philadelphia in

May of last year, and who went to Boston and took charge of the army on July third-kept the British penned up in Boston till about the middle of last March, when he fortified Dorchester Heights, overlooking Boston, the work being performed in one night, and next morning the British, seeing what had been done and realizing that they would be at the mercy of the patriot army if they remained in Boston, hurriedly boarded the ships of the British fleet, then in the harbor, and sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia."

"And General Washington and his patriot troops went down and took possession of Boston!" said Tom, his eyes shining.

"Yes, Tom. But General Howe, the British commander-in-chief, did not keep his troops long in Halifax, but sailed to New York, where he was soon joined by the British fleet under his brother, Admiral Howe, and by General Clinton."

"And General Washington and his patriot army came to New York and took possession of that city," said Tom.

"Yes, and he's there now, and that is where we are going, Tom."

"Hurrah, Dick! Say, I'm glad of it. I want to join the army, and fight the redcoats. I want to fight for liberty and independence."

"So do I. And we will, too."

"When will we go, Dick?"

"In a few days, likely. We have to get things in shape so that mother and sister Mary can get along without us, you know."

"Yes, but that won't take long. Most of the work for the summer is done, and all there will be to do on the farm is to wait for the crops to ripen."

"True. Well, we'll go in a few days, now, likely."

"Don't be in too big a hurry to go, sons," said Mrs. Dare sadly, when they were discussing the matter, that evening at supper. "Think how lonesome Mary and I will be when you are gone."

"Mrs. Foster and the girls will come over often," said Dick. "They will keep you cheered up."

"It will help," was the reply. "But we will be lonely, just the same."

"You might try to be cheerful, mother," said Tom. "Dick and I won't want to think of you as being lonely."

"Oh, I will get along all right, sons," said the brave woman, forcing a smile. She wanted to have the boys go away feeling that she was in good spirits.

They had just finished eating supper, when Ben Foster came in. There was an eager, excited look on his face, and he said earnestly:

"There's a plot on foot against Dick and Tom, and I came right over to let you know about it."

"A plot!" exclaimed Mrs. Dare, her face paling and her voice trembling. "By whom!"

"The Tories."

"Ah!" breathed the woman, a look of anxiety on her face. "This is terrible!"

"Don't worry, mother," said Dick. "We know of it, now, and can prepare for them. It will not be as if we were to be taken by surprise."

"No, don't be afraid, Mrs. Dare," said Ben. "We'll make the Tories wish they had attended to their own business."

"How did you learn about it, Ben?" asked Tom.

"Father found it out this afternoon. You know, he's a king's man, and they weren't as careful as they might have been, and he heard them talking about it."

"What are their plans?" asked Dick.

"They are going to come here to-night at about midnight and break in, take you and Tom out and tie you to trees and whip you—at least, that is their intention. They won't succeed, though, you may be sure."

"Indeed they will not!" smiled Dick. "There will be some sadder and wiser Tories before the night is ended."

"Oh, I am sore afraid, son!" said Mrs. Dare. "There will be a dozen or more of the Tories, and what can you and Tom do against so many?"

"I'll come over and help Dick and Tom, Mrs. Dare," said Ben. "As soon as father told me about the plan, I made up my mind that I would come here to-night and help fight the Tories."

"Say, you are all right, Ben!" said Tom, slapping his friend on the shoulder.

"That is good of you, old fellow," said Dick, seizing Ben's hand and shaking it heartily. "We thank you."

"Yes, indeed!" said Mary, who saw that Ben's eyes were on her, as if he wished to hear what she thought about it. "It is indeed good of you, Ben, to volunteer to do that."

"Oh, that's all right," said Ben, a pleased look in his eyes. "I tell you we will make it lively for those Tories when they come sneaking around here."

"We'll do our best to give them a warm reception, at any rate," said Dick.

"I'll be over in an hour or so," said Ben, "and I'll bring a musket and a pistol along. But how about Mrs. Dare and Mary? Hadn't they better come over to our house until after the attack has been made? The folks told me to ask you to come, Mrs. Dare and Mary."

"Perhaps it would be best," agreed Mrs. Dare. "But still, I hate to go away and leave you boys here. You might be reckless, when if I were to stay you would be more careful."

"Don't think that, mother," said Dick. "We are going to go to war soon, and you can't be with us then, and if you and Mary stayed here, you might get hit with a stray bullet. There is no use of your taking the risk. We'll be as careful with you away as if you were here; and we will be in a position to fight with more freedom and effect if you are not here."

"Very well, then, Dick. If that is the case, we will go over to Mr. Foster's. But we will return after the attack has been made, for we wouldn't want any of the neighbors to see us coming away from there in the morning, as that would cause them to suspect that Mr. Foster had warned us, and might cause him trouble."

"True, mother. That will be all right. You and Mary can come home after we have driven the Tories away."

"We'll go over to Mr. Foster's as soon as it is dark," said Mrs. Dare.

Shortly after dark, Dick, accompanied by his mother and Mary, went over to the Foster home, and Ben returned with him.

"So you're here, eh?" greeted Tom. "That's fine. I guess when those cowardly Tories put in an appearance, they will get something that they are not looking for."

"That's what they will," nodded Ben. "At any rate, I hope so."

"So do I," said Dick.

"I wish Zeke and Lem would be in the party," said Tom, grinning. "I'd like to give them another thrashing."

"When did you thrash them, before?" queried Ben.

"In Philadelphia, yesterday. Didn't Dick tell you about it?"

"No, you tell me now," eagerly.

Then Tom did so, detailing the encounter on the streets of Philadelphia, and when he had heard all, Ben said:

"Good! I'm glad you thrashed them."

Chapter IV

A Night Attack

"They're coming, Dick!" whispered Ben Foster.

"Yes, I hear footsteps," replied Dick. "But," after listening a few moments, "there is only one person coming. Perhaps it isn't the Tories after all."

"Yes, that's their game-to make you think there is only one. He walks boldly, so you can hear him, while the others creep up. It is the Tory gang, all right."

"Likely you are right."

It was now nearly midnight, and so it was time for the Tories to put in their appearance, if they were to make the attack that night, as Mr. Foster had heard them say they would do.

Closer sounded the footsteps, and then they ceased and there came a knock on the door.

Dick did not answer, as he did not want the fellow to suspect that the inmates of the house were awake and on the alert. The youths, gripping tightly their rifles and muskets, waited. Their hearts were beating more rapidly than was their wont, but it is safe to say that no feeling of fear had place in their hearts. Only expectation, and eagerness to get at the Tories dominated them.

After a brief period, the knock on the door was repeated. Then Dick spoke up.

"Who is there?" he called out.

"A friend," was the reply, in a hoarse, evidently disguised voice.

"What is your name, friend?"

"That doesn't matter. I have news, important news for you, Dick Dare"

"You have no news for me that I don't know already," retorted the youth.

"What do you mean?" There was a quick suspicion in the voice.

"I mean that I know you are a Tory, and that you have a number of companions, and intend to try to get hold of my brother and myself and tie us up and whip us. I don't feel like permitting that, so you had better go away, if you value your skins, for if you try to bother us, we will surely defend ourselves and do harm to you-if we can."

Evidently the man realized it was useless to carry the deception further, for he cried out, sneeringly:

"Oh, will you indeed, Dick Dare? Well, let me tell you something, my bold young rebel: When we get through with you, you will not be in a position to harm anybody. We are going to take you out and whip you soundly, as should be done with all such traitors to the king as you two are!"

"I give you fair warning," replied Dick, sternly; "if you attempt to injure myself and brother, you will get badly hurt. Go about your business and leave us alone."

"Oh, we'll go about our business and leave you alone, of course we will-but it will be after we have tied you up to one of the trees here in your own yard! Open the door, or we'll break it down."

"You are wasting breath," in a voice of contempt. "We would be very foolish if we opened the door, would we not?"

"It doesn't matter; we'll break the door down in a jiffy, anyway."

"If you do, you'll be very sorry. Remember, I gave you fair warning."

"Bah! Boys' threats don't scare us worth a cent. We'll have the door down and you two rebel brats out of there very quickly."

"And we'll have some of you Tory hounds lying dead on the grass of our own yard very soon, too. Mind what I tell you!"

A sneering laugh was the only reply. They had no idea the boys would really shoot at them.

There was the sound of receding footsteps, followed by the murmur of voices, and then a few minutes later there sounded the trampling of many feet, and crash! something struck the door, causing it to creak and groan under the impact.

"They've found a log, and will better the door down," said Dick. "Be ready, boys and as soon as the door falls, fire through the opening. They have brought this upon themselves, and if we injure a few of them, it will be their own fault."

"We're ready, Dick," said Tom.

"Yes, we'll fire when you give the word," from Ben.

"All right, boys. Level your weapons, and be ready, and when I say 'Fire', pull trigger."

"Yes, yes, we will!" came the reply.

The next moment there sounded the trampling of feet once more, and crash! the end of the log struck the door. This time the impact was so great the door could not withstand it, and down it came with a thud. At least a dozen forms could be seen through the opening, outlined against the horizon.

"Fire!" cried Dick, his voice ringing out loudly and clearly.

The youths obeyed the command, pulling trigger instantly, and the crash that followed was deafening, and seemed almost sufficient in volume to raise the roof.

It was an effective volley, too, for two or three of the Tories were hit by bullets, as was evidenced by the yells and screams of pain and rage that they gave utterance to. They fell back, in dismay, the log dropping to the ground with a thud.

Dick, instinctively realizing that the Tories were stricken with a feeling of dismay, not to say terror, because of their reception, cried, "Charge them, boys! At them! Give it to the scoundrels!"

With a yell that must have added to the dismay of the enemy, the youths dashed out through the doorway and attacked the Tories, laying

about them with the butts of their rifles and muskets, and discharging their pistols.

Thud, thud, thud! Thus sounded the impact of the butts of the weapons with the heads, arms and bodies of the ruffians, and with each thud sounded a yell of pain and rage from the recipient of the blow. Then, suddenly the Tories took refuge in flight, running from the scene as swiftly as possible, and fairly falling over the fence in their haste to get away. They were quickly out of sight, and the affair was at an end. The three youths had put their enemies to rout, and without having sustained any injury whatever.

They were well pleased, and although they had not killed any of the Tories outright, yet the youths were sure they had wounded several, for they had heard the ruffians give utterance to cries of pain, and too, they saw blood on the ground in several places.

Dick now hastened to the Foster home and reported the victory over the Tories, and was congratulated by all there, even Mr. Foster, the avowed king's man, seeming very well pleased for he was an honest, honorable man, and not at all in sympathy with the night-marauding tactics of his Tory neighbors.

Mrs. Dare and Mary accompanied Dick home, and the good woman thanked Ben for coming and helping her sons.

"Oh, that's all right," smiled Ben. "I was glad to come. I wanted a chance at those cowardly Tories."

"And we thrashed them soundly, too, mother," said Tom.

"Do you think there is any danger that they will return?" queried Mrs. Dare, somewhat anxiously.

"I don't think so, mother," said Dick. "They've had all the fighting they want, for one night, I am sure."

"I think so," said Ben Foster. "But I'll stay here, Mrs. Dare, and if they come, we will be able to drive them away again."

But the Tories did not return. They had, as Dick said, evidently seen all the fighting they wanted, for one night.

Dick, Tom, and Ben Foster began getting ready to go to New York, that day, to join the patriot army under General Washington. They would be ready in a day or two, as there was not a great deal to do.

Next day, however, Ben Foster had news for his friends. He came over, an eager look in his eyes, and told the brothers that Zeke Boggs had just told him that he and Lem Hicks were going over to Long Island and join the British army.

"He says that they don't intend to let us get ahead of them, Dick," finished Ben. "They hope to fight against us in some of the battles."

"Well, I guess they will get the chance," said Dick, grimly.

"Yes, they'll get the worst of the fighting, too," declared Tom.

"That they will!" coincided Ben.

"There are two things that I hope to do, when in the patriot army," said Dick. "One is, to find where my father is imprisoned and free him, and the other to meet Zeke Boggs and Lem Hicks in battle and defeat them."

"Yes, Dick," said Tom, his eyes shining. "We must find father as soon as possible, and rescue him from the hands of the British. I think we can do so, don't you?"

"I surely think so, Tom."

"Oh, you'll be certain to find out where he is, and before very long, then you can rescue him," proposed Ben, confidently.

"And after that we can thrash Zeke and Lem with a good heart," suggested Tom.

"I don't think Zeke and Lem will make very good soldiers," remarked Ben.

"I think they'll run, the very first time they get into a battle," concluded Tom.

Chapter V

The Dare Boys in New York

An orderly knocked at the door of the room occupied by General Washington, in the old Fraunces' Tavern, the building used as patriot headquarters, and on being commanded to enter, opened the door and said:

"A young man wishes audience with you, your excellency."

General Washington, the great man on whose shoulders rested such a serious responsibility, now that the people of the Colonies had declared for Independence, sat at his desk, looking over some papers. He now glanced up at the orderly.

"Who is the young man, orderly?" he queried.

"He says his name is Richard Dare."

"I have never heard of him," with a shake of the head. "Did he state his business?"

"No, your excellency. I asked him, but he said he preferred seeing you and stating his business direct."

Washington was thoughtful for a few moments, and then said:

"He is a young man, you say?"

"Yes, your excellency; or rather, I should perhaps have said youth. I

doubt if he is more than eighteen or nineteen years of age."

"H'm," murmured the commander-in-chief; "I am pretty busy, but will see him briefly. Show him in."

"Yes, your excellency," and the orderly withdrew.

He was back again in a few moments, however, and ushered in a handsome, manly-looking youth, at the same time announcing:

"Richard Dare, your excellency." Then he withdrew, leaving the two alone.

General Washington glanced up as his visitor was announced, and when his eyes took in the handsome face, the fine physique and perfect poise of the youth, he gave a slight start and eyed him keenly and somewhat searchingly, with considerable interest.

"You are Richard Dare?" the commander-in-chief remarked.

"Yes, your excellency," saluting.

"Very good, Mr. Dare. Now if you will be so kind as to state your business as briefly as possible, I will hear you. I am quite busy, as you may well suppose."

"Pardon me for taking up your time, sir," said Dick, "but I wished to see you in person, as I have come to make you an offer."

"Ah, indeed? What kind of an offer, my young friend?"

"I will tell you, sir: I and two friends of about my own age have come to New York from our homes in the western part of New Jersey. We arrived here only this morning, and I, as their spokesman, have come to offer our services to you, sir. We are ardent patriots and desirous of fighting in our country, for the freedom and independence of our people."

"Well, well," said Washington, looking at the youth with renewed interest. "Bravely spoken! Your desire is a commendable one, and certainly I shall be glad to accept of your offer, if your parents are willing that you shall enter the army. You are mere youths, as it were, and I would not want to take advantage of your offer unless it were satisfactory to your parents. They have knowledge of your project?"

"Oh, yes, your excellency. We have done this with the knowledge and approval of our parents. My father, however, was captured in his own dooryard, less than two weeks ago, by a gang of Tories, and I and my brother Tom decided to join your army, to take father's place, as he had intended to join, and also with the hope of finding and rescuing him. One of our friends, when he heard that we were going to do this, came and told us that he wanted to come, too, and here we are. I hope you will accept us, sir, and give us a place in your army."

"I shall be pleased to do so, Dick Dare," was the hearty reply. "From this moment you are a member of the Continental Army, as are your companions also. I thank you, Dare, for your interest in the welfare of our country, and pray extend to your companions my thanks, and tell

them that I shall expect to hear a good report from them when it comes to actual conflict with the enemy."

"I think they will give a good account of themselves, your excellency," said Dick, quietly but modestly. "I am sure they will fight hard for freedom."

"I have no doubt about it, my boy. Well, the matter is settled, then. Here, take this order and present it to Colonel Morgan, who will find room for you in his regiment, now in process of formation."

The commander-in-chief hastily wrote the order and handed it to Dick, who took it and saluted.

"Thanks, your excellency," he said. "I will do as you have commanded. My companions will be delighted when I make my report to them."

Then, saluting again, Dick left the presence of the great man, and was quickly back with Tom and Ben, who were quartered in a building only about a block distant.

They greeted him eagerly.

"Did you see General Washington, Dick?" cried Tom Dare.

"Yes, Tom, I saw him," was the reply.

"And what did he say?" queried Ben Foster. "Did he accept our offer of our services?"

"Yes, Ben," replied Dick. "He seemed to be pleased, and said that he hopes to hear a good report concerning us when we come in actual conflict with the British."

"I think he will be satisfied on that score," said Ben, a grim look on his face. "I think we will be as good fighters as any of them, when we get started, eh, Tom?"

"Yes, I think so, Ben," nodded Tom, his eager eyes sparkling.

"Get ready and come with me, boys," said Dick, beginning to gather up his belongings, which were not many, as the youths had not brought very much luggage with them.

"Where to, Dick?" queried Tom.

"We are to report to Colonel Morgan, and will be assigned to his regiment."

"Good!" said Ben. "Then we will be genuine soldiers, eh, Dick?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Say, that will be fine!" said Tom. "I'm ready. Lead the way to Colonel Morgan's quarters, Dick."

A few minutes later the youths set out. They found Colonel Morgan and Dick gave him the note from the commander-in-chief, whereupon they were assigned to their new quarters, their names having been enrolled

on the membership list of the regiment.

"Now we are soldiers, sure enough!" murmured Tom Dare, his eyes shining. "Hurrah!"

"Yes, patriot soldiers, Tom," said Dick, quietly. There was an air of satisfaction on his face also.

"We will be ready to take part in the first battle that takes place," said Ben. "Say, that'll be fine. I am eager to be in a battle!"

"And I," said Dick. "I want to fight for Independence and the freedom of the American people. And, too, I want to fight and rescue our father, Tom."

"Yes, yes, Dick. We won't forget that part of our work!" said Tom.

Chapter VI

Chosen for Dangerous Work

Dick, Tom and Ben made friends rapidly, and were soon well acquainted with the majority of the members of the company to which they had been assigned, and with many of the members of other companies that were quartered in the same building and near at hand.

They had been in New York about a week, and were feeling quite at home. One afternoon, as they were sitting in the big front room, talking to some of the soldiers, the door opened and an orderly from headquarters was seen standing on the threshold.

"Is there anyone here by the name of Dare?" he asked. "Dick Dare, I believe it is."

"I am he," said Dick, advancing. "What is wanted?"

"You are wanted at headquarters."

"Now?"

"Yes, at once. The commander-in-chief orders you to report."

"I will go right along with you."

"Very well. Such were his instructions."

Dick put on his hat and took his departure in the orderly's company, after telling Ben and Tom that he would probably be back soon.

They arrived quickly at headquarters, and Dick was ushered into the private room occupied by the commander-in-chief.

Dick saluted and said:

"You sent for me, your excellency?"

"Yes, Dare. Be seated," and he pointed to a chair near his desk.

Dick took the seat and then looked at the commander-in-chief inquiringly.

General Washington did not say anything for a few moments, but eyed Dick keenly and searchingly. It was evident that he was appraising the boy's value carefully, and it seemed that the result was satisfactory, for he gave a sigh as of relief, and said:

"How old are you, Dare?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"Eighteen. That is young. You are a mere youth, but somehow I believe you are the one to do what I wish done. I have a mind to try you, anyway. Dick," pausing and looking impressively at the youth, "if I were to ask you to undertake something that was exceedingly dangerous, something that might easily result in your death if you made a false step, what would you say?"

"I would say, your excellency, that if you had confidence enough in me to think I might succeed, I would be only too glad to try. You have only to command and I will obey, sir."

"Spoken like a true Son of Liberty!" exclaimed the commander-in-chief. "That is what I expected to hear you say, however. I believe you are a brave, sensible youth, and that it is possible you may succeed in the undertaking which I have in mind, even though several grown men have already failed. You had better think well before you consent to attempt this task, however, Dick. It is one fraught with such danger that I would not think of ordering you to attempt it, considering your age. But if, on the other hand, after knowing what the work is, you still wish to go ahead, I shall be delighted to avail myself of your services."

"I will be glad to attempt the work, sir. Pray state the case. What is the nature of the work you wish me to do?"

"It is spy-work!"

Dick's heart leapt with joy. Spy-work! This, of all things was what he felt that he would most like to do. As a spy he would have to venture into the enemy's territory, would have to even penetrate to their midst and secure information as to their plans and, too, he might thus find and rescue his father. It was fine to think of, and the sparkle in his eyes must have told the commander-in-chief that the youth was pleased, for he said:

"You seem to be favorably impressed, rather than otherwise, my boy. You think you will like spy-work?"

"Yes, your excellency," was the reply. "I think I shall like it, better than anything else. I shall be glad to attempt any work in that line that you wish. Just tell me where you wish me to go and what you want me to do, and I will do my best to make a success of the work, sir."

"Very well, Dick. I will do so. You know, perhaps, that the British

army is located on the southwest shore of Long Island, near York Bay, and the British fleet lies just outside the Narrows and off York Bay. The British outnumber us considerably, I think, but just how much I do not know. And this is one thing that I wish to learn. I want to learn the numerical strength of the British, and also I wish to find out, if such a thing is possible, the intentions of the British commander-in-chief. This is a big undertaking, my boy, and as I have told you, several of my best men have already tried to accomplish this and failed, so you can see the magnitude of the task that confronts you. It will be no disgrace if you should fail."

"I may fail, sir," said Dick, modestly; "I may not succeed in securing the information you desire, but I will make the attempt, and I will say this, that if such a thing as securing the information is possible, I will do it. I will do my very best, sir, you may rest assured of that."

"I do, Dick. I feel confident that if you fail it will be only after you have made every effort to succeed. Well, it is settled, then? You will attempt his spy-work?"

"Yes, your excellency. When shall I start?"

"This evening. I will give you a letter of introduction to General Putnam, who is in command of the patriot force on Brooklyn Heights, and he will give you all the information and assistance in his power."

"Very well, sir. At what hour shall I report here?"

"Be here at six, Dick. I will have the letter for you, and then you will go down to the East River in company with one of my orderlies, and a boatman will take you across to the Long Island side. It is not far from there to the Heights, where you will locate General Putnam."

"I will report here at six, your excellency," said Dick, and then saluting, he took his departure.

When he returned to his quarters and told Tom and Ben that General Washington had selected him to go over onto Long Island and do some spying, the youths were surprised, but were delighted as well, for they felt that it was an honor to Dick.

"That will be fine," said Ben Foster. "I believe you will make a good spy, Dick."

"I hope so, Ben."

"I wish I could go with you," said Tom, looking wistfully at his brother.

"It will be best that I go alone, Tom," said Dick. "One can do spy-work better than two."

"I vould lige dot sby vork," said Fritz Schmockenburg, a fat, Dutch soldier, gravely.

"It's a foine spoy yez would be afther makin', Fritz," chuckled Tim Murphy, a merry Irish patriot. "Yez would be caught the first thing, and the only thing that would kape thim from hangin' yez would be

because they wouldn't have innny rope sthout enough to hould your weight."

"When are you going, Dick?" queried Ben.

"This evening at six."

The youths discussed the matter at considerable length, and were glad that Dick had been selected for such important work, though they were somewhat fearful for his safety. Tom and Ben cautioned him to be careful, and he was the recipient of advice from others, all well-meant, but of course not likely to be of much use to him, as he would have to govern his actions mainly by existing circumstances, after he was on the ground and at work.

Shortly before six he bade Tom and Ben, and his comrades good-bye and made his way to headquarters, where he was given the letter of introduction by the commander-in-chief, and also a few kindly words of encouragement.

"General Putnam will give you all the information and help in his power," General Washington said. "Go, now, Dick, my boy, and may you be successful is my prayer. Good-bye, and heaven bless you."

He shook Dick's hand, and then with a good-bye and a salute, the youth took his departure.

An orderly accompanied him to the dock and summoned a boatman, and then Dick got in and was ferried across the East River. Alighting on the Long Island shore, he set out in the direction of Brooklyn Heights, reaching there shortly after dark.

Chapter VII

Dick's First Adventure

Dick was challenged, and on answering that he was a friend, was told to advance and give the countersign.

He approached the sentinel, and when near him, said:

"I am a patriot, but do not know the countersign. I wish to see General Putnam."

"Who are you and why do you wish to see the general?" the sentinel asked.

"My name is Dare, and I am a messenger from General Washington. I have a letter of introduction to General Putnam."

"All right. I'll summon the officer of the guard and he'll conduct you to the general."

He did so, and the officer asked Dick a few questions, seemed satisfied, and conducted him to the quarters occupied by General Putnam.

Dick saluted on entering the presence of the general, and drawing the letter from his pocket, handed it to Putnam, who took it and read the contents, after which he gave Dick a keen, searching and somewhat wondering glance.

"You are Richard Dare?" he queried.

"Yes, General Putnam," replied Dick.

"H'm. The commander-in-chief says here that you are going down to the enemy's territory to try to do some spying. You are rather young, it seems to me, to be going such work."

"Time will cure that," smiled Dick.

"Yes-if you live," grimly. "This is very dangerous business you are entering upon, my boy."

"So General Washington said, sir."

"Yes? Well, it is a fact, and I have my doubts regarding your ability to do anything, but since the commander-in-chief has seen fit to try you and has sent you to me for the purpose of having me give you what information I possess regarding the location of the British, I will do what I can to assist you."

"Thank you, General Putnam."

The general then gave Dick all the information that he thought would be of value to him, and the youth listened attentively.

"Now," said Putnam when he had finished, "do you think you can find the British without any trouble?"

"I am sure I can find the British, sir," was the reply; "but I don't know about the trouble part."

The grim general chuckled. He seemed to like the dry humor of the lad.

"I guess you'll do, Dare," he said. "I'm beginning to think the commander-in-chief showed good judgment in sending you, after all. But, I might have known that such was the case, for he is a man who seldom makes mistakes."

"I hope he hasn't made a mistake in this instance, sir," modestly.

"I guess he hasn't. It is possible that a boy like you may be better able to penetrate to the enemy's lines and secure information than a man, for the British will not be so likely to suspect you of being a spy."

"That is what General Washington said, sir."

"The position is well taken, I feel confident. Well, Dare, be careful, take care of yourself and secure all the information possible regarding the enemy."

"I will do my best, General. Well, I must be going."

The general shook hands with Dick, and wished him good luck.

"Don't let the redcoats get you," he said.

Dick laughed.

"They won't get me, if I can help it," he said. "Good-bye, General Putnam."

Dick did not start just then, however, for the very good reason that while he had been engaged in conversation with General Putnam, a storm that had been threatening that afternoon and evening, broke upon them, the wind blew a gale and the rain poured down in torrents, the lightning was incessant and the roar of the thunder terrific. It was indeed a severe storm.

"You must not think of starting out to-night," said General Putnam. "You could not find your way anywhere, and would simply get soaked to the skin, or perhaps struck by lightning. I will give you a bed, and you will remain here till morning."

"Doubtless that will be best," agreed Dick, though he disliked the delay. Still, he felt that it would do no good to go in such a storm, for as the general had said, he could not find his way to the British encampment, or accomplish anything if he did find it.

So he remained on the Heights that night, only to find it still raining the next morning.

"You would not want to start out in the daytime, anyhow," said General Putnam; "so it does not matter. You will stay till evening, and then if it has ceased raining, you can start on your expedition."

It was still raining hard, when evening came, however, and General Putnam said it would be foolish to make the start in the storm. So Dick remained all that night, and all next day. The rain had ceased soon after sunrise and the sun shone brightly that day, drying the ground pretty thoroughly, by evening.

"You can make the start, this evening, Dare," said the general. "I don't suppose the delay in getting away from here will make any difference."

"I hope not, sir," said Dick.

After dark that evening, Dick took his departure, and as soon as he was past the sentinels, he struck out southward. The British army was at that time encamped near the Flatlands, about two miles from the bay and about two miles south of Flatbush.

Dick walked onward at a moderate pace. There was no hurry, and besides, by hurrying he might run right into a party of redcoats, and this would be bad, as it would likely result in his capture.

It were better to make haste slowly. Dick realized this, and he decided to take his time and exercise his every care. Caution was a necessary adjunct of a spy.

Dick was eager to succeed. Several men had failed, and had doubtless been captured, and if he could accomplish his object it would be a big feather in his cap. He was intensely patriotic, anyway, and this made him extremely desirous of succeeding in securing the information regarding the plans of the British.

He reached the wooded heights about halfway between the village of Bedford and Flatbush after a walk of an hour or so, and having climbed the hill, he paused on the summit and listened intently for some time. It was his thought that perhaps a party of British might be located here, and he did not want to run into their midst, if such were the case.

He heard sounds, but only such as are usually to be heard in the woods at night—the chirping of crickets, the buzzing of the wings of insects, and the call of nightbirds. He heard nothing that would indicate the presence of human beings.

"I guess there are no redcoats in these woods," he murmured after listening a while. "The British haven't advanced this far yet, likely. I'll go ahead, but will be exceedingly careful."

He moved forward slowly, and cautiously made his way down the south slope of the wooded hill. He paused every few moments and listened. He was not going to take any chances of discovery and capture, if he could avoid it by exercising care.

Somehow Dick's heart thrilled with pleasure, even though he were on a perilous undertaking. He was working for General Washington, trying to do something that would be of benefit to the great Cause of Liberty, and this made him experience a feeling of happiness. The danger did not have any effect on him, save to, if anything, add to the zest. He was a brave youth, though not a foolhardy one, and the danger made the work all the more interesting and exhilarating.

On he went down the slope, slowly and cautiously. He had to practically feel his way, for in under the trees it was very dark and he could not see to pick a path. This made it slow work, but he had all night for his task, if he wished so much time, and so he did not worry because he could not proceed at a swift pace.

"'Slow but sure,' is a good motto," he told himself. "There will be times, doubtless, when it will pay me to move swiftly, but this is not one of the times."

Suddenly Dick paused and stood stock still, his every nerve tense, his every sense on the alert. He thought that he had heard the sound of voices!

He listened intently, and presently his heart gave a leap. Yes, he had not been mistaken. Over to the right, and not very far distant, he had heard someone talking. At least two men were there, engaged in conversation, their voices being pitched low.

Dick strained his eyes, but could not catch sight of the speakers. He could only judge of their location and distance from him by the sound of their voices, and he judged that they were perhaps a dozen yards from him. This was rather close, if they were British soldiers, as he had no doubt they were, and he decided that the best thing for him to

do was to get away from their vicinity as quickly as possible. It would be well to be silent about it, too, for if they should discover his presence, they would doubtless make a great outcry and try to capture him.

He began edging away, toward the left. Every once in awhile he paused to listen. The voices could still be heard, but not so plainly as at first. He was gradually getting farther and farther away from the speakers, and would have been successful in escaping from the vicinity without his presence having been discovered, but for an accident. He struck his foot against a good-sized stone, which was lying right on the edge of a rather steep slope, and the rock, becoming dislodged, went tumbling and plunging downward through the underbrush, making what seemed to be a great noise, coming as it did in the midst of the night stillness. It sounded as loud as thunder in Dick's ears.

"Now I've done it!" he murmured, in some dismay. "That will rouse them sure."

He was right, for instantly there came the challenge, loud and clear:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

There could be no doubt regarding the matter, now; the men Dick had heard talking were British soldiers doing picket duty.

Dick's first impulse was to take to his heels and run at the top of his speed, but his second thought was that perhaps if he were to stand perfectly still, the redcoats would come to the conclusion that there was no one in the vicinity save themselves, and would go ahead with their conversation after a few minutes of listening. But it did not work out that way. After a few moments of silence there came the command, in a stern voice:

"Who is there? Answer, or I will fire!"

Dick did not like the idea of being fired at, even in the darkness. He knew the soldier could not see to take aim, but a chance shot might be as successful as one that was aimed. Dick did not care to take the chance, anyway, and he quickly, but very cautiously shifted his position and got a tree between himself and the redcoats.

"Now, he won't be able to hit me, even if he does fire," thought the youth with a feeling of relief. "Now if he will just make up his mind that there is no one here and resume the conversation with his comrade, I shall be able to slip away and escape, doubtless."

But the redcoats were evidently not satisfied to let the matter go thus. "Let's investigate, comrade," Dick heard a voice say. And then he heard another in reply: "All right. If there is anybody round here, we will either run him down or frighten him out of his boots."

"That's what we will, comrade."

"And I feel confident there is somebody near here. What else would make the noise that we heard?"

"I don't know, comrade. I think it likely that somebody is about."

"I am positive, sure of it as can be."

"Well, come on, then. Let's search all around. We ought to be able to lay him by the heels, for we can hear him if he tries to run away."

"True. Come, comrade. We'll quickly have the fellow, if he's here."

Then Dick heard the trampling of feet, which sounded closer and closer, and he realized that he must get away from there at once, or the redcoats would be upon him.

Having so decided, he lost not time, but moved away as cautiously as possible. He went a bit faster than he should have done, to maintain a noiseless movement, however, for he stepped on a fallen branch, which broke with a cracking sound, and the very next step he stumbled over a log, and fell into a brushpile, making considerable noise.

"A spy!" he heard one of the redcoats cry. "There's somebody there, sure!"

"Halt!" cried the other soldier, loudly. "Stop, or I'll fire!"

But Dick, fearing to remain, as he would almost certainly be found and captured, leaped to his feet and took to his heels, running as fast as he dared; to run too fast, would have been to break his head against a tree, more than likely.

The British soldiers heard him, evidently, for one cried, excitedly:

"There he goes! I hear him running!"

"Yes," cried the other, "but I'll put a stop to his running, or know the reason why. Here goes to wing the rebel."

The next instant the loud crack of a musket rang upon the still night air. At the same instant Dick Dare fell sprawling upon his face on the ground, and lay still.

Chapter VIII

Tom Dare Acts

On the afternoon of the second day after the departure of Dick Dare from patriot headquarters in New York, Tom Dare appeared there, and to the orderly at the door said:

"I wish to see General Washington, sir."

"Oh, you do, eh?" was the query. The orderly could not imagine what business this sixteen-year-old boy could have with the commander-in-chief.

"Yes, sir. Show me to his presence, please."

The orderly looked at the eager, bright face of the boy with more of interest.

"Who are you?" he queried.

"My name is Tom Dare."

"Tom Dare!" in surprise. "Why, there was a young fellow here a couple of days ago whose name was Dare-Dick Dare, I believe it was."

"Yes," quietly; "he is my brother."

"Ah, your brother! Are you a member of the patriot army, also?"

"Yes, sir. I'm in Colonel Morgan's regiment."

The orderly stared.

"Well!" he murmured; "the Dares seem to be pretty well represented in the Continental Army."

"Yes, sir. Our father was captured by Tories, and Dick and I made up our minds that we would join the patriot army and do all we could to bring about the defeat of the British and Tories, and if possible rescue our father."

"Well, that is the right spirit, certainly."

"Will you show me to the presence of the commander-in-chief, sir?" questioned Tom, eagerly. "I am very desirous of seeing him," he added, earnestly.

"Come with me," was the reply; "I will speak to the commander-in-chief, and if he is willing, I will conduct you to his presence."

Tom accompanied the orderly along the hall, pausing presently when told to do so. The orderly said he would be back in a few moments, and disappeared in a room at one side. He quickly returned and said that General Washington would see the youth.

The next moment he ushered Tom into the presence of the commander-in-chief, announcing:

"Master Tom Dare."

The general looked up from some papers he was examining, and gave Tom a keen, searching glance.

"You are Master Tom Dare," he said.

"Yes, your excellency," saluting.

"Brother to Dick Dare?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. What can I do for you, my boy?" The great man's air and tone were kindly, and Tom, encouraged, said:

"I have come to ask a favor, sir."

"What is the favor? Be brief, as my time is of value, my boy."

"Very well, sir. I have come to ask that you let me go over onto Long Island, the same as you have done with Dick."

General Washington looked at the boy in surprise.

"Why do you want to do that?" he queried.

"I want to be with Dick, sir, or near him, all the time, if possible. I promised my mother that I would stay at Dick's side and fight side by side with him, and if I stay here, when he is over on Long Island, I won't be keeping my word, sir. Something might happen to Dick. He might get into trouble with the British, and if I was near at hand, I could render him assistance, and if he were captured, I might be able to rescue him. I hope you will let me go, sir."

The commander-in-chief looked thoughtfully at the boy. There was a look of admiration in his eyes, and to himself he said: "A brave pair of lads are those two Dares, I feel certain." Aloud he said, after a few moments:

"I don't know whether to grant your request or not, my boy. I have sent Dick over to Long Island on a spying expedition, and if you were to go also and join him, it might hamper him in his work. At the same time, I dislike to refuse your request, since you made your mother the promise that you would stay by your brother's side. Still, you can hardly hope to be always together. War is cruel, and one can not always do as one would like, or be where one would wish to be. We must all go where we think we can be of the most benefit to the Cause, and do that which will be most beneficial. Do you think you could do Dick any good, if I were to let you go, my boy?"

"I think it possible, sir. He is going into great danger, as I understand it, and I might render him very valuable assistance. At any rate, if you will let me go, I will promise that at least I will not in any way interfere with his work or do anything to cause him to fail in the task he has before him."

"Very good. Then I will grant your request. Go, my boy; but be careful. I will give you a note to General Putnam, on Brooklyn Heights, and he will tell you which way to go to find your brother."

"Thank you, sir. You are very kind, and I will try to do nothing to cause you to regret that you let me go."

"That is right." The commander-in-chief wrote a brief note, addressed it to General Putnam and handed it to Tom.

"There. Now go, my boy, and may you succeed in joining your brother and benefit to him in his work. Good-bye," and he gave the boy's hand a friendly grasp.

"Good-bye, your excellency," and saluting, Tom took his departure.

He hastened down to the East River dock and got a boatman to take him across to the east shore, after which he made his way as quickly as possible to the patriot quarters on Brooklyn Heights.

When he presented himself before General Putnam, and handed over the note, the officer, after a perusal of the few words written there, looked at the boy in some surprise and with no little interest.

"Another one," he said, with something like a grim smile. "The Dares certainly seem to be in evidence to-night."

"Dick was here, then, sir?" eagerly.

"Yes, he was here."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Oh, about an hour, I should judge. He had to remain here until this evening on account of the storm."

"Please direct me how to go in order to overtake him, General Putnam."

"I will do so as nearly as possible, my boy." Then the general gave Tom all the directions possible, and the boy said:

"Thank you, sir. I will try to join my brother to-night."

"You had better keep your eyes open, Master Dare," cautioned General Putnam. "You are going where redcoats are thicker than mosquitoes, and that is saying a good deal."

"I'll look out for them, sir," with a smile. "Good-bye, and thank you, General Putnam."

"That's all right. You are welcome. Good-bye and good luck."

Tom took his departure, and as soon as he was out of the patriot encampment, he hastened away in the direction that he had been told Dick had undoubtedly gone.

"Perhaps by hurrying I may be able to overtake Dick," was his thought.

He walked swiftly, at times running, and came to the wooded hills much quicker than Dick had done. He climbed the hill quickly, and was soon making his way down the other side. He had gone only a few steps when he heard the report of the musket-shot, sounding close at hand and almost in front of him.

Instantly Tom was greatly excited. The thought came to him at once that a redcoat had fired that shot and that it had been fired at Dick, and with wildly-beating heart he ran forward, at the same time drawing a pistol from his belt. Tom was excited, but not at all frightened. His only fear was that perhaps Dick had been wounded or killed by the bullet from the musket, and he was eager to get a shot at the person who had just done the shooting.

Suddenly he heard voices, and paused, listening intently.

"I wonder if I got the rebel?" he heard one say.

"Likely you did," replied another voice. "I don't hear the sound of running feet any more."

"Served the rascal right if I put a bullet through him," said the first voice.

"Yes. That is what ought to happen to all rebels."

Tom heard these words, and his heart sank, and then a feeling of anger blazed up in his heart. What if Dick was killed, as these soldiers surmised. It was terrible to contemplate, and acting on the spur of the moment, Tom leveled his pistol, pointing in the direction from which the voices sounded, and pulled the trigger.

Crack! went the pistol, and a howl of pain, rage and surprise commingled went up on the night air.

"Oh--ow!--ouch! I'm shot!" cried one of the voices. "There are other rebels at hand, comrade! Perhaps we're surrounded!"

This gave Tom an idea, and he at once acted upon it. If he could make the redcoats think there were a number of patriot soldiers around, they might be put to flight, and then he could look for Dick, and learn whether he were injured.

"Come on, boys!" he yelled loudly. "Charge the scoundrelly redcoats! Kill them! At them, I say!" And then, drawing his other pistol, he fired another shot.

He had no way of knowing whether this bullet hit either of the redcoats, but he had evidence that it was effective in one way, for he heard the British soldiers going tearing down the slope, through the underbrush at a great rate. They had undoubtedly been seized with a panic and taken to their heels.

Tom waited till he could no longer hear any sounds of the fleeing redcoats, and then he called out:

"Dick! Oh, Dick!"

Chapter IX

The Brothers Together

Almost at once came the reply:

"Tom! Oh, Tom, is that you?"

"Yes, Dick. I'll be right with you."

He hastened in the direction from which Dick's voice sounded, and a few minutes later was at his side.

"What in the world brought you here, Tom?" queried Dick. "I was never so surprised in my life as when I heard your voice."

"I'll tell you why I come, Dick. After you left your quarters in New York, I got to thinking, and I remembered what I had told mother-that I would go to war with you and fight side by side with you, you know,

and I thought of how I had let you go away on a dangerous spying expedition alone, and I decided to follow you. I went and asked permission of General Washington to come over here, and he gave it."

"He was willing for you to come, then, was he?"

"Yes. He held back a little at first, but when I told him about having promised mother I would stick by you, he then said I might come."

"Well, it has been all right, so far. You got here just in time to frighten those redcoats away, but I don't believe that two can do spy-work successfully."

"We don't need to both actually do the spy-work, Dick. You can do that, and I'll stay back and wait and watch, and then if anything should happen to you, I would perhaps be able to render you some assistance."

"True. Well, now that you are here, you may as well stay with me. We'll go on down in the neighborhood of the British encampment together, and then you can hunt at hiding-place and I will go ahead and see what I can do in the way of spying."

"Very well, Dick. That will suit me."

"Come, then."

"You were not hit by the bullet from the redcoat's musket, Dick?" somewhat anxiously.

"No, Tom. At the very moment he fired I tripped over a vine and fell headlong to the ground. I was still lying there when I heard you fire your pistol, and then I heard you yell, 'Come on, boys', and recognized your voice; but I was sorely puzzled. I didn't know what to think. I almost thought I must have dreamed it."

Tom laughed.

"I hit one of the rascals, Dick," he chuckled. "I'll warrant you he did not think it was a dream."

"Likely no," with an answering chuckle. "Well, let's move."

They set out down the slope, moving at a fair pace, pausing occasionally to listen. All was quiet, however. The redcoat pickets had evidently retreated to the British encampment.

When Dick and Tom emerged from the timber, at the foot of the slope, they were able to go at a faster pace, and they set out in the direction in which they believed the enemy's camp to be. They walked onward about half an hour, and then came upon a little clump of trees. Feeling certain that they must be in the vicinity of the British encampment, they went in among the trees and stopped.

"Wait here a few minutes, Tom" said Dick. "I'm going to climb a tree and see if I can see the campfires of the enemy."

"All right."

Dick climbed a tree on the south side of the clump, and looked toward the south. He was rewarded by seeing the twinkling lights of the campfires, seemingly at no very great distance.

"There is the encampment, sure enough," he murmured. "Well, now, the question is, How am I to get into the camp and secure information regarding the plans of the British?"

This was a poser. It certainly seemed like a hopeless task, but Dick Dare was not a youth to be easily discouraged. He had come here to spy on the British and learn their plans, and he would do so, if such a thing were possible.

He climbed down and told his brother that he had seen the campfires of the British.

"Good," said Tom. "But, what are you going to do next, Dick? How are you going to get into their encampment?"

"I decided on my course, Tom," he said, "before I started out."

"What are you going to do?" eagerly.

"I'm going to enter the British encampment boldly and tell them that I want to join the army."

"Goodness! That will be dangerous, brother!"

"Yes, but one can't do spy-work without encountering danger."

"I know that. Do you think that you can succeed, Dick?"

"I'm going to try."

"Will they take you into the army-a boy like you?"

"General Washington did."

"But the British army may be different. They may think that they don't need help badly enough for them to accept boys as recruits."

"Well, even if that is the case, I will succeed in entering the British encampment, Tom."

"That's so. That part will be all right."

"Yes."

"When are you going to approach the encampment? Now?"

"Yes, I don't see any use of waiting."

"What shall I do?"

"You had better stay right here or in this vicinity."

"All right. When do you think you will be back?"

"I don't know. Possibly to-morrow night."

"I'm to wait till you come?"

"Yes."

"But, I'll get hungry before to-morrow night."

"Go to a farmhouse in the morning and get some food. There must be farmhouses near."

"That's so. I can do that."

"Well, I may as well be going. Good-bye, Tom."

"Good-bye, Dick; and-be careful, brother! If anything should happen to you, it would break mother's heart."

"I'll be careful, Tom. You had better keep your eyes open, too, for the redcoats may come prowling around here to-morrow, and you must not let them capture you."

"I'll not let them get me, brother."

Then Dick took his departure. He had some time since decided upon his course, and as soon as he was a short distance away from the clump of trees, he set out at a brisk walk, and made no effort at concealment. He did not care, now, if he were halted by a British picket or sentinel.

He walked swiftly onward, and about twenty minutes later was hailed:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

Dick's heart leaped, and he felt that he was soon to be submitted to an ordeal, but he did not hesitate, and answered firmly and promptly:

"A friend."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," was the command.

Dick advanced till within a few yards of the sentinel, whose form he could make out, it being outlined against the light background made by the campfires.

"Halt!" ordered the sentinel. "Give the countersign before you come any further."

"I don't know the countersign," replied Dick, quietly. "But I am a friend, and I wish to see the commander in charge of this army."

"Humph. What do you want to see him for?"

"I want to offer my services to fight for the king."

"Oh, you do, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are a loyal king's man, then, are you?"

"Would I be anxious to join the king's army if I were not?" questioned Dick. He had decided that there could be no harm in deceiving the enemy. In spy-work it would be absolutely necessary to use this means. His conscience did not reproach him in the least, for he felt that he was making the pretense of being a king's adherent in a good cause—that of Liberty.

"What is your name?" the soldier asked.

Dick had decided that it would be best to give a fictitious name, so he gave the first one that came into his mind:

"Harry Fuller," he said.

"Harry Fuller, eh? Well, Harry Fuller, since you are a loyal king's man and wish to join his army, I will see that you have the opportunity. I'll summon the officer of the guard and he will conduct you to the commander of the force."

"This isn't the full army, then?" queried Dick.

"One division of it," was the curt reply. "There's enough of it here for you to join, I guess, if you really mean business."

The sentinel summoned the officer of the guard, explained matters to him, and then the officer conducted Dick into the encampment, and to a tent near its center. This was occupied by General Percy, and the officer of the guard entered and exchanged a few words with the general, who was writing at a little, portable desk, by the light of a candle, and then he emerged and said to Dick:

"The general will see you."

Then he ushered the youth into the tent, at the same time announcing:

"Harry Fuller, General Percy."

The British general looked up, eyed Dick sharply for a few moments, and then said:

"Well, Harry Fuller, so you wish to join the British army and fight for the king, eh?"

Dick had met the searching gaze of the officer unflinchingly, and now he answered promptly and firmly:

"Yes, sir; such is my wish."

"Humph. How old are you?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"Rather young, but no matter. You can hold a musket and shoot as good as a man, without doubt, so should make a good soldier. I accept your offer, and will assign you to Colonel Harker's regiment."

Then he scribbled a brief note, handed it to Dick and said: "Give that to the colonel. He will take care of you." Lifting his voice, he

called out: "Orderly!"

An orderly entered at once, and saluted.

"Conduct this young man to Colonel Harker. That is all. Good-night, young man."

"Good-night, sir," replied Dick, and followed the orderly from the tent and to the point where Harker's regiment was stationed, and to that officer he handed the note from the general.

"Ah, a new recruit," said the colonel, when he had read the note. "Very well, Harry Fuller, you are a member of Company H. That is it, yonder. Take your place there." He pointed to the company in question, and Dick saluted and joined the company, taking a seat with the soldiers of Company H, some of whom greeted him with nods, and many looking at him with a slight show of curiosity, but saying nothing. One or two said: "How are you, comrade?"

"I'm all right, I guess," Dick replied to these, smiling.

The soldiers smoked and talked, and Dick sat quietly there and listened. He had an eager interest in all that was said, for he wished to learn all he possibly could. That indeed was what he had come there for.

Dick felt that he had been fortunate in getting within the British lines so easily. And, too, he was lucky to have been accepted as a soldier. He naturally had feared that his youth would be against him, and that he would be refused on that account. But such had not been the case, his youth had not counted against him, and he was now in the British camp, playing the part of a British soldier.

Chapter X

In the Enemy's Camp

Dick Dare had accomplished what had seemed to be the most difficult part of the task that he had come here to accomplish, viz.: Gotten within the British lines, had become, in fact, a member of the British army.

So far so good. Now to secure information that would be of value to General Washington and a benefit to the great Cause of Liberty.

"What's your name?" asked one of the British soldiers.

"Harry Fuller," Dick replied

"Where do you live?"

"Oh, about ten miles from here," replied the youth

"Parents living."

"Yes," replied Dick.

"And so you have joined the king's army and are going to help make it hot for the rebels, hey" with a chuckle. "Good for you."

"Yes," said Dick, "I am eager to get a chance to strike blows against the rebels. How soon do you think that will happen? When are we likely to get into a battle with them?"

"Hard telling, young man. That's for the generals to say. What their plans may be is more than I can say."

"I have heard it rumored in our part of the country that the British will make an attack on the rebels soon. That's the reason I came here to-night. I thought maybe the attack might be made to-morrow, and if I didn't get here to-night, I would not arrive in time for the fight."

"We might be ordered to move against the rebels to-morrow, for all I know," was the reply. "And then again we might be left sitting here a week or a month. I haven't any idea when the move will be made."

"I hope it will be soon," declared Dick, with a view to keeping up the pretense of being imbued with an intense desire to get at the rebels.

"You'll get a chance to do all the fighting you care for, one of these days, young fellow," said another soldier. "Don't worry on that score."

"I'm not worrying about it, sir," said Dick.

"Do you think you will fight when the time comes?" half-sneered another, rather evil-featured fellow, leering at Dick. "I'd be willing to wager that you'll do more running than fighting."

"You might lose your money if you wagered it that way," said Dick, quietly, gazing steadily at the speaker.

"I might, but I don't think I would," with a harsh laugh. "I don't think much of the bravery of the Americans, whether rebels or king's men. They are not the kind that make good soldiers."

"I suppose you think that you are," said Dick, calmly.

"I know it, sonny!" fiercely. "I've been tried in the fire, do you hear? I'm a veteran, and have seen service in the fields of Europe, India and Africa."

"You seem to be great at blowing your own horn, at any rate," said Dick, quietly. And several of the other soldiers sitting near snickered, which seemed to anger the other very much.

"Do you mean to insult me?" he cried, glancing fiercely at Dick.

"Oh, no," coolly. "I was simply stating a fact, that is all."

"Well, you had better be careful, that's all I have got to say!" snarled the redcoat, viciously. "If you weren't a boy, I would give you a thumping for what you have already said."

"Don't let my youth hinder you," retorted Dick. "I will say this, that

I think you will find the people of America as brave as those of your country or any other, and I think, too, that they will make as brave and effective soldiers."

"That's right, youngster, hold up for your own people," said one of the soldiers approvingly. "The boy's all right, Coggins," to the ill-natured soldier. "You had no business talking as you did."

"Bah!" sneered Coggins. "I meant what I said, but as the young fellow is not yet out of his teens, I'll pay no attention to his words. It wouldn't look well for me to thrash a boy."

"You might find that you had your hands full if you tried it," said Dick, coldly. He had taken a dislike to the boastful redcoat, and as he was a brave youth, and also had always found himself a match for any man he had ever engaged in a physical struggle with, he had no fear of this fellow.

"There's good nerve, for you!" remarked a soldier, admiringly. "How do you like it, Coggins?" It was evident that this particular soldier, Coggins, was not very well liked by his comrades.

"Do you think I'm a fool, to get myself laughed at for engaging in a fight with a green country boy?" growled Coggins. "I'll do no such thing." Rising, he walked away with a swagger, but he gave Dick a look of hatred as he did so.

A number of the soldiers grinned, and two or three chuckled aloud, and unless Coggins was deaf, he must have heard them.

"Would you really have fought him?" queried a soldier, looking at Dick keenly, when Coggins was gone.

"If he attacked me, I should have protected myself," was the reply.

"But you couldn't have done much against him. You're only a boy."

"I don't know about that. I am pretty strong and am also rather active, and I have wrestled with a number of grown men, and never found one yet that I couldn't down."

"Well, you might have held your own with Coggins, but I doubt it a little."

"Better be a bit careful how you ruffle him, young man," said another soldier. "He's a vicious chap when his anger is aroused, and he would not hesitate to do you serious injury. He gave you a look I noticed that was not exactly friendly, as he left."

"I noticed that, too," smiled Dick. "But I do not fear him. I shall not try to anger him, but if he annoys me, I will take my own part, that is certain. I won't let him run over me."

"That's right, of course," approvingly. "But don't get into trouble with him if you can avoid it without discredit to yourself."

"I won't, sir, and thank you for your friendly words."

"You're welcome. I don't like Coggins myself, and I don't care who

knows it. He knows it, all right, I guess," with a short laugh. The fact was, though of course Dick knew nothing of it, that this soldier, whose name was Ferguson, and the other, Coggins, were enemies, having had an encounter once, in which Ferguson had gotten rather the best of it, though the fight did not go to a finish, it having been stopped by order of the colonel.

Soon the soldiers stretching themselves on blankets and going to sleep. Dick was given a blanket, and he also lay down, being quite tired by this time, and was soon asleep.

The fact that he was in the encampment of the enemy did not have any effect on Dick's nerves at all. He was a brave and matter-of-fact youth, and felt the boldest plan was the safest, and so he was enabled to act with as much *sang froid* as if he were really an adherent of the king and sincere in his desire to fight for him.

Dick ate breakfast with the rest of the soldiers of his company, then he looked about them, and over the encampment, with interest. It was very interesting indeed to the boy patriot spy and he was eager to see all that there was to be seen.

He noted that this was in itself quite an encampment, but realized that it was only one portion of the whole. He wished to get the other divisions located, and desired also to learn how many soldiers there were in the entire British army. He asked questions, carefully, in such a manner as not to create suspicion, and gradually became possessed of considerable information that he felt must be reliable, since there could be no occasion for those who gave him the information to deceive him, they believing him to be loyal to the king and a soldier the same as they were.

About nine o'clock Company H. was ordered to proceed to the beach for the purpose of allowing the soldiers to bathe, and they set out at once, Dick accompanying them, of course. On the way they passed another division of the British army, and Dick was informed by a companion that it was the main body.

When they neared the beach, Dick caught sight of several old hulks of vessels at anchor near the shore, and he inquired what they were.

"Old hulks of dismantled ships," was the reply. "We use them for prisons for those of the rebel army that we capture."

"Are there any rebels in there now?" queried Dick, making his tone as careless as possible, though having his father in mind, his heart was throbbing with eagerness.

"Yes, there are a number in there-fifteen or twenty, I should judge. They are in the hulk farthest to the north. Among them are three or four rebel spies who will likely be shot or hanged sooner or later."

Dick's heart thrilled as he heard this news. Perhaps he might be able to rescue all those poor, suffering patriot prisoners! He made up his mind that he would try, at any rate. And again the thought struck him that his father might be imprisoned there. He at once decided that he would visit the prison ship and rescue the prisoners, if possible.

Chapter XI

Tom in Trouble

Dick Dare eyed the British fleet with interest. It lay in the roadstead, just off York Bay, and the sight of the warships was indeed alluring. He asked questions about the fleet, being careful to inquire as if actuated merely by curiosity, and he also managed to secure information as to the number of soldiers in the army on shore. He was told that the army, as a whole, had about twenty-four thousand men in its ranks.

"Phew, that outnumbers our army considerably!" thought Dick. "Well, no matter, when it comes to battle, I'll wager that we will give the redcoats all they can do."

When Company H. had finished bathing, the soldiers marched back to the encampment, and other companies were met on their way to the beach to take their turn in the water.

Dick was on the alert for information all the rest of that day. He did not learn much more, for he found that there was no intention of attacking the patriot force on Brooklyn Heights very soon, exactly the point on which General Washington wished to be informed. He became convinced that it would be useless to remain longer in the hope of securing further information, as no date for an attack had been decided upon.

He turned his attention therefore to the problem of how if possible to rescue the patriot spies and soldiers that were in the old hulk used for a prison.

"I must rescue them!" was his thought. "I will rescue them!" he decided, and he began figuring on the matter in earnest and laying his plans.

About half-past one o'clock in the afternoon, however, he was given a shock: He saw half a dozen British soldiers approaching the encampment from the north, and in their midst was his brother Tom!

"They've captured Tom!" he exclaimed mentally, in dismay. "Goodness, that is bad! I wonder how it happened?"

This was a simple matter. The half dozen redcoats had been up in the hills nearby the Heights, where Dick and Tom had had the adventure the night before, when in passing the clump of trees, some one of them happened to catch a glimpse of Tom, who was seated under a tree, eating some food that he had procured at a farmhouse early that morning. The soldiers had advanced, and their sudden appearance had startled Tom to such an extent that when they asked who he was and what he was doing there, he stammered and was unable to make a satisfactory reply offhand, with the result that the redcoats seized him and made him a prisoner, their idea being that even though he were a boy he might be a "rebel" spy.

As may well be supposed, when Dick saw the redcoats approaching with his brother a prisoner in their midst, his heart sank. He had been

figuring on getting his brother to help him in rescuing the patriot spies and soldiers, and here was Tom in the enemy's hands, a prisoner.

"I'll have to begin by rescuing Tom, I guess," was Dick's thought.

The soldiers entered the encampment, with the youth in their midst, and conducted him to where in front of his tent the general was sitting on a camp-stool. The officer looked up as the party approached, and he eyed the prisoner in some surprise.

Dick had drawn near as the soldiers entered the camp, and had managed to catch Tom's eye and give him a warning look. He hoped that his brother would be very careful, and not let it be seen that they were known to each other.

"Whom have you there?" queried General Percy, as the party came to a halt in front of him.

"We found this youngster over yonder in that bit of woods, General Percy," said one of the soldiers. "He was sitting there, eating a lunch, and when we appeared and asked him who he was and where he came from, he seemed frightened and could make no satisfactory answer."

"I wasn't frightened, any such thing!" said Tom, his eyes flashing. "I am not frightened even now, sir. I was surprised, for they came upon me so suddenly, and they leaped at me as if I were a desperado, and naturally I may have seemed a bit confused in my answers to their questions. But I wasn't frightened, sir."

Something like a grim smile appeared for an instant on the general's face, as he looked at the bright face of the boy.

"So you were not afraid, eh?" he remarked. "Well, if you are not a rebel spy or an enemy to the king, there is no reason that you should be afraid. What is your name?"

"Tom Dare, sir." Tom had given his real name to the soldiers, but had wished afterward that he had given a fictitious one. Now he could do nothing other than give his own name.

"Tom Dare, eh? Well, Master Tom Dare, where do you live?"

The boy hesitated an instant, and then said: "I live over in New Jersey."

"Ah, in New Jersey? Well, what are you doing over here on Long Island?"

"I wanted to see the British army, sir, and so I came over here."

"Ah, indeed? Why did you wish to see the British army?"

"Just out of curiosity, sir. I have never before seen an army, and I wanted to see one."

General Percy eyed the boy searchingly for a few moments, and then said:

"It seems to me you have come good ways to satisfy a feeling of

curiosity. Your action is a little bit unusual. You appear to have an inquiring mind." There was something in his tone that Tom did not just like. It had a threatening sound. However, he kept a bold face, and said as calmly as possible:

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose," said the general after a few moments, "that you have so much curiosity, you would like to see all that you possibly can."

Tom still did not fancy the general's tone and air, but he answered:

"True, sir. So I would."

"Very well. Such being the case, I have no doubt that you would like to see the interior of one of the old hulks down at the bay, that we use as prisons for rebel spies and other prisoners. I am going to send you down there, my boy, and I hope you will like the looks of things there, for you will probably be there some time."

Tom started and turned slightly pale.

"Surely you are not going to make me a prisoner there, sir!" he exclaimed in dismay.

"That is just what I am going to do, Master Tom Dare!" was the reply in a stern tone. "The fact is, I believe you are a rebel spy. Your explanation of your presence here, when your home is over in New Jersey is not satisfactory at all. I am certain that you have an ulterior motive in coming, and the only motive that I can think of is that you came to engage in spy-work. Take him to the prison at once, men," this last to the soldiers.

Poor Tom! He knew it would be hopeless to expostulate. He felt that he was doomed to become an inmate of one of the prison-ships, and as he thought it would be useless he said not a word, but accompanied the soldiers without making any show of resistance.

"Take him past the other encampments and let him see the whole army," called General Percy after them. "When one has as much curiosity as he seems to be possessed of, it should be satisfied." This was sarcasm and intended to hurt Tom's feelings and humiliate him, but instead it only aroused a feeling of resentment in his breast, and almost before he realized what he was saying, he exclaimed aloud:

"I'd like to kick him!"

"Who, the general?" queried one of the soldiers.

"Yes," said Tom, boldly.

"You'd better not let him hear you say anything like that, sonny!"

"Say, comrades," remarked another, maliciously, "let's go back and tell the general what he said."

"No, let's not," said another. "The general would whip out his sword and cut the boy's head off. Come on; it will be punishment sufficient to be incarcerated in the old prison-ship, even if he is a spy."

"I guess you're right about that, comrade."

"If it was me," spoke up another, "I believe I'd rather have my head cut off and be done with it, than to be imprisoned in that old hulk."

"I guess you're about right," agreed the first speaker. "I certainly would hate to have to change places with you, my boy."

Tom decided that the prison-ship must be a terrible place, and he was destined to soon find that such was really the case.

They passed the main encampment of the British, as they went to the beach, and the patriot youth thought that the British would be hard to defeat, with such a strong army.

"There must be fifteen or twenty thousand soldiers there" was his estimate.

Soon the little party was at the beach, and getting into the old row-boat, the soldiers rowed out to the hulk furthest north, and assisted Tom to the deck. Here they found a British soldier on guard.

"What have you got there, comrades?" this soldier asked, looking at Tom in surprise.

"Another prisoner, Hawkins. He is only a boy, but the general is of the opinion that he is a rebel spy, so down he goes into the hold with the rest of the rebels."

"All right; down with him. But I wouldn't think the rebels would send out such a young one to do spy-work."

"Well, the general thinks he's a spy, and that settles it."

"It certainly does so far as I am concerned. Down with him."

The hatch was opened, and Tom was assisted down the ladder to the bottom of the hold, and then leaving him there, with his hands still tied together behind his back, the soldiers mounted the ladder and put the hatch in place, leaving Tom in complete darkness.

As he realized his situation, a shudder went over the youth's form.

"I don't like this!" he murmured.

Chapter XII

Dick Does Wonderful Work

Dick Dare had been afraid that General Percy might connect him with Tom, and suspect that they were in the neighborhood together, but such a thought evidently did not come to the commander, for happily he seemed to dismiss the matter from his mind when the soldiers departed with the boy. He again busied himself with some writing.

When Dick noted this, he breathed a sigh of relief. It would have been bad indeed had he been then suspected and made a prisoner, the same as had been the case with Tom. With them both in the old prison-hulk, escape would have been difficult, in fact well-nigh impossible, but with Dick free to work from the outside, it was different. The youth believed that he might be able to rescue his brother and the other prisoners in the prison-ship, and he was fully decided to make the attempt that very night.

The afternoon dragged slowly along. Dick could hardly wait for nightfall, for he was eager to get to work. He thought the afternoon never would end.

But it did, at last, and after he had eaten supper, he began mentally reviewing the task that lay before him. The first thing to do would be to get away from the encampment, and he decided to do this at once. He had laid his plans, and going to the colonel, he asked permission to take a walk.

"I am not used to camp life, sir," he said; "and I feel the need of a little exercise. If not contrary to the rules, I would like to take a walk of a mile or so in the country."

"I guess it will be all right," was the reply. "Go ahead, but don't stay too long."

"I won't, sir. Thank you."

Dick walked boldly out of the encampment, and in order to disarm suspicion, in case his action should occasion comment, he went toward the east. To have started north might have aroused suspicion that he was heading for New York.

"Where away, comrade?" queried the sentinel at the east side of the encampment.

"Oh, out for a little walk for exercise," replied Dick, carelessly.

"All right. The Countersign is 'The King Rules'."

"Thank you," said Dick. "I'll not forget."

He walked slowly on, as if merely taking a leisurely stroll, but as soon as he was out of sight of the sentinel and others, he changed to a swift pace, and turning, headed toward the prison-ships in the bay.

"Now for business!" he murmured, grimly. "I'll have the patriot prisoners out of that old hulk before many hours, or I'll know the reason why!"

He hastened onward, but paused frequently and listened intently. He did not want to meet any force of British soldiers then for it would have been awkward work explaining his presence.

He was fortunate, however, in that he did not encounter any redcoats, and in considerably less than an hour he was at the shore, near where the prison-ships were anchored.

"Now the next thing is to get aboard the hulk," was Dick's thought.

This would be difficult, for the reason that there was a sentinel on the deck. To reach the hulk and climb aboard without being seen by this sentinel was a task that would be hard to accomplish. But Dick did not hesitate. He was brave, and eager to rescue his brother and the other patriot spies and soldiers, and so he located an old boat, got in, and then pulled slowly and carefully toward the prison-ship, which could be faintly seen looming up a couple of hundred yards distant on the water.

Dick felt that the chances were that the sentinel would have his attention directed toward the shore, and so he made a half-circuit and approached from the other side. He rowed slowly and cautiously, making scarcely any noise at all, and was successful in reaching the hulk without having been discovered. Dick had rightly guessed that the sentinel was at the other side, doubtless keeping a lookout shoreward.

Dick felt around in the boat, and found a rope-ladder, with hooks on one end, and with the aid of a boathook, he managed to get the hooks caught over the ship's rail. This accomplished, he stood there and listened intently. He feared he might have been heard by the sentinel.

Such did not seem to be the case, however, for all was quiet aboard, and presently the youth began making his way slowly and cautiously up the ladder. He kept on till his head was even with the top of the rail, and then he gazed about, trying to locate the sentinel. It was so dark, however, that he could not see the redcoat, and feeling that the coast was reasonably clear, Dick climbed on up, and over the rail, and a moment later stood on the deck.

So far all was well. He had escaped from the British encampment, had reached the prison-hulk, and was on board. Now to overpower the sentinel and rescue the prisoners.

The youth paused only long enough to tie the boat's painter to the rail, and then he slowly and cautiously made his way along the deck, going toward the bow. He reached the end of the cabin, moved quietly around it, and then started in the other direction. He went with still greater caution now, for he realized that at any moment he might come upon the British sentinel.

Dick knew that there were two soldiers on board all the time, and that they took turns at standing guard, so one would be on deck and the other would likely be in the cabin asleep. To capture the one guard, without making a noise that would be heard by the other would be a difficult matter, but Dick was not the kind of youth to be dismayed by difficulties. Their presence only made him the more determined.

He advanced carefully, and suddenly he caught sight of a shadowy form a few feet ahead of him. It was the sentinel, undoubtedly, and luckily for Dick, the redcoat's back was partially toward him, and the soldier was gazing in almost the opposite direction from that in which Dick was approaching.

The youth, after a keen survey of the form, decided that the redcoat's back was toward him, and so advanced a couple of steps, as silently as a shadow. He was now close upon the man, and reaching out suddenly, he grasped the fellow by the throat with both hands, and raising his knee quickly, struck the soldier in the small of the back, and threw him

with a twisting motion to the deck; then dropping upon the fallen man, Dick compressed his windpipe, gripping it with all his might.

Although but eighteen years of age, Dick Dare was stronger than the majority of men. He was naturally powerful, and his life on the farm had been such as to develop his strength and endurance, and so it happened that he was easily more than a match for the British soldier. The fact that this fellow had been taken completely by surprise worked to his disadvantage, too, and although he struggled hard, he was unable to do anything, and the gripping fingers, compressing his windpipe like bands of steel, gradually weakened him, for he was unable to get his breath. Neither could he cry out, and the result was that in about three minutes from the time Dick had seized the redcoat, the fellow was lying unconsciously on the deck-choked into insensibility.

Feeling confident the sentinel would remain unconscious some time, Dick left the form lying there, and entered the cabin in search of the other soldier. A snore sounding from a stateroom at one side guided the youth, so he entered the compartment, and seizing this redcoat by the throat, as he had the other, Dick quickly choked him into limp insensibility. This accomplished, he went out on deck, dragged the other redcoat into the cabin, and into the stateroom. Closing the door, he locked them in.

"I don't think they will be able to get out of there, even if they regain consciousness before I get to the prisoners," thought Dick.

Then he went out on deck again and hunted around till he found the hatchway. Removing the covering, he looked down into the hold, but could see nothing, the darkness there being even greater than on the deck.

"Hello, down there!" he called. "Are you there, Tom!"

"Dick! Oh, is it really you?" came the reply, in the excited voice of Tom Dare.

"Yes, it is I," was the reply. "How many are there with you, Tom? Is father there?"

"No, Dick, father isn't here. Come down and free us, quick!" eagerly. "There are twelve of us here, it is a terrible place,-slimy and foul-smelling, and there are rats, insects and worms, ugh!"

"Climb up the ladder," instructed Dick. "Surely you are not bound."

"Our hands are tied. That's what I meant by telling you to come down and free us, Dick."

"I'll be with you in moment, Tom."

Dick hastened down the ladder, and was soon standing beside Tom, who had scrambled to his feet. He quickly cut the rope binding his brother's wrists, and then asked where the other prisoners were.

"Here," replied a hoarse voice. "We are right at hand, Dick Dare, and glad to welcome you. Your brother has told us about you, and we have been hoping you would succeed in freeing us, though we feared you

might not be able to do so. But you seem to have succeeded, thank God! I am Joseph Boswick," he continued, "one of the spies sent down here by General Washington to secure information regarding the British. There are three more spies, and seven patriot soldiers and all of us are eager to get out of this terrible hole, as you may well believe."

"I can easily believe it, Mr. Boswick, and I'll have your hands free in a jiffy, and then you can climb the ladder to the deck, and we will go ashore in the boat. The two British guards are insensible, and locked in a stateroom."

"You are a wonder, Dare!" said Boswick, admiration in his tone. "Well, cut our bonds quickly and we'll try to get out of here."

This was speedily done, and a few minutes later the entire party was on the deck. To climb down into the boat was a simple matter, but it had only just been accomplished when there came the noise of oars in rowlocks, from the other side of the hulk, followed by the sound of voices.

"Some redcoats have come off to the ship, from the shore!" whispered Dick, to Boswick. "We must get away from here in a hurry, for your escape will be discovered very quickly!"

Chapter XIII

General Washington is Pleased

"We had better get to the shore at once," was the reply. "This boat is so heavily loaded that it would be dangerous to try to go to New York in it."

"Yes, and it is old and leaky, anyway. We'll go ashore and then head for Brooklyn Heights."

Dick turned the oars and rowed cautiously toward the island. The boat moved very slowly, for it was deep in the water, and rapid progress was impossible.

The shore was reached presently, however, and at the same instant there came out of the darkness excited yells from the direction of the prison-ship.

"They've discovered your escape," said Dick. "Get ashore, men, as quickly as possible."

The rescued patriots leaped ashore as fast as they could, and then with Dick in the lead, they set out northward.

"By keeping over pretty close to the water, I think we shall be able to keep clear of the redcoats," said Dick.

"Likely," agreed Tom. "We mustn't let them capture us now."

"I'll never go back to that terrible prison-pen alive!" declared Boswick. "I would much rather die fighting."

"We'll get to the Heights and then over to New York in safety," assured Dick.

The excited voices of the British who had discovered the escape of the prisoners could be heard for some time, but gradually grew fainter, until at last no sound could be heard. The little party kept steadily onward, and managed to get past the left end of the British army and an hour or so later arrived at the patriot encampment on Brooklyn Heights.

They paused there only long enough to rest a bit and apprise the officer in command of their escape from the prison-ship, then they went down to the shore and were taken across to the New York side in boats.

They went direct to patriot headquarters, and were quickly ushered into the presence of the commander-in-chief. When he saw Dick and Tom, and also Boswick and the other spies and the patriot soldiers that had been prisoners, his face lighted up with pleasure.

"You surely have succeeded well, Dare!" he exclaimed. "You have rescued the patriot prisoners from the British prison-ship, and I hope you have as well secured some important information."

"I have secured some information, your excellency," replied Dick. "And I am pleased because I was able to free the patriots from the prison-ship."

"You have done well, Dick-wonderfully well. I congratulate you, my boy." Then he shook hands with Boswick and the other spies and the soldiers and asked them about their experience in the prison-ship. According to their words, the prison-ship was a terrible place, the bottom of the hold being water-soaked and slimy, and infested by myriads of insects and worms, which crawled over the prisoners' bodies, stinging and biting them and almost driving them wild. There were large and vicious rats also. The prisoners were thin and gaunt, and it was evident that they had suffered indeed.

"You have had a very unpleasant experience, men," said the commander-in-chief; "but now you are free and will soon be your old selves again. Go to your quarters, get some food and then rest up and regain your lost strength."

The soldiers obeyed, all going save Dick, who remained at the command of General Washington. When the others had gone, he turned inquiringly at Dick.

"What did you learn, my boy?" he queried. "Have you secured any information of value?"

"I haven't secured a great deal of information, your excellency," was the reply. "I learned the numerical strength of the British army, for one thing."

"That is important. What is the number?"

"Twenty-five thousand."

A sober, thoughtful look settled over the face of the commander-in-chief.

"That is about five thousand more than I figured on," he murmured. "Well, I am glad to have knowledge of their strength, even though it is greater than I had expected it to be."

"I learned also, that an attack on Brooklyn Heights, while a probability at some future time, is not contemplated at an early date."

"That is important also, Dick. Well, did you learn anything else?"

"Nothing else, sir. But, if you desire it, I will go back over onto Long Island and will keep watch on the British and do my best to learn of any intended move early enough to get the news to you, so that you will have time to make a move that will check the enemy."

"We will wait a few days, Dick, and then I may send you again. I congratulate you on the success of your first attempt at spying. You did well, Dick, exceedingly well, and I shall doubtless make use of you frequently in the future, if you care to undertake the work."

"I shall be glad to do so, your excellency. My only wish is to do all in my power to aid the people of America to secure their independence, and if I can be of value by doing spy-work, then I shall take pleasure in doing it."

"That is the right spirit, my boy, and I shall call upon you whenever I have work that I think you can do better than an older man could do it."

Then he dismissed Dick, who saluted and withdrew, going to his quarters.

He found Tom there, engaged in telling the story of his and Dick's adventures over on Long Island, and Ben and the other soldiers were listening eagerly, their eyes shining. They greeted Dick joyously.

"Say, I wish I had been with you two fellows, old man," said Ben Foster. "You have got the bulge on the rest of us, and that isn't fair. You have already encountered the redcoats and had adventures with them, while the rest of us have had to stay cooped up here in the city." Ben pretended to be vexed with Dick and Tom, but it was only pretense.

"You boys will get all the adventure you want, one of these days, I think," smiled Dick. "There is going to be a battle over on Long Island sooner or later, and then you will get all the fighting you want."

"Hurroo!" cried Tim Murphy, "shure an' thot is phwat we are afther wantin', Oi dunno. It's all av us wull foight to the last gasp, sure an' we wull."

"Yah, ve vill fighd lige eferyting," declared Fritz Schmockenburg. "Ve are nod avraid uf der retgoads, und dot is so."

"How soon will the battle take place, Dick?" queried Ben Foster.

Dick shook his head.

"As to that I cannot say, Ben," he replied. "But it will come soon enough, without doubt, for the British have twenty-five thousand soldiers, while we have not more than eighteen thousand."

"That is pretty big odds," said Ben, with a shake of the head.

"So it is," agreed Dick. "But the patriots will give a good account of themselves when the time comes, I feel certain."

"Yah, ve vill gif ein goot account mit mysellufs," said Fritz, the Dutch soldier.

"Just listen to thot, wull yez?" remarked Tim, scathingly. "Shure an' there is agotism fur yez!"

"Well, I hope all of us will always give a good account of ourselves," said Dick, quietly. "And I believe we will."

"We'll try to, Dick," said Ben, earnestly.

A few days later General Washington again summoned Dick and told him to go over on Long Island and see if he could learn anything regarding the intentions of the British.

"You will have to be very careful, this time, however, Dick," he cautioned; "for you are known to many of the British, and if they should see you, they would capture you, and that would be bad."

"True, sir," said Dick. "I will be very careful. I will not let them capture me, if I can help myself." Then, after receiving his instructions, Dick saluted and withdrew.

After supper he set out, and crossing the East River, made his way in the direction of the British encampment, which was about five miles distant, to the southward. He did not need to go to Brooklyn Heights to see General Putnam, for the reason that he now knew more about the location of the enemy than Putnam did.

Dick did not walk rapidly, for he felt that it were better to proceed with caution, for if he went too swiftly he could not exercise much care, and the result might be unpleasant, as there was danger that he might run into a party of British. By going slowly he could avoid this danger.

Two hours from the time he crossed the East River, he was in the vicinity of the British encampment, and he moved slowly around it, trying to figure out some way to get where he could secure information, but to no avail. He could not devise any means of doing this. To enter the lines was out of the question, for there would likely be some of the soldiers who would recognize him as the youth who had joined the British army a few days before and then deserted. Doubtless the British were aware of the fact, also, that the same youth had set the prisoners free from the prison-ship.

Dick remained near the British encampment till after midnight, but could do nothing to further the purpose for which he had come, and so

he retired to a clump of trees situated about a quarter of a mile from the edge of the encampment, and hunting up a place under some bushes, lay down and went to sleep.

He slept soundly till morning, and then got up and took a survey of the British encampment. The sun was just rising, and everything was quiet in the camp. The soldiers were still asleep, with the exception of the sentinels, who could be seen slowly pacing their beats.

Dick had nothing to eat, but did not let that bother him. He was prepared to go without food all day, if by so doing he would have a better chance of securing information regarding the enemy. He watched till the British soldiers got up and ate their breakfast, and then as he saw small groups moving about, some coming almost to the clump of trees, he decided that it would be best to climb up into a tree and conceal himself amid the leaves, and selecting a tree with very heavy foliage, he climbed well up into it. Here he took up as comfortable a position as possible, watching the enemy and awaiting developments.

All was quiet till noon, and then as he saw the soldiers eating their dinners, he was assailed by a feeling of hunger. He resolutely dismissed the thought of food, however, and stuck to his position. He was determined to stay till evening, at any rate, and then if he had not secured any information, he would go to a farmhouse which he saw about a mile distant, to the eastward, and get something to eat, after which he would return to his post. He was determined to remain in the vicinity of the army till he learned something of value in the way of news regarding the intentions of the British, if it took him a week.

He climbed down out of the tree presently and walked about, in the thicket, stretching in legs and feeling much better afterward, for his position had been a cramped one at the best.

When the British soldiers began moving around again, after dinner, Dick climbed up into the tree once more, for some of the redcoats might visit the clump of trees at any time. A party of four of the soldiers did enter the thicket an hour or so later, and throwing themselves down in the shade, talked and laughed for some time, but although Dick listened with intense eagerness, no words were spoken that gave him any information. If the soldiers knew of any intended move on the part of the British army, they did not mention the fact in their conversation, which was made up of idle talk, of the kind as such men would naturally indulge in.

When they left and returned to the encampment Dick drew a breath of relief, for he felt that every minute they remained in the clump of trees he was in danger of discovery. He might make a noise, in shifting his position, and be heard, or he might have to sneeze, or cough. And if he were to be discovered, it would go hard with him, for he would undoubtedly be deemed a spy.

After the redcoats returned to the encampment, Dick descended to the ground and walked about a while, being careful to keep the most of the thicket between himself and the enemy. After half an hour on the ground, he again climbed up into the tree.

Dick began to think the day was to be barren of results, as evening drew near; but a little while before sundown he caught sight of a couple of soldiers approaching the clump of trees. As the two drew

near, he got a fair view of their faces, and he had all he could do to keep from uttering an exclamation, for the two approaching British soldiers were no others than Zeke Boggs and Lem Hicks, Dick's enemies, the Tory youths from over in New Jersey!

"Well, this is a surprise!" thought Dick. "But I remember now, that Ben said Zeke told him he and Lem were going to join the British army and be British soldiers, that they were not going to let Tom, Ben, and myself get ahead of them. I wonder what they would say if they knew I was so near them?"

Zeke and Lem, dressed in the uniform of British soldiers, entered the clump of timber and seated themselves on the moss under the tree next to that Dick was in. They had no suspicion that there was anyone other than themselves present, and talked freely of their plans.

"How do ye like army life, anyhow, Zeke?" asked Lem, as they lolled on the grass.

"Oh, pretty well, Lem," was the reply. "How do ye like et?"

"Oh, only so-so, Zeke. They're too strict ter suit me. I don't like ter hev ter come an' go just ez sumbuddy tells me, do you?"

"No, I don't. But when er feller enters the army, that's jest whut he hez ter do."

"Yes, that's so. Well, I guess I'll git used ter et."

"I'll be glad when we git inter a bettle with the rebels, Lem, won't you?"

"Yes, I guess so." The tone was not very decided or enthusiastic. "I hope thet ef we do git inter a battle, we'll meet up with Dick an' Tom Dare an' Ben Foster."

"So do I. I'd like ter giv' 'em a thrashin' in a battle."

"So would I. An' I guess that we'll hev a chance to fight the rebels afore so very long, fur I heerd our colonel tell another officer thet et hez be'n decided ter make an attack on Brooklyn Heights the twenty-fourth."

"Yes, I heard 'im say thet."

Dick made mental note of this date. He had learned something of value, and from the lips of his enemies, Zeke and Lem. How angry they would be if they knew they had done Dick Dare a kindness! "Thank you, Zeke and Lem," he murmured. "You are very kind, and have done me quite a favor."

The two Tory youths remained there half an hour or so, and then returned to the encampment. Their conversation had held nothing further of interest to Dick, but what he had learned was sufficient. He had learned when the British intended to make the attack, and that was just what he had come over there to try to learn. Now he was eager to get back to New York and tell the commander-in-chief the news.

As soon as it was dark, he set out for New York, and reached there a

couple of hours later. He went at once to headquarters, where he told General Washington what he had learned.

The commander-in-chief complimented Dick on his success in securing the information, and next morning he sent three thousand troops over to reinforce General Putnam's force on Brooklyn Heights. To the delight of Dick, Tom and Ben, Colonel Morgan's regiment was among those sent, and the youths would thus be able to take part in the battle.

When the 24th arrived, however, the British did not make the expected attack, and about mid-day General Washington came over to the Heights and conferred with Putnam, and Dick was asked his opinion regarding the non-appearance of the British.

"I don't understand it, sir," he replied. "I heard the two Tory youths say that an attack would be made on the twenty-fourth. Perhaps the British have learned that you were expecting them, and have postponed the attack on that account."

"That is possible," agreed General Washington. "Well, the only thing to do, now, is to keep constantly on the lookout and be ready all the time to repulse an attack."

"That is the proper course, your excellency," said General Putnam.

So it was decided to remain in readiness, and to keep out double the usual number of sentinels, so as to avoid being taken by surprise.

This course was adopted, and the patriots kept in readiness for instant battle, and waited with what patience they could muster, pestered as they were by the hot weather and myriads of mosquitoes, for the British to make an attack.

Chapter XIV

The Haunted House

Life in the patriot camp often grew irksome to the volunteers of Washington's army. All were eager to meet their red-coat foes, and prove their mettle in a real battle. Thus far the troops gathered in New York, had been forced to content themselves with occasional skirmishes with the British outposts, which little affairs only served to increase their eagerness to "have it out" with the invaders.

To make the long days of waiting pass more pleasantly, frequent excursions were made into the surrounding country in search of adventures and to pick up whatever delicacies in the way of fruit and fowl that the outlying farms afforded. Tom appointed himself a committee of one to supply the company to which he and his friends belonged. He had exhausted most of the well-known haunts about camp, and was in the habit of going off on long tramps to find the coveted fruit.

One evening toward dusk Tom was sauntering along a quiet country road hunting for apples. In the course of his wanderings he came upon a

well laden tree standing on the grounds of a neglected estate. Far back amongst the trees was the deserted mansion-house, looking desolate and forbidding in the rays of the sinking sun.

About this old place many stories clung of mystery and violent death. From the time of its erection by a runaway nobleman the families who had unfortunately occupied it had either left in extreme haste and terror for some far removed section of the country, or had met with foul play at the hands of a band of Gypsies, who appeared in the neighborhood only when a new occupant moved into the fated homestead. The last family that had lived there had suddenly left the house one night. Two grown up sons, however, returned and told the inquisitive farmers that although their folks had been frightened away, they proposed to remain until they had solved the mystery of the place. This perhaps they did the next night, but they both paid for their curiosity with their lives, for the neighbors found their bodies suspended from the upper floor over the Main Stairway. Since this last fatality, the house had been deserted, its bad name growing with each recounting of its dark history.

A little youngster scarce four years old, was playing under the tree. Tom helped himself to some apples as was his wont, and speaking cheerily to the boy, learned that his name was "Jackie." A stick of candy from Tom's pocket was greedily accepted by Jackie. Tom was feeling blue that day thinking of his father from whom had come no word, of his mother and sister, and his old home. He wandered on unobservant of the fact that it was growing dark, and that a storm was fast approaching. He was suddenly called to a sense of his surroundings by hearing a cry behind him, and turning back saw that little Jackie was dogging his footsteps.

The youngster was tired out now, and wanted "home and mother," so Tom spoke a soothing word or two and they commenced to retrace their footsteps. He noted now that the storm was soon to break, and Jackie was too tired to hurry, so he gathered the little fellow into his strong arms, and made fast time for home.

By the time they had reached the apple tree it was quite dark. Large drops of rain, the roar of thunder, and the glare of lightning told Tom that he was none too soon. He ran through the unkempt garden, and was quickly at the door. A sinister looking place it was even in daylight, and now revealed by an occasional lightning flash, the house seemed but a wreck of former stateliness. Not a light was visible within, and to Tom's loud and hurried rappings on the door, there was no response.

A flash of lightning however, showed Tom that the door was unlatched, and with the rain now descending in torrents, he hesitated no longer, but stepped within. There was a rush of wind, a rattle of shutters, a deafening peal of thunder as if close at hand, and with a crash the great door suddenly closed.

It did not take Tom long to determine that he and his little charge were alone in a deserted mansion.

"Is this your home, Jackie?" inquired Tom.

The little fellow whom Tom had placed upon the floor was thoroughly terrified, and could only grasp his answer.

"It is the haunted house, let me go home."

"Nonsense, Jackie, don't be afraid, but where is your home?"

Meantime Tom had turned about and was searching for the handle of the great door. There was none. It had been broken off, and this means of egress was unavailable.

"Let's see if we can find a window," suggested Tom, but Jackie clung closer to his rescuer and began to cry wildly.

"There is a ghost, it's coming," shrieked the little fellow.

Tom looked along the depth of the long hall, and at first saw nothing, then at the next flash of lightning he was startled to see two green and glaring eyes fixed upon him. No thought of such a thing as a ghost entered his mind, he was far too sensible for that, and had no fear of spirits. If they were good spirits, he argued, of course they would not hurt, if they were bad, he might hurt them. He was for advancing at once to investigate, but his little charge clung to him in desperate terror.

Then there came another crash of thunder, and at the same instant a noise as of an overturned table, and the rattle of pans and pots upon the floor. But the eyes, they were gone-no, they were close upon the floor, and coming toward them. Tom could not deny that he felt a creeping feeling, and poor Jackie, always observant of the goings on, was simply overcome with fright, and buried his head in Tom's side to shut out the dreaded sight.

"Come, Jackie, let's get out of here," encouraged Tom, and having observed a window in the room to the left, he once more took up his charge and made for it.

Halfway to his objective point, however, he was startled for a moment to see revealed by a lantern the whiskered face of a man on the other side of the window. Tom stopped short an instant, but not so Jackie, who struggled from his protector's embrace calling out, "There's papa!"

In a brief interval Jackie was in his parent's arms, and as they lived next door to the deserted mansion, Tom was soon being thanked time and again for the rescue of the little runaway.

"And is the house really haunted?" asked Tom, and then without waiting for a reply he answered his own question "but of course I know it is not."

"No," was the laughing response, "but it has been unoccupied except by cats, and in some way has gotten that name."

"And then the eyes we saw-?"

"Quite likely a stray cat, but still it would not be wondered at if your nerves got on edge. You are a brave boy, Tom Dare, and I know I shall hear of brave deeds of yours in the future."

The storm had moderated, and Tom now had to hasten back to camp where

he was welcomed for he had for distribution a large bag of apples, given him by Jackie's father.

That evening about the camp-fire Tom recounted his adventures to his friends, and a trip was planned for the next day to explore the secrets of the old house.

The following morning, after drill and the camp duties had been performed, Tom, Dick and Ben set out for the scene of the previous day's excitement.

"I don't believe half of these 'haunted house' stories," said Tom, "ever since-," and here he stopped.

"Yes, ever since you thought we had a real ghost, and suggested leaving the poor spirit to its own reflection while you and the rest of us made for home," broke in Dick.

"When was that?" questioned Ben.

"Why, about a year ago," Dick responded, "four of us spent a night in a house with a 'haunted' reputation, and after numerous fake alarms, caused by the wind shaking the windows or banging the shutters, we at last got track of the real disturber, who happened along the very night we were on watch."

"Who was it?" questioned Ben, eagerly, while Tom, remembering his temporary terror on that night, grew suspiciously red in the face.

"None other than a marauding cat," Dick replied, "whose head had stuck in a can it was drinking from, and who knocked the unwelcome helmet on the floor in an effort to disengage it."

The boys had now reached the old mansion, and a trip through its ruined rooms failed to reveal anything unusual, so after gathering another supply of apples, the three returned to camp.

Chapter XV

Dick Again Does Spy-Work

As the days and weeks dragged slowly past and the British did not make an attack on the patriot force on Brooklyn Heights, General Washington became somewhat impatient. He was puzzled by the action, or rather lack of action of the enemy, and was desirous of learning what it meant.

There was only one way that this could be done-by sending a spy to venture among the enemy and spy upon them, and as Dick Dare had done good work for him on two former occasions, the commander-in-chief decided to try him again. He had been on the Heights, conferring with General Putnam, on the afternoon of August 20th, and presently he summoned an orderly and told him to tell Dick Dare to come to headquarters.

The orderly saluted and went in search of the youth, whom he found in

company with his brother Tom, and Ben Foster and two or three other soldiers, talking listlessly and wondering when the British would make an attack.

"Dick Dare, you are wanted at headquarters," said the orderly. "The commander-in-chief sent me to inform you."

Dick leaped up with alacrity.

"I'll go at once," he said.

"Maybe he is wanting you to do some more spy-work, Dick," suggested Ben.

"I hope so. I would like to get away from camp and circulate around awhile."

"So would I," said Tom.

"Yes, and get captured again," grinned Ben. "You are not cut out for spy-work, Tom. You are too impulsive."

"Oh, I don't know about that," demurred Tom. "I'd like to try spying, on my own hook, once, like Dick does."

"I don't think either of us would be as successful as Dick," remarked Ben.

"That is phwat Oi think," said Tim Murphy, the Irish soldier. "Av inywan, now, could come innywhere near bein' as good at spyin' as Dick, phwy Fritz here," he continued with a grin, "would be the mon, Oi'm thinkin'."

Fritz Schmockenburg, the Dutch soldier, grunted.

"I bet me dot I vould mage ein better sby as vot your vould, Tim Murphies," he said placidly.

And then ensued a good-natured dispute between the two, who, although they quarrelled frequently, and to one who did not understand them would seem to be very angry at each other and enemies in fact, were the best of friends. And Tom and Ben egged the two on, for they liked to hear them talk, it affording something in the way of amusement to pass away the time, which was beginning to hang heavy on their hands, camp-life being rather dull and trying, especially to youths like them, who had always been used to an active life in the open fields.

Dick had gone to headquarters, and on reaching there, he was given a cordial greeting by Generals Washington and Putnam.

"You sent for me, your excellency?" said Dick, after saluting.

"Yes, Dick," was the reply. "I think that I shall again call you into requisition. How wold you like to again venture out toward the British lines in search of information?"

Dick's face lighted up eagerly.

"I would like it first rate, sir," he said.

"I thought so, and that is the reason I sent for you. Well, Dick, the fact is, that we are beginning to grow weary of this state of affairs, and would like to learn what is detaining the enemy and causing them to hold back from making an attack. And we wish to learn, if possible, if an attack is intended soon, and if so, on what date. You wish to try your hand at the work of learning this, my boy?"

"I shall be glad to make the attempt to secure the information you wish, General Washington," was the prompt and earnest reply.

"Very well, Dick. Then the matter is settled. You will leave this evening, as soon as darkness has come, and will visit the special spot in the vicinity of the enemy's camp, and learn all that you possibly can. There is no need of my giving you other than these general instructions, for you have had sufficient experience as a spy to know how to go about it yourself."

"Yes, your excellency. I will leave as soon as it is dark, and will do my best to secure some information of value."

"I hope that you may succeed, my boy."

"I hope so, sir."

After a little further conversation Dick took his departure, and rejoined his comrades, who looked at him inquiringly.

"Spy-work again, Dick?" queried Ben.

"Yes, Ben," was the reply.

"That's what we guessed. When do you start?"

"This evening."

"I wish I could go with you!" said Tom.

"I think it will be better for me to go alone," said Dick. "I can do better work alone than if somebody is with me. The general selected me because I have a likely place to hide."

"How would it do to take Dootchy wid yez, Dick?" grinned Tim. "He thinks he would be a foine spy."

Dick laughed. "I don't know how Fritz would make out in that field of endeavor," he said.

"He is so big he couldn't get within a mile of the redcoats without their seeing him," commented Ben.

"Yes, that's the only trouble with Fritz," said Tom. "He is too big to be a success as a spy."

"I didn't said dot I vould be a goot sby, Dick," responded Fritz. "I said dot I vould be as goot a sby as vot Tim Murphies vould be, see? und I vill stand me by dot statements, alretty."

"Wull, Oi have not said that Oi vould make a good spy, Dootchy," said

Tim, "so you wouldn't have to be much in that line to acquit me. But when it comes to fighting, now, it's myself believes Oi have yez bate, Fritz, me bye."

"Oh, I don't vos know about it, Tim," was the reply. "I think I will do some fighting myself alretty, ven ve get der redcoats at, yehs."

"Maybe so," grinned Tim. "We will wait and see how yez act when we come face to face with the redcoats."

"Oh, you'll both be brave soldiers, no doubt," said Tom. "But, you won't be any ahead of Dick, Ben and myself. We intend to do some fighting, too, when the time comes."

"Oi'm betting that yez present a bold face to the enemy," nodded Tom, who liked the youths immensely. "And sure, it's myself is wishing that we get a chance at the redcoats before very long."

"I hope so, Tim," said Dick.

Soon after supper, that evening, Dick made his preparations for going on the expedition. Tom cautioned him again and again to be careful, and not take too great risks. "I won't be there to help you, and you will have to depend on yourself," he said.

"I shall be careful," said Dick. "But I'm going to find out when the British intend to make an attack, that is, if such a thing is possible."

"I hope that you may succeed, Dick," encouraged Ben.

"I'll do my best," and then saying good-bye to his friends, Dick left the works and set out down the slope, heading in the direction of the encampment of the British.

He walked at a moderate pace, for there was no occasion for haste. He had the whole night before him.

He walked onward an hour or more, and then stopped in the same little clump of timber which had before sheltered him. Climbing a tree, he looked toward the south, and saw, not very far distant, the campfires of the British. The enemy were still occupying their old quarters.

Dick did not of course dare venture into the British encampment, for the reason that he would be recognized and placed under arrest as a spy at once, for having pretended to join the force in question only a few weeks before, and the redcoats would be only too glad to get their hands on him now.

"I guess the best thing I can do is to remain here till morning," was Dick's thought. "Then I can get a good view of the encampment, and possibly some soldiers may come here to the timber during the day, as they did before, to loll in the shade, and I may again be able to hear something of interest."

Dick climbed down out of the tree and lay down under some bushes and was soon sound asleep. That was one thing that made Dick a good person for work of this kind. He did not get excited, and could lie down and

sleep soundly almost anywhere, and even with the redcoats in close proximity to him.

He was up with the sun, next morning, and after eating a portion of the food he had brought along with him, he felt refreshed, and turned his attention again toward the British encampment. By climbing the tree, he was enabled to get a good view of the camp, and could see the British soldiers at work cooking their breakfast over the campfires.

Away in the distance, toward the bay, Dick could make out another encampment, and knew that this was the main force, under General Howe in person. There was no clump of trees near that encampment, however, which made it difficult of approach for spying purposes, which was the reason he had come to this division of the army instead.

Dick remained up in the tree an hour or so, and then descended and lay down under some bushes at the edge of the clump of the trees, on the side next to the encampment, and kept a sharp lookout in that direction, watching eagerly for the coming of some of the soldiers.

One, two hours passed, and then Dick's patience was rewarded. He saw a couple of British soldiers leave the encampment and come strolling in the direction of the clump of trees.

Dick would have liked to remain on the ground, but feared that he might be discovered in case he did so, and thinking it better to be careful, he once more careful a position as possible, feeling up as comfortable a position as possible, owing to the fact that the foliage was very thick.

The two British soldiers came strolling along, talking and laughing, and presently they entered the clump of trees and sat down under the very tree that Dick was in. Here they made themselves as comfortable as possible, and lighting their pipes, smoked and talked lazily.

Dick listened eagerly, hoping to hear something that would be in the nature of news, and of value to General Washington, but the soldiers kept their conversation in personal channels, which was not of much interest to Dick.

"I wish they would talk about the army, and what it intends to do," was Dick's thought.

But the redcoats did not do this. They talked of matters of no importance or interest to Dick, and after staying an hour or so, they get up and returned to the encampment.

Dick was disappointed. "I was in hopes that I would learn something from their conversation," he muttered. "Well, perhaps some more soldiers will visit the clump of trees to-day, and in that case I may succeed in securing some information. I hope that such will be the case, anyway."

Noon came, and no other soldiers had visited the clump of trees. Dick was not discouraged, however. He felt that he would likely get a chance to hear other soldiers talk that afternoon.

He ate the rest of his food, and then sat down beside a tree and took it easy for a while. He knew that the soldiers were busy cooking their

dinners, and that none would likely come to the timber for quite a while.

As he sat there, gazing idly over toward the encampment, however, he suddenly heard footsteps behind him, and turned his head quickly, and saw a British soldier standing within a few paces of him, musket in hand, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Hello," greeted the redcoat.

Dick was surprised and somewhat dismayed as well, but he was a cool youth, and did not let the fact that he was flustered show on his face. Instead, he affected a cool and careless air, and replied:

"Hello. Good afternoon, sir."

The soldier stood there, keeping a keen eye on the youth.

"Who are you?" he queried.

"My name is Dick Morris." Dick gave the first name that came to his mind.

"Humph. What are you doing here?"

"Nothing. Just sitting here."

"Why are you sitting here?" Dick believed the soldier was suspicious of him.

"I'm resting," replied the youth.

"Resting, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"What made you tired?"

"I have come quite a distance. I walked here from nearly twenty miles east, and I'm resting in the shade, before continuing my journey. No objection is there?"

"Humph. Where are you bound for?"

"Over on the shore of the bay."

"What are you going there for?"

"To work for a man, sir."

"Who?"

"An old fisherman."

"Humph. You seem to be interested in the army, yonder, judging by the way you were looking that way when I came up."

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, quietly. "When one has never seen an army before, it does interest one."

The redcoat eyed Dick searchingly.

"I'm almost inclined to believe that you are not what you make out yourself to be," he said, after a few moments.

"Why so, sir?" Dick opened his eyes as if surprised and puzzled and looked at the soldier inquiringly.

"Because-in these times of war, it is often the case that anyone like yourself may turn out to be a spy."

"A spy?" exclaimed Dick, assuming a most astonished expression.

"Yes, and you may be a spy for all I know."

Dick shook his head. "Oh, no, you've got another guess," he said. He felt that he was doing no wrong in denying being a spy, to a British soldier.

"I'm not so sure of it," was the stubborn reply. "I think that I shall have to take you into camp and see what General Percy has to say about the matter."

Dick's heart sank. General Percy was the officer he had seen, a few weeks before, when he had pretended to join the British force, and the officer would recognize him at once, without doubt. It would not do to permit himself to be taken into the camp, a prisoner. It would result disastrously, as he would likely be shot as a spy, for it was known that he had rescued the patriot prisoners out of the old prison-ship in the bay, and he would be handled severely. Even though only a boy in years, he had proven himself capable of doing a man's work.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that, if I were you," said Dick, calmly.

The soldier smiled grimly. "I suppose you do not view the matter favorably," he replied. "But, I think it my duty to take you into camp, for you may be a dangerous spy."

Dick had been doing some swift thinking, and he had made up his mind that he must not permit himself to be taken into the encampment a prisoner. He must manage in some way to prevent the soldier from accomplishing this. The only way, so far as he could see, was to engage the soldier in a struggle, and overpower him, and as the redcoat looked a pretty husky fellow, this would likely not be an easy thing to accomplish. But Dick was more than ordinarily strong, and he was quick and athletic, and a good wrestler, and he believed he could overpower the soldier. He felt confident he could do so, if he could succeed in taking the redcoat by surprise.

Dick, busy thinking, made no reply to the redcoat's last remark, and the soldier, after waiting a few moments, said sharply: "Get up, young fellow."

Dick rose to his feet, slowly and quietly. His actions were such as would cause the redcoat to think he did not contemplate offering any resistance, and this was done purposely, so as to throw the redcoat off his guard. And it worked that way, for the soldier, with a careless wave of the hand, said:

"March along in front of me to the encampment, young fellow. We'll see what General Percy thinks about you."

But Dick did not march, as ordered to do. Instead, he suddenly leaped upon the amazed soldier, and seizing him by the throat, so as to prevent his crying out, tripped him, throwing him to the ground heavily, and then, seated astride the redcoat's body, and holding him pinned to the earth in spite of his struggles.

The soldier was a pretty strong man, but he had been taken at a disadvantage and by surprise, and so was not in a position to exercise his full powers, and the result was, that although only a youth of eighteen years, Dick managed to choke the soldier into a state of insensibility in a very few minutes.

And then, when confident that the redcoat was unconscious, Dick let go his hold, and proceeded to bind the redcoat's hands and feet, and gag him. This accomplished, the youth dragged the soldier into the deepest and thickest clump of bushes and concealed him there, so that in case any soldiers came to the timber, later on, they would not discover his presence.

Having accomplished this task, Dick sat down beside the tree and drew a long breath of relief and satisfaction.

"There, that turned out all right, after all," he murmured. "But, I thought at first that I might be taken into camp a prisoner, and that would have been bad indeed."

Dick looked toward the encampment keenly, as he spoke, and noted that all was quiet there, and that none of the soldiers were as yet evincing any disposition to visit the clump of timber.

At least an hour passed, and then Dick saw a couple of soldiers leave the encampment and come toward the timber. As soon as he was certain they were coming to loll in the shade of the trees, Dick climbed the tree. From there he could hear the conversation of the redcoats, and there was not much chance that they would discover his presence, the foliage in the tree as has been noted, being quite thick.

The two soldiers entered the edge of the timber and seated themselves under a tree close to the one Dick was in, and sat there, smoking and talking, their conversation being mainly personal, as had been the case with the two that had been there in the forenoon. But, after a while they got to talking about the army, and finally touched upon the very matter that Dick wish to hear discussed. In a general way they commented upon the bustle, stir and preparation that indicated some important move.

"I'm glad of it," remarked one. "I am getting tired of being cooped up in camp. I'd rather do some marching and fighting."

"So would I. Well, I think it likely that we will have fighting to do in a few days, if the colonel knew what he was talking about, and I suppose he did."

"He had the news from General Percy?"

"I suppose so. The general was over to the main encampment yesterday, you know, and likely they held a council of war and decided to make an attack."

Dick was straining every nerve to hear distinctly.

Just then a groan sounded, from amid the clump of bushes in which Dick had placed the soldier he had overpowered. The soldiers heard it, and looked at each other wonderingly and inquiringly and then gazed keenly toward the clump of bushes. Dick had heard the groan also, and his heart sank, for he thought that if the soldiers found and released the other redcoat, a search might be instituted for him, and result in his discovery and capture.

"What does that mean, comrade?" remarked one of the soldiers.

"Somebody groaned," was the reply. "Let's take a look in that clump of bushes and see who is there, and what ails him."

They leaped to their feet, and drawing pistols, strode to the edge of the clump of bushes, and stooping, pushed their way through between the bushes. A few moments later Dick heard an exclamation from the lips of one of the soldiers, and knew they had discovered the bound redcoat. The youth had thought of slipping down out of the tree and trying to make his escape, but did not do so, for he realized that the chances were that he would be seen and either shot or captured. So he decided to remain where he was, and risk being discovered.

A few minutes later the three redcoats emerged from amid the bushes, the two having freed the redcoat from his bonds. They paused underneath the tree Dick was in, and the redcoat explained about his encounter with and capture by the person he had suspected of being a spy and had intended to march into the camp, a prisoner. To Dick's amusement, the redcoat described him as being a big, ferocious-looking fellow, a six-footer, and very strong. Evidently the soldier did not want his comrades to know that he had been overpowered and made a prisoner by a youth of eighteen years, and smaller than himself.

"I suppose the rascally spy isn't still in this clump of timber, eh?" remarked one of the soldiers, with a glance around.

"No, not likely," was the reply of the one who had been made a prisoner. "Probably he got away from here as quickly as possible, after making a prisoner of me."

"Luckily he was not here to listen to what we were saying," remarked one, and he looked significantly at the other who agreed.

Then one suggested that they go into the encampment and make a report of the affair to the general. The other two assented to this proposition, and they at once left the clump of trees and made their way to the encampment.

Dick was eager, now, to get away from there.

He felt that he had important if not really definite information and wished to get it to General Washington as quickly as possible. He knew that he might succeed in getting away from the clump of timber without being discovered, but again there was a chance that he would be seen

and captured, and so he decided to wait till nightfall, when he could slip away in safety, and without being in any danger of being seen. True, the redcoats might come and search the clump of timber, for the spy the soldier had had the encounter with, but the youth did not believe they would do so, as they would not think him likely to linger thereabouts after having had the struggle with the British soldier there.

So Dick remained in the timber, and the result justified his judgment, for the soldiers did not come out again to make a search. Evidently it was thought that the spy had taken his departure.

When night came, Dick slipped away and started in the direction of the patriot encampment on Brooklyn Heights. He reached there in safety, a couple of hours later, and at once went to headquarters and made his report, General Washington being there, conferring with General Putnam.

When Dick told them of the unwonted activities in the British lines they were well pleased, and said that if an attack were made they would be able to hold their position on the Heights, in spite of the superior numbers of the enemy.

Next day preparations were begun for the reception of the British, and all was done that could be to make it possible to offer strong and successful battle to the enemy. Then the patriots waited, as patiently as possible for the coming of the British, who might now come at any time. The days dragged slowly by, however, and it was not until the morning of the 27th of August that the British advanced to attack. Seated in their quarters on the Heights, Dick, Tom and Ben, and the other soldiers were discussing the matter and wishing that the redcoats would do something, when suddenly the rattle of musketry was heard, coming from down on the Narrows road, near the bay, where General Stirling's division was stationed.

"To arms!" at once shouted General Putnam. "The British are beginning the attack!"

Instantly all was excitement. The soldiers grabbed their muskets and took their places, ready for battle, and down where Stirling's force was there sounded the rattle of musketry, as volleys were exchanged. It was indeed exciting, and Dick, Tom and Ben, their eyes shining, could scarcely contain themselves. They wanted to be at the front, helping fight the redcoats.

"Say, Dick, ask General Putnam to let us go down there," pleaded Ben Foster. "I want to help fight the redcoats!"

"Yes, do ask him, Dick," urged Tom. "I can't stand staying here, doing nothing, when there is fighting going on. Get him to let us go down there."

"All right, I'll try," said Dick. "I would like it myself. But, I'm afraid he won't be willing to let us go."

"Ask him, anyway," said Tom.

"I will," and Dick hastened to General Putnam and made his wish known.

General Putnam listened, but shook his head. "No, I can't permit you to go down there," he said. "You must stay here with your company. If it should go, of course you would go too. But I don't think it will leave the works."

Dick nodded, a disappointed look on his face.

"Very well, sir," he said, and turning, started to rejoin his comrades.

"It is possible that I may make use of you boys as messengers during the battle, Dick," the general said. He had noted the disappointed look on the youth's face, and doubtless thought the idea of being used as messengers would please the boys.

It evidently pleased Dick, for he turned a beaming face toward the general and said: "Thank you, General Putnam. If you have any messages to send to the commanders of the other forces, at the front, we will be glad to take them."

"Very well, Dick. It is likely that I shall want to send some messages. You boys hold yourselves in readiness to take them."

"We will do so, sir."

Then Dick hastened back to his comrades and told them the result of the interview. They were slightly disappointed because of not being permitted to go and join the troops already engaged in fighting the British, but were pleased with the idea of being sent to the commanders with orders.

"I hope General Putnam will have a lot of messages to send," said Tom Dare, his eyes shining with excitement.

"So do I," said Ben Foster.

Chapter XVI

The Battle of Long Island

Down on the Narrows Road, General Stirling's force was holding its own against the British. The patriot soldiers were steady and calm, and loaded and fired regularly and with considerable effect, and had fortune gone well with Sullivan's division, the Continental soldiers would probably have won the battle. But General Sullivan, stationed on the hills south of Bedford, was attacked fiercely in front by a strong force of British, and another force under Generals Howe and Cornwallis, having marched around to the north of this position, by way of the Jamaica Road, attacked Sullivan from the rear, and his force, thus caught between two fires, was driven back and forth among the trees, with disastrous results.

General Putnam, watching the battle from the Heights, through his glass, saw that Sullivan was in difficulties and in danger of capture, and he decided to send a message to Stirling, warning him of this fact, and ordering him to retreat toward the Heights as quickly as

possible-for as soon as Sullivan's force was overpowered, the British would sweep on across the fields and fall upon the rear of Stirling's force and capture it. So, having written a brief note, General Putnam summoned Dick Dare.

"Do you think you can find General Stirling?" the general asked.

"I think so, sir," was the reply.

"He is over on Narrows Road. You will know him, because he will be mounted on a large bay horse. Get to him as quickly as possible, and hand him this message," and he gave Dick the slip of paper.

"I will do so, General Putnam," said Dick, firmly.

"Very good. Now hurry. Get there as quickly as possible."

Dick hastened away, running swiftly, and as he passed where Tom and Ben were stationed, he called out: "I'm taking a message to General Stirling."

"Good for you," cried Ben.

"Go it," from Tom.

Dick vaulted over the breastworks and then ran down the slope at the top of his speed.

"I'm a messenger from General Putnam," he called to the sentinel, as he approached the soldier on duty partway down the slope, and then on he dashed, without slackening speed in the least.

Soon he was in among the trees and out of sight of the patriot soldiers on the Heights. He knew the direction to go in order to reach General Stirling, and he headed in that direction and kept up his speed.

Dick heard the firing over to his left, and knew this was where General Sullivan was having such a hot fight with the enemy. The youth would pass within two or three hundred yards of the left wing of the attacking British, and he kept a sharp lookout in that direction, for he did not want to get shot by any of the British soldiers.

Presently he caught sight of the right wing of Sullivan's force, and saw the patriot soldiers firing at the British as rapidly as possible, and then he saw the redcoats, who were attacking the patriots from both the front and the rear.

Dick wished that he might be able to help the patriot soldiers fight the British, but he had business of his own to attend to, and so he kept onward, running at the top of his speed.

Suddenly, however, when he was perhaps halfway to the point where General Stirling's army was fighting so bravely, he was given a surprise, and a most unpleasant one-for he found himself confronted by a force of British soldiers, which was making a flank movement, with the intention, doubtless, of falling upon Sullivan's right wing. Doubtless another force was executing a similar movement on the opposite side, to attack Sullivan's left wing, and when this movement

was finished, the soldiers under Sullivan would be surrounded.

Dick halted instantly, on catching sight of the approaching soldiers. He had seen them while still they were a couple of hundred yards distant, they being easy to see owing to the brilliant red of their coats, which stood out plainly between the trees. He wondered if he had been seen. If not, it might be possible to escape capture by hiding-if a hiding-place could be found. If he were to turn to the right and run in that direction, with the purpose of getting around the end of this advancing force, he would be almost certain to be seen and either shot down or captured. Evidently, therefore, the proper thing for him to do was to hide if he could find a place of concealment.

But could he do this? He glanced around him, eagerly and anxiously. He was determined to get through the British ranks and deliver the message to General Stirling, if such a thing were possible. It would never do to fail in the very first work that he was given to do in a battle with the British. No, he must reach General Stirling. General Putnam had shown confidence in Dick, and the youth was not going to give the general reason to think his confidence had been misplaced.

But, where could he hide? While pondering this matter, Dick was standing behind a larger tree, and on glancing around this tree, to see how close the redcoats were, the youth noted an interesting fact: The tree was hollow. There was an opening at least two feet high by a foot and a half wide, at the bottom, but halfway around to the other side. In order to enter this opening, Dick would have to take the chance of being seen by the approaching British soldiers.

It seemed to be his only chance, however, for he could not hope to run around the end of the force and escape without being shot down, and to remain where he was would be to be discovered the instant the soldiers came up to him.

This being settled, Dick did not hesitate, but acted at once. He dropped to the ground, and lying on his stomach, wriggled his way around the tree-trunk, much after the fashion of a huge snake. He glanced toward the approaching redcoats, and while he could see them plainly, they being within seventy-five yards of him, they had not as yet, he felt certain, discovered him. This gave him courage, and quickly he reached the opening and crawled through it and into the hollow within.

Crouching back as far from the opening as possible, Dick waited anxiously for the coming of the British soldiers. Had they seen him as he crawled through the opening? Would he be hauled out of the hollow tree and made a prisoner? Dick could not say. All he could do was to wait and see what would happen. If the redcoats had seen him, he would certainly be captured, but if they had not, then he stood a chance of escaping discovery, and when they passed, he could continue on his way and deliver the message to General Stirling. How Dick wished that this might be the case!

The moments that intervened before the redcoats reached the vicinity of the tree were anxious ones for Dick. He sat there, crouching back as far as possible from the opening, and waited, and as he heard the footsteps and voices of the British soldiers, his heart came up into his throat.

It was indeed a critical moment. It was a situation to try the nerve of the bravest person.

Louder sounded the footsteps, plainer the voices of the redcoats. Closer and closer the soldiers came, and then some of them appeared opposite the opening. Dick's heart was in his mouth. He held his breath and wondered if some of the redcoats would stop and haul him out from his hiding-place. But no, nothing of the kind occurred. It was now evident that he had not been seen as he was entering the hollow tree, and the redcoats merely walked past, without looking through the opening, and Dick was not discovered.

Eagerly and thankfully he saw the soldiers pass, and when they had all gone by, and had gotten perhaps fifty yards beyond, he stuck his head out through the opening and took a look after his enemies. They were walking swiftly onward, their faces to the front. Not one was looking back, and deeming it was safe, Dick crawled out of his hiding-place, and heaving a sigh of relief, he again set out in the direction of the point where Stirling's force was giving such valiant battle to the British.

On Dick ran, at top speed, and presently he emerged upon the Narrows Road, and caught sight of the patriot force, and also of the British. The battle between these two divisions of the armies was still going on, and Dick quickly caught sight of General Stirling, who was seated on his big bay charger, watching the progress of the battle.

Dick hastened up to the general, and saluting, said: "I have message for you, General Stirling, from General Putnam."

General Stirling took the message and quickly read the few words written there.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Sullivan is in sore straits, being attacked from both front and rear, and I must retreat, or my force will be treated to the same fate."

Then he turned to Dick, and said: "Tel General Putnam I will begin retreating toward the Heights at once."

"Yes, General Stirling," said Dick, and then he moved away, in the direction from which he had come, while General Stirling gave the order for his force to beat a retreat. They obeyed, though reluctantly, for they did not know that Sullivan's force was practically in the hands of the British, and so could not understand why the order to retreat was given. They knew there was a strong force of redcoats over to their left hand, however, and so they kept a sharp lookout in that direction as they fell back. They were attacked from that side, by a part of the force, and General Stirling, while fighting valiantly, was surrounded and made a prisoner.

Dick, from quite a distance, saw the capture of General Stirling, and he remained where he was for a little while, until he saw that the main force under Stirling succeeded in getting past the British and were coming toward the Heights, which they would undoubtedly succeed in reaching, and then he turned and hastened on up to the Heights, and made his way to General Putnam.

"I delivered the message to General Stirling, sir," the youth said, "and he told me to say to you that he would begin a retreat at once."

"Very well, Dick," said Putnam. "You did well to deliver the message."

"I saw his force retreating, sir, from down the slope a ways," went on Dick, "and I saw some of the redcoats make a prisoner of General Stirling."

"So you say, my boy?" exclaimed Putnam. "That is bad. Well, it cannot be helped. But, I think the major portion of his force will succeed in reaching the Heights."

"Yes, I think so, General Putnam. The soldiers are coming steadily, and have got past the main part of the British force."

"Thanks for the information, Dick," said the general, and then the youth rejoined his comrades at the breastworks. Tom and Ben had many questions to ask, and he told them briefly the story of his trip with the despatch.

The soldiers of Stirling's force reached and entered the works on the Heights by the time Dick had finished his story, and the battle of Long Island was practically ended, the firing ceasing very soon afterwards.

The British army now advanced till in front of Brooklyn Heights, but it did not attempt to storm the defenses. Doubtless General Howe remembered Bunker Hill, and felt that a repetition of that experience would be disastrous to the king's cause.

General Washington sent over two thousand more soldiers, from New York, which made the force ten thousand strong within the patriot works of Brooklyn Heights, and he was positive, as was General Putnam also, that the Heights could be held, that if the British made an attack it would be disastrous for them.

The action of General Howe showed that he thought so too, for instead of getting ready to attack, he stretched his force around the Heights, from the East River on the north to the East River again, on the south, in a semicircle, and it was plain that his intention was to establish a siege.

General Washington realized at once that it would not do to stay on Brooklyn Heights, under such circumstances, for if the British fleet were to come up the East River and cut off the patriot army's retreat in that direction, the only result possible would be the surrender of the Continental army on the Heights. As he had no intention of surrendering, he decided to evacuate the position, and that night all the boats that could be gathered together were secured and the patriot army was removed across the river to New York. Also all the arms, ammunitions, provisions of every kind, and the heavy artillery, were ferried over. Nothing was left, and when next morning the British looked up at the works on the Heights, they were amazed to see no signs of life there-for so silently and cautiously had the patriots worked during the night that the British had not gotten an inkling of the movement. The redcoats pushed up the hill, and climbed over the works, only to stare around in dismay. Nothing was left of the big army that had been there only the evening before.

This achievement of General Washington, this wonderful feat of withdrawing an entire army of ten thousand men, with all the arms, including heavy artillery, and the ammunitions and provisions from right under the very nose of the enemy, and without the enemy even suspecting what was going on, will always be considered one of the greatest triumphs of generalship the world has ever known. This feat, when it became known in England, caused some of the greatest soldiers, and generals, and over in Europe as well, to shake their heads and declare that General Washington was a commander who would cause the British a great deal of trouble. And after events proved that they were right in their prophecies.

General Putnam must have told General Washington about Dick Dare having carried a message practically through the lines of the British, to General Stirling, during the battle of Long Island, for the commander-in-chief, happening to see Dick the day after the army took up quarters in New York, spoke to him about the matter, and complimented him on having successfully delivered the message, thus probably saving Stirling's force from capture.

To say that Dick was well pleased at receiving words of praise from the lips of the commander-in-chief is stating it mildly. And when he told Tom and Ben what General Washington had said, they were well pleased also, and declared that the commander-in-chief should have cause to be satisfied with all three of them many times before the end of the war, and, as friends will find, if they read the succeeding volume of the Dare Boys Series, which will be entitled, "The Dare Boys on The Hudson," the brothers kept their word, and performed many, many wonderful deeds of daring while fighting for Liberty.

The British commander-in-chief now put in a week trying to get the patriot commander-in-chief to agree to peace, he stating that the king would make certain concessions, but as in accordance with the Declaration of Independence this was not to be thought of for a moment, the interviews came to naught, and so the British commander-in-chief began making preparations to continue the war. His next move, undoubtedly would be to capture New York City, and General Washington knew this would be an easy matter, so he made preparations to retreat to Harlem Heights, on the banks of the Hudson at the north end of Manhattan Island, where he would occupy a strategic position.

On the fifteenth of September the British made the move that was expected. Warships from Admiral Howe's fleet ascended the Hudson river as far as Bloomingdale, and the East River as far as Blackwell's Island, and while they bombarded the north end of the island, General Howe brought his army across from Brooklyn in boats, and landed at Kipp's Bay, near what is now the foot of 34th Street.

General Washington came down from the Heights with two brigades of patriot soldiers, with the purpose of holding the British in check long enough for General Putnam to evacuate the lower part of the city with the four thousand soldiers under him at that point. This was accomplished, and when Putnam and his men were safe on the Heights, the two brigades retired to the Heights also. The British then took possession of New York City, and so the two armies lay, the Continental on the Heights and the British in the city, confronting each other, on Manhattan Island.

It was an interesting situation, and especially so to Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster, who were now just beginning to feel that they were soldiers in the patriot army.

One evening, a few days after the British took possession of New York and the patriots took up their station on Harlem Heights, the commander-in-chief of the patriot army made the soldiers a stirring speech, as they were assembled at the center of the encampment, saying that he expected each and every soldier to do his full duty, and support the cause of Liberty with his life if need be. The speech made a great impression on Dick, Tom and Ben, and when they went to their quarters, they were enthusiastic about it.

"I'll tell you what, boys," said Tom Dare, "it was wonderful, the way General Washington talked, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Tom," agreed Dick, "and we'll come up to his expectations, too, or know the reason why."

And in enthusiastic unison Tom and Ben exclaimed:

"Yes, yes! That we will, Dick!"

And when the time came, they kept their word.

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