

A TIGHT SQUEEZE.

BY AN EX-REBEL.

When General Meade fell back from Mine Run, in the fall of 1863, he went into winter quarters between the Rapidan and the Rappahannock, on his old grounds. This was about December 1. On the 15th of the month I received orders to cross the river, penetrate his camp and pick up all possible information.

It was understood that he was sending troops off west, and I was particularly charged to discover if there was any foundation in the report.

I left the rebel cavalry outpost at 10 o'clock one night, being on foot and wearing a blue uniform throughout. There was about a mile of neutral ground between outposts, and when I had crept under the highway almost to the Union videttes I took to the fields and flanked 'em. I knew every rod of that country, and passing the vidette was a matter of no trouble.

It was when I reached the first line of sentinels that I had to go keener. It was now midnight, and winter had set in. There was no snow, but the wind was cold and the ground frozen. It so happened that I struck a part of French's corps. Knowing that Lee was going into winter quarters, and knowing that a strong picket was out, the sentinels were not over watchful. I crept up until I located two, and both were muffled up against the cold and thinking more of keeping warm than of looking for spies. While I was waiting for a chance to skulk in, the two came together and stood talking, and this gave me the show I wanted. I riz up from the cold ground, bore off a little to the right, and entered the gap without being seen. In ten minutes more I was among the tents and shanties.

I must find a place to pass the night. It was too cold to go prowling round, saying nothing of the danger to be incurred. I walked up one street and down another, looking for a place to stop myself away; and by-and-by I saw a soldier come out of a tent and go off. I reasoned that he was on guard, and had come to his tent on some errand, and I was probably right.

It was half-tent, half-shanty, with a fire-place in it. I crept in at the door, and found a fire going and three men asleep under the blankets. There was a heap of wood at the back, and the best I could do was to stir up the fire and hover over it. I didn't mean to fall asleep; that is, I was bound and determined to keep awake, but I had no sooner got fairly warmed through than I went off to the land of Nod, and the next thing I knew it was daylight.

None of the chaps under the blankets were awake, and I slipped out without disturbing 'em. Everything would have been all right 'cept for a man in a tent across the street. He had come out after wood, and was standing there as I appeared. As both tents belonged to the same company, and as all the men in each company knew each other, it was only natural that I, a perfect stranger, should attract his attention. Further, it was just as natural that he should suspect me of being a thief. He was a sour-faced, beetle-browed chap, and the minut I looked into his eyes I knew we should have a row.

"Ah! I caught you!" he growled as I faced him.

"At what?" I coolly asked.

"Stealing, of course?"

"You are wrong. I went in there to get warm."

"Who be you?"

"George Smith."

"What regiment?"

"Sixth Maine."

I wasn't answering at random. I knew that the Sixth Maine was in the fight at Rappahannock Station, about a month before, because I had talked with some prisoners.

"Where's your regiment?" he asked.

"That's what I'm looking for," I replied. "I was took by the rebels fifteen days ago, and have just escaped and come in."

I answered him so promptly, and told such a straight story, that he could have no suspicions, and I might have got away but for an accident. He had brought out his coffee-pot, and in moving away I fell over it. He was aching for as much with somebody, and that was a good excuse. He jumped for me without a word. I returned his blow, and then we clinched and fought up and down the street.

I was getting the best of him, when we fell upon and wrecked a tent and began to draw a crowd. In five minutes there were fifty men around us, and pretty soon an officer came up, separates us and asks:

"What is this row about?"

"I caught the chap stealing," sings out my opponent.

"He lies!"

"Who are you?" asks the officer.

"Private George Smith, of the Sixth Maine."

"Where's your regiment?"

"Don't know, sir. I was captured by the 'rebs,' got away and am looking for my regiment."

"When did you come in?"

"Last night."

"How did you pass all the outposts and sentinels?"

He had me there. I had as good as betrayed myself by that one answer. "I'll see to your case," he growled, and he called the guard and had me marched off. The guard-house was a log stable, and as soon as he reached it I was stripped and searched. The next move was to hunt up the Sixth Maine and discover that I did not belong to that regiment. I was then taken to corps headquarters and questioned.

I changed my line of defence, claiming to be a deserter from the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth New York, who was voluntarily coming back to his regiment, but the next day the Colonel of that regiment came to look at me, and he pronounced me a liar and an impostor.

consumed about two weeks. I was pretty comfortably fixed in the barn, but so zealously guarded that there was no possible show for escape. The papers had been sent off, and I was daily expecting to hear their approval, when, one night just before dusk, the chaplain of a Pennsylvania regiment came in to console me. He was about my size and age with the same colored hair, and the minut I saw him I grasped at a plan. When we had talked a little I asked him:

"How did you get in?"

"Why, I showed my pass to the guard," he answered.

"That was all I desired to know. He talked for about a quarter of an hour, and I made him promise to come, and see me next evening at the same hour. He advised me to give up all hope and make my peace with God, and I gave him to understand that I might be more contrite on his next visit.

I tell you, that next day seemed a week long. I had a plan, and it promised success. When the day did begin to fade away I was so nervous and excited that I could not keep still. The chaplain came in just at dark, and as he grasped my hand, he said:

"The papers have come back, and you must prepare to die!"

"Pray for me!" says I.

He knelt right down, and he had scarcely uttered a word when I had him by the throat. It was so sudden, and I had such a grip on him, that he scarcely kicked. I didn't want to kill him, but I choked him until he was like a rag. Then I off with his coat, vest and pants, and was into 'em before he showed signs of coming to. It was too soon to go out, and I choked him some more.

Poor man! I felt powerful sorry to do him such injury, but my life was at stake. In about twenty minutes I felt it was safe to go out. I dragged him into a corner, sat him up on end, and then knocked on the door. It was opened at once, and as I squeezed out the guard shut it without even glancing in.

How is he, chaplain?" asks the guard as he looks the door.

"Resigned, poor man," I answers, and off I goes.

As I afterwards learned, I had a good hour's start. I didn't head for the river, as might be expected, but for the north, and it was over a month before I saw Lee's lines again. A Washington paper had a long story about my escape, and it said I would have bin shot next day, and that the chaplain would be laid up for a month.

Mr. Brown's Experience.

I went to the skating rink the other night. I didn't tell anyone I was going, not even my wife. I knew if I did she would want to go, too, and as I intended to try skating I preferred to make my debut unattended by my friends and relatives. So I told Mary Ann—that's my wife—that I was going to prayer-meeting. She looked rather surprised—but for I am not generally a regular attendant—but at once laid aside her sewing and announced her intention of accompanying me. I saw that wouldn't do, and so when she appeared a few minutes later with cloak and bonnet I assumed an air of tone and said: "I declare, Mary Ann, I have a pressing business engagement for this evening which has entirely slipped my mind. However," seeing her countenance fall, "I'll go round by the church and leave you at prayer-meeting." She looked rather grieved and disappointed, and altogether so innocent that I almost repented and mentally called myself a brute for deceiving the dear little woman so, but I had determined to go to the rink, so I quieted my conscience by registering solemnly that just as soon as I had learned to skate I would take her along with me—to look on. Well, after leaving my wife at the church door, I brought up at the skating rink in due time. I somewhat timidly took my place among the skaters on the floor, but as I watched their graceful evolutions, and noted the apparent ease with which it was performed, I boldly struck out. I immediately—if not sooner—struck something else, too. It was the floor. Yes, I sat down a little more "forever than elegant."

My head flew back and my jaws snapped together like a turtle catching a fly. The sudden concussion set my brain in a whirl, but after two or three vain efforts, and gasping at the empty air, I righted myself. By this time the perspiration was starting from every pore, but I wasn't going to be discouraged by one fall; so, after relieving myself of my coat, I cautiously started in again. I thought this time I would go slow and easy like till I got accustomed to the motion; but, bless you, the moment these rollers got the least little encouragement to start away they went like chain lightning, and you either had to keep up with them or you would be most unceremoniously left behind. I got left. So did several other fellows. At about 12 o'clock that night I reached my own door. With the assistance of a policeman and a cane I had managed to hobble there from the doctor's office, despite his earnest entreaties to call an ambulance. My wife—unsuspecting little woman—is in a constant state of worriment lest I have another attack of acute inflammatory rheumatism. I don't think I shall—not this fall.

He Might Have Stolen \$100,000.

After a brief pause, the banker who had told no story said: "I can tell you a true story of a young broker's clerk who, from deliberate honesty, threw away an opportunity to steal \$100,000, when he knew that he would never be detected. When George I. Seney was speculating heavily in railroad securities, he had a large amount of bonds hypotheated with a first-class Wall street firm. The bonds were to have access to them every six months for the purpose of clipping the coupons. The clerk was known to the broker's firm. One day when he dropped in to cut off some coupons the hypotheated securities were handed to him, and he was left in one compartment of the office. The firm, of course, retained in its possession a list of all the hypotheated securities, which it was accustomed to compare with the securities returned by the clerk. On this particular occasion the clerk found folded in Mr. Seney's package other good negotiable bonds of the value of \$100,000. They had evidently got mixed up with Mr. Seney's securities through one of those unexplainable mistakes that happen very rarely in brokers' offices.

"The clerk cut off the coupons that he had come after and restored the package

of securities to a representative of the firm. The extra \$100,000 of bonds had been slipped into the clerk's coat pocket. Mr. Seney's securities were compared one by one with the check list and found to be all right.

"Is everything there?" asked the clerk.

"Oh, yes," said the broker, as he prepared to put away the box. "Everything is as straight as a string."

"You are sure that there were no other bonds in that box?"

"Perfectly," answered the broker with a confident air. "We never get things mixed here."

"Well, how about this \$100,000 of bonds?" asked the clerk, drawing the extra securities from his pocket. The broker recognized them instantly, and mentioned the name of the person to whom they belonged. His astonishment knew no bounds when the clerk told him where the bonds had been found. The broker said that he would have sworn in court that those identical bonds were in a certain place in his private safe. The clerk was asked to accept \$100 as a souvenir of the occasion, but he declined.

"That fellow will get away with a million yet," said the brisk, nutty banker, as he put on his hat and started for the car. —New York Times.

How Bert Harter Lost \$10,000.

When Bert Harter came East in the first flush of his California fame, and New York and Boston were bidding for his work, Chicago undertook to waylay him and secure the prize for herself. To this end a dozen rich and prominent Chicagoans arranged for an elaborate dinner, with Harter as the principal guest. The dinner, in truth, was given on his account, to induce him to cast his lot in the Garden City. As an insurer of their purpose they put under his plate an accepted check for \$10,000. The hour came, and the company, with one exception—the exception being the chief guest. The dinner was delayed, the dishes cooled and the gentlemen warmed with impatience and vexation. Still they thought that he would arrive at the last moment, or at least send some word of explanation. It was nearly 10 o'clock when they sat down, having despaired of his presence. To this day he has never offered any excuse for his staying away. But the reason was, I have been told, that Mrs. Harter had not been invited, at which she took grave offense, communicating her temper to her husband. The fact that it was entirely a man's dinner, where any woman would have been as much out of place as in a bar room, seemed not to have occurred to either of them. It is possible that Harter may not have needed any pretext for violating a formal engagement. He has often done the same thing in the East without breaking silence as to the cause. Why, it is impossible to define, for he is usually very amiable and polite, a delightful fellow socially. Extreme and unpardonable rudeness on grand occasions must be set down as one of the idiosyncrasies of genius.

The Chicagoans who had contributed the \$10,000 were, naturally enough, very angry at Harter for his gross incivility and kept their money. No further effort was made to prevail upon him to remain in the Northwest and he continued his journey East. —[Philadelphia Times.

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