

CONFESSIONS



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XVI.—CONTINUED.

"Now, see here," I said with a certain composure that would occasionally surprise me by breaking the rapid current of my speech...

"If we can find a boat, we had better go up the river. When they come here they'll probably think we have crossed at any rate, there will be three ways for them to track us across, down and up the river, and they won't know which we have taken. If we can reach Doughty's ford, where we crossed when we came, we will have a straight road home."

"But we must leave our horses, and we'll need them when we take to land again."

"I can walk from the upper ford," said Margaret, "if we can only get there; I've walked there and back from home often. It's only five miles."

"All right, and now for a skiff. Plunk, you go down stream, and I'll go up. But there must be a limit to our search; neither of us had better be away more than ten minutes. If we're not successful within that time we'll abandon the plan."

"Plunk went off on his search with more speed than I had ever before seen in his deliberate person. Margaret wished to dismount, and I helped her to the ground, tied her horse to a sapling, and started on my hunt up the river. I followed the high bank, looking down on the margin as I went along, but used up my ten minutes without success. Turning reluctantly, I started back to the ford hoping that Plunk had had better luck. On the way I had a path leading down to the river that had escaped my notice on my way out; following it to the brink, there in a little cove partly hidden among bushes was a rickety flat-bottomed punt, fastened to a tree by a chain and padlock. I smashed the padlock with a stone, then began to look about for the oars, which I felt must be near, and found a couple of short paddles leaning up against a tree. Getting into the punt, I shoved off shore, and a few strokes, aided by the current, took me down to the ford. Margaret was on the shore waiting, and was overjoyed to see me pulling a boat, for Plunk had returned a few moments before empty handed. He loosened his horse, and mounting, rode down to the river to let the tired beast drink.

"What are you doing?" I asked, surprised.

"For going back after that flour-bag deserter."

"You'll be captured."

"Never you mind, lieutenant. I haven't scouted ever since this war began for nothing. When I go back there I'll be somebody different from what I am."

There was no time for debate. Margaret was in the boat, seated in the stern. I began to pull up the stream.

"Good-by," I said to Plunk. "I hope you'll have to tell many lies."

"I can't see, lieutenant," called the corporal, "how y' kin rucknecle yer conscience to takin' another man's boat."

"Oh, go on," And I pulled out of hearing.

up only a short distance from the mouth. We heard one of them say something about the west shore being nearer the mark, whereupon they left the creek. Pulling out after them cautiously, we saw them making for the other side of the river.

I rowed up, skimming along the east bank, screened occasionally by overhanging trees. The boat ahead of us searched the west bank for awhile; then we heard no more of it. We felt no immediate apprehension till Margaret, who knew the river well, said that we were approaching a ferry. Believing it would be watched, we dreaded to attempt to pass it, and paused under the branches of a tree for consultation.

"I'll tell you," said Margaret. "You skulk through the woods back of the ferry to some point beyond it. I'll pull the boat up the river. If I pass the ferry I'll go to where you strike the river, and take you in."

"Where can I meet you?" She thought a moment before replying. "A mile above the ferry there is an island, midway between the upper and lower end of this island is a creek."

"On this side of the river?" "Yes; I'll meet you at the mouth of the creek."

She changed her seat and I handed her the oars. "Margaret," I said, with a bit of tremble in my voice, "good-by."

"No, no, not good-by. I'll meet you at the creek, depend upon it."

A few strokes drew her away from the bank. She stopped, rested one hand on the handles of the oars, and with the other waved me an adieu, then pulled out into the river as gracefully as a water-sprite. I watched her till I could see her no more; then a feeling of isolation came over me. My little army was scattered; the escort had probably been captured; Plunk had gone back to the confederate camp; and now Margaret had parted from me.

Skirting the base of a hill, I crossed a road, and soon after found myself on the river bank above the ferry. There, about a mile ahead, was the island, a line of low timber extending from the river westward marking the line of the creek. I walked briskly till I struck the creek at its mouth, then looked about for Margaret.

She was not there. My heart sank within me. I felt sure that if she had arrived she would make herself known, but thinking she might be hiding, waiting for me to give some signal, I called:

"Margaret." No reply. How odd one's voice sounds calling in the night at nothing! The stillness mocked me.

I sat on a log to rest, and peered down the river. I wondered what time it was. It must be near morning, but I had passed through so much since the evening before that it seemed there had been two nights instead of one. I listened for some sound that would denote pursuit, but could hear nothing. With such perfect quiet about me, it seemed impossible that I could be in imminent danger. I looked up at the moon. It wore no smile to-night; the left cheek was veiled in, and there was a ghastly look on its face.

As I sat up on all hope of Margaret's keeping her appointment, I must swim across the river and proceed on my journey. I dare not wait longer, for the morning would come, and it would be sure capture either to remain where I was or cross by daylight.

Making a bundle of my coat, waistcoat and shoes, I tied it between my shoulders with a wither of willow, then stood a moment calculating the distance to the island. I was not a good swimmer and disliked the prospect; indeed, had not the distance been broken by the island, I would not have dared to make the attempt. However, death by drowning was preferable to death by hanging, so I walked into the water.

Lord, how cold! I struck out lustily, but the current was so rapid that by the time I had gone two-thirds of the distance it had taken me pretty near the south end of the island and there was a prospect of my being carried beyond it. If so, I would have to swim the whole width of the river without a rest. But I kept my head, and taking a number of long, slow strokes soon found myself in shallow water, and walked up on dry land. Going to the extreme south end of the island I looked down the stream for Margaret. At that moment a cloud passed over the face of the moon, darkening everything.

I resolved to swim the remaining part of the river, but stood appalled at the water, which looked so black, so merciless. I went in, feeling that I was not equal to the task. My strokes did not seem to pull me forward, but I kept on till I could swim no longer. Choked by water, I sank with a piercing cry.

The next thing I knew I felt a hand grasp my collar, then another pass under my arms. After a little my head was drawn out of the water, and my two arms rested on the gunwale of a boat. I looked up and saw Margaret. "Can you hold on?" she asked. "No." "I can't get you into the boat without upsetting it."

She reached me with one hand, she clenching the painter in the bow of the boat. This she passed under my arms and fastened the end, holding my head out of water. Seeing me thus supported, she took up the oars, seated herself, and began to pull a quick stroke. It seemed but a minute before we had reached the shore and she was dragging me up to the bank. I tried to rise, but failed. "Margaret," I gasped, "how did you find me?" "I heard you cry."

"They were watching the ferry. I waited a long while for a chance to get by. If it had not been for that cloud over the moon I would not have succeeded."

"That cloud was a blessing in disguise."

I made another effort to rise, Margaret giving me a hand, and stood on my feet. A man dislikes strength supplied by a woman; I grunted my thanks in no very warm tone, but retained Margaret's hand, both because I needed its support and because I found it very pleasant standing hand in hand with her. After I had walked to and fro a bit and stamped my feet and swung my arms, I led the way back to the boat, and, getting in, was about to take my seat at the oars when Margaret stopped me.

"In the stern, please." "Who's going to pull?" "I am."

"Not with an able-bodied man in the boat, and that man a soldier."

But the men standing on my legs was too much for my overtaken strength, and feeling a tremendous buzzing in my ears, I obeyed her order, getting into the stern, and pulled by a girl, meekly assumed the ignoble duty of steering with a barrel stave.

A faint tinge of light appeared in the east. The moon, whose tipped face was sinking in the west as though it were dropping asleep after its nightly vigil, began to lose its golden hue and take on a silvery gray under the coming sunlight. There was the hush which precedes the opening of day. Here and there on either shore a bird that had not yet set out for its winter resort was chattering over its work of getting breakfast. Above us was an island, and half a mile above the island was Doughty's ferry—the ferry we sought.

Pulling into a little cove near the north end, and dragging the bow of the boat up on the over, we threw ourselves on the ground, and in five minutes were sound asleep.

We were awakened by men shouting orders, and as soon as I could raise my heavy eyelids I saw a column of confederate cavalry riding down the east bank to the river. Following the ford, their course lay directly off the island on which we were concealed. Most of their officers were on our side of the confederate ford, while the men were anything, chiefly "butternut." They splashed across the river, striking the road on the opposite side leading from the ferry.

"They're going for the plantation," I exclaimed. "Hark! What was that? Distant thunder?" "Thunder? Not in November. That was a gun, and not a morning gun either. My God's, it's afternoon! There's a fight going on somewhere."

"Another gun." "Off to the west, in the direction of the plantation. I see how it is. They're attacking Wilton, or the general, if he is there."

By this time the cavalry had reached the road on the west bank, and soon after the last files disappeared behind the hills.

"I think we had better pull for the west ferry," said Margaret. "They're doubtless going to join in the fight, and we'll have little difficulty in following the road in their wake."

Launching our boat, we pulled to the west shore, striking it a short distance below the ferry. I climbed the eminence, and saw that the coast was clear.

"All right," I said, returning to Margaret. "There's no obstacle in sight; we can take to the land and let the boat go. Good-by, old skiff," and I pushed it out into the stream. "You have served us well."

"Good-by," said Margaret. "Go back to your owner and tell him how thankful we are to you for your use. Say we're sorry we couldn't have asked permission to take you."

The boat nodded, as it rode the waves, as if to say: "Good-by. I'll take your message." Just then the booming, which had ceased, recommenced. "A parting salute," I remarked. "Let us be getting on."

Rounding the base of the hill, we soon found ourselves in the road—the road we had ourselves in a few days before. Being now in a valley extending in the direction of the plantation, the booming was more distinct. "I'm afraid those are rebel guns," I said. "If so, our men are hard pressed."

THE TEACHERS MEET

The Thirteenth Annual Assembly Highly Successful.

Over Three Hundred Teachers in Attendance. Excellent Papers on Timely Topics by Some of the State's Best Known Educators.

The thirteenth annual meeting of the North Dakota Educational Association, which convened at Grand Forks, December 27, was the most successful in the history of the organization. It was first organized with a mere handful; now the enrollment numbers over 300. The meeting of the general association was called to order by E. J. Taylor, the retiring president, and the divine blessing was invoked by Rev. W. P. MacVey, pastor of the first M. E. church of Grand Forks. Hon. Tracy R. Bangs was introduced, and, on behalf of the people of Grand Forks, bade the assembled teachers a hearty welcome to the city.

President Stockwell addressed the assembly, touching the progress and enlargement of educational matters, not alone in the state, but throughout the country.

After the social half hour Miss Fannie C. Amidon, of Valley City, sang two solos in a most charming manner. She has a voice both sweet and powerful and her two numbers were heartily appreciated by those present.

The paper of the progress and enlargement of educational matters, not alone in the state, but throughout the country, was read by Mrs. B. Scanlon of Fargo, on "Modern Education of Women" was a very able effort and was listened to with great interest.

The last paper of the afternoon session was read by Prof. Danphy, of the Ellendale schools, and was a brief but very clear and concise treatise on normal training.

A committee on resolutions was appointed by President Stockwell, consisting of Supt. P. S. Berg, of the general association; President Merrifield, of the College and Normal section; Supt. E. L. Whitney, of the High School section; Prof. S. K. Kendrick, of the Elementary department; County Supt. L. B. Fancher, County Superintendent's department.

The College and Normal section was called to order by President Carhart, of the Mayville Normal school, who read a paper on "The Test of Educational Matters."

President Carhart was followed by Miss Emily K. Reynolds, a member of the university faculty, who read a paper on "Art in Education." The excellence of this paper was so marked that it was unanimously resolved to request that it be read before the general assembly by accident.

In the business session a nominating committee was appointed, consisting of Prof. Squires of the university, Prof. Willard of the Mayville Normal, Prof. Mayville of the Normal school, Prof. Bachman of the Valley City Normal, Prof. Carhart of the Mayville Normal, President Robertson of the Red River university, and Prof. Genes of the college.

Resolutions touching the death of President Simmons, of Fargo college, consists of President Merrifield, of the university, Prof. McArdle, of the Agricultural college, and Prof. Perine of the Valley City Normal school.

In the high school section President Moore, of Bismarck, delivered an address on "Some High School Problems."

The members of the elementary section were comparatively few in numbers, though all listened with keen interest to the opening paper by the president, F. F. Johnson, of Minn. He dwelt at length upon the duties of the teacher as a character builder in the school and community in which he labors.

Miss Julia Mason, of Mayville, next made an earnest plea for "Higher Scholarship and Broader Culture for Elementary Teachers." This paper was followed by Prof. Carhart, of Ellendale, and Frank P. Bachman, of Valley City.

The second day of the annual meeting of the North Dakota Educational Association was a day of great interest and an increase of enthusiasm. The program as prepared in advance was followed without more variation than that rendered absolutely necessary by accidents.

Mr. Guy C. H. Corliss was to have delivered an address, but he was unfortunately obliged to be out of the city. The next number on the program was the paper by President Worst, of the Agricultural college, who spoke on "Education as a Directing Force."

After Miss Reynolds' address on "Art in Education," a series of papers followed on the subject, "The Function of the Institutions of Society in the Education of the Individual." The first paper on "The Home" was read by Mrs. Coles, of Wahpeton. Prof. Berg followed with a paper on "The School."

NORTH DAKOTA NEWS

More Excursions. The beneficial results of the free excursions given the farmers along its lines by the Great Northern road last spring and summer to the North Dakota Agricultural college were so evident that the Northern Pacific has announced a series of similar excursions next spring and summer.

The farmers along the line will not be slow in taking advantage of the trip, as the college is being admirably advertised and an interest aroused that is having a salutary effect on the attendance. Last year the Northern Pacific has announced a series of similar excursions next spring and summer. The farmers along the line will not be slow in taking advantage of the trip, as the college is being admirably advertised and an interest aroused that is having a salutary effect on the attendance. Last year the Northern Pacific has announced a series of similar excursions next spring and summer. The farmers along the line will not be slow in taking advantage of the trip, as the college is being admirably advertised and an interest aroused that is having a salutary effect on the attendance. Last year the Northern Pacific has announced a series of similar excursions next spring and summer. 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