

Castlemon Harry

The First Capture: or, Hauling Down the Flag of England



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CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON

It happened on the morning of the 9th day of May. The little village of Machias in the far away colony of Maine was lively enough as far as fishing towns go, but on this particular time it was in a regular turmoil. Men had jumped up leaving their breakfast half eaten and ran out bareheaded to gather round a courier, who, sitting on a horse that had his head down and his flanks heaving as if he were almost exhausted, was telling them of a fight which had occurred just twenty days before. There was nothing to indicate that the men were excited except their pale faces and clenched hands, but the looks they turned upon one another had a volume of meaning in them. What had the messenger to communicate that had incited such a feeling among those who listened to him? He was describing the battle of Lexington which had been fought and won by the patriots on the 19th day of April. We did not have any telegraph in those days, and the only way the people could hold communication with one another was by messengers, mounted on fleet horses, who rode from village to village with the news.

The courier was so impatient to tell what he knew that he could not talk fast enough, but the substance of his story was as follows:

General Gage, the commander of the British troops who were quartered in Boston about this time, had become a tyrant in the eyes of the people. When spring opened he had a force of three thousand five hundred men. Boston was the headquarters of the rebellion. He determined with this force to nip the insurrection in the bud, and his first move was to seize and destroy the stores of the patriots at Concord, a little village located about six miles from Lexington. To carry out this plan he sent forth eight hundred men under the command of Colonel Smith and Major Pitcairn with orders to "seize, burn and otherwise render useless" everything in the shape of munitions of war that they could find. He supposed he went about it secretly, but the ever-vigilant patriots were awake to all his movements. A watch was established at Concord, and everywhere the minute-men were ready with "burnished muskets, fixed bayonets, and well-filled cartouches."

They left Boston about midnight, but it so happened that the minute-men became aware of their expedition almost as soon as it was ready to start. Paul Revere was there and ready to undertake his famous midnight ride. No sooner was the trampling of soldiers heard than two lights were hung in the steeple of Christ Church in Charlestown. Paul Revere saw the lights, and he forthwith mounted his horse and started to carry the warning to every village in Middlesex.¹ The British did not see the beacon fire blazing above them, but marched away silent and still, arresting everybody that came in their way "to prevent the intelligence of their expedition being given."

As the day began to dawn in the east the British reached Lexington, and there they found a company of minute-men gathered on the green. To say that they were amazed at the sight would be

¹ "He said to a friend, 'If the British march By land or sea from the town to-night, Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch Of the Old North Tower as a signal light – One if by land, two if by sea, And I on the opposite shore will be Ready to ride and spread the alarm Through every Middlesex village and farm For the country folk to be up and to arm.'"

putting it very mildly; but Major Pitcairn, after a short consultation with his superior officer, rode up and flourished his sword as if he meant to annihilate the minute-men then and there. His officers followed him and his troops came close behind him in double quick time. But the patriots stood their ground, and the redcoats shouted angrily at them —

"Disperse, you villains! Lay down your arms! Why don't you disperse, you rebels?"

But our men had not come out there to be dispersed by shouting. Utterly ignorant of the ways of civilized warfare they continued to hold their ground, and for a time it looked as though there was going to be bloodshed sure enough. Major Pitcairn did not care to come too close to them but wheeled his horse, discharged his pistol and shouted "Fire!" and the British obeyed him. The front rank fired, and when the smoke cleared away, seven men, the first martyrs of the Revolution, were found weltering in their blood. That was too much for the patriots. They did not suppose that the British were going to shoot them down like dogs. They scattered in every direction, and the redcoats, having nothing further to oppose them, kept on and destroyed the stores.

"Colonel, I don't like the way those rebels retreated," said Major Pitcairn, as he kept a close watch upon the neighboring hills. "They fell back as though they would come again."

"If they were soldiers we would know how to take them," replied Colonel Smith. "But being rebels, we have nothing further to fear from them."

Major Pitcairn, however, kept a bright lookout, and very soon he became uneasy at the rapidity with which the militia increased in numbers. He called the attention of his superior to it, and very shortly the latter gave the order to retreat; and it was not a moment too soon. The whole region flew to arms, for remember that Paul Revere had aroused to vigilance the inmates of every house he came to, and from every one there came a man or boy who was strong enough to handle a rifle, and hurried to the help of his countrymen. It seems that Colonel Smith had more to contend with than mere rebels. It appeared, too, that one who afterwards wrote about that battle was there to have seen it for he tells us in his poem:

"And so through the night rode Paul Revere,
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm —
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo for evermore.
For, borne on the night-wings of the Past,
Through all our history to the last,
In the hours of our darkness, peril, and need,
Will the people waken to listen, to hear
The hurrying foot-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere."

The minute-men gathered as if by magic. They did not come out and form themselves in line for the purpose of being shot down by the redcoats, but remembering their skulking habits which they learned while fighting the Indians, they hid behind trees, fences, and rocks, in front, flank, and rear, and poured so galling a fire upon the Britishers that if it had not been for reinforcements not one of those eight hundred men would ever have reached the city alive. As one of their officers expressed it: "the militia seemed to have dropped from the clouds," and the flower of that British army must have surrendered to those patriots if relief had not arrived. Their retreat was regarded as a defeat and a flight, and at every corner were heard the jeers and mockings of the people regarding that "great British army at Boston who had been beaten by a flock of Yankees." At any rate the jubilee

trumpet was sounded proclaiming "Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." The power of all the royal governors was broken, from Massachusetts to Georgia.

This was the substance of the news which was brought to Machias twenty days after the fight. The people were both astonished and angry – astonished to know that the British soldiers, who had been regarded as invulnerable, could be outdone with American bullets, and angry to learn that so many of their friends² should have been killed during their conflict with them.

"This thing has got to be settled now," said Zeke Lewis, turning away and flourishing his fists in the air. "That is too many of our men to go up after fighting those redcoats. Boston has been standing all the brunt of tyranny so far, and we had better join in. Now there's that –"

The man suddenly paused and looked about him. Almost every face he saw was that of a patriot, but there were a few who were known to be Tories, and it would not do to express his thoughts too freely before them.

"Go on, Zeke," said a friend at his elbow. "There's what?"

"When I get you fellows all by yourselves I will explain things to you," said Zeke, after holding a short consultation with a young man who stood close beside him. "There are too many Britishers here."

"Yes; and they ought to be shot down as those redcoats were at Lexington," said another.

Any one who had been there could easily have picked out the Tories by the expression of their faces. They were amazed by the news. British soldiers whipped by a mob! They would have been glad to deny it if they could, but there were too many stalwart sailors standing around whose opinions differed from their own, and they thought it would be the part of wisdom to keep their thoughts to themselves. They turned toward their homes, but they had plenty of opportunity to exchange ideas with one another.

The most of those who had listened to the messenger's news also turned away when he got through speaking and walked with their heads on their breasts and their eyes fastened thoughtfully on the ground. Among them was one, Enoch Crosby by name, who seemed to think that the world was coming to an end because the British soldiers had been fired upon; but he did not believe as the Tories did by any means. He was an American; he could not forget that.

Among all the boys of his acquaintance there was no one more loyal to King George than he was. His father had been an officer in the service of the crown before he died, and Enoch believed that a monarch who had been selected to reign over a country, was placed there by divine right. The people had nothing to do with it except to hold themselves in readiness to obey his orders. He had English blood in his veins, and, although he felt the soil of America under his feet, he had been, almost ever since he could remember, a good and loyal subject of Great Britain, and hoped some day to serve King George with his sword. To have all this thing wiped out in a day by a fight, was rather more than the boy could live up under.

But he was an American. It came upon him with a force sometimes that almost took his breath away. He could still be loyal to his sovereign and ready to smite hip and thigh any one who said anything against him, but his sailor's love of fair play would not let him stand by and see his neighbors imposed upon.

Enoch had been watching this thing for two years and all the while he felt the ropes of tyranny growing tighter. Ever since General Gage had taken up his quarters in Boston he had been growing more and more severe in his treatment of the patriots. The Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre, The Tea Party, and the conduct of his soldiers in destroying the ice on which the boys were accustomed to spend their half holidays – all these were galling to Enoch, and he hoped that the time would soon come when something would induce the King to do differently. But when Christopher Snyder was

² Lossing says: "The British lost 65 killed, 18 wounded, and 28 made prisoners; in all 273. The Americans lost 59 killed, 39 wounded, and 5 missing; in all 103.

killed by Richardson for looking on at a mob who were engaged in throwing clods and stones at him, and Governor Hutchinson refused to sign Richardson's death warrant, it opened the eyes of Enoch and he began to see things in a plainer light. The man was put into prison, but at the end of two years was pardoned out by the King. Enoch found that it was necessary to fight in order to secure his rights, and it cost him a long and severe struggle to come to that conclusion. He was thinking about these things as he walked slowly homeward and went into the house. His mother, with snowy hair and steel-bowed spectacles, raised her eyes from her knitting, and one glance was enough to show her that something had gone wrong with Enoch.

If there was anybody on earth Enoch loved it was his mother. All her surroundings bore evidence to that fact. Enoch was a sailor – he had made a good many trips along the coast in little trading vessels – but when he was at home he was not idle. His mother had enough from the earnings of her husband to support her in as good a style as she cared to live; the raiment of herself and son was neat and comely, but that did not prevent her from sticking close to the New England maxim: "Those who do not work should not eat." She had plainly brought Enoch up with the same ideas, for when he was ashore he was always at work at something.

Mrs. Crosby did not go out to listen to the news the messenger had to bring, but Enoch went, and the face he brought back with him excited his mother's alarm at once. Like her son she had been waiting for this day, but she little dreamed that it would come so soon.

"What is it, boy?" she asked, dropping her knitting into her lap. "That man's horse seems to be near tired out. Has he come far?"

"He came from out west somewhere," said Enoch, dropping into the nearest chair. "But I don't know whether he came from Lexington or not."

"What should be going on at Lexington?" asked Mrs. Crosby; although something told her that the news the messenger brought was worse than any she had heard yet.

"They have had a fight out there," said Enoch, resting his head on his hands. "King George can make up his mind to one thing, and that is, he had better keep his men at home. The provincials whipped them because they destroyed property that did not belong to them."

"And they did have a fight sure enough?" said his mother.

"They had such a fight as they used to have with the Indians. They killed almost three hundred of them."

Mrs. Crosby settled back in her chair and looked at Enoch without speaking.

CHAPTER II

ENOCH'S HOME

"Enoch," said his mother, rising from her chair after a moment's pause and leading the way toward the kitchen, "breakfast is ready and waiting. While you are eating it I shall be pleased to hear something more about this fight. It looks to me now as though we had got to do battle with the King."

"That is the way it looks to me, too," said the boy.

The Crosby house would have been an object worth seeing if it had stood in this century. It was a double house built of logs, the places where they met being chinked with clay and the roof was thatched with long grass or rye straw. The windows consisted of small lead frames set with diamond plates of glass hung so that they opened inward instead of outward. As the building stood facing the south the "sun shone squarely in at noon," and gave warning that the dinner hour was approaching.

There were two rooms in which Mrs. Crosby took delight – her "best room" and her kitchen. The best room was used only on state occasions, that is, when the minister came to see them or some old-time friends dropped in for an hour or two. The andirons were of brass and shone so brightly that one could see his face in them, and in summer time the fireplace was always kept garnished with asparagus and hollyhocks. On the rude mantelpiece stood the high candlesticks made of the same material, and close beside them lay the tray and the snuffers. Here also was the library, small, it is true, for reading in those days was undertaken for improvement and not for pleasure. Books were scarce and cost money; but among them could be found the family Bible, Watts' Poems, Young's Night Thoughts, and Milton's Paradise Lost.

The best room for the family was in the kitchen, and that was where Enoch always liked to be. Sometimes in winter when he did not have to go to sea he read one of the well-thumbed volumes by the aid of a tallow dip. The blaze in the fireplace was always piled high, but even this was but little if any shelter from the cold. The places where the chinking did not fit were numerous, and the way the cold wind poured into the room made the words of an old writer perfectly apparent: "While one side of the inmate was toasting the other was freezing." To make matters still worse "the smoke escaping into the room by no means favored study or any other employment requiring the use of the eyes."

When Enoch followed his mother into the kitchen he saw there a well-filled table which had often made him hungry when he did not want anything to eat; but it had little effect upon him now. There was hot salt pork, vegetables, and bannocks,³ which were all their simple tastes required. In the place of tea they had milk; for those one hundred and forty men had long ago thrown the tea overboard in Boston harbor, and all that Mrs. Crosby had left was some tied up in a paper and stowed away in one of her bureau drawers. Before they seated themselves at the table they took their stand behind their chairs with bowed and reverent heads, while his mother offered up thanks to the Giver of all good for the provisions set before them. This was a plan always followed in Enoch's home. When his mother was away, at a quilting bee or sitting up with a sick person, Enoch never forgot the custom, but offered up prayers himself.

"Now, boy, I should like to hear something about that fight," said Mrs. Crosby, seating herself in her chair. "Have we got to fight the King, sure enough?"

"The things indicate that fact," said Enoch, helping his mother to a piece of the pork and to a potato which had been baked in the ashes on the hearth. "King George has not acted right with us anyway. When young Snyder was killed in Boston because he happened to be near a mob who were throwing stones at Richardson, the King went and pardoned out Richardson, who had been put

³ Bannocks are something like the present "hoecakes" of the South – merely flat cakes of Indian meal or rye, wet with water and baked over the hot coals on the hearth.

into prison for it, after he had been there for two years. That does not look as though he felt very kindly toward us, does it?"

"And then the tea," said his mother, who came as near being angry as she could whenever she thought of that. Like all old ladies she loved the "cup which cheers but does not inebriate," and she could not bear to have it taken away from her. "The King ought not to have taxed us for that."

"He might if he would allow us to be represented in Parliament," said Enoch, "but he would not do it. If we have got to be taxed to help carry on the government of Great Britain, we want some men of our own over there to see about it."

"Now tell me about the fight. You said we killed almost three hundred of them."

"Why, mother, you say 'we' as though you were there and helped shoot at those redcoats," said Enoch.

"Of course I do, my son. If your father were here now, he would have taken that old flint-lock down and had it put in running order before this time," said his mother, pointing to the weapon which occupied its usual position over the fireplace. "We are Americans, and whenever we are shot at, we must shoot in return."

Enoch was delighted to hear his mother talk in this way. It showed that she was not loyal enough to King George to fight against her own countrymen at any rate. The boy began and told the history of the fight as he had heard it from the messenger, and, as he talked and told how the minute-men had concealed themselves behind every rock and tree that they came to, his mother's eyes sparkled, and she said that she almost wished that she had been a man and lived in Lexington so that she could have been there too.

"I really wish I had been there," said Enoch, glancing affectionately at the old flint-lock as he said this. "Of course I could not shoot with those who hunt squirrels every day, but I could have made a noise. And to talk about those British soldiers being invulnerable! I tell you they could not stand before the minute-men."

"And to think that we should be called '*rebels*,'" said his mother, who could scarcely restrain herself.

"But I say we are not rebels," said Enoch emphatically. "The people in Boston told the King just what they wanted to do, and he turned around and made them do something else. There was not any more loyal paper gotten up than they sent to him."

A long talk on such matters as these occupied them while they were at breakfast, and just as Enoch arose there came a sound like the rattling of a stick between the pickets of the front fence. The boys had not learned to whistle in those days to let a comrade know that there was some one outside waiting for him. Whistling is easier, but the boys made each other known in spite of it.

"That is Caleb Young," said Enoch. "I know him by the way he rattles his stick. I hope we shall hear something more about that fight."

Enoch put on his hat and went out, and there he saw Caleb, dressed after the fashion of a seafaring man as he was himself, leaning on the gate and whistling softly to himself.

"Have you got anything more to tell about it?" said Enoch, coming up to him.

"No more than what the courier has already told," said Caleb. "But say! there is something in the wind."

"I gained an idea from something Zeke said that he was thinking of something else," said Enoch, sinking his voice to a whisper because Caleb did the same. "He would not tell us what it was because there were too many Tories near."

"No, but he was thinking and talking about it since, and he has made up his mind that we are going to do something to equal that battle of Lexington in some way," said Caleb. "He has been talking to that Joseph Wheaton, and he has been advising Zeke what to do. He says it is not right for those Boston people to take all the hard knocks while we get none of them."

"That is what I say. If we are going to hang, we will all hang together."

"But we are not going to hang – none of us," said Caleb, striking the nearest picket with his closed hand. "There are three vessels in the harbor – "

"Yes; and I am going to keep away from them," said Enoch, pushing himself away from the fence. "You don't make a pirate out of me. I have made my living honestly and I intend to keep on doing it."

"That is me," said Caleb. "I have worked for every cent I have and I am not ashamed to let everybody know it; but if we can capture that vessel we will show the Boston people that they are not alone in this business."

"What vessel do you mean?"

"I mean the *Margaretta*. She is here as convoy for those two sloops that are loading with lumber, and she is in the service of the crown. If we can get her we will have the sloops easy enough."

"Why, Caleb, that would be piracy," said Enoch, fairly aghast at the proposition. "The *Margaretta* has not done anything to us."

"Of course she has not, but she is in the service of the King. Those men who went out to destroy those stores were in the service of the King, too; but they got neatly whipped for their pains. Zeke and Joseph Wheaton would not have proposed that plan if they did not think we would make something by it. You ought to have heard mother talk to me while we were at breakfast. She said that if father was alive now he would have taken his old flint-lock down and shot every Tory he could find."

"I guess I know about what your mother said, for mine talked to me in the same way," said Enoch, with a laugh. "Are you one of those who are going to capture that schooner?"

"I am! I am one of the fifteen men and boys who have agreed to be on hand when they hear a cheer sounded. That is going to be our rallying cry, and we must all go to where we hear it. What are you going to do? You are not a Tory."

"Don't you call me that," said Enoch, opening the gate and coming out to meet his friend. "When that cheer is sounded you will see me on hand. When do you propose to take the schooner?"

"Why as to that we have not had a chance to talk it over," said Caleb. "Zeke only spoke of it just a little while ago to see how many men we could raise; and to-night – here come two of those Tories now," continued Caleb, pushing his hat on the back of his head and shoving up his sleeves. "Now let us see what they have got to say about that fight at Lexington. I do not wish them any harm, but I would like to know that they had been there and I kneeling a little way off with my father's flint-lock in my hand."

"Then you would not have heard anything about that fight," said Enoch, with a laugh. Caleb was noted for his sharp shooting, and if he had got a bead on one of those fellows it would have been all over with him. "I will bet you I would have shot pretty close to him," Caleb added.

"Now don't you go to picking a fuss with them," said Enoch in a lower tone, "because I will not have it."

"Oh, I will pick no fuss with them at all," said Caleb, turning his back to the approaching boys and resting his elbow on the fence. "But they must not say anything against the minute-men. If they do somebody will get licked."

The two boys came nearer, and presently drew up beside the fence beside which Enoch and Caleb stood. They did not expect any greeting, for that happened long ago to have gone out of style between the Tories and the Provincials. Whenever they met on the street they looked straight ahead as if there was nobody there. They did not want to speak to each other for the chances were that there would be a game of fisticuffs before they got through with it.

These boys were evidently better off in the world than Enoch and his friend. They wore cocked hats, neat velvet coats, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and low shoes with huge silver buckles. But their queues were what they prided themselves upon. They were neatly combed and hung down upon their coat collars. The arms of their coats were "slashed" in several places to show the fine quality

of their underwear. If they had been boys in our day we should have been obliged to introduce them with cigarettes in their hands.

These sprucely dressed young fellows were Tories of the worst description, but they followed in the footsteps of their fathers. One was a "passive" Tory and the other was an "aggressive" Tory. How these two men differed in opinion and actions shall be told further on.

CHAPTER III

ZEKE LEWIS

Have you ever met a New England man whom your grandparents used to regard as the very personification of all that was utterly worthless so far as the labor with his hands was concerned? We do not mean by saying this that Zeke Lewis was lazy – the old folks had a milder term for it. He was always at work at something, but he was shiftless. Nothing that he could do appeared to get him ahead any. Work always looked for him; he never looked for work. If anybody wanted a pair of shoes mended Zeke was always the man looked for. He was generally to be found at the tavern (Zeke did not drink any, we'll say that much for him), or loafing around the corner grocery, and he was always "lying on his oars," that is, ready to pull in any direction in which work was to be found. Zeke would work early and late upon those shoes until he got them done, and he carried his money straight to his wife, who had the faculty of making a shilling go farther than he would. If a vessel was ready to sail, either up or down the coast or on a fishing trip, Zeke always got the first berth. He could do more work in less time and with less trouble than any two men you could find. And he was brave, too. No one ever saw Zeke refuse to go where duty called him.

He was just such a man as you would expect to see after this description of his way of doing business. He was tall, and so round-shouldered that he did not look as though he had any chest at all; he was strong; so strong that when he got hold of a rope everybody knew he was there. There were two things about him that were noticeable – his smiling, good-natured face and his queue, which was always freshly combed and looked as though it had come from the hands of a dresser. But then his wife always attended to that. She took it down and combed it every day.

Zeke was always in straits where money was concerned. No matter how hard he worked or how little money he spent upon himself he never could make both ends meet. One night he came home after a hard day's work in the hay-field. He found his wife sitting in the kitchen engaged in knitting, but she made no efforts at all to get supper for her husband. Zeke thought she looked a little paler than usual, but then he was used to that. The patient little woman never had a word of fault to find with him. She believed that Zeke was doing his best, and with that she was satisfied.

"Sick?" asked Zeke.

"No, I am not ill," answered his wife. "I feel as well as usual."

"Something is the matter with you and I know it," said Zeke. "I guess I will have to go to work and get my own supper. I am hungry."

"You will not find a crust of bread in the house," said his wife.

"You don't tell me!" exclaimed Zeke.

"I have looked the house over and I cannot find anything. You ate the last this morning."

"Bussin' on it!" gasped Zeke, backing toward the nearest chair. "And you did not have any?"

"I thought you were at work in the field and would need it more than I. So I let you take it all."

"Whew!" whistled Zeke. "And I thought there was not more than enough to keep a hen from starving when I ate it. Mr. Howard owes me five shillings, but I don't like to ask him for it."

"Are you working for that man? Then you will never get your money."

"What for won't I?"

"Because he will cheat you out of it just as he has cheated everybody else who has worked for him."

"Eh? Do you see these arms?" asked Zeke, getting upon his feet and stretching himself so that his wife could see on all sides of him. "I have not often slung these arms about loose and reckless since I went to school to old Parson Stebbins, and then I slung them at Jeems Howard because I thought

he had tried to take my knickerbockers⁴ away from me. He has not forgotten that, I am proud to say. My wages will come due on Saturday night and I shall get every cent that is coming to me. But you must have something to eat. Bussin' on it! Why did you not tell me?"

Zeke went out into his woodshed where he kept his shoemaker's tools and began to gather them up in his arms. A pang shot through him while he did so, for he could not help thinking what he was going to do if somebody came to him with shoes to mend while the tools were gone.

"It can't be helped," said he, with a long-drawn sigh. "She took me for better or worst when she married me, and she has had the worst all the time. I will go and see Jeems Howard about them, and see what he will give me until next Saturday. He is the only one around here that I know of who has got any money."

As soon as he had gathered up all his tools Zeke went out of the back door, for he did not want his wife to see him; but there were others that saw him as he walked along the street, and every one wanted to know where he was going to mend shoes. For in those days the cobblers always came to a person's house and did their work there. Zeke always gave some good-natured reply, for no one ever expected anything else of him, and in a few minutes he had walked through Mr. Howard's yard and come up to the back steps.

"I want to see if you will lend me five shillings on these tools until Saturday night," said he, when he had brought the man for whom he was at work to the door. "We want something to eat at our house."

If the man had possessed the semblance of a heart he would have pulled out some money and given it to Zeke; but all was fish that came to his net, and he forthwith began to haggle with him in order to get them as cheap as possible. Zeke wanted more for them than he could afford to give, and he concluded that two and a half shillings were all he could pay. He insisted so strongly upon it that Zeke was about to close with his offer, when a new actor appeared upon the scene. It was Jeremiah O'Brien, of whom we shall have something more to say as our story progresses. Something told him that Zeke was in trouble, and he opened the gate and went in. Like all the rest of the patriots he had but little love for men of Howard's opinion, and he was not anyway backward about beginning his business.

"Zeke, what are you doing with your tools here?" he asked.

"I want to sell them until next Saturday night," returned Zeke.

"How much are you going to get for them?"

"I want five shillings, but Jeems allows that he can't give more than two and a half."

"They are worth two pounds if they are worth anything," said O'Brien emphatically.

"I know they are. Just see that knife. It is sharp –"

"Pick up your tools and come with me," interrupted O'Brien.

"Where are you going?"

"Pick up your tools and come with me," insisted O'Brien. "I don't want to tell you twice."

Zeke smiled, drew himself up to his full height and looked at O'Brien. The latter returned his gaze with interest and Zeke finally thought better of it, gathered up his tools from the step where had placed them and followed him out to the gate.

"Look here," said O'Brien, when they reached the street. "The next time you want to sell your tools that you make a living with, I want you to come to me. Don't go to that old Tory, who is bound to cheat you out of everything you have. You say your wife has not had anything to eat?"

"Not a smell," said Zeke looking down at the ground. "She gave me all she had for breakfast and never has had a bite all day."

"Well, lay your tools down here," said O'Brien, when they came to Zeke's house. "They can stay there until you come back."

"Bussin' on it!" exclaimed Zeke. "What are you going to do?"

⁴ Marbles.

"We will go up to the grocery and get some provisions. I am going to send out a vessel next week and you can pay me then."

This made everything all right in Zeke's estimation. He wanted credit, but he little knew how he could get it unless he was regularly employed in some business that would pay him in the end. Of course, when he was at sea on one of Mr. O'Brien's vessels, his wife could go to the store and get anything she pleased; but Zeke knew it was not so while he was working for James Howard. The old Tory was a cheat, and nobody except Zeke or some other fellow who happened to be "hard up" would work for him. He accompanied O'Brien to the grocery store and got everything he wanted. When he came back into his wife's presence he looked more like himself.

This little episode will give the reader a pretty good idea of the kind of life Zeke Lewis led at Machias. Nothing bothered him. His wife being out of provisions was the nearest thing that came to throwing him off his balance; and when the goods obtained in this way were gone, why, then he would go to work at something and earn some more.

We have said that nothing bothered Zeke Lewis. That was what all the people about Machias said, and they had known him for a long time. A man who would not wake up from his shiftless habits and go to work at something in order to support his wife, who depended on him for everything, was not of much use in the world; but on this particular morning, after listening to the story of the battle of Lexington, Zeke began to take a little interest in matters. In fact the people had never seen him so worked up before. He held a short but earnest consultation with Joseph Wheaton, attended eagerly to what the man had to say, and then walked away with his head up, his fingers moving convulsively, and now and then he lifted his hands and brought them together with a loud slap.

"What's the matter with you, Zeke?" asked one of his companions who walked by his side.

"Are there any Tories around here?" exclaimed Zeke, casting his eye behind him. "Then I guess I can speak out here as well as anywhere. I say we ought to go to work and do something to equal those fellows in Boston."

"But there are no troops here," said his companion. "These Tories will not come out so that we can shoot them down as they did at Concord."

"No matter for that. They have got some property here, and we can capture it as well as not."

"I am in for that. Where is it?"

"You know that the Margareta is here to protect two sloops that are loading up with lumber for the crown. What is the reason we cannot capture her?"

"It would be all right if we could do it; but suppose we should fail? Have you forgotten what the penalty for piracy is?"

"No, I have not forgotten it, and furthermore, I know that we are not going to fail. I will make one of half a dozen men that will capture her to-night. Where are the rest of you?" he continued, glancing around at the men who had come up, one by one, to listen to what he had to say. "Are you all Tories? If you are not, say you will join in."

"She lies some little distance from the wharf," said one of his auditors.

"Are there not plenty of boats that we could get to take us out to her?" asked Zeke. "Some of you are afraid of being killed. That is what is the matter with you."

"If the others are afraid of being shot at I am not," said Mr. O'Brien. "What are your plans, Zeke? But first let us go somewhere so that we can talk without being overheard."

It put a different look on the matter when Mr. O'Brien began to inquire into Zeke's scheme. If he was not afraid to undertake it the rest were not. They crowded up around Zeke to hear what he had to propose.

CHAPTER IV

ZEKE'S PROPOSITION

"But first I want to see if there are any Tories around here," said Zeke, stopping in his walk and coming back to gaze fixedly into the face of every man who was following him. "We don't want to talk too loud for fear that everything we say will go straight to the ears of that schooner's crew. If there is any man here who can't be trusted let him say so and go back where he belongs."

There were probably a dozen men and boys in the crowd, and every one of them wore a white face as he looked at it; but it was an expression of "defiance and not of fear." Every one of them believed in capturing the schooner, but every one, too, if we may except Zeke and O'Brien and perhaps Joseph Wheaton, who was the first man to conceive of the thing, could not help thinking what their fate would be if they failed. The act they were about to perform was piracy, and they could not make anything else out of it. To board and capture a schooner which had come into their harbor on a friendly mission was something the law did not bear them out in.

"I guess we are all true blue," said Zeke, as he pushed a man out of his way and planted himself fairly in the middle of the group, "and I guess we can talk here as well as anywhere else, if we talk low. We want to keep the Tories from knowing or suspecting anything about it."

"Do you want to seize the schooner?" asked Mr. O'Brien.

"Exactly," said Zeke.

"And you are going to take her out from under that flag whether the crew is willing or not?"

"Certainly. That cross of St. George does not stay above her after we get her into our hands."

"And what will we do if they resist us?"

"Then they just make up their minds that they are going to keep company with those fellows at Lexington."

"Hear, hear!" shouted one of the auditors.

"Silence!" whispered Zeke in a low tone. "Don't say anything to arouse the suspicions of the Tories. We want to get this thing done before they know a thing about it. We will send them to keep company with the three hundred and more who fought our fellows at Lexington," continued Zeke, turning to O'Brien, "and those of us who have guns will get them; and the rest will gather up clubs, pitchforks and anything else that we can make a good fight with. If we can once get a footing on her deck, she is ours."

"Some of the officers will be coming off to church to-morrow," said Mr. O'Brien.

"That is just what I was thinking of, but I had not time to get that far," said Zeke. "We can just go in after them and seize them in their seats, and then go back and finish those fellows left on the vessel."

"I don't believe in any killing," said one.

"You don't!" exclaimed Zeke turning fiercely upon him.

"No, sir, I don't. Piracy is bad enough, but when it comes to killing folks that were put there by the king to look out for their vessel, I say I don't believe in it."

"Then you have no business here in this crowd," said Zeke, taking off his hat and dashing it to the ground. A moment afterward he stepped forward and seized the man by both wrists. He did not attempt to throw him down, but he crossed his hands on his chest and held him there as if he had been in a vise. "And you don't want to hear what our plans are either. Get away from here."

"Hold on," said the man, who was but an infant in Zeke's grasp. "Let me get through with what I was going to say. I don't believe in killing folks that are standing up for their rights, but if we are too many for them, why, then they will give up."

"Well, that is a little more sensible," said Zeke, releasing his hold upon the man. "If they give up that is all we want. I did not mean to hurt you, Zeb, but you don't want to talk that way in this crowd. Old Zeke has got his dander riz now, and any one who does not want to do as I say in this matter can just get right out."

"But what will we do with the schooner after we get her?" said Mr. O'Brien, who wanted to know just how the thing was coming out before he went into it.

"We will make a man-of-war out of her," said Zeke. "We will capture those two sloops now loading up with lumber the first thing we do; then we will go to sea and capture every one who floats the cross of St. George at her peak."

"Hear, hear!" shouted that enthusiastic auditor again.

"I like your pluck, Jacob, because I know you will stand up to the rack when the time comes; but I would a little rather you would keep still now. All you fellows who want to go with me to capture that schooner step over this way."

Zeke walked away half a dozen paces, and when he turned about he found the entire group at his heels.

"I knew we were all true blue," said Zeke, striking his palms together.

"I do not believe in killing men who are standing up for their rights," said Zeb, who stepped over as promptly as the others did. "We must get up a crowd that is bigger than theirs, and then she will give up to us."

"I believe in that, too," assented Zeke. "Now, as we have not got any fife or drum to call us together, let every one who hears a cheer sounded to-morrow come a-running to the wharf where that schooner lies, and bring along everybody that you think will aid in capturing her; but mind you, don't say a word to any of the Tories. Bring with you everything that you can put your hands on that will do to knock a man down with. We will have some small boats there ready to take us aboard of her, and when the schooner is our own, we will see what we will do next. That is about all we want to decide on to-day."

"I declare, who would have thought there was so much in Zeke?" said one, as he stood looking after him as he moved down the road. O'Brien and Wheaton went with him, and they were talking earnestly about something.

"I tell you I thought there was a good deal in him when he grabbed me by the arms," said Zeb, who had not yet got through rubbing the place where Zeke's sinewy hands had clasped. "I felt as if I had let a forty-foot barn fall on me. If he deals with the schooner's crew as he dealt with me, they are ours, sure enough."

"And to think that that man would let his wife starve," said another. "He has got something in him. It may be that young fellow they call Wheaton is at the bottom of it."

Caleb Young was there during the talk, and he was satisfied that war was coming. He was well acquainted with most of the officers and crew composing the company of the schooner, and he knew that they would never surrender their vessel without making a desperate resistance. She was armed, she had small arms aboard, and her crew were sufficiently trained to stand by their captain.

As for the men who had talked so bravely about capturing her – they had no captain. Everything thus far was going along as Zeke had planned it; but when it come to a clash of arms, Caleb wanted somebody on hand who knew what he was about to take command of him. He was bound to go for he had been one of the first to follow Zeke when he stepped off a few paces; but he really wished he knew who was going to order the thing when he stood before the schooner's company.

"If I am going into this thing Enoch Crosby has got to go too," said he as he bent his steps toward his friend's house. "He is a good boy, and I know he will fight if the worst comes. I want to know what he thinks about this piracy business."

When Caleb had almost reached Enoch's house he began looking around for a stick with which to attract the boy's attention by rattling between the pickets. After a short search he found one, and

Enoch was prompt to answer the summons. They had but fairly got started on the subject of seizing the schooner when the two young Tories, which were the objects of especial hatred to them, came in sight. They would rather have seen almost any one else than James Howard and Emerson Miller. The sober look on the latter's face showed that they were not much elated, and the reason was because they did not like to believe that British regulars had been whipped by minute-men. Young Howard, who was always the first to speak wherever he might be, opened the conversation.

"Well, what do you fellows think of that fight?" said he.

"We came out on purpose to hear you express an opinion," said Enoch. "What do you think of it?"

"I can tell you that in short order," said James. "Every one of those men who had guns in their hands at Lexington are going to be hung."

"You will catch them first, will you not?"

"Oh, that is easy enough," said Emerson. "When the regulars get to running around with ropes in their hands and calling for the men who were engaged in that massacre, everybody will be willing to tell on his neighbor. If Caleb was in the fight you would say, 'Here's one of them.'"

"Don't you wish you were there?" asked James, with a grin.

"Yes, I do," said Caleb, promptly. "But I would have been on the side of the minute-men."

"That may be a Britisher's way of doing business, to tell on all those who were in the fight, but it is not our way," said Enoch, quietly. "This thing has gone too far to admit of hanging. You will need an army to take them."

"Well, have we not got one, I would like to know?" asked James. "There will be more men here in a little while, and then you fellows will want to keep dark. What were those fellows talking about that were gathered on the corner so long? We wanted to go over there but did not dare."

"It is just as well that you did not go over," said Caleb. "You would not have heard anything anyway."

"We heard somebody howling 'Hear, hear!' at the top of his voice," said Emerson. "I guess we would have heard something from him."

"No, we would not," said James. "Don't you know that they do not talk when Tories are around? They are afraid we will tell of them."

"And it is a mighty fine reputation for you to have," said Enoch, in disgust. "If I could not keep still in regard to what my neighbors do, I would go out and hang myself."

"Oh, you will hang easy enough," said James, with a laugh. "Don't you worry about that. I will be one of the first to grab the rope and pull you up."

Just how it happened Enoch could not have told to save his life. The place whereon James was standing became suddenly vacant and the spot where his face was occupied by his heels. He fell like a tree struck by a whirlwind, and his head came in violent contact with the ground. He lay there for a second or two as if he did not have his wits about him, and Caleb stood over him ready to receive him when he got up. Seeing no move on his part, he turned to face Emerson.

"Let us hear one word out of your head and I will put you down, too," said he.

"Go away," said Emerson, tremblingly. "I have not done anything to you, and I want you to let me alone. There is a magistrate in this town –"

"Go on," said Caleb. "You can get to the magistrate as soon as you please and tell him for me –"

By this time Enoch began to recover himself. He unlatched the gate, and seizing Caleb around the waist fairly lifted him from the ground and carried him inside. Then he shut the gate and looked over at Emerson.

"You had better go on your way," said he. "Pick up your comrade and go about your business."

"But I would like first to hear him say that he would like to haul Enoch up with a rope," said Caleb, trying hard to get on his feet. "I will knock him down as often as he can say it."

These words Caleb was obliged to shout over his shoulder, for Enoch, still retaining his hold upon him, was carrying him along the walk toward the entrance of the kitchen. He pushed him into the house, and then closed the door behind him.

Having seen his enemy disposed of Emerson bent over James Howard to see if he was still alive. To his joy the prostrate boy opened his eyes and stared about him in a vacant manner.

"That cowardly provincial is gone now," said Emerson. "Enoch took him into the house with him."

"I never will put up with such a blow from a boy who is down on the king," said James, sitting up on the ground. "The young rebel strikes an awful whack, does he not? We will go and see the magistrate about it at once. I am all dirt, I suppose?"

"No, but your queue is full of it," said Emerson, brushing it off as well as he could. "I wish we dared lick him."

"So do I, but we can't touch him now. Wait until those reinforcements come up here that father was talking about last night, and I will have revenge for all that boy's actions. Help me up. Now we will go and see father about it the first thing we do. These rebels are coming to a high pitch when they can strike a gentleman for something he has said."

The young Tories had started out for a walk but they did not take it. They turned about and went back the same way they came, and in a few minutes drew up at Mr. Howard's gate. The old gentleman was at home, sitting in his easy-chair, but he was not taking life pleasantly. There was a scowl on his forehead, for he was thinking about the battle of Lexington. There was one thing about it he said to his wife: Those rebels had got to be whipped into submission, or he and his family must go back to England. How he wished he possessed the power to wipe all those who were in rebellion from the face of the earth! Would not he make a scattering among them before the sun set? While he was thinking about it the boys came up to the gate. If such a thing were possible his son James' face presented a worse appearance than his own. In addition to the scowl which it wore, there was a lump under his eye which now began to grow black. Mr. Howard knew well enough what was the matter.

CHAPTER V

A REBELLION IN THE COURT-ROOM

"Father, look at my face," said James, who was the first to begin the conversation. "Just look at it."

"Yes, I see it," said the old gentleman, angrily. "You have been having an argument with some of those young rebels and you have got the knock-down end of it. I will wager that Caleb Young and Enoch Crosby know something about it."

"They were both there," said James, seating himself on the steps, "but Caleb was the only one who struck me. Now, father, what am I going to do about it? I can't go around with my face this way."

"Do you mean to say that you gave up to Caleb and that he struck you only once?" exclaimed Mr. Howard. "You would make a pretty fight, you would."

"But, father, you don't know anything about the strength in that fellow's arms," whined James. "I would just as soon have a horse kick me. I want to see the magistrate about this."

"Let us go up there at once," said Mr. Howard, putting on his hat. "We don't want to let the grass grow under our feet until this thing is settled. These young rebels are getting altogether too brash. They want to be shut up for a while. I wish I had them in England. When they were there, they would find themselves among gentlemen, and they could not talk as they pleased."

"Do you believe you can put him under lock and key for hitting me?" said James. He began to be all excitement now. To see Caleb Young put in jail for what he had done would be ample recompense for him.

"I assure you that I am going to try it. How did the argument begin in the first place?"

James hesitated when his father propounded this question. When he came to think the matter over he found that he had given Caleb good reason for knocking him down. He might have to make the complaint under oath when he came before the magistrate, and he concluded that it was best to tell the truth while he was about it.

"I said that all those who were in that massacre would be hung some day," began James.

"Good enough. You told him the truth."

"And I told him that if he were there I would be one of the first to grab the rope and haul him up," continued James. "Caleb or Enoch, I have forgotten which one, replied that if he went and talked that way about his neighbors, he ought to be hanged."

"And he knocked you down for that?" exclaimed Mr. Howard. "You did perfectly right in saying what you did, and if I were magistrate I would shut him up for two or three days at least."

These last words were spoken as they were passing along the streets toward the magistrate's office. There were many people loitering about, for the news of the battle of Lexington had not been thoroughly discussed, and the inhabitants of Machias could not get over it. Every one knew what was the matter with James without any telling. The provincials smiled and nodded their heads in a way that showed young Howard that he was served just right, while the Tories grew angrier than ever, and insisted on hearing all about it. Before reaching the magistrate's office James began to think that he was something of a hero in town, and fully expected to see Caleb shut up for a long time.

When they arrived at their journey's end they found the magistrate there as well as two constables, who were hanging around for a chance to serve some papers which were slowly being made out for them. The magistrate was surprised when he saw such a company of men coming into his office, for he it known that a good many people, both Tories and provincials, had turned about and gone with them. They wanted to see what was going to be done in regard to it.

"Bless us!" he exclaimed, when he saw James' battered face. "What have you been doing?"

"I have not been doing anything," said James, in an injured tone. "A young rebel got mad at me for something I had said and knocked me down."

"Aha! A young rebel!" said the magistrate, the scowl deepening upon his forehead; for he was one of those "aggressive" Tories who believed in making war upon all those people who did not hold to his own opinions. "Do you want to make out a complaint against him? I will fine him a pound at least. These rebels have got to be kept within bounds. I will make out the papers right away. Here are two constables ready to serve them," he added, speaking in a low tone to Mr. Howard. "You had better have two go with them, for there are some rebels around here and maybe they will stand by to protect him."

The magistrate made a great flourish and prepared to go on with his warrant, while James and his father took time to look about upon the crowd that had followed them in. There were more rebels than Tories in the party, and that was easy enough to be seen. Some of the former exchanged a few words in whispered consultation and then went out, but the Tories stood their ground.

"There!" said the magistrate, who at last turned about with the completed document in his hand. "Kelly, take this, go up to Young's house and arrest Caleb in the name of the king. I need not add that if he does not come you will call upon any man present to help you."

"I don't know as I had better go up there alone," whispered the constable. "The rebels are out in full force."

"Then take Nolton with you. You surely do not need two constables to arrest a boy! Take notice of the way he acts and I will fine him for that, too."

The constables went out reluctantly, for they were about to undertake something which the magistrate himself would have shrunk from if he had been in their place. After thinking a moment Mr. Howard drew nearer to the judge.

"You spoke of fining that boy just now," said he. "What is there to hinder you from shutting him up for three or four days? If the rebels are to be held within bounds, I don't know of a better way of doing than that."

"That is what I think," whispered the magistrate. "But you can't do that for assault and battery. If you could prove that he tried to kill James, why then –"

"How do we know that he did not try to kill him?" asked Mr. Howard. "He knocked him down and there he let him lie."

"Well, we will see about it when he comes. I will shut him up if I can."

Meanwhile the two constables had gone on toward Caleb Young's house, where they found his mother, who was overcome with alarm when they told her that they had come for the purpose of arresting her son. Caleb was not at home, she said; she had not seen him since that man brought the news of the battle of Lexington. She guessed he was down at Crosby's house; but what did they want to arrest him for? The constables gave her no satisfaction on this point, but came out and hurried toward Enoch's. They entered without ceremony⁵ and found Caleb seated at the table with his friend enjoying breakfast. He had left home before breakfast was ready.

"Ah! Here you are," said Kelly. "Come on. We want you."

It was just what Caleb expected. The boys had been obliged to tell Mrs. Crosby that they had a skirmish with James Howard in front of the house, because she knew it all along. The tussle that Enoch made in getting Caleb into the house had told her that there was something unusual going on, and she was anxious to know all about it.

"I am ready," said Caleb, "at any time you are."

"Caleb, you did not kill him?" exclaimed Mrs. Crosby.

⁵ The constables were not in the habit of knocking at a private house. They heralded their approach by the command: "Open in the name of the King!" and then went in and did their business.

"Oh no," replied Caleb, with a laugh. "I told you that I just knocked him down. It will teach him better than to talk of hauling honest boys up with a rope."

Enoch had sat there talking with Caleb while the latter was eating his breakfast, and had never thought of saying a word; but when he saw his friend rise to his feet and pick up his hat, he took it as a signal that it was high time he was doing something. He jumped up and ran out of the house bareheaded and hurried off to find Zeke Lewis. He burst open the door without waiting to knock, and caught Zeke in the act of picking his teeth after enjoying a comfortable breakfast.

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