



John Pendleton Kennedy (1795-1870)

WHIG AND TORY IN *HORSE-SHOE ROBINSON*

“We have seen war in its horrors,” exclaimed Mildred, with an involuntary vivacity; “and here it is in all its romance!”

~ *Horse-Shoe Robinson*, ch. 41.

For his time, Baltimore born Joseph Pendleton Kennedy would seem to have *just about* done and had it all; which for our purposes we can summarize by listing some highlights. He began his career as an attorney; fought at the battle of Bladensburg while serving in the Maryland militia; disenchanted with practicing law, he took up writing; and wrote three novels -- two of which became popular and successful. His main focus, however, was not literature but politics and he became a busy statesman; acting for many years as an assembly member, including Speaker, of the Maryland legislature. Later he was elected U.S. Congressman (on the Whig platform) from the same state, and subsequently went on, like fellow literary lights James Kirke Paulding and U.S. historian George Bancroft, to be appointed Secretary of the Navy. He knew or was the personal acquaintance of most, if not quite all, of many of the eminent American authors of his era; as well as being a correspondent with some well-known British ones, including Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray. Although a devoted lover of the South, he was pro-Union during the Civil War; arguing that it was the collective, not individual, states that found our country and won its independence.¹ At the same time, he was one of those who thought slavery a bad idea, and encouraged its overtime and gradual eradication. To cap it all off, he was a devout Presbyterian and a reputed credit to his congregation.²

His two (aforesaid) *successful* novels were *Swallow Barn, or A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (1832), and *Horse-Shoe Robinson: A Tale of the Tory Ascendancy* (1835). The first was a sentimental and semi-comical tale of nostalgia, written in the affectionate and warm hearted manner of Washington Irving; that told the story of neighboring plantations in (what was then becoming) Old Virginia. While the first is critically considered his best work overall, it was *Horse-Shoe Robinson*, a humorous historical romance set during the Revolutionary War in (mostly) South Carolina in 1780, that earned Kennedy most acclaim.

Although *Horse-Shoe Robinson* is in part yet another attempt at an American based *Waverly* spin-off, Kennedy's work has the advantage over such as Cooper in that there is a greater emphasis on realism; while simultaneously humor is far more prominent and lively an ingredient to the story. With respect to realism, Kennedy was ahead of his time in presenting Black slaves as more human and intelligent than, say, they appear in William Gilmore Simms. True, he occasionally has one of his characters, such as Horse-

¹ Maj. Arthur Butler, a *Continental* (S.C.) officer and who plays a pivotal role, is in the end rescued from his British captivity by the Southern *militia*.

² A good introduction to Kennedy and his work, and from which much of the above is taken, is Ernest E. Leisy's lead-in to the 1937 edition of *Horse-Shoe Robinson* (American Book Company.)

Shoe Robinson himself, ridicule or speak condescendingly of them, but not so Kennedy himself; who draws them in a believable and reasonably (and for his time) respectful manner. He is matter-of-fact candid in displaying the foibles and faults as well as strengths of his heroes; including, for instance, detailing their punctual concern for eating; or the rank villainy of other characters, such as Horse-Shoe's guide who insists on (literally) skinning a captured wolf alive.³

As history, *Horse-Shoe Robinson* is fairly fast and loose at times but mostly faithful to the record. As well as brief recreations of the battles of Musgrove Mill and King's Mountain, it includes what we today might call cameo appearances by loyalist Alexander Innes,⁴ Francis Marion, James Williams, William Campbell, Tarleton, Cornwallis, Archibald McArthur, Patrick Ferguson, Isaac Shelby; with repeated references to Sumter, Elijah Clark, and Pickens. And it is interesting to note that Kennedy's work antedated Simms' southern Revolutionary War novels, and even in some-wise would seem to have prompted them. On the whole, *Horse-shoe Robinson* is overly lengthy; while suffering from excessive digressions and unnecessarily protracted conversations (the latter device regrettably typical of American novels of the time.) Where the book succeeds rather and chiefly is in its individual scenes and characters; administered in extracted doses.

The star of the tale is said by Kennedy in his introduction to have been based on a real Galbraith Robinson (who'd fought and related anecdotes of his experiences in the Revolution), and there's no reason to think that this wasn't technically and in part the case. Notwithstanding, Horse-Shoe as much as anything is more of a general type: a male southerner: hardy, fearless, given to both joking and philosophizing. He's Natty Bumppo, but Natty Bumppo given more to wit making and wise-cracking than Cooper's creation -- such that Kennedy here is something of a forerunner of Mark Twain and Will Rogers. Here, to illustrate, are some notable Horse Shoe-isms:

* *Horse Shoe came to the fire-side, and took a chair, saying, "I larnt that, Colonel, in the campaigns. A man picks up some good everywhere, if he's a mind to; that's my observation."* [Introduction]

* *"When danger stares you in the face," replied Horse Shoe, "the best way is not to see it. It is only in not seeing of it, that a brave man differs from a coward: that's my opinion."* [ch. 2]

* *"A good stomach enough, but not much in it. I'll tell you another observation I made; when a man travels all night long on an empty stomach, he ought either to fill it next morning or make it smaller."
"And how is that to be managed, friend Horse Shoe?"
"Indian fashion," replied the sergeant. "Buckle your belt a little tighter every two or three hours. A man may shrivel his guts up to the size of a pipe stem. But I found a better way to get along than by taking in my belt --"* [ch. 2]

* *"It is my opinion, ma'am, the best thing the women can do, in these here wars, is to knit; and leave the fighting of it out, to us who hav'n't faces to be spoiled by bad weather and tough times."* [ch. 5]

* *"It's the custom of our country," rejoined Horse Shoe, "I don't know what it may be in yourn, to larn a little about the business of every man we meet; but we do it by fair, out-and-out question and answer -- all above board, and we hold in despise all sorts of contwistifications, either by laying of tongue-traps, or listening under eaves of houses."* [ch. 6]

* *"In our country," replied Horse Shoe, "we generally like to get a share of whatever new is stirring, and, though we don't practise much with cudgels, yet, to sarve a turn, we do, now and then, break a head or so; and, consarnin that fist work you happened to touch upon, we have no condesentious scruples against a fair rap or two over the knowledge-box, and the tripping-up of a fractious chap's heels, in the way of a sort of a rough-and-tumble, which, may be, you understand. You have been long enough here, mayhap, to find that out."* [ch. 6]

³ In Simms' *Mellichampe: A Legend of the Santee* (1836) a character not dissimilarly cruelly stabs a dog to keep him quiet.

⁴ Kennedy mistakenly spells his last name as "Innis."

* *"They didn't want to have no uproar with me, Major [Arthur] Butler. They knowed me, that although I wa'n't a quarrelsome man, they would'a got some of their necks twisted if I had seen occasion: in particular, I would have taken some of mad Archy's crazy fits out of him--by my hand I would, major! But I'll tell you,--I made one observation, that this here sort of carrying false colors goes against a man's conscience: it doesn't seem natural for a man, that's accustomed and willing to stand by his words, to be heaping one lie upon top of another as fast as he can speak them. It really, Major Butler, does go against my grain."* [ch. 12]

* *"If the worst comes to the worst, major, the rule is run or fight. We can manage that, at any rate, for we have had a good deal of both in the last three or four years."* [ch. 12]

* *"There is some good things," said the sergeant, "in this world that's good, and some that's bad. But I have always found that good and bad is so mixed up and jumbled together, that you don't often get much of one without a little of the other. A sodger's a sodger, no matter what side he is on; and they are the naturalest people in the world for fellow-feeling. One day a man is up, and then the laugh's on his side; next day he is down, and then the laugh's against him. So, as a sodger has more of these ups and downs than other folks, there's the reason his heart is tenderer towards a comrade than other people's. Here's your health, sir. This is a wicked world, and twisted, in a measure, upside down; and it is well known that evil communications corrupts good manners; but sodgers were made to set the world right again, on its legs, and to presarve good breeding and Christian charity. So there's a sarmon for you, you tinkers!"* [ch. 18]

* *"As heavy a lump, certainly," replied the officer [one of Tarleton's]. "This, you say, is the first time you have been in Carolina?"*

"To my knowledge," replied the [masquerading] sergeant. [ch. 47]

Of particular relevance to historians of the American Revolution is Kennedy's faithful portrayal of southern whigs and tories. Here is a view of Revolutionary War combatants on both sides interacting in a manner we scarce ever get a chance to see and hear. To spare such as who haven't read the book the digging, here is an excellent sample of this very case in point, taken from chapter 18. Robinson and the S.C. Continental officer Maj. Arthur Butler, taken prisoner, are being escorted by their captors, a gang of roguish, yet conscience weighingly human, tories.

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It was with the most earnest solicitude that Butler and his companion watched the course of events, and became acquainted with the character of the ruffians into whose hands they had fallen. The presence of James Curry in this gang excited a painful consciousness in the mind of the soldier, that he had powerful and secret enemies at work against him, but who they were was an impenetrable mystery. Then the lawless habits of the people who had possession of him, gave rise to the most anxious distrust as to his future fate: he might be murdered in a fit of passion, or tortured with harsh treatment to gratify some concealed malice. His position in the army was, it seemed, known too; and, for aught that he could tell, his mission might be no secret to his captors. Robinson's sagacity entered fully into these misgivings. He had narrowly observed the conduct of the party who had made them prisoners, and with that acute insight which was concealed under a rude and uneducated exterior, but which was strongly marked in his actions, he had already determined upon the course which the safety of Butler required him to pursue. According to his view of their present difficulties it was absolutely necessary that he should effect his escape, at whatever personal hazard. Butler, he rightly conjectured, was the principal object of the late ambushade; that, for some unknown purpose, the possession of this officer became important to those who had procured the attack upon him, and that James Curry had merely hired this gang of desperadoes to secure the prize. Under these circumstances, he concluded that the Major would be so strictly guarded as to forbid all hope of escape, and that any attempt by him to effect it would only be punished by certain death. But, in regard to himself, his calculation was different. "First," said he, "I can master any three of this beggarly crew in an open field and fair fight; and, secondly, when it comes to the chances of a pell-mell, they will not think me of so much account as to risk their necks by a long chase; their whole eyes would undoubtedly be directed to the Major." The sergeant, therefore, determined to make the attempt, and, in the event of his success, to

repair to Sumpter, who he knew frequented some of the fastnesses in this region; or, in the alternative, to rally such friends from the neighboring country as were not yet overawed by the Tory dominion, and bring them speedily to the rescue of Butler. Full of these thoughts, he took occasion during the night, whilst the guard were busy in cooking their venison, and whilst they thought him and his comrade wrapt in sleep, to whisper to Butler the resolution he had adopted.

“I will take the first chance to-morrow to make a dash upon these ragamuffins,” he said; “and I shall count it hard if I don’t get out of their claws. Then, rely upon me, I shall keep near you in spite of these devils. So be prepared, if I once get away, to see me like a witch that travels on a broomstick or creeps through a keyhole. But whisht! The drunken vagabonds mustn’t hear us talking.”

Butler, after due consideration of the sergeant’s scheme, thought it, however perilous, the only chance they had of extricating themselves from the dangers with which they were beset, and promised the most ready co-operation; determining also, to let no opportunity slip which might be improved to his own deliverance. “Your good arm and brave heart, Galbraith, never stood you in more urgent stead than they may do to-morrow,” was his concluding remark.

When morning broke the light of day fell upon a strange and disordered scene. The drunken and coarse wretches of the night before, now lessened in number and strength by common broil and private quarrel, lay stretched on their beds of leaves. Their motley and ill-assorted weapons lay around in disarray; drinking cups and empty flasks were scattered over the trodden grass, the skin and horns of the buck, and disjointed fragments of raw flesh were seen confusedly cast about beneath the tree, and a conspicuous object in the scene were the clots of blood and gore, both of men and beast, that disfigured the soil. Two new-made graves, or rather mounds, hastily scratched together and imperfectly concealing the limbs of the dead, prominently placed but a few feet from the ring of last night’s revelry, told of the disasters of the fight at the ford. The brushwood fire had burned down into a heap of smouldering ashes, and the pale and sickly features of the wounded trooper were to be discerned upon a pallet of leaves, hard by the heap of embers, surrounded by the remnants of bones and roasted meat that had been flung carelessly aside. In a spot of more apparent comfort, sheltered by an overhanging canopy of vines and alder, lay Butler stretched upon his cloak, and, close beside him, the stout frame of Horse Shoe Robinson. In the midst of all these marks of recent riot and carousal, sat two swarthy figures, haggard and wan from night-watching, armed at every point, and keeping strict guard over the prisoners.

The occasional snort and pawing of horses in the neighboring wood showed that these animals were alert at the earliest dawn; whilst among the first who seemed aware of the approach of day, was seen rising from the earth, where it had been flung in stupid torpor for some hours, the bloated and unsightly person of Hugh Habershaw, now much the worse for the fatigue and revelry of the preceding night. A savage and surly expression was seated on his brow, and his voice broke forth more than ordinarily harsh and dissonant, as he ordered the troop to rouse and prepare for their march.

The summons was tardily obeyed; and while the yawning members of the squad were lazily moving to their several duties and shaking off the fumes of their late debauch, the captain was observed bending over the prostrate form of Gideon Blake, and directing a few anxious inquiries into his condition. The wounded man was free from pain, but his limbs were stiff, and the region of the stab sore and sensitive to the least touch. The indications, however, were such as to show that his wound was not likely to prove mortal. By the order of Habershaw, a better litter was constructed, and the troopers were directed to bear him, by turns, as far as Christie’s, where he was to be left to the nursing of the family. It was a full hour before the horses were saddled, the scattered furniture collected, and the preparations for the march completed. When these were accomplished the prisoners were provided with the two sorriest horses of the troop, and they now set forward at a slow pace, under the escort of four men commanded by James Curry. The two troopers who bore the sick man followed on foot; Habershaw with the remainder, one of whom had appropriated Captain Peter, whilst he led the horses of the dismounted men, brought up the rear.

On the journey there was but little spoken by any member of the party; the boisterous and rude nature of the men who composed the troop seemed to have been subdued by sleep into a temper of churlish indifference or stolid apathy. Peppercorn, or James Curry, as the reader now recognizes him, strictly

preserved his guard over the prisoners, manifesting a severity of manner altogether different from the tone of careless revelry which characterized his demeanor on the preceding night. It never relaxed from an official and sullen reserve. A moody frown sat upon his brow, and his communication with the prisoners was confined to short and peremptory commands; whilst, at the same time, he forbade the slightest intercourse with them on the part of any of the guard. During the short progress to Christie's he frequently rode apart with Habershaw; and the conversation which then occupied these two was maintained in a low tone, and with a serious air that denoted some grave matter of deliberation.

It was more than an hour after sunrise when the cavalcade reached the point of their present destination. There were signs of an anxious purpose in the silence of the journey, broken as it was only by low mutterings amongst the men, above which sometimes arose an expression of impatience and discontent, as the subject of their whispered discussions appeared to excite some angry objection from several of the party; and this mystery was not less conspicuous in the formal order of the halt, and in the pause that followed upon their arrival at the habitation.

The house, in front of which they were drawn up, was, according to the prevailing fashion of the time, a one-storied dwelling covering an ample space of ground, built partly of boards and partly of logs, with a long piazza before it, terminating in small rooms, made by inclosing the sides for a few feet at either extremity. Being situated some twenty paces aside from the road, the intervening area was bounded by a fence through which a gate afforded admission. A horse-rack, with a few feeding troughs, was erected near this gate; and a draw-well, in the same vicinity, furnished a ready supply of water. With the exception of a cleared field around the dwelling, the landscape was shaded by the natural forest.

A consultation of some minutes' duration was held between Habershaw and Curry, when the order to dismount was given, accompanied with an intimation of a design to tarry at this place for an hour or two; but the men, at the same time, were directed to leave their saddles upon their horses. One or two were detailed to look after the refreshment of the cattle, whilst the remainder took possession of the principal room. The first demands of the troop were for drink, and this being indulged, the brute feeling of conviviality which in gross natures depends altogether upon sensual excitement, began once more to break down the barriers of discipline, and to mount into clamor.

The scenes of the morning had made a disagreeable impression upon the feelings of Butler and his comrade. The changed tone and the ruffian manners of the band, the pause, and the doubts which seemed to agitate them, boded mischief. The two prisoners, however, almost instinctively adopted the course of conduct which their circumstances required. They concealed all apprehension of harm, and patiently awaited the end. Horse Shoe even took advantage of the rising mirth of the company when drink began to exhilarate them, and affected an easy tone of companionship which was calculated to throw them off their guard. He circulated freely amongst the men, and by private conference with some of the individuals around him, who, attracted by his air of confiding gaiety, seemed inclined to favor his approaches of familiarity, he soon discovered that the gang were divided in sentiment in regard to some important subject touching the proposed treatment of himself and his friend. A party, at least, he was thus made aware, were disposed to take his side in the secret disputes which had been in agitation. He was determined to profit by this dissension, and accordingly applied himself still more assiduously to cultivate the favorable sentiment he found in existence.

Whilst breakfast was in preparation, and Habershaw and Curry were occupied with the wounded man in an adjoining apartment, the sergeant, playing the part of a boon companion, laughed with the rioters, and, uninvited, made himself free of their cups.

"I should like to know," he said to one of the troopers, "why you are giving yourselves all this trouble about a couple of simple travelers that happened to be jogging along the road? If you wanted to make a pitched battle you ought to have sent us word; but if it was only upon a drinking bout you had set your hearts, there was no occasion to be breaking heads for the honor of getting a good fellow in your company, when he would have come of his own accord at the first axing. There was no use in making such a mighty secret about it; for, as we were travelling the same road with you, you had only to show a man the

civility of saying you wanted our escort, and you should have had it at a word. Here's to our better acquaintance, friend!"

"You mightn't be so jolly, Horse Shoe Robinson," said Shad Green--or, according to his nickname, Red Mug, in a whisper; "if some of them that took the trouble to find you, should have their own way. It's a d---d tight pull whether you are to be kept as a prisoner of war, or shoved under ground this morning without tuck of drum. That for your private ear."

"I was born in old Carolina myself," replied Horse Shoe, aside to the speaker; "and I don't believe there is many men to be found in it who would stand by and see the rules and regulations of honorable war blackened and trod down into the dust by any cowardly trick of murder. If it comes to that, many as there are against two, our lives will not go at a cheap price."

"Whisht!" returned the other, "with my allowance, for one, it shan't be. A prisoner's a prisoner, I say; and damnation to the man that would make him out worse."

"They say you are a merry devil, old Horse Shoe," exclaimed he who was called Bow Legs, who now stepped up and slapped the sergeant on the back. "So take a swig, man; fair play is a jewel!--that's my doctrine. Fight when you fight, and drink when you drink--and that's the sign to know a man by."

"There is some good things," said the sergeant, "in this world that's good, and some that's bad. But I have always found that good and bad is so mixed up and jumbled together, that you don't often get much of one without a little of the other. A sodger's a sodger, no matter what side he is on; and they are the naturalest people in the world for fellow-feeling. One day a man is up, and then the laugh's on his side; next day he is down, and then the laugh's against him. So, as a sodger has more of these ups and downs than other folks, there's the reason his heart is tenderer towards a comrade than other people's. Here's your health, sir. This is a wicked world, and twisted, in a measure, upside down; and it is well known that evil communications corrupts good manners; but sodgers were made to set the world right again, on its legs, and to presarve good breeding and Christian charity. So there's a sarmon for you, you tinkers!"

"Well done, mister preacher!" vociferated a prominent reveller. "If you will desert and enlist with us you shall be the chaplain of the troop. We want a good swearing, drinking, and tearing blade who can hold a discourse over his liquor, and fence with the devil at long words. You're the very man for it! Huzza for the blacksmith!"

"Huzza for the blacksmith!" shouted several others in the apartment.

Butler, during this scene, had stretched himself out at full length upon a bench, to gain some rest in his present exhausted and uncomfortable condition, and was now partaking of the refreshment of a bowl of milk and some coarse bread, which one of the troopers had brought him.

"What's all this laughing and uproar about?" said Habershaw, entering the room with Curry, just at the moment of the acclamation in favor of the sergeant "Is this a time for your cursed wide throats to be braying like asses! We have business to do. And you, sir," said he, turning to Butler, "you must be taking up the room of a half dozen men on a bench with your lazy carcass! Up, sir; I allow no lolling and lying about to rascally whigs and rebels. You have cost me the death of a dog that is worth all your filthy whig kindred; and you have made away with two of the best men that ever stept in shoe leather. Sit up, sir, and thank your luck that you haven't your arms pinioned behind you, like a horse thief."

"Insolent coward," said Butler, springing upon his feet; "hired ruffian! you shall in due time be made to pay for the outrage you have inflicted upon me."

"Tie him up!" cried Habershaw; "tie him up! And now I call you all to bear witness that he has brought the sentence upon himself; it shall be done without waiting another moment. Harry Gage, I give the matter over to you. Draw out four men, take them into the yard, and dispatch the prisoners off-hand! shoot the traitors on the spot, before we eat our breakfasts! I was a fool that I didn't settle this at daylight this

morning--the rascally filth of the earth! Have no heart about it, men; but make sure work by a short distance. This is no time for whining. When have the Whigs shown mercy to us!"

"It shall be four against four, then!" cried out Shadrach Green, seconded by Andrew Clopper; "and the first shot that is fired shall be into the bowels of Hugh Habershaw! Stand by me, boys!"

In a moment the parties were divided, and had snatched up their weapons, and then stood looking angrily at each other as if daring each to commence the threatened affray.

"Why, how now, devil's imps!" shouted Habershaw. "Have you come to a mutiny? Have you joined the rebels? James Curry, look at this! By the bloody laws of war, I will report every rascal who dares to lift his hand against me!"

"The thing is past talking about," said the first speaker, coolly. "Hugh Habershaw, neither you nor James Curry shall command the peace if you dare to offer harm to the prisoners. Now, bully, report that as my saying. They are men fairly taken in war, and shall suffer no evil past what the law justifies. Give them up to the officer of the nearest post--that's what we ask--carry them to Innis's camp if you choose; but whilst they are in our keeping there shall be no blood spilled without mixing some of your own with it, Hugh Habershaw."

"Arrest the mutineers!" cried Habershaw, trembling with rage. "Who are my friends in this room? Let them stand by me, and then--blast me if I don't force obedience to my orders!"

"You got off by the skin of your teeth last night," said Green, "when you tried to take the life of Gideon Blake. For that you deserved a bullet through your skull. Take care that you don't get your reckoning this morning, captain and all as you are."

"What in the devil would you have?" inquired Habershaw, stricken into a more cautious tone of speech by the decided bearing of the man opposed to him.

"The safety of the prisoners until they are delivered to the commander of a regular post; we have resolved upon that!" was the reply.

"Curry!" said Habershaw, turning in some perplexity to the dragoon as if for advice.

"Softly, Captain; we had better have a parley here," said Curry, who then added in a whisper: "There's been some damned bobbery kicked up here by the blacksmith. This comes of giving that fellow the privilege of talking."

"A word, men," interposed Horse Shoe, who during this interval had planted himself near Butler, and with him stood ready to act as the emergency might require. "Let me say a word. This James Curry is my man. Give me a broadsword and a pair of pistols, and I will pledge the hand and word of a sodger, upon condition that I am allowed five minutes' parole, to have a pass, here in the yard, with him--it shall be in sight of the whole squad--I pledge the word of a sodger to deliver myself back again to the guard, dead or alive, without offering to take any chance to make off in the meantime. Come, James Curry, your word to the back of that, and then buckle on your sword, man. I heard your whisper."

"Soldiers," said Curry, stepping into the circle which the party had now formed round the room, "let me put in a word as a peace-maker. Captain Habershaw won't be unreasonable. I will vouch for him that he will fulfil your wish regarding the conveying of the prisoners to a regular post. Come, come, let us have no brawling! For shame! put down your guns. There may be reason in what you ask, although it isn't so much against the fashion of the times to shoot a Whig either. But anything for the sake of quiet amongst good fellows. Be considerate, noble captain, and do as the babies wish. As for Horse Shoe's brag--he is an old soldier, and so am I; that's enough. We are not so green as to put a broadsword and a brace of pistols into the hands of a bullying prisoner. No, no, Horse Shoe! try another trick, old boy! Ha, ha, lads! you are a

set of fine dashing chaps, and this is only one of your mad-cap bits of spunk that boils up with your liquor. Take another cup on it, my merry fellows, and all will be as pleasant as the music of a fife. Come, valiant Captain of the Tiger, join us. And as for the prisoners--why let them come in for snacks with us. So there's an end of the business. All is as mild as new milk again."

"Well, well, get your breakfasts," said Habershaw gruffly. "Blast you! I have spoiled you by good treatment, you ungrateful, carnivorous dogs! But, as Peppercorn says, there's an end of it! So go to your feeding, and when that's done we will push for Blackstock's."

The morning meal was soon despatched, and the party reassembled in the room where the late disturbance had taken place. The good-nature of Robinson continued to gain upon those who had first taken up his cause, and even brought him into a more lenient consideration with the others. Amongst the former I have already noted Andrew Clopper, a rough and insubordinate member of the gang, who, vexed by some old grudge against the fat captain, had efficiently sustained Green in the late act of mutiny, and who now, struck with Horse Shoe's bold demeanor towards Curry, began to evince manifest signs of a growing regard for the worthy sergeant. With this man Horse Shoe contrived to hold a short and secret interview that resulted in the quiet transfer of a piece of gold into the freebooter's hand, which was received with a significant nod of assent to whatever proposition accompanied it. When the order of "boot and saddle" was given by Habershaw, the several members of the troop repaired to their horses, where a short time was spent in making ready for the march; after which the whole squad returned to the porch and occupied the few moments of delay in that loud and boisterous carousal which is apt to mark the conduct of such an ill-organized body in the interval immediately preceding the commencement of a day's ride. This was a moment of intense interest to the sergeant, who kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the movements of Clopper, as that individual lingered behind his comrades in the equipment of his horse. This solicitude did not, however, arrest his seeming mirth, as he joined in the rude jests of the company and added some sallies of his own.

"Give me that cup," he said at length, to one of the men, as he pointed to a gourd on a table; "before we start I have a notion to try the strength of a little cold water, just by way of physic, after all the liquor we have been drinking," and, having got the implement in his hand, he walked deliberately to the draw-well, where he dipped up a draught from the bucket that stood on its brink. As he put the water to his lips and turned his back upon the company, he was enabled to take a survey of the horses that were attached to the rack near him: then, suddenly throwing the gourd from him, he sprang towards his own trusty steed, leaped into his saddle at one bound, and sped, like an arrow from a bow, upon the highway. This exploit was so promptly achieved that no one was aware of the sergeant's purpose until he was some twenty paces upon his journey. As soon as the alarm of his flight was spread, some three or four rifles were fired after him in rapid succession, during which he was seen ducking his head and moving it from side to side with a view to baffle the aim of the marksmen. The confusion of the moment in which the volley was given rendered it ineffectual, and the sergeant was already past the first danger of his escape.

"To horse and follow!" resounded from all sides.

"Look to the other prisoner!" roared out Habershaw; "if he raises his head blow out his brains! Follow, boys, follow!"

"Two or three of you come with me," cried Curry, and a couple of files hastened with the dragoon to their horses. Upon arriving at the rack it was discovered that the bridles of the greater part of the troop were tied in hard knots in such a manner as to connect each two or three horses together.

A short delay took place whilst the horsemen were disentangling their reins, and Curry, being the first to extricate his steed, mounted and set off in rapid pursuit. He was immediately followed by two others.

At the end of half an hour the two privates returned and reported that they had been unable to obtain a view of the sergeant or even of Curry. Shortly afterwards the dragoon himself was descried retracing his steps at a moderate trot towards the house. His plight told a tale upon him of discomfiture.



One side of his face was bleeding with a recent bruise, his dress disarranged and his back covered with dust. The side of his horse also bore the same taint of the soil.

He rode up to Habershaw--who was already upon the road at the head of the remaining members of the squad, having Butler in charge -- and informed him that he had pursued the sergeant at full speed until he came in sight of him, when the fugitive had slackened his gait as if on purpose to allow himself to be overtaken.

“But, the devil grip the fellow!” he added, “he has a broad-side like a man-of-war! In my hurry I left my sword behind me, and, when I came up with him, I laid my hand upon his bridle; but, by some sudden sleight which he has taught his horse, he contrived, somehow or other, to upset me--horse and all--down a bank on the road-side. And, when I lay on the ground sprawling, do you think the jolly runagate didn’t rein up and give me a broad laugh, and ask me if he could be of any *sarvice* to me? He then bade me good bye, saying he had an engagement that prevented him from favoring me any longer with his company. Gad! it was so civilly done that all I could say was, luck go with you, Mr. Horse Shoe; and, since we are to part company so soon, may the devil pad your saddle for you! I’ll do him the justice to say that he’s a better horseman than I took him for. I can hardly begrudge a man his liberty who can win it as cleverly as he has done.”

“Well, there’s no more to be said about it,” remarked Habershaw. “He is only game for another day. He is like a bear’s cub; which is as much as to signify that he has a hard time before him. He would have only given us trouble; so let him go. Now, boys, away for Blackstock’s; I will engage I keep the fox that’s left safely enough.”

With these words the troop proceeded upon their march.

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William Thomas Sherman

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