



FAIR DOCKADE-BREAKER. (COPYRIGHT, 1891 BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT CO. AND PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.)

CHAPTER IX. A BOON AND ITS REVERIE. The movement quickly turned the old general's eyes from the guard line to the obstacle in his path...

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"Sorry you can't stop and call now, Mr. Robt. but some day—when you are paroled, or when we've whipped you all back to the union again, mamma will perhaps open her door to Carolyn's cousin. Be sure and remember the house, if you did forget me when—"

The gruff command rang along the line. With final hand shake, low-browed blessings on either side, and tearful eyes on that of the women, the pitiful column and its grim escort formed, moving slowly up the street. And, watching them with wet lashes so long as they could see, some of those women stood in mid street, unmindful of wind and cold, but with their baskets and coffee cans alike emptied by the effort.

"What paper, child?" Miss Clay's eyes opened wide. "The one left in the coat-pocket—the one he cautioned me was dangerous—"

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river was full of transports passing up. Wonder if they can be massing for a move this winter? "We've the creek freezing?" the other asked, anxiously. "Carroll, if the river freezes, how can we ever get her across?"

"Upper route—Harpers—and cross on the ice," Meredith returned, promptly. "Not if they're massing above Washington. Besides, hang it, she's obstinate as a burro about that cursed anonymous medicine. But for him I'd have had her across that night."

"His information was strictly correct," his friend replied. "Read your letter." McKee retorted, abruptly; and the host read, slowly: "Maj. Bond begs to hand Mr. Carroll Meredith the enclosed, just received from Wheeling, with request for immediate delivery."

"I don't remember the writing, even," Meredith tossed the sheet to his friend, reaching for his slippers and drawing off one boot, as McKee read aloud: "Called off suddenly. Don't delay the hunt for me. Creeks may freeze and ducks fly too high; go ahead—alone. Regrets to the ladies, especially Miss C. Let her read this, but be careful the heat from her angry eyes does not burn it up before she reads my grief between the lines. Ask her to pray for my soul. Thine, HARRY."

"Who is 'Miss C.'? Do you recognize her?" McKee queried in turn. "Divine a spat av me! as Mary says," the other returned. "Miss Carroll—Crenshaw—Colston? But I've no engagement. It is some stupid joke! If I catch the fellow, I'll make him pray for his own soul!"

"That's it! He is the man!" McKee started to his feet. "Dammed if you don't read Chinese after all!" Meredith replied, staring. "Well, his name?"

"I have no idea, but there's far more than any joke in this, Carroll, his writer is the same who sent the warning." "By George!" the other cried, springing to feet in one slipper and one riding-boot. "Are you sure? Why, man, he would have written to you. No one knows that I ever saw Carolyn Clay."

"There may be good reason," McKee persisted. "See: 'Don't delay the hunt.' Go ahead alone! Why, Carroll, it is plain warning to cut and run. And that 'Pray for my soul' is his signature." "It does look that way," Meredith assented, scanning the letter closely, suddenly adding: "How in thunder could it have come from Yankee headquarters? Will it be a trap or a joke?"

"It is no joke," was the confident reply. "The words are too exact for coincidence. She must see it, anyway. It will fix her determination to go; and we must get her to the river before the freeze. Wait till I come back." Hastily pocketing the letter, McKee seized hat and overcoat, sallied into the street, and raced for the Gray mansion. Bessie opened the door for him, her ear—more acute from long and wondering waiting—recognizing his step before his hand touched the bell.

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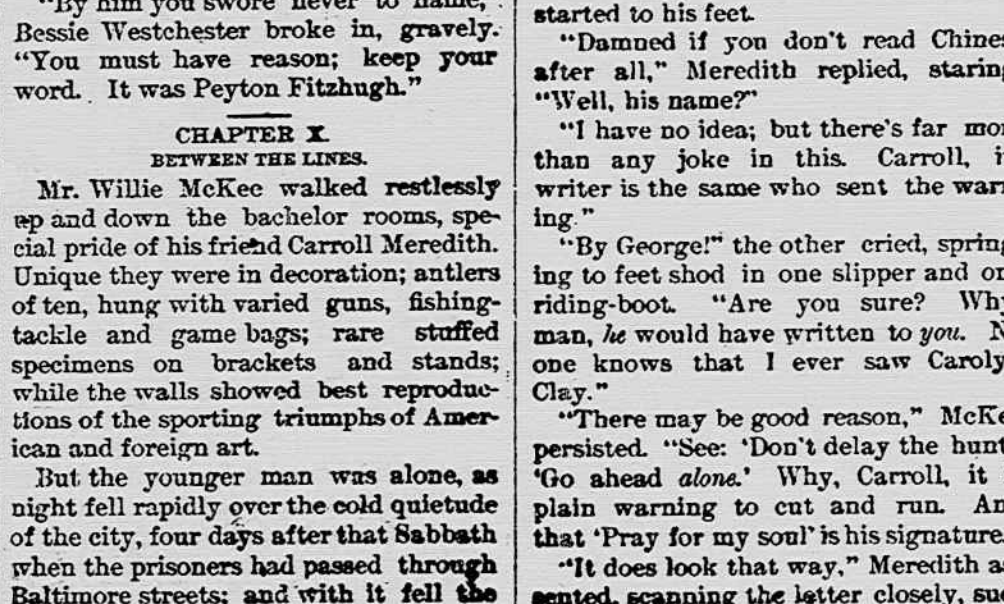
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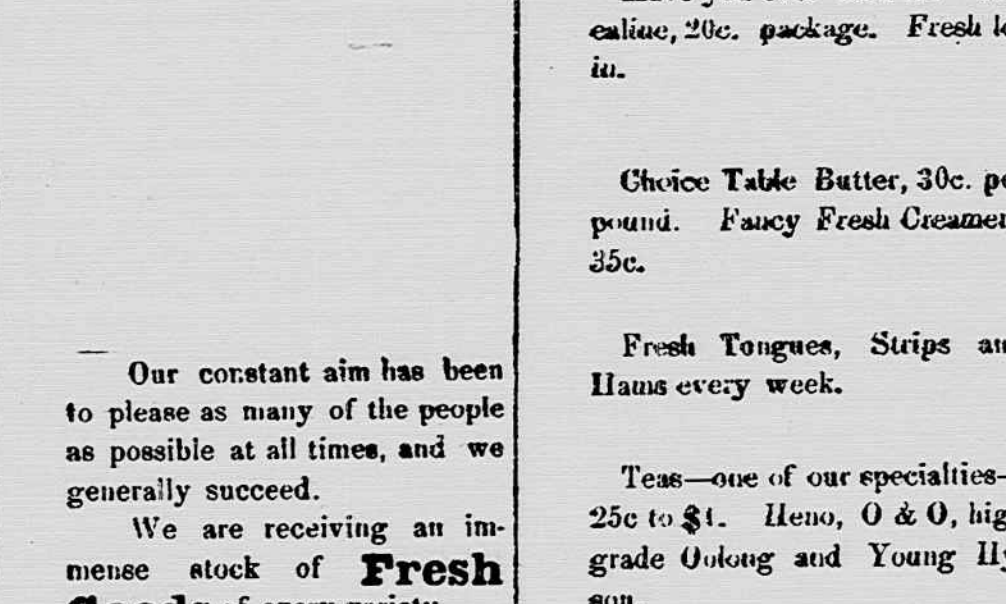
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