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DONALD McELROY

SCOTCH IRISHMAN

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Nelly Stood Ready to Receive the General.

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CHAPTER I

The life story of most men, who have lived earnest and active lives, would doubtless be worth the hearing, if the various influences and the many vicissitudes which compose it could be separated and skillfully rearranged into some well wrought design. As I look back upon my own life, it seems to me full of interest and instruction, yet I suppose not more so than that of many another; wherefore, were personal experiences and conclusions the sum of it, I should hesitate to write them down, lest those events and struggles which to me have seemed notable and significant, should prove in the telling of them to have been but commonplace incidents to which all are liable. Because of the accident of my birth in the year 1754, however, I have lived through a period which will be ever memorable in the history of the world—a period so crowded with worthy deeds and great men, especially on this continent, that there is small danger its interest will be soon exhausted. Do not conclude that I intend to venture upon a tale of the American Revolution; only a master's hand can fill in with due skill and proportion so wide a canvas, and that story waits. Where my own life's story has been entangled with some of the events of that struggle I must touch upon them, and the real purpose of my narrative—which is to chronicle for future generations the noble part played in the great drama of the nation's making by a certain worthy people—will require me to review briefly a few of the battles and campaigns of our war against autocracy.

The Scotch Irish of America, through the commendable habit of that race, so it be not carried too far, to put their strength into deeds rather than into words, have missed their meed of credit for the important work they did in our struggle for liberty. Now, our honored fellow-countrymen and co-patriots, the Puritans, have not made this mistake; they took their part in action nobly, and also they have taken care to record in history, song, and story the might and glory of their deeds. The "Boston Tea Party" and the "Boston Massacre" will go down emblazoned on the page of history, but the fight at Alamance, and the vehement petitions urging resistance to tyranny sent up to state conventions, and the first Congress, by the Scotch Irish counties of Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania have scarcely been heard of.

It is my hope not only to show what the Scotch Irish have done for the cause of liberty, but also to give a just idea of the character of this people, a true picture of their home life, and a correct estimate of that religion which is so dear to them, and which has had so much to do with making them the freedom-loving, and withal broad-minded patriots they are. Few men, I flatter myself, are better equipped to tell a Scotch Irish story than I, Donald McElroy, who in blood am pure blue Scotch Irish, who have been instructed by Scotch Irish divines in things temporal and spiritual, have fought under Scotch Irish leaders, and lived all my life among them: yet I think I may promise that my story shall not be a mere idyl—a panegyric of a people, all whose virtues will be exaggerated, all whose faults will be slurred, or kept out of sight. I have seen too much of life not to know that for each height there is a shadow, that every noble trait of character is closely attended by a special weakness. I know the faults of my people as I know their virtues, and through one dearer to me than all else the world holds, I have suffered much from that narrowness of view and stubbornness of purpose peculiar to some of them.

My boyhood was spent within the bounds of our own plantation, in the valley of Virginia. Rarely was I allowed to venture beyond sight of the house unless in company with my father, or some of the negro slaves; then only to the plow lands, or the harvest fields, until I had learned the use of rifle, knife and tomahawk. After that I was permitted to hunt in the forest, being solemnly charged each time by my mother that I should not go more than a few hundred yards into the woods in any direction, nor be lured by deer or squirrel into the thickets. There might be Indians lurking in the bushes any day, and the youthfulness of a scalp did not impair its value. Later, when I could ride and run like an Indian, and shoot a bounding deer through the heart, at a distance of three hundred feet, I was not admonished so frequently, and used often to hunt alone the day long, coming home at twilight, my horse strung round with many kinds of game.

All this time with my uncle's eldest son, Thomas, I was being taught English, Greek, Latin and Mathematics by an old Scotchman, who had become one of my grandfather's household before the family left Pennsylvania. He was a fellow of Edinburgh University, and but for the disabilities of encroaching age was well fitted to bestow upon us all the education we could imbibe.

Among the incidents of my boyhood, two stand out with peculiar distinctness. Both were fraught with terrible danger, and yet, as they come back to me, I realize with something of astonishment that except for one brief moment, on each occasion, I felt only a sensation of exhilarating excitement and grim determination. By living in the midst of hourly peril, we pioneers were dulled to the sense of it. Our one thought when peril overtook us was to do our utmost, in the full assurance that the God of our fathers, who miraculously had preserved us through so many

dangers, would again interpose for our deliverance. In such faith, and naught else could have served them, my mother went singing about her work, and my father stood guard, alone, over his slaves, day after day, as they felled the timber on the hill slopes, in sight of the mountain pass through which the Indians were accustomed to raid our valley, without cause or warning.

This Saturday afternoon, in the fall of the year, I had gone hunting afoot. In hot pursuit after a deer, I penetrated a thicket deep in the forest, there to lose track of my game. But in making my way out, came full upon a panther's burrow, and so much admired the one striped and mottled cub curled therein, that the fancy seized me to carry it home and attempt to tame it. Hearing no sound of the parent beast, I put the sleeping cub into my game bag, and started homeward. Scarcely half a mile had been covered when there came from the thicket behind me that nerve-shaking cry of the panther, resembling nothing else so much as the scream of a child in mortal terror. My steady gait quickened into a run. A second screech came from the pursuing panther. Knowledge of my danger lent wings to my limbs, but the beast gained on me with long leaps of her agile body. Louder and louder sounded her oft repeated cries, and the cub in my bag answered with pitiable whines. I could hear her deep, swift panting, and the soft thud of her feet upon the leafy ground. The open field was gained but a few yards in advance of her, and turning to face my foe a sudden panic seized me. To my amazement she paused at the edge of the forest, and, after turning a scornful glance in my direction, fixed a meditative eye upon a sunset more gorgeous than usual. With that alertness of observation, and acuteness of consciousness which most persons experience in moments of high tension, I remember noting the rich coloring of the tan and brown rings on the creature's sleek and mottled skin, and of thinking what a fine, soft cover it would make for my mother's rocking chair.

Suddenly the panther turned toward me, uttering a still more blood-curdling cry, and crouched for a spring. My ball met her as she rose, but only to sting her, and make her the more furious. Her body came against mine with the force of a cannon ball, and I went down under it, my unloaded rifle being hurled from my hand. Fastened by the animal's claws, together we rolled over and over in the dry, matted grass of the meadow, struggling desperately.

The confused, doubtful struggle was presently over and not only was I alive and fully conscious, but could even move my mangled arm, and stand upon my feet. The hilt of my knife stuck straight upward in the long fur upon the creature's breast, and I pulled it out, wiped it upon the grass, and sheathed it, thinking I would not use it again, but keep it for remembrance.

Again I was struck by the thickness and beauty of the panther's skin, and wished to have it for my mother's chair. It was my custom to carry a leathern thong in the outer pouch of my game bag; one end of it I now fastened about the beast's body, the other about my own, and so dragged the carcass after me across the level field. Slow and painful was my progress, for my lacerated shoulder and arm smarted maddeningly, and every few yards I was forced to drop upon the ground to rest.

The full moon was two hours high, when, at last, I came to the barn yard stile, on which my father leaned, scanning the fields anxiously.

"Well, son, I'm glad you've come," said my father, "your mother is half dead with anxiety."

I showed my trophy and told my story.

"You did a foolish thing, Don, when you stole the cub, but your mother need have, I think, little further anxiety about you; you are as able to take care of yourself as any seasoned woodsman."

The glow of pride my father's words gave me changed to a feeling of remorse when I saw my mother's blanched face and trembling hands. She would not consent to let me tame the cub. "Our lives were already close enough to savagery," she said, "with Indians and wild beasts likely to fall upon us at any moment; we do not want the sweet peace of our home broken by any savage sight or sound." She kept the skin, though, used it on her winter rocking chair, and prized it highly. Indeed I have more than once overheard her tell how she came by it.

The second incident of my youth most vividly stamped upon my memory happened just ten months after I killed the panther.

The occasion was the last Indian raid into our valley. Fortunately we had two days' warning, and in that time the women and children were gathered within the recently completed stockade around the church, with provisions enough for a week's siege. Meanwhile the men took their rifles and marched to the mountain pass through which the Indians were expected to enter the valley, hoping to turn the savages back with a bloody lesson such as would last them a while, and insure us some more years of peace.

Much exalted in my own opinion by my recent exploit with the panther, I begged to go with the men, and took it somewhat sullenly that I should be left behind with the rest of the youths, under the captaincy of the parson, to guard a church full of women and children. About half an hour before sunset on the second day I was descending the hill behind the church to the spring, a piggin in either hand, and my ever present rifle under my arm, when I saw on the crest of the opposite hill a file of Indians, their painted bodies and feather crested heads standing out against the glowing sky, as distinctly as a picture on a white leaf. Back I flew to the church, with the alarm hot on my lips, and found that Parson Craig had assembled all within for evening worship. In an instant, Bible and Psalm book laid aside, the doors of the church were barricaded, and we youths, each with rifle or musket loaded and primed, stood close about our parson, awaiting

orders.

"Lads," he said, in tones that rang as they did when he preached one of his famous sermons of warning to sinners, and dropping in a Scotch word here and there, as he was apt to when excited, "keep cool and fire carefully when ye ha'e taken good aim. We ha'e nae bullets to spare and each ain maun hold himself responsible for half a dozen savages. Remember, lads, ye are fightin' for your maithers, your sisters, your kirk an' your hames, for a' that true men hauld dear, and if ye maun gie your verra lives to save these dearer things count not the price, but pay like brave men, and like brothers o' that dear Christ wha gladly gi'ed His life a sacrifice for us a'. Fear not death, my lads—'tis but the beginning of life, but fear for your maithers' and your sisters' torture and dishonor."

Hardly had the brave pastor spoken the last word, when the stockade was surrounded by whooping red skins, brandishing tomahawks and war clubs, and yelling to each other unintelligible words of command or exhortation. In another instant they were flying a shower of arrows and bullets over the top of the stockade, and several savage faces appeared above the wall.

A second, third and fourth attempt to scale the stockade was made. For a while, however, I could render little assistance in checking our enemies from without, for I was engaged in a hand to hand death grapple with one of the three Indians who at the first rush succeeded in getting within our enclosure. Never, before or since, had I so mighty a wrestle for my life, and but for my superior height, and the strength of my strong arms, my reader would have been spared this personal narrative.

The next half hour—it seems thrice as long—stays in my mind as an idea of what Hell might well be like. Row after row of hideous, paint streaked, savage faces rose about our wall; the crack of rifles, the whizz of arrows, the yell of the red demons, the shrieks of the wounded, the groans of the dying, mingled in a hideous clamor, and above all rose the wailing of frightened children, and the moans of terrified women. The one harmonious note amidst this frightful discord was the ringing, cheerful tone of Parson Craig's voice, as he encouraged his lads between the quickly succeeding shots of his own musket.

Again and again I fired my good rifle, and whenever a savage face fell backward from the top of the stockade, I experienced a heart bound of fierce joy. Not until there was almost complete silence about us and not a living Indian in sight, did we boys cease the almost mechanical action of loading and firing, and turn to look about us.

The ground both within and without the enclosure, was strewn with dead and dying Indians, half a score of them at least, and some of the lads were carrying our own injured, six in all, into the church, where tender hands waited to dress their wounds. Presently I discovered clotted blood upon my sleeve, and realized for the first time that a bullet had pierced my leathern shirt and the flesh of my left arm between shoulder and elbow.

Next day the militiamen joined us, and we learned that the Indians had evaded them by seeking another pass higher up the range; also that they had devastated all the valley, except our end of it. We had stopped effectually the war party detailed against us, and had saved our homes and crops, as well as the lives of our women and children. The valley rang with praise of "the fighting lads," and my father's face beamed with pride and tenderness as he shook my hand.

"I shall call you boy no longer, Donald," he said; "you have nobly earned your majority; my advice is always at your service, sir, but no longer I give you commands." I think I never had a promotion or an honor that so pleasured me; and doubtless my father was shrewd enough to know that by thus expressing his pride and confidence in me, he was fixing upon me a sense of uplifting responsibility, as one from whom only noble deeds were expected, which would prove a restraint stronger than any which the most respected authority could impose—an obligation to right and duty neither to be shirked, nor forgotten.

CHAPTER II

The mellow glow of September lay upon green hills and purple mountains, sleeping in serene content against a tender sky. Over quiet woods, and gliding river, bordered with ribbons of rich meadows, brooded a sweet peace, as if nature, after a busy and fruitful season, took her well earned rest in mood of conscious thankfulness. The very grapes, hanging in heavy amber clusters below the sloping roof of the low-eaved porch on which I sat, suggested fruition and content, as if they had stored all the sweetness possible within their bursting skins, and now rested thankfully upon their strong stems.

I could see my father salting sheep in the meadow, watered by the spring-run, below the house, and I smiled as presently he sought the shade of a spreading elm, and stretched himself full length upon the ground. The droning of the bees, and the sleepy humming of the flies added to the lazy influence of the fondling fruit-scented breeze; I almost nodded over my bullet molding for a moment, then roused myself and went to work. Saturday was my only holiday, and I could not laze the morning away unless I were content to miss my one chance during the week for an afternoon in the forest.

"Good morning, nephew," spoke suddenly a high, strong voice which I knew to be Aunt Martha's. "Spend you all your spare time polishing firearms, molding bullets, and shooting animals?"

I turned in my chair, and looked up to see my mother's sister, who was as unlike her as one sister could be from another—coming up the sidewalk, and my father leading her pacing mare from the stile, stable-ward. Aunt Martha's erect and well formed shoulders had a square set which gave her a masculine air, and she held her somewhat sharp chin and nose tilted a little upward, as if she felt very sure of her own convictions. Her brown hair was brushed back severely from her square, high brow, and her gray eyes met your gaze steadily with a look that was not unkind, though it was certainly not sympathetic, nor confidence inviting.

"Good morning, Aunt Martha," I answered, in undisturbed, and cheerful tones—for I never allowed Aunt Martha to disconcert or overawe me, as she did her own son, Thomas, and even Uncle Thomas himself—"I'll clear the way for you in a moment," and I began to push back my chair, rifle and implements from the middle of the porch.

"Your time might be better spent, nephew, in my opinion," continued Aunt Martha, as she stood waiting on the step, looking with stern disapproval first at me, and then at the cluttered floor of the porch. "Our lads, it seems to *me*," (Aunt Martha always accented the *me* or the *my*) "are growing up to be a turbulent and bloodthirsty race, with but the most carnal ideas of life. Did we but serve God more entirely, and trust Him more fully, we would depend less upon our own strength and skill, and more upon Him to defend and take care of us. And after all what is man's puny strength against the dangers of this life? It is our all powerful Heavenly Father who must save and protect us."

"True enow, Martha, true enow," broke in the voice of my grandmother, who appeared just then in the front doorway, her ever busy fingers picking up and knitting off the stitches from her shining needles with steady click, "but God has naewhere promised to do His ain work, and man's as weel. He led the children o' Israel to the Promised Land, and then bade them fight for a' they wanted o' it, nor did they get ony more than they could win an' hauld. There's yet need, plenty, for men who can shoot in this colony, and likely to be for mony lang days to come. Let the lad alone, Martha; he's fearless, an' sometimes rash, but neither bloodthirsty nor a brawler," and as my aunt stepped into my mother's room, adjoining, to lay aside her bonnet, I heard my grandmother add in somewhat impatient tones,

"I'm glad enow to ken ye're sae pious, Martha, but dinna get to be fanatical, nor in the way o' going about a' the time with reproof in your een, an' a sairmon on your lips. You but cheapen our holy religion sae, an' harden the young an' the unconverted."

My grandmother spoke with a rich Irish accent that it is impossible to indicate, for it was not a brogue, nor a dialect; it was merely a full-throated, and somewhat rolling sound which she gave to certain words. Her language too, was freely sprinkled with Scotch words, and these she pronounced with broad Scotch accent. The combination was delightful, and her blended speech added a peculiar charm to the fascinating stories she could sometimes be beguiled into telling.

"It is strange doctrine, mother, that one may be too pious," answered my aunt, who certainly did not number meekness among her Christian virtues. Nor was my grandmother meek spirited, and a warm argument would likely have followed had not my mother, whose sweet and placid temper was the oil ready, at all times, to be poured on the threatening argument, entered the back door at that moment.

With Dulce, the cook woman, to help her she had been making candles all morning, in the back kitchen—my father having killed a fat beef but a few days before—and on seeing Aunt Martha's horse led to the stable she had but waited to hang up the last dipping, and to tidy herself before coming in to welcome her sister.

"How do you do, Sister Martha," she began cheerily, "I'm more glad than ordinarily to see you; indeed I was just wishing I could send for you to eat some of the suet pudding we are boiling for dinner; I know you are fond of it."

"Yes, suet pudding is a favorite dish of mine," said my aunt, solemnly and with a deep sigh, "but I am little in the mood to enjoy anything this morning, Rachael."

"And what troubles you noo, daughter?" asked grandmother kindly, but with no note of anxiety in her cheery voice.

"I thought you looked pestered, child," added my mother in soothing tones; "take this chair, it sits easier than that one, and tell us what's on your mind."

"'Tis about the letter that came yesterday to Thomas," and Aunt Martha paused, to whet still further her listeners' curiosity, and meantime, heaved another deep sigh.

"Well, Martha, who writ the letter, an' what was't writ aboot?" somewhat impatiently from grandmother.

"'T'was writ by a cousin of Thomas', in Baltimore, to bring him news of his Sister Mary's death, and of her husband's, Owen O'Niel, of the small pox plague within three days of each other," and again Aunt Martha sighed.

"But you ken but little o' Mary O'Niel, child, and 'tis near fifteen years syne you ha'e seen her,"

remarked my grandmother, a touch of impatience still audible in her voice.

"They left an only daughter," continued my aunt, "and made dying request that the child, Ellen, might be sent to Virginia to the care of Mary's brother. And now Thomas says there's naught else to do but that he must start at once to bring her to our house."

"Thomas is right, Martha; there's naught else to be doon;—the child canna weal come sae far alone, e'en by the stages. But I see nae sic sair trouble in that, though I'm nae denyin' 'twill be something of a trial to you to spare Thomas for four or five weeks. At the same time 'twill be a welcome opportunity to get some muslins, cap laces, and sic like things; and Martha, you micht hae him fetch you the table and bed linens you hae wanted for sae lang," and grandmother's voice sounded as cheery as a bird's morning carol, while she suggested these substantial compensations.

"And William will be glad to come over every few days, sister, to advise with Thomas, who, though he's but a boy yet, is a sensible, steady lad, and can see that the negroes carry out his father's directions."

"'Tis not the sparing Thomas I am most troubled about, Rachael, though I like not the prospect of his absence, and son Thomas is in all things a child yet. That which kept me awake last night was the thought of having an O'Niel and a Catholic in my household. 'Tis bitter, indeed, after all our people have suffered from that name and that religion."

"Tut, tut, Martha; you fret me," said my grandmother, almost shrilly, only shrillness was not possible to her rich voice. "I'd ne'er keep an old sore running that I micht hae the nursing o' it. And was na' the great, great grandmaither of yourself an O'Niel and a Catholic? 'Tis nae fact we hae reason to be greatly proud of, I weel ken, yet O'Niel is nae low Irish name, nor is the Catholic religion, though it be full of superstition, sae bad as some folks believe. I hae known, indeed, charitable and pious Catholics, and there was a time when an O'Niel stood staunch friend to our family, else I misdoubt me there'd hae been nae McElroys in America to-day."

"And Ellen is only a child, sister," put in my mother; "we'll make a good Presbyterian of her in no-time."

"Ne'er by driving," said grandmother; "an O'Niel was ne'er yet driven to do anything."

"She's fourteen or more, thinks Thomas, and knowing the bigoted and stubborn spirit of the O'Niels I doubt not she is set in her idolatrous religion by this time," sighed Aunt Martha.

"But she may be a sweet, tractable child, sister, and since you've no daughter of your own, and I've always been sorry you did not have—Jean's such a pleasure to us—this Ellen'll doubtless grow up to be a great comfort to you."

Getting no response to this cheerful doctrine but another sigh, my mother got up, and said briskly:

"Come, Martha, I want you to see my cheeses. I never made finer ones, I'm sure."

The invitation proved too tempting to resist, and Aunt Martha followed mother into the back entry, wearing still the look of a much burdened woman. She would forget her role, presently, however, in the interest of inspecting jellies, and butters, and sampling the new cheeses. My mother was a famous housewife, and her domestic products were the admiration of the neighborhood.

"Grandmother," I said, joining her as soon as they were out of hearing, "who is this Ellen O'Niel who is niece to Uncle Thomas?"

"Well, laddie, 'tis a tangled story, but I will e'en try to unravel it for you, if you'll hold this hank of yarn till I wind me a good ball."

There was nothing, save hunting, I liked so well as my grandmother's stories; so I drew my chair in front of her and held my arms as still as I could, while she wound dexterously, and told me the origin of Ellen O'Niel.

To-day I can shut my eyes and call up the picture of the "big room" in the comfortable log house where I was born and raised. Its walls of hewn logs, brown from smoke and age, and chinked with yellow plastering, were almost covered with wild skins, and stag antlers; these last used as rests for muskets, and powder horns. Over its small paned, deep silled windows hung speckless muslin curtains; upon its floor was spread a gayly striped rag carpet; and the wooden rocking-chairs were made soft with skins or feather cushions. The high mantel-shelf was ornamented, at either end, with squat wide-lipped blue pitchers, and between them two shining brass candle-sticks, having trays and snuffers to match. In winter these pitchers were filled with dried grasses and "everlastings;" in summer with flowers of the marigold, poppy, heartsease or love-in-mist, and the great fireplace below with feathery asparagus branches. At all times it was a homely, comfortable room, but cosier perhaps on winter evenings, when great logs blazed high above the dog-irons; when between the candles on either end of the long table against the wall, sat plates of ginger bread, and pitchers of persimmon beer; when apples sputtered on the stone hearth, filling the room with spicy fragrance, and roasting chestnuts popped in the hot ashes. Especially were we merry on such winter evenings as guests joined the hearth circle around the blazing logs. Nor were they so infrequent as you may suppose, for my father, being justice of the county

and a man of substance, kept open house for travelers of all degrees, and, since they brought us all our news from the outside world, they were always welcome. On such evenings I was bid to hurry with my lessons, that I might play a tune for our guests on my fiddle—for music was so rare a treat in our settlement that even my poor, self-taught efforts were appreciated.

But I am wandering, as garrulous old age is apt to do, and meantime my reader waits for my grandmother's story.

"The O'Niels, lad," she began, "lang syne, were a great family in Ireland, the Earls O'Niel, or the Earls O'Tyrone, as they were called, being hereditary chiefs o' a powerful clan, in the northern part o' Ireland. But always they were a turbulent people, an' as was the custom with mony o' the Scotch an' Irish lads in those days, lived for the maist part by pillaging their neighbors. Continually, too, they were the leaders in insurrection against the English power, and as far back as the reign of King James part o' their lands were forfeited to the croon, an' were granted or sold to English an' Scotch Protestants, with the hope that a loyal an' peaceful settlement in the heart o' brawling Ireland micht help to civilize the people, an' keep them quiet, or at warst, help to subdue them. 'Twas then our ancestor came to Ulster frae Scotland, though your father's people not until half a century later. Our people were sheep graziers an' wool manufacturers, and always thrifty and prosperous. The Irish, for the maist part, e'en the great lairds, were idle and shiftless, and lived in a sort of squalid splendor within their castles, surrounded by bands of clansmen and swarms o' unpayed retainers.

"Our lands were close to the castles o' Sir Phelim O'Neil, an' I hae heard my grandmaither say that mony's the time my great grandmaither wad send welcome gifts o' cheese, an' meat to the maither o' Sir Phelim, when he would be absent on one of his lang maraudin' expeditions.

"Twas in the year 1641, that the massacre of Protestants took place, and the besotted, cruel Sir Phelim was thought to be at the head of the dreadful plot. At first Protestants were only driven from their homes to wander, starving an' shiverin', aboot the country, refused shelter or food everywhere, till mony a woman and her bairns perished from hunger and exposure, and all suffered cruelly.

"Presently the killing began, an' no Protestant in a' that part o' Ireland escaped save the verra few who found refuge with Catholic friends. My great grandmaither an' her two young children were amangst those few fortunate ones, though my great grandfaither was killed. She lay concealed for weeks in a disused wing o' the O'Niel castle itself, an' was carefully guarded, an' provided for by old lady O'Niel.

"Afterwards when Cromwell an' his men marched into Ulster to take revenge, my great grandmaither begged successfully for the lives o' Lady O'Niel an' her two grandsons. They were not, tho' I am glad to say, the children o' Sir Phelim, but o' a younger son, who had died before the massacre. My grandmaither, when she grew up, married Owen O'Niel, an' 'tis there that the one strain o' Irish cooms into our bluid. But this Owen died young, an' my grandmaither went back to her ain people, with naithin' to show the Irish in her children, but the name an' accent. My maither, Jeannie, married, as you know, a full blooded Scotchman, William Irvine, an' I anaither, Douglas McIlwaine—yet they tell me the Irish accent has descended as far as me," and my grandmother looked at me with a half merry, half serious question in her eye.

"Just enough to make your speech roll musically, grandmother. So then I am a cousin of Ellen O'Niel's as well as Thomas Mitchell?"

"Yes, but verra deestant. She's a direct descendant o' James, a brother of the Owen who was my ancestor, an' who also married a Scotch lass as his brother did, in spite of the law an' the custom. The grandson o' James was amangst the first o' the Scotch Irish settlers who came with the McElroys, an' aithers to Pennsylvania in the year 1729, in the good ship, *George and Ann*. The Mitchells came a few years later, an' your Uncle Thomas' sister married the youngest son o' this first emigrant, some sixteen years syne."

"They moved from Pennsylvania to Baltimore?"

"Yes; James O'Niel was a shrewd man, and whilst made money in the ship traffic; but when Thomas was last on, he brought news that James had lost his ship, and that his business was being taken frae him by richer traders. Thees child Ellen has nae aither heritage, I suppose, than her name, an' mayhap beauty—her race are a comely people."

"Poor child!" said I, "'Tis a pity she must come here."

"The purposes o' God in His providences are inscrutable, lad; but that He maun work final good out o' this event you need nae meesdoot. Martha's a pious woman, an' her intentions are good, though without doot she is overly selfrighteous, an' has nae understanding o' the feelings o' the young. But remember, my son, 'twere better to hae o'er mooch religion than not enow, an' what e'er experience life may bring you ne'er lose reverence, lad, for the earnest and beautiful faith of your forefaithers. Because there be some who pervert its solemnity to sternness—do not conclude that Presbyterianism is a hard and narrow faith. There be some, lad, that wad make it appear so, but 'tis in their perverted minds, an' not in those lofty an' consoling doctrines which turn life into a joyful though toilsome pilgrimage to a blissful eternity."

"Should I ever be inclined to think Presbyterianism a cold, hard faith, grandmother," I answered, "I shall but need to think of you."

"Aye, laddie, think o' your old grandmaither, an' that she told you thees—that during a pilgrimage o' seventy-five years,—an' my life has known mony vicissitudes, Donald, an' mooch hardship an' danger—nae trouble e'er came to her that her religion dinna gie her strength to endure calmly, and hopefully; and nae joy that her faith dinna make the sweeter an' brighter—as being but a faint foretaste o' that perfect an' eternal happiness to which she felt assured she was journeying."

As grandmother spoke these words, there grew upon her face a rapt and absent look, and her lips parted in a smile of perfect satisfaction. I like to remember her thus—the silky bands of her white hair shining beneath her soft cap, her wrinkled hands crossed upon the finished ball, her alert brown eyes dreamy and tender, and over all her kind, bright face, that look of pure content—as of faith assured, and Heaven already realized.

CHAPTER III

Some weeks later the news came that Uncle Thomas had returned, bringing with him the "Irish lass," and a huge bundle of linens, muslins, laces, tea, spices, and other goods and delicacies such as were difficult to come by in our remote settlement. The horses were saddled as early the next morning as my mother's energetic household management permitted, and she and grandmother, who sat her horse as erectly as either of her daughters, rode across the fields to my aunt's, even more eager to inspect the contents of the bundles, which Uncle Thomas had brought, than to see our new kinswoman. I accompanied them, on foot, to lay down the fences, and to watch my grandmother's horse, lest he stumble, though I did not dare avow the last named object to the dear old lady, who liked not to be treated as if she were in any sense incapacitated by her age.

When Thomas and I entered the big room, after stabling the horses, we could see the three women in the adjoining spare room, gathered about the bed which was piled so high with "feather-ticks" that my little mother, standing, could not much more than see the top, on which was laid out an array of fine dry goods, the like of which had seldom been seen in our neighborhood.

Aunt Martha, mounted upon the bed-stool, was drawing to the edge of the bed piece after piece of her treasures, and all were talking volubly as they examined each article with eyes, fingers, tongues and even noses. I smiled as the thought came into my mind that Uncle Thomas had used the wisdom of a serpent combined with the harmlessness of a dove, according to the Bible injunction, in thus diverting Aunt Martha's worrying spirit for a while from the Irish lass thrown, so unwelcome, upon their charities. Uncle Thomas would sacrifice anything for peace in his household, though he lacked not courage where another than his wife was concerned.

"Where is our new cousin, Thomas?" I asked, as I hung my hat upon the stag antlers near the door.

"There," he said, pointing to the farthest window; then, after a moment's hesitation, he approached her and said, with shy, off-hand manner, "This is another cousin, Ellen, and his name is Donald McElroy."

The girl, who had been leaning listlessly on the window sill, turned a thin pale face towards me, and nodded silently.

"You must be very tired, Cousin Ellen," I said as kindly as I could, moved somehow with sympathy by the utter dejection of her attitude and expression.

When I spoke directly to her she looked me full in the face, and I noted the singular beauty of her eyes. They were large, almond-shaped, the bluest I have ever seen, and rayed with minute, dark lines which centered in the wide pupils. Moreover, the dark lashes, which fringed thickly their white lids, curved upward, and when they were lifted almost touched the gracefully arched black brows. Otherwise her face was not pretty; it was too long, too thin and too pale; the nose was somewhat sharp and the lips were compressed in an expression that denoted either sullenness or restrained misery, while the black hair, which had been cropped like a boy's, was stubbly and unbecoming.

"I am not tired," she answered, rather scornfully; "I'm very strong."

"But you are lonely," I said, "I wish we had brought Jean with us." Then casting about in my mind for some more available resource to offer her, I asked impulsively: "Would you like to go duck shooting this afternoon with Thomas and me? Jean goes with me sometimes."

"I would like it, but I cannot go."

"And why not?"

"My Aunt Martha says that girls should be satisfied to keep busy within doors. I am to learn to spin, and to weave, and then I'll not have time to get lonesome, she says."

"Do you not know how to spin and weave, Ellen? Why, even Jean can spin, and she's but thirteen," put in Thomas.

"My mother did not make me do the things I detested," answered Ellen with a flash of her eyes toward Thomas; then to me, with some show of interest, "Who is Jean?"

"My little sister. What do you like to do, Cousin Ellen?"

"Nothing that's useful."

"Then what sort of play do you like?"

"To shoot, to climb, to swim, to chop wood, to drive sheep and to read."

I opened my eyes wide, I suppose, for I never heard of a girl who liked such things. "And you can do these things?" I asked.

"Yes, my father taught me, and my mother said I needed outdoor life to make me strong, and at night my father would read to us, or else my mother would teach me."

"But you may like to spin; Jean does."

"No; I shall hate everything I have to do here; I would rather have died than to have come." As she said this I noticed a singular quality in her voice, though not until afterwards did I analyze it. There was a sort of tremor in certain tones, though tremor is, perhaps, too strong a word, since it was rather the suggestion of a harp-like vibration.—like the faintest echo of a sob.

"I wish I might have died when my mother did," she continued, with rising passion. "Why did God leave me alone in the world with no one to love me?" and the strange child burst into a storm of weeping, and ran out of the room, her face hidden by her arm, her slight body shaken by sobs.

"Isn't she queer, Don?" said Thomas, while Aunt Martha came from the room to inquire what was the matter, followed by my mother and grandmother.

"O, 'twas Ellen," I explained, making as light of the matter as possible; "she was answering our questions, and spoke of her mother, which started her to crying."

"Poor child!" said my mother; "I do not wonder she is unhappy, having so recently lost both her parents."

"She is by no means humbled by her afflictions, nor does she seem ever to have been taught respect and obedience," replied Aunt Martha. "Last night I stayed in her room to see that she said her prayers, and when she kneeled down she began to count the beads about her neck and to kiss the crucifix hung to them. I called her to me, and asked her if she did not know they were idolatrous symbols, that she was breaking the second commandment in using them, and that she ought to pray to the unseen God rather than to a wooden cross; and then I bade her give me the beads that I might put it out of her power to sin in that way again. But she refused to give them up, said they were the last thing her mother had kissed, and that her father had told her to say her prayers to them every day; then she grew violent and said she would part with them only with her life. I took her to her Uncle Thomas this morning, and urged him to remonstrate with her, but she again became angry and wept and stormed till Thomas bade me let the child's beads alone; since they were the gift of her dead parents, he could not see how they could do her harm, even though she did attach a superstitious importance to them. So you see, mother, that already this Irish girl is bringing trouble to my household, as I was forewarned she would. Last night was the first time I have ever heard Thomas say a word in favor of idolatry, and not for months has he spoken to me so sternly."

"But, Martha, you dinna use due discretion with the child," said my grandmother; "couldna you hae waited till she hae gotten used to her new surroundings, an' her grief for her parents had some abated, afore you began to abuse her religion? You will soon hae the child set in stubborn defiance, at this rate; hae na' I told you that ne'er yet micht an O'Niel be driven—that they wad be easier led to hell, than driven to heaven?"

"Such language sounds irreverent to me, mother," Aunt Martha replied, with her most pious air, "and if that is the character of the O'Niels they must be a stiff necked people. In my opinion anyone should be grateful to be driven in the right way. But, be that as it may, I cannot risk the effect of an idolatrous example upon my own children, even could I bring myself to tolerate such practices in my house. If Ellen persists in saying prayers to her beads she must do so without my knowledge or consent, and I shall consider it my duty to speak out against such practices whenever the opportunity is afforded."

"Well, Martha, you maun need take your ain way, and reap the fruit of it," said my grandmother, in her sharpest tone; and my mother as usual rushed in with soothing words, diverting the conversation into smoother channels, by further laudation of the beauty of the table linens they were already beginning to hem.

Ellen did not come into dinner, and no one appeared to notice her absence, though Uncle Thomas watched the door, I thought. After dinner I took my rifle on my shoulder, and went down to the canebrake where I hoped to find a flock of wild ducks. Thomas had been sent by his father with more seed to the fields, where the men were sowing wheat, so could not go with me. I went by the dining room, and found platters of wheaten bread, and spice cake still on the side table with which I filled my pockets, for my appetite would be as hearty as ever in three hours, and I might need bait for the ducks.

My way lay under a sycamore tree, on the edge of the creek behind the barn, and as I stooped to pass beneath a low bough, something jumped from a branch just before me. I raised my head quickly, and saw the child, Ellen, standing in the path.

"May I go hunting with you, now?" she said, eagerly. "You asked me this morning, so I brought my bonnet, and I have been watching for you."

"But you've had no dinner."

"I'm not hungry, and I can't eat when she looks at me."

"Who?"

"The one I must call Aunt Martha; do *you* like her?"

"Well, I never thought about it, much, but I don't believe I am as fond of her as I ought to be."

"Ought to be,—why?"

"She is my real blood aunt, you know—my mother's sister."

"That's nothing. She's hateful, just as much as if she weren't—this morning she stole my crucifix —I left it on my dresser, and it's gone. O, I know she stole it!"

"Don't let's talk about that now," I said, "but sit down here and have lunch together. I'm hungry still, though I've had my dinner." This was not strictly true, but I managed to eat enough to keep her at it till I thought she was satisfied, and then I bade her follow me, and not to let me walk too fast for her.

She scouted the idea, saying: "My father was tall, like you, and walked fast always, and he never had to wait for me."

She kept up without seeming to try, and helped me to pile brush for a blind on the edge of the brake, keeping as still as possible when we were hidden behind it.

A flock rose presently, and flew straight over our heads toward the river. I took aim, brought down one, then loaded quickly, and hit a second, as the flock circled, calling noisily to each other.

Ellen ran fleetly into the marshy grass, and brought both of the dead ducks to me.

"I wish you had two rifles with you," she said, her eyes shining with excitement. "I might be loading one, while you shoot the other."

I smiled at her enthusiasm. "The next flock that rises is yours," I said, "I want to see how well you can aim."

In less than half an hour we again heard a whirring in the brake, and this time the flock flew low, and between us and the river, affording Ellen a fine chance. She waited with a coolness that surprised me, then took careful aim and shot the leader.

"Well done!" I said, seizing the gun to reload, and getting it ready to pick off one of the scattered flock before they could all get back into the brake.

By the time the light began to fail we had six ducks, two of which Ellen had killed. Already we were good friends, and the child looked so happy, as she tripped lightly beside me, that I could not believe that she would ever again seem to me sullen and forbidding as she had that morning.

"It's a pity you're a girl, Ellen," with the patronizing air of a youth of nineteen.

"I wish I were a boy!" with a profound sigh; "I'd live in the woods, and eat roots, berries, and game; I'd never have to weave and spin for my keep, then. Why must I wear skirts and live in the house just because I'm a girl, Cousin Donald?"

"I'm not sure I can give a better answer than the one Aunt Martha would likely make you. God fixed it that way. He meant women for the home, and men for the fields and for war. There's one good thing, maybe, about being a girl—that is, some persons might think it a compensation,—you will never have to fight, or go to war."

"I think fighting would be fine, a heap more fun than staying at home and hearing about it. Don't women ever go to war?"

"Of course not, child, though in this valley they have more than once helped to fight Indians."

"I do wish I were a boy," she repeated, "or I'd like better still to be a splendid, big man like you."

This flattery, whether intentional or not, had its effect upon me, and I constituted myself Ellen's champion from that moment. When we reached the house I marched boldly in with her to Aunt Martha, and after announcing that I had taken the child to the river to pick up ducks for me, made Aunt Martha a peace offering of half of them.

CHAPTER IV

My father had destined me for a lawyer, there being at that time need for one in our valley—a fact which sounds strangely now, when knights of quill and ink horn are everywhere so numerous. An accumulation of legal lore requiring, as was then thought, the deep laid foundation of a thorough classical education, I was sent, after old David Ramsey had imparted to me such measure of his learning as his failing powers permitted, to the Augusta Academy, to continue my Greek and Latin, while at the same time I read Coke and Blackstone, and practiced on legal forms.

We had just begun a second session of eleven months, and I flattered myself I was making some progress in comprehending the great underlying principles of law, as well as in unlearning certain faults of pronunciation and scanning acquired under old David, when my studies encountered a sudden interruption in an event whose influence upon my after life was of sufficient importance to justify me in briefly recording it.

The class room that August afternoon was hot and buzzing, and most of the lads in the Greek class awaited the coming of the master with a sort of drowsy impatience, while a few bent their eyes upon well thumbed books, and read the coming lesson over greedily, hoping to make up for previous neglect by diligent use of an unexpected respite. When the master did come, he had an absent and very serious look upon his face, and he heard us recite with surprising indifference to mistakes. We knew intuitively that he held something in waiting, to tell us as soon as the lesson should be over, and a subdued inward excitement quickly counteracted our drowsiness.

After the last line had been recited, he got on his feet, his tall gaunt figure, stern mouth and Roman nose more impressive than usual, and told us, as quietly as if he were announcing the next day's lesson, that news had been received of a confederated rising of the Indians in the Ohio Valley, and that Colonel Lewis had been ordered to call out the militia, to enlist volunteers, and to march to the frontier to meet the savages. He, the master, being a militia man, was in duty bound to go, and as it was but two days to the one set for the mustering, he would not meet his class again until his return—if it should be God's will to spare his life and liberty, and allow him to come back to more peaceful pursuits. Meantime, he hoped we would not neglect our studies, or grow careless of our duty to our parents, and our country. That duty, at present, was to train our minds by constant exercise, and to fill our brains with varied knowledge, that we might become useful and honored citizens in a commonwealth, standing upon the threshold of a future which promised to be one of glorious and continued progress. Then he bade us good-by feelingly, and left us, each one envying him his chance of adventure and danger, and each sheepishly conscious of tears in his eyes. A moment later I made a sudden but resolute decision, and having put my books, desk, and other school belongings in the care of a fellow student, struck out across the fields, and walked the twelve miles to the home stile by sunset.

"Father," I said, before he had time to express astonishment, "I am going with Colonel Lewis to whip the Indians."

The day after the next, my father accompanied me to the mustering, and gave full consent to my enlistment for the campaign.

The long march we made through an almost trackless wilderness, and the effectual check we gave Cornstalk and his warriors, are, now, facts of history, and since they in no way serve to help on my story, I must resist the temptation to dwell upon our brief campaign. I cannot even stop to point out convincingly the far reaching and most important consequences to the cause growing out of this victory. But this much of a digression must be forgiven me—though my story halts while I say it.

Had not the strength and confidence of the Shawnees, and the tribes confederated with them, been shaken at Point Pleasant, and the prestige and influence of the brave and capable Cornstalk destroyed, the Indians would, doubtless months before, have made impossible that intrepid defiance of Washington, the memory of which we Scotch Irish cherish with so much pride:—that he would never surrender but if driven to bay would make a last stand in the mountain fastnesses of Augusta; and, rallying to his aid those brave pioneers, yet bid defiance to the enemy and hope to pluck victory from apparent defeat. Nor, had there been no battle of Point Pleasant, would a dauntless rifle company have been available for service under the gallant Morgan, to march to Quebec, to win the decisive battle at Freeman Farm, and the telling victories of King's Mountain and of Cowpens.

Returned from the Ohio, I went back to my books, but I could not settle down contentedly to Latin odes and Greek classics. The excitement of the march, the battle, and the victory, had aroused within me a sleeping aptitude for the life of a soldier, and I chafed at the prospect of a safe and uneventful career.

At Christmas I had two weeks' holiday, and what time I was not tracking game in the snow, was spent breaking the colts to the cutter, or coasting on a plank down the steepest hills to be found, with Jean and Ellen O'Niel behind me. My grandmother, who did not share the universal disapproval of the Irish child's "defiant spirit," had persuaded my mother to have Ellen over to spend the holidays with Jean, using the adroit argument, with both my mother and Aunt Martha, that Jean's gentle and tractable spirit might have a good influence over the untamed Ellen. She had come, but not very graciously, and sat silent among us, for the first day and evening, looking

sullen and unhappy.

Few could resist, however, the contagion of our kindly home atmosphere, and by the second morning, Ellen had melted sufficiently to smile at grandmother's quaint jokes and stories of Ireland. By dinner time she was ready to listen with interest to some of my father's pioneer experiences, and that night when mother bade me give her a relation of my fight with the panther, she listened with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. We were by this time drawn in the usual family circle about the glowing fireplace, from which roasting apples and chestnuts were sending forth a rich odor. Mother sat in her special corner, her head resting against the panther's skin, and father sat beside her, grandmother opposite, and I near her on the settle, while Jean nestled close to me. Thomas, who occupied the other end of the settle, wore a radiant face, for he enjoyed the absence of restraint which he found nowhere but with us, and all the sullen reserve was gone from Ellen's countenance.

Presently Ellen, who so far had deigned only to answer us, began to talk. At first she barely asked a question into which interest or surprise had betrayed her, or made an occasional impulsive remark. But, as her reserve melted in the genial and sympathetic atmosphere, the sluice gates of pent up memories seemed suddenly to open, and she talked freely, relating anecdotes and reminiscences of her childhood, and showing a depth and warmth of emotion which surprised us. These led her on to repeat some of the stories her father had read or told to her. They were chiefly tales from Shakespeare's "Tempest," "Winter's Tale," "Hamlet," and others of the more fantastical and tragic of these dramas. None of her listeners had read them, then, though I had heard of Shakespeare, the great English playwright. We were all charmed, as much, perhaps, by the flashing expressions of intelligence and feeling which transformed Ellen's face into one almost of beauty, as by the stories themselves. Moreover that emotional quality of her voice, so prone to subtle vibrations, added a special charm to all she said.

"Now, Donald," said my father, when Ellen seemed to have spent her present memories, and had lapsed into her usual quiet, "get your fiddle, and let's have a tune."

Jean ran at once to bring my violin, and I did my best to add my share of entertainment to the evening's innocent pleasures.

"Ellen can sing sweeter than a lark, or a red bird," said Thomas, as I paused to rest my arm.

"Can she?" from Jean with eager delight. "I do love singing; sing for us, Ellen."

"I can sing only the Irish and Scotch ballads, and the Catholic hymns my mother used to sing," answered Ellen, flushing. "I do not know the solemn songs you people sing, and I shall never learn them"—the last said in a defiant tone which the occasion scarcely called for.

"Our psalms are vera sweet an' sacred to us, my dear," remarked my grandmother, with no apparent recognition of the challenge in Ellen's voice, yet choosing her words with a precision that was evidence of slight displeasure, "but we like aither sangs too, an' sing them except on the Sabbath. I love the Scotch and Irish ballads, an' though you hae already done your share aboot making the evening go by pleasantly for us a', we'd greatly like a sang or twa, if ye dinna mind to pleasure us further."

"It's a delight to please you, grandma," said Ellen impulsively, and she rose from her chair, slipped behind the settle and dropped upon the floor beside grandmother, kissing as she did so, one of the soft, wrinkled hands folded in her lap. Then, resting her head against grandmother's knee, she fixed her eyes upon the dancing flames, and began to sing somewhat unsteadily, but with more fullness and confidence, as she continued. Her voice did indeed soar and swell like a redbird's, and she threw all her heart into her singing, while the quaint words of the old ballads slipped meltingly from her lips, as drops of dew from the petals of a flower.

"Why, my dear, I hae na' been up sae late for years," remarked grandmother, in a tone of alarm as the clock struck midnight; then stroking Ellen's hair, which was growing out in loose curls, "You g'ie us mouch pleasure, dear, but it's bedtime now, for a'. Come, Jean and Ellen! Good night a', and a merry Christmas to you."

Not only were cider and persimmon beer drawn from the full barrels in the cellar, but a big bowl of apple toddy was concocted early Christmas morning, and flanked by plates of doughnuts, and ginger bread, raisin and spiced cake, apples, and nuts, sat upon the long table in the big room, all day, every one being free to eat and drink his fill. This custom of my father, which usually drew to our house most of the men within a ten mile ride, always scandalized my Aunt Martha, and but for Uncle Thomas' backing we would never have gotten Ellen and Thomas to our house until after Christmas day. Uncle Thomas himself always came, however, and on this occasion Aunt Martha broke her rule and came with him, bringing too their younger son, John.

I observed a change come over Ellen's face as soon as Aunt Martha appeared in the doorway; she seemed to draw within herself, and her face took on the sullen expression which so marred its comeliness, and presently when I looked about for her, she was nowhere to be found.

"Ah, Rachael," said Aunt Martha, glancing toward the laden table between the two southern windows, and shaking her head in solemn disapproval, "I see you have not yet been able to persuade William of the sinfulness of this habit of his, of offering the intoxicating cup to all comers, at this season. Strange perversion, that this holy Christ festival should be turned into an occasion for gluttony and rioting."

"William has his own ideas, Martha, and I do not set mine against him," I heard my mother answer, from the doorway, as she followed my aunt into the bedroom. "The neighbor gentlemen will all be in presently, and a warming cup will be needed by those who do not stay to dinner."

"You are too meek with William, Rachael, and so fail of due influence. Wifely obedience is commanded in the Bible, it is true, but I do not think the sacrifice of our principles is required."

"Preaching still, eh, Martha—" called my father's cheery voice from the big room, having come in to put another log upon the roaring pile; "well, you'll have to stop now, for I see Justices McDowell and Willson riding up, and, as you know, we like not solemn faces in this house on Christmas day," and he hurried out again to meet his guests, before Aunt Martha was sufficiently recovered from her indignant surprise to make him proper answer.

The ensuing hour brought a dozen others, the most substantial freeholders in the community, nearly all of them members of the church, as well as men of influence in public affairs. A few drank only cider or beer, but most of them quaffed full cups of the spiced, apple-seasoned toddy with evident appreciation, and ate the cakes, apples and nuts without stint.

I sat about the fire with the men, proud of my privilege, but mother and Aunt Martha, after ceremonious greetings were exchanged, retired, as was customary for women when several men were met together. The talk was animated, and at times exciting, though there was but small difference of opinion among them. The Boston massacre, and recent unjust restrictions upon our commerce, were indignantly condemned, and the determined spirit of the colonists of Massachusetts warmly commended. Presently it was proposed by Justice Willson, and warmly seconded by my father, that the citizens of Augusta County, or a committee elected by them, should draw up resolutions to be sent to the Virginia assembly, expressing with no uncertain sound their fixed determination not to submit to tyranny, and to sustain Massachusetts in her noble stand against injustice and oppression at every hazard. In truth the leaders of the New England "Town Meeting," could not have shown more fervor nor more determination than these representative men of this Scotch Irish settlement in the Virginia mountains. The discussion was unabated still, and not a man had suggested returning home, when my mother announced dinner. The table had been lengthened to its utmost, by raising all its "wings" and putting the side tables at either end; but there was still no seat for me, so I wandered into my mother's room, and then across the yard to the kitchen to look for Jean and Ellen. Jean, and John Mitchell I found, eating turkey livers, gravy and potatoes before the embers, over which hung the now idle cranes, and Thomas was mending John's sled at the work bench in the back kitchen. But Ellen was not to be found, and no one had seen her for two hours. Returning to the house, I mounted the steps to the room under the gable, where grandma and Jean slept, and there found Ellen, wrapped in a blanket, and lying prone on the floor in the stream of sunshine pouring through the western window. Her chin was supported by her hands and an open book lay before her.

"Are you hiding from Aunt Martha, Ellen?" I asked teasingly.

"I slipped away while she was helping your mother set table," she answered, "and stole up here to read. I don't often get a chance; your Aunt Martha keeps me at work from sun up till dark, and then sends me to bed. She says it is a wicked waste of time to read anything but one's Bible—and the holy father in Baltimore told me that the way Protestants presumed to read the sacred book, and determine for themselves its sacred meaning is blasphemous."

"What book are you reading?" I asked.

"One of the Shakespeare books my father gave me. I have six more like it," and she held up to my view a small leather bound volume, a good deal the worse for wear. "I slipped it into my satchel when Aunt Martha sent me up stairs to get my things, the morning you came for us, but please don't tell her, Cousin Donald—she said she'd take the books away from me if she saw me reading them again, for they were not fit reading for me, and I had no time to waste on them."

"How did she know they were not fit reading for you?" I asked, curious to learn if Aunt Martha had stopped work long enough to examine a book.

"She made Uncle Thomas read some out of one of the volumes to her," answered Ellen, smiling in response to my thought. "And she said, at breakfast table next morning, that a great deal of it had neither sense nor meaning, and the part she could understand was about fighting and killing, or else foolish love stuff—all of it unfit for any young person to hear. She wanted to burn my books, as she did my crucifix, but I ran and hid them, and cried so, all day, that Uncle Thomas said 'Let the child's books alone, Martha; her father gave them to her; if they harm her it's no fault of yours.'"

"Is the reading as good as your telling of the stories, Ellen?"

"Oh, so much nicer. There are beautiful things I could never say; listen," and she read me a passage from "Romeo and Juliet." "Isn't that like music? The very words have a tune to them without thinking of the meaning even."

"Could you lend me the book to read while you are here, Ellen? or to-morrow, if you will, we'll come up here and you shall read aloud to me."

"But your mother and father might find out, and tell Aunt Martha."

"We need not conceal our reading from them; they will make no objection if I tell them the book

is harmless—and I suppose it is, even for girls. I know it is a famous book and counted among the English classics. I've always meant to read it some day."

"And I'll lend you the other volumes, one by one, if you'll take me bear hunting the next time you find a track," added Ellen.

"That's a bargain, if my mother will let you go. How old are you, Ellen?"

"I shall be sixteen my next birthday."

"And when is that?"

"Next November."

"Then you are just fifteen."

"Fifteen and two months," she corrected.

"That is young for you to have read Shakespeare, and to be capable of appreciating him. Your father taught you so carefully, and read to you so much because he had no sons, I suppose."

"Perhaps; he used often to wish I were a boy. He used to say I was so strong, and tall, and had more sense than most women; and when he was taken sick, after mother's death, he said every few hours—'Oh if you were only a boy, Ellen, I would not mind so much leaving you alone in the world; you could soon be independent then, and make your own way!'"

"'Tis a pity, Ellen; you'd make a good man, I'm sure. You are as strong now as a boy of your age is likely to be, and half a head taller than John who is but six months younger."

"I dared John to a wrestle, one day in the barn, and threw him," laughed Ellen, "but I promised not to tell, and you must not twit him about it."

"All right, I won't; but were I John I'd keep on challenging you till I had proved my superior strength; no girl should throw me! Does Aunt Martha know?"

"Of course not, Donald. Already she calls me a hoyden, and an untamed Irish girl—which I am, the last I mean, and proud of it. Did she hear of my wrestling with John, the bread and water she threatens me with would be my only diet for a week."

"You'll not have bread and water diet while you are here, at any rate. But there's my mother calling now; my mouth waters for her Christmas dinner, for there's no better served in the neighborhood to-day, I warrant you. Come on; let's go down," and I put the little book in my pocket, seized Ellen by the hand and pulled her after me, pell-mell down the stairway where we ran straight into Aunt Martha.

"Ellen O'Niel!" she stopped to say, fixing a stern eye upon her—"you are the greatest hoyden I have ever seen. I thank a merciful Providence you are not my daughter."

"Amen, and so do I," said Ellen, in my ear, and as Aunt Martha passed into the next room, she turned toward me, and pulled her face down into the most comical imitation of Aunt Martha's solemn countenance. I laughed heartily, though in truth I did not approve of Ellen's flippancy. Reverence for religion and respect for our elders were among the virtues earliest and most faithfully instilled into the breasts of Scotch Irish children.

CHAPTER V

"Two of the pigs are gone, and I see fresh bear's tracks behind the barn, Ellen. If you want to go after the beast with Thomas and me, put on your heaviest boots, get a rifle from the rack, and come on," and I spoke with a degree of animation which turned upon me the gaze of the entire family, assembled at the breakfast table. I was not then so sated a huntsman that the prospect of big game could fail to excite me.

"Why, Donald, you are not thinking of taking Ellen bear hunting with you?"

"And why not, mother? She wishes to go, she handles a rifle well enough, and there's no danger with three guns against one poor bear."

"Oh, Aunt Rachael, please let me go; I have never seen a bear, and it must be beautiful in the forest to-day."

"Might as well let her go, mother," put in my father; "the boys will take care of her, and it will be an experience she will like to tell when she is an old woman. Besides, it is well enough for her to learn courage and coolness in facing danger—the women in this valley may need such qualities in the future, as they have in the past."

"I can't see why you care to go," said little Jean, shuddering involuntarily, her brown eyes fixed in amazement upon Ellen's eager countenance.

"May I go, Aunt Rachael?" urged Ellen.

"Well, child, I suppose so, since your heart seems set upon it. Do be careful, Donald, and get back before sundown."

We followed the print of the bear's feet across the meadow behind the barn, and then around the curve of a low range of hills to the edge of the forest, walking Indian file, Ellen between us, and stepping, as I bade her, in my tracks. The air was so crisp and buoyant that we were half intoxicated by long, full breaths of it, and went skimming over the frozen surface as if, like fabled Mercury, we had wings to our heels. The meadows gleamed and scintillated, and the edge of the hill's undulating outline shone in opalescent lines, as if the prying rays of the sun, forcing their way through the thin snow clouds at the eastern horizon, were disclosing a ledge of hidden jewels. The world all about us was downy soft, radiantly pure, and familiar fields and hills took on a strange newness, in which perspective was confused and outlines blurred; white fields melted into white hills, hills merged into white sky, and one might, it seemed, walk out of this world into the next without noting the point of transition.

The forest was stranger still, and even more beautiful. There was but little snow on the ground, and the dry leaves under it rustled beneath one's feet with homely, cheerful sound, but overhead stretched a marvelous canopy of graceful feather laden branches, each giant of the forest being powdered as carefully as any court dame, and, like her, gaining a sort of distinction for its beauty by this emphasis to its height and grace.

"Am I walking too fast for you, Ellen?" I asked soon after we had started.

"No; but you step too far," she called back merrily. So I shortened my stride a little, and again insisted on carrying her rifle, getting this time her consent.

"The forest is like a place enchanted," said Ellen with rapt face, as we waited at the edge of the woods for Thomas to catch up. "How warm and snug one could sleep under that low boughed pine, yonder; I'd like to live in the forest were there no panthers, wolves, or bears."

"But the beasts have possession, and sometimes I almost wonder if we have a right to drive them with gun and knife out of their inherited haunts."

"As we do the Indians."

"I have more sympathy for wild beasts than for the red savages; the beasts are not treacherous, nor cruel for sport."

"Have you lost the bear's track, Don?" interrupted Thomas; "if not, what are you stopping for?"

"We are admiring the forest—but I have kept my eye on the track, all right. There it goes off to the left; we'll find him, I suspect, fast asleep in some hollow log."

My surmise was correct, for the track led us to a large fallen tree a mile within the forest. The bear, having gorged himself on the pigs, was curled within for a good nap.

"We'll have to smoke him out," said Thomas, beginning to look about for dried leaves and twigs. We piled them into the smaller end of the log, and then lit them with our tinder-boxes, after which we stood about the larger opening and waited watchfully.

"You shall have the first shot, Ellen," I said. "Stand a little to one side, and aim either at his throat, or behind one of his ears."

The bear could not stand long the stifling smoke of the pungent leaves, and with a muffled roar, interrupted by a wheezing cough, he backed awkwardly out of the tree, then turned to look about him for an avenue of escape. But his captors, with ready rifles, stood in close range around him, and behind him burned the log, its murky smoke and lapping blaze limning weirdly the beast's shaggy bulk, against the white forest.

"Shoot, Ellen!" I called, for she stood as if spellbound, her eyes fixed upon the crouching, growling animal. She pulled her trigger then, but with nerveless fingers, and her ball whizzed just above the bear's head, cutting off one-half of his right ear. With a roar of pain the furious animal was upon her, the weight of his huge body throwing her down, and half burying her in the snow. For an instant my brain rocked with horror; I dared not shoot, for I could not distinguish Ellen's form from the bear's in the cloud of flying snow which surrounded them, and every instant I feared to hear a cry of agony, and the crunching of Ellen's skull between the creature's iron jaws.

"I must risk it," I swiftly concluded; and with quick intake of my breath, I raised my rifle to my shoulder, stepped back a pace, and took the aim of my life. Providence guided the ball, which severed the beast's spinal column just at the base of his brain. In another instant I was dragging his shuddering bulk from Ellen's body, lest he crush her in the death struggle.

Ellen was as pallid as the snow she lay upon, and as motionless. Her long lashes made a light shadow on the waxen cheeks, and the dark ringlets dropping over the brow were like charcoal by contrast with its marble. When I lifted her head upon my arm, I saw a ragged wound upon her neck, just behind her right ear, and from it ran trickling a crimson rill, down the soft throat to the still bosom. Her clothes were torn from her right shoulder, and there the flesh showed marks of the animal's teeth in the midst of an ugly bruise.

Thomas had dropped white and limp upon a log, and, great boy as he was, began to cry.

"She's dead, Don, she's dead! Oh, why did we let her come—what shall we do?"

"Hush," I said angrily; "she's not dead, only stunned, I hope," and I gathered handfuls of snow, which I rubbed gently upon her forehead and cheek, and then forced between her lips a few drops of gin from my pocket flask. Seeing that she swallowed the gin mechanically, I poured a good spoonful upon her tongue, and chafed her hands vigorously till she opened her eyes and recognized the faces bending over her.

"Where's the bear, Donald?" she asked, as quietly as if she had just wakened from a vivid dream.

"Dead," I answered cheerfully; "you shall have the skin for a rug."

"But I didn't kill him," in disappointed tones. "I got frightened and aimed badly—I'd never do for a man, after all."

"You'd make a better man than Thomas; he began to cry as soon as he saw you were hurt, and you haven't yet complained of the scratches the bear gave you."

"They sting some," she said with a grimace, putting her hand to her wound, and sliding it down to her shoulder. "Why, Donald, my clothes are torn," and a faint flush tinged her cheeks, while she tried to sit up and to pull her shredded garment together.

"The bear bit you there; it is well mother made you put on this buckskin jacket over your pelisse. Does the place hurt you much?" and I knelt beside her to examine her shoulder more carefully.

"It aches, while the hurt on my neck smarts," and she flushed again, and shrank from the touch of my fingers on her bare flesh.

And I, too, was suddenly embarrassed, while a new thrill went through me. "The shoulder bone is not crushed," I said, after a careful examination which gave Ellen some pain, "nor is the wound very deep; doubtless, though, it will hurt a good deal, besides making your shoulder stiff and helpless for a while. We must bandage the wound somehow, till we can get home, and we must find a way to exclude the cold air from it."

Thomas, who had sat by, flushed and silent since I had chidden him for blubbering, picked up the torn jacket I had stripped from Ellen's shoulders, and disappeared behind the tree. Presently he came back with his own flannel shirt and a bunch of linen strips across his arm, himself reclad in the torn jacket, which had been pinned together, after some sort, with small thorns.

"I beg your pardon, Thomas," I said, grasping his hand as I took the bandages from it.

"'Twas the sight of her so white and still," replied Thomas, looking yet mortified and hurt.

"Thank you, dear Thomas," said Ellen, smiling upon him; "your tears were only symptoms of a tender heart. I'm glad you were sorry for me; Donald did not care enough to cry."

Now that was very unkind of Ellen, for I had been sick with fright and apprehension for her, and would have rather been torn in pieces by the beast, myself, than to have carried home in my arms that still, white form. But I made no response to Ellen's accusation; I only set my lips, and plastered and bandaged her wounds as best I could.

Our homeward journey was very unlike the cheerful tramp of the morning, for Ellen tottered as she walked, and I had need to support her with my arm, while Thomas carried the guns and powder-horns. The snow no longer gleamed and sparkled, for the afternoon light was hazy and dull, and the sky a cold, smeary gray. Forest, field and hill were but the component parts of a commonplace winter landscape, and bear hunting something else than a glorious adventure through an enchanted forest.

And I was not the same, nor Ellen. She was become all at once a woman, shy, reserved, conscious of my touch, leaning on my arm no more than necessity required. And I, though half vexed at the change in her, and grieved that I had lost so congenial a comrade—for I knew intuitively that our intercourse would never again be so unrestrained—nevertheless found her more interesting, more alluring because of this very change which put a distance between us, and which had in it a touch of mystery:—as the forest had been that morning the fairer, for that unnameable magic with which nature veils herself in her stiller haunts.

CHAPTER VI

The conversation around our Yule fire, to which I had listened with such eager absorption, had caused my budding convictions to bloom in an hour into fully expanded principles. I had caught the fever of patriotism running like an epidemic through the land. Were not we of Scotch Irish race and Presbyterian faith pledged already to the cause since the first blood shed for American liberty was the blood of the Scotch Irish Presbyterians, spilled at the battle of Alamance, when the stern North Carolina "Regulators" had risen, like Cromwell's "Ironsides," against the tyranny of their royal governor? The "Boston Tea Party," therefore, found quickest sympathy among the Scotch Irish of the Southern and Middle States, and the earliest and grimmest of the resolutions sent up to the several assemblies, urging that Massachusetts be sustained, and kingly tyranny

determinedly resisted, came from the towns and counties settled by these people. "Freedom or death" was the consuming sentiment in the hearts of many Scotch Irish Americans for months before the typical orator of that race thrilled a continent by speaking those immortal words, "Give me liberty, or give me death."

The first call issued by Congress for troops named seven rifle companies to be recruited in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. Again I put aside my books, only this time I gave them to a fellow student who sorely needed them, and went home to tell my father that I meant to enlist. I recall as vividly as 'twere yesterday that calm spring afternoon when I took the short cut across flower spangled meadows, and bosky, sweet scented woods to the humble home which had given me a youth so rich in love and happiness, but which I was so soon to leave for privations, dangers, and temptations such as had not yet entered into my imagination.

It was the year of my majority, and I was already mature in physical development. Even in our neighborhood of "brawny Scotchmen" I was called tall, measuring six feet three inches in my moccasins, and though somewhat spare, was broad of shoulder, long of limb, muscular, agile, and deep winded; moreover, I could ride and shoot with the best man in the valley. More proud was I, at this time, of my strength, and the keen sight of my gray eyes, than of my brown, curling hair, and the general comeliness of my appearance, in which my mother took such pride. A few months later I was to have my hour of vanity, and to eat the fruit of it.

Few men, I imagine, can separate their lives sharply into boyhood and manhood, but mine I can. That last Christmas holiday of my schooldays marked the line of division, and I took the first step across it the day I saved Ellen from the bear's fangs, and the second the hour I formed the resolution to shoulder my rifle for American liberty. My father, it is true, had chosen to treat me as a man, since the Indian raid, but from the hour I made up my mind to enlist I put aside childish things, and bore myself with a consciousness of manhood's power.

A stranger sat on our porch who, hearing me announce impetuously to my father, as he came to the top of the porch steps to meet me, that "I meant to enlist in one of the rifle companies," sprang up from his chair, seized my hand, shook it heartily, and said with a genial smile, and cordial tone that made my spirit go out to him at a leap,

"You're a lad after my own heart, sir! Are there many more like you in this valley? How old is your son, Justice McElroy?"

"Not long past twenty, sir. Donald, this is Captain Morgan, the renowned Indian fighter of whom you have so often heard. He is in the neighborhood to enlist men for his rifle company, so you have not far to go to fulfill your purpose."

I looked now, you may be sure, with fresh interest at the powerful but graceful figure before me. He was nearly as tall as I, but broader and heavier; his tanned, handsome face was marred by a scar on the right cheek, and I noted even in this first hasty scrutiny an indication of stubborn will in the set of his lips, and a dare devil gleam in his fine eyes that would make one hesitate to pick a quarrel with him.

"I have found my captain," I thought, my pulse throbbing joyously, just as he spoke again, with that ring of cheerful courage in his voice which I was to learn to know so well, and so often to be inspired by.

"That we shall win admits no doubt if I can enlist a company of muscular young giants like you. Can you shoot, lad?"

"Aye, that he can," laughed my father, well pleased, I could see, by Captain Morgan's manner toward me. "Cut off a squirrel's head at a distance of three hundred yards. And there are other marksmen in our valley that can fully equal him, though few as tall as my son Donald," and he laid a caressing hand upon my shoulder.

"You shall be one of my sergeants, lad," continued Captain Morgan, seizing my hand again, "and to-morrow you must ride with me to enlist as many like you as this neighborhood affords."

"Unfortunately, Captain Morgan," said my father, "some of those who would like nothing better than the opportunity to strike a blow for our rights, dare not leave their families and homes here unprotected, subject as we are to the raids of the savages from across the mountain. Enough able-bodied men must be left in the valley to turn back Indian forays, though, since our victory over them at Point Pleasant, our danger is not near so great. Still a score or more recruits may be had in this neighborhood, I doubt not."

"May I ask, Captain Morgan, whither we are to march after our quota has been recruited?" I questioned.

"Straight to Boston, where we will have a chance to drill."

"And to fight also, I hope."

"Amen, lad, say I to that! and may there be other of your brave spirit. I like not this dallying, this parleying with the stubborn king, who but deludes us with promises while he gains time to equip and to land his troops upon our shores. And I am beginning to think that this talk of our Congress that we take up arms as loyal subjects of England, to force from the crown redress of our grievances, goes not far enough. Only a democracy where all are free and equal, and where the stakes are worth the risks and privations to be endured, is suited to the genius of this vast and virgin continent. Under no other form of government may she be rightly developed."

"Nor are you alone, sir, in that opinion," replied my father. "None other is held in this valley, as the memorial sent up to the assembly by the county committee of Augusta in February last can testify. Were the Scotch Irish settlers of this country consulted, Captain Morgan, our declaration of independence would be speedily proclaimed; Patrick Henry's burning words but voice the sentiment of his race."

"The timid and the half-hearted may not yet be safely set in opposition, perhaps," answered Captain Morgan, "and Congress is beset with many difficulties. But 'tis for the independence of the American States I have drawn my sword"—and as he spoke he sprang suddenly to his feet, straightened his imposing figure and keyed his voice to a clarion pitch—"nor will I sheathe it again, save death or bodily infirmities intervene, till the glorious cause of America's liberty has been won—till we are a free, self-governing people!"

"I take that oath with you, sir," said I, springing also to my feet.

Then my father, looking up at us from his arm chair, unwiped tears upon his cheeks, said, in deep, reverent tone: "God grant us victory, and make this goodly land the home of freedom—a refuge for the oppressed of all nations!"

We found no trouble in enlisting men enough in our valley to complete the company Captain Morgan was to command, and in three weeks I was ready to march the Augusta boys to Frederick County, where we were to join our captain and the rest of the men. The twenty-two boys from our end of the valley bivouacked all night in our yard, that we might get an early start the next morning; and that evening the neighbors came from far and near to give us farewell, and a blessing. Uncle Thomas and his family came with the rest, Aunt Martha helping to cook the hot supper which my mother insisted on serving the lads under the trees, that their home-filled haversacks might be saved for the march.

Thomas wandered about among the men, lying in groups upon the grass in the shade of the oaks and elms, with a look of distress upon his face that surprised me. At last he called me to one side, and said with trembling lips,

"Don, I'd give the next ten years of my life to go with you."

"You are too young, Thomas. Why, you are not nineteen yet."

"There are four boys in the squad no older than I, and I am strong, and a fair shot."

"Then enlist; it's not too late yet, and the more the merrier."

"But my mother made me give her a solemn promise that I would not. She wishes me to be a minister, and once I thought I was called, but now I believe I was mistaken. I couldn't be so wild to go to the war if I had received a call from heaven to the ministry; but mother says it will kill her if I turn soldier, after she has solemnly consecrated me to the Lord. Oh, Donald, what must I do?"

"I cannot advise you to disobey your mother, Thomas," I answered, "but I am sorry for you."

"Ellen says my life is my own, to live as I please, and that not even my mother has a right to dictate to me whether I shall be preacher or soldier," sighed Thomas.

Now I half agreed with Ellen, but the doctrine seemed an irreverent one to a youth of Scotch Irish raising, so I only repeated, "I think you had best obey your mother, Tom," which afforded him small consolation. He answered me with a suppressed groan, and presently went back to the soldiers.

Hot and tired from the day's labors, I decided, after supper, to cool myself by a last drink of my mother's delicious buttermilk. The footpath to the spring wound its careless way down a grassy slope starred with dandelions, and dusted with milky ways of daisies and pale bluets. Apple, pear, and peach trees grew in the angles of the worm fence which separated the garden from the meadow, and they were so full of bloom that they looked like masses of pink and white clouds drifted down to earth. There was a crab apple tree among them, and its elusive fragrance came and went upon the zephyrs which swayed the dandelions and rustled the blossoms upon the trees. The world about my feet was as fair and full of mystic charm as the moon-glorified, star-spangled heaven. The talk, the work, the plans which had filled the last weeks of my life, seemed out of tune with God's purposes, as revealed in nature—out of keeping with His beneficent plans for all His handiwork.

Pondering this strange anomaly, of the tendency of God's creatures to make war continually upon each other, in the midst of a world so fair, so beneficent, and so peaceful—the solemn mystery of

death always treading close upon the heels of life—of the desolation always threatening beauty, I passed the springhouse before I knew it, and found myself at the foot of the hill, where the spring breaks forth to fall into a natural basin overhung by a broad, jutting rock. As I raised my eyes to this rock, a vision greeted me which startled me into an instant's consciousness of superstitious terror. Did I see a ghost at last—after all my jeering unbelief? Was that slim shape, wrapped in a white robe standing so motionless on the white rock, the spirit of some Indian maiden, seeking again the haunts where in life she had met her lover?

Of course not; it was only Ellen, for now I saw a hand lifted, to push back the wind blowsed curls from her forehead. Softly I climbed the hill behind her, and stood at her side, but so rapt was she in her own thoughts, she did not hear me till I spoke.

"What are you looking at, Ellen?" I asked.

Had I not thrown my arm quickly about her, she would have sprung from the rock in her startled surprise, yet she did not scream, but regained her poise in an instant, disengaged herself from my arm, and answered me calmly—

"At the moon, Cousin Donald."

"'Tis only a round, bright ball, Ellen; why gaze at it so long and fixedly?"

"'Tis more than a silver ball when one looks at it so. It grows bigger and deeper, and within there are mountains and caverns, and seas and plains; mayhap there are people there who suffer and think as we do. Would you not like to have great wings, Cousin Donald, and fly and fly through the soft blue air, till you reached the moon?"

"Such fancies have never come into my mind, Ellen. You must have clear eyes, and a vivid imagination," and I smiled down upon her, not a little amused by her fanciful conceits.

"If I did not I should die;" then, turning hotly upon me, "How would you like to walk back and forth, back and forth along a bare floor, with bare garret walls about you, whirring a great, ugly wheel, and twisting coarse, ill-smelling wool all day long, day after day? One dare not *think*, for then one gets careless and breaks or knots the thread, and yet to keep one's mind upon so dreary, and so monotonous a task is maddening. Do you wonder I run away, and talk with the flower-fairies, or the stars, whenever I get the chance?"

"No, Ellen, I don't. I have often thought that women's tasks must be very wearisome, the endless spinning, weaving, and knitting. I wonder they have patience for such work."

"I wish I might go to the war with you, Cousin Donald."

"You could never stand the hardships."

"But I think I could. I'd love to sleep out of doors, under the winking stars, and the friendly moon; I'd love to walk through trackless forests, across wide, unknown plains, and to come now and then upon some town or settlement where every one would feast and praise the patriots."

"But what of the cold, hunger and fatigue? of wounds and capture and the sights and sounds after a battle? It tries even the souls of brave, strong men to bear such things."

"The soul of a woman might endure as much, and I think I should mind even those things less than eternal spinning, Cousin Donald."

I laughed now. "You are not yet a woman, Ellen, and you are not doomed, I trust, to eternal spinning. When I come back from the war we'll go hunting every day, even though we will have to run off from Aunt Martha."

"I shall not have a friend left except grandma."

"And Thomas."

"Thomas likes me, yes, but he is too much afraid of his mother to help me have my way. When you come back you may not find me here."

"Of course I shall; and remember, Ellen, we are always to be good friends and comrades," and I held out my hand to her.

"Good friends and comrades," repeated Ellen; "I shall remind you one day when you come home famous, and dignified—if I am able to endure life with Aunt Martha so long as that," and she put her hand in mine in the old way of confident comradeship which had gone out of our intercourse for months. Hand in hand we went back to the house, talking intimately, she of her thoughts and feelings, I of my plans and hopes.

Before sun-up the next morning we were on the march. I had left Jean weeping bitterly on grandmother's shoulder, and I doubt not the dear old lady wept, too, when I was out of sight. My mother stood in the doorway, shading her brave, loving eyes with her hand, that I might not see fall the tears glittering on their lashes. Father walked beside me at the head of my little troop for a mile, and, before he left me, took me in his arms in sight of them all, straining me for an instant

to his breast, and pouring out a patriarch's blessing upon my bowed head.

Our valley looked very fair that day, as we marched northward across it. The rank wheat rolled in billows of rich green, the springing corn showed narrow gray green blades, which moved gently to and fro above the loamy uplands, and the forests, which enclosed the cleared lands on all sides, were fresh robed in verdure of many hues. Edging the forest like a jeweled braid grew masses of red-bud, dogwood and hawthorn in full blossom, and singing along its sparkling way, the river wound in and out of velvety meadows with deep curves and bold sweeps of bountiful intent, embracing as much as possible of this fair land that it might scatter widely its fertilizing influences.

"Boys," I said, pausing on an eminence from which we could see all our end of the valley, and pointing outward, as I stopped to take a long, last look, "is it not a land worth fighting for?"

"Aye, aye, sergeant!" came in hearty chorus.

"Then fight for it we will, like brave men and true, nor look backward again till freedom be won."

"Aye, that we will!" again in deep, full accord, and when all had taken a lingering look, I gave the command—

"Right about face! Forward!"

Without a backward glance, we tramped onward, our faces forever toward the enemies of freedom.

CHAPTER VII

Under Morgan we marched to Boston, and a long and weary tramp it seemed, though in comparison with later ones, I learned to look back upon it as a pleasant summer's journey. Our uniforms, patterned after Morgan's habitual dress, consisted of buckskin breeches, leggins and moccasins, a flannel shirt, over which we usually wore an unbleached linen hunting shirt, confined with a leathern belt at the waist, and a huntsman's cap on the band of which was inscribed, "Liberty or Death." From each man's belt hung a knife, a tomahawk, and a bullet pouch, and each rifleman carried in his pockets a bullet mold, and a bar of lead; across one shoulder passed the strap from which hung his powder-horn, and over the other he carried his rifle with its whittled ramrod of hickory wood.

Our uniforms, our size, and our marksmanship won for us immediate notoriety and consideration, and not many days were we permitted to be idle, though it was but comparative idleness we enjoyed, even in camp, since we were drilled two hours each morning and afternoon, and did our share of guard duty in the trenches around Boston. In our leisure hours we taught the Yankees to chew tobacco, and to mold bullets, and learned in return to rant eloquently upon liberty and natural rights in the language of Samuel Adams, and John Hancock, and to eat beans baked with hog middling.

Early in September we were ordered to join Colonel Arnold's command for a raid into Canada. In addition to our arms, ammunition, and blankets we must take turns at carrying the light canoes necessary for a part of our journey, and many miles of our way lay through the tangled undergrowth of dense forests, or across the treacherous slime of trackless bogs. It was not long before many of the men were bare footed, half naked, and weak from insufficient food; for our rifles were soon our dependence for rations, and game grew scarce as we proceeded northward. Several of the companies ate their sled dogs with relish. Morgan's men fared better than the rest, for it was our rule to share equally whatever game we killed, and we were sure to get a large proportion of all there was to be found. Moreover, our clothes, being of leather, stood the wear of the march better than the uniforms of the rest, and many of us could make rude moccasins of wolf or dog skins.

After two months of toils and privations such as I wonder now we were able to endure, we reached Quebec with but seven hundred of the thousand men with whom we had started from Boston. In response to Arnold's daring summons to fight or surrender, the garrison shut the city's gates in our faces, and we were compelled to lie in our trenches, and wait for General Montgomery's reinforcements. On the last day of December, 1775, in the midst of a blinding snow storm, we attacked Quebec. General Montgomery soon received the bullet that ended his career, and Colonel Arnold was wounded shortly after. But for these two untoward misfortunes, I truly believe we had won the day, and over all Canada and all British America would now be waving the Stars and Stripes. Be that as it may, we riflemen came very near to taking Quebec alone and unsupported, for Morgan took the battery opposed to him, and penetrated to the very center of the town. Meanwhile, General Montgomery's troops, broken and disorganized for lack of a leader, and Arnold's, in like case, were falling back; our opponents were left free to concentrate their forces upon us, so that, after a fierce resistance, we were completely surrounded, outnumbered, and compelled to surrender.

We lay in prison at Quebec for nine long months, treated with as much kindness as is usually accorded to prisoners of war, but chafing like wild animals in a cage. Captain Morgan told me of the offer, made to him by one of the garrison officers, that he should be made a colonel in the

British army, if he would but desert "a doomed and hopeless cause," and of the hot reply he made.

"Sir, I scorn your proposition, and I trust that you will never again insult me in my present distressed and unfortunate condition, by making me an offer which plainly implies that you consider me a scoundrel."

At last we were discharged, Captain Morgan on parole, and were carried in transports to New York. I saw Morgan as he stepped off the boat, in the brilliant light of a harvest moon, stoop and kiss the soil, and heard him whisper in a sort of ecstasy, "My country, my country!" My own heart swelled within me, and I could have done likewise with full meaning.

Great things, of which we had heard but vague rumors, had happened in our absence. Boston had been evacuated by the enemy, the attack on Fort Moultrie had failed, and the Declaration of Independence had been declared by all the thirteen States. On the other hand, General Washington had been compelled to yield New York to Howe, and to fall back to New Jersey, and England was making ready to send army after army across the ocean to conquer her rebellious colonies.

Though my term of enlistment had already expired, I could not go home in the midst of such stirring events, so I made haste to Morristown, there reënlisted, and was put to service as special courier to General Washington. And now, for the first time, I saw the man to whom all patriotic hearts turned with hope and pride. His soldierly, dignified bearing, the look of resolute, yet not arrogant self-consciousness upon his face, his courteous manner, and the perfectly controlled tone of voice in which he issued a command, or uttered a rebuke, impressed me with a confidence that made me from that hour sure of our cause. "With such leaders as Washington, Arnold and Morgan," I thought, with fervid enthusiasm and pride, "how can we fail to win?"

Not many weeks later my beloved captain, who had been exchanged, and made a colonel by act of Congress, marched into our camp with one hundred and eight recruits, most of them from the valley, at his back. I could hardly wait till he had reported at headquarters before I sought him.

"'Tis my old comrade, Donald McElroy!" he said, scarcely less moved than I. "Have you been on duty all this time, lad, with no furlough, no rest? Ah, many's the time I've told Arnold, that with ten thousand such troops as my Scotch Irish riflemen, I'd undertake to whip all the armies that could be sent to these shores."

"I believe you could do it, Colonel," answered I, "but your health, sir? Are you quite strong again?"

"Never better, lad; even my rheumatism is gone. I've been home, you know, for five months, and have had nothing but coddling from that good wife of mine. Six months more of it, and I'd have been unfitted for further service to my country. My lad, you should marry—how old are you, sir?"

"In my twenty-third year, Colonel, but as yet I have had no time to look for a wife," and I blushed like a lass.

"There's yet time enough, without doubt, but a man needs a wife to keep him from mischief—especially a soldier. I was but a half tamed animal till Abigail took me in training; ever since I have lived the life of a gentleman, I hope, and been as happy as a lord. You deserve a good wife, Donald, and I shall help you to find one, sir."

Despite the embarrassment which such personal interest caused me, I was greatly pleased to be so noticed by my colonel, and when, a few days later, he sent for me to tell me that he had named me as one of the captains who were to command the eight companies of which his regiment would be composed, I was filled with such joy and pride as I have since experienced but once—and then upon a very different occasion.

"Donald, lad," said Colonel Morgan, standing at the door of my tent on an April morning, when the sweet scents and cheerful sounds of early spring had started a longing in my heart for a look at our valley, "I've a secret for your ear, and an expedition to propose to you."

"Come in, Colonel," said I, smiling with pleasure of his visit, and offering my one chair; "I'll be proud to know the secret, and I promise to keep it well."

"We are shortly to be ordered North to join General Gates, who is to check the advance of General Burgoyne upon New York, if possible, and we'll see active service, and mayhap a big battle or two, at last. Meantime I'm riding home on ten days' furlough, to say good-by to Abigail, and would you ride with me, I'll grant you leave to go."

"Your invitation is an honor I much appreciate, Colonel, and it will give me pleasure to go."

"Then be ready, by sun up."

It was about ten o'clock at night, and our horses were stiff jointed, and without spirit, after three days' hard traveling, when we rode through the double gates that opened into the driveway circling the lawn of "Soldier's Rest"—Colonel Morgan's home in Frederick County. The spacious brick house with its columned porch was in darkness, save for one brightly lighted room on the

left, and a single candle burning in the hall. Colonel Morgan's spurs and sword clanked noisily on the bare floor of the hallway, and he called to me, in hearty tones, "Come on, lad! we'll find Abigail in the red room." As he spoke the door flew open, warmth and light streamed forth to meet us, and also the sweet tones of a woman's voice in eager greeting.

"Well, Dan'l! what good fortune brought you back so soon? Oh, but it is good to see your dear face again!" I hung back in the shadow, with a lump in my throat, while Mrs. Morgan laid her head on her husband's breast, and was for a moment clasped in his arms.

"Captain McElroy is with me, Abigail," said the Colonel. "Where are you, Donald?"

"Here, Colonel," said I, stepping into the light.

"It is a pleasure to welcome you to our home, Captain McElroy," in Mrs. Morgan's kind tones. "I've heard the Colonel speak of you, and of your family; walk in, and be resting while I have supper served; you are both hungry and tired, I am sure."

"That we are, Abigail," and the Colonel set me the example of divesting himself of muddy leggins, spurs, and top coat—"The smell of your coffee and fried ham has been in my nostrils for two hours past. Donald, she's the best housekeeper in the Old Dominion," and he smiled proudly upon the round, comely, beaming little woman, who, as I soon discovered, deserved all his praise, for she was equal to my own mother as housewife.

As I followed Mrs. Morgan into the living room, which was brightly lighted by half a dozen candles in brass candle-sticks with crystal pendants, and a pile of roaring logs upon the hearth, I realized suddenly the presence of a very pretty young woman sitting beside a candle stand, on one side of the fire place, with a piece of needle work in her hands. She looked up as we entered, then dropped her eyes again to her work.

"Colonel Morgan, this is my cousin, Nelly Buford, and this is Captain McElroy, Nelly."

The young lady rose, dropped me a graceful courtesy, then turned and held out her hand to Colonel Morgan.

"You do not remember me, Cousin Daniel, but I well recall you, and the day you came to our house to see Cousin Abigail. I had heard of you as a famous Indian fighter, and I peeped at you through the half open door, expecting to see a string of scalps around your waist."

"I had no eyes nor ears then for any woman save Abigail," replied Colonel Morgan, shaking her hand in his hearty fashion, "but I'll never forget your pretty face again, Cousin Nelly—be sure of that."

She laughed merrily, and her ease of manner indicated that she was as much used to pretty speeches as she deserved them. There was a witchery in her laughing hazel eyes, in the curves of her saucy, full lipped mouth, in the very tendrils of blonde hair which looped and ringed in riotous fashion about the small pink ears, and low, white brow, which few men tried to resist. Before we retired that night, I was completely fascinated. I lay wide awake in spite of my weariness until past midnight, recalling each curve of her pretty, piquant face, each modulation of her cooing voice; and then I set over against her many charms my own awkwardness, the boorishness of my manners, and my ignorance of everything except camp life and public topics. I longed ardently for that polish of manner, and that faculty of polite conversation I had heretofore esteemed so lightly.

There were no girls in our neighborhood near my own age, and I had known scarcely any other women besides those of our own family, and the matrons of our church congregation. I had grown up, therefore, like a maiden, with no temptations, and small knowledge of passion, and later my mind had been so fully occupied with hunting, studying, Indians, and public matters, that all the vanities and snares of youth had passed me by. But nature is not easily starved into subserviency, and upon the first opportunity takes vengeance for former neglect by more violent and unreasoning possession.

So madly in love was I with Nelly Buford before another sunset that all my past was forgotten, and all my future weighed as naught. I cared for nothing, wished for nothing but to be with her; had no dream or ambition beyond pleasing her. I blushed when she spoke to me, trembled if her hand or her dress touched me, and could scarcely refrain from kissing the handkerchief she now and then let fall, and which I restored to her with a sense of proud privilege. I scarcely heard the remarks of Mrs. and Colonel Morgan, but every word Nelly spoke was registered in my mind and conned over and over like a lesson. When they left me alone with her, as they often did—for they were daily going about the place together, to take counsel as to its management during the Colonel's absence—I experienced a sort of ecstasy which made my blood surge through my brains, and my heart flutter as if I were frightened.

Nor was Miss Nelly slow to perceive my infatuation, or so little woman as to fail to take pleasure in it. I think she beguiled me, indeed, with an audacity she would not have dared to use toward a youth more worldly wise, or more experienced in the emotions of the heart. I recall one instance which will illustrate the coquetry which she practiced for my deeper ensnaring. We were walking through the orchard flush with bloom, when she stopped beneath a low boughed apple tree, and asked me to pluck a spray for her, then twisted it into a wreath, and laughingly bade me crown her queen of May. I took the wreath from her fingers, and would have dropped it awkwardly upon her blonde curls almost two feet below me, but she stopped me with a merry laugh, and said in

playful tones,

"How stupid you are! The queen must be enthroned before she is crowned. Help me to a seat upon this curving limb, and then I'll be just high enough for you to lay the crown upon my sacred head, with due reverence and solemnity."

I lifted her to the bough she indicated, and when she had settled herself gracefully, and said with pretty affectation of dignity, "Now, Sir Knight, the Queen awaits your service," I laid the floral wreath carefully upon the bright curls, and would have stepped back to admire its effect, only something in the eyes that met mine, and the perfume breathing lips, which were on a level with my own, made my head reel, the blood surge in my ears, and many colored motes float between me and the canopy of blossom bending over us. In another instant I had kissed her full upon the lips, and then emboldened by their touch, I threw my arms about her, and kissed her again and again, upon brow, cheek, eyes and lips, paying no heed to her commands, and only desisting when she began tearfully to entreat me.

"I Laid the Floral Wreath Carefully Upon the Bright Curls."

No sooner was the madness passed than I was deeply penitent, and begged her forgiveness so humbly that Nelly gracefully consented to pardon me, on condition that all should be between us as if the incident had never occurred. My promise was easier given than fulfilled, however, for the memory of those kisses lingered with me for years, and came near to my undoing. Yet I never again entirely lost self-control, and all fear of consequences in a woman's presence. The realization of the strength of this heretofore unknown force of my nature sobered me and put me on my guard against myself, in future.

Even Colonel Morgan saw presently my infatuation, and tried to warn me. "Nelly is a pretty lass, and bewitching enough, in all conscience," he said to me, one morning as we rode over the place together, "but I fear, lad, she's a sad coquette, and moreover she's an ardent Tory. It was not she I meant to pick out for a wife for you, indeed I did not know we should find her here."

"A Tory? Is she not your wife's cousin?"

"Aye, lad, 'tis only in our valley that all men are patriots. Nelly is a cousin to my wife, and the families have always been intimate; but the Bufords live in Philadelphia, are well to do, and strong Tories. The stringent orders of General Washington against English sympathizers compelled Nelly's brother to join the British army and Nelly to take refuge with us—her mother having gone to New York to nurse a sister who is ill."

Colonel Morgan's warning came too late, however, even if I had been inclined to mix politics with love, or to think that the fact of a woman's opinion being adverse to my own made her any the less lovable. Age and experience are needed to teach a man that congeniality of mind and temperament count more for happiness in the marriage relation than the sparkle of a bright eye, or the enchanting curve of a rosy mouth. But I was disappointed, and ventured that afternoon to sound the depths of my charmer's disloyalty.

"Colonel Morgan tells me that you are a Tory, Miss Nelly."

"Yes, and why not?"

"I cannot understand how an American citizen can take sides with the oppressors of our country."

"That is such stuff as Colonel Morgan and all you self-styled patriots talk—saying nothing of the ingratitude of turning against our mother land that has lavished her treasures and the blood of her sons, to plant and protect these colonies; nor of the absurd folly of thinking there can be aught else but defeat, and years of poverty before us, as the fruit of this rebellion. Great Britain is sure to win in the end, and then, sir, mayhap you'll be glad of a friend at court. It were well to treat me courteously, and my views with respect while I am forced thus to take refuge among you—the day may come when I can return the favor," and Miss Nelly's eyes flashed, and she held her small self very erect in her chair. I had thought her all gayety and softness, and this evidence of spirit made her but the more charming to me.

"At all events let us not quarrel," I begged. "I trust I am not so narrow minded as to be unable to recognize that there may be something to say on the side of England, especially since it is the tyranny of King George and not the will of the people which oppresses us. But I can never agree with your views nor admit the probability of your prophecy. Should the patriots win, as they will, I may have an opportunity to show my appreciation of the offer you have just made me. Meantime, while we await results, let us declare a truce—do not spoil my brief holiday by withdrawing your smiles."

"Since you put it so gallantly, I must consent—truce for the present, alliance for the future."

"Then I dread nothing the future holds for me—even defeat would be tolerable with your favor to soften it."

"You may hold my yarn, Sir Blarney," she laughed; "no need to tell me there's Irish blood in your veins."

So I held her yarn, and delayed the winding process all I could, that she might be the longer over her task, and her soft finger tips touch my hands the oftener in untangling the threads I snarled. So our first quarrel resulted in my more certain entanglement in the net of Nelly's wiles.

The sense of loneliness and regret, of distaste for the life of hardship before me that oppressed me, as we took horse to return to camp, was entirely new to me. So quickly had a week of ease and luxury, of woman's society, and idle trifling enervated me! I was too far gone even to have proper contempt for myself, and rode all morning by Colonel Morgan's side, silent and morose, answering his cheerful talk with rude monosyllables.

"Look here, my lad," said the Colonel, after a while, "I fear your holiday has done you harm, rather than good. I meant to give you a brief rest and change that would hearten you for the work before you, and, if instead I've led you into a snare, Donald, I'm very sorry."

"What snare, Colonel Morgan?" I enquired somewhat haughtily.

"The snare that a pretty woman's face and a frivolous woman's mind has laid for many a strong man before you, Captain McElroy," answered Colonel Morgan, "but I obtrude neither admonition nor advice, sir," and he spurred his horse forward and rode on in front of me.

The "Captain McElroy" brought me to my senses, for I was not used to hearing anything but "Donald" and "lad" from his lips. I felt heartily ashamed of myself, and presently spurred to his side, and humbly begged his pardon.

"I forgive you without stint, lad," he answered me; "your feelings are very natural, and 'tis hardly my privilege to preach to any young man, for my own youth was reckless and dissipated. But I can say with knowledge that there is no influence a young man needs so much to dread as that of his own ungoverned passions, and none he should so carefully guard against. You've heard the old hymn:—

> 'Lo, on a narrow neck of land
> 'Twixt Heaven and Hell I stand';

"Well, if there's a single situation in life these words describe it is that point in a young man's life when he makes his first clear decision between right and desire, between yielding himself the sport of youthful inclinations, and following the clean path of duty. When the time comes for you to win honestly a good woman's love, she will be very proud and glad to know that you can offer her an unsullied manhood. It's the one thing that ever comes between Abigail and me:—that even yet I'm ashamed to tell her some of the episodes of my youth."

"Thank you, Colonel! I shall try to remember your words."

Remembering was easy enough, but making application was more difficult. I could not see, then, that Colonel Morgan's caution applied to my infatuation for Nelly, further than to put me on my guard against letting that infatuation interfere with my steadfastness and courage as a soldier. I took the warning to heart, therefore, only so far as to set my face sternly toward my duty again. Its true application was made clear to me, almost too late.

CHAPTER VIII

There was little time for moping after we got back to headquarters, for on the very next day, Colonel Morgan issued orders to his captains to get their companies in marching order, and a few days later we filed out of camp in double column, bands playing, colors flying, and our faces northward. The men cheered us as we passed, for Morgan's rifle rangers were famous by this time, and were always greeted vociferously.

General Gates gave us an enthusiastic welcome when we came up with him, lying intrenched along the Hudson River from Stillwater to Halfmoon; and from the first he paid us the compliment of giving us the positions of greatest danger and responsibility, issuing a command that we were to receive orders from himself alone. It was ours to do most of the scout and picket duty during the three weeks that the British army waited on the opposite bank of the river about thirty miles above us, their rear protected by Fort Edward.

Burgoyne wearied presently of inaction, and determined to wait no longer for Lord Howe's continually delayed reinforcements. He began, too, to suspect that his position was fast becoming a critical one, for news now reached him that the forces of Baum and St. Leger had been destroyed at the battle of Oriskany, and that the attack upon Fort Stanwix had failed, so that the blow from the west could no longer be counted on; the New England militiamen were gathering in force in his rear, and his Indian and Canadian allies—frightened it was said by the report that Morgan's rifle rangers had joined Gates—daily deserted him. There was no alternative left to General Burgoyne but to cross the river and attack Gates, ere this time well fortified, by the skill of Kosciusko, on Bemis Heights.

For six days longer, Burgoyne hesitated, or awaited reënforcements. On the morning of September the nineteenth, one of the outlook, stationed in a tree top, reported a movement of Burgoyne's army which indicated a concerted rear and front attack upon our position. General Gates decided to await the attack behind our fortifications; but Arnold, who commanded our left wing, argued vehemently in favor of a charge upon Burgoyne's advance column, and at last won Gates' consent that he should lead Morgan's riflemen, and Dearborn's infantry against the approaching enemy. The riflemen were given the lead, and we fell upon Burgoyne with telling energy, Morgan all the time exposing himself recklessly, and shouting encouragement to his men above the incessant crack of their rifles, and the responsive roar of the enemy's guns.

It was a picture worth seeing—our regiment in action, their tall commanding figures in their huntsmen's garb scattering or forming as the ground suggested, and each man firing as coolly as if he had nothing more than a brace of partridges in range.

We had been but a short while in action, when General Frazier turned eastward to help General Burgoyne; and Riedesel, seeing Burgoyne was hard pressed, hurried up to his assistance from the river road, along which he was marching to attack Gates' position, in front, while, as they had planned, Generals Burgoyne and Frazier should simultaneously attack our position in rear. We had, therefore, successively diverted the entire force, marching to charge Bemis Heights, and fought, with our three thousand backwoods riflemen and raw infantry, four thousand of the best troops in the British army, led by their bravest and most skilled officers.

The fight was waged with desperate determination on both sides for two hours, while Arnold and Morgan galloped hither and thither, animating the men by their voice, presence, and example. Again and again Arnold sent couriers to Gates begging for re-enforcements, and assuring him that with two thousand more men he could crush the army of Burgoyne. But the self opinionated Gates, who preferred to lose by his own judgment, rather than win by any other man's, sat calmly in his tent, watching the fight below, and steadily refused us assistance. In defiance of his narrow stupidity Arnold fought on till dark, and though Burgoyne was left in possession of the battle field, he had lost heavily, and his attack upon our position had been foiled. We, also, had lost heavily, and of our brave riflemen far more than we could by any means afford to spare.

General Burgoyne did not venture another attempt for nearly three weeks. Meanwhile we did not lack excitement in camp, for the long brewing difficulties between Gates and Arnold came rapidly to a head, culminating in a rash speech of Gates that "as soon as General Lincoln should arrive he would have no further use for General Arnold," and the withdrawal from Arnold's command of Morgan's and Dearborn's regiments, the two he counted most upon. Arnold was furious and all the officers under Gates, except two or three, were indignant. We had as much confidence in Arnold's courage and military skill, then, as we had doubt of Gates possessing either of these qualities. General Arnold sent in his resignation, which General Gates accepted; but after all the other officers had met and signed a petition entreating Arnold to remain, he was induced to

withdraw his resignation, and Gates submitted sullenly.

It fell also to the lot of Morgan and Arnold to check the second concerted movement of the British, and upon almost the same ground as before. But the second battle of Freeman's Farm was a far more decisive victory for us. Again Morgan's men led the attack, were the first men on the field, and the last to withdraw. This might well be called the battle of the Colonels, for until General Arnold led the famous charge upon Frazier's wavering line late in the afternoon, which completed the rout of the British, no officer higher in command than a colonel was engaged in the fight on our side.

General Burgoyne now found himself surrounded by the American army, and next discovered that every ford along the river for miles was strongly guarded—Gates was a better general at reaping the fruits of others' victories, than at winning them for himself. A few days later Burgoyne asked for terms of surrender, and on the seventeenth of October—seven was our lucky number during this campaign—the "Convention of Saratoga" was carried into effect by the British army marching into a meadow, and laying down their arms, while General Burgoyne handed his sword to General Gates. Our men stayed within their entrenchments, not caring to look upon the humiliation of a brave enemy, and not a single cheer was heard as the disarmed and dejected British repassed our lines; we realized then, as more than once afterwards, that Americans and Britishers could never really be enemies and that the aims and destinies of Anglo-Saxon peoples were and always would be much the same.

In General Gates' report of the surrender he failed to mention Colonel Morgan's name, or to give any credit to the riflemen for the important service they had rendered. A few days after the capitulation, General Gates gave a dinner to a large number of British and American officers, but he did not include Colonel Morgan. During the progress of the dinner Colonel Morgan was compelled to make some important report to the general in chief, and was ushered into the banqueting room. He saluted formally, made his report, and withdrew.

"And who, General Gates, may be that soldierly and magnificent looking colonel?" enquired a British officer.

"It is Colonel Morgan of the Virginia Riflemen," answered Gates, with as gracious an air as he could command.

"What, is that the famous Colonel Morgan! Pardon me, but I must shake hands with him," and he rose from the table, and followed Morgan, several of the other British officers doing likewise, thus compelling General Gates to recall and introduce him.

"Sir," said General Burgoyne, "you command the finest regiment in the world."

Colonel Morgan proudly repeated this to his men, and each man of the regiment treasured it in his memory to the end of his life, as being the highest compliment troops could receive, for it came, unsolicited, from a gallant enemy.

A few days afterward we rejoined the main army at Whitemarsh, Morgan's command taking part in the battle of Chestnut Hill. It was there I got my first and only wound during the Revolution, and was for a second time taken prisoner. I was leading my men in a headlong charge upon the enemy's works, when a small body of British cavalry dashed suddenly upon us from an unexpected direction, and threatened to cut us off from the main body of our troops; I gave the order to retreat at double quick, and remembered no more, till I found myself a prisoner with a bullet in my left thigh.

The next day I was taken to a prison hospital in Philadelphia, and laid on a straw pallet in a row of other groaning, tossing, half delirious unfortunates. For some days—I lost count of time—I lived in a troubled dream, with but one definite need, one clearly defined longing, and that for water. Oh, for a fountain of cool sweet water, that I might drink and drink, then rest and drink again! That which some one brought me from time to time was muddy and flat, but I drank it as if it had been the ambrosial cup of Jove, and in the confused visions which floated in and out of my mind, there was always a sparkling spring gushing out of a green hillside, and falling with a splashing sound into a pebble paved basin. Sometimes I seemed to lie flat upon my chest in the cool grass, and to plunge my head into the cool water. Again I saw the spring, as on that last night at home, silvered by the moon's rays, and Ellen standing on the rock above, wrapped in her white robe, her face mystical with strange thoughts. She smiled at me, and gave me to drink from a golden cup the sweetest water I had ever quaffed.

One of the first things to arouse me from my semi-stupor was the beseeching cry of a poor lad, who lay on the pallet next mine, for "water, water,"—over and over again, in tones first petulant and insistent, then entreating and pitiful, then weary and despairing. The next time the bucket and dipper came around, I begged the man who distributed our dole to give my share to the lad, though my throat was like cast iron within, and my heavy tongue as slick as if coated with varnish. The boy fell asleep afterwards, and the brief quiet of his tossing limbs with the smile his dreams brought to his pale lips so rested my nerves, as to enable me to endure the hours which ensued before the next bucketful was distributed.

"This is Captain McElroy, I believe, sir," I heard a prison official say one day, standing over my pallet—I do not know whether it was morning or afternoon, or how many days after I had been brought to the hospital.

"Do we not provide better accommodations than this for wounded officers?" said another in lowered voice.

"We cannot make our own wounded comfortable, Captain," answered the first; "we must do as we can in this half savage country."

I opened my eyes now, and met those of a slim young man in British uniform,—"Can you tell me, sir," he asked, "where I may find Captain Donald McElroy, of Morgan's rifle company?"

"I'm Captain McElroy of the Virginia Riflemen, sir," and I sat up with a mighty effort, and managed to salute him with a trembling hand.

"You have not lost your pluck with your strength, I see, Captain McElroy," returning my salute; "I'm Captain Buford, a brother of the young woman you met at the home of Colonel Morgan, last April. Nelly saw your name in the list of wounded prisoners, several days ago, and has waited impatiently for my return to the city, that she might set me to searching for you. She tells me that you two entered into a friendly compact, pledging each other help and protection while the war lasts, whenever one is needed, and the other possible. It was your pleasure once, she bade me say, to extend courtesy to a Tory, it is hers now to show her appreciation of that courtesy, and also of the valor of a brave opponent,—the word enemy she charged me *not* to use."

The little blood left in my body all mounted to my face, and I knew not if it were weakness, or pleasure that made my brain reel so. "Will you convey to your sister my most grateful thanks, Captain Buford, and say to her for me that any obligation she may feel to my friends—for she can owe none to me, since she but honored me with her society—is doubly discharged by her gracious interest in my fate. If it is in my power to do so, I shall call to express my gratitude in person, as soon as I am strong enough. Will you be so good as to leave your address with me?" But I had used up all my will power, in this long speech, which had come faltering from my dry throat, and now I fell back on my pallet almost in a swoon of weakness.

"You need more practical assistance, if I mistake not, Captain McElroy, than a mere expression of interest. And our Cousin Abigail will never forgive us the neglect of a friend of her husband. If it is possible to get permission, and I think there will be no difficulty, we wish to take you to our house as a paroled prisoner. With a comfortable bed, and nourishing diet we shall have you well in no time."

"I am too unsightly an object to risk being seen by your mother and sister, Captain Buford—would it not be well to wait until I am strong enough to be shaven and dressed," I protested, weakly.

"You need only fresh garments, and a comb to be entirely presentable."

"Then I am in your hands."

When Captain Buford returned, he was accompanied by a physician and his own body servant, and had my parole in his hand. The last he showed me, while the physician administered a cordial hardly more stimulating, after which the negro valet made me as decent in appearance as my state permitted. Before they carried me to the ambulance in waiting, I stopped a moment, beside the lad's pallet to say good-by, and speak a cheering word to him. His fever had abated, now, but I feared he would die of exhaustion, aided by extreme dejection.

"Cheer up, comrade," I said; "my friends here have promised me they will have you paroled or exchanged, if you'll only set your mind to it, and get well."

"I'm glad for your good luck," he answered wearily, "but I don't expect to hear another friendly voice this side of Heaven."

"That is not soldier-like talk, lad—a patriot must learn to defy suffering, and mischance."

"Yes, I know, and I'm trying to learn to endure as a soldier should," but he shut his eyes, and the weak grasp of his fingers on mine relaxed.

"That's right, lad, keep up a brave heart; my friends will not forget you."

I could trust myself to say no more, and as I took a last look at the smooth, girlish face of the lad, I thought with a fresh heart pang, "How much do the horrors of war outweigh its glories!"

CHAPTER IX

The Buford mansion reached, I was at once assisted to my room, and put to bed, a special servant being assigned to attend upon me. A week later I was able to sit up each morning in a cushioned chair before my cheerful fire, and presently to walk about my room. I spent many of my waking hours listening to the voices which floated up to me from the lower floor, trying to distinguish Nelly's gay sweet tones among them. Now and then I recognized a light footfall, as she flitted past my door, and hoped vainly that she would stop to speak to me. At last I grew desperate, demanded paper and quill of my man, Hector, and wrote this in scrawling characters:

"Am I never to have the honor and privilege of thanking my generous deliverer? The

weight of my gratitude oppresses me; will you not add another deed of gracious kindness to my debt, and give me the opportunity to ease my soul by expressing a part of the thankfulness and devotion which fill it to overflowing? Only let me see you, and I shall be, for as long as it pleases you, sweet Nelly.

"Your most willing captive,

"DONALD MCELROY."

Then I sealed, and addressed the note, and bade Hector take it to his young mistress. He came back in a few moments with the message that "Miss Nelly would see me in half an hour." The interim was spent by me in making as careful a toilet as any young girl robing for her first ball. I had had Captain Buford purchase for me two suits of citizens' clothes of latest cut and pattern, and I flattered myself that the plum colored breeches and coat, the sprigged velvet waistcoat, black silk stockings, and silver buckles set off my heroic proportions to some advantage. I had been daily clean shaven since I had been strong enough to stand it, and my "curling chestnut locks," had grown long enough to admit of their being gathered into a respectable resemblance to a queue, which I tied with a black satin ribbon.

Just as I had satisfied myself that I was not ill to look at, a liveried footman came to my door to say that Miss Buford awaited me in the second floor reception room, and that I was to follow him thither. I found her standing by the window, a plume covered brown felt scoop hiding all her blonde head, except the airy curls upon her forehead, and about her throat a dark fur tippet, from which her fair face rose, like a flower set in rich leaves.

"I'm just going out, Captain McElroy," she said, after she had given me a gracious greeting, "but I could not resist your gallant appeal, nor go until I had relieved you of your heavy burden—though I'm sorry, sir, you should feel it as a burden, the small service it has been our pleasure to render you."

"I feel not your kindness as a burden, Miss Nelly, it has been accepted as freely as bestowed —'twas the longing to see and to thank you that I could endure no longer. I have now no further cause for unrest, save this threat of yours to leave me, before I have had time to clothe my gratitude in adequate words."

"Will't say you're glad I'm a Tory—and that even a Tory may be honest and a Christian? If you will, I shall call it fair quittance of all you owe me," and she laughed the rippling saucy laugh that had been ringing through my dreams for months.

"That a Tory may be honest and a Christian, I admit most freely,—but that I am glad you are one is more than I can say, with aught of truth. I would have you all on my side if I could; still more, I would have no one with half so good a claim to you as I."

"But 'tis the other way, Sir Patriot—no one else has so good a claim to you as have I; since you are my paroled prisoner. Do they treat you well, poor captive?"

"As an honored guest, fair jailer; there's but one thing lacking to my comfort."

"And what may that be? It shall be supplied."

"A daily interview, and a long one, with my jailer."

"You have been very slow, sir, to signify a wish to see her. Two weeks ago to-day it has been since you came, and this is the first intimation I have had that my presence would be welcome."

"And daily I have hoped you would stop at my threshold to ask of my improvement—you could not fail to know that I have been pining for one look at your bright face."

"Young women must not take things for granted, sir; you, however, are not like the British officers and the city macaronis, you are both honest and modest, and if you have not made great haste to be gallant, I feel sure you are sincere. But I must say good-by for the present, a skating party waits for me, down stairs."

"When may I hope to see you again?"

"To-morrow, if you wish."

"At what hour, that I may count the minutes!"

"Eleven o'clock, shall we say? If I might read to you an hour each morning, would that help you to pass less irksomely the tedious days of your captivity?"

She called this back to me over her shoulder, her saucy face fairer for its frame of soft plumes and rich fur.

"'Twould make me rejoice in the midst of my misfortunes, most merciful jailer," I answered, striking an attitude with my hand upon my heart.

The hours crawled by like a slow procession of half torpid serpents till I fell asleep, and the next morning passed in eager expectancy.

"Which of these shall I read from?" began Miss Nelly, entering the small reception room with her arms full of books.

"I have chosen a variety, one of which will, I hope, suit both your taste and your mood. Here is Ossian, if your literary appetite calls for the mystic and lyric; or Pope if it demands the caustic and humorous; or Lady Mary Montague if you have a weakness for gossip; or Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet,' Ben Jonson's 'Mourning Bride,' should your mood be tragic; or 'Evelina,' the most popular of the new novels, if you have a fancy for fiction. Which shall it be this morning?"

"First, a few extracts from Ossian, then, a bit of Lady Mary, and lastly, a chapter from the new novel," I answered with shameless greed.

But we did not get to the novel that morning, for the reading of Ossian ended in an animated discussion of the claims of McPherson that his poems were a genuine translation from the old Gaelic. I strongly maintained, that the true spirit of the ancient Gaelic people was in these poems, and that it would be well nigh impossible for a modern to conceive or to reproduce the feelings and sentiments of these primitive bards with such absolute truth of conception. Miss Nelly, however, held stoutly to the views of the critics, as became her conservative habit of mind.

Then came a few extracts from "Lady Mary" after which she seemed weary, so that I picked up her volume of plays and read from it some of my favorite quotations.

"Why, Captain McElroy," she exclaimed, "you read well. After this you shall read to me, sir, while I finish hemstitching my ruffles."

"I have a favor to ask of you, Captain McElroy," said Miss Nelly one morning when my hour of bliss was about to end. "I want you to take a part in the play we are rehearsing,—'tis the latest comedy written by the late great London playwright, Sheridan, and you could do the part of Sir Peter Teazle to perfection."

"But I have never so much as seen a play, Miss Nelly," I answered in consternation.

"Never mind that, you will be sure to say your lines with true expression, and the rest I can teach you. Do consent, Sir Patriot, I have told the girls and the British officers about you, and they all desire greatly to meet you; even the belle and beauty, Miss Margaret Shippen, said last evening to me, 'I hear, Miss Nelly, you have captured a rebel captain, and hold him imprisoned in your castle—are not we to have the pleasure of meeting him? 'Tis said he is a Goliath for size; a David for skill, though with rifle instead of sling; and an Absalom for beauty of person.' Now, Sir, can you resist a compliment like that from the fairest Tory maiden in Philadelphia; will you not come in the drawing room this evening, and be introduced to her?"

"And meet British officers, who might resent my impertinence!"

"All who come to this house are gentlemen, sir—nor would they show the least disrespect to a friend of mine."

"I am not fit for polite society, Miss Nelly, and I wish not to play the part of Samson—to make sport for my enemies."

"The suggestion is insulting, Captain McElroy, and I urge you no more," and Miss Nelly left the room, her head poised haughtily. Next morning she did not join me in the library at the usual time, and after an hour's waiting I sent to beg her presence.

"I apologize with deep humility of soul for my rudeness of yesterday," I said, as soon as she came in. "I'll meet your friends gladly, and try the part of Sir Peter if 'twill gratify you. Do not I owe my life to you, and have you not made my very captivity a time of delight? Will you not forgive me, since the speech was prompted by the stupidity of a blunt soldier, and not by any doubt of you or your friends?"

"Only upon condition that you stop abusing yourself, will I forgive you, sir, and moreover that you speak before these British, and Tory friends of mine with the same bold spirit of independence you have ever used to me. I like you for it, though, at times, it nettles me."

"You need have no fear of that," I laughed, "but I shall endeavor so to act that you may not blush for having honored me with the name of friend."

"You know well that I shall be proud of you, Captain McElroy, there's not so handsome a man in the British army. I would give a great deal to see you in a British captain's uniform, that I might show them such men as this land, which they sometimes flaunt and laugh at, produces. Though a Tory, Captain McElroy, I love America, and Americans, and allow no one to slur either at our country, or our people."

O wily, bewitching Nelly; how was it possible to resist you. And yet I cannot believe that you were from the first playing a part, nor that you coldly schemed to entrap me. You were my true friend when much I needed one, and if afterward you became a snare, it was greatly my own fault.

That evening I donned my best, having sent Hector out to purchase a white silk vest embroidered with pink rosebuds, and a white silk, lace trimmed stock, that I might be behind none of the macaronis, nor give the foppish British officers cause to scoff at my provincial appearance. A man of gentle blood and sound principles needs scant time for acquiring society polish, and by saying little, and watching and listening closely, I soon learned the approved ways of doing the little things. They thought me shy, and kindly left me a good deal to myself, at first. Miss Shippen—a stately, beautiful, and most gracious mannered maiden—called me to her side the second evening, and entered into a conversation in regard to the comedy. "Like you the part of Sir

Peter?" she asked.

"Rather better than any of the others, I think."

"Then I infer you do not find the other characters to your liking?" and she smiled, and glanced sideways at the officer who sat on her other hand.

"The comedy is doubtless a fine satire upon certain gay London circles," I replied, "but there are but two characters one can like. Maria, and Sir Peter, and both are shamefully cozened. I must except too the old uncle, he is quite likable."

"And you like not that fascinating rake, Charles Surface, nor delicious Lady Teazle, with her boisterous snobbery, and her irrepressible good nature? Are you of Quaker faith, Captain McElroy?"

"No, Miss Shippen, I'm a Scotch Irish Presbyterian."

"Then we shall shock you, I fear."

"But whatever may be your religious views, sir, you wish surely to know something of life?" put in the British officer, a well made blonde man with straight nose, and large mouth. "Would you take advantage of your present opportunities, you shall learn things you have not dreamed of in your mountain wilds."

"Adventure has ever appealed to me, sir, and lately my life has been o'er tame," I answered, determined to be no milksop among these British. "So you do not ask me to go a backbiting with Sir Benjamin, and the rest, there's little you can offer me, promising excitement, that you will not find me ready for."

"Glad am I to hear it, Mr. McElroy—

"Captain McElroy, an' you please; having won my humble title by hard service, and not by court favor, I am very proud of it, sir."

"Beg your pardon," somewhat haughtily; "I was about to say I like not a soldier, Captain McElroy, who cants and prays between battles, as did the hypocritical Cromwellians. A gay life in barracks is proper reward for arduous work during a campaign;—to-morrow, an' you will, I shall call to take you to our quarters, where you may lunch with four as jolly good fellows as are to be found in the British army."

I had just assented to this invitation of Captain Wheaton's, when Miss Shippen introduced me to the latest comer, as Colonel Forbes; he was a small, wiry, swarthy man who had been making the round of the room, and now leaned over Miss Shippen's chair, whispering in her ear.

"One of Morgan's Riflemen, said you, Miss Margaret?" eyeing me with most evident curiosity, as I rose to return his salutation; "a famous leader, and brave troops; they did the work for us at Saratoga. To your colonel and his men belongs the glory of that victory, Captain McElroy—yet I hear it has been filched from you by that braggart Gates, and that Colonel Morgan has not even been accorded a promotion. This so-called Continental Congress knows naught of the art of warfare, nor can recognize the qualities of a true leader, or else it has its favorites whom it is determined to advance, regardless of merit."

Though all this was true, I burned inwardly to hear him say it; determined, however, to repress the rash words which rose to my lips, I set them firmly, folded my arms, and bowed in grave silence.

"Captain Morgan is devotedly loved by his men, I hear," put in Miss Shippen. "Is he very genial with them, Captain McElroy?"

"He treats them as sons, or as brothers; there's not one but would follow him cheerfully to certain death."

"But," said Miss Shippen, "I am much more interested in the comedy, than in any talk of war, or comparison of leaders, for Captain McElroy it is I who am to act Maria—do you not think I'll look and act the character to the life?"

"To perfection, and now I wish I were to play Charles Surface."

"Hear him, Nelly," called Miss Shippen to that young lady, crossing the room to the spinet, attended by half a dozen gallants. "He pretends to wish that he were going to be Charles Surface in our comedy, didst ever hear of such shameless deceit?"

"Or such base ingratitude, for I see he has already transferred his allegiance—but why should we be surprised by any fresh evidence of masculine perfidy—have we not long since learned that 'Men were deceivers ever'?" and Nelly's manner and tone showed that she would be no amateur upon the stage.

"And women were ever our innocent victims, I suppose. There's not a coquette among you!" jeered Captain Buford, who had just joined our circle, a brown haired Quakeress upon his arm, who was going to sing duets with Miss Nelly.

"We but use nature's weapons for our just defense, Captain Buford," answered Miss Shippen. "The more skillful and wary one's enemy, the more adroit one needs be. Women have learned to

guard, to parry, and to thrust by long practice in the art of self-defense."

The lunch in Captain Wheaton's quarters the next day was not the last of the entertainments proffered me by my hospitable enemies, especially by Buford's and Wheaton's mess. Not only did I lunch with them, dine with them, and drink with them; I also diced and played with them, and was invited to join their riding parties. Once Wheaton, who seemed to have conceived a liking for me which I returned heartily, carelessly allowed me to inspect with him the city's fortifications, and to see how inadequate they were to resist attack from any strong, well equipped force. Afterwards this incident, which was purely accidental, and seemed of small importance as I thought at the time, counted heavily against me, and proved to be the small silent hinge on which turned the door opening to me the high road of my destiny. Far more important events have turned upon still smaller hinges.

The British soldiers were most of them fine soldiers, and genial comrades, and their treatment of me was all courtesy and kindness. Through an odd streak of luck attending me, for surely skill had nothing to do with my triumph, I won at nearly all the games of chance so prevalent among them. Quinze, Piquet, Hazard, and other games, besides all sorts of wild betting, were their chief diversions. They even bet at whist, a slow, deep thinking game, well worth the playing without a wager. Whatever the game, I won indifferently, and soon my depleted pockets jingled merrily with English gold pieces.

"The Scotchman's luck" became a proverb in the captain's messes. But in all the dissipation of that time I was watchful never to drink to excess. I am not fanatical against strong drinks, and to this day can find no harm in one's warming and cheering himself with a cup of good sack, or a finger of rum, but it has ever filled me with disgust to see a man's legs wabbling and tangling as he walked, and to hear maudlin words mixing themselves in unintelligible gibberish upon a thick and lolling tongue.

And all this time my infatuation for Nelly Buford took daily stronger possession of me. I spent in her society every hour she would allow me, and became the slave of each of her pretty, womanish caprices. Her deference to me as her captive guest led me on as subtly as her coquetry, and so little skill or wish had I to hide my infatuation, that I must have seemed to all Miss Nelly's acquaintances to stand to her in the attitude of an accepted lover. Once or twice I did venture to tell her that I loved her, but was easily checked by a doubting word, or an attempt to change the subject. Now, at any rate, I considered, I could not ask her to marry me, and to avow my love for other purposes were dishonorable. I yet had not the courage to resign hope, nor the will to see less of her.

My habit to drink sparingly has more than once stood me in good stead, but never more so than at a banquet given to General Howe by the officers, about the first of February, to which I was most graciously invited; and to which, being urged by Buford and Wheaton, I foolishly consented to go. I did not realize the unpleasantness of the position in which I had put myself until the time came for toasts and speeches. First the health of the king was drunk with enthusiasm, all standing with heads held proudly, and brimming glasses tossed high, while a lusty cheer went up from many throats. I stood, also, not to make myself conspicuous, but neither drank nor cheered. To General Howe's health, I drank for courtesy's sake, but when "Success to British arms" was proposed, I found my stock of politeness completely exhausted, and sat down abruptly, to the amusement of Forbes on my left and the scorn of the officer opposite.

And now began the serious business of the evening; brave soldiers, and cultivated gentlemen set themselves valorously to the task of drinking each other under the table; as gradually they waxed uproarious, free talk was interchanged as to the supposed plans of the British government, and its unswerving determination to subdue the revolting colonies at whatever cost of men or money. Meantime Colonel Forbes and the captain next to him diverted me from the general talk by asking questions as to the part Morgan and his men had taken in the attack against Quebec, and the battles which led to Saratoga; throwing in frequent adroit compliments to the riflemen, and expressions of admiration and sympathy for Colonel Morgan. Finding me noncommittal as to the treatment Arnold and Morgan had received from the Continental Congress, they branched off into an argument meant to convince me of the hopelessness of our cause, and the uselessness of sacrificing life and property by further resistance; declaring that Great Britain was willing to yield all we asked and wanted, short of complete independence, and that only a few fanatics believed that to be possible, or desirable.

To this I responded, with perfect calmness, that nothing less than complete independence from autocratic will would satisfy the American people and that since we could never be conquered at such distance it would be wiser to grant us the independence we claimed and to make of us loyal allies. That we were not warring against the British nation which we honored and esteemed above all other souls, but against the tyrannical notions of the King and his courtiers, themselves aliens to the English blood. That our independence would but hasten theirs and bring the sooner that freedom of the human race and that universal democracy which was the dream of all true men and real patriots. Indeed, I affirmed, waxing more and more enthusiastic for my most

cherished belief, "It would yet be the proud privilege of England and America to stand side by side for the cause of liberty and self-government."

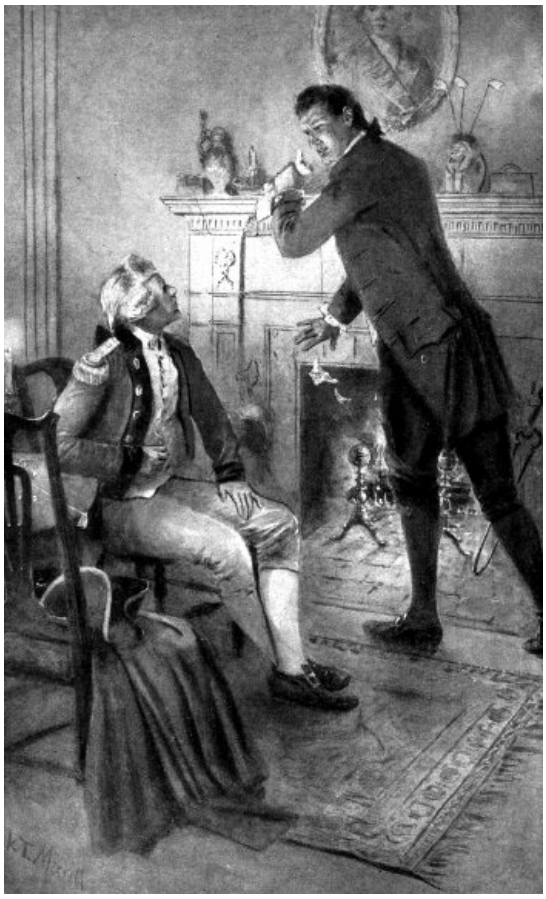
Colonel Forbes but laughed at my wild theories and as he got drunker and drunker grew more and more friendly 'til, presently, he wished I were his comrade, since I was too good a fellow for a rebel; and then, with the effusive confidence of a man deep in his cups, began a jumble of protestations and insinuations, hinting at the high honors, and rich emoluments which awaited me if I would only consent to give up my foolish devotion to rebellion and become once more a loyal British subject.

I thought his talk but the foolish babble of a drunken man, and turned it aside with jest and banter.

When presently the more sober arose to depart, the officer who had sat next to Colonel Forbes, and who, since the latter had waxed so confidential, had lapsed into silence, took me by the arm and asked me to go with him to a small cloak room adjoining the banqueting hall.

"Captain McElroy," he said when we were seated and alone, "Colonel Forbes has prematurely made you an offer we have been contemplating for some days, and in regard to which I was authorized to sound you. We have good reason to believe there is an officer in the rebel ranks well affected to our cause; we need some one who can freely communicate with him—if you will consent to help us, a captain's commission in the British army, with promise of speedy promotion, and any sum of ready money you may name is yours. Only sign this paper, and the compact is closed."

I took the paper he handed me, opened and read it, then rose to my feet, and slowly tore it into bits, throwing them, as I did so, into the fire.



"You Have Evidently Mistaken Me for a Villain."

"Captain Forsythe," I said, while my hand and my voice shook with the strain I put upon myself to control my anger, "you and others have evidently mistaken me for a villain of that low and despicable type capable of treason to his country. For the present I condone the insult for the sake of other British officers who have seemed to consider me a man of honor. I bid you good night, sir," and reaching for cloak and hat, I hastened into the street, where the freshness and purity of the early morning air and the calming message of the steadfast stars—shining on in their clear, soft beauty, whether men pray and sleep like Christians, or dice and plot, and drink like devils, on the changeful earth beneath them—cooled my fevered brow, and helped me to restrain a seething desire to take violent vengeance upon my insulter. But I realized clearly the foolhardiness of such course, and moreover the ingratitude and disrespect to my friends it would

seem to imply.

CHAPTER X

The second evening after the banquet was the one set for the performance of our carefully rehearsed comedy, and all the Tory society of Philadelphia was agog with interest and curiosity to see the latest London hit, played by the belles of the city and the most popular of the British officers. I was told, moreover, that the story had gone abroad that the part of Sir Peter would be taken by a youthful Virginia mountaineer, whose giant proportions and unusual gifts of person and bearing—considering his backwoods breeding—made him the feature of the performance. I was no little annoyed by this talk, though I credited Wheaton, who retailed it to me, with a good deal of bantering exaggeration. In truth, being still sore from the insult offered me at the banquet, I wanted to throw up my part; but, after consideration of the difficulties it would entail upon my entertainers, and others who had been courteous to me, I forced myself to stick to my role cheerfully, and to do my best at it.

Rigged out in all the toggery of a stage Sir Peter, I presented myself to Miss Nelly. "Perfect," she exclaimed taking me by the elbow with the tips of her fingers, and slowly turning me around at arm's length, while she inspected critically my pompous finery. "Now must they all admit that there's not so handsome a figure of a man in the British army," and she nodded approval bewitchingly, with her puffed, powdered, and plumed head. She was altogether charming in her rich brocade gown and yellow laces, and I managed to tell her so in words that pleased her.

The play was pronounced a London success, and the players universally complimented. Twice were Lady Teazle and Sir Peter called before the curtain, and such flattering compliments were showered upon me in the green room that I was quite puffed with vanity and forgot my inward soreness. After the performance, Colonel Forbes entertained the players at a supper where sherry, Burgundy, and sparkling white wines of France were as free as spring water. Wheaton was made to sing his hit of the evening—Sheridan's jolly drinking song over again, and did so with even better voice and expression.

"Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,
Here's to the widow of fifty,
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant queen
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

(And all joined in the chorus:—)

"Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

"Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize,
Now to the maid who has none, sir;
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but one, sir.

"Let the toast pass, etc.

"Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow,
Now to her that's as brown as a berry;
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the girl that is merry.

"Let the toast pass, etc

"For let them be clumsy, or let them be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather,
So fill a pint bottle quite up to the brim
And let us e'en toast them together.

"Let the toast pass, etc."

Even Miss Nelly, and the stately Miss Shippen had drunken till their fair faces were a little flushed, and they joined with noticeable abandon in the chorus. The men presently became too hilarious, there being ladies present, and I suddenly realized that I also had imbibed more freely than I usually allowed myself. Just then I caught Miss Shippen's eye, saw that she observed my change of manner, and took it either for reproof or warning. Not to appear either rude or Puritanical in her eyes, I silently rebuked myself for my Presbyterian straight-lacedness, and began again to drink and to make noisily merry with the rest. A moment later Miss Shippen leaned over to us and asked, in an undertone, if Nelly and I would escort her home—the recent Joseph Surface being, she feared, already incapacitated for that duty. We slipped out almost unobserved, being followed soon after, I think, by the rest of the ladies, and the few gallants in fit condition to escort them.

My brain cooled but slowly, even in the fresh night air, and, after we had safely delivered Miss Shippen at her home, and driven to the Buford mansion, I begged Nelly to sit with me, in the library, till I felt more ready to welcome sleep. A single candle burned still in the silver stick on the candlestand, but through the shutterless French windows giving upon the rear balcony, a bath of opal-rayed moonlight flooded the room. I blew out the candle, as Nelly sank into a deep chair within the circle of the moon's softer radiance, and bade me find something to talk of, other than the play, for she was sick of it.

"Then give me a subject your ladyship will be pleased to hear discourse upon," I said, placing a chair for myself in front of her.

"The one nearest your heart, sir."

"That would be the one most accessible to my present satisfied vision."

"I—and what could you say upon so meager a topic?"

"Meager? To recount your goodness to me would furnish material for an hour's discourse; to enumerate your charms and graces another; your qualities and accomplishments a third. Give me leave and I'll talk till cock crow upon one subdivision of my theme—how much I love you! But always you hush me when I approach that subject."

"Because I know you love me not—that only you love to flatter me. How learned you such arts of the world, thou whilom backwoodsman?"

"From instinct. Needs a man ever to learn how to tell a woman he loves her? How to descant upon charms and graces he sees limned in beauty before his eyes? How can you say I do not love you?"

"Have you read of King Arthur's knights, and how they dared mighty deeds of prowess for the damsels they loved?"

"Yes, and so would I—were there deeds of prowess to be done. But I, a prisoner," and then I stopped, ashamed that I should complain, like a whining stripling, of the fortunes of war,—which in truth had used me but too kindly in all save enforced inactivity.

"True, there are no deeds of prowess you may do now, but one single act of self-sacrifice would convince me of your love."

"Only name it, dear Nelly," and I leaned nearer and caught in mine the hands that folded in her lap.

"It will serve to prove the value of your protestations—though I know beforehand you will not consent."

"First name my reward; were it but one kiss from those sweet lips, I'll engage to earn it at any cost."

"It might be something more lasting than a kiss, an' you would," and Nelly blushed adorably, and dropped the soft fringe of her eyes upon her glowing cheeks.

"Your dear self, Nelly, your love?" I questioned ardently, kissing the hands I still imprisoned, and dropping on my knees beside her, that I might force her eyes to meet mine.

"Even my own poor self—nor is the sacrifice I would ask so great; indeed it carries with it a compensation which by many would be deemed ample reward, were all you are now bargaining for left out of the contract. Can you not guess what proof of your sincerity I would claim?"

"Thick headed soldier that I am, I cannot—" but I scarcely knew what I said, for my arm was about Nelly's warm, pliant form, her soft cheek rested against mine, her fragrant breath was in my nostrils, and my heart thumped audibly, while all my blood was in a hot tumult of blissful agitation.

"Simply to don the uniform of a British captain, and then to teach these luxurious laggards how to put a speedy end to this fratricidal contest. By doing so you will the sooner bring to this distracted country the blessing of restored peace, and for yourself win quick promotion, honor, fame, fortune—and if you love me, Donald, that which will make you happiest."

As soon as I had realized the full meaning of Nelly's rapidly poured forth persuasions, I gently released her, and rose to my feet, then stood silently by, for a moment, looking down upon her, with a conscious tenseness of all my muscles, as of one who inwardly strengthens himself for a wrenching effort. Beneath my fixed gaze Nelly paled, and flushed, and paled again, and the fingers of her freed hands were locked and loosed alternately, while from beneath her lowered lids two big tears slipped, and fell unheeded.

Meantime I thought of Colonel Morgan, and the indignation with which he had repelled an offer of treason when a prisoner in Canada; then of my father, and his perfect trust in me—his only son, bearer of a yet untarnished name to future generations; and then, most strangely, came a sudden vision of Ellen O'Niel, as last I had seen her poised like a spirit upon the rock above the spring; and with the vision came a new and more complete understanding of her feelings of fierce loyalty to her parents' religion, and of all that it meant to her.

"And you could give yourself to a traitor," I said, at last—"or would you play Delilah to my Samson, Jael to my Sisera, Judith to my Holofernes? But I am roused from my well nigh fatal slumber; I have broken my bonds. To-morrow I resign my parole, and deliver myself a prisoner. I must indeed have sunk low, since twice in forty-eight hours infamous proposals of treason have been made to me!" Then my heart softened to Nelly, now shaken with sobs, her face covered with her hands.

"But I can well believe you meant it not for insult, Miss Nelly; you were set on by others to offer me love and luxury at the price of my honor. Women have no place in intrigue; I shall forget the nightmare of this hour, and remember only your goodness to me, and my happiness in your home. Farewell, thou sweet and gracious Nelly of my heart; the only Nelly I shall ever remember." And then I stooped and kissed the bowed head with reverent tenderness—as one kisses the face of a dying comrade.

The soft moon radiance which had caressed Nelly so becomingly, in the room below, streamed through my opened window, and I kneeled in it, and prayed, earnestly, that the God of my fathers would protect me against temptation, as he had hitherto protected me against all other dangers. As I did so the quavering voice of my grandmother seemed to sound in my ears, and I could hear her chanting in tones of solemn rapture her favorite song:

"The man hath perfect blessedness,
Who walketh not astray
In counsel of ungodly men,
Nor stands in sinners' way,
Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair
But placeth his delight
Upon God's law, and meditates
On His law day and night.

"He shall be like a tree that grows
Near planted by a river,
Which in his season yields his fruit,
And his leaf fadeth never.
And all he doth shall prosper well.
The wicked are not so,
But like they are unto the chaff,
Which wind drives to and fro."

Often had I sung with her these words, but now they took on a new meaning. I had chosen to enjoy luxury with the enemies of my country, rather than endure the hardships of prison life with other captives, and had allowed myself to become so entangled with them that the wrench of total separation must cost me much of regret and suffering. I had walked astray—therefore God's blessing was no longer upon me.

All night I tossed, regretting past weakness, and planning an honorable retreat. I could see, now, how they had played upon my conceit, and even upon my sociability, and, with writhings of spirit, I was compelled to admit that Nelly herself had measured my weaknesses, and used them to gain her ascendancy over me.

The household was still wrapped in the slumber of early morning when I arose, packed my belongings, and leaving a note of thanks and farewell to Madam Buford, betook myself to Captain Wheaton's quarters.

"He was still asleep," his man said; so I stretched myself upon a settee in his smoking room, fell into a doze, and then asleep.

"In the name of Pluto, and all the other gods of the lower region, how came you here, McElroy! Had you to bring me home, and were you too drunk to go farther?" were the first words which aroused me; and they came from Wheaton, who stood in the middle of the room, unshaven, and uncombed, his fine figure wrapped in a gay Turkish chamber-robe.

"I know not how drunk you may have been before the feast ended, Wheaton," I answered, laughing, "but I slept in my own bed, rose at sun-up, and have dozed here an hour or so waiting for you."

"Then you have the stomach and the head of Charles Fox himself. I know not how, or when I got to bed, and my head is as big and as tight as a drum. But you came avisiting full early—what's to pay?"

"I wish to ask a last favor, Captain, though already your courtesy to a prisoner passeth thanks."

"Out with it, man,—though why last, I can no way surmise. 'Tis done if can be."

As briefly as possible I told him of the offer which had been made me at the officers' banquet, and of my growing conviction that my own conduct had made me liable to the insult; so that, though I felt no sentiment but one of gratitude to the officers, I could no longer remain among them, as a

guest. I wished him, therefore, to ask Colonel Forbes to grant me an exchange as soon as possible, and meantime I would hand in my parole, and go to prison. "I tell you truth, Wheaton," I concluded, "when I say that I scorn myself for my conduct during the past two months."

"You take a most exaggerated view of the situation, McElroy, and your decision is quixotic," answered Wheaton. "I'll ask for your immediate exchange, but, meantime, why not make yourself comfortable? I'll gladly share my quarters with you, if you feel indisposed to accept the Bufords' hospitality longer."

"Thank you from my heart, Wheaton," and I laid my hand upon his arm in grateful affection. "You British are good fellows, as well as brave and generous enemies; would there had never been cause of quarrel between us. But my resolution is taken; to prison I will go till exchanged. Will you be so good as to consider me your prisoner, and to send me under guard to your most comfortable resort for the enemy? Here is my parole."

"Damn your foolishness, McElroy! I'll not have your parole, nor will I send you to prison. If you are set to do this absurd thing, and no doubt you are, for you are as stubborn as—as—a Scotch Irishman, and I know of no other breed of animal worthy to be compared with him for that virtue, march yourself over to the general prison, find a cell, lock yourself in, and throw the key out of the window."

I laughed, wrung Wheaton's hand in farewell, and took his advice; except that I had no need to lock myself in, the astonished prison officer doing that for me with due courtesy.

My fare that day, and my couch that night were as poor and as hard as my aroused conscience could have suggested, but I took them as penance, and almost with pleasure. The very next day, Wheaton came to tell me that my exchange was, for the present, refused on the ground that I knew too much of the state of the defenses of Philadelphia; but that my parole was extended for a year, and I was requested to return to my home until my exchange could be allowed, as provisions were growing scarce, and the feeding of prisoners had become well-nigh impossible.

Unless exchanged in the meantime I could not bear arms against the British under any circumstances for six months, and I was not permitted to join my old command under a fixed period of twelve months from the first day of the present month. The terms seemed to me unduly severe, but upon Wheaton's assurance that they were the best I could hope for, I determined to accept them, and to start at once for home. The last was no unwelcome prospect, more than two years having expired, since I had seen the dear valley and the faces of loved ones.

I had still a dozen gold sovereigns in my pocket—fruits of the last game of Hazard I had played—and Wheaton assisted me in buying that afternoon, a sorrel horse, a saddle, and a pair of saddle pockets which I stocked with a bottle of rum, a package of biscuits, and a change of garments. By sunrise next morning, equipped with proper passports, my parole, and a pistol, presented to me by Wheaton, I rode southward to the Virginia border line; then deflected my course eastward, towards Williamsburg.

Governor Henry was an acquaintance of my father and a warm friend of Colonel Morgan. It might be worth my while to ask his influence in securing my early exchange, and to let him understand how irksome to me were the terms of my parole. When so many were ready to shirk there were those who would ask nothing better than an honorable excuse to stay at home. I would see Governor Henry, and ask that he transfer me to some frontier service where at least I could help defend the Virginia border against Indians, during the months of forced inactivity against the British.

CHAPTER XI

It will doubtless seem a matter for wonderment to those who may read this chronicle, that it was no more difficult, in those days, to secure an interview with the Governor of the State of Virginia than with any other gentleman in the Commonwealth. The morning after my arrival in Williamsburg, I betook myself to the Governor's mansion, clanged the iron knocker, and was shown by the negro doorkeeper straight into the Governor's office. He sat before a square deal table, littered with documents, inkhorns, and the like, while under his hand, on a small tray, lay a pile of letters, one of which he was engaged in deciphering. I made my bow in the doorway, and with my cocked hat upon my heart, after the latest manner, announced myself:

"Your Honor's most obedient servant, sir! My name is Donald McElroy, late captain in Colonel Morgan's rifle company."

Governor Henry rose and came to meet me, a friendly smile upon his lean, dark, beak-nosed face, his hand cordially outstretched. "Then you are one of the notable marksmen who whipped us the gallantly led English regulars at Freeman's Farm—closing thereby the trap in which Burgoyne was taken, a few days later. Let me shake your hand, sir, and thank you in the name of Virginia. Gates seems minded to claim all the glory, and that asinine congress still allows him to throw dust into their half shut eyes. But, history, sir, will be no more deceived than are General Washington, and others, and the debt of honor due Colonel Morgan and his riflemen will be paid in full by posterity, Captain McElroy."

Governor Henry's manner of saying this had far more effect than the mere words. His head went up, and his whole face beamed with lively enthusiasm, while his deep voice rang thrillingly. Wheaton had told me of Charles Fox, and how he made any man think what he pleased, more by the kindling power of his rich, finely modulated voice, than by his logic, or bursts of eloquence. Now, I understood what had seemed exaggeration in Wheaton; now I knew why those simple words, eloquent only with feeling, spoken by Mr. Henry before the Virginia assembly, at a surcharged moment, had set them aflame with patriotic fervor.

So proud was I again of my recent service under Morgan, that I forgot the depression and self-abasement I had suffered these last few days, and found it easy to sit down before Governor Henry, and give him an account of all that had happened to me since I was taken prisoner on the battle field of Chestnut Hill—leaving out, of course, the name of Nelly Buford, and hiding as well as I could the part a woman had played in my downfall. He guessed, I thought, much of what I tried to conceal, though his words in no way intimated that he did so. He told me candidly, that he thought I had been wrong to linger with my kind entertainers after my wound was healed, but added this remark of sympathy which warmed my heart anew:

"Yet, who knows but that I'd have done the same in like circumstances. Your conduct, sir, was less wise than natural. However, a whole year's absence from your command, without privilege of exchange, meantime, seems unwarranted by the harm you may be able or inclined to do them."

I thanked Governor Henry for his sympathy, and then unfolded to him my wish to spend this forced interval of absence from the regular army in frontier service, where I might still defend my state, and wipe from my conscience the reproach of having proved myself unworthy.

"If that be your wish, Captain," the governor answered heartily, "I have in waiting the very service you are looking for; and moreover, we sorely need men for the enterprise—as great a one and almost as difficult, to my thinking, as the undertaking of Jason and his Argonauts. Have you ever chanced to meet George Rogers Clark, one of the pathfinders in the Kentucky wilderness, a friend of Daniel Boone?"

"I have not had that honor, sir."

"Then it shall be yours, this evening, and an honor you may well esteem it. He is yet a young man, but he has the daring of a Cortez. He has vast schemes abrewing which, if successful, mean great things for Virginia, and timely aid to the cause. His plans, however, are yet secret, and must remain so, except in so far as he may see fit to enlighten you should you enter his service. Meet him here this evening, and, if Clark consents, you shall be present at our conference. I demand, you see, no credentials. Most men I can read in an hour's talk; and, moreover, I know the Scotch Irish breed—rugged, plain, a little hard and narrow, perhaps, but also steadfast as the rocks which rib the mountains they delight to dwell among."

"Though you but give proper praise to the worthy breed from which you also have partly sprung, Governor Henry, I still owe you warm thanks for saying it," I answered; "yet with your permission I'll leave my credentials for Mr. Clark's inspection," and I took from my pocket my captain's commission, a personal letter from General Arnold, commending my bravery at Freeman's Farm, and a copy of one written my father by Captain Morgan.

Impatiently I awaited the chance to learn more of this great adventure, and not a moment behind the hour named, presented myself. Yet Clark was before me. The first look into each other's eyes fixed, I think, our mutual confidence, and with our first handclasp began a life long friendship.

George Rogers Clark had the look and bearing of a man born for deeds of great emprise. He was half an inch taller than I, measuring in his moccasins six feet three and a half inches, and not one of Morgan's riflemen was tougher of muscle, suppler of limb. His face, lighted with glowing brown eyes, was singularly handsome, at once winning and commanding. It indicated a lofty mind, and a sweet nature, but also a reckless boldness of disposition. Better than all, for the fulfilling of his purposes, there was boundless confidence in himself and his resources, and a buoyant hopefulness of disposition; and these were united with a daring will which but strengthened under difficulty.

"Captain McElroy, I introduce you to Captain George Rogers Clark. He is quite ready to take you into his service if you can promise to join him heart and soul in this bold enterprise he is determined upon," said Governor Henry.

"Yes, Captain McElroy," and Clark grasped my hand, bestowing his winning smile upon me. "I am satisfied that I can trust you, and you may be of great assistance to me. Could you enlist forty or fifty volunteers in your valley, think you?"

"If there be left that many able bodied men, if the service be one of Virginia's need or honor, and there be no rumor of an Indian uprising afloat."

"Our enterprise will put an end to all fear of Indian forays, by driving them to the Mississippi. Our nominal purpose, indeed, is to turn back the gathering forces of the Northwest savages, who are planning a surprise for Bonnesville, Harrodsburg and Logan's Fort, and who, after devastating Virginia's outposts, expect to over-run your valley, and exterminate the settlements of the Blue Ridge. Now, while all the able bodied men are engaged in the war upon the coast, is the red man's last opportunity to regain his lost hunting ground. Does the plan to meet them more than half way, to do ourselves the surprise act, appeal to you, Captain McElroy? Is it likely to appeal to

your neighbors in the valley?"

"Next to fighting our invaders, it is the service I shall like best, Captain Clark; and there are those of my neighbors more likely to respond to this call upon their rifles than to any other. The happy results of Point Pleasant have taught us 'tis best not to wait for the savages, but to go to meet them."

"That's encouraging talk, Captain," and Clark's voice rang more heartily, and his face sparkled with animation and humor, "and you may be doubly grateful before we see the end of our expedition; though we go against the Indians, and shall cheerfully fight them if there be need, our real object"—his voice sank to a whisper—"is to strike the forts at Kaskaskia and Vincennes. They are weakly garrisoned and unsuspecting, and their French inhabitants, I hear, are much disaffected to British rule. We have but need to appear before them with a small, resolute, well-armed force to compel capitulation, after which we can form alliance with the French, intimidate the Indians, and claim all the Ohio Valley as Virginia territory. By doing so we will not only more than double the dominion of our State, and give a blow to autocratic power, but will secure safety to the pioneers of Virginia and Kentucky, and save from butchery many a helpless family."

"But my parole, Governor Henry," I said, turning to him with rueful countenance.

"You are not violating its terms, Captain McElroy, by accepting service with Clark, since there's small chance of a clash with the British before your parole has expired."

"Then what can I do, Captain Clark, to forward your bold enterprise?" I said, turning again eagerly to my new leader.

"First you can sit here and listen, while Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Wythe, Mr. Mason, Governor Henry and I devise ways and means that will make known to you the details of our plan. You can then hasten home to enlist men for an advance against the Indians. Later—"

"That's Jefferson's voice now," interrupted the Governor, "and the others are with him," and hastening to the street door with a flaring candle in his hand, he lighted the group through the passage way to our presence.

Mr. Jefferson had once dined at our house, and I remembered him as an elegant and gracious gentleman, though somewhat over dignified and sententious. Colonel Mason, and the learned and able Wythe, I saw now for the first time. Since he had written our "Declaration of Independence" Mr. Jefferson's fame was world-wide, and Colonel Mason, as the author of our "Bill of Rights," and our State's Constitution, was not less favorably, though perhaps less widely, known; while Mr. Wythe's reputation as jurist had already extended beyond America.

As behooved in such company, I was a silent listener, learning much of Colonel Clark's plans, and even more of the difficulties in the way of them. It seemed to me a rash and dangerous undertaking but not without chance of success.

Governor Henry, I found, was not a whit behind Clark in zeal for the enterprise; nor was Mr. Jefferson much less ready to give the plan full countenance, though he did not expect from the expedition, even if successful, the vast results that Clark reckoned upon so confidently. Mr. Wythe showed the caution to have been expected from his calm and logical mind, suggesting difficulties at every turn, and urging forethought in the plans, while Colonel Mason spoke infrequently and with less of flowing readiness than any of the others, but most pointedly and justly, first on the side of caution, and then on the side of boldness, as Clark's enthusiasm and strongly presented arguments gradually won him to our side.

Governor Henry's fiat had already gone forth, nor could he be persuaded to modify it, that the men for the expedition must be drawn from the counties west of the mountains. If the seven companies, of fifty men each, which was the minimum force demanded by Clark, could be raised in the counties of Frederick, Augusta, and Fincastle, Clark was welcome to enlist and use them—otherwise the undertaking must be given up. But Clark was no wise minded to give up and, after accepting the Governor's terms, turned to me to know what I thought might be done toward raising a company in Augusta.

"It has been more than two years since I left home," I answered, "and I cannot speak with assurance, but I believe one or more companies of fifty might be raised, if I am allowed to say that the settlements in Kentucky are threatened, and that our object is to turn back an Indian invasion."

"You can say that with truth, Captain McElroy. I shall rely upon you for at least one company."

"I'll do my best, Captain Clark. I continue my journey homeward to-morrow, and shall begin the work of enlistment at once."

"You ride my way, Captain McElroy, I think," said Mr. Jefferson pleasantly, "and I also go to-morrow; with your consent we'll keep each other company."

I thanked him, and we fixed sun rise as the hour for our departure from the Bell Tavern.

"You are the son of Justice McElroy, of the Stone Church neighborhood, I suppose, Captain? The name is not a common one even in your valley of Macs."

"I am his only son, sir."

"Once when you were a lad I dined at your house; you scarcely remember the occasion, I suppose?"

"Perfectly, sir, and I should have recognized you anywhere. We cherish with pride the memory of your visit."

Mr. Jefferson was evidently pleased—few men are so great as to be indifferent to appreciation.

"By the way, Clark," continued Mr. Jefferson, "the ex-scout hermit we were talking of this morning lives on McElroy's direct homeward route, near the top of the south slope of the mountain between Monticello and Staunton. It might be well to engage McElroy to see him; that would save delay and me a journey at a busy season."

"I am at your service, Mr. Jefferson," spoke I. Then made my bow and left them. They might wish to talk matters over before taking me further into their confidence.

CHAPTER XII

That ride with Mr. Jefferson, and the day I spent at Monticello, have still a pleasant flavor in retrospect. Mr. Jefferson's urbanity matched his delightful conversation, and my pleasure in his condescension and his intellectual charm gave him evident satisfaction.

Part of our way lay through the forest, and one could hear the oozing sap, mounting upward into the yet leafless branches interlaced above us. The graceful, clean-limbed maples had strung themselves with strand after strand of glowing coral leaf buds, and the white trunked cotton woods were hung thickly with a soft pinkish brown fringe, while each branch of the laurel, the dogwood and the ivy shrubs bulged with close folded gray green buds—big with promise of leaf and blossom. The rich loam under our horses' feet was cracked open here and there, making tiny winrows of the rotted leaves, where reawakened roots of fern or flower were pushing upward with divine instinct for life and sunshine. From sunny dell's slope, and the southern side of oak and locust trees, rose nature's incense—the breath of purple violets, of white anemones, and flushed arbutus blossoms, floating intermittently upon the whimsical zephyrs of a balmy day in March.

Sudden bursts of rapture, or shrill, happy calls from vibrant throats of robin, and wren, cat bird and oriole, red bird and yellow hammer, mocking bird and blue jay, rang from treetop to treetop, and the fluttering of busy wings, and the important chirruping and twittering of the nest builders, told that the birds, too, recognized the many hints of coming spring, and were all of a spirit with the mounting sap, and the promise-breathing perfume of violet and arbutus buds.

We talked of farming and gardening, upon which subject Mr. Jefferson had gathered much valuable information. From horticulture we drifted to books, and the writers of them. It pleased me to find that, as far as my limited reading had gone, our tastes were similar. He preferred the Greeks and Greek literature to the Romans and their writings. He admired Demosthenes, Thucydides, and Homer; Tacitus and Horace were his favorites among the Latins; and when we came to English writers, he also gave first place to Dryden, Milton, Pope and Ossian among the poets, to Bacon, Hume and Addison among prose writers. Finding I knew nothing of French, Italian or German literatures, he barely mentioned Molière, Racine, Petrarch, Tasso and Goethe. Yet his mere word of appreciation kindled my resolution to know these masters, when peace and a quiet life should give me opportunity.

My liking for Ossian seemed to delight Mr. Jefferson, and he quoted freely from his poems, saying, with warmth, that he thought "this rude bard of the North the greatest of poets."

"Then, sir, you give no credence to the charge of the English critics, that there was never any other Ossian than his pretended translator?"

"No, I do not!" answered Mr. Jefferson emphatically, then proceeded to give me cogent reasons to back his opinion.

The urgency of Mr. Jefferson's invitation to stop a day at Monticello was not to be resisted, nor was my inclination far behind the courtesy of my host. The early morning was spent about the beautifully turfed and planted grounds, and the carefully cultivated gardens. I was even allowed to look over the garden books, as accurate as algebraic demonstrations, and as neat as copy books. Horses were then ordered for a ride over the plantation. Mr. Jefferson scanned their satiny coats with critical eye, rubbed a single rough spot on his own mount with his handkerchief, and showing the black groom who held the impatient steed's bridle the dust stain made upon it, gave him a sharp reprimand. We got back in time for a glass of Scotch rum and hot water, seasoned with nutmeg, before dinner. A second ride to Charlottesville in the afternoon, to procure the mail and attend to some matter of business, seemed necessary to Mr. Jefferson's indefatigable energy.

Mrs. Jefferson gave us her charming company in the evening, and some excellent music with voice and spinet, after which I was so fortunate as to be able to entertain her by an account of the Philadelphia performance of "A School for Scandal," with a few quotations from the text—since they had not yet had the opportunity to read any of Mr. Sheridan's plays.

Though Mr. Jefferson had given me most minute directions, I came near losing the trail—to the right, half way up the mountain—which was to lead me to the hermit's retreat. One of the giant sentinel maples, which marked the entrance to the trail, had recently blown down, and its sprawling branches completely hid the path. A double log cabin, built in a dent of the mountain's southern slope, was the old scout's home. The forest clustered about it protectingly, except for a clearing a few yards wide just in front of the door, and no other than wild growth was anywhere visible. Two yelping dogs came from the doorway at the sound of my horse's feet, followed closely by the hermit himself.

"Light, stranger, an' hitch," he called, pointing to the nearest tree trunk.

I did so, while he leisurely approached, a short stemmed cob pipe in his mouth, his hands pushed deep into the pockets of his homespun breeches. His hunting shirt was also of homespun; his leggins, belt, and moccasins of leather; and the cap which surmounted his face—so covered with beard that a pair of heavy browed, keen brown eyes, and a large crooked nose were the only features visible—was made of deerskin. Though hair and beard were grizzled, he showed no signs of age in figure or bearing. Within the cabin's wide chimney a fire smoldered, and a rough bench was drawn up before it. Seated and served with tobacco for my pipe, I unfolded my mission.

"Thar' ain't no two men nowhares I'd ruther pleasure thin Pat Henry en' George Clark," said the scout, "en' I 'low I'm the man they er' lookin' fur. I knows them Algonquins, en' ther savage ways, en' ther heathen talk better'n menny."

"Governor Henry and Mr. Clark say they cannot do without you, and Mr. Jefferson bade me tell you to come to Monticello this week to give him your promise."

"Thar' ain't but one thing es'll hinder me—but thet's 'nuff. I see no way er promisin' jist now, Cap'n—but I'll see Mr. Jefferson afore I sez no. You coulden' nohow mention no kind uv frolic, nur no feastin' nur pleasuring es temptin' ter me, Capt'n, es killin' Injuns. The way I hates the redskins mought be counted es hell-desarvin' sin, Capt'n, but fur the fact thet they's devils en' hes devils' ways, en' the Holy Word commands us ter hate the devil and all his wurrucks. Did Mr. Henry ur Clark tell yer the old scout's story, Capt'n?"

Just then my eye was drawn to the crack in the door, between the two rooms, by hearing the swishering as of a woman's skirts, and a soft tread upon the planks, and I was much astonished to see what seemed to me the shadow of a woman's form. The scout, too, looked up, then drew his brow into a half worried frown. I had not heard of a wife or a daughter; indeed, had understood that the hermit lived entirely alone, so was greatly surprised. Something in the scout's manner led me to think, however, that he did not care to be questioned, so I made haste to withdraw my eyes and to answer his question in the negative.

"Wall, ef you kin bide er spell longer you shell hear the pitiful tale"—said the old man with a sigh —"en' er sadder, I 'low you've seldom hearn, even in this land uv sorrowful stories en' terrurble sufferin's."

"Then without doubt your opportunity has come," said I when the tale was ended; "nor do I wonder you hate the Indians," and I wrung his hand. "But I must say good-by now, and ride on. I hope you will decide to join us, as your not doing so will be a serious loss to our expedition."

"I'll see, I'll see. Ther temptation to fight Injun devils is not one I'm likely ter resist; yit thar's reasons, serious reasons," and he lowered his voice, looked grave, and watched the crack in the door between the two rooms as he gripped my hand in farewell.

A mile farther down the mountain a sudden crackling in the bushes at one side caused my horse to snort and sniff suspiciously. But I had no time now to track wild beast, or snare game, for it was already midday, and I must reach Staunton, if not home, that night. As I rode on I thought much of the scout's sad story, and pitied his bereaved and lonely condition. But could he be a hypocrite posing for sympathy? Surely that was a woman's form which flitted before the partly open door, yet he had let fall no hint of having any companion of his solitude, and I knew of no neighbors nearer than the dwellers on the plantations around Charlottesville.

CHAPTER XIII

The realization that before another sunset I should be at home, should take mother, grandmother, and little Jean in my arms, clasp my father's hand and meet his welcoming eye, thrilled me with a joyous excitement such as I had not felt since, nearly three years before, I had led my squad of recruits out of the valley.

The road between the foot of the mountain and Staunton seemed elastic—as if it stretched as I traveled it. Not for six months now had I heard from home. The last letter had been brought me by a recruit from our valley, before the fight at Chestnut Hill, and was then several weeks old. It told of my grandmother's gradually failing strength, of Aunt Martha's increasing vexation with still unconquered Ellen, of Jean's rapid development into womanhood; of my mother's good health

and father's continued vigor; also of the fine crops harvested during the year, and sold at good prices, after a generous proportion had been given to help load the wagon train sent from the valley to help to feed General Washington's army. There were, also, bits of local news and gossip most interesting to me.

A chill, misty March drizzle came on with the twilight, my steed drooped his head wearily, and lifted his feet with mechanical, springless effort.

"Poor tired beast," I said, patting his flanks, "we'll stop this night in Staunton, and you shall have supper and stable if there's a barn left in the town." He appeared to understand my promise, for his gait quickened, his head was lifted hopefully, and a moment later, as a turn in the highway revealed the lighted windows of the town, he uttered a low, thankful nicker.

"If William Allen or John Walker is at home, we'll not lack a welcome," I added, giving him a second encouraging pat. Both these lads—they were men now, of course—had been mates of mine at "the academy," and 'twas Allen to whom I made gift of my books when I went home to enlist. Walker's house was the first reached and, leaving my horse before the gate, I rapped loudly with the hilt of my sword upon the door. It was opened somewhat cautiously, and Elder Walker's voice enquired peremptorily, "Who's without?"

"An old school mate of your son John's, Donald McElroy."

"What! Captain McElroy, whom family and friends have mourned as dead these six months past? Come in, lad, come in!" and the door was flung wide open. "You'll be chilled to the bone in that drenching drizzle,—and your horse likewise. John! John! Here's an old school friend! Call the niggers, wife! Send one of them round for Captain McElroy's horse, and have on another back log! Bring out the rum and the peach brandy! The son of William McElroy would be welcome under all circumstances, but coming from the dead, as it were, and covered with honor, doubtless,—why, there's nothing in the town good enough for him."

The house was abustle by this time, negroes running to and fro, Mrs. Walker and John overwhelming me with welcoming attention, and the Elder alternately rattling the decanters and glasses, and ringing the heavy iron poker against the massive brass andirons, as he vigorously punched the logs into a brisker blaze. I had half forgotten the warmth and heartiness of a Scotch Irish welcome, and my eyes filled with tears at the familiar sound of it all, and the sight of John's kind, homely face wreathed with glad smiles.

How pleasant the flavor of the oily peach brandy, how genial the blaze of the hickory logs, how good to hear the rich voices and the slight accent, as they called over familiar names and faces, and told me the valley news!

"Are they all well at home?" was my first question.

"All well, the last we heard, and your father continues to be one of the most prosperous and respected men in the county, and your mother the best of housewives. Little Jean has grown into a beauty, and your father has built a big new barn, and is burning brick for a spacious dwelling to take the place of the old cabin," answered the Elder loquaciously, while Mrs. Walker superintended the maid Jinsey, serving me, upon a folding table placed at my elbow, a cavalry man's lunch—which means enough for three.

"And they thought me dead, Elder?"

"They feared it, lad, having heard that you fell wounded on the field at Chestnut Hill, were taken prisoner, and carried to the prison hospital in Philadelphia—death traps they are said to be. Your father hopes still, but your mother greets sair, and fears the very worst."

It was not easy to get away from my entertainers the next morning, but I was eager to be at home, and managed to be off by half past ten, despite their urgent hospitality, and their disinclination to have my horse brought around.

"It was communion Sabbath at the Stone Church," the Elder had insisted, "and my whole family would, without doubt, spend the day at the services; so I might as well take dinner with them, and ride home in the afternoon."

But "No," I said; "I would ride on to the church, hear part of the sermon, find my people, and take them home with me at the recess between the morning and afternoon service."

Elder Walker was one of those who had gone off to form a new congregation at Tinkling Spring, and I gathered from his talk that the feud caused by a secession of a part of the congregation had not yet abated. Between my Uncle Thomas and Elder Walker this split in the congregation had given rise to a lasting bitterness, and during all our conversation my Uncle Thomas' name was not mentioned.

Every rod of the way, from the town to the church, was marked with memories for me. I smiled at the recollection of the squirrel I had caught in the top branches of a certain gnarled old oak; of the deer I had shot, as it bounded across the branch in yonder meadow; of the strawberries I had gathered from the sunny hillsides. Wrapped in these recollections of a happy boyhood, I rode on, as in a dream, and came at last with the surprise of suddenness, upon the old church.

One might have supposed that a cavalry company was bivouacked in the grove, from the horses hitched to every tree and shrub, and the illusion would only be strengthened upon closer view, by

the rude but strong fortifications encircling the building. How vividly came back the sounds and scenes of the Indian raid! especially the erect form and inspired face of old Parson Craig, addressing "his lads," in the spirit of a Spartan leader. Years before this intrepid man of God had gone to his reckoning, and I had no doubt as to the side of the account on which he had found that Mosaic charge he had given us to "slay and spare not."

But the sounds issuing that March morning from the closed doors of the old church were sounds of Christian harmony and pious rejoicing. The congregation was singing one of Rouse's paraphrases as I pushed the door open gently, and glided into the vacant pew against the wall. Not a head was turned, so engrossed were they all in worship, save those of two or three restless children. I drew myself close in the shadow of a pillar, and listened with glad and thankful heart to the singing. This was the psalm, and the words were set to one of those solemn, grand old tunes, which rolled so deep and full from the throats of big chested, earnest men, and devout women, that no accompaniment of instruments, such as the modern music is said to require, was needed.

"O praise the Lord, for He is good,
His mercy lasteth ever,
Let those of Israel now say
His mercy faileth never.
Let those who fear the Lord now say
His mercy faileth never."

I thought I recognized the full tones of my father's voice and my emotions almost choked me.

The instant the minister rose to give out his text, I knew him to be Parson Waddell—the eloquent, blind preacher of Hanover, who more than once had been described to me, though never before had I seen him, or heard him preach. That long, lank form; that thin face, and high, bald forehead, from which the long gray locks flowed backward; those fixed, open eyes, so evidently sightless; those long, restless arms, and hands, trembling with palsy—that ensemble could be no other than Parson Waddell—the pulpit orator of America during his generation, and one who has been seldom equaled in any age or country.

I cannot now recall the words of his text, nor their exact place in the Bible, only that it was some passage in the description of the passion of our Lord. This I remember well, that from the first sentence uttered by that mellifluous and feeling voice, I forgot everything but the scene he depicted, which scene I saw as 'twere passing before me. I agonized with Jesus in the garden; flamed with Peter's anger, when he struck off the ear of the servant of the high priest; followed, weeping, afar with the other disciples; burned with indignation against Christ's accusers and torturers; heard Pilate's decision, and the High Priest's sentence, with the despairing astonishment of His followers; grew sick and tremulous with sympathy as His bleeding form, weighted with the cross, struggled up Calvary; and my very soul was overwhelmed in horror and amaze, as I saw His broken body hanging upon the cross, scorned, reviled, His sacred head crowned with thorns, His sacred side pierced by the soldier's spear. As the preacher went on to depict Jesus' agony of spirit, when He felt Himself deserted by His Father, and uttered that piercing cry, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?" my every nerve was strung to its tightest tension, and my throat became so rigid that the moans which came from my heart could find no utterance. The entire congregation was moved almost as I was.

From Dr. Waddell's sightless eyes tears streamed like rain, and his utterances were almost choked by the heartfelt emotion which moved him. At last he was forced to pause and to cover his face with his trembling hands. For an instant the deep silence over all the church was broken only by low sobs and stifled moans.

Presently Dr. Waddell lifted up a face, wet with tears, straightened slowly his tall, gaunt form, lifted his left arm with solemn impressiveness, and pointing and looking upward, with a gesture of indescribable faith and assurance, said, in tones which rang in glad triumph, though an echo of the recent sobs of penitence still lingered in them,

"Friends—Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ like a God."

The effect was marvelous. The moans and the sobbing ceased, and all over the church men, women, and children bowed their heads, and wept tears of thankfulness, while the preacher went on to describe the last scenes of the crucifixion:—the rent veil of the temple, the darkness, the earthquake, the terror of the soldiers—divine signs that no mere man, but the Son of God Himself had here offered up His life a free sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice.

When the invitation had been given to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and while the communicants were taking their places at the long tables spread in the aisles, which formed a cross, another psalm was sung. During its singing I slipped unheeded from the church, and walked back and forth under the trees, my soul more moved than ever it had been before. That hour I gave my heart, and my life to Christ, making solemn vow that from henceforth I would take my place, as my heritage and baptism, gave me right—at God's Table; that I would no longer be one of those to scorn so mighty a sacrifice, to refuse so priceless a redemption. There, under the trees, I knelt and consecrated all my future to God's service.

The very day seemed set apart by this solemn resolve, and now I did not wish to greet my family before the congregation. So I got on my horse and rode homeward.

At the bars which led from the highway across my Uncle Thomas Mitchell's fields to his house, stood my Cousin Thomas, half leaning on the stile. His gaze was fixed upon some distant object, and though he answered my greeting, as I halted before him, there was neither interest nor curiosity in his listless manner.

"You do not know me, Thomas," I said.

"Can it be Donald McElroy?" and he was interested enough now, his face aglow with pleasure. "We had given you up for dead in Philadelphia prison, Donald," and almost before I was off my horse he had his arms about me, and was hugging me as if I had been his mother.

It did not take long to tell him so much of my story as was needful he should know at once, and then I began to put questions.

"Are all well at home? Tom?"

"Yes, all well."

"Then dear grandmother has recovered from her illness; I'm glad to know that."

"And you have not heard, Donald? You do not know that grandmother has been dead these five months. But there, cousin," putting a comforting arm about me, "don't grieve for her; she went joyously, her one regret being that she could not see you once more on earth."

"And mother has stood it bravely?"

"Yes, and is if anything, kinder than before, but she grieves all the time about you. The only thing that keeps her in heart is your father's confidence in your coming. He looks for you every day, or for good news of you."

"And does little Jean believe that I am dead?"

"Oh, no; she agrees stoutly with Uncle William, and watches the road for you, each evening."

"She is almost grown now?"

"Quite grown up, and the prettiest, sweetest lass in the valley—now Ellen's gone," and Thomas sighed deeply and fixed his eyes upon the hills again.

"Ellen gone? What mean you, Thomas? Where would she go? I thought she had no other relatives."

"She has no others, and we do not know where she is. Three months ago she disappeared—my mother was harsh with her, and Ellen would not brook it. One night she slipped from her bed, took father's riding horse from the stable, and rode away. Three days later the horse came back, saddled and bridled, but we have never heard a word of Ellen, nor had a clew as to her whereabouts. Perhaps the horse threw and killed her; perhaps wild beasts devoured her; perhaps she was captured by Indians. My mother says she is hiding somewhere to spite us, and hardens her heart against grieving for her; but father and I keep up constant search and inquiry for her.

"Meantime, Donald, our peace is gone, and our home is disgraced. We have driven the orphan, and one of our own blood, forth into the wilderness, to perish by savages or by wild beasts—yet we boast our religion, pray our prayers, sing our psalms, and blame harshly the intolerance of the established church, and the tyranny of the British! Do you wonder that I'm half Tory, and whole heretic, Donald?—at war with my race, my religion, and my family?"

"Then you loved Ellen O'Niel, Thomas?" I said, coming to the prompt conclusion that such morbid vehemence could spring but from one root.

"Yes, Donald, I loved her, and will always love her—or her memory, more than aught else in the world. It was, I think, the suspicion that I was growing to love Ellen, and the fear of her influence over me, that made my mother more and more harsh to her. She is beginning, however, to find out that if I have lost Ellen, she has lost a son, and what is more to her, I think, the church has lost a preacher. She thought I would soon get over it, but now she is beginning to worry about it, and to wish me to find Ellen. I care little any more; however, mother's worries are her chief sources of happiness."

"I do not believe Ellen is dead, Thomas," I said, ignoring his disrespect to his mother. "Either she is hiding somewhere, as Aunt Martha surmises, or she has been carried off by the Indians. In either case, Thomas, we'll find her, for I intend to join you in the search, and will not give up 'till we have a sure clew. Don't let it trouble you so, laddie, but cheer up and expect good news every day as father has done. And I'm sorry, Thomas, to hear you express yourself so bitterly against religion on this day of all others—when for the first time I have felt the influence of converting grace," and then I told him of Parson Waddell's sermon, and my resolve to be a Christian.

Thomas was moved, I could see, but he held firmly to his latest view, that religion in most people was naught but fanaticism, and Presbyterianism a narrowing creed. "If ever I find Ellen alive," he concluded, "I shall become a Catholic and marry her. Should I be assured of her death I shall go west as pioneer or scout or else turn monk."

"I can offer you a better career than either of those," I replied, laying my hand on his arm, and speaking cheerfully, "and not only a fine career, but, if all our searching hereabouts fails, your

best chance to find Ellen. Come to see me, and we'll talk it over."

At the first bend in the road, I turned to wave to Thomas; he was still leaning dejectedly upon the stile, his back to me, and his absent gaze fixed upon the mountains. And now surprising thoughts and feelings took possession of me. My sympathy for Thomas was marred by sudden and unreasoning jealousy. What right had he to fall in love with Ellen O'Niel in my absence? Had she not shown plainly enough her preference for me? He had not been man enough to protect her from his mother's tyranny, and yet he talked as presumptuously of marrying her as if he had earned a right to her. He had not even found her in all these weeks, and was now hanging idly on his father's stile, whining, and uttering blasphemies. Find her and marry her indeed! I'd find her myself, and, marry her, too, if I pleased, for all he might say. Nor would I turn Catholic and abuse my relatives, and the religion of my fathers to win her; rather, I'd make her see she had acted foolishly and teach her to honor our creed, as I should honor hers. Ellen, I plainly saw, had needed sympathy, and love, also some one to show her the dangers of her own impetuous, and self-willed nature.

Thinking these thoughts, I put my horse to graze in the meadow, and sat down on the porch, drinking in, with profound content, the well remembered prospect, and planning how I should search minutely all over the country for Ellen, and get together my recruits for Clark's expedition at the same time. Then I fell to castle building, and it was Ellen, restored to us with added beauty and a nobleness of character developed by her trials, who was to lend charm and grace to my "Castle in Spain."

Already I avoided thoughts of Nelly Buford, and though they often forced themselves upon me, they brought me always regret and mortification, mingled still with a lively sense of her powers of fascination.

CHAPTER XIV

The meeting with my parents has a place in my memory so sacred that description seems desecration. My mother went white as the linen handkerchief she wore, and with one sharp cry, "O! William, it is Donald, our son! Oh my laddie, my laddie!" fell into my outstretched arms, weeping and laughing, in a violent hysteria of joy.

"There, there, Rachael, wife, don't take on so," said my father. "Of course it's Donald! You know I've always said he was not dead; he's well and strong, only broader and more manly looking,"—and he took mother out of my arms, and began to stroke her hair and to soothe her.

"And this is the little sister I left three years ago"—turning to Jean to hide my own emotion. "I can hardly believe it, yet the eyes are the same," and I kissed her and held her off to look at her, saying teasingly, "Why, Jean, you are almost as pretty as our mother."

"Do you hear that, mother?" asked my father in pleased tones. "Don hasn't forgotten his blarneying ways, either;—just the same lad who went away from us so many months ago."

Mother smiled at this, and ceased weeping, and together we went joyfully into the big room, where I was forced to turn aside to the window to blink back the tears that welled up at the recollections of my grandmother, which the familiar room with her chair still in its place called forth. Not until mother followed me to my room that night, to sit on the side of my bed, as she used to do when I was a little boy, did we talk of her. None of us wished to dim the pure joy of our first hours together by reference to our bereavement, and I had so much to tell them, so many questions to answer.

Then, mother gave me a minute history of grandmother's last days. "You and I, dear daughter," she had said to my mother, "will not for long be separated; I am just gangin' on a little before you, to make our real hame the mair ready for your welcome, but Donald's a young man, and will live a lang an' useful life, I trust. I should like to see him once mair on earth, an' gie him my last message. But since that could not be, Rachael, kiss him for me, and tell him the message's just the verra same as that I told him the day he held the last hank o' yarn for me—he'll not fail to remember, I'm sure."

Then I told my mother what it was grandmother had said to me, and also of the resolution I had made that day to live hereafter a Christian's life. Mother wept with me, tears of joy mixed with tears of regret that grandmother was not there to hear the glad news. "I hope, dear Donald," she said, as she kissed me good night, after the clock had chimed the midnight hour, "that your dear grandmother in heaven knows of your conversion, and that it adds to her perfect joy this day, as it has to mine."

I was too happy to go to sleep, my heart too full of thankfulness and high resolve, to be willing to waste the blessed moments in unconsciousness. So I lay awake until daybreak, tasting with keener and keener relish my new found holy joy. Then I fell asleep, and slept so restfully that, after two hours' repose, I awoke feeling as fresh as the robins, caroling joyously in the branches of the elms that shaded the eastern window of my room.

Mother seemed to avoid talking of Ellen. I knew it was because she could not bear to blame her sister, and yet she could not, in justice, exonerate her; but with father I discussed the matter

freely. He blamed Aunt Martha's severity, and had little excuse to make for her:

"She was not only unsympathetic, and harsh with the child," he said, "but, in all save blows, she was cruel. She overworked her, and tried hard to break her spirit. Many a child would have been driven to lying, but Ellen was honest through all, if she was at times defiant and disrespectful. I do not blame her for running away; it is what any high spirited lad would have done, long ago."

"Yes, father," I answered, "but Ellen, being a girl, should have been more submissive to authority, more meek it seems to me. Think what fearful risks she took in running away."

"The very fact that a woman must take such grave risks in pursuing any course of action not countenanced by her lawful protectors, makes her condition the more pitiable under oppression. Ellen was completely in your aunt's power; no relief was possible to her, save from some act of desperation such as the one she was guilty of."

"Could she not have found refuge somewhere in the neighborhood?"

"No one would have taken her in. It would not do to encourage the child in disrespect and disobedience."

"What do you surmise has been her fate, father?" with an effort to speak calmly.

"I think it most likely she has been carried off by some band of roving Indians. She doubtless tried to find her way back to Baltimore, lost her way, and was picked up by the savages. She, I surmise, watched the chance to turn the horse loose, that he might find his way home."

"They would hardly kill her."

"No; more likely they have taken her to their village, and are training her for a chief's squaw."

The thought blanched my cheek, and I resolved to make inquiry and search from the crest of the Blue Ridge all the way to the Mississippi, and not to return home till I had found Ellen, or had gotten some clew to her fate.

"Uncle Thomas has searched the neighborhood thoroughly you think?"

"He and Tom have made enquiry at every house in the county, I am sure; have sent to Charlottesville and Richmond; written to Baltimore, and posted notices at every store and cross roads between here and Maryland. No, I think there's little room for doubt that she's been carried west by Indians."

"That's what I told Thomas, yesterday, and advised him that our best chance to find her was to go with Clark on this expedition to the Kentucky border, next month."

"What expedition, son? I had heard no rumor of it—and do you mean George Rogers Clark, the Kentucky pioneer and friend of Daniel Boone?"

"The very same, father, and a most remarkable young man he is." Then I went on to tell of my interview with Governor Henry, Captain Clark, Mr. Jefferson and the rest, and of the service to which I had engaged myself.

I saw at once that my father was not pleased, and now for the first time, I felt the chilling influence of his disapproval of my plans. He had never approved the forward movement into Kentucky, believing it to have been worked up by land companies, that they might line their pockets at the expense of the lives of the settlers.

"I have never grudged your services in the cause of our independence, Donald," he said, "nor would I your life even, were the sacrifice of it necessary; but I cannot feel it our duty to give you up a victim to the scalping knife of some savage, in order that this rash project of the premature settlement of Kentucky should be encouraged. Have we not already more land than we can protect, and properly cultivate? The Kentucky settlers would do much better to move back over the mountains 'til our independence has been won—when Virginia will be able to establish posts, garrison them adequately, and furnish sufficient protection to make emigrating to Kentucky other than wanton self-destruction. Why not stay with us, lad, since you are honorably released from service for a while?—you'll never know how much we've missed you these three long years."

"Father," I replied, laying my hand on his, and inwardly reproaching myself bitterly for my comparative indifference, now that I realized how much my long absence had really meant to him, "if my word had not been given, if I had not already taken service for this expedition, it would be my pleasure to make my own wishes second to yours. But now, father, it is too late. I cannot honorably draw back. Moreover, I must join in the search for Ellen. I could never stay quietly at home as long as there is uncertainty as to her fate. And I think I can unite the two duties, follow Clark and make constant search for Ellen from the mountains to the mouth of the Ohio. Thomas will go with me, I think. He'd far better do that than some of the rash things he is contemplating."

"It will almost break his mother's heart, but she deserves it," spoke my father, harshly for him, who was usually calm and mild in his judgments.

I think at this time I had more tolerance for Aunt Martha than any one in the family, except my mother. To my mind Ellen had not been blameless, and Aunt Martha's harshness was to have been expected from her character, and the spirit in which she had received the child. I put much

of the blame on Uncle Thomas for his unmanly meekness, and part on the neighborhood for not speaking out its sympathy for the child until too late. And when I thought of her probable sufferings, and dangers, I almost ground my teeth in impotent rage with them all.

Poor little Ellen! With her indomitable spirit, and courageous faithfulness, what a cold, hard, loveless life she had had these three years! And hers was a nature made for happiness and love, one to expand under appreciation and sympathy, as a morning glory opens in the early sun's rays, and to fold close all its beauty and sweetness under the chilling influence of disapproval, as the morning glory on a cold and sunless day.

"You'll not withhold your consent, I hope, father, to my going with Clark," I said when we had sat together in silence for a while. "This expedition means far more to our country than appears, and before the expiration of my year's parole I shall be back, I hope, ready to engage in the regular service again, should the war not yet be ended."

"You will take my consent and blessing, Donald, and my love and prayers upon any honest adventure you see fit to enter. But I grieve, lad, for your mother. This last strain of anxiety about you, following so soon upon the shock of her mother's death, came nigh killing her. Tell her yourself, lad, and soften the blow as much as you can."

Women are unaccountable creatures. They are apt to do the least expected things, and to take quietly the news you most dread to break to them. So it proved in my mother's case. She went white for an instant, and her hands began to tremble, but she spoke quietly:

"I knew, Donald, you'd never be content to dwell idly at home, when there's so much doing in the land; nor would I be so proud of my lad were he less a man of deeds, and duty. Governor Henry and Captain Clark honored you in taking you into their confidence; they saw that my son is no ordinary man," and she stroked the hand that had taken hers, and smiled tearfully upon me.

"That such men as Governor Henry, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Mason, and Mr. Wythe take an interest in the expedition would seem to mean, Donald," she went on presently, "that they have some more important object in view than to protect a few scattered emigrants. If the rumored alliance of the French with us is confirmed, they may intend to use Clark's troops to make a surprise advance on the western forts, recently ceded by France to England. That would overawe the Indians and strike a blow at the British power at the same time."

My mother's shrewdness so astonished me that I came near telling her all I knew. "You may be right, mother," I answered nonchalantly, after a moment; "certainly we hope to overawe the Indians, but our present instructions go no further than safe conduct for the band of emigrants, and an attack upon the Indians, should we find them on the warpath, or plotting an attack on the border settlements. It lifts a weight from my heart, mother, dear, to have your approval," I added.

"You are a man, Donald; it would be presumption in your mother to withhold her blessing from any worthy thing you had set your heart upon. As for your safety, dear, I must leave that in God's hands. I trust you to Our Heavenly Father's care, my son, with only the shield of our hourly prayers about you."

Recruiting was no easy task, especially with the account I was free to give of the object of our expedition. I encountered all sorts of objections and discouragements, and was obliged to travel from end to end of the county, and into the district of West Augusta, with little left of my two months' anticipated holiday to spend at home. I grew impatient of my ill success, especially since all my enquiries in the county concerning Ellen were as fruitless as Thomas' had been. There was no other conclusion left us than the one my father had reached, and both Thomas and I grew more and more restless to start westward, that we might begin a more hopeful search.

At last I was enabled to add Captain Bowman's company to the score of volunteers I had been able to get together, although this made it necessary that I should yield him my place as captain, and content myself with a lieutenant's rank. Captain Bowman was encouraged by the prospect of glory and land grants, the men satisfied with large but vague promises; and by the middle of May we were ready to start.

Clark—recently made colonel by Governor Henry—with three companies, each of less than fifty men, and a band of emigrants, had already reached the falls of the Ohio, and we were ordered to join him there as speedily as possible.

CHAPTER XV

It was marvelous what Clark had accomplished with less than one hundred and fifty men in the three weeks he had been at the Falls, and I now conceived a higher opinion than ever of the rare qualities of the man. He had a faculty for organization, and for using men and circumstances which amounted to genius of the noblest order. Already he had builded a substantial block house on Corn Island, just above the Falls, in which all his goods, supplies, and ammunition were stored; the newly enlisted men had been taught some idea of the duties and requirements of

soldiers by the work, systematically organized, of clearing and building, by the regular camp life, and the daily drills which they practiced. Still more important, they had acquired unbounded confidence in their leader, and all his orders were obeyed with a cheerful alacrity that promised well for our project.

The camp presented a busy and cheerful scene, and the neighboring settlement of emigrants had already the promise of a village in the dozen log cabins built, or building, surrounded by newly broken ground, ready for the corn planting. Our company was received with enthusiasm, and Captain Bowman by Clark with the consideration due his rank and age. Publicly I had only the formal recognition of an acquaintance, but as soon as we had been assigned a place for our camp, and the ax-men set to cutting poles for our booths, Colonel Clark, who, meantime, had concluded his interview with Captain Bowman, and given personal attention to the pitching of a small tent for his accommodation, sent a messenger to me with word that I would please follow the man to the block-house. There Colonel Clark awaited me in a small room adjoining the one in which the ammunition and extra arms were kept; he had taken this room for his own quarters that he might watch over his precious store of lead and powder and guard against its waste.

"With three hundred like you, McElroy, I'd venture an attack upon Quebec itself," was Clark's greeting, as he seized and shook both my hands in a grip that cramped them, "I see what you've done, stepped down rank a grade in order to get Bowman's militiamen to fill up your company. It glads my heart, McElroy, to know there's one kindred spirit in this enterprise with me."

The proud distinction had been mine of claiming a personal friendship with Colonel Morgan. Also I had been commended by General Arnold for my bravery at Freeman's Farm, but more than all these Colonel Clark's recognition of a sacrifice which had cost my pride no easy struggle, gratified me. Clark read men as a master in geometry reads his blackboard, and found as little difficulty in solving the human problem. Captain Bowman he had won to hearty cooperation in his plans by treating him with the dignified consideration he deemed his due, and now he took the surest way to fasten me to him as with hooks of steel.

"You have accomplished so much already, Colonel Clark," said I, "that I have less doubt than ever before of the success of your project. Your raw recruits are already soldierly in bearing, and your camp as orderly as a barrack. Our company will be the awkward squad of your command."

"Two weeks' training will bring them up with the rest," answered Clark. "Most of them are Scotch Irishmen I see—that is saying all that is necessary. But I must tell you my plans before we are interrupted. I shall often want your secret counsel, until the opportunity comes to give you a place on my staff. How much, think you, does Captain Bowman know?"

"Only, I surmise, that we are here to protect the frontier, and that it is probable we may be commanded to make a foray into the lands of the Iroquois, in which case our chances for promotion and bounty lands will be increased."

"That is well. He knows enough to have a mind prepared for further disclosure, and is not likely to turn back when he knows all. Did any suspicion of our real object seem to occur to any one in your neighborhood?"

"To no one except to my mother, and I easily allayed her shrewd suspicions. Most of our people were disposed to blame our project as diverting strength from the cause."

"More than anything else I am dreading that the English may get some information as to our movements, their suspicions be aroused, and the garrisons at Vincennes and Kaskaskia reënforced. I have certain information, through spies I have been sending out all summer, that both places are sparsely garrisoned at present, the men having been withdrawn to defend Canadian forts, which are thought to be more exposed. Also that the commandant and most of the garrisons, if not all, at Kaskaskia are French, and not overfond of their new British masters, while the English officer in charge of Vincennes is just now absent at Detroit. You see, therefore, that we run but little risk of failure, if only our plans can be kept secret."

"Certainly the prospect is so far encouraging. When do we start and by what route?"

"In ten days or two weeks, down the river by boat to the mouth of the Tennessee, and, I suppose, landward to Kaskaskia—since that is the weaker point. Meantime we must drill and enthuse our men, load our boats and get all in readiness for a forced march. It will be best, I think, not to inform the men of our destination till necessary.

"Hello, Givens!" as a face appeared before the open window—"come in!" Then, lowering his voice to me—"be careful, McElroy, in your talk to the scout; he doesn't know all yet, and it is necessary to reveal our plans to him gradually, and to use some persuasion; he hates the Indians, and longs to fight them, but he has never consented to bear arms against Great Britain. Nor do I want to persuade him against his convictions, but he'll not be of much service to us unless he is one with us. If he does consent freely to go on he will be as valuable as an interpreter as he has been so far as a scout and guide. I'm loath to lose his services."

Givens had by this time made his way through the armory, and was knocking on Clark's door. His recognition of me was immediate.

"Glad ter meet yer ergin, Capt'n McElroy," speaking with his usual emphatic drawl, and with hand outstretched cordially. "Couldn't resist ther temptation, yer see, uv goin' ergin ther red-skinned devils onct more 'fore ole age kitches me, en' lays me by ther heels. But ther savages's

wary, sence they larn't thet last lesson we sot 'm so mighty well et Pint Pleasant. 'Tain't ther intentions, 'pears like, ter walk inter no more sich traps; besides er leader like Cornstalk's precious sildom found 'mongst 'um. They'll be mighty apt, though, ter be at ther native tricks uv skulkin' roun' en' bushwackin' en' ambushin' ef we give 'um enny chanst. Long es we keeps tergether, howsomever, en' in ther open they ain't no ways likely ter distarb us."

"This block-house is a substantial warning to them, Givens," put in Clark; "I wish we had forts all through the Ohio and Mississippi country; that would be the surest way to drive and hold back the savages."

"And now that the English are arming the Indians and using them to intimidate the border colonies, we must make a big show of strength, or all our frontier settlements will be wiped out," said I.

"Do you believe thet thar 'tale, Capt'n?" asked Givens, a flush rising to his cheeks. "'Tain't like the gallant English."

"I think there's small doubt of it, it's by King George's command and is not approved by his ministers, I understand. Governor Henry has had most positive information to that effect recently."

"If thet's so, I ain't no longer countin' myself er loyal subject," said Givens, speaking even more slowly and emphatically than usual. "Ef ther English king es capabul' uv armin' red skins, en' turnin' 'em loose on ther settlements ter murder innocent wimmen en' babies, then I'm done bein' loyal ter 'im. I'd es lief jine ther Continentals en' fight 'um wid ther rest uv yer."

Clark gave me a sly and eloquent look and, with that tact which amounted to a sixth sense with him, turned the subject at precisely the right moment. "Where's your foster son this afternoon, Givens? I haven't seen him since drill this morning."

"Oh, I got a furlough fur 'im, en' sont 'im over ter ther settlement. He ain't over strong, so I saves 'im all thet's possible. He's powerful frens uv some uv ther wimmen en' chillun down ter the settlement, en' sence he ain't so mighty strong I'm glad fur 'im ter hev ther milk en' ther eggs they meks 'im eat."

Just then Clark was called out a minute, and I took this opportunity to tell Givens about Ellen O'Niel, of her having left her home, of our long fruitless search for her, and of our finally having reached the conclusion that she had been captured and carried off by Indians; of our hope of finding her or getting some clew to her fate during this expedition, and my reliance on him to help me make enquiries among the various Indian tribes we might meet.

At first he asked me a few questions as to the time Ellen left home, her age, appearance, etc. Then he pulled his cap over his eyes, and listened silently.

"You do not think it likely the Indians have killed her?" I asked anxiously, his silence seeming ominous.

"'Taint like ther red skinned devils ter kill er handsum' young gal."

"Then do you not think we have good prospect of finding her, and will not the Indians be glad to take a big ransom for her?"

"Thar's some prospects, I reckin', en' ef we find 'er we'll git 'er," was the scout's answer, as he got up and marched off, his skin cap still pulled down over his eyes.

Once during the next two weeks, I had Givens' step-son pointed out to me; his youth, his shyness, and the scout's special watchfulness over him, seemed to have excited a good deal of interest. I, too, felt some curiosity. Givens had said nothing to me of a foster son the day I had visited him, though it is true our conversation was confined to the one topic, and there was no occasion to mention any other. Perhaps he was not then with Givens, or the form I took to be a woman's in the adjoining room was his, the swish of a woman's skirts being added by my imagination. Well, it was no concern of mine, either way, and I had enough to do and to think about.

Thomas Mitchell, who had improved greatly in health and spirits, under the influence of an outdoor, active life, and manly duties, came to me about a week after our arrival at Corn Island, and with an air of mystery led me off down the river some little distance from the camp.

"Do you know, Donald," he said almost in a whisper, "I am convinced the scout, Givens, knows something about Ellen?"

"And why do you think so?"

"I was telling him the story of her disappearance, and our vain search for her, to-day, in the hope of getting him interested, and he seemed already to know everything."

"Well," I laughed, "that is not strange. I also told him a week ago, and for the same reason."

"Oh, did you! Still that does not fully account for his manner, Donald, nor his unwillingness to continue the subject. He's got some clew, I'm sure."

Colonel Clark now detailed eighteen of the least bold of his men to remain behind at the block-house, for the protection of the settlers, and of our extra supplies. He then allowed his officers to

make known that we were about to start on a further journey down the Ohio—the object and destination of which would be revealed just before the start was made. Confusion and speculation reigned in camp; boats were loaded; rifles cleaned; ramrods whittled from the hearts of hard wood saplings; a supply of bullets molded, and a lot of new moccasins and bullet pouches made, by those skilled in such work, from the skins we had collected.

At the afternoon drill hour, on the twenty-third of June, Clark presented himself, in riflemen's uniform, before his men, and was greeted with enthusiastic cheers. He gave orders to the captains that the men should form in two columns, and then swing out in double line facing him. The maneuver was executed without a hitch, and our small force presented a fine soldierly appearance. Most of the men were past early youth, either brawny pioneers or substantial freeholders, many of them being persons of some education, and considerable weight in their own communities. They were not, as some have charged, a set of mere adventurers.

The occasion and the scene were well calculated to impress one who realized their import, and as I walked back and forth to dress the line, my imagination took fire, and all the daring deeds I knew of tradition and history marshaled themselves in my memory—a long and glorious array.

"My men," spoke Colonel Clark, when all were waiting in expectant silence—"shall we press onward to a glorious enterprise—or having conducted our emigrants, and established them here in safety, shall we turn homeward without having wrought any deed worthy to be written on the page of our country's history? I can lead you on to the performance of such deed, my men—that noble friend of liberty, Patrick Henry, has sanctioned a daring enterprise, which all along, I have had in my mind, and which, if successfully executed, will bring honor and dominion to our noble commonwealth, and to each of us renown, fortune, and the gratitude of all Virginians. Not only so, but in executing this bold plan, we shall strike a telling blow for that cause we all hold dearest.

"No need, my men, to say what that cause is—the cause to which the heart of every man present, I truly believe, responds as gladly, as the tenderly nurtured infant to its mother's loving call. The cause of liberty for which each one of us would proudly shed his blood! Nor is the cause unworthy such devotion, my comrades, for 'tis not only that of our country's independence, of American liberty, of blessed freedom and rare privileges for our descendants—'tis the cause of the world's liberty, of the freedom from kingly tyranny and the right to seek happiness for all future generations of men, till time shall be no more. My brothers, future ages will look back to us and call us blessed, will offer thanks to Heaven for the brave and determined people of the new continent, who freely risked all for liberty—threw into the scales against the claims of oppressed humanity, every present good, every hope for the future. Are you willing, my men, to sacrifice still further, to risk still more for the cause? Shall I tell you more? Shall we press onward?"

"Onward! Colonel, onward!" yelled the men in wild enthusiasm—"tell us more, tell us more! Onward! Onward!"

Then Clark told them the true object of our expedition, and unfolded all his plans, which had been so well concealed, hiding from them nothing of the hardships and risks of the undertaking. Yet he dwelt long and eloquently upon the tremendous consequences of success, the glory that would be theirs, and the important results to Virginia and the cause. He added that he wanted no half hearted consent, that he far preferred that all those who were not enlisted heart and soul in the enterprise—ready to do and to dare all things,—should make their decision now. They could do so by stepping out of ranks. Seventeen men stepped out, looking sullen and ashamed of themselves.

"You are free to go," said Clark, with a contemptuous wave of the hand toward the east; then he faced the faithful again, and made them a brief speech, which set them wild, and sent them off to their booths so eager to begin our adventure that they could scarcely wait for the night to pass.

During the first part of Colonel Clark's address, I had watched Givens, close by. His face was a study of mingled interest, eagerness and doubt. When Clark gave the command that all who did not wish to follow him should step out of ranks, he started forward, hesitated, then dropped back into rank, where presently, he was cheering with the rest. When all were gone except the officers assembled around Clark, Givens came up to him.

"Colonel," he said, "I've tuck my stand by yer fur good en' all; yer may fight Injuns, ur British, ur what yer please, I'm with yer."

"Thank you, Givens," said Clark, shaking his hand heartily; "we could ill afford to lose you."

"Mebbe you'd better thank that boy uv mine. Him yer've plum bewitched, en wher' he goes, goes Givens."

That night as I wandered about the camp—it was all astir till long after midnight—I got wind of the fact that some of the deserters were lurking around trying to persuade others to sneak off with them, and went straight to Clark with the information.

"Detail a squad from your company, McElroy, and surround the camp with a close cordon of guards," said Clark, promptly.

I did so; then Clark had the drum beat, and the men called to the drill ground, where waning moon and twinkling stars gave barely light enough for them to see each other's faces.

"Silence!" commanded Clark, stilling the confusion with a word. "I understand that the cowards who deserted us this evening are in the camp attempting to stir up mutiny. It must be stopped. The deserters must leave camp immediately, or suffer the penalty of mutineers and traitors. Should any other man, except these, attempt to leave the camp he will be arrested or shot by the guards now surrounding it. You had your chance, men, and took your choice; you must now abide by your decision. To-morrow we start for Kaskaskia."

CHAPTER XVI

A June sky and a resplendent sun, undimmed by cloud or mist, beamed upon the camp next morning, as we made last preparations for our departure. Those of the men who had been detailed to "stay by the stuff," at the block-house, were plainly dissatisfied, now that they realized that they were to be left out of the adventures and chances, as well as the toils and dangers of our enterprise. Those who had made the bolder choice were as eager as boys starting on a first bear hunt. The uncertainty as to what might befall us, the unknown country we must traverse, the very dangers we would probably encounter, all lent mystery and excitement to our undertaking.

The entire population of the settlement, and all the block-house garrison were assembled on the river bank to say good-by to us. The women were in tears, the men quiet and serious; we, on the contrary, were hilarious with excitement.

Colonel Clark again addressed the men in words stirring and heroic, and the command to embark was given. Company by company we stepped upon the flat boats, and drifted rapidly down the Ohio to the falls, each raft guided by a skilled poleman, who stood erect, steering carefully for the one channel through which we could safely shoot the falls. The crowd on the bank was still cheering the last boat load, as the first dropped over the edge of the rapids. At that moment the sun, which had beamed less fiercely for some time, though in our engrossment we had taken little notice of the fact, became suddenly obscured, and the dimness of twilight fell upon gliding river, green banks, and tumbling falls. One could scarcely recognize the faces of his companions beside him in the boat, nor the polemen see to steer. The cheering ceased, and over man, beast and nature fell an awesome stillness. The birds in the branches of the overhanging trees ceased their glad caroling, the insects their buzzing, the fish their plunging, even the hurrying river seemed hushed into a more subdued murmur, and the noise of the falls to subside into a muffled roar.

The men in my boat drew in their breath; one uttered a stifled sigh, another a low moan; and I realized that a word might precipitate a panic. I stood up and studied the sky for explanation of the phenomenon. The sun held his wonted place in a cloudless sky, but over his radiant face lay a black disc, leaving only a bright rim upon one edge.

"It is an eclipse, comrades," I called, in my loudest tones, "an eclipse of the sun. I take it for a good sign—symbol of what we shall do for autocratic power upon this continent, only that will be a lasting, as well as a total, eclipse."

My words had magic effect upon the men in our boat, and in the two others near enough to hear my words. Clark must have said something similar to those in his, and adjacent boats, for I saw him spring to his feet, pointing to the sun, and simultaneously with our shouts of "Eclipse, eclipse! good sign, good omen! Thus we'll blot out the forts in the northwest," came like cries from the other boats, and answering cheers from the bank. So the ominous portent, as it seemed at first, was changed into a symbol of encouragement.

Often since, I have thought of this incident, which seems to illustrate the way life should be met. Allow ourselves to be discouraged by apparent auguries of failure, and we will turn our backs upon success, when our feet are already pressing its threshold; yet such signs read by the light of a steadfast purpose, and a courageous heart, may become but prophecies of victory, and encouragement to more strenuous effort.

Our journey down the river was as rapid and uneventful as the most hopeful of us could have asked; we reached the mouth of the Tennessee without a single adventure worth recording. On the way, however, Colonel Clark had learned a most cheering piece of news, and one momentous to our undertaking. The rumored French alliance was made public, and France had promised liberal and immediate aid of men, money, and a fleet. That night when we had disembarked at the mouth of the Tennessee, after we had tied up the boats, and killed and cooked our suppers, Clark assembled the men, and announced the joyous intelligence he had received, pointing out all the fortunate consequences to our expedition to be expected from the French alliance. This was all that was needed to give the men assurance of success, and to make them ready to brave everything.

Next morning we shouldered all the ammunition we could march under, and set out for Kaskaskia. We were still following the river, when, an hour after starting, we hailed a boat load of hunters. They proved to be Americans—a new appellation among us—but eight days out from Kaskaskia, and after a conversation between them and Colonel Clark, one of them, a certain John Saunders, consented to act as our guide through the Illinois country, with which he professed to

be perfectly familiar. This solved our one difficulty, for until now we had lacked a guide. With light hearts we resumed our tramp across prairie, marsh, and forest, seeing victory within our grasp—renown and wealth as the individual reward of each, and for our country extended dominion, and added glory.

Good luck continued to attend us, while six more days passed. We had fine weather and made good progress, considering the unbroken; wilderness through which our route lay. Time was most precious, for everything depended upon our reaching Kaskaskia before any rumors of our approach should get to the ears of the commandant. Signs of lurking Indians, pointed out from time to time by Givens and Saunders, made the least enthusiastic among the men eager to hurry on; but these filled Thomas and me with impatience, because even Givens discouraged our wish to seek out their camps, and to question them in regard to Ellen. It would be foolhardiness, declared Givens, and result only in our being ambushed—he'd find "the gal" fast enough for us when once we were safe behind the walls of a fort, and could kill the "redskin devils" at our leisure.

On the eighth morning, Saunders spread consternation among us by the announcement that he was lost—that he did not know where we were, nor could he recognize a single landmark. The night before we had seen the smoke from a distant camp fire, which Saunders said he doubted not was that of some roving Miamis or Kickapoos. This fact made our predicament the more serious. At once a halt was called, and Clark sternly declared to the confused Saunders—who was half suspected of treachery by us all—that unless he quickly found the way, he might prepare for instant death. It was not possible, Givens declared, in his slow, emphatic dialect, for a scout and woodsman to lose his way in a country he had once traveled over, and Saunders had either lied to us in the first place, or was laying a trap for us now; therefore all were ready to back Colonel Clark in his evident resolve to make short work of the suspected traitor, unless he speedily found himself. Saunders saw that his doom was sealed if he could not quickly regain his bearings, and went to work desperately, closely attended by two guards, retracing our way for some distance, examining sky, stream and trees, then climbing to the tops of the tallest to overlook the landscape.

The men sat about smoking dejectedly, or muttering their suspicions to each other. Meantime I grew restless, and the sight of the anxious face of Saunders, and the stern face of Clark, oppressed me. So I picked up my rifle, and plunged into the forest which fringed the higher ground stretching eastward. A small stream flowing out of the woods promised either spring or pond, and possibly rare game, within. As I started I called to Givens asking him to sound his turkey yelper should they resume the march before my return.

The shade and freshness of the woods was most grateful and the tangle of well laden blackberry bushes in a more open space beguiled me to stop and pluck some of the fruit. The spring found, I looked about for signs of game, but seeing none, propped my rifle against a tree, laid flat down upon my chest, and buried my face in the limpid sweetness of the pure, cool water. I drank till satisfied, then fell to dreaming. The same scenes under different aspects came to me always in my day visions, or night dreams—pictures of home, recollections of my childhood, and occasionally some scenes from those few weeks of dissipation in Philadelphia, with Nelly's witching face, swimming, amidst my memories. But I liked the home scenes best, and next to seeing them in the flesh, was the happiness of closing my eyes, and conjuring up visions of my mother, of Jean, and of Ellen.

What a glad day it would be when, Ellen having been found, and our country's independence won, Thomas and I could go home and settle down to peace and happiness!

Peace and happiness! Would it be ours after all, so long as Aunt Martha set herself, in her narrow bigotry, to persecute Ellen? so long as there was estrangement between husband and wife, mother and son in my uncle's family? So tenderhearted was my mother, so loyal to her sister, that even we could not be a happy family while there was discord and unhappiness in Aunt Martha's—for mother was our happiness barometer, and the family atmosphere went up or down with her feelings. But mother should adopt Ellen, and we would make her happy, and Aunt Martha ashamed of her harshness and the narrowness of her religion.

Then and there I vowed a new crusade. I must be a soldier always, fighting upon one arena or another for some principle of human liberty—for the love of liberty and a fervent zeal for it had, from long meditation and some sacrifices in its cause, gotten into my blood, and become a part of my nature. When this war against autocratic rule should be ended I would take my stand by Mr. Jefferson, and give all my time and energies to the brave fight he was making for entire and universal religious liberty. Deeper and deeper had I plunged into the trackless wilderness of my own thoughts, till I was lost to consciousness of the place, the hour and myself.

Perhaps I had been dimly conscious of some slight movement in the bushes behind me—afterward I remembered being subtly disturbed by it, and of lifting my head to listen—but the first sounds that really aroused me were the short explosion of a rifle, followed, almost instantly, by the whistle of a bullet cutting its way through the still air, and then, scarcely a second later, a wild weird whoop, close beside me, which caused me to spring to my feet, and turned me in its direction, as if I had been an automaton. There, beside the tree, against which I had leaned, was stretched the quivering body of a dying Indian. One hand still grasped a tomahawk, while the other clutched frantically at the leaves and grasses. A last quiver and he was still, his set eyes staring into the branches, rustling softly above him.

It was all a mystery to me. Where had the Indian come from? Who had shot him? I stood an instant gazing down upon the still savage in dumbfounded amazement, then took my rifle and started back to the men in search of an explanation of it all. Presently I overtook Givens' foster son, who was hurrying forward as fast as he could. I caught up with him, halted him, and asked if he had shot the Indian. He did not answer, and only pulled his cap farther over his eyes. I took his rifle, and looked into the bore of it; it was warm, empty, and smelled strongly of powder.

"Givens," I said planting myself before him, and holding out my hand, "you have just saved my life, doubtless. Won't you let me thank you?"

The beardless lips of the lad, about all I could see of his face under his wide brimmed cap, curved into a half smile, and he said, in muffled voice, his head still on his chest:

"The savage had just poised his tomahawk for a blow when I saw him."

"You acted most promptly," I answered; "he might have brought a whole tribe down upon us, so that you have perhaps saved the entire band, as well as Donald McElroy." I continued to talk, to praise his coolness, readiness, and marksmanship, and to repeat my thanks, but I got no more out of the lad and it was so evident that I embarrassed and annoyed him that presently I walked on and left him to follow. He seemed affected with a painful shyness, and apparently preferred solitude to the most flattering society.

No immediate opportunity was given me to tell Givens of his boy's kindly deed, for, just as I joined him and Colonel Clark, talking earnestly together, Saunders, still attended by his guards, came running toward us, waving his arms, and shouting joyously. He had found a landmark, and knew our locality! We were but a day's march from Kaskaskia, and the way was safe and open!

CHAPTER XVII

"Comrades," said Clark the next morning, just as we were falling into line of march, "have you remembered the day? It is the fourth of July, my men—the anniversary of our Declaration of Independence, the birthday of our liberties—day propitious in the history of the United States of America! Our guide tells me that we are but six leagues from Kaskaskia, and I have already planned our attack. Bloodless victory awaits us—for I can rely on each man of you to do only and all that is expected of him. We will march within half a mile of the fort this morning, conceal ourselves in the woods until dark, and, then, dividing into two companies, we will rush into the town from opposite ends, shouting and brandishing our knives.

"I am told that the minds of the French in this region have been filled with terror of the bordermen by horrid tales of our ruthless cruelty; we may as well take advantage of this impression to overawe them. Perhaps we may prevent bloodshed by producing astonishment and terror in the breasts of the garrison and citizens. We have no quarrel with the French, but are concerned rather with winning them peaceably to our side. After a night of fear—but you must remember, men, that we wish to arouse apprehension alone, and that a single deed of violence or rapine may ruin all—the reaction will be the greater, and our liberal terms of amnesty the more gratefully accepted. As we lie in ambush this afternoon, you will preserve the strictest silence, and not a man must venture out of hiding till the command to advance be given. Carry out this plan successfully, and Kaskaskia is ours to-morrow, and Virginia's forever!"

Cheers rent the air, and the more enthusiastic waved their caps over their heads, and shook each other's hands, as if victory were already ours.

The town lay dark and silent under the stars, as our two bands circled it, and simultaneously marched down the principal street from opposite directions, yelling, and brandishing our unsheathed hunting knives, as demon-wise as the worst of savages.

"The Long-Knives! The Long-Knives!" shouted the people upon the streets, running from house to house to spread the alarm, while women and children screamed, doors were slammed and barred within, and lights extinguished everywhere. Gradually the pandemonium of shrieks, shouts, and screams subsided into a hush of fearful expectation, during which Givens and Saunders, each of whom could speak a little French, marched captured citizens from door to door, before which they required them to announce in loud tones that the general in command of the Long-Knives had decreed that all citizens of Kaskaskia who should remain quietly within their houses would be unmolested, but that all who ventured out would be summarily dealt with.

M. Rocheblave, the commandant, was surprised in his bed-chamber, and taken prisoner. His wife, a pretty, voluble Frenchwoman, went into hysterics, and begged piteously for their lives in broken English, much mixed with French words, and interpreted with expressive gestures. Colonel Clark assured her, as best he could, that no harm would be done them, and then bade me search the apartment for papers while he stood guard in the doorway. Meantime the Commandant and Madame looked on, the latter regaining her composure, and seating herself on a small trunk, from which she watched my proceedings with smiling scorn. I searched everywhere, upsetting furniture, and even ripping open the feather beds, but few papers were found, and they of slight importance. The trunk which Madame seemed to be guarding was, evidently, the receptacle for the more important documents.

"Madame," I said, approaching her, and taking her gently by the arm, "I must search this trunk also."

But she held her place firmly, and, in better English than she had yet spoken, heaped reproaches upon me, saying that "no man worthy of the name would invade the privacy of a woman's personal belongings." Then she began to weep and to wail, and to entreat Clark piteously.

"Let her alone, McElroy," said Clark, at last; "we cannot use violence to a woman," so we marched off with our prisoner, the Commandant, and left the little Frenchwoman to destroy his papers at her leisure.

"I tell you, McElroy," said Clark, "I'd rather face a battalion, or storm a battery, than to encounter another hysterical Frenchwoman."

During the night we took possession of the ungarrisoned fort—a disused warehouse, which had served as fort since the burning of the old one—and Colonel Clark issued strict commands that only the officers and such soldiers as he should detail to guard the town from time to time, must leave the fort until further orders. By this ruse the citizens were deceived for weeks as to our real strength, their imagination readily using such adroit hints as Colonel Clark threw out to magnify our force into a strong army of invasion, and the squad left at Corn Island, into large reinforcements, expected in a few days.

All night guards patrolled the streets. The inhabitants, however, obeyed orders strictly, and did not venture forth next morning until permission was given them, with the information that the fort and the town were in our possession, and M. Rocheblave a prisoner.

Their distressed faces presented a strong contrast to the cheerful scene which greeted our eyes with the beaming sunlight of the morning. Kaskaskia, situated on the right bank of the Kaskaskia or the Okan River, six miles above its confluence with the Mississippi, was then a village of two hundred and fifty houses, situated on a beautiful and rolling peninsula. The velvet verdure of the plain, dotted with little groves of pecan, maple, ash, and button-wood, the glassy surface of the idle river, the lofty hill opposite, with its stately forest, the air scented with the fragrance of its wild flowers, the little springs gushing from its sides in sparkling beauty, all reposing in the lap of nature, with their virgin freshness yet upon them—there was a landscape to charm her most capricious lover. We gazed enchanted on the fair picture and felt that we had reached a Canaan, rich reward for all we had dared and endured.

Presently came the priest to Colonel Clark, asking that the people be allowed to assemble once more in the church to say to each other a last farewell before leaving their homes, and separating forever. "Theirs," he said, "was the fortune of war, and they made no murmur—since an all wise God had willed it so. Nor could they complain of their conquerors, who so far had treated them with unexampled consideration. They had but one other favor to ask—that the men might not be separated from their wives and their little ones."

Doubtless all the night through the woeful fate of the hapless Acadians had been present to the anxious minds of the people, who were expecting for themselves, as the best to be hoped, a similar fate.

When the priest's words had been translated to Colonel Clark by Saunders, he answered with a winning smile, and a convincing air of friendliness:

"Monsieur Gibault, we have nothing whatever against your religion, nor against the citizens of Kaskaskia. Assemble your people in church when and for what purpose you will; worship God freely, as your consciences dictate. It is to win freedom of belief and personal liberty for all the inhabitants of this broad continent we have taken up our arms. But we came not to fight against the French; our quarrel is against King George of England. And why should the citizens of Kaskaskia, for the sake of being loyal to a power which has but lately subdued them, desert their comfortable homes, and wander forth again into the wilderness? Why should they not make peace, and live in harmony with the allies of their father land? Have they not heard the great news—that France and America have formed a close alliance—that a French fleet and a French army are on their way to help us fight the armies who have invaded us because we would not submit to tyranny and injustice? Does not this alliance absolve the citizens of Kaskaskia from all allegiance to England? Is not blood thicker than treaties forced upon a people at the point of the sword?

"No! M. Gibault, there is no necessity for your flock to bid each other farewell, and scatter into the wilderness to fall prey to wild beast and cruel savage! Remain peacefully in your homes! swear allegiance to Virginia! conclude with us the same alliance that France has lately entered into with the United States of America, and not a drop of blood need be shed, not a man, woman, or child need leave his home, nor resign either his religion, nor a franc's worth of his lawful property! We will pledge ourselves to secure your safety, and to maintain you in the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of American citizens!"

The gentle face of the priest passed from distressful entreaty, through all the varying expressions of surprise, doubt, conviction, relief, and rapture, as Colonel Clark's speech, phrase by phrase, was interpreted to him. He poured out fervid and voluble thanks, called down Heaven's blessing upon such merciful conquerors, and repaired quickly to the church to spread the glad news among his flock.

Never have I witnessed a more affecting scene than the one which followed. The child-like Kaskaskians passed in an instant from despair to joy, from fear and horror of us, to enthusiastic admiration and affection. We were their allies, their brothers, not only would they share all they had with us, but they would assist us against our common enemy.

An hour later, when the first outburst of joy had somewhat subsided, Father Gibault called his flock to assemble again in the church, that they might offer to God a solemn thanksgiving for this great deliverance. Colonel Clark and I, with two others of the officers, attended this service and gave respectful attention. In a far corner of the dim little chapel I recognized the slim form of young Givens bowed in worship. Again I fell to puzzling over the lad—some mystery attended, evidently, his presence among us. Could he be a Catholic? yet Catholics were as rare as Jews in our part of the State; Ellen had been the single one in our county as far as I knew. There was no solving the mystery, unless Givens chose to disclose what he knew, and that he was little likely to do, without good reason. Well, mysteries were not rare in the New World, and we were little accustomed to concern ourselves about them beyond idle speculation.

When the religious ceremonies were over, Father Gibault announced that the rest of the day would be celebrated as a fête day, and asked that the panins, or slaves, should be given holiday. Festoons of flowers were quickly woven, and hung from house to house; maidens and youths danced upon the green; flutes, violins, fife, and drum filled the air with music; and later a supper of pan cakes and maple syrup was served to all by soft-voiced, bright-eyed Frenchwomen. Dancing, feasting and rejoicing were kept up in many of the houses until midnight. Intoxicating drinks had flowed so freely, meantime, that there was much disorder on the streets, and several fights among the panins, who mingled with their masters in a familiar manner, strange to us. To their brawls, however, we paid no attention, since only friendly demonstrations were made us, and no one ventured near the fort, in which the men were kept with some difficulty.

To Colonel Bowman's company fell the lot of marching up the river to take possession of the town and fort of Cahokia. Several of the citizens of Kaskaskia had volunteered to go with us, and, entering the town before us, easily persuaded the inhabitants to transfer their allegiance from Great Britain to Virginia. As in Kaskaskia, the news of the French alliance was all that was needed to incline to a bloodless surrender.

Chosen by Captain Bowman to carry the news of our easy success to Colonel Clark, and ask for further instructions, I was again in Kaskaskia within the week. My interview over with Colonel Clark—who took my news with rather disappointing calmness—I found Givens waiting for me, his anxious face and air of mystery giving me a sharp surprise. He led me aside, and asked abruptly,

"You hed er cousin by ther name uv Ellen O'Niel?"

"Yes," I answered, still more surprised.

"She's yander in the fort, en lyin' low. What'll we do erbout et?"

"Here, in Kaskaskia? It is not to be believed."

"All ther same, Capt'n, et's so. John Givens es Ellen O'Niel, dressed en boy's clothes. Howsomever she's down with ther swamp fever now, en must hev woman's nussin' en' priest's docterin' es soon es it's ter be got fur 'er. It's yer es must tell Colonel Clark, en' have 'er moved frum ther fort at onct."

"How came she with you, Givens? And why did you let her come all this way from her friends—and dressed, too, in men's clothes?" I questioned angrily.

"'Tain't no time fur explanations now, Capt'n. Ther gal needs tendin' ter, right away," and he stalked on in front of me with imperturbable manner, but anxious countenance.

It took few words to explain so much as was necessary to Colonel Clark, and not many more to enlist the sympathies of Madame Rocheblave. We soon had the poor child,—yet in her rifleman's garb, but too far gone in the stupor of her disease to know anything—removed to the Commandant's house, and left her in the care of Madame, and a fresh faced girl whom Madame called Angélique, and recommended as an excellent nurse. Then we went to see Dr. Lafonte, the village doctor, and Father Gibault, who was reputed to be skilled in herbs and roots, and especially successful in treating fevers.

When both had come, while we waited for their verdict, Givens sat down beside me on the steps of the house and told me the following story:

"Twuz one bitter cold en' snowy evenin', las' winter, as I wuz out on ther mountin', huntin'. I seed a dark heap 'long side er ther parth, en' thort 'twuz er wild beast uv sum descripshun. When I got closter I heerd er human moan, en' seed it wuz er woman, hurt, en' harf froze. I toted 'er home on my shoulder, laid 'er on my bed, en' rubbed sum life inter 'er. Fur days she did'n' know nothin'; then, when she did 'pear ter notice sum, she lay ther', too weak ter speak, en' lookin' more like er ghost than like er woman. When she could talk she 'peared not ter wan' ter, en' specully not ter keer ter talk erbout herself. I didn't ask 'er no questions, en' one day I tole 'er I'd call 'er Mary ef she'd es lieve—thet having been ther name of my own leetle gal, es ther redskin devils killed, en' her eyes somehow remindin' me uv ther chile's. She 'greed ter thet, en' got more friendly.

"One day she axed me if I could give her some paper en' er quill. I guv 'em ter 'er, made 'er sum poke-berry ink, en' she writ' er letter; thin I tramped ter Charlottsville ter post et fur er. She

waited en' waited, en' twiset I went ter town ter git ther answer, afore it cum. When et did cum, et sot her ter cryin', en' took all ther red out'n her cheeks ergin—fur by this time she wuz well en' strong, doin' all my cookin' en' mendin', and makin' cheerful company fur me evenin's. She said 'twuz her own letter cum back frum ther postman, who had writ on et thet ther people et wuz sont ter didn't live in Baltimore no longer. She didn't hev no whar, now, ter go, she said, crying pitiful. She could stay with me es long es she'd er mind ter, I tole her, en' I'd be glad to hev her fur my own chile—sence the red-skinned devils hedn't left me none. Thet seemed ter cumfort her some, but you cum er few days arter thet, en' she heerd me tell yer I'd like ter go with Clark. You wuz no sooner gone then she declared she wuz goin' off so es not to be er hinderunce ter me, nur my plans. Ter thet I wouldn't ergree nohow, spechully arter she hed tole me er leetle 'bout how she happened ter be on ther mountin thet evenin'—though she never did tell me her name, nur ther name uv her kin folks.

"We talked mos' all thet night; she argified, en' I argified; et las we cum ter this ergreement:—she wuz ter go with me ter Kaintucky es my foster-son, en' we'd settle out ther, when she'd put on her gal clothes ergin, en' be my daughter fur good en' all.

"I went ter Charlottesville, got er rifleman's uniform fur 'er, en' she put it right on ter practice wearin' it, en' lookin' natural en it. Every day she went huntin' with me ter practice shootin', en' I tuk ter callin' her John. By ther time we started, 'twas all es nat'ral as if 'twere so, en' everything went smooth tel you en' Mr. Mitchell come. She wuz skeered fur fear you'd fine 'er out, en' staid most er the time at the settlement. 'Twuz my intention to leave er ther, even ef I went on with Clark, but she wuz mad fur adventure by thet time, en' would cum' on. The reason I let 'er wuz becus' uv yer two bein' her kin, in case 'twuz needful ter mek known she wuz er woman. Her being in 'tother company kept you frum seein' 'er much, en' nights I allus slept nigh 'er es you know. She's been awful sick now fur twenty-four hours, en' both uv yer gone. Et's been er terrable responserbility frum fust ter last—es fatherly as I feel ter ther poor gal," and Givens mopped the sweat from his brow, and drew a long, deep sigh of intense relief.

"Will she recover?" I asked eagerly of Dr. Lafonte, who just then opened the front door softly. To translate my question was beyond Givens' strictly limited French, but somehow Dr. Lafonte understood, and replied in his own tongue.

I gazed at him hopelessly, for then I could not understand a single word of the French language. Father Gibault, gliding behind the little doctor, smiled at my bewilderment and translated for me with many shrugs and gestures.

"He would say, Monsieur, that Mademoiselle ees very seek—boot she ees young and strong, eef le bon Dieu ees weeling she weel make recovery. I, Monsieur, have plenty Peruvian bark, et ees la grande médicine; Mademoiselle weel make recovery, I theenk, Monsieur," and he gave me a benign and reassuring smile.

CHAPTER XVIII

As soon as Colonel Clark's commands were delivered to Captain Bowman at Cahokia, I obtained permission for Thomas and myself to return to Kaskaskia, that we might await there the issue of Ellen's illness. We took turns of watching upon the porch of the commandant's house to be in readiness for any instant service it was in our power to render. Meantime Madame Rocheblave and Angélique nursed Ellen assiduously and tenderly, and her physicians gave her faithful attention. This was my first acquaintance with people of French blood, and their unfailing cheerfulness and sympathy were a revelation to me. In truth the French Americans of the Northwest were the most simple natured and warm hearted race I have ever known—they had not, however, the hardier qualities of my own people.

For seven days we had always the same answer to our questions given by the little doctor, with cheery air, and sympathetic expression—"C'est impossible à dire, Monsieur, il faut avoir la patience."

Late on the eighth night, Father Gibault came to me, his gentle face beaming with pleasure, to announce that the crisis had been favorably passed, and that with no relapse, Ellen would soon be as strong or stronger than before.

The most hazardous part of our enterprise lay yet before us—the taking of Vincennes, the real key to the Northwest, without which we could not long hold our position at Kaskaskia and Cahokia. And every day the English commandant, Abbott, might return from Detroit with reënforcements for the fort, which was far stronger and better equipped than the almost abandoned one at Kaskaskia. Moreover we could not hope so easily to overawe and win the larger and more mixed population of the town of Vincennes, which had fallen more directly under British influence.

Colonel Clark had conceived that his best hope was to make the Kaskaskians believe his riflemen the most formidable of warriors, and to lead them to think that he could summon from our

recently established forts on the Ohio any number of reënforcements he might need. So we drilled and mustered the men and made pretense of sending couriers to our forts, till the Kaskaskians imagined us to be but the vanguard of an army. Their fears were aroused for friends and relatives at Vincennes, and Father Gibault himself offered to proceed to that town under an escort of Colonel Clark's troops, to counsel submission and alliance. Clark accepted his offer with apparent indifference, but secret joy, put me in command of Father Gibault's escort, and bade me gather all the information possible, in regard to the condition of the fort, the feeling of the people toward the English, and everything I thought might be useful in case we should have to storm or besiege the place.

Still our amazing good luck attended us. The logic of Father Gibault, and the natural preference of the people for peace—which made a change of masters a matter of secondary importance—proved irresistible. The citizens assembled willingly in the church, swore allegiance to Virginia, elected a town officer favorable to our interests, and allowed us to garrison the fort, and raise our standards over it. Father Gibault carried the news of our third bloodless victory back to Clark, and a week later Captain Helm arrived to take command of the garrison of five Americans, and about a score of French recruits. Colonel Clark had given him the large sounding title of "Governor-General of Indian affairs on the Wabash," and had charged him with a characteristic answer to Tabac—the head chief of the Piankeshaws, who had visited us at Vincennes, and arrogantly commanded us to convey a defiant message to the chief of the Long-Knives.

"Take your choice," was Clark's answer—by the mouth of the interpreter Givens—"between the British and the Big-Knives. Choose peace or war with the Long Knives and you will—but whichever you select, remember it is final and prepare to stand firmly by your choice. We are fighters by trade, we object not to war, yet we have no present quarrel with the red men, and seek none. We prefer to save our strength to make war upon the British king"—and then the ground of our quarrel with Great Britain was explained as well as Givens was able to do it by the use of such figures of speech as the Indians could understand.

The negotiations lasted several days, nor could we gather from the stolid faces of Tabac and his warriors what their decision would be. At last Tabac announced that he had made up his mind,—then sat in Sphinx-like silence for half an hour, smoking solemnly and looking straight before him into the dense smoke made by the pine knots, burning in the midst of our circle. His warriors did likewise. Instructed by Givens, we showed neither curiosity nor impatience, but remained as impassive as they.

Meantime, partially to rest my eyes from the smoke and flame of the pine logs, I gazed long and curiously at Tabac. How crafty and subtle the expression about the thin close-lipped mouth, and long half-shut eyes! How savage the narrow sloping forehead, and the high fleshless cheek bones, smeared with fantastic daubs of paint, and surmounted with suggestive scalp lock, conspicuously adorned with gay feathers and stiff quills. The noble red man indeed! I have no patience with this absurd sentiment of admiration and pity for the Indian—which seems now to be coming into fashion. The generation of pioneers, and frontiersmen not long past, realize as others never can the inherent savagery of the Indians. Either we should never have come to America, or we must exterminate the savages. Indians and civilization repel each other like the opposite poles of a magnet.

When Tabac arose deliberately to his feet at last, his eyes roved around the circle, and were fixed upon me with an expression of defiance, rather than upon Captain Helm, at whose left I sat, showing that he had felt, and resented my scrutiny.

"Warriors of the Big-Knife," he began in slow, measured tones, that made an impression of rude eloquence, though we understood not a word he said until Givens had translated his speech; "I have reflected long—have taken counsel of my warriors, and of the Great Spirit himself. I have made my choice. I have reached a last decision. And when Tabac, chief of the brave and noble tribe of the Piankeshaws decides, it is the end—there is no more hesitation with him, nor with his people. We are friends to the Big-Knife, and his warriors. We make alliance with the tribes of Virginia. We, too, are Big-Knives, we stand or fall with our pale face brethren from the rising sun."

Captain Helm made gracious answer to this language, interspersed with much flattery of Tabac and his tribe, for their alliance was, really, of the greatest importance to us, and our apparent indifference but a part of the big game of bluff Clark was playing. Then the peace pipe was passed around, presents interchanged, and after bidding our new allies an elaborate farewell, we returned to the fort.

Just before he had sent me to Vincennes, Colonel Clark, as I neglected to mention at the proper time, had raised me to my old rank of Captain, and given me a place on his staff, as special attaché to himself—as the moving executive, so to speak, of the central authority. Clark remained at Kaskaskia, where one Indian deputation after another flocked to him to make treaties of peace or alliance, while I moved up the river to Cahokia, or across the prairies and marshes to Vincennes, carrying his orders, making reports, and gathering information.

Upon my return to Kaskaskia after my first trip to Vincennes, I found Ellen more than convalescent. Her vigorous youth had quickly vanquished the disease after the first crisis was safely passed, and she had made such rapid recovery as caused Madame Rocheblave to lift her hands, elevate her eyebrows, and exclaim over the marvelous physical powers of "zeze so veery strong Ameerikans."

I found Ellen not only bright-eyed, but plump and rosy, as she had never been before, and even gay among her new friends. They had already taken her to their hearts, partly, I suppose, because she was so devout a Catholic, partly because they had been called upon to befriend and care for her, and partly too, as any one must recognize, for her own charming personality. No wonder Thomas had been so infatuated! The thin, awkward, shy girl, I remembered, with the beautiful blue eyes, set in a slim, pale face, was become an indescribable compound of girlish roundness, bloom, and sparkle, of maidenly softness and brightness. Her new woman's clothes, constructed by Angelique's deft fingers of the delicate hued soft stuffs of the place, which were woven of home grown flax, or of buffalo wool, and dyed with native roots, hung about her in long, graceful folds, that made her figure look statuesque in its poses of natural grace. But even more than her beauty, her manner astonished me—its graciousness, piquancy, gayety, and ease. Not Nelly Buford herself, nor Miss Shippen, reigned with more charming assurance over her circle of admirers, than did Ellen over the court of adorers which soon gathered about her.

She had been enrolled as "John Givens" in Captain Dillard's company, and they laid now special claim to her; every one of the officers making himself the slave of her caprices, and vying one with another to flatter and to spoil her. Dr. Lafonte and young Legère, a distant kinsman of the commandant, promptly surrendered, and, presently, Colonel Clark enrolled himself among her devoted admirers. There were a dozen fresh faced, sweet voiced French girls of the peasant class in the village, but Ellen alone had qualities to attract men like Dillard, Clark, Thomas and me, who demanded more than rounded outlines, bright eyes, and soft skin.

If once I had patronized Ellen, it was her turn now, and she queened it over me ruthlessly. At our very first interview she proved her power. I had sought to see her alone, that I might give her in plain words my opinion of her late rashness, and insist that in future she take no step without consulting Thomas, or me, in lieu of closer kinsman, with better right to advise her. It seemed my duty to do this, since Thomas' infatuation made him dumb in her presence, and would allow him to recognize no fault in her.

After keeping me waiting a good fifteen minutes, she came, trailing a pale yellow robe behind her, and bearing herself like a princess.

"Is this really Ellen O'Niel?" I asked, involuntarily, meeting her half way down the long room, and taking both her hands in cousinly greeting.

"None other than the forlorn little Irish lass you used to be kind to," and she flashed upon me an irradiating smile, and drew her hands out of mine with an air of gentle dignity that somehow embarrassed me. "But you did not know me in riflemen's uniform—my heart need not have fluttered so that day in the forest when you planted yourself before me, and looked me straight in the eye."

"It makes me tremble even yet, Ellen," I answered, "to think of your rash conduct during the last few months."

"All has turned out beautifully, Cousin Donald, and I would do it all over again," and she spoke gaily, but with more seriousness, as she added: "Are you not risking all for freedom; and is not liberty as dear to a woman as to a man? I took the risk and I have won. Had I died in the attempt 'twould have been better than the life of slavery and persecution. Besides, cousin, though your narrow Protestantism may find it hard to grant such grace to Catholics, we, too, have faith in an overruling Providence, believe in a power that can protect the helpless, and guide the orphan. I rode away from my Uncle Thomas' house that night, unguarded by man, but guided by the holy Christ and the gentle Virgin,"—Ellen's face shone with uplifted rapture as she spoke thus—"By them I have been brought in safety to this peaceful village of kindly, cheerful people, to the care of holy Father Gibault, kind Madame Rocheblave, and faithful Angélique. I shall not again lack friends nor suffer persecution for my religion. You are a distant kinsman, 'tis true, Cousin Donald, and I hold you in grateful affection for past kindnesses—but I will not be scolded nor upbraided. I am done with that, for always. Nor have I any apologies to make to any one. I was driven to what I did by those who were called to give me a home and affection. I repeat I would do over again what I have done. If you wish to treat me with a kinsman's kindness upon these terms I shall be glad—otherwise you must say farewell, and leave me to my new found friends."

Never was I so completely cowed by speech from the lips of any one, as by these quiet words from Ellen, as she sat before me in calm dignity. Scattered like summer smoke was my intent to reprimand her once for all, and set before her the suffering she had caused us.

"Did you not promise, the night we said good night at the spring, to be my friend and comrade always?" I answered, "and have not friends and comrades the right to speak the truth to one another? Once for all, Ellen, I must say I think you acted rashly, and beg that you will never again act upon impulse without taking counsel of Thomas or me who are your loyal kinsmen, and would risk our lives for you. I speak not to disapprove, but to warn; the dangers, the risks your independent, confident spirit may lead you into, frighten me. And, Ellen," I went on rapidly, lest I should never again be able to summon up the needful courage to say it—"you must not include Uncle Thomas, nor my mother, in your just condemnation of Aunt Martha; both are sincerely grieved, and Uncle Thomas half distracted with apprehension and remorse; neither had a thought that you were so very unhappy."

"Uncle Thomas had not the courage to take my side, nor your mother to offer me a refuge—both preferred family peace, and their own comfort to my salvation; they left no other course open to

me than that I took. Not even Cousin Thomas, though he wished to befriend me, had the bravery to make a stand on my side against his mother; he, too, was cowed by her domineering spirit—were I a man, I would cringe to no one, not even to the woman that I love."

That last sentence I remembered, and afterwards it helped me to hold my own a little better against Ellen's growing power over me.

"You were most unkindly treated, Ellen, and it will always be a reproach upon us, something for which we must all hang our heads in shame,—but will you not try to forgive them? They have bitterly atoned for the wrong they did you, if unhappiness, and self reproach, can atone."

"Father Gibault says I must freely forgive them ere he can absolve me from the wrong thoughts, and actions of which I too have been guilty," answered Ellen—that catch in her voice, which so often I had recalled to mind, and had never heard in any other woman's—"but I find no consolation in their remorse. In you, Cousin Donald, I have nothing to forgive, you have always been good to me. I am still your friend and comrade, if you wish—though already you are a great and noble man, as I foresaw you would be," and again she gave me that flashing smile which made my head swim.

"And you will go home with Thomas and me when this business is ended?"

"I can never go back to that dreary, solemn valley, where people think of nothing but hard work, and long doleful prayers. As yet I have heard mass but twice, and only once have I been to confession; it seemed to me that the spirit of my dead parents were with me, and it brought me such joy and peace as you cannot conceive. I can never be separated again from the exercise of my religion. In truth I have a solemn and holy purpose set before me, of which I shall tell you, some day. Meantime let us not talk upon this painful subject, Cousin Donald,—life is so good to me now, so full of pure joy, and perfect happiness that I like not to recall the past five years."

CHAPTER XIX

During the months of August and September, Clark was kept busy receiving the Indian deputations which came weekly to Kaskaskia to sue for peace and alliance, with the famed Big-Knives and his warriors. Each visit was an affair of state, and must be received with due ceremony. Did the deputation consist only of the chief of some petty sub-tribe, and two or three warriors, they must have audience at the fort with Colonel Clark himself, surrounded by an armed body-guard; speeches, presents, and wampum belts must be ceremoniously exchanged, and the peace pipe smoked solemnly, after which Clark must tender them a feast.

Born to administer large affairs, Colonel Clark showed in his pacification of the Northwest Indians, a remarkable shrewdness, and knowledge of human nature. He used much the same tactics as those found so successful in dealing with the French:—he over-awed them by dauntlessness of spirit, and a show of far greater strength than he really possessed. When the desired impression had been made upon them, and they had offered alliance, he would adroitly win them to his purposes by friendliness and flattery. He could meet them with a counter stoicism and subtlety that confounded them, and sent them back to their tribes to tell marvelous stories of the great white warrior chief, the redoubtable Big-Knife, whose course of conquest had started at the rising sun, and would be stopped only by the big river towards the sun's lodge. One edict of Colonel Clark well serves to illustrate his far-seeing wisdom, and the extent of his power. He forbade any soldier, any citizen of Kaskaskia, or trader on the river, to sell or to give a single gill of liquor to an Indian within so many miles of the town and fort, under heavy penalties; and the few infringements of this rule were severely punished. Ceremony, presents and feasting were dealt out generously to the savages, but their expectations of fire-water were invariably disappointed. Some of them went away sullen, but there was no rioting in Kaskaskia, and no more bloody fights such as had been customary between panins and Indians.

Between these and other duties, Colonel Clark found some leisure for diversion, and sought it usually in the long room of the Commandant's house, where Ellen held her court with a constantly increasing number of subjects. Madame Rocheblave had left Kaskaskia soon after Ellen's recovery, to visit friends in Detroit, while awaiting the release of M. Rocheblave, who had been sent to Virginia with several other prisoners. But Angélique had consented to accept services as Ellen's maid, and was in constant attendance upon her.

Among Ellen's admirers the most indefatigable and determined were Monsieur Légère, Colonel Clark, Thomas and I; and for each of us she had a special course of treatment that kept us hovering between hope and despair. Monsieur Légère's manner of attack was nightly to serenade Ellen with voice and guitar, and daily to present her with passionate love poems, hidden in bunches of gorgeous wild flowers, which he had gathered at risk of limb and life from the most inaccessible spurs of the bluff across the river. These offerings she would receive with just enough appearance of pleasure, and expression of appreciation to prevent that emotional youth from committing suicide. Thomas, she treated as she would a brother, took him to mass with her, and alternately commanded, scolded, and coaxed him. He alone failed to see that there was naught but cousinly regard, and a degree of gratitude and pity in her heart for him.

Colonel Clark sued, as he did everything else, masterfully. It was plain, too, that this had a

certain effect upon Ellen, who moreover, could not fail to be attracted by his handsome person and winning manners. That personal charm felt so strongly by men, even by savages and foreigners must produce a more sure effect upon the feelings of the woman whom he condescended to woo. Yet Ellen did not acknowledge his power, but rather took pleasure in making him yield to her. There was almost daily warfare of words between them. She would be starting to vespers with Thomas perhaps, just as Clark would be mounting the porch steps.

"You are not going this afternoon, Miss Ellen," in his firm tone of command; "I want you to stay and talk to me."

"But I always go to vespers, Colonel Clark."

"Except when I come to see you."

"No matter who comes to see me."

"You need make exception in my case only; I have many duties, and can not choose my hours of recreation; you can say your prayers all day, if you wish."

"Vesper hour is sacred; I cannot profane it by staying away from service to amuse even *you*, Colonel Clark. Moreover I am neither Frenchman, Indian, nor soldier; I do not take orders from the Long-Knives," and she would flash upon him a look of smiling defiance, and pass on.

"You are as cruel as fair, Miss Ellen," in hurt, gentle tones; "you cannot guess how weary, and heart-hungry I am, or you would be more merciful. Are you not the one bit of home, and comfort, and cheer we soldiers have in this wilderness? Now, after a day of toil, with the prospect of an hour of delight with you as my only recompense, you leave me thus without a word of regret."

"I must to vespers, Colonel Clark, but I shall hasten back; you can wait here for me."

And Clark would wait impatiently, Ellen returning promptly, as she had promised, to put forth for him, during the rest of the evening, the utmost of her powers of fascination.

Her treatment of me was less flattering, I thought, than that she accorded any of the others. I was no more her best friend, her openly favored comrade. On the contrary, she treated me with alternate indifference, haughtiness and patronage; she would seem to seek occasions of difference, and then, when I was lashed into answering her, would flaunt me angrily, or mock me with sarcasms. Afterwards she would repent her rudeness, and beg my pardon with the sweetest humility and gentleness. But this playing hot and cold on her part kept me in a sort of inward fever, and made me what I had never been in my life before, irritable and quarrelsome. To the men under me, I was peremptory; I was testy with Thomas, and often almost rude with Clark. In truth I was half frenzied with jealousy. A score of times in the day, I would compare myself with Clark—set my appearance and qualities over against his, and cast up the balance between us; but, with all my leaning to my own side, I could not blind myself that neither in manner, person, nor gifts could I rival him. There could be little doubt as to which one of us Ellen would choose when a final choice was forced upon her.

The wild grape vintage was a customary festival with the Kaskaskians. The woods along the river were wreathed with the vines, which looped from branch to branch, or from tree to tree, and even the berry thickets had become trellises to support their luxuriant meanderings. These wild grapes made a rich, delicious wine, much prized by the people as a beverage, and by the priests as an antidote to the far less innocent fire water, peddled by the traders, in boat loads, up and down the river. Colonel Clark not only consented to the celebration of this one of their frequent holidays, but agreed that the soldiers might take part on condition that no liquors be dispensed.

All assisted in the morning's work of gathering the grapes, and piling them in the calèches, or two-wheeled carts, to be hauled to the wine vats, then the afternoon was given up to pleasure and feasting. Games were interspersed with trials of strength and skill, upon the public square of the village; shooting at a mark, hurling the tomahawk, wrestling and racing were the chief contests, which were participated in by Frenchmen and soldiers on equal terms. Colonel Clark, Captain Montgomery, and myself were the chosen judges, and we were careful to distribute the prizes equally, with no very strict regard to merit.

The free half-breeds and the panins, with a few straggling Indians, had also their games apart, presided over by three of our men from the fort, who acted as judges. The supper was provided by Colonel Clark, and besides the usual pancakes and maple syrup, served at nearly all their feasts, there were maize cakes, barbecued venison, corn parched, ground and sweetened, wild duck and plover eggs boiled and roasted, melons, pawpaws, mulberries and sangaree. This supper was served by the cheery matrons of Kaskaskia, from calèches backed in a circle around a part of the green. Later, smiling maidens bedecked with flowers, came out of the low eaved houses, and with the youths and gayer soldiers fell a dancing on the green to the sound of banjo and guitar, in the light of a bright full moon, beneath a star-studded dome of clearest azure. It was a picture of simple Arcadian happiness, which needed only the embellishments of nature to beautify it, only the impulses of nature to stimulate it.

Ellen had been named "Queen of the Festa" by Clark, and the day seemed diverted into an occasion to honor her. It was she who pressed with dainty fingers the juice from the first bunch of grapes, ere they were put into vats for trampling; she who presented the prizes to the victors, or crowned them gracefully with the laurel wreaths. And when the music sounded, Clark led her forth to tread a stately measure alone with him upon the green, ere the general dancing began. I

did not know before that either of them could dance—for never had I seen such sport until Nelly Buford had shown me the latest steps at Colonel Morgan's. But Ellen was a daily astonishment, and Clark had learned much in his adventurous life.

When they had thus inaugurated the evening's gayety as also they had presided over the day's festivities, Ellen and Clark wandered through the village together, in the moonlight, she leaning on his arm, and he bending over her like an accepted lover. Half an hour later I saw them seated side by side on the steps, under the nave of the church, absorbed in each other, and entirely unconscious of me, as I passed them on the opposite side of the street. Ellen was all in white, save for a black lace scarf she wore Spanish fashion, about her head, and shoulders, and in the moonlight she was a radiant vision of girlish loveliness—as Clark by her side was a picture of handsome young manhood. "They would be well mated," I thought with a sigh as I passed on, homesick and heartsick. In the darkness of the deserted barracks, I sought my soldier's couch, and lay a long time awake, thinking longingly of home and loved ones and wrestling with the demon of jealousy which threatened to master me.

A deep sigh aroused me after awhile, from the half dream into which I had slipped, and I heard Thomas' voice, praying in low tones. Poor Thomas. He was even more unhappy than I, for he had deserted home, parents, and religion for his idol, who but treated him with cousinly kindness. Yet I rejoiced, though I pitied him; there was hope for Thomas, since his sorrow and disappointment but drove him back to God, and his prayers.

Colonel Clark sent for me next morning, and began, in his most peremptory manner to announce that he desired me to make ready to start to Virginia immediately, to deliver certain dispatches to the Governor and the Assembly. He wished his appointments confirmed, and the conquered territory of the Northwest formally annexed to Virginia. Also, he must have money, supplies, and reënforcements for a prompt advance on Detroit, and later on, Quebec. All Canada might be taken, with the aid of our French and Indian allies, had we but a nucleus of American soldiers, and sufficient means to forward the enterprise. I must not only deliver his request to that effect, but urge the members of the Assembly, publicly and privately, as I had opportunity, to support the project, and to vote money and men for it.

When he had said all this, without asking my opinion, I stopped him by suggesting that perhaps I could not be earnest and eloquent enough in a cause my reason and judgment did not sanction; that I had once helped to storm Quebec, and knew the almost insurmountable difficulties of the attempt without a large army and plenty of cannon; that I did not believe our allies would be of any value in such an enterprise, and that in my opinion we would only be risking what we had secured, or abandoning it more probably, for a success dependent upon a hundred unlikely chances.

Colonel Clark had gazed at me haughtily as I spoke—a manner the more nettling because of his previous friendliness and comradeship with me—and now he reprimanded me sharply for having forgotten my position as a subordinate, whose business it was to obey, not to advise, and then added:

"Can you start, sir, to Virginia to-morrow, with my dispatches and commands?"

"No, Colonel Clark," I answered with a haughtiness that matched his own: "I remain in Kaskaskia till it is my pleasure to leave; my term of enlistment expires next week, after which I am no longer under orders. Confine me if you please, in the guardhouse, while I am still in your service, but I shall not go to Virginia on this errand."

"And I know your reason for this act of disrespect and disobedience, sir. You are jealous of my suit to Ellen O'Neil."

"As my cousin's lawful protector, I stay by her side until she is safely placed with the guardian she shall choose upon reaching her legal majority."

"Your jealousy has been made evident before, Captain McElroy, but know this, I recognize not your right to interfere with me in any way, nor to dictate to Miss O'Neil upon any subject. I shall warn her, sir, and watch you," and Clark had grown so angry that he talked now half random foolishness, and glared at me savagely.

No less angry, I replied, "And I shall watch you, Colonel Clark. A man who can take advantage of his position of authority to send his rival across the continent with dispatches that a common courier might as well carry is capable of taking other and less honorable advantages, perhaps."

"No man dare insult me, McElroy, without knowing that he must apologize or fight. Take your choice; I am no longer your superior officer," and he threw aside his epauleted coat, and plumed hat, and drawing his sword, stood before me, pallid and rigid with anger.

"Sir," I answered, fully as furious as he, "you have so lorded it over Frenchmen, panins and Indians, that you seem to have forgotten the respect due a comrade—your equal in all save military rank. Your challenge, Colonel Clark, I accept with pleasure!" I bowed to him, drew my sword and stood at guard.

Neither of us were practiced swordsmen, but both were lithe, active, and possessed of trained

eyes, and arms. We fought with small science, yet with some skill, and in deadly earnest. Without doubt one or the other of us would have been killed or badly wounded, had not a startling interruption paralyzed the arm of each, just when both were wrought up to the killing frenzy. I was fighting desperately and so was Clark, when, suddenly, Ellen's voice rang above the clash of our swords, and the panting emission of our breath:

"Cousin Donald! Colonel Clark!" she called sharply, and each lowered his weapon and turned to face her. She stood in the doorway, her eyes glowing, her face quite pale, and Father Gibault stood behind her, looking more perturbed than I had ever seen him.

"Cousin Donald! Colonel Clark!" She Called Sharply.

"I know not whose the fault," she added scornfully, "but each is less the knight and patriot, in my esteem, for this rash deed. You would kill each other and bring destruction upon your patriotic enterprise, and death to these men, whose lives are in your keeping? Bah! Men are children; their passions rule them! Father Gibault, will you stay with Colonel Clark and soothe his anger? You have hurt me grievously, Colonel Clark, and I thought you my friend—" and now was heard the break in Ellen's voice which tugged always at one's heartstrings.

"Forgive me, Miss Ellen!" stammered Clark; "I have no quarrel with your cousin; it was, as you say, foolish anger and rashness. But in justice I must confess that I forced this fight upon McElroy," and my generous comrade looked frankly at me.

"Nor have I just grounds of quarrel with you, Colonel Clark," I responded. "I was disrespectful in my words and manner. Will you accept my apology?" and I held out my hand.

Clark took and shook it warmly, while Ellen smiled upon us, and Father Gibault blessed us with low spoken benediction.

"Come with me, Cousin Donald!" commanded Ellen; "I have something I would say to you."

We walked together toward the town, for some time in silence, then Ellen said, blushing as she spoke:

"Father Gibault tells me that you and Colonel Clark quarreled about me, Cousin Donald. It was not kind, nor respectful, and it was very foolish, if jealousy prompted you, for I shall never marry."

"Never marry, Ellen, and why?" I asked in great astonishment.

"Did not I tell you, Cousin, that I had set before myself a high and holy purpose? I have sworn a

vow of consecration. As soon as I have reached my majority, I shall take the veil, and pass the remainder of my life in prayer, and God's holy service. Will you tell Colonel Clark this for me? And neither of you, I beg, will ever again couple me, even in your thoughts with love and marriage. I shall be the bride of the Church, I trust, but never the bride of mortal. God saved me from an awful fate in answer to my vow of consecration. To choose a life of worldly pleasure would be in me dishonesty in its worst form. Help me to keep my vow, Cousin Donald; make me strong to do the right."

The touching appeal of her voice and manner as she spoke thus, it is not possible to describe. She seemed to throw herself upon my strength, to implore me to help her to sacrifice herself. I saw how strongly she felt all she said, how impossible it would be to make her see now the folly of her purpose, and the illogic of her thoughts. She wanted my sympathy and encouragement—yet how could I give it to her, at risk of forfeiting my happiness, and possibly hers! Yet I could not fail her.

"Dear Ellen," I said, with all the deep tenderness of my heart for her trembling in my words, "whatever you finally conclude is your duty, that I shall help you to do, with all the sympathy and courage I can give you. But take no step rashly, nor without consulting Father Gibault. Our heavenly Father has, I truly believe, guided you thus far; let us look to Him for further guidance."

CHAPTER XX

There was no lack of volunteers to convey Colonel Clark's dispatches to Virginia. More than half of the men it appeared were anxious to return to their homes at the expiration of their term of enlistment. In that case, but a handful of us would be left, after October, to hold the three forts, and keep down the Indians. Colonel Clark resorted to entreaties and promises, and at last induced about three hundred of the men to consent to reënlist for six months more. Thirty-five were determined to go, and even the prospect of being rewarded, by the gratitude of Virginia, with royal land grants in the new territory, could not keep them longer.

"If Virginia did not choose to send recruits to hold the territory, we had won for her," they argued, "she deserved to lose it. Meantime their own families might be suffering privation or danger, and their own lands be lapsing again into the state of wilderness from which they had so lately rescued them. They could risk no more, sacrifice no further—not even for Virginia." One was forced to admit there was reason in their excuses.

Thomas, to my small surprise, was one of those who could not be persuaded to remain. Clark asked me to remonstrate with him, and I did so but without success.

"I've nothing to stay for," he answered; "Ellen rejects my love, and it is only what I deserve for my stubborn following of my own will, and my disrespect to my mother. Since neither Ellen's death nor her misery lies at our door; since she has reached a safe and pleasant harborage among people of her own religion, and can take her choice between a nunnery in Quebec, or a husband —who may be either military hero, or French Catholic as she will—I feel that my responsibility is ended. I shall go home, Donald, beg my parents' pardon, renew my vows, and resume the work to which I was called, and upon which I wickedly turned my back to pursue a foolish course."

"I cannot understand your feelings, Thomas," I replied, out of patience with what sounded to me like spiteful cant; "you joined our expedition with two specific objects in view:—to regain your lost health, and possibly find trace of Ellen. You have accomplished both objects; besides, have done your share toward our fortunate achievement. To abandon us now, before our success is permanently assured, and Ellen safely settled, seems to me to be an act of childishness."

"Yours, Donald, is the soldier's point of view, and I cannot complain of your disapproval. I see it all differently, however. It was wrong of me to come, in the first place, with the motives that brought me; the only reparation I can make is to go back as soon as possible, confess humbly, and reconsecrate to God and duty all my future life."

I said no more, for I saw Thomas' will was set; his present state of mind was as unreasonable as that I had found him in eight months before. There are men to whom a medium course is not possible—they are born fanatics; Thomas was one of these, but, in justice to him, I must add here, that he grew saner as he grew older, and that, with the coming of maturity, what fanaticism was left took the form of humble service in God's name, to his fellow men.

Colonel Clark's force now numbered barely a hundred men, including officers. A score were left at Cahokia; the rest were with him at Kaskaskia. It seemed wise to preserve a show of strength at both places, since Indian deputations were coming to one or the other of the two forts, all through the fall, to tender to Colonel Clark the allegiance or submission of their tribes. Being but half a day's march apart, our force could quickly be massed at either of these points.

Captain Helm, backed chiefly by his high sounding title of "Governor-general of Indian Affairs on the Wabash," with a garrison of five, held Vincennes! Should an English force march against it there would be no chance for defense; for that reason, that Vincennes might be strongly

garrisoned, it seemed imperative for us to have speedy reënforcements from Virginia. It was from Vincennes that Colonel Clark was planning to advance on Detroit, but I had never any hope of sufficient reënforcements to make such advance feasible, even in Clark's daring estimation, so gave myself no anxiety as to that rash project.

A rumor that Vincennes had been taken by the British reached us about the middle of December, but a few weeks after the thirty-six had departed for Virginia. The rumor lacked confirmation, however, and Colonel Clark eagerly awaited the confidently expected reënforcements.

After the cold autumn rains set in, visits from the Indian tribes were less frequent, and presently with the coming of winter they ceased. The arrival on Christmas eve, therefore, of a large deputation of much befeathered warriors, and their chief, caused some excitement,—the more so as they were reported to be Miamis from Lake Michigan. This tribe so far had held aloof from us, and was said to be faithful to the English. They demanded an interview with the white chief, Long-Knife, and asked that he bring only his most trusted warriors to the council chamber, since they had secret matters of weight and importance to discuss.

Colonel Clark summoned his officers, and five others, and the conference began in the large room of the fort—where Clark and I had indulged in our sword play some days before. The chief was, I thought, not past middle age, though it is difficult to guess the age of a redskin. He had a countenance of unusual cruelty and subtlety. His tall frame was powerfully built, and his tongue was both eloquent and cunning.

"Long-Knife and his warriors had come," he said, "as strangers to the land of the Algonquins; they had come to bid the great tribes of the red men, whose fathers had owned the plains washed by the fresh seas, and the great Father-of-Waters, from the beginning, to declare war against their powerful English father, who had given them their guns, and had protected them against their hereditary enemies, the Hurons and the Iroquois. It was said that the warriors of the white chief, Big-Knife, were about to conquer the warriors of the great English father, but were willing to protect the Miamis, and to leave them in peaceful possession of their lands. He and his braves had come to ask if these things were true, and if the Big-Knives sought peace and friendship with the tribes of the Miami."

Colonel Clark responded in his usual way, mixing adroitly with his parade of cool arrogance, and entire indifference, a tone of gracious condescension. "The Miamis might choose for themselves; he had no quarrel with the red man—did they wish the redoubtable warriors of Long-Knife, and the great and war-like nation they came from, on the shore of the eastern ocean, for their friends and brothers—did they wish, as so many of their brethren had done, to make alliance with us, it would be well with them, but we were used to war and liked it—if the Miamis preferred war—good; it was theirs to choose. But they must decide once for all, and war once begun the Long-Knives would not be the first to sue for peace."

A long silence followed Clark's speech, during which the Indians gazed fixedly before them, while the air grew dense with the strong tobacco smoke they exhaled, in great deliberate puffs. We also smoked stolidly on; and the chief's face was not more a mask than Clark's. In the midst of this silent ring of grim smokers—as an angelic apparition floats into the vision of a dream—glided Ellen. She came to my side with smiling countenance, on which was no other expression than that of idle curiosity, gazed calmly into the hideous faces of the savages, and pointing to the crimson aigrette among the head feathers of one, and the black heron quills worn by another asked me in English to buy them for her. Then without changing her expression, or looking again at me, she lowered her tones to a whisper, and scarcely moved her lips in saying,

"When I go out—wait—then follow," and even while she spoke thus, she was making gestures of admiration over the Indian's ornaments, continuing to do so, and to comment upon them to us, as a child might.

Presently the chief began again to speak. Ellen listened gravely for a few moments, shook her head, smiled, and passed out. In doing so she walked behind Clark, and uttered a whisper like a sigh. "Beware! Be on your guard!"

Clark gave no sign to indicate that she had spoken, and after lingering at the door for a moment, Ellen went out, and we heard her singing gayly, on her way back to the town.

But for her words to me, I should have thought, as evidently the Indians did, that she had wandered into the council chamber, prompted by idle curiosity alone, and finding small amusement there, had wandered out again. The free customs among their own squaws, in regard to their comings and goings, made the incident seem natural to the Indians.

A meaning look from Clark, the barest glance of significance, made known to me that he too had been spoken to, and was on the watch for something unusual. Ellen was not found until I had gone all the way to her house, where she was walking the floor in the greatest excitement, awaiting my arrival.

"Cousin Donald," she whispered, as if the walls had really ears,—"the fort is surrounded by armed savages, they are lurking in the bushes and in the chimney corners, crouching under the steps, and behind trees—they are everywhere. Without doubt they await the signal for an attack; meantime the soldiers are scattered about the village, and ten went this morning, as you know, to carry the powder to Cahokia."

"We must take measures at once to collect the men. You have already warned Colonel Clark?"

"Yes; and I have sent Angélique to seek every soldier she can find loitering about the village, and to bid them all come here."

"Well done, Ellen! I shall muster them as quietly as possible and lead them to the fort. Have you thought of anything else that should be done?"

"M. Légère, who was walking on the bluff with me when I saw the Indians, with Colonel Clark's spy glass, has already started to Cahokia, mounted on the fleetest horse in the village. If only you can, by some strategy, delay the signal until the men from Cahokia can get here."

"They will, I imagine, wait for twilight. The savages seem to rely much upon the aid of surprise and confusion. If Légère's horse is fleet, and they have boats in readiness at Cahokia, reënforcements should reach us by midnight; but that will be too late, I fear. It will hardly be possible to divert the Indians from their purpose so long. But, now that we are warned, we may find a way to outwit them."

Having disposed my men in the neighborhood of the fort, in a convenient clump of trees, I told them to wait in absolute silence for the sound of my turkey call within the fort and then to surround the council chamber with a rush, making, as they did so, all the hideous noises possible.

The chief was still speaking when I returned to the council chamber, but his manner and his words were less conciliatory and his warriors were scowling ominously.

"Let my friend, and brother chief, speak for the great American father, General Washington, since you profess to doubt my word," said Colonel Clark, as, a moment later, the chief concluded his second wordy and pointless harangue. "Tell the chief, Captain McElroy, since you were present on the day it happened, how the warriors of Chief Washington defeated the warriors of the English father, on the great battlefield west of the Alleghanies, and how you took prisoners a whole tribe of them at Saratoga."

Stepping into the midst of the circle, I told them of the surrender of Saratoga, vaunting much the courage of my tribe, and the war-like skill of our chiefs, and ending thus: "Before many more moons have waxed and waned, the English will mount again their white winged birds, their great ships, and sail back across the wide waters to their own land, leaving all this country subject to the great confederation of the white American tribes. And when the English are gone, and our great chief Washington shall march his armies against the still hostile Indians, woe to those who have refused our friendship! They shall be shaken as ripe fruit from the boughs; scattered to the four corners of the earth, as fruit blossoms by the wind of an April storm."

The Indians listened to me at first with solemn stolidity, then began to utter low grunts of unbelief, or anger, and at last to exchange black looks, and to scowl at me threateningly. Still they smoked on; still Colonel Clark and his councilors smoked silently, paying no sort of heed to the angry demonstrations of the savages.

The sun set, meanwhile, and what with the fast-coming winter's twilight without, and the thick fog of smoke within, one could scarcely see the faces about him well enough to distinguish white face from red, friend from foe.

As I sat down, the chief laid aside his pipe, with the utmost deliberation, and rose to his feet, towering in the midst of his warriors, who closely copied all his expressions and actions. We rose, also, and the two half circles faced each other grimly, while the murky redness of the sun's last rays cast a momentary lurid illumination over the scene.

With a quick gesture the chief drew from his long robe of white bear's skin two wampum belts—the peace and war belts—and flung them with haughty and insulting air upon the table.

"There are two belts of wampum," he said, and the Indians crowded closer about him; "you know what they mean. Choose which you will!"

There was awesome silence for a moment. For the second time in my life I knew the feeling of subtle, unreasoning terror, such as must precede a panic; but again with a tremendous effort of will I controlled the impulse, and looked calmly from one to another of the scowling, cruel faces—watching, as beasts do, for a chance to spring.

Clark gave each a calm, undaunted stare, then fixed his deliberate, scornful gaze upon the chief, picked up the wampum belts on the point of his sword, took them in his right hand, and drawing himself to his utmost height, flung them full into the face of the chief, as he said in tones of contempt:

"Begone, ye dogs! Back to your squaws, and your beaver traps!"

Upon this instant I blew my turkey call, long, and shrilly. From without came the sound as of a rushing multitude, mingled with yells, whoops, and howls. The Indians seemed suddenly cowed and gathered together in a huddled group.

"We are trapped!" called the chief, and made a leap for the door, followed by the rest. The savages without were fleeing also. Clark called out in loud and positive commands that they should be neither killed nor hindered.

"Let them run like the coward dogs they are," he said, "we care neither to capture their living nor

to bury their dead carcasses."

In the midst of the excitement, reënforcements arrived from Cahokia, Légère having met a squad on their way to Kaskaskia. Clark now stationed guards all around the fort and the town, and ordered that the soldiers hold themselves in readiness to repulse a night attack. The Indians loitered all night in the bushes about the fort, and we could hear them arguing hotly. When morning came, they sent in a deputation of three to sue for peace, after which they hastily departed.

I shall not now relate an incident which happened later that night when some of the loitering Indians attempted to take terrible revenge on Ellen, whose warning to Clark they afterwards suspected, and from which it was my very good fortune to save her. Thus repaying twice over, since her life was twice as valuable as mine, the debt I owed her, and proving that I counted my own naught, as weighed against her safety and her honor.

CHAPTER XXI

For four days, a fine, thick rain had been descending persistently from the low, gray-blanketed sky, and a wet mist rose from the sodden earth to meet it. The soil reeked with dampness; it oozed from the walls of the stone or stuccoed houses, dripped from the sloping roofs of rambling porches, saturated one's clothes, and permeated one's blood. The Kaskaskia River, pushed out of its banks by its swollen tributaries, had overflowed all the bottoms, and banked the waters of the bayous up into the hills. The village was surrounded by water on three sides, and from the fort one could see nothing save the dreary waste of still, dull water. Even the reeds, canes, and grasses which ordinarily fringed the bayous, adding something of life and grace, were now submerged.

In all the village there was but one cheerful, wooing spot:—the room in the late Commandant's house, made bright by the presence of Ellen, and kept warm and cheery by the crackling logs piled high in the wide fireplace. Here Ellen gave gracious welcome to officer and private, priest and native, coureur de bois from Canada, trader from New Orleans, and scout from the eastern settlements—whoever might chance our way, so he deport himself gentlemanwise. And now, since the winter and the rains had settled upon us, since the Indian deputations had ceased to trouble us, and traders were rare, the town afforded the officers no other diversion than a twice daily visit to Queen Eleanor's audience chamber.

Colonel Clark, Captains Bowman, Montgomery, Harrod and I, with Légère and Dr. Lafonte occupied usually the inner circle around the fire, Ellen throned in our midst. My quill falls from my hand and I lose myself in the scenes which my memory recalls so vividly that almost I live them over again. Ellen's graceful head, outlined by dark ringlets, rests against the white bear skin which covers her chair; her slender hands are crossed in her lap, and her arched feet, in their gay moccasins, are half buried in the panther's skin thrown over her foot rest. The fire, of seasoned logs three feet in length, lights the low-ceiled stone room with a vivid glow and suffuses the atmosphere with a fragrant warmth. This glow of the flames plays becomingly on Ellen's rich, soft coloring, and even brings out the shadows made by the long lashes upon her cheeks. Also it shows plainly the varied colors and markings of the wild skins hung thick upon the wall, and the gay stripes in the heavy Indian mats upon the floor.

Better still than the cheerful scene was the pleasant talk that filled the room, the bright, earnest discussions which did more to keep us keyed to our otherwise dreary task than all the promises that we could make ourselves of future fortune and renown. Who can gauge the value of woman's social tact and sympathy? In all ages they have been magnets around which great thoughts and noble deeds have focused. Some of the conversations held in the long, stone room at Kaskaskia seem to me to have been worthy the most brilliant salons in Paris, or the most famous of London coffee-houses. Ellen was never one of those chattering women—though she could express herself pithily and gracefully when she had anything to say—but she was the most inspiring listener I have ever seen.

Colonel Clark was a bold and brilliant talker, though sometimes arrogant and boastful. Légère, who had been bred and educated in Paris, had culture, and a keen tongue. Bowman was a man of careful observation, shrewd thinking, and close reasoning; and my own love of mental exercise made me an ambitious aspirant in these conversational bouts, over which Ellen presided with inspiring guidance.

The future of America was the subject we oftenest discussed, perhaps, and the one upon which we diverged, too, most widely. Colonel Clark favored the organization of thirteen free states, confederated as loosely as possible. I was for a close federation with a strong central government. All the delays and difficulties of our war were due to the lack of a central authority, it seemed to me. And even after our independence should be achieved we must fall to pieces, I argued, or become the prey of European powers unless we sought strength in a firmly cemented union.

"But Virginia," argued Clark, "had everything to lose, and nothing to gain by union. With the Illinois territory added to her possessions she would be the largest, richest, and strongest, of the

States, and could dominate the rest. No union would be agreed to by the other States which did not provide for the territorial reduction of the Old Dominion—for her relinquishment, doubtless, of all we had won for her, and that we would never consent to. Why should Virginia voluntarily weaken herself in order to strengthen a union which would control all her resources?"

To this Ellen responded, taking sides with me: "A course of unselfish patriotism was the only course worthy of Virginia, and the only one consistent with her admirable policy so far. The building of a free, mighty, and glorious republic in America which might become a pattern for future democracies was the object for which all true Virginians and all enlightened patriots should be willing to sacrifice everything."

Légère agreed with Clark, Bowman with me, and our argument waxed warm—always to be quieted or diverted by Ellen's skillful management. One day, however, Clark was more arrogant than usual, and I more vehement, so that at last we quarreled like school boys.

Ellen's sarcasm, as she rebuked us, seemed directed at me rather than at Clark, and I left the room in an unseemly rage, being for several days too sore, and too much ashamed of myself, to return.

No loafing place was left me, now, save the large room in the barracks, where the men were accustomed to assemble. On a certain afternoon it became unbearable. The chimney smoked, the damp logs burned grudgingly, the soldiers, who were now in the town, slept snoring on the floor, wrapped in their blankets, or sprawled on the benches, and smoked strong pipes. My heart ached with home longing; for but an hour with the dear circle around the cheerful hearth, in the big room, I would at that moment have resigned all the prospects of my life—save only my hope of winning Ellen. I could stand it within no longer, and wrapping my cloak around me, and pulling my bearskin cap over my ears, set out to walk to the boat landing. It would afford me a moment's diversion to see how far the water had risen since yesterday. Then the lower end of the wharf was an inch under water.

Now it was completely submerged, and the ground all about it. If a boat should chance to come to Kaskaskia it must seek precarious landing upon a rock, which in dry weather, was half way up the low bluff on this side of the river, below the town. I made my way to this rock, and stood looking out on the formless waste of waters with a new sympathy for the victims of the flood, and a sudden emotion of deep thankfulness for the rock-ribbed mountains, rolling hills, upland meadows and well restricted, gentle streams of our dear valley. He who would might come west to dwell in the rich alluvial valley of the Mississippi, and her tributaries—as for me, I wished no other heritage than one of the fertile, smiling farms in the valley of Virginia.

As I gazed thus, my mind upon my own land rather than upon this desolation, a moving speck appeared upon the waters, and rapidly approached. Yes, it was a boat, one of those long, deep, swift boats used by the coureurs, and the traders. The two men propelling it were standing, evidently looking for the wharf. I called and signaled to them to drift a little down stream, and land upon the rock; then I clambered to its lower edge, and stood in readiness to help them. I had by this time recognized Colonel Vigo and his servant. A month before they had stopped with us on their way to the Illinois country, when Colonel Vigo had offered to spy out for Colonel Clark the real condition of affairs at Vincennes, and to send or to bring him word. His coming back so soon foreboded ill news; he would hardly have returned at such inclement season, but to warn us. We had hardly counted on such friendship from him, though we knew that he wished well to the cause of America. Moreover, he had seemed to conceive a strong friendship both for Colonel Clark and myself.

Sardinian by birth, soldier of fortune by profession, Spanish officer by rank won in Spanish wars, he was to me a most interesting character. Bold, yet cautious, rash yet diplomatic, shrewd yet daring, accomplished gentleman yet reckless adventurer, Indian by mode of life, but in manner and preferred tongue French—he was a type of that age and that civilization, which alone could have produced his like.

"Ah, McElroy," he called to me, as I gave him my hand to help him spring ashore, speaking in what he called English tongue, but which was really an impossible dialect, composed of a conglomerate of English, French, Italian, Spanish and Indian words, so that I do not attempt to reproduce it, but give only the substance of his utterances, "It is you then, and where is the Colonel?"

"Visiting," I answered, rather curtly; "do you come from Vincennes?"

"So the Colonel is courting the fair Americaness, eh?—and you, mon ami, sulk upon the rock! Is it that you have surrendered? I thought it not possible for a stubborn Scotchman to own defeat—but this is no time for banter. Yes, Captain McElroy, I come from Vincennes, and I have for the Colonel important news. He must arouse himself from the idle pleasure of paying court to beauty, and go back to the arduous work of a soldier would he hold his footing on the Wabash."

Meantime we had reached the village, and were soon before the Commandant's house. A panin summoned Clark for us, and together we walked toward the fort, while Colonel Vigo told how Vincennes had fallen, and outlined clearly the present state of affairs at that place. The fort had been repaired and restocked, and was garrisoned by a force of eighty mixed English and Canadians. The French inhabitants were over-awed, and the Wabash Indians were in sympathy with the English. The Miamis, who had recently made a pretended treaty with us, were really agents of Hamilton, having been hired by him to kill or capture Clark, and as many of his men as

possible. Having been disappointed in their anticipations of big scalp money, they were awaiting surlily a chance of revenge. The French were, however, in heart, still loyal to us, and Father Gibault—who had been all the time with Captain Helm, as also had Scout Givens—was using all his diplomacy for us. It was due to his insistence that Colonel Vigo was released, and allowed to leave the town, even though he refused to swear that he would do nothing hostile to the British cause.

Clark heard Colonel Vigo to the end, then asked two or three questions as to General Hamilton's expectation of reënforcements, or apparent apprehension lest he be attacked by the Americans. Colonel Vigo answered that he seemed to anticipate neither the one nor the other, whereupon Clark turned to his officers, now gathered about him, and said in the tone of a man promulgating some joyful news.

"Men, we march at once to Vincennes! We are too near success to yield to the first reverse. Have the drum beat for roll call, McElroy!"

When all the men, and many of the villagers, were assembled on the parade ground before the fort, Clark clambered upon the body of a calèche and made them one of his stirring speeches, recalling the treachery of General Hamilton and the successful stratagem of Captain Helm.

At its conclusion, loud cheers rang forth, and the men crowded about the calèche.

"Right, Colonel," called one of the men, "we must thrash this 'hair-buyer' General; he has been needing a lesson for some time."

"We'll thrash him, Colonel, never doubt it!" called another.

"If the Kaskaskians wish to help us—if they have found us true allies and kind friends, we promise them full recognition and reward with our regular soldiers," added Clark. "Wish any of you to enlist with us?"

"I! I! I!" came from a dozen throats, in chorus.

"Légère shall captain you, if as many as twenty-five enlist," added Clark. "Will you take down their names, Légère, and organize your company?" turning to that Frenchman, who accepted both the honor and the task with enthusiasm.

The commons now presented a lively and almost a cheerful scene; the men gathered in groups here and there, talking excitedly; drums were beating, and the villagers chattering and gesticulating. Suddenly, too, the western sun broke through environing mist and cloud, and poured over the scene a crimson glow, which might have been a word of promise spoken from Heaven, so much it cheered them.

"McElroy," said Clark in my ear, "I would like a word apart with you, please"; then as we walked off together: "It is time this rivalry between us were somehow put an end to; there are too few of us pledged to this dangerous enterprise to risk personal bitterness, especially among the officers, who should be in entire accord. You love your cousin, Ellen O'Neil, and so do I. You wish to marry her, so do I. Which one of us she prefers I defy angel, devil, or man to determine. But she must decide between us, and quickly. If it is you she loves, she must say so, and I will resign all claim, and cease to trouble either of you. If it is I, can you agree to do the same?"

"Yes," I answered a little reluctantly. "If she loves you, Colonel Clark, I promise to withdraw my suit. Only as her cousin and present guardian, I would have a right, I think, to exact one promise of you, and that is that you will forswear a single habit, and promise to settle down when this war is over. Can a man who loves adventure, as you do, resign it for the love of a woman—Colonel Clark—to say nothing of that other passion which sometimes overmasters you?"

Clark's face darkened and flushed, but with an effort he controlled himself. "As her kinsman, McElroy, you doubtless have a right to speak thus to me. You refer to my love for strong drink, and speak of my passion for adventure. The one I could easily resign for Ellen's sake; the other —'tis embedded in my nature, yet even adventure, methinks, might be well exchanged for the love of such a woman; for domestic joys with her to share them; for friends, home and children. Yes, McElroy, I can imagine myself a quiet, respectable, church-going citizen—and yet content."

"Then the decision rests with Ellen alone. Should she choose you, I promise to give my sanction to her choice. But I fear there is small hope for either of us. Have you not heard her say that she intends to take the veil, to be a nun?"

"Yes, but I have never believed that she meant it in her heart of hearts, though she has deceived herself into thinking she does, by telling herself that it is her holy duty."

"She does not seem to me called to the vocation of a nun." I was smiling at the mere thought of the brilliant Ellen in a nunnery.

"Surely she is not, McElroy; could she be happy, think you, shut out from a world which interests her so fully? Your quiet valley, with its dull routine of duty and religion made her rebellious, then how would she endure life in a convent? No, she greatly misunderstands herself. I should rather, by far, see her your wife, McElroy, than to know that all her brilliancy and charms were hidden behind the chill walls of a convent."

"And I would far rather see her your wife than a nun."

"Then let us pledge mutual aid, thus far—that we will both use all the influence we may have with her to keep her from a convent. Shall we go now to see her, and bid her choose between us?"

"It does not seem to me to be the wisest course. Suppose she should absolutely refuse both of us? or even in case we can persuade her that she is not called to a convent life, and can induce her to make choice, suppose one of us should be killed in this attack upon Vincennes, and he the one she had chosen? Might she not afterwards feel it disloyal to the memory of that one to listen to the addresses of the other, and so be more than ever disposed to think herself set apart to virgin consecration? Let us leave the matter undecided until one or both of us return from Vincennes. I can trust you to take no less interest in my safety on that account, and you, I think, can likewise trust me. Should I fall, my rights in Ellen, such as they are, become yours. Should you be killed, I inherit your claim to her. Meantime both are pledged to use our utmost endeavors to keep her out of a convent—even though to do so, we must help the other to win her."

"Shrewdly said, McElroy," replied the Colonel, with a hearty laugh. "It is a true Scotch-Irishman's bargain you propose—many chances to win, few to lose. Your hand on it. Once more we are good friends, and loyal comrades, pledged together and twice over to two noble causes: one—the independence of the United States of America and the saving of the world for democracy, and the other—to preserve to the world the beauty, the wit, and the spirit of Ellen O'Neil."

CHAPTER XXII

I shall pass over the details of our arduous midwinter march of one hundred and sixty miles to Vincennes across swamps and flooded plains. Also any account of the three separate mutinies of our French recruits and the almost irreparable loss of our boat, the *Willing*, and consequent lack of food and rest while we worked feverishly, knee deep in water, building canoes.

The timely capture, after we had crossed the swollen river and reached firmer ground, of an Indian canoe loaded with buffalo meat, corn, and (strange circumstance) several large kettles, alone saved our men from starving and our hazardous attempt from total disaster. On the afternoon of the eighteenth day we reached Vincennes, and with our numerous flags, which through all the suffering of the march we had never relinquished, mounted on long poles, Clark disposed his little band in squads, and ordered them to march some distance apart and to follow the winding road (easily seen from the village, though hidden from the fort) to the town.

Not only did we meet with no resistance from the townspeople, but numbers of them offered to assist us in storming the fort. Tabac and his hundred Indians, who were camping near the town, likewise offered their services as allies.

When the firing upon Fort Sackville began, General Hamilton was in Captain Helm's quarters playing piquet with his prisoner, while the latter brewed upon the hearth his favorite beverage—a spiced apple toddy. Helm's room had been pointed out to us, and we aimed at his chimney. Soot and plaster came tumbling down, half filled the kettle and ruined the smoking drink. The players sprang to their feet.

"I'll wager it's Clark, and his riflemen, General," said the jovial Helm. "They'll take the fort, for they are the finest marksmen in the world. Meantime they've spoiled our toddy, d—— 'em, and with malicious intent you may be sure; some villager has indicated my quarters to McElroy, I dare say, and he pays his respects to me, and announces their presence this way. D—— their sure bullets and their rude jokes; wish we had drunk that toddy sooner. Now look at it!" and he held out a ladle full, gritty with dried mud, and black with soot.

"You are cool ones, you Americans," said Hamilton, with an uneasy laugh. "Pray, how do you suppose Clark would get his men here through these floods?"

"They swam, maybe—oh, Clark and his riflemen are equal to anything. Might as well run up your white flag, General, and be done the sooner with this unpleasant business; we can finish our game then, and have Clark in to help drink my second brewing—he's good at that as at fighting; we'll make a jolly party."

"Curse your impudence, Helm! I'll not surrender the fort while there's a man to the guns!" and Hamilton departed, sputtering with angry excitement.

All night brisk firing was kept up on both sides; at the same time detachments of us worked like beavers to make a trench about a hundred yards in front of the main gate. Early next morning Clark sent in a flag with a bold demand for surrender, and during the respite afforded by its reception the men ate a hearty breakfast, provided by the well disposed townspeople. It was the first meal they had had in five days. This was the message sent by Clark under his flag of truce, and it is so characteristic of the man that I quote it verbatim:

> "Sir—In order to save yourself from the impending storm that now threatens you, I order you immediately to surrender yourself with all your garrison, stores, etc., etc. For if I am obliged to storm, you may depend on such treatment as is justly due a murderer. Beware of destroying stores of any kind, or any papers or letters that are in your possession, for, by Heaven, if you do, there shall be no mercy shown you.

"G. R. Clark."

An angry and scornful refusal was returned by General Hamilton to this stern demand, and the firing was renewed. Wherever a port-hole was open, a dozen rifles were aimed upon it, and the bullets poured through like hail; the gunners were killed as fast as they were sent to the guns. Even the cracks in the walls afforded targets to the death-dealing bullets of the riflemen, and more than one of the garrison fell pierced through the eye.

The afternoon of the second day brought a flag of truce from General Hamilton, asking for a cessation of hostilities for three days, and a conference with Colonel Clark at the fort. Clark refused the terms offered by Hamilton, but agreed to a conference in the village church. At this conference Clark's bold determination again won, and next morning Fort Sackville was surrendered, with all its stores and supplies, and General Hamilton and his garrison became prisoners of war.

This was on the twenty-fifth day of February, 1779. It is a date deserving enrollment among eventful days of American history. Henceforth the Northwest was Virginia territory, until ceded by her to the Union. In the negotiations which preceded the final treaty with England, it was this fact—that Virginia troops had fought for, and conquered the right bank of the Mississippi—which gave potency to the claim of our commissioners, that the Father of Waters and not the Alleghanies, or the Ohio, was our rightful boundary line on the west.

Among our Revolutionary heroes, George Rogers Clark should stand high, not only because of his daring and his achievements, but because of the important and far-reaching results of his conquest.

In the last few years, observing the rapidity with which our vast Western territory is being settled and civilized, noting the rapid increase of its population and prosperity, I begin to set a true value upon the importance of this territory to the republic. Not only has it given us room for necessary expansion, but it has quickened all our energies, kindled our imaginations, and furnished a safe outlet for the vigorous, throbbing life of our young nation. Moreover, there is no way to calculate the important part this common territory has played in uniting, into a firm and reasonable union, the several States of America. It gave us a common interest, at a time when we thought our state interests divergent; furnished us a means of satisfying with land grants our discontented and unpaid soldiers; and is teaching us, through experience learned in governing a joint possession, broad principles of democratic government. In truth, the more I think upon it, the more highly I rate the achievement of George Rogers Clark—in which those of my race bore a worthy part.

"Since fate has not ended our rivalry for us, McElroy," said Clark—when affairs had been satisfactorily settled at Vincennes, Helm reinstated with a somewhat larger garrison, and the other troops ready to return to Kaskaskia—"the decision rests still with Queen Eleanor. We must force her to a choice, somehow, and certainty is preferable to this suspense."

"The sooner we know her decision the better I shall be suited," I responded, "for, now that my year's parole has expired, I am eager to get back to the regular service, especially as reënforcements from Virginia can now be counted upon. Moreover, you are not likely to need a large force to enable you to hold what we have won."

"I agree with you," replied Clark. "You have stood by me and the enterprise, like a brave man, and a true comrade, McElroy, and I am glad our business is finished before your duty calls you back to Virginia. You have been my right hand, though all my officers and men have alike acquitted themselves nobly, from first to last."

"With a leader such as we have had, only worthy conduct is possible," I said, my eyes suddenly dim.

"Thank you for that word, McElroy. That worthy men should deem me a worthy leader, is all the praise I ask. And whatever may come between us in the future, comrade, let us not forget that we have stood together in peril and in suffering, have shared risks and dangers in a cause dear to the hearts of both—not even the love of woman should separate comrades such as we have been."

"Nor shall it," I answered earnestly. "God bear me witness, Clark, that I shall feel no malice should Ellen's heart answer to yours. I shall wish you both happiness in all sincerity, and seek solace in my duty."

"No fear, McElroy; you have the sturdiest and best traits of a noble people. I have some of them, doubtless, as my Saxon blood gives me right, but mixed, I fear, with a strain of wildness. I doubt if the anchors of duty are strong enough to hold me to a wise, sane life—unless Ellen's love shall help to weight them. As you have said, comrade, an adventurous, reckless life has strong temptation for me; therefore, if Ellen's love is not for me—and I forebode it is not, though I'm not yet ready to resign all hope—I shall take it for a sign that a kind fate is sparing her the woeful doom of a drunkard's wife." He added, after a brief pause, during which a deep melancholy settled upon his face, "Sometimes a man is doomed from his birth; from the beginning he moves on to a prefixed destiny, and all his struggles to save himself from the end he fears, avail nothing."

My reply combatted Clark's fatalism with all the arguments I could command, but I soon saw that his views on the subject of his destiny were fixed; that with all his cheerful courage, and calculating boldness, there was in his nature that strange vein of superstition or fatalism which

has marked so many military heroes:—Hannibal, Alexander, Cæsar, Robert Bruce, Frederick the Great, and others less renowned. Nor can one lay the fatalistic views Clark held to the charge of his religion. Though Scotch-Irish by birth, he knew no more of Presbyterian doctrines than did Father Gibault, and he had no religious principles.

Clark, as I have said, was a fatalist, though he had no religion. I was and am a Presbyterian, yet I have always believed in cause and effect, the working of natural laws to natural ends. Nevertheless, though it be apparently a contradiction, I believe in an overruling Providence, and the care of God over the most insignificant of His creatures. Therefore, when I knew myself to be ill, on that last day of our return march, and said to Clark, "It seems, after all, comrade, as if fate meant to settle this matter of rivalry between us," I meant it not as it was said, but as Clark might look upon it. My future lay, I knew, in God's hands, and even in that hour of evil apprehension—for I realized that my illness would be a long and serious one—I felt satisfied to leave it there, and to trust my life and Ellen's to His guidance.

A faith that can sustain a man, and leave him calm and undismayed in each crisis of his life, is worth much to him—call it by what name or sect, distinguish it by whatsoever creed, you will. And these small variations of our small minds, are, I conceive, little taken into account by the Infinite, who knows we are but children, in mental and spiritual development, and values our faith and our honest striving without regard to the creeds with which we confuse ourselves.

CHAPTER XXIII

Beyond this comforting assurance of my religion, there was but one idea floating through my confused and fever-consumed brain, and that was a longing vision rather than an idea—a vision of my mother's downy, rose-scented beds; and then, as next best, of the heaps of feathers, covered with gay Indian blankets, which constituted the pride of the Kaskaskian homes. Oh, to feel a thick pillow under my head, to stretch my aching limbs on the yielding feathers! It was the one thing in life I wanted. I longed for rest as a tired infant longs for his mother's soft breast, and tender arms. The hope of it alone gave me courage to drag my weighted feet over the last two miles of our way.

It was a little strange that the realization of the bliss of repose was my first conscious thought after an illness of many days, so that I could never realize that more than a night had intervened between the longing and the realization, the agony and the relief. My first conscious moment lasted just long enough for me to appreciate the comfort of my couch; almost immediately I sank again into sleep or unconsciousness. The next time I came to myself I was not only wide awake, but alert and curious as I opened my eyes to note my surroundings. They were rough limed walls with a low sloping ceiling; bright-hued Indian rugs were upon the floor, and half-burned logs on heavy dog-irons, with sputtering candle ends, burning upon a round stand, in the farthest corner. In the shadow of the corner sat a figure, its head against the wall. Some one had been good enough to sit up all the night with me, and now that day was breaking, his eyes could be kept open no longer, and he had fallen into a doze. I would be very quiet and not wake him.

Presently the figure stirred, rose and came to the bedside. I recognized Clark, even in the dimness of the gray dawn.

"You have been watching me, my Colonel?" I questioned, trying to smile, and to put out the hand that was too feeble to answer to my will. Clark came closer, saw my purpose, gave my hand a warm pressure, and lifted me a little higher on my pillows.

"Have I been very ill?" I asked.

"You have been near enough the happy hunting ground to know the way, my lad. But, thank God, you are better, and will live long enough, I trust, to forget the route before you take another journey in that direction."

"Where are we?"

"In Kaskaskia, in one of the loft rooms of the Commandant's house."

"Is Ellen below?"

"Yes, and asleep, I hope; she and Angélique tend you by day, Légère, Givens and I by night; but you must not talk yet a while; that's Dr. Lafonte's orders. Drink this and go to sleep."

I obeyed like a child, settling myself deeper in the feathers, with a sigh of content.

Upon my third awaking, I recognized Ellen's voice, and felt her soft hand upon my brow.

"Ellen!" I whispered, and opened my eyes to look at the face bending above mine with the rapture a saint might feel upon seeing some beatific vision, long prayed for.

"Do not talk, Cousin Donald," she said, beaming a smile of cheerful affection upon me; "Dr. Lafonte says you must be very quiet for a few days more."

I managed, despite my weakness, to get hold of her hand, and clung to it feebly. "I will be

perfectly quiet," I answered in tones so weak that I wondered if it could be really I who was speaking, "if you will sit beside me and hold my hand."

She smiled, flushed a little, and as she held a glass of cordial to my lips said coaxingly, "If you'll drink this and go to sleep, I will." Then she sat down beside me, and held my nerveless fingers in her warm, soft clasp, till I was dreaming an odd jumble of pleasant visions through all of which flitted Ellen's face and form.

This sort of half dream life went on I know not how long. I only remember an incident here and there—floating faces, cups held to my lips, and then the pleasant drifting off into long periods of dreamless rest. At last I was strong enough to sit part of each day in a high-backed chair, and after that I saw little of Ellen. She came twice each day for a brief visit, but Angélique brought my broth and wine, helped me from bed to chair, smoothed my pillows, and sometimes sang me to sleep with wild, sweet Acadian ballads. Clark came in and out with cheery presence, and encouraging words—but now that summer had come again he had more affairs to administer, and so less time to give me. Givens would linger, though, when he came on his daily visit, to tell me the gossip of the village, of which the half wild, half drowsy life suited him well. Légère and others visited me almost daily, and my monotonous life was not a lonely one, though forced inaction grew more and more irksome as my strength returned.

"Clark," I said to him one day, "I can't stand this suspense any longer. I want to know all, even if it be the worst. Since I am better, Ellen comes in only when others are here, and makes prompt excuses to get away. Her kindness is barely cousinly. And you too seem to avoid being left alone with me. Have you spoken to Ellen?"

"Yes, I have spoken—though to do so, comported not fairly with our compact. But my feelings overmastered me. I have avoided telling you till you should be stronger."

"I am strong enough now," I answered, though I trembled from head to foot; "tell me all—and quickly."

"It was one evening when we thought you dying. I followed her from the room, and was moved to tell her your last words to me—when you left her to my care, and bade me give her perfect freedom in the disposition of her life, but left us your blessing could she love me enough to link her fate with mine. She wept afresh at the recital of your words; and then with friendly candor there was no mistaking, thanked me for my love, and accepted my offer of protection, even while she told me that whether you lived or died there was no hope for me. Her quiet decision awed me, and forced back all the protestations I had formulated against her vow of nunnery. She declared it was no rash or hasty one, made to be repented of, but that she held it to be more sacred and binding than any other claim upon her heart and life, and that she waited only for your restoration to health to go, under Father Gibault's escort, and yours, if you would, to the convent at Quebec."

"Comrade," I said, putting out my shaking hand to clasp his, "that is not the news I expected—but it is much more distressing to me."

"Perhaps I am wrong to tell you, and am but making the harder for you the final disappointment," continued Clark after a silence of some moments, during which he seemed to be thinking deeply, "but I am not convinced that Ellen looks forward to the life of a nun. I believe she once made a foolish vow and thinks it sacrilege to break it. And if I can read a woman's heart through her face, McElroy, Ellen O'Neil feels for you a tenderness that is neither usual nor natural for a woman to feel towards one she regards only as a distant kinsman. I believe she loves you—yet I cannot honestly say I think you will win her. Her will is strong, and her religion has so far been the dominant principle of her life. One side of her nature is fitted to the martyr's role, the other side is strongly human—throbs with the full current of youth, loves daring and doing, experiencing and enjoying, even as you and I. Which part of her complex nature will triumph I cannot foresee. This I can say honestly, comrade," and Clark laid a hand upon my knee, and his truth-speaking eyes looked straight into mine, "even with my own grievous disappointment fresh upon me, I would see Ellen the happy and joy-giving wife of my true-hearted friend with delight, compared to the feeling with which I shall see her the self-immolated 'bride of the church'—which is, in my opinion, but another name for victim to superstition and priestly tyranny. The fates grant that you may win her, McElroy."

An hour I sat in deep thought—then I made my vow. If in Ellen's heart there dwelt but the weakest germ of love for me, it should grow on until it uprooted all other influences. I bade the whole Roman Church defiance. A girl's superstition to come between Ellen and her life's fulfillment? between me and lifelong happiness? I swore it should not be! She should love me more and more till love mastered her, choking superstition and conquering her will. Once convinced, she would see it all as I did, and be glad all her life that I had saved her from a fatal mistake. I girded myself afresh for the conflict, as it were, each hour of the days that followed, and planned my campaign against a maiden's heart as carefully as a general plans an advance into the enemy's country. My first move must be to keep her from reaching a final decision as long as possible; my second to take her, upon some pretext, back to the valley with me.

Meanwhile I hastened my recovery by every means possible, watching impatiently the summer moving on to autumn. From my window I could see the slow, gliding river, glancing in the sun's rays, and the stagnant, spreading bayous, gay with spotted lilies, and fringed with swaying grasses, while birds, as gayly colored as the blossoms, rode blithely upon the springy reeds. The

meadows were green with waving corn, or yellow with the ripened grass, and the rich odor of the wild grapes came upon the breeze with other and more elusive fragrances. But gliding river, reed-fringed bayou, and luxuriant meadow, were not half so fair to my real vision as the dear valley to my imaginary one. I longed to see the undulating blue ranges, and the varied landscape, with the comfortable farmhouses dotted over it. I was eager to be off for home, to hear the late news from the war, and to bear Ellen away from Romish influences.

At last spirit could wait the body's leisure no longer, and though still weak and emaciated, I made a firm resolve to start for home within a week or two. Then I sent Angélique with a message to Ellen, demanding a private interview.

"Your message is earnest, almost peremptory, Cousin Donald," said Ellen, coming in with a playful smile on her lips; "am I to have another scolding, and for what? My conscience acquits me this time; I have stopped coquetting with the officers, or walking alone without the village; therefore I know not what wrong I have done to deserve a kinsman's reprimand."

"'Tis not to scold, but to entreat that I have sent for you, Ellen," I replied. "Will you sit down here before me, and give me your serious attention for a brief while?" Perhaps it was the tone of my voice, or it may have been that my face betrayed me, for Ellen flushed and dropped her lids an instant over her eyes, as she took the chair I had indicated, yet saying with an air of banter:

"My 'serious attention,' Cousin Donald? You plead for it as if 'twere a rare favor, and one most difficult to obtain;—am I so seldom serious?"

"Two weeks from to-day, Ellen, I start back to Virginia," ignoring her playful manner; "my duty calls me thither; but I cannot leave you here in Kaskaskia without lawful guardian or protector. You have long known, Ellen, that I love you with my whole being, that the dearest and most sacred wish of my heart is to make you my wife. Will you marry me, Ellen, and go back to Virginia to a home of your own, with the protection and constant devotion of one whose whole life shall be dedicated to your happiness?"

The flush on Ellen's cheeks leaped upward to her brow in a flame of crimson; her eyes grew darker; and upon her face came a look of mingled sorrow, yearning and resolve.

"Oh, my cousin, have I not said it often enough," with the sob-suggesting catch, vibrating like harp tones through her words—"that never can I be wife to any man? Do even you believe that all this time I have been jesting on a subject so sacred—that I have but used pretense of holy calling as a coquettish wile to lure men on? Yet how can I find fault with you for having thought so, since my life has so belied my words? I have been naught but a frivolous coquette these months past—as if I would get all of worldly triumph, and food for vanity possible out of my life, during the respite which circumstances have afforded me from the fulfillment of my vow. Mine has been lip service, only, not yet have I known true heart consecration. But I will know it, Donald, will possess the true nun's heart, if all of self must be immolated by hourly chastisement and self-denial to achieve it. I have solemnly pledged my life to prayer, and penance, and holy service. Will not you, Cousin Donald, my only friend and protector, my one source of human strength, help me to keep my vow to God?" and she clasped her hands in passionate entreaty, and lifted moist eyes and trembling lips to my serious gaze.

"Dear Ellen!" and I spoke with a new emotion of respect for the depth of her feeling, "I want more than aught else to help you, but I do not fully understand, nor see the reason for your being so determined, and feeling so strongly—will you not tell me all, so that I can better understand you? When was this vow you speak of made?"

"That bitter night I was lost upon the mountain, when, numb with cold, and shaken with terror of the wolves pursuing us, I fell from the rearing horse, frightened too by the wild beasts, and lay there in agony of fear and pain, through long hours, listening to the wolves, as they chased the poor horse, and each moment expecting to feel their fangs in my flesh. I prayed as never I had prayed before, to the Holy Virgin and her sacred Son, promising to consecrate all the rest of my life to prayer and humble service, in some rigorous convent, if they would send me deliverance from a violent death. Even as I prayed I fell into sleep, or unconsciousness, and awoke in Father Givens' house. He nursed me back to health, and I had it in my mind to induce him to take me to Baltimore to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, had you not come by with the message from Mr. Jefferson. I saw the scout's desire was to go with you, and I would not stand between him and his wish. Already he had done too much for a willful girl who had no claim upon his charities, save the claim of common humanity. I gave all my energies to persuading him that a life of adventure appealed to me even more strongly than the life of a convent retreat, and so fed his inclination to join in the adventure that he could not resist it. At last he consented to purchase for me the coveted disguise as his foster son, and when once he had seen me wear it, and watched my rifle practice, he grew interested in my plans, and made no further difficulty.

"For the first weeks I was buoyed by the spirit of excitement, and enjoyed the free, outdoor life I had been accustomed to as a child. Not until you and Thomas joined us did I realize the boldness of my deed. I dreaded to have you find me out, yet I could not bear to be left behind in Kentucky. What the result might be haunted my thoughts and my dreams. Again I added daily vows to daily prayers. Were I safely delivered once more, delivered from the coil of questionable circumstances with which I had rashly surrounded myself, I would without delay, find my way to some peaceful convent and atone for all my willful past by years of devout consecration. You know how wonderfully I was delivered—was spared even blame or question; how fortunately I have since

been placed.

"Were not all my prayers heard and answered? Dare I then break my vows—lie to the holy Virgin and her sacred Son? Accept divine deliverance, and repay with broken promises, violated oaths? Could you love and trust a wife who would come to you with a sacrilege upon her conscience?"

"My dear one!" answering her solemnly, as she had spoken, and taking the fluttering fingers firmly in my own to still them; "I will not ask you to violate a vow you regard so sacredly. I will live all my life with an unsatisfied longing, an aching, hungry heart, rather than to say one word to urge you against your conscience. But I think you reason and feel morbidly. Is there no other life of consecration to God's service for a woman than that to be found behind convent walls? Think you the life of wife and mother less holy, less self-sacrificing, of less savory incense to God than that of a nun?

"What service can a nun render to God that a consecrated wife and mother may not offer Him? Prayer? Does not the wife pray with added fervor—for herself, that she may live a worthy exemplar to those she loves—for them, with more earnest zeal because love prompts each petition—and for all the world more fervently because those she lives for are a part of it. Deeds of unselfish charity? Are they less in God's sight, believe you, than the daily immolation of her own wishes which each true wife practices upon the altar of domestic duty. And what need we most in this new world? Is it not consecrated men and women to spend all the powers of their being for peace, purity and enlightenment? We hope to found in this virgin land a wondrous republic where freedom of conscience and equal opportunities will be offered to the downtrodden of all nations. But we may not hope to perpetuate such republic, unless there be noble women—women of the unusual intelligence and gifts with which God has honored you—to strive with us toward that ideal."

"There is truth in most you say, Donald," a glow answering mine on her face, her hands still and warm now in mine; "you move me always by your calm reasoning. Yet I am bound by my vow. Did I let my selfish inclinations plead, I might easily persuade myself that your logic is as true for me as it would be for another, not so solemnly pledged as I am. But the very leaning of desire warns me to guard my sacred promises the more sturdily against temptation." In her earnestness she did not realize the half confession she had made, but my heart leaped within me, and a quiver of joy thrilled to my finger tips.

"Tell me, Ellen," and I held her hands in a tighter clasp, and claimed the full gaze of her eyes, "had you never made this vow, could you consent to be my wife—would there have been hope of happiness for me?"

"Oh, Donald!" a cry of entreaty, following the blush that swam upward to the roots of her hair, "it is not fair to ask me—you have promised to help me—you should not make my duty so hard—so very hard for me."

I kissed the hands now cold and trembling again, not with passion, but with reverence on my lips, and laid them gently on her knee; then said, with a mighty effort at self-control—for I would have given the world to take her in my arms, and dared hope she would find it hard to resist me:

"Forgive me, Ellen; I will ask you nothing; you shall follow your duty as you see it. If you feel your promise binds you to the utmost self-sacrifice, I shall use no power your confidence has given me to persuade you from your duty. But why should you remain in this wilderness unprotected—for I must needs follow my soldier's duty back to Virginia—waiting the uncertain chance of safe convoy to Quebec, when you could go under my escort to the valley, stay there with your lawful protectors till the war is over, and then be escorted by them, with due consent and proper honor to your chosen retreat in Baltimore? There you will not only have wider sphere of usefulness among people of your own race and language, but you will be near your parents' graves and in reach of your relatives, should they need you, or you them. There I might even visit you sometimes—it would be a consolation and a joy had I only the happiness to hold your hand an instant, and to catch the old dear smile through the grating of convent bars.

"Moreover, Ellen, though I say this not in harshness, you would feel, I think, surer of God's blessing on your sacrifice if you were to enter your holy life at peace with all men—without bitterness in your heart toward the unfaithful guardians to whom your parents left you."

"That thought has troubled me," said Ellen, tears springing to her eyes, and making a soft film over their velvet blueness; "it does not seem meet for me to take the sacred veil with a spirit unforgiving and unforgiven. I would welcome the opportunity to beg Uncle Thomas' forgiveness, and to apologize to Aunt Martha for my willfulness. I had no wish, believe me, Donald, to cause them suffering. I thought to relieve Uncle Thomas of an obstacle to his domestic happiness, and Aunt Martha of a source of much annoyance. Remorse has pursued me since I knew of Thomas' following me, that he was willing to desert his parents and his religion for me. I made what reparation I could by sending him back to them, and his nature is not one to grieve long. If you, Cousin Donald, would but carry to them my repentance, and obtain their forgiveness, and their consent to my taking the veil, I might be able to do sufficient penance for my other sins."

"The truest reparation you can make them, Ellen, the one they would most value, and which will alone relieve them from the reproach of their consciences, and the odium of their neighbors, will be to go back with me, live in peace and amity with them for a time, and go from them in kindness to your convent seclusion."

"It is indeed a cup of humbling you would hold to my lips," said Ellen, paling suddenly—"yet doubtless I need to drink of that very cup. Pride, I think, is my besetting sin."

"Pride and love of your own will, Ellen,—unseemly faults for a fair and gentle woman—yet offset by rare virtues."

"Do not flatter me, Donald; let me face the truth; in showing me my real self, you are my truest friend. Pride and self-will! when I should possess 'a meek and quiet spirit,' and 'an humble and a contrite heart' before I shall be ready for my holy calling."

"May it not be, Ellen, that you are mistaking your determination to fulfill a rash vow, made under exciting circumstances, for a true call founded on real consecration of heart and spirit? Talk with Father Gibault; he is a holy man, yet a just and reasonable one; tell him all, and ask him to help you to determine your path of duty. Then come and tell me your decision—and with God's help, dear one, I will add to yours all my strength and courage, to enable you to follow where your conscience leads you. But oh, Ellen, will you not tell me once, just once, that you do love me, and would give yourself to me if you were free?"

"Donald! Donald! you must not disturb my soul by such entreaties!" she cried in pleading tones. "Do you not see that if once it were said, it could never again be unsaid?" and she left me hastily, her head drooping like a flower upon its stalk.

CHAPTER XXIV

What if Father Gibault's priestly zeal should prove stronger than the common sense, and sound humanity, I credited him with? What if he should conclude that the immolation of two lives was necessary to the saving of one soul? Should strengthen Ellen's superstition as to the sacred obligation of her impulsive vow? Well! in that case I should have two strong forces to war against, Ellen's superstition, and a priest's influence. But I had no thought of resigning Ellen until the authority of the Roman Church had put her forever beyond reach of my hopes. She had been created for love, and happiness, for the duties and ties of earth; once the fervor of self-sacrifice had exhausted itself, she would be miserable in a convent. I thought I knew her nature better than she understood it, and meant to save her from self-immolation for a happier life, and one, I truly believed, not less holy in God's sight. As impatient as I was to take once more my part in the struggle waging beyond the Alleghanies, I meant not to leave the Illinois Country until Ellen had consented to go with me, or was immured for life behind convent walls.

Father Gibault was with her when she came to me the next morning, and my heart beat fast with apprehension; his presence seemed to convey a hint of doom to my hopes. Ellen's face was very serious, but rigidly self-controlled, and about her was an air of unaccustomed meekness and humility.

"The Father has made my duty plain, Cousin Donald," she began; "I must go back to the guardians to whom my parents left me, and go from them to my seclusion, when, by meekness and obedience, I have won their forgiveness; I must shrive myself for the holy life by conquering will and pride," and she turned and left us, without having once lifted her eyes to mine. But my first point was gained, and my heart beat more calmly as I turned to Father Gibault, still standing by the window, looking pensively upon the landscape, to exclaim vehemently:

"And you think a rash vow, made by a child, under stress of fright and suffering, obligatory, Father Gibault? You will allow this girl to feel herself doomed to self-immolation because of an irresponsible promise to her own excited conscience? Cannot you foresee that she will live a long life of regret, and unavailing struggle against natural inclinations? And can you believe a half-hearted sacrifice, an immolation of the body only, is more likely to fit Ellen for Heaven, or more sure to do God's service, than the thrice holy calling of Christian wife and mother?"

"You are vehement in your argument beyond necessity, monsieur," answered the Father, in his soft precise English, and smiling calmly at me from the chair in which he had seated himself, while I strode up and down the room excitedly.

"The matter excuses vehemence," I answered. "Have you not guessed that I love my Cousin Ellen, that I wish her for my wife? And I would have good hope of winning her but for this absurd superstition of your cold and bigoted faith, that a fair and innocent young woman does honor to God by shutting herself up and doing penance—thus perpetuating a heathen custom, originating in the need of unprotected women for a place of refuge in a lawless age, to a more civilized time, which has greater need of the example and the inspiration of holy matrons, than for useless bead-counting nuns."

"You have unsuspected fluency of the tongue, Captain McElroy," and Father Gibault's habitual expression of gentle benevolence had given place to one of droll humorousness. "Priest though I be, and with mind, I trust, fixed usually on holier things, I could not easily have blinded myself to signs of earthly love so evident as those you have shown for your cousin. I guessed many things when the maiden lay ill of fever last autumn, and you haunted my steps for news of her. I wonder not that you love Ellen O'Neil. A maiden more sweet I have not known, nor one better worth a man's heart. When I learned of her vow, I thought first of you, with much sympathy, and fearing

that her convictions were but the expression of extreme sensibility natural to girlhood, I was most careful not to say aught to fix them into resolve. Later, seeing that she took a maiden's natural pleasure in her small court, and that her influence over Colonel Clark and the rest of you was good, softening and restraining you, I soothed Ellen's unquiet conscience, and showed her that the holy God had given her a present work she could not wisely abandon until the way was opened to her. Moreover, I advised her to test farther her heart, and to be sure of full, free consecration before she should take the holy vows of a nun. Neither the Supreme God nor the holy church value half-hearted service, and such vow as Ellen made is binding only so long as conscience, will, and heart are in full accord. Ellen goes with you, Captain McElroy, free in conscience, unfettered by priestly admonition."

These words of Father Gibault's lifted a weight from my heart. I seized both his hands, and shook them gratefully, saying: "You are as honest and as true hearted as I thought you, Holy Father," calling him for the first time by the reverend title the Kaskaskians gave him. "I have not words sufficient to express my appreciation of your interest in my happiness and your regard for Ellen's welfare."

"I have advised you both as my conscience dictates," he answered, resuming the expression of benevolence, blended with worldly abstraction, and the tone of fatherly authority usual to him. "In doing so I have shifted my responsibility for Ellen O'Niel's future to you, until she is safe in her uncle's home; even then you must share jointly with her other kinsmen the trust which I, as her priestly guardian, have transmitted to you. Had I not full confidence in your honor, and your manly faith, Captain McElroy, I could not give you so delicate a charge with free conscience. You are to conduct this maiden in all safety and honor to her uncle's home; you are to leave her there in unmolested peace for at least one year—longer if she desires—and then allow her to choose, with absolute freedom, between your love and a nun's life. She is to choose, I repeat, freely, as her heart dictates and her conscience approves. Meantime, while she is under your sole guardianship you are to take no slightest advantage of her unprotected state, nor even of her new-found humility, to wring from her any promise or to exact any condition; you will not so much as trouble her with protestations, nor frighten her with appeals and entreaties."

"Most solemnly, I promise all, Holy Father," and I raised my eyes and hand to Heaven; "in no way will I trouble Ellen's peace for a full year; I will conduct her in honor and safety to the care of her lawful guardians, who shall in future be accountable to me for her happiness; and if she shall adhere to her resolutions to take nun's vows, my mother shall escort her to the convent she may choose."

"You leave for Virginia at once, Captain McElroy?"

"In ten days, if my cousin can be ready so soon."

"You will take all the brightness from Kaskaskia with Ellen, and leave many sad hearts behind. Others go with you?"

"Captain Bowman and twenty of his company."

"You make the journey by water?"

"To the headwaters of the Alleghany; there I shall procure horses, and we will make our way to the valley by the nearest pass."

Givens, after much deliberation with himself and others, concluded to remain with Colonel Clark; there was strong possibility, indeed, that he would settle in Kaskaskia for the rest of his life. Only one thing seemed to mar his content—that he would have fewer opportunities in the Illinois country for killing Indians than in Kentucky, or almost anywhere else in our borders. Colonel Clark had concluded an alliance with all the tribes in that part of our territory, and was very positive in his instructions that no quarrel was to be stirred up among them, and no excuse whatever given them to molest the whites, and they seemed equally to desire to live in friendly relations with the Americans.

"Wut in ther name uv all ther saints en all ther holies," said Givens, who had been almost converted to the Catholic faith, "Cunnel Clark mout be hevin' en his mind I doan' know—but, ef he'd er listened ter me he'd never made no sich er terms with ther murderin' savages es ud lef no chance fur er man ter git his revenge on 'em fur injuries es is more an human flesh en blood ought ter be axed ter forgive."

Ellen parted with Givens, Father Gibault, and the faithful Angélique and her many friends in Kaskaskia, with heartfelt sorrow, and they from her with evident grief. It seemed, at the last, almost cruel to take her away from so much tenderness, and sympathy, to a cold, loveless atmosphere. I, too, bade them, and gay Majore Légère, and genial Dr. Lafonte, farewell, and took my leave of the pleasant village of Kaskaskia with genuine regret.

The parting with Clark was a real heart wrench. He had said good-by to Ellen cheerfully, even gayly,—for it was not his way to wear heart on sleeve—presenting her with a large Indian basket

full of amulets, chains of shells, small totems, rugs, blankets, beaded moccasins, and other curious things of Indian workmanship, to remind her, he said, of a year's life among savages, red savages and white:

"The happiest year of my life," said Ellen, beaming gratitude upon him for his cheerful and unselfish God-speed to us; "and also the most glorious of Colonel Clark's. I go back to chant the victories, both in war and diplomacy, of our American Hannibal!"

"The comparison is too flattering, Queen Eleanor," said Clark, but I knew he was pleased. I thought of Hannibal's end, even as I saw the force of Ellen's comparison, and a sad premonition was borne in upon my mind, adding to my grief at parting with him.

"If our expedition has been successful, even beyond our hopes," added Clark, "most of the credit is due to my loyal officers and my brave men. Especially must I share any glory that is mine with this brave, true comrade," and he laid a hand upon my shoulder, and looked into my eyes with his own bold and piercing ones, softened to the tenderness of a woman's. I knew this generous speech was made to forward my cause with Ellen, and I choked in my throat as I grasped his hand again, and, when I had given him one look of thanks, must needs turn aside to regain control of my feelings.

"If you needed me, Clark, I could not leave you," I found voice, presently, to say; "I but go to fight for our cause beyond the Alleghanies. But never can I have a commander more honored, or more beloved."

"Success to you, McElroy, in war and peace!—in all things you may have at heart!" he answered me, also much moved; "and when you have won all you strive for I shall come to rejoice with you. Farewell, comrade!"

"Farewell, Queen Eleanor! A pleasant journey and a pleasant home-coming! Forget me not in your prayers, sweet saint!" and he bent and kissed her hand, then handed her into the boat with a courtly grace which well became him.

He was still standing upon the wharf, when we made the first bend in the river—his arms folded, his gaze fixed upon the receding boat, as if he saw it but as part of a vision. We waved to him, but he did not move. The virgin freshness of the early morning, and the roseate radiance of the newly risen sun brought out, with added force, the heroic proportions and carriage of the man, silhouetted like a carven statue, representing human will, against the far sweeping, luxuriant bluffs, crowned with the growth of centuries, marking that vast and opulent territory which his single purpose had won and held for his country.

Floating down the river through the soft October haze on our comfortably fitted flat boat was ideal journeying. Often now when I fall into reveries, I live over again those golden autumn days, and see the rich and varied landscape through which we drifted with the swift current of the majestic Mississippi.

Ellen spent the days and half the nights on deck, protected from sun and dew, by the overhanging roof of the little cabin in which she slept. She had her own chair which Clark had ordered conveyed on board from the commandant's house, and there were thick Indian mats for her feet. I sprawled on these, hour after hour, making talk to amuse her, or listening to her when she pleased to entertain me, and entirely content were she silent, or talkative, gay or pensive, so only there was no shadow of regret upon her face. But one thing was lacking,—a book or two to read from. In lieu of them we told each other stories we had read, or repeated passages, prose or poetry, as we could remember. Ellen gave me long extracts from Shakespeare. I recited parts from "The School for Scandal"—that being, in truth, all the poetry I had learned by heart since my schoolboy days, and, seeing Ellen was interested, described the costumes we wore at its playing in Philadelphia, and the appearance and air of the players. From that I was led on to talk of the society I had mingled with in Philadelphia, and then of the Bufords and their kindness to me. Ellen's questions and shrewd guessing brought me at last to narrate the whole story of my whilom infatuation for Miss Nelly, and the narrow escape I made from being led to play a traitor's part by her wiles.

"She must be loyal Tory, indeed," was Ellen's comment, "or else she knew you less than her opportunities permitted, for she risked her happiness most rashly."

"Her happiness was little at stake, I have thought since; had she truly loved me she would have prized my honor more."

"She is fair and very winsome, did you say?"

"Yes; her manner wins you whether you will or no, and her beauty is of a kind to bewitch—to lead a man on like a swamp light, till, before he realizes his danger, he is hopelessly entangled."

"Would she not resume her sway over you were you to see her again?"

A throb of joy set my blood bounding at this question. Did it not suggest a twinge of jealousy in Ellen's heart? And the thought modified my answer somewhat.

"Can a man ever measure the influence of a woman's beauty and fascination upon him? Miss

Buford bewitched me once; she might be able to do so again—unless my heart had some firm anchor to hold by."

Ellen sighed lightly, "I wish you had been born a Catholic, Cousin Donald."

"Or you a Protestant, sweet Ellen."

Her eyes did not answer the playful smile in mine, nor did she, as usual, chide my endearment; instead, she sighed lightly again, and looked dreamily at the water, breaking about our boat in golden ripples under the slanting rays of a declining sun. "It were a difficult thing for a Catholic to be happy in the valley, Donald."

"When Mr. Jefferson has carried his statute of religious liberty it will not be. The persecuted become readily persecutors; but when we shall all enjoy complete religious freedom, such as this statute gives us, we shall be more liberal toward others. And when the war is ended, and we have formed a free government, we shall have ideals so lofty before us, and scope so broad for all our energies, that there'll be small time or inclination for narrow bickering about creed or doctrine."

"And this statute will be enacted?"

"Without doubt. It is one of Mr. Jefferson's cherished measures; and when peace is won, he with Mason, Henry and others, I among them, of divergent creeds, but a single ideal, are pledged to give all our energies to its enactment."

"The brave, I think, are ever liberal-minded," said Ellen, "yet they are stubborn too, fixed as adamantine in their principles." And then, as she was wont to do when the talk between us grew personal, she called Captain Bowman to her side and asked him laughingly, if he still thought a Catholic worse than an unbeliever, and priests monsters of superstition, now that he had lived among them, and had known good Father Gibault?

"If ever I have thought so I do no longer," replied Bowman. "The Kaskaskians are honest Christians, and have been faithful friends to us, while Father Gibault is, I must admit, the equal for piety and charitableness of any Presbyterian parson I have ever known."

"Then will you not tell them so in the valley?" pleaded Ellen; "cannot you, with good conscience, speak a kind word for a misunderstood and reviled sect?"

"But I have yet one serious objection to your church, Queen Eleanor, that it encourages the immuring behind convent walls such as you—women whom the world *needs* to leaven its sodden mass of selfishness and sin. Since you have relinquished your vow of nunnery, however, and are half willing to reward as he deserves this brave comrade of mine, I can heartily promise not only my tongue but my rifle also to your defense, and the defense of your religion—should there ever be need."

"But you misapprehend my cousin's purposes, Captain Bowman," I made haste to say; "she is not my promised wife; she but goes to her uncle's home under our protection, and from there, when she is fully ready, to a convent."

"Grant me your pardon for a soldier's bluntness," said Bowman with an embarrassed bow to Ellen; then followed my lead eagerly, as I broached another subject.

Fair weather attended us the entire route, with only summer showers now and then to drive us to the cabin's shelter; and placid currents made the rowing, when we came to ascend the Ohio and the Alleghany, easy work. More fatiguing was the landward journey, which Bowman, Ellen, and I continued, in company, across mountain range after mountain range, valley after valley. When the top of the last ridge was reached, and the fair land of the Shenandoah lay unrolled to my eager vision, I lifted my hat, and said aloud:

"Thank God! once more I am home!"

"Aye, thank God for this crowning mercy!" added Bowman devoutly. There it lay, the sweet, peaceful scene I loved better than nature's grandest efforts! My horse must have felt the joyful impetus throbbing in my heart and tingling through my nerves, for he quickened his gait to match my eagerness.

We were still some miles from home, and the sun was setting, when Bowman halted at a farm gate.

"A cousin of mine lives a mile beyond this meadow," he said, "and I shall spend the night with him. He will gladly welcome my friends, and since you cannot hope to reach home before midnight, McElroy, why not come with me? Queen Eleanor is already tired; see how her shoulders droop; and for an hour she has not spoken."

I thought I saw assent in Ellen's eyes and so answered him, "Thank you, Captain, for a kind suggestion. I accept gladly for my cousin, but I am too hungry for a sight of home to need rest. On the day after to-morrow, Ellen, I shall return for you."

"You are very thoughtful, Cousin Donald," said Ellen, in low tones, as Captain Bowman considerately rode up to the gate, and occupied himself with its fastenings. "You will break the news of my coming, and soften the way for me. Good-by—till Thursday." Then she added with a merry smile, "You may promise what you will for me; I shall be good, and meek, and humble; I will even learn the Shorter Catechism, and wear my beads and crucifix beneath my bodice. It is

easier to be good"—her expression changing to one of serious gratitude—"when one has a friend and sympathy."

"And love, you should say, also, Ellen. My tongue is bound by a promise, for a year, yet I wish you not to forget that I shall love you with unchanging devotion to the end of my life. Every breeze that caresses your hair, Ellen, every sunbeam that kisses your cheek, will bring a love message from my heart to yours. You cannot get away from my love, dear one, never again while you live! It will follow you even behind convent walls, should ever your conscience take you there. You will then bury my happiness as well as your own."

The words had sprung from my heart, and were spoken without premeditation. I realized, as soon as they were uttered, that they strained, perhaps, the strict letter of my compact with Father Gibault; yet when I saw the flush upon Ellen's cheeks, and met for an instant a tender glance, which seemed to beam without permission from those rare blue eyes, I did not regret the impulse which had made me speak. Who can set bounds to a lover's tongue, or demand of the eye of love that it express only what cold reason bids it say? Hearts have swayed heads since Adam listened to Eve, in the garden, and will to the end of time.

CHAPTER XXV

The messages I bore Ellen from Aunt Martha, when I rode to Mr. White's to bring her home, were ample in assurances of forgiveness and reconciliation, while Uncle Thomas' were full of affection and satisfaction at her return. Aunt Martha I found much changed; she looked not only older, but a new expression of meekness struggled with the habitual one of self-righteousness and indomitable will. Mother, ready as ever to make excuses for the faults of those she loved, declared that Aunt Martha's whole nature had been softened by recent chastenings, and that she had even lost her restless, bustling energy, so that one could spend, now, a peaceful afternoon with her and not be conscious of having interrupted a soap boiling, a candle molding, or a quilting. It was evident from my brief talk with her that Ellen's return was a great satisfaction; that she regarded it in some sense as a vindication in the eyes of husband, son, and neighbors. Thomas had just departed for Liberty Hall Academy to continue his ministerial studies, which was one reason, perhaps, that Aunt Martha could welcome Ellen sincerely. Especially had Thomas' full confession of all that had passed between Ellen and himself softened his mother's heart toward her, and increased her regret for past harshness.

Thomas, I found, had been most considerate, having given no hint to any one of my feelings toward Ellen. But I told my mother, as we sat talking, late into the night, and got her blessing, with a promise of profound secrecy, and whatever help she might find quiet opportunity to give me. All my own affairs were for the present as I would have them, and my heart would have been as light as thistledown but for the discouraging war news I had from my father.

The year that had given us such unbroken success, and such fruitful victories in the Northwest, had been one of disaster for the American cause in the East. The British still held New York; Fort Washington had been taken, Continental currency was depreciated in value till it was no longer possible to procure necessary army supplies; the troops had not been paid for months, and were ragged, poorly equipped, half starved, and mutinous. Georgia had fallen, and South Carolina sorely beset by home and foreign enemies, could not hope to hold out much longer unless strongly reënforced from without. Worse still, the gallant and patriotic Arnold had turned traitor, and a shuddering horror and apprehension was upon the land—since the noble and high-spirited Arnold could fall to such depths, might we not look for treason everywhere? On hearing all this discouraging news, I determined at once to visit Colonel Morgan, and to urge him, despite his physical infirmities and his justly wounded pride—for Congress had not yet raised him to the rank to which his past services had entitled him—to call together his scattered riflemen once more, and go to the help of the hard-pressed patriots of the sparsely settled South. And so I told Ellen as we rode together to Uncle Thomas'.

"Shall I feel as lonely, and as friendless when you are gone, I wonder, as I did the first time you left the valley with Morgan?" said Ellen with a light sigh.

"You were a child then," I answered, "and had few resources. Now you are sufficient to yourself. I fear you will not miss me half so much as you will the kindly Kaskaskians, and the good Father, and the faithful Angélique."

"Bless their memories! I shall miss them, and long for a sight of their kind faces. But, all the more, since they are so far away, I shall miss my one true and tried friend in the valley."

"Will you be very lonely and unhappy in the valley, Ellen? Would you have been far better contented had I left you in Kaskaskia?" I questioned anxiously.

"Father Gibault thought it my duty, Cousin Donald, and more and more I understand that it is the one right thing for me. I must find the way my God would have me walk by following the lowly path of duty, and by making reparation for past sins. Do you remember, Cousin, that night before you left the valley—when you found me star-gazing on the rock overhanging the spring?"

"Aye, Ellen! The vision of you, as you looked that night, has come back to me again and again—so

often that I began to question, long before I knew I loved you, as man loves but one woman in his life, what import the vision might have, and to wonder if it foretold the crossing of our lives in some fateful way. That picture was the last that floated through my dream the day I slept in the forest, when you saved me from the Indian's tomahawk."

"Memory, it seems to me, has mysterious power,—beyond our will to guide, or our reason to explain," Ellen replied. "That night of our farewell at the spring, the first fibers of affection and sympathy reached out from your heart to mine, and through all these months have stretched and held till they have grown strong enough to bring me back to my duty."

"May they grow yet stronger, Ellen, till our hearts are knitted together for life, and for eternity!"

Ellen's serious absorption was shaken by these words, and she blushed like any earthly minded maiden, as she answered:

"My heart will ever feel itself bound to yours by the fibers of a deep and strong affection, Cousin Donald, wherever my duty leads me. There can be no harm in a nun's cherishing gratitude and affection, nor in her offering hourly prayers for one who has been to her the noblest of friends."

"Your thoughts and prayers would be but cheerless consolation for a desolate life. I want your daily presence, Ellen, the hourly benediction of your smile. But, forgive me, dear,"—for I saw that her lips trembled like a grieved child's, and that a tear had slipped from underneath her lowered lids; "I am very weak. After all my promises I continue to disturb you with my arguing and beseeching. You shall have a year to think upon it all, and, meanwhile, I shall smother in my breast every word that my heart may urge to my lips."

My visit to Colonel Morgan was made before Christmas, and I returned home cheered by his promise to take the field early in the spring. Meanwhile I was put to my old work of enlisting recruits—a work much interrupted by the malarial chills which every second day tied me to the chimney corner. Gradually they wore themselves out, and by the faithful use of bitters concocted from the Peruvian bark Father Gibault had given me, I made myself fit for active duty by the early spring, and gladly joined Morgan. He had been almost grudgingly made general by Congress at last, and generously forgetting all past wrongs and differences had hastened to join Gates, after the woeful disaster of Camden.

But that unfortunate officer reaped now the fruits of his previous scheming and bragging, and fell rapidly from the favor of Congress, in which he had held so high a place since Saratoga. He was replaced by the capable General Greene, and roundly abused by the whole country. Having been sent into North Carolina with dispatches from General Morgan to certain officers of the State Militia, it was my good fortune on my return to fall in with grim backwoodsmen marching to meet and repulse the advance of Ferguson. I accepted temporary service under Colonel Campbell, and so had the honor of fighting beside those indomitable militiamen, who won the victory of King's Mountain—one of the most glorious incidents of our Revolution, and the turning point of disasters, from which events marched on, more and more successfully, to Cowpens and Yorktown. At the risk of wearying my readers with constant reiteration of the praises of the race from which I, proudly claim descent—though I have played fair with them, saying, in the beginning, that it was partly with the hope of repairing our historians' neglect of the Scotch Irish that this chronicle was undertaken—I must call attention to the fact that King's Mountain was a Scotch Irish victory, won by militiamen of that race. I doubt, indeed, if the plan could have been conceived, or if conceived could have been executed, by regulars. Men used to climbing mountains, and to the methods of Indian warfare, were needed to fight and win as the frontiermen fought and won at King's Mountain.

By the first of January our affairs in the South were more hopeful. Recently discouraged patriots, inspired by the victory of King's Mountain, flocked to General Greene's standard, and that able officer, supported by General Morgan and Colonel Washington, and aided by the daring bands led by Sumter and Marion, soon threatened Cornwallis on both his flanks, and by a series of surprises and sudden maneuvers so confused that military pedant that he did not know what next to expect, and hardly which way to turn. Having divided his army into two bodies, Greene skillfully avoided a drawn battle, and continued to threaten the British communications. For Cornwallis to sit still was to await his doom; to march against either army was to give the other an opportunity to win a fatal advantage. He, therefore, divided his own force, sending the renowned Tarleton to hold Morgan in check, while he drew Greene after him into North Carolina.

Morgan retired slowly before Tarleton's advance to some meadows, not far from King's Mountain, and there formed his men upon the field of Cowpens, on gently rising ground, with hills to the left, and a deep, broad river in the rear. There would be no chance for the militiamen to run, for, said Morgan, with grim humor, when they had reached the river's bank they would likely be willing to turn and fight again. We slept that night upon our chosen battle ground, and until past midnight General Morgan was abroad in the camp, inspecting arms, inspiring his officers, joking with his men, and telling them what they and the "old wagoner" would do for the British regulars the next morning.

To form in fighting line, according to prearranged plan, was but an hour's work, when Tarleton's advance was discovered, and time was still left for our General to ride down the line, encouraging and animating us with a few hearty words—such as he so well knew how to fit to each heroic occasion. A furious rush, Tarleton's favorite maneuver, drove in our front line of militia, as had been foreseen, after they had obeyed General Morgan's oft repeated command to fire at least two

volleys, at killing range, before breaking rank. But, behind the militia stood DeKalb and his Marylanders, and a tried company of Virginia Continentals, who met calmly the too confident pursuit of the British, and fought deliberately, till Colonel Washington's cavalry swooped down from the hills, attacking the enemy's right flank simultaneously with the charge of the militia, which had been re-formed, and marched around our position, on their left. Already entangled, by their over-eager pursuit of our first column, with their opponents, and now almost surrounded, the British fought on, gallantly but hopelessly. A bayonet charge from the Continentals in their front quickly brought about rout and panic, and nearly the whole British force engaged was killed or captured. Their loss was nearly one thousand; ours not more than seventy-five. No battle of our War for Independence was more skillfully planned, more boldly won, and to General Morgan, alone, belongs the credit for plan and execution.

A fortunately heavy rainfall cut off Cornwallis' pursuit, and gave us an opportunity to carry our prisoners across the Catawba. General Greene joined us here, escorted by a few dragoons, his force behind him. He had heard of Morgan's splendid victory, and pushed forward to help him reap the fruits of it. But Morgan was now attacked violently by his old enemy, rheumatism, and could not leave his tent; the gallant "old wagoner" who had never known defeat in battle, had more than once been vanquished by disease, the result, he bitterly admitted, of his own youthful excesses. A few weeks later he was forced to resign his command, and to return to his home.

That circumstance made easier for me the duty which had been assigned me—namely, to command one company of the militia which was to escort our seven hundred prisoners to Virginia. My latest service, on General Morgan's staff, had been most congenial to me, and even the honor now offered me of a similar position with General Greene did not console me for the loss of my first leader. The place would have been gratefully accepted, however, for I admired and trusted General Greene, both as man and leader—even with loss of the opportunity of a few days at home, and a glimpse of Ellen—had not a circumstance occurred which made me entirely willing to perform the duty which had been first assigned me. This circumstance was communicated to me by General Morgan.

"Whom, in heaven's name, think you I found this morning among our prisoners, McElroy? Young Buford—the pretty Nelly's brother, he who rescued you from Philadelphia prison hospital. He has a painful but not dangerous wound in the hip, for which reason he sent to me, asking for ambulance service, his wound having become inflamed from the march."

"Make him *my* prisoner, General?" I asked eagerly; "I claim no other share of the spoils."

"Eh? You'll hold him as hostage for his sister's favor—fair stratagem, I suppose. He'll be perfectly safe in your hands, doubtless, so I'll turn him over to you."

"To him and to his entire family I owe an obligation which can be repaid in kind only; this is a longed for opportunity."

"And what will you do with him?"

"Take him to my own home, even as he did me, and leave him to my mother's nursing, till he is well enough to be discharged."

"And no parole asked? The terms granted you were less generous."

"Buford did not make the terms; but if he had, I should still wish to surpass my enemies in generosity, as well as in bravery."

"Then you will decline Greene's offer of a place on his staff? I asked it for you, thinking this excursion to Virginia in charge of prisoners less to your liking."

"It was most kind of you, General, but for this find of Buford it would have been my choice—could the place be held for me?"

"It can be, doubtless, especially if you can bring back some recruits. Greene will need reinforcements, and must look to Virginia for them. But for these swollen and painful limbs of mine,"—with a grimace toward those much swathed members—"I should be the last to desert him. It's a bitter pill, lad, to be obliged to go home—to be chained by disease to my chair, like a galley slave to his bench, when my spirit is with the front ranks, against our country's enemies."

"It is a sore grief to me, also, General, and particularly that your malady should attack you now, when your newest laurels are still green, and there are more awaiting you. Your retirement takes half the heart out of me for the service, as it does for every rifleman in the regiment."

"That spirit must not be encouraged, lad. As much as it pleases me to be regretted by my gallant boys, it would sincerely grieve me were my going to affect in any way their zeal or bravery. I shall expect them to do no less than they have always done, indeed they must fight the more determinedly because their commander has gone stiff and lame and must be content to stand like a used up horse in the stall, munching memories for diversion."

"You'll get better after a rest, General, and be at it again before the war's over. Not even disease can conquer your spirit."

"Right, lad! If the war lasts long enough for my good Abigail to tea and poultice the swelling from my joints, I'll be at 'em again."

That evening I had Buford removed to my tent, where, presently, I visited him.

"I am sorry for the occasion, Captain Buford," I said, extending my hand to him, "but since it was written that this misfortune of war should befall you, I am grateful that the opportunity has come to me to repay in some degree the courtesy and kindness I received at your hands, when my situation was similar to your present one."

"It is indeed Donald McElroy!" Buford exclaimed, in pleased tones. "I am lucky in spite of this painful accompaniment to my good fortune," pointing to his bandaged thigh.

"You are now my prisoner," I said, "and your wound shall have the best attention possible."

"You are then in command of the militia which is to convey us to Virginia? Is it proper to tell me our final destination?"

"Yours, with your consent, Captain Buford, is my own home. My mother is the best of nurses. I promise you comfort and kind care, at any rate, if you will agree to the arrangements just made between Colonel Morgan and me."

"One would think me an urged guest, rather than a poor sick prisoner," answered Buford, a smile upon his face. He was much like Nelly, though his was strictly a masculine, as hers was purely a feminine, type of comeliness. "There is small likelihood that I shall decline so generous an offer—a comfortable home and woman's nursing are all too tempting for my present weakness."

"As was your offer to me in Philadelphia. It is seldom, I imagine, that a man is granted so high a boon as the opportunity to evince in fitting deeds his gratitude. Your mother and sister are well, I hope, and in safety?"

"My mother is dead, Captain McElroy, and I fear her constant anxiety for me hastened her end. Nelly, poor girl, is left lonely and desolate. She has taken refuge for the present with Quaker friends near the city."

I expressed my regret and sympathy, and left him to make arrangements for the march next day. His news oppressed my spirit more than one would have supposed; it was hard to think of light-hearted Nelly as a sad refugee. Oh, this weary, cruel war! When would it end?

CHAPTER XXVI

Buford's strength had been so burnt out with fever, and so wasted from the suppuration of his wound, that he was but the pale, limp outline of a man when I laid him gently on one of my mother's snowy beds. Had he been more than Tory, more than British officer, my dear mother would have received him kindly in his present state, and laid aside all other duties to care for him. It was good to see her hovering over him with gentle touch and to hear her say: "They were good to you, son, when you were in like condition. I am proud you brought him to me; he shall have every care, every comfort."

"Oh, brother, were you as ill as this, when he took you from the Philadelphia prison?" said Jean, tender commiseration on her face.

"Weaker, I think, only I had passed the stage of delirium into which he slipped only a few days ago. But look at me now! See how robust I am!" and I lifted her by the elbows to the level of my face, kissed her and set her upon her feet again, adding: "Buford will soon be as sound, with yours and mother's nursing."

"His mother and sister nursed you?"

"They had me well-cared for. I was over the worst when they found me."

"We'll nurse him carefully, dear Donald, you may be satisfied of that. Is he, though, really a Tory? He looks like a gentleman," glancing toward him as she spoke, as if she half suspected Buford of possessing hidden tusks and horns like some fabled monster.

"And gentleman he is, only his opinions do not agree with ours"; whereupon I laughed so merrily at Jean's shocked face that mother signed to us to leave the room, lest we disturb her patient. "Aye, little sister," I continued, "prejudice is a most strange thing! 'Tis like a pestilence in the air, poisoning even the most innocent and pure-hearted. Heaven, Jean, I doubt not, is a place where thought is as free as God's smile, and conviction untrammeled, save by love and knowledge of truth. Such state would almost be heaven, methinks, without other concomitants."

Jean, though the sweetest of little women, and well endowed with common sense, and all needful womanly reason, cared not, like Ellen, to follow the twistings and wanderings of thought, so she took me straight back to our subject.

"And if Captain Buford gets well, Donald, will they hang him because he is a Tory?"

"Do you suppose, innocent one, that we but fatten him for the halter? Either he'll be exchanged,

paroled, or discharged."

"Then he'll go back to fight more against us? Oh! Donald, I'm afraid I shall hate the poor man when he begins to get stronger, though he looks now so pitiable."

"It would be very hard to hate Buford, Jean. You'll forget he's in a sense our enemy. But, don't bother your little head about all this yet; perhaps Generals Greene and Washington may make peace with the British by the time Buford is strong enough to shoulder arms again. A few more victories like King's Mountain and Cowpens and it's done."

"What would then become of Captain Buford?" persisted Jean.

"He would be released, and could go back to Philadelphia, or to England, as he pleased. Perhaps his estate would be confiscated, and he might suffer other persecutions. There is much bitterness everywhere against the Tories," I responded.

"Poor gentleman!" she sighed; "perhaps we ought not to want him to get well."

"Nonsense, little Jean! Of course we want him to get well, and if he could be consulted he himself would choose to get well, you may be sure. A man worth the name wants to see the end of the play—to finish the game—to keep up life's battle while muscle and wind are left him to fight with. Do all you can to cure him, Jean, and leave his future in his own hands."

"And God's," she added reverently.

All this conversation I repeated to Ellen, during the few brief hours I had to spend with her. Then we went back to the subject of prejudice, and I talked out the convictions which Jean had not encouraged me to express. Ellen was broad-minded, open-souled—one of God's chosen transmitters from generation to generation of ever-widening truth. This talk between us upon the subject of prejudice, as to which we were already agreed, led on to a less general discussion, and gave me opportunity to drive, I hoped, another wedge between superstition and consecration. Presently I made the enquiry I almost dreaded to have her answer:

"Tell me of your daily life with Aunt Martha, Ellen; is each day still a trial to you, exercising all your fortitude and patience?" Her answer gave me my first heart's ease for weeks.

"No, Donald, I wonder, indeed, if it was ever so bad as I thought, or if my stubborn will and set defiance magnified the hardships I underwent, as a child, under Aunt Martha's discipline. However that may have been, I find her, now, disposed to give me full liberty, and to exact few duties. Indeed, it is of my own will that I relieve her of such duties as she will trust me to perform; and since her health fails more and more, she is obliged to let others do many things she once took upon herself."

"And she never asks you to go to church?"

"No, but twice I have offered to go. Father Gibault granted me absolution beforehand—as Elisha did Naaman—should I think it best to attend the Protestant meetings which my relatives frequented. And I have found the quiet church a better place to repeat my litany and aves than even my own room; the preacher's voice I can imagine to be the priest's intoning, and if I shut my eyes, I can see the candles, and smell the incense."

I smiled at this naïve confession. "But you make no signs, I hope," I said in pretended seriousness, which for a moment deceived her.

"I am careful to do so only under my tippet; and see! I wear my beads beneath my gown," and Ellen drew forth a small ebony cross and held it out for my inspection.

Thinking this scene over later, Ellen's religion seemed to me not only harmless—apart from her superstitious vow—but so much a part of her as to be lovable. It would nowise affect my confidence and love were my wife always a devout Catholic. Could I be one with her, though, in her religion; could I yield my own simple and sublime faith for hers?—to that question came a not uncertain negative. My reason and feelings repelled all the dogmas and practices so sacred to Ellen, as hers did those most congenial to my spirit! No! I would make no compromise with the woman I loved—the woman I would win for my wife. She must come to me trusting all, confiding all. There must be no terms of barter between me and my heart's love.

The company of militiamen I was able to take with me to General Greene was warmly welcomed, for many of the men of King's Mountain and Cowpens had refused to enlist for regular service, and General Greene was using all the skillful tactics of which he was master to avoid a drawn battle with Cornwallis' united army, until his own was strong enough to offer some hope of another victory. Defeat could not be risked just now, for that meant a resubjugated South, and then General Washington's dislodgement from Philadelphia and New Jersey, which would be the end of our hopes and our efforts. The battle of Guilford Court House, fought on the fifth of March, was claimed by the British as a defeat for the Americans; but Charles Fox realized, as General Greene did, its true import, when he said on the floor of the British Parliament:

"Another such victory as that of Guilford would destroy the British Army."

General Greene now retreated to Troublesome Creek and there awaited the expected pursuit. We did not know until later that General Cornwallis had lost a third of his force, nor that he was so encumbered with wounded, and so needy of supplies of all kinds, as to make pursuit impossible. Slowly he fell back into the Tory Highland Settlement at Cross Creek. We followed, at first cautiously, but more and more eager to dislodge and rout our enemy as we learned of his crippled condition. Our own lack of ammunition prevented our doing so, and General Cornwallis was perforce allowed to cross Deep River, near Ramsay's Mill. Both armies crouched here—like two angry lions, pausing in prolonged combat, and waiting but for strength enough to make again at each other's throats—for some weeks, the river between, with all its fords vigilantly guarded. We Continentals fared hardly, meanwhile, subsisting on ash cakes, and the black, stringy meat of the half wild cattle, raised on the pine barrens. The damp ground was our bed, and our ragged blankets and our tattered clothes were our only protection from the vagaries of the spring weather.

A bold decision of General Greene's relieved the strained situation. He would leave Cornwallis in his rear, and advance by rapid marches to the relief of South Carolina. If Cornwallis should follow him he would turn and give him battle;—if he should decide to march on northward to coöperate with Arnold in Virginia, the militia and General Lafayette must take care of him. His, General Greene's, task was to relieve the Southern States; he would stick to his work.

We advanced swiftly to Camden, held by a considerable British force, and sat down before it. Cornwallis still remained at Ramsay's Mill. The night before the fall of Fort Watson, which would give us Camden, General Greene sent for me to his tent. "Colonel McElroy," he began—I have found no opportunity to state my gradual rise in rank during my eight months of southern service,—"I wish to send important dispatches to Governor Jefferson, and for obvious reasons prefer to have them conveyed orally. I must have a trusty and well accredited messenger, and one perfectly familiar with the country, therefore I have chosen you. Say to Governor Jefferson that I believe it to be General Cornwallis' intention to advance into Virginia in an attempt to over-run and subjugate that state. Say to him, that I hope, with the assistance of Sumter's and Marion's rangers, without further reënforcements, to relieve the Southern States, and afterwards, if I am needed, I will gladly come to the help of Virginia. I would not have him think that I have deserted that noble commonwealth whose aid, more than that of any of the others, has enabled me to do what so far it has been possible to accomplish in this department. I know the bravery and loyalty of Virginians, and have no fears for the result there, but these over-ridden South Carolinians must have instant succor, if the State is not to be given over finally to the British and the Tories. Have you a fleet mount, Colonel McElroy?"

"The best that can be raised on my father's plantation, and bred from good English hunting stock."

"You will need to ride swiftly, and persistently. Once Cornwallis gives the order to advance—you know his habit—there'll be no delays, no deliberate marches."

"I fully realize that, General; I will lose no time."

"A somewhat circuitous route might be the safer: skirt the Highland neighborhood, though your route be lengthened thereby. It might be well to suggest to Governor Jefferson the extreme importance of guarding any army stores we may have left in Virginia, though doubtless the obvious necessity to do so will occur to him."

"Where shall I rejoin you, General?" I asked.

"I cannot say where one, two or three weeks may find me; it depends both on Cornwallis' movements, and our successes or reverses, as we attempt to relieve South Carolina. I would suggest that you do not try to rejoin me until ordered to do so. Should Cornwallis continue his advance into Virginia, Governor Jefferson will need you to help to raise and command the militia, doubtless. You may say that I but lend you to him, until the tide of invasion has been rolled back from your State."

Thanking General Greene for his confidence implied, I saluted, and went at once to my tent to make preparations for departure early the next morning.

Though General Cornwallis had the advantage of two days' start, I overtook him on the third day, and from that time distanced his encumbered movements every hour. Part of my way was over ground he had just traversed, part lay parallel with it, and more than one distressing scene came under my observation. Smoldering homes, barns, and hay ricks sent up a sodden smoke from all along the route, and several times I saw women and children sheltering, for lack of better place, under the eaves of half-burned ricks. Say the most one can for it, war at its best is but a grim and terrible necessity.

CHAPTER XXVII

My report but confirmed rumors of the approach of Cornwallis which had already reached Governor Jefferson, and I found him wide awake to Virginia's danger, against which he was taking every precaution his exhausted resources allowed. He received me with flattering remembrance of our former meeting, and an unaffected cordiality. Still more, he pleased me by the letter of introduction he gave me to General Lafayette, together with certain dispatches in which he spoke of me in terms of personal friendship. Among the dispatches was my special commission to raise reënforcements in the valley, with which I was to join Lafayette's command as promptly as possible.

This was my first meeting with the gallant and elegant Frenchman, under whom I was to serve during the remainder of our struggle. Morgan, Clark, Greene, and Lafayette were the four great leaders whom I followed during my eight years of military life. They were as different as four great souled men of war-like genius could well be—though between Morgan and Clark there was the kinship of spirits cast in primitive heroic mold, a like resemblance to Achilles, Priam, Alexander and other heroes of an earlier time—yet each of the four I could honor and love sincerely, serving him with exulting sense of privilege.

For this last emergency, recruiting was not needful. I did not find it necessary, indeed, to cross the mountain, for at its foot I met the grim militiamen of the valley, swarming to meet Tarleton. I had only to form them into a company, and march them to join Lafayette before he began his strategical retreat toward Fredricksburg, with the double object of protecting the manufactory of arms near Falmouth, and effecting a junction with the troops under General Wayne, ordered southward to reënforce us. Cornwallis followed Lafayette, taking a parallel course to the eastward of ours. Often not more than twenty miles separated us, and we dared not slacken our march for heat or storm while the winged Cornwallis gave chase. The junction with Wayne before a battle was forced upon us was General Lafayette's one hope of escape. And now, once more, it was the privilege of the Scotch Irish to render signal service to the cause. To my company, and that of Captain Mercedes, fell the posts of honor and danger. We were the scouts, the pickets, the couriers, and the rear guard on this skillfully conducted retreat.

We had nearly reached the ford on the Pamunkey we had been pushing for, when a force of the enemy overtook us and pressed upon our rear. General Lafayette halted and formed line of battle with the determination to make a desperate stand. I had been sent for to reconnoiter, on the first report of the enemy's advance, and soon discovered that it was only a patrolling force, and that the main body of the British was yet some distance in the rear of us. Hastening with this good news to General Lafayette, I found it more expeditious to travel for several miles along the road recently gone over by Cornwallis' reconnoitering force, and between that force and the British army. As was my rule when on scout service, my squad marched in close column, with detail of two in front, and two in rear, as special lookouts. The front lookout stopped suddenly, and seemed to listen; we approached quickly and heard also the confused sounds, with screaming, and hoarse wrangling, which had arrested their attention. Convinced that the force in front, whatever its uniform and purpose, could be but a small one, I ordered my men to advance at double quick, and, putting spurs to my horse, I came immediately around the bend in the road to the scene of action.

A squad of fifteen or more British soldiers surrounded an overturned post chaise, from the tangled harness of which, four frightened and struggling horses were being extricated by trembling postilions. In the midst of the group were two female figures, one dressed in black, and heavily veiled, the other in the costume of a lady's maid. It was she who continued to utter piercing screams, throwing her hands about in the most tragic manner, and paying no heed to her mistress' low spoken commands. We were within fifty yards of the group before the thud of our horses hoofs upon the sandy soil was loud enough to rise above this confusion of clamors; and before the mounted British could turn, or the dismounted leap upon their horses, we had surrounded them.

"Stack arms: You are my prisoners!" I called, "and what means this cowardly attack upon a lady's traveling carriage?"

"You Americans have a trick of using women as your spies and couriers, and then crying shame upon us if we arrest them, and foil you! This pretended widow or orphan is doubtless stuffed like a pin cushion beneath her black robes with spies' reports, and warnings to Jefferson!" replied the officer in charge of the squad, as he angrily stacked his gun beside the rest, and cast scornful glances upon the veiled figure, who, until then, had stood haughtily erect and silent among them.

"It is a false charge!" she now answered, spiritedly; "I bear no dispatches, convey no messages. I but go to seek my only brother, late a British officer, now a wounded prisoner, yet treated by the courteous enemy who harbor him, I doubt not, with more gentleness than I am receiving from those who should be most prompt to succor and defend me!" Then, turning to me, she continued in tones less scornful: "Will you be so good as to inform me, sir, whose prisoner I have now the honor to be?—The fortune of war may change, it seems, with such magic swiftness, that one finds it difficult to be sure of one's present or one's prospective situation."

"You are no one's prisoner, madam," I replied, stirred suddenly by familiar tones in her voice; "you are under the protection, however, of Virginia troops commanded by Colonel McElroy, and will be conveyed to some place of safety acceptable to you as soon as possible." I had dismounted, meantime, and stood near her.

"Can it be Captain Donald McElroy, of Virginia?" she said in lowered and tremulous voice, at the

same moment throwing back her veil, and revealing the face of Nelly Buford—fairer than ever in its setting of rich hair and banded crepe.

Does a man ever quite forget his first love? Has its remembrance always power to thrill him, even though the once lively sentiment be supplanted, or outlived? That the sound of Nelly's voice, and the touch of her hand, could yet thrill me, was, just now, a disturbing revelation. I felt myself disloyal to Ellen and so scorned myself for this fresh evidence of weakness, that I fear my manner to her was almost haughty.

Having dispatched a courier with my comforting news to General Lafayette, and sent my prisoners after him, under sufficient escort, I ordered the postilions, and some of my men, to right the carriage, and make the harness safe. Then I joined Nelly, and relieved her mind of all anxiety about her brother by telling her of his whereabouts, and the news I had had recently that he was convalescent, and would completely recover. Nelly's thanks were fervently expressed after which she proceeded to explain her present situation, and to give me her double reason for leaving the shelter her generous Quaker friends had for some months afforded her—the longing to find her brother, and the wish to relieve her host of the inconvenience and possible danger of harboring one of a family well-known to be strong Tory adherents.

The carriage having been made ready, Nelly and her maid were shut within, and, preceded and followed by mounted escort, Miss Buford was conveyed in state to General Lafayette's late headquarters. We found the army gone, and camp deserted, and I surmised, that, upon receipt of my courier's message, the general, seeing yet a chance to escape, had ordered an immediate advance. We followed, but did not overtake the hastily bivouacked army until past midnight.

No other accommodation than that Nelly's carriage offered was procurable, and so I regretfully informed her, to be cheerfully assured that she asked nothing better, if she might have cessation from jolting, and sense of security. The rest of the hot night I stood guard, watching the languid stars blink one by one to sleep, and waging lively warfare with the swarms of greedy mosquitoes, who constituted themselves surety for my vigilance. As soon as the first flush of morning tinged the eastern sky, I woke one of my men, and left him to guard the carriage while I sought General Lafayette. He was sound asleep under a tree with a gnarled root for pillow, his face and hands covered by his blanket to protect them from the swamp pests. Awakened by my step, he threw off his blanket, looked up at the sky, and muttered sleepily some unintelligible words in his own language.

"General Lafayette?" I said, stepping in front of him, and saluting, "I am Colonel McElroy, at present in command of a company of Virginia militiamen. Will you grant me a few moments of your time while the camp is getting ready to march?"

"Most certainly, Colonel McElroy," then, in the precise English of the cultivated foreigner, and with agreeable accent—"when I have thanked you for this valuable information sent me last evening. Ah, if fortune continues to favor us, we'll yet escape the bold Cornwallis, Colonel McElroy! But we must march unceasingly, till we meet the reinforcements of General Wayne. Then we'll give Cornwallis the fight he seems so much to wish, and show him what may be done by the united gallantry of America and France! But I retard your story, sir; command, now, my attention."

I related briefly the capture of the British stragglers, the rescue of the young lady, and added an account of my previous acquaintance with Miss Buford, and the debt of gratitude I felt myself under to her family. He listened with courteous attention, and responded with true French understanding of such obligation:

"You can do nothing less, Colonel McElroy, than escort the young woman in safety to her brother. Later I shall gladly detail such force to guard you as you may think necessary, but for the present it is safer that she remain with the army."

"Then you have no objection, General Lafayette, to her carriage and its escort traveling between the main army and my company—at present the van guard?"

"None, sir—under the circumstances."

"I have still another favor to ask, General"—somewhat embarrassed by my own boldness—"that you will grant Miss Buford the honor of an introduction. Such attention from you as a brief visit to her carriage would avoid all danger of familiar acts, words, or surmise from any of the troops while she must be with us; she would become your guest, and be under your personal protection."

"A shrewd thought, Colonel, worthy of your Scotch name," General Lafayette gayly replied, "and for gallantry of conception not unworthy one of my own countrymen! I consent, with pleasure, and while awaiting your orderly shall make such toilet as my very limited facilities permit."

Nelly had managed in some mysterious way to remove all traces of her tiresome journey and broken rest, and stood ready to receive the general, under the canopy of a blooming magnolia, meeting him with the ease of a society queen, and responding to his gallant speeches with grace and vivacity. The susceptible young Frenchman at once proclaimed himself her captive, lingering to talk with her until the troops in front were moving, and the rear guard falling into line of march.

Twice during the day he rode back to exchange a few words with her, and to assure himself of

her comfort. He was so attentive, indeed, and so solicitous for her, that I think I felt almost a pang of jealousy at being deprived of the full credit of being the fair Nelly's rescuer and protector.

Our junction with Wayne was effected near the ford of the Rapidan a few days later. Already Cornwallis had given over the pursuit, and turned back to rejoin Tarleton. It was now possible for me to accept General Lafayette's offer of a furlough and escort, with fair prospect of safe journey to the valley by circuitous northeastern route. It seemed my fate, by some claim upon my private sentiments or some untoward accident, again and again to be withdrawn from active service at critical periods of our struggle. As willingly as I now rendered this service to one to whom I owed perhaps my life, I sighed inwardly to leave General Lafayette at a time when we might speedily expect some chance to strike a telling blow. To the General I expressed my regret, and was gratified by the warmth with which he assured me he would welcome my return as soon as I should have placed my fair charge in safety.

Not many hours before we reached home, when indeed we were entering the valley, I told Nelly of an amusing conceit that had been running in my head, namely—that I was destined for a rescuer of fair damsels, using this as an introduction to the story, I had been casting about for an excuse to relate, of Ellen O'Neil, and her journey to the west with Clark. But the presence of the maid kept back a full confession, and Nelly's suspicions did not seem to be aroused by my warm championship. Evidently she thought I but framed elaborate apologies for a kinswoman.

Miss Nelly's bearing, in truth, had been a source of disturbance to me for several days. She was so confiding, so almost affectionate in her manner, and seemed to appropriate me with such joyous confidence, that it was difficult not to meet her in like spirit. Not unto this day have I been able to determine the true meaning of her conduct during that journey. Did she believe that I was yet a captive to her charms? or, was it but the natural overflowing of grateful, friendly affection? Or—but even as it came I reproached myself for such thought—did she wish to make me again her slave, that she might have revenge for my single defiance of her power? Such reflections and uncertainties disturbed me more and more as we neared home; and mixed with the gratification of uniting Nelly and her brother, and the happiness I could but feel in the near prospect of seeing Ellen, was a sense of vague uneasiness, of shadowy foreboding.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Seldom have my forebodings gone unverified—possibly because I am not superstitious, and they are usually founded upon some more or less clearly realized cause. I had not been home a quarter of an hour till I felt that something had gone wrong; that the usual sweet and serene home atmosphere was impregnated with an illusive element of discord. Every one capable of the finer shades of feeling has experienced, doubtless, the subtle influence of an atmosphere, surcharged with carefully hidden emotion that yet jars each soul, and sets all nerves a-quiver. Not always, however, is there present a serene, commanding spirit, which can dissipate the threatened storm, by tact and the sunshine of genial graciousness.

So did Ellen, being for a while my mother's guest, during Aunt Martha's absence at a famed medicinal spring. My father, strangely stern and silent, after his first hearty greeting for me, and courteous one for his latest guest, would warm into fitful geniality under Ellen's blandishments, mother's face lose its look of anxious distress, Jean dimple and brighten in the old way, and Buford relax somewhat his air of dignity and reserve.

Yet the cause of the evident gloom hanging over the household was, on the second day after my return, still a mystery; the entire family seemed to have entered into a tacit agreement to withhold it from me, and each one carefully avoided a private interview. For a while it defied guessing even; I could only surmise that Nelly's presence had complicated the situation, and was to some extent the reason for my exclusion from the family confidence. From the first hour I had seen that Ellen was surprised by Nelly's manner to me, though I alone guessed her unconscious resentment, noting the expression of it through an added flush to her cheeks, a slightly more erect attitude of her head, and a firmer tone in her voice. Mother, too, had presently observed Nelly's apparently unconscious appropriation of me, and watched us both anxiously; then Buford seemed to note it, looked annoyed, and exchanged a quick glance of mingled despair and tender assurance with Jean. That intercepted glance gave me my first hint, and I longed more than ever to get Ellen alone, and to ask the score of questions that hung upon my lips.

Through all, Nelly seemed unconscious of the false note in her welcome, and the gloom hanging over the household. After her first regret at finding that her brother, though almost as strong as ever, was yet lame, and likely to be always slightly so, she seemed to be entirely content with her new surroundings, and grew blithe as a child, putting forth all her charms to win over her new friends. I, meanwhile, was driven to despair by Ellen's manner—by disappointment, longing, and hope continually deferred. Once more she was the unapproachable Ellen of Kaskaskia—sweetly dignified, graciously charming, cousinly kind—yet the distance of the poles between us! And, continually, she found excuses to leave me alone with Nelly, constituting me her host and entertainer, while she kept herself occupied with helping mother or with entertaining Buford.

From Thomas, home for his vacation, the explanation came at last.

"Tom," I asked abruptly, "what is the matter? I have not had a moment's satisfaction since I came home. Father is stern, mother unhappy, Jean feverish, and Buford sullen. As for Ellen she avoids me as if I were a dangerous lunatic."

Tom gazed at me, astonished at my petulance, and answered with provoking calmness: "The trouble or at least their knowledge of it, is so recent that they have had no time as yet to adjust themselves to it, and they do not know how you may take it—especially since they are in doubt as to your relations with Miss Buford."

"What trouble? Speak out, lad! I'm sick of mystery."

"Jean's avowed love for Captain Buford. Neither your mother nor your father suspected their interest in each other until four days ago, though Ellen tells me she had guessed it for weeks."

"Well, it is no such grave trouble that the family need sink into despondency because of it. Buford is a Tory, and likely to be always a little lame; nevertheless he's a gentleman by birth and breeding, and lacks none of the qualities necessary to make him a good husband."

"All that may be true, and yet it is not surprising that Uncle William should object to a penniless, lame Tory, and ex-British officer, as husband for his only daughter. Your bringing his sister here just at this time complicates the situation. Buford had decided to go to Staunton, if such move were consistent with the terms of his parole, but Miss Buford's arrival brings him the double embarrassment of providing means for two to live upon, and of seeming to decline for his sister your proffered hospitality—which for himself he has so long accepted."

"I have General Morgan's permission to release Buford as soon as he is well," I said, "so his parole need not interfere with his plans. And he can sell Miss Nelly's carriage and horses if he is too proud to borrow. Perhaps General Morgan can induce Congress to restore Buford's confiscated property, so that his poverty need not influence father, if he can bring himself to forgive his Tory principles. Moreover, I have always intended to divide my western bounty lands with Jean."

"If you are to marry Miss Buford any objection to her brother as husband for your sister would be untenable."

"I have no intention, and no wish to marry Miss Buford," I responded impatiently, "nor she to marry me."

"She seems greatly interested in you, Donald, and lays open claim to you. Well, I despair of ever knowing any woman, and am thankful I have resolved to live a bachelor. Ellen never treated you as familiarly as Miss Buford, after all your months of comradeship."

"Ellen is as rare among women, as the nightingale among song birds," I answered, "but Nelly is lovable and womanly, and I owe her an unpaid debt. Look here, Tom; if you'll do me one great kindness I will consider myself under obligations to you for life. Pay Miss Nelly devoted attention for the next two days; take her for a long ride to-morrow; do anything to give me a chance for some private talk with Ellen before I go back to the army. Think of it, lad," and I laid my hand entreatingly on his shoulder. "My furlough is almost gone, and I haven't had a moment alone with Ellen! I might be killed in the next battle and never see her again! She might take a sudden resolve and immure herself before I can return! I *must* see her before I go!"

"I'll do all I can to help you, Don," said Thomas, with a long drawn sigh, "but you couldn't well ask a harder thing of me. Miss Buford, though pretty and gay enough, is not my style of woman; and moreover, the least I have to say to young women, now-a-days, the better pleased I am!"

I might have smiled to see Thomas, not yet twenty-six, affect to be already so blasé, and a woman scorner. But I was too feverishly engrossed with my own passionate longings, and half angry defiance of circumstances, to be greatly interested in the feelings of others—except Ellen's, upon which I knew now depended all my hopes of a life rounded and completed as God meant a man's to be.

My next confidential talk was with Jean. She poured out all her innocent heart to me, surprising me by the depth of her feelings. My sympathy seemed to comfort her and she promised, without urgence, to heed my counsel for patience and to impose like conduct upon Buford. They must wait, I told her, until the war was over and I came home for good. Then, with time and intercession, there was good hope that she would win the full consent of our parents, which meant a far better prospect of happiness than a union unblessed by their approval. I promised her, too, a last interview with Buford, before he should leave for Staunton, and she assured me that she would make him no promises I would not be likely to sanction.

A second plan had come to me, which offered, I thought, a better chance to both Buford and myself than my first one of sending Thomas and Nelly for a long ride together, which was to make up a horseback party to the big cave, that Tom and I had often explored in our boyhood and which had now become a resort for pleasure parties. It was but natural that I should wish to show our guest the greatest curiosity in the neighborhood, and also that I should desire one day's pleasuring before I should return to the stern duties of war. I boldly proclaimed my plan, therefore, at breakfast table, the next morning; it was warmly seconded by Thomas and Nelly, and met with no spoken opposition from any one.

A negro boy was sent ahead, with cart laden with skins, wraps, lunch baskets and candles, and

we followed on horseback an hour later. Tom and Jean, Nelly and I, Ellen and Buford, we started out, and mother viewed the pairing with little less satisfaction than she would have an arrangement more pleasing to most of us. Freed from the suspicious eyes of our elders, we forgot our reserve and self-consciousness, and enjoyed the cool, dim ramble through the crystal studded passage ways, and also our lunch in the cool grove near by, with the light chatter afterward. When we were mounting for the homeward ride, Thomas revived my waning hopes by boldly proposing a change of partners all around, coolly sending Jean off with Buford, and himself appropriating Nelly, leaving Ellen no choice but to ride with me. Even then I was like to be checkmated, for Ellen kept close behind Thomas and Nelly. At last I grew desperate, and riding close laid a restraining hand upon her bridle, stopping her horse just as we were about to enter a beautiful strip of open forest through which the road extended for a mile.

"Ellen," I said, in firm tones, "I *must* have an hour alone with you. Let them ride on; we'll follow when they are out of hearing. Can you not trust yourself with me for one brief ride after all our journeying together?"

Over throat, cheek and brow came a sudden glow of crimson like that which was flaming in the western sky; the thick fringed lids dropped over her eyes, and the harp-like vibration I loved was in her voice, as she said:

"You cannot doubt I trust you, Cousin Donald; you saved me once from claw of wild beast, once from my own folly, and once again from a fate worse than common death, from the Indian's torture stake. I would trust my safety to you under all circumstances."

"But not your happiness, Ellen?"

"My happiness would be but too safe in your hands, dear cousin. One has not always the right to be happy."

"And it is sometimes a sacred duty to make one who loves you with every fiber of his being, one who would die to save you sorrow, miserable for life. Oh, Ellen, I know that you are true and holy beyond my understanding, yet I can see no reason in this fixed purpose of yours to divert your life from its evident destiny."

"My weakness assents to all you say, Cousin Donald," and Ellen lifted eyes to mine that were tenderly aglow with feeling, "but you have missed the true reason on which my final decision must depend. If my vow to God may be honestly broken, if I may be absolved from it, it would be only because that were true beyond question which you have so earnestly claimed—that your single hope of happiness, Donald, depends upon me—that by fulfilling my vow, I should leave you to bear the man's struggle, without hope of the man's God-appointed cheer and solace. But recently I have been convinced that no one woman circumscribes a man's possibility of happiness, that God wisely has ordained a quick healing for heart wounds. Therefore, cousin, since happiness, thank God, would still be possible to you without me, I am bound by my vow. You will find some one to devote her life to you who is not of alien faith, who has not broken sacred vows that she might come to you; and I, meantime, will be adding to your happiness by daily intercessions for you before God's holy altar."

Why it was I do not know, but a sudden anger flamed in my heart. Was I always to be answered in this absurd, illogical way, with platitudes of holy vows, and sacred consecration? Were all my protestations of devotion to be brushed aside, as not worth believing, and my life's happiness to weigh as nothing against Ellen's will, and pride, her sudden whims and conclusions? Making no attempt to conceal my anger and my bitterness, I answered her:

"Let us have no more of this cant of sacred vows, Ellen. Think you God has cared to register a disobedient girl's sick fancy that, by immolating herself, she could render Him special homage, or add one ounce to His power and His influence? You say I do not need your life, that I can find happiness without you—thus casting back my words as too light for belief, and my heart, my very soul, as of small value beside your vaunted vow. I would I could believe, Ellen, that happiness were possible for me without you. But it is too late for that, and if in perversity of stubborn superstition you condemn me to a lonely, loveless life, I can but endure it with such fortitude as I may learn to command. It would seem to me but poor reflection for quiet convent hours—that an honest man's life had been wrecked—that a noble family name had perished from the earth—all that one more nun might count her beads and offer up prayers in needless repetition to an all powerful God who has no need of such mummery to help him rule with eternal wisdom a universe of worlds."

"So far apart are we in mind and heart, Donald McElroy," answered Ellen, with flashing eyes, having reined her horse to a standstill that she might fully face me, "if these be your true sentiments, that never could we hope to be one in spirit; never would I dare to unite my life with yours," and, putting whip to her horse, she joined Thomas and Nelly, nor deigned to show consciousness of my presence again that evening.

The next day she kept her room, "with headache," said Jean. The morning after she came down only at the last moment to say good-by to our guests and me. Vainly I sought the chance to whisper my regret and repentance in her ear; she was careful to give me opportunity only for a formal farewell in the presence of them all.

To Buford and his sister I said good-by, after I had settled them comfortably in Staunton, almost with coolness. They, it seemed to me, had repaid my generous wish to more than return their

kindness by a crass indifference to my feelings.

Then I faced to the scene of war, once more, with fierce satisfaction. For the first time I felt a thirst for danger. Since I had thrown away all chance for happiness, I would win a glorious death in the last glorious and successful struggle of my country for liberty!

CHAPTER XXIX

The battle of Green Spring, fought the third day after I had rejoined General Lafayette—that gallant officer being now in pursuit of Cornwallis, who was slowly retreating to a less hazardous position, near the sea coast—was the one engagement Lafayette allowed himself during the tedious game of march and countermarch at which the opposed armies had been playing for three months. Fighting was much more to the taste of the ardent Lafayette, but he had learned the art of war in the school of Washington, and knew that a timely and skillful retreat is often worth more than a victory. By such "Fabian policy" as the great leader himself had condescended to use, to the open scorn of his enemies, Lafayette had completely aborted the concerted invasion of Virginia, and had gradually turned Cornwallis on to the open mouth of the trap which was later to prove so fatal to him. The fight above mentioned was undecisive, and had no other effect than to hurry Cornwallis' retreat to the seashore—at a dear cost to us of one hundred and fifty men.

At Yorktown, the British awaited their fleet with convoys of needed supplies, and hoped daily for reënforcements from General Clinton; meantime working industriously to entrench themselves. We sat down at Malvern Hill, watching, like a bull-dog before his enemy's gate. The sea protected Cornwallis' position on three sides, and a few days sufficed to erect strongly fortified works on their fourth—there was small chance for the bull-dog, unless the desired prey could somehow be driven from cover. But he crouched and waited on. This stubborn vigilance was rewarded on the last day of August when the flagship of Count de Grasse sailed into the Chesapeake Bay at the head of the French fleet.

Our camp went mad with joy as the three thousand French troops under Marquis de Saint Simon landed to unite with us, and on the next day we took position across the neck of the peninsula at Williamsburg. Cornwallis was in the trap, and Lafayette had sprung shut the last door which offered possible chance of escape. Admiral Graves with the English fleet arrived too late. We watched anxiously the naval battle between him and Count de Grasse, and exulted wildly when the defeated fleet sailed away. Nine days' later, General Washington arrived, his presence the final assurance of coming victory, and close on his heels the whole northern army; by the twenty-sixth of September, the American and French forces confronting Cornwallis were sixteen thousand strong. It was only a question of days now. The brave British, inspired ever by the intrepid Cornwallis, could not hold out long in their cramped condition, without adequate supplies, and decimated daily by the deadly fire we were presently ready to pour into the town. Our first parallel was opened on the sixth of October; the men were so impatient with the prospect of speedy victory after our long struggle against heavy odds, and so reckless with mad enthusiasm, that it took all the authority of the older and more prudent officers to restrain acts of needless risk and exposure.

That night—I had helped to fire the first guns and had witnessed the fearful havoc they made among the enemy's redoubts—my whole being was in such tumult from violent and conflicting emotions that I could not sleep. Patriotic joy uplifted my soul to a fervor of grateful emotion one moment, and in the next, a wave of depression overwhelmed me. Apples of Sodom would be even the success of the cause, which so long and so fervently I had cherished, if the future held for me no hope of Ellen's love, no promise of Ellen's companionship! Ah, if I had not lost my last chance by the rashness of my tongue! had not thrown away my life's happiness by yielding to unreasoning anger!

Had I but explained my true situation and feelings in regard to Nelly Buford before I began to urge my suit so commandingly, I might have had hope, at least, to feed upon, instead of the certainty of disappointment. Yet why admit failure? If General Washington had done so after Long Island, General Greene after Guilford; where would be to-day the cause of American liberty? No, I would not recognize defeat! I would fight on till no ray of hope was left me. This very night I would make a last appeal to Ellen—set before her once again, but more persuasively, all the reasons and arguments that to me seemed so clear. So I lit my last end of candle, took my board upon my knee, found a bottle of poke-berry ink, sharpened a quill and wrote—the ardent words flowing from my quill's end more freely than the thin purplish red fluid in which I transcribed them:

> "Dear Heart of my Heart:
>
> "Past midnight, and this vast camp lies wrapt in slumber. No sounds disturb the star lighted peace save now and then the faint call of the sentinels, and the distant roaring of an occasional gun, fired from our first parallel which we opened to-day. To my tent, far in the rear of our front line, these sounds come softened into the musical echo of to-day's joyous excitement, and hint of to-morrow's glorious promise. Though the sweet and brooding peace of the night, the benediction of the stars, and the caresses of a gentle breeze, all woo my tired limbs and excited mind to needed repose, my heart is

too full of longing thoughts of you, dear Ellen, to admit sleep!

"I see your dear face as last I saw it, flushed, hurt, angry, and hear that voice, whose tender tremor is the sweetest music my ears have known, ring sharp and firm in those words which were the death knell of my hopes. In no other mood than that one, in which I have seen you so rarely, can I recall you—the hurt and angry state so foreign to your warm and generous nature. Yet I cannot upbraid you, dearest, or in anywise blame you, that last I saw you in a mood which so ill-becomes you, for I was its just occasion. I was too impetuous, too assertive, dear one. I knew it ere the rashness left me, and would have given my right arm to have been able to blot my foolish words from your memory. I longed to explain, to implore your forgiveness, to humble myself before you, and to recall all I had said that could give you offense—but you gave me no opportunity; was it not, mavourneen, a needlessly cruel punishment to deny me a last chance to beg for mercy, a moment to say farewell? Yet, dear one, though I expressed myself rudely, and went too far, much of what I said was true, as your generous spirit has already admitted when you have, with characteristic nobleness of soul, recalled my words in the hope of finding excuses for me.

"Perhaps before this letter reaches you—it goes by special courier to Richmond, with General Washington's dispatches to Governor Jefferson—a glorious victory will be ours. General Cornwallis and his army are completely surrounded, and must surrender in a few days. This will end the war, think all the officers, and bring us peace with Great Britain upon liberal terms. The United States of America will be a free republic, and before us stretches a noble future with the grandest possibilities that the mind of statesmen have yet been able to conceive. We shall have a free representative government administered by noble patriots, such as Washington, Jefferson and Adams. We shall abolish all prerogatives of class, party and creed; not only life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness will be free to all, but entire freedom of religious thought and free speech will be the unquestioned right of all the inhabitants of America. And not only freedom, but prosperity will be within reach of all. The wide and fertile plains of the West await but the claim of the settler to constitute a rich heritage. My heart thrills at the realization of the vast territory which Clark and his handful of Virginians added to that country which shall be called the American Republic. And you, Ellen, and I had our share in that glorious enterprise. Can any citizen of America fail to experience the glow of a true patriot's fervor, a thrill of true patriot's pride, upon contemplation of the noble destiny which a glowing future seems to promise our land—with Freedom's crown upon it? A destiny that will be shared with all who come to us.

"But oh, heart of my heart, my joy and exultation for my country are overcast with the gloom of despair! despair of any hope for my own life, any happiness for my own heart. Even my joy in our victory will be but the dim shadow of what it would be for my spirit is sick from this gnawing regret, and despair, eating daily deeper and deeper into my heart, till all buoyancy has left me, and I have longed for death. That madness is past, dear Ellen, else I would not tell you of it, but in truth I have sought death for days, as a mother seeks a lost child, wooed it as a lover wooes his mistress while yet there is hope. Not even death would come to my relief—and now I see it was a weakness to have sought it, a blasphemy to have prayed for it. I shall live out as even I must, the span allotted to me, and strive at least for the patience of hopeless resignation.

"Two pictures, Ellen, haunt the sick visions of my idle, waking hours, and glide nightly through my dreams. One is that which might have been, the other that which, alas, likely will be! I see a spacious mansion, crowning a green and gently sloping hill; its wide windows open to the sweet air and gracious sunshine of Virginia; its doors hospitably spread to welcome kinsmen, friends, neighbors, or wayfarers, whether bringing or needing blessing. At the foot of the hill, and seen from the broad verandas, stretch luxuriant meadows, where sleek horses and lazy herds of cattle wade knee deep in blossoming grass, and pink headed clover.

"Roses, lilies, and pinks bloom in the garden behind the house, and their fragrance floats in through doors and windows. Music too is there, for happy, unmolested birds sing their praises to their Creator, and the sweetest voice in all the world speaks kindly to contented slave, or happy child, or croons tenderly to the rosy infant. And beauty is there, rarer than that of the fair landscape to be glimpsed through doors and windows, for the fairest, loveliest woman in Virginia fills this happy home with her sweet pervading presence, and casts over it a rare and nameless charm—a spell which brings to all its inmates, from master to slave, from visiting friend to chance guest, a sense of assured comfort and cheerful content—Does not your heart tell you, oh, heart of my heart, that such home might be ours! and can you conceive for any woman, even for my own rare Ellen, a nobler destiny than to be the mistress of such home, the priestess of such heart shrine?

"But the other picture! A gloomy convent cell in which a spirit-worn one—whose lingering beauty glads no tender heart, charms no eye of love—kneels with face of despair, to pray for grace not to loathe a life of useless sacrifice, of cloistered inaction, —so little suited to an ardent and loving soul, so fruitless in bringing real peace, true heart renunciation,—a life of small service to man or God, and of worth only because it brings to the heavy-hearted nun daily self wrestlings. And ever as she prays there

comes between her and the Christ vision for which she yearns, and hourly implores her God, the sad face of a man, old before his time, and hopelessly resigned to sit in listless idleness by another's fireside, because he has no heart for one of his own.

"His old comrades and friends have built for themselves spacious homes, transformed the wilderness into rich estates, carved out useful and honorable careers, and are counted among those Virginians who are laying broad and deep the foundations of country, state, and family. But he, lacking the dear responsibilities of wife and children, having no descendants to carry the name in honorable memory and emulation to future generations, has dropped out of the struggle, given over the race; and, broken-hearted and despairing, lives only to recall the memories of an active and inspired youth.

"Can you, Ellen, mavourneen, contemplate this last vision, and not be moved to the thought that such end for God-endowed spirits, destined to complete each other's lives, were indeed a fearful sacrifice? That the tears, regrets and prayers of the nun would be but poor recompense to God—if there can be a reckoning between man and his Maker—for two unfulfilled lives, and lost generation after generation of human souls adequately gifted by noble birth, and honest inheritance, with health, comeliness, happiness, and opportunities, and trained in love of country, love of progress, love of virtue, love of God! My children shall have no other mother, Ellen, should you finally determine to let your superstition stifle your heart; know that in doing so you cut off from the earth the race of McElroy. Last male of the line am I, and vowed to go childless to my grave unless my offspring may call mother the one woman who is the love of my life, heart of my heart, hope and inspiration of my soul!

"As soon as General Cornwallis surrenders I shall ask for a furlough, and come home for my final answer. Oh, my Ellen, dearest of dear ones, will you not crown my rejoicing, make of true worth to me our hard-won victory! and fill one patriot's breast with that supreme happiness of love accepted and returned which is the wine of men's souls, the one elixir which can furnish them with courage and inspiration for the constantly repeated struggles and continually renewed efforts of life!

"May that God who is your God and mine, the God of your fathers and the God of mine, come to you in dream or vision, through word of saint or prophet, and open your eyes to see, as I see, that destiny which is the noblest and holiest for woman! Yet always, dear one, whether the happiest, or the most sorely bereft of men, I shall be

"Your true and loyal friend, your sworn knight, your devoted lover,

"Donald McElroy."

My candle sputtered feebly in its last effort to do its duty as I folded and sealed my letter. As I crossed the camp in search of the courier, the formless dull gray of the eastern landscape was suddenly aroused by the yet unrealized promise of the coming sun, and soon appeared a glow of life, under whose influence the bolder features of the landscape began slowly to assume their natural forms. Half an hour later, when I was returning to my tent, the whole east was glowing gorgeously and every smallest detail of the landscape was limned in vivid light. Nature was pulsing with life in every part, beneath the first kiss of the sun. So would a word of kindness from Ellen scatter the heavy, chill mist from my heart, and set my whole nature a-quiver with a new life of hope and joy.

To history belongs the record of those brave days when American and Frenchman vied with one another in deeds of daring gallantry, and when hour by hour our long delayed reward came nearer. General Cornwallis made a brave resistance, and delayed surrender almost to the point of madness. Our final exultation—the day Cornwallis gave up his sword, and the long line of our prisoners marched between our lines to stack arms—was, indeed, much softened by respectful admiration and sympathy for our gallant late foes, and their broken-hearted General.

As we all know family quarrels are usually the bitterest, but somehow this long contest between the American colonies and the mother country did not seem to breed any deep-seated animosity between their respective peoples. It may have been that the people of England—as certainly some of their statesmen did—recognized that we were but leading the vanguard of progress toward a happier order for all nations. England is not fond of experiments, yet none are more freedom loving than her sons. They have but moved on more conservatively, more deliberately to their goal.

Or perhaps the happy absence of any lasting bitterness may have been due to the circumstance that our war—except for its few Indian episodes—was conducted with as little savagery as war may well be. Whatever the explanation, it is true that in two days after Cornwallis' surrender the officers and men of the two armies were fraternizing like brothers, and not a few of our late enemies were already declaring their intention to remain in this new land of promise and to cast in their lot with the American Republic.

At a banquet given by our colonels to those of the British army, toasts were drunk to a firmly cemented and lasting peace between our respective countries and then to a steadfast alliance between England and America. In response to the last of these I ventured the prophecy that the

two great English-speaking peoples would not only be bound together presently by ties of blood and language into a close alliance for mutual welfare, but that side by side they would go forward toward higher and higher ideals of free government and universal brotherhood, pointing the way to a nobler civilization than had yet been conceived. Carried away by my own fervor, I even predicted a time when the two nations, England and the United States of America, that was to be, supported by France perhaps, would make the last fight against autocratic power and military rule, to conquer the world for democracy—to the end that war might forever cease, and the world begin to be made ready for the coming of the "Prince of Peace."

It was a perfervid and wild harangue doubtless, and some of my fellow-officers who heard it never ceased to twit me about my one burst of eloquence. Nevertheless, it seemed at the time to chime in with the mood of my hearers, who soundly applauded these sentiments. If events since, and especially more recent ones, have made me appear but a poor prophet, I am still not ready to withdraw my prediction, and I still believe that the destiny of humanity lies in the keeping of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, who will, I yet maintain, go steadily forward through mistakes and errors to a better understanding and a closer friendship.

General Lafayette granted my request for furlough with playful jest about the fair refugee who awaited my coming, and my blush and stammer doubtless confirmed his suspicions. I lost no more time getting home than I could help, you may be sure, but every man I met stopped me to get details of the big news, which had spread like fairy fire, and men, women, and children ran out to question me as I passed each hamlet.

Jean was on the porch enjoying the bracing balminess of a bright October afternoon when I rode up, and ran with glad cry to meet me. Father and mother were gone to Staunton for the day—father to get further news, mother to lay in the fall supplies—and Ellen was back again with Aunt Martha, whose health failed more and more, so that Ellen was her chief dependence. All this Jean told me and more, while she urged upon me the laziest chair, and brought sangaree and spiced cake to refresh me.

"You, dear Jean, are well again and happy if your face is index to your feelings," I said, when my first eager questions had been answered. "Have father and mother already been won over to Buford's cause? I knew they never could stand to see our little maid wear sad face, and lose all her pretty bloom."

"It was not all done by my reproachful looks," she answered, smiling and blushing. "Ellen's influence more than any other has changed them. Oh, Donald, she is the dearest girl, and her tact is wonderful! Neither father nor mother know when it was done, but gradually she has made them like Captain Buford, till now they are willing for his sake as well as for mine. Mother told me yesterday that they but waited for your full approval to withdraw all objection to our marriage."

"Then, little sister, Buford's happiness is assured, and yours too, I believe. He is a brave and an honorable gentleman, and likely to make his wife a happy woman. His poverty, for most of his property will be confiscated, doubtless, is the one drawback, but if I get my western bounty lands, I shall be able to make up for that. A deed to one-half of my share shall be my wedding gift to you."

"Dear Donald, you are the very dearest of brothers," and Jean perched herself upon the arm of my chair, kissed my forehead, and began to thread my somewhat neglected locks with her slender fingers. "Will you think me presumptuous, brother, if I ask you a personal question?" she began presently, with apparent hesitation.

"I can hardly think of a question my little sister would not have the right to ask me," turning my head to smile encouragement upon her.

"Did you ever think Nelly Buford a coquette?" she asked, waiting for my answer with amusing anxiety.

"Can any one who has ever known her exonerate her from the charge?" I replied with a smile —"unless it is Buford, who has never guessed his sister's weakness. Is it high treason in his eyes for his prospective wife to harbor such suspicions?"

"Oh, we never discuss family matters; I was thinking only of your opinion of Nelly."

"Is my judgment upon coquettes so valuable?"

"Then you do not love Nelly, Donald? Oh! I'm so glad!"

"No, I do not love Nelly Buford, though she's a winsome maiden. But why rejoice, little sister? Do you disapprove of too close family entanglements?"

"I could not be happy if it were not so," Jean responded enigmatically.

"And why?" Indifferent to Jean's meaning, my thoughts wandered off to the far greater likelihood of my love for Ellen bringing me unhappiness.

"She has promised to marry Thomas!"

"Thomas?" I almost sprang from my chair with surprise. "Thomas and Nelly Buford to be married?" and then I laughed long and heartily.

Jean laughed too. "It is funny, Don, for at first Thomas barely endured Nelly. I believe his indifference nettled her into a determination to win him. She seems entirely unsuited to a parson's wife, much less a missionary's. Thomas declares he is going to Kentucky as a border missionary, and that Nelly is willing to go with him anywhere."

"And give up her Tory principles, and her Episcopal faith? Wonder of wonders is this love which overleaps all barriers as easily as a hunter takes his ditch. Does Ellen know of this?"

"Yes, and seems to be very happy over it. I think she feels now for the first time easy in conscience, since Thomas' happiness, as well as his calling is assured."

"And what says Aunt Martha?"

"She says very little about it, though we all know that Nelly would not have been her choice for Thomas. She told Ellen, when first she heard it, that she had interfered, already, too much with the lives that other people had to live, and that she no longer felt that confidence in her own judgment she once had; that humility was the latest flower of her Christian experience, and though but a weak and sickly bloom, she wished to cherish it."

"Poor Aunt Martha. She has suffered much, then?"

"Yes, but mother and Ellen say she has grown daily gentler under her sufferings."

"Only natures of true worth are 'refined by the furnace of affliction,' to my observation—Aunt Martha evidently deserved not the youthful scorn I felt for her. But tell me more of Ellen—she is, you think, really happy to be Aunt Martha's nurse?"

"Yes, Ellen is more light-hearted recently than I have ever known her; Aunt Martha called her, talking to mother yesterday, 'a well-spring of happiness,' and said it made her very thankful when she considered how Providence had forced upon her a daughter against her time of need, in spite of her utter undeservingness."

Scarcely could I wait to greet my parents, I was so eager to see Ellen, to fathom the true cause of her unaccustomed gayety of spirits, which even the love-absorbed Jean had noticed. I found her so busy with household duties, and attentions to Aunt Martha, that I was obliged to content myself, after the first greetings—which told me without need of words that I was forgiven—with the vision of her flitting about busily, and the exchange of an occasional meaningless remark. When reluctantly I rose to go, Uncle Thomas asked me to stay to tea, and I accepted so eagerly, that I think Aunt Martha guessed, at last, my secret. Either because of that, or the way my truant gaze followed Ellen's every movement. At any rate she surmised the real reason of my prompt visit to them, and when supper was over, came to my help with something of my own mother's tactfulness.

"Donald," she said, "take Ellen out to the porch, and make her rest while you tell her all about Yorktown—as you told it to me while she was at the dairy; Ellen never takes time to rest unless I make her. Thomas will sit with me."

For a while we talked perfunctorily, and with embarrassed self-consciousness, like children who are bidden to be sociable; and I did describe to her the final scenes at Yorktown, but with such lack of interest in my own story—my mind all the time on other words I wished to speak—that there was no spirit in the narrative. Disgusted with my bungling of such an inspiring subject, I broke off abruptly, then after a silence surcharged with emotion—"Oh, heart of my heart," I asked, "have you ready the answer to my letter?"

"Almost," and there was the dear harp-like tremor in her tones, which bespoke deep feeling.

"Meantime I may feed on hope, may I not, mavourneen?"

"Some men need only their own resolution, Donald, to base assurance upon," and she smiled at me, in such wise that I grew suddenly dizzy, then gliding away from me to the top of the steps —"you are one of those masterful men, cousin, whose will is not to be gainsaid by any weaker vessel."

"So I fail not this time, I can trust my will for all the rest of my life," I answered—"but you know full well, Ellen, that with you I am very coward," following her, and capturing the hands she had clasped about a column of the porch. "Dearest one, I have waited long, and, it seems to me, most patiently and humbly—ask not, I beseech you, much more of my fortitude." Then I kissed softly the blue-veined wrists, where her heart's blood pulsed warmest, and asked once more, "May I hope, mavourneen?" getting for answer a low, but tenderly spoken "Yes, but ask no more, now. Be patient, dear Donald, only a little longer," and once more she lifted her quivering eyelids, and flashed a smile upon me which filled my veins with an all-pervading thrill of fiery joy. Again I kissed the white wrists, looked into her eyes for one instant, spoke a murmured word of joy, then —lest I could no longer resist the mad impulse to clasp her in my arms, and ease all my violent emotion in passionate caresses—turned, and, without daring to grant myself a single backward glance, walked swiftly away in the starlight. No single self-conquest of my life cost me the effort of that one.

CHAPTER XXX

Buford came down from Staunton the morning after my arrival to urge upon mother and Jean an immediate marriage. News had just come to him that made his presence in Philadelphia necessary within the fortnight, and he was so unwilling, he declared, to leave the valley until Jean was his own, beyond question of his right to return for her, that, rather than do so, he would forfeit the chance for pardon, and restoration of his property, which this call to Philadelphia seemed to promise him. With my help mother's objections were overborne, and it was settled that the ceremony should take place on the first day we could procure the services of a clergyman of the Church of England.

Under the establishment, a marriage solemnized by any other than an Episcopal rector was not strictly valid in law, and though such marriages had been spasmodically tolerated under certain circumstances, they were regarded with such ill favor by the courts that they often gave rise to unpleasant complications afterwards. It was, therefore, our custom to submit to the mortification of begging the nearest Episcopal clergyman to read the service, previous to the solemnization of the contract by our own minister. The nearest clergyman to us lived more than thirty miles distant, and as he spent much of his time in Williamsburg, it was a difficult matter to induce him to go any distance to legalize the marriage of dissenters. However, I preferred not to be the one to enlighten Buford on this subject.

Buford and I rode together to see the clergyman, while Thomas went to Staunton for a persuasive interview with Nelly—we to join him there next day. Our clergyman was at his midday meal when we arrived, and we were left to cool our heels in his draughty hall while he finished leisurely an evidently tempting repast. He came out to us after three quarters of an hour, cleaning his teeth with a golden pick, a string of hounds at his heels, and his top boots muddy from his morning ride. We introduced ourselves, and announced our business.

"You are modest in your request, sirs. Think you I have nothing else to do than to ride all over the State reading the marriage ceremony for dissenters? Such usually come to me. Bring your wenches behind you any afternoon this week and I'll make quick work of the marriage service for your benefit."

"This gentleman, sir, who is to marry my sister," I made calm answer, though restraining my anger with no small effort, "was late an officer in the British army, and is a member of the Church of England. He is entitled to your services, therefore, through the double claim of like politics and religion. His sister weds my cousin. To neither of them would it appear seemly to ride the width of two counties to seek their church's blessing on their marriage."

"You should have stated those facts before," responded the clergyman stiffly, but with sense enough of decency to flush as he turned to Buford. "Your rank and name again, please. I shall be glad to come to you any day and hour you may name. It is my duty and my privilege to go wherever needed by those of the established faith, but I do not consider it so to be gallivanting from hut to hut to marry all the heretics in this valley—who have made such ado about the tithings of their pitiful substance, that the State has been forced to heed their clamor, and we are cut down to a beggar's stipend."

"Since the State requires your services to legitimatize marriage, since you are paid to perform that duty—and from the scarcity of your parishioners I judge your other duties are by no means onerous—I see not how you can excuse yourself," was Buford's cool rejoinder "But you shall be well paid for your needful assistance, sir. Shall we say Thursday afternoon, McElroy? There is to be a second service in the evening, solemnized by your own minister, as you know, and this would better be got through with beforehand."

Buford, I saw, was seething inwardly by this time, and holding the reins on his passion with rigid grip; the clergyman, too, was waxing hot, and there was need to terminate the interview as soon as possible.

"It is small wonder, McElroy, that you Presbyterians are so set against an established church," commented Buford as we remounted our horses. "I understand as never before, that men appointed to holy office by royal or state patronage are more likely than otherwise to be men unfitted for the discharge of sacred duties; to them it is a living rather than a holy calling. Count me on your side, Donald, when you are ready to throw yourself into the fight for religious liberty, which is, I believe, the next war you Scotch Irish propose to engage in, now that your state independence has been won."

"The fight for religious liberty and for the separation of church and state is already on. All through the greater war our ministers have kept up a brisk warfare of yearly memorials and petitions to the State Assembly. Four years ago Mr. Jefferson drew up a statute of religious liberty which he offered to the Assembly, and which has since been brought up at each session for warm discussion. Sooner or later the measure will be carried, and you are right in supposing that that is the next fight in which I shall enlist; nor shall I forget your promise to be on my side the next time," and I laid my hand on Buford's arm. Already I felt almost a brother's affection for him.

"After this, Donald," said Buford with feeling, "your people shall be my people, your country my country, and your interests mine; and," he added more lightly, "if I meet many more mere holders of livings, like the clergyman we have just left, your religion shall be mine also."

"You and Jean shall settle that question to your mutual satisfaction," I answered, smiling; "if you can make an Episcopalian out of her you have my consent."

"She shall make anything out of me she wishes," and Buford's face and voice were softened by quick springing tenderness. "My one ambition shall be to make her happy."

"You will not find that a hard task," I answered, with a sigh for my own delayed happiness; "she loves you dearly."

"Look here, Donald. Some forts may not be taken by the most persistent siege; a bold assault is the only way. Miss Ellen loves you, but she dare not close the door for good and all on the morbid conscience to which she has so long listened. Surprise her into an irreclaimable step, and she will but love you the more for having mastered her will, since you have already mastered her heart."

"But how?" I questioned eagerly. "I was never shrewd at strategy, and am, at best, but a backwoodsman in love warfare."

"Procure a license for your marriage *to-day*, and Wednesday show it to her, refusing to listen to her plea for postponement.

"Ellen would hold no marriage valid for herself not solemnized by a priest."

"Call this but the civil contract and explain it is to get this unpleasant necessity for a Church of England ceremony over with. You will surprise her into the necessary step before she has time to listen to her doubts and fears, and can afford, then, to wait for priest's blessing before you shall claim her. I will bring you a priest on my return from Baltimore."

"Suppose Ellen should be angry?" and I shuddered at the bare thought.

"What woman was ever made angry by the daring determination of the man she loves, to win her at all hazards? If at first Ellen should seem angry, be deeply grieved, and declare your intention to go to Kentucky to join Clark, and fight the Indians. If she loves you, as she does, she will never consent to that."

Buford's suggestion appeared more and more feasible as my mind dallied with the tempting prospect. In the end three licenses were procured. Thomas, who acted for Ellen, swore profound secrecy, and I rode home with the folded paper on which hung my destiny feeling warm against my beating heart. The more I contemplated the rashness of my deed, next day, the more I feared Ellen's displeasure. When evening came, I was still in a state of excitement that seemed to key all my faculties to a higher pitch.

An Indian summer's day had been followed by a calm but buoyant night. The sky, unflecked by lightest cloud, sparkled overhead, an arch of congealed azure, amidst which the big bright moon shone with such radiant resplendence that the stars were quite outdone and gleamed almost apologetically, as if aware that this was not their hour. As the sky dipped down to meet the mountains, lifting their purple bulk in soft but distinct undulation, the sparkling blue melted to a fathomless, almost colorless mist, which cast over the dark blue range a mysterious reflection, exaggerating its bulk, its mystery, and its silence.

The night, I thought, was like Ellen, exhilarating, joy-giving, yet serious and thought-compelling—its beauty and sweetness far removed from the beauty and sweetness of common things, by a silent suggestion of unfathomed depths. I found her alone on the porch, a white shawl so draped about her that once again she looked as she did that night at the spring, when she was yet a child, like a spirit from some purer world.

"Ellen," I began, dropping down on the step below her, and compelling her dream-held eyes to recognize mine, "have I kept high carnival in my heart these last three days for naught, or are you but playing with my hopes? Surely, Ellen, promise is but delayed fulfillment."

"Has it made you very happy—the hope?" she asked, her tones soft and dreamy, like the far-away notes of a violin. "You are *very* sure that you will always be entirely content with me? The pleadings of my own heart, Donald, I might have resisted, but to bring you happiness, to bless and crown your life, as you say I alone can—to resist that temptation, Donald, was beyond my soul's strength. I may have been hard to win, dear, but your conquest is complete."

My right arm clasped her, and her head sank to my breast, as a bird into its nest, and rested there as quietly.

"Then you will grant my request, Ellen?" my heart throbbing tremulously. "Say you will! Even before I make it, that will be the sealing sign of your love and confidence."

"You could ask nothing I would refuse."

"Then marry me to-morrow, mavourneen!" and before she could answer, I dropped softly upon her lips the first kiss I had ever dared to claim.

"To-morrow, Donald?" she questioned, with more of curiosity than anger or even surprise; "how could that be? But it shall be soon, dear, almost as soon as you could ask."

Then I explained all, and told her how I had dreaded her anger, and yet felt that I could endure suspense no longer, but must somehow force her to make me the very happiest or most miserable of men.

"And you will wait for priest's blessing on our union, before you claim me, Donald—you have thought fully about it?"

"When you come to my home, Ellen, it shall be with the full and glad consent of your whole heart. This marriage to-morrow will be no more than the publishing of our banns, after all, but I shall be sure of you then; my heart will be at rest, and this annoying necessity for a Church of England ceremony will be done with. Our real marriage will be wholly a dear and solemn rite."

"Do you know, dear Donald," said Ellen, after a long silence while her heart beat against mine, "I am very glad it is all settled at last, that after to-morrow I shall have no right to question my soul, or even to pray for further guidance? Once I am your wife, dear, I shall give all my thoughts and prayers to wifely duty. Do not fear I shall still try your patient soul with doubts and regrets."

"I fear nothing, dear one, now that we are one. Do you know, mavourneen, that you can have no feeling, no thought, hereafter, that I shall not share, and that I shall experience no emotion you will not feel? Awful mystery, yet precious reality, this merging of two spirits into one!"

My eyes had turned from time to time to rest in rapt thankfulness upon sky and mountain; but now, suddenly, I was aware that the haunting mystery, lately brooding over the horizon, was gone, and in its place only a perfect peace beyond which the shining circle of the moon, climbing higher and higher in the azure dome, gave promise of joys beyond, infinite and eternal.

CHAPTER XXXI

Impatiently our household awaited Buford's return. Jean, his bride of two days, bore his absence, and the suspense of his still unsettled fate, with more fortitude than I the weary waiting for the coming of the priest, whose blessing was to give me my own—my Ellen. Each day, as I watched her minister more and more tenderly to Aunt Martha, who was slowly dying, and had now and then rare hours of confidential intercourse with her, my love, which I had thought already great beyond power of increase, grew and deepened, till every plan and aspiration centered around her, every thought and emotion was inspired by the glad consciousness of our mutual love.

Thomas and Nelly would not start to Kentucky while their mother lived, nor until after Buford's fate was settled.

There was much hot, foolish talk of banishing Tories, and the English government had been ordered to convey them to England. Through the strong influence which General Morgan and myself had been able to enlist for Buford, however, we hoped to procure for him, at least, a pardon. Both households lived on week after week in anxious suspense, made endurable by the love which brightened the lagging hours.

Meantime Ellen's home was building, planned as to its larger outlines after my vision, but in all details modeled to meet Ellen's tastes and wishes. Whenever the weather permitted, and it was possible for her to leave Aunt Martha—for even the new daughter could not take Ellen's place acceptably at the invalid's bedside—we rode together to the green knoll with its fair prospect, which our home was to crown, to inspect with almost affectionate interest each beam and brick, and to suggest, alter, and replan to the bewilderment of the tolerant workmen. Nevertheless the slow winter days dragged along, and Buford's repeated delays and excuses wore my patience to a thin edge as spring approached. Was I to wait forever for my long withheld happiness?

Aunt Martha had been beyond all suffering for a week, and Thomas and Nelly were almost determined to start to their waiting field of labor without again seeing Buford, when he returned —taking us all by surprise at last.

But he brought no priest with him. "None would come so far," he said, "in such unsettled times." One indeed had been at first willing, but could not get the requisite dispensation from his superior. He, Buford, would be obliged to go back at once to Philadelphia, but he could stand the separation no longer and had returned for Jean. Why not Ellen and I go with them, stop in Baltimore to be married, and then go on to Philadelphia to help him? With me to intercede, personally, for him, he felt sure of obtaining not only pardon but the restoration of his estates.

I took this disappointing news across the fields to Ellen. Surely the fate of Tantalus was not much worse than mine!

"Yes, I'll go to Baltimore with you, Donald," she said cheerily—seeming so little disappointed over this further delay that I was for the moment hurt. "Indeed, if you can help your brother, it is your duty to go. Moreover, I shall like a wedding journey, and I have always wanted to go to Baltimore and to Philadelphia."

That put a new phase on the matter. Since it would give Ellen pleasure to take the journey, and we would take it together, I could endure a few more days of waiting. And a happy journey it was, in our own four-horse post chaise, notwithstanding the roads were muddy, and the March weather precarious. Still more happy its ending.

Ellen and I were married in the Cathedral by the solemn ceremony of the Catholic Church, with only the priest's assistance—the choir boys, and Jean and Buford for witnesses. Afterwards Ellen

went into the confessional, while I waited alone for her in the dimly lighted, reverence-inspiring edifice. She joined me, presently, her face both tender and radiant.

"The good Father, Donald," she whispered, slipping a warm little hand into mine, "bade me obey my husband, and follow my conscience in all things—even should that lead me into becoming a Protestant; for I must not let my religion come between me and my wifely duty, since marriage was a God appointed sacrament. You must never again say, my husband, that the Catholic faith is bigoted and superstitious."

"I trust I shall never say anything to wound my dear wife," I answered; "all her principles and feelings are sacred to me. As to her being a Protestant, that she shall never be unless she truly wishes it. As a loyal Catholic, I have learned to love her, and if she is happier still to be one, I shall love her none the less for that," and I kissed first the sweet, earnest face upturned to mine, and then the tiny jeweled cross which had been one of my gifts to her. Three weeks later Buford's pardon had been obtained, with a full restoration of his estates. He would return to Philadelphia, occupy the family mansion, and resume his father's business, for which indeed he had been destined and trained. But, first, he must take Jean back to her mother, as he had promised, and gain her consent to really giving up her only daughter. Buford's supposed poverty, indeed, had been a strong argument in his favor with my mother. If he had nothing, she argued, why should they not settle down on the home place? It was big enough for all and then she and Jean would never be separated. Buford's good fortune would be, I feared, a sad blow to dear mother. But, then, Ellen and I would live not far away, and she could often visit us; while Jean affirmed that her mother should spend part of each year in Philadelphia—for, after all, it was not much of a journey, with good stage roads all the way.

This is the true story of a somewhat eventful life, and I must e'en tell it as it happened. I cannot then conclude it by saying that Ellen and I lived in perfect happiness ever after. In truth we had our sorrows and disappointments, such sorrows and disappointments as are common to mortals—even our differences at times.

Yet, looking back upon our united lives, I see that they have been full and happy—almost realizing the radiant vision of my youth.

One of the incidents of it which gave us much pleasure, was a visit, some years after our marriage, from good Father Gibault. His love for Ellen and hers for him was almost that of a real father and daughter, and his interest in our children that of a grandfather. Especially did he take delight in the manly blue-eyed son we had named for him. Before he bade us farewell, to return to his beloved land of Illinois, he absolved Ellen finally from her allegiance to her old faith, bidding her, since her conscience allowed it, be one in creed also with the husband to whom she was fully united in life and purpose. Though devoted priest of a faith, held bigoted by some, he too believed that creeds are man made, and that God lives not in doctrines, but in our hearts and in our deeds.

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