

**THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF THROUGH THE GATES OF OLD ROMANCE, BY WEYMER JAY
MILLS**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THROUGH THE GATES OF OLD ROMANCE

Through the Gates of Old Romance



THE PARK THEATRE, NEW YORK CITY, IN 1807

Through the Gates of Old Romance

BY W. JAY MILLS

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at Princeton College, 1766-1773"

With Illustrations by John Rae



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TO THE FOUR MANNERS
OF MANNERS HOUSE ON
OLD BARROW STREET

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**AN UNRECORDED PHILADELPHIA
ROMANCE THE FRANKLIN
FAMILY HELPED INTO FLOWER**



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**AN UNRECORDED PHILADELPHIA ROMANCE THE FRANKLIN
FAMILY HELPED INTO FLOWER**

IT was at a musical party given by the great Franklin a few months after he returned from London to Philadelphia, in 1762, that Betsey Shewell first met Benjamin West and entered with him through the ever-swaying gates of Romance. At the time she was known as a belle of the Quaker City, and he is best described by that keen observer of mankind, Doctor Jonathan Morris, as "a young painter of fine parts enjoying his native haunts after the glamour of European capitals."

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The modest Franklin house in the heart of the city was at that time a Mecca for the choice spirits of the colonists. Statesmen, scholars, and men of wealth trod the pebbly street to the philosopher's through all hours of the day until

long after candle-lighting time. Benjamin Franklin meant many things to many people. It is small wonder that poor Mrs. Franklin often lamented that her "Pappy," as she called her husband, was unhappily affected with a too tender and benevolent disposition, and that all the world claimed the privilege of troubling him with their calamities and distress. But still the lady loved her kind, especially those with good ears, tradition says, and the night that "Pappy" gave this frolic for his buxom daughter Sarah she smiled at the company with broad good-humor. And, knowing this (for otherwise there would have been no party at Franklin's), we can raise the curtain on the scene with impunity, and listen to the ghostly wails of violins, the tinkles of tired spinets, and the long-lost voices of the company.

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The night-shutters before the windows of the Franklin parlor are open, for it is the summer time. About the wide, plain room with its few embellishments the guests are grouped in a circle. The host seems to be in a merry mood, and is strumming away on the famous guitar, a knowledge of which he was always ready to impart to his intimate female acquaintances. The ever-laughing Sarah, who seldom sighed for more than the days brought to her, is in her element. She is having a party, and she knows that there is a spicy Madeira punch in the Staffordshire bowl her father purchased as a gift for her mother in England, and a high pyramid of sweet cakes their faithful Abigail made that morn adorns the sideboard. As she flits out into the entry she nudges a girl who is seated by the door, one of a group composed of Mr. and Mrs. Abram Bickley and good Doctor Jonathan Morris. The girl answers her invitation to join her with a wan and unresponsive smile. Her rather piquant face is suffused with sadness, and she pays no heed to the remarks of her companions. It is easy to see that Mrs. Bickley is annoyed by her behavior. Many eyes are focussed on her fine full gown of soft lustring, but she seems unaware of their attention, for the lady is Miss Betsey Shewell, who is indulging herself in a fit of the vapors.

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Betsey Shewell had been crossed in love. Like a foolish maid, she had given her heart where it was not wanted, and the object of her affections, Isaac Hunt, a young gentleman from the West Indies, was then paying desperate court to her niece, Mary Shewell, a girl of her own age.

Isaac Hunt, the spoiled heir of an aristocratic Tory family settled at Bridgetown in the Barbadoes, must have been something of an Adonis. His son, the gifted gossip Leigh Hunt, whom Charles Lamb referred to as "The Indicator" in the famous couplet he addressed to him, wrote of his father, "He was fair and handsome, with delicate features, a small aquiline nose, and blue eyes. To a graceful address he joined a remarkably fine voice, which he modulated with great effect." It was in reading with this voice the poets and other classics that he made conquest of the two girls' hearts.

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The image of this fascinating gentleman was constantly haunting Betsey Shewell's mind as she sat moping by the door of Benjamin Franklin's parlor at the close of a summer's day one hundred and forty-one years ago. That very evening she knew he was to ride over from the Red Lion to visit Mary Shewell, then staying with Betsey Bickley at Penn Rhyn, the Bickley country house, five miles below Bristol on the Delaware. He was with his "shy, dark-haired Mary" now, no doubt. Try as she would, it seemed impossible for her to forget him. Her sister Bickley, observing her sad face, began to fidget. She looked at her with disgust and was about to speak, when the sound of the knocker suddenly reverberated through the house, and Sarah, hastening to open the front door, welcomed in a party of belated guests.

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"Betsey Shewell! Betsey Shewell!" resounded the voice of the indefatigable Sarah over the babble of feminine tongues in the hall. "Betsey, I want to present to thee Mr. Benjamin West."

The melancholy maid turned round on her clavichord stool, and as she rose to courtesy, the color left her cheeks, for before her stood a youth strangely like her longed-for lover, but of a finer presence. His eyes, hair, and nose were the same, and when he spoke, the tones of his voice—low and tender, like Isaac's—were as balm to her lacerated heart.

It was Jonathan Morris who later in the evening fanned the flame of Miss Shewell's curiosity in regard to the handsome Mr. West. He knew almost every step in the round of the young painter's life. There were many things he told her in regard to his early years passed at Springfield, Delaware County, where he did his first drawings with colors given to him by the Indians. How his rude paintings were the pride of a simple Quaker community and the delight of a mother who believed her son to be predestined for some exalted place in the world.

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We can see the girl's bright eyes glisten as she listens to the tale of the day when the youth first left his home to journey to the city and to fame. His father and several neighbors accompanied him part of the way on the

Strasburg road, which was then unsafe to travel without the protection of a score of muskets. In those days of pioneer life under King George the way from Springfield township to the City of Brotherly Love was a hazardous one, infested with bands of brigands constantly on the watch for travellers. As he pictures West flying through the forest pursued by outlaws, but at last outwitting them, her eyes stray to the young painter, who is talking with her sister. She views him with mingled emotions. Brave and valiant, he dashes before her on the charger of courage over the rough and rocky places of life. And then the face of Isaac Hunt comes to her mind in the guise of a handsome weakling. Her foolish infatuation for him is flickering and dying. What has he ever done like this man who has risen from a humble environment to a figure of consequence through the force of his own nature? The words of Morris have succeeded in exciting her interest.

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West feels her gaze upon him and turns to look at her. She is wonderfully lovely in her shimmering gown. Their eyes meet and he goes to her. The vapors that Doctor Franklin's music could not dispel have vanished, and in their place the lights of love are all aglow for conquest.

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Sarah Franklin was the life of her party that night. She even made her mother—good jolly home dame that few Philadelphia fine madams would have anything to do with—sing for the company. Perhaps she sang the quaint song Franklin composed for her some years after his marriage, called "My Plain Country Joan." If she did, she must have lingered with satisfaction over the last verses, in which "Pappy" paid a tribute to her worth:

"Were the finest young princess with millions in purse
To be had in exchange for my Joan,
I could not get better wife, might get worse,
So I'll stick to my dearest old Joan."

When the company rose and gathered in a group for the chorus, there were two who stole out into the cool entry. They were Betsey and West, the idealization of her former lover. There he finished for her the story that his early patron had begun. She heard of his life in Italy and the admiration his work excited. Through the great cities of Europe she strayed with him until they came to the small town of Reading, where, in a watchmaker's rose-embowered shop, his brother tinkered over fusees, ratchet wheels, and main-springs. In his words peace lingered along the village street, and she sighed over the charm of it.

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When the chairs came the Franklin household stood on the doorstep and wished their guests "good-night and good rest." West helped Miss Shewell into her sister's vehicle, bound for Stephen Shewell's abode on Chestnut Street, where the Bickley party were to pass the night. After the carriers started he followed in the chair's shadow until he neared the alley which led to his lodging-place; there he turned and threw a kiss at it in the darkness. The girl's conquest was complete. The lights of love had burned him.

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Betsey, seated by her sister in their slow-moving vehicle, was silent. As they passed the long rows of Cheapside houses, each like its neighbor, some new memory of the evening would come to her. Life seemed an intangible mystery with labyrinths of intricacies. She had found a lover strangely like Isaac Hunt in appearance, and yet so different. As she mounted the steps of her four-poster a little later she almost pitied her niece Mary.

Philadelphia was a gossipy place in the days before the Revolution, and it soon became noised abroad that the young limner West was paying court to Betsey Shewell. The Bickleys had retired to Penn Rhyn, but the maiden still stayed on at her brother Shewell's abode. This brother Shewell was a wealthy man, following the mercantile calling of many of his family. It is a tradition that he desired to marry his sister to a Water Street compatriot over twice her age, and therefore frowned on any gentleman whose admiration was ardent enough to lead him to call upon her. West had visited the fair sister several times before the rumors of their love-affair reached his ears. Returning one night from the Hat Tavern, where he had business with one Widow Cadwell, he fell in with a meddlesome friend of Betsey's who inadvertently told him of the tales that were floating about the town. That a saucy nincompoop of a painter should dare set his eyes on one of the Shewells was a strange thing to this arrogant gentleman whose days were bound with buckram. Nevertheless, he resolved to deal summarily with all parties concerned and sift the matter to the bottom. At first he thought of calling out West, but decided that it would create too much scandal; besides, although the painter's usual demeanor was most peaceable, it was said that while in the Lancaster militia he had become well skilled in the use of his sword. As he rode homeward his anger grew at every rod the horse covered. He scowled at the timorous handmaiden who opened the door of his house. His spurs beat the hard pine-wood floor as he strode through the hall.

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The family were seated at the evening repast. Mrs. Shewell, a dainty, fluttering little woman with the air of a shy wood-pigeon, rose to greet him, but fell back in her seat as she saw his face. Betsey glanced at him, too. She did not quail, for she had known her brother longer than his wife. For a moment there was a silence awesome as the void between two thunder-claps. Then fury was let loose upon the room and tore the story of a tender love-affair from a girl's heart.

"Love him, dost thou? Thy chamber, miss, is the place for thee until thy mind mends." The man sputtered as he made to seize the now thoroughly frightened girl.

The dining-room, so peaceful a few minutes before, became a scene of wild confusion. Mrs. Shewell was taken with the hysterics, the frightened handmaiden, having entirely lost her wits, let fall a tray of India ware she was clutching, and in the nearby aviary a pair of Brazilian parrots set up a screeching.

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Through the hall and up the stairway Stephen Shewell forced his sister, now grown passive, and thrust her into her chamber, locking the door from the outside. From the landing he called in a loud voice his orders that no one should go to her. The tongues of the household were silent, and quiet came after the storm.

Later in the night, when the hall candles were snuffed out and the stern lord of the mansion had fallen asleep, Mrs. Shewell crept to the girl's door and, unfastening the lock, stole in to give her comfort. The room was dark and the little woman's throat became parched as she imagined all sorts of awful things which might have befallen her sister-in-law. A chair gave an unearthly creak, and she stood still, afraid to move, when Betsey descried her and spoke.

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The girl was seated, fully dressed, by the window, gazing on the sleeping city. Mrs. Shewell approached her, and, putting her arms about her neck, wept softly as she thought over the past scene. Betsey kissed her and smiled out at the night. Somewhere off over those dim roofs just touched by a pale moon's light he was sleeping, dreaming of her. Over the silent streets her prayer floated to him, where'er he was: "Oh, Mother Night, fold your tranquil shadows about his couch and guide his wanderings in that wondrous land to pleasant places." Her face was suffused with the joy of love. They might shut her away forever behind closed doors, but they could not destroy the memory of the world she had found with him.

Sarah Franklin was one of the first to hear of Betsey Shewell's incarceration and its cause.

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"'Tis hard on the poor maid," she said to her father over their morning dish. "Her love-affairs always run amuck. First 'tis her niece Shewell who runs away with Isaac Hunt, and now 'tis that cock-a-spur of a brother who shuts her away from Mr. West."

Mrs. Franklin was up in arms in an instant. "Pappy" should go at once to get her out. The poor maid was no doubt languishing. Then, too, 'twas well known Mr. West was soon leaving again for foreign countries.

Franklin shook his shaggy head and bent lower over his bowl. "Would you have me carry coals to Newcastle?" he asked. "We must bide our time, for he that stops a little makes an end the sooner."

Sarah smiled, for she knew that when her father waxed proverbial his mind was making a pleasant excursion.

"We must bide our time," he repeated again. Neither Sarah nor her mother spoke, for they knew his mood.

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A few hours before the Franklins began their digression on Betsey Shewell's fate a dark-coated figure stood before the Shewell house and threw tiny pebbles at the third-story chamber window where the girl slept. There was no one on the street. The solitary lanternman, who had laid aside his rattle and staff, called out in a husky voice the last "All's well and near morning," and departed. Daylight's eyes were on the verge of opening. Faint streaks of pink were drawn across a sombre sky like tassels bedecking a dull brocade. It was the wonder hour when ghosts are creeping back to their graves and the living are about to awake.

Soon a young girl appeared at the window, opened it, and began to talk softly with the man below. Sweet were the words that the dawn wind caught, for the pair were the lovers Betsey Shewell and Benjamin West. It was in this manner that they sometimes saw each other. Although the window was at too great a height for the youth to clamber up to his ladylove or the lady to descend to him, it still permitted soft vows and protestations. This particular morning West brought the sad news that he had obtained a berth on a vessel

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leaving port in a fortnight. Could she not in some way escape from her prison? The heart of the girl, so near and yet far away from her lover on the pavement, beat wildly 'neath her quilted night-robe. Vainly she longed for the wings of a bird that she might light by his side. For an instant there was a faint hope, and then it was dashed away.

Below a window casement creaked softly. Stephen Shewell was listening ensconced in the folds of the chintz window-piece. "Would thee, hussy? Would thee?" he murmured. He could hear the voice of West imploring his Betsey to try and fly with him. The old crone who kept his lodging-place in Christ Church Alley would secrete her until the ship left port. "Oh, but to have the impudent fellow by the neck!" In his rage he clenched the soft folds of his worsted damask banyan. He longed for something to throw,—as he oftentimes did at the vermin of the night. Over under the shadow curtains of the bed his wife was waking. From a happy dream the daylight led her eyes to her husband's face leering out of the curtain. Knowing of the stolen meetings, fright overcame the awe of her husband, and she gave one piercing shriek, prolonged and full of anguish. The three actors in the drama each received a shock in a different way. There was a hurry of footsteps in the street below. Windows rattled and opened. Grave night-capped Quakers looked askance at one another from house to house. What was the matter? Inside the third-story window of the Shewell mansion a girl swooned.

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When the sun was high a great coach drove away from Shewell's and took the road for the Bickley house, Penn Rhyn, many good leagues from the city. It carried a pallid maid guarded by two stout Quakeresses, servants and aides of Stephen Shewell. The hoyden hussy was wedged between them, disgraced and bound for the sequestered rural shades where impecunious painters were not.

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Out into the wooded country the vehicle rolled. At every jolt of the lumbering thing the larger and stouter of the two seized a blunderbuss from an arm-chest, in fear of possible highwaymen. The girl between them gave no heed to their thoughts. Like one only half awake, she gazed out at the country. Each field and fallow they skirted was bearing her farther away from him. The sweet odor of the hay-ricks, the clouds that seemed to be racing with them, the life of the waving trees, and the trilling birds fluttering out of the coverts they brushed, all spoke of him. Each whispered some message, she knew not what.

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"He will never find me again," she mused. Tears came to her eyes, and the drops which were not to be kept back fell on the palm of the stouter Quakeress, who was dozing.

The woman opened her sleepy eyes and gazed at her almost compassionately, then closed them again and fell into a deep slumber. The coach was striking level land. Now the other Quakeress was nodding. For a moment the girl was tempted to seize the blunderbuss from its leather bed and jump out into the road. Then fear overcame her, and she, too, sank back and closed her eyes.

It was the ringing of an evening bell tolled in a nearby hamlet which welcomed them into the beautiful roadway leading to Penn Rhyn. That roadway is little changed to-day, but the house itself gazes upon its visitors in new attire. Probably there is no mansion in Pennsylvania that has had a more interesting history than this pile erected early in the eighteenth century by a pompous Bickley from Buckinghamshire. On the estate is the family tomb guarding the dust of many generations of Bickleys—young Bickleys who faded before their perfect bloom, old Bickleys who were glad enough to lay down the thread of life and rest their tired bones on that moss-grown bank. A long procession of men and women bearing a name that they all were proud of, with but one exception. He, Robert Bickley, cursed his name and his father one Christmas night and then threw himself into the Delaware because the stern gentleman had told him never to darken his door in life, owing to an unfortunate marriage. Now, every Christmas eve it is said that he rises from the river, gaunt and slimy, and steals up the path to the house. Sometimes a belated wanderer sees him standing in the moonlight before the great hall door of Penn Rhyn, moaning over his unhappy fate. Again he is heard in the corridors tapping with ghostly fingers at each chamber door for admittance. Promptly on the stroke of twelve weird, unearthly cries fill the house. Then every wakeful sleeper cuddles down low under the bedclothes. Perhaps it is only the wind playing about the chimneys, but the superstitious would have us believe that it is the shade of poor Robert Bickley calling to his young wife and cursing his fate and name.

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Twilight, with her many fairy couriers,—the glowworms, fireflies, and velvety night-moths,—was settling over the paths of Penn Rhyn's garden when the two Quakeresses and the girl, stiff from their long journey, alighted before the Bickley door. The Bickleys were overjoyed to see their sister before

brother Shewell's letter was delivered by the stoutest of the guards, who still carried the blunderbuss. After Abram Bickley perused the epistle with knitted brow an air of depression fell on the group. "She is to stay in the country, guarded close, for the summer, and the next summer until this painter fellow is filched from her head," he read to his wife.

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The figures on the porch, with their background of dim vines and murky bricks, made a night-piece worthy of the brush of Mr. Hogarth. To the girl, tired and distraught, the front of the house seemed to be covered with mocking faces like the masks about the playboard of the Philadelphia theatre. She hated them all with their looks of compassion, scorn, and surprise. The dull-witted Quakeresses were speaking again with her brother-in-law. Their slow-mouthed sentences came to her ears. "I am here like some poor thief awaiting jail," the girl thought, as she looked at them. Then the faces began to fade. She had wandered into a world of fragrant dusk filled with the good-night prayers of closing flowers. She would willingly go to jail for love. There was nothing more beautiful in the world. Each prison bar she would twine with it. Each day and night should be carpeted with it. Her face was raised heavenward to the field of little stars.

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In the course of events the world in which the Shewells moved learned that Benjamin West had departed for England, and that Betsey Shewell was secreted in a safe country retreat where it would be impossible for him to find her. Sarah Franklin brought to her father's mind his half promise to aid the lovers.

"We must bide our time," he said. "Haste trips up its own heels." That night he penned a letter to West in London. In a few months an answer came. When "Pappy" showed it to his family one morning, they almost devoured him with kisses.

"Take me with you, father, when you set out for Bickleys," Sarah implored. "I want to be in the plot."

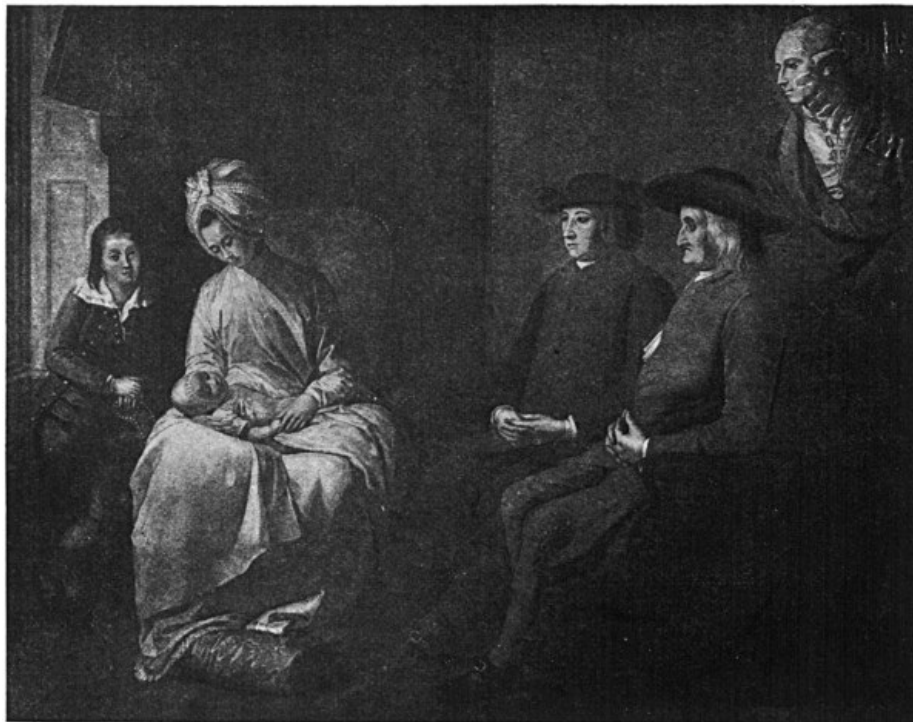
"That you shall," he promised her. "There is much to be done first, though, for we must get at old West."

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"Twill be like the play, and I shall wear my new mourning mitts," Sarah called, pirouetting in glee.

Mrs. Franklin's face was aglow with motherly pride. "Thou shalt wear a new store silk, for the Bickleys be fine feathers at home, I hear."

She glanced at "Pappy" for assent, but he was deep in a newspaper. "I will get it out of him," she said, nodding to the daughter knowingly.



THE WEST FAMILY IN LONDON

Betsey Shewell, who was practically a prisoner at Penn Rhyn, so closely was she watched, thought often of her lover in the weary run of days. She was only allowed to walk as far as the terrace with one of the family or some saucy maid well aware of her mistress's shortcoming. Her diversions were few, and but for her cousin Betsey Bickley she would have wasted from grief. From her she learned of Isaac Hunt, and her lips curved with scorn at the praise

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bestowed upon him. Her niece brought the news one day of a letter received by Abram Bickley from over the sea. Both girls wondered at its contents. Could it be from West? A closer watch seemed to be kept over the fair visitor. Many an hour they pondered over it, surmising this and that and wreathing it with sanguine fancies. The suspense was becoming maddening when all hope was dashed to the ground by Abram Bickley, who read the communication to his wife one morning as the four sat in the dreary garden. It was from a London creditor.

Another June was upon the land,—a wet month more like some silly April than the span of days loved for cheer and sunshine. The two Betseys were out in the Bickley garden gathering drenched roses for the want of something better to do. All of a sudden from the sleepy road there came the clatter of wheels and the clink of a slow nag's feet. Then into view loomed a comfortable chaise of the style afterwards known as the "Postmaster-General." The pair nearly dropped their budholders in the momentary excitement. Rising from her seat and waving a kerchief was a girl. The face they knew well.

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"Sarah Franklin, I do believe," called Betsey Bickley. "Yes, yes; 'tis her father with the reins."

"Pappy" and his daughter had come on their long-promised visit to the Bickleys. Sarah Franklin was radiant with happiness, and it was easy to see that her father reflected her mood. A sight to behold she was when she descended from the side step. Her gown, the fought-for store silk, was garnished with a multitude of varicolored prim flowers, and its folds tried in vain to cover her Paris shoes with red heels, which, in lieu of paste buckles, owing to "Pappy's" hatred of gewgaws, she had tied with red ribbons. On her head she wore a stiffened pasteboard trimmed with "masqueraded bombazin" and adorned with a waving plume which the wind swayed like the dancer a venturesome manager of the new theatre had put on in the tragedy "The Orphan."

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"Oh, you dear Betsey Shewell and Betsey Bickley," she exclaimed, laughingly, as she threw herself alternately in each girl's arms. "My heart thumps at the sight of thee!"

Her father smiled at her actions over his spectacles as he added his greeting.

The noise of the arrival soon brought the whole of the Bickley household to the door.

"'Tis an honor, sir, to see you here," Abram Bickley said, as he helped Benjamin Franklin from his seat.

"There is naught of an honor about it," Sarah Franklin whispered mockingly in Betsey Shewell's ear. "We have come for a play; but keep it to thyself," she added, as if afraid of her words. Then she took off her long black mitts and twirled them in the other's face.

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"Won't thee make a sweet actor lady," she said, to the other girl's wonderment, as they walked together.

There were great doings at Penn Rhyn the day the most talked of man in Philadelphia and his daughter arrived. The largest guest chambers were aired, the fattest goose-feather pillows were brought out, and sweet herbs were placed in all the chimney-piece ornaments. Mrs. Bickley prated in a grandiloquent manner to her maids. A statesman on a visit to her abode gave her undisguised pleasure.

The whole house was soon in a bustle. Sarah Franklin, who sat with Betsey Shewell on a bench in one of the fast-drying paths near the doorway, heard many sounds familiar to her housewifely ears. There were the whack and thump of duster and broom. Delicious odors soon began to steal from the kitchen and mingle with the scents of revived flowers.

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"There will be a party to-morrow night," she said to her companion.

"A party!" reiterated the other in surprise.

"Yes, a party! Wait and see. 'Tis part of the play I have writ with my father out of our heads." Then she began to hum a tralala. "Tell not a soul," she cautioned, and nothing the other said could get another word out of her.

When the Franklins and their travelling chests were safely in their rooms, Sarah opened her chamber door and went in to her father. "She is closely watched," she said. "Did you hint at a merry-making for to-morrow, father?"

"That I did," he answered. "And now, miss, you must lay your traps well. Tell neither of the maids aught, for women have restive tongues. You are proof of the maxim. Go you to Bet Shewell's room to-morrow and have her show you her finery. Find out her clothes closet, and to-morrow night, when the noise is on, creep to her room and do them up in a bundle. Have them

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ready to give her when it is time to tell the news. To Bet Bickley say that you have a desire to see the neighborhood gallants, and get her to bid them all for to-morrow night. Her father will let her if he knows it is your hanker. Lay thy plans well. Remember, two heads and a goose make a market. It is a lot of trouble we are going to for young West, and I don't begrudge the turn; but we must not fall out with the Bickleys."

The famous Miss White, of Philadelphia, who lived to a great age, repeating reminiscences of her cousin good Bishop White used often to tell of that sometime gathering given for Benjamin Franklin by the Bickleys at Penn Rhyn. Among the guests she always gave the names of Francis Hopkinson, Doctor Jonathan Morris, and her cousin, who was then a lad. No one ever disputed her, and it is safe to say that the three celebrities were there.

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Early in the evening the neighbors began to arrive from nearby country-seats, and the house was soon filled with a great company, for Mrs. Bickley wanted her world to know of the honor being paid her. Along the south walk each of the boxwood grotesques was strung with little Chinese lanterns. A bush cut in the shape of a bird held a green dragon in the mouth. The host had planned for a garden frolic, but a soft rain was falling. A wit suggested that the fair ones don capuchins and repair to the lawn for a water-nymph dance. The drawing-room was filled with the noise of gay badinage and the rustle of silken garments. A female voice in an adjoining room was trilling in languishing strains Mr. Vernon's new Vauxhall-garden song, "Jenny and Chole." Between the notes one could catch the fretful murmur of the rain. Its patter on the catalpa leaves near the windows was like the protestations of some band of elfin children angry at the death of moonlit hours and lost playtimes.

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To all observers Franklin was in his gayest mood, and repeated funny tales and made frequent jests; his daughter also laughed with all the gentlemen surrounding her. But in reality their hearts were both heavy. Betsey Shewell was upstairs locked in her chamber, and their long-cherished plan of setting her free seemed worsted, for a servant sat guard by the door.

Outside at the back of the house, hidden by a clump of bushes, the father of Benjamin West was waiting patiently for the lady who was to fly with him to England. Some distance from the Bickley grounds his rowboat that was to bear them to a frigate at Chester was moored to a bank. The night was far advanced and his old limbs were quaking from the cold rain. His eyes, resting on the house, saw a candle flash from an upper window. He knew that it must be a signal.

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Sarah Franklin, as soon as she discovered the way the wind blew, began, at her father's instigation, quietly to take goodies from the dining-room up to the servant by the door.

"I can't let you give them to her, miss," the woman said when the girl first approached.

"They are not for Betsey, but for yourself," Sarah answered. "You must be tired watching. I thought you would like some cheer," she added artfully.

Fate aided the conspirator, for it chanced that the woman was a glutton, and she drank eagerly of the huge jug of stiff punch. She was snoring blissfully when Sarah again came up to her. Slipping her hand into the other's apron pocket, she found the door-key. On tiptoe she crept to the door and, turning the lock, opened it a few inches and went in very softly, bolting it on the inside.

A night-lamp was burning on a wall-piece and Betsey Shewell did not shriek, as Sarah feared she might, on her entrance. She was dressed and lying on a sofa listening to the sounds of mirth from below. She had been pondering over Sarah's strange words of the morning and the day before, and their meaning was now dawning on her. The Franklins were going to help her to escape from Penn Rhyn.

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The girl, in disordered party finery, seized a candle from a stand, lit it over the lamp, and held it before the window. Betsey Shewell ran to her and began to clutch at her skirts, unnerved at the glorious thoughts of freedom.

"Hist!" the other said, touching her lips. "West's father comes across the lawn."

Both girls had mounted the sill and were motioning to the man below, who was placing a ladder before the window. Betsey began to sob in her excitement.

"I cannot go! I cannot go!" she wailed.

Sarah shook her companion gently as she drew a heavy hooded cape about her head.

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"Hush! Hush!" she murmured. "Do you want to wake the woman by the door? Your lover longs for you in London Town and my father and I want to get thee to him. There is no time to stop now for your things," she added. "Part of the play I prated of is ruined, for we did not count on your being shut up here to-night." She was losing her breath and the din downstairs seemed to be lessening. "Go! go!" she said.

For a moment the girls were clasped in each other's arms. "I can ne'er repay your goodness," one of them said. From the other's eyes flashed all manner of sweet wishes.

"Go!" she whispered again hoarsely. "Good that is too late is as good as nothing." She was smiling alone in the darkness.

Off into the night floated the murmur of convivial voices in bibulous cadence. Now the great Franklin was laughing. A watchful ear could catch the patter of faint footsteps. [54]

Outside the room the servant still snored by the door. Sarah passed her safely and replaced the key. No one was ever the wiser for the part she and her father had played in West's life until she told it herself in later years.

Down to the river an old man and a girl stole through the darkness. Off to an unknown land it bore them to bask in the sunshine of a laurel-strewn pathway the painter Benjamin West knew through a long and fruitful life.

Recently one of his old letters to Doctor Jonathan Morris was brought to light, written four years after his marriage to Betsey Shewell, on September 2, 1765, in the church of St. Martin's in the Fields. It breathes of peace and contentment, and when that worthy read it to the Franklin household, there was one who sighed over its sentiments, and another, alas! over the spelling.

"DEAR JONATHAN, [55]

"Our worthy Friend Tho^s Goodwin being just about to imbarck on his returne to North America I could not let so favorable an opportunity Pass without returning you my thanks for your kind favor to me by Tho^s Carrington. By him I intended to have answered it but his leaving this place without giving me the least notice if his returne (which he rather promised he would before his departure) has been the ocasion of this omission, which I hope my dear friend will not think an neglect. As I can assure him his letter gave me that pleasure which may be felt on the meeting of long absent friends, for such was your letter to me. It revived fresh to my memory as tho I had been in the actual enjoyment of the many Pleasing and happy hours I have spent with you in those Rural and inocent juvenal amusements with which America alone abounds my sighs are often intruding and vainely wishing again for those past pleasures which I have there so often experience in those Solitary retreats, or what they people of this side the water call the wilds of America and which is I think a true Image of the following celebrated lines—

"O Solitude; blest state of life below—
Friend to our thoughts and balm to all our woe
Where lust no object for his fires can gain
And Pride wants gazers to admire her train
Where want no crawling feels no insults bear
Kind Lethe of our Passions and our care
Far from the Burse, from Casts and levels far
The crowded Theatre and wrangling Bar
O! far from cities my abode remove
To realms of Innocence and Peace and love.' [56]

"My having had an oppertunity for the last ten years of my life from the vast Toures I have made in visiting the great Capitals in Europe of forming and inlarging my knowledge of Both the world and man and thereby know that true value of America and the Boundless blessings its inhabitance enjoy. For without this oppertunity I might have remained in Ignorance of the real Blessings they Injoy and the State of happyness that subsists between them. For it's by comparison we learn to know the true value of all things—And from thence arises its real worth and esteem.

"As this is the part of the world my department in life has fixed me, I have indeavored to accommodate and settle myself in a domestick life with my little Famely which consists of my dear Betsey and her little boy."

**THE LOVE-STORY OF THE NOTED
NATHANIEL MOORE AND "THE
HEAVENLY ELLEN," A BELLE OF
CHAMBERS STREET, NEW YORK
CITY**



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THE LOVE-STORY OF THE NOTED NATHANIEL MOORE AND "THE
HEAVENLY ELLEN," A BELLE OF CHAMBERS STREET, NEW
YORK CITY

"VERY far away Federal Hall seems to-day as I sit at Aunt's window and gaze out into the street full of chaises and passing pedestrians—The grim stone Pompeys on the garden gates seem to mock at me a simple country girl bound in this hot-bed of fashion for another fortnight—Oh my tenderest Diana how I long for the fresh green of the countryside to give the balm of solitude to my fluttering heart—Ogling and pretty spoken gentlemen New York has in abundance but a girl in my situation no longer cares for a string of gallants—You, my dearest consoler have guessed my secret that he loves me—How can I describe to you his eyes, his hair, his voice, when it is such perfect bliss to pen he loves me...."

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HOW CAN I DESCRIBE TO YOU HIS EYES,
HIS HAIR, HIS VOICE

A great red brick mansion in Chambers Street, guarded by two sentinel-like elm-trees and a tall iron fence; a sidewalk filled with the fashionables of Gotham starting for the afternoon Battery promenade; and up behind the eye-like panes of one of the haughty, staring windows a maiden dreaming over her pen. There is the picture. A demure little country Phyllis, visiting her august city relatives for the first time, has found herself in two strange worlds—fashion and love. In the extract taken from her letter written to a home confidante is the key to a forgotten romance of old New York. Love! the key to all the romances since the world began. "He loves me," she writes, the time-worn phrase every true daughter of Eve has hoped to whisper to herself or cry out to the multitudes, and we feel the thrill of those faded but impassioned words as in imagination we open the gates of that old-time mansion and enter into the year of 1807.

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New York society, which seems to undergo a complete revision every quarter of a century, has entirely changed since the name of Moore meant as much to the metropolis as that of Biddle to Philadelphia or Carroll to Baltimore. At the time of which I write, when the first numbers of the "Salmagundi Papers" were startling North River aristocrats, fields lay beyond the new St. John's Church, and Canal Street was looked upon by the sagacious as the probable Mecca for retail commerce. Jeremy Cockloft, the younger, gives us a glimpse of the residence portion of the city in "The Stranger at Home, or a Tour of Broadway." "Broadway—great difference in the gentility of streets; a man who resides in Pearl-Street, or Chatham-Row, derives no kind of dignity from his domicile, but place him in a certain part of Broadway—anywhere between the Battery and Wall-Street, and he straightway becomes entitled to figure in the beau monde, and struts as a person of prodigious consequence."

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In the new Chambers Street, named after one of Trinity's vestrymen, was

the home of Dr. William Moore, then the first physician of old New York. With a wife who was a daughter of Nathaniel Fish, and a brother, the Right Reverend Benjamin Moore, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York and Rector of Trinity Church, his right to dose the aristocratic element of the city was undisputed. It is small wonder that his morning parlor was generally filled with patients who, tradition says, sometimes literally fought for admission into the inner room and the presence of their "dear gentlemanly doctor."



A SIDEWALK FILLED WITH THE FASHIONABLES OF GOTHAM
STARTING FOR THE AFTERNOON BATTERY PROMENADE

William Moore was a physician of the old school, and is remembered as wearing a bob-tailed wig and wrist ruffles long after the fashion was obsolete. No doubt this adherence to the costume of a past *régime* gave him an additional hold over many of his patrons. Legion were the antique dames struggling against the invasion of demoralizing French fashions who derived momentary satisfaction watching him amble to the family pew in Trinity, followed by numerous exponents of that scapegrace, Napoleon's Empire.

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Dr. William Moore, of Chambers Street! A long-dead king of pills and potions. How stern looks the old figure in the bottle-green coat the name conjures up! We can hear the voice of Thomas, the negro valet, call out, "Dis way to de Dochtar's sanctum, missy or madam." "Not you thar, ladies," as the circle rises. Many a humble possessor of a backache or a heartache must have trembled before that roomful of Cræsus's children on hearing a summons to the awesome presence. Just over the office a maiden sat one spring afternoon in the glow of a love-dream. She heard the dull murmur below, but her thoughts were too beautiful to heed an interlude so closely allied to pain. Through the garden gates the people passed in and out, and now and then the voice of Thomas would come floating to her with his "Dis way to de Dochtar's sanctum." Little did she imagine, as she bent over her pen, that she would ever be called there and the closing door shut out her love-dream forever.

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NATHANIEL FISH MOORE

Two years before Ellen Conover, the girl of the picture, first came to town a youth had journeyed to her home, Federal Hall, in Monmouth County, New Jersey, on a visit. He was Nathaniel Fish Moore, the son of Dr. Moore. The time was a college vacation, for the young man was a student at Columbia, the institution so closely associated with the Moore name. Mrs. Conover *née* Anna Fish, his mother's twin sister, was proud of her handsome and high-spirited nephew, and encouraged his intimacy with her sons and daughters.

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On the outskirts of Marlboro, where Federal Hall lifted its white head above the low stretches of verdant country, Ellen first met the youth who was to be her future lover. When the great coach rounded the turnpike curve with rumbles and groans, and the foam-flecked horses were becoming mere specks in the gray distance, did any of that merry party realize that in the infrangible twilight silence of an early summer's eve two kindred souls had found each other? Up the hilly meadow whose multitude of young green things seem awed at the shadowy approach of night the family trudges, followed by slaves carrying the horse-hair trunks! What a peaceful pastoral scene it is! The spring and all her delicate children are dead, and in her place have come the thousand charms of happier summer. We hear the mother's tender voice, the father's deep tones, and now and then the eager questions of the boy as he helps the maiden through tangles and over stones. The arms of the darkness are encircling them and shutting them away. Soon they will reach that great hall door which no longer guards the welcoming glow of a high-piled hearth. Before it every year the summer comes and goes. The flowers creep up to it, the wind and the rain sigh against it, but the old-time lovers long ago joined the silent company in God's immutable garden of rest.

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Freehold, the next town to Marlboro, was the county-seat and the resort of a gentry which closely modelled itself after the country families of England. Racing, hunting, shooting, and fishing then comprised a large part of the sum of existence for the Jersey squire. Every great landowner possessed a small army of slaves, and the wheels of life ran smoothly. Heavy silver flagons were on the oaken sideboards, old port and sherry in Mammy Dinah's cellaret, and a strong box overflowing with gold pieces was secreted somewhere behind the *Spectators* on the library shelves. On the yellow road creeping out from the court-house stood half a hundred happy Jersey homes—Battle Hill, Violet Bank, Cincinnati Hall, Forman Place, Mount Pleasant Hall, Wassung Vale, Shipley, Harmony Hall, Haven Home, Lover's Port. Only a few of them are left to-day. Mornings spent in following the hounds through dewy coverts, afternoons in spinning or visiting, and evenings in dancing or reading Goldsmith with some favored companion in the englenook by the hall fire composed the daily and nightly curriculum that Ellen Conover and the Jersey girls of her class knew.

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It is said that the portrait of Ellen Conover, by the elder Jarvis, in a white empire gown against a dull pink background, was more like a caricature of her than a faithful rendering of her charms. Her eyes were deep blue, her hair of a gold-brown color, and her complexion had that fresh soft tint only to be

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compared to wild roses. Clement Moore, a son of Bishop Moore, who wrote "Twas the Night before Christmas," a poem which has delighted so many generations of children, used to dwell with rapture on the beauty of her arms and neck. He was one of the gay young city sparks who looked with favor on the little country girl when she first appeared in town, and lost his heart in the bargain, too, if tradition does not err. This we know, that the Knickerbocker belles were palling upon him at that period, and his muse hurled fiery diatribes at the modish nakedness of his young country-women.

After the stately dinners were over in the Moore mansion, and the hour for stray patients past, the parlors became scenes of revelry. Eight o'clock was then the usual calling time in the city, and when the voice of the old clock had finished welcoming in that portion of the evening dear to feminine hearts, Thomas had answered the knock of many a beau. These were the good old days when jolly Colonel Marinus Willet, the city's mayor, was the model of every smooth-faced buck, and sweet Anne Bankhead, coming to town with her fair tresses arranged in the Paris mode resembling the comb of a rooster, started a fashion which made the fortune of the "Empereur des Barbieres Frizzing Palace on de Brudeway." We know the names of many of the Moore girls' callers. Among the favored were Henry Major, who married Jane Moore on August 2, 1808, in St. John's Church, still standing on Varick Street. Then there was Henry de Rham, who married her sister Maria; John Titus, engaged in business with Mr. Major; John Swartwout, the loyal friend of Colonel Burr; Theodore Frelinghuysen, and many others.

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On the Orleans claw-footed sofas, then humiliated by chintz covering depicting the Corsican's bees, the Misses Moore would sit with their swains. There were four of these ponderous pieces of furniture in the large room, so that there was never any danger of crowding. We can picture to ourselves Ellen and her lover taking part in the gayety and longing to be by themselves in some quieter spot. In Monmouth her heart would not tell her that she loved him, but here she had discovered the sweet secret.

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How beautiful was their blossoming love-dream! No doubt, after Thomas crept down to the servants' quarters to bed and the hall was deserted, they often stole away from the company, opened the massive mahogany door, and gazed off over the patch of garden into the night. Only the garden knew of their first kisses,—the nesting birds and the drowsy flowers. They always seem to keep an eye open for human lovers. The robins and the bluebirds chirp sadly, and the flowers give forth fragrant sighs just as if they knew that the course of "true love never runs smooth."

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Under the little beech-tree, with his arm about her, he told her of the humble home he hoped to rent in Gansevoort Street when she would say "Yes." He would not be dependent on his father. His office down on Nassau Street was no longer always deserted.

"I will bring mammy from the country," she would whisper. "And Ned."

"Yes, dear," he would answer.

"I shall cook the breakfast for you with my own hands every morning."

Little white hands. How he pressed them!

"Isn't it beautiful just to be here together?" her lips would falter, as if afraid of the words.

Poor little old-time lovers! Poor little fluttering hearts! There are steps on the pavement outside the gates, for the watch have started on the weary walk with night.

The Moore girls who decorously occupied the Orleans sofas all through the calling hours soon began to notice the couple who so often left the circle. In the morning at the breakfast-table there were often sly innuendoes that Dr. Moore, absorbed in his *Herald*, never paid any attention to and Mrs. Moore could not understand. She would have, though, if she had observed the burning roses in a maiden's cheeks and the angry eyes of the youth opposite glaring at his tormentors.

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"Oh, girls, did you observe the new moon last night?" Jane Moore would innocently ask. "Ellen, you must have." Then how they would giggle.

"Hush, girls!" Mrs. Moore would say as she poised her Wedgwood coffee-cup and gazed around the table. "Young ladies in your station of life should never laugh so loudly; it is not genteel."

Some of the young fellows who called at the house were not so observing as the Moore girls. Freddy Frelinghuysen used to try and keep the pretty country cousin by his side on one of the sofas when the sparking hour was on. Captain William Montgomery, just home from the West Indies, professed open admiration for a New York maiden who could spin.

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"If you will spin me a shirt in an afternoon like the girls in Melrose used to make I will give you the handsomest lace dress to be found in the city," he once said.

"Agreed," she answered. "And if I fail I will give you the finest dress suit a tailor can make."

You may be sure that the proud sister-in-law of a bishop never heard of this wager. The girls kept it a secret.

"It is not anything, after all," Jane said to her sisters. "Ellen not being town bred, it will exonerate her."

Ned did not like the idea very much, but Ellen seemed so delighted at the chance to show her skill that he did not have the heart to dampen her pleasure with a lecture on the improprieties. [80]

"I must remember that she is a bloom of the fresh free countryside, where life is broader and less restrained by convention," he said to himself. So Ellen was left to win her wager with happiness.

One morning Mrs. Moore announced from behind the George III. coffee-urn bearing the arms of the Fish family that she had decided to give a ball. "As the wife of a physician and the sister of a bishop, I feel it my duty to do something for society. Not a bread-and-butter affair like old Mrs. Hone gives; nor should I care to entertain the mob of vulgarians Mrs. Van Pelt does. Something elegant for the representative families, William," she said, giving her spouse's coffee-cup a conciliatory dash of cream.

"Oh, you lovely, lovely mamsey!" the Moore girls chorus. "No, we can't sit still," they cry, heedless of her admonishment. About the table they pirouette and out into the hall, almost knocking over the haughty, stout Miss Rattlebones whom Thomas is leading to the doctor's office. [81]

"Won't it be simply perfect?" they keep asking Ellen. "We will have the waltz,—the new dance so fashionable abroad, you know."

"And 'The Devil among the Tailors' they had at Matilda Hoffman's the other night," Jane added.

"The what? The devil something do I hear you say?" asks Mrs. Moore, rolling her eyes in a horrified fashion. "We will never have that indecent dance in my abode."

What happy days followed Mrs. Moore's announcement, with the hundred things to be planned and finished! Every gallant who shared the Orleans sofas with the Misses Moore during those evenings before the great event was asked whether he preferred white or blue bunting for the parlor ceiling. Did he like the idea of pink roses in the Nast vases on the chimney-piece? Could he imagine the room lighted by five hundred candles? Wasn't it shocking that mother was contemplating serving five kinds of punch? The parlor was becoming a huge question mark and the Moore ball the talk of the city. [82]

Ellen and her lover shared in all the preparations for the affair, but very often they stole out to their trysting-spot of an evening to be alone.

The fateful night before the ball the Argus eyes of Mrs. Moore descried them from her bedroom window seated under their favorite beech-tree. At first she thought the figures were Jane and Mr. Major. Then, blowing out her candle, the cruel spring starlight helped her to make out the forms of Nathaniel and Ellen. Like one fascinated, she watched them. The wind blew the silver leaves of the beech-tree and she learned their secret. He had kissed her. "Oh, it is dreadful!" she whispered to herself, murmuring like one who has received a shock. "They are first cousins. My Nathaniel loves her. I have been blind." The memory of the bantering words passed at table came back to her with a new meaning. Why, only the other day William, her younger son, had told her that Nathaniel was in Brooke's getting the rents of Gansevoort Street houses. The ball had driven everything else from her mind. The affair must be broken off at once. She would seek William. [83]

Doctor Moore was seated by a hickory-wood fire in an adjoining apartment, ensconced in a flowered chintz dressing-gown. The bustle of preparation for the past few days had annoyed him, but the spirit of peace now seemed to have found a place in the wide firelit room. A negress was passing a warming-pan lightly over the lavender-scented sheets of the high four-poster. It was an old-fashioned winter custom that the doctor demanded all through the spring. The air was filled with the dreamy scents of lavender and the pungent odor of the hickory boughs. The fire made the tired man close his eyes, and the ponderous medical treatise dropped to the floor. Morpheus was wooing him when the startling figure of Mrs. Moore, with her nightcap awry and her hair falling over her shoulders, entered the room, bringing him back to the world he was trying to forget. The walls of the old room heard sad things that night. Young hearts that had blossomed out like twin buds on a stem were to be torn [84]

asunder. Their little beech-tree in the garden seemed to be aware of impending disaster, and the dreary sighing of its leaves suddenly fell upon the two by the fire. The night was nearly dead.

"Perhaps, after all, Jane, we have been premature with our worrying and there is nothing between them," the weary father said. "I will see Nathaniel in the morning. Now go to bed, dear; you know to-morrow is your ball, and that will bring you many duties."

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The mystical to-morrow. Like some wan and beggared guest, it tapped on the panes of the great Moore mansion. The cold starlight had not fulfilled its promise, and the face of the day was old before the world was up to see it. Outside the Moore gates it was all gray mist, and yet many of the household looked at it happily. The cooks sang as they worked over the breakfast by candle-light. In a week's time they had prepared a roomful of good things for the children of pleasure to eat that night.

Thomas chuckled gleefully as he showed his new red-and-gold party livery to the company below stairs. He knew that he was a very handsome nigger, and many a lady's maid would smile at him as she followed her mistress through the hall when the ball commenced. None of the ladies appeared at breakfast, and after the last dish was removed Doctor Moore asked Nathaniel to follow him to the office.

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"Nathaniel," the father said, motioning his son to a seat, "your mother saw your conduct in the garden last night with Miss Conover, and I wish to know its meaning."

The young man had refused to be seated, and stood by one of the windows gazing out into the mist. The grayness filled him with a vague intimation of approaching trouble. Ellen's name was its first sense of realization. "I love Miss Conover," he answered, almost unconsciously.

The old physician in the stiff-backed desk-chair knit his brow and pulled his stock up higher about his throat, an action familiar to his patients. He seemed lost in thought. In front of him was his desk covered with medicine phials, but here was a case that no medicine he could give would help.

"My son," he said, and the clock accentuated the huskiness of his voice. "My son, you have no right to love Miss Conover. She is your first cousin, and you can never marry her. It is a hopeless love."

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"Other men have married their cousins, sir. There are Jonathan Kortright and Hulda Reid, and Chauncey Prince——"

"Yes, Nathaniel," the doctor's voice interrupted his passionate speech, "the world is full of law-breakers; but it is the edict of God that two of one flesh cannot marry. I should never countenance such a union. Your children would be accursed."

The glowing eyes of the young man were riveted on those older eyes drooping beneath the gray wig. Why didn't he storm and rage as he used to in the old days when a lad in torn nankeens and begrimed face was brought to that desk like a culprit before a tribunal of justice? He could see that his father pitied him. In the next room they were tacking up the wall decorations for the ball, and a monotonous tap, tap was joined to the maddening ticking of the clock.

Suddenly the youth rose to his full height before the old man and caught his weary eyes. "I shall marry her," he said. "I defy you, God, or the devil to stop me!"

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The wrinkled, passive face before him seemed dazed and blurred. There was no answer. Oh, how cold and dreary the room looked! Life, after all, held very little. The fire died out in the youth's eyes. "My God, what a hell you have given me!" he cried. There was a knock at the door and the father rose to open it. In the middle of the floor he stopped and went up to his son. Upon the strong young arms he placed his feeble hands. "Be a brave man, my son," he said. "May God help you!"

In her aunt's room overhead Ellen was humming an air she remembered Miss Trelawny singing a week before at the Park, when Nathaniel had given a gay little theatre party to celebrate the winning of Captain Montgomery's gown. It had arrived only that morning from Madame Bouchard's on Cortlandt Street, and the black maid had spread it on a bed where the young ladies could admire it. Very beautiful were its soft folds of Machlin lace.

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"You will be more like a partner of the fashionable Madame Moreau than a country girl to-night," Jane Moore told Ellen, as she and her sisters hurried off to deliver some of their mother's orders.

"Watch Ned's eyes, Jane, when he first sees her," Maria whispered, as she closed the bedroom door softly.

Ellen gazed out into the street. The mist was rising. Perhaps, after all, it would be a clear night. Through the gates came a ceaseless stream of flower men and women carrying wicker baskets piled high with early blooms; Fly-Market dealers with bundles of provisions; Mrs. Leach and some of the girls from the Broadway Frozen Cream Parlor to make the sherbets and syllabubs. A group of urchins and older busybodies were standing in the middle of the street gazing up at the windows.

"It would be grand to be rich and give parties like them foine birds," a chimney-sweep's wife remarked to the woman next to her. [90]

"Now, don't ye envy them, miss," her companion replied. "Ye never can tell when ye look at a big house what's hiding behind the velvets afore the windows."

The grim Pompeys on the gates seemed to smile at her logic. And yet, after all, the darkness overhead was breaking away, and from out the sombre clouds the sky was spilling pale new-born sunshine over roofs and steeples and despairing streets.

Those who heard of the glories of the Moore ball in their youth are not likely ever to forget it: the music, the supper, the graciousness of host and hostess, and the company. There was a new Astor piano borrowed from the bishop to mingle its fresh voice with that of the tired Moore spinet and the playing of the Park's four violinists. The people who attended it, whose names were as well known then as the pure tones of Trinity's bells,—Le Roys, Rutgers, Gouverneurs, Beekmans, Jays, de Lanceys, Wilcoxes, Livingstons, Kissams, Kortrights, Clarksons, Schermerhorns, Van Pelts, Clarks, Varicks, Waddingtons, Van Santvoorts, Van Nests, Pells, Kembles, Fairlees, and Waters,—they were the great of 1807. [91]

In the largest parlor, where the Orleans sofas are pushed ignominiously against the wall, youthful New York is whirling about to the strains of the Corporal Listnor waltz. Two belles of the evening the room contains,—Maria Mayo, of Virginia and New Jersey, who married General Winfield Scott, and Matilda Hoffman, the love of gay young Washington Irving. A third, and the most remarked of all that large company,—Ellen Conover,—has just passed through the doorway on the arm of Nathaniel Moore. A handsome couple they make,—she in her lace gown and he in dark plum-colored evening clothes. She is smiling, for she does not see the look of misery in his eyes. [92]

"The stars are out, dear; shall we go into the garden and sit under our own little beech-tree?" she asks.

Our beech-tree! How the words sink into his soul and cut like knives!

"No, Ellen," he answers; "the leaves of the tree, so tender and young, are old and seared for us."

"Why, Nathaniel, how strange you talk!" she says. Then she looks into his white face and begins to understand.

Oh, the anguish of his drawn young face, as he folds her in his arms and tells her to be brave. Into the library she follows him. Her step has lost its buoyancy and the roses have died in her cheeks. A woman's intuition has guessed what he has to tell her. Something has come between them. Softly he closes the door on the lights, the music, and the babble of happy voices.

"Kiss me and never let me speak again, darling," he whispers. But she lets him speak—and break her heart. [93]

Almost a century has passed since the dawn after the Moore ball when a girl stole down the slender staircase of that proud mansion. It was Ellen Conover garbed for a journey. Like the ghost of pleasure, she crept through the trellis-work of faded flowers which adorned the landing and hurried noiselessly over the slippery hall. No one was about but Thomas, who was picking up some of the motto papers and dead flowers strewn over the dining-room floor. Hearing the rustle of a woman's dress, he came to the door of that room and looked out with startled eyes.

"Why, missy, is you going abroad so early?" he asked, incredulously.

"Yes, Tom, I'm going back to Monmouth."

Seeing a question in his eyes, she continued,—

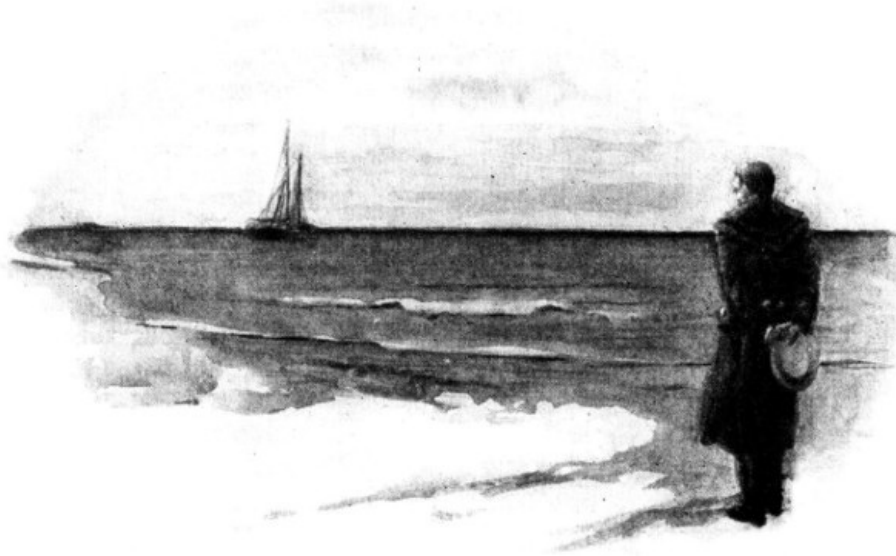
"Aunt will understand. I have left a note by her door." [94]

In her hand she held a square deerskin bag, and the negro, not forgetting his manners in his bewilderment, asked whether he could carry it for her.

"Thanks, Tom," she said, wearily, as he relieved her of the heavy burden. "Colonel Montgomery is to be at the Broadway corner for me. He is going to Englishtown, and has promised to see me home. The Paulus Hook coach passes at seven, you know."

Beside the lyre-shaped hat-rack Ellen paused for a moment. Thomas thought that she was going to faint, but she beckoned for him to go on. Before her was Nathaniel's gray beaver, the one she had liked him in so much. She remembered he wore it that happy day they wandered down to Gansevoort Street to look at their little dream-house. Dear dream-house, that would never be theirs. The wistaria vine that twined so lovingly about the stoop-rail high up to the dormer window would never purple for them. Was he asleep now? She wondered what he would think of her running off in this fashion. "Perhaps it is foolish, but I could never stand seeing him again," she murmured to herself. On the floor were his riding-gloves, swept off the hat-rack by some heedless reveller of the night before. Like one lingering in a dream, she picked them up and tenderly put them in the pocket of her coat. For a moment she stood silent with her hand on the door in the attitude of one listening to a benediction. Outside a souging wind was sweeping through the deserted street and the dark hall was full of its whispered sighs. Softly she opened the door on the new day, and then, as if speaking to an invisible presence, she said, "May you sometimes think of me as I shall always think of you, dear heart." And the sweetest part of the story is, he was faithful to her memory until death.

A TRUE PICTURE OF THE LAST DAYS OF AARON BURR



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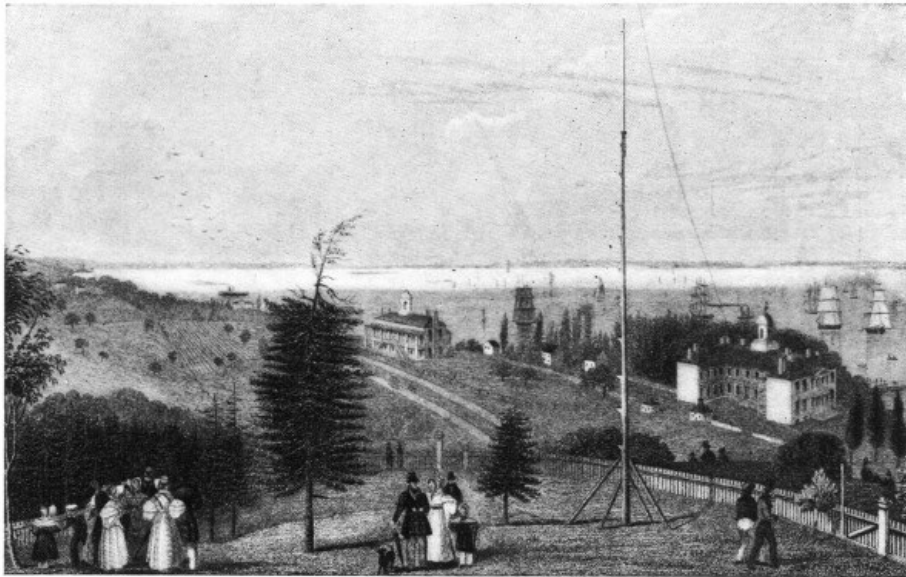
A TRUE PICTURE OF THE LAST DAYS OF AARON BURR

AN old house that has fallen to ruin always has something pathetic about it, but a great hostelry in the clutches of decay, where warmth and cheer have welcomed generations of travellers, is sadder still. In Port Richmond, Staten Island, there is still standing the Richmond Inn, suffering from the weight of many years. Erected before the war of 1812, until 1820 it was the home of the Mersereau family, who owned most of the surrounding land when the place bore the name of Mersereau's Ferry. The Mersereaus were Huguenots, and descended from two brothers who fled with their mother from France to America on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Richmond Inn rests on the site of an earlier Mersereau mansion,—a witness of the Revolution. During the early part of the last century there were no buildings to shut off the view of the water-front, and its lawn ran down to a bluff overlooking the ferry landing and wharf. There Jed Simonson, a soldier who had fought at Monmouth, received the freight from the Jersey shore and the chance scow bearing Indian luxuries purchased from the hold of some newly-arrived merchantman. Great trees stood guard at the back of the inn like a troop of shadowy sentinels, and through them came sweet scents of the verdant country that rolled away over the British breastworks still covering the nearby hills. On the wide galleries of this haven of rest old sea-captains could always be seen gently dozing as they puffed long pipes in the sunlight, or perchance gazing through spy-glasses at the white sails flecking the harbor. The ocean underwent quick transitions as they rounded Cape

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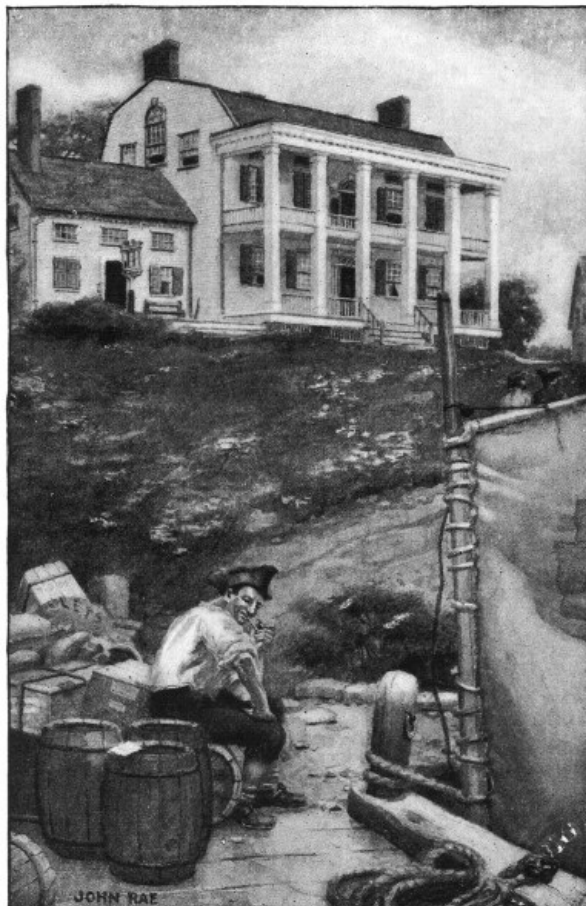
Hatteras or struck the Gulf Stream, and the nautical yarns they spun of the "Merry Marys," "Saucy Belles," and "Swift Sallys" were ropes which led to the seamen's true Elysium.



AN OLD VIEW OF STATEN ISLAND, ABOUT 1830

At nightfall the mail-coach often drove up before the door with a load of happy guests and bore others away. Those were the days when social intercourse was a feature of tavern life. "Good-by! Good-by!" a dozen feminine voices would call as the gay party of Southerners departed on their long journey to Baltimore. Toasts of Calverts and St. Marys, tears and kisses and fluttering handkerchiefs before the coach rumbled past the little red general store into the darkness. And then later in the evening, when it was time for the candles, the young people remaining would assemble in the hall for a reel, made merrier by the jingly protests of the gold-legged Clementi piano. It was to this abode that Aaron Burr, world-weary and near death, was brought in 1836.

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ON THE WIDE GALLERIES OF THIS HAVEN OF REST
OLD SEA-CAPTAINS COULD ALWAYS BE SEEN GENTLY
DOZING AS THEY PUFFED LONG PIPES IN THE
SUNLIGHT

Aaron Burr, the courageous, was then sunk into an abyss so low that his

enemies should have been satisfied. For years he had endured the censure of his fellows, the vituperation of Federalists and anti-Federalists, and the sneers of the populace without a murmur. Like the rock depicted on the old seal with which he used to stamp his letters, his lofty spirit had been unmoved by the winds and waves of public opinion. But now disease and old age had found him, and the spectre every human thing must some day face was his relentless pursuer. Until recently there was one living who remembered his arrival at the old hostelry. How the black stage-driver and a gentleman of the party assisted him up the steps to the door and then up the quaint staircase to the largest guest-room on the second floor. The spot is still shown where stood the ancient curtained bed he occupied. The wide, white carved mantel-piece where his tired eyes must have often rested has not been disturbed, and one of the old window-panes bears the sentence, scratched with a diamond, "All is vanity," which tradition says is his work.

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Aaron Burr's career is a strange record of triumphs almost reached; the picture of a proud spirit tortured and frenzied by fate. The story has been handed down from generation to generation in the Edwards family, and is preserved among the papers of the late William Paterson, of Perth Amboy, that when Aaron Burr was an infant in the parsonage on Broad Street, Newark, his mother often prayed that her son should be as a star among men. Her prayer was answered, but not in the way she would have wished. From his mother Burr inherited that morbid sensitiveness which eventually proved his downfall. Esther Edwards never forgot some of the stings she had endured when painting fans in the manner of Watteau for the fashionable women of Boston. Her son always believed that Alexander Hamilton was the cause of his ruin in the eyes of Washington, the loss of the Presidency of the United States, and the constant blackener of his good name by tongue and pen. If the shadow of Hamilton had never crossed the path of Burr, the latter's name might have been glorious for all time.

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In the Paterson papers on Princeton College, recently published under the title "Glimpses of Colonial Society and the Life at Princeton College, 1766-1773," we find recorded that "little Burr" was one of the most popular men of his class at "The College of New Jersey." "To see you shine as a Speaker would give great pleasure to your friends in general and to me in particular. You certainly are capable of making a good Speaker, dear Burr," that noble youth, William Paterson, wrote to him when leaving Princeton in 1772. Through Paterson we learn that Burr would go any length to serve a friend, wrote in a lady-like hand, and at sixteen was the admiration of the fair sex of Elizabethtown. This comrade and a few other of the jolly founders of the Cliosopic Society were the subjects of Burr's reminiscences in those last summer days when the sea-air stealing through his windows seemed to give him new life. The horrible nightmare of his later years was forgotten. He was a boy again at the little village of Princeton that his father loved, the sun shone on proud Nassau Hall, the Scotch silversmiths tinkered all day long in the shops lengthening the Main Street, the lights glowed in the tavern, and fair Betsy Stockton was the belle and toast of the College.

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Almost every stage of Aaron Burr's life is tinged with melodramatic interest, and it is fitting that the woman who befriended him in his last years should have been the daughter of a British soldier met on the battle-field of Quebec. There Burr saw the gallant Richard Montgomery and his own college-mate, John Macpherson, stain the snow with their blood, and it is a disputed tradition that Burr carried the wounded Montgomery from the field. The name of the generous soul who cared for him after his disastrous marriage with Madame Jumel and subsequent removal from Mrs. Hedden's house in Paulus Hook was Mrs. Joshua Webb. It has been written that she kept a boarding-house in the old Jay mansion, a proud dwelling in New York's history, and sheltered her father's friend at the risk of fortune and reputation. Madame Jumel, towards the close of her life, used to relate that she offered him pecuniary aid at that period, but it was proudly refused.

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In his basement room at Mrs. Webb's, propped up in bed by his faithful black servant Kester, or Keaser, as the name is sometimes written, Burr received his old friends. There John Vanderlyn, the youth from Kingston whom he befriended, and who became a famous painter, celebrated for his "Marius," would visit him; there, too, came Judge Ogden Edwards, then residing in the Dongan manor-house at West New Brighton, Colonel Richard Conner, and a few other faithful ones whose names are unrecorded. The portrait of his lost Theodosia, who stands forth in history as the noblest of daughters, hung in front of the bed. Through the window he could obtain glimpses of familiar streets where he had once walked with his wife, Theodosia Prevost, the lovely niece of the eccentric Thomas Bartow, of Amboy. But they were changing. The abode on Maiden Lane, his first New York house, was destroyed, and the larger mansion at the corner of Nassau and Cedar Streets was also gone. Richmond Hill, one of the most beautiful country-seats in New York, where, in

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her fourteenth year, Theodosia presided over her father's board and conversed with the greatest men of the day, was then covered by Varick Street, and St. John's Park, which was in the beginning of its glory. At the little Maiden Lane house his wife had penned him many of her beautiful letters. Her ghost must have often come before him as he read over the faded epistle written one stormy night after he had left her for New Jersey, in which she outpoured for him her ardent love:

"Thus pensive, surrounded by gloom, thy Theo sat, bewailing thy departure. Every breath of wind whistled terror; every noise at the door was mingled with hope of thy return, and fear of thy perseverance, when Brown arrived with the word—embarked—the wind high and the water rough. Heaven protect my Aaron; preserve him, restore him to his adoring mistress. A tedious hour elapsed, when our son was the joyful messenger of thy safe landing at Paulus Hook. Stiff with cold how must his papa have fared? Yet grateful for his safety I blessed my God. I envied the ground which bore my pilgrim. I pursued each footstep. Love engrossed his mind; his last adieu to Bartow was the most persuasive token. 'Wait till I reach the opposite shore that you may bear the glad tidings to your trembling mother.' O, Aaron, how I thank thee! Love in all its delirium hovers about me; like opium it lulls me to safe repose! Sweet serenity speaks, 'tis my Aaron presides. Surrounding objects check my visionary charm. I fly to my room and give the day to thee."

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New York was undergoing a great transition. She was outgrowing her maidenhood, and her swift feet took sure foothold in meadow, swamp, and woodland. To these changes Burr was unconscious. He had known her well and loved her, but when his clear brain grew listless and his eyes lost their fire she cast him out. Soon came the day when he was to look at the familiar sights for the last time. Tears filled his eyes as he gazed from the deck of the primitive steamboat which voyaged twice a day from the Battery to Staten Island. He knew that it was his last farewell, and the calloused heart was melted. In that sad moment his friend must have held his feeble hand. The world had not deprived him of everything—there was something at the last!

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When Aaron Burr was brought to the Richmond Inn, the hostelry was kept by Daniel Winant, a man of Dutch descent. He was assisted in his task by two young daughters, who were the life of the little hamlet. Old Port Richmond residents used to tell of their kindness to the famous guest, nursing him devotedly and doing all in their power to shield him from the annoyance of curious strangers who journeyed to the Port to gaze upon him.

Among the guests stopping at the hotel during Burr's last days there was a young man of twenty-four by the name of Orlando Buel, from New Preston in Connecticut. The quizzical, genial Orlando in his little shop, cutting posies and weeping willows on tombstones or making tall mahogany clocks with wonderful embellishments, still lives in the minds of many of the islanders. In God's acres, which lie north and south and east and west over this isle of the great State of New York, Orlando's white blooms cover many and many a green mound. What a great man was Orlando, to record the lives of a small army of humanity! Sweet were the emblems he placed over their faded lives. Close to the specimens of his handiwork are older stones on which are figured skulls and other cruel reminders of death; but Orlando gave his tired ones the emblems of nature, the never-ceasing resurrection. The elements are sweeping away some of his trees and flowers, it is true, for this youth from New England came to cut tombstones as a travelling apprentice to one Thompson, in the spring before Aaron Burr thought of Staten Island as his last home.

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Orlando frequently occupied a seat next to Burr on the gallery, and in after-years the interested visitor could always induce him to relate his memories of this time. The favorite among his stories was of Mrs. Webb's arrival at the inn to obtain a last look at the face of her old friend the morning after his death. Orlando had prepared the body for its final resting-place the night before and was still in charge of the remains. Mrs. Webb came heavily veiled and accompanied by her small daughter. In the hall they waited until the chamber of death was deserted, and then timidly crossed its threshold. When the passionate tears of this noble woman fell on the withered face of the dead, the heart of her observer was touched, and he gazed on the scene with wet eyes.

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Several times during the months of July and August Burr took rides back into the country. The Ogden chaise, drawn by a bay horse, would stop at the Inn in the afternoon while the sun was still high. Tommy, the lad who kept the garden path clean for the soft crinolines that caressed it in the late afternoon and early evening, never neglected an opportunity to leave the slouching weeds for the excitement of running up the steep steps and hammering the heavy knocker, calling out in the shrill trumpet tones of youth, "Here's the

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chaise for Colonel Burr! Here's the chaise." The buxom calico-clad figure of one of the Misses Winant would open the door, and through the hall and up the narrow winding staircase would rush the boy. Out on the gallery, in the depths of the old cushioned draught chair, an expectant figure always sat waiting for the near approach of those eager, clattering feet. With the boy's help he rises tremblingly, and we see him there in the sunlight,—a slight, emaciated old man in a Continental blue coat, a thin, worn face which has lost all the beauty of his famous likeness given to the world by Stuart's brush, but eyes still lustrous and oftentimes full of fire. Into the shadows, down the staircase and the porch, the strong young arms of the boy almost carry him. After them comes the faithful Miss Winant with Burr's great-coat, carefully treading on tiptoe lest she should attract his attention to her heavy burden. With the united efforts of the coachman, the boy, and his landlady, Burr is seated in the chaise. The coachman cracks his whip over the plodding mare, and the old-style vehicle bearing its precious burden rounds the corner into a world of green.

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A pathetic and almost tragic picture of Burr has been recorded on one of these drives. On a gray, melancholy afternoon, while being driven through a neighboring village, he passed a group of rustic militia attempting a drill. His old eyes lighted up as he gazed upon them, and his mind went back to the time when he wore regimentals in the service of his country.

Calling out to the wind, for no one was by his side, he is said to have exclaimed,—

"Why, one might have fancied these yokels as having just ravelled off Washington's pet brigade! Washington! oh, Washington!"

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Until the carriage had left the village far behind he continued to hold communion with himself. The twilight was enveloping him. He saw the youthful hero, Burr, storming the heights of Quebec, rescuing the brigade of General Knox, routing the enemy at Hackensack; now starving at Valley Forge and again enduring the hell of Monmouth. With ghosts from out the past he lived again.

Through the summer Burr lingered on at the old hostelry until September 14, 1836, when his tired eyes closed forever. At noon Dr. Van Pelt, the minister of the nearby Dutch Reformed Church whom Burr had refused so often to see, came on his last visit of consolation. Through his life he declared that Burr's death was one of peace, despite the many stories to the contrary.

History has never clearly revealed those who grouped themselves about his bedside, but this we know: by the door stood the Misses Winant and a few humble friends his last days had brought him. Their tears were among the most heartfelt shed over the courageous one whose dreams were delusions and great deeds ashes.

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THE POETIC COURTSHIP OF
PHILIP FRENEAU, THE POET
OF THE REVOLUTION, AND
BEAUTIFUL ELEANOR FORMAN



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THE POETIC COURTSHIP OF PHILIP FRENEAU, THE POET OF THE
REVOLUTION, AND BEAUTIFUL ELEANOR FORMAN

OVER a hundred years ago, in the most luxuriant part of Monmouth County, a garden spot of New Jersey, two large white houses smiled at each other through the changing seasons across a long vista of billowing field. The one nearest the sea was Mount Pleasant Hall, the home of the Freneaus, and the other, on the outskirts of Freehold, was Forman Place, the home of the Formans. Tall trees lined the narrow roads that crept so lovingly about them, grain and fruit grew in abundance on their broad acres, and flowers filled the gardens. Surely it was an ideal setting for a poetic courtship.

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In the history of American belles-lettres it would be hard to find a more interesting couple than Philip Freneau, the poet of the Revolution, and the Jersey beauty he made his bride. Their life was the sweetest of pastorals. Like two brilliant butterflies, they flitted through years softly tintured with shadows. When the world ill-used them, they sought refuge at the Pierian spring. Calliope was their sure consoler, and it was only when their gay wings were crushed and broken at the last that they forgot her.

Both belonged to distinguished families counted among the gentry class of the time. The Freneaus were descended from the Huguenot house of De Fresneau, famous in the history of La Rochelle. André Freneau, the poet's grandfather, upon his arrival in New York identified himself with the Royal West India Company of France. His associates in its interest were Auguste Jay and Étienne Delancey, two men of prominence in the early city. He is several times mentioned in the Journal of John Fontaine, who visited New York in 1716. His son, Pierre Freneau, resided in one of the finest dwellings on old Frankfort Street, and there his wife held a miniature court for the French society that found its way to the Dutch city flourishing under the English flag.

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The Formans came from as notable stock as the Freneaus. One of their ancestors was a Lord Mayor of London, and Lady Mary Forman is recorded as dazzling New Orleans with her finery at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Tradition says that Mrs. Samuel Forman, a jolly dame and a leader of the old Monmouth neighborhood, used to ride to the Tennent Church in a golden coach. It was at that old church, close by the battle-field of Monmouth, that Philip Freneau first saw his Nelly and grew to love her.

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Little Tennent has borne the marks of time lightly since the youth and the maiden shyly gazed at each other across the narrow aisle. Very sweetly her voice would ring out to the gay-tuned airs, for the music was lively in Tennent after that good nomadic dominie, George Whitefield, introduced the fashion of theatrical music in church. It was an often-repeated county jest in Monmouth that no one could fall asleep in the Tennent Church, the pews were so hard and straight-backed, and the choir so noisy.

Eleanor Forman was of a type which has always appealed to the poets. Her features were regular, her eyes blue and languishing, and her hair the color of pale sunshine. So fair and lasting was her complexion that, as an old lady, a Freehold gallant compared it to "the lilies and garden pinks." In those long-dead Sabbaths Freneau and his boy friends, home on vacations from the College of New Jersey, no doubt thought her a very attractive picture as she nestled by her mother's rich beflowered brocade, a tiny figure in white muslin and soft ribbons. James Madison saw her then, and, although she was too young for his companionship, he never forgot her charm, and in after-years, when she had entered the poet's life, he was one of the most loyal frequenters of her little salon in Philadelphia during Washington's second administration.

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Although Philip Freneau, as an elderly gentleman given to reminiscence, used to relate that Eleanor Forman crept into his heart in his boyhood before he became a wandering pedagogue, it was not until long after his arrival at manhood's estate that she stormed and took the citadel. There was another romance in his life before his Nelly. At the immature age of sixteen he fell in love with a Jersey maiden residing near his home, whose name is lost to posterity. She died early of consumption, and the poet's verses at the time show his melancholy state of mind.

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In "The Power of Fancy" he wrote of her:

"Fancy, stop and rove no more,
Now, tho' late returning home,
Lead me to Belinda's tomb;
Let me glide as well as you
Through the shroud and coffin, too.
And behold, a moment, there
All that once was good and fair.
Who doth here so soundly sleep?
Shall we break this prison deep?
Thunders cannot wake the maid,
Lightnings cannot pierce the shade,
And tho' wintry tempests roar,

Tempests shall disturb no more."

Another of his poems, entitled "Amanda in a Consumption," tells the whole pitiful story of his misplaced passion. We sympathize with a lover who was no more than a boy when we read:

"When wandering in the evening shade,
I shared her pain and calmed her grief,
A thousand tender things I said,
But all I said gave no relief:
When from her hair I dried the dew
She sighed and said—"I'm not for you."

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There is an old saying that "love weeping burns away," and soon the boy ceased to write lamentations over his lost Belinda. Events were crowding thick and fast into his life at this time; years of travel and excitement had helped him to forget her; and when he returned to "the old house at Monmouth" on a summer day in 1780, weary of war and ill from long incarceration in a British prison-ship, he was in a state of mind to fall in love with the little Nelly of old Tennent days.

Like Philip Freneau, who had written from his earliest childhood, Eleanor Forman began the indulgence of her muse in her teens. One of her books still in existence shows her first thoughts put into verse. "Lines to a Lady's Singing-Bird" are scribbled over a copper print of a placid shepherdess, and words ready for rhyming embellish some of the margins. The pompous Mrs. Forman was very proud of her daughter's accomplishment, and it is said that, on Eleanor's composing some tributary verses to her mother's pet gray turkey, she presented her with a pair of paste shoe-buckles whose glitter affected the heart of every Monmouth maid and swain.

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Beside Freneau's own stream running through the valley of young pine-trees near the Hall the romantic Eleanor loved to come to dream. There one day she found another dreamer, and the chance meeting was the beginning of one of the most poetic love-affairs.

This pleasant stream was almost a human thing to the poet. In the days before he found his Eleanor seated on its bank he addressed to it his last musings on the vanished Belinda:

"Where the pheasant roosts at night,
Lonely, drowsy, out of sight,
Where the evening breezes sigh,
Solitary, there stray I.

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"Close along the shaded stream,
Source of many a youthful dream,
Where branchy cedars dim the day,
There I muse and there I stray."

Later, with "the fairest of women" by his side, when Belinda had grown to be only a memory, he composed his exquisite poem, "Retirement:"

"A hermit's house beside a stream,
With forests planted round,
Whatever it to you may seem,
More real happiness I deem
Than if I were a monarch crown'd.

"A cottage I could call my own,
Remote from domes of care;
A little garden, wall'd with stone,
The wall with ivy overgrown,
A limpid fountain near,

"Would more substantial joys afford,
More real bliss impart,
Than all the wealth that misers hoard,
Than vanquished worlds, or world's restored—
Mere cankers of the heart!

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"Vain, foolish man! how vast thy pride,
How little can thy wants supply!—
'Tis surely wrong to grasp so wide—
We act as if we only had
To triumph—not to die!"

Reading its faded original, we hear the strong, mellifluous voice of the poet that the ladies of Charleston used to grow enthusiastic over when he visited

his brother Peter in that city, and our minds grow retrospective, leading us back through the years to the couple by the little silver thread of water which long ago gave up its life to some mysterious unknown ocean. What a joyous thing it is when she is near him to listen to his words and share in his flights of fancy! The wind whispers through the pine-trees, and their soft sighing mingles with the gurgling cadences of the wavelets and breaks up the sunlit silence. The wind is a dream wind, and brings to them both sweet visions of the future. The house, surrounded by walls "with ivy overgrown" and "remote from domes of care," where he longs to take her, is almost a reality. Fate is a hag old and blind, and Life is a song from a charmed lute.

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Soon after his meeting with Nelly Forman, Freneau wrote his tragedy of "Major André," which was never presented before the footlights. It is not known whether he ever gave it to a printer, and only fragments of his manuscript are in existence to-day. A portion of it shows us the unfortunate André pleading for his life before a tribunal, and as we finger the time-stained paper, desecrated by the household accounts of later years, a tearful Eleanor rises up before us, listening to the impassioned reading of her poetic lover.

For his "Major André" Freneau wrote a prologue, which he afterwards changed and permitted to be spoken at the opening of the Philadelphia Theatre. This he dedicated "to his Excellency General Washington."

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"PROLOGUE

"Written to a Theatrical Entertainment in Philadelphia, December, 1781.

"Wars, bloody wars and hostile Britain's rage
Have banished long the pleasures of the stage;
From the gay painted scene compell'd to part,
(Forget the melting of the heart)
Constrained to shun the bold theatric show,
To act long tragedies of real woe,
Heroes once more attend the comic muse;
Forget our failings, and our faults excuse.
In that fine language is our fable drest
Which still unrivall'd reigns o'er all the rest;
Of foreign courts the study and the pride,
Who to know *this* abandon all beside;
Bold though polite, and ever sure to please;
Correct with grace, and elegant with ease;
Soft from the lips its easy accents roll,
Form'd to delight and captivate the soul;
In this Eugenia tells her easy lay
The brilliant work of courtly Beaumarchais;
In this Racine, Voltaire, and Boileau sung,
The noblest parts in the noblest tongue.
If the soft story in our play expressed
Can give a moment's pleasure to your breast,
To you, Great Sir! we must be proud to say
That moment's pleasure shall our pains repay.
Returned from conquest and from glorious toils,
From armies captured and unnumbered spoils;
Ere yet again, with generous France ally'd,
You rush to battle, humbling British pride;
While arts of peace thy kind protection share,
O let the Muses claim an equal care.
You bade us first our future greatness see,
Inspired by you, we languish'd to be free;
Even here where freedom lately sat distrest,
See a new Athens rising in the West!
Fair science blooms where tyrants reign'd before,
Red war reluctant leaves our ravag'd shore—
Illustrious hero, may you live to see
These new republics powerful, great, and free;
Peace, heaven-born peace, o'er spacious regions spread,
While discord, sinking, veils her ghastly head."

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In the soft autumn twilights of the days that followed, when the yellow Morris turnpike grew vague and shadowy and the stars dotted the sky like little candles lighting up a hundred pieces of rose- and dusk-tinted velvet, Freneau would mount his faithful Cato and ride through the avenue of locust-trees into the lane leading to Forman Place. Dear to their hearts were these trysts of the lovers. There were walks in the Forman garden, made a place of enchantment by the breath of Indian summer. Later came songs in Madam Forman's chintz parlor. All through their lives Nelly sang to her Philip the love-ditties of sighing Darbys and unhappy Joans; and even after his death, when very aged, it is said that she sometimes crooned to his spirit in a queer

cracked voice the songs he once loved to hear.

Forman Place, still standing close to the village of Freehold, what a place of memories it is! The tired, weather-beaten old building which the sunshine seems to desecrate was once one of the happiest of homes. Now, like some sleepy antique dame belated after a revelry, it waits despairingly by the turn of the road for Father Time and his band of winds to sweep it away. Broad-shouldered and broad-hearted Samuel Forman, with a rubicund visage made familiar by Hogarth, was an ideal host. Oh, the Merry-Andrews and the witlings Euphrosyne brought there! "Better one's house be too little one day than too big all the year after" was his motto, and bantering bucks were broadcast round his board.

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And Madam Forman, who came of a pious family, but was married at fifteen, early caught the infection from her spouse. None could resist the laugh of the portly dame so redolent of good-humor. Tongues that wagged said her handmaidens were willing to work their fingers off in her service if she would let them. Her daughters she cajoled into the idea that they were wits as well as beauties, and men, from callow youth down to the very grandfathers of the parish, worshipped the ground she tripped upon. Whether gracing her chintz parlor, garbed in a lustrous grenadine, her powdered hair covered with a hundred ringlets that dangled and danced as she talked, or in humble linsey-woolsey overseeing the daily baking, the chance guest was always sure of a welcome from the mistress of Forman Place.

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"Heigh-ho! there's Jeremy, Juniper, or Tobias. What a lark!" the great voice of her lord and master would come floating over the staircase or from the depths of the cushioned grandfather's chair in the library. "Yes, he's here, Samuel, and promised to sup," the echo would answer. It was to this happy haven the horseman rode very often after the meeting by the stream.



NOW, LIKE SOME SLEEPY ANTIQUE DAME BELATED AFTER A REVELRY, IT WAITS DESPAIRINGLY BY THE TURN OF THE ROAD

The days drifted into months and the months into years, and the drama of the Revolution was nearing its triumphant end for the patriot. Monmouth was awakening as from a lethargy. After the ravages it had endured through the early periods of the war, life had become stagnant. At Mount Pleasant Hall Freneau had written many a stirring verse which had travelled from Concord to Yorktown, encouraging the oftentimes despairing soldiers. Not a memorable incident escaped his watchful eye. Behind the ardent and passionate desire for liberty was the inspiration of love to guide his pen. The love of country and the love of woman were intertwined, and it was his thrilling visions of the first that brought sweet dreams of the other real one to camp-fire and battle-field.

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Liberty was a strange and beautiful goddess that those tattered, wearied men knew not, and it was always the memory of the sweetheart's face that spurred them over rock-bound roads filled with multitudinous obstacles in quest of the shadowy creature. When they fell by the wayside or in the trenches, the look of peace on their white faces was not her doing, but the tender vows and the last kisses of the girls they had left behind them. [142]

Soon came peace, and on its trail the last meeting of the lovers in the Forman garden. The gates of winter were open and all the gorgeous flower-children slumbering in the earth. By the golden sundial a solitary purple pansy bloomed, hoping that the false shimmer was the sun, and in Madam Forman's rose-bed yellow blushmaids were glowing at the bleak landscape like incense lamps on some dim altar. There had been a family conference in Forman Place the night before. Eleanor's brother David, the stern "Black David" of Germantown fame, who had recently laid down his gun and sabre by his father's hearth, was incensed at his sister's betrothal to the poet. Mrs. Freneau's fortune was almost depleted by the inroads of the war. "That scribbling fellow is no match for Eleanor," the warrior said. The household, seated about the heavy oaken table in the hall where the letters and the last *Gazette* always lay, listened to his words of wisdom. Every one was always silent when David spoke, for his sentences were like nails,—something to be driven into the hearts of his hearers. No one could dispute him. "The Freneaus no longer kept up the state they flourished during their first years in Monmouth; a poet's pen could not support a wife! The engagement was worse than foolhardy. Many a man of wealth as well as parts would be seeking Eleanor." [143]

Samuel, in the great Hepplewaite chair, was silent. The mirth lines about his mouth drooped and lengthened. He liked Freneau, whose ready tongue always held a jest. His blue-eyed Nelly loved him, he knew. Furtively he turned and stole a glance at his wife for help to stem the wrath of the stern dictator, but the good dame held a handkerchief to her eyes. Trouble weighed heavily on her heart. Eleanor stood by the door gazing out of the blurred panes at the road that led to the Freneaus. Her face was pale, but suffused with the light of love. Before her was the highway of Fate, and her heart told her that it would not admit of another. [144]

"David," she said, looking at him, "you may be a great man in war counsel, but when a woman is the question you know naught. With the man I love I could wander penniless but unwearied all through life."

There was silence; then Madam Forman tried to speak, but her voice was choked with sobs.

And so it was that the lovers met in the dying garden and said good-by. She told him of her brother's words, and into his life there came a new desire. His country needed his pen no longer. The fortune his father's will gave to his mother had been placed on the altar of patriotism, and much of it went into the ship "Aurora," captured by the British. He would leave his home to seek another fortune, and, when it was won, return and claim her. [145]

The air was sultry and the moon hung like a dying taper over their heads. The fields that crept up to the Homdel hills he loved so well were gray. A north wind sighed among the wraiths of summer in the garden, a harbinger that the dawn would be fresh and clear.

"I shall never marry any one else," she told him. "My window faces the bend of the road, and there I shall place a candle every night to light your steps when they bring you back to me. Often I shall go to the little stream and wonder where you are wandering. Never fear. I shall wait for you forever and forever, until my cheeks fade and my eyes grow dim."

Like one of the flowers in the garden trying to hide its head from the death-stings of the wind, she nestled in his arms. The moon grew faint behind the clouds, and the sighing low and melodious, for a woman's heart was being spilled over the highway. [146]

The next morning a small procession left Mount Pleasant Hall and crept over the Morris turnpike road to the Point. There were the poet and his mother in the antiquated chaise, Josiah, an old negro household slave, mounted on Cato, and several of the field servants, carrying a large wooden chest, following on foot. The air was fresh and strong, and, although the day was young, the blue of the sky deep and pure. John Burrowes's sailing-vessel was to leave Kearny Port, bound for Philadelphia, before the noon hour.

The sunshine played over the yellow, clay-stained road, and off in the distance the sea was a sheet of burnished gold. Some place where its arms spread was the promised land the poet hoped to find. There his work would bring him a reward that would help him to win his love.

At the Port the vessel was anchored in the calm inlet with her bowsprit [147]

pointed to the dancing waves beyond. Old Mrs. Burrowes, the corn merchant's wife, with some of her grandchildren, was on the wharf to see him off. When she saw the Freneau chaise, she ran forward to meet its occupants. "Yes, I am very sure my husband can take Mr. Freneau to Philadelphia," she said, in answer to their inquiries. Mrs. Freneau alighted and sat with her on one of the grain sacks while the poet went to seek Mr. Burrowes. All about them was bustle and confusion preparatory to a long cruise. Soon came the hour of leaving and the last farewells. Tears filled the mother's eyes as she kissed her son. Once before she had watched him depart to wrestle with the world beyond her quiet land. No cruel war was to claim him now, and yet she could not hide her anguish at parting. His own heart was full of courage and the breath of the sea was like wine to him. The fortune his mother had given to her country he would build again! As he embraced his mother, before his eyes was the face of the woman he thought the most beautiful in the world. She was worth the price of conquest.

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After Philip left, Eleanor took to watching the highway. It had brought him to her, and in the dawn, the noonday, and the dusk she looked out upon it from the windows of her room, longing for his return. Every night she placed the candle in the farthest sill, as she promised him at parting. He was constantly in her thoughts. As time went on other suitors came to Forman Place to pay to her their addresses. Hezekiah Stout, the great mill-owner of Englishtown, was one of them. That Revolutionary Cræsus received more encouragement from David than from the lady of his choice. Hezekiah proved a patient lover, for when she refused to see him, he would sit silently blinking on the Forman settle for hours at a time, until Madam Forman, the best-natured woman in the world, vowed to herself that, with all his money, he was too stupid a man to wed her daughter.

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And the little silver stream that whispered its secrets to the slim pine-trees, how it missed the pair! Many a time it wearily watched the winter wane and earth cast off her white mantle. The wild anemones came, the primroses and the crocuses and all that lovely company of fragile blooms which mark the footsteps of hope. "Oh, if he would but come now while I mirror so much beauty," the stream crooned to herself. Sometimes she would see among the flowers the reflection of the fair face he loved. Then the little stream was happy. "She at least remembers, and perhaps he will come soon," she sang in joy to the pine-trees. Then the grasses grew high, and the golden sunshine lured the dragon-flies to flit among the fragrant worlds along her course. Still he came not. She began to grow impatient. Perhaps her heart would be dried up before his children strolled by her side and waded in her clear water. The leaves began to fall, and the worlds along her course knew that the night was coming on. "He has forgotten," the stream moaned; "forgotten." And, hundreds of miles away, he heard her voice, and in the hold of an ice-bound ship wrote to his stream and his love, whom he called Cynthia, these tender verses:

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"Through Jersey groves a wandering stream
That still its wonted music keeps
Inspires no more my evening dream,
Where Cynthia, in retirement, sleeps.

"Sweet murmuring stream, how blest art thou
To kiss the bank where she resides!
Where nature decks the beechen bough
That trembles o'er your shallow tides.

"The cypress-tree on Hermit's height,
Where love has soft addresses paid
By Luna's pale reflected light,
No longer charms me to its shade.

"To me, alas! so far removed,
What raptures, once, that scenery gave,
Ere, wandering yet from all I loved,
I sought a deeper, drearier wave.

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"Your absent charms my thoughts employ,
I sigh to think how sweet you sung,
And half adore the painted toy
That near my careless heart you hung.

"Now, fettered fast in icy fields,
In vain we loose the sleeping sail;
The frozen wave no longer yields,
And useless blows the favoring gale.

"Yet still in hopes of vernal showers
And breezes moist with morning dew,
I pass the lingering, lazy hours
Reflecting on the spring—and you."

Mammon proved a cruel and elusive mistress to Freneau, and she led him many a fruitless errand in pursuit of her. For several years he commanded the brig "Washington," owned by his brother Peter. In this ship he made many journeys to the West Indies, and by clever trading at last succeeded in amassing a small competence. With this he returned to Mount Pleasant Hall after an absence of nearly six years. [152]

In the spring of that year the lovers were united. The wedding held in Forman Place was a very simple affair, attended by only a few of the Monmouth neighborhood. After his marriage the poet took his bride home to Mount Pleasant Hall, and later to Philadelphia, where Mrs. Freneau's little salon played a part in the history of the capital. A diary of Freneau's life in that city is said to be in existence, and it is to be hoped that it will some day come to light.

The love-letters of the charming Freneaus, written for the most part in verse, were destroyed many years ago. Several of the poems compiled in the editions of Freneau's works are thought to have been written by his wife. Like Mrs. Wordsworth, who is credited with helping her husband with his masterpiece, "The Daffodils," Mrs. Freneau lent her deft hand to beautifying "The Wild Honeysuckle," the most exquisite poem written by an American in the eighteenth century. [153]

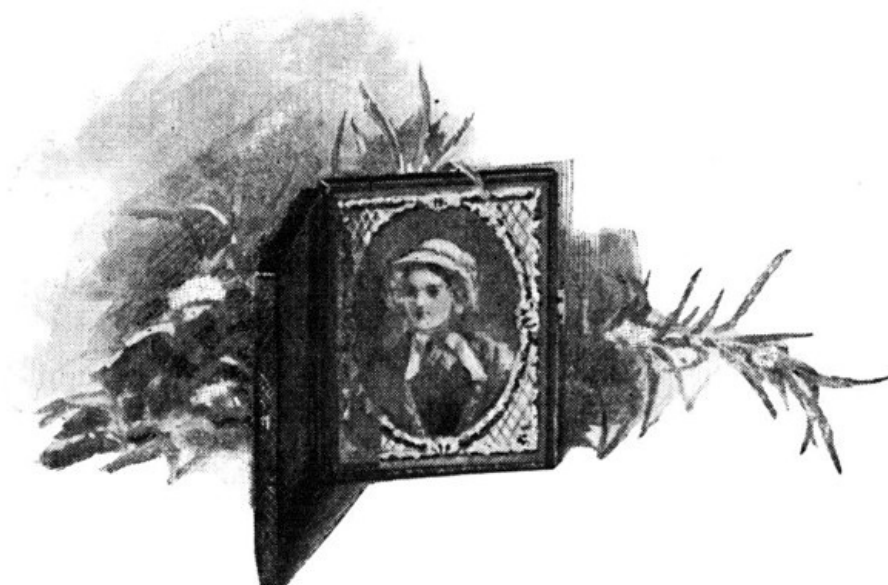
"Fair flower that dost so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honey blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet;
No roving foot shall crush thee here,
No busy hand provoke a tear.

"By nature's self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by;
Thus quietly thy summer goes,
Thy days declining to repose.

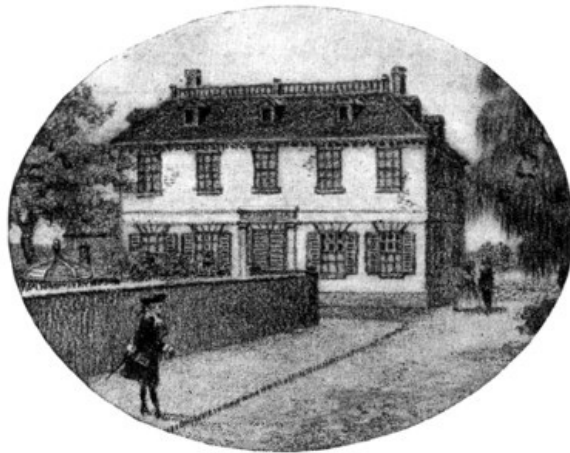
"Smit with those charms, that must decay,
I grieve to see your future doom;
They died—nor were those flowers more gay,
The flowers that did in Eden bloom;
Unpitying frosts and autumn's power
Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

"From morning's suns and evening's dews
At first thy little being came;
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are same;
The space between is but an hour,
The frail duration of a flower." [154]

One cannot read these verses without entering into a closer intimacy with "The Poet of the Revolution" and the beautiful Eleanor Forman. Their courtship was idyllic, and during the long stretch of years they walked together hand in hand the flame of love never diminished, but grew brighter. From the day of their marriage, when Freneau is recorded as having compared his blushing bride to Fielding's "Amelia," the ideal characterization of womanhood, until one wintry dawn forty-five years later, when a trembling, aged Eleanor bent over the lifeless body of her lover lulled to sleep in a snow-drift, no discordant note entered the sweet harmony of their lives. When shadows dimmed their pathway, they clung closer to each other. Even death could not separate them. When Freneau was under the sod and the world disputing over the few poor bay leaves it had allowed him, her mind was constantly with the lover of her youth. In her maidenhood she had watched weary years for him to come back to her, and at the last, when his voice was hushed in "the land of no returning," she longed to go to him. [155]



THE CHEVALIER DE SILLY
AND HIS NEWPORT SALLY

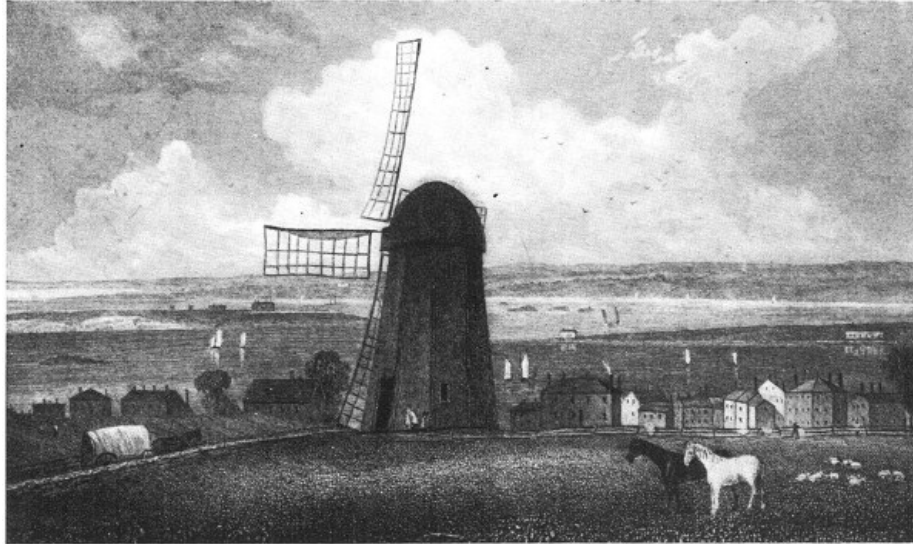


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THE CHEVALIER DE SILLY AND HIS NEWPORT SALLY

IN the old portion of Newport, where the houses are compact and the streets hilly and narrow, is the Vernon mansion, erected many years before the Revolution, when the city ranked second only to Boston in commercial supremacy. William Vernon, its first owner, was one of the wealthy old-time traders whose fleet of merchantmen made the long wharf famous. There, in the days before British guns were trained on the city and stanch, opulent warehouses flanked the quays, his jolly tars would unload the cargoes of West Indian sugar and bring out of some brave ship's hold the half a hundred blacks. Most of those ship-loads of sugar would be made into rum and sent back to Africa or the Indies for more blacks; but the savages never saw their native homes again, and became the faithful Cudjos and Pompeys of many a colonial household.

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NEWPORT IN 1831

Quaint Mary Lane, or Street, as it is now called, running past the Vernon residence, is truly a thoroughfare of memories. For a period of three years it was trodden by the feet of thousands of British soldiers, and later the gallant Frenchmen of Rochambeau's fleet of seven ships of the line and five frigates walked there disconsolately in groups of three or four, hoping soon to sail away from the poverty-stricken place Newport was at that period of its existence. No longer were there gentlemen of fortune like Colonel Godfrey Malbone, who so often clinked silver goblets with his guests over groaning tables, to give entertainments. The town was almost destitute of wealth, and but a small number of the better class of its population came back to their former dwellings during the French fleet's stay there.

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Life in Newport during 1780 and 1781 was for the most part a dreary thing to these Frenchmen, but a host of dashing chevaliers fresh from the Court of "the Austrian," as spiteful Madame Adélaïde had nicknamed her fair niece, were sure to find some amusement even in the dullest city. It is true there was no "prince of youth," as the court ringleader, the Comte d'Artois, was dubbed by his intimates, to lead them through days of delight as at Versailles and Fontainebleau, but Newport gallants soon introduced them to town beauties, and cards were laid for the ever new and exciting game of love. In lieu of the cabriolet races in the Bois de Boulogne they could skate in the little creeks about the Point, and when dreams of the Palais Royal made them long for "Armide" and "Alcestis," there was always a dame to finger a spinet. Old citizens of the past generation used to tell of window-panes in the Vernon mansion covered with the names of Newport's femininity. With the same spirit which later led their compatriots to jest and dance amid the grim shadows of the Conceirgerie, they made the best of a changed life.

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Mrs. Cowley's assembly-room, famous in Newport annals, was made over into a salon for play, and there the youth of the army would often stray when the periods of duty were over. We can see the haughty Rochambeau with his muff bending over the tric-trac table, while about him flutter the very flower of France,—men bearing such names as Marquis de Chastelleux, Marquis de Laval, Baron de Closen, Vicomte de Noailles, Marquis de Custine, Comte de Fersen, and Duc de Lauzun. They who had lost and won their louis to the laughter of the fairest women of a famous court had for sole spectators little village gamins peering in at the windows. Before the glitter of gold these graceful gamesters forgot time and place. They were back again at tables in the gardens of Paris,—recreation spots as lovely as Little Trianon, where Oberkirche wrote, "The glades were perfumed with lilacs and peopled with nightingales—The air full of fragrant mist brightened by butterflies." Off came

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their tinselled coats, and in their stead some of them donned frieze great-coats, while the more intrepid rolled thin soft linen shirt-sleeves up to the elbow for luck. To guard their eyes from the light and keep their powdered wigs in place, they tied on straw-crowned hats festooned with some forgotten charmer's colors. The Maybud plucked many moons before, which nestled so often 'neath a tassel, was faded. Cliff flowers were in full bloom then.

The belles of Newport! What pages could be devoted to them! A more enchanting galaxy of femininity never enriched a New England town. The Duc de Lauzun, an ardent spirit in our struggle for liberty who left his countrymen enthusiastic over republican ideas, the ladies even going so far as to have their hair dressed *aux insurgents*, wrote home from Newport of their charms. The Misses Hunter, daughters of Dr. William Hunter, he particularly admired. "I was not in love with them," he coyly confided, "but had they been my sisters I could not have loved them more."

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Three famous beauties were Miss Champlin, who danced with stately Washington; Miss Redwood, to whose charms the sailors in the street would doff their caps, holding them low until she passed; and Sally Church, the sprightly maiden who, tradition says, tripped into the hearts of a small army of Frenchmen when she returned from Providence to her native city about the time of the French fleet's arrival.



MRS. WANTON, A BELLE OF NEWPORT

Sally Church! how prim the pseudonym, and yet very vivacious was its owner. A charming vision in her red wool gown and huge fur tippet, we see her mincing merrily through that Mary Street on a blustering March morning. The wind blows her wide London hat and gives it a saucy tilt, and the eyes of a long line of soldiers follow the wave of her skirt as it plays about her trim ankles. "Here comes Sally in her chair," or "Here comes Sally on foot," were among the most interesting pieces of news her admirers had to impart. They ogled and sang to her, wrote poems on her beauty; and yet at most of them she only laughed, and so they ended by worshipping her.

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As the months flew by there lay in one of the rooms of the Vernon mansion, which Rochambeau had made his head-quarters, a young lieutenant by the name of Chevalier de Silly, suffering from a disease protracted by the severe cold. Having heard his brother officers dilate on the charms of the lovely Sally, he desired that his bed be removed close to the window, in hope that he might obtain a glimpse of her. Many a weary hour he spent gazing out into the gray line of the street unrewarded, and then one happy day he espied her. The fates favored him, and Sally, chancing to look up at his window, smiled and thereby added another soldier to her own little army. Soon the Chevalier grew better and was able to assume the duties of his post. His friendship with Sally

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had progressed by this time and she was becoming the torment of his life,—an agony far worse than bodily illness. As he stood on duty—a grim sentinel—before the Vernon mansion, the maiden would happen to stroll by.

"Come, Silly," she would call, "take me for a walk to the old mill."

"I cannot, mademoiselle," was his usual sad answer; "the king's service goes before everything."

"You do not love me or you would take me," she always mocked, and with a proud toss of her head she would hasten past him, heedless of his torrent of reproaches. [171]

And so "Silly and his Sally," as the youth and the maiden came to be dubbed by the garrison, spent their days. Tradition says that she was fonder of him than of any other of her French swains, but, womanlike, enjoyed the power of her fascinations. But she was not to keep him in her train forever. The springlike day dawned when General Washington, "the Atlas of America," Silly called him, was to arrive. At Barney's Ferry he landed in a gayly decorated barge, and all Newport was out to greet him. The troops formed a solid line three deep on either side from the long wharf to the very door of the Vernon mansion, where he was to be entertained by Rochambeau. The following night all Newport was illuminated, and old records say that the Town Council ordered candles to be purchased and given to all who were too poor to use them, so that every house should show a light. About the streets the hero rode, followed by the French officers, their aides, and hundreds of patriotic citizens bearing candle torches to make the occasion joyful. The night was clear, the sea calm, and the wind still. Those who participated in the affair never forgot the beauty of the scene. Sally was in the crowd, but there was no Silly by her side, for the disconsolate Chevalier wrote to a friend that, "after General Washington, she who attracted my attention was the amiable Sally Church accompanied, alas! by a faithful townsman who was free of a touch of the gout." [172]

A few days later, when the gout departed, the Chevalier had his revenge on her other suitors at a ball given by the city of Newport to General Washington and Admiral Rochambeau, in Mrs. Cowley's assembly-room. There, to the rippling airs of Gluck, so beloved by musical little Marie Antoinette, he showed the company many of the famous Guimard steps, as he essayed the gavottes of his king. Sally would look at him often, admiration springing forth from her sparkling eyes, as he gracefully swayed to music, one moment gay and the next sinking into a gentle cadence. This is one of the last records we have of Sally and her Silly dancing out the swift-footed hours in the taper-lighted ballroom. [173]

Numerous accounts of the ball have come down to us. The decorations were intrusted to Dezoteux, one of the aides of the Baron de Vioménil, and the guests are said to have been loud in the appreciation of his efforts. Washington opened the festivities by leading out Miss Champlin in a minuet. When midnight was near at hand and frolic and mirth at their highest pitch, the gallant Rochambeau and several of his officers led an assault on the startled musicians, and, seizing their instruments, played the tune, "A Successful Campaign,"—a graceful token of respect to the Commander-in-Chief of the army.

We picture them together when he homeward walks beside her chair, the constant lover, to her very gate. With the memory of the music in her ears, the stars overspreading the sky a dazzling canopy, and a cavalier by her side, could she ask for more? And yet she did, and, alack-a-day, as she herself would have said, the stream of her life was not always so fresh and frolicking. Could the chairmen tell us more? No doubt; but leave the door tight shut and spare a lady's blushes. [174]

The day came when the Chevalier de Silly sailed away to Yorktown, and the maiden was left to work her witcheries on her townsmen. Newport was a changed place after the French departed. Many a true heart was exchanged that morning for a golden button or some other token. The mothers only were happy, and back to households came a troop of long-exiled femininity, free from the fret of love. Twelve years later, it is said, one summer dawn in Paris there rolled through the streets a tumbril on its way to a guillotine erected near the gardens of the Luxembourg. One of its occupants was De Silly. In the hush which always fell on the mob when a victim reached the last step of the stairway of death we wonder whether the fair face of Sally Church came before the eyes of her poor Chevalier. The answer is lost in the length of long-dead years. Over the cries of that surging mass of humanity when the blade snapped the thread of his life we see them once again living out their Newport romance. [175]

SUSANNA ROWSON, OF
"CHARLOTTE TEMPLE" FAME,
AND HER BRITISH GRENADIER



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SUSANNA ROWSON, OF "CHARLOTTE TEMPLE" FAME, AND HER
BRITISH GRENADIER

OVERLOOKING Nantasket's white beach, and guarded, as it were, by the little hills of Hull, is a dwelling, now entirely changed, where Susanna Haswell spent her girlhood. A quarter of a century ago it was still as the Haswells left it when they were forced to remove to the neighboring town of Hingham, practically prisoners of war. Then it was described as a large one-story wooden building with a huge chimney in the centre, one of a type to be found in hundreds of old New England villages. In the days when the English maiden conned her lessons as her father painted quaint stilted landscapes on the doors and mantel-pieces of his abode the house was approached through a line of fruit-trees, and close to the gray walls that the sea-mist loved to kiss grew the multitude of flowers that flourished in the sweet plots of the

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descendants of the Puritans.

Somehow it is with the garden of her early home that we associate the young Susanna. Tradition says that it was her especial care, and she helped the seeds her stepmother brought from Boston to perfect bloom and watched each season for her fairy children. There we know, in the autumn of 1768, when her last garden inmates were dying, she saw the British fleet of six men-of-war enter Nantasket Roads, little dreaming that they were to affect her life. Later in the day she helped her father receive some of the officers. It is easy to picture her, a simply garbed child, listening to the talk of the circle about the fireplace. How her eyes must have glistened at the tales of the theatres,—the sprightly new comedy "The Perplexities," which was put on at Covent Garden; "The English Merchant," with its witty prologue by Garrick. Then there was chatter of the new tea-gardens that were springing up everywhere on the skirts of London Town. Wonderful they seemed with their grottos of mystery and Chinese lanterns that rivalled the stars. The talk of war she would not listen to, and we see her leave the company to creep to the door and gaze out on the silent night. Very lonely her home looked in the darkness, and off in the distance she could hear the dull boom of the surf telling her that London Town was far away.

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A strange child was this Susanna Haswell. When the "quality maids" of her day spent a large part of their time perusing the "Boston News Letter" for the latest falafals and fashions,—thinking only of fine brocades, the newest talemotongues to make high their head-dresses, and the Sweet Royal Honey Water for their fair faces,—Susanna's mind was always with her few treasured books or dwelling on the pleasure she gave her father in their journeyings near their home. They would wander off over the nearby hills in search of the first wild fruits. Sometimes he would bring his box of colors and they would linger until nightfall in some spot that had caught his fancy.

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At an early age she began to write verses, and all through her life kept up this pastime. Her whisperings to birds, flowers, and sea-shells helped to fill up her days. She was happy, we know, for "The Roses of Life," written at a later period, show a brave and intrepid spirit that feared neither isolation nor the daily trials allotted to mortals.

"Why should we complain of this life's dreary road,
Or the thorns or the thistles that in our path lay?
Has not heaven a portion of reason bestow'd,
To pass them o'er lightly or brush them away?
I'll gather life's roses wherever I find them,
And smile at their folly who dread to come near;
Who cast all its joys and its pleasures behind them,
Nor pluck the sweet buds, lest the thorns should appear."

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The years flew by until after the battle of Bunker Hill, when most of the inhabitants of Nantasket left their farms and fled to Boston. It is recorded that the grain was left standing in the fields and that the Haswell family were eventually left the sole occupants of the place. Ex-Lieutenant Haswell was loyal to his king, and his house was a constant resort for the British naval and military commanders. Small skirmishes sometimes took place near the village, and one day, during an action in the vicinity, a wounded redcoat, a member of Major Tupper's brigade, was brought to the door on a stretcher by some of his comrades, with the request that he be given shelter. Into the southeast room the family had him carried and laid on the great four-poster. There Susanna tended him through the morning hours, bandaging his wounds with soft homespun and ministering to his wants. It was a never-to-be-forgotten day, often referred to in after-years, and it made a deep impression on the heart of the sensitive girl. Bending over him, she received his last confidences. He was Daniel Carnagon, twenty-six years old, the only son of a clergyman in the north of England. When his breath grew feebler her stepmother brought out the family Bible and read in a low voice words of comfort. Death came to him as he dreamed of his native heath and a happy boyhood. When the dusk began to fall Susanna helped her father dig a grave in the garden. There they laid him to rest with the last sunbeams staining his poor clay like a heavenly benediction. Some rose-bushes and an apple-tree covered his resting-place. The latter is still standing alone, a faithful watcher over dust neglected and forgotten. Little has been written of Susanna's grenadier, but we know that she who made the whole of her generation weep with "a tale of truth" wept over him in the twilight of a long-dead day.

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When the Revolution was nearing its close the Haswell family removed from Massachusetts to Halifax, a favorite gathering-place for loyalists. Susanna was then nearing womanhood, and, owing to the low state of her father's pecuniary resources, she was forced to separate from dearly loved brothers and sail for England. There she obtained a situation as governess in a noble family, which she retained until her health failed. In 1786 she married Mr.

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William Rowson in London. This gentleman was then engaged in the hardware business and also acted as trumpeter in the Royal Horse-Guards. He was the son of an armorer to George III., and was noted for his personal beauty and accomplishments. It has been recorded that no one who heard could ever forget "the sublime and spirit-stirring tones" of his trumpet when he played for the Boston Handel and Haydn Society. When he trumpeted "The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised" he thrilled his hearers into imagining the last hour was close at hand.

Shortly after entering the bonds of wedlock Mrs. Rowson published her first work, "Victoria," under the patronage of the Duchess of Devonshire, the famous Carlton House beauty known to history as the friend of Charles Fox. Among the subscribers are such names as Sarah Siddons, General John Burgoyne, Sir Charles Middleton, and our own Samuel Adams. The duchess seems to have conceived a warm attachment for her, and arranged that she should be presented to no less a personage than "Prince Florizel." Soon she found a place in the brilliant galaxy of ladies headed by "The Blue-Stocking Club," and in 1790, when "Charlotte Temple" was published, she became one of the leading literary lights of the day.

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"Charlotte Temple" was the heart-toucher of her generation, and countless thousands sorrowed over her fate. Her story, as Mrs. Rowson gave it to the world, was the greatest success of the day, and it is said that more editions were printed of it than of any other novel written in the eighteenth century. About the life of the real heroine the years have woven a web some parts of which can never be unravelled. Tradition says that she was Charlotte Stanley, a young lady of great personal beauty and the daughter of a clergyman related to the Earl of Derby. Mrs. Rowson wrote of her that

"Her form was faultless, and her mind,
Untainted yet by art,
Was noble, just, humane, and kind,
And Virtue warm'd her heart.
But, ah! the cruel spoiler came."

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Montreville, her lover, was in reality Colonel John Montrésor, an engineer in the service of the British army. His name is given as one of the managers of the famous Meschianza. It is said that he was a connection of the Haswell family, and it is a significant fact that the author's youngest brother, who distinguished himself in the war with Tripoli, bore his name.

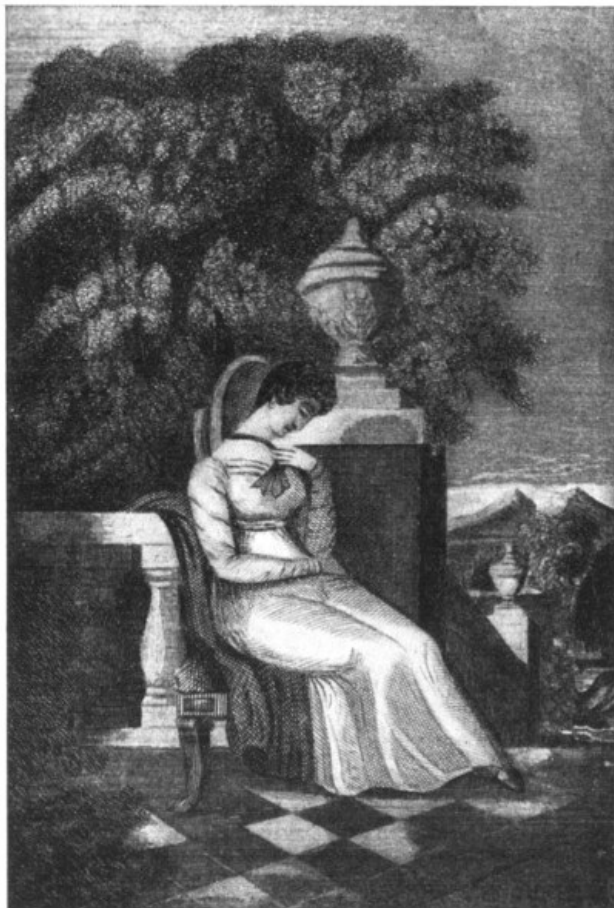
The story on which Mrs. Rowson founded her romance was that Colonel Montrésor persuaded Miss Stanley to leave her boarding-school and elope with him to America at the opening of the Revolutionary War. She sailed in his companionship some time in the year 1774. On the same vessel was his brother, a fellow-engineer. Arriving at New York City, Montrésor secured a small cottage for her at Morrisania, a few miles distant from the city proper and near to the Boston post-road. The house she occupied—a primitive affair—is remembered as standing until 1850.

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In the book we read,—

"Montreville gave her one female attendant and supplied her with what money she wanted; but business and pleasure so entirely occupied his time that he had but little to devote to the woman whom he had brought from all her connections and robbed of innocence. Sometimes, indeed, he would steal out at the close of evening and pass a few hours with her; and then so much was she attached to him that all her sorrows were forgotten while blessed with his society; she would enjoy a walk by moonlight, or sit by him in a little arbor at the bottom of the garden, and play on the harp, accompanying it with her plaintive, harmonious voice. But often, very often, did he promise to renew his visits, and, forgetful of his promise, leave her to mourn her disappointment. What painful hours of expectation would she pass! She would sit at a window which looked toward a field he used to cross, counting the minutes and straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of his person, till, blinded with tears of disappointment, she would lean her head on her hands and give free vent to her sorrow; then, catching at some new hope, she would again renew her watchful position till the shades of evening enveloped every object in a dusky cloud."

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CHARLOTTE TEMPLE IN HER GARDEN
From an old print

In one of the old editions of the work there is a quaint picture of the neglected girl seated in a mournful attitude in a formal garden evidently much more pretentious than the primitive spot that the real heroine knew. The house in New York City generally accepted as the place where she died formerly stood at the corner of Pell and Doyer Streets and was known as the "Old Tree House." Her grave is in Trinity Church-yard; but even that is unauthenticated, some people having gone so far as to state that the headstone that bears her name is a fiction. It is still the resort of the sentimental, and it is to be hoped that time cannot prove that Montrésor never sorrowed there over the girl Mrs. Rowson made famous as she herself did many years before on the grave of her British Grenadier.



JOHN
RAE

THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD STATEN ISLAND MANOR



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THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD STATEN ISLAND MANOR

IN the green old village of Tottenville, on Staten Island, there is still standing the antiquated Bentley manor-house, erected during the reign of Queen Anne. It is built of stone, and reposes on a high flowery slope overlooking the waters of Staten Island and the Raritan River. The walls are several feet thick and the gable roof is almost grotesquely high and steep, giving the building a very picturesque appearance. From its quaint little upper-story casements one can gaze over the Sound to St. Michael's Church at Perth Amboy with its quiet graveyard, where some of the Billops are sleeping. There they rest in peace, we hope; but, according to "Perth Towne" tradition, the fairest in life of that silent company is an unruly shade, and once a year during the first quarter of the spring-time moon comes back to her neglected garden to keep a tryst and a vow.

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Christopher Billop, the first owner of the house, played a very interesting minor part in American history. When the Duke of York conveyed New Jersey to Lord Berkeley Carteret, a question arose as to whether Staten Island was included in the grant. To settle a discussion which threatened to assume grave proportions, it was decided that all islands in the harbor should belong to New York if they could be circumnavigated in twenty-four hours. Christopher Billop, who owned a little vessel called the "Bentley," sailed around Staten Island in that time, and the duke gave him the tract of land, on part of which the house is built, for his services.

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This first Christopher Billop died very long ago. His only daughter married a Thomas Farmar, who changed his name to Billop, thereby acquiring the estate. It is with the son of this couple that the tales of the old house deal. The Billop family, like most of the islanders, were loyalists, and during the Revolution sided with their king. When the war broke out the second Christopher, a man of decided views and morose temperament, was reigning over the plantation. Many years before 1775 he had married a beautiful island belle by the name of Seaman and taken her home to his dreary house. An interesting tradition says of her that the month before she married she was courted by three lovers: the Englishman she married, a Huguenot, and a descendant of the pious Waldeneses.

The nuptial coach which bore her away did not bring her to the road of happiness, for the love between the husband and wife was never what it should have been. Her parents had sent her to a gilded cage. Soon her lord and master began to neglect her for his horses and dogs or his field work, and she was left alone in her great rooms to sigh and weep for the happy times she knew in her girlhood before Fate bound her an unwilling prisoner. The fine brocades and taffetas which formed her wedding portion no longer delighted her, for there was seldom any one but her sullen husband or the black women to gaze upon them. In vain she implored him to receive her friends, but he would not gratify her. Life ran smoothly enough for his liking, and he needed neither fiddles nor the flutter of fashion to enhance his happiness. Often on clear nights she would gaze from her chamber window on the lights in the castles over the water. How brightly they shone! and in her imagination seemed to beckon her. Then to her mind would come a flood of memories. She would see herself in Love Grove, dancing on the green of a fair day, with all the populace of the little capital assembled to behold the frolics of the quality. Now the Governor gives her a garland of flowers, for she is queen of a spring-time revel. In the ballroom of Edinborough Castle, the home of the Johnstone family, she flits. Over the memoried voices of violins would come the picture of a score of cavaliers bending low to the belle from a sister isle, and often the face of a boy would haunt her,—a boy more dashing and gayer than all the others. They were in the lantern-hung Watson garden the night the nephew of the old Scotch painter gave a fête when his penurious uncle was away at Woodbridge, and youthful Amboy entered into the frolic with zest. It was a sweet revenge for past injuries to feast on the miser's hoard. When a raid on the wine-cellar was planned, she stayed on alone with him in the garden. The laughter in his mocking eyes died away; he was urging her to fly with him to England. Beyond the wall of green which shut away the cliff a merchantman was anchored, and on board her were his travelling chests, for he was sailing back to his father's home on the morrow. He loved her, and would she go with him? Out into the tangle of green he led her down to the road overlooking the river. The night was very still, and through the sweet-scented darkness fresh with the breath of June they wandered hand in hand. Suddenly before their eyes spread the line of the town and beyond lay the sea of molten silver. Just below them the dark ship rested in a shadowy pool. She could not sail away with him to an unknown land. Fear overcame her love, and later in the night she tearfully wished him God-speed on his journey, and for a time he was forgotten.

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The river before her would become a dream-river bearing her away through the portals of the past. The commonplace fabric of her days was forgotten. She was like one of those rare flowers that give their greatest beauty to the night. Without her visions life would have been a maddening monotone; and so she went about the duties of a colonial wife.

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The early portion of 1776 was a poor thing full of dreariness to Mrs. Billop. She was leaving her girlhood far behind in her walk with Time. Each year was a repetition of the one past. The plantation of one thousand five hundred acres was a little world of its own, and she rarely went beyond its gates. Most of her working hours she spent in her garden, and under her fostering care it became a spot of loveliness. In the circles of roses flanked by humbler flowers and the tall line of lilies that crept like a stately band of pure-souled fairy sentinels down to the riverside she planted some of her own fragrant heart. Sometimes her garden was to her like an only child, and then, again, the relationship was changed, and the garden was the tender mother and she

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herself the weary thing that sought peace there on a breast of green. But one day a wonderful thing happened. Awakened by the sunlight gilding the narrow panes of her bedroom windows, she heard shouts in the barley-field. "Dey am coming! dey am coming!" the household slaves were calling in merry voices. Mrs. Billop, drawing her curtains, saw in the path leading to the house a body of scarlet-coated cavaliers mounted on mettlesome steeds. It came to her mind that a horseman had dashed over from Richmond a week before, telling of General Howe's arrival. These horsemen must be some of his officers making a tour of the island, she thought. For the first time in many years gentlemen were coming to stop at the manor. A smile crept over her face as she gazed upon them, and then she softly let down the curtain.

When the day had advanced another hour by the sundial outside the boxwood grotto a vision stood on the landing at the top of the stairs and spread out the panniers of a long-unused gown. The hall below was filled with the badinage of masculine voices, and the surly Christopher, forced into playing the host, seemed to be performing the part with no poor grace. Black women in India print dresses were passing bowls of summer punch, and from the kitchen came the pungent scents of limes and the redolence of roasting corn.

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From her vantage-point the wife viewed it all, and then began slowly to descend. As the rustle of the brocade became louder and the odor of attar of roses more perceptible, the noise stopped all of a sudden, and every eye was focussed on the woman garbed as if going to a Franklin ball. Little they knew that she was wearing her wedding attire that had lain folded many years in her mother's cedar chest brought from home.

High towered her hair of the brown-red color of autumn leaves, and rouge and black lustre helped bring out the charms of her face. White as the white-thorn bush in the garden was her sweeping brocade, and on her arm a love-knot caught a tiny Bambini fan.

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"Good-morning, sirs," she called, in a voice that charmed all the company, as they bowed low, save her husband, who gazed at her with astonishment and rage. But she did not heed his angry looks. Before her at the foot of the stairs there stood a gallant youth by the name of Harry Fairleigh. He alone held her eyes. Where had she seen that strong face tanned by the ocean wind? In an instant she knew. He was the embodiment of a dream—her boy lover grown older—the cherished girlhood vision of her true mate. The Revolution had brought him to America again and Fate led him to her very doorstep. Something seemed to be swaying her. She caught his eyes and read in them that he knew her. As he came forward to kiss her hand, she seemed filled with an awful joy,—a feeling that tortured and hurt as it swept over her,—for she knew that he had come too late.

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The islanders welcomed the British gladly. Soon General Howe's brother arrived with an additional force of twenty thousand men, and General Clinton, repulsed at Charleston, hurried north with a re-enforcement of three thousand more, making the combined forces somewhere near thirty-three thousand. At the Rose and Crown Tavern near New Dorp, the Black-Horse at Richmond, the Ship near Prince's Bridge, and in farmhouses from end to end of the island hundreds of the soldiers had their quarters. In that month of July the interest of the colonists was centred on Staten Island. Every Tory maid who dreamt of scarlet coats and golden epaulets thought with envy of those fortunate fair ones surrounded by such multitudes of would-be admirers. Many a modern household descended from loyalist settlers retains tokens of that gala period. Now it is a chair that some visiting genius made when off duty, perhaps a paste buckle, or a miniature which witnessed some story woven in a summer month before the wheels of the Revolution began to move swiftly.

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No longer could Mrs. Billop complain of lacking company. Her husband, under the influence of his foreign guests, was becoming a changed man, and the fame of his hospitality was known even in New York. All through the war there was a constant stream of visitors. Among the famous ones could be mentioned Major André, General Knyphausen, Sir Henry Clinton, and General Robertson. Many times Fairleigh would ride over from Richmond to take part in some festivity. His manly beauty always made him a noted figure, and his admirers called him the English Apollo. Billop, by some strange intuition, seemed to hate him, and longed to forbid him the house. One night his rage obtained mastery over his prudence, and he rushed into his garden, where a dance was in progress, and demanded that he stop his minuet with Mrs. Billop and leave the company. Those were days of hot words and flashing steel, and soon the moon shone on the glint of crossing swords. The wife, terrified that harm should come to the young soldier on her account, threw herself between the combatants, and, in the face of her husband's threats, it is said that she promised to dance with Fairleigh again at some future time. But she reckoned

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not with war. Soon the drum and fife notes sounded in every part of the island, and the gallant young soldier marched away with his regiment, carrying what was left of the heart of the beautiful Mrs. Billop.

On the bloody field of Monmouth Fairleigh fell in the thick of the fight, and Mrs. Billop's promise was never to be fulfilled in life. Evil days fell upon the Bentley manor. Christopher Billop was dragged away to Burlington to languish chained to the jail floor, if we are to believe Elias Boudinot's stern order to the keeper of the jail, written in November, 1779. In one of the rooms General Howe met the peace envoys after the disastrous battle of Long Island, and later the Billops were forced to flee, as the property was declared confiscated by the new government.

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Years afterwards, when the house was in the hands of aliens, the story goes that one of the new-comers was startled on a July night by the appearance of two ghostly figures that seemed to come out of the boxwood grotto and dance a stately minuet along the garden paths. Every year, it is said, they still come back. When the trees are in their fullest foliage and the earth carpeted with flowers, the shades of the unhappy wife and the laughing-eyed soldier she could have loved haunt the neglected garden, and with only a sighing wind for music, they bow and sway through the tangled paths until the morning stains the dreary faces of the decaying castles across the water.

MAJOR ANDRÉ'S LAST LOVE



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MAJOR ANDRÉ'S LAST LOVE

AT the foot of Broadway, New York City, there is a little plot of grass, surrounded by a rusted iron railing, which is a part of the one-time Bowling Green. In old Knickerbocker days and up to the time of the Revolutionary War it played an important part in the history of the Colony. When the British occupied the city it was often used as a romping-ground by the neighborhood's Tory children and the waifs of the alley-ways.

There in the summer of 1779 a happy-faced youth with sparkling dark eyes and hair lightly powdered would sometimes be seen sketching a group of frolicsome urchins as they rolled their hoops or played games among the bushes. He was Major John André, then acting as an aide-de-camp to General Clinton and living at his head-quarters.

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One bright May day after the capture of Stony Point, when sweet airs were stealing over from the fragrant wilderness Paulus Hook, and the road Broadway was like a glittering golden ribbon drawn through a world of summer time, Major André loitered near his favorite seat on the greensward. Toying with his pencil, he glanced up to see a chair pass by on its way up from

Whitehall. By its side walked three cavaliers dressed in the height of fashion and looking as if they might have just stepped out of Court Alley. Its window-panels were down to let in the air, and as it rounded the green the young soldier from his point of view caught a glimpse of one of the fairest faces he had viewed during his American career. Soft brown hair rolled high above eyes of the same shade and a complexion as beautiful as the apple-blossoms of old Derbyshire.

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Who the maiden was he longed to inquire, but no one was by, and in an instant the chair had passed. His eyes followed it, and as it turned in its triumphal course into one of the upper streets he saw a white hand rest for an instant above the door and wave the end of a fichu. All day long the memory of the lovely face and the waving fichu stayed with him.

Looking out of a window of Sir Henry Clinton's drawing-room at nightfall, he saw the same chair on its homeward way, followed by another. Then he learned from some of his brother officers that the vision of the morning was Sally Townsend, a belle of Long Island.

General Sir Henry Clinton was then occupying the mansion No. 1 Broadway. It was a spacious house with a garden extending to the river. Only a portion of his time was spent there, for when the weather grew extremely warm he departed with his household for the Beekman mansion at Turtle Bay. In the garden of the former place, one of the noted pleasure-spots in the city, Major André is said to have composed his poem "The Cow Chase." These quaint verses would perhaps be forgotten to-day if the one who penned them had not been immortalized by calamity.

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THE TOWNSEND GARDEN

Although the British officers made New York a theatre of amusement in which the candles never flickered or died out for a space of many months, the dashing André could not have found it as agreeable a spot as Philadelphia. In that city he planned the famous Meschianza in honor of jovial Sir William Howe, and was acclaimed the hero of the hour. Fame to him seems to have been an instinctive passion, and although of a family humbler than most of those of his scarlet-coated compatriots, he rose like a meteor above the shackles of environment and became the favorite of his regiment. It is small wonder that a youth who could correspond with the learned Anna Seward, as he did at the age of eighteen, should have hated his work in the mercantile shop of old Warnford Court. Looking back over the years to-day, he appears to us a paragon. That the "Cher Jean" of that humble home circle at Litchfield should be described by all his faithful biographers in most glowing colors is singular proof that he could not have fallen far short of their eulogiums. Of unusual personal beauty, a poet, artist, linguist, and musician, he lives for us

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again the handsome limner the belle of Long Island waved to on an early summer's day.

The love-affairs of Major André have always created as much discussion as the justice of his lamented fate. Whether he was true to that paragon of virtues, Honora Sneyd, as has often been written, or forgot her for Peggy Chew, Rebecca Redman, or any of the host of colonial beauties whose names have been linked with his, can never be answered. This we know, that after she was married to another, "the endless Mr. Edgeworth," André still wore her miniature, and he himself tells us that he secreted it in his mouth when taken a prisoner at Quebec. His affection for her was pure and lofty, and in his sprightly and characteristic letters to Anna Seward, her foster-sister, who corresponded with him under the pseudonym of "Julia," we obtain glimpses of a hopeless passion; of a lover who truly loved and longed, but was never an accepted suitor. In the fall-time of 1769 he writes to "Julia" from the midst of the implements of "quill-driving" in the London establishment:

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"Instead of figuring a merchant as a middle-aged man, with a bob wig, a rough beard, in snuff-colored clothes, grasping a guinea in his red hand, I conceive a comely young man, with a tolerable pigtail, wielding a pen with all the noble fierceness of the Duke of Marlborough brandishing a truncheon upon a sign-post, surrounded with types and emblems, and canopied with cornucopias that disembogue their stores upon his head; Mercuries reclin'd upon bales of goods; Genii playing with pens, ink, and paper, while in perspective his gorgeous vessels launched on the bosom of the silver Thames, are wafting to distant lands the produce of this commercial nation. Thus all the mercantile glories crowd on my fancy, emblazoned in the most effulgent coloring of an ardent imagination. Borne on her soaring pinions, I wing my flight to the time when Heaven shall have crowned my labors with success and opulence. I see sumptuous palaces rising to receive me; I see orphans, and widows, and painters, and fiddlers, and poets, and builders protected and encouraged; and when the fabrick is pretty nearly finished by my shattered pericranium, I cast my eyes around and find John André by a small coal fire in a gloomy compting house in Warnford Court, nothing so little as what he has been making himself, and in all probability never to be much more than he is at present. But, oh! my dear Honora! it is for thy sake only I wish wealth."

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Later in the day he pictures his Honora and a few of her friends forming a snug circle about her dressing-room fireplace, and gives vent to the wish that he were with them. Then comes the closing hour of the "compting house," and

he writes, "I am about to jog to Clapton on my own stumps; musing as I homeward plod my way—Ah! need I name the subject of my contemplation?"

Although Honora Sneyd was the grand passion of André's life, he had a gay and volatile temperament, and many a pretty face caught his fancy after donning the king's livery; and so we find him in the days that followed his meeting with the belle of Long Island journeying to her home in Oyster Bay.

The house where Sally Townsend resided still stands on the main street. The old building was erected by Samuel Townsend in 1740, and is little changed since the day Sally's gallant British admirers used to hurry over from wind-swept Fort Hill in search of her. The Townsends were among the first Long Island settlers, having purchased land in this village in 1661. One of the early daughters of the family, by the name of Freelove, married the famous pirate, Tom Jones, as dreaded by Long Islanders as Captain Kidd was farther south. Their house at Massapequa, known as "the pirate's house," remained standing until well into the last century. An interesting tradition is often told of it. When the pirate lay on his death-bed a great black bird hovered over the roof, circling about the chimney. As his breath was ceasing it flew through the western wall, and no one ever succeeded in closing the hole that its strong wings made, the bricks and mortar always tumbling out as fast as put in place.

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Tom Jones had long been a troubled shade, if we credit the tales of ghost-hunters, when Major André first came to Oyster Bay. Colonel Simcoe, commander of the Queen's Rangers, was then quartered at the Townsend house, and General Clinton's aide, on his week's leave of absence from New York, knew he would receive a warm welcome from him. It was noonday when he and two of his fellows arrived at the village; a market lad directed them to the house. Wilting under the rays of the hot sun, they were longing for the cool strip of Quogue's beach.

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André was inwardly lamenting his foolhardiness in coming such a long distance simply to get a closer view of a maiden who had waved a kerchief at him. As they approached the wide gray shadow of the Townsend dwelling the noise of some disturbance from within met their ears. There was a clatter of china-ware, deep, boisterous laughter, and a woman's voice in shrill accents. "Don't!" and "Lud!" and then "Keep it up!" floated out through the windows. André parted the plumes of a high peony-bush, stood on tiptoe, and gazed in at the scene. A girl, dodging a line of lusty youths pursuing her about a table filled with steaming viands, stopped in her flight.

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For a moment she gazed at the man's head and shoulders rising out of the plant in the garden. To both their minds came the picture of a patch of grass at the foot of Broadway and the memory of a waving bit of white gauze. The girl blushed and so did the man over the peonies. The noise was still going on about her. For a moment she hesitated, then, rushing to the window, she merrily called, "Help! Help!" One of the young soldiers had also caught a glimpse of André and recognized him.

"'Tis John André, Clinton's aide, coming," he said; but the words had no more than left his mouth when a biscuit hit the spot from whence they came.

"Take that, and that," the rescuer cried, as he aimed the crispy balls at the ungallant youths. "Shame on you! Four lads to one maid!"

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The men were laughing.

The girl had become silent and her cheeks were flaming scarlet. "'Twas a game of forfeits, sir," she cried, "and they took advantage. I shall call the others of your tribe, gentlemen," she said, turning to her tormentors. There was scorn in her voice, but her eyes smiled on André.

Later in the day André sat at the feet of Sally Townsend, as she shelled peas in a grotto at the back of the house. Almost up to the entrance of the spot which she herself had planned in imitation of a Ranleigh grotto marched an army of radiant blooms. Over their fragrant faces hovered a band of butterflies, and now and then a brigand bee droned of his thefts to a heedless world. Every Simcoe redcoat was away drilling in a distant field. The house seemed like some great white bird asleep in the sun. The man and the girl under the cool arch of cedar boughs were facing each other. Even the brook in the distance had stopped its murmuring.

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"And why did you wave to me that morn on Broadway as you journeyed to your Aunt's?" André asked.

"'Twas all a mistake, I told you. I took you for some one else," the girl replied.

"Tell me, was he much like me?" he began again.

The girl smiled. "Why press me, Major André?" she said.

The peas were flying through her rosy fingers. The young soldier by her side reached out to a gaudy poppy and broke it from its frail stem. Now he was playing with it. A shaft of sunlight had strayed over from the flower field and was loitering on his unpowdered hair, beating it into gold.

Suddenly he spoke:

"I came all the way from York to obtain another view of you, Miss Townsend. The face by the chair window was so wonderfully sweet. Won't you tell me why you waved?"

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The girl bent her head over the pea-pods. The bees, for a moment deep in the honeyed hearts of the flowers, were silent. The hot world seemed like a colored print in a picture-book, brilliant but without life.

"If you must know," she said, hesitatingly, "I thought for a moment you were the man I love. The color of the coat showed me my mistake."

She was smiling at his chagrin.

There was a silence for a few minutes.

"Where is your rebel to-day?" he said, when he had cast his dream away.

A look of sadness came over her face and tears choked her voice as she answered, "God knows!"

It was the calls of old Miss Townsend for her evening vegetables which broke up the visions of the two. The girl's last words had brought to André's mind a picture of his Honora separated from him by miles and miles of ocean. Did she care whether he followed this new beauty? he asked himself. No; she had forgotten him. He looked at Sally. Where were her eager thoughts now? With some slender youth tramping along a Jersey road, perhaps. She was following him through the dark forest where he walked with bleeding feet. Camp-fires glowed before her eyes as he ate his starvation rations, the wind whistled in her ears with its shriek of musketry and deep roar of cannon. Now she gazed upon him wounded and creeping over the mossy turf to some stream to quench his thirst of death. The agony of it was awful.

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André saw the horror in her face.

"Poor girl," he whispered, "he is safe somewhere, I know; my heart feels sure of it."

Sally rose and he carried her basket into the kitchen, where a slave woman took it, murmuring protestations of thanks. There was no room in the house for him to sleep, but Sally assured him that he could find a lodging at the tavern.

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"May I come and see you to-night?" he said, when they reached the garden gate.

"You had better not," she answered. "You know me only as a hoyden with silly wits. I should hate all of you redcoats!"

"Let me come and I will talk only of him," he whispered.

"Then come," she said. "King George has the whole village in his power, and besides," she added, "you somehow make me think of Jack." And her eyes followed him as he walked down the street, turning often to bow to her until the night folded him in her arms.

"André hath captured the belle," was the verdict of every Simcoe officer quartered at Townsend's. They had become firm friends. The gay young officer had journeyed into the country in search of a pretty face and had found a good heart. André settled in his mind that the waving fichu was but the caprice of a moment; the act of a young and thoughtless girl who never hoped to see him again. Did he really look like Jack? he often asked himself. From Sally he heard of that youth's good parts, and soon began to feel a strange sympathy for him. Before the war he was the master of the village school. He was a dreamer and a writer of sweet verses who should have had naught to do with battle.

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In a little vine-covered cot by the king's highway his mother dwelt, breeding doves and rarer birds for a livelihood. There were few sales for her now. André passed her sometimes, seated by her doorstep, her wrinkled old face turned towards the west road where she had followed her best beloved to the turnpike one bright morning two years before. Her eyes were like those of a troubled parent bird, as she often sat there brooding. Once he went to see her with Sally. The girl had told him more of her lover. In a burst of confidence she had informed him that they were not even betrothed; his poverty forbade him the house. André sighed with her over the tale of no letters. There was one who never wrote to him, too, but alas! from choice. Once he showed this younger woman her miniature. He was growing to love Sally as a brother would. They were so alike with their smiles and their laughter, yet each with a

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sad secret. At Philadelphia and York, where gayety was rife, the image of his Honora did not come before him as often as it did in this quiet village.

With Sally, André would leave the house ostensibly to walk over to the camp, but, once away from prying eyes, they would wander off through the pines to heathy wastes where the golden-rod tossed its tassels knee high, and through fields green and riant, filled with the very passion of ripe summer. It was on these walks that they entered into the closest communion. All their superficialities seemed to vanish. André forgot the many beauties the God of Love had led his footsteps to in America, and for the time was the simple "Cher Jean" of younger days. The girl by his side felt stronger with him. Jack must be safe, for he said so. "You will find him again and happiness," he would often tell her. "The world cannot be all made up of dreary days." And a smile always followed the sigh.

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On the fifth day of André's stay in Oyster Bay he wandered with Sally as usual beyond the outskirts of the township. Starting for home when the sunbeams were beginning to fade along the roadway, they came upon a fisherman's wife driving an empty cart. The woman was all excitement, and in a jumbled Dutch dialect tried to tell them of something that had happened, pointing often to the village. She evidently feared André, for her eyes resting on him were filled with hatred. Sally was used to seeing the woman pass by the Townsend gate. What could she mean by her queer actions? She was evidently trying to tell them that something had been taken from her.

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"Her fish may have been seized by the soldiers, poor thing!" the girl said, as, still gesticulating wildly, they watched her drive away. When she was out of sight the two hurried on.

The sun left the tree-tops and sank into a misty grave. Gray vapors stole over the meadows. The day was dying sadly. The dew came suddenly upon the countryside and drenched all its varicolored beauty in tears. The wings of a storm could be heard in the distance. André seized his companion's hand and they ran laughingly with the wind.

The girl paused for breath. Her face changed. "Major André," she said, "what do you think the woman meant?"

"'Twas her fish," he said, to comfort her.

Nature's swift transition coming upon them so silently gave him a strange foreboding of impending trouble.

They were entering the street; the storm was at their backs. The day was stifled in a sable pall. There was a roll of thunder and a swift flash of lightning illumined the sky. Then out of the sullen blackness loomed the house, a sheet of fire, candles glowing in every room. A group of townspeople were about the door. Sally ran from André's side. Old Miss Townsend sat on the doorstep weeping, with her head in her apron. Sally looked at her and then at the faces about her. Most of the people were Tories, and there was little in their eyes but curiosity. Two or three neighbors glanced at her tenderly, and one stepped forward as if to speak, then checked herself. Inside there was the murmur of many voices. One that lived ever in her heart now came to her ears like an evil dream. Her face blanched. André was by her side in an instant.

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"'Tis Jack," she whispered. In the hall she saw him bound and bleeding. His face was thin and haggard. There were bayonets all about him.

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"You cannot enter here yet a while," a sentinel called out; but her ears were heedless. In André's arms she had swooned. The few who remained by the door were bending over her; about them roared the storm.

Sally's lover had been captured that afternoon in a rye field a mile from his home. He was dressed in a cheap, soiled homespun, and would have passed as a farmer's lad if a townsman vigilant in the service of King George had not recognized him. The youth was free after a long incarceration in a British warehouse prison in New York City. Many a weary mile he had skirted homeward bound. His one thought was to reach his mother's cool little cot again. The fever was still in his veins. He was nearing the road to rest when the soldiers ran out upon him. To his distraught fancy they seemed like red devils eager to drag him back to hades. Off over the fields he could see the roof of Sally's home. How glad she would be to see him again! Farther on was the little house he loved so well. The storm-clouds were beginning to form over it. His mother was no doubt bringing in the birds now from the willow garden house. Hark! was that the faint call of Rollin, his own pet bluewing?

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"Yes, he belongs to the rebel forces," he heard a voice cry out. "He must be here spying." Grim faces pressed closer to him. Cruel hands bound him. Death was whispering to him—mocking. A thoughtless youth who carried a flute began to play the doleful music of "The Rogues' March." On they went to the tribunal.

Colonel Simcoe, who was kind at heart, could not condemn the young prisoner to death when there was little proof that he was a spy. His men had searched him for possible papers, but none were to be found. "Still, he may be a clever trickster," he mused. After consulting with his chief officers, it was decided to give out a mock sentence that he was to die on the morrow, to see whether aught could be learned from him. Then Major André, who had helped old Miss Townsend carry the prostrate Sally to her chamber, stood by the door from whence emanated justice when the verdict was reached. "If he is hung it will kill the poor maid," he thought. Through the ante-room he saw the prisoner. His head was drooping; the very attitude of his body betokened abject despair. "Poor lad," he said; "can Simcoe mean to carry out the murder?"

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The storm was ceasing. So grave were the affairs over which the little world in the Townsend house were concerned that the night was on them unawares. The hour was long past the usual evening meal-time. The sentence of death sickened the hearts of all of those not in the plot. The court was about to break up when the prisoner asked permission to speak with Colonel Simcoe.

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For the last hour they had been trying to wring from him that which he knew not. Was this a confession? The thought of death was a compelling force. A hush fell upon the room, broken only by the sputter of a candle.

"Colonel Simcoe," he said, "as this is to be my last night on earth, I ask of you a favor." He had suddenly grown pale like one arisen from a weary couch of sickness. "'Tis a great boon to ask, sir, and I have naught to give in exchange but my word. I came to this place to-day solely with the thought of seeing my old mother—and one other," he added, hesitatingly. "This has cost me my life, and I beg that you will let me go to her just for an hour or two, and I promise to come back again. Half a mile down the road is our house. She is thinking of me now, poor soul!" His voice had sunk into a whisper. "The bird woman; perhaps you know her, sir. You must trust me to go, and go alone. The knowing I am a prisoner would kill her. Do I ask too much?"

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The officer looked at the youth. 'Twas a prodigious request, but bespoke honesty. The words touched a hidden part of his nature. The fair white face before him with the eager eyes brought back to him dead faces dreaming under cypress-trees. "I will set you free for two hours," he said, "on your promise to come back."

"I promise to return by all that I hold sacred," the youth answered.

The cords that bound his swelling arms were loosened. The great hall door swung back for freedom, and he staggered out into the garden. The storm was over. After the brightness of the room his eyes could not penetrate the darkness. A dash against a drenched rose-bush brought a cloud of raindrops and loosened petals on his head. The dampness and the faint odor of the flowers awakened him. A wind was arising, making a low murmur among the bushes.

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Suddenly it came over him that he was leaving Sally's house. Only the Townsends had white garden-posts. Sally! How sweet the name! Long, long ago it was that he bade her good-by in the meadow. He felt her kiss on his cheek now. Then the wind sighed, "You are to die!—to die!"

A chill was creeping over him—he was to go back to the great house. No, it was not right. He was young; he was free; he could escape to the forest, and they would never know. For a moment he turned and looked at it, then hurried off into the road.

He began to run slowly at first, gradually increasing his pace until his strength was taxed to its utmost. He was a wild, hunted thing that the forces of the world were about to drown. A wet blanket was over the earth. Watery trees touched him with their wet arms, making him shudder. Deep pools in the middle of the roadway showed him his shadow. Dark, wet things flew out at him from coverts and joined his mad course. The wind was at his heels, growing louder and more insistent. "You are to die!—to die!" it shrieked. Now he was battling with it. "I cannot die!—I shall not die!" his soul said. On he plunged.

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It was his own log school-house overlapping the road that stopped him. Close to his path it stood like some grim sentinel. Before it he paused, his breath coming in short gasps. "You must go back," it whispered. "You have promised." "I cannot die," he answered; but he lingered by it as if afraid to go on. The wind was lessening; it no longer challenged him. In its sweep he now heard the voices of children. "Here you taught us the meaning of faith and honor." Over the years he saw them all. A long line of eager little forms were stealing through a gate whose latch was rusted. Where were they all to-night: the merry boys who dreamed of playtimes over dull books; the girls with their

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flowers and apples for the master? No longer would he guide them. They were gone forever from him. The wind had caught their droning voices. A lad who wore the dunce-cap often was before him. He saw him stolid and indifferent in the corner of the dreary room; then again, awakened by the call of war, he was by his side, a drummer-boy, charging the heights of Bergen. The dunce was not afraid to die. "You will go back," the voices wailed, and he answered, "Yes!"

The moon was throwing off the mist veils, and her first pale beams sent earthward showed him his mother's cot. There were no lights in the windows. He approached the door and stood by it shivering. An awful fear came over him that perhaps she was away. A fourth of his time was already gone. What if he could not see her again? He longed to feel her tender arms about him, and yet he knew that the agony of leaving them would be more than he could bear. He dared not knock, but crept softly to an open window. In the old stole-band rocking-chair she was seated close to a dying fire, her eyes closed by sleep. The worn strip of wool rag carpet he knew so well was smooth beneath her feet. A pair of finches were twittering softly in their cage by the south window. Over the broad sill he climbed as in the days of his boyhood. To her side he crept and began to stroke her calloused, tired hands. His touch brought her back from her visionary realm. "Is he dead?" her waking lips murmured, and then she saw her son.

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At the Townsend house none of the officers knew that the youth who left them was anything to Sally. It was proper for a tender-hearted maid to swoon at a danger. After the door closed upon him there were calls for the hostess. Was she revived? Then André stepped forward and told the officers what the condemned youth was to her. In his graphic way he repeated the simple love-story. The eyes of all in the room, expressing varying emotions, were still centred on his face when a faint rustle of women's garments was heard in the hall. André stopped speaking. In their midst stood Sally, pale and with anguish in her eyes. Miss Townsend was near her, wringing her hands.

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"Sirs," the girl said, "you have been here nigh a month, and we have given you of our best, hiding naught, although you are not of our color." Her voice was breaking. "I," she continued, "have worked for you, amused you, laughed for you, and now I want my pay. You must give me an innocent man's life. The one you have condemned to death is not a spy. I swear it before God!"

Bluff and hearty Colonel Simcoe, in the act of drawing a goblet of port, lowered the glass a few inches at each of the girl's passionate outbursts. He began to feel of his wig to see if it were awry. "Lud, here is a pretty to do," he murmured to himself. The lady was a fine creature and her words were true. He placed the heavy cut piece on the table and then he spoke. "His death-sentence was but a mock one," he said. "'Tis our mind to set him free, yet 'twas necessary to find out if he knew aught."

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"Oh, sir, let me have his life! Write it on a paper that you set him free." The girl's tones were entreating. "I must go to him, and now."

For a moment the commander hesitated; then André's voice rang out. "Those who are for Sally unsheath their swords," he cried. The room was full of flashing steel. The pardon was in Sally's hand.

"Come," she said, as she turned and faced the group of excited men.

The next moment she was out in the night, followed by a line of supperless redcoats.

The moon, grown round and full, smiled on the procession. Sally and André headed the company splashing through the wet road. So intent were they on their errand that scarcely any one spoke.

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They were nearing the lights of the cottage when Sally paused. Placing her finger to her mouth to enjoin silence, she said, "You must turn back, friends. The sight of you all might kill his mother. 'Twas thoughtless in asking you to come with me. André," she whispered, "you must stay to bring me home."

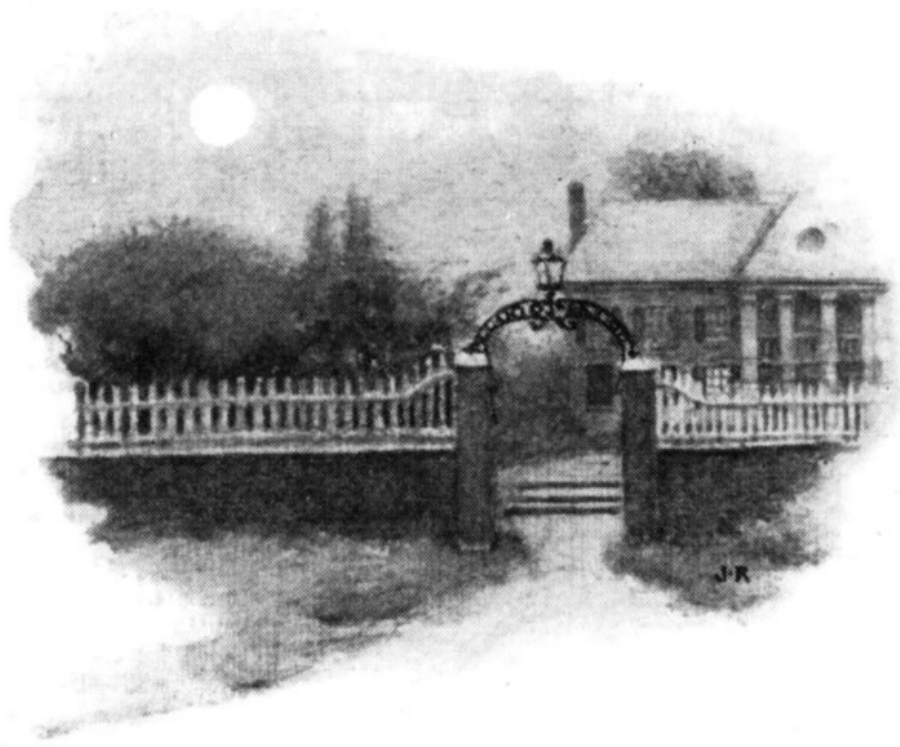
"Brave little Sally!" a youth's lusty voice rang out. The men surrounded her. One by one they asked to kiss her hand, then crept off through the dripping foliage. All the while she was gazing at the house. Rain-drops glistened in her hair and her garments hung limp about her knees. André stood by her side seemingly lost in thought. He was dreaming of days that were dead. Softly she touched his shoulder.

"André," she said, "I am afraid to go in."

The crashing of twigs under foot died away in the distance; the clouds were all swept out of the heavens and the night seemed one vast ambient plain of loneliness. The girl and the man in the middle of the roadway drew closer to each other. Tenderly he caught her trembling hands in his. "Do not be afraid, Sally," he said; "you will find happiness." His voice was breaking. "Two hearts

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will always beat for you—one belongs to the man in yonder cot and the other to John André." Softly she crept from him to the door which opened into her earthly Paradise.



**PINDERINA SCRIBBLERUS,
AN AMERICAN MONTAGU**



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PINDERINA SCRIBBLERUS, AN AMERICAN MONTAGU

WHEN the great Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu was receiving the *bas-bleus* of London in her Hill Street drawing-room there arose across the water a little American salon which reflected in a degree the spirit of the famous gatherings Admiral Boscawen named after the slovenly Dr. Stillingfleet's gray stockings. It is only recently that historians have taken a marked interest in the literature which followed in the wake of the Revolutionary War and the world has learned that in the newly-formed States there were a few bright spirits whose lives and aspirations reflected the culture of Europe. One of the most interesting of these was Elizabeth Kearny, *née* Lawrence, a daughter of Judge Lawrence, of Burlington, and a half-sister of Captain James Lawrence of "Don't give up the ship" fame. She formed a literary circle which flourished for a few years in old Perth Amboy, Jersey's fallen capital.

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Elizabeth Lawrence passed her early youth in Burlington, where she pursued the study of Greek and Latin, to the mild astonishment of the community. Over her father's library table in the Lawrence mansion, still existing impervious to the encroachments of time, she chatted as a girl with the Tory satirist Jonathan Odell. She must have imbibed some of his sarcasm, for in later years her loquacious tongue was barbed with a wit almost

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Walpolian in its acrid cleverness. At nearby Philadelphia she met the famous Peggy Chew, and formed an intimacy with Anne Willing, better known as Mrs. William Bingham. The "dazzling Bingham" she made the subject of some animated verses, entitled,—

"LINES ON MRS. BINGHAM'S RECALL OF A SUPPER INVITATION.

"Just in from the country, with nothing to wear,
At Bingham's to-night I am bidden repair.
My one silken pelisse is all in a tangle,
And I know I have lost my Parisian bangle:
Not a whif of hair-powder to light up my head—
Methinks 'twould be better to get into bed!
My slippers the parrot has quite eaten up—
Oh! why am I bidden to come in to sup?
Now, Rebecca, do try make the child stop its wailing;
At the thought of the company courage is failing!
There's a chair going past and a coach with a clatter.
If I go as I am—pray, what does it matter?
Here give me some Rose-Bloom to ease up my face,
And a patch on my chin would give it a grace.
My new brilliant necklace, my white turkey wrapping,
Ah, now I am ready; but who is that tapping?
A word from the Binghams—you say a postponement:
An illness—alas, 'tis a hurried atonement,
With nothing to wear and nothing to eat!
Come blow out the candles and gaze on the street."

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There are very few records of this remarkable woman's girlhood still extant. Her brother John, for whom she cherished a strong attachment, was born after her marriage to Mr. Michael Kearny, "the beloved noble Michael," who erected her Perth Amboy cottage. There she lived as "the scribbling Mrs. Kearny, occupying the highest seat on Parnassus," a power in her world. Argus-eyed she evidently was, for nothing seems to have escaped her facile quill. There was scarcely a subject too great or too small for her to digress upon, and she wrote in the morning of "the shameful performance of certain gentlemen in Congress" and at night of "the sorrow she felt on finding a slave under the influence of pernicious rum."

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A LADY OF OLD AMBOY

About some of the streets of the city named in honor of the "passionately proud" Earl of Perth there lingers an air of decayed opulence. Although old Amboy of the scarlet coats died long ago, a few of her echoes live on undrowned by the din of new voices. In Mrs. Kearny's day many a stately

garden crept down to the water-front. The great houses overlooking the smooth Raritan still sheltered a few of the noble Scotch and Irish families who had unwillingly relinquished their king and remained in the New World. In the letters of Sophia Brown, who lodged with the mother of William Dunlap, the art historian, there are glimpses of this society. The frail and aristocratic Misses Parker with their tea-drinkings, the gallant Captain Love, and other charming figures, look out at us from pages filled with the trivialities of everyday life. A child dreaming beside a broad pane overlooking the quiet street, where trees stood in line as if awaiting the call of Orpheus, saw many things. Now a youthful pair sauntered by in the spring-time of love, now an ancient crone in worn satin shoes that had once touched ever so lightly a king's feet in a long-forgotten dance, and now a tired veteran of the Revolution murmuring to himself of battles still unwon. Suddenly would come the rush of many footsteps. Off in the distance the bell of St. Peter's tolls. People of condition are to be married. Ladies in faded silk or humble erminetta mince past gentlemen in desay suits. Then the music creeps out of the chancel,—the faint, sweet air of an old English wedding-march. Even the sombre fronts of the houses seem to be ravished with it. The voices of the gentle choir may not be as pure as they were in the days of George III., but to the girl who listened then they were like strains from Paradise. [258]

The city which had received its charter one day after New York was at that period beginning to lose its importance in the eyes of the Western world. No longer chariots drawn by white horses carried a supercilious nobility to the resort of the Knickerbockers. No longer big-wigs talked over the commercial supremacy of Perth Amboy in the Sweeting's Alley Coffee House. No longer were there stately minuets and revels at the Governor's palace. The old days were gone forever; but although the leading actors and the lights had fled, the stage remained unchanged. That sad-faced baggage Poverty loitered behind and came often to once proud dwelling-places. Pinderina heard the sighs of her friends, and decided to enliven the situation. In the Kearny Cottage, whose rooms seem to widen mysteriously as one enters, she held her gatherings of sympathetic souls. These affairs differed somewhat from the parties given at an earlier date by Mrs. Hugh Ferguson and Mrs. Richard Stockton, two other literary lights of the time, for the hostess suffered from a slender purse. Her guests came only for the pleasure of conversation, without the "stomach compensation" Mrs. Montagu and her American imitators thought so necessary. [262]

One of the most distinguished frequenters of Mrs. Kearny's Blue-Stocking Club was Philip Freneau, whose mother had made a second matrimonial venture and wedded Captain James Kearny, of Kearny Port, a relative of the Perth Amboy family. "Small but well formed, his blue eyes sparkling with poetic fire," it is easy to imagine him the lion of Mrs. Kearny's evenings. Whenever the old sloop "King William"—changed to "Liberty"—sailed into Amboy, bringing Mr. Freneau to pass the night with his friends before journeying to Monmouth, there was always great excitement in the town. Mrs. Kearny's black Rebecca was sent forth in haste to inform the chosen few of the neighborhood that their leader bade them to her drawing-room. The seven romping Kearny boys were hurried up to the attic to bed, the furniture rearranged, and Madam Scribblerus, as her world called her, slipped on her brocade gown to be in readiness for the battle of wits sure to ensue. A happy woman was this quaint personage when footfalls began to sound on the gallery steps. The rap-tap of the knocker made her spirits buoyant, and each greeting took her farther away from the cares of a commonplace existence. Although she was a lover of nature, she too could have said with Mr. Robinson, the father of Mrs. Montagu, that living in the country was like sleeping with one's eyes open. Each breath of the world beyond Amboy brought new life to her. [263]

We can picture to ourselves the evening. About the oddly-shaped room, on hard-seated, fiddle-backed chairs, sits Pinderina's little court. By the wide fireplace on the settle old Judge Nevill, the editor of the first American magazine, is blinking at the embers. Mr. Freneau has finished telling some of his recent adventures in New York City. Now Mrs. Kearny begins the story of Captain Kidd's black cat, which lived on long after her master had been condemned to death in Old Bailey, and for these two hundred years has haunted the spot where the bold adventurer is said to have buried some of his chests of rupees. Sleepy eyes grow wider as she advances in her narrative. Timid ladies feel for each other's hands in the flickering light. The hostess is in her element. [264]

Taking a penetrating look at the company over the years, they are not as we would at first imagine them. There are holes in Mr. Freneau's wrist ruffles, and the worn brocade gown of the hostess no longer gives forth even faint protesting rustle as she walks. In this respect the circle is true-blue,—for Oliver Goldsmith went to Mrs. Montagu's in darned stockings and a laced

coat, and the immortal Johnson and many of his confrères were naturally careless in their attire, or were helped to the state by the lack of pence.

The one great ambition of Elizabeth Kearny's life was to write like her "admired Mr. Freneau," and her many mild plagiarisms of his poems, if they failed in their object, were no doubt regarded by him as flattering homage to his genius. Theirs was an unusual friendship of which the world knows very little, but mute testimonials remain of it to-day in her letters and her autographs fading under those of Philip Freneau's in many of his favorite volumes. She could have written of him as Mrs. Montagu once wrote, thinking no doubt of her faithful Dr. Beattie:

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"Many guests my heart has not admitted; such as there are do it honor, and a long and intimate acquaintance has preceded their admittance; they were invited in it by its best virtues; they passed through the examination of severity, nay, even answered some questions of suspicion that inquired of their constancy and sincerity; but now they are delivered over to the keeping of constant faith and love; for doubt never visits the friends entirely, but only examines such as would come in, lest the way should be too common."

When Philip Freneau lived for a short period over a little shop in the Fly-Market, New York City, and edited *The Time Piece*, Mrs. Kearny became one of its constant contributors. Among that sentimental group of female poets, numbering a Saraperina, Edena, Cynthea, Clara, Carolina, and a Petronella, her effusions—generally under the *nome de guerre* of "Scribelra"—stand forth in bold type. Turning the musty pages of a bound volume of the paper, we find

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"LINES BY A LADY ON HEARING THE FROGS SING ON THE 17TH OF MARCH.

"Hail! pleasing harbingers of spring,
Who in the ponds so jocund sing;
And with a merry roundelay
Do usher in St. Patrick's day;
Some think your music rather hoarse,
Nay that 'tis altogether coarse;
Others ever fond of joking,
Swear your singing is but croaking.
Yet I declare it is to me
A pleasing, perfect harmony.
For in your varying notes I trace
The counter, treble, tenor, bass.
Should *some* reply too *base* indeed,
Such rude sarcasms pray don't heed,
But in your old accustomed way
Still celebrate St. Patrick's day;
Whether to hail the saint you sing
Or joy for the returning spring,
Which doth your tribe from jail release,
Let not your annual tribute cease."

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Although the merit of this poem lies much below mediocrity, in subject it is delightfully grotesque. Her style was varied and her pen strangely moody, judging from her productions extant. The following *jeu d'esprit* was written at the beginning of Jefferson's administration:

"AN EPIGRAM.

"Says William to Thomas I'll hold you a bet,
That the French are confoundedly frightened;
They thought that our Federal ships had o'erset,
But they find that they staunch are, and righted.

"They slighted our Pleno's and made a demand
That we a shameful tribute should pay them,
Or else (as they plundered at sea) on the land
Neither Rapine nor Murder should stay them!

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"But those who are born in the woods can't be scared
By the croaking of Bull-frogs in ditches.
Nor will we of Frenchmen at all be afraid,
A people who're *sans* honor, *sans* breeches.

"They've taken our coats from our backs, and say too
That they will have our shirts and our smocks, sir;
But faith if they try it the project they'll rue,
For we'll give them some flesh-burning knocks, sir!

"They've tried every art which deception could frame,
But our Congress too wise were to heed them,
They've Heaven defied, and have put aside shame,
And have gone all lengths the Devil would lead them."

Among her poems are some pleasing verses, entitled "A Whim." These also appeared in *The Time Piece*, unsigned, and we have nothing to show whether they were a copy or the child of her own muse:

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"I gave—'twas but the other day—
My Kate a ticket for the play,
'Tis love such tricks imparts;
When holding up the card to me,
She laughed and said, the emblem see,
And show'd the Knave of Hearts.

"Amaz'd I cry'd, what means my dear?
A knave will lie, will steal, will swear;
I pray, your words define.
She smiled and said, nay never start.
He's sure a knave that steals a heart,
And you have stolen mine!"

There was one yearly occasion when the world of Amboy did not flock with acceleration to the Kearny Cottage, and that was the anniversary of Michael Kearny's death. Mrs. Kearny was always fond of writing epitaphs to embellish the tombstones of departed Amboyites, but as the years progressed she developed a very morbid strain. To commemorate the demise of her husband she wrote poems of several hundred verses and then assembled her satellites to weep with her. Woe to the indifferent ones whose tears of sorrow were dry. They were pretty sure of indignant visits from her, or, worse still, her far-reaching pen was capable of dealing them swift retribution. She never spared the most loyal of her friends. When one of the distinguished men of the city came to her under the effects of toddy, she celebrated his fall from grace by lines which must have always rankled in his breast.

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Mrs. Kearny longed to have her work admired for its worth alone, and, like Miss Burney, who visited the bookseller Mr. Lownes as a chance purchaser of "Evelina" to learn his opinion of its author, "Pinderina" was in the habit of calling upon her friends with her manuscripts, coyly reading them, and then requesting their criticism on the latest compositions she had copied from the *Gazette*. Tradition says that this plan did not always meet with pleasant results. Descending upon a Mrs. Golightly, a new-comer to Perth Amboy, with a batch of her poems, she was told that the productions were far from those of a genius and must have been written by some very foolish female. Pinderina, placidly awaiting praise, was astounded at the intelligence. Recovering herself, she informed the unfortunate woman that her own pen had given birth to the verses, and left her house in high indignation.

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THE WALK TO MRS. BELL'S MANSION

A new book was an event in the Perth Amboy world at the beginning of the

century. When Simeon Drake, who received the mail from Woodbridge three times a week, brought a packet to the door of Mrs. Andrew Bell, the wealthiest member of the circle, a flutter of envy arose in every breast. What anxious hours were passed before it started on its round from house to house. Ofttimes an impatient dame sent her little Abigail to gaze through the low windows of Mrs. Bell's study, where the lady usually sat reading, to see if she were nearly through with the volume. When the first month of its Amboy life was over, how it had been discussed! The golden urns and garlands of roses which decorated the cover were already worn. To-day high up in the dust of dim attics the books of old Amboy are content to rest neglected and forgotten. The love that was given to them was stronger and truer than that bestowed upon their modern kindred. Through the long years of summer suns and wintry rains they had been happy in the thought of a mission fulfilled. When the wind creeps through the cracks in the casements and stirs their musty pages, one can almost fancy that they are whispering to the ghosts of the long ago.

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A letter written by Mrs. Kearny to Mrs. Bell has been preserved:

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"I am much obliged to you Madam for your Books. The scriptural essays are very good; the author seems to have been fully inspired by his subject. Rather enthusiastically so (I think) when he prefers the story of Ruth to that of Lavinia. I have long thought that Mr. Thomson had taken that sacred history for his model but had no idea that any one would say—the Paraphrase is inferior to the original. The story of the unfortunate lovers, very interesting—Carolina but so, so quite middling; I read it through without being able to approve of it. Allow me to mention a few remarks I made when reading it—It, in my opinion, wants two essential qualities Style and Reason; qualities which you know are capable of making any story pleasing—interesting, however fictitious we suppose the circumstances to be.

"Ovid's metamorphoses are not more wonderful than some of the turns of fortune in the history of Carolina. I will instance the sudden and total transformation of the Count of Wolstein. That one who nature had designed for a tall and well proportioned man should by a few months' studying become hunchbacked—and by having a scar on his face, one eye lost, and a limp in his gait, should be so deformed as to be called a monster! and that Carolina a young lady who had been two months at court and likely had some idea of politeness should when introduced to the Count instantly hide her eyes with her hands, give a piercing shriek and disappear like a flash of lightning at midnight is demanding too much from our credulity. We know pretty well what effect the loss of an eye, the scar, and the limp might have had but we cannot otherwise account for his other deformity than by supposing that he sat in a remarkably uneasy posture, or studied much more intently than any of our modern statesmen do: not one of whom, I believe, have broken their backs by studying politics however their minds may be deformed by it. Don't you think that the Canoness should have been totally deaf, as well as nearly blind, whilst the Pavilion was building in her garden?

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"I can't for my part see the necessity of obliging Carolina to HAVE it built; as, had it been already there. In adding the embellishments would have been a sufficient surprise to her dear mama. In short, I am of opinion that the author did not require his readers to have common sense. Excuse the liberty which I have taken with your Book and believe me to be much obliged to you for the favor.

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"Yours,
"E. K."

The close of Mrs. Kearny's life was blighted and narrowed by adversity. Money matters estranged her from many of her old intimates, and she wrote pathetically to each member of the circle after a lawsuit with Richard Stevens: "Have you too entered the lists against me?" Unlike Mrs. Montagu, of whom Wraxall recorded that she wore glittering jewels to dazzle those her reputation failed to astound, Mrs. Kearny's last years were tinctured by the plaintiveness of homespun.

In the fall-time of the year 1799 the Amboyites who wandered past the wide lawns of Franklin Palace often saw by one of the windows of Kearny Cottage a figure bent low over a writing-table. It was Mrs. Kearny working industriously. Soon the rumor went abroad that Pinderina was completing her works for publication. No one dared question her. Covert glances were bestowed upon her when she entered her pew in old St. Peter's on a Sabbath morning. The thoughts of their former leader were to be handed down to posterity in print. Betsey Parker, one of the sisters at the castle who had scoffed her effusions in secret, decided to call at the cottage as soon as etiquette would permit. Feuds over money matters seemed trivial things after

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this great news.

Pinderina's star was again in the ascendancy. She smiled fondly on the pages of finely-written manuscript she was putting together. A glorious triumph seemed near at hand. One morning Mr. Freneau was seen leaving Kearny Cottage. After him trotted a black boy, bearing aloft a heavy bundle. Curious eyes watched him from behind the partly closed shutters of many a sedate-looking building facing the green. The gossips felt sure that the fruit of Mrs. Kearny's genius was being borne away for the approval of the New York publishers. They circulated the tale industriously. The élite of the town had not been so excited since the day an irate Mrs. Franklin broke all the mirrors of the palace on finding that her husband had been made a prisoner of war.

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Three times the "Liberty" sailed into Amboy. On each occasion be vies of ladies found it necessary to transact business near the wharf. A case of fine nabobs, which had lain at old John's for a fortnight, was suddenly discovered. Captain Goelet had brought home some necklaces of Indian sea-shells. Anything plausible was used as an excuse to parade along the water-front.

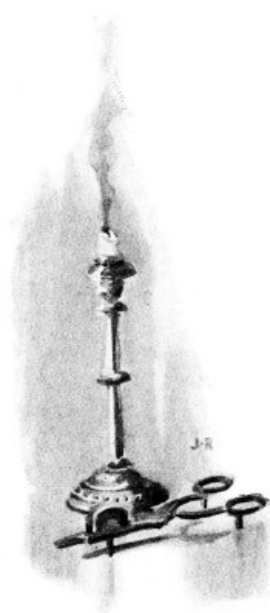
And after all the weary watching Mr. Freneau arrived by coach. A gray mist enveloped the roadway that night, as if to keep his return a secret. But it was decreed that he should be observed. A member of the circle, who lived close by the cottage, chanced to bring out on her balcony a plant thirsting for rain. She recognized the figure which alighted from the mud-bespattered vehicle before Mrs. Kearny's door. The wind spread wide his great-coat. Its fluttering folds guarded from view the package of manuscript which had been rejected by the lords of New York's Printing House Lane. The woman on the balcony saw him enter the house; then she ran into her own dwelling. It took but a few moments to find the Hanway umbrella and the lantern. Excitement overcoming her timidity, she hurried out into the night to share her news with the neighbors.

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An hour later a few courageous souls were wending their way to Pinderina's. Each carried some peace-offering. A bowl of white jelly, an ounce of Mr. Stebben's snuff, an orange that had colored in some sunlit Amboy window were hidden beneath wet garments. Before the worn door, which the darkness and the rain made grim and sinister looking, they huddled together. Suddenly there was a noise inside. A thrill went over the company as it swung back and showed Pinderina holding a candle aloft in her hands. "I know why you are here," she said, gazing at them mockingly. "It is not true. The villains have refused my work." Some faithful member of the circle started to speak, then stopped. "As the poetess of Perth Amboy I have lived, and as the poetess of Perth Amboy I shall die," she continued. There were smiles in the darkness, —the smiles akin to tears.

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Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation mistakes have been corrected.

Page 131, missing opening quotation mark added before "Close along the..."

Page 221, illustration caption: "Andre" changed to "André."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THROUGH THE GATES OF OLD ROMANCE

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