

The Spy, Volume 1

James Fenimore Cooper

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TO JAMES AITCHISON.

Although we are natives of different countries, I feel that I can safely offer to your notice a work, which has been chiefly written with a view to induce love to my own. Attachment to the land of our nativity, is a sentiment so intimately blended with our best feelings, that should I have discovered any weakness in the exhibition of this national partiality, I feel confident, that you, at least, will not judge me harshly; for your liberality to this country is untainted with any irreverence for the institutions of your own. If I find reasons, in your candor, to believe you will do justice to my merited eulogiums, I can equally hope for your lenity, where habit has blinded me to defects.

We have spent many pleasant hours together, and I hope, while perusing these pages, you may experience some portion of that satisfaction, which has, I trust, hitherto attended our association. With the best wishes for your welfare,

I remain, Dear Sir, Your assured friend, _____

PREFACE.

There are several reasons why an American, who writes a novel, should choose his own country for the scene of his story—and there are more against it. To begin with the—pros—the ground is untrodden, and will have all the charms of novelty; as yet but one pen of any celebrity has been employed among us in this kind of writing; and as the author is dead, and beyond the hopes and fears of literary rewards and punishments, his countrymen are beginning to discover his merit—but we forget, the latter part of the sentence should have been among the—contras. The very singularity of the circumstance, gives the book some small chance of being noticed abroad, and our literature is much like our wine—vastly benefited by travelling. Then, the patriotic ardor of the country, will insure a sale to the most humble attempts to give notoriety to any thing national, as we have the strongest assurances our publisher's account of profit and loss will speedily show. Heaven forbid, that this don't prove to be like the book itself—a fiction. And lastly, an Author may be fairly supposed to be better able to delineate character, and to describe scenes, where he is familiar with both, than in countries where he has been nothing more than a traveller. Now for the contras—we will begin by removing all the reasons in favour of the step. As there has been but one writer of this description hitherto, a new candidate for literary honours of this kind, would be compared with that one, and unfortunately he is not the rival that every man would select. Then, although the English critics not only desire, but invite works that will give an account of American manners, we are sadly afraid they mean nothing but Indian manners; we are apprehensive that the same palate which can relish the cave scene in Edgar Huntly, because it contains an American, a savage, a wild cat, and atomahawk, in a conjunction that never did, nor ever will occur—will revolt at descriptions here, that portray love as any thing but a brutal passion—patriotism as more than money-making—or men and women without wool. We write this with all due deference to our much esteemed acquaintance, Mr. Cæsar Thompson, a character we presume to be well known to the few who read this introduction; for nobody looks at a preface until they are at a loss to discover from the book itself, what it is the author means. Then touching the reason, which is built on the hope of support from patriotic pride, we are almost ashamed to say, that the foreign opinion of our love of country, is nearer the truth than we affected to believe in the foregoing sentence. As for the last reason in favour of an American scene, we are fearful that others are as familiar with their homes as we are ourselves, and that consequently the very familiarity will breed contempt; besides, if we make any mistakes every body will know it. Now we conceive the moon to be the most eligible spot in which to lay the scene of a fashionable modern novel, for then there would be but very few who could dispute the accuracy of the delineations; and could we but have obtained the names of some conspicuous places in that planet, we think we should have ventured on the experiment. It is true, that when we suggested the thing to the original of our friend Cæsar, he obstinately refused to sit any longer if his picture was to be transported to any such heathenish place. We combatted the opinions of the black with a good deal of pertinacity, until we discovered the old fellow suspected the moon to be somewhere near Guinea, and that his opinion of the luminary was something like European notions of our States—that it was not a fit residence for a gentleman. But there is still another class of critics, whose smiles we most covet, and whose frowns we most expect to encounter—we mean our own fair. There are those who are hardy enough to say that women love novelty; and a proper respect to our own reputation for discernment, compels us to abstain from controverting this opinion. The truth is, that a woman is a bundle of sensibilities, and these are qualities which exist chiefly in the fancy. Certain moated castles, draw-bridges, and kind a of classic nature, are much required by these imaginative beings. The artificial distinctions of life also have their peculiar charms with the softer sex, and there are many of them who think the greatest recommendation a man can have to their notice, is the ability to raise themselves in the scale of genteel preferment; very many are the French valets, Dutch barbers, and English tailors, who have received their patents of nobility from the credulity of the American fair; and occasionally we see a few of them, whirling in the vortex left by the transit of one of these aristocratical meteors, across the plane of our confederation. In honest truth, we believe, that one novel with a lord in it, is worth two without a lord, even for the nobler sex—meaning usmen. Charity forbids our insinuating that any of our patriots respond to the longings of the other sex, with an equal desire to bask in the sunshine of royal favour; and least of all, may we venture to insinuate, that the longing generally exists in a ratio exactly proportioned to the violence

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with which they lavish their abuse on the institutions of their forefathers.—There is ever a reaction in human feelings, and it was only when he found them unattainable, that Æsop makes the fox call the grapes sour!

We would not be understood as throwing the gauntlet to our fair countrywomen, by whose opinions it is that we expect to stand or fall; we only mean to say, that if we have got no lords and castles in the book, it is because there are none in the country. We heard there was a noble within fifty miles of us, and went that distance to see him, intending to make our hero look as much like him as possible; when we brought home his description, the little gipsy, who set for Fanny, declared she would'nt have him if he were a king. Then we travelled a hundred miles to see a renowned castle to the east, but, to our surprise, found it had so many broken windows, was such an out-door kind of a place, that we should be wanting in Christian bowels to place any family in it during the cold months: in short, we were compelled to let the yellow haired girl choose her own suitor, and lodge the Whartons in a comfortable, substantial, and unpretending cottage. We repeat we mean nothing disrespectful to the fair—we love them next to ourselves—our book—our money—and a few other articles. We know them to be good-natured, good-hearted—ay, and good-looking hussies enough: and heartily wish, for the sake of one of them, we were a lord, and had a castle in the bargain.

We do not absolutely aver, that the whole of our tale is true; but we honestly believe that a good portion of it is; and we are very certain, that every passion recorded in the volumes before the reader, has and does exist; and let us tell them that is more than they can find in every book they read. We will go farther, and say that they have existed within the county of West-Chester, in the State of New-York, and United States of America, from which fair portion of the globe we send our compliments to all who read our pages—and love to those who buy them.

CHAPTER I.

And though amidst the calm of thought entire,
Some high and haughty features might betray
A soul impetuous once——'twas earthly fire
That fled composure's intellectual ray,
As Etna's fires grow dim before the rising day.

—— Gertrude of Wyoming

It was near the close of the year 1780, that a solitary traveller was seen pursuing his way through one of the numerous little valleys of West–Chester. The easterly wind, with its chilling dampness, and increasing violence, gave unerring notice of the approach of a storm, which, as usual, might be expected to continue for several days: and the experienced eye of the traveller was turned, in vain, through the darkness of the evening, in quest of some convenient shelter, in which, for the term of his confinement by the rain, that already began to mix with the atmosphere in a thick mist, he might obtain such accommodations as his age and purposes required. Nothing, however, offered, but the small and inconvenient tenements of the lower order of inhabitants, with whom, in that immediate neighbourhood, he did not think it either safe or politic to trust himself.

The county of West–Chester, after the British had obtained possession of the island of New–York, became common ground, in which both parties continued to act for the remainder of the war of the revolution. A large proportion of its inhabitants, either restrained by their attachments, or influenced by their fears, affected a neutrality they did not always feel. The lower towns were, of course, more particularly under the dominion of the crown, while the upper, finding a security from the vicinity of the continental troops, were bold in asserting their revolutionary opinions, and their right to govern themselves. Great numbers, however, wore masks, which even to this day have not been thrown aside; and many an individual has gone down to the tomb, stigmatized as a foe to the rights of his countrymen, while, in secret, he has been the useful agent of the leaders of the revolution; and, on the other hand, could the hidden repositories of divers flaming patriots have been opened to the light of day, royal protections would have been discovered, concealed under piles of British gold.

At the sound of the tread of the noble horse ridden by the traveller, the mistress of the farm house he was passing at the time, might be seen cautiously opening the door of the building to examine the stranger; and, perhaps, with an averted face, communicating the result of her observations to her husband, who, in the rear of the building, was prepared to seek, if necessary, his ordinary place of concealment in the adjacent woods. The valley was situated about mid–way in the length of the county, and was sufficiently near to either army to make the restitution of stolen goods no uncommon occurrence in that vicinity. It is true, the same articles were not always regained, but a summary substitute was generally resorted to, in the absence of legal justice, which restored to the loser the amount of his loss, with no inconsiderable addition for the temporary use of his property.

The passage of a stranger, with an appearance of somewhat doubtful character, and mounted on an animal, which, although unfurnished with any of the ordinary trappings of war, partook largely of the bold and upright carriage that distinguished his rider, gave rise to many surmises among the gazing inmates of the different habitations; and, in some instances, where conscience was more than ordinarily awake, to no little alarm.

Tired with the exercise of a day of unusual fatigue, and anxious to obtain a speedy shelter from the increasing violence of the storm, that now began to change its character to large drops of driving rain, the traveller determined, as a matter of necessity, to make an application for admission to the next dwelling that offered. An opportunity was not long wanting; and, riding through a pair of neglected bars, he knocked loudly at the outer door of a building, of very humble exterior, without quitting his saddle. A female of middle age, with an outward bearing but little more prepossessing than her dwelling, appeared to answer to his summons. The startled woman half closed her door again, in affright, as she saw, by the glare of a large wood fire, a mounted man so unexpectedly near its threshold; and an expression of terror, mingled with her natural curiosity, as she required his pleasure.

Although the door was too nearly closed to admit of a minute scrutiny of the accommodations within, sufficient had been seen to cause the horse–man to endeavour, once more, to penetrate the gloom, with longing

eyes, in search of a more promising roof, before, with an ill-concealed reluctance, he stated his necessities and wishes. His request was listened to with evident unwillingness, and while yet unfinished, was interrupted, in a tone of reviving confidence, and an air of pert volubility, as she replied, in a sharp key——

"I can't say I like to give lodgings to a stranger in these ticklish times; I'm nothing but a forlorn lone body; or, what's the same thing, there's nobody but the old gentleman at home; but a half mile further up the road, is a house, where you can get entertainment, and that all for nothing—— I am sure 'twill be much convenient to them, and more agreeable to me; because, as I said before, Harvey is away——I wish he'd take advice, and leave off wandering; he's well to do in the world by this time; and he ought to leave off his unsteady courses, and settle in life.——But Harvey Birch will have his own way, and die a vagabond after all."

The horseman did not wait to hear more than the advice to pursue his course up the road; but had slowly turned his horse towards the bars, and was gathering the folds of an ample cloak around him, preparatory to again facing the storm, when something in the speech of the female suddenly arrested the movement.

"Is this, then, the dwelling of Harvey Birch?" he inquired, in an apparently involuntary manner—— checking himself, as he was about to utter more.

"Why, one can hardly say it is his dwelling," replied the other, drawing a breath somewhat between a sigh and a groan; "he is never in it, or so seldom, that I hardly remember his face, when he does think it worth his while to show it to his poor old father and——me. But it matters little to me, I'm sure, if he ever comes back again, or not——turn in the first gate on your left;——no, I care but little, for my part, whether Harvey ever shows his face again or not——no, not I;"——and she closed the door abruptly on the horseman, who gladly extended his ride a half mile further, to obtain lodgings, which promised both more comfort and greater security.

Sufficient light yet remained to enable the traveller to distinguish the improvements which had been made in the cultivation, and general appearance of the grounds around the building to which he was now approaching. The house was of stone, long, low, and with a small wing at either extremity. A piazza, extending along the front, with neatly turned pillars, together with the good order and preservation of its fences and out buildings, gave it an air altogether superior to the common farm houses of the country. After leading his horse behind an angle of the wall, where he was in some degree protected from the wind and rain, the traveller threw his valisse over his arm, and knocked loudly at the entrance of the building for admission. An aged black soon appeared; and, without seeming to think it necessary, under the circumstances, to consult his superiors——first taking one prying look at the applicant, by the light of the candle in his hand——he acceded to the request for accommodations. The traveller was shown into an extremely neat parlour, where a fire had been lighted, to cheer the dulness of an easterly storm, and an October evening. After giving the valisse into the keeping of his civil attendant, and politely repeating his request to the old gentleman who rose to receive him, and paying his compliments to the three ladies who were seated at their needles, the stranger commenced laying aside some of the outer garments which he had worn in his ride.

On taking an extra handkerchief from his neck, and removing a cloak of blue cloth, with a surtout of the same material, he exhibited, to the scrutiny of the party within, a tall and extremely graceful person, of apparently fifty years of age; his countenance evinced a settled composure and dignity; his nose was straight, and approaching to Grecian; his eye, quiet, thoughtful, and rather melancholy; the mouth and lower part of his face expressive of decision and much character. His dress, being suited to the road, was simple and plain, but such as was worn by the higher class of his countrymen; he wore his own hair, dressed in a manner that gave a military air to his appearance, and which was rather heightened by his erect and conspicuously graceful carriage. His whole appearance was so impressive and decidedly that of a gentleman, that as he finished laying aside the garments, the ladies rose from their seats, and, together with the master of the house, received anew, and returned, the complimentary greetings which were again offered.

The host was by several years the senior of the traveller, and by his manner, dress, and every thing around him, showed he had seen much of life and the best society. The ladies were——a maiden of forty, and two younger ones, who did not seem to have reached half those years. The bloom of the elder of these ladies had vanished, but her eyes, and fine hair, gave an extremely agreeable expression to her countenance; and there was a softness and affability in her deportment, that added a charm many more juvenile faces do not possess. The sisters——for such the resemblance between the younger maidens denoted them to be——were in all the pride of youth; and the roses, so eminently the property of the West-Chester fair, glowed with their richest colours on

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their cheeks, and lighted their deep blue eyes with that lustre which gives so much pleasure to the beholder, and indicates so much innocence and happiness in themselves. There was much of that feminine delicacy in the appearance of the three, which, in a great degree, distinguishes the sex in this country; and, like the gentleman, their demeanor proved them to be women of the higher order of life.

After handing a glass of excellent Madeira to his guest, Mr. Wharton resumed his seat by the fire, with another in his own hand. For a moment he paused, as if debating with his politeness, but, at length, threw an inquiring glance on the stranger, as he inquired, with a formal bow——

"To who's health am I to have the honor of drinking?"

The traveller had also seated himself, and sat, unconsciously gazing on the fire, when Mr. Wharton spoke; turning his eyes slowly on his host, with a look of close observation, he replied, bowing in his turn, while a faint tinge gathered on his pale features——

"Mr. Harper."

"Mr. Harper," resumed the other, with the formal precision of the day, "I have the honor to drink your health, and hope you will sustain no injury from the rain to which you have been exposed."

Mr. Harper bowed in silence to the compliment, and soon resumed the meditations from which he appeared to have been interrupted.

The young ladies had again taken their seats beside the work-stand, while their aunt, Miss Jeanette Peyton, had withdrawn, to superintend the preparations necessary to appease the hunger of their unexpected visitor. A short silence prevailed, during which Mr. Harper was apparently enjoying the change in his situation, when Mr. Wharton again broke it, by inquiring, in the same polite, but formal manner, whether smoke was disagreeable to his companion; to which he received as polite a negative, and immediately resumed the pipe he had laid aside at the entrance of the traveller.

There was an evident desire on the part of the host to enter into conversation, but either from an apprehension of treading on dangerous ground, or an unwillingness to intrude upon the rather studied taciturnity of his guest, he several times hesitated before he could venture to make any further remark. At length, a movement of Mr. Harper, as he raised his eyes to the party in the room, encouraged him to proceed.

"I find it very difficult," said Mr. Wharton, cautiously avoiding, at first, such subjects as he wished to introduce, "to procure that quality of tobacco for my evenings' amusement, to which I have been accustomed."

"I should think the shops in New-York might furnish the best in the country," rejoined the other, with his usual gravity.

"Why——yes," returned the host, in rather a hesitating manner, lifting his eyes to the face of Harper, and lowering them quickly, under his steady look, "there must be plenty in town, but the war has made any communications with the city, however innocent in themselves, too dangerous to be risked for so trifling an article as tobacco."

The box from which Mr. Wharton had just taken a supply for his pipe, was lying open, within a few inches of the elbow of Harper, who took a small quantity of the article, and applied it to his tongue, in a manner perfectly natural, but one that filled his companion with instant alarm. Without, however, observing that the quality was of the most approved kind, the traveller relieved his host by relapsing again into his meditations. Mr. Wharton now felt unwilling to lose the advantage he had gained, and, making an effort of more than usual vigor, he continued——

"I wish, from the bottom of my heart, this unnatural struggle was over, that we might again meet our friends and relatives in peace and love."

"It is much to be desired," said Harper, emphatically, again raising his eyes to the countenance of his host.

"I hear of no movements of consequence since the arrival of our new allies," said Mr. Wharton, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and turning his back to the other, under the pretence of receiving a coal from his youngest daughter.

"None have reached the public yet, I believe," replied the traveller, crossing his leg with steady composure.

"Is it thought any important steps are about to be taken?" continued Mr. Wharton, still occupied with his daughter, yet unconsciously suspending his employment, in expectation of a reply.

"Is it intimated any are in agitation?" inquired the other, evasively, and, in a slight degree, adopting the affected indifference of Mr. Wharton's manner.

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"Oh! nothing in particular," said the host, hastily—"but it is natural to expect something, you know, sir, from so powerful a force as the one under Rochambeau."

Harper made an assenting inclination with his head, but no other reply to this remark; while Mr. Wharton resumed the subject, by saying—

"They appear more active in the South—Gates and Cornwallis seem willing to bring the war to an issue there."

The brow of Harper contracted; and a deeper shade of melancholy crossed his features—his eye kindled with a transient beam of fire, that spoke a latent source of deep feeling. The admiring gaze of the younger of the sisters had barely time to read its expression, before it passed away, leaving in its room the acquired composure which marked the countenance of the stranger, and that impressive dignity which so conspicuously denotes the empire of reason.

The elder sister made one or two movements in her chair, before she ventured to say, in a tone, which partook in no small measure, of triumph—

"General Gates has been less fortunate with the Earl, than with General Burgoyne."

"But General Gates is an Englishman, Sarah," cried the younger lady, with quickness; and then coloring to the eyes at her own boldness, she employed herself in tumbling over the contents of her work-basket, silently hoping her remark would be unnoticed.

The traveller had turned his face from one sister to the other, as they had spoken in succession, and an almost imperceptible movement of the muscles of his mouth betrayed a new emotion, as he inquired of the younger sister, with much courtesy of manner—

"May I venture to ask, what inference you draw from that fact?"

Frances blushed yet deeper at this direct appeal to her opinions, upon a subject on which she had incautiously spoken in the presence of a stranger; but, finding an answer necessary, after some little hesitation, and with a good deal of stammering in her manner, replied—

"Only—only—sir—my sister and myself sometimes differ in our opinions of the prowess of the British." A smile of much meaning played on a face of naturally infantile innocency of expression, as she concluded, in a voice, that shared in the covert humour of the speaker.

"On what particular points of prowess do you differ?" continued Harper, meeting her look of animation with an open smile of almost paternal softness.

"Why, Sarah thinks the British are never beaten; but I do not put so much faith in their invincibility."—

The traveller listened to her with that pleased indulgence, with which virtuous age loves to contemplate the ardour of youthful innocence; but making no reply, he turned to the fire, and continued for some time gazing on its embers in silence.

Mr. Wharton had in vain endeavoured to pierce the disguise of his guest's political feelings; but, while there was nothing forbidding in his countenance, there was nothing communicative—it was strikingly reserved; and the master of the house rose, in profound ignorance of what, in those days, was the most material point in the character of his guest—to lead the way into another room to the supper table. Mr. Harper offered his hand to Sarah Wharton, and they entered the room together; while Frances followed, greatly at a loss to know whether she had not wounded the feelings of her father's inmate.

The storm began to rage with great violence without; and the dashing rain on the sides of the building, awakened that silent sense of enjoyment, which is excited by such sounds in a room of quiet comfort and warmth, when a loud summons at the outer door again called the faithful black to the portal. In a minute the servant returned, and informed his master that another traveller, overtaken by the storm, desired to be admitted to the house, for a shelter through the night.

At the first sounds of the impatient summons of this new applicant, Mr. Wharton had risen from his seat in evident uneasiness, and with eyes glancing, with alternate quickness, from his guest to the door of the room, seemed to be expecting something to proceed from this second interruption, which was connected with the stranger who had occasioned the first. He scarcely had time to bid the black, with a faint voice, to show this second comer in, before the door was thrown hastily open, and the intruder himself entered the apartment. He paused a moment, as the person of Harper met his view, and then, in a more formal manner, repeated the request he had before made through the servant. Mr. Wharton and his family disliked the appearance of this new visitor

excessively; but the inclemency of the weather, and the uncertainty of the consequences if he were refused the desired lodgings, compelled the old gentleman to give a reluctant acquiescence.

Some of the removed dishes were replaced by the orders of Miss Peyton, and the weather-beaten intruder invited to partake of the remains of the repast from which the party had just risen. Throwing aside a rough great coat, he very composedly took the offered chair, and gravely proceeded to allay the cravings of an appetite, which appeared by no means delicate. But at every mouthful he would turn an unquiet eye on Harpur, who studied his appearance with a closeness of investigation, that was very embarrassing to its subject. At length, pouring out a glass of wine, the new comer nodded significantly to his examiner, previously to swallowing the liquor, and said, with something of bitterness in his manner——

"I drink to our better acquaintance, sir,——I believe, this is the first time we have met."——The quality of the wine seemed greatly to his fancy, for, on replacing the glass upon the table, he gave his lips a smack, that resounded through the room; and, taking up the bottle, held it between himself and the light for a moment, in silent contemplation of its clear and brilliant color.

"I think, we have never met before, sir," replied Harper, with a slight smile on his features, as he observed the movements of the other; but appearing satisfied with his scrutiny, he turned to Sarah Wharton, who sat next him, and remarked, with much suavity——

"You doubtless find your present abode solitary, after being accustomed to the gaities of the city."

"Oh! excessively so," said Sarah hastily, "I do wish with my father, that this cruel war was at an end, that we might return to our friends once more."

"And you, Miss Frances, do you long as ardently for peace as your sister?"

"On many accounts, I certainly do," returned the maid, venturing to steal a timid glance at her interrogator; and, meeting the same benevolent expression of feeling as before, she continued, as her own face lighted into one of its animated and lovely smiles of intelligence, "but, not at the expence of the rights of my countrymen."

"Rights," repeated her sister, impatiently; "whose rights can be stronger than those of a sovereign; and what duty is clearer, than to obey those who have a natural right to command?"——

"None, certainly," said Frances, laughing with great pleasantry; and taking the hand of her sister affectionately within both of her own, she added, with a smile directed towards Harper——

"I gave you to understand, that my sister and myself differed in our political opinions——but we have an impartial umpire in my father, who loves his own countrymen, and loves the British, so sides with neither."

"Yes," said Mr. Wharton, in a little alarm, eyeing first one guest, and then the other; "I have near friends in both armies; and I dread a victory by either, as a source of misfortune to myself."

"I take it, you have little reason to apprehend much from the Yankees in that way," cried the guest at the table, abruptly, as he coolly helped himself to another glass, from the bottle he had admired.

"His majesty may have more experienced troops than the continentals," answered the host, fearfully, "but the Americans have met with distinguished success."

Harper disregarded the observations of both; and, rising, desired to be shown to his place of rest. A small boy was directed to guide him to his room; and, wishing a courteous good-night to the whole party, the traveller withdrew. The knife and fork fell from the hands of the unwelcome intruder, as the door closed on the retreating figure of Harper;——he rose slowly from his seat;——listening attentively, he approached the door of the room——opened it——seemed to attend to the retreating footsteps of the other——and, amidst the panic and astonishment of his companions, closed it again. In an instant, the red wig, which concealed his black locks——the large patch, which hid half his face from observation——the stoop, which had made him appear fifty years of age, disappeared.

"My father!——my dear father"——cried the now handsome young man;" and you, my dearest sisters and aunt——have I at last met you again."

"Heaven bless you——my Henry——my son," exclaimed the astonished, but delighted, parent; while both his sisters sunk on his shoulders, dissolved in tears.

The faithful old black, who had been reared from infancy in the house of his present master, and who, as if in mockery of his degraded state, had been complimented with the name of Cæsar, was the only other witness of this unexpected discovery of the son of Mr. Wharton. After receiving the extended hand of his young master, and imprinting on it a kiss, and leaving on it a tear, Cæsar withdrew. The body did not re-enter the room; and the

black himself, after some time, returned, as the young British captain exclaimed——

"But, who is this Mr. Harper?——is he likely to betray me?"

"No——no——no——Massa Harry," cried the African, shaking his head confidently, "I been to see——Massa Harper on his knees——pray to God——no gentleman who pray to God, tell of good son, come to see old father——Skinner do that——no christian."

This poor opinion of the Skinners was not confined to Mr.——Cæsar Thompson, as he called himself——but Cæsar Wharton, as he was styled, by the little world to which he was known. The convenience, and perhaps the necessities, of the leaders of the American arms, in the neighbourhood of New-York, had induced them to employ certain subordinate agents, of extremely irregular habits, in executing their lesser plans of annoying the enemy. It was not a moment for fastidious inquiries into abuses of any description; and oppression and injustice were the natural consequences of the possession of power, which was uncurbed by the restraints of civil authority. In time, a distinct order of the community was formed, whose sole occupation appears to have been relieving their fellow citizens from any little excess of temporal prosperity, they might be thought to enjoy, under the pretence of patriotism, and the love of liberty.

Occasionally, the aid of military authority was not wanting, in enforcing these salutary distributions of worldly goods; and a petty holder of a commission, in the state militia, was to be seen giving the sanction, of something like legality, to acts of the most unlicensed robbery——and, not unfrequently, bloodshed.

On the part of the British, the stimulus of loyalty was by no means suffered to sleep, where so fruitful a field offered, on which it might be expended. But their freebooters were enrolled, and their efforts more systematized. Long experience had taught their leaders the efficacy of concentrated force; and, unless tradition does great injustice to their exploits, the result did no little credit to their foresight. This corps——we presume, from their known affection to that useful animal——had received the significant appellation of "Cow-Boys."

Cæsar was, however, far too loyal to associate men who held the commission of George III., with the irregular warriors, whose excesses he had so often witnessed, and from whose rapacity, neither his poverty, nor his bondage, had suffered even him to escape uninjured. The Cow-Boys, therefore, did not receive their proper portion of the severity of the black's remark, when he said, no Christian——nothing but a "Skinner," could betray a pious child, while honoring his father with a visit, full of peril, and the danger of captivity.

CHAPTER II.

The rose of England bloom'd on Gertrude's cheek——
What though these shades had seen her birth, her sire
A Briton's Independence taught to seek
Far Western worlds; and there his household fire
The light of social love did long inspire,
And many a huleyon day he liv'd to see
Unbroken, but by one misfortune dire,
When fate had reft his mutual heart——but she
Was gone——and Gertrude climb'd a widow'd father's knee.
—— Gertrude of Wyoming

The father of Mr. Wharton was a native of England; and of a family, whose parliamentary interest, had enabled them to provide for a younger son, in the colony of New-York. The young man, like hundreds of others in his situation, had settled permanently in the country. He married, and the sole issue of his connexion had been sent, early in life, to receive the benefits of the English schools. After taking his degrees at one of the universities of the mother country, the youth had been suffered to acquire a knowledge of life, with the advantages of European society. But the death of his father recalled him, after passing two years in this manner, to the possession of an honorable name, and very ample estate.

It was much the fashion of that day, to place the youth, of certain families, in the army or navy of England, as the regular stepping-stones to preferment. Most of the higher offices in the colonies, were filled by men who had made arms their profession; and it was no uncommon sight to see a veteran warrior laying aside the sword, to assume the ermine on the benches of the highest judicial authority.

In conformity with this system, the senior Mr. Wharton had intended his son for a soldier, but a natural imbecility of character in his child, had interfered with his wishes.

A twelvemonth had been spent by the young man, in weighing the advantages of the different description of troops, among which he was to serve, when the death of his father occurred. The ease of his situation, and the attentions lavished upon a youth, in the actual enjoyment of one of the largest estates in the colonies, interfered greatly with his ambitious projects. Love decided the matter——and Mr. Wharton, in becoming a husband, ceased to think of becoming a soldier. For many years he continued happy in his family, and respected, by his countrymen, as a man of integrity and consequence, when all his enjoyments vanished, as it were, at a blow. His only son, the youth introduced in the preceding chapter, had entered the army, and had arrived in his native country but a short time before the commencement of hostilities, with the re-inforcements the ministry had thought it prudent to throw into the disaffected parts of North America. His daughters were just growing into life, and their education required all the advantages the city could afford. His wife had been, for some years, in declining health, and had barely time to fold her son to her bosom, and rejoice in the re-union of her family, before the revolution burst forth, in a continued blaze, from Georgia to Maine. The shock was too much for the feeble condition of the mother, who saw her child called to the field, to combat against the members of her own family in the South; and she sunk under the blow.

There was no part of the continent where the manners of England, and its aristocratic notions of blood and alliances, prevailed with more force, than in a certain circle immediately around the metropolis of New-York. The customs of the early Dutch inhabitants had, indeed, blended, in some measure, with the English manners; but still the latter prevailed. This was increased by the frequent inter-marriages of the officers of the mother country, with the wealthier and more powerful families of the vicinity, until, at the commencement of hostilities, their united influence had very nearly thrown the colony into the scales, on the side of the crown. A few, however, of the leading families espoused the cause of the people; and a sufficient stand was made against the efforts of the ministerial party, to organize, and, aided by the army of the confederation, to maintain an independent and republican form of government.

The city of New-York, and the adjacent territory, were alone exempted from the rule of the new

commonwealth; and the royal authority extended no further than its dignity could be supported by the presence of an army. In this condition of things, the loyalists, of consequence, adopted such measures, as best accorded with their different characters and situations. Many bore arms in support of the ancient laws; and, by their bravery and exertion, endeavoured to secure what they deemed the rights of their prince, and their own estates from confiscation. Others left the country; seeking, in that place they emphatically called home, an asylum, as they fondly hoped, for a season only, against the confusion and dangers of war. A third, and more wary portion, remained in the place of their nativity, with a prudent regard to their ample possessions, and, perhaps, influenced by their attachments to the scenes of their youth. Mr. Wharton was of this description. Aftermaking a provision against future contingencies, by secretly transmitting the whole of his money to the British funds, this gentleman determined to continue in the theatre of strife, and to maintain so strict a neutrality, as to insure the safety of his large estate, whichever party succeeded. He was apparently engrossed in the education of his daughters, when a relation, high in office in the new state, intimated, that a residence in what was now a British camp, differed but little, in the eyes of his countrymen, from a residence in the British capital. Mr. Wharton soon saw this was an unpardonable offence in the existing state of things, and instantly determined to remove the difficulty by retiring to the country. He possessed a convenient residence in the county of West-Chester, and having been for many years in the habit of withdrawing thither, during the heats of the summer months, it was kept furnished, and ready for his accommodation. His eldest daughter was already admitted into the society of women; but Frances, the younger, required a year or two more of the usual cultivation, to appear with proper éclat—at least so thought Miss Jeanette Peyton; and as this lady, a younger sister of their deceased mother, had left her paternal home, in the colony of Virginia, with the devotedness and affection peculiar to her sex, to superintend the welfare of her orphan nieces, Mr. Wharton felt her opinions were entitled to profound respect. In conformity to her advice, therefore, the feelings of the parent were made to yield to the welfare of his children.

Mr. Wharton withdrew to the "Locusts," with a heart rent with the pain of separating from all that was left to him of a wife he had adored, but in obedience to a constitutional prudence that plead loudly in behalf of his worldly goods. His handsome town residence was inhabited, in the meanwhile, by his daughters and their aunt. The regiment to which Captain Wharton belonged, formed part of the permanent garrison of the city, and the knowledge of the presence of his son was no little relief to the father, in his unceasing meditations on his absent daughters. But Captain Wharton was a young man, and a soldier; his estimate of character was not always the wisest, and his propensities led him to imagine, that a red coat never concealed a dishonorable heart.

The house of Mr. Wharton became a fashionable lounge to the officers of the royal army, in common with those, of every other family, thought worthy of their notice. The consequences of this association were, to some few of the visited, fortunate—to more, injurious, by exciting expectations which were never to be realized, and, unhappily, to no small number ruinous. The known wealth of the father, and, possibly, the presence of a high-spirited brother, forbid any apprehension of the latter danger to the young ladies; but it was impossible for all the admiration, bestowed on the fine figure and lovely face of Sarah Wharton, to be thrown away. Her person was formed with the early maturity of the climate, and a strict cultivation of the graces had made her, decidedly, the belle of the city. No one promised to dispute with her this female sovereignty, unless it might be her younger sister. Frances, however, wanted some months to the charmed age of sixteen; and the idea of competition was far from the minds of either of the affectionate girls. Indeed, next to the conversation of Colonel Wellmere, the greatest pleasure of Sarah was in contemplating the budding beauties of the little Hebe, who played around her with all the innocence of youth, with all the enthusiasm of her ardent temper, and with no little of the archness of her native humour. Whether it was, that Frances received none of the compliments which fell to the lot of her elder sister, in the often repeated discussions on the merits of the war, between the military beaux who frequented the house; it is certain their effects on the sisters were exactly opposite. It was much the fashion, then, for the British officers to speak slightly of their enemies; and Sarah took all the idle vapourings of her dangles to be truths. The first political opinions which reached the ears of Frances, were coupled with sneers on the conduct of her countrymen. At first she believed them; but there was occasionally a general, who was obliged to do justice to his enemy, in order to obtain justice for himself, and Frances became somewhat sceptical on the subject of her countrymen's inefficiency. Colonel Wellmere was among those who delighted most in expending his wit on the unfortunate Americans, and, in time, Frances began to listen to his eloquence with great suspicion, and some little resentment.

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It was on a hot sultry day, the three were sitting in the parlour of Mr. Wharton's house, the Colonel and Sarah, seated on a sofa, engaged in one of their combats of the eyes, aided by no little flow of small talk, and Frances, occupied at her tambouring frame, in an opposite corner of the room, when the gentleman suddenly exclaimed——

"How gay the arrival of the army under General Burgoyne will make the city, Miss Wharton."

"Oh! how pleasant it must be," said the thoughtless Sarah, in reply; "I am told there are many charming women with that army; as you say, it will make us all life and gaiety."

Frances shook back the abundance of her golden hair, and raised from the work her eyes, dancing with the ardor of her national feeling, and laughing, with a kind of concealed humour, as she asked——

"Is it then so certain, that General Burgoyne will be permitted to reach the city?"

"Permitted!" echoed the Colonel, in affected surprise; "who is there to prevent it, if he wishes it himself, my pretty Miss Fanny?"

Frances was at precisely that age, when young people are most jealous of their station in society; neither quite a woman, nor yet a child. The "pretty Miss Fanny" was rather too familiar to be relished; and she dropped her eyes on her work again, with cheeks that glowed with crimson, as she continued very gravely——

"General Stark took the Germans into custody ——may not General Gates think the British too dangerous to go at large?"

"Oh! they were Germans, as you say," cried the Colonel, excessively vexed at the necessity of explaining at all, "mere mercenary troops; but, when the really British regiments come in question, you will see a very different result."

"Of that there is no doubt," cried Sarah, without in the least partaking of the resentment of the Colonel to her sister, but hailing already in her heart the triumph of the British.

"Pray, Colonel Wellmere," said Frances, recovering her good humour, and raising her joyous eyes once more to the face of the gentleman, "was the Lord Percy of Lexington, a kinsman of him who fought at Chevy Chase?"

"Why, Miss Fanny, you are becoming a rebel," said the Colonel, endeavouring to laugh away the anger he felt; "what you are pleased to insinuate as a chase at Lexington, was nothing more than a judicious retreat——a——kind of——"

"Running——fight," interrupted the good-humoured girl, laying great emphasis on the first word.

"Positively, young lady——" Colonel Wellmere was interrupted by a laugh from a person who had hitherto been unnoticed.

There was a small family apartment adjoining the room occupied by the trio, and the air had blown open the door communicating between the two. A fine young man was now seen sitting near the entrance, and, by his smiling countenance, evidently a pleased listener to the foregoing conversation. He rose instantly, and coming through the door, with his hat in his hand, appeared a tall graceful youth, of dark complexion, and sparkling eyes of black, from which the mirth had not yet entirely vanished, as he made his bow to the ladies.

"Mr. Dunwoodie!" cried Sarah, in surprise, "I was ignorant of your being in the house; you will find a cooler seat in this room."

"I thank you," replied the young man, "but I must go and seek your brother, who placed me there in ambuscade, as he called it, with a promise of returning an hour ago." Without making any further explanation, he bowed politely to the young women——distantly, and with hauteur, to the gentleman, and withdrew. Frances followed him into the hall, and blushing richly, inquired, in a hurried voice——

"But why——why do you leave us, Mr. Dunwoodie——Henry must soon return."

The gentleman caught one of her hands in his own, and the stern expression of his countenance, gave place to a look of admiration, as he replied——

"You managed him famously, my dear little kinswoman——never——no never, forget the land of your birth——remember, Miss Wharton, if you are the grand-daughter of an Englishman, you are, also, the grand-daughter of a Peyton."

"Oh!" returned the laughing girl, "it would be difficult to forget that, with the constant lectures on genealogy before me, with which aunt Jeanette favours me——but why do you go?"

"I am on the wing for Virginia, and have much to do"——he pressed her hand as he spoke, and looking back, while in the act of closing the door, exclaimed, "be true to your country——be American." The ardent girl kissed

her hand to him, as he retired, and then instantly applying it with its beautiful fellow to her burning cheeks, ran into her own apartment to hide her confusion.

Between the open sarcasm of Frances, and the ill-concealed disdain of the young man, Colonel Wellmere had felt himself placed in an awkward predicament; but ashamed to resent such trifles, and in the presence of his mistress—he satisfied himself with observing superciliously, as Dunwoodie left the room——

"Quite a liberty for a youth in his situation—— a shop-boy with a bundle, I fancy."

The idea of picturing the elegant and graceful Peyton Dunwoodie as a shop-boy, could never enter the mind of Sarah, and she looked around her in surprise, when the Colonel continued:——

"This Mr. Dun——Dun——"

"Dunwoodie! Oh no——he is a relation of my aunt's," cried the young lady, "and an intimate friend of my brother; they were at school together, and only separated in England, when one went into the army, and the other to a French military academy."

"His money appears to have been thrown away," observed the Colonel, showing the spleen he was unsuccessfully striving to conceal.

"We ought to hope so," added Sarah, with a smile; "for it is said he intends joining the rebel army——he was brought in here in a French ship, and has just been exchanged——you may soon meet him in arms."

"Well let him——I wish Washington plenty of such heroes"——and he turned to a more pleasant subject, by changing the discourse to themselves. A few weeks had elapsed after this scene occurred, and the army of Burgoyne laid down their arms. Mr. Wharton, beginning to think the result of the contest to be doubtful, resolved to conciliate his countrymen, and gratify himself, by taking his daughters into his own abode. Miss Peyton consented to be their companion; and from that time, until the period at which we commenced our narrative, they had formed one family.

Whenever the main army had made any movements, Capt. Wharton had, of course, accompanied it; and once or twice, under the protection of strong parties, acting in the neighbourhood of the Locusts, he had enjoyed rapid and stolen interviews with his friends. A twelvemonth had however passed without his seeing them; and the impatient Henry had adopted the disguise we have mentioned, and unfortunately arrived on the very evening an unknown and rather suspicious guest was the inmate of a house, that seldom contained any others than its regular inhabitants.

"But, do you think he suspects me?" asked the captain, with anxiety, after pausing to listen to Cæsar's opinion of the Skinners.

"How should he?" cried Sarah, "when your sisters and father could not penetrate your disguise."

"There is something mysterious in his manner; his looks are too prying for an indifferent observer," continued young Wharton thoughtfully, "and his face seems familiar to me——the recent fate of André has created much irritation on both sides. Sir Henry threatens retaliation for his death; and Washington is as firm as if half the world were at his command. The rebels would think me a fit subject for their plans just now, should I be so unlucky as to fall into their hands."

"But, my son," cried his father, in great alarm, "you are not a spy——you are not within the rebel——that is, the American lines;——there is nothing here to spy."

"That might be disputed," rejoined the young man, musing; "their picquets were out at the White Plains when I passed through in disguise. It is true, my purposes are innocent; but how is it to appear. My visit to you would seem a cloak to other designs. Remember, sir, the treatment received by yourself, not a year ago, for sending me a supply of fruit for the winter."

"That proceeded from the misrepresentations of my kind neighbours," said Mr. Wharton, "who hoped, by getting my estate confiscated, to purchase good farms, at low prices.——Peyton Dunwoodie, however, soon obtained our discharge—— we were detained but a month."——

"We!" repeated the son, in amazement, "did they take my sisters also?——Fanny, you wrote me nothing of this."

"I believe," said Frances, colouring highly, "I mentioned the kind treatment received from your old friend, Major Dunwoodie; and that he procured my father's release."——

"True;——but were you with him in the rebel camp?"——

"Yes," said the father, kindly; "Fanny would not suffer me to go alone. Jeanette and Sarah took charge of the

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Locusts, and this little girl was my companion in captivity."

"And Fanny returned from such a scene a greater rebel than ever," cried Sarah, indignantly; "one would think the hardships her father suffered would have cured her of such whims."

"What say you to the charge, my bonny sister?" cried the Captain, gaily;—"Did Peyton strive to make you hate your king, more than he does himself?"

"Peyton Dunwoodie hates no one," said Frances, quickly; and, blushing at her own ardor, she added immediately, "he loves you Henry, I know, for he has told me so again and again."

Young Wharton tapped his sister on the cheek, with a shrewd smile, as he asked her, in an affected whisper,—"Did he tell you also that he loved my little sister Fanny?"

"Nonsense," said Frances; and the remnants of the supper table soon disappeared under her superintendance.

CHAPTER III.

'Twas when the fields were swept of autumn's store,
And growling winds the finding foliage tore,
Behind the Lowmon hill, the short-liv'd light,
Descending slowly, usher'd in the night;
When from the noisy town, with mournful look,
His lonely way a meagre pedlar took.

—— Wilson

A storm below the highlands of the Hudson, if it be introduced with an easterly wind, seldom lasts less than two days. Accordingly, as the inmates of the Locusts assembled, on the following morning, around their early breakfast, the driving rain was seen to strike, in nearly horizontal lines, against the windows of the building, and forbade the idea of exposing either man or beast to the tempest. Harper was the last to appear: after taking a view of the state of the weather, he apologized to Mr. Wharton for the necessity that existed, for his trespassing upon his goodness for a longer time. To appearances, the reply was as courteous as the excuse; yet Harper wore a resignation in his deportment that was widely different from the uneasy manner of the father. Henry Wharton had resumed his disguise with a reluctance amounting to disgust, but in obedience to the commands of his parent. No other communications passed between him and the stranger, after the first salutations of the morning had been paid to him by Harper, in common with the rest of the family. Frances had, indeed, thought there was something like a smile passing over the features of the traveller, when, on entering the room, he first confronted her brother; but it was confined to the eyes, seeming to want power to affect the muscles of the face, and was soon lost in the settled and benevolent expression which reigned in his countenance, with a sway but seldom interrupted. The eyes of the affectionate sister were turned, in anxiety, for a moment, on her brother; and, glancing again on their unknown guest, met his look as he offered her, with peculiar grace, one of the little civilities of the table; and the heart of the maiden, which had begun to throb with violence, regained a pulsation as tempered as youth, health, and buoyant spirits could allow. While yet seated at the table, Cæsar entered, and, laying a small parcel in silence by the side of his master, modestly retired behind his chair; where, placing one hand on its back, he continued in an attitude half familiar, but profoundly respectful.

"What is this Cæsar?" inquired Mr. Wharton, turning the bundle over in examination of its envelope, and eyeing it rather suspiciously.

"The 'baccy, sir; Harvey Birch, he got home, and bring you a little good 'baccy from York."

"Harvey Birch," rejoined the master, with great deliberation, stealing a look at his guest. "I do not remember desiring him to purchase any tobacco for me; but as he has bought it, he must be paid for his trouble."

For an instant only, as the negro spoke, did Harper suspend his silent meal——his eye moved slowly from the servant to the master, and again all remained in its impenetrable reserve.

To Sarah Wharton, this intelligence gave unexpected pleasur; rising from her seat, with impatience, she bid the black shew Birch into the apartment; when, suddenly recollecting herself, she turned to the traveller with an apologizing look, and added, "if Mr. Harper will excuse the presence of a pedlar."

The indulgent benevolence expressed in the countenance of the stranger, as he bowed in silent acquiescence, spoke more eloquently than the nicest framed period, and the young lady repeated her order with a confidence in its truth, that removed all embarrassment.

In the deep recesses of the windows of the cottage, were seats of paneled work; and the rich damask curtains, that had ornamented the parlour in Queen-street, had been transferred to the Locusts, and gave to the room that indescribable air of comfort, which so gratefully announces the approach of a domestic winter. Into one of these recesses Captain Wharton now threw himself, drawing the curtain before him in such a manner as to conceal most of his person from observation; while his younger sister, losing her natural frankness of manner in an air of artificial constraint, silently took possession of the other.

Harvey Birch had been a pedlar from his youth; at least, so he frequently asserted, and his skill in the occupation went far to prove the truth of the declaration. He was supposed to be a native of one of the Eastern

Colonies; and, from something of superior intelligence which belonged to his father, it was thought they had known better fortunes in the land of their nativity. Harvey possessed, however, the common manners of the country, and was in no way distinguished from men of his class but by his acuteness—and the mystery which enveloped his movements. Ten years before they had arrived together in the vale, and, purchasing the humble dwelling at which Harper had made his unsuccessful application, continued peaceful inhabitants, but little noticed and but little known. Until age and infirmities had prevented, the father devoted himself to the cultivation of the small spot of ground belonging to his purchase, while the son pursued with avidity his humble barter. Their orderly quietude had soon given them so much of consideration in the neighbourhood, as to induce a maiden of five and thirty to forget the punctilio of her sex, and to accept the office of presiding over their domestic comforts. The roses had long before vanished from the cheeks of Katy Haynes, and she had seen in succession, both her male and female acquaintances forming the union so desirable to her sex, with but little or no hope left for herself, when, with views of her own, she entered the family of the Birch's. Necessity is a hard master—but still Katy was not wanting in some qualities, which made her a very tolerable housekeeper. On the one hand, she was neat, industrious, honest, and a good manager.—On the other, she was talkative, selfish, superstitious, and inquisitive. By dint of using the latter quality with consummate skill, she had not lived in the family but five years when she triumphantly declared, that she had heard, or rather over heard, sufficient to say what had been the former fate of her associates.—Could Katy have possessed enough of divination to pronounce upon their future lot, her task would have seemed comparatively easy. From the private conversations of the parent and child, she learnt that a fire had reduced them from competence to poverty, and at the same time diminished the number of their family to two. There was a tremulousness in the voice of the father, as he touched lightly on the event, which affected even the heart of Katy; but no barrier is sufficient to repel vulgar curiosity. She persevered, until a very direct intimation from Harvey, by threatening to supply her place with a female a few years younger than herself, gave her awful warning, that there were bounds beyond which she was not to pass. From that period, the curiosity of the housekeeper had been held in such restraint, that, although no opportunity of listening was ever neglected, she had been able to add but little to her stock of knowledge. There was, however, one piece of intelligence, and that of no little interest to herself, which she had succeeded in obtaining; and, from the moment of its acquisition, she had directed her energies to the accomplishment of one object, aided by the double stimulus of love and avarice.

Harvey was in the frequent habit of paying mysterious visits, in the depth of the night, to the fire-place of the apartment, that served for both kitchen and parlor. Here he was observed by Katy; and, availing herself of his absence and the occupations of the father, by removing one of the hearth-stones, she discovered an iron pot, glittering with a metal that seldom fails to soften the hardest heart. Katy succeeded in replacing the stone without discovery, and never dared to trust herself with another visit. From that moment, however, the heart of the virgin lost its obduracy; and nothing interposed between Harvey and his happiness, but his own want of observation.

The war did not interfere with the traffic of the pedlar, who seized on the golden opportunity which the interruption to the regular trade afforded, and appeared absorbed in the one grand object of amassing money. For a year or two his employment was uninterrupted, and his success proportionate; but, at length, dark and threatening hints began to throw suspicion around his movements, and the civil authority thought it incumbent on them to examine narrowly into his mode of life. His imprisonments were not long, though frequent; and his escapes from the guardians of the law comparatively easy, to what he endured from the persecution of the military. Still Birch survived, and still he continued his trade, though compelled to be very guarded in his movements, especially whenever he approached the northern boundaries of the county; or, in other words, the neighbourhood of the American lines. His visits to the Locusts had become less frequent, and his appearance at his own abode so seldom, as to draw forth from the disappointed Katy, in the fullness of her heart, the complaint we have related, in her reply to Harper. Nothing seemed to interfere with the pursuits of this indefatigable trader; and, with a view to dispose of certain articles which could only find purchasers in the very wealthiest families of the county, he had now braved the fury of the tempest, for the half mile between his own residence and the house of Mr. Wharton.

In a few minutes after receiving the commands of his young mistress, Cæsar reappeared, ushering into the apartment the subject of the foregoing digression. In person, the pedlar was a man of middle height, spare, but full of bone and muscle: at first sight, his strength seemed unequal to manage the unwieldy burden of his pack; yet he

threw it on and off with great dexterity, and with as much apparent ease as if it had been feathers. His eyes were gray—sunken, restless, and, for the flitting moments that they dwelt on the countenances of those with whom he conversed, seemed to read the very soul. They possessed, however, two distinct expressions, which, in a great measure, characterized the whole man. When engaged in traffic, the intelligence of his face appeared lively, active, and flexible, though uncommonly acute; if the conversation turned on the ordinary transactions of life, his air became abstracted and restless; but if, by chance, the revolution and the country were the topic, his whole system seemed altered—all his faculties were concentrated—he would listen for a great length of time, without speaking, and then would break silence by some light and jocular remarks, that were too much at variance with his former manner, not to be affectation. But of the war, and of his father, he seldom spoke, and always from some apparent necessity.

To a superficial observer, avarice would seem his ruling passion—and, all things considered, he was as unfit a subject for the plans of Katy Haynes as can be readily imagined. On entering the room the pedlar relieved himself from his burden, which, as it stood on the floor, reached nearly to his shoulders, and saluted the family with modest civility. To Harper he made a silent bow, without lifting his eyes from the carpet; but the curtain prevented any notice of the presence of Captain Wharton. Sarah gave but little time for the usual salutations before she commenced her survey of the contents of the pack; and, for several minutes, the two were engaged in bringing to light the varied articles it contained. The tables, chairs, and floor, were soon covered with silks, crapes, gloves, muslins, and all the stock of an itinerant trader. Cæsar was employed to hold open the mouth of the pack, as its hordes were discharged, and occasionally aided his young lady, by directing her admiration to some articles of finery, which, from their deeper contrast in colours, he thought more worthy of her notice. At length, Sarah having selected several articles, and satisfactorily arranged the prices, observed in a cheerful voice—

"But, Harvey, you have told us no news.—Has Lord Cornwallis beaten the rebels again?"

The question could not have been heard; for the pedlar, burying his body in the pack, brought forth a quantity of lace of exquisite fineness, and, holding it up to view, required the admiration of the young lady. Miss Peyton dropped the cup she was engaged in washing, from her hand; and Frances exhibited the whole of that lovely face, which had hitherto only suffered one of its joyous eyes to be seen beaming with a colour that shamed the damask, which enviously concealed her figure.

The aunt quitted her employment; and Birch soon disposed of a large portion of this valuable article. The praises of the ladies had drawn the whole person of the younger sister into view; and Frances was slowly rising from the window, as Sarah repeated her question, with an exultation in her voice, that proceeded more from pleasure in her purchase, than her political feelings. The younger sister resumed her seat, apparently examining into the state of the clouds, while the pedlar, finding a reply was expected, answered slowly—

"There is some talk below about Tarleton having defeated General Sumpter, on the Tyger river."

Captain Wharton now involuntarily thrust his head between the opening of the curtains into the room; and Frances, in turning her ear, in breathless silence, noticed the quiet eyes of Harper looking at the pedlar, over the book he was affecting to read, with an expression that denoted him a listener of no ordinary interest.

"Indeed!" cried the exulting Sarah, "Sumpter—Sumpter—who is he? I'll not buy even a pin, until you tell me all the news;" she continued laughing, and throwing down a muslin she had been examining.

For a moment the pedlar hesitated; his eye glanced towards Harper, who was yet gazing on him in settled meaning, and the whole manner of Birch was altered. Approaching the fire, he took from his mouth a large allowance of the Virginian weed, and depositing it, with the superabundance of its juices, without mercy to Miss Peyton's shining andirons, returned to his goods, and replied in a more lively tone—

"He lives somewhere among the negroes to the south."

"No more negur than be yourself, Mister Birch," interrupted Cæsar tartly, and dropping the covering of the goods in high displeasure.

"Hush, Cæsar—hush—never mind it now," said Sarah Wharton soothingly, waiting with impatience to hear further.

"A black man as good as white, Miss Sally," continued the offended African, "so long he behave himself."

"And frequently much better," rejoined his mistress; "but, Harvey, who is this Mr. Sumpter?"

A slight indication of humour shewed itself on the face of the pedlar, as he continued—"As I was saying, he

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lives among the coloured people in the south,"——Cæsar resumed his occupation——"and has lately had a skirmish with this Colonel Tarleton."——

"Who defeated him of course," cried Sarah, with confidence.

"So say the troops at Morrisania," returned the other laconically.

"But what do you say?" Mr. Wharton ventured to inquire, yet speaking involuntarily in a low tone.

"I repeat but what I hear," said Birch, offering a piece of cloth to the inspection of Sarah, who rejected it in silence, evidently determined to hear more before she made any further purchases.

"They say, however, at the Plains," the pedlar continued, after first throwing his eyes again round the room, and letting them rest for an instant on Harper, "that Sumpter and one or two more were all that were hurt, and that the rig'lers were all cut to pieces, for the militia were fixed snugly in a log barn."

"Not very probable," said Sarah contemptuously, "though I make no doubt the rebels got behind the logs."

"I think," said the pedlar coolly, again offering the silk, "it's quite ingenious to get a log between one and a gun, instead of getting between a gun and a log."——The eye of Harper dropped quietly on the pages of the volume in his hand, while Frances, rising, came forward with a smile in her face, as she inquired, in a tone of affability the pedlar had never before witnessed——

"Have you more of the lace, Mr. Birch?"

The desired article was immediately produced, and Frances became a purchaser also; by her order a glass of liquor was offered to the trader, who took it with thanks, and, having paid his compliments to the master of the house and the ladies, drank the beverage.

"So it is thought that Colonel Tarleton has worsted General Sumpter?" said Mr. Wharton, affecting to be employed in mending the cup, broken by the eagerness of his sister-in-law.

"I believe they think so at Morrisania," said Birch drily.

"Have you any other news, friend?" asked Captain Wharton, venturing to thrust his face without the curtains again.

"Have you heard that Major André has been hung?" inquired the pedlar with emphasis, in reply.

Captain Wharton started, and for a moment glances of great significance were exchanged between him and the trader, when he observed, with affected indifference, "that must have been some five weeks ago."

"Does his execution make much noise?" asked the father, striving to make the broken china unite.

"People will talk, you know, Squire," returned the pedlar, exhibiting his goods respectfully to the young ladies.

"Is there any probability of movements below, my friend, that will make travelling dangerous?" asked Harper, looking steadily at the other, in expectation of his reply.

Some bunches of ribbons fell from the hand of Birch; his countenance changed instantly, losing its keen expression in intent meaning, as he answered slowly.——"It is some time since the rig'lar cavalry were out, and I saw some of De Lancey's men cleaning their arms as I passed their quarters; it would be no wonder if they took the scent soon, for the Virginia horse are low in the county."

"Are they in much force?" asked Mr. Wharton, suspending all employment in anxiety.

"I did not count them," said the pedlar, giving his attention to his trade again.

Frances was the only observer of the change in the manner of Birch, and, on turning to Harper, he had resumed his book in silence. The maid took some of the ribbons in her hand——laid them down again——and, bending over the goods, so that her hair, falling in rich curls, shaded her face, she observed, blushing with a colour that suffused her neck——

"I thought the southern horse had marched towards the Delaware."

"It may be so," said Birch; "I passed the troops at a distance."

Cæsar had now selected a piece of calico, in which the colours of yellow and red were contrasted on a white ground; and after admiring it for several minutes, laid it down with a sigh, as he exclaimed, "very pretty calico!"

"That," said Sarah; "yes, that would make a proper gown for your wife, Cæsar."

"Yes, Miss Sally," cried the delighted black, "make old Dinah heart leap for joy——so very genteel."

"Yes," added the pedlar quaintly, "that would make Dinah look like a rainbow."

Cæsar eyed his young mistress eagerly, until, laying it down with a smile, she inquired the price of Harvey.

"Why, much as I light of chaps," said the pedlar.

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"How much?" demanded Sarah in surprise.

"According to my luck in finding purchasers—— for my friend Dinah, you may have it at four shillings."

"It is too much," said Sarah, turning to some goods for herself.

"Monstrous price——for coarse calico, Mister Birch," grumbled Cæsar, dropping the opening of the pack again.

"We will say three then," added the pedlar, "if you like that better."

"Be sure, like'em better"——said Cæsar smiling good humouredly, re-opening the pack——"Miss Sally like a three shilling when she give, and a four shilling when she take."

The bargain was immediately concluded; but in measuring, the cloth wanted a little of the well known ten yards required by the dimensions of Dinah. By dint of a strong arm, however, it grew to the desired length, under the experienced eye of the pedlar, who conscientiously added a ribbon of corresponding brilliancy with the calico, and Cæsar hastily withdrew, to communicate the joyful intelligence to his aged partner.

During the movements created by the conclusion of the purchase, Captain Wharton had ventured to draw aside the curtain, so as to admit a view of his person, and he now inquired of the pedlar, who had begun to collect his scattered goods, at what time he had left the city.

"At early twilight," was the answer.

"So lately!" cried the other in surprise; and then correcting his manner, by assuming a more guarded air, he continued——"Could you pass the picquets at so late an hour?"

"I did," was the laconic reply.

"You must be well known by this time, Harvey, to the officers of the British army," cried Sarah, smiling archly on the pedlar.

"I know some of them by sight," said Birch, glancing his eyes round the apartment, taking in their course Captain Wharton, and resting for an instant on the countenance of Harper.

Mr. Wharton had listened intently to each speaker in succession, and had so far lost the affectation of indifference, as to be crushing in his hand the pieces of china he had expended so much labour in endeavouring to mend; when, observing the pedlar tying the last knot in his pack, he asked abruptly——

"Are we about to be disturbed again with the enemy?"

"Who do you call the enemy?" said the pedlar, raising himself erect, and giving the other a look, before which the eyes of Mr. Wharton sunk in instant confusion.

"All are enemies who disturb our peace," said Miss Peyton, observing her brother unable to speak. "But are the royal troops out from below?"

" 'Tis quite likely they soon may be," returned Birch, raising his pack from the floor, and preparing to leave the room.

"And the continentals," continued Miss Peyton mildly, "are the continentals in the county?"

Harvey was about to utter something in reply, when the door opened, and Cæsar made his appearance, attended by his delighted spouse.

The race of blacks of which Cæsar was a favorable specimen is becoming very rare. The old family servant, who, born and reared in the dwelling of his master, identified himself with the welfare of those whom it was his lot to serve, is giving place in every direction to that vagrant class which has sprung up within the last thirty years, and whose members roam through the country, unfettered by principles, or uninfluenced by attachments. For it is one of the curses of slavery, that its victims become incompetent to the attributes of a freeman. The short curly hair of Cæsar had acquired from age a colouring of gray, that added greatly to the venerable cast of his appearance. Long and uninterrupted applications of the comb had straightened the close curls of his forehead, until they stood erect in a stiff and formal precision, that gave at least two inches to his stature. The shining black of his youth had lost its glistening hue, and had been succeeded by a dingy brown. His eyes, which stood at a most formidable distance from each other, were small, and characterized by an expression of good feeling, occasionally interrupted by the petulance of an indulged servant——they, however, now danced with inward delight. His nose possessed, in an eminent manner, all the requisites for smelling, but with the most modest unobtrusiveness——his nostrils being abundantly capacious, without thrusting themselves in the way of their neighbours. His mouth capacious to a fault, that was only tolerated on account of the double row of pearls it contained. In person Cæsar was short, and we would say square, had not all the angles and curves of his figure bid defiance to any thing like

mathematical symmetry. His arms were long and muscular, and terminated by two bony hands, that exhibited on one side, a colouring of blackish gray, and on the other a faded pink. It was in his legs that nature had indulged in her most capricious humours. There was an abundance of the material, but it had been injudiciously used. The calves were neither before nor behind, but rather on the outer side of the limb, inclining forward, and so close to the knee as to render the free use of that joint a subject of doubt. In the foot, considering it as a base on which the body was to rest, Cæsar had no cause of complaint, unless, indeed, it might be that the leg was placed so near the centre, as to make it sometimes a matter of dispute, whether he was not walking backwards. But whatever might be the faults a statuary could discover in his person, the heart of Cæsar Thompson was in the right place, and, we doubt not, of very just dimensions.

Accompanied by his ancient companion, Cæsar now advanced, and paid his tribute of gratitude in words—Sarah received them with great complacency, and made a few compliments to the taste of the husband, and the probable appearance of the wife. Frances took the hard and wrinkled hand of her nurse into her own; and, with a face beaming with a look of pleasure that corresponded to the smiling countenances of the blacks, offered the service of her needle in fitting the admired calico to its future uses. The offer was humbly and gratefully accepted.

As Cæsar followed the pedlar and his wife from the apartment, and was in the act of closing the door, he indulged himself in a grateful soliloquy, by saying aloud—

"Good little lady—Miss Fanny—take care of old father—love to make a gown for old Dinah too." What else his feelings might have induced him to utter is unknown, but the sound of his voice was heard sometime after the distance had made his words indistinct.

Harper had dropped his book, and sat an admiring witness of the scene; and Frances enjoyed a double satisfaction, as she received an approving smile from a face which concealed, under the traces of deep thought and engrossing care, the expression which characterizes all the best feelings of the human heart.

CHAPTER IV.

"It is the form, the eye, the word,
The bearing of that stranger Lord;
His stature, manly, bold, and tall,
Built like a castle's battled wall,
Yet moulded in such just degrees,
His giant-strength seems lightsome case,
Weather and war their rougher trace
Have left on that majestic face;—
But 'tis his dignity of eye!
There, if a suppliant, would I fly,
Secure, 'mid danger, wrongs, and grief,
Of sympathy, redress, relief—
That glance, if guilty, would I dread
More than the doom that spoke me dead!"—
"Enough, enough," the princess cried,
" 'Tis Scotland's hope, her joy, her pride!"
—— Walter Scott

The party sat in silence for several minutes after the pedlar withdrew. Mr. Wharton had heard enough to increase his uneasiness, without in the least removing his apprehensions on behalf of his son. The Captain was impatiently wishing Harper in any other place, than the one he occupied with such apparent composure; while Miss Peyton completed the disposal of her breakfast equipage, with the mild complacency of her nature, aided a little by inward satisfaction at her possessing so large a portion of the trader's lace— Sarah was busily occupied in arranging her purchases, and Frances was kindly assisting her in the occupation, disregarding her own neglected bargains for the moment, when the stranger suddenly broke the silence by saying—

"If any apprehensions of me induce Captain Wharton to maintain his disguise, I wish him to be undeceived—had I motives for betraying him, they could not operate under present circumstances."

The younger sister sunk into her seat colourless and astonished. Miss Peyton dropped the tea-tray she was lifting from the table; and Sarah sat with her purchases unheeded in her lap, in speechless surprise. Mr. Wharton was stupified; but the Captain, hesitating a moment from astonishment, sprang into the middle of the room, and exclaimed, as he tore off the instruments of his disguise—

"I believe you from my soul, and this tiresome imposition shall continue no longer under the roof of my father. Yet I am at a loss to conceive in what manner you know me."

"You really look so much better in your proper person, Captain Wharton," said Harper with a slight smile, "I would advise you never to conceal it in future. There is enough to betray you, if other sources of detection were wanting:" as he spoke, he pointed to a picture suspended over the mantle-piece, which exhibited the British officer in his regimentals.

"I had flattered myself," cried young Wharton with a laugh, "that I looked better on the canvass than in masquerade—you must be a close observer, sir!"

"Necessity has made me one," said Harper mildly, rising from his seat.

Frances met him as he was about to withdraw, and, taking his hand between both her own, said with earnestness—her cheeks mantling with their richest vermilion—"You cannot—you will not betray my brother."

For an instant Harper paused in silent admiration of the lovely pleader, and then, folding her hands on his breast, replied solemnly—"I cannot, and I will not;" he released her hands, and laying his own on her head gently, continued—"If the blessing of a stranger can profit you, receive it." He turned, and, bowing low, retired to his apartment.

The whole party were deeply impressed with the ingenuous and solemn manner of the traveller, and all but the

father found immediate relief in his declaration. Some of the cast-off clothes of the captain, which had been removed with the goods from the city, were produced; and young Wharton, released from the uneasiness of his disguise, began at last to enjoy a visit which had been undertaken at so much personal risk to himself. Mr. Wharton retiring to his apartment in pursuance of his regular engagements, the ladies, with the young man, were left to an uninterrupted communication on such subjects as were most agreeable. Even Miss Peyton was affected with the spirits of her younger relatives; and they sat for an hour enjoying in heedless confidence, the pleasures of an unrestrained conversation, without reflecting on any danger which might be impending over them. The city and their acquaintances were not long neglected; for Miss Peyton, who had never forgotten the many agreeable hours of her residence within its boundaries, soon inquired, among others, after their old acquaintance Colonel Wellmere.

"Oh!" cried the Captain gaily, "he yet continues there, as handsome and as gallant as ever."

Although a woman be not actually in love, she seldom hears without a blush, the name of a man whom she might love, and who has been connected with herself, by idle gossips, in the amatory rumour of the day. Such had been the case with Sarah, and she dropped her eyes on the carpet with a smile, that, aided by the blush which suffused her cheek, in no degree detracted from her native charms.

Captain Wharton, without heeding this display of interest in his sister, immediately continued—"At times he is melancholy—we tell him it must be love." Sarah raised her eyes to the face of her brother, and was consciously turning them on the rest of the party, when she met those of her sister, laughing with good-humour and high spirits, as she cried, "Poor man—does he despair?"

"Why, no—one would think he could not—the eldest son of a man of wealth, so handsome, and a Colonel."

"Strong reasons, indeed, why he should prevail," said Sarah, endeavouring to laugh, "more particularly the latter."

"Let me tell you," replied the Captain gravely, "a Lieutenant-Colonelcy in the Guards is a very pretty thing"——

"And Colonel Wellmere a very pretty man," cried Frances, with a laugh.

"Nay, Frances," returned her sister, "Colonel Wellmere was never a favorite with you—he is too loyal to his King to be agreeable to your taste."

Frances took the hand of her sister, as she said—— "and is not Henry loyal to his King?"

"Come, come," said Miss Peyton, "no difference of opinion about the Colonel—he is a favorite of mine."

"Fanny likes Majors better," cried the brother, pulling her upon his knee.

"Nonsense," said the blushing girl, as she endeavoured to extricate herself from the grasp of her laughing brother.

"It surprizes me," continued the Captain, "that Peyton, when he procured the release of my father, did not endeavour to detain my sister in the rebel camp."

"That might have endangered his own liberty," said the maid, smiling archly, and resuming her seat; "you know it is liberty for which Major Dunwoodie is fighting."

"Liberty!" exclaimed Sarah, "very pretty liberty—which exchanges one master for fifty."

"The privilege of changing masters at all is a liberty," returned the other good-humouredly.

"And one you ladies would sometimes be glad to exercise," cried the captain.

"We like, I believe, to have the liberty of choosing who they shall be in the first place," said the laughing girl; "don't we, aunt Jeanette."

"Me!" cried Miss Peyton starting; "what do I know of such things child; you must ask some one else, if you wish to learn such matters."

"Ah!" returned the maid, looking playfully at her aunt, "you would have us think you were never young—but what am I to believe of all the tales I have heard about the handsome Miss Jeanette Peyton."

"Nonsense—my dear—nonsense," said the aunt, endeavouring to suppress a smile; "it is very silly to believe all you hear."

"Nonsense! do you call it," cried the captain gaily; "to this hour General Montrose toasts Miss Peyton; I heard him within the week, at Sir Henry's table."

"Why, Henry, you are as saucy as your sister," returned the lady; "and to break in upon your folly, I must take

you to see my new home—made manufactures in contrast with the finery of Birch."

The young people rose to follow their aunt, in perfect good humour with each other and the world. On ascending the stairs to the place of deposit for Miss Peyton's articles of economy, she availed herself, however, of an opportunity to inquire of her nephew, whether General Montrosesuffered as much from the gout, as he had done when she knew him.

It is a painful discovery that we make, as we advance in life, that none of us are exempt from its frailties. When the heart is fresh, and the view of the future unsullied by the blemishes which have been gathered from the experience of the past, it is that our feelings are most holy—we love to identify with the persons of our natural friends, all those qualities to which we ourselves aspire, and all those virtues we have been taught to revere. The confidence with which we esteem seems a part of our nature; and there is a purity, thrown around the affections which tie us to our kindred, that after life can seldom hope to see uninjured. The family of Mr. Wharton continued to enjoy, for the remainder of the day, a happiness to which they had long been strangers; and one that sprung, in its younger members, from the delights of the most confiding affection, and the exchange of the most disinterested endearments.

Harper appeared only at the dinner table, and retired with the cloth, under the pretence of some engagements in his own room. Notwithstanding the confidence created by his manner, the family felt his absence a relief; for the visit of Captain Wharton was necessarily to be confined to a very few days, both from the limitation to his leave of absence, and the danger of a discovery.

All dread of consequences, however, were lost in the pleasure of the meeting. Once or twice during the day, Mr. Wharton had suggested a doubt as to the character of his unknown guest, and the possibility of the detection of his son proceeding in some manner from his information: but the idea was earnestly opposed by all his children; even Sarah united with her brother and sister in pleading warmly in favor of the sincerityexpressed in the outward appearance of the traveller.

"Such appearances, my children," replied the desponding parent, "are but too often deceitful; when men like Major André lend themselves to the purposes of fraud, it is idle to reason from qualities, much less externals."——

"Fraud!" cried his son quickly; "surely, sir, you forget that Major Andre was serving his king, and that the usages of war justified the measure."

"And did not the usages of war justify his death, Henry?" inquired Frances, speaking in a low voice, unwilling to abandon what she thought the cause of her country, and yet unable to suppress her feelings for the man.

"Never!" exclaimed the young man, springing from his seat, and pacing the floor rapidly——"Frances you shock me; suppose it should be my fate, even now, to fall into the power of the rebels—— you would vindicate my execution——perhaps exult in the cruelty of Washington."

"Henry!" said Frances solemnly, quivering with emotion, and with a face pale as death, "you little know my heart."——

"Pardon me——my sister——my little Fanny," cried the repentant youth, pressing her to his bosom, and kissing off the tears which had burst in torrents from her eyes.

"It is very foolish to regard your hasty words, I know," said Frances, extricating herself from his arms, and raising her yet humid eyes to his face with a smile——"But reproach from those we love is most severe, Henry——particularly——where we—— we think——we know,"——the paleness of the maid gradually gave place to the colour of the rose, as she concluded in a low voice, with her eyes directed to the carpet,——"we are undeserving of it."——

Miss Peyton moved from her own seat to the one next her niece, and, kindly taking her hand, observed, "you should not suffer the impetuosity of your brother to affect you so much——boys, you know," she continued with a smile, "are proverbially ungovernable."——

"And you might add cruel, from my conduct," said the Captain, seating himself on the other side of his sister; "but on the subject of the death of André we are all of us uncommonly sensitive—— you did not know him——he was all that was brave—— that was accomplished——that was estimable." Frances smiled faintly and shook her head, but made no reply. Her brother, observing the marks of incredulity in her countenance, continued—— "you doubt it, and justify his death?"

"I do not doubt his worth," replied the maid mildly, "nor his being deserving of a more happy fate; but I doubt

the impropriety of Washington's conduct. I know but little of the customs of war, and wish to know less; but with what hopes of success could the Americans contend, if they yielded all the principles which long use had established, to the exclusive purposes of the British?"

"Why contend at all?" cried Sarah impatiently; "besides, being rebels, all their acts are illegal."——

"Women are but mirrors, which reflect the images before them," cried the captain good naturedly.——"In Frances I see the picture of Major Dunwoodie——and in Sarah"——

"Colonel Wellmere," interrupted the younger sister laughing, and blushing crimson. "I must confess I am indebted to the Major for my reasoning——am I not aunt Jeanette?"

"I believe there is something like it, indeed, child," replied Miss Peyton with a smile, "in his last letter to me."

"Yes, I plead guilty——and you, Sarah, have not forgotten the learned discussions of Colonel Wellmere."——

"I trust I never forget the right," said Sarah, emulating her sister in colour, and rising, under the pretence of avoiding the heat of the fire.

Nothing occurred of any moment during the rest of the day; but in the evening Cæsar reported that he had overheard voices in the room of Harper, conversing in a low tone. The apartment occupied by the traveller was the wing at the extremity of the building, opposite to the parlor in which the family ordinarily assembled; and it seems, that Cæsar had established a regular system of espionage, with a view to the safety of his young master. This intelligence gave some uneasiness to all the members of the family; but the entrance of Harper himself, with the air of benevolence and sincerity which shone through his reserve, soon removed the doubts from the breast of all but Mr. Wharton. His children and sister believed Cæsar to have been mistaken, and the evening passed off without any additional alarm.

On the afternoon of the succeeding day, the party were assembled in the parlor around the tea-table of Miss Peyton, when a change in the weather occurred. The thin scud, that apparently floated but a short distance above the tops of the hills, began to drive from the west towards the east in astonishing rapidity. The rain yet continued to beat against the eastern windows of the house with incredible fury: in that direction all was dark and gloomy. Frances was gazing at the scene with the desire of youth to escape from the tedium of confinement, when, as if by magic, all was still. The rushing winds had ceased: the pelting of the storm was over——and, springing to the window, the maid, with delight pictured in her face, saw a glorious ray of sunshine lighting on the opposite wood. The foliage glittered with the chequered beauties of the October leaf——reflecting back from the moistened boughs the richest lustre of an American autumn. In an instant, the piazza, which opened to the south, was thronged with the inmates of the cottage. The air was mild, balmy, and refreshing——in the east, clouds, which might be likened to the retreating masses of a discomfited army, hung around the horizon in awful and increasing darkness. At a little elevation above the cottage, the thin and vapory clouds were still rushing towards the east with amazing velocity; while in the west the sun had broken forth in all his majesty, and shed his parting radiance on the scene below, aided by the fullest richness of a clear atmosphere and freshened herbage.——Such moments belong only to the climate of America, and are enjoyed in a degree proportioned to the suddenness of the contrast, and the pleasure we experience in escaping from the turbulence of the elements to the quiet of a peaceful evening, and an air still as the softest mornings in June.

"What a magnificent scene!" said Harper in a low tone; "how grand! how awfully sublime! May such a quiet speedily await the struggle in which my country is engaged, and such a glorious evening follow the day of her adversity."

Frances, who stood next him, alone heard the voice——turning in amazement from the view to the speaker, she saw him standing bare headed, erect, and with his eyes to heaven; there was no longer the quiet which had seemed their characteristic, but they were lighted into something like enthusiasm, and a slight flush passed over his pale features.

There can be no danger apprehended from such a man, thought Frances——such feelings belong only to the virtuous.

The musings of the party were now interrupted by the sudden appearance of the pedlar. He had taken advantage of the first gleam of sunshine to hasten to the cottage. Heedless of wet or dry as it lay in his path, with arms swinging to and fro, and with his head bent forward of his body several inches, Harvey Birch now approached the piazza, with a gait peculiarly his own——the quick, lengthened pace of a vender of goods.

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"Fine evening," said the pedlar, saluting the party without raising his eyes, "quite warm and agreeable for the season."

Mr. Wharton assented to the remark, and inquired kindly after the health of his father. Harvey heard him, and continued standing for some time in moody silence; but the question being repeated, he answered with a slight tremor in his voice——

"He fails fast; old age and hardships will do their work." The pedlar turned his body from the view of most of the family; but Frances noticed his glistening eyes and quivering lips, and, for the second time, Harvey rose in the estimation of the maid.

The valley in which was the residence of Mr. Wharton ran in a direction from North-west to South-east, and the house stood on the side of a hill which terminated its length in the former direction. A small opening, occasioned by the receding of the opposite hill, and the fall of the land to the level of the tide water, afforded a view of the Sound over the tops of the distant woods on its margin. The surface of the water, which had so lately been lashing the shores with boisterous fury, was already losing its ruffled darkness in the long and regular undulations that succeed a tempest, while the light air from the South-west was gently touching their summits, lending its feeble aid in stilling the waters. Some dark spots were now to be distinguished, occasionally rising into view, and again sinking behind the lengthened waves which interposed themselves to the sight. They were unnoticed by all but the pedlar. He had seated himself on the piazza, at a distance from Harper, and appeared to have forgotten the object of his visit. His roving eye, however, soon caught a glimpse of these new objects in the view, and he sprang up with alacrity, gazing intently towards the water. The juices of the tobacco soon disfigured the floor of Miss Peyton——he moved his place——glanced his eye with marked uneasiness on Harper——and then said with great emphasis——

"The rig'lars must be out from below."

"Why do you think so?" inquired Captain Wharton eagerly; "God send it may be true; I want their escort in again."

Those ten whale boats would not move so fast," answered Birch drily, "unless they were better manned than common."

"Perhaps," cried Mr. Wharton in alarm, "they are——they are continentals returning from the island."

"They look like rig'lars," said the pedlar with great meaning.

"Look!" repeated the captain, "there is nothing but spots to be seen."

Harvey disregarded his observation, but seemed to be soliloquizing as he said, in an under tone—— "They came out before the gale——have laid on the island these two days——horse are on the road—— there will soon be fighting near us." During this speech Birch several times glanced his eye towards Harper, with evident uneasiness, but no corresponding emotion betrayed any interest of that gentleman in the scene.——He stood in silent contemplation of the view, and seemed enjoying the change in the air. As Birch concluded, however, Harper turned to his host and mentioned, that his business would not admit of unnecessary delay; he would, therefore, avail himself of the fine evening to ride a few miles on his journey. Mr. Wharton made many professions of regret at losing so agreeable an inmate; but was too mindful of his duty not to speed the parting guest, and orders were instantly given to that effect.

The uneasiness of the pedlar increased in a manner for which nothing apparent could account; his eye was constantly wandering towards the lower end of the vale, as if in expectation of some interruption from that quarter. At length Cæsar appeared leading the noble beast which was to bear the weight of the traveller. The pedlar officiously assisted to tighten the girths, and fasten the blue cloak and valisse to the mail straps.

Every preparation being completed, Harper proceeded to take his leave. To Sarah and her aunt he paid his compliments with ease and kindness——but when he came to Frances, he paused a moment, while his face assumed an expression of more than ordinary benignity; his eye repeated the blessing which had before fallen from his lips, and the maid felt her cheeks glow and heart beat with a quicker pulsation, as he spoke his adieus. There was a mutual exchange of polite courtesy between the host and his parting guest; but as Harper frankly offered his hand to Captain Wharton, he remarked, in a manner of great solemnity——

"The step you have undertaken is one of much danger, and disagreeable consequences to yourself may result from it——in such a case I may have it in my power to prove the gratitude I owe your family for its kindness."

"Surely, sir," cried the father, losing sight of delicacy in apprehension for his child, "you will keep secret the

discovery which your being in my house has enabled you to make."

Harper turned quickly to the speaker, and then losing the sternness which had begun to gather on his countenance, he answered mildly, "I have learnt nothing in your family, sir, of which I was ignorant before—but your son is safer from my knowledge of his visit, than he would be without it."

He bowed to the whole party, and without taking any notice of the pedlar other than by simply thanking him for his attentions, mounted his horse, and riding steadily and gracefully through the little gate, was soon lost behind the hill which sheltered the valley to the northward.

The eye of the pedlar followed the retiring figure of the horseman so long as it continued within view, and as it disappeared from his sight, he drew a long and heavy sigh, as if relieved from a load of apprehension. The Whartons had meditated in silence on the character and visit of their unknown guest for the same period, when the father approached Birch, and observed—

"I am yet your debtor, Harvey, for the tobacco you were so kind as to bring me from the city."

"If it should not prove so good as the first," replied the pedlar, fixing a last and lingering look on the direction of Harper's route, "it is owing to the scarcity of the article."

"I like it much," continued the other, "but you have forgotten to name the price."

The countenance of the trader changed, and losing its expression of deep care in a natural acuteness, he answered—

"It is hard to say what ought to be the price; I believe I must leave it to your own generosity."

Mr. Wharton had taken a hand well filled with the images of Carolus III. from his pocket, and now extended it towards Birch with three of the pieces between his finger and thumb. Harvey's eyes twinkled as he contemplated the reward; and rolling over in his mouth a large quantity of the article in question, coolly stretched forth his hand into which the dollars fell with a most agreeable sound; but not satisfied with the transient music of their fall, the pedlar gave each piece in succession a ring on the stepping-stone to the piazza, before he consigned it to the safe keeping of a huge deer-skin purse, which vanished from the sight of the spectators so dexterously, that not one of them could have told about what part of his person it was secreted.

This very material point in his business so satisfactorily completed, the pedlar rose from his seat on the floor of the piazza, and approached where Captain Wharton stood, supporting his sisters on either arm, as they listened with the lively interest of affection, to his conversation.

The agitation of the preceding incidents had caused such an expenditure of the juices which had become necessary to the mouth of the pedlar, that a new supply of the weed was required before he could turn his attention to business of lesser moment. This done, he asked abruptly—

"Captain Wharton, do you go in to night?"

"No!" said the captain laconically, and looking at his lovely burdens with great affection.— "Mr. Birch, would you have me leave such company so soon, when I may never enjoy it again."

"Brother!" said Frances in a low tone, "jesting on such a subject is cruel."

"I rather guess," continued the pedlar coolly, "now the storm is over, the Skinners may be moving; you had better shorten your visit, Captain Wharton."

"Oh!" cried the British officer, "a few guineas will buy off those rascals at any time should I meet them. No—no—Mr. Birch, here I stay until morning."

"Money could not liberate Major André," said the pedlar drily.

Both the sisters now turned to the captain in alarm, and the elder observed—

"You had better take the advice of Harvey— rest assured, brother, his opinion in such matters ought not to be disregarded."

"Yes," added the younger, "if, as I suspect, Mr. Birch assisted you to come here—your safety—our happiness, dear Henry, require you to listen to him now."

"I brought myself out, and can take myself in," said the captain positively; "our bargain went no farther than to procure my disguise, and let me know when the coast was clear, and in the latter particular you were mistaken, Mr. Birch."

"I was," said the pedlar with some interest, "and the greater is the reason why you should get back to night—the pass I gave you will serve you but once."

"Cannot you forge another?"

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The pale cheek of the trader showed an unusual colour, but he continued silent, with his eyes fixed to the ground, until the young man added with great positiveness—"here I stay this night, come what will."

"Captain Wharton," said the pedlar with great deliberation and marked emphasis, "beware a tall Virginian, with huge whiskers—he is below you by my knowledge; the devil can't deceive him; I never could but once myself."

"Let him beware of me," said Wharton haughtily; "but Mr. Birch, I exonerate you from further responsibility."

"Will you give me that in writing?" asked the cautious Birch.

"Oh! cheerfully," cried the captain with a laugh; "Cæsar! pen, ink, and paper, while I write a discharge for my trusty attendant, Harvey Birch, pedlar,

The implements for writing were produced, and the captain, with great gaiety, wrote the desired acknowledgment in language of his own; which the pedlar took, and, carefully depositing it by the side of the images of his Catholic majesty, made a sweeping bow to the whole family, and departed as he had approached. He was soon seen at a distance stealing into the door of his own humble dwelling.

The father and sisters of the captain were too much rejoiced in retaining the young man to express, or even entertain, the apprehensions his situation might reasonably excite; but on retiring to their evening repast, a cooler reflection induced the captain to think of changing his mind—unwilling to trust himself out of the protection of his father's domains, the young man despatched Cæsar to desire another interview with Harvey. The black soon returned with the unwelcome intelligence that it was now too late. Katy had told him Harvey must be miles on his road to the northward, having left home at early candle light, with his pack. Nothing now remained to the captain but patience, until the morning afforded further opportunity of deciding on the best course for him to pursue.

"This Harvey Birch, with his knowing looks and portentous warnings, gives me more uneasiness than I am willing to own," said Captain Wharton, rousing himself from a fit of musing in which the danger of his situation made no small part of his meditations.

"How is it, that he is able to travel to and fro in these difficult times without molestation?" inquired Miss Peyton.

"Why the rebels suffer him to escape so easily, is more than I can answer," returned the other; "but Sir Henry would not permit a hair of his head to be injured."

"Indeed!" cried Frances with interest; "is he then known to Sir Henry Clinton?"

"At least he ought to be," said the captain, smiling significantly.

"Do you think, my son," asked Mr. Wharton, "there is no danger of his betraying you?"

"Why—no—I reflected on that before I trusted myself to his power," said the Captain thoughtfully; "he seems to be faithful in matters of business. The danger to himself, should he return to the city, would prevent such an act of villany."

"I think," said Frances, adopting the manner of her brother, "Harvey Birch is not without good feelings; at least, he has the appearance of them at times."

"Oh!" cried her sister exultingly, "he has loyalty, and that with me is a cardinal virtue."

"I am afraid," said her brother laughing, "love of money is a stronger passion than love to his king."

"Then," said the father, "you cannot be safe while in his power—for no love will withstand the temptation of money when offered to avarice."

"Surely, sir," cried the youth, recovering his gaiety, "there must be one love that can resist any thing—is there not Fanny?"

"Here is your candle," said the distressed maiden: "you keep your father up beyond his usual hour."

CHAPTER V.

Through Solway sands, through Taross most,
Blindfold, he knew the paths to cross;
By wily turns, by desperate bounds,
Had baffled Percy's best bloodhounds.
In Eske, or Liddel, fords were none,
But he would ride them, one by one;
Alike to him was time, or tide,
December's snow, or July's pride;
Alike to him was tide, or time,
Moonless midnight, or matin prime.

— Walter Scott

All the members of the Wharton family laid their heads on their pillows that night, with a fearful anticipation of some interruption to their ordinary quiet. This uneasiness kept the sisters from enjoying their usual repose, and they rose from their bed on the following morning, unrefreshed, and almost without closing their eyes.

On taking an eager and hasty survey of the valley from the windows of their room, nothing, however, but its usual serenity was to be seen—it was glittering with the opening brilliancy of one of those lovely mild days, which occur about the time of the fall of the leaf; and which, by their frequency, class the American autumn with the most delightful seasons in other countries. We have no spring—vegetation here seems to leap into existence, instead of creeping, as in the same latitudes of the old world: but how gracefully it retires! September—October—even November and December compose the season for enjoyment in the open air—they have their storms, but they are distinct, and not of long continuance, leaving a clear atmosphere and cloudless sky.

As nothing could be seen likely to interrupt the enjoyments and harmony of such a day, the sisters descended to the parlor with a returning confidence in their brother's security, and their own consequent happiness.

The family were early in assembling around their breakfast table; and Miss Peyton, with a little of that minute precision which creeps into the habits of single life, had pleasantly insisted the absence of her nephew should in no manner interfere with the regular hours she had established—consequently, the party were already seated when the captain made his appearance; though the untasted coffee sufficiently proved, that by none of his relatives was his absence disregarded.

"I think I did much better," he cried, taking a chair between his sisters, and receiving their offered salutes, "to secure a good bed, and such a plentiful breakfast, instead of trusting to the hospitality of that renowned corps, the Cow-Boys."

"If you could sleep," said Sarah, "you were more fortunate than Frances and myself—every murmur of the night air sounded to me like the approach of the rebel army."

"Why," said the captain laughing, "I do acknowledge a little inquietude myself—but how was it with you," turning to his younger and evidently favourite sister, and tapping her cheek; "did you see banners in the clouds, and mistake Miss Peyton's Æolian harp for rebellious music."

"Nay, Henry," rejoined the maid, looking at him affectionately, "much as I love my own country, the approach of her troops just now would give me great pain."

The brother made no reply, but returning the fondness expressed in her eye by a look of fraternal tenderness, he gently pressed her hand in silence—when Cæsar, who had participated largely in the anxiety of the family, and who had risen with the dawn, and kept a vigilant watch on the surrounding objects, exclaimed, as he stood gazing from one of the windows—

"Run—massa Harry—run—if love old Cæsar, run—here come the rebel horse," added the black, with a face that approached to something like the hues of a white man.

"Run!" repeated the British officer, gathering himself up in an air of military pride; "no, Mr. Cæsar, running is not my trade"—while speaking, he walked deliberately to the window, where the family were already collected

in the greatest consternation.

At a distance of more than a mile, about fifty dragoons were to be seen, winding down one of the lateral entrances to the valley. In advance with an officer, was a man attired in the dress of a countryman, who pointed in the direction of the cottage. A small party now left the main body, and moved rapidly towards the object of their destination.

On reaching the road which led through the bottom of the valley, they turned their horses' heads to the north. The Whartons continued chained in breathless silence to the spot, watching their movements, when the party, having reached the dwelling of Birch, made a rapid circle round his grounds, and in an instant his house was surrounded by a dozen sentinels.

Two or three of the dragoons now dismounted and disappeared: in a few minutes, however, they returned to the yard, followed by Katy, from whose violent gesticulations it was evident matters of no trifling concern were on the carpet. A short communication with the loquacious housekeeper followed the arrival of the main body of the troop, and the advanced party remounting, the whole moved towards the Locusts with great speed.

As yet, none of the family had sufficient presence of mind to devise any means of security for Captain Wharton; but the danger now became too pressing to admit of delay, and various means of secreting him were hastily proposed, but they were all haughtily rejected by the young man, as unworthy of his character—it was too late to retreat to the woods in the rear of the cottage, for he would unavoidably be seen, and followed by a troop of horse, as inevitably taken.

At length his sisters, with trembling hands, replaced his original disguise, the instruments of which had been carefully kept at hand by Cæsar, in expectation of some apprehended danger.

This arrangement was hastily and imperfectly completed, as the dragoons entered the lawn and orchard of the Locusts, riding with the rapidity of the wind; and in their turn the Whartons were surrounded.

Nothing remained now, but to meet the impending examination with as much indifference as the family could assume. The leader of the horse dismounted, and followed by a couple of his men, approached the outer door of the building, which was slowly and reluctantly opened for his admission by Cæsar. The heavy tread of the trooper, as he followed the black to the door of the parlor, rung in the ears of the females as it approached nearer and nearer, and drove the blood from their faces to their hearts with a chill that nearly annihilated all feeling.

A man whose colossal stature manifested the possession of vast strength, entered the room, and removing his cap, saluted the family with a mildness his appearance did not indicate as belonging to his nature—his dark hair hung around his brow in profusion, unstained with the powder which was worn at that day, and his face was nearly hid in the whiskers by which it was disfigured—still the expression of his eye, though piercing, was not bad, and his voice, though deep and powerful, was not unpleasant. Frances ventured to throw a timid glance at his figure as he entered, and saw at once the man, from whose scrutiny Harvey Birch had warned them there was so much to be apprehended.

"You have no cause for alarm, ladies," said the officer, pausing a moment, and contemplating the pale faces around him—"my business will be confined to a few questions, which, if freely answered, will instantly remove us from your dwelling."

"And what may they be, sir?" stammered Mr. Wharton, rising from his chair, and waiting anxiously for the reply.

"Has there been a strange gentleman staying with you during the storm?" continued the dragoon, speaking with interest, and in some degree sharing in the evident anxiety of the father.

"This gentleman—here—favored us with his company during the rain, and has not yet departed;" answered the agitated parent, unable to look his interrogator in the face.

"This gentleman!" repeated the other, turning to Captain Wharton, and contemplating his figure for a moment, until the anxiety of his countenance gave place to a lurking smile—he approached the youth with an air of comic gravity, and, with a low bow, continued—"I am sorry for the severe cold you have in your head, sir."

"Me!" exclaimed the captain in surprise; "I have no cold in my head."

"I fancied it then, from seeing you had covered such handsome auburn locks with that ugly old wig," rejoined the stranger; "it was my mistake, you will please to pardon it."

Mr. Wharton groaned aloud; but the ladies, ignorant of the extent of their visitor's knowledge, remained in trembling yet rigid silence. The captain himself moved his hand involuntarily to his head, and found the

trepidation of his sisters had left some of his natural hair exposed. The dragoon watched the movement with a continued smile, when, seeming to recollect himself, he proceeded, turning to the father——

"Then, sir, I am to understand there has not been a Mr. Harper here within the week."

"Mr. Harper!" echoed the other, feeling a load removed from his heart——"yes, sir——I had forgotten; but he is gone; and if there be any thing wrong in his character, we are in entire ignorance of it——to me he was a total stranger."

"You have but little to apprehend from his character," answered the dragoon dryly; "but he is gone——how——when——and whither?"

"He departed as he arrived," said Mr. Wharton, gathering renewed confidence from the manner of the trooper, "on horseback last evening, and he took the northern road."

The officer listened to him with intense interest, his countenance gradually lighting into a smile of pleasure; and the instant Mr. Wharton concluded his laconic reply, he turned on his heel and left the apartment. The Whartons, judging from his manner, thought he was about to proceed in quest of the object of his inquiries. On gaining the lawn they noticed the dragoon in earnest, and apparently pleased conversation with his two subalterns. In a few moments orders were given to some of the troop, and horsemen left the valley, at full speed, by its various roads.

The suspense of the party within, who were all highly interested witnesses of the scene, was shortly terminated; for the heavy tread of the dragoon soon announced his second approach. He bowed again politely as he re-entered the room, and walking up to Captain Wharton, said, with comic gravity——

"Now, sir, my principal business done, may I beg to examine the quality of that wig?"

The British officer imitated the manner of the other, as he deliberately uncovered his head, and handing him the wig, observed, "I hope, sir, it is to your liking."

"I cannot, without violating the truth, say it is sir," returned the dragoon; "I prefer your auburn hair, from which you seem to have combed the powder with great industry——but that must have been a sad hurt you have received under that enormous black patch."

"You appear so close an observer of things, I should like your opinion of it, sir," said Henry, removing the silk, and exhibiting his cheek free from blemish.

"Upon my word, sir, you improve most rapidly in externals," added the trooper, preserving his muscles in inflexible gravity: "if I could but persuade you to exchange this old surtout for that handsome blue coat by your side, I think I never could witness a more agreeable metamorphosis, since I was changed myself from a lieutenant to a captain."

Young Wharton very composedly did as he was required; and stood an extremely handsome, well-dressed young man. The dragoon looked at him for a minute with the drollery that characterized his manner, and then continued——

"This is a new comer in the scene——it is usual you know for strangers to be introduced——I am Captain Lawton, of the Virginia horse."

"And I——sir——am Captain Wharton, of his Majesty's 60th regiment of foot," returned Henry, bowing stiffly, and recovering his natural manner.

The countenance of Lawton changed instantly, and his assumed quaintness vanished. He viewed the figure of Captain Wharton, as he stood proudly swelling with a conscious pride that disdained further concealment, and cried, with great earnestness——

"Captain Wharton——from my soul I pity you."

"Oh! then," cried the father in agony, "if you pity him, dear sir, why molest him——he is not a spy——nothing but a desire to see his friends prompted him to venture so far from the regular army in disguise——leave him with us——there is no reward, no sum, which I will not cheerfully pay."

"Sir, your anxiety for your friend excuses your language," said Lawton haughtily; "but you forget I am a Virginian, and a gentleman."——Turning to the young man, he continued——"were you ignorant, Captain Wharton, that our picquets have been below you for several days?"

"I did not know it until I reached them, and it was then too late to retreat," said Wharton sullenly. "I came out, as my father has mentioned, to see my friends, understanding your parties to be at Peeks-kill, and near the Highlands, or surely I would not have ventured."

"All this may be very true," said Lawton musing; "but the affair of André has made us on the alert. When treason reaches to the grade of general officers, Captain Wharton, it behoves the friends of liberty to be vigilant."

Henry bowed to this remark in distant silence, and Sarah ventured to urge something in behalf of her brother. The dragoon heard her politely, and apparently with commiseration; but willing to avoid useless and embarrassing petitions, answered mildly——

"I am not the commander of the party, madam; Major Dunwoodie will decide what must be done with your brother; and, at all events, he will receive nothing but kind and gentle treatment.

"Dunwoodie!" exclaimed Frances, with a face in which the roses contended with the paleness of apprehension for the mastery; "thank God! then Henry is safe."

Lawton regarded her with a mingled expression of pity and admiration, then shaking his head, doubtfully, continued——

"I hope so; and with your permission we will leave the matter for his decision."

The colour of Frances changed from the paleness of fear to the glow of hope——her dread on behalf of her brother was certainly greatly diminished; yet her form shook; her breathing became short and irregular; and her whole frame gave tokens of extraordinary agitation——her eyes rose from the floor to the dragoon, and were again fixed immoveably on the carpet——she evidently wished to utter something, but was unequal to the effort. Miss Peyton was a close observer of these movements of her niece, and advancing with an air of feminine dignity, inquired——

"Then, sir, we may expect the pleasure of Major Dunwoodie's company shortly?"

"Immediately, madam," answered the dragoon, withdrawing his admiring gaze from the person of Frances; "expresses are already on the road to announce to him our situation, and the intelligence will speedily bring him to this valley; unless, indeed," he continued, contracting his lips, and looking droll, as he turned to Mr. Wharton, "some private reasons may exist to make a visit particularly unpleasant."

"I shall always be happy to see Major Dunwoodie," said the father hastily, overhearing the soliloquy of the trooper.

"Oh! doubtless, sir," said the other dryly; "he is a general favorite——may I presume on it so far as to ask leave to dismount and refresh my men, who compose part of his squadron."

There was a manner about the trooper, that would have made the omission of such a request easily forgiven by Mr. Wharton, but he was fairly entrapped by his own eagerness to conciliate, and it was useless to withhold a consent which he thought would probably be extorted——he, therefore, made the most of the necessity of the case, and gave such orders as would facilitate the wishes of Captain Lawton.

The officers were politely invited to take their morning's repast at the family breakfast table, and having first made their arrangements without, the invitation was frankly accepted. None of the watchfulness, which was so necessary to their situation, was neglected by the wary partizan. The patrols were seen on the distant hills, taking their protecting circuit around their comrades, who were enjoying, in the midst of dangers, a security that can only spring from the indifference of habit, and the watchfulness of discipline.

The addition to the party at Mr. Wharton's table was in number only three——and these were all of them men who, under the rough exterior of actual and arduous service, concealed the manners of the highest class of society. Consequently, the interruption to the domestic privacy of the family was marked by the observance of strict decorum. The ladies left the table to their guests, who proceeded without much superfluous modesty to do proper honours to the hospitality of Mr. Wharton.

At length, Captain Lawton suspended for a moment his violent attacks on the buck-wheat cakes, to inquire of the master of the house, if there was not a pedlar of the name of Birch who lived in the valley at times?

"At times only, I believe, sir," replied Mr. Wharton quickly; "he is seldom here——I may say I never see him."

"That is strange too," said the trooper, looking at the disconcerted host intently, "considering he is your next neighbour; he must be quite domestic, sir——and to the ladies it must be somewhat inconvenient——I doubt not but that muslin in the window-seat cost twice as much as he would have asked them for it."

Mr. Wharton turned in consternation, and saw some of the recent purchases scattered around the room.

The two subalterns smiled on each other significantly, but the captain resumed his breakfast with an eagerness that created a doubt, whether he ever expected to enjoy another. The necessity of a supply from the dominion of

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Dinah soon, however, afforded another respite, of which Lawton availed himself to say——

"I had a wish to break this Mr. Birch of his unsocial habits, and gave him a call this morning—— had I found him within, I should have placed him where he would enjoy life in the midst of society, for a short time at least."

"And where might that be, sir," asked Mr. Wharton, conceiving it necessary to say something.

"The guard-room," said the trooper drily.

"What is the offence of poor Birch?" asked Miss Peyton, handing the dragoon a fourth dish of coffee.

"Poor!" cried the captain; "if he is poor—— John Bull must pay him ill."

"Yes, indeed," said one of the subalterns, "king George owes him a dukedom."

"And congress a halter," continued the commanding officer, commencing anew on a fresh supply of the cakes.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Wharton, "that any neighbour of mine should incur the displeasure of our rulers."

"If I catch him," cried the dragoon, while buttering another cake, "he will dangle from the limbs of one of his namesakes."

"He would make a very pretty ornament, suspended from one of those locusts before his own door," added the lieutenant coolly.

"Never mind," continued the captain emphatically, "I will have him yet before I'm a major."

As the language of these officers appeared to flow from the strength of their feelings, the Whartons thought it prudent to discontinue the subject. It was no new intelligence to any of the family, that Harvey Birch was distrusted, and greatly harrassed by the American officers. His escapes from their hands, not less than his imprisonments, had been the conversation of the country in too many instances, and under circumstances of too great mystery, to be easily forgotten. In fact, no small part of the bitterness, expressed by Captain Lawton against the pedlar, arose from the unaccountable disappearance of the latter when intrusted to the custody of two of his most faithful dragoons.

A twelvemonth had not yet elapsed, since Birch had been seen lingering near the head quarters of the commander-in-chief, and at a time when important movements were expected hourly to occur. So soon as the information of this fact was communicated to the officer, whose duty it was to guard the avenues to the American camp, he despatched Captain Lawton in pursuit of the suspected pedlar.

Acquainted with all the passes of the hills, and indefatigable in the discharge of his duty, the trooper had, with much trouble and toil, succeeded in effecting his object. The party had halted at a farm house for the purposes of refreshment, and the prisoner been placed in a room by himself, but under the keeping of the two men before mentioned——all that was known subsequently is, that a woman was seen busily engaged in the employments of the household near the sentinels, and was particularly attentive to the wants of the captain, until he was deeply engaged in the employments of the supper table.

Afterwards neither woman nor pedlar were to be found. The pack, indeed, was discovered, open, and nearly empty, and a small door communicating with a room adjoining to the one in which the pedlar had been secured, was also open.

Captain Lawton never could forgive the deception; his antipathies to his enemies were not very moderate, but this was adding an insult to his penetration that rankled deeply. He sat in portentous silence, brooding over this exploit of his prisoner, yet mechanically pursuing the business before him, until after sufficient time had past to make a very comfortable meal, a trumpet suddenly broke on the ears of the party, sending its martial tones up the valley in startling melody. The trooper rose instantly from the table, exclaiming——

"Quick, gentlemen, to your horses——there comes Dunwoodie;" and, followed by his officers, he precipitately left the room.

With the exception of the sentinels left to guard Captain Wharton, the dragoons mounted, and marched out to meet their comrades.

None of the watchfulness, necessary in a war, where similarity of language, appearance and customs, rendered prudence doubly necessary, was omitted by this cautious leader. On getting sufficiently near, however, to a body of horse of more than double his own number, to distinguish countenances, Lawton plunged his rowels in his charger, and in a moment was by the side of his commander.

The ground in front of the cottage was again occupied by the horse; and the same precautions observed as before, the newly arrived troops hastened to participate in the cheer prepared for their comrades.

CHAPTER VI.

"Prepare thy soul, young Azim! thou hast brav'd
The bands of Greece, still mighty though enslav'd;
Hast fac'd her phalanx, arm'd with all its fame,
Her Macedonian pikes and globes of flame;
All this hast fronted, with firm heart and brow,
But a more perilous trial waits thee now——
Woman's bright eyes," * * * *
* * * * "and, let conquerors boast
Their fields of fame——he who in virtue arms
A young, warm spirit against beauty's charms,
Who feels her brightness, yet defies her thrall,
Is the best, bravest, conqueror of them all."

—— Moore

The ladies of the Wharton family had gathered around a window, deeply interested in the scene we have related.

Sarah viewed the approach of her countrymen with a smile of contemptuous indifference for the persons and appearance of men, whom she thought arrayed in the unholy cause of rebellion. Miss Peyton looked on the gallant show with an exulting pride which arose in the reflection, that the warriors before her were the chosen troops of her native colony, while Frances gazed with an intensity of interest that absorbed all other considerations.

The two parties had not yet joined, before her quickly glancing eyes distinguished one horseman in particular from those around him. Even the steed of this youthful soldier seemed to be conscious that he sustained the weight of no common man——his hoofs but lightly touched the earth, and his airy tread was the curbed motion of a blooded charger.

The dragoon sat gracefully in his saddle, with a firmness and ease that showed him master of both himself and horse——his figure united the just proportions of strength and activity, being tall, round, and muscular. It was to this officer Lawton made his report, and side by side they rode into the field opposite to the cottage.

The heart of the maiden beat with a pulsation nearly stifling, as he paused for a moment and took a survey of the building with an eye whose dark and sparkling glance could be seen in the distance between them——her colour changed, and for an instant, as she saw the youth throw himself from his saddle, Frances was compelled to seek relief to her trembling limbs in a chair.

The officer gave a few hasty orders to his second in command, walked rapidly into the lawn, and approached the cottage.——Fanny rose from her seat, and vanished from the apartment.——The dragoon ascended the steps of the piazza, and had barely time to touch the outer door when it opened to his admission.

The youth of Frances, when she left the city, had prevented her sacrificing, in conformity to the customs of that day, all her native beauties on the altar of fashion. Her hair, which was of a golden richness of colour, was left untortured to fall in the natural ringlets of her infancy, and shaded a face which was glowing with the united charms of health, youth, and artlessness——her eyes spake volumes, but her tongue was silent——her hands were interlocked before her, and aided by her taper form, bending forward in an attitude of expectation, gave a loveliness and interest to her appearance that for a moment chained her lover in silence to the spot.

Frances silently led the way into the vacant parlour opposite to the one in which the family were assembled, and turning to the soldier frankly, placing both her hands in his own, exclaimed——

"Ah! Dunwoodie! how happy, on many accounts, I am to see you; I have brought you in here to prepare you to meet an unexpected friend in the opposite room."

"To whatever cause it may be owing," cried the youth, pressing her hands to his lips, "I am happy too in being able to see you alone.——Frances, the probation you have decreed to my love is cruel——war and distance may shortly separate us forever."

"We must submit to the necessity which governs us," said the maid, losing the glow of excitement in a more

melancholy feeling. "But it is not love speeches I would hear now: I have other and more important matter for your attention."

"What can be of more importance than to make you mine by a tie that may be indissoluble! Frances, you are cold to me——me——from whose mind days of service and nights of alarm have never been able to banish your image."

"Dear Dunwoodie," said Frances, softening nearly to tears, and again extending her hand to him, as the richness of her colour gradually returned, "you know my sentiments——this war once ended, and you may take that hand for ever——but I never can consent to tie myself to you by any closer union than already exists, so long as you are arrayed in arms against my only brother—— even now that brother is awaiting your decision to restore him to liberty, or conduct him to a probable death."

"Your brother!" cried Dunwoodie, starting and turning pale; "your brother! explain yourself——what dreadful meaning is concealed in your words?"

"Has not Captain Lawton told you of the arrest of Henry, as a spy, by himself this very morning?" continued Frances, in a voice barely audible, and fixing on her lover a look of the deepest and most anxious interest.

"He told me of arresting a captain of the 60th in disguise, but without mentioning where or whom," replied the major in a similar tone, and dropping his head between his hands, he endeavoured to conceal his feelings from his companion.

"Dunwoodie! Dunwoodie!" exclaimed Frances, losing all her former confidence in the most fearful apprehensions, "what means this agitation?" as the Major slowly raised his face, in which was pictured the most expressive concern, she continued, "surely——surely——you will not betray your friend——my brother——your brother——to an ignominious death."

"Frances!" exclaimed the young man in agony, "what can I do——what can I do?"

"Do!" repeated the maid, gazing at him wildly; "would Major Dunwoodie yield his friend to his enemies——the brother of his betrothed wife?"

"Oh! speak not so unkindly to me——dearest Miss Wharton——my own Frances. I would this moment die for you——for Henry——but cannot forget my duty——cannot forfeit my honor——you yourself would be the first to despise me if I did."

"Peyton Dunwoodie!" said Frances solemnly, and with a face of ashy paleness, "you have told me——you have sworn, that you loved me."

"I do——I do"——interrupted the soldier with fervor; but the maid, motioning with her hand for silence, continued, in a voice that trembled with her emotions,

"Do you think I can throw myself in the arms of a man whose hands are stained with the blood of my only brother?"

"Frances!" exclaimed the major in agony. "you wring my very heart;" then pausing for a moment to struggle with his feelings, he endeavoured to force a smile, as he added, "but, after all, we may be torturing ourselves with unnecessary fears, and Henry, when I know the circumstances, may be nothing more than a prisoner of war; in which case I can liberate him on parole."

There is no more delusive passion than hope; and it seems to be the happy privilege of youth to cull all the pleasures which can be gathered from its indulgence. It is when we are most worthy of confidence ourselves, that we are least apt to distrust, and what we think ought to be, we are fond to think will.

The half-formed expectations of the young soldier were communicated to the desponding sister more by the eye than the voice, and she rose quickly from her chair with a returning crimson to her cheeks, as she cried——

"Oh! there can be no just grounds to doubt it: I knew——I knew——Dunwoodie, you would never desert us in the hour of our greatest need." The violence of her feelings conquered, and the agitated girl burst into a flood of tears.

The office of consoling those we love is one of the dearest prerogatives of affection; and Major Dunwoodie, although but little encouraged by his own momentary suggestion of relief, could not undeceive the lovely woman who leaned on his shoulder, as he wiped the traces of her agitated feelings from her face, with a trembling, but reviving confidence in the safety of her brother and the protection of her lover.

Frances having sufficiently recovered her recollection to command herself, now eagerly led the way into the opposite room, to communicate to her family the pleasing intelligence which she already conceived as certain.

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Dunwoodie followed her reluctantly, and with dreadful forebodings of the result: but a few moments brought him into the presence of his relatives, and he summoned all his resolution to meet the approaching trial with firmness.

The salutations of the young men were cordial and sincere, and on the part of Henry Wharton as collected as if nothing had occurred to disturb his self-possession.

The abhorrence of being, in any manner, auxiliary to the arrest of his friend, the danger to the life of Captain Wharton, and the heart-breaking declarations of Frances had, however, created an uneasiness in the bosom of Major Dunwoodie, which all his efforts could not conceal. His reception by the rest of the family was kind and sincere, both from old regard, and a remembrance of former obligations, heightened by the anticipations they could not fail to read in the expressive eyes of the blushing maid by his side. After exchanging greetings with every member of the family, Major Dunwoodie beckoned to the sentinel, whom the wary prudence of Captain Lawton had left in charge of the prisoner, to leave the room. Turning to Captain Wharton, with an air of fixed resolution, he inquired mildly——

"Tell me, Henry, the circumstances of this disguise, in which Captain Lawton reports you to have been found, and remember——remember—— Captain Wharton——your answers are entirely voluntary."

"The disguise was used by me, Major Dunwoodie," replied the English officer, gravely, "to enable me to visit my friends, without incurring the danger of becoming a prisoner of war."

"But you did not wear it until you saw the troop of Lawton approaching?" inquired the Major quickly.

"Oh! no," interrupted Frances, eagerly, forgetting all the circumstances in her anxiety for her brother; "Sarah and myself placed them on him when the dragoons appeared——it was our awkwardness that led to his discovery."

The countenance of Dunwoodie brightened, as, turning his eyes in fond admiration on the lovely speaker, he heard her explanation, and he added——

"Probably some articles of your own, which were at hand, and were used on the spur of the moment."

"No," said Wharton, with dignity, "the clothes were worn by me from the city——they were procured for the purpose to which they were applied, and I intended to use them in disguising me in my return this very day."

The appalled Frances shrunk back from between her brother and lover, where her ardent feelings had carried her, as the whole truth glanced over her mind, and sunk into a seat, gazing wildly on the young men who stood before her.

"But the picquets——the party at the plains"—— added Dunwoodie, turning pale.

"I passed them too in disguise," continued Wharton, proudly; "I made use of this pass for which I paid; and, as it bears the name of Washington, I presume is forged."

Dunwoodie caught the paper from his hand eagerly, and stood gazing on the signature for some time in silence, during which the soldier gradually prevailed over the man; when he turned to the prisoner, with a searching look, as he asked——

"Captain Wharton, whence did you procure this paper?"

"That is a question, I conceive, Major Dunwoodie has no right to ask," said the other, distantly.

"Your pardon, sir," returned the American officer; "my feelings may have led me into an impropriety."

Mr. Wharton, who had been a deeply interested auditor to the conversation, now so far conquered his feelings as to say, "Surely, Major Dunwoodie, the paper cannot be material——such artifices are used daily in war."

"This name is no counterfeit," said the dragoon, studying the characters, and speaking in a low voice; "is treason yet among us undiscovered?——The confidence of Washington has been abused, for the fictitious name is in a different hand from the pass. Captain Wharton, my duty will not suffer me to grant you a parole: you must accompany me to the Highlands."

"I did not expect otherwise, Major Dunwoodie," said the prisoner haughtily, moving towards his father, and speaking to him in a low tone.

Dunwoodie turned slowly towards the sisters, when the figure of Frances once more arrested his gaze; she had risen from her seat, and stood again with her hands clasped before him in an attitude of intense interest: feeling himself unable to contend longer with his feelings, he made a hurried excuse for a temporary absence, and left the room. Frances followed him, and, obedient to the direction of her eye, the soldier re-entered the apartment in which had been their first interview.

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"Major Dunwoodie," said Frances, in a voice barely audible, as she beckoned to him to be seated; her cheek, which had been of a chilling whiteness, was flushed with a suffusion that crimsoned her whole countenance; she struggled with herself for a moment, and continued, "I have already acknowledged to you my esteem—even now, when you most painfully distress me, I wish not to conceal it. Believe me, Henry is innocent of every thing but imprudence. Our country can sustain no wrong;" again she paused, and almost gasped for breath; her colour changed rapidly from red to white, until the blood rushed into her face, covering her features with the brightest vermilion; and she added hastily, in an under tone, "I have promised, Dunwoodie, when peace is restored to our country, to become your wife—give to my brother his liberty on parole, and I will this day go with you to the altar, follow you to the camp—and, in becoming a soldier's bride, learn to endure a soldier's privations."

Dunwoodie seized the hand which the blushing maid had in her ardour extended towards him, and pressed it for a moment to his bosom; then rising from his seat, paced the room in excessive agitation, as he exclaimed—"Frances—say no more—I conjure you, unless you wish to break my heart."

"You then reject my offered hand?" said the maid, with an air of offended delicacy, rising with dignity, though her pale cheek and quivering lip plainly showed the conflicting passions within.

"Reject it!" cried her lover with enthusiasm; "have I not sought it with entreaties—with tears? Has it not been the goal of all my earthly wishes? But to take it under such conditions would be to dishonour us both. Yet hope for better things. Henry must be acquitted—perhaps not tried. No intercession of mine will be wanting, you must well know; and believe me, Frances, I am not without favour with Washington."

"That very paper, that abuse of his confidence, to which you alluded, will steel him to my brother's sufferings. If threats or entreaties could move his stern sense of justice, would André have suffered?" said the maid despairingly, as she flew from the room to conceal the violence of her emotions.

Dunwoodie remained for a minute nearly stupified, with the distress of his mistress and the pain of his own feelings; and then followed, with a view to vindicate himself and relieve her apprehensions. On entering the hall that divided the two parlours, he was met by a small ragged boy, who looked one moment at his dress; and placing a piece of paper in his hands in silence, immediately vanished through the outer door of the building. The bewildered state of his mind, and the suddenness of the occurrence, gave the Major barely time to observe the messenger to be a country lad, meanly attired, and that he held in his hand one of those toys which are to be bought in cities, and which he now apparently contemplated with the conscious pleasure of having fairly purchased, by the performance of the service required. The soldier turned his eyes to the subject of the note. It was written on a piece of torn and soiled paper, and in a hand barely legible; but, after some little labour, he was able to make out as follows:—

"The rig'lars are at hand, horse and foot."

Dunwoodie started; and forgetting every thing in the duties of a soldier, precipitately left the house. While walking rapidly towards the troops, he noticed on a distant hill a vidette riding with speed; several pistols were fired in quick succession, and the next instant the trumpets of the corps, rung in his ears with the enlivening strain of "to arms." By the time he had reached the ground occupied by his squadron, the Major saw that every man was in active motion. Lawton was already in his saddle, eyeing the opposite extremity of the valley with the eagerness of expectation, and crying to the musicians, in tones but little lower than their own—

"Sound away my lads, and let these Englishmen know the Virginia horse are between them and the end of their journey."

The videttes and patrols now came pouring in, each making in succession his hasty report to the commanding officer, who gave his orders coolly, and with a promptitude that made obedience certain. Once only, as he wheeled his horse to ride over the ground in front, did Dunwoodie trust himself with a look at the cottage, and his heart beat with an unusual rapidity as he saw a female figure standing, with clasped hands, at a window of the room in which he had met Frances. The distance was too great to distinguish her features through the intervening object; but the soldier could not doubt that it was his mistress. The paleness of his cheek and the languor of his eye endured but for a moment longer. As he rode towards the intended battle-ground, a flush of ardour began to show itself on his sun-burnt features; and his dragoons, who studied the face of their leader, as the best index to their own fate, saw again the wonted flashing of the eyes, and cheerful animation, which they had so often witnessed on the eve of battle. By the additions of the videttes and parties that had been out, and which now had all joined, the whole number of the horse was increased to near two hundred. There was also a small body of mounted men,

whose ordinary duties were those of guides, but who, in cases of emergency, were embodied and did duty as foot soldiers: these were dismounted, and proceeded, by the order of Dunwoodie, to level the few fences which might interfere with the intended movements of the cavalry. The neglect of husbandry, which had been occasioned by the war, left this a comparatively easy task. Those long lines of heavy and durable walls, which now sweep through every part of the county, forty years ago were unknown. The slight and tottering fences of stone were then used more to clear the land for the purposes of cultivation, than as permanent barriers in the divisions of estates, and required the constant attention of the husbandman, to preserve them against the fury of the tempests and the frosts of winter. Some few of them had been built with more care immediately around the dwelling of Mr. Wharton; but those which had intersected the vale below were now generally a pile of ruins, over which the horses of the Virginians would bound with the fleetness of the wind. Occasionally a short line yet preserved its erect appearance, but as none of these crossed the ground on which Dunwoodie intended to act, there remained only the slighter fences of rails to be thrown down. Their duty was hastily, but effectually, performed; and the guides withdrew to the post assigned to them for the approaching fight.

Major Dunwoodie had received from his scouts all the intelligence concerning his foe, which was necessary to enable him to make his arrangements. The bottom of the valley was an even plain, that fell with a slight inclination from the foot of the hills on either side, to the level of a natural meadow that wound through the country on the banks of a small stream, by whose waters it was often inundated and fertilized. This brook was easily forded in any part of its course; and the only impediment it offered to the movements of the horse, was in a place where it changed its bed from the western to the eastern side of the valley, and where its banks were more steep and difficult of access than common; here the highway crossed it by a rough wooden bridge, as it did again at the distance of half a mile above the Locusts.

The hills on the eastern side of the valley were abrupt, and frequently obtruded themselves in rocky prominencies into its bosom, lessening the width to half its usual dimensions. One of these projections was but a short distance in the rear of the squadron of dragoons, and Dunwoodie directed Captain Lawton to withdraw, with two troops, behind its cover. The officer obeyed with a kind of surly reluctance, that was, however, somewhat lessened by the anticipations of the effect his sudden appearance would make on his enemy. Dunwoodie knew his man, and had selected the Captain to lead this service, both because he feared his precipitation in the field, and knew, when needed, his support would never fail to appear. It was only in front of the enemy that Captain Lawton was hasty; at all other times his discernment and self-possession were consummately preserved; but he sometimes forgot them in his eagerness to engage. On the left of the ground on which Dunwoodie intended to meet his foe, was a close wood, which skirted that side of the valley for the distance of a mile. Into this, then, the guides retired, and took their station near its edge, in such a manner as would enable them to maintain a scattering, but effectual fire, on the advancing column of the enemy.

It cannot be supposed that all these preparations were made unheeded by the inmates of the cottage: on the contrary, every feeling which can agitate the human breast, in witnessing such a scene, was actively alive. Mr. Wharton alone saw no hopes to himself in the termination of the conflict. If the British should prevail, his son would be liberated; but what would then be his own fate! He had hitherto preserved his neutral character in the midst of trying circumstances. The fact of his having a son in the royal, or, as it was called, the regular army, had very nearly brought his estates to the hammer. Nothing had obviated this result, but the powerful interest of the relation, who held a high political rank in the state, and his own vigilant prudence. In his heart, he was a devoted loyalist; and when the blushing Frances had communicated to him the wishes of her lover, on their return from the American camp the preceding spring, the consent he had given, for her future union with a rebel, was as much extracted by the increasing necessity which existed for his obtaining republican support, than by any considerations for the happiness of his child. Should his son now be rescued, he would, in the public mind, be united with him as a plotter against the freedom of the states; and should he remain a captive, and undergo the impending trial, the consequences might be still more dreadful. Much as he loved his wealth, Mr. Wharton loved his children better; and he sat gazing on the movements without, with a listless vacancy in his countenance, that denoted his imbecility of character.

Far different were the feelings of his son. Captain Wharton had been left in the keeping of two dragoons; one of whom marched to and fro the piazza with a measured tread, and the other had been directed to continue in the same apartment with his prisoner. The young man had witnessed all the movements of Dunwoodie with

admiration, for the ability he had displayed, and some fearful anticipations of the consequences to his friends. He particularly disliked the ambush of the detachment under Lawton, who could be distinctly seen from the windows of the cottage, cooling his impatience, by pacing on foot the ground in front of his men. Henry Wharton threw several hasty and inquiring glances around, to see if no means of liberation would offer, but invariably found the eyes of his sentinel fixed on him with the watchfulness of an Argus. He longed, with the ardour of youth, to join in the glorious fray, but was compelled to remain a dissatisfied spectator of a scene in which he would so cheerfully have been an actor. Miss Peyton and Sarah continued gazing on the preparations with varied emotions, in which concern for the fate of the captain formed the most prominent feeling, until the moment the shedding of blood seemed approaching, when, with the timidity of their sex, they sought the retirement of an inner room. Not so Frances——she had returned to the apartment where she had left Dunwoodie, and, from one of its windows, been a deeply interested spectator of all his movements. The wheelings of the troops, the deadly preparations, had all been unnoticed; the maid saw her lover only, and with mingled emotions of admiration and dread that nearly chilled her. At one moment the blood rushed to her heart, as she saw the young warrior riding gracefully, and with admirable skill, through his ranks, evidently giving life and courage to all whom he addressed; and the next, it curdled with the thought, that the very gallantry she so much valued, might soon prove the means of placing the grave between her and the object of her regard. Frances gazed until she could gaze no longer.

In a field on the left of the cottage, and at a short distance in the rear of the troops, were a small group, whose occupations seemed to differ from all around them. They were in number only three, being two men and a mulatto boy. The principal personage of this party was a man, whose leanness made his really tall stature appear excessive——he wore spectacles——was unarmed, haddismounted, and seemed to be dividing his attention between a segar, a book, and the incidents of the field before him. To this party Frances determined to convey a note, directed to Dunwoodie. She wrote hastily, with a pencil, "Come to me, Peyton, if it be but for a moment;" and Cæsar emerged from the cellar kitchen, taking the precaution to go by the rear of the building, to avoid the sentinel on the piazza, who had very cavalierly ordered all the family to remain housed. The black delivered the note to the gentleman, with a request it might be forwarded to Major Dunwoodie. It was the surgeon of the horse to whom Cæsar addressed himself; and the teeth of the African chattered, as he saw displayed upon the ground, the several instruments which were in preparation for the anticipated operations. The doctor himself seemed to view the arrangement with great satisfaction, as he deliberately raised his eyes from his book to order the boy to convey the note to his commanding officer, and then dropping them on the page continued his occupation. Cæsar was slowly retiring, as the third personage, who by his dress might be an inferior assistant of the surgical department, coolly inquired "if he would have a leg taken off." This question seemed to remind the black of the existence of those limbs, for he made such use of them as to reach the piazza at the same instant that Major Dunwoodie rode up at half speed. The brawny sentinel squared himself, and poised his sword with military precision, as he stood on his post while his officer passed; but no sooner had the door closed, than, turning to the negro, he said, with great deliberation——

"Harkee, blacky, if you quit the house again without my knowledge, I will shave off one of those ebony ears with this razor."

Thus assailed in another member, Cæsar hastily retreated into his kitchen, muttering something, in which the words "Skinner, and rebel rascal," formed a principal part of his speech.

"Major Dunwoodie," said Frances to her lover as he entered, "I may have done you injustice—— if I have appeared harsh"——

The emotions of the agitated girl prevailed, and she burst into tears.

"Frances," cried the soldier with warmth, "you are never harsh——never unjust——but when you doubt my love."

Ah! Dunwoodie," added the now sobbing maid, "you are about to risk your life in battle—— remember that there is one heart whose happiness is built on your safety——brave I know you are——be prudent"——

"For your sake?" inquired the delighted youth.

"For my sake," replied Frances, in a voice barely audible, and dropping on his bosom.

Dunwoodie folded her to his heart, and was about to speak, as a trumpet sounded in the southern end of the vale. Imprinting one long kiss of affection on her unresisting lips, the soldier tore himself from his mistress, and hastened to the scene of strife.

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Frances threw herself on a sofa, buried her head under its cushion, and, with her shawl drawn over her face, to exclude as much of sound as possible, continued there until the shouts of the combatants, the rattling of the fire arms, and the thundering tread of the horses had ceased.

CHAPTER VII.

In peace, there's nothing so becomes a man,
As modest stillness, and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard favour'd rage:—
I see you stand, like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot;
Follow your spirit. And upon this charge
Cry—

— Shakspeare

The rough and unimproved face of the country, the frequency of covers, together with the great distance from their own country, and the facilities afforded them for rapid movements to the different points of the war, by the undisputed command of the ocean, had all united to deter the English officers from employing a heavy force in cavalry, in their efforts to subdue the revolted colonies.

Only one regiment of regular horse was sent from the mother country during the struggle. But legions and independent corps were formed in different places, as it best accorded with the views of the royal commanders, or suited the exigencies of the times. These were not unfrequently composed of men raised in the colonies, and at other times drafts were had from the regiments of the line, and the soldier was made to lay aside the musquet and bayonet, and taught to wield the sabre and carabine. One particular body of the subsidiary troops were included in this arrangement, and the Hessian yagers were transformed into a corps of heavy and inactive horse.

Opposed to them were the hardest spirits of America. Most of the cavalry regiments of the continental army were led and officered by gentlemen from the south. The high and haughty courage of the commanders had communicated itself to the privates, who were men selected with care and attention to the service they were intended to perform.

While the British were confined to their empty conquests in the possession of a few of the larger towns, or marched through countries that were swept of every thing like military supplies, the light troops of their enemies had the range of the whole of the interior before them.

The sufferings of the line of the American army were great beyond example; but possessing the power, and feeling themselves engaged in a cause which justified severity, the horse were well mounted, well fed, and consequently very effective. Perhaps the world could not furnish more brave, enterprising, and resistless corps of light cavalry than were a few in the continental service at the time of which we write.

Dunwoodie's men had often tried their prowess against the enemy, and now sat panting to be led once more against foes that they seldom charged in vain. Their wishes were soon to be gratified; for their commander had scarcely time to regain his seat in the saddle, before a body of the enemy came sweeping round the base of the hill, which intersected the view to the south. A few minutes enabled the Major to distinguish their character. In one troop he saw the green coats of the Cowboys, and in the other the leather helmets and wooden saddles of the yagers. Their numbers were about equal to the body under his immediate orders.

On reaching the open space near to the cottage of Harvey Birch, the enemy halted and drew up his men in line, and was evidently making preparations for a charge. At this moment a column of foot appeared in the vale, and pressed forward to the bank of the brook which we have already mentioned.

Major Dunwoodie was not less distinguished for coolness and judgment, than, where occasion offered, by his dauntless intrepidity. He at once saw his advantage, and determined to profit by it. The column he led began slowly to retire from the field, when the youthful German, who commanded the enemy's horse, fearful of missing an easy conquest, gave the word to charge. Few troops were more hardy than the Cow-boys; they sprang eagerly forward in the pursuit with a confidence, created by the retiring foe and the column in their rear; the Hessians followed more slowly, but in better order. The trumpets of the Virginians now sounded long and lively; they were

answered by a strain from the party in ambush that went to the hearts of their enemies. The column of Dunwoodie wheeled in perfect order, opened, and, as the word to charge was given, the troops of Lawton emerged from the cover, with their leader in advance, waving his sabre over his head, and shouting, in a voice that was heard above the clangor of the martial music.

The charge threatened too much for the refugee troop. They scattered in every direction, flying from the field as fast as their horses, the chosen beasts of Westchester, could carry them. Only a few were hurt; but such as did meet the arms of their avenging countrymen never survived the blow, to tell who struck it. It was upon the poor vassals of a German tyrant that the shock fell. Disciplined to the most exact obedience, these illfated men met the charge bravely, but they were swept before the mettled horses and nervous arms of their antagonists like chaff before the wind. Many of them were literally ridden down, and Dunwoodie soon saw the field without an opposing foe. The proximity of the infantry prevented pursuit, and it was behind its column that the few Hessians who escaped unhurt sought protection.

The more cunning refugees dispersed in small bands, taking various and devious routes back to their old station in front of Harlaem. Many was the sufferer, in his cattle, furniture, and person, that was created by this route; for the dispersion of a troop of Cow-boys was only the extension of an evil.

Such a scene could not be expected to be acted so near them, and the inmates of the cottage take no interest in the result. In truth, the feelings it excited pervaded every bosom, from the kitchen to the parlour. Terror and horror had prevented the ladies from being spectators, but they did not feel the less. Frances continued lying in the posture we have mentioned, offering up fervent and incoherent petitions for the safety of her countrymen, although in her inmost heart she had personified her nation by the graceful image of Major Dunwoodie. Her aunt and sister were less exclusive in their devotions, but Sarah began to feel, as the horrors of war were thus brought home to her senses, less pleasure in her anticipated triumphs.

The inmates of Mr. Wharton's kitchen were four—namely, Cæsar and his spouse, their granddaughter, a jetty damsel of twenty, and the boy before alluded to. The blacks were the remnants of a race of negroes which had been entailed on his estate from Mr. Wharton's maternal ancestors, who had been descendants from the early Dutch colonists. Time, depravity, and death, had reduced them to this small number, and the boy, who was white, had been added by Miss Peyton to the establishment, as an assistant, to perform the ordinary services of a footman. Cæsar, after first using the precaution to place himself under the cover of an angle of the wall, for a screen against any roving bullet which might be traversing the air, became an amused spectator of the skirmish. The sentinel on the piazza was at the distance of but a few feet from him, and entered into the spirit of the chase with all the ardour of a tried blood-hound—he noticed the approach of the black, and his judicious position with a smile of contempt, as he squared himself towards the enemy, offering his unprotected breast to any dangers which might come.

After considering the arrangement of Cæsar for a moment with ineffable disdain, the dragoon said with great coolness—

"You seem very careful of that beautiful person of yours, Mr. Blueskin."

"I guess a bullet hurt a coloured man as quick as a white," muttered the black surlily, casting a glance at his rampart with much self-satisfaction.

"I'm thinking it's all guess with you, snowball—suppose I make the experiment;" as he spoke, he deliberately drew a pistol from his belt and levelled it at the black. Cæsar's teeth chattered at the appearance of the dragoon, although he believed nothing serious was intended; and it was at this moment that the column of Dunwoodie began to retire, and the royal cavalry commenced their charge.

"There, Mister Light-horseman," said Cæsar eagerly, as he believed the Americans were retiring in earnest, "why you rebels don't fight—see—see how King George's men make Major Dunwoodie run—good gentleman too, but don't like to fight a rig'lars."

"Damn your regulars," cried the other fiercely; "wait a minute, blackey, and you'll see Captain Jack Lawton come out from behind yonder hill, and scatter these Cow-boys like wild geese who've lost their leader."

Cæsar had supposed the party under Lawton to have sought the shelter of the hill from similar motives to what had induced him to place the wall between himself and the battle ground: but the fact soon verified the trooper's prophecy, and the black witnessed with consternation the total route of the royal horse.

The sentinel had manifested his exultation at the success of his comrades with loud shouts, which soon

brought his companion, who had been left in the more immediate charge of Henry Wharton, to the open window of the parlour.

"See, Tom, see," cried the delighted trooper, "how Captain Lawton makes that Hessian's leather cap fly; and now the major has killed the officer's horse—zounds, why didn't he kill the Dutchman, and save the horse?"

A few pistols were discharged at the flying Cow-boys, and a spent bullet broke a pane of glass within a few feet of Cæsar—imitating the posture of the great tempter of our race, the black sought the protection of the inside of the building, and immediately ascended to the parlour.

The small lawn in front of the Locusts was hid from the view of the road by a close line of shrubbery, and the horses of the dragoons had been left linked together under its shelter to await the movements of their masters.

At this moment two Cow-boys, who had been cut off from a retreat to their own party, rode furiously through the gate, with an intention of escaping to the open wood in the rear of the cottage.

The victorious Americans had pressed the retreating Germans until they had driven them under the protection of the fire of the infantry; and feeling themselves in the privacy of the lawn relieved from any immediate danger, the predatory warriors yielded to a temptation that few of the corps were ever known to resist—opportunity and horse-flesh. With a hardihood and presence of mind that could only exist from long practice in similar scenes, they made towards their intended prizes by an almost spontaneous movement. They were busily engaged in separating the fastenings of the horses, when the trooper on the piazza discharged his pistols, and rushed sword in hand to the rescue.

The entrance of Cæsar into the parlour had induced the wary dragoon within to turn his attention more closely on his prisoner; but this new interruption drew him again to the window. He threw his body out of the building, and with dreadful imprecations endeavoured by his threats and appearance, to frighten the marauders from their prey. The moment was enticing. Three hundred of his comrades were within a mile of the cottage; unriden horses were running at large in every direction, and Henry Wharton seized the unconscious sentinel by his legs, and threw him headlong into the lawn.—Cæsar vanished from the room, and drew a bolt of the outer door.

The fall of the soldier was not great, and recovering his feet, he turned his fury for a moment on his prisoner. To scale the window in the face of his enemy, was, however, impossible, and on trial he found the main entrance barred.

His comrade now called loudly upon his aid, and forgetful of every thing else, the discomfited trooper rushed to his assistance. One horse was instantly liberated, but the other was already fastened to the saddle of a Cow-boy, and the four retired behind the building, cutting furiously at each other with their sabres, and making the air resound with the violence of their imprecations. Cæsar threw the outer door open, and pointing to the horse, who was quietly biting the faded herbage of the lawn, exclaimed—

"Run—now—run—Massa Harry, run."

"Yes," cried the youth as he vaulted into the saddle, "now, indeed, my honest fellow, is the time to run." He beckoned hastily to his father, who stood at the window in speechless anxiety, with his hands extended towards his child in the attitude of benediction, and adding, "God bless you, Cæsar, salute the girls," dashed through the gate with the rapidity of lightning.

The African watched him with anxiety as he gained the highway, saw him incline to the right, and riding furiously under the brow of some rocks, which on that side rose perpendicularly, and disappear behind a projection, which soon hid him from view.

The delighted Cæsar closed the door, pushing bolt after bolt, and turning the key until it would turn no more, soliloquizing the whole time on the happy escape of his young master.

"How well he ride—teach him myself—salute a young lady—I guess a Miss Fanny would'nt let old coloured man kiss her pretty red cheek."

When the fortune of the day was decided, and the time arrived for the burial of the dead, two Cow-boys and a Virginian were found in the rear of the Locusts to be included in the number.

Happily for Henry Wharton, the searching eyes of his captor were examining, through a pocket glass, the column of infantry that still held its position on the bank of the stream, as the remnants of the Hessian yagers were seeking its friendly protection. His horse was of the best blood of Virginia, and carried him with the swiftness of the wind along the valley, and the heart of the youth was already beating tumultuously with the pleasure of his deliverance, when a well known voice reached his startled ear, crying aloud—

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"Bravely done——Captain——don't spare the whip, and turn to your left before you cross the brook."

Wharton turned his head in surprise, and saw, sitting on the point of a jutting rock that commanded a bird's-eye view of the valley, his former guide, Harvey Birch. His pack much diminished in size lay at the feet of the pedlar, who waved his hat to the youth exultingly as the latter flew by him. The English captain took the advice of this mysterious being, and finding a wood road, which led to the highway that intersected the valley, turned down its direction, was soon opposite to his friends, and the next minute crossed the bridge, and stopped his charger before his old acquaintance, Colonel Wellmere.

"Captain Wharton!" exclaimed the astonished commander of the English troops, "dressed in blue and mounted on a rebel dragoon horse! are you from the clouds in this attire, and in such a style?"

"Thank God!" cried the youth, recovering his breath, "I am safe, and escaped from the hands of my enemies; but five minutes since and I was a prisoner and threatened with the gallows."

"The gallows, Captain Wharton! surely those traitors to their king would never dare to commit another murder in cold blood; is it not enough that they took the life of André? wherefore did they threaten you with a similar fate?"

"Under the pretence of a similar offence," said the captain, briefly explaining to the group of listeners the manner of his capture, the grounds for his personal apprehensions, and the method of his escape. By the time he had concluded his narration, the fugitive Germans had collected in the rear of the column of infantry, and Colonel Wellmere cried aloud——

"From my soul I congratulate you, my brave friend——mercy is a quality with which these traitors are unacquainted, and you are doubly fortunate in escaping from their hands, and uninjured. Prepare yourself to grant me your assistance, and I will soon afford you a noble revenge."

"I do not think there was danger of personal outrage to any man, Colonel Wellmere, from a party where Major Dunwoodie commands," returned young Wharton, with a slight glow on his face; "his character is above the impeachment of such an offence; neither do I think it altogether prudent to cross this brook into the open plain, in the face of those Virginian horse, flushed as they must be with the success they have just obtained."

"Do you call the route of those irregulars and these sluggish Hessians, a deed to boast of?" said the other with a contemptuous smile; "you speak of the affair, Captain Wharton, as if your boasted Mr. Dunwoodie, for major he is none, had discomfited the body guards of your king."

"And I must be allowed to say, Colonel Wellmere, that if the body guards of my king were in yon field, they would meet a foe that it would be dangerous to despise. Sir, my boasted Mr. Dunwoodie is the pride of Washington's army as a cavalry officer," cried Henry with warmth.

"Dunwoodie——Dunwoodie," repeated the colonel slowly; "surely I have met the gentleman before."

"I have been told you once saw him, sir, for a moment, at the town residence of my sisters," replied Wharton, with a lurking smile.

"Ah! I do remember me of such a youth," said the Colonel with affected irony; "and does the most potent congress of these rebellious colonies intrust their soldiers to the leading of such a warrior?"

"Ask the commander of your Hessian horse, whether he thinks Major Dunwoodie worthy of the confidence," said Henry Wharton keenly, feeling indignant at the trifling of the other, when applied to such a man as his friend, and at a moment so unseasonable.

Colonel Wellmere was far from wanting that kind of pride which makes a man bear himself bravely in the presence of his enemies. He had served in America a long time without ever meeting with any but new raised levies, or the militia of the country; these would sometimes fight, and that fearlessly, but they as often chose to run away without pulling a trigger. He was too apt to judge from externals, and thought it impossible for men, whose gaiters were so clean, whose tread so regular, and who wheeled with so much accuracy, to be beaten. In addition to all these, they were Englishmen, and their success was certain. Colonel Wellmere had never been kept much in the field, or these notions, which he had brought with him from home, and which had been greatly increased by the vaporings of a garrisoned town, would have long since vanished——he listened to the warm reply of Captain Wharton with a supercilious smile, and then inquired——

"You would not have us retire, sir, before these boasted horsemen, without doing something that may deprive them of part of the glory you appear to think they have gained?"

"I would have you advised, Colonel Wellmere, of the danger you are about to encounter."

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"Danger is but an unseemly word for a soldier," continued the British commander with a sneer.

"And one as little dreaded by the 60th as any corps who wear the royal livery," cried Henry Wharton fiercely; "give but the word to charge, and then let our actions speak."

"Now again I know my young friend," said Wellmere soothingly; "but if you have any thing to say before we fight, that can in any manner help us in our attack, we'll listen. You know the force of the rebels—are there more of them in ambush?"

"Yes," replied the youth, chafing still with the other's sneers, "in the skirt of this wood on our right are a small party of foot—their horse are all before you."

"Where they will not continue long," cried Wellmere, turning to the few officers around him; "gentlemen, we will cross the stream in column, and display on the plain beyond, or else we shall not be able to entice these valiant yankies within the reach of our muskets. Captain Wharton, I claim your assistance as an aid-de-camp."

The youth shook his head in disapprobation of a movement which his good sense taught him was rash, but prepared with alacrity to perform his duty in the impending trial.

During this conversation, which was held at a small distance in advance of the British column, and in full view of the Americans, Dunwoodie had been collecting his scattered troops, securing his few prisoners, and retiring to the ground where he had been posted at the first appearance of his enemy. Satisfied with the success he had already obtained, and believing the English too wary to give him an opportunity of harrassing them farther, he was about to withdraw the guides, and, leaving a strong party on the ground to watch the movements of the regulars, to fall back a few miles to a favorable place for taking up his quarters for the night. Captain Lawton was reluctantly listening to the reasoning of his commander, and had brought out his favorite glass, to see if no opening could be found for an advantageous attack, when he suddenly exclaimed—

"How's this? a blue coat among those scarlet gentry," again applying his glass to his eye, "as I hope to live to see old Virginia, it is my masquerading friend of the 60th, the handsome Captain Wharton escaped from two of the best men in my troop."

He had not done speaking when the survivor of these heroes joined, bringing with him his own and the horses of the Cow-boys; he reported the death of his comrade, and the escape of his prisoner. As the deceased was the immediate sentinel over the person of young Wharton, and the other was not to be blamed for defending the horses, which were more particularly under his care, his captain heard him with uneasiness, but without anger.

This intelligence made an entire change in the views of Major Dunwoodie. He saw at once that his own reputation was involved in the escape of his prisoner. The orders to recal the guides was countermanded, and he now joined his second in command, watching as eagerly as the impetuous Lawton for some opening to assail his foe to advantage.

But two hours before and Dunwoodie had felt the chance, which made Henry Wharton his captive, as the severest blow he had ever sustained. Now he panted for an opportunity in which, by risking his own life, he might return his friend to bondage—all other considerations were lost in the goadings of his wounded spirit, and he might have soon emulated Lawton in hardihood, had not Wellmere and his troops at this moment crossed the brook into the open plain.

"There," cried the delighted captain, as he pointed out the movement with his finger, "there comes John Bull into the mouse trap, and with his eyes wide open."

"Surely," said Dunwoodie eagerly, "he will not display his column on that flat; Wharton must tell him of the ambush. But if he does"—"We will not leave him a dozen sound skins in his battalion," interrupted the other, springing into his saddle.

The truth was soon apparent; for the English column, after advancing for a short distance on the level land, displayed with an accuracy that would have done them honour on a field day in their own Hyde Park.

"Prepare to mount—mount;" cried Dunwoodie; the last word being repeated by Lawton in a tone that rung in the ears of Cæsar, as he stood at the open window of the cottage The black had lost all his confidence in Captain Lawton's timidity, for he thought he yet saw him emerging from his cover and waving his sword on high.

As the British line advanced slowly and in exact order, the guides opened a galling fire. It began to annoy that part of the royal troops which was nearest to them. Wellmere listened to the advice of the veteran who was next to him in rank, and ordered two companies to dislodge the American foot from their hiding place. The movement created a slight confusion, and Dunwoodie seized the opportunity to charge. No ground could be more favorable

for the manœuvres of horse, and the attack of the Virginians was irresistible. It was aimed chiefly at the flank opposite to the wood, in order to clear the Americans from the fire of their friends who were concealed—and it was completely successful. Wellmere was on the left of his line, and was overthrown by the impetuous fury of his assailants. Dunwoodie was in time to save him from the impending blow of one of his men, and raising him from the ground, had him placed on a horse and delivered to the custody of his orderly. The officer who had suggested the attack upon the guides, had been intrusted with its execution, but the menace was sufficient for these irregulars. In fact, their duty was performed, and they retired along the skirt of the wood with intent to regain their horses, which had been left under a guard at the upper end of the valley.

The left of the British line had been outflanked by the Americans, who had doubled in their rear, and had thus made the route in that quarter total. But the second in command perceiving how the battle went, promptly wheeled his party, and threw in a heavy fire on the dragoons as they passed him to the charge; with this party was Henry Wharton who had volunteered to assist in dispersing the guides: a ball had struck his bridle arm, and compelled him to change hands. As the dragoons dashed by them, rending the air with their shouts, and with trumpets sounding a lively strain, the charger ridden by the youth became ungovernable—he plunged, reared, and his rider being unable with his wounded arm to manage the impatient animal, Henry Wharton found himself in less than a minute, unwillingly riding by the side of Captain Lawton. The dragoon comprehended at a glance the ludicrous situation of this new comrade, but had only time to cry aloud before they plunged into the English line——

"The horse knows the righteous cause better than his rider. Captain Wharton, you are welcome to the ranks of freedom."

No time was lost, however, by Lawton, after the charge was completed, in securing his prisoner again; and, perceiving him to be hurt, he directed him to be conveyed to the rear.

The Virginian troopers dealt out their favours with no gentle hands on that part of the royal foot who were thus left in a great measure at their mercy. Dunwoodie noticing the remnant of the Hessians, who had again ventured on the plain, led on in pursuit, and easily overtaking their light and half-fed horses, soon destroyed the remainder of their detachment.

In the meanwhile, great numbers of the English, taking advantage of the smoke and confusion on the battle ground, were enabled to get in the rear of their countrymen, who still preserved their order in a line parallel to the wood, but who had been obliged to hold their fire from the fear of injuring friends as well as foes. The fugitives were directed to form a second line within the wood itself, and under cover of its trees. This was not yet done, when Captain Lawton, called to a youth, who commanded the other troop left with that part of the force which remained on the ground, and proposed charging the unbroken line of the British. The proposal was as promptly accepted as it had been made, and the troops were arrayed for the purpose. The eagerness of their leader prevented the preparations necessary to insure success, and the horse receiving a destructive fire as they advanced, were thrown into additional confusion. Both Lawton and his more juvenile comrade fell at this discharge. Fortunately for the credit of the Virginians, Major Dunwoodie re-entered the field at this critical instant—he saw his troops in disorder—at his feet lay weltering in his blood George Singleton, a youth endeared to him by numberless virtues, and Lawton was unhorsed and stretched senseless on the plain. The eye of the youthful warrior flashed with unwonted fires. Riding between his squadron and the enemy, in a voice that reached to the hearts of his dragoons, he recalled them to their duty. His presence and words acted like magic. The clamour of voices ceased; the line was formed promptly and with exactitude; the charge sounded, and led on by their commander, the Virginians swept across the plain with an impetuosity that nothing could withstand, and the field was instantly cleared of the enemy; what were not destroyed sought a shelter in the woods. Dunwoodie slowly withdrew from the fire of the English who were covered by the trees, and commenced the painful duty of collecting his dead and wounded.

The sergeant, charged with conducting Henry Wharton to where he might procure surgical aid, set about performing his duty with alacrity, in order to return as soon as possible to the scene of strife. They had not reached the middle of the plain, before the captain noticed a man whose appearance and occupation forcibly arrested his attention. His head was bald and bare, but a well-powdered wig was to be seen half concealed in the pocket of his breeches. His coat was off, and his arms naked to the elbow——blood had disfigured much of his dress, and his hands and even face bore this mark of his profession——in his mouth was a segar——in his right

hand some instruments of strange formation, and in his left the remnants of an apple, with which he occasionally relieved the duty of his before mentioned segar. He was standing, lost in the contemplation of a Hessian who lay breathless before him. At a little distance were three or four of the guides, leaning on their muskets, and straining their eyes in the direction of the combatants, and at his elbow stood a man who, from the implements in his hand and bloody vestments, was an assistant in his duty.

"There, sir, is the doctor," said the attendant of Henry very coolly; "he will patch up your arm in the twinkling of an eye;" and beckoning to the guides to approach, he whispered and pointed to his prisoner; and then galloped furiously towards his comrades.

Wharton advanced to the side of this strange figure, and observing himself to be unnoticed, was about to request his assistance, when the other broke silence in a soliloquy—

"Now I know this man to have been killed by Captain Lawton, as well as if I had seen him strike the blow. How often have I strove to teach him the manner in which he can disable his adversary without destroying life. It is cruel thus unnecessarily to cut off the human race, and furthermore, such blows as these render professional assistance unnecessary—it is in a measure treating the lights of science with disrespect."

"If, sir, your leisure will admit," said Henry Wharton, "I must beg your attention to this slight hurt of mine."

"Ah!" cried the other starting, and examining him from head to foot, "you are from the field below—is there much business there, sir?"

"Indeed," answered Henry, accepting the offer of the surgeon to assist in removing his coat, "'tis a stirring time, I can assure you.

"Stirring!" repeated the surgeon, busily employed with his dressings, "you give me great pleasure, sir, for so long as they can stir there must be life, and while there is life you know, there is hope—but here my art is of no use—I did put in the brains of one patient, but I rather think the man must have been dead before I saw him—it is a curious case, sir; I will take you to see it—only across the fence there, where you may perceive so many bodies together. Ah! the ball has glanced around the bone without shattering it—you are fortunate in falling into the hands of an old practitioner, or you might have lost this limb."

"Indeed!" said Henry with a slight uneasiness, "I did not apprehend the injury to be so serious."

"Oh! the hurt is not bad, but you have such a pretty arm for an operation," replied the surgeon coolly, "the pleasure of the thing might easily tempt a novice."

"The devil!" cried the horror-struck captain, "can there be any pleasure in mutilating a fellow creature?"

"Sir," said the surgeon with great gravity, "a scientific amputation is a very pretty operation, and doubtless might tempt a younger man, in the hurry of business, to overlook all the particulars of the case."

Further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the dragoons, slowly marching towards their former halting place, and new applications from the slightly wounded soldiers who now came riding in, making hasty demands on the skill of the doctor.

The guides took charge of Wharton, and with a heavy heart, the young man retraced his steps to his father's cottage.

The English had lost in the charges about one third of their foot, but the remainder had been rallied in the wood, and Dunwoodie, perceiving them to be too strongly posted to assail, had left a strong party with Captain Lawton, with orders to watch their motions, and seize every opportunity to harrass them before they re-embarked.

Intelligence had reached the major of another party being out by the way of the Hudson, and his duty required that he should hold himself in readiness to defeat the intentions of these also. Captain Lawton received his orders with strong injunctions to make no efforts on the foe unless a favourable chance should offer. The injury received by this officer was in the head, being stunned by a glancing bullet, and parting with a laughing declaration from the major, that if he again forgot himself, they should all think him more materially hurt, each took his own course.

The British were a light party without baggage, that had been sent out to destroy certain stores understood to be collecting for the use of the American army. They now retired through the woods to the heights, and keeping the route along their summits, in places unassailable by cavalry, commenced their retreat to their boats.

CHAPTER VIII.

"With fire and sword the country round
Was wasted far and wide;
And many a childing mother then,
And new born infant died;
But things like these, you know, must be
At every famous victory."

The last sounds of the combat died on the ears of the anxious listeners in the cottage, and was succeeded by the stillness of suspense. Frances had continued by herself, striving to exclude the uproar, and vainly endeavouring to summon resolution to meet the dreaded result. The ground where the charge on the foot had taken place, was but a short mile from the Locusts, and, in the intervals of the musketry, the voices of the soldiery had even reached the ears of its inhabitants. After witnessing the escape of his son, Mr. Wharton had joined his sister and eldest daughter in their retreat, and the three continued fearfully waiting news from the field. Unable longer to remain under the painful uncertainty of her situation, Frances soon added herself to the uneasy group, and Cæsar was directed to examine into the state of things without, and report on whose banners victory had alighted. The father now briefly related to his astonished children the circumstance and manner of their brother's escape. They were yet in the freshness of their surprise when the door opened, and Captain Wharton, attended by a couple of the guides, and followed by the black, stood before them.

"Henry——my son——my son," cried the agitated parent, stretching out his arms, yet unable to rise from his seat, "what is it I see——are you again a captive, and in danger of your life."

"The better fortune of these rebels has prevailed," said the youth, endeavouring to force a cheerful smile, and taking a hand of each of his distressed sisters. "I strove nobly for my liberty, but the perverse spirit of rebellion has even lighted on their horses. The steed I mounted carried me, greatly against my will I acknowledge, into the very centre of Dunwoodie's men."

"And you were again captured," continued the father, casting a fearful glance on the armed attendants who had entered the room.

"That, sir, you may safely say; this Mr. Lawton, who sees so far, had me in custody again immediately."

"Why you didn't hold 'em in, Massa Harry?" cried Cæsar, advancing eagerly, and disregarding the anxious looks and pallid cheeks of the female listeners.

"That," said Wharton, smiling, "was a thing easier said than done, Mr. Cæsar, especially as these gentlemen" (glancing his eyes at the guides) "had seen proper to deprive me of the use of my better arm."

"Wounded!" exclaimed both sisters in a breath, catching a view of the bandages.

"A mere scratch, but disabling me at a most critical moment," continued the brother kindly, and stretching out the injured limb to manifest the truth of his declaration. Cæsar threw a look of bitter animosity on the irregular warriors who were thought to have had an agency in the deed, and left the room. A few more words sufficed to explain all that Captain Wharton knew relative to the fortune of the day. The result he thought yet doubtful, for when he left the ground, the Virginians were retiring from the field of battle."

"They had tree'd the squirrel," said one of the sentinels abruptly, "and didn't quit the ground without leaving a good hound for the chase, when he comes down."

"Ay," added his comrade drily, "I'm thinking Captain Lawton will count the noses of what are left before they see their whale-boats."

Frances had stood supporting herself by the back of a chair, during this dialogue, catching, in breathless anxiety, every syllable as it was uttered——her colour changed rapidly——her limbs shook under her——until, with desperate resolution, she inquired——

"Is any officer hurt on——the——on either side?"

"Yes," answered the man cavalierly, "these southern youths are so full of mettle, that it's seldom we fight but one or two gets knocked over—— one of the wounded, who came up before the troops, told me, that Captain Singleton was killed, and Major Dunwoodie"——

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Frances heard no more, but fell back lifeless in the chair behind her. The attention of her friends soon revived her, when the captain, turning to the man, said, fearfully——

"Surely Major Dunwoodie is unhurt."

"Never fear him," added the guide, disregarding the agitation of the family, "they say a man who is born to be hung will never be drowned——if a bullet could kill the major, he would have been dead long ago. I was going to say, that the major is in a sad taking because of the captain's being killed; but had I known how much store the lady sat by him, I would'nt have been so plain spoken."

Frances now rose quickly from her seat, with cheeks glowing with confusion, and leaning on her aunt, was about to retire, when Dunwoodie himself appeared. The first emotion of the maid, when she saw him, was unalloyed happiness; in the next instant she shrunk back appalled from the unusual expression that reigned in his countenance. The sternness of battle yet sat on his brow——his eye was fixed, penetrating and severe. The smile of affection that used to lighten his dark features, on meeting his mistress, was supplanted by the lowering look of care; his whole soul seemed to be absorbed with one engrossing emotion, and he proceeded at once to his object.

"Mr. Wharton," he earnestly began, "in times like these, we need not stand on idle ceremony—— one of my officers, I am afraid, is hurt mortally; and presuming on your hospitality, I have brought him to your door."

"I am happy, sir, that you have done so," said Mr. Wharton, at once perceiving the importance to his son, of conciliating the American troops; "the necessitous are always welcome, and doubly so, in being the friend of Major Dunwoodie."

"Sir, I thank you for myself, and in behalf of him who is unable to render you his thanks," returned the other hastily; "If then you please, we will have him conducted where the surgeon may see and report upon his case without delay." To this there could be no objection, and Frances felt a chill at her heart, as her lover withdrew without casting a solitary look on herself.

There is a devotedness in female love that admits of no rivalry. All the tenderness of the heart——all the powers of the imagination, are enlisted in behalf of the tyrant passion, and where all is given much is looked for in return. Frances had spent hours of anguish——of torture, on behalf of Dunwoodie, and he now met her without a smile, and left her without a greeting. The ardor of feeling in the maid was unabated, but the elasticity of her hopes was weakened. As the supporters of the nearly lifeless body of Dunwoodie's friend, passed her in their way to the apartment prepared for his reception, she caught a view of this seeming rival in her interest with her lover. His pale and ghastly countenance, sunken eye, and difficult breathing, gave her a glimpse of death in its most fearful form. Dunwoodie was by his side and held his hand, giving frequent and stern injunctions to the men to proceed with care, and, in short, manifested all the solicitude that the most tender friendship could, on such an occasion, inspire. The maid moved lightly before them, and, with an averted face, held open the door for their passage to the bed; it was only as the major touched her garments on entering the room, that she ventured to raise her mild blue eyes to his face. But the glance was unreturned, and Frances unconsciously sighed as she sought the solitude of her own apartment.

Captain Wharton voluntarily gave a pledge to his keepers not to attempt again escaping, and then proceeded to execute those duties on behalf of his father, which were thought necessary in a host. On entering the passage for that purpose, he met the operator, who had so dexterously dressed his arm, advancing to the room of the wounded officer.

"Ah!" cried the disciple of Esculapius, "I see you are doing well——but stop——have you a pin?—— No! here, I have one——you must keep the cold air from your hurt, or some of the youngsters will be at work at you yet."

"God forbid," muttered the captain in an undertone, and attentively adjusting the bandages, when Dunwoodie appeared at the door, impatiently crying aloud——

"Hasten——Sitgreaves——hasten, or George Singleton will die from loss of blood."

"What! Singleton! God forbid——bless me——is it George——poor little George," exclaimed the surgeon as he quickened his pace with evident emotion, and hastened to the side of the bed; "he is alive though, and while there is life there is hope. This is the first serious case I have had to day, where the patient was not already dead. Captain Lawton teaches his men to strike with so little discretion——poor George——bless me, it is a musket bullet."

The youthful sufferer turned his eyes on the man of science, and with a faint smile endeavoured to stretch

forth his hand. There was an appeal in the look and action that touched the heart of the operator, with a force that was irresistible. The surgeon removed his spectacles to wipe an unusual moisture from his eyes, and proceeded carefully to the discharge of his duty——while the previous arrangements were, however, making, he gave vent in some measure to his feelings by saying——

"When it is only a bullet I have always some hopes——there is a chance that it hits nothing vital——but bless me, Captain Lawton's men cut so at random——generally sever the jugular, or let out the brains, and both are so difficult to remedy—— the patient mostly dying before one can get at them——I never had success but once in replacing a man's brains, although I tried three this very day. It is easy to tell where Lawton's troop charge in a battle, they cut so at random."

The group around the bed of Captain Singleton were too much accustomed to the manner of their surgeon, to regard or reply to his soliloquy; but they quietly awaited the moment when he was to commence his examination. This now took place, and Dunwoodie stood looking the operator in the face with an expression that seemed to read his soul. The patient shrunk from the application of the probe, and a smile stole over the features of the surgeon, as he muttered——

"There has been nothing before it in that quarter." He now applied himself in earnest to his work, took off his spectacles, and threw aside his wig. All this time Dunwoodie stood in feverish silence, holding one of the hands of the sufferer in both his own, watching the countenance of Doctor Sitgreaves. At length Singleton gave a slight groan, and the surgeon rose with alacrity, and said aloud——

"Ah! there is some pleasure in following a bullet, it may be said to meander through the human body, injuring nothing vital; but as for Captain Lawton's men"——

"Speak," interrupted Dunwoodie in a voice hardly articulate; "is there hope——can you find the ball?"

"It's no difficult matter to find that which one has in his hand, Major Dunwoodie," replied the surgeon coolly, and preparing his dressings; "it took what that literal fellow, Captain Lawton, calls a circumbendibus, a route never taken by the swords of his men, notwithstanding the multiplied pains I have been at to teach him how to cut scientifically. Now I saw a horse this day with his head half severed from his body."

"That," said Dunwoodie, as the blood rushed to his cheeks again, and his dark eyes sparkled with the rays of hope revived, "was some of my own handy-work; I killed that horse myself."

"You!" exclaimed the surgeon, dropping his dressings in surprise, "you! but then you knew it was a horse."

"I had such suspicions, I own," said the Major smiling, holding a beverage to the lips of his friend.

"Such blows alighting on the human frame are fatal," continued the doctor, pursuing his business, "and set at nought all the benefits which flow from the lights of science; they are useless in a battle, for disabling your foe is all that is required. I have sat, Major Dunwoodie, many a cold hour, while Captain Lawton has been engaged, and after all my expectation, not a single case worth recording has occurred——all scratches or death wounds; ah! the sabre is a sad weapon in unskilful hands. Now, Major Dunwoodie, many are the hours I have thrown away in endeavouring to impress this on Captain Lawton."

The impatient major pointed silently to his friend, and the surgeon quickened his movements as he continued——

"Ah! poor George——it is a narrow chance—— but"——he was interrupted by a messenger requiring the presence of the commanding officer in the field. Dunwoodie pressed the hand of his friend, and beckoned the doctor to follow him, as he withdrew.

"What think you?" he whispered on reaching the passage, "will he live?"

"He will;" said the surgeon laconically, turning on his heel.

"Thank God!" cried the youth, hastening below.

Dunwoodie for a moment joined the family, who were now collected in the ordinary parlour. His face was no longer wanting in smiles, and his salutations, though hasty, were cordial. He took no notice of the escape and recapture of Henry Wharton, but seemed to think the young man had continued where he had left him before the encounter. On the ground they had not met. The English officer withdrew in haughty silence to a window, leaving the major uninterruptedly to make his communications.

The excitement produced by the events of the day in the youthful feelings of the sisters, had been succeeded by a languor that kept them both silent, and it was with Miss Peyton that Dunwoodie held his discourse.

"Is there any hope, my cousin, that your friend can survive his wound?" said the lady, advancing towards her

kinsman with a smile of benevolent regard.

"Every thing—my dear madam—every thing," answered the soldier cheerfully. "Sitgreaves says he will live, and he has never yet deceived me."

"Your pleasure is not much greater than my own at this intelligence. One so dear to Major Dunwoodie cannot fail to excite an interest in the bosom of his friends."

"Say one so deservedly dear, madam," returned the major with warmth; "he is the beneficent spirit of the corps—equally beloved by us all—so mild, so equal, so just, so generous, with the meekness of a lamb and the fondness of a dove—it is only in the hour of battle that Singleton is a lion."

"You speak of him as if he were your mistress, Major Dunwoodie," observed the smiling spinster, glancing her eye at her niece, who sat pale and listening, in a corner of the room.

"I love him as one," cried the excited youth; "but he requires care and nursing—all now depends on the attention he receives."

"Trust me, sir," said Miss Peyton with dignity, "he will want for nothing under this roof."

"Pardon me, dear madam," cried the youth hastily; "you are all that is benevolent, but Singleton requires a care which many men would feel to be irksome. It is at moments like these, and in sufferings like his, that the soldier most finds the want of female tenderness." As he spoke, he turned his eyes on Frances with an expression that again thrilled to the heart of the maiden—she rose from her seat with burning cheeks, and said—

"All the attention that can with propriety be given to a stranger will be cheerfully bestowed on your friend."

"Ah!" cried the major, shaking his head, "that cold word propriety will kill him; he must be fostered, cherished, soothed."

"These are offices for a sister or a wife," said the maid, with still increasing colour.

"A sister!" repeated the soldier, the blood rushing to his own face tumultuously; "a sister! he has a sister—and one that might be here with to-morrow's sun." He paused, mused in silence, glanced his eye uneasily at Frances, and muttered in an under tone—"Singleton requires it, and it must be done."

The ladies had watched his varying countenance in some surprise, and Miss Peyton now observed, that—

"If there were a sister of Captain Singleton near them, her presence would be gladly requested both by herself and nieces."

"It must be, madam; it cannot well be otherwise," replied Dunwoodie with a hesitation that but ill agreed with his former declarations; "she shall be sent for express this very night." And then, as if willing to change the subject, he approached Captain Wharton, and continued mildly—

"Henry Wharton, to me honour is dearer than life—but in your hands I know it can safely be confided—remain here unwatched, until we leave the county, which will not be for some days to come."

The distance in the manner of the English officer vanished, and taking the offered hand of the other, he replied with warmth—"your generous confidence, Peyton, will not be abused, even though the gibbet on which your Washington hung André be ready for my own execution."

"Henry—Henry Wharton," said Dunwoodie reproachfully, "you little know the man who leads our armies, or you would have spared him that reproach; but duty calls me without. I leave you where I could wish to stay myself, and where you cannot be wholly unhappy."

In passing Frances, the maid received another of those smiling looks of affection she so much prized, and for a season she forgot the impression made by his appearance after the battle.

Among the veterans that had been impelled by the times to abandon the quiet of age for the service of their country was Colonel Singleton. He was a native of Georgia, and had been for the earlier years of his life a soldier by profession. When the struggle for liberty commenced, he offered his services to his country, and from respect to his character they had been accepted. His years and health had, however, prevented his discharging the active duties of the field, and he had been kept in command of different posts of trust, where his country might receive the benefits of his vigilance and fidelity without inconvenience to himself. For the last year he had been entrusted with the passes into the Highlands, and was now quartered, with his daughter, but a short day's march above the valley where Dunwoodie had met his enemy. His only other child was the wounded officer we have mentioned. Thither then the major prepared to despatch a messenger with the unhappy news of the captain's situation, and charged with such an invitation from the ladies as he did not doubt would speedily bring the ardent sister to the couch of her brother.

This duty performed, though with an unwillingness that only could make his former anxiety more perplexing, Dunwoodie proceeded to the field where his troops had again halted. The remnant of the English were already to be seen, over the tops of the trees, marching on the heights towards their boats in compact order, and with great watchfulness. The detachment of the dragoons under Lawton were a short distance on their flank, eagerly awaiting a favourable moment to strike a blow. In this manner both parties were soon lost to the view.

A short distance above the Locusts was a small village where several roads intersected each other, and from which, consequently, access was easy to the surrounding country. It was a favourite halting place of the horse, and frequently held by the light parties of the American army during their excursions below. Dunwoodie had been the first to discover its advantages, and as it was necessary for him to remain in the county until further orders from above, it cannot be supposed he overlooked them now. To this place, the troops were directed to retire, carrying with them their wounded; parties were already employed in the sad duty of interring the dead. In making these arrangements, a new object of embarrassment presented itself to our young soldier. In moving to and fro the field, he was struck with the appearance of Colonel Wellmere seated by himself, brooding over his misfortunes uninterrupted by any but the passing civilities of the American officers. His anxiety on behalf of Singleton had hitherto banished the recollection of his captive from the mind of Dunwoodie, and he now approached him with apologies for his neglect. The Englishman received his courtesies with coolness, and complained of being injured by what he affected to think was the accidental stumbling of his horse. Dunwoodie, who had seen one of his own men ride him down, and doubtless with very little ceremony, slightly smiled, as he offered him surgical assistance. This could only be procured at the cottage, and thither they both proceeded.

"Colonel Wellmere," cried young Wharton in astonishment, as they entered, "has the fortune of war been thus cruel to you also; but you are welcome to the house of my father, although I could wish the introduction to have taken place under more happy circumstances."

Mr. Wharton received this new guest with the guarded caution that distinguished his manner, and Dunwoodie left the room to seek the bedside of his friend. Every thing here looked propitious, and he acquainted the surgeon that another patient waited his skill in the room below. The sound of the word was enough to set the doctor in motion, and seizing his implements of office, he went in quest of this new applicant for his notice. At the door of the parlour he was met by the ladies who were retiring. Miss Peyton detained him for a moment to inquire into the welfare of Captain Singleton, before she suffered him to proceed. Frances smiled with something of her natural archness of manner, as she contemplated the grotesque appearance of the bald-headed practitioner; but Sarah was too much agitated, with the surprise of the unexpected interview with the British Colonel, to notice his attire. It has already been intimated that Colonel Wellmere was an old acquaintance of the family. Sarah had been so long absent from the city, that she had in some measure been banished from the remembrance of the gentleman, but the recollections of Sarah were more vivid. There is a period in the life of every woman, when she may be said to be predisposed to love—it is at the happy age when infancy is lost in opening maturity—when the guileless heart beats with the joyous anticipations of life which the truth can never realize, and when the imagination forms images of perfection that are copied after its own unsullied visions—it was at this age that Sarah left the city, and she had brought with her a picture of futurity, faintly impressed, it is true, but which gained durability from her solitude, and in which Wellmere had been placed in the fore-ground. The surprise of the meeting had in some measure overpowered her, and after receiving the salutations of the colonel, she had risen, in compliance with a signal from her observant aunt, to withdraw.

"Then, sir," observed Miss Peyton, after listening to the surgeon's account of his young patient, "we may be flattered with the expectations that he will recover."

"'Tis certain, madam," returned the doctor, endeavouring, out of respect to the ladies, to replace his wig, "'tis certain with care and good nursing."

"In those he shall not be wanting," said the spinster mildly. "Every thing we have he can command, and Major Dunwoodie has despatched an express for his sister."

"His sister," echoed the practitioner with a look of particular meaning; "if the Major has sent for her, she will come."

"Her brother's danger would induce her, one would imagine."

"No doubt, madam," continued the doctor laconically, bowing low, and giving room to the ladies to pass. The words and the manner were not lost on the younger sister, in whose presence the name of Dunwoodie was never

mentioned unheeded.

"Sir," cried Dr. Sitgreaves, on entering the parlour, addressing himself to the only coat of scarlet in the room, "I am advised you are in want of my aid. God send 'tis not Captain Lawton with whom you came in contact, in which case I may be too late."

"There must be some mistake, sir," said Wellmere haughtily; "it was a surgeon that Major Dunwoodie was to send me, and not an old woman."

"'Tis Dr. Sitgreaves," said Henry Wharton quickly, though with difficulty suppressing a laugh, "the multitude of his engagements to-day has prevented his usual attention to his attire."

"Your pardon, sir," added Wellmere, but very ungraciously, proceeding to lay aside his coat and exhibit, what he called, a wounded arm.

"If, sir," said the surgeon drily, "the degrees of Edinburgh——walking your London hospitals——amputating some hundreds of limbs——operating on the human frame in every shape that is warranted by the lights of science, a clear conscience, and the commission of the Continental Congress, can make a surgeon, then am I one."

"Your pardon, sir," repeated the colonel stiffly. "Captain Wharton has accounted for my error."

"For which I thank Captain Wharton," said the surgeon, proceeding coolly to arrange his amputating instruments with a formality that made the colonel's blood run cold. "Where are you hurt, sir? What, is it then this scratch in the shoulder? In what manner might you have received this wound, sir?"

"From the sword of a rebel dragoon," said the colonel, with emphasis.

"Never," exclaimed the surgeon as positively. "Even the gentle George Singleton would not have breathed on you so harmlessly." He took a piece of sticking plaster from his pocket and applied it to the part. "There, sir, that will answer your purpose, and I am certain it is all that is required of me."

"What do you take to be my purpose, then, sir," said the colonel fiercely.

"To report yourself wounded in your despatches," replied the doctor with great steadiness; "and you may say that an old woman dressed your hurts, for if one did not, one easily might?"

"Very extraordinary language," muttered the Englishman.

Here Captain Wharton interfered, and by explaining the mistake of Colonel Wellmere to proceed from his irritated mind and pain of body, he in part succeeded in mollifying the insulted practitioner, who consented to look further into the hurts of the other. They were chiefly bruises from his fall, to which Sitgreaves made some hasty applications, and withdrew.

The horse, having taken their required refreshment, prepared to fall back to their intended position, and it became incumbent on Dunwoodie to arrange the disposal of his prisoners. Sitgreaves he determined to leave in the cottage of Mr. Wharton in attendance on Captain Singleton. Henry came to him with a request that Colonel Wellmere might also be left behind under his parole, until the troops marched higher into the country. To this the major cheerfully assented, and as all the rest of his prisoners were of the vulgar herd, they were speedily collected, and, under the care of a strong guard, ordered to the interior. The dragoons soon after marched, and the guides, separating in small parties, accompanied by patrols from the horse, spread themselves across the country in such a manner, as to make a chain of sentinels from the waters of the Sound to the Hudson.

Dunwoodie himself had lingered in front of the cottage, after he paid his parting compliments for the time, with an unwillingness to return, that he thought proceeded from solicitude for his wounded friends. The heart which has not become callous, soon sickens with the glory that has been purchased with a waste of human life. Peyton Dunwoodie, left to himself, and no longer excited by the visions which youthful ardour had kept before him throughout the day, began to feel there were other ties, than those which bound the soldier within the rigid rules of honor. He did not waver in his duty, yet he felt how strong was the temptation. His blood had ceased to flow with the impulse created by the battle. The stern expression of his eye gradually gave place to a look of softness; and his reflections on the victory, brought with them no satisfaction that compensated for the sacrifices by which it had been purchased. While turning his last lingering gaze on the Locusts, he remembered only that it contained all that he most valued. The friend of his youth was a prisoner, under circumstances that endangered both life and honor. The gentle companion of his toils, who could throw around the rude enjoyments of a soldier, the graceful mildness of peace, lay a bleeding victim to his success. The image of the maid, who had held during the day a disputed sovereignty in his bosom, again rose to his view with a loveliness that banished her rival, glory,

from his mind.

The last lagging trooper of the corps had already disappeared behind the Northern hill, and the major unwillingly turned his horse in the same direction. Frances, impelled by a restless inquietude, now timidly ventured on the piazza of the cottage. The day had been mild and clear, and the sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky. The tumult, which so lately disturbed the valley, was succeeded by the stillness of death, and the fair scene before her looked as if it had never been marred by the passions of men. One solitary cloud, the collected smoke of the contest, hung over the field; and this was gradually dispersing, as if no vestige of its origin was worthy to hover above the peaceful graves of its victims. All the conflicting feelings—all the tumultuous circumstances of the eventful day, for a moment, appeared to the maid like the deceptions of a troubled vision. She turned and caught a glimpse of the retreating figure, who had been so conspicuous an actor in the scene, and the illusion vanished. Frances recognised her lover, and with the truth, came other recollections that drove her to her room, with a heart as sad as that which Dunwoodie himself bore from the valley.

CHAPTER IX.

A moment gaz'd adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,
A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh,
Then as the headmost foe appear'd
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Wam-Var.

— Walter Scott

The party under Captain Lawton had watched the retiring foe to his boats with the most unremitting vigilance, without finding any fit opening for a charge. The experienced successor to Colonel Wellmere in command, knew too well the power of his enemy to leave the uneven surface of the heights, until compelled to descend to the level of the water. Before he attempted this hazardous movement, he threw his men into a compact square, with its outer edges bristling with bayonets. In this position, the impatient trooper well understood, that brave men could never be assailed by cavalry with success, and he was reluctantly obliged to hover near them without seeing any opportunity of stopping their slow but steady march to the beach. A small schooner had been their convoy from the city, and lay with her guns bearing on the place of embarkation. Against this combination of force and discipline, Lawton had sufficient prudence to see it would be folly to contend, and the English were suffered to embark without further molestation. The dragoons lingered on the shore until the last moment, and then reluctantly commenced their own retreat back to the main body of the corps.

The gathering mists of the evening had begun to darken the valley, as the detachment of Lawton made its re-appearance at the southern extremity. The march of the troops was slow, and their line extended for the benefit of ease in their progress. In the front rode the captain, side by side with his senior subaltern, apparently engaged together in close conference, while the rear was brought up by a young cornet, humming an air, and thinking of the sweets of a straw bed after the fatigues of a hard day's duty.

"Then it struck you too," said the captain; "the instant I placed my eyes on her, I remembered the face—it is one not easily forgotten—by my faith, Tom, the girl does no discredit to the major's taste."

"She would do honour to the corps," replied the lieutenant with great warmth; "those blue eyes might easily win a man to gentler employments than this trade of ours. In sober truth, I can easily imagine that such a maid might tempt even me to quit the broadsword and saddle for a darning-needle and pillion."

"Mutiny, sir, mutiny," cried the other laughing; "what you, Tom Mason, dare to rival the gay, admired, and withal, rich, Major Dunwoodie in his love! You, a lieutenant of cavalry, with but one horse, and he none of the best! whose captain is as tough as a peperage log, and has as many lives as a cat."

"Faith," said the subaltern smiling in his turn, "the log may yet be split, and Grimalkin lose his lives, if you often charge as madly as you did this morning. What think you of many raps from such a beetle as laid you on your back to day?"

"Ah! don't mention it, my good Tom, the thought makes my head ache," replied the other, shrugging up his shoulders; "it is what I call forestalling night."

"The night of death."

"No, sir, the night that follows day. I saw myriads of stars, things which should hide their faces in the presence of the lordly sun. I do think nothing but this thick cap saved me to you a little longer, maugre the cat's lives."

"I have much reason to be obliged to the cap," said Mason drily, "that or the skull must have had a comfortable portion of thickness, I admit."

"Come, come, Tom, you are a licensed joker, so I'll not feign anger with you," returned the captain good humouredly; "but Singleton's lieutenant, I am fearful, will fare better than yourself for this day's service."

"I believe both of us will be spared the pain of receiving promotion purchased by the death of a comrade and friend," observed Mason kindly; "it was reported that Sitgreaves said he would live."

"From my soul I hope so," exclaimed Lawton fervently; "for a beardless face, that boy carries the stoutest heart I have ever met with. It surprises me, however, that, as we both fell at the same instant, the men behaved so well."

"For the compliment, I might thank you," cried the lieutenant with a laugh; "but my modesty forbids—I did my best to stop them, but without success."

"Stop them," roared the captain, "would you stop men in the middle of a charge?"

"I thought they were going the wrong way," answered the subaltern drily.

"Ah!" said the other more mildly, "our fall drove them to the right about."

"It was either your fall, or apprehensions of their own," returned the waggish subaltern gravely, "until the major rallied us, we were in admirable disorder."

"Dunwoodie!" exclaimed the astonished Lawton, "why the major was on the crupper of the Dutchman."

"Ay! but he managed to get off the crupper of the Dutchman," continued Mason coolly. "He came in at half speed with the other two troops, and riding between us and the enemy, with that imperative way he has when roused, brought us in line in the twinkling of an eye. Then it was," added the lieutenant, with animation, "that we sent John Bull to the bushes. Oh! it was a sweet charge—heads and tails, until we were upon them."

"The devil!" cried the captain with vexation, "what a sight I missed."

"You slept through it all," said Mason laconically.

"Yes," returned the other with a sigh, "it was all lost to me and poor George Singleton. But, Tom, what will George's sister say to this fair haired maiden, in yonder white building?"

"Hang herself in her garters," said the subaltern. "I owe a proper respect to my superiors, but two such angels are more than falls to the share of one man, unless he be a Turk or a Hindoo."

"Yes, yes," said the captain quickly, "the major is ever preaching morality to the youngsters, but he is a sly fellow in the main. Do you observe how fond he is of the cross roads above this valley? Now, if I were to halt the troops twice in the same place, you would all swear there was a petticoat in the wind."

"You are well known to the corps," returned the sententious subaltern.

"Well, Tom, your slanderous propensity is incurable, but" stretching forward his body in the direction he was gazing, as if to aid him in distinguishing objects through the darkness, "what animal is moving through the field on our right."

"'Tis a man," said Mason, looking intently at the suspicious object.

"By his hump 'tis a dromedary," added the captain, still eyeing it keenly—wheeling his horse suddenly from the highway, he exclaimed, "Harvey Birch, take him dead or alive."

Mason and a few of the leading dragoons only understood the sudden cry, but it was heard throughout the line. A dozen of the men, with the lieutenant at their head, followed the impetuous Lawton, and their speed threatened the pursued with a speedy termination to the race.

Birch had prudently kept his position on the rock, where he had been seen by the passing glance of Henry Wharton, until evening had begun to shroud the surrounding objects in darkness. From his height he had seen all the events of the day as they had occurred. He had watched, with a beating heart, the departure of the troops under Dunwoodie, and with difficulty had curbed his impatience until the obscurity of night should render his moving free from danger. He had not, however, completed a fourth of his way to his own residence, when his quick ear distinguished the tread of the approaching horse. Trusting to the increasing darkness, he, notwithstanding, determined to persevere. By crouching and moving quickly along the surface of the ground, he hoped yet to escape unnoticed. Captain Lawton had been too much engrossed with the foregoing conversation to suffer his eyes to indulge in their usual wandering; and the pedlar, perceiving by the voices that the enemy he most feared had passed him, yielded to his impatience and stood erect in order to make greater progress. The moment his body rose above the shadow of the ground, it was seen, and the chase commenced. For a single instant Birch remained helpless, with his blood curdling in his veins at the imminence of his danger, and his legs refusing their natural and so necessary office. But it was for a moment only. Casting his pack where he stood, and instinctively tightening the belt he wore, the pedlar betook himself to flight. He knew that by bringing himself in a line with his pursuers and the wood, his form would be lost to the sight. This he soon effected, and he was straining every nerve to gain the wood itself, when several horsemen rode by him but a short distance on his left, and cut him off from this place of refuge. The pedlar had thrown himself on the ground as they came near him, and was in this

manner passed unseen. But delay now became too dangerous for him to remain in that position. He accordingly rose, and still keeping in the shadow of the wood, along the skirts of which he heard voices crying to each other to be watchful, he ran with incredible speed in a parallel line, but an opposite direction to the march of the dragoons.

The confusion of the chace had been heard by the whole of the men, though none had distinctly understood the order of the hasty Lawton but those that followed. The remainder were lost in doubt as to what was required of them; and the aforesaid cornet was making eager inquiries of the trooper near him, when a man, at a short distance in his rear, crossed the road at a single bound. At the same instant, the stentorian voice of Captain Lawton rang through the valley, shouting in a manner that told the truth at once to his men.

"Harvey Birch, take him, dead or alive."

Fifty pistols lighted the scene instantly, and the bullets whistled in every direction around the head of the devoted pedlar. A feeling of despair seized his heart as he exclaimed bitterly——

"Hunted like a beast of the forest." He felt life and its accompaniments to be a burden, and was about to yield himself to his enemies. Nature, however, prevailed; he feared, that if taken, his life would not be honoured with the forms of a trial, but that most probably the morning sun would witness his ignominious execution; for he had already been condemned to, and only escaped that fate by stratagem. These considerations, with the approaching footsteps of his pursuers, roused him to new exertions; and he again fled before them. A fragment of a wall, that had withstood the ravages made by war in the adjoining fences of wood, fortunately crossed his path. He hardly had time to throw his exhausted limbs over this barrier before twenty of his enemies reached its opposite side. Their horses refused to take the leap in the dark, and amid the confusion of the rearing chargers and the execrations of their riders, Birch was enabled to gain a sight of the base of the hill, on whose summit was a place of perfect security against the approach of any foe. The heart of the pedlar now beat high with the confidence of his revived hopes, when the voice of Captain Lawton again rung in his ears, shouting to his men to give him room. The order was promptly obeyed, and the fearless trooper came at the wall at the top of his horse's speed, plunged the rowels in his charger, and flew over the obstacle like lightning, and in safety. The triumphant hurrahs of the men, and the thundering tread of the horse, now too plainly assured the pedlar of the emergency of his danger. He was nearly exhausted, and his fate no longer seemed doubtful.

"Stop, or die," said the trooper in the suppressed tones of inveterate determination.

Harvey stole a fearful glance over his shoulder, and saw within a bound of him the man he most dreaded. By the light of the stars he saw the uplifted arm and threatening sabre. Fear, exhaustion, and despair, seized on his heart, and the intended victim suddenly fell at the feet of the dragoon. The horse of Lawton struck the prostrate pedlar, and both steed and rider came together violently to the earth.

As quick as thought Birch was on his feet again, and with the sword of the discomfited dragoon in his hand. Vengeance seems but too natural to human passions. There are but few who have not felt the seductive pleasure of making our injuries recoil on their supposed authors; and yet there are some who know how much sweeter it is to return good for evil. All the wrongs of the pedlar shone on his brain with a dazzling brightness. For a moment the demon within him prevailed, and Birch brandished the powerful weapon in the air, in the next it fell harmless on the reviving but helpless trooper; and the pedlar vanished up the side of the friendly rock.

"Help Captain Lawton there," cried Mason, as he rode up followed by a dozen of his men, "and some of you dismount with me and search these rocks; the villain lies here concealed."

"Hold," roared the discomfited captain, raising himself with difficulty on his feet, "If one of you dismount he dies; Tom, my good fellow, you will help me to straddle Roanoke again."

The astonished subaltern complied in silence, while the wondering dragoons remained as fixed in their saddles as if they composed part of the animals they rode.

"You are much hurt I fear," said Mason with something of condolence in his manner, as they re-entered the highway, and biting off the end of a segar for the want of a better quality of tobacco.

"Something so, I do believe," replied the captain catching his breath and speaking with difficulty, "I wish our bone-setter was at hand, to examine into the state of my ribs."

"Sitgreaves is left in attendance on Captain Singleton, at the house of Mr. Wharton," said Mason in reply.

"Then there I halt for the night, Tom," returned the other quickly, "these rude times must abridge ceremony; besides you may remember the old gentleman professed a great regard for the corps. Oh! I can never think of passing so good a friend without calling."

"And I will lead the troop to the four corners," said the lieutenant, "if we all halt there, we shall breed a famine in the land."

"A condition I never desire to be placed in," added Lawton. "The idea of that graceful spinster's buck-wheat cakes is highly comfortable in the perspective."

"Oh! you won't die if you can think of eating," cried Mason with a laugh.

"I should surely die if I could not," observed the captain gravely.

"Captain Lawton," said the orderly of his troop, riding to the side of his commanding officer, "we are now passing the house of the pedlar spy, is it your pleasure that we burn it?"

"No!" roared the captain in a voice that startled the disappointed sergeant; "are you an incendiary——would you burn the house in cold blood——let but a spark approach it, and the hand that carries it will never light another."

"Zounds!" exclaimed the sleepy cornet in the rear as he was nodding on his horse, "there is life in the captain, notwithstanding his tumble."

Lawton and Mason rode on in silence, the latter ruminating on the wonderful benefit of being thrown from a horse, when they arrived opposite to the gate which was before the residence of Mr. Wharton. The troop continued its march, but the captain and his lieutenant dismounted, and followed by the servant of the former, proceeded slowly to the door of the cottage.

Colonel Wellmere had already sought a retreat for his mortified feelings in his own room; Mr. Wharton and his son were closeted by themselves; and the ladies were administering the refreshments of the tea-table to the surgeon of the dragoons, who had seen one of his patients in his bed, and the other happily enjoying the comforts of a sweet sleep. A few natural inquiries from Miss Peyton had opened the soul of the doctor, who knew every individual of her extensive family connexion in Virginia, and who even thought it impossible that he had not seen the lady herself. The amiable spinster smiled as she inwardly felt it improbable that she should ever have met her new acquaintance before, and not remember his singularities. It, however, greatly relieved the embarrassment of their situation, and something like a discourse was maintained between them; the nieces were only listeners, nor could the aunt be said to be much more.

"As I was observing, Miss Peyton, it was nothing but the noxious vapours of the low lands that made the plantation of your brother an unfit residence for man; but quadrupeds were"——

"Bless me, what's that," said Miss Peyton, turning pale at the report of the pistols fired at Birch.

"It sounds prodigiously like the concussion on the atmosphere made by the explosion of fire-arms," said the precise surgeon very coolly, and sipping his tea with great indifference, "I should imagine it to be the troop of Captain Lawton returning, did I not know the captain never uses the pistol, and that he dreadfully abuses the sabre."

"Merciful providence!" exclaimed the agitated maiden, "he would not injure one with it certainly."

"Injure!" repeated the other quickly, "it is certain death, madam; the most random blows imaginable——all that I can say to him will have no effect."

"But Captain Lawton is the officer we saw this morning, and is surely your friend," said Frances hastily, observing her aunt to be dreadfully alarmed.

"I find no fault with his want of friendship," returned the doctor, "the man is well enough if he would learn to cut scientifically, and give me some chance with the wounded; all trades, madam, ought to be allowed to live——but what becomes of a surgeon, if his patients are dead before he sees them?"

The doctor continued haranguing on the probability and improbability of its being the returning troop, until a loud knock at the front door gave new alarm to the ladies. Instinctively laying his hand on a small saw that had been his companion for the whole day in the vain expectation of an amputation, the surgeon coolly assuring the ladies that he would avert any danger, proceeded in person to answer to the summons.

"Captain Lawton!" exclaimed the surgeon, as he beheld the trooper leaning on the arm of his subaltern, and with difficulty crossing the threshold.

"Ah! my dear bone-setter, is it you?" returned the other good-humouredly, "you are here very fortunately to inspect my carcass, but do lay aside that rascally saw."

A few words from Mason explained to the surgeon the nature and manner of his Captain's hurts, and Miss Peyton cheerfully accorded the required accommodations. While the room intended for the trooper was getting in

a state of preparation, and the doctor was giving certain portentous orders, the captain was invited to rest himself in parlour. On the table was a dish of more substantial food than ordinarily adorned the afternoon's repast, and it soon caught the attention of the dragoons. Miss Peyton recollecting that they had probably made their only meal that day at her own table, kindly invited them to close it with another. The offer required no pressing, and in a few minutes the two were comfortably seated, and engaged in an employment that was only interrupted by an occasional wry face from the captain as he moved his body in evident pain. These interruptions, however, interfered but little with the principal business in hand; and the captain had got happily through with this important duty before the surgeon returned to announce all things ready for his accomodation in the room above stairs.

"What, eating!" cried the astonished physician, "Captain Lawton, do you wish to die?"

"I have no particular wish that way," said the trooper rising, and bowing a polite good night to the ladies, "and, therefore, have been providing the materials necessary to preserve life within me."

The surgeon muttered his dissatisfaction as he followed Mason and his captain from the apartment.

Every house in America had at that day what was emphatically called its best room, and this had been allotted by the unseen influence of Sarah to Colonel Wellmere. The down counterpane, which a clear frosty night would render extremely grateful over bruised limbs, decked the English officer's bed. A massive silver tankard, richly embossed with the Wharton arms, held the beverage he was to drink during the night; while beautiful vessels of china performed the same office for the two American captains. Sarah was certainly unconscious of the silent preference she had been giving to the English officer, and it is equally certain, that but for his hurts, bed, tankard, and every thing but the beverage would have been matters of indifference to Captain Lawton—— half of whose nights were spent in his clothes, and not a few of them in the saddle. After taking possession, however, of what was a small but very comfortable room, Dr. Sitgreaves proceeded to inquire into the state of his injuries. He had begun to pass his hand over the body of his patient, when the latter cried impatiently——

"Sitgreaves, do lay that rascally saw aside, the sight of it makes my blood cold."

"Captain Lawton," rejoined the surgeon, "I think, for a man who has so often exposed life and limb, you are unaccountably afraid of what is a very useful instrument."

"Heaven keep me from its use," said the trooper with a shrug.

"Surely you would not despise the lights of science, nor refuse surgical aid because this saw might be necessary?" asked the incorrigible operator.

"I would."

"You would!"

"Yes, you never shall joint me like a quarter of beef while I have life to defend myself," cried the resolute dragoon; "but I grow sleepy, are any of my ribs broke?"

"No."

"Any of my bones?"

"No."

"Tom, I'll thank you for that pitcher." As he ended his draught, he very deliberately turned his back on his companions, and good naturedly cried——"Good night, Mason——Good night, Galen."

Captain Lawton entertained a profound respect for the surgical abilities of his comrade, but was very sceptical on the subject of administering internally for the ailings of the human frame. With a full stomach, a stout heart, and a clear conscience, he often maintained, that a man might bid defiance to the world and its vicissitudes. Nature provided him with the second, and, to say the truth, he strove manfully himself to keep up the other two requisites in his creed of worldly prosperity. It was a favourite maxim with him, that the last thing death assailed was the eyes, and next to the last, the jaws. This he interpreted into a clear expression of the intention of nature, that every man might regulate, by his own volition, whatever was to be admitted into the sanctuary of his mouth; consequently, if the guest proved unpalatable, he had no one to blame but himself. The surgeon, who was well acquainted with these views of his patient, beheld him, as he cavalierly turned his back on Mason and himself, with a commiserating contempt, replaced in their leathern repository, the phials he had exhibited, with a species of care that was allied to veneration, gave the saw, as he concluded, a whirl of triumph, and departed, without condescending to notice the compliment of the trooper, to give some of his care to the guest in the best bed-room. Mason finding, by the breathing of the captain, that his own good night would be unheard, hastened to pay his

respects to the ladies——mounted, and followed the troop at the top of his horse's speed.

CHAPTER X.

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires,
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashea, live their wonted fires.

— Gray

The possessions of Mr. Wharton extended to some distance on each side of the house in which he dwelt, and most of his land was unoccupied. A few scattering dwellings were to be seen in different parts of his domains, but they were fast falling to decay, and untenanted. The proximity of the country to the contending armies had nearly banished the pursuits of agriculture from the land. It was useless for the husbandman to devote his time, and the labour of his hand, to obtain overflowing garuers, that the first foraging party would empty. None tilled the earth with any other view than to provide the scanty means of subsistence, except those who were placed so near to one of the adverse parties as to be safe from the inroads of the light troops of the other. To these the war offered a golden harvest, more especially to such as enjoyed the benefits of an access to the Royal Army. Mr. Wharton did not require the use of his lands for the purposes of subsistence, and willingly adopted the guarded practice of the day, and limited his attention to such articles as were soon to be consumed within his own walls, or could be easily secreted from the prying looks of the foragers. In consequence, the ground on which the action was fought, had not a single inhabited building, besides the one belonging to the father of Harvey Birch—This stood between the places where the cavalry had met and the charge had been made on the party of Wellmere.

To Katy Haynes, it had been a day fruitful in incidents to furnish an inexhaustible theme to her after life. The prudent housekeeper had kept her political feelings in a state of rigid neutrality; her own friends had espoused the cause of the country, but the maiden never lost sight of the moment when she herself was to be espoused to Harvey Birch. She did not wish to fetter the bonds of Hymen with any other clogs than those with which nature had already so amply provided them. Katy could always see enough to embitter the marriage bed, without calling in the aid of political contention; and yet, at times, the prying spinster had her doubts, of which side she should be, to escape this dreaded evil. There was so much of practised deception in the conduct of the pedlar, that the housekeeper frequently arrested her own words when most wishing to manifest her sympathies. His lengthened absences from home, had commenced immediately after the hostile armies had made their appearance in the county; previously to that event, his returns had been regular and frequent.

The battle of the Plains had taught the cautious Washington the advantages possessed by his enemy, in organization, arms, and discipline. These were difficulties to be mastered by his own vigilance and care. Drawing off his troops to the heights, in the northern part of the county, he bid defiance to the attacks of the Royal Army, and Sir William Howe fell back to the enjoyments of his barren conquests, a deserted city and the adjacent islands. Never afterwards did the opposing armies make the trial for success within the limits of West-Chester; yet hardly a day passed, that the partisans did not make their inroads, or a sun rise, that the inhabitants were spared the relation of the excesses, that the preceding darkness had served to conceal. Most of the movements of the pedlar through the county, were made at the hours which others allotted to repose. The evening sun would frequently leave him at one extremity of the district, and the morning find him at the other. His pack was his never-failing companion, and there were those who closely studied him in his moments of traffic, who thought his only purpose was the accumulation of gold. He would be often seen near the Highlands with a body bending under the weight it carried—and again near the Harlaem river, travelling, with lighter steps, with his face towards the setting sun. But these glances at him were uncertain and fleeting. The intermediate time no eye could penetrate. For months he disappeared, and no traces of his course were ever known.

Strong parties held the heights of Harlaem, and the northern end of Manhattan Island was bristled with the bayonets of the English sentinels, yet the pedlar glided among them unnoticed and uninjured. His approach to the American lines were also frequent; but generally so conducted as to baffle pursuit. Many a sentinel, placed in the gorges of the mountains, spoke of a strange figure that had been seen gliding by them in the mists of the evening. The stories reached the ears of the officers, and, as we have related, in two instances the trader fell into the hands

of the Americans. The first time he escaped from Lawton, shortly after his arrest; but the second he was condemned to die. On the morning of his intended execution the cage was opened, but the bird had flown. This extraordinary escape had been made from the custody of a favorite officer of Washington, and sentinels who had been thought worthy to guard the person of the commander-in-chief. Bribery and treason could not approach the characters of men so well esteemed, and the opinion gained ground among the common soldiery, that the pedlar had dealings with the dark one. Katy, however, always repelled this opinion with indignation; for within the recesses of her own bosom, the housekeeper, in ruminating on events, concluded that the evil spirit did not pay in gold——Nor, continues the wary spinster in her cogitations, does Washington——paper and promises were all that the leader of the American troops could dispense to his servants, until after the receipt of supplies from France; and even then, although the scrutinizing eyes of Katy never let any opportunity of examining into the deer-skin purse, pass unimproved, she was never able to detect the image of Louis, intruding into the presence of the well known countenance of George III.

The house of Harvey had been watched at different times by the Americans, with a view to his arrest, but never with success; the reputed spy possessed a secret means of intelligence that invariably defeated their schemes. Once, when a strong body of the Continental Army held the four corners for a whole summer, orders had been received from Washington himself, never to leave the door of Harvey Birch unwatched; the command was rigidly obeyed, and during this long period the pedlar was unseen——the detachment was withdrawn, and the next night Birch re-entered his dwelling. The father of Harvey had been greatly molested in consequence of the suspicious character of the son. But, notwithstanding the most minute scrutiny into the conduct of the old man, no fact could be substantiated against him to his injury, and his property was too small to keep alive the zeal of professed patriots——its confiscation and purchase would not reward them for their trouble. Age and sorrow were now about to spare him from further molestation, for the lamp of life had begun to be drained of its oil. The separation of the father and son had been painful, but in obedience to what both thought a duty. The old man had kept his situation a secret from the neighbourhood, in order that he might have the company of his child in his last moments. The confusion of the past day, and his increasing dread that Harvey might be too late, helped to hasten the event he would fain arrest for yet a little while. As night set in, his illness increased to such a degree that the dismayed housekeeper had sent a truant boy, who had been shut up with them for the day rather than trust himself in the presence of the combatants, to the Locusts, in quest of a living soul to cheer her desolate situation. Cæsar was the only one who could be spared, and, loaded with eatables and cordials by the kind-hearted Miss Peyton, the black had been despatched on this duty. The dying man was past the use of such articles, and his chief anxiety seemed to centre in a meeting with his absent child.

The noise of the chase had been heard by the group in the house, but its cause not understood; and as both the black and Katy were apprised of the detachment of American horse being below them, with its discontinuance all apprehension from this disturbance ceased. They heard the dragoons as they moved slowly by the building, but in compliance with the prudent injunction of the black, the housekeeper forbore to indulge her curiosity by taking a view of the pageant. The old man had closed his eyes, and his attendants supposed him to be asleep. The house contained two large rooms, and as many small ones. One of the former served for kitchen and parlor——in the other lay the father of Birch: of the latter, one was the sanctuary of the vestal, and the other contained the provisions for subsistence. A huge chimney of stone rose in the centre of the building, serving, of itself, for a partition between the larger rooms, and fire-places of corresponding dimensions were in each apartment. A bright fire was burning in that of the common room, and within the very jambs of its monstrous jaws sat Cæsar and Katy at the time of which we speak. The African was impressing his caution on the maiden to suppress an idle curiosity that might prove dangerous.

"Best neber tempt a Satan," said Cæsar, rolling up his eyes significantly, till the whites glistened by the glare of the fire——"I like to lose an ear—— only for carrying a little bit of a letter——But I wish Harvey get back."

"It is very disregarding in him to be away at such times," said Katy imposingly. "Suppose now his father wanted to make his last will in the testament, who is there to do such a thing for him. Harvey is a very wasteful and a very disregarding man."

"Perhaps he make him before," said the black inquiringly.

"It would not be a wonderment if he had," returned the housekeeper eagerly; "he is whole days looking into the Bible."

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"Then he read a good book," said the black solemnly. "Miss Fanny read him to Dinah berry often."

"Yes," continued the inquisitive spinster; "but he would not be forever studying it, if it didn't hold something more as common."

She rose from her seat, and stealing softly to a chest of drawers in the room where lay the sick, took from it a large Bible, heavily bound, and secured with strong clasps of brass, with which she returned to the expecting African. The volume was opened, and she proceeded instantly to the inquiry. Katy was far from an expert scholar, and to Cæsar the characters were absolute strangers. For some time the housekeeper was occupied with finding out the word Matthew, which she at last saw in large Roman letters crowning one of the pages, and instantly announced her discovery to the attentive Cæsar.

"Berry well, now look him all through:" said the black, peeping over the damsel's shoulder, as he held a long, lank, candle of yellow tallow in his hand, in such a manner as to throw its feeble light on the volume.

"Yes, but I must begin with the book," replied the other, turning the leaves carefully back, until, moving two at once, she lighted upon a page covered with the labours of a pen. "Here," said the housekeeper with impatience, and shaking with the eagerness of expectation, "here is the very words themselves; now I would give the world to know who he has left them big silver shoe buckles to."

"Read him," said Cæsar laconically.

"And the black walnut drawers, for Harvey could never want them."

"Why no want 'em as well as his father?" asked the black drily.

"And the six silver table spoons; for Harvey always uses the iron."

"I guess he say," continued the African, pointing significantly to the writing, and listening eagerly, as the other thus opened the store of the elder Birch's wealth.

Thus repeatedly advised, and impelled by her own curiosity, Katy commenced her task; anxious to come to the part which most interested herself, she dipped at once into the centre of the subject.

"Chester Birch, born September 1st, 1755;" read the spinster with great deliberation.

"Well," cried the impatient Cæsar, "what he give him?"

"Abigail Birch, born July 12th, 1757;" continued the housekeeper in the same tone.

"I guess he give her the spoons," observed the black hastily.

"June 1st, 1760. On this awful day the judgment of an offended God lighted on my house"—— a heavy groan from the adjoining room made the spinster instinctively close the book, and Cæsar, for a moment, shook with fear——neither possessed sufficient resolution to go and see what was the condition of the sufferer, but his heavy breathings continued as usual——Katy dared not, however, reopen the Bible, and carefully securing its clasps, it was laid on the table in silence. Cæsar took his chair again, and, after looking timidly round the room, remarked——

"I thought he 'bout to go."

"No," said Katy solemnly, "he will live till the tide is out, or the first cock crows in the morning."

"Poor man!" continued the black, nestling still farther into the chimney corner; "I hope he lay quiet after he die."

"'Twould be no astonishment to me if he didn't," returned Katy, glancing her eyes around the room, and speaking in an under voice, "for they say an unquiet life makes an uneasy grave."

"Johnny Birch a berry good man," said the black quite positively.

"Ah! Cæsar," said the housekeeper in the same voice, "he is good only who does good——can you tell me, Cæsar, why honestly gotten gold should be hidden in the bowels of the earth?"

"If he know where he be, why don't he dig him up?" asked the black promptly.

"There may be reasons not comprehensible to you," said Katy, moving her chair so that her clothes covered the charmed stone, underneath which lay the secret treasures of the pedlar—— unable to refrain speaking of what she would have been very unwilling to reveal; "but a rough outside often holds a smooth inside." Cæsar stared around the building unable to fathom the hidden meaning of the damsel, when his roving eye suddenly became fixed, and his teeth chattered with affright. The change in the countenance of the black was instantly perceived by Katy, and turning her face, she saw the pedlar himself standing within the door of the room.

"Is he alive?" asked Birch tremulously, and seemingly afraid to receive an answer to his own question.

"Surely," said the maiden, rising hastily, and officiously offering her chair to the pedlar, "he must live till day

or the tide is down."

Disregarding all but her assurance, the pedlar stole gently to the room of his dying parent. The tie which bound this father and son together was one of no ordinary kind. In the wide world they were all to each other. Had Katy but have read a few lines farther in the record, she would have seen the sad tale of their misfortunes. At one blow competence and kindred had been swept from before them, and from that day to the present hour, persecution and distress had followed their wandering steps. Approaching the bed side, Harvey leaned his body forward, and said, in a voice nearly choked by his feelings——

"Father, do you know me?"

The parent slowly opened his eyes, and a smile of satisfaction passed over his pallid features, leaving behind it the impression of death in still greater force from the contrast. The pedlar gave a restorative he had brought with him to the parched lips of the sick man, and for a few minutes new vigor seemed to be imparted to his frame. He spoke, but slowly and with difficulty. Curiosity kept Katy silent; awe had the same effect on Cæsar; and Harvey seemed hardly to breathe, as he listened to the language of the departing spirit.

"My son," said the father in a hollow voice, "God is as merciful as he is just——if I threw the cup of salvation from my lips when a youth, he graciously offers it to me in mine age. He chastiseth to purify, and I go to join the spirits of our lost family. In a little while, my child, you will be alone. I know you too well not to foresee you will be a lone pilgrim through life. The bruised reed may endure, but it will never rise. You have that within you, Harvey, that will guide you aright; persevere as you have begun, for the duties of life are never to be neglected——and"—— A noise in the adjoining room interrupted the dying man, and the impatient pedlar hastened to learn the cause, followed by Katy and the black. The first glance of his eye on the figure in the door—way told the trader but too well both his errand, and the fate that probably awaited himself. The intruder was a man still young in years, but his lineaments bespoke a mind long agitated by evil passions. His dress was of the meanest materials, and so ragged and unseemly, as to give him the appearance of studied poverty. His hair was prematurely whitened, and his sunken, lowering eye avoided the bold, forward look of innocence. There was a restlessness in his movements, and agitation in his manner, that proceeded from the workings of the foul spirit within him, and which was not less offensive to others than distressing to himself. This man was a well known leader of one of those gangs of marauders who infested the county with a semblance of patriotism, and, were guilty of every grade of offence, from simple theft up to murder. Behind him stood several other figures clad in a similar manner, but whose countenances expressed nothing more than the callous indifference of brutal insensibility. They were all well armed with muskets and bayonets, and provided with the usual implements of foot soldiers. Harvey knew resistance to be vain, and quietly submitted to their directions. In the twinkling of an eye both he and Cæsar were stripped of their decent garments, and made to exchange clothes with two of the filthiest of the band. They were then placed in separate corners of the room, and under the muzzles of the muskets, required faithfully to answer such interrogatories as were put to them.

"Where is your pack?" was the first question to the pedlar.

"Hear me," said Birch, trembling with agitation; "in the next room is my father now in the agonies of death; let me go to him, receive his blessing, and close his eyes, and you shall have all——aye, all."

"Answer me as I put the questions, or this musket shall send you to keep the old driveller company——where is your pack?"

"I will tell you nothing unless you let me go to my father," said the pedlar resolutely.

His persecutor raised his arm with a malicious sneer, and was about to execute his threat, when one of his companions checked him, and cried——

"What would you do? you surely forget thereward. Tell us where are your goods, and you shall go to your father."

Birch complied instantly, and a man was despatched in quest of the booty: he soon returned, throwing the bundle on the floor, swearing it was as light as feathers.

"Ay," cried the leader, "there must be gold somewhere for what it did contain; give us your gold, Mr. Birch; we know you have it; you will not take continental, not you."

"You break your faith," said Harvey sullenly.

"Give us your gold," exclaimed the other furiously, pricking the pedlar with his bayonet until the blood followed his pushes in streams. At this instant a slight movement was heard in the adjoining room, and Harvey

cried imploringly——

"Let me——let me go to my father, and you shall have all."

"I swear you shall go then," said the skinner.

"Here, take the trash," cried Birch, as he threw aside the purse, which he had contrived to conceal, notwithstanding the change in his garments.

The robber raised it from the floor with a hellish laugh, as he said coolly——

"Ay, but it shall be to your father in heaven."

"Monster!" exclaimed Birch, "have you no feeling, no faith, no honesty?"

"Why, to hear him, one would think there was not a rope around his neck already," said the other malignantly. There is no necessity of your being uneasy, Mr. Birch; if the old man gets a few hours the start of you in the journey, you will be sure to follow him before noon to-morrow.'

This unfeeling communication had no effect on the pedlar, who listened with gasping breath to every sound from the room of his parent, until he heard his own name spoken in the hollow, sepulchral tones of death. Birch could endure no more, but shrieking out——

"Father, hush, father, I come——I come:" he darted by his keeper, and was the next moment pinned to the wall by the bayonet of another; fortunately his quick motion had caused him to escape a thrust aimed at his life, and it was by his clothes only that he was confined.

"No, Mr. Birch," said the skinner, "we know you too well for a slippery rascal to trust you out of sight——your gold——your gold."

"You have it," said the pedlar, writhing with the agony of his situation.

"Ay, we have the purse; but you have more purses. King George is a prompt paymaster, and you have done him many a piece of good service. Where is your hoard? without it you will never see your father."

"Remove the stone underneath the woman," cried the pedlar eagerly——"remove the stone."

"He raves——he raves," said Katy, instinctively moving her position to another stone than the one on which she had been standing; in a moment it was torn from its bed, and nothing but earth was seen under it.

"He raves; you have driven him from his right mind," continued the trembling spinster; "would any man in his senses think of keeping gold under a hearth-stone?"

"Peace, babbling fool," cried Harvey——"lift the corner stone, and you will find what will make you rich, and me a beggar."

"And then you will be despiseable," said the housekeeper bitterly. "A pedlar without goods and without money——is sure to be despiseable."

"There will be enough left to pay for his halter," cried the skinner, as he opened upon a store of English guineas. These were quickly transferred to a bag, notwithstanding the declarations of the spinster, that her dues were unsatisfied, and that of right ten of the guineas should be her property.

Delighted with a prize that greatly exceeded their expectations, the band prepared to depart, intending to take the pedlar with them in order to give him up to some of the American troops above, and claim the reward offered for his apprehension. Every thing was ready, and they were about to lift Birch in their arms, as he refused to move an inch; when a figure entered the room, that appalled the group——around his body was thrown the sheet of the bed from which he had risen, and his fixed eye and haggard face gave him the appearance of a being from another world. Even Katy and Cæsar thought it was the spirit of the elder Birch, and they both fled the house, followed by the alarmed skinnners.

The excitement which had given the sick man strength soon vanished, and the pedlar, lifting him in his arms, re-conveyed him to his bed. The reaction of the system which followed hastened to close the scene.

The glazed eye of the father was fixed upon the son; his lips moved, but his voice was unheard. Harvey bent down, and, with his parting breath, received the dying benediction of his parent. A life of privation, of care, and of wrongs, embittered most of the future hours of the pedlar. But under no sufferings——in no misfortune——the subject of poverty and biting obloquy——the remembrance of that blessing never left him. It constantly gleamed over the images of the past, shedding a holy radiance around his saddest hours of despondency. It cheered the prospect of the future with the prayers of a pious spirit for his well-being; and it brought assurance to his soul of having discharged faithfully and truly the sacred offices of filial love.

The retreat of Cæsar and the spinster had been too precipitate to admit of much calculation; yet had the former

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instinctively separated himself from the skimmers. After fleeing a short distance, they paused from fatigue, and the maiden commenced in a solemn voice——

"Oh! Cæsar, 'twas dreadful to walk before he had been laid in his grave; but it must have been the money that disturbed him; they say Captain Kidd walks where he buried gold in the old war."

"I nebber tink Johnny Birch had such big eye," said the African, his teeth yet chattering with the fright.

"I'm sure 'twould be a botherment to a living soul to lose so much money, and all for nothing," continued Katy, disregarding the other's remark; "Harvey will be nothing but a despiseable, poverty-stricken wretch. I wonder who he thinks would marry him now."

"Maybe a spooke take away Harvey too," observed Cæsar, moving still nearer to the side of the maiden. But a new idea had seized the imagination of the spinster: she thought it not improbable that the prize had been forsaken in the confusion of the retreat; and after deliberating and reasoning for some time with Cæsar, they both determined to venture back, and ascertain this important fact, and, if possible, learn what had been the fate of the pedlar. Much time was spent in cautiously approaching the dreaded spot; and as the spinster had sagaciously placed herself in the line of the retreat of the skimmers, every stone was examined in the progress, to see if it was not the abandoned gold. But, although the suddenness of the alarm, and the cry of Cæsar, had impelled the freebooters to so hasty a retreat, they grasped the hoard with an instinctive hold that death itself would not have loosened. Perceiving every thing to be quiet within, Katy at length mustered resolution enough to enter the dwelling, where she found the pedlar with a heavy heart performing the last sad offices for the dead. A few words sufficed to explain to Katy the nature of her mistake; but Cæsar continued till his dying day to astonish the sable inmates of the kitchen, with learned dissertations on spookes, and how direful was the appearance of Johnny Birch.

The danger to himself compelled the pedlar to abridge even the short period that American custom leaves the deceased with us; and aided by the black and Katy, his painful task was soon ended. Cæsar volunteered to walk a couple of miles with orders to a carpenter, and the body being habited in its ordinary attire was left with a sheet laid over it with great decency, to await the return of the messenger.

The skimmers had fled precipitately to the wood, which was but a short distance from the house of Birch, and once safely sheltered within its shades, they halted, and mustered their panic-stricken forces.

"What in the name of fury seized on your coward hearts?" cried the dissatisfied leader, drawing his breath heavily.

"The same question might be asked yourself," returned one of the band sullenly.

"From your fright, I thought a party of De Lancey's men were upon us. Oh! you are brave gentlemen at a race," continued the leader bitterly.

"We follow our captain."

"Then follow me back, and let us secure the scoundrel and receive the reward."

Yes; and by the time we reach the house, that black rascal will have the mad Virginian upon us; by my soul I would rather meet fifty Cow-boys, than that single man."

"Fool," cried the enraged leader, "don't you know Dunwoodie's horse are at the corners, full two miles from here?"

"I care not where the dragoons are, but I will swear that I saw Captain Lawton enter the house of old Wharton, while I lay watching an opportunity of getting the British colonel's horse from the stable."

"And if he does come, won't a bullet silence a dragoon from the south as well as from old England?"

"Ay, but I don't choose a hornet's nest around my ears; you raise the skin of one of that corps, and you will never see another peaceable night's foraging again."

"Well," muttered the leader, as they retired deeper into the wood, "this sottish pedlar will stay to see the old devil buried, and though we mustn't touch him at the funeral, he'll wait to look after the moveables, and to-morrow night shall wind up his concerns."

With this threat they withdrew to one of their usual places of resort, until darkness should again give them an opportunity of marauding on the community without danger of detection.

CHAPTER XI.

O woe! O woeful, woeful, woeful day!
Most Inmentable day! most woeful day,
That ever, ever, I did yet behold!
O day! O day! O day! O hateful day!
Never was seen so black a day as this:
O woeful day! O woeful day!

—— Shakspeare

The family at the Locusts had slept or watched through all the disturbances at the cottage of Birch, in perfect ignorance of their occurrence. The attacks of the Skinners were always made with so much privacy as to exclude the sufferer, not only from succour, but frequently through a dread of future depredations, from the commiseration of their neighbours also. The cares of their additional duties had drawn the ladies from their pillows at an hour somewhat earlier than usual, and Captain Lawton, notwithstanding the sufferings of his body, had risen in compliance with a rule that he never departed from, of sleeping but six hours at a time. This was one of the few points in which the care of the human frame was involved, where the trooper and the surgeon of horse were ever known to agree. The doctor had watched, during the night, by the side of the bed of Captain Singleton, without once closing his eyes. Occasionally he would pay a visit to the wounded Englishman, who, being more hurt in the spirit than in the flesh, tolerated the interruptions to his repose with a very ill grace; and once, for an instant, he ventured to steal softly to the bed of his obstinate comrade, and was near succeeding in obtaining a feel of his pulse, when a terrible oath, sworn by the trooper in a dream, startled the prudent surgeon, and warned him of a trite saying in the corps, "that Captain Lawton always slept with one eye open." This group had assembled in one of the parlors as the sun made its appearance over the eastern hill, and dispersed the columns of fog which had enveloped the low land.

Miss Peyton was looking from a window in the direction of the tenement of the pedlar, and was expressing a kind anxiety after the welfare of the sick it was supposed to contain, when the person of Katy suddenly emerged from the dense covering of an earthly cloud, whose mists were scattering before the cheering rays of the sun, and was seen making hasty steps towards the Locusts. There was that in the air of the housekeeper, which bespoke distress of an unusual nature, and the kind-hearted mistress of the Locusts opened the door of the room, with the benevolent intention of soothing a grief that seemed so overwhelming. A nearer view of the disturbed features of the visitor, confirmed Miss Peyton in her belief, and with the shock that gentle feelings ever experience at a sudden and endless separation from even the meanest of their associates——she said hastily——

"What, Katy, is he gone?"

"No, ma'm," replied the disturbed damsel with great bitterness, "he is not yet gone, but he may go as soon as he pleases now, for the mischief is all done——I do verily believe, Miss Peyton, they haven't so much as left him money enough to buy him another suit of clothes to cover his nakedness, and what he has on are none of the best, I can tell you."

"How!" exclaimed the astonished spinster, "could any one have the heart to plunder a man in such distress?"

"Hearts!" repeated Katy catching her breath; "men like them have no bowels at all——plunder and distress indeed.——Why, ma'm, there were in the iron pot, in plain sight, fifty-four guineas of gold, besides what lay underneath, which I couldn't count without handling——and I didn't like to touch it, for they say, that another's gold is apt to stick—— so judging from that in sight, there wasn't less than two hundred guineas——besides what was in the deer-skin purse. But Harvey is little better now than a beggar, and don't you think a beggar very despicable, Miss Peyton?"

"Poverty is to be pitied and not despised," said the lady in reply, still unable to comprehend the extent of the misfortune that had befallen her neighbours during the night. "But how is the old man; and does this loss you speak of affect him much?"

The countenance of Katy changed instantly, from the natural expression of concern to the set form of melancholy, as she answered——

"He is happily removed from the cares of the world—the chinking of the money made him get out of his bed, and the poor soul found the shock too great for him. He died about two hours and ten minutes before the cock crowed, as near as we can say"—she was interrupted by the physician, who, approaching, inquired, with much interest, the nature of his disorder. Glancing her eye over the figure of this new acquaintance, Katy, after instinctively adjusting her dress, replied——

" 'Twas the troubles of the times, and the loss of property, that brought him down——he wasted from day to day, and all my care and anxiety were lost——for now Harvey is no better than a beggar, and who is there to repay me for what I have done?"

"God will reward you for all the good you have done," said Miss Peyton mildly.

"Yes," interrupted the spinster hastily, and with an air of reverence that was instantly succeeded by an expression that denoted more of worldly care; "but then I left my wages for three years past in the hands of Harvey, and how am I to get them. My brothers told me again and again to ask for my money, but I always thought accounts between relations were easily settled."

"Were you related then to Birch?" asked Miss Peyton, observing her to pause.

"Why," returned the maiden, hesitating a little, "I thought we were as good as so. I wonder if I have no claim on the house and garden, though they say now it is Harvey's it will surely be confiscated," turning to Lawton, who had been sitting in one posture, with his piercing eyes lowering at her through his thick brows, in silence; "perhaps this gentleman knows——he seems to take an interest in my story"——

"Madam," said the trooper, bowing very low, "both you and the tale are extremely interesting." Katy smiled involuntarily; "but my humble knowledge is limited to the setting of a squadron in the field, and using it when there. I beg leave to refer you to Dr. Archibald Sitgreaves, a gentleman of universal attainments, and unbounded philanthropy."

The surgeon drew up in proud disdain, and employed himself in whistling a low air as he looked over some phials on a table; but the housekeeper, turning to him with an inclination of her head, continued——

"I suppose, sir, a woman has no dower in her husband's property, unless they be actually married?"

It was a maxim with Dr. Sitgreaves, that nospecies of knowledge was to be despised, and consequently he was an empiric in every thing but his profession. At first, indignation at the irony of his comrade kept him silent; but suddenly changing his purpose, he answered the maiden, with a smile——

"I judge not. If death has anticipated your nuptials, I am fearful you have no remedy against his stern decrees."

To Katy this sounded well, although she understood nothing of its meaning, but "death," and "nuptials." To this part of his speech, then, she directed her reply.

"I did think he only waited the death of the old gentleman before he married," said the housekeeper, looking on the carpet; "but, now he is nothing more than despiseable, or what's the same thing, a pedlar without house, pack, or money. It might be hard for a man to get a wife at all in such a predicary——don't you think it would, Miss Peyton?"

"I seldom trouble myself with such things," said the lady gravely, busying herself in preparations for the morning's repast.

During this dialogue Captain Lawton had been studying the countenance and manner of the housekeeper, with a most ludicrous gravity; and fearful the conversation would cease, he inquired with an appearance of great interest——

"Then you think it was age and debility that removed the old gentleman at last?"

"And these troublesome times," returned the spinster promptly; "trouble is a heavy pull down to a sick bed; but I suppose his time had come, and when that happens, it matters but little what doctor's stuff we take."

"Let me set you right in that particular," interrupted the surgeon gravely; "we must all die it is true, but it is permitted us to use the lights of science in arresting dangers as they occur, until"——

"We can die secundum artem," said the trooper, drily.

To this observation the physician did not deign to make any reply, but deeming it necessary, in order to support his dignity, that the conversation should continue, he added——

"Perhaps, in this instance, judicious treatment might have prolonged the life of the patient——who administered to the case?"

"No one yet," said the housekeeper, with quickness; "I expect he made his last will in the testament."

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The surgeon disregarded the smile of the ladies, and pursued his inquiries, by saying——

"It is doubtless wise to be ever prepared for death. But under whose care was the sick man during his indisposition?"

"Under mine," answered Katy, with an air of a little importance; "and care thrown away I may well call it; for Harvey is quite too despiseable to think any more nor that."

There was a mutual ignorance of each other's meaning, between the surgeon of horse and the loquacious maiden, but it made very little interruption in their communications——both took a good deal for granted, and Sitgreaves pursued his questions by asking——

"And how did you treat him?"

"Why kindly, you may be certain," said Katy with spirit, and rather tartly.

"The doctor means medically, madam," said Captain Lawton, with a face that would have honoured the funeral of the deceased.

"I doctor'd him mostly with yarbs," said the housekeeper smiling her consciousness of error.

"With simples," returned the surgeon; "they are safer in the hands of the unlettered than more powerful remedies——but why had you no regular attendant?"

"I'm sure Harvey has suffered enough already from having so much concerns with the rig'lars, without having one to wait on his father," replied the housekeeper; "he has lost his all, and made himself a vagabond through the land——and I have reason to rue the day I ever crossed the threshold of his house."

"Dr. Sitgreaves does not mean a rig'lar soldier, but a regular physician, madam," said the trooper, without moving a muscle.

"Oh!" cried the maiden, again correcting herself, with a smile, "for the best of all reasons—— there was none to be had——so I took care of him myself. If there had been a doctor at hand I am sure we would gladly have had him; for my part, I am clear for doctoring, though Harvey says I am killing myself with medicines, but I am sure it will make but little difference to him whether I live or die."

"Therein you show your sense," said the surgeon, approaching to where the spinster sat holding the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet to the genial heat of a fine fire, making the most of comfort amid all her troubles; "you appear to be a sensible, discreet woman, and some who have had opportunities of acquiring more correct views, might envy you your respect for knowledge and the lights of science."

Although the housekeeper did not altogether comprehend its meaning, she knew it was a compliment, and as such was highly pleased with the surgeon's observation; with increased animation, therefore, she cried, "it was always said of me, that I wanted nothing but opportunity to make quite a physician myself——solong as before I came to live with Harvey's father, they called me the bitch doctor."

"More true than civil, I dare say," returned the surgeon, losing sight of the woman's character in his admiration of her respect for the healing art. "In the absence of more enlightened counsellors, the experience of a discreet matron is frequently of great efficacy in checking the progress of disease in the human system; under such circumstances, madam, it is dreadful to have to contend with ignorance and obstinacy."

"Bad enough, as I well know from experience," cried Katy in triumph; "Harvey is as obstinate about such things as a dumb beast; one would think the care I took of his bed-ridden father, might learn him better than to despise good nursing. But some day he may know what it is to want a careful woman in his house, though now I am sure he is too despiseable himself to have a house."

"Indeed, I can easily comprehend the mortification you must have felt in having one so selfwilled to deal with," returned the surgeon, glancing his eye reproachfully at his comrade; "but you should rise superior to such opinions, and pity the ignorance by which they are engendered."

The housekeeper hesitated a moment, at a loss to comprehend all that the surgeon expressed, yet she felt it was both complimentary and kind; therefore, suppressing her natural flow of language a little, she replied——

"I tell Harvey his conduct is often despiseable, and last night he made my words good; but the opinions of such unbelievers is not very consequential; yet it is dreadful to think how he behaves at times: now, when he threw away the needle——"

"What!" said the surgeon, interrupting her, "does he affect to despise the needle? But it is my lot to meet with men daily who are equally perverse, and who show a still more culpable disrespect for the information that flows from the lights of science."

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The doctor turned his face towards Captain Lawton while speaking, but the elevation of the head, prevented his eye from resting on the grave countenance maintained by the trooper. Katy listened with the most profound attention, and added——

"Then Harvey is a disbeliever in the tides."

"Not believe in the tides," repeated the healer of bodies in astonishment; "does the man distrust his senses——but perhaps it is the influence of the moon that he doubts?"

"That he does," exclaimed Katy, shaking with eager delight at meeting with a man of learning, who could support her in her favorite opinions. "If you was to hear him talk, you would think he didn't believe there was such a thing as a moon at all."

"It is the misfortune of ignorance and incredulity, madam, that they increase themselves," said the doctor, gravely. "The mind once rejecting useful information, insensibly leans to superstition and conclusions on the order of nature, that are not less prejudicial to the cause of truth than they are at variance with the first principles of human knowledge."

The spinster was too much awe-struck to venture an undigested reply to this speech, and the surgeon, after pausing a moment in a kind of philosophical disdain, continued——

"That any man in his senses can doubt of the flux of the tides is more than I could have thought possible; yet obstinacy is a dangerous inmate to harbor, and may lead us into any error, however gross."

"You think then they have an effect on the flux," said the housekeeper, inquiringly.

Miss Peyton rose with a slight smile, and beckoned her nieces to give her their assistance in the adjoining pantry, while for a moment the dark visage of the attentive Lawton was lighted by an animation that vanished by an effort as powerful, and as sudden, as the one that drew it into being.

After reflecting whether he rightly understood the meaning of the other, the surgeon, making due allowance for the love of learning, acting upon a want of education, replied——

"The moon, you mean——many philosophers have doubted how far it affects the tides; but I think it is wilfully rejecting the lights of science not to believe it causes both the flux and reflux."

As reflux was a disorder the spinster was not acquainted with, she thought it prudent to be silent for a time; yet burning with curiosity to know the meaning of certain portentous lights that the other so often alluded to, she ventured to ask——

"If them lights he spoke of were what was called northern lights in these parts?"

In charity to her ignorance, the surgeon would have entered into an elaborate explanation of his meaning, had he not been interrupted by the mirth of Lawton. The trooper had listened so far with great composure; but now he laughed until his aching bones reminded him of his fall, and the tears rolled over his cheeks in larger drops than had ever been seen there before. At length the offended physician seized an opportunity to say——

"To you, Captain Lawton, it may be a source of triumph, that an uneducated woman should make a mistake in a subject on which men of science have long been at variance; but yet you find this respectable matron does not reject the lights——the lights——does not reject the use of proper instruments in repairing injuries sustained by the human frame. You may possibly remember sir, her allusion to the use of the needle."

"Ay," cried the delighted trooper, "to mend the pedlar's breeches."

Katy drew up in evident displeasure at this allusion to such familiarity between herself and the nether garments of the trader, but prompt to vindicate her character for more lofty acquirements, said——

"'Twas not a common use that I put that needle to——but one of much greater virtue."

"Explain yourself, madam," said the surgeon impatiently, "that this gentleman may see how little reason he has for exultation."

Thus solicited, Katy paused to collect sufficient eloquence with which to garnish her narrative. The substance of which was, that a child who had been placed by the guardians of the poor in the keeping of Harvey, had, in the absence of its master, injured itself badly in the foot by a large needle. The offending instrument had been carefully greased, wrapped in woollen, and placed in a certain charmed nook of the chimney; while the foot, from a fear of weakening the incantation, was left in a state of nature. The arrival of the pedlar had altered the whole of this admirable arrangement, and the consequences were expressed by Katy, as she concluded her narrative, by saying——

"'Twas no wonder the boy died of a lock-jaw."

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Dr. Sitgreaves looked out of the window in admiration of the brilliant morning—strove all he could to avoid the basilisk eyes of his comrade, but in vain. He was impelled by a feeling that he could not conquer, to look Captain Lawton in the face. The trooper had arranged every muscle of his countenance in perfect accordance with due sympathy for the fate of the poor child; but the exultation of his eyes cut the astounded man of science to the quick: he muttered something concerning the condition of his patients, and retreated with precipitation.

Miss Peyton entered into the situation of things at the house of the pedlar, with all the interest of her excellent feelings: she listened patiently while Katy recounted more particularly the circumstances of the past night as they occurred. The spinster did not forget to dwell on the magnitude of the pecuniary loss sustained by Harvey, and in no manner spared her invectives at his betraying a secret which might so easily have been kept.

"For, Miss Peyton," continued the house-keeper, after a pause of a moment to take breath, "I would have given up life before I would have given up that secret. At the most, they could only have killed him, and now a body may say that they have slain for this world, both soul and body; or what's the same thing, they have made him a despiseable vagabond. I wonder who he thinks would be his wife, or who would keep his house. For my part, my good name is too precious to be living with a lone man; though, for the matter of that, he is never there. I am resolved to tell him this day, that stay there a single woman I will not an hour after the funeral—and marry him I don't think I will—unless he becomes steadier, and more of a homebody.

The mild mistress of the Locusts suffered the exuberance of the housekeeper's animation to expend itself, and then, by one or two judicious questions, that denoted a more intimate knowledge of the windings of the human heart in matters of Cupid, than might fairly be supposed to belong to a spinster, she extracted enough from Katy to discover the improbability of Harvey's ever presuming to offer himself, with his broken fortunes, to the acceptance of Miss Katharine Haynes. She, therefore, mentioned her own want of assistance in the present state of her household, and expressed a wish that Katy would change her residence to the Locusts, in case the pedlar had not farther use for her services. After a few preliminary conditions on the part of the wary housekeeper, she concluded the arrangement; and making a few more piteous lamentations on the weight of her own losses, the stupidity of Harvey, and united with some curiosity to know the future fate of the pedlar, Katy withdrew to make certain preparations for the approaching funeral, which was to take place that day.

During the interview between the maidens, Lawton, through delicacy, had withdrawn. Anxiety took him to the room of Captain Singleton. The character of this youth, it has already been shown, endeared him in a peculiar manner to every officer in the corps. The singularly mild deportment of the young dragoon had, on so many occasions, been proved not to proceed from want of manly resolution, that his almost feminine softness of manner and appearance, had failed to bring him into disrepute even among a band of partizan warriors.

To the major he was as dear as a brother, and his easy submission to the directions of his surgeon had made him a marked favourite with Dr. Sitgreaves. The rough usage this corps often received in their daring attacks, had brought each of its officers in succession under the temporary keeping of its surgeon. To Captain Singleton the man of science had decreed the palm on such occasions, and Captain Lawton he had fairly black-balled. He frequently declared, with unconquerable simplicity and earnestness of manner, to his assembled comrades, that it gave him more pleasure to see the former brought in wounded than any officer in the squadron, and that the latter afforded him the least—a compliment and condemnation that was received by the first of the parties with a quiet smile of good nature, and by the last with a grave bow of thanks. On the present occasion, the mortified surgeon and exulting trooper met in the room of Captain Singleton, as a place where they could act on common ground. Some time was occupied in joint attentions to the comfort of the wounded officer, and the doctor retired to an apartment prepared for his own accommodation; here, within a few minutes, he was surprized by the entrance of Lawton. The triumph of the trooper had been so complete, that he felt he could afford to be generous, and commencing by voluntarily throwing aside his coat, the captain cried carelessly—

"Come, Sitgreaves, administer a little of the aid of the lights of science to my body, if you please."

The surgeon was beginning to feel this was a subject that was intolerable, but venturing his first glance towards his comrade, he saw with surprize the preparations he had made, and an air of sincerity about him that was unusual to his manner when making such a request. Changing his intended burst of resentment to a tone of civil inquiry, he said—

"Does Captain Lawton want any thing at my hands?"

"Look for yourself, my dear Sit." said the trooper mildly; "here seem to be most of the colours of the rainbow

on this shoulder of mine."

"Indeed you have reason for saying so," said the other, handling the part with great tenderness and consummate skill; "but happily nothing is broken. It is wonderful how well you escaped."

"Oh! I have been a tumbler from my youth, and I am past minding a few falls from a horse; but, Sitgreaves," he added with affection, and pointing to a scar on his body, "do you remember this bit of work?"

"Perfectly well, Jack," replied the doctor with a smile, "it was bravely obtained, and neatly extracted; but don't you think I had better apply an oil to these bruises?"

"Certainly," said Lawton, with unexpected condescension.

"Now, my dear boy," cried the doctor exultingly, as he busied himself in applying the remedy to the hurts, "do you not think it would have been better to have done all this last night?"

"Quite probably," returned the other complacently.

"Yes, Jack, but if you had let me perform the operation of phlebotomy when I first saw you, it would have been of infinite service."

"No phlebotomy," said the other positively.

"It is now too late," replied the dejected surgeon; "but a dose of oil would carry off the humours famously."

To this the captain made no reply, but gritted his teeth in a way that showed the fortress of his mouth was not to be assailed without a resolute resistance, and the experienced physician changed the subject by saying—

"It is a pity, John, that you did not catch the rascal, after the danger and trouble you incurred."

The captain of dragoons made no reply; and, while placing some bandages on the wounded shoulder, the surgeon continued—

"If I have any wish at all to destroy human life, it is to have the pleasure of seeing that traitor hung."

"I thought your business was to cure, and not to slay," said the trooper drily.

"Ay! but he has caused us such heavy losses by his information, that I sometimes feel a very unchristian temper towards that spy."

"You should not encourage such feelings of animosity to any of your fellow creatures," returned Lawton, in a tone that caused the operator to drop a pin he was arranging in the bandages, from his hand. He looked the patient in the face to remove all doubts of his identity, and finding, however, it was his old comrade, Captain John Lawton, who had spoken, he rallied his astonished faculties, and proceeded by saying—

"Your doctrine is just, and in general I subscribe to it. But, John, my dear fellow, is the bandage easy?"

"Quite."

"Yes, I agree with you as a whole; but as matter is infinitely divisible, so no case exists without an exception. Lawton, don't you—do you—feel easy?"

"Very."

"It is not only cruel to the sufferer, but sometimes unjust to others, to take human life where a less punishment would answer the purpose. Now, Jack, if you were only—move your arm a little—if you were only—I hope you feel easier, my dear friend?"

"Much."

"If, my dear John, you would teach your men to cut with more discretion, it would answer you the same purpose—and give me great pleasure."

The doctor drew a heavy sigh, as he was enabled to get rid of what was nearest to his heart; and the dragoon coolly replaced his coat, saying with great deliberation, as he retired—

"I know no troop that cut more judiciously—they generally shave from the crown to the jaw."

The disappointed operator collected his instruments, and with a heavy heart, proceeded to pay a visit to the room of Colonel Wellmere.

CHAPTER XII.

This fairy form contains a soul as mighty
As that which lives within a giant's frame;
These slender limbs, that tremble like the aspen
At summer evening's sigh, uphold a spirit,
Which rous'd, can tower to the height of heaven,
And light those shining windows of the face
With much of heaven's own radiance.

— Due

The number and character of her guests had greatly added to the cares of Miss Jeannette Peyton. The morning had found them all restored, in some measure, to their former ease of body, with the exception of the youthful captain of dragoons, who had been so deeply regretted by Dunwoodie. The wound of this officer was severe, though the surgeon persevered in saying that it was without danger. His comrade, we have shown, had deserted his couch; and Henry Wharton awoke from a sleep that had been undisturbed by any thing but a dream of suffering amputation under the hands of a surgical novice. As it proved, however, to be nothing but a dream, the youth found himself much refreshed by his slumbers, and Dr. Sitgreaves removed all further apprehensions, by confidently pronouncing him a well man within a fortnight.

During all this time Colonel Wellmere had not made his appearance; he breakfasted in his own room, and, notwithstanding certain significant smiles of the man of science, declared himself too much injured to rise from his bed. Leaving him, therefore, endeavouring to conceal his chagrin in the solitude of his chamber, the surgeon proceeded to the more grateful task of sitting an hour by the bedside of George Singleton. A slight flush was on the face of the patient as the doctor entered the room, and he advanced promptly and laid his fingers on the pulse of the youth, beckoning him to be silent, while he filled the vacuum in the discourse, by saying—

"Growing symptoms of a febrile pulse—no—no, my dear George, you must remain quiet and dumb; though your eyes look better, and your skin has even a moisture."

"Nay, my dear Sitgreaves," said the youth, taking his hand, "you see there is no fever about me—look, is there any of Jack Lawton's hoarfrost on my tongue?"

"No, indeed," said the surgeon, clapping a spoon in the mouth of the other, forcing it open, and looking down his throat as if he was disposed to visit his interior in person; "your tongue is well, and your pulse begins to lower again. Ah! the bleeding did you good. Phlebotomy is a sovereign specific for southern constitutions. But that mad-cap Lawton obstinately refused to be blooded for a fall he had from his horse last night. Why, George, your case is becoming singular," continued the doctor, instinctively throwing aside his wig; "your pulse even and soft, your skin moist, but your eye fiery, and cheek flushed. Oh! I must examine more closely into these symptoms."

"Softly, my good friend, softly," said the youth, falling back on his pillow, and losing some of that colour which alarmed his companion; "I believe in extracting the ball you did for me all that is required. I am free from pain, and only weak, I do assure you."

"Captain Singleton," said the surgeon with heat, "it is presumptuous in you to pretend to tell your medical attendant when you are free from pain; if it be not to enable us to decide in such matters, of what avails the lights of science? for shame, George, for shame; even that perverse fellow, John Lawton, could not behave with more obstinacy."

His patient smiled as he gently repulsed his physician in an attempt to undo the bandages, and with a returning glow to his cheeks, inquired—

"Do, Archibald," a term of endearment that seldom failed to soften the operator's heart, "tell me what spirit from heaven has been gliding around my apartment, while I lay pretending to sleep, but a few minutes before you entered."

"If any one interferes with my patients," cried the doctor hastily, "I will teach them, spirit or no spirit, what it is to meddle with another man's concerns."

"Tut—my dear fellow," replied the wounded man with a faint smile, "there was no interference made, nor

any intended; see," exhibiting the bandages, "every thing is as you left it—— but it glided about the room with the grace of a fairy, and the tenderness of an angel."

The surgeon, having satisfied himself that every thing was as he had left it, very deliberately resumed his seat and replaced his wig, as he inquired, with a brevity that would have honoured Lieutenant Mason——

"Had it petticoats, George?"

"I saw nothing but its heavenly eyes——its bloom ——its majestic step——its grace;" replied the young man, with rather more ardor than his surgeon thought consistent with his debilitated condition, and he laid his hand on his mouth, to stop him; saying himself——

"It must have been Miss Jeannette Peyton——a lady of fine accomplishments, with——with——hem—— with something of the kind of step you speak of—— a very complacent eye; and as to the bloom, I dare say offices of charity can summon as fine a colour to her cheeks, as glows in the faces of her more youthful nieces."

"Nieces!" said the invalid; "has she nieces then? Oh, the angel I saw may be a daughter, a sister, or a niece, but never an aunt."

"Hush, George, hush, your talking has brought your pulse up again; you must observe quiet, and prepare for a meeting with your own sister, who will be here within an hour."

"What, Isabella! and who sent for her?"

"The major," said the surgeon drily.

"Kind, considerate Dunwoodie," murmured the exhausted youth, sinking again on his pillow; where the commands of his attendant compelled him to continue in silence.

Even Captain Lawton had been received with many and courteous inquiries after the state of his health, from all the members of the family when he made his morning entrance; but an invisible spirit presided over the comforts of the English colonel. Sarah had shrunk with retiring delicacy from entering the room; yet she knew the position of every glass, and had, with her own hands, supplied the contents of every bowl, that stood on his well furnished table.

At the time of which we write we were a divided people, and Sarah thought it was no more than her right to cherish the institutions of that country to which she yet clung as the land of her forefathers: but there were other, and more cogent reasons for the silent preference she was giving to the Englishman. His image had first filled the void in her youthful fancy, and it was an image that was distinguished by many of those attractions that can enchain a female heart. It is true, he wanted the graceful and lofty stature of Peyton Dunwoodie, his commanding brow, his speaking eye, and his clear and comprehensive diction; but his skin was fair, his cheeks coloured, and his teeth no less white than those which shone in the fascinating smile of the young Virginian. Sarah had moved round the house during the morning, casting frequent and longing glances at the door of Wellmere's apartment, anxious to learn the condition of his wounds, and yet ashamed to inquire: conscious interest kept her tongue tied, until her sister, with the frankness of innocence, had put the desired question to Dr. Sitgreaves.

"Colonel Wellmere," said the operator gravely, "is in what I call a state of free-will, madam. He is ill, or he is well, as he pleases; his case, young lady, exceeds my art to heal; and I take it, Sir Henry Clinton is the best adviser he can apply to: though Major Dunwoodie has made the communication with his leech rather difficult."

Frances smiled archly, but averted her face to do so, while Sarah moved haughtily, and with the stately grace of an offended Juno, from the apartment. Her own room, however, afforded her but little to relieve her thoughts, and in passing through the long gallery that communicated with each of the chambers of the building, she noticed the door of Singleton's room to be open. The wounded youth seemed sleeping, and was alone. Sarah ventured lightly into the apartment, and busied herself for a few minutes in arranging the tables, and nourishment provided for the patient, hardly conscious of what she was doing, and possibly dreaming that it was done for another. The natural bloom of her cheek was heightened by the insinuation of the surgeon, and the lustre of her eye was by no means diminished from the same cause. The sound of the approaching footsteps of Sitgreaves had hastened her retreat through another door, and down a private stair-way to the side of her sister. Together they sought the fresh air on the piazza to the cottage, and they pursued their walk arm in arm, holding the following dialogue——

"There is something disagreeable about this surgeon, Dunwoodie has honoured us with," said Sarah, "that causes me to wish him away, most heartily."

Frances fixed her laughing eyes on her sister, who, meeting their playful glance as they turned in their walk, blushed yet deeper than before as she added hastily; "but I forget he is one of this renowned corps of Virginians,

and as such must be spoken reverently of."

"As respectfully as you please, my dear sister," returned Frances mildly; "there is but little danger of your exceeding the truth."

"Not in your opinion," said the elder with a little warmth; "but I think Mr. Dunwoodie has taken a liberty that exceeds the rights of consanguinity; he has made our father's house an hospital."

"We ought to be grateful," replied the younger in a low voice, "that none of the patients it contains are dearer to us."

"Your brother is one," said Sarah laconically.

"True, true," interrupted Frances hastily, and blushing to the eyes; "but he leaves his room, and thinks his wound lightly purchased by the pleasure of being with his friends—if," she added with a tremulous lip, "this dreadful suspicion that is affixed to his visit were removed, I could feel his wound as nothing."

"You now have the fruits of rebellion brought home to you," said Sarah, moving across the piazza with something more than her ordinary stateliness; "a brother wounded and a prisoner, and perhaps a victim; your father distressed, his privacy interrupted, and not improbably his estates torn from him on account of his loyalty to his king."

Frances continued her walk in silence. While facing the northern entrance to the vale, her eye was uniformly fastened on the point where the road was suddenly lost by the intervention of a hill; and at each turn, as she lost sight of the spot, she lingered until an impatient movement of her sister quickened her pace to an even motion with that of the other. At length, a single horse chaise was seen making its way carefully among the stones which lay scattered over the country road that wound through the valley, and approached the cottage. Frances lost her brilliancy of colour as the vehicle gradually drew nigher, and when she was enabled to see a female form in it by the side of a liveried black who held the reins, her limbs shook with an agitation that compelled her to lean on Sarah for support. In a few minutes the travellers approached the gate, and it was thrown open by a dragoon who had followed the carriage, and who had been the messenger despatched by Dunwoodie to the father of Captain Singleton. Miss Peyton advanced to receive their guest, and the sisters united in giving her the kindest welcome; still Frances could with difficulty withdraw her truant eyes from reading the countenance of the visitor. She was young, of a light and fragile form, yet of exquisite proportions; but it was in her eye that her greatest charm existed; it was large, full, black, piercing, and at times a little wild. Her hair was luxuriant, and without the powder it was then the fashion to wear, but shone in its own, glossy, raven, blackness. A few of its locks had fallen on her cheek, giving its chilling whiteness by the contrast yet a more deadly character. Dr. Sitgreaves supported her from the chaise, and when she gained the floor of the piazza, she turned her expressive eye on the face of the practitioner in silence; but it spoke all that she wished to say——

"Your brother is out of danger, and wishes to see you, Miss Singleton," said the surgeon in reply to her look.

For an instant the lady clasped her hands with energy, rolled her dark eyes to heaven, while a slight flush, like the last reflected tinge of the setting sun, beamed on her features, and she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of tears. Frances had stood contemplating the action and face of Isabella with a kind of uneasy admiration, but she now sprang to her side with the ardor of a sister, and kindly drawing her arm in her own, led the way to a retired room. The movement was so ingenuous, so considerate, and so delicate, that even Miss Peyton withheld her interference, following the youthful pair with only her eyes and a smile of complacency. The feeling was communicated to all the spectators, and they dispersed in pursuit of their usual avocations. Isabella yielded to the gentle influence of Frances without resistance, and having gained the room where the latter conducted her, wept in silence on the shoulder of the observant and soothing maiden, until Frances thought her tears exceeded the emotion natural to the occasion. The sobs of Miss Singleton for a time were violent and uncontrollable, until with an evident exertion she yielded to a kind observation of her companion, and succeeded in suppressing her tears: raising her face to the eyes of Frances, she rose, while a smile of beautiful radiance passed over her features, made a hasty apology for the excess of her emotion, and desired to be conducted to the room of her brother.

The meeting between the brother and sister was warm, but, by an effort on the part of the lady, more composed than her previous agitation had given reason to expect. Isabella found her brother looking better, and in less danger than her sensitive imagination had led her to suppose, and her spirits rose in proportion; from despondency she passed to something like gayety; her beautiful eyes sparkled with renovated brilliancy, and her face was lighted with smiles so fascinating, that Frances, who, in compliance with her earnest intreaties, had

accompanied her to the sick chamber, sat gazing on a countenance that possessed such wonderful variability, as if impelled by a charm that was beyond her control. The youth had thrown an earnest look at Frances as soon as his sister had raised herself from his arms, and perhaps it was the first glance at the lovely lineaments of the maiden, where the gazer turned his eyes from the view in disappointment; pausing a moment, during which the wandering eyes of Singleton were bent on the open door of the room, he said, as he took the hand of his sister affectionately——

"And where is Dunwoodie, Isabella? he is never weary of kind actions. After a day of such service as that of yesterday, he has spent the night in bringing me a nurse, whose presence alone is able to raise me from my couch."

The expression of the lady's countenance changed instantly; her eye roved round the apartment with a character of wildness in it that repelled the anxious maiden, who studied her movements with intensity of interest, as forcibly as the moment before it had attracted her; while the sister answered with a trembling emotion——

"Dunwoodie! is he then not here? with me he has not been: I thought to have met him by the side of my brother's bed."

"He has duties that require his presence elsewhere; yes, these English are said to be out by the way of the Hudson, and give the light troops but little rest," said the brother musing; "surely nothing else could have kept him so long from a wounded friend; but, Isabella, the meeting has been too much for you; you tremble like an aspen."

Isabella made no reply, but stretched forth her hand towards the table which held the nourishment of the captain, and the attentive Frances comprehended her wishes in a moment; a glass of water in some measure revived the sister, who, smiling faintly, was enabled to say——

"Doubtless it is his duty. 'Twas said above, a royal party was moving on the river; though I passed the troops but a short two miles from this spot." The latter part of the sentence was hardly audible, and spoken more in the manner of a soliloquy than as if intended for the ears of her companions.

"On the march, Isabella?" eagerly inquired her brother.

"No, dismounted, and seemingly at rest," was the reply, in the same abstracted manner as before.

The wondering brother turned his gaze on the countenance of his sister, who sat with her full, black eye bent on the carpet in unconscious absence, but found no explanation. His look was changed to the face of Frances, who, startling with the earnestness of his expression, arose, and hastily inquired if he would have any assistance.

"If, madam, you can pardon the rudeness," said the wounded officer, making a feeble effort to raise his body, "I would request to have Captain Lawton's company for a moment."

Frances hastened instantly to communicate his wish to that gentleman, and impelled by an anxious interest she could not control, returned again to her seat by the side of Miss Singleton.

"Lawton," said the youth impatiently as the trooper entered, "hear you from the major?"

The eye of the sister was now bent on the face of the trooper, who made his salutations to the lady with the ease of a gentleman, blended with the frankness of a soldier, and answered——

"His man has been here twice to inquire how we fared in the Lazaretto."

"And why not himself?" said the other quickly.

"Ah! that is a question the major can answer best himself," returned the dragoon drily; "but you know the red coats are abroad, and Dunwoodie commands in the county; these English must be looked to."

"True," said Singleton slowly, as if struck with the other's reasons; "but how is it that you are idle when there is work to do?"

"My sword arm is not in the best condition, and Roanoke has a dreadfully shambling gait this morning," said the trooper with a shrug; "besides there is another reason I could mention, if it were not that Miss Wharton would never forgive me."

"Speak, I beg, sir, without dread of my displeasure," said Frances, withdrawing her eyes from the countenance of Miss Singleton, and returning the good-humoured smile of the trooper with the natural archness of her own lovely face.

"The odours of your kitchen, then," cried Lawton bluntly, "forbid my quitting the domains, until I qualify myself to speak with more certainty concerning the fatness of the land."

"Oh! aunt Jeannette is exerting herself to do credit to my father's hospitality," said the laughing maid, "and I

am a truant from her labours, as I shall be a stranger to her favour unless I proffer my assistance."

After making a proper apology to the stranger, Frances withdrew to seek her aunt, musing deeply on the character and extreme sensibility of the new acquaintance chance had brought to the cottage.

The wounded officer followed her with his eyes, as her lovely figure moved with infantile grace through the door of his apartment, and as she vanished from his view, observed——

"Such an aunt and niece are seldom to be met with, Jack; this seems a fairy, but the aunt is angelic."

"Ah! George, you are doing well, I see," said the trooper; "your enthusiasm holds its own."

"I should be ungrateful as well as insensible did I not bear testimony to the loveliness of Miss Peyton."

"A good motherly lady," said the dragoon drily; "but as to love, you know that is a matter of taste. I think a few years younger, with deference to the sex," bowing to Miss Singleton, "would accord better with my fancy."

"She must be under twenty," said the other quickly.

"Oh, doubtless, about nineteen," said Lawton with extreme gravity; "yet she looks a trifle older."

"You have mistaken an elder sister for the aunt," said Isabella, laying her fair hand on the mouth of the invalid, "but you must be silent; your feelings are beginning to affect your frame."

The entrance of Doctor Sitgreaves, who, in some alarm, noticed the increase of feverish symptoms in his patient, enforced this mandate; and the trooper withdrew to pay a visit of condolence to Roanoke, who had been an equal sufferer with himself in their last night's somerset. To his great joy, his man pronounced the steed to be equally convalescent with the master; and Lawton found, that by dint of rubbing the animal's limbs several hours without ceasing, he was enabled to place his feet in what he called systematic motion. Orders were accordingly given to be in readiness to prepare to rejoin the troop at the four corners, so soon as the captain had shared in the bounty of the approaching banquet.

In the mean time, Henry Wharton had entered the apartment of Wellmere, and by his sympathetic feelings on account of a defeat in which they had been alike unfortunate, succeeded greatly in restoring the colonel to his own good graces; he was consequently enabled to rise and prepare to meet a rival of whom he had spoken so lightly, and as the result had proved, with so little reason. Wharton knew this misfortune, as it was termed by both, was owing to the other's rashness; but he forbore to speak of any thing except the unfortunate accident which had deprived the English of their leader, and their consequent defeat.

"In short, Wharton," said the colonel putting one leg out of bed, "it may be called a combination of untoward events; your own ungovernable horse prevented my orders from being carried to the major, in season to flank the rebels."

"Very true," replied the captain, kicking a slipper towards the bed; "had we succeeded in getting a few good fires upon them in flank, we should have sent these brave Virginians to the right about."

"Ay! and that in double quick time," cried the colonel with very considerable animation, making the other leg follow its companion; "then it was necessary to route the guides, you know, and the movement gave them the best possible opportunity to charge."

"Yes," said the other, sending the second slipper after the first, "and that Dunwoodie never overlooks an advantage."

"I think if we had the thing to do over again," continued the colonel, raising himself on his feet, "we might alter the case very materially, though the chief thing the rebels have now to boast of is my capture; they were repulsed you saw, in their attempt to drive us from the wood."

"At least they would have been, had they made an attack," said the captain, throwing his clothes within reach of the colonel.

"Ay! why that, you know, is the same thing," returned Wellmere, dressing himself; "to assume such an attitude as to intimidate your enemy is the chief art of war."

"Doubtless," said the captain, entering himself a little into the proud feelings of a soldier; "then you may remember in one charge they were completely routed."

"True——true," cried the colonel with animation; "had I been there to have improved that advantage we might have turned the table completely on the yankies;" in saying which he completed his toilette, and was prepared to make his appearance, fully restored to his own good opinion, and fairly persuaded that his capture was owing to casualties absolutely without the control of man.

The knowledge that Colonel Wellmere was to be a partaker in the feast in no degree diminished the

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preparations which were already making for that important event; and Sarah, after receiving the compliments of the gentleman, and making, with blushing cheeks, many kind inquiries after the state of his wounds, proceeded in person to lend her aid in embellishing what would now be of additional interest.

CHAPTER XIII.

I will stand to and feed,
Although my last: no matter, since I feel
The best is past:—Brother, my Lord the Duke
Stand to, and do as we——"
—— Tempest

The savour of preparation, which had been noticed by Captain Lawton, began to increase vastly within the walls of the Cottage—Certain sweet smelling odours, that rose from the subterraneous territories of Cæsar, gave to the trooper the most pleasing assurance, that his olfactory nerves, which on such occasions were as acute as his eyes on others, had faithfully performed their duty; and for the benefit of enjoying the passing sweets as they arose, the dragoon so placed himself at a window of the building, that not a vapour, charged with the spices of the east, could exhale on its passage to the clouds, without first giving its incense, by way of tribute, to his nose. Lawton, however, by no means indulged himself in this comfortable arrangement without first making such preparations, to do meet honour to the feast, as his scanty wardrobe would allow. The uniform of his corps was always a passport to the proudest tables, and this, though somewhat tarnished by faithful service and unceremonious usage, was properly brushed and decked out for the occasion. His head, which nature had marked with the blackness of a crow, now shone with the spotless whiteness of the dove; and his hand, that so well became, by its bony and gigantic frame, the sabre it wielded so indiscreetly, peered from beneath a ruffle with something like maiden delicacy. The improvements of the dragoon went no farther, excepting that his boots shone with more than holiday splendor, and his spurs glittered in the rays of the sun like worthy offspring of the hills of Potosi.

Cæsar moved through the apartments with a face charged with an importance, vastly exceeding that which had accompanied him in his melancholy task of the morning. The black had early returned from the message on which he had been despatched by the pedlar, and obedient to the commands of his mistress, promptly appeared to give his services, where his allegiance was due—— so serious, indeed, was his duty now becoming that it was only by odd moments he was enabled to impart to his sable brother, who had been sent in attendance on Miss Singleton to the Locusts, any portion of the wonderful incidents of the momentous night he had so lately passed through. By ingeniously using, however, such moments as might be fairly thought his own, Cæsar communicated so many of the heads of his tale, as served to open the eyes of his visitor to a width that justly entitled them to the significant appellative of saucer. Indeed, to such a state of amazement had the gusto for the marvellous conducted the sable worthies, that Miss Peyton found it necessary to interpose her authority, in order to postpone the residue of the history to a more befitting opportunity.

"Ah! Miss Jin'nett," said Cæsar shaking his head, and looking all that he expressed, "'twas awful to see Johnny Birch walk on a feet, when he lie dead."

This concluded the conversation for the present, though the black promised himself, and actually put in execution his intention of having many a good gossip on the solemn subject hereafter.

The ghost thus happily laid, the department of Miss Peyton thrived with additional success, and by the time the afternoon's sun had travelled a two hours journey from the meridian, the formal procession from the kitchen to the parlour commenced under the auspices of Cæsar, who led the van, supporting a turkey on the palms of his withered hands with the dexterity of a balance master.

Next followed the servant of Captain Lawton, bearing, as he marched stiffly and walking wide, as if allowing room for his steed, a ham of true Virginian flavour;—being a present from the spinster's wealthy brother in Accomac. The supporter of this savory dish kept his eye on his trust with military precision, and by the time he reached his destination it might be difficult to say which contained the most juice, his mouth or the Accomac bacon.

Third in the line was to be seen the valet of Colonel Wellmere, who carried in either hand chickens fricassied, and oyster pattys.

After him marched the attendant of Dr. Sitgreaves, who had instinctively seized an enormous tureen, as most

resembling matters he understood; and followed on in place, until the steams of the soup so completely bedimmed the spectacles he wore as a badge of office, that on arriving at the scene of action, he was compelled to deposite his freight on the floor until, by removing the glasses, he could see his way through the piles of reserved china and plate-warmers in safety.

Next followed another trooper, whose duty it was to attend on Captain Singleton; and as if apportioning his appetite to the feeble state of his master, he had contented himself with conveying a pair of ducks, roasted until their tempting fragrance began to make him repent his demolishing so lately, a breakfast that had been provided for his master's sister, with another prepared for himself.

The white boy who belonged to the house brought up the rear, groaning under the load of sundry dishes of vegetables that the cook, by way of climax, had unwittingly heaped on him.

But this was far from all of the preparations for that day's feast. Cæsar no sooner deposited his bird, which but the week before had been flying amongst the highlands of Duchess, little dreaming of so soon heading such a goodly assemblage, than he turned mechanically on his heel, and took up his line of march again for the kitchen. In this evolution the black was imitated by his companions in succession, and another procession to the parlour followed in the same order. By this admirable arrangement, whole flocks of pigeons, certain bevys of quails, shoals of flat-fish, bass, and sundry wood-cock, found their way into the presence of the company above stairs.

A third attack brought suitable quantities of potatoes, onions, beets, cold-slaw, rice, and all the other minutiae of a goodly dinner; and for a time this completed the preparations.

The board now fairly groaned with American profusion, and Cæsar, glancing his eye over the show with a most approving conscience, after moving every dish that had not been placed on the table with his own hands, proceeded to acquaint the mistress of the revels, that his task was happily accomplished.

Some half hour before the martial array we have just recorded took place, all the ladies had disappeared, much in the same unaccountable manner that swallows flee the approach of winter. But the spring-time of their return had arrived, and the whole party were collected in an apartment that, in consequence of its containing no side-table, and being furnished with a chintz-covered settee, was termed a withdrawing room.

The kind-hearted spinster had deemed the occasion worthy, not only of extraordinary preparations in the culinary department, but had seen proper to deck her own person in garments suited to the guests it was now her happiness to entertain.

On her head Miss Peyton wore a cap of exquisite lawn, which was ornamented in front with a broad border of lace, that spread from the face in such a manner as to admit of a display of artificial flowers, clustered in a tasteful group on the summit of her fine forehead.

The colour of her hair was lost in the profusion of powder with which it was covered; but a slight curling of the extremities in some degree relieved the formality of its starched arrangement, and gave a look of feminine softness to the features.

Her dress was a rich, heavy silk of violet colour, cut low around the bust, with a stomacher of the same materials, that fitted close to the figure, and exhibited the form, from the shoulders to the waist, in its true proportions: below, the dress was full, and sufficiently showed, that parsimony in attire was not a foible of the day. A small hoop displayed the beauty of the fabric to advantage, and aided in giving majesty to the figure.

The tall stature of the spinster was heightened by shoes of the same material with the dress, whose heels added more than an inch to the liberality of nature.

The sleeves were short and close to the limb, until they fell off at the elbows in large ruffles, that hung in rich profusion from the arm when extended; and duplicates and triplicates of lawn, trimmed with Dresden lace, lent their aid in giving delicacy to a hand and arm that yet retained their whiteness and symmetry. A treble row of large pearl closely encircled her throat, and a handkerchief of lace partially concealed that part of the person that the silk had left exposed, but which the experience of forty years had warned Miss Peyton should now be veiled.

Thus attired, and standing erect with the lofty grace that distinguished the manners of that day, the spinster would have looked into atoms a bevy of modern belles.

The taste of Sarah had kept even pace with the decorations of her aunt; and a dress, differing in no respect from the one just described, but in material and tints, exhibited her imposing form to equal advantage. The satin of her robe was of a pale blush colour. Twenty years did not, however, require the skreen that was prudent in forty, and nothing but an envious border of exquisite lace hid, in some measure, what the satin left exposed to the

view. The upper part of the bust and fine fall of the shoulders were blazing in all their native beauty, and like the aunt, the throat was ornamented by a treble row of pearl, to correspond with which were rings of the same jewel in the ears. The head was without a cap, and the hair drawn up from the countenance so as to give to the eye all the loveliness of a forehead as polished as marble and as white as snow. A few straggling curls fell gracefully in the neck, and a bouquet of artificial flowers was also placed, like a coronet, over her commanding brow.

Miss Singleton had yielded her brother to the advice of Dr. Sitgreaves, who had succeeded in getting his patient in a deep sleep after quieting certain feverish symptoms that followed the agitation of the interview related. The sister was persuaded by the observant mistress of the mansion to make one of the party, and sat by the side of Sarah; differing but little in appearance from that lady, except in refusing the use of powder on her raven locks, and that her unusually high forehead and large and brilliant eye gave an expression of thoughtfulness to her features, that was possibly heightened by the paleness of her cheek.

Last and least, but not the most unlovely in this display of female charms, was the youngest daughter of Mr. Wharton. Frances, we have already mentioned, left the city before she had attained to the age of fashionable womanhood. A few adventurous spirits were already beginning to make inroads in the barriers which custom had so long drawn around the comforts of the fair sex; and the maid had so far ventured in imitation, as to trust her beauty to the height which nature had given her. This was but little, but that little was a master-piece. Frances several times had determined, in the course of the morning, to bestow more than usual pains in the decoration of her person. Each time in succession, as she formed this resolution, she spent a few minutes in looking earnestly towards the north, and then she as invariably changed it.

At the appointed hour, the maid appeared in the drawing room, clothed in a vestment of pale blue silk, of a cut and fashion much like that worn by her sister. Her hair was left to the wild curls of nature, its exuberance being confined to the crown of her head by a long, low comb made of light tortoise shell; a colour barely distinguishable in the golden hue of her tresses. Her dress was without a plait or a wrinkle, and fitted the form with an exactitude that might lead one to imagine the arch girl more than suspected the beauties it displayed. A tucker of rich Dresden lace softened the contour of the figure. Her head was without ornament; but around her throat was a necklace of gold clasped in front with a rich cornelian.

Dr. Sitgreaves was a mineralogist among his other qualities, and during the day he ventured a remark on the beauty of the stone; and for a long time the simple operator was at a loss to conjecture what there was in the observation to call the blood so tumultuously to the face of the maiden. His surprise might haply have continued to the hour of his death, had not Lawton kindly intimated that it was indignation at his overlooking the object on which the bauble reposed. The gloves of kid which concealed the hands and part of the arm, leaving enough of the latter in sight, however, to proclaim its fair proportions, indicated that there was no one present to tempt the flattering, and perhaps unconscious display, of womanly power.

Once, and once only, as they moved towards the repast prepared with so much judgment and skill by Cæsar, did Lawton see a foot thrust itself from beneath the folds of her robe, and exhibit its little beauties encased in a slipper of blue silk, clasped close to the shape by a buckle of brilliants. The trooper caught himself sighing as he thought, though it was good for nothing in the stirrup, how enchantingly it would grace a minuet.

As the black appeared on the threshold of the room making a low reverence, which has been interpreted for some centuries into "dinner waits," Mr. Wharton, clad in a dress of drab, and loaded with enormous buttons, advanced formally to Miss Singleton, and bending his powdered head to near the level of the hand he extended, received her's in return.

Dr. Sitgreaves offered the same homage to Miss Peyton, and met with equal favor; the lady first pausing, with stately grace, to draw on her gloves.

Colonel Wellmere was honoured with a smile from Sarah while performing a similar duty; and Frances gave the ends of her taper fingers to Captain Lawton with a manner, that said so much to the corps, and so little to the man.

Much time, and some trouble was expended before the whole party were, to the great joy of Cæsar, comfortably arranged around the table with proper attention to all points of etiquette and precedence. The black well knew the viands were getting cold, and felt his honour concerned in the event.

For the first ten minutes all but the captain of dragoons found themselves in a situation much to their liking; but he felt himself a little soured at the multiplicity of the questions and offers of the host, which were meant to be

conducive to his enjoyments, but which in truth had an exactly contrary effect. The captain could not eat and answer in a breath, and the demands for the latter somewhat interfered with the execution of the former.

Next came the drinking with the ladies; but as the wine was excellent, and the glasses of very ample size, the trooper bore this interruption with consummate good nature. Nay, so fearful was he of giving offence, and omitting any of the nicer points of punctilio, that having commenced this courtesy with the lady who sat next him, he persevered until not one of his fair companions could, with justice, reproach him with partiality in this particular.

His long abstemiousness from any thing like generous wine might plead the excuse of Captain Lawton, especially when exposed to so strong a temptation as was now before him. Mr. Wharton had been one of a set of politicians in New-York, whose principal exploits, before the war, had been to assemble, and pass sage opinions on the signs of the times, under the inspiration of certain liquors which were made from a grape that grew on the south side of the island of Madeira, and found its way into the colonies of North America by the way of the West Indies, sojourning awhile in the Western Archipelago, by way of trying the virtues of the climate. A large supply of this cordial had been drawn from his store-house in the city, and some of it now sparkled in a bottle before the captain, blushing luxuriantly in the rays of the sun, which were passing obliquely through it.

If the meat and vegetables had made their entrance with perfect order and propriety, their exeunt was effected with far less. The point was to clear the board something after the fabled tale of the harpies, and by dint of scrabbling, tossing, breaking, and spilling, the overflowing remnants of the repast vanished from the room. And now another series of processions commenced, by virtue of which a goodly display of pasty with its usual accompaniments, garnished the table.

Mr. Wharton poured out a glass of wine for the lady who sat on his right hand, and pushing the bottle to a guest, said, with a low bow——

"We are to be honoured with a toast from Miss Singleton."

Although there was nothing more in this movement than occurred every day on such occasions, yet the lady trembled, coloured, and grew pale again, seemingly endeavouring to rally her thoughts, until by her agitation she had excited the interest of the whole party; when, by an effort, and in a manner as if she had strived in vain to think of another, Isabella said faintly——

"Major Dunwoodie."

The health was drank cheerfully by all but Colonel Wellmere, who wet his lips, and drew figures on the table with some of the liquor he had spilt; and Frances thought deeply on the manner of doing, what in itself would have excited no suspicions.

At length Colonel Wellmere broke silence by saying aloud to Captain Lawton——

"I suppose, sir, this Mr. Dunwoodie will receive promotion in the rebel army, for the advantage my misfortune gave him over my command."

The trooper had supplied the wants of nature to his perfect satisfaction; and perhaps, with the exception of Washington and his immediate commander, there was no mortal whose displeasure he regarded a tittle: he was free to converse or to fight; to him it mattered nought. First helping himself, therefore, to a little of his favorite bottle, he replied with admirable coolness——

"Colonel Wellmere, your pardon——Major Dunwoodie owes his allegiance to the confederated states of North America, and where he owes it he pays it, and is no rebel; promoted I hope he may be, both because he deserves it, and I am next in rank in the corps; and I know not what you call a misfortune, unless you deem meeting the Virginia horse as such."

"We will not differ about terms, sir" said the colonel haughtily; "I spoke as duty to my sovereign prompted; but do you not call the loss of a commander a misfortune to a party?"

"It certainly may be so," said the trooper with great emphasis.

"Miss Peyton, will you favor us with a toast?" cried the master of the house, anxious to stop dialogue in which he might be called on for an opinion.

The spinster bowed her head with infinite dignity as she named "General Montrose;" and her nephew smiled as he noticed the long absent bloom stealing lightly over her fine features.

"There is no term more doubtful than that word misfortune," said the surgeon, regardless of the nice manœuvres of the host: "some deem one thing a misfortune, others its opposite: misfortune begets misfortune: life

is a misfortune; for it may be the means of enduring misfortune; and death is a misfortune, as it abridges the enjoyments of life."

"It is a misfortune that our mess has no such wine as this," interrupted the trooper abruptly, and laying in a stock to supply the deficiency.

"We will pledge you a sentiment in it, sir, as it seems to suit your taste," said Mr. Wharton, still uncertain what would be the termination of all these misfortunes.

Filling to the brim, Lawton said, looking hard at the English colonel—"a clear field and no favor."

"I drink your toast, Captain Lawton," said the surgeon gravely; "inasmuch as courtesy requires no less at my hands; but I wish never to see your troop nearer to an enemy than long pistol-shot."

"Let me tell you, Mr. Archibald Sitgreaves," said the dragoon hastily, "that's a damned unneighbourly wish."

The ladies bridled, and Miss Peyton made a motion to withdraw, which was instantly obeyed by her fair bevy of juniors.

The suddenness of the movement somewhat appalled the trooper, and he stammered out an apology to Frances, who stood next him, which the laughing maid received very good-naturedly out of regard to the coat he wore, although she knew it would afford matter of triumph to her sister for a month to come.

"'Tis unneighbourly to wish a man at such a distance from his friends," said the captain good-humouredly, in a manner that spoke his willingness to atone; it was, however, too late, and the ladies retired with much dignity amidst the bows and compliments of all but the chop-fallen dragoon. The discomfiture produced an utter stagnation in the thoughts of the trooper; and Mr. Wharton, making a profusion of apologies to his guests, arose and left the room, followed by his son, and together both quitted the house. The retreat of the ladies was the signal for the appearance of the surgeon's segar box, which, having comfortably established it in a corner of his mouth in a certain knowing way, caused not the slightest interruption to the following discourse—

"If any thing can sweeten captivity and wounds, it must be the happiness of suffering in the society of the ladies who have left us," said the colonel gallantly, feeling something of the kind due to the hospitality he experienced, and, perhaps, also, moved by a softer sentiment.

The doctor cast a glance of silent observation on the black scarf around the neck of the Englishman, and knocking the ashes from his segar with his little finger, in the manner of an adept, replied—

"Sympathy and kindness have, doubtless, their genial influence on the human system. The connexion is intimate between the moral and physical feelings; but still, to accomplish a cure, and restore nature to the healthy tone it has lost from disease or accident, requires more than can flow from unguided sympathies. In such cases, the lights"—the surgeon accidentally caught the eye of the trooper, which was fast regaining its complacency—taking two or three hasty puffs in huge disdain, he essayed to finish the sentence—"yes, in such cases, the knowledge that flows from the —the lights."

"You were saying, sir," said Colonel Wellmere, sipping his wine.

"Yes, sir," said the operator, turning his back abruptly on Lawton; "I was saying that a bread poultice would not set a broken arm."

"More is the pity," cried the trooper, venturing again to trust the sound of his own voice.

"Now, Colonel Wellmere, to you, as a man of education," said the surgeon with great earnestness, "I can with safety appeal." The Colonel bowed complacently. "You must have noticed the dreadful havoc made in your ranks by the men who were led by this gentleman;" the colonel looked grave again; "how when blows lighted on their frames, life was invariably extinguished beyond all hope of scientific reparation—how certain yawning wounds were inflicted, that must prove fatal to the art of the most experienced practitioner; now, sir, to you I triumphantly appeal, to know whether your detachment would not have been as effectually defeated, if the men had all lost a right arm for instance, as if they had all lost their heads."

"The triumph of your appeal is somewhat hasty, sir," said Wellmere, nettled at the unfortunate conjunction of terms in the doctor's question.

"Is the cause of liberty advanced a step by such injudicious harshness in the field?" continued the surgeon, disregarding the other's equivocation, and bent on the favorite principle of his life.

"I am yet to learn that the cause of liberty is in any manner advanced by the services of any gentleman in the rebel army," said the colonel promptly.

"Not liberty," said the appalled operator in astonishment; "Good God, for what then are we contending?"

"Slavery, sir; yes, even slavery," cried the Englishman with confidence in his infallibility—"you are putting the tyranny of a mob on the throne of a kind and lenient prince—where is the consistency of your boasted liberty?"

"Consistency," repeated the surgeon, looking around him a little wildly at hearing such sweeping charges against a cause he had so long thought to be holy.

"Ay, sir, your consistency. Your congress of sages have published a manifesto, wherein they set forth the equality of political rights."

"'Tis true, sir, and it is done most ably."

"I say nothing of its ability; but if true, why not set your slaves at liberty?" cried Wellmere, in a tone that plainly showed he had transferred the triumph to his own standard.

Every American feels humbled at the necessity of vindicating his country from the inconsistency and injustice of this practice; his emotions are much like those of a man who is compelled to exonerate himself from a disgraceful charge, although he may know the accusation to be false. At the bottom, Sitgreaves had much good sense, and thus called on, he took up the cudgels of argument in downright earnest.

"We deem it a liberty to have a voice in the councils by which we are governed. We think it a hardship to be ruled by a people who live at a distance of three thousand miles from us, and who cannot, and who do not, feel a single political interest in common with ourselves. I say nothing of oppression; the child was of age, and was entitled to the privileges of majority. In such cases, there is but one tribunal to which to appeal for a nation's rights—it is power, and we now make the appeal."

"Such doctrines may suit your present purposes," said Wellmere with a sneer of contempt; "but I apprehend it is opposed to all the opinions and practices of civilized nations."

"It is in conformity with the practices of all nations," said the surgeon, returning the nod, and drinking to Lawton, who enjoyed the good sense of his comrade as much as he disliked what he called "medical talk." "Who would be ruled when he can rule—the only rational ground to take is, that every community has a right to govern itself, so that in no manner it violates the laws of God."

"And is holding your fellow creatures in bondage, in conformity to those laws?" asked the colonel impressively.

The surgeon took another glass, and hemming once, returned to the combat.

"Sir," said he, "slavery is of very ancient origin, and seems to have been confined to no particular religion or form of government; every nation of civilized Europe does, or has held their fellow creatures in this kind of duress."

"You will except Great Britain, sir," cried the colonel proudly.

"No, sir," continued the surgeon confidently, feeling that he was carrying the war out of his own country; "I cannot except Great Britain. It was her children, her ships, and her laws, that first introduced the practice into these states; and on her institutions the judgment must fall. It is true, we continue the practice; but we must come gradually to the remedy, or create an evil greater than that which we endure at present: doubtless, as we advance, the manumission of our slaves will accompany us, until happily these fair regions will exist, without a single image of the creator that is held in a state, which disqualifies him to judge of that creator's goodness."

It will be remembered that Doctor Sitgreaves spoke forty years ago, and Wellmere was unable to contradict his prophetic assertion.

Finding the subject exceeding his comprehension, the Englishman retired to the apartment where the ladies had assembled, and seated by the side of Sarah and her aunt, found a more pleasing employment in relating the events of fashionable life in the metropolis, and recalling the thousand little anecdotes of their former association. Miss Peyton was a pleased listener, as she dispensed the bounties of the tea-table with precise grace, and Sarah frequently bowed her blushing countenance to the needle work in her lap, as her face glowed at the flattering remarks of her companion.

The dialogue we have related established a perfect truce again between the surgeon and his comrade, and the former having paid a visit to Singleton, they took their leave of the ladies, and mounted; the former to visit the wounded at the encampment, and the latter to rejoin his troop. But their movement was arrested at the gate by an appearance, which we will relate in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

I see no more those white locks thinly spread,
Round the bald polish of that honoured head:—
No more that meek, that suppliant look in prayer,
Nor that pure faith that gave it force—are there:—
But he is blest, and I lament no more,
A wise good man contented to be poor.

— Crabbe

We have already said, that the customs of America leave the remains of the dead but a short time in the sight of the mourners; and the necessity of providing for his own safety compelled the pedlar to abridge even this brief space. In the confusion and agitation produced by the events we have recorded, the death of the elder Birch had occurred unnoticed; but a sufficient number of the immediate neighbours were hastily collected, and the ordinary rites of sepulture were paid to the deceased; it was the approach of this humble procession that arrested the movements of the trooper and his comrade. Four of the men supported the body on a rude bier; and four others walked in advance, ready to relieve their friends occasionally from their burden. The pedlar walked next the coffin, and by his side moved Katy Haynes with a most determined aspect of woe, and next to the mourners came Mr. Wharton and the English captain. Two or three old men and women, with a few straggling boys, brought up the rear. Captain Lawton sat in his saddle in rigid silence until the bearers came opposite to his position, and then, for the first time. Harvey raised his eyes from the ground, and saw the enemy that he dreaded so near him. The first impulse of the pedlar was certainly flight; but recovering his recollection, he fixed his eye on the coffin of his parent, and passed the dragoon with a firm step, but swelling heart. The trooper slowly lifted his cap from his head, and continued uncovered until Mr. Wharton and his son had moved by him, when, accompanied by the surgeon, he rode leisurely in the rear, maintaining an inflexible silence. Cæsar emerged from the cellar kitchen of the cottage, and with a face of settled solemnity, added himself to the number of the followers of the funeral, though with a humble mien, and at a most respectful distance from the horseman; the first feeling was owing to the colour of his skin; and the latter circumstance, to certain emotions of dread that prevailed in the bosom of the black, whenever Captain Lawton prevented his organs of vision, from resting on more agreeable objects. Cæsar had placed around his arm, a little above the elbow, a napkin of unsullied whiteness, it being the only time since his departure from the city, that the black had an opportunity of exhibiting himself in the garniture of servile mourning. He was a great lover of propriety, and had been a little stimulated to this display by a desire to show his sable friend from Georgia all the decencies of a New-York funeral; and the ebullition of his zeal went off very well, producing no other result, than a mild lecture from Miss Peyton at his return, on the fitness of things. The attendance of the black was thought well enough in itself; but the napkin was deemed a superfluous exhibition of ceremony, at the funeral of a man, who had performed all the menial offices in his own person. The graveyard was an enclosure on the grounds of Mr. Wharton, which had been fenced with stone, and set apart for the purpose by that gentleman some years before. It was not, however, intended as a burial place for any of his own family. Until the fire, which raged as the British troops took possession of New-York, had laid Trinity in ashes, a goodly gilded tablet graced its walls, that spoke the virtues of his deceased parents, and beneath a flag of marble in one of the aisles of the church, their bones were left to moulder with becoming dignity. Captain Lawton made a movement, as if he was disposed to follow the procession when it left the highway, to enter the field which contained the graves of the humble dead, but he was recalled to his recollection by a hint from his companion, that he was taking the wrong road.

"Of all the various methods which have been adopted by man for the disposal of his earthly remains, which do you prefer, Captain Lawton?" said the surgeon with great deliberation, as they separated from their line of march: "now in some countries the body is exposed to be devoured by wild beasts; in others, it is suspended in the air to exhale its substance in the manner of decomposition; in some countries it is consumed on the funeral pile, and then, again, it is inhumed in the bowels of the earth; every people have their own particular fashion, and to which do you give the preference?"

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"All are very agreeable," said the trooper, disregarding the harangue of the other, and following the group they had left with his eyes; "which do you most admire?"

"The last as practised by ourselves," said the operator promptly; "for the other three are destructive to the opportunities for dissection; but in the last, the coffin can lie in peaceful decency, while the remains are made to subservise the useful purposes of science. Ah! Captain Lawton, I enjoy comparatively but few opportunities of such a nature, to what I expected to meet on entering the army."

"To what may these pleasures amount in a year, numerically?" said the captain drily, and withdrawing his gaze from the grave-yard.

"Within a dozen, upon my honour," said the surgeon piteously; "my best picking is when the corps is detached; for when we are with the main army, there are so many boys to be satisfied, that I seldom get a good subject. Those youngsters are dreadfully wasteful, and as greedy as vultures."

"A dozen!" echoed the trooper in surprise, "why I furnish you more than that number with my own hands."

"Ah! Jack," returned the doctor, approaching the subject with great tenderness of manner, "it is seldom I can do any thing with your patients, you disfigure them wofully; believe me, John, when I tell you as a friend—merely as a friend, that your system is all wrong; for you unnecessarily destroy life, and then you injure the body so that it is unfit for the only use that can be made of a dead man."

The trooper maintained a silence which he thought would be the most probable means of preserving peace between them; and the surgeon, turning his head from taking a last look at the burial, as they rode round the foot of the hill that shut the valley from their sight, continued with a kind of suppressed sigh—

"A body might get a natural death from that grave-yard to night, if there was but time and opportunity; the patient must be the father of the lady we saw this morning."

"The bitch-doctor; she with the sky-blue complexion," said the trooper, with a shrewd smile, that began to cause uneasiness to his companion; "but the lady was not the gentleman's daughter, only his medico-petticoat attendant; and the Harvey, whose name was made to rhyme with every word in her song, is the renowned pedlar-spy."

"What!" cried the astonished surgeon; "he who unhorsed you."

"No man ever unhorsed me, Doctor Sitgreaves," said the dragoon with abundant gravity; "I fell by a mischance of Roanoke; we kissed the earth together."

"A warm embrace from the love spots it left on your cuticle," returned the surgeon with some of the other's archness; "but 'tis a thousand pities that you cannot find where the tattling rascal lies hid."

"He followed his father's body," said the trooper composedly.

What! and you let him pass," cried the surgeon with extraordinary animation, checking his horse instantly; "let us return immediately and take him, to-morrow you have him hung, Jack, and damn him, I'll dissect him."

"Softly, softly, my dear Archibald," said the trooper soothingly; "would you arrest a man while paying the last offices to a dead father; leave him to me, and I pledge myself he shall have justice."

The doctor muttered his dissatisfaction at any postponement of his vengeance, but was compelled to acquiesce from a regard to his reputation for propriety, and they continued their ride to the quarters of the corps, engaged in various discussions concerning the welfare of the human body.

Birch supported the grave and collected manner, that was thought becoming in a male mourner on such occasions, and to Katy was left the part of exhibiting the tenderness of the softer sex. There are some people, whose feelings are of such a nature, that they cannot weep unless it be in proper company, and the spinster was a good deal addicted to all congregational virtues; after turning her head round the small assemblage, the housekeeper found the eyes of the few females who were present fixed on her in solemn expectation, and the effect was instantaneous; the maiden really wept, and gained no inconsiderable sympathy and reputation for a tender heart from the spectators. The muscles of the pedlar's face were seen to move, and as the first clod of earth fell on the tenement of his father, sending up that dull, hollow, sound, that speaks so eloquently the mortality of man, his whole frame was for an instant convulsed; he bent his body down as if in pain, his fingers worked as his hands hung lifeless by his side, and there was an expression in his countenance that seemed to announce a writhing of the soul; but it was not unresisted, and it was transient: he stood erect, drew a long breath, and looked around him with an elevated face, that even seemed to smile with a consciousness of having obtained the mastery. The grave was soon filled; a rough stone, placed at either extremity, marked its position, and the turf, with a faded

vegetation that was adapted to the fortunes of the deceased, covered the little hillock with the last office of seemliness. The task ended, the neighbours, who had each officiously tendered his services in performing this duty, paused, and lifting their hats, stood looking toward the mourner, who now felt himself to be really alone in the world: removing his hat also, the pedlar hesitated a moment to gather energy, and spoke——

"My friends and neighbours, I thank you for assisting me to bury my dead out of my sight."

A solemn pause succeeded the brief and customary conclusion, and the group dispersed in silence, some few walking with the mourners back to their own habitation, but respectfully leaving them at its entrance. The pedlar and Katy were followed into the building by one man, however, who was well known to the surrounding country by the significant term of "speculator." Katy saw him enter with a heart that palpitated with dreadful forebodings, but Harvey civilly handed him a chair, and evidently was prepared for the visit.

The pedlar went to the door, and taking a cautious glance round the valley, quickly returned and commenced the following dialogue——

"The sun has just left the top of the eastern hill; my time presses me; here is the deed for the house and lot, every thing done according to law."

The stranger took the paper, and coned its contents with a deliberation that proceeded partly from his caution, and partly from the unlucky circumstance of his education having been sadly neglected when a youth. The time occupied in this tedious examination was employed by Harvey in gathering together certain articles, which he intended to include in the stores that were to leave the habitation with himself. Katy had already inquired of the pedlar, whether the deceased had left a will, and saw the Bible placed in the bottom of a new pack, which she had made for his accommodation, with a most stoical indifference; but as the six silver spoons were laid carefully by its side, a sudden twinge of her conscience objected to such a palpable waste of property, and she broke silence by saying somewhat abruptly——

"When you marry, Harvey, you may miss them spoons."

"I never shall marry," said the pedlar laconically.

"Well if you don't, there's no occasion to be short. I'm sure no one asked you. I should like to know, though, of what use so many spoons can be to a single man: for my part, I think it's a duty for every man who is so well provided, to have a wife and family to maintain."

At the time when Katy expressed this sentiment, the fortune of women in her class of life consisted of a cow, a bed, the labours of their own hands in the shape of divers pillow cases, blankets, and sheets, with, where fortune was unusually kind, a half dozen of silver spoons. The spinster herself had obtained all the other necessaries to completing her store, by her own industry and prudence, and it can easily be imagined saw the articles, she had long counted her own, vanish in the enormous pack with a very natural dissatisfaction, that was in no degree diminished by the declaration that had preceded the act. Harvey, however, disregarded her opinions and feelings, and continued his employment of filling the pack, which soon grew to a size something like the ordinary burden of the pedlar.

"I'm rather timorous about this conveyance," said the purchaser, having at length concluded his task."

"Why so?" said Harvey quickly.

"I'm afeard it won't stand good in law; I know that two of the neighbours leave home to-morrow morning, to have the place entered for confiscation, and if I should go now and give forty pounds and lose it all, 'twould be a dead pull back to me."

"They can only take my right," said the pedlar, coolly; "pay me two hundred dollars, and the house is your's; you are a well known whig, and you at least they won't trouble;" as Harvey spoke, there was a strange mixture of bitterness with the care he expressed concerning the sale of his property.

"Say one hundred, and it is a bargain," returned the man, with something that he meant for a good-natured smile.

"A bargain!" echoed the pedlar in surprise, "I thought the bargain already made."

"Nothing is a bargain," said the purchaser with a gratulating chuckle, "until papers are delivered, and the money paid in hand."

"You have the paper," returned the pedlar quickly.

"Aye, and will keep it, if you will excuse the money," replied the speculator with a sneer; "come, say one hundred and fifty, and I won't be hard; here——here is just the money."

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The pedlar looked from the window, and saw with dismay that the evening was fast advancing, and knew well that he endangered his life by remaining in the dwelling after dark; yet he could not tolerate the idea of being defrauded in this manner, in a bargain that had already been fairly made; he hesitated——

"Well," said the purchaser, rising; "mayhap you can find another man to trade with between this and morning; but if you don't, your title won't be worth much afterward."

"Take it, Harvey," said Katy, who felt it impossible to resist a tender like the one before her, all in English guineas: her voice roused the pedlar, and a new idea seemed to strike him.

"I agree to the price," he said, and turning to the spinster, placed part of the money in her hand, as he continued——"had I other means to pay you, I would have lost all, rather than have suffered myself to have been defrauded of part."

"You may lose all yet," muttered the stranger with a sneer, as he rose and left the building.

"Yes," said Katy, following him with her eyes; "he knows your failing, Harvey; he thinks with me, now the old gentleman is gone, you will want a careful body to take care of your concerns."

The pedlar was busied in arranging things for his departure, and took no notice of this insinuation, while the spinster returned again to the attack. She had lived so many years in expectation of a different result from that which now seemed likely to occur, that the idea of separation began to give her more uneasiness, than she had thought herself capable of feeling, about a man so destitute and friendless as the pedlar.

"Have you another house to go to?" inquired Katy, with unusual pathos in her manner.

"Providence will provide me with a home," said Harvey, with a perceptible tremor in his voice.

"Yes," said the housekeeper quickly; "but maybe 'twill not be to your liking."

"The poor must not be difficult," returned the pedlar gravely.

"I'm sure I'm every thing but a difficult body," cried the spinster very hastily; "but I love to see things becoming, and in their places; yet I wouldn't be hard to persuade to leave this place myself. I can't say I altogether like the ways of the people."

"The valley is lovely," said the pedlar with fervor, "and the people like all the race of man; but to me it matters nothing; all places are now alike, and all faces equally strange," as he spoke, he dropt the article he was packing from his hand, and seated himself on a chest with a look of vacant misery.

"Not so, not so," said Katy, instinctively shoving her chair nearer to the place where the pedlar sat; "not so, Harvey, you must know me at least; my face cannot be strange to you certainly."

Birch turned his eyes slowly on her countenance, which exhibited more of feeling, and less of self, than he had ever seen there before; he took her hand kindly, and his own features lost some of their painful expression as he said——

"Yes, good woman, you, at least, are not a stranger to me; you may do me partial justice; when others revile me, possibly your feelings may lead you to say something in my defence."

"That I will——that I would!" said Katy eagerly, "I will defend you, Harvey, to the last drop——let me hear them that dare revile you! you say true, Harvey, I am partial and just to you——what if you do like the king, I have often heard say he was at the bottom a good man; but there's no religion in the old country; for every body allows the ministers are desperate bad."

The pedlar paced the floor in evident distress of mind; his eye had a look of wildness that Katy had never witnessed before, and his step was measured with a dignity that appalled the maiden.

"While he lived," cried Harvey, unable to smother his feelings, "there was one who read my heart, and oh! what a consolation to return from my secret marches of danger, and the insult and wrongs that I suffered, to receive his blessing and his praise; but he is gone," he continued stopping and gazing wildly towards the corner that used to hold the figure of his parent, "and who is there to do me justice?"

"Why Harvey, Harvey," Katy ventured to say imploringly, when the pedlar added, as a smile stole over his haggard features——

"Yes, there is one who will——who must know me before I die. Oh! it is dreadful to die and leave such a name behind me."

"Don't talk of dying, Harvey," said the spinster, glancing her eye around the room, and pushing the wood in the fire to obtain a light from the blaze.

But the ebullition of feeling in the pedlar was over; it had been excited by the events of the past day, and a

vivid perception of his sufferings; it was not long that passion maintained an ascendancy over the reason of the trader, and perceiving that the night had already thrown an obscurity around the objects without doors, he hastily threw his pack over his shoulders, and taking Katy kindly by the hand, made his parting speech——

"It is painful to part with even you, good woman, but the hour has come, and I must go: what is left in the house is freely yours; to me it could be of no use, and it may serve to make you more comfortable——farewell——we meet hereafter."

"Yes, in the regions of darkness," cried a voice that caused the pedlar to sink on the chest he had risen from, in despair.

"What! another pack, Mr. Birch, and so well stuffed so soon."

"Have you not yet done evil enough?" cried the pedlar, regaining his firmness, and springing on his feet with energy; "is it not enough to harrass the last moments of a dying man——to impoverish me——what more would you have?"

"Your blood," said the skinner with cool malignity.

"And for money," cried Harvey bitterly; "like the ancient Judas, you would grow rich with the price of blood."

"Ay! and a fair price it is my gentleman: fifty guineas——nearly the weight of that scare-crow carcass of your's in gold."

"Here," said Katy promptly, "here are fifteen guineas, and these drawers, and this bed are all mine——if you will give Harvey but one hour's start from the door, they shall be your's."

"One hour," said the skinner, showing his teeth, and looking with a longing eye at the money.

"Yes, but one hour——here, take the money."

"Hold!" cried Harvey, "put no faith in the miscreants."

"She may do what she pleases with her faith," said the skinner with malignant pleasure; "but I have the money in good keeping; as for you, Mr. Birch, we will bear your insolence, for the fifty guineas that are to pay for your gallows."

"Go on," said the pedlar proudly; "take me to Major Dunwoodie; he, at least, may be kind, although he may be just."

"I can do better than by marching so far in such disgraceful company," replied the other very coolly; "this Mr. Dunwoodie has let one or two Tories go at large; but the troop of Captain Lawton is quartered some half mile nearer, and his receipt will get me the reward as soon as his major's: how relish you the idea of supping with Captain Lawton this evening, Mr. Birch?"

"Give me my money, or set Harvey free," cried the spinster in alarm.

"Your bribe was not enough, good woman, unless there is money in this bed," thrusting his bayonet through the ticking, and ripping it for some distance, he took a malicious satisfaction in scattering its contents around the room.

"If," cried the housekeeper, losing sight of her personal danger in care for her newly acquired property, "there is law in the land, I will be righted."

"The law of the neutral ground is the law of the strongest," said the skinner with a malignant laugh; "but your tongue is not as long as my bayonet; you had, therefore, best not set them at loggerheads, or you might be the loser."

A figure stood in the shadow of the door as if afraid to be seen in the group of skimmers, but a blaze of light raised by some articles thrown in the fire by his persecutors, showed the pedlar the face of the purchaser of his little domain: occasionally there was some whispering between this man and the skinner nearest him, that induced Harvey to suspect he had been the dupe of a contrivance, in which that wretch had participated: it was, however, too late to repme, and he followed the party from the house with a firm and collected tread, as if marching to a triumph and not to a gallows. In passing through the yard the leader of the band fell over a billet of wood, and received a momentary hurt from the fall; exasperated at the accident, the fellow sprung on his feet, and exclaimed——

"The curse of heaven light on the log; the night is too dark for us to move in; throw that brand of fire in you pile of tow, to lighten up the scene."

"Hold!" roared the horror-struck speculator, "you'll fire the house."

"And see the farther," said the other, hurling the fire in the midst of the combustibles; in an instant the

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building was in flames; "come on, let us move towards the heights while we have light to pick our road."

"Villain!" cried the exasperated purchaser, "is this your friendship, this my reward for kidnapping the pedlar?"

"'Twould be wise to move more from the light, if you mean to entertain us with abuse, or wemay see too well to let a bullet miss you," cried the leader of the gang; the next instant he was as good as his threat, but happily missed the terrified speculator, and equally appalled spinster, who saw herself again reduced from comparative wealth to poverty, by the blow. Prudence dictated to the pair a speedy retreat, and the next morning, the only remains of the dwelling of the pedlar was the huge chimney we have already mentioned.

CHAPTER XV.

Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous, confirmations strong
As proofs from holy writ.
—— Moor of Venice

The weather, which had been mild and clear since the storm, now changed with the suddenness of the American climate. Towards evening the cold blasts poured down from the mountains, and flurries of snow plainly indicated that the month of November had arrived—a season whose temperature varies from the heats of summer to the cold of winter. Frances had stood at the window of her own apartment, watching the slow progress of the funeral procession, with a melancholy that was too deep to be excited by the spectacle. There was something in the sad office which engaged the attention of her father and brother, that was in unison with the feelings of the maid. As she gazed around, she saw the trees bending to the force of the whirlwinds, that swept through the valley with an impetuosity that shook even the buildings of lesser importance; and the forest, that had so lately glittered in the sun with its variegated hues, was fast losing its loveliness, as the leaves were torn from the branches, and were driving irregularly before the eddies of the blast. A few of the southern dragoons, who were patrolling the passes which led to the encampment of the corps, could be distinguished at a distance on the heights, bending to their pommels, as they faced the keen air which had so lately traversed the great fresh water lakes. and drawing their watch coats around them in tighter folds.

The maid witnessed the disappearance of the wooden tenement of the deceased, as it was slowly lowered from the light of day, and the sight still added to the chilling dreariness of the view. Captain Singleton was sleeping under the careful watchfulness of his own man, while his sister had been persuaded to take possession of her room, for the purpose of obtaining the repose, of which her last night's journeying had robbed her. The apartment of Miss Singleton communicated with the room occupied by the sisters, through a private door, as well as through the ordinary passage of the house; this door was partly open, and Frances moved towards it with the benevolent intention of ascertaining the situation of her guest, when the surprised girl saw her, whom she had thought to be sleeping, not only awake, but employed in a manner that banished all probability of present repose. The black tresses, that during the dinner had been drawn in close folds over the crown of the head, were now loosened, and fell in profusion over her shoulders and bosom, imparting a slight degree of wildness to her expressive countenance. The chilling white of her complexion was strongly contrasted with the brilliant glances of eyes of the deepest black, that were fixed in rooted attention on a picture she held in her hand. Frances hardly breathed, as she was enabled, by a movement of Isabella, to see that it was the figure of a man in the well known dress of the southern horse; but she gasped for breath, and instinctively laid her hand on her heart to quell its throbbings, as she thought she recognised the lineaments that were so deeply seated in her own imagination. Frances felt she was improperly prying into the sacred privacy of another, but her emotions were too powerful to permit her to speak, and she drew back to a chair, whence she still retained a view of the stranger, from whose countenance she felt it to be impossible to withdraw her eyes. Isabella was too much engrossed by her own feelings to discover the trembling figure of the maid who witnessed her actions, and she pressed the inanimate image to her lips, with an enthusiasm that denoted the most intense passion. The expression of the countenance of the fair stranger was so changeable, and the transitions were so rapid, that Frances had scarcely time to distinguish the character of the emotion, before it was succeeded by another equally powerful, and equally attractive. Admiration and sorrow were, however, the preponderating passions; the latter was indicated by large drops that fell from her eyes on the picture, and which followed each other over her cheek at such intervals, as seemed to pronounce the grief too heavy to admit of the ordinary bursts of sorrow. Every movement of Isabella was marked by an enthusiasm that was peculiar to her nature, and every passion in its turn triumphed in her breast with an undisputed sway. The fury of the wind, as it whistled around the angles of the building, was in consonance with those feelings, and she rose and moved to a window of her apartment. Her figure was now hid from the view of Frances, who was about to rise and approach her guest, when tones of a thrilling melody chained her in breathless silence to the spot. The notes were wild, and the voice not powerful, but the execution exceeded any thing the maid had ever heard, and

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she stood, endeavouring to stifle the sounds of her own gentle breathing, until the song following was concluded:

Cold blow the blasts o'er the tops of the mountain,
And bare is the oak on the hill,
Slowly the vapours exhale from the fountain,
And bright gleams the ice-bordered rill;
All nature is seeking its annual rest,
But the slumbers of peace have deserted my breast.
Long has the storm pour'd its weight on my nation,
And long have her brave stood the shock;
Long has our chieftain ennobled his station,
A bulwark on liberty's rock——
Unlicens'd ambition relaxes its toil,
Yet blighted affection represses my smile.
Abroad the wild fury of winter is low'ring,
And leafless, and drear is the tree,
But the vertical sun of the south appears pouring
Its fierce, killing heats upon me——
Without all the season's chill symptoms begin,
But the fire of passion is raging within.

Frances abandoned her whole soul to the suppressed melody of the music, though the language of the song expressed a meaning, which united with certain events of that and the preceding day, left a sensation of uneasiness in the bosom of the warm-hearted girl, to which she had hitherto been a stranger. Isabella moved from the window as her last tones melted on the ear of her admiring listener, and, for the first time, her eye rested on the face of the pallid maiden. A glow of fire lighted the countenances of both at the same instant, and the blue eye of Frances met the brilliant black one of her guest for a single moment, and both fell in abashed confusion on the carpet; they advanced, however, until they met, and had taken each other's hand, before either ventured again to look her companion in the face.

"This sudden change in the weather, and perhaps the situation of my brother, have united to make me melancholy, Miss Wharton," said Isabella in a low tone, and in a voice that trembled as she spoke.

"Tis thought you have little to apprehend for your brother," said Frances, in the same embarrassed manner; "had you seen him when he was brought in by Major Dunwoodie"——

Frances paused with a feeling of conscious shame, for which she could not account herself, and in raising her eyes, she saw Isabella studying her countenance, with an earnestness that again drove the blood tumultuously to her temples.

"You were speaking of Major Dunwoodie," said Isabella faintly.

"He was with Captain Singleton."

"Do you know Dunwoodie——have you seen him often?" continued Isabella, in a voice that startled her companion. Once more Frances ventured to look her guest in the face, and again she met the piercing eyes bent on her as if to search her inmost heart. "Speak, Miss Wharton, is Major Dunwoodie known to you?"

"He is my relative," said Frances, appalled at the manner of the other.

"A relative!" echoed Miss Singleton; "in what degree——speak, Miss Wharton, I conjure you to speak."

"Our parents were cousins," replied Frances, in still greater confusion at the vehemence of Isabella.

"And he is to be your husband," cried the stranger impetuously.

Frances felt her pride awakened by this direct attack upon the delicacy of her feelings, and she raised her eyes from the floor to her interrogator a little proudly, when the pale cheek and quivering lip of Isabella removed her resentment in a moment.

"It is true——my conjecture is true——speak to me, Miss Wharton——I conjure you, in mercy to my feelings, to tell me——do you love Dunwoodie?" There was a plaintive earnestness in the voice of Miss Singleton, that disarmed Frances of all resentment, and the only answer she could make was hiding her burning face between her hands, as she sunk back in a chair to conceal her confusion.

Isabella paced the floor in silence for several minutes, until she had succeeded in conquering the violence of

her feelings, when she approached the place where Frances yet sat, endeavouring to exclude the eyes of her companion from reading the shame expressed in her countenance, and taking the hand of the maid, she spoke with an evident effort at composure.

"Pardon me, Miss Wharton, if my ungovernable feelings have led me into impropriety—the powerful motive—the cruel reason"—she hesitated; Frances now raised her face, and the eyes of the maids once more met—they fell in each other's arms, and laid their burning cheeks together—the embrace was long—was ardent and sincere—but neither spoke—and on separating, Frances retired to her own room without farther explanation.

While this extraordinary scene was acting in the room of Miss Singleton, matters of great importance were agitated in the drawing-room. The disposition of the fragments of such a dinner as the one we have recorded, was a task that required no little exertion and calculation. Notwithstanding several of the small game had nestled in the pocket of Capt. Lawton's man, and even the assistant of Dr. Sitgreaves had calculated the uncertainty of his remaining long in such good quarters, still there was more left unconsumed than the prudent spinster knew how to dispose of to advantage. Cæsar and his mistress had, therefore, a long and confidential communication on this important business, and the consequence was that Colonel Wellmere was left to the hospitality of Sarah Wharton. All the ordinary topics of conversation were exhausted, when the colonel, with a little of the uneasiness that is in some degree inseparable from conscious error, touched lightly on the transactions of the preceding day.

"We little thought, Miss Wharton, when I first saw this Mr. Dunwoodie in your house in Queenstreet, that he was to be the renowned warrior he has proved himself," said Wellmere, endeavouring to smile contemptuously.

"Renowned, when we consider the enemy he overcame," said Sarah with consideration for her companion's feelings. "'I' was most unfortunate indeed in every respect that you met with the accident, or doubtless the arms of our Prince would have triumphed in their usual manner."

"And yet the pleasure of such society as this accident has introduced me to, would more than repay the pain of a mortified spirit and wounded body," added the colonel in a manner of peculiar softness.

"I hope the latter is but trifling," said Sarah, stooping to hide her blushes under the pretext of biting a thread from the work on her knee.

"Trifling, indeed, to the former," returned the colonel in the same manner. "Ah! Miss Wharton, it is in such moments we feel the full value of friendship and sympathy."

Those who have never tried it, cannot easily imagine, what a rapid progress a warm hearted female can make in love, in the short space of half an hour, particularly where there is a predisposition to the distemper. Sarah found the conversation, when it began to touch on friendship and sympathy, too interesting to venture her voice with a reply. She however turned her eyes on the colonel, and saw him gazing at her fine face with an admiration that was quite as manifest, and much more soothing, than any words could make it.

Their *tete-a-tete* was uninterrupted for an hour, and although nothing that would be called decided by an experienced matron was said by the gentleman, he uttered a thousand things that delighted his companion for the moment, who retired to her rest with a lighter heart than she had felt since the arrest of her brother by the Americans.

CHAPTER XVI.

And let me the canakin clink, clink
And let me the canakin clink:
A soldier's a man;
A life's but a span;
Why then, let a soldier drink.

— Iago

The position held by the corps of dragoons, we have already said, was a favorite place of halting with their commander. A cluster of some half dozen small and dilapidated buildings formed what, from the circumstance of two roads intersecting each other at right angles, was called the village of the four corners. As usual, one of the most imposing of these edifices had been termed, in the language of the day, "a house of entertainment for man and beast." On a rough board suspended from the gallows looking post that had supported the ancient sign was, however, written in red chalk "Elizabeth Flanagan, her hotel," an ebullition of wit from some of the idle wags of the corps. The matron, whose name had thus been exalted to an office of such unexpected dignity, ordinarily discharged the duties of a female sutler, washerwoman, and, to use the language of Katy Haynes, bitch-doctor to the troops; she was the widow of a soldier who had been killed in the service, and who, like herself, was a native of a distant island, that had early tried his fortune in the colonies of North America. She constantly migrated with the troops, and it was seldom that they became stationary for two days at a time, but the little cart of the bustling woman was seen driving into their encampment, loaded with such articles, as she conceived would make her presence most welcome. With a celerity that seemed almost supernatural, Betty took up her ground and commenced her occupation; sometimes the cart itself was her shop; at others, the soldiers made her a rude shelter of such materials as offered; but on the present occasion she had seized on a vacant building, and by dint of stuffing the dirty breeches and half dried linen of the troopers in the broken windows, to exclude the cold which had now become severe, she formed what she herself had pronounced to be "most iligant lodgings." The men were quartered in the adjacent barns, and the officers collected in the "Hotel Flanagan," which they facetiously called headquarters. Betty was well known to every trooper in the corps, could call each by his christian or nick-name, as best suited her fancy; and, although absolutely intolerable to all whom habit had not made familiar with her virtues, was a general favorite with these partizan warriors. Her faults were, a trifling love of liquor, excessive filthiness, and a total disregard to all the decencies of language; her virtues, an unbounded love for her adopted country, perfect honesty when dealing on certain known principles with the soldiery, and great good nature: added to these, Betty had the merit of being the inventor of that beverage which is so well known at the present hour, to all the patriots who make a winter's march between the commercial and political capitals of this great state, and which is distinguished by the name of "cock-tail." Elizabeth Flanagan was peculiarly well qualified by education and circumstances to perfect this improvement in liquors, having been literally brought up on its principal ingredient, and having acquired from her Virginia customers the use of mint, from its flavour in a julep, to its height of renown in the article in question. Such, then, was the mistress of the mansion, who, reckless of the cold northern blasts, showed her blooming face from the door of the building to welcome the arrival of her favorite, Captain Lawton, and his companion, her master in matters of surgery.

"Ah! by my hopes of promotion, my gentle Elizabeth, but you are welcome," cried the trooper, as he threw himself from his saddle; "this villanous fresh water gas from the Canadas, has been whistling among my bones till they ache with the cold, but the sight of your fiery countenance is as cheering as a christmas fire."

"Now, sure, Captain Jack, you are always full of your complimentaries," replied the sutler, taking the bridle of her customer; "but hurry in for the life of you, darling; the fences hereabouts are not so strong as in the Highlands, and there's that within will warm both sowl and body."

"So you have been laying the rails under contribution, I see; well, that may do for the body," said the captain coolly; "but I have had a pull at a bottle of cut glass with a silver stand, and don't think I could relish your whiskey for a month to come."

"If it's silver or goold that your thinking of, it's but little I have, though I've a trifling bit of the continental,"

said Betty with a look of much meaning," but there's that within that's fit to be put in vessels of di'monds."

"What can she mean, Archibald?" asked Lawton quickly: "the animal looks as if she meant more than she says."

" 'Tis probably a wandering of the reasoning powers, created by the frequency of intoxicating draughts," observed the surgeon coolly, as he deliberately threw his left leg over the pommel of his saddle, and slid down on the right side of his horse.

"Faith, my dear jewel of a doctor, but it was this side I was expecting you; the whole corps come down on this side but yourself," said Betty, winking at the trooper; "but I've been feeding the wounded, in your absence, with the fat of the land."

"Barbarous stupidity!" cried the panic-stricken physician, "to feed men labouring under the excitement of fever with powerful nutriment; woman, woman, you are enough to defeat the skill of Hippocrates himself."

"Pooh!" said Betty with infinite composure, "what a botheration you make about a little whiskey; there was but a gallon betwixt a good two dozen of them, and I gave it to the boys to make them sleep easy; sure jist as slumbering drops."

Lawton and his companion now entered the building, and the first objects which met their eyes explained the hidden meaning of Betty's comfortable declaration. A long table, made of boards torn from the side of an out-building, was stretched through the middle of the largest apartment or bar-room, and on it was a very scanty display of crockery ware. The steams of cooking arose from an adjoining kitchen, but the principal attraction was in a demi-john of fair proportions, which had been ostentatiously placed on high by Betty as the object most worthy of notice. Lawton soon learnt that it was teeming with the real amber-coloured juice of the grape, and had been sent from the Locusts as an offering to Major Dunwoodie, from his friend Captain Wharton of the royal army.

"And a royal gift it is," said the grinning subaltern who made the explanation. "The major gives us an entertainment in honour of our victory, and you see the principal expense is borne, as it should be, by the enemy. Zounds, I am thinking that after we have primed with such stuff, we could charge through Sir Henry's head quarters and carry off the knight himself."

The captain of dragoons was in no manner displeased at the prospect of terminating so pleasantly a day that had been so agreeably commenced; he was soon surrounded by his comrades, who made many eager inquiries concerning his adventures, while the surgeon proceeded with certain quakings of the heart, to examine into the state of his wounded. Enormous fires were crackling in the chimneys of the house, superseding the necessity of candles, by the bright light which was thrown from the blazing piles. The group within were all young men, and tried soldiers; in number they were rather more than a dozen, and their manners and conversation, were a strange mixture of the bluntness of the partizan with the polish of gentlemen. Their dresses were neat, though plain; and a never failing topic amongst them was the performance and quality of their horses—some were endeavouring to sleep on the benches which lined the walls, some were walking the apartments, and others were seated in earnest discussion on subjects connected with the business of their lives. Occasionally, as the door of the kitchen opened, the hissing sounds of the frying pans, and the inviting savour of the food, created a stagnation in all other employments; even the sleepers, at such moments, would open their eyes and raise their heads to reconnoitre the state of the preparations. All this time Dunwoodie sat by himself gazing at the fire, and lost in reflections that none of his officers presumed to disturb; he had made earnest inquiries of Sitgreaves on his entrance after the condition of Singleton, during which a profound and respectful silence was maintained in the room; but as soon as he had ended and resumed his seat, the usual ease and freedom prevailed.

The arrangement of the table was a matter of but little concern to Mrs. Flanagan, and Cæsar would have been sadly scandalized at witnessing the informality with which various dishes, each bearing a wonderful resemblance to the others, were placed before so many gentlemen of consideration. In taking their places at the board, the strictest attention was paid to precedency; for notwithstanding the freedom of manners which prevailed in the corps, the points of military etiquette were at all times observed, with something approaching to religious veneration. Most of the guests had been fasting too long to be in any degree fastidious in their appetites, but the case was different with Captain Lawton; he felt an unaccountable loathing at the exhibition of Betty's food, and could not refrain from making a few passing comments on the condition of the knives, and the clouded colourings of the plates. The good nature and personal affection of Betty for the offender, restrained her for some time from

answering to his innuendos, until Lawton, with a yawn, ventured to admit a piece of the black meat before him into his mouth, where, either from sated appetite, or qualities inherent in the food, much time was spent in vain efforts at mastication, when he cried with some spleen——

"What kind of animal might this have been when living, Mrs. Flanagan?"

"Sure, captain, and was'nt it the ould cow," replied the suttler with an emotion, that proceeded partly from dissatisfaction at the complaints of her favourite, and partly from grief at the loss of the deceased.

"What!" roared the trooper, stopping short as he was happily about to swallow his morsel, "ancient Jenny!"

"The devil!" cried another dropping his knife and fork, "she who made the campaign of the Jerseys with us?"

"The very same," replied the mistress of the hotel with a most piteous aspect of woe; "sure gentlemen 'tis awful to have to eat sitch an ould frind."

"And has she sunk to this," said Lawton pointing with his knife to the remnants on the table.

"Nay, captain," said Betty with spirit, "I sould two of her quarters to some of your troop; but divil the word did I tell the boys what an ould frind it was they had bought, for fear it might damage their appetites."

"Fury!" cried the trooper with affected anger, "I shall have my fellows as limber as supple-jacks on such fare. Afraid of an Englishman as a Virginia negro is of his driver."

"Well," said Lieutenant Mason, dropping his knife and fork in a kind of despair, "my jaws have more sympathy than many men's hearts. They absolutely decline making any impression on the relics of their old acquaintance."

"Try a drop of the gift," said Betty soothingly, pouring a large allowance of the wine into a bowl, and drinking it off as taster to the corps. "Faith 'tis but a wishy-washy sort of stuff after all."

The ice once broken, however, a clear glass of wine was handed to Dunwoodie, who, bowing to his companions, drank the liquor in the midst of a most profound silence. For a few glasses there was much formality observed, and sundry patriotic toasts and sentiments were duly noticed by the company. The liquor, however, performed its wonted office; and before the second sentinel at their door had been relieved, all recollection of the dinner and their cares were lost in the present festivity. Dr. Sitgreaves had not returned in season to partake of Jenny, but had come in time to receive his fair proportion of Captain Wharton's present.

"A song——a song from Captain Lawton," cried two or three of the party in a breath, on observing the failure of some of the points of good fellowship in the trooper; "silence for the song of Captain Lawton."

"Gentlemen," returned Lawton, his dark eyes swimming with the bumper he had finished, though his head was as impenetrable as a post, "I am not much of a nightingale, but under the favour of your good wishes, I consent to comply with the demand."

"Now, Jack," said Sitgreaves, nodding on his seat, "remember the air I taught you, and——stop, I have a copy of the words in my pocket."

"Forbear——forbear, good doctor," said the trooper, filling his glass with great deliberation, "I never could wheel round those hard names. Gentlemen I will give you an humble attempt of my own."

"Silence for Captain Lawton's song," roared five or six at once, when the trooper proceeded, in a fine full tone, to sing the following words to a well known bacchanalian air; several of his comrades helping him through the chorus with a fervour that shook the crazy edifice they were in:

Now push the mug, my jolly boys,
And live, while live we can,
To-morrow's sun may end your joys,
For brief's the hour of man.
And he who bravely meets the foe
His lease of life can never know.
Old mother Flanagan
Come and fill the can again,
For you can fill, and we can swill,
Good Betty Flanagan.
If love of life pervades your breast,
Or love of ease your frame,
Quit honor's path, for peaceful rest,

And bear a coward's name;
For soon and late, we danger know,
And fearless on the saddle go.
Old mother,
When foreign foes invade the land,
And wives and sweethearts call:
In freedom's cause we'll bravely stand,
Or will as bravely fall
In this fair home the fates have given,
We'll live as lords, or live in heaven.
Old mother,

At each appeal made to herself, by the united voices of the choir, Betty invariably advanced and complied literally with the request contained in the chorus, to the infinite delight of the singers, and perhaps with no small participation in the satisfaction on her own account. The hostess was provided with a beverage more suited to the high seasoning she had accustomed her palate to, than the tasteless present of Captain Wharton; by which means Betty had managed, with tolerable facility, to keep even pace with the exhilaration of her guests. The applause received by Captain Lawton, was general with the exception of the surgeon, who rose from the bench during the first chorus, and paced the floor, in a fine glow of classical indignation. The bravos and bravissimo's drowned all other noises for a short time, but as they gradually ceased, the doctor turned to the musician, and exclaimed, with manifest heat——

"Captain Lawton, I marvel that a gentlemen, and a gallant officer, can find no other subject for his muse, in these times of trial, than in such beastly invocations to that notorious follower of the camp, the filthy Elizabeth Flanagan. Methinks the Goddess of Liberty could furnish a more noble inspiration, and the sufferings of your country a more befitting theme."

"Heyday!" shouted the hostess, advancing upon him in a most threatening attitude, "and who is it that calls me filthy? Master squirt Master pop-gun——"

"Peace," said Dunwoodie, in a voice that was exerted but a little more than common, but which was succeeded by the stillness of death; "woman leave the room. Dr. Sitgreaves, I call you to your seat, to wait the order of the revels."

"Proceed——proceed," said the surgeon, drawing himself up in an attitude of dignified composure, "I trust, Major Dunwoodie, I am not unacquainted with the rules of decorum, nor ignorant of the by-laws of good fellowship." Betty made a hasty but somewhat devious retreat to her own dominions, being unaccustomed to dispute the orders of the commanding officer.

"Major Dunwoodie will honour us with a sentimental song," said Lawton, bowing to his leader, with the politeness of a gentleman, and the collected manner he so well knew how to assume.

The Major hesitated a moment, and then sung, with fine execution, the following words:

Some love the heats of southern suns,
Where life's warm current mad'ning runs,
In one quick circling stream;
But dearer far's the mellow light,
Which trembling shines, reflected bright
In Luna's milder beams.
Some love the tulip's gaudier dyes,
Where deep'ning blue with yellow vies,
And gorgeous beauty glows;
But happier he, whose bridal wreath,
By love entwined, is found to breathe
The sweetness of the rose.

The voice of Dunwoodie never lost its authority with his inferiors, and the applause which followed his song, though by no means so riotous as that which succeeded the effort of the captain, was much more flattering.

"If, sir," said the doctor, after joining in the plaudits of his companions, "you would but learn to unite classical

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allusions with your delicate imagination, you would become a pretty amateur poet."

"He who criticizes ought to be able to perform," said Dunwoodie with a smile; "I call on Dr. Sitgreaves for a specimen of the style he admires."

"Dr. Sitgreave's song—Dr. Sitgreaves song," echoed all at the table with delight: "a classical ode from Dr. Sitgreaves.

The surgeon made a complacent bow of acquiescence, took the remnant of his glass, and gave a few preliminary hems, that served hugely to delight three or four young cornets at the foot of the table. He then commenced singing in a cracked voice, and to any thing but a tune, the following ditty—

Hast thou ever felt love's dart, dearest,
Or breathed his trembling sigh—
Thought him, afar, was ever nearest,
Before that sparkling eye.
Then hast thou known, what 'tis to feel
The pain that Galen could not heal.

"Hurrah!" shouted Lawton in a burst of applause, "Archibald eclipses the muses themselves; his words flow like the sylvan stream by moonlight, and his melody is a cross breed of the nightingale and the owl."

"Captain Lawton," cried the exasperated operator, "it is one thing to despise the lights of classical learning, and another to be despised for your own ignorance."

A loud summons at the door of the building created a dead halt in the uproar, and the dragoons instinctively caught up their arms, to be prepared for any intruders. The door was opened, and the skinnners entered, dragging in the pedlar, bending under the load of his pack.

"Which is Captain Lawton?" said the leader of the gang; gazing around him in some little astonishment.

"He waits your pleasure," said the trooper drily, and with infinite composure.

"Then here I deliver to your hands a condemned traitor—this is Harvey Birch, the pedlar—spy."

Lawton started as he looked his old acquaintance in the face, and turning to the skinner with a lowering look, continued—

"And who are you, sir, that speak so freely of your neighbours?" bowing to Dunwoodie, "but your pardon, sir; here is the commanding officer, to him you will please to address yourself."

"No, said the man sullenly, "it is to you I deliver the pedlar, and from you I claim my reward."

"Are you Harvey Birch?" said Dunwoodie, advancing with an air of authority, that instantly drove the skinner to a corner of the room.

"I am," said Birch proudly.

"And a traitor to your country," continued the major with sternness; "do you know that I should be justified in ordering your execution this night?"

"'Tis not the will of God to send a soul so hastily to his presence," said the pedlar with solemnity.

"You speak truth," said Dunwoodie; "and a few brief hours shall be added to your life; but as your offence is most odious to a soldier, so it will be sure to meet with the soldier's vengeance: you die tomorrow."

"'Tis as God wills," returned Harvey without moving a muscle.

"I have spent many a good hour to entrap the villain," said the skinner, advancing a little from his corner, "and I hope you will give me a certificate that will entitle us to the reward; 'twas promised to be paid in gold."

"Major Dunwoodie," said the officer of the day entering the room, "the patrols report a house to be burnt, near yesterday's battle ground."

"'Twas the hut of the pedlar," muttered the leader of the gang; "we have not left him a shingle for shelter; I should have burnt it months ago, but I wanted his shed for a trap to catch the sly fox in."

"You seem a most ingenious patriot," said Lawton with extreme gravity; "Major Dunwoodie, I second the request of this worthy gentleman, and crave the office of bestowing the reward on him and his fellows."

"Take it;" cried the major, "and you, miserable man, prepare for that fate which will surely await you before the setting of to-morrow's sun."

"Life offers but little to tempt me with," said Harvey, slowly raising his eyes, and gazing wildly at the strange faces in the apartment.

"Come, worthy children of America," said Lawton, "follow, and receive your reward."

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The gang eagerly accepted this invitation, and followed the captain towards the quarters assigned to his troop. Dunwoodie paused a moment, from reluctance to triumph over a fallen foe, and proceeded with great solemnity——

"You have already been tried, Harvey Birch, and the truth has proved you to be an enemy, too dangerous to the liberties of America, to be suffered to live."

"The truth!" echoed the pedlar starting, and raising himself proudly, in a manner that regarded the weight of his pack as nothing.

"Ay, the truth——you were charged with loitering near the continental army, to gain intelligence of its movements, and by communicating it to the enemy, to enable him to frustrate the intentions of Washington."

"Will Washington say so, think you?" said Birch with a ghastly smile.

"Doubtless he would——even the justice of Washington condemns you."

"No——no——no," cried the pedlar, in a voice, and with a manner that startled Dunwoodie; "Washington can see beyond the hollow views of pretended patriots. Has he not risked his all on the cast of the die?——if a gallows is ready for me, was there not one for him also? no——no——no, Washington would never say, 'lead him to a gallows.'"

"Have you any thing, wretched man, to urge to the commander in chief, why you should not die?" said the major, recovering from the surprise created by the manner of the other.

Birch trembled with the violence of the emotions that were contending in his bosom; his face assumed the ghastly paleness of death, and his hand drew a box of tin from the folds of his shirt——he opened it, and its contents was a small piece of paper——his eye was for an instant fixed on it——he had already held it towards Dunwoodie, when suddenly withdrawing his hand, he exclaimed——

"No——it dies with me——I know the conditions of my service, and will not purchase life with their forfeiture——it dies with me."

"Deliver that paper, and you may possibly yet find favour," said Dunwoodie eagerly; expecting a discovery of importance to the cause.

"It dies with me," repeated Birch, a flush passing over his pallid features, and lighting them with extraordinary brilliancy.

"Seize the traitor, cried the major hastily, "and wrest the secret from his hands."

The order was immediately obeyed; but the movements of the pedlar were too quick for them; in an instant he swallowed it. The officers paused in astonishment, at the readiness and energy of the spy; but the surgeon cried eagerly——

"Hold him, while I administer an emetic."

"Forbear," said Dunwoodie, beckoning him back with his hand; "if his crime is great, so will his punishment be heavy."

"Lead on," cried the pedlar, dropping his pack from his shoulders, and advancing towards the door with a manner of incomprehensible dignity.

"Whither?" asked Dunwoodie in amazement.

"To the gallows."

"No," said the major, recoiling in horror at his own justice. "My duty requires that I order you to be executed; but surely not so hastily——take until nine to-morrow to prepare for the awful change you are to undergo."

Dunwoodie whispered his orders in the ear of a subaltern, and motioned to the pedlar to withdraw. The interruption caused by this scene prevented further enjoyment around the table, and the officers dispersed to their several places of rest. In a short time the only noise to be heard was the heavy tread of the sentinel, as he paced over the frozen ground, in front of the Hotel Flanagan.