WILLIE CALDWELL

DONALD MCELROY, SCOTCH IRISHMAN

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Willie Walker Caldwell Donald McElroy, Scotch Irishman

CHAPTER I

The life story of most men, who have lived earnest and active lives, would doubtless be worth the hearing, if the various influences and the many vicissitudes which compose it could be separated and skillfully rearranged into some well wrought design. As I look back upon my own life, it seems to me full of interest and instruction, yet I suppose not more so than that of many another; wherefore, were personal experiences and conclusions the sum of it, I should hesitate to write them down, lest those events and struggles which to me have seemed notable and significant, should prove in the telling of them to have been but commonplace incidents to which all are liable. Because of the accident of my birth in the year 1754, however, I have lived through a period which will be ever memorable in the history of the world – a period so crowded with worthy deeds and great men, especially on this continent, that there is small danger its interest will be soon exhausted. Do not conclude that I intend to venture upon a tale of the American Revolution; only a

master's hand can fill in with due skill and proportion so wide a canvas, and that story waits. Where my own life's story has been entangled with some of the events of that struggle I must touch upon them, and the real purpose of my narrative – which is to chronicle for future generations the noble part played in the great drama of the nation's making by a certain worthy people – will require me to review briefly a few of the battles and campaigns of our war against autocracy.

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

It is my hope not only to show what the Scotch Irish have done for the cause of liberty, but also to give a just idea of the character of this people, a true picture of their home life, and a correct estimate of that religion which is so dear to them, and which has had so much to do with making them the freedom-

loving, and withal broad-minded patriots they are. Few men, I flatter myself, are better equipped to tell a Scotch Irish story than I, Donald McElroy, who in blood am pure blue Scotch Irish, who have been instructed by Scotch Irish divines in things temporal and spiritual, have fought under Scotch Irish leaders, and lived all my life among them: yet I think I may promise that my story shall not be a mere idyl – a panegyric of a people, all whose virtues will be exaggerated, all whose faults will be slurred, or kept out of sight. I have seen too much of life not to know that for each height there is a shadow, that every noble trait of character is closely attended by a special weakness. I know the faults of my people as I know their virtues, and through one dearer to me than all else the world holds, I have suffered much from that narrowness of view and stubbornness of purpose peculiar to some of them.

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

at a distance of three hundred feet, I was not admonished so frequently, and used often to hunt alone the day long, coming home at twilight, my horse strung round with many kinds of game.

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

Among the incidents of my boyhood, two stand out with peculiar distinctness. Both were fraught with terrible danger, and yet, as they come back to me, I realize with something of astonishment that except for one brief moment, on each occasion, I felt only a sensation of exhilarating excitement and grim determination. By living in the midst of hourly peril, we pioneers were dulled to the sense of it. Our one thought when peril overtook us was to do our utmost, in the full assurance that the God of our fathers, who miraculously had preserved us through so many dangers, would again interpose for our deliverance. In such faith, and naught else could have served them, my mother went singing about her work, and my father stood guard, alone, over his slaves, day after day, as they felled the timber on the hill slopes, in sight of the mountain pass through which the Indians were accustomed to raid our valley, without cause or warning.

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

make for my mother's rocking chair.

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

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

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

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

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

I showed my trophy and told my story.

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

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

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

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

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

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

His life a sacrifice for us a'. Fear not death, my lads – 'tis but the beginning of life, but fear for your maithers' and your sisters' torture and dishonor."

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

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

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

quickly succeeding shots of his own musket.

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

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

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

"I shall call you boy no longer, Donald," he said; "you have nobly earned your majority; my advice is always at your service, sir, but no longer I give you commands." I think I never had a promotion or an honor that so pleasured me; and doubtless my

father was shrewd enough to know that by thus expressing his pride and confidence in me, he was fixing upon me a sense of uplifting responsibility, as one from whom only noble deeds were expected, which would prove a restraint stronger than any which the most respected authority could impose – an obligation to right and duty neither to be shirked, nor forgotten.

CHAPTER II

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heavenly Father who must save and protect us."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"'Tis about the letter that came yesterday to Thomas," and

Aunt Martha paused, to whet still further her listeners' curiosity, and meantime, heaved another deep sigh.

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

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

"But you ken but little o' Mary O'Niel, child, and 'tis near fifteen years syne you ha'e seen her," remarked my grandmother, a touch of impatience still audible in her voice.

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

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

"And William will be glad to come over every few days, sister,

to advise with Thomas, who, though he's but a boy yet, is a sensible, steady lad, and can see that the negroes carry out his father's directions."

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

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

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

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

"She's fourteen or more, thinks Thomas, and knowing the bigoted and stubborn spirit of the O'Niels I doubt not she is set

in her idolatrous religion by this time," sighed Aunt Martha.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

from the outside world, they were always welcome. On such evenings I was bid to hurry with my lessons, that I might play a tune for our guests on my fiddle – for music was so rare a treat in our settlement that even my poor, self-taught efforts were appreciated.

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

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

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

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

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

"Afterwards when Cromwell an' his men marched into Ulster to take revenge, my great grandmaither begged successfully for the lives o' Lady O'Niel an' her two grandsons. They were not, tho' I am glad to say, the children o' Sir Phelim, but o' a younger son, who had died before the massacre. My grandmaither, when she grew up, married Owen O'Niel, an' 'tis there that the one strain o' Irish cooms into our bluid. But this Owen died young,

an' my grandmaither went back to her ain people, with naithin' to show the Irish in her children, but the name an' accent. My maither, Jeannie, married, as you know, a full blooded Scotchman, William Irvine, an' I anaither, Douglas McIlwaine – yet they tell me the Irish accent has descended as far as me," and my grandmother looked at me with a half merry, half serious question in her eye.

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

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

"They moved from Pennsylvania to Baltimore?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

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

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

Aunt Martha, mounted upon the bed-stool, was drawing to the edge of the bed piece after piece of her treasures, and all

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

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

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

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

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

When I spoke directly to her she looked me full in the face, and I noted the singular beauty of her eyes. They were large, almond-shaped, the bluest I have ever seen, and rayed with minute, dark lines which centered in the wide pupils. Moreover, the dark lashes, which fringed thickly their white lids, curved upward, and when they were lifted almost touched the gracefully arched black

brows. Otherwise her face was not pretty; it was too long, too thin and too pale; the nose was somewhat sharp and the lips were compressed in an expression that denoted either sullenness or restrained misery, while the black hair, which had been cropped like a boy's, was stubbly and unbecoming.

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

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

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

"And why not?"

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

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

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

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

"Nothing that's useful."

"Then what sort of play do you like?"

"To shoot, to climb, to swim, to chop wood, to drive sheep

and to read."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But, Martha, you dinna use due discretion with the child," said my grandmother; "couldna you hae waited till she hae gotten

used to her new surroundings, an' her grief for her parents had some abated, afore you began to abuse her religion? You will soon hae the child set in stubborn defiance, at this rate; hae na' I told you that ne'er yet micht an O'Niel be driven – that they wad be easier led to hell, than driven to heaven?"

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

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

Ellen did not come into dinner, and no one appeared to notice her absence, though Uncle Thomas watched the door, I thought. After dinner I took my rifle on my shoulder, and went down to the canebrake where I hoped to find a flock of wild ducks. Thomas had been sent by his father with more seed to the fields, where the men were sowing wheat, so could not go with me. I

went by the dining room, and found platters of wheaten bread, and spice cake still on the side table with which I filled my pockets, for my appetite would be as hearty as ever in three hours, and I might need bait for the ducks.

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

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

"But you've had no dinner."

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

"Who?"

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

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

"Ought to be, – why?"

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

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

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

me, and not to let me walk too fast for her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By the time the light began to fail we had six ducks, two of which Ellen had killed. Already we were good friends, and the child looked so happy, as she tripped lightly beside me, that I

could not believe that she would ever again seem to me sullen and forbidding as she had that morning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

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

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

The class room that August afternoon was hot and buzzing, and most of the lads in the Greek class awaited the coming of the master with a sort of drowsy impatience, while a few bent their eyes upon well thumbed books, and read the coming lesson over greedily, hoping to make up for previous neglect by diligent use of an unexpected respite. When the master did come,

he had an absent and very serious look upon his face, and he heard us recite with surprising indifference to mistakes. We knew intuitively that he held something in waiting, to tell us as soon as the lesson should be over, and a subdued inward excitement quickly counteracted our drowsiness.

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

books, desk, and other school belongings in the care of a fellow student, struck out across the fields, and walked the twelve miles to the home stile by sunset.

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

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

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

Had not the strength and confidence of the Shawnees, and the tribes confederated with them, been shaken at Point Pleasant, and the prestige and influence of the brave and capable Cornstalk destroyed, the Indians would, doubtless months before, have made impossible that intrepid defiance of Washington, the memory of which we Scotch Irish cherish with so much pride: – that he would never surrender but if driven to bay would make a last stand in the mountain fastnesses of Augusta; and, rallying to his aid those brave pioneers, yet bid defiance to the enemy and hope to pluck victory from apparent defeat. Nor, had there been

no battle of Point Pleasant, would a dauntless rifle company have been available for service under the gallant Morgan, to march to Quebec, to win the decisive battle at Freeman Farm, and the telling victories of King's Mountain and of Cowpens.

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

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

Few could resist, however, the contagion of our kindly home atmosphere, and by the second morning, Ellen had melted sufficiently to smile at grandmother's quaint jokes and stories of Ireland. By dinner time she was ready to listen with interest to some of my father's pioneer experiences, and that night when mother bade me give her a relation of my fight with the panther,

she listened with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. We were by this time drawn in the usual family circle about the glowing fireplace, from which roasting apples and chestnuts were sending forth a rich odor. Mother sat in her special corner, her head resting against the panther's skin, and father sat beside her, grandmother opposite, and I near her on the settle, while Jean nestled close to me. Thomas, who occupied the other end of the settle, wore a radiant face, for he enjoyed the absence of restraint which he found nowhere but with us, and all the sullen reserve was gone from Ellen's countenance.

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

stories themselves. Moreover that emotional quality of her voice, so prone to subtle vibrations, added a special charm to all she said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It's a delight to please you, grandma," said Ellen impulsively,

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

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

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

came, however, and on this occasion Aunt Martha broke her rule and came with him, bringing too their younger son, John.

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

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

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

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

"Preaching still, eh, Martha – " called my father's cheery voice from the big room, having come in to put another log upon the roaring pile; "well, you'll have to stop now, for I see Justices McDowell and Willson riding up, and, as you know, we

like not solemn faces in this house on Christmas day," and he hurried out again to meet his guests, before Aunt Martha was sufficiently recovered from her indignant surprise to make him proper answer.

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

I sat about the fire with the men, proud of my privilege, but mother and Aunt Martha, after ceremonious greetings were exchanged, retired, as was customary for women when several men were met together. The talk was animated, and at times exciting, though there was but small difference of opinion among them. The Boston massacre, and recent unjust restrictions upon our commerce, were indignantly condemned, and the determined spirit of the colonists of Massachusetts warmly commended. Presently it was proposed by Justice Willson, and warmly seconded by my father, that the citizens of Augusta County, or a committee elected by them, should draw up resolutions to be sent to the Virginia assembly, expressing with no uncertain sound their fixed determination not to submit to tyranny, and to sustain Massachusetts in her noble stand against injustice and oppression at every hazard. In truth the leaders of the New England "Town Meeting," could not have shown more fervor

nor more determination than these representative men of this Scotch Irish settlement in the Virginia mountains. The discussion was unabated still, and not a man had suggested returning home, when my mother announced dinner. The table had been lengthened to its utmost, by raising all its "wings" and putting the side tables at either end; but there was still no seat for me, so I wandered into my mother's room, and then across the yard to the kitchen to look for Jean and Ellen. Jean, and John Mitchell I found, eating turkey livers, gravy and potatoes before the embers, over which hung the now idle cranes, and Thomas was mending John's sled at the work bench in the back kitchen. But Ellen was not to be found, and no one had seen her for two hours. Returning to the house, I mounted the steps to the room under the gable, where grandma and Jean slept, and there found Ellen, wrapped in a blanket, and lying prone on the floor in the stream of sunshine pouring through the western window. Her chin was supported by her hands and an open book lay before her.

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

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

"What book are you reading?" I asked.

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

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

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

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

"Oh, so much nicer. There are beautiful things I could never say; listen," and she read me a passage from "Romeo and Juliet." "Isn't that like music? The very words have a tune to them

without thinking of the meaning even."

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

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

"We need not conceal our reading from them; they will make no objection if I tell them the book is harmless – and I suppose it is, even for girls. I know it is a famous book and counted among the English classics. I've always meant to read it some day."

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

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

"I shall be sixteen my next birthday."

"And when is that?"

"Next November."

"Then you are just fifteen."

"Fifteen and two months," she corrected.

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

"Perhaps; he used often to wish I were a boy. He used to say I was so strong, and tall, and had more sense than most women; and when he was taken sick, after mother's death, he said every few hours – 'Oh if you were only a boy, Ellen, I would not

mind so much leaving you alone in the world; you could soon be independent then, and make your own way!'"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Amen, and so do I," said Ellen, in my ear, and as Aunt Martha

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

CHAPTER V

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"As we do the Indians."

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

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

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

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

"We'll have to smoke him out," said Thomas, beginning to look about for dried leaves and twigs. We piled them into

the smaller end of the log, and then lit them with our tinder-boxes, after which we stood about the larger opening and waited watchfully.

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

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

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

"I must risk it," I swiftly concluded; and with quick intake of my breath, I raised my rifle to my shoulder, stepped back a pace, and took the aim of my life. Providence guided the ball, which

severed the beast's spinal column just at the base of his brain. In another instant I was dragging his shuddering bulk from Ellen's body, lest he crush her in the death struggle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

rug."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thomas, who had sat by, flushed and silent since I had chidden him for blubbering, picked up the torn jacket I had stripped from Ellen's shoulders, and disappeared behind the tree. Presently he

came back with his own flannel shirt and a bunch of linen strips across his arm, himself reclad in the torn jacket, which had been pinned together, after some sort, with small thorns.

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

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

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

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

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

And I was not the same, nor Ellen. She was become all at once a woman, shy, reserved, conscious of my touch, leaning

on my arm no more than necessity required. And I, though half vexed at the change in her, and grieved that I had lost so congenial a comrade – for I knew intuitively that our intercourse would never again be so unrestrained – nevertheless found her more interesting, more alluring because of this very change which put a distance between us, and which had in it a touch of mystery: – as the forest had been that morning the fairer, for that unnameable magic with which nature veils herself in her stiller haunts.

CHAPTER VI

The conversation around our Yule fire, to which I had listened with such eager absorption, had caused my budding convictions to bloom in an hour into fully expanded principles. I had caught the fever of patriotism running like an epidemic through the land. Were not we of Scotch Irish race and Presbyterian faith pledged already to the cause since the first blood shed for American liberty was the blood of the Scotch Irish Presbyterians, spilled at the battle of Alamance, when the stern North Carolina "Regulators" had risen, like Cromwell's "Ironsides," against the tyranny of their royal governor? The "Boston Tea Party," therefore, found quickest sympathy among the Scotch Irish of the Southern and Middle States, and the earliest and grimmest of the resolutions sent up to the several assemblies, urging that Massachusetts be sustained, and kingly tyranny determinedly resisted, came from the towns and counties settled by these people. "Freedom or death" was the consuming sentiment in the hearts of many Scotch Irish Americans for months before the typical orator of that race thrilled a continent by speaking those immortal words, "Give me liberty, or give me death."

The first call issued by Congress for troops named seven rifle companies to be recruited in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. Again I put aside my books, only this time I gave them to a fellow student who sorely needed them, and went home

to tell my father that I meant to enlist. I recall as vividly as 'twere yesterday that calm spring afternoon when I took the short cut across flower spangled meadows, and bosky, sweet scented woods to the humble home which had given me a youth so rich in love and happiness, but which I was so soon to leave for privations, dangers, and temptations such as had not yet entered into my imagination.

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

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

with a consciousness of manhood's power.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And to fight also, I hope."

"Amen, lad, say I to that! and may there be other of your brave spirit. I like not this dallying, this parleying with the stubborn king, who but deludes us with promises while he gains time to equip and to land his troops upon our shores. And I am beginning

to think that this talk of our Congress that we take up arms as loyal subjects of England, to force from the crown redress of our grievances, goes not far enough. Only a democracy where all are free and equal, and where the stakes are worth the risks and privations to be endured, is suited to the genius of this vast and virgin continent. Under no other form of government may she be rightly developed."

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

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

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

Then my father, looking up at us from his arm chair, unwiped tears upon his cheeks, said, in deep, reverent tone: "God grant

us victory, and make this goodly land the home of freedom – a refuge for the oppressed of all nations!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But my mother made me give her a solemn promise that I would not. She wishes me to be a minister, and once I thought I was called, but now I believe I was mistaken. I couldn't be so wild to go to the war if I had received a call from heaven to the

ministry; but mother says it will kill her if I turn soldier, after she has solemnly consecrated me to the Lord. Oh, Donald, what must I do?"

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

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

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

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

weeks of my life, seemed out of tune with God's purposes, as revealed in nature – out of keeping with His beneficent plans for all His handiwork.

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

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

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

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

"At the moon, Cousin Donald."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You could never stand the hardships."

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

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

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

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

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

"And Thomas."

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

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

"Good friends and comrades," repeated Ellen; "I shall remind you one day when you come home famous, and dignified – if I am able to endure life with Aunt Martha so long as that," and she put her hand in mine in the old way of confident comradeship

which had gone out of our intercourse for months. Hand in hand we went back to the house, talking intimately, she of her thoughts and feelings, I of my plans and hopes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Right about face! Forward!"

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

CHAPTER VII

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

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

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

After two months of toils and privations such as I wonder now we were able to endure, we reached Quebec with but seven hundred of the thousand men with whom we had started from Boston. In response to Arnold's daring summons to fight or surrender, the garrison shut the city's gates in our faces, and we were compelled to lie in our trenches, and wait for General Montgomery's reinforcements. On the last day of December, 1775, in the midst of a blinding snow storm, we attacked Quebec. General Montgomery soon received the bullet that ended his career, and Colonel Arnold was wounded shortly after. But for

these two untoward misfortunes, I truly believe we had won the day, and over all Canada and all British America would now be waving the Stars and Stripes. Be that as it may, we riflemen came very near to taking Quebec alone and unsupported, for Morgan took the battery opposed to him, and penetrated to the very center of the town. Meanwhile, General Montgomery's troops, broken and disorganized for lack of a leader, and Arnold's, in like case, were falling back; our opponents were left free to concentrate their forces upon us, so that, after a fierce resistance, we were completely surrounded, outnumbered, and compelled to surrender.

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

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

At last we were discharged, Captain Morgan on parole, and were carried in transports to New York. I saw Morgan as he stepped off the boat, in the brilliant light of a harvest moon, stoop and kiss the soil, and heard him whisper in a sort of ecstasy, "My

country, my country!" My own heart swelled within me, and I could have done likewise with full meaning.

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

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

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

headquarters before I sought him.

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

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

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

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

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

Despite the embarrassment which such personal interest caused me, I was greatly pleased to be so noticed by my colonel, and when, a few days later, he sent for me to tell me that he had named me as one of the captains who were to command the

eight companies of which his regiment would be composed, I was filled with such joy and pride as I have since experienced but once – and then upon a very different occasion.

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

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

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

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

"Then be ready, by sun up."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As I followed Mrs. Morgan into the living room, which was

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

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

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

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

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

She laughed merrily, and her ease of manner indicated that she was as much used to pretty speeches as she deserved them. There was a witchery in her laughing hazel eyes, in the curves of her saucy, full lipped mouth, in the very tendrils of blonde hair which looped and ringed in riotous fashion about the small pink ears, and low, white brow, which few men tried to resist. Before we retired that night, I was completely fascinated. I lay

wide awake in spite of my weariness until past midnight, recalling each curve of her pretty, piquant face, each modulation of her cooing voice; and then I set over against her many charms my own awkwardness, the boorishness of my manners, and my ignorance of everything except camp life and public topics. I longed ardently for that polish of manner, and that faculty of polite conversation I had heretofore esteemed so lightly.

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

So madly in love was I with Nelly Buford before another sunset that all my past was forgotten, and all my future weighed as naught. I cared for nothing, wished for nothing but to be with her; had no dream or ambition beyond pleasing her. I blushed when she spoke to me, trembled if her hand or her dress touched me, and could scarcely refrain from kissing the handkerchief she now and then let fall, and which I restored to her with a sense of proud privilege. I scarcely heard the remarks of Mrs. and Colonel Morgan, but every word Nelly spoke was registered in my mind

and conned over and over like a lesson. When they left me alone with her, as they often did – for they were daily going about the place together, to take counsel as to its management during the Colonel's absence – I experienced a sort of ecstasy which made my blood surge through my brains, and my heart flutter as if I were frightened.

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

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

I lifted her to the bough she indicated, and when she had settled herself gracefully, and said with pretty affectation of dignity, "Now, Sir Knight, the Queen awaits your service," I laid

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, and why not?"

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

"That is such stuff as Colonel Morgan and all you self-styled patriots talk – saying nothing of the ingratitude of turning against our mother land that has lavished her treasures and the blood of her sons, to plant and protect these colonies; nor of the absurd folly of thinking there can be aught else but defeat, and years of

poverty before us, as the fruit of this rebellion. Great Britain is sure to win in the end, and then, sir, mayhap you'll be glad of a friend at court. It were well to treat me courteously, and my views with respect while I am forced thus to take refuge among you – the day may come when I can return the favor," and Miss Nelly's eyes flashed, and she held her small self very erect in her chair. I had thought her all gayety and softness, and this evidence of spirit made her but the more charming to me.

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

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

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

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

So I held her yarn, and delayed the winding process all I could, that she might be the longer over her task, and her soft finger tips

touch my hands the oftener in untangling the threads I snarled. So our first quarrel resulted in my more certain entanglement in the net of Nelly's wiles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remembering was easy enough, but making application was more difficult. I could not see, then, that Colonel Morgan's caution applied to my infatuation for Nelly, further than to put me on my guard against letting that infatuation interfere with my steadfastness and courage as a soldier. I took the warning to

heart, therefore, only so far as to set my face sternly toward my duty again. Its true application was made clear to me, almost too late.

CHAPTER VIII

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

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

Burgoyne wearied presently of inaction, and determined to wait no longer for Lord Howe's continually delayed reinforcements. He began, too, to suspect that his position was fast becoming a critical one, for news now reached him that the forces of Baum and St. Leger had been destroyed at the battle of Oriskany, and that the attack upon Fort Stanwix had failed, so that the blow from the west could no longer be counted on;

the New England militiamen were gathering in force in his rear, and his Indian and Canadian allies – frightened it was said by the report that Morgan's rifle rangers had joined Gates – daily deserted him. There was no alternative left to General Burgoyne but to cross the river and attack Gates, ere this time well fortified, by the skill of Kosciusko, on Bemis Heights.

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

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

We had been but a short while in action, when General Frazier turned eastward to help General Burgoyne; and Riedesel, seeing

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

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.