

# ELLET ELIZABETH FRIES

THE WOMEN OF THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION,  
VOL. 1

**Elizabeth Ellet**  
**The Women of The**  
**American Revolution, Vol. 1**

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*The Women of The American Revolution, Vol. 1:*

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# **E. F. Ellet**

## **The Women of The American Revolution, Vol. 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When Mrs. Ellet compiled her history of "The Women of the Revolution," she could not have foreseen the deep interest in Colonial and Revolutionary history, that was destined to mark the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, nor could she have realized that the various patriotic societies that were to be organized among women, would lead to as great an interest in the lives of the mothers as in those of the fathers of the Republic. Yet the writer of these sketches of noted women has prepared for just such a phase of American life, which makes her work now appear a prophecy of the future as well as a summary of past events.

"The Women of the Revolution" having been published in the middle of the century, the material for these biographical sketches was collected while some men and women were still living who could recall the faces and figures of the statesmen and soldiers of the Revolutionary struggle. When the sketch of Mrs. Philip Schuyler went to press, the daughter of that heroic

lady was still living in Washington, and able to relate for the entertainment of her friends stirring incidents of her mother's life, and of her own life in camp with Mrs. Washington, when as Miss Betsey Schuyler she won the heart of the General's young aide-de-camp, the brilliant, versatile Hamilton. Another interesting character, who was living while Mrs. Ellet's work was in course of preparation, was Mrs. Gerard G. Beekman, whose mind was a storehouse of Revolutionary incidents and adventures, of many of which she was herself the heroine or an eyewitness.

There are in these volumes many proofs that Mrs. Ellet availed herself of the opportunities afforded her to draw from original sources. In some instances, the author acknowledged her indebtedness to the rich fields of reminiscence in which it was her privilege to glean, in other passages the result of such gleaning is evident from the minuteness and vividness with which she portrayed certain characters and depicted the scenes and circumstances in which they moved.

In the opening paragraph of the sketch of Martha Wilson of New Jersey, Mrs. Ellet speaks of the valuable fund of recollection that was opened to her through familiar association with intimate friends of the subject of the biography. Mrs. Wilson, who lived through the first decade of the Nineteenth Century, recollected the stirring days of the Revolution when New Jersey was its principal battle ground, and she, as the daughter of one of General Washington's officers and the wife

of another, entertained in her father's house and in her own, the Commander-in-Chief and other prominent Revolutionary heroes. Mrs. Wilson was able to relate many conversations that were held at her table, and numerous personal incidents which threw light upon the characters of Washington, Wayne, Greene and Knox, while the faces and voices of such foreign patriots as Pulaski and the Marquis de Lafayette were familiar to her as household words.

An excellent characteristic of Mrs. Ellet's work is its comprehensiveness and breadth of view. She wrote, not only of women who were prominent in the pivotal centres of action, but also of those whose homes in small inland towns or remote country places rendered them liable to dangers and depredations unknown to their sisters more favorably situated in the larger cities and towns. We are wont to think of the trials and privations of the early settlement of our country as having been confined to the narrow strip along the Atlantic seaboard that once stood for Colonial America, forgetting the dangers and vicissitudes of pioneer life in such border lands as Kentucky, Ohio, and the western part of Virginia. Mrs. Ellet, in her chapters upon the women of the Western States, draws a vivid picture of the heroism and endurance of these border settlers, who were subjected to the successive forays of Tories and Indians. In the intrepid courage and fertility of resource exhibited by the wives and daughters of some of the settlers, especially in the story of young Elizabeth Zane, we are confronted with a record of

bravery that rivals that of such well-known heroines as Lydia Darrach, Deborah Samson and the women of the Valley of the Wyoming.

Side by side with the sketches of women who, however patriotic and highly placed in public and social life, were essentially domestic, as Martha Washington, Catherine Greene, Rebecca Biddle and Sarah Bache, we find those of such women of letters as Elizabeth Ferguson of Pennsylvania, Mercy Warren and Abigail Adams of Massachusetts, and of Annis Stockton of New Jersey. Here also are the biographies of women who were chiefly distinguished for beauty, wit and social charm, as Dorothy Hancock, Rebecca Franks and Margaret Shippen, for without them any picture of the life of the time would have been as incomplete as without the record of characters as heroic as those of Rebecca Motte, Catherine Schuyler, Cornelia Beekman, and Mary Slocumb.

In these two volumes of 650 pages, a vast amount of information, of characterization, of incident and anecdote has been preserved for the use of the historian and scholar, as well as for the pleasure and instruction of the casual reader. More than this, if as Mr. Froude says, "history is a voice forever sounding across the centuries the laws of right and wrong," the reader of to-day may draw from the record of the lives of these women of yesterday, lessons in courage, endurance, fidelity to principle and unselfish devotion to their country, that may well prove an inspiration to higher ideals of citizenship and broader patriotism

in the future.

Anne Hollingsworth Wharton.

Philadelphia, June 15th, 1900.



# PREFACE

In offering this work to the public, it is due to the reader no less than the writer, to say something of the extreme difficulty which has been found in obtaining materials sufficiently reliable for a record designed to be strictly authentic. Three-quarters of a century have necessarily effaced all recollection of many imposing domestic scenes of the Revolution, and cast over many a veil of obscurity through which it is hard to distinguish their features. Whatever has not been preserved by contemporaneous written testimony, or derived at an early period from immediate actors in the scenes, is liable to the suspicion of being distorted or discolored by the imperfect knowledge, the prejudices, or the fancy of its narrators. It is necessary always to distrust, and very often to reject traditionary information. Much of this character has been received from various sources, but I have refrained from using it in all cases where it was not supported by responsible personal testimony, or where it was found to conflict in any of its details with established historical facts.

Inasmuch as political history says but little – and that vaguely and incidentally – of the Women who bore their part in the Revolution, the materials for a work treating of them and their actions and sufferings, must be derived in great part from private sources. The apparent dearth of information was at first almost disheartening. Except the Letters of Mrs. Adams, no

fair exponent of the feelings and trials of the women of the Revolution had been given to the public; for the Letters of Mrs. Wilkinson afford but a limited view of a short period of the war. Of the Southern women, Mrs. Motte was the only one generally remembered in her own State for the act of magnanimity recorded in history; and a few fragmentary anecdotes of female heroism, to be found in Garden's collection, and some historical works – completed the amount of published information on the subject. Letters of friendship and affection – those most faithful transcripts of the heart and mind of individuals, have been earnestly sought, and examined wherever they could be obtained. But letter-writing was far less usual among our ancestors than it is at the present day; and the uncertainty, and sometimes the danger attendant upon the transmission of letters were not only an impediment to frequent correspondence, but excluded from that which did exist, much discussion of the all-absorbing subjects of the time. \_\_Of the little that was written, too, how small a portion remains in this – as it has been truly called – manuscript-destroying generation! But while much that might have illustrated the influence of woman and the domestic character and feeling of those days, had been lost or obscured by time, it appeared yet possible, by persevering effort, to recover something worthy of an enduring record. With the view of eliciting information for this purpose, application was made severally to the surviving relatives of women remarkable for position or influence, or whose zeal, personal sacrifices, or

heroic acts, had contributed to promote the establishment of American Independence.

My success in these applications has not been such as to enable me to fill out entirely my own idea of the work I wished to present to the reader. Some of the sketches are necessarily brief and meagre, and perhaps few of them do full justice to their subjects. There is, also, inherent difficulty in delineating female character, which impresses itself on the memory of those who have known the individual by delicate traits, that may be felt but not described. The actions of men stand out in prominent relief, and are a safe guide in forming a judgment of them; a woman's sphere, on the other hand, is secluded, and in very few instances does her personal history, even though she may fill a conspicuous position, afford sufficient incident to; throw a strong light upon her character. This want of salient points for description must be felt by all who have attempted a faithful portraiture of some beloved female relative. How much is the difficulty increased when a stranger essays a tribute to those who are no longer among the living, and whose existence was passed for the most part in a quiet round of domestic duties!

It need scarcely be said that the deficiency of material has in no case been supplied by fanciful embellishment. These memoirs are a simple and homely narrative of real occurrences. Wherever details were wanting to fill out the picture, it has been left in outline for some more fortunate limner. No labor of research, no pains in investigation – and none but those who have been

similarly engaged can estimate the labor – have been spared in establishing the truth of the statements. It can hardly be expected that inaccuracies have been altogether avoided in a work where the facts have to be drawn from numerous and sometimes conflicting authorities; but errors, if discovered, may be hereafter corrected.

The sketches contained in the first volume, illustrating progressive stages of the war, are arranged with some observance of chronological order; while those in the second do not admit of such a distribution.

Many authorities, including nearly all the books upon the Revolution, have been consulted, and reference is made to those to which I am under special obligations. For the memoir of Mrs. Bache, I am indebted to the pen of Mr. William Duane, of Philadelphia, and for that of Mrs. Allen, to Mr. Henry R. Schoolcraft, of Washington. My grateful acknowledgments are due also to Mr. Jacob B. Moore, Librarian of the New York Historical Society, for valuable advice, and for facilities afforded me in examining the books and manuscripts under his charge; and to Dr. Joseph Johnson, the Rev. James H. Saye, and the Hon. Judge O'Neill, of South Carolina, who have obligingly aided me in the collection of authentic particulars connected with the war in that State. Others have rendered valuable assistance in the same way, and in affording me an opportunity of examining family papers in their possession. To them all – and to those numerous friends who have encouraged me by their sympathy

and kind wishes in this arduous but interesting task – I offer most heartfelt thanks. If the work whose progress they have cherished should be deemed a useful contribution to American History, they will be no less gratified than myself that its design has been accomplished. E. F. E.

# THE WOMEN OF THE REVOLUTION

All Americans are accustomed to view with interest and admiration the events of the Revolution. Its scenes are vivid in their memory, and its prominent actors are regarded with the deepest veneration. But while the leading spirits are thus honored, attention should be directed to the source whence their power was derived – to the sentiment pervading the mass of the people. The force of this sentiment, working in the public heart, cannot be measured; because, amidst the abundance of materials for the history of action, there is little for that of the feeling of those times. And, as years pass on, the investigation becomes more and more difficult. Yet it is both interesting and important to trace its operation. It gave statesmen their influence, and armed heroes for victory. What could they have done but for the home-sentiment to which they appealed, and which sustained them in the hour of trial and success? They were thus aided to the eminence they gained through toils and perils. Others may claim a share in the merit, if not the fame, of their illustrious deeds. The unfading laurels that wreath their brows had their root in the hearts of the people, and were nourished with their life-blood.

The feeling which wrought thus powerfully in the community

depended, in great part; upon the women. It is always thus in times of popular excitement. Who can estimate, moreover, the controlling influence of early culture! During the years of the progress of British encroachment and colonial discontent, when the sagacious politician could discern the portentous shadow of events yet far distant, there was time for the nurture, in the domestic sanctuary, of that love of civil liberty, which afterwards kindled into a flame, and shed light on the world. The talk of matrons, in American homes, was of the people's wrongs, and the tyranny that oppressed them, till the sons who had grown to manhood, with strengthened aspirations towards a better state of things, and views enlarged to comprehend their invaded rights, stood up prepared to defend them to the utmost. Patriotic mothers nursed the infancy of freedom. Their counsels and their prayers mingled with the deliberations that resulted in a nation's assertion of its independence. They animated the courage, and confirmed the self-devotion of those who ventured all in the common cause. They frowned upon instances of coldness or backwardness; and in the period of deepest gloom, cheered and urged onward the desponding.

They willingly shared inevitable dangers and privations, relinquished without regret prospects of advantage to themselves, and parted with those they loved better than life, not knowing when they were to meet again. It is almost impossible now to appreciate the vast influence of woman's patriotism upon the destinies of the infant republic. We have no means of showing

the important part she bore in maintaining the struggle, and in laying the foundations on which so mighty and majestic a structure has arisen. History can do it no justice; for history deals with the workings of the head, rather than the heart. And the knowledge received by tradition, of the domestic manners, and social character of the times, is too imperfect to furnish a sure index. We can only dwell upon individual instances of magnanimity, fortitude, self-sacrifice, and heroism, bearing the impress of the feeling of Revolutionary days, indicative of the spirit which animated all, and to which, in its various and multiform exhibitions, we are not less indebted for national freedom, than to the swords of the patriots who poured out their blood.

"'Tis true, Cleander," says a writer in one of the papers of the day,<sup>1</sup> "no mean merit will accrue to him who shall justly celebrate the virtues of our ladies! Shall not their generous contributions to relieve the wants of the defenders of our country, supply a column to emulate the Roman women, stripped of their jewels when the public necessity demanded them?" Such tributes were often called forth by the voluntary exertions of American women. Their patriotic sacrifices were made with an enthusiasm that showed the earnest spirit ready on every occasion to appear in generous acts. Some gave their own property, and went from house to house to solicit contributions for the army. Colors were embroidered by fair hands, and presented with the

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<sup>1</sup> *New Jersey Gazette, October 11th, 1780.*



charge never to desert them; and arms and ammunition were provided by the same liberal zeal. They formed themselves into associations renouncing the use of teas, and other imported luxuries, and engaging to card, spin, and weave their own clothing. In Mecklenburgh and Rowan counties, North Carolina, young ladies of the most respectable families pledged themselves not to receive the addresses of any suitors who had not obeyed the country's call for military service.

The needy shared the fruit of their industry and economy. They visited hospitals daily; sought the dungeons of the provost, and the crowded holds of prison ships; and provisions were carried from their stores to the captives whose only means of recompense was the blessing of those who were ready to perish. Many raised grain, gathered it, made bread, and carried it to their relatives in the army, or in prisons, accompanying the supply with exhortations never to abandon the cause of their country. The burial of friends slain in battle, or chance-encounters, often devolved upon them; and even enemies would not have received sepulture without the service of their hands.

When the resources of the country scarcely allowed the scantiest supply of clothing and provisions, and British cruisers on the coast destroyed every hope of aid from merchant vessels; when, to the distressed troops, their cup of misfortune seemed full to overflowing, and there appeared no prospect of relief, except from the benevolence of their fellow-citizens; when even the ability of these was almost exhausted by repeated applications

– then it was that the women of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, by their zealous exertions and willing sacrifices, accomplished what had been thought impossible. Not only was the pressure of want removed, but the sympathy and favor of the fair daughters of America, says one of the journals, "operated like a charm on the soldier's heart – gave vigor to exertion, confidence to his hopes of success, and the ultimate certainty of victory and peace." General Washington, in his letter of acknowledgment to the committee of ladies, says, "The army ought not to regret its sacrifices or its sufferings, when they meet with so flattering a reward, as in the sympathy of your sex; nor can it fear that its interests will be neglected, when espoused by advocates as powerful as they are amiable." An officer in camp writes, in June, 1780: "The patriotism of the women of your city is a subject of conversation with the army. Had I poetical genius, I would sit down and write an ode in praise of it. Burgoyne, who, on his first coming to America, boasted that he would dance with the ladies, and coax the men to submission, must now have a better understanding of the good sense and public spirit of our females, as he has already heard of the fortitude and inflexible temper of our men." Another observes: "We cannot appeal in vain for what is good, to that sanctuary where all that is good has its proper home – the female bosom."

How the influence of women was estimated by John Adams, appears from one of his letters to his wife:

"I think I have sometimes observed to you in conversation,

that upon examining the biography of illustrious men, you will generally find some female about them, in the relation of mother, or wife, or sister, to whose instigation a great part of their merit is to be ascribed. You will find a curious example of this in the case of Aspasia, the wife of Pericles. She was a woman of the greatest beauty, and the first genius. She taught him, it is said, his refined maxims of policy, his lofty imperial eloquence, nay, even composed the speeches on which so great a share of his reputation was founded,

"I wish some of our great men had such wives. By the account in your last letter, it seems the women in Boston begin to think themselves able to serve their country. What a pity it is that our generals in the northern districts had not Aspasia's to their wives.

"I believe the two Howes have not very great women for wives. If they had, we should suffer more from their exertions than we do. This is our good fortune. A smart wife would have put Howe in possession of Philadelphia a long time ago."

The venerable Major Spalding, of Georgia, writes, in reply to an application to him for information respecting the revolutionary women of his state: "I am a very old man, and have read as much as any one I know, yet I have never known, and never read of one – no, not one! – who did not owe high standing, or a great name, to his mother's blood, or his mother's training. My friend Randolph said he owed everything to his mother. Mr. Jefferson's mother was a Randolph, and he acknowledged that he owed everything to her rearing. General Washington, we all

know, attributed everything to his mother. Lord Bacon attributed much to his mother's training. And will any one doubt that even Alexander believed he owed more to the blood and lofty ambition of Olympia, than the wisdom or cunning of Philip?"

The sentiments of the women towards the brave defenders of their native land, were expressed in an address widely circulated at the time, and read in the churches of Virginia. "We know," it says – "that at a distance from the theatre of war, if we enjoy any tranquillity, it is the fruit of your watchings, your labors, your dangers... And shall we hesitate to evince to you our gratitude? Shall we hesitate to wear clothing more simple, and dress less elegant, while at the price of this small privation, we shall deserve your benedictions?"

The same spirit appears in a letter found among some papers belonging to a lady of Philadelphia. It was addressed to a British officer in Boston, and written before the Declaration of Independence. The following extract will show its character:

"I will tell you what I have done. My only brother I have sent to the camp with my prayers and blessings. I hope he will not disgrace me; I am confident he will behave with honor and emulate the great examples he has before him; and had I twenty sons and brothers they should go. I have retrenched every superfluous expense in my table and family; tea I have not drunk since last Christmas, nor bought a new cap or gown since your defeat at Lexington; and what I never did before, have learned to knit, and am now making stockings of American wool for

my servants; and this way do I throw in my mite to the public good. I know this – that as free I can die but once; but as a slave I shall not be worthy of life. I have the pleasure to assure you that these are the sentiments of all my sister Americans. They have sacrificed assemblies, parties of pleasure, tea drinking and finery, to that great spirit of patriotism that actuates all degrees of people throughout this extensive continent. If these are the sentiments of females, what must glow in the breasts of our husbands, brothers, and sons! They are as with one heart determined to die or be free. It is not a quibble in politics, a science which few understand, that we are contending for; it is this plain truth, which the most ignorant peasant knows, and is clear to the weakest capacity – that no man has a right to take their money without their consent. You say you are no politician. Oh, sir, it requires no Machiavelian head to discover this tyranny and oppression. It is written with a sunbeam. Everyone will see and know it, because it will make everyone feel; and we shall be unworthy of the blessings of Heaven if we ever submit to it...

"Heaven seems to smile on us; for in the memory of man, never were known such quantities of flax and sheep without number. We are making powder fast, and do not want for ammunition."

From all portions of the country thus arose the expression of woman's ardent zeal. Under accumulated evils the manly spirit that alone could secure success, might have sunk but for the firmness and intrepidity of the weaker sex. It supplied

every persuasion that could animate to perseverance, and secure fidelity.

The noble deeds in which this irrepressible spirit breathed itself, were not unrewarded by persecution. The case of the quakeress Deborah Franklin, who was banished from New York by the British commandant for her liberality in relieving the sufferings of the American prisoners, was one among many. In our days of tranquillity and luxury, imagination can scarcely compass the extent or severity of the trials endured; and it is proportionately difficult to estimate the magnanimity that bore all, not only with uncomplaining patience, but with a cheerful forgetfulness of suffering in view of the desired object. The alarms of war – the roar of the strife itself, could not silence the voice of woman, lifted in encouragement or in prayer. The horrors of battle or massacre could not drive her from the post of duty. The effect of this devotion cannot be questioned, though it may not now be traced in particular instances. These were, for the most part, known only to those who were themselves actors in the scenes, or who lived in the midst of them. The heroism of the Revolutionary women has passed from remembrance with the generation who witnessed it; or is seen only by faint and occasional glimpses, through the gathering obscurity of tradition.

To render a measure of justice – inadequate it must be – to a few of the American matrons, whose names deserve to live in remembrance – and to exhibit something of the domestic side of the Revolutionary picture – is the object of

this work. As we recede from the realities of that struggle, it is regarded with increasing interest by those who enjoy its results; while the elements which were its life-giving principle, too subtle to be retained by the grave historian, are fleeting fast from apprehension. Yet without some conception of them, the Revolution cannot be appreciated. We must enter into the spirit, as well as master the letter.

While attempting to pay a tribute but too long withheld, to the memory of women who did and endured so much in the cause of liberty, we should not be insensible to the virtues exhibited by another class, belonging equally to the history of the period. These had their share of reverse and suffering. Many saw their children and relatives espousing opposite sides; and with ardent feelings of loyalty in their hearts, were forced to weep over the miseries of their families and neighbors. Many were driven from their homes, despoiled of property, and finally compelled to cast their lot in desolate wilds and an ungenial climate.<sup>2</sup> And while their heroism, fortitude, and spirit of self-sacrifice were not less brightly displayed, their hard lot was unpitied, and they met with no reward.

In the library of William H. Prescott, at his residence in Boston, are two swords, crossed above the arch of an alcove. One belonged to his grandfather, Colonel William Prescott, who commanded the American troops in the redoubt at Bunker Hill.

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<sup>2</sup> *The ancient Acadia, comprising Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, was settled by many of the refugee loyalists from the United States.*

The other was the sword of Captain Linzee, of the royal navy, who commanded the British sloop of war – The Falcon, then lying in the Mystic; from which the American troops were fired upon as they crossed to Bunker Hill. Captain Linzee was the grandfather of Mrs. Prescott. The swords of those two gallant soldiers who fought on different sides upon that memorable day – now in the possession of their united descendants, and crossed – an emblem of peace, in the library of the great American historian – are emblematic of the spirit in which our history should be written. Such be the spirit in which we view the loyalists of those days.



# I. MARY WASHINGTON

The Mother of Washington! There needs no eulogy to awaken the associations which cling around that sacred name. Our hearts do willing homage to the venerated parent of the chief —

"Who 'mid his elements of being wrought  
With no uncertain aim – nursing the germs  
Of godlike virtue in his infant mind."

The contemplation of Washington's character naturally directs attention to her whose maternal care guided and guarded his early years. What she did, and the blessing of a world that follows her – teach impressively – while showing the power – the duty of those who mould the characters of the age to come. The principles and conduct of this illustrious matron were closely interwoven with the destinies of her son. Washington ever acknowledged that he owed everything to his mother – in the education and habits of his early life. His high moral principle, his perfect self-possession, his clear and sound judgment, his inflexible resolution and untiring application – were developed by her training and example. A believer in the truths of religion, she inculcated a strict obedience to its injunctions. She planted the seed, and cherished the growth, which bore such rich and glorious fruit. La Fayette observed that she belonged rather to

the age of Sparta or Rome, than to modern times; she was a mother formed on the ancient model, and by her elevation of character and matchless discipline, fitted to lay the foundation of the greatness of him who towered "beyond all Greek – beyond all Roman fame."

The course of Mrs. Washington's life, exhibiting her qualities of mind and heart, proved her fitness for the high trust committed to her hands. She was remarkable for vigor of intellect, strength of resolution, and inflexible firmness wherever principle was concerned. Devoted to the education of her children, her parental government and guidance have been described by those who knew her as admirably adapted to train the youthful mind to wisdom and virtue. With her, affection was regulated by a calm and just judgment. She was distinguished, moreover, by that well marked quality of genius, a power of acquiring and maintaining influence over those with whom she associated. Without inquiring into the philosophy of this mysterious ascendancy, she was content to employ it for the noblest ends. It contributed, no doubt, to deepen the effect of her instructions.

The life of Mrs. Washington, so useful in the domestic sphere, did not abound in incident. She passed through the trials common to those who lived amid the scenes of the Revolutionary era. She saw the son whom she had taught to be *good*— whom she had reared in the principles of true honor, walking the perilous path of duty with firm step, leading his country to independence, and crowned with his reward – a nation's gratitude; yet in all these

changes, her simple, earnest nature remained the same. She loved to speak, in her latter days, of her boy's merits in his early life, and of his filial affection and duty; but never dwelt on the glory he had won as the deliverer of his country, the chief magistrate of a great republic. This was because her ambition was too high for the pride that inspires and rewards common souls. The greatness she discerned and acknowledged in the object of her solicitous tenderness was beyond that which this world most esteems.

The only memoir of the mother of Washington extant, is the one written by George W. P. Custis, the grandson of Martha Washington, and published more than twenty years ago in his "Recollections" in the National Gazette. These reminiscences were collected by him in the course of many years; and to them we are indebted for all that is known of the life and actions of this matron. According to these, she was descended from the respectable family of Ball, who came to this country and settled on the banks of the Potomac. In the old days of Virginia, women were taught habits of industry and self-reliance, and in these Mrs. Washington was nurtured. The early death of her husband involved her in the cares of a young family with limited resources, which rendered prudence and economy necessary to provide for and educate her children. Thus circumstanced, it was left to her unassisted efforts to form in her son's mind, those essential qualities which gave tone and character to his subsequent life. George was only twelve years old at his father's death, and retained merely the remembrance of his person, and

his parental fondness. Two years after this event, he obtained a midshipman's warrant; but his mother opposed the plan, and the idea of entering the naval service was relinquished.

The home in which Mrs. Washington presided, was a sanctuary of the domestic virtues. The levity of youth was there tempered by a well regulated restraint, and the enjoyments rational and proper for that age were indulged in with moderation. The future chief was taught the duty of obedience, and was thus prepared to command. The mother's authority never departed from her, even when her son had attained the height of his renown; for she ruled by the affection which had controlled his spirit when he needed a guardian; and she claimed a reverence next to that due to his Creator. This claim he admitted, mingling the deepest respect with enthusiastic attachment, and yielding to her will the most implicit obedience, even to the latest hours of her life. One of the associates of his juvenile years, Lawrence Washington, of Chotank, thus speaks of his home:

"I was often therewith George, his playmate, schoolmate, and young man's companion. Of the mother I was ten times more afraid than I ever was of my own parents; she awed me in the midst of her kindness, for she was indeed truly kind. And even now, when time has whitened my locks, and I am the grandparent of a second generation, I could not behold that majestic woman without feelings it is impossible to describe. Whoever has seen that awe-inspiring air and manner, so characteristic of the Father

of his country, will remember the matron as she appeared, the presiding genius of her well-ordered household, commanding and being obeyed." Educated under such influences, it is not to be wondered at that Washington's deportment towards his mother at all times, testified his appreciation of her elevated character, and the excellence of her lessons.

"On his appointment to the command-in-chief of the American armies," says Mr. Custis, "previously to his joining the forces at Cambridge, he removed his mother from her country residence, to the village of Fredericksburg, a situation remote from danger and contiguous to her friends and relatives. There she remained, during nearly the whole of the trying period of the Revolution. Directly in the way of the news, as it passed from north to south; one courier would bring intelligence of success to our arms; another, "swiftly coursing at his heels," the saddening reverse of disaster and defeat. While thus ebbcd and flowed the fortunes of our cause, the mother, trusting to the wisdom and protection of Divine Providence, preserved the even tenor of her life; affording an example to those matrons whose sons were alike engaged in the arduous contest; and showing that unavailing anxieties, however belonging to nature, were unworthy of mothers whose sons were combating for the inestimable rights of man, and the freedom and happiness of the world."

When news arrived of the passage of the Delaware in December, 1776, the mother received calmly the patriots who

came with congratulations; and while expressing pleasure at the intelligence, disclaimed for her son the praises in the letters from which extracts were read. When informed by express of the surrender of Cornwallis, she lifted her hands in gratitude towards heaven, and exclaimed, "Thank God! war will now be ended, and peace, independence and happiness bless our country!"

Her housewifery, industry, and care in the management of her domestic concerns, were not intermitted during the war. "She looketh well to the ways of her household," and "worketh willingly with her hands," said the wise man, in describing a virtuous woman; and it was the pride of the exemplary women of that day, to fill the station of mistress with usefulness as well as dignity. Mrs. Washington was remarkable for a simplicity which modern refinement might call severe, but which became her not less when her fortunes were clouded, than when the sun of glory arose upon her house. Some of the aged inhabitants of Fredericksburg long remembered the matron, "as seated in an old-fashioned open chaise she was in the habit of visiting, almost daily, her little farm in the vicinity of the town. When there, she would ride about her fields, giving her orders and seeing that they were obeyed." When on one occasion an agent departed from his instructions – she reproved him for exercising his own judgment in the matter; "I command you," she said; "there is nothing left for you but to obey."

Her charity to the poor was well known; and having not wealth to distribute, it was necessary that what her benevolence

dispensed should be supplied by domestic economy and industry. How peculiar a grace does this impart to the benefits flowing from a sympathizing heart!

It is thus that she has been pictured in the imagination of one of our most gifted poets.<sup>3</sup>

"Methinks we see thee, as in olden time,  
Simple in garb, majestic and serene, —  
Unawed by 'pomp and circumstances' – in truth  
Inflexible – and with a Spartan zeal  
Repressing vice, and making folly grave.  
Thou didst not deem it woman's part to waste  
Life in inglorious sloth, to sport awhile  
Amid the flowers, or on the summer wave,  
Then fleet like the ephemeron away,  
Building no temple in her children's hearts,  
Save to the vanity and pride of life  
Which she had worshipped."

Mr. Custis states that she was continually visited and solaced, in the retirement of her declining years, by her children and numerous grandchildren. Her daughter, Mrs. Lewis, repeatedly and earnestly solicited her to remove to her house, and there pass the remainder of her days. Her son pressingly entreated her that she would make Mount Vernon the home of her age. But

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<sup>3</sup> *Mrs. Sigourney, in her poetical tribute on the occasion of laying the corner-stone for the monument,*

the matron's answer was: "I thank you for your affectionate and dutiful offers, but my wants are few in this world, and I feel perfectly competent to take care of myself." To the proposition of her son-in-law, Colonel Lewis, to relieve her by taking the direction of her concerns, she replied: "Do you, Fielding, keep my books in order; for your eyesight is better than mine: but leave the executive management to me." Such were the energy and independence she preserved to an age beyond that usually allotted to mortals, and, till within three years of her death, when the disease under which she suffered (cancer of the breast), prevented exertion.

Her meeting with Washington, after the victory which decided the fortune of America, illustrates her character too strikingly to be omitted. "After an absence of nearly seven years, it was, at length, on the return of the combined armies from Yorktown, permitted to the mother again to see and embrace her illustrious son. So soon as he had dismounted, in the midst of a numerous and brilliant suite, he sent to apprize her of his arrival, and to know when it would be her pleasure to receive him. And now, mark the force of early education and habits, and the superiority of the Spartan over the Persian schools, in this interview of the great Washington with his admirable parent and instructor. No pageantry of war proclaimed his coming – no trumpets sounded – no banners waved. Alone, and on foot, the marshal of France, the general-in-chief of the combined armies of France and America, the deliverer of his country, the hero of the age,



repaired to pay his humble duty to her whom he venerated as the author of his being, the founder of his fortune and his fame. For full well he knew that the matron was made of sterner stuff than to be moved by all the pride that glory ever gave, or by all the 'pomp and circumstance' of power.

"The lady was alone – her aged hands employed in the works of domestic industry, when the good news was announced; and it was further told, that the victor-chief was in waiting at the threshold. She welcomed him with a warm embrace, and by the well-remembered and endearing names of his childhood. Inquiring as to his health, she remarked the lines which mighty cares, and many trials, had made on his manly countenance – spoke much of old times, and old friends; but of his glory, *not one word!*

"Meantime, in the village of Fredericksburg, all was joy and revelry. The town was crowded with the officers of the French and American armies, and with gentlemen from all the country around, who hastened to welcome the conquerors of Cornwallis. The citizens made arrangements for a splendid ball, to which the mother of Washington was specially invited. She observed, that although her dancing days were *pretty well over*, she should feel happy in contributing to the general festivity, and consented to attend.

"The foreign officers were anxious to see the mother of their chief. They had heard indistinct rumors respecting her remarkable life and character; but forming their judgment from

European examples, they were prepared to expect in the mother, that glare and show which would have been attached to the parents of the great in the old world. How were they surprised when the matron, leaning on the arm of her son, entered the room! She was arrayed in the very plain, yet becoming garb worn by the Virginia lady of the olden time. Her address, always dignified and imposing, was courteous, though reserved. She received the complimentary attentions which were profusely paid her, without evincing the slightest elevation; and at an early hour, wishing the company much enjoyment of their pleasures, and observing that it was time for old people to be at home, retired, leaning as before, on the arm of her son."

To this picture may be added another:

"The Marquis de La Fayette repaired to Fredericksburg, previous to his departure for Europe, in the fall of 1784, to pay his parting respects to the mother, and to ask her blessing. Conducted by one of her grandsons, he approached the house, when the young gentleman observed: 'There, sir, is my grandmother.' La Fayette beheld – working in the garden, clad in domestic-made clothes, and her grey head covered with a plain straw hat – the mother of 'his hero, his friend and a country's preserver!' The lady saluted him kindly, observing, 'Ah, marquis! you see an old woman; but come, I can make you welcome to my poor dwelling, without the parade of changing my dress.'"

To the encomiums lavished by the marquis on his chief, the mother replied: "I am not surprised at what George has done, for

he was always a very good boy." So simple in her true greatness of soul, was this remarkable woman.

Her piety was ardent; and she associated devotion with the grand and beautiful in nature. She was in the habit of repairing every day for prayer to a secluded spot, formed by rocks and trees, near her dwelling.

After the organization of the government, Washington repaired to Fredericksburg, to announce to his mother his election to the chief magistracy, and bid her farewell, before assuming the duties of his office. Her aged frame was bowed down by disease; and she felt that they were parting to meet no more in this world. But she bade him go, with heaven's blessing and her own, to fulfil the high destinies to which he had been called. Washington was deeply affected, and wept at the parting.

The person of Mrs. Washington is described as being of the medium height, and well proportioned – her features pleasing, though strongly marked. There were few painters in the colonies in those days, and no portrait of her is in existence. Her biographer saw her but with infant eyes; but well remembers the sister of the chief. Of her we are told nothing, except that "she was a most majestic woman, and so strikingly like the brother, that it was a matter of frolic to throw a cloak around her, and place a military hat upon her head; and such was the perfect resemblance, that had she appeared on her brother's steed, battalions would have presented arms, and senates risen to do homage to the chief."

Mrs. Washington died at the age of eighty-five, rejoicing in the consciousness of a life well spent, and the hope of a blessed immortality. Her ashes repose at Fredericksburg, where a splendid monument has been erected to her memory.

## II. ESTHER REED

Esther De Berdt was born in the city of London, on the 22d of October, 1746, (N. S.,) and died at Philadelphia on the 18th of September, 1780. Her thirty-four years of life were adorned by no adventurous heroism; but were thickly studded with the brighter beauties of feminine endurance, uncomplaining self-sacrifice, and familiar virtue – under trials, too, of which civil war is so fruitful. She was an only daughter. Her father, Dennis De Berdt, was a British merchant, largely interested in colonial trade. He was a man of high character. Descended from the Huguenots, or French Flemings, who came to England on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Mr. De Berdt's pure and rather austere religious sentiments and practice were worthy of the source whence they came. His family were educated according to the strictest rule of the evangelical piety of their day – the day when devotion, frozen out of high places, found refuge in humble dissenting chapels – the day of Wesley and of Whitfield. Miss De Berdt's youth was trained religiously; and she was to the end of life true to the principles of her education. The simple devotion she had learned from an aged father's lips, alleviated the trials of youth, and brightened around her early grave.

Mr. De Berdt's house in London, owing to his business relations with the Colonies, was the home of many young Americans who at that time were attracted by pleasure or duty

to the imperial metropolis. Among these visitors, in or about the year 1763, was Joseph Reed, of New Jersey, who had come to London to finish his professional studies (such being the fashion of the times) at the Temple. Mr. Reed was in the twenty-third year of his age – a man of education, intelligence, and accomplishment. The intimacy, thus accidentally begun, soon produced its natural fruits; and an engagement, at first secret, and afterwards avowed, was formed between the young English girl and the American stranger. Parental discouragement, so wise that even youthful impetuosity could find no fault with it, was entirely inadequate to break a connection thus formed. They loved long and faithfully – how faithfully, the reader will best judge when he learns that a separation of five years of deferred hope, with the Atlantic between them, never gave rise to a wandering wish, or hope, or thought.

Mr. Reed, having finished his studies, returned to America, in the early part of 1765, and began the practice of the law in his native village of Trenton. His success was immediate and great. But there was a distracting element at work in his heart, which prevented him from looking on success with complacency; and one plan after another was suggested, by which he might be enabled to return and settle in Great Britain. That his young and gentle mistress should follow him to America, was a vision too wild even for a sanguine lover. Every hope was directed back to England; and the correspondence, the love letters of five long years, are filled with plans by which these cherished, but delusive

wishes were to be consummated. How dimly was the future seen!

Miss De Berdt's engagement with her American lover, was coincident with that dreary period of British history, when a monarch and his ministers were laboring hard to tear from its socket, and cast away for ever, the brightest jewel of the imperial crown – American colonial power. It was the interval when Chatham's voice was powerless to arouse the Nation, and make Parliament pause – when penny-wise politicians, in the happy phrase of the day, "*teased America into resistance*," and the varied vexations of stamp acts, and revenue bills, and tea duties, the congenial fruits of poor statesmanship, were the means by which a great catastrophe was hurried onward. Mr. De Berdt's relations with the Government were, in some respects, direct and intimate. His house was a place of counsel for those who sought, by moderate and constitutional means, to stay the hand of misgovernment and oppression. He was the Agent of the Stamp Act Congress first, and of the Colonies of Delaware and Massachusetts, afterwards. And most gallantly did the brave old man discharge the duty which his American constituents confided to him. His heart was in his trust; and we may well imagine the alternations of feeling which throbbed in the bosom of his daughter, as she shared in the consultations of this almost American household; and according to the fitful changes of time and opinion, counted the chances of discord that might be fatal to her peace, or of honorable pacification which should bring her lover home to her. Miss De Berdt's letters, now in the

possession of her descendants, are full of allusions to this varying state of things, and are remarkable for the sagacious good sense which they develope. She is, from first to last, a stout American. Describing a visit to the House of Commons, in April, 1766, her enthusiasm for Mr. Pitt is unbounded, while she does not disguise her repugnance to George Grenville and Wedderburn, whom she says she cannot bear, because "*they are such enemies to America.*" So it is throughout, in every line she writes, in every word she utters; and thus was she, unconsciously, receiving that training which in the end was to fit her for an American patriot's wife.

Onward, however, step by step, the Monarch and his Ministry – he, if possible, more infatuated than they – advanced in the career of tyrannical folly. Remonstrance was vain. They could not be persuaded that it would ever become resistance. In 1769 and 1770, the crisis was almost reached. Five years of folly had done it all. In the former of these years, the lovers were reunited, Mr. Reed returning on an uncertain visit to England. He found everything, but her faithful affection, changed. Political disturbance had had its usual train of commercial disaster; and Mr. De Berdt had not only become bankrupt, but unable to rally on such a reverse in old age, had sunk into his grave. All was ruin and confusion; and on the 31st of May, 1770, Esther De Berdt became an American wife, the wedding being privately solemnized at St. Luke's Church, in the city of London.

In October, the young couple sailed for America, arriving at Philadelphia in November, 1770. Mr. Reed immediately



changed his residence from Trenton to Philadelphia, where he continued to live. Mrs. Reed's correspondence with her brother and friends in England, during the next five years, has not been preserved. It would have been interesting, as showing the impressions made on an intelligent mind by the primitive state of society and modes of life in these wild Colonies, some eighty years ago, when Philadelphia was but a large village – when the best people lived in Front street, or on the water side, and an Indian frontier was within an hundred miles of the Schuylkill. They are, however, all lost. The influence of Mrs. Reed's foreign connection can be traced only in the interesting correspondence between her husband and Lord Dartmouth, during the years 1774 and 1775, which has been recently given to the public, and which narrates, in the most genuine and trustworthy form, the progress of colonial discontent in the period immediately anterior to actual revolution. In all the initiatory measures of peaceful resistance, Mr. Reed, as is well known, took a large and active share; and in all he did, he had his young wife's ardent sympathy. The English girl had grown at once into the American matron.

Philadelphia was then the heart of the nation. It beat generously and boldly when the news of Lexington and Bunker Hill startled the whole land. Volunteer troops were raised – money in large sums was remitted, much through Mr. Reed's direct agency, for the relief of the sufferers in New England. At last, a new and controlling incident here occurred. It was in

Philadelphia that, walking in the State House yard, John Adams first suggested Washington as the National commander-in-chief; and from Philadelphia that in June, 1775, Washington set out, accompanied by the best citizens of the liberal party, to enter on his duties.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *As this memoir was in preparation, the writer's eye was attracted by a notice of the Philadelphia obsequies of John Q. Adams, in March, 1848. It is from the New York Courier and Enquirer: "That part of the ceremonial which was most striking, more impressive than anything I have ever seen, was the approach through the old State House yard to Independence Hall. I have stood by Napoleon's dramatic mausoleum in the Invalides, and mused over the more simple tomb of Nelson, lying by the side of Collingwood, in the crypt of St. Paul's; but, no impression was made like that of yesterday. The multitude – for the crowd had grown into one – being strictly excluded from the square, filled the surrounding streets and houses, and gazed silently on the simple ceremonial before them. It was sunset, or nearly so – a calm, bright spring evening. There was no cheering, no disturbance, no display of banners, no rude sound of drum. The old trees were leafless; and no one's free vision was disappointed. The funeral escort proper, consisting of the clergy, comprising representatives of nearly all denominations, the committee of Congress, and the city authorities – in all, not exceeding a hundred, with the body and pall bearers, alone were admitted. They walked slowly up the middle path from the south gate, no sound being heard at the point from which I saw it, but the distant and gentle music of one military band near the Hall, and the deep tones of our ancient bell that rang when Independence was proclaimed. The military escort, the company of Washington Greys, whose duty it was to guard the body during the night, presented arms as the coffin went by; and as the procession approached the Hall, the clergy, and all others uncovered themselves, and, if awed by the genius of the place, approached reverently and solemnly. This simple and natural act of respect, or rather reverence, was most touching. It was a thing never to be forgotten. This part of the ceremonial was what I should like a foreigner to see. It was genuine and simple." And throughout, remember, illusion had nothing to do with it. These were simple, actual realities, that thus stirred the heart. It was no empty memorial coffin; but here were the actual honored remains of one who was part of our history – the present, the recent, and remote past. And who could avoid thinking, if any spark of consciousness remained in*

Mr. Reed accompanied him, as his family supposed, and as he probably intended, only as part of an escort, for a short distance. From New York he wrote to his wife that, yielding to the General's solicitations, he had become a soldier, and joined the staff as Aid, and Military Secretary. The young mother – for she was then watching by the cradle of two infant children – neither repined nor murmured. She knew that it was no restless freak, or transient appetite for excitement, that took away her husband; for no one was more conscious than she, how dear his cheerful home was, and what sweet companionship there was in the mother and her babes. It was not difficult to be satisfied that a high sense of duty was his controlling influence, and that hers it was "to love and be silent."

At Philadelphia she remained during Mr. Reed's first tour of duty at Cambridge; and afterwards, in 1776, when being appointed Adjutant-General, he rejoined the army at New York. In the summer of that year, she took her little family to Burlington; and in the winter, on the approach of the British invading forces, took deeper refuge at a little farmhouse near Evesham, and at no great distance from the edge of the Pines.

We, contented citizens of a peaceful land, can form little conception of the horrors and desolation of those ancient

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*the old man's heart, it might have brightened as he was borne along by the best men of Philadelphia, on this classic path, in the shadow of this building, and to the sound of this bell. The last of the days of Washington was going by, and it was traversing the very spot, where, seventy years ago, John Adams had first suggested Washington as Commander-in-chief of the army of the Revolution. It reposed last night in Independence Hall."*

times of trial. The terrors of invasion are things which nowadays imagination can scarcely compass. But then, it was rugged reality. The unbridled passions of a mercenary soldiery, compounded not only of the brutal element that forms the vigor of every army, but of the ferocity of Hessians, hired and paid for violence and rapine, were let loose on the land. The German troops, as if to inspire especial terror, were sent in advance, and occupied, in December, 1776, a chain of posts extending from Trenton to Mount Holly, Rhall commanding at the first, and Donop at the other. General Howe, and his main army, were rapidly advancing by the great route to the Delaware. On the other hand, the river was filled with American gondolas, whose crews, landing from time to time on the Jersey shore, by their lawlessness, and threats of retaliation, kept the pacific inhabitants in continual alarm. The American army, if it deserved the name, was literally scattered along the right bank of the Delaware; Mr. Reed being with a small detachment of Philadelphia volunteers, under Cadwalader, at Bristol.

Family tradition has described the anxious hours passed by the sorrowing group at Evesham. It consisted of Mrs. Reed, who had recently been confined, and was in feeble health, her three children, an aged mother, and a female friend, also a soldier's wife: the only male attendant being a boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age. If the enemy were to make a sudden advance, they would be entirely cut off from the ordinary avenues of escape; and precautions were taken to avoid this risk. The wagon

was ready, to be driven by the boy we have spoken of, and the plan was matured, if they failed to get over the river at Dunk's or Cooper's Ferry, to cross lower down, near Salem, and push on to the westward settlements. The wives and children of American patriot-soldiers thought themselves safer on the perilous edge of an Indian wilderness, than in the neighborhood of the soldiers who, commanded by noblemen – by "men of honor and cavaliers," for such, according to all heraldry, were the Howes and Cornwallises, the Percies and Rawdons of that day – were sent by a gracious monarch to lay waste this land. The English campaigning of our Revolution – and no part of it more so than this – is the darkest among the dark stains that disfigure the history of the eighteenth century; and if ever there be a ground for hereditary animosity, we have it in the fresh record of the outrages which the military arm of Great Britain committed on this soil. The transplanted sentimentalism which nowadays calls George III. a wise and great monarch, is absolute treason to America. There was in the one Colony of New Jersey, and in a single year, blood enough shed, and misery enough produced, to outweigh all the spurious merits which his admirers can pretend to claim. And let such for ever be the judgment of American history.

It is worth a moment's meditation to pause and think of the sharp contrasts in our heroine's life. The short interval of less than six years had changed her not merely to womanhood, but to womanhood with extraordinary trials. Her youth was passed

in scenes of peaceful prosperity, with no greater anxiety than for a distant lover, and with all the comforts which independence and social position could supply. She had crossed the ocean a bride, content to follow the fortunes of her young husband, though she little dreamed what they were to be. She had become a mother; and, while watching by the cradle of her infants, had seen her household broken up by war in its worst form – the internecine conflict of brothers in arms against each other – her husband called away to scenes of bloody peril, and forced, herself, to seek uncertain refuge in a wilderness. She too, let it be remembered, was a native-born Englishwoman, with all the loyal sentiments that beat by instinct in an Englishwoman's heart – reverence for the throne, the monarch, and for all the complex institutions which hedge that mysterious oracular thing called the British Constitution. "God save the king," was neither then, nor is it now, a formal prayer on the lips of a British maiden. Coming to America, all this was changed. Loyalty was a badge of crime. The king's friends were her husband's, and her new country's worst enemies. That which, in the parks of London, or at the Horse-Guards, she had admired as the holiday pageantry of war, had become the fearful apparatus of savage hostility. She, an Englishwoman, was a fugitive from the brutality of English soldiers. Her destiny, her fortunes, and more than all, her thoughts, and hopes, and wishes, were changed; and happy was it for her husband that they were changed completely and thoroughly, and that her faith to household loyalty was exclusive.

Hers it was, renouncing all other allegiance —

"In war or peace, in sickness, or in health,  
In trouble and in danger, and distress, '  
Through time and through eternity, to love."

"I have received," she writes, in June, 1777, to her husband, "both my friend's letters. They have contributed to raise my spirits, which, though low enough, are better than when you parted with me. The reflection how much I pain you by my want of resolution and the double distress I occasion you, when I ought to make your duty as light as possible, would tend to depress my spirits, did I not consider that the best and only amends is, to endeavor to resume my cheerfulness, and regain my usual spirits. I wish you to know, my dearest friend, that I have done this as much as possible, and beg you to free your mind from every care on this head."

But to return to the narrative — interrupted, naturally, by thoughts like these. The reverses which the British army met at Trenton and Princeton, with the details of which every one is presumed to be familiar, saved that part of New Jersey where Mrs. Reed and her family resided, from further danger; and on the retreat of the enemy, and the consequent relief of Philadelphia from further alarm, she returned to her home. She returned there with pride as well as contentment; for her husband, inexperienced soldier as he was, had earned military fame of no slight eminence. He had been in nearly every action, and

always distinguished. Washington had, on all occasions, and at last in an especial manner, peculiarly honored him. The patriots of Philadelphia hailed him back among them; and the wife's smile of welcome was not less bright because she looked with pride upon her husband.

Brief, however, was the new period of repose. The English generals, deeply mortified at their discomfiture in New Jersey, resolved on a new and more elaborate attempt on Philadelphia; and in July, 1777, set sail with the most complete equipment they had yet been able to prepare, for the capes of the Chesapeake. On the landing of the British army at the head of Elk, and during the military movements that followed, Mrs. Reed was at Norristown, and there remained, her husband having again joined the army, till after the battle of Brandywine, when she and her children were removed first to Burlington, and thence to Flemington. Mr. Reed's hurried letters show the imminent danger that even women and children ran in those days of confusion. "It is quite uncertain," he writes on 14th September, 1777, "which way the progress of the British army may point. Upon their usual plan of movement, they will cross, or endeavor to cross, the Schuylkill, somewhere near my house; in which case I shall be very dangerously situated. If you could possibly spare Cato, with your light wagon, to be with me to assist in getting off if there should be necessity, I shall be very glad. I have but few things beside the women and children; but yet, upon a push, one wagon and two horses would be too little." Mrs. Reed's letters show



her agonized condition, alarmed as she was, at the continual and peculiar risk her husband was running. A little later (in February, 1778), Mrs. Reed says, in writing to a dear female friend: "This season which used to be so long and tedious, has, to me, been swift, and no sooner come than nearly gone. Not from the pleasures it has brought, but the fears of what is to come; and, indeed, on many accounts, winter has become the only season of peace and safety. Returning spring will, I fear, bring a return of bloodshed and destruction to our country. That it must do so to this part of it, seems unavoidable; and how much of the distress we may feel before we are able to move from it, I am unable to say. I sometimes fear a great deal. It has already become too dangerous for Mr. Reed to be at home more than one day at a time, and that seldom and uncertain. Indeed, I am easiest when he is from home, as his being here brings danger with it. There are so many disaffected to the cause of their country, that they lie in wait for those who are active; but I trust that the same kind presiding Power which has preserved him from the hands of his enemies, will still do it."

Nor were her fears unreasonable. The neighborhood of Philadelphia, after it fell into the hands of the enemy, was infested by gangs of armed loyalists, who threatened the safety of every patriot whom they encountered. Tempted by the hard money which the British promised them, they dared any danger, and were willing to commit any enormity. It was these very ruffians, and their wily abettors, for whom afterwards so much

false sympathy was invoked. Mr. Reed and his family, though much exposed, happily escaped these dangers.

During the military operations of the Autumn of 1777, Mr. Reed was again attached as a volunteer to Washington's staff, and during the winter that followed – the worst that America's soldiers saw – he was at, or in the immediate neighborhood, of Valley Forge, as one of a committee of Congress, of which body he had some time before been chosen a member. Mrs. Reed with her mother and her little family took refuge at Flemington, in the upper part of New Jersey. She remained there till after the evacuation of Philadelphia and the battle of Monmouth, in June, 1778.

While thus separated from her husband, and residing at Flemington, new domestic misfortune fell on her, in the death of one of her children by smallpox. How like an affectionate heart-stricken mother is the following passage, from a letter written at that time. Though it has no peculiar beauty of style, there is a touching genuineness which every reader – at least those who know a mother's heart under such affliction – will appreciate.

"Surely," says she, "my affliction has had its aggravation, and I cannot help reflecting on my neglect of my dear lost child. For thoughtful and attentive to my own situation, I did not take the necessary precaution to prevent that fatal disorder when it was in my power. Surely I ought to take blame to myself. I would not do it to aggravate my sorrow, but to learn a lesson of humility, and more caution and prudence in future. Would to God I could

learn every lesson intended by the stroke. I think sometimes of my loss with composure, acknowledging the wisdom, right, and even the kindness of the dispensation. Again I feel it overcome me, and strike the very bottom of my heart, and tell me *the work is not yet finished.*"

Nor was it finished, though in a sense different from what she apprehended. Her children were spared, but her own short span of life was nearly run. Trial and perplexity and separation from home and husband were doing their work. Mrs. Reed returned to Philadelphia, the seat of actual warfare being forever removed, to apparent comfort and high social position. In the fall of 1778, Mr. Reed was elected President, or in the language of our day, Governor of Pennsylvania. His administration, its difficulties and ultimate success belong to the history of the country, and have been elsewhere illustrated. It was from first to last a period of intense political excitement, and Mr. Reed was the high target at which the sharp and venomous shafts of party virulence were chiefly shot.

The suppressed poison of loyalism mingled with the ferocity of ordinary political animosity, and the scene was in every respect discreditable to all concerned. Slander of every sort was freely propagated. Personal violence was threatened. Gentlemen went armed in the streets of Philadelphia. Folly on one hand and fanaticism on the other, put in jeopardy the lives of many distinguished citizens, in October, 1779, and Mr. Reed by his energy and discretion saved them. There is extant a letter from

his wife, written to a friend, on the day of what is well known in Philadelphia, as the Fort Wilson riot, dated at Germantown, which shows her fears for her husband's safety were not less reasonable, when he was exposed to the fury of an excited populace, than to the legitimate hostility of an enemy on the field of battle:

"Dear Sir: – I would not take a moment of your time to tell you the distress and anxiety I feel, but only to beg you to let me know in what state things are, and what is likely to be the consequence. I write not to Mr. Reed because I know he is not in a situation to attend to me. I conjure you by the friendship you have for Mr. Reed, don't leave him. – E. R."

And throughout this scene of varied perplexity, when the heart of the statesman was oppressed by trouble without – disappointment, ingratitude – all that makes a politician's life so wretched, he was sure to find his home happy, his wife smiling and contented, with no visible sorrow to impair her welcome, and no murmur to break the melody of domestic joy. It sustained him to the end. This was humble, homely heroism, but it did its good work in cheering and sustaining a spirit that might otherwise have broken. Let those disparage it who have never had the solace which such companionship affords, or who never have known the bitter sorrow of its loss.

In May, 1780, Mrs. Reed's youngest son was born. It was of him, that Washington, a month later wrote, "I warmly thank you for calling the young Christian by my name," and

it was he who more than thirty years afterwards, died in the service of his country,<sup>5</sup> not less gloriously because his was not a death of triumph. It was in the fall of this year, that the ladies of Philadelphia united in their remarkable and generous contribution for the relief of the suffering soldiers, by supplying them with clothing. Mrs. Reed was placed, by their united suffrage, at the head of this association. The French Secretary of Legation, M. de Marbois, in a letter that has been published, tells her she is called to the office as "the best patriot, the most zealous and active, and the most attached to the interests of her country."

Notwithstanding the feeble state of her health, Mrs. Reed entered upon her duties with great animation. The work was congenial to her feelings. It was charity in its genuine form and from its purest source – the voluntary outpouring from the heart. It was not stimulated by the excitements of our day – neither fancy fairs, nor bazaars; but the American women met, and seeing the necessity that asked interposition, relieved it. They solicited money and other contributions directly, and for a precise and avowed object. They labored with their needles and sacrificed their trinkets and jewelry. The result was very remarkable. The aggregate amount of contributions in the City and County of Philadelphia, was not less than 7,500 dollars, specie; much of it, too, paid in hard money, at a time of

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<sup>5</sup> *George Washington Reed, a Commander in the U. S. Navy, died a prisoner of war in Jamaica, in 1813. He refused a parole, because unwilling to leave his crew in a pestilential climate; and himself perished.*

the greatest appreciation. "All ranks of society," says President Reed's biographer, "seem to have joined in the liberal effort, from Phillis, the colored woman, with her humble seven shillings and six pence, to the Marchioness de La Fayette, who contributed one hundred guineas in specie, and the Countess de Luzerne, who gave six thousand dollars in continental paper." La Fayette's gentlemanly letter to Mrs. Reed is worth preserving.

Head Quarters, June the 25th, 1780.

Madam,

In admiring the new resolution, in which the fair ones of Philadelphia have taken the lead, I am induced to feel for those American ladies, who being out of the Continent cannot participate in this patriotic measure. I know of one who, heartily wishing for a personal acquaintance with the ladies of America, would feel particularly happy to be admitted among them on the present occasion. Without presuming to break in upon the rules of your respected association, may I most humbly present myself as her ambassador to the confederate ladies, and solicit in her name that Mrs. President be pleased to accept of her offering.

With the highest respect, I have the honor to be,

Madam, your most obedient servant,

La Fayette.

Mrs. Reed's correspondence with the Commander-in-chief on the subject of the mode of administering relief to the poor soldiers, has been already published,<sup>6</sup> and is very creditable to

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<sup>6</sup> *Life and Correspondence of President Reed.*

both parties. Her letters are marked by business-like intelligence and sound feminine common sense, on subjects of which as a secluded woman she could have personally no previous knowledge, and Washington, as has been truly observed, "writes as judiciously on the humble topic of soldier's shirts, as on the plan of a campaign or the subsistence of an army."

All this time, it must be borne in mind, it was a feeble, delicate woman, who was thus writing and laboring, her husband again away from her with the army, and her family cares and anxieties daily multiplying. She writes from her country residence on the banks of Schuylkill, as late as the 22nd. of August, 1780: "I am most anxious to get to town, because here I can do little for the soldiers." But the body and the heroic spirit were alike overtaken, and in the early part of the next month, alarming disease developed itself, and soon ran its fatal course. On the 18th of September, 1780 – her aged mother, her husband and little children, the oldest ten years old, mourning around her – she breathed her last at the early age of thirty-four. There was deep and honest sorrow in Philadelphia, when the news was circulated that Mrs. Reed was dead. It stilled for a moment the violence of party spirit. All classes united in a hearty tribute to her memory.

Nor is it inappropriate in closing this brief memoir, to notice a coincidence in local history; a contrast in the career and fate of two women of these times, which is strongly picturesque.

It was on the 25th of September, 1780, seven days after Mrs. Reed was carried to her honored grave, and followed thither by

crowds of her own and her husband's friends, that the wife of Benedict Arnold, a native born Philadelphia woman, was stunned by the news of her husband's detected treachery and dishonor. Let those who doubt the paramount duty of every man and every woman, too, to their country, and the sure destiny of all who are false to it, meditate on this contrast. Mrs. Arnold had been a leader of what is called fashion, in her native city, belonging to the spurious aristocracy of a provincial town – a woman of beauty and accomplishment and rank. Her connections were all thorough and sincere loyalists, and Arnold had won his way into a circle generally exclusive and intolerant by his known disaffection, and especially his insolent opposition to the local authorities, and to Mr. Reed as the chief executive magistrate. The aristocratic beauty smiled kindly on a lover who felt the same antipathies she had been taught to cherish. While Mrs. Reed and her friends were toiling to relieve the wants of the suffering soldiers – in June, July and August, 1780, Mrs. Arnold was communing with her husband, not in plans of treason, but in all his hatreds and discontents. He probably did not trust her with the whole of the perilous stuff that was fermenting in his heart; for it was neither necessary nor safe to do so. But he knew her nature and habits of thought well enough to be sure that if success crowned his plan of treason, and if honors and rewards were earned, his wife would not frown, or reject them because they had been won by treachery. And he played his game out, boldly, resolutely, confidently. The patriot woman of Philadelphia sank



into her grave, honored and lamented by those among whom so recently she had come a stranger. Her tomb, alongside of that of her husband, still stands on the soil of her country. The fugitive wife of an American traitor fled forever from her home and native soil, and died abroad unnoticed, and by her husband's crime dishonored. She was lost in a traitor's ignominy. Such was then and such ever will be, the fate of all who betray a public and a patriot trust.

### III. CATHARINE SCHUYLER

The name of Philip Schuyler adds another to the list of distinguished men indebted largely to maternal guidance. To his mother, a woman of strong and cultivated mind, he owed his early education and habits of business, with that steadfast integrity, which never faltered nor forsook him. His wife – the beloved companion of his maturer years – cherished his social virtues and added lustre to his fame. Those who shared his generous hospitality, or felt the charm of his polished manners, were ready to testify to the excellence of her whose gentle influence was always apparent. A brief notice of her is all that can here be offered.

Catharine Schuyler was the only daughter of John Van Rensselaer, called Patroon of Greenbush, a patriot in the Revolutionary struggle, and noted for his hospitality, and for his kindness and forbearance towards the tenants of his vast estates during the war. It cannot be doubted that the recent anti-rent struggles, which have almost convulsed the State of New York, can be traced to the amiable but injudicious indulgence of this great landholder and his immediate heirs.

The qualities which in some cases shone in remarkable acts, were constantly exercised by Mrs. Schuyler in the domestic sphere. At the head of a large family, her management was so perfect that the regularity with which all went on appeared

spontaneous. Her life was devoted to the care of her children; yet her friendships were warm and constant, and she found time for dispensing charities to the poor. Many families in poverty remember with gratitude the aid received from her; sometimes in the shape of a milch cow, or other article of use. She possessed great self-control, and as a mistress of a household, her prudence was blended with unvarying kindness. Her chief pleasure was in diffusing happiness in her home.

The house in which the family resided, near Albany, was built by Mrs. Schuyler, while her husband was in England, in 1760 and 1761. It had, probably, been commenced previously. The ancient family mansion, large and highly ornamented in the Dutch taste, stood on the corner of State and Washington streets, in the city. It was taken down about the year 1800. It was a place of resort for British officers and travellers of note in the French war. Fourteen French gentlemen, some of them officers who had been captured in 1758, were here entertained as prisoners on parole. They found it most agreeable to be in Schuyler's house, as he could converse with them in French; and his kindness made them friends. In 1801, when Mrs. Schuyler and some of her family visited Montreal and Quebec, they were received with grateful attention by the descendants of those gentlemen.

Near Saratoga, the scene of General Schuyler's triumph, he had an elegant country-seat, which was destroyed by General Burgoyne. It was one of the most picturesque incidents of the war, that the captive British general with his suite, should be

received and entertained, after the surrender at Saratoga, by those whose property he had wantonly laid waste. The courtesy and kindness shown by General and Mrs. Schuyler to the late enemy, and their generous forgetfulness of their own losses, were sensibly felt and acknowledged. Madame de Riedesel says their reception was not like that of enemies, but of intimate friends. "All their actions proved, that at sight of the misfortunes of others, they quickly forgot their own." This delicacy and generosity drew from Burgoyne the observation to General Schuyler, "You are too kind to me, who have done so much injury to you." The reply was characteristic of the noble-hearted victor: "Such is the fate of war; let us not dwell on the subject."

The Marquis de Chastellux mentions, that just previous to this visit, General Schuyler being detained at Saratoga, where he had seen the ruins of his beautiful villa, wrote thence to his wife to make every preparation for giving the best reception to Burgoyne and his suite. "The British commander was well received by Mrs. Schuyler, and lodged in the best apartment in the house. An excellent supper was served him in the evening, the honors of which were done with so much grace, that he was affected even to tears, and said, with a deep sigh, 'Indeed, this is doing too much for the man who has ravaged their lands, and burned their dwellings.' The next morning he was reminded of his misfortunes by an incident that would have amused any one else. His bed was prepared in a large room; but as he had a numerous suite, or family, several mattresses were spread on

the floor for some officers to sleep near him. Schuyler's second son, a little fellow about seven years old, very arch and forward, but very amiable, was running all the morning about the house. Opening the door of the saloon, he burst out a laughing on seeing all the English collected, and shut it after him, exclaiming, 'You are all my prisoners!' This innocent cruelty rendered them more melancholy than before."

Thus were even the miseries of war softened by Mrs. Schuyler's graceful courtesy; while the military renown won by her husband's illustrious services, was associated with remembrances of disinterested kindness bestowed in requital for injury. In reverse, her resolution and courage had been proved equal to the emergency. When the continental army was retreating from Fort Edward before Burgoyne, Mrs. Schuyler went up herself, in her chariot from Albany to Saratoga, to see to the removal of her furniture. While there, she received directions from the General, to set fire, with her own hand, to his extensive fields of wheat, and to request his tenants, and others, to do the same, rather than suffer them to be reaped by the enemy. The injunction shows the soldier's confidence in her spirit, firmness, and patriotism.

Many of the women of this family appear to have been remarkable for strong intellect and clear judgment. The Mrs. Schuyler described in Mrs. Grant's memoirs, was a venerated relative of the General. He lost his admirable wife in 1803. Her departure left his last years desolate, and saddened many

hearts in which yet lives the memory of her bright virtues. One of her daughters, Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, now resides in Washington, D. C., and another at Oswego.

## IV. CATHARINE GREENE

Catharine Littlefield, the eldest daughter of John Littlefield and Phebe Ray, was born in New Shore-ham, on Block Island, 1753. When very young, she came with her sister to reside in the family of Governor Greene, of Warwick, a lineal descendant of the founder of the family, whose wife was her aunt. The house in which they lived, twelve or fourteen miles south of Providence, is still standing. It is situated on a hill, which commands a view of the whole of Narragansett Bay, with its islands. Mount Hope, associated with King Philip, and the Indian traditions, fills the background, rising slightly above the line of the horizon. It was here that Miss Littlefield's happy girlhood was passed; and it was here also that she first knew Nathanael Greene. She often went on a visit to her family at Block Island. Nathanael would come there to see her; and the time was spent by the young people in amusements, particularly in riding and dancing, of which the future general was remarkably fond, notwithstanding his father's efforts to whip out of him such idle propensities. He was not discouraged by the example of his fair companion from any of these outbreaks of youthful gaiety; for the tradition of the country around, and the recollections of all who knew her, testify that there never lived a more joyous, frolicsome creature than "Kate Littlefield." In person, she was singularly lovely. Her figure was of the medium height, and light and graceful at this

period, though in after years she was inclined to *embonpoint*. Her eyes were gray, and her complexion fair; her features regular and animated. The facilities for female education being very limited at that period, Miss Littlefield enjoyed few advantages of early cultivation. She was not particularly fond of study, though she read the books that came in her way, and profited by what she read. She possessed, moreover, a marvellous quickness of perception, and the faculty of comprehending a subject with surprising readiness. Thus in conversation, she seemed to appreciate every thing said on almost any topic; and frequently would astonish others by the ease with which her mind took hold of the ideas presented. She was at all times an intelligent listener. On one occasion, when the conversation turned on botany, she looked over the books and collection of a Swedish botanist, making remarks from time to time which much interested him, and showed her an observer of no common intelligence. This extraordinary activity of mind, and tact in seizing on points, so as to apprehend almost intuitively, distinguished her through life. It enabled her, without apparent mental effort, to apply the instruction conveyed in the books she read, to the practical affairs of life, and to enrich her varied conversation with the knowledge gained from them, and her observation of the world. This power of rendering available her intellectual stores, combined with a retentive memory, a lively imagination, and great fluency in speech, rendered her one of the most brilliant and entertaining of women. When to these gifts was added the charm of rare beauty,



it cannot excite wonder that the possessor of such attractions should fascinate all who approached her.

How, when, or by what course of wooing, the youthful lover won the bright, volatile, coquettish maiden, cannot be ascertained; but it is probable their attachment grew in the approving eyes of their relatives, and met with no obstacle till sealed by the matrimonial vow. The marriage took place July 20th, 1774, and the young couple removed to Coventry. Little, it is likely, did the fair Catharine dream of her future destiny as a soldier's wife; or that the broad-brimmed hat of her young husband covered brows that should one day be wreathed with the living laurels won by genius and patriotism. We have no means of knowing with how much interest she watched the over-clouding of the political horizon, or the dire advance of the necessity that drove the Colonies to armed resistance. But when her husband's decision was made, and he stood forth a determined patriot, separating himself from the community in which he had been born and reared, by embracing a military profession, his spirited wife did her part to aid and encourage him. The papers of the day frequently notice her presence, among other ladies, at headquarters. Like Mrs. Washington, she passed the active season of the campaign at home. Hers was a new establishment at Coventry, a village in Rhode Island, where her husband had erected a forge, and built himself what then passed for a princely house on the banks of one of those small streams which form so beautiful a feature in Rhode Island scenery. When the army

before Boston was inoculated for the smallpox, she gave up her house for a hospital. She was there during the attack on Rhode Island; and every cannon on the hard fought day which closed that memorable enterprise, must have awakened the echoes of those quiet hills. When the army went into winter quarters, she always set out to rejoin her husband, sharing cheerfully the narrow quarters and hard fare of a camp. She partook of the privations of the dreary winter at Valley Forge, in that "darkest hour of the Revolution;" and it appears that, as at home, her gay spirit shed light around her even in such scenes, softening and enlivening the gloom which might have weighed many a bold heart into despondency. There are extant some interesting little notes of Kosciusko, in very imperfect English, Which show her kindness to her husband's friends, and the pleasure she took in alleviating their sufferings.

How much her society was prized by General Greene, and how impatiently he bore separation from her, may be seen in his letters.<sup>7</sup> When about to start for the South, in October, 1780, he waits for her arrival to join him, expecting she will overtake him at camp, or in Philadelphia; and expresses the greatest anxiety that she should avoid the dangerous route by Peekskill. His fears for her safety at last impel him to request her not to encounter the risk. Mr. Hughes, who knows the feelings of the anxious wife,

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<sup>7</sup> *The letters quoted or referred to in this sketch are from the MS. correspondence of General Greene, in the possession of his grandson, Prof. George W. Greene, of Providence, R. I., late Consul at Rome.*

detains the letters: and afterwards, confessing the unwarrantable liberty – for which he "deserved to appear before a court-martial" – says: "But if I do, I will plead Mrs. General Greene." Again he writes: "Give me leave to say that your lady, if possible, without injury to herself, must see you. My God! she will suffer a thousand times as much by a disappointment, as she can by going ten times the distance!"

Notwithstanding her ardent wish to accompany the General, it seems that Mrs. Greene was prevented from doing so. Mrs. Washington writes to her from Mount Vernon, to say that General Greene was well, and had spent the evening at Mount Vernon, on his way to Richmond. General Weedon, in a letter to her, announces that the General had stopped for the night at his house in Richmond; and invites Mrs. Greene, if she should come as far as Virginia, to quarter under his roof. A letter from the Commander-in-chief, written from New Windsor on the 15th of December, encloses Mrs. Greene a letter from her husband, and offers to forward hers.

"Mrs. Washington," he says, "who is just arrived at these my quarters, joins me in most cordial wishes for your every felicity, and regrets the want of your company. Remember me to my namesake. Nat, I suppose, can handle a musket."

The "namesake" alluded to, was the eldest son, who was afterwards drowned in the Savannah River. His mother never recovered her spirits after this shock.

Mrs. Greene joined her husband in the South after the close of

the active campaign of 1781, and remained with him till the end of the war, residing on the islands during the heats of summer, and the rest of the time at head-quarters. In the spring of 1783, she returned to the North where she remained till the General had completed his arrangements for removing to the South. They then established themselves at Mulberry Grove, on a plantation which had been presented to Greene by the State of Georgia.

Mrs. Greene's first impressions of southern life and manners are painted in lively colors in her letters to northern friends. The following passage is from one to Miss Flagg:

"If you expect to be an inhabitant of this country, you must not think to sit down with your netting pins; but on the contrary, employ half your time at the toilet, one quarter to paying and receiving visits; the other quarter to scolding servants, with a hard thump every now and then over the head; or singing, dancing, reading, writing, or saying your prayers. The latter is here quite a phenomenon; but you need not tell how you employ your time."

The letters of General Greene to his wife breathe the most entire confidence and affection. His respect for her judgment and good sense is shown in the freedom with which he expresses his thoughts and unfolds his hopes and plans. He evidently looked to her for support and sympathy in all his cares and troubles. His lighter hours, even in absence, were shared with her. Sometimes his youthful gaiety breaks forth in his descriptions of adventures and persons encountered in his travels. And regard for his interests was plainly above every other thought in the mind

of his wife. After his death, she writes to Mr. Wadsworth, his executor, September 19th, 1788, "I consider – , – , – , debts of honor, and would starve, rather than they should not be paid." – "I am a woman – unaccustomed to anything but the trifling business of a family; yet my exertions may effect something. If they do not, and if I [sacrifice] my life in the cause of my children, I shall but do my duty, and follow the example of my illustrious husband."

It was while on a visit to Savannah with his wife, that General Greene was seized with the disease which in a few days closed his brilliant career. They were then preparing to return and pass the summer at the North. The weight of care that fell on Mrs. Greene in consequence of this event, would have crushed an ordinary mind; but she struggled nobly through it all. Some years afterwards, thinking that some lands she owned on Cumberland Island offered greater advantages than Mulberry Grove, she removed there with her family; dividing her time between her household duties and the cares of an extensive hospitality; occasionally visiting the North in the summer, but continuing to look upon the south as her home. It was while she lived at Mulberry Grove, that she became instrumental in introducing to the world an invention which has covered with wealth the fields of the South.

Late in 1792, her sympathies were enlisted in behalf of a young man, a native of Massachusetts, who having come to Georgia to take the place of private teacher in a gentleman's

family, had been disappointed in obtaining the situation, and found himself without friends or resources in a strange land. Mrs. Greene and her family treated him with great kindness. He was invited to make his home in her house while he pursued the study of the law, to which he had determined to devote himself. According to the account of some, his attention was attracted to the cotton plant growing in the garden, and to Mr. Miller's observation that cotton of that sort could be cultivated as a staple, provided some method could be found of cleaning it from the seed. According to others, a party of gentlemen on a visit to the family, spoke of the want of an effective machine for separating the cotton from the seed, without which, it was allowed, there could be no profitable cultivation of this more productive species. Mrs. Greene spoke of the mechanical genius of her young protégé; introduced him to the company, and showed little specimens of his skill, in tambour frames and articles for the children. Eli Whitney, for that was the name of the young student, was strongly impressed with the conversation. He examined the cotton, and communicated his plans to Mrs. Greene and Mr. Miller, who gave him warm encouragement. A basement room, into which no one else was admitted, was appropriated for his work. He labored day after day, making the necessary tools; and persevering with unwearied industry. By spring the *cotton gin* was completed, and exhibited to the wonder and delight of planters invited from different parts of Georgia to witness its successful operation.

Mr. Phineas Miller entered into an agreement with Whitney, to bear the expense of maturing the invention, and to divide the future profits. He was a man of remarkably active and cultivated mind. Mrs. Greene married him some time after the death of General Greene. She survived him several years – dying just before the close of the late war with England. Her remains rest in the family burial-ground at Cumberland Island, where but a few years afterwards, the body of one of her husband's best officers and warmest friends – the gallant Lee – was brought to moulder by her side. She left four children by her first marriage – three daughters and one son – of whom the son and second daughter are still living.

Mrs. Miller related to a lady residing in New York, the incident of Colonel Aaron Burr's requesting permission to stop at her house, when he came South, after his fatal duel with General Hamilton. She would not refuse the demand upon her hospitality, but his victim had been her friend; and she could not receive as a guest, one whose hands were crimsoned with his blood. She gave Burr permission to remain; but at the same time ordered her carriage, and quitted her house; returning as soon as he had taken his departure. This little anecdote is strongly illustrative of her impulsive and generous character. The lady who mentioned it to me had herself experienced, in time of the illness of one dear to her, Mrs. Miller's sympathy and active kindness; and described her manners as gentle, frank and winning. Her praise, were I at liberty to mention her name, would do the highest honor to its

object.

The descendants of Mrs. Greene regard her with affectionate reverence. She was a loved and honored wife, and a tender yet judicious mother. Her discipline was remarkably strict, and none of her children ever thought of disobeying her. Yet she would sometimes join with child-like merriment in their sports. A lady now living in Providence states, that one day, after the close of the war, passing General Greene's house in Newport, she saw both him and his wife playing "puss in the corner," with the children.

She loved a jest, and sometimes too, a hearty laugh upon her friends. On one occasion, while living at Newport after the close of the war, she disguised herself like an old beggar-woman, so effectually that she was not recognized even by her brother-in-law. In this dress she went round to the houses of her friends to ask charity – telling a piteous tale of losses and sufferings. At one house they were at the card-table; and one of her most intimate friends, as she ordered her off, desired the servant to look well as she went out and see that she did not steal something from the entry. At another, the master of the house was just sitting down to supper; and though an old acquaintance and a shrewd man, was not only deceived, but so moved by her story, that he gave her the loaf he was on the point of cutting for himself. When she had sufficiently amused herself with this practical test of her friends' charity, she took off her disguise, and indulged her merriment at their expense; reminding them that with the exception of the



loaf, she had been turned away without any experience of their liberality.

Mrs. Greene's power of fascination, described as absolutely irresistible, may be illustrated by a little anecdote. A lady, who is still living, had heard much of her, and resolved as young ladies sometimes will when they hear too much about a person – that she would not like her. One day she chanced to be on a visit at the late Colonel Ward's in New York, where she saw a lady – dressed completely in black, even to the head dress, which was drawn close under the throat – who from her seat on the sofa was holding the whole company in breathless attention to the lively anecdotes of the war, and the brilliant sketches of character, which she was drawing so skillfully and in a tone so winning, that it was impossible not to listen to her. Still the young girl's resolution was not shaken. She might be compelled to admire, but the liking depended on herself; and she took a seat at the opposite side of the room. How long she remained there she was never able to tell; but her first consciousness was of being seated on a stool at the old lady's feet, leaning upon her knee, and looking up in her face as confidingly as if she had been her own mother.

## V. MERCY WARREN

The name of Mercy Warren belongs to American history. In the influence she exercised, she was perhaps the most remarkable woman who lived at the Revolutionary period. She was the third child of Colonel James Otis, of Barnstable, in the old colony of Plymouth; and was born there, September 25th, 1728.<sup>8</sup> The Otis family came to the country in 1630 or 1640, and settled first in Hingham.

The youth of Miss Otis was passed in the retirement of her home, in a routine of domestic employments, and the duties devolving upon her as the eldest daughter in a family of high respectability. Her love of reading was early manifested; and such was her economy of time, that, never neglecting her domestic cares or the duties of hospitality, she found leisure not only to improve her mind by careful study, but for various works of female ingenuity. A card-table is preserved by one of her descendants in Quincy, as a monument of her taste and industry. The design was her own, the patterns being obtained by gathering and pressing flowers from the gardens and fields. These are copied in worsted work, and form one of the most curious and beautiful specimens to be found in the country.

At that period, the opportunities for female education were

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<sup>8</sup> *This date, with that of her death, is taken from the entries in the family Bible at Plymouth.*

extremely limited, but perhaps the more prized on that account. Miss Otis gained nothing from schools. Her only assistant, in the intellectual culture of her earlier years, was the Rev. Jonathan Russell, the minister of the parish, from whose library she was supplied with books, and by whose counsels her tastes were in a measure formed. It was from reading, in accordance with his advice, Raleigh's "History of the World," that her attention was particularly directed, to history, the branch of literature to which she afterwards devoted herself. In later years, her brother James, who was himself an excellent scholar, became her adviser and companion in literary pursuits. There existed between them a strong attachment, which nothing ever impaired. Even in the wildest moods of that insanity, with which, late in life the great patriot was afflicted, her voice had power to calm him, when all else was without effect.

These favorite employments of reading, drawing and needle work, formed the recreation of a quiet life, in the home which Miss Otis rarely quitted. A visit to Boston, at the time of her brother's graduation at Harvard College, in 1743, was the occasion of her first absence for any length of time.

When about twenty-six, she became the wife of James Warren, then a merchant of Plymouth, Massachusetts. In him she found a partner of congenial mind. Her new avocations and cares were not allowed to impair the love of literature which had been the delight of her youth. It was while residing occasionally for a few weeks with her husband and children on a farm a few

miles from the village, to which she gave the name of "Clifford," that most of her poetical productions were written. On the other hand, attached as she was to these pursuits, she never permitted them to interfere with household duties, or the attention of a devoted mother to her children. Her attainments fitted her to give them valuable instruction; and the lessons of her loving spirit of wisdom were not lost.

With this fondness for historical studies, and the companionship of such a brother and husband, it is not strange that the active and powerful intellect of Mrs. Warren should become engaged with interest in political affairs. These were now assuming an aspect that engrossed universal attention. Decision and action were called for on the part of those in-dined to one or the other side. How warmly Mrs. Warren espoused the cause of her country – how deeply her feelings were enlisted – appears in her letters. Her correspondence with the great spirits of that era, if published, would form a most valuable contribution to our historical literature. This rich correspondence has been preserved by her descendants; and affords the material for the present memoir. It includes letters, besides those from members of her own family, from Samuel and John Adams, Jefferson, Dickinson, Gerry, Knox and others. These men asked her opinion in political matters, and acknowledged the excellence of her judgment. Referring to some of her observations on the critical state of affairs after the war, General Knox writes: – "I should be happy, Madam, to receive your communications from

time to time, particularly on the subject enlarged on in this letter. Your sentiments shall remain with me." Mrs. Warren herself thus writes to Mr. Adams, before the meeting of the first Congress:

"Though you have condescended to ask my sentiments, in conjunction with those of a gentleman qualified both by his judgment and integrity, as well as his attachment to the interest of his country, to advise at this important crisis, yet I shall not be so presumptuous as to offer anything but my fervent wishes that the enemies of America may hereafter for ever tremble at the wisdom and firmness, the prudence and justice of the delegates deputed from our cities, as much as did the *Phocians* of old at the power of the *Amphyctions* of Greece. But if the *Locrians* should in time appear among you, I advise you to beware of choosing an ambitious Philip as your leader. Such a one might subvert the principles on which your institution is founded, abolish your order, and build up a *monarchy* on the ruins of the happy institution.<sup>9</sup>

Colonial difficulties, and the signs of the times, formed

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<sup>9</sup> Letter, July 14th, 1774. All the extracts from letters in this memoir, are from the manuscript correspondence of Mrs. Warren, in the possession of her daughter-in-law, who resides at Plymouth. This lady is herself a descendant of Governor Winslow, whose family inter-married with the Warrens in the fourth and sixth generations. One of the curiosities of her parlor is an easy chair belonging to Governor Winslow, which was brought over in the Mayflower. The iron staples are still attached, by which it was fastened to the cabin floor of the Pilgrim ship; and its present covering is the dress of white brocade richly embroidered, worn by Mercy Warren on the day after her marriage. Some of the ancient china also remains; several pieces one hundred and fifty years old, are of surpassing beauty.

subjects of communication continually between Mrs. Warren and her female friends. Mrs. Adams says to her, in 1773, "You, madam, are so sincere a lover of your country, and so hearty a mourner in all her misfortunes, that it will greatly aggravate your anxiety to hear how much she is now oppressed and insulted. To you, who have so thoroughly looked through the deeds of men, and developed the dark designs of a "Rapatio" soul, no action, however base or sordid, no measure, however cruel and villainous, will be matter of any surprise. The tea, that baneful weed, is arrived: great, and I hope effectual opposition, has been made to the landing."

The friendship that existed between these two gifted women was truly beautiful and touching. Commenced in early youth, it continued unchanged through the vicissitudes of a long and eventful life – unshaken by troubles, unchilled by cares, unalienated by misunderstanding. Their thoughts were communicated to each other with perfect freedom and openness; and they found in joy and sorrow, a solace, or an added pleasure, in each other's sympathy and affection. The sister of Abigail Adams, who married Mr. Shaw, was also warmly attached to Mrs. Warren.

The celebrated Mrs. Macauley was another of her favorite correspondents, though they were not personally acquainted till that lady's visit to New England. Mrs. Warren's letters to her describe the progress of the Revolutionary spirit. That written December 29th, 1774, speaks forcibly of the aspect of things:

"America stands armed with resolution and virtue; but she still recoils at the idea of drawing the sword against the nation from whence she derived her origin. Yet Britain, like an unnatural parent, is ready to plunge her dagger into the bosom of her affectionate offspring. But may we not yet hope for more lenient measures! You, madam, can easily delineate the characters of the new Parliament."

"The seeds of empire are sown in this new world: the ball rolls westward fast, and though we are daily threatened with the depredations of Britain with foreign auxiliaries, and the incursions of the savages, yet each city, from Nova Scotia to Georgia, has her Decii and her Fabii, ready to sacrifice their devoted lives to preserve inviolate, and to convey to their children the inherent rights of men, conferred on all by the God of nature, and the privileges of Englishmen claimed by Americans from the sacred sanction of compacts."

In the following year she writes:

"I hinted that the sword was half drawn from the scabbard. Since that it has been unsheathed... Almost every tongue is calling on the justice of heaven to punish or disperse the disturbers of the peace, liberty, and happiness of their country."

She says to John Adams:

"I have my fears. Yet, notwithstanding the complicated difficulties that rise before us, there is no receding; and I should blush if in any instance the weak passions of my sex should damp the fortitude, the patriotism, and the manly resolution of yours."

May nothing ever check that glorious spirit of freedom which inspires the patriot in the cabinet, and the hero in the field, with courage to maintain their righteous cause, and to endeavor to transmit the claim to posterity, even if they must seal the rich conveyance to their children with their own blood."<sup>10</sup>

"The desk, the pews, and other incumbrances are taken down in the Old South (a church long venerated in the town), to make it convenient for the accommodation of General Burgoyne's light horse; while the infamous Dr. Morrison, whose character I suppose you are acquainted with, reads prayers in the church in Brattle street to a set of banditti, who, after the rapines, robberies, and devastations of the week, dare – some of them – to lift up their sacrilegious hands, and bow before the altar of mercy.

"I will breathe one wish more; and that is for the restoration of peace – peace, I mean, on equitable terms; for pusillanimous and feeble as I am, I cannot wish to see the sword quietly put up in the scabbard, until justice is done to America."<sup>11</sup>

During the years that preceded the Revolution, and after its outbreak, Mrs. Warren's house appears to have been the resort of much company. As she herself says, "by the Plymouth fireside were many political plans originated, discussed, and digested." She reminds Mr. Adams while he is in Europe, of his words once uttered in a moment of despondency, that "the dispute

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<sup>10</sup> *Letter, August 2d, 1775.*

<sup>11</sup> *Letter, October, 1775.*



between Great Britain and America will not be settled till your sons and my sons are able to assist and negotiate with the different European courts." – "A lady replied, though perhaps not from prescience, but from presentiment or presumption, that you must do it yourself; that the work must be done immediately, and that she expected from you in the intervals of business, a pleasing narration of the different customs, manners, taste, genius, and policy of nations with whom, at present, we were little acquainted. You assented a compliance if the prediction took place."

Although her home was in Plymouth, her place of residence was occasionally changed during the war. At one time she lived in the house at Milton, which Governor Hutchinson had occupied. Wherever she was, the friends of America were always welcomed to the shelter of her roof, and the hospitalities of her table. In different passages of her letters to Mr. Adams, the officers with whom she became acquainted are described. The following extract is interesting:

"The Generals Washington, Lee, and Gates, with several other distinguished officers from headquarters, dined with us (at Watertown) three days since. The first of these I think one of the most amiable and accomplished gentlemen, both in person, mind, and manners, that I have met with. The second, whom I never saw before, I think plain in his person to a degree of ugliness, careless even to unpoliteness – his garb ordinary, his voice rough, his manners rather morose; yet sensible, learned,

judicious, and penetrating: a considerable traveller, agreeable in his narrations, and a zealous, indefatigable friend to the American cause; but much more from a love of freedom, and an impartial sense of the inherent rights of mankind at large, than from any attachment or disgust to particular persons or countries. The last is a brave soldier, a high republican, a sensible companion, an honest man, of unaffected manners and easy deportment."

She speaks thus of the Count D'Estaing:

"While the errand on which the Count D'Estaing came out excites our gratitude, the dignity of his deportment commands respect; and his reserved affability, if I may so express it, heightens our esteem."

And La Fayette is praised in laconic fashion: "Penetrating, active, sensible, and judicious, he acquits himself with the highest applause in the public eye, while the politeness of his manners, and the sociability of his temper, insure his welcome at every hospitable board."

Every page from the pen of Mrs. Warren, is remarkable for clearness and vigor of thought. Thus her style was not vitiated by the artificial tastes of the day; yet her expression is often studiously elaborated, in accordance with the prevalent fashion. This is the case in her letters written with most care; while in others her ardent spirit pours out its feelings with irrepressible energy, portraying itself in the genuine and simple language of emotion. The following passage perhaps did not then appear

studied, even in a familiar letter:

"The late convulsions are only the natural struggles which ensue when the genius of liberty arises to assert her rights in opposition to the ghost of tyranny. I doubt not this fell form will ere long be driven from our land: then may the western skies behold virtue (which is generally the attendant of freedom) seated on a throne of peace, where may she ever preside over the rising Commonwealth of America."<sup>12</sup>

About this time, as it appears, was published "The Group" – a satirical dramatic piece in two Acts, in which many of the leading tory characters of the day were humorously introduced. A strong political influence has been ascribed to this and other satirical poems from her pen. It is in allusion to this that Mrs. Adams speaks of "a Rapatio soul" – Governor Hutchinson being thus designated. The following description is applied to him:

"But mark the traitor – his high crime glossed o'er  
Conceals the tender feelings of the man,  
The social ties that bind the human heart;  
He strikes a bargain with his country's foes,  
And joins to wrap America in flames.

Yet with feigned pity, and Satanic grin,  
As if more deep to fix the keen insult,  
Or make his life a farce still more complete,  
He sends a groan across the broad Atlantic,

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<sup>12</sup> *Letter to Mrs. Lathrop, 1775.*

And with a phiz of crocodilian stamp,  
Can weep, and wreathe, still hoping to deceive;  
He cries – the gathering clouds hang thick about her,  
But laughs within; then sobs —  
Alas, my country!"

*Act II. Scene I.*

With the classical allusions then common, she mentions

" – India's poisonous weed,  
Long since a sacrifice to Thetis made,  
A rich regale. Now all the watery dames  
May snuff souchong, and sip in flowing bowls  
The higher flavored choice Hysonian stream,  
And leave their nectar to old Homer's gods."

It may be imagined that such bold and keen satire would produce a marked sensation, and be severely felt by the persons against whom it was aimed. The author herself seems to have had some misgivings, fearing lest her patriotic feelings should have carried her too far. Mrs. Adams thus re-assures her:

"I observe my friend is laboring under apprehension, lest the severity with which a certain *Group* was drawn, was incompatible with that benevolence which ought always to be predominant in a female character. Though 'an eagle's talon asks an eagle's eye,' and satire in the hands of some is a very dangerous weapon; yet when it is so happily blended with benevolence, and is awakened only by the love of virtue and abhorrence of vice – when truth

is unavoidably preserved, and ridiculous and vicious actions are alone the subject, it is so far from blamable that it is certainly meritorious."

Mrs. Warren employed much of her leisure with her pen. She kept a faithful record of occurrences during the dark days of her country's affliction, through times that engaged the attention both of the philosopher and the politician. She did this with the design of transmitting to posterity a faithful portraiture of the most distinguished characters of the day.

Her intention was fulfilled in her history of the war. Her poetical compositions, afterwards collected and dedicated to General Washington, were the amusement of solitude, when many of her friends were actively engaged in the field or cabinet. Some of them contain allusions to bodily sufferings, her health being far from robust. The tragedies, "The Sack of Rome," and "The Ladies of Castile," are more remarkable for patriotic sentiment than dramatic merit. The verse is smooth and flowing, and the language poetical, but often wanting in the simplicity essential to true pathos. An interest deeper than that of the story is awakened by the application of many passages to the circumstances of the times. The truth of the following lines must have been dolefully felt:

"'Mongst all the ills that hover o'er mankind,  
Unfeigned, or fabled in the poet's page,  
The blackest scroll the sister furies hold  
For red-eyed wrath, or malice to fill up,

Is incomplete to sum up human woe;  
Till civil discord, still a darker fiend,  
Stalks forth unmasked from his infernal den,  
With mad Alecto's torch in his right hand,  
To light the flame, and rend the soul of nature."

Both these tragedies were read with interest, and much praised in after years. Alexander Hamilton writes to the author, July 1st, 1791:

"It is certain that in the 'Ladies of Castile,' the sex will find a new occasion of triumph. Not being a poet myself, I am in the less danger of feeling mortification at the idea that in the career of dramatic composition at least, female genius in the United States has out-stripped the male."

The criticism of John Adams – who writes from London, Dec. 25th, 1787, is equally favorable.

"The 'Sack of Rome' has so much spirit in itself, that for the honor of America, I should wish to see it acted on the stage in London, before crowded audiences. The dedication of it does so much honor to me, that I should be proud to see it in print, even if it could not be acted. It requires almost as much interest and intrigue to get a play acted, as to be a member of Parliament."

At another time he says of her Poems: "The Poems are not all of them new to me, by whom some of them have been read and esteemed some years ago. However foolishly some European writers may have sported with American reputation for genius, literature and science, I know not where they will find a female

poet of their own to prefer to the ingenious author of these compositions."<sup>13</sup> "A Poetical Reverie" was published before the breaking out of the war. It gives a poetical view of the future greatness of America, and the punishment of her oppressors.

"The Squabble of the Sea Nymphs," celebrates the pouring of the tea into the sea, and is something in the Rape of the Lock style. The lines to a friend, who on the American determination to suspend all commerce with Great Britain, except for the necessities of life, requested a poetical list of the articles the ladies might comprise under that head, have some fine satire. The reader will not object to the following specimen:

"An inventory clear  
Of all she needs, Lamira offers here;  
Nor does she fear a rigid Cato's frown  
When she lays by the rich embroidered gown,  
And modestly compounds for just enough, —  
Perhaps some dozens of more sightly stuff:  
With lawns and lustrings – blond and mechlin laces,  
Fringes and jewels, fans and tweezer cases;  
Gay cloaks and hats, of every shape and size,  
Scarfs, cardinals, and ribbons of all dyes;  
With ruffles stamped, and aprons of tambour,  
Tippets and handkerchiefs, at least three score:  
With finest muslins that fair India boasts,  
And the choice herbage from Chinesan coasts;

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<sup>13</sup> *MS, Letter to Mrs. Warren, Dec, 36th, 1790,*

(But while the fragrant hyson leaf regales,  
Who'll wear the home-spun produce of the vales?  
For if 'twould save the nation from the curse  
Of standing troup – or name a plague still worse,  
Few can this choice delicious draught give up,  
Though all Medea's poisons fill the cup.)  
Add feathers, furs, rich satins, and ducapes,  
And head-dresses in pyramidal shapes;<sup>14</sup>  
Side-boards of plate, and porcelain profuse,  
With fifty dittos that the ladies use;  
If my poor treacherous memory has missed,  
Ingenious T – I shall complete the list.  
So weak Lamira, and her wants so few,  
Who can refuse? they're but the sex's due.  
"In youth, indeed, an antiquated page  
Taught us the threatenings of a Hebrew sage  
'Gainst wimples, mantles, curls and crisping pins,  
But rank not these among our modern sins;  
For when our manners are well understood,  
What in the scale is stomacher or hood?  
'Tis true, we love the courtly mien and air,  
The pride of dress, and all the debonair:  
Yet Clara quits the more dressed negligée,

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<sup>14</sup> *It is mentioned in Sanderson's Biography of the Signers of Independence, that the Whig ladies of Philadelphia having adopted the tory fashion of high head-dresses, after the evacuation of the city by the British, some Whigs dressed a negress in the full costume of a loyalist lady, took her to a place of resort, where the fashionables displayed their towering top-knots, seating her in a conspicuous place, – and afterwards paraded her through the city. Nothing, however, could stop the progress of the fashion, which for a season became general in America.*



And substitutes the careless polancé;  
Until some fair one from Britannia's court  
Some jaunty dress, or newer taste import;  
This sweet temptation could not be withstood,  
Though for the purchase paid her father's blood;  
Though loss of freedom were the costly price,  
Or flaming comets sweep the angry skies;  
Or earthquakes rattle, or volcanoes roar;  
Indulge this trifle, and she asks no more;  
Can the stern patriot Clara's suit deny?  
'Tis beauty asks, and reason must comply."

The powers of Mrs. Warren were devoted to nobler objects than chastising the follies of the day. She gave her tenderest sympathies to the sufferings of her friends, and poured the balm of consolation into many a wounded heart. The letters of Mrs. Adams show how much she leaned, amidst her heavy trials, on this faithful support. Nor was her kindness limited to the circle of her acquaintance.

Every sufferer from this cruel war had a claim her heart acknowledged, and her benevolence went forth on its gentle mission among strangers. She addressed a letter of condolence to the widow of the brave Montgomery, Jan. 20th, 1776, in which the consolatory suggestions are those of a patriot and a Christian.

"While you are deriving comfort," she says, "from the highest source, it may still further brighten the clouded moment to reflect that the number of your friends is not confined to the narrow

limits of a province, but by the happy union of the American Colonies, (suffering equally by the rigor of oppression,) the affections of the inhabitants are cemented; and the urn of the companion of your heart will be sprinkled with the tears of thousands who revere the commander at the gates of Quebec, though not personally acquainted with General Montgomery."

Montgomery, as is known, married Janet Livingston, a sister of Chancellor Robert R. Livingston. Her life was a secluded one, and affords few materials for biography; but her letters expressive of her feelings have a deep interest. Mrs. Warren says with truth – writing to her Nov. 25th, 1777:

"The sensibility of soul, the pathos of grief so strongly marked in your letters, have convinced me that the brave Montgomery had a partner worthy of his character."

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