

# REBECCA BROWN

STORIES ABOUT  
GENERAL WARREN,

Rebecca Brown  
**Stories about General Warren,**

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# **Rebecca Warren Brown Stories about General Warren, / in relation to the fifth of March massacre, and the battle of Bunker Hill**

## **PREFACE**

The author of the following little sketch has often heard the question asked, "What did Gen. Warren do to deserve all that has been said about him?" "Did he do any thing more than fight bravely, and get killed on the day of the battle of Bunker Hill?" To answer these questions, and to show, that although it was *much* for him to sacrifice his life for his country, yet that was not *all* he did; that he had toiled nobly for many years in her cause, before a drop of blood had been shed to accomplish her freedom, has been the principal object in writing it.

For some of the facts, she is indebted to those who have before written on the subject; but many of them have never before been published; nor does she think any but the closing one of his death is very generally known.

Another object has been, to place the leading causes of the Revolution in so strong and clear a light, and in such simple language, that every child may comprehend them as soon as he can read.

It has also been her design so to delineate the leading traits of Gen. Warren's character, as to show that his patriotism was not a sudden start of enthusiasm, but had long been a guiding principle of action.

If the writer has succeeded in deepening in any young mind, the impression of the debt of gratitude we owe the authors of our free institutions, or if the following pages should lead any one to think and read more on the subject, she will feel amply rewarded for all the trouble bestowed on them.

## STORIES OF GENERAL WARREN

As Mary Montague and her mother were one morning sitting at work, by a cheerful fire, William, a boy about nine years old, ran in exclaiming, Oh dear mother! I'm so tired I don't know what to do.

Mrs. Montague. Why, my son, what has tired you so much?

William. I have been playing hoop more than an hour, and my hands ache so I can play no longer.

Mrs. M. Then you had better come and sit down with Mary and me and rest yourself.

William. Yes, mamma, I will, if you can lend me some pretty book, or tell me a story; there is no school to-day, you know.

Mrs. M. I have no book which you have not read, nor can I put aside my work to amuse you, but I can tell you a story and work too.

William. So do, mamma, I shall like that best.

Mary. And I too, dear mother.

Mrs. M. What shall I tell you about? Shall I tell you a true story, or do you wish me to make up one?

William. I should rather hear a true one, if you please, about some great man. Some American, for I had rather hear about one of my own countrymen, than about a foreigner, as I think you call those who live in other countries, do you not?

Mrs. M. Yes, my dear.

William. You know I have had books about a great many of our celebrated men, such as Gen. Washington, Gen. Lafayette, and Franklin. Now I want you to tell me what you can of Gen. Warren. Was he not a great and good man? I should think he must have been, for I have heard people speak of him very often, when talking of the revolution; I know, too, that great monument on Bunker Hill is partly for him, but I do not know what he did to deserve so much praise.

Mrs. M. I believe, my dear, there has never been any little books written about him, but he was both a great and a good man, though he did not live long enough to do so much for his country as those other generals of whom you have read. If you wish, I will tell you all I can of him.

William. Oh, so do! I want to hear it very much.

Mary. So do I.

Mrs. M. You spoke just now, William, of Lafayette as though you thought him an American. Do you not know he was a Frenchman?

William. Yes, mamma, I know that very well, but he did so much for us I can hardly help thinking he belonged to us.

Mrs. M. I do not much wonder at that, for he could not have done more, nor even so much, if he had indeed been an American. Come, now for General Warren. Shall I begin at the time when he was a child like you, or at that in which he became a general?

William and Mary, both together. Oh pray begin when he was a child like us.

Mrs. M. I cannot tell you a great deal about him at that time. I only know that he was born in Roxbury, in the year 1741. Roxbury is a small town a few miles from Boston. I have no doubt you often ride by the old house in which Joseph (for that was the name of the general) and his three brothers were born. It has now almost fallen to pieces, but it was once a beautiful place, and had a great many fine fruit trees round it. The father of Joseph was quite a rich farmer; he raised the best fruit of any one near Boston. Do you remember seeing last winter an apple with a fine blush on one side, called the Warren russeting?

William. Yes, mother, I think I do.

Mrs. M. Joseph's father was the first person who cultivated this apple, and it received its name from him: but alas! it cost him and his family very dear.

William. How, mamma?

Mrs. M. I will tell you. One day, in the fall of the year, when almost all the apples were gathered, Mr. Warren, the father of Joseph, while walking round his orchard to see if every thing in it was in good order, as he was looking over the trees he perceived one apple on the top of his favorite tree, the Warren russeting; it looked so beautiful, with the sun gilding its rosy side, that he determined to get it. He was a very active man; so up he climbed until his hand was on the apple, when, just as he had pulled it off, the branch on which he was standing, gave way, he fell to the ground and was instantly killed!

William. Oh dear, how long did he lay there, mamma?

Mrs. M. Not long; some of his workmen, who were near, heard the noise of the fall, and directly went to see what it was.

His youngest son, whose name was John, was then only four years old: dinner was ready at home, and the mother of little John told him to run into the orchard, and see why his father did not come in to dinner: away he went, and, as he was looking eagerly to see if his father was coming, he saw two men carrying something between them: he ran up to them to see what it was, and, only think of it! it was the body of that dear father whose affectionate embrace he was expecting every moment to meet! Those eyes, which had so often beamed on him with love, were closed in death, and the arms, so often held out to embrace him, hung motionless at his side!

Mary. Oh, how I pity the poor boy, he must have felt dreadfully!

Mrs. M. Dreadfully indeed! When he grew up to be a man I often heard him say, that, young as he then was, the feelings of that moment could never be effaced from his mind.

William. I should think he never could have forgotten it.

Mrs. M. I have now told you about the father of Joseph; shall I tell you any thing about his mother, or go on about him?

William. If you please, I should like to hear about his mother. I always feel more interested in any one, when I am acquainted with his father and mother.

Mary. And I too love dearly to hear about them, especially I want to know all I can of the mother of any one I hear of, or read about.

Mrs. M. I will tell you all I can of her. Like Washington, Joseph was blessed with a most excellent mother; she, too, was like the mother of Washington, left a widow when even the oldest of her sons most required a parent's care. Her husband, you recollect, was killed when the youngest boy was only four years old. The eldest was about twelve years older. The task of a parent, though a delightful, is a very arduous one, and when that of both parents must be discharged by one, it is much more so. It often happens that a mother is left with a family of young children, and is obliged to bring them up without the controlling power of a father's care; it is therefore the duty of every female so to educate her own mind, and that of her daughters, as to enable her, if she should be placed in this responsible situation, to be able to guide aright the minds of those under her care. Indeed, a mother should always possess a cultivated mind, and a firm principle of action, to render her capable of doing such a duty faithfully. The bent which she gives to the dawning character is seldom effaced through the whole existence of an immortal being. I hope, therefore, my children, more especially you, my daughter, will constantly remember, that unless you attend most carefully to the formation of your own hearts and minds, you will never be competent to form those of others, and that you are in some measure responsible for the good or evil of the characters it may be your lot to form. I trust, too, you will feel that much of the good you may yourselves possess is owing to your parents, who have, as far as they could, guarded you from evil, and led you in the right path, and to whom, therefore, you owe obedience and gratitude, and an earnest endeavor to show, by your conduct, that their labor has not been in vain. Most faithfully did the mother of Joseph discharge the double duty

which had now devolved on her. Her four boys, under her watchful eye, grew up to be good, wise, and, most of them, celebrated men, and richly repaid all her care of them. But not only as a mother was she estimated, for she practised the virtue of benevolence, in the fullest sense of the word. To her neighbors she was kind and hospitable; to the poor her house was always open. Indeed, it might with truth be said of her, in the words of that beautiful poet, Goldsmith, whose works I trust you will soon learn to read and admire:

"Her house was known to all the vagrant train,  
She chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain.  
The long remember'd beggar was her guest,  
And oft the traveller at her board found rest.  
Gentle their merits or their faults to scan,  
Her pity gave e'er charity began."

In her old age, when her own children had left her fire-side to take their part in the active scenes of life, it was one of her dearest pleasures to gather a group of their children, and the children of others around her. She did all in her power to promote their enjoyment, and her benevolent smile was always ready to enliven and encourage them. On Thanksgiving day she depended on having all her children and grand-children with her; and until she was eighty years of age, she herself made the pies with which her table was loaded! Not satisfied with feasting them to their hearts' content, while they were with her, she always had some nice great pies for them to take home with them.

Mary. What a fine old lady she must have been! How I should have admired to have gone to see her!

Mrs. M. She was indeed a most excellent woman. As far as one imperfect being can judge of another, she appeared to deserve to be classed among those whom Christ, in his sermon on the Mount, pronounced blessed. She was often called to mourn, and she was comforted by his word; she was "meek" and "humble," for, much as she did for others, she thought she did nothing worthy to be mentioned. Truly did she appear to hunger and thirst after righteousness. That she was "merciful," I have already told you. She was "pure in heart," as an infant. As a "peacemaker," she was more especially known. If there was any dispute among her friends, relations, neighbors, or acquaintances, to her they carried their troubles and their complaints. Even their evil feelings towards others were not concealed from her. She soothed their troubles, pacified their complaints, and their evil feelings and jealousies she changed into kindness and good will. If she was reviled she reviled not again, and though her good was often evil spoken of, it did not make her weary in well doing. Those who knew her trust she is now reaping the reward promised to those that "faint not," and are not weary in well doing.

Mary. I think she must now be happy, dear mother, or no one can expect to be.

Mrs. M. We have every reason to believe that she is, my dear girl.

Now let us go back to Joseph. He was her eldest son. He was educated at the public school in Roxbury. Like Washington, he displayed in childhood the qualities which afterwards rendered him so celebrated as a man. He was manly, generous, fearless and independent. If one boy oppressed another, he would always take the part of the weakest, and generally succeeded in making the little tyrant ashamed of himself.

William. Did not all the boys like him, mamma? I am sure I should have liked him.

Mrs. M. Yes, my dear, all the good boys liked him, and, what was still better, the masters all liked him. You may be pretty sure that a boy or girl either is deserving of love, if their instructors are attached to them. His mind was so well regulated, that, although he would not submit to tyranny, he was respectful and obedient to those who had a right to govern him. And this was his rule of conduct through his after life. At the age of fourteen, Joseph entered college. Here the same good feelings

which had marked his character at school, continued to govern him. His manners were gentle, and he had the reputation of possessing fine talents, great perseverance, and an entire fearlessness of danger, when accomplishing that which he thought to be right.

One day some of his classmates had determined to do something of which they knew he would not approve. They met together to arrange their plans for its execution. They did not wish Warren to be with them, for they knew his powers of persuasion were so great that he would, if present, prevail on the greatest part of them not to enter into these plans. They therefore fastened the door of the room, in which they were, so that he could not get it open. But he did not give up the matter so easily. They were assembled in an upper room; and finding he could not get in at the door, Warren went down into the college yard. As he looked up he saw their window was open. Now how do you think he managed?

William. I am sure I cannot tell, mamma. Did he climb up to it?

Mrs. M. No, he could not do that, it was very high, and there was not any thing to climb upon. He could see nothing near the window but an old spout, which went from the ground to the eaves, or top, of the house; this spout was so rotten it would hardly bear a touch, much less the whole weight of any one.

Mary. He could not get in on that then. Do make haste, dear mother, and tell us if he did get in, and how he contrived to.

Mrs. M. I will, my child, as soon as I can. He again went up stairs to the scuttle door, which was on the top of the house; out of this he got, slid down the slanting roof to the edge of the house, just where the old spout came up to it; he then seized hold of this spout, swung himself upon it, and slid down as far as the window of the room, where his classmates were, then in he sprang among them, to their great surprise, as you may well suppose. The instant he let go the decayed thing on which he had descended, it broke to pieces and fell to the ground. His companions heard the crash, rushed to the window, and while they were uttering exclamations of astonishment at the risk he had run, and congratulating him on his narrow escape, he very coolly replied, "it has stayed up just long enough to serve my purpose," he then directly entered upon the business which had brought them together.

William. What a brave fellow he was. How glad I am it did not break while he was on it!

Mary. I hardly breathed for fear it would. I hope he succeeded in preventing those young men from doing what they had intended.

Mrs. M. I hope so too, and I think it probable he did. After such a proof of his determination and perseverance, they must have felt it was useless to oppose him.

A gentleman who saw him at the moment he was coming from the top of the house, on the spout, related the fact, in the college yard, fifty years afterwards, pointing, at the same time, to the very spot on which he saw him. It had made so deep an impression on him, that, even at that distance of time, he could not speak of it without emotion.

William. Oh how I wish I could see the place. Do you think, mamma, any body could show it to me now?

Mrs. M. I do not know, my dear, if any one is now living who knows exactly the place. I mean to inquire when I have an opportunity, for I should like to see it myself.

Mary. So do mamma.

Mrs. M. At the end of his collegiate education, Joseph quitted college with the esteem and love of all who had known him there. He then determined to study medicine. I suppose you know he was a physician before he became a general.

William. No, indeed, I did not: if I have heard it, I did not think enough about it to remember it. Was he the celebrated Dr. Warren of whom I have so often heard?

Mrs. M. Do you mean the Dr. Warren now living?

William. Oh no, mamma, I know it was not him, though I have heard a great deal about him too; the one I mean died a great while before I was born.

Mrs. M. The one you are thinking of was the youngest brother of the general, – his name was John, – he whom I told you was the first one of the family who saw his father when he was killed by the fall from the tree. Do you not remember it?

William. Yes, dear mother, I am sure I shall not forget him.

Mrs. M. Joseph was an eminent physician as well as his brother. He began to practice in Boston. Soon after he commenced business the small pox spread all over the city, or town; for it was not then a city. We hardly know any thing of this dreadful disease now-a-days; inoculation has made it a very different one from what it then was. At that time people had not much faith in this mode of lessening its violence, and when it once entered a place, a great many people generally had it and died with it. This was the case at the period of which I speak. Dr. Joseph Warren was then only twenty-three years old, but he managed the disease with so much judgment and skill that he restored more people, who were attacked with it, than any other physician in Boston.

William. How did the other doctors like that, dear mother?

Mrs. M. They were all very glad he was so successful; and liked him the better for it. His manners were so gentle and courteous, they could not feel jealous of him. He always looked so pleasant, and was so benevolent, that every body loved him. The hearts he won at this time always remained warmly attached to him. His great talents, and the superiority of his information secured the respect as well as love of those who knew him. This was the reason he had so much influence over others. His talents alone would not have given it to him; but when to respect was added admiration and love, it gave him power to guide his countrymen almost as he pleased.

When the King of England yielded to the counsels of those who told him that, as we were his subjects, he had a right to make us pay him whatever money he chose to demand, whether we chose to pay it or not, General, then Dr. Warren, was one of the first to tell the people that the king had no right to make us pay one single copper without our consent; that he had not a right even to say what we ought to pay, but ought to allow us to choose our own rulers, and let them decide what our taxes should be.

Mary. What are taxes, dear mother?

Mrs. M. Taxes are monies paid for the support of those who govern us. You know that every city and town makes choice of men whom they can trust, to meet together to say what and how much these taxes shall be. Now it was not possible that we should send men every year to England, to meet with the rulers there, to agree on what we ought to pay, and, unless we did, we should be taxed unjustly. Therefore the only way to be taxed fairly, was to choose people ourselves to tax us. The king would neither let us say what we ought to pay, nor would he let us say who should govern us. He insisted on our suffering men whom he sent over, to govern us; and he obliged us to pay them, even though they oppressed us.

William. What a shame! I do not wonder our people determined not to submit to it.

Mrs. M. The people were so much attached to the king and their mother country, as England was always called, that they would not have resisted this; at least not so early after their settlement in this country, had the king stopped here. But he chose, notwithstanding all our remonstrances and petitions, to continue to impose taxes without our consent. We could hardly buy an article which came from England, that we did not have to pay for it more than its worth, so that the king might have part of the money. As almost every thing we consumed was brought from England, this tax of course bore very heavy on a young country. But still this was not the reason it was resisted; it was because it was unjust to impose any taxes on a free people, without their consent. Gen. Warren endeavored, with all the powers of his vigorous mind, to make the people understand their rights. His arguments, and those of others who thought like him, had so far convinced them of the necessity of resisting these taxes, that, when a cargo of tea arrived at the port of Boston, on every pound of which there was a heavy duty, a number of people, disguised in Indian dresses, entered the vessel in the night which contained it, broke open the chests of tea, and threw all that was in them, into the water. They

thus showed that they preferred to have their families go without an article which was much valued by them, rather than to pay for it by yielding, in the slightest degree, to an act that would endanger their liberties. Their wives, so far from repining at this deprivation, determined, from that moment, not to touch a drop of their favorite beverage until they could have it free from taxes.

Mary. That was right. I am glad they did what they could to support those brave men.

Mrs. M. After this daring act, the king determined to make us submit *by force*. He therefore sent over more soldiers to control us; he had always kept some here; and he sent Gen. Gage to command *them*, and to be our *Governor*. He also sent ships filled with armed men, to occupy our harbour, and to prevent any other vessels from coming to our assistance. Should you not think that the Boston people would now be tempted to give up the point?

William. Yes, mamma, I should; for I do not see how they could see any prospect of gaining it with their town and their harbour filled with British soldiers.

Mrs. M. So far from giving it up, they only determined more strenuously to endeavor to gain it. They would not suffer any of the British rulers or judges to meet. They closed all the court houses where these men wanted to meet, and decided all their disputes and difficulties themselves: indeed, they were so determined not to need these courts, that the utmost order and regularity reigned among them. Sometimes, indeed, the British officers or the soldiers which thronged the streets would exasperate the people so much, that they collected in mobs, determined to avenge themselves on them. At such times Gen. Warren repeatedly exposed his life in the midst of these mobs, to soothe them and restrain them from acts of violence. His persuasive eloquence seldom failed to bring them to their duty, and to make them ashamed of what they were about to do. He would tell them that it was a very bad way to show they could govern themselves, by committing acts which would let every one see they had neither justice nor humanity; that while so many good men were doing all in their power to free them from the oppression of others, it was a great injury to the cause of freedom for them to oppress in their turn; and thus to take upon themselves to both judge and punish others without giving those whom they disliked an opportunity to defend themselves. At first, the men who composed these mobs would try to drive him away, and make a noise to prevent his being heard. While they did this, he would stand calmly and look at them. His intrepidity, his commanding and animated countenance, and, above all, their knowledge that he was in reality on their side, as far as it was right to be, would soon make them as eager to hear as he was to speak, and, finally, they would disperse to their houses, with the most perfect confidence that they could not do better than to leave their cause in such hands.

Although Gen. Warren thus restrained the people from revenging the insults of the British, he did not escape them himself. They took every opportunity of calling him a *rebel*, and telling him, as they did all those who were on his side, that he would meet the fate of a rebel, that of being hung. You know there is a piece of land which connects Boston to Roxbury, called the neck, do you not?

Mary. Yes, mamma, we often ride over it when we go to R – , do we not?

Mrs. M. Yes, my dear. Formerly people were hung oftener and much more publicly than at present. There was, therefore, a gallows erected on the neck, on which to hang criminals, where every body could see them. One day, Dr. Joseph Warren was going over to Roxbury, to visit his mother, whom he loved very much; when he had gone over a little way on the neck he came to a spot where three or four British officers were standing together, talking, as he passed them, one of them called out "Go on, Warren, you will soon come to the gallows." They meant he would soon come to the gallows on the neck, but it was very evident they also meant to insult him, as they burst into a loud laugh so soon as it was said. Warren was not a man to submit to an insult from any one, least of all from them. He immediately turned back, walked up to them, and calmly requested to know which of them had thus addressed him. Not one of them had the courage to avow his insolence. Finding he could obtain no answer, he at last left them, ashamed of themselves and of each other, but glad to have got off so easily.

William. What a set of cowards! I wish Gen. Warren could have given them a good flogging.

Mrs. M. It would have been but what they deserved, to be sure. It usually happens that those who are most ready to insult, where they think no defence can be made, are the greatest cowards when called upon to avow or defend what they have done.

Gen. Warren had so much power over the feelings of those whom he addressed, that is, he was so *eloquent*, that he was several times chosen, by those who were in favor of the cause of liberty, to address the people from the pulpit, that a great many at a time might hear him.

Do you know anything about the 5th of March massacre, in which the first American blood was shed by the British?

William. Yes, mamma, we both know about it. We have read it in Parley's First Book of History.

Mrs. M. I am glad of it; that is a most excellent little history, and contains a great deal you ought to remember. You know, then, that for some years after that massacre, on every 5th of March there was an oration delivered in the Old South meeting-house, to tell every body that one injury after another had been inflicted on us by the British, until the common people had become so angry that whenever they saw a British soldier they wanted to insult him. By the way, I will stop here a moment, to tell you of something which was done by one of the British officers, which will show you that the people of Boston had some reason to dislike them. The British were very much afraid that guns should be procured by the Americans from their soldiers, and whenever they knew that any American had bought a musket from one of their men, they punished him severely. Some of the officers, however, were so eager to have an excuse for punishing our men, that they would tempt them to buy guns, on purpose to make a difficulty. One in particular, a Col. Nesbit, ordered one of his men to offer an American, who had come in from the country, an old musket, very cheap. The poor man, little suspecting any trick, eagerly bought it. Col. Nesbit immediately took him up and confined him all night in the guard house. The next morning he stripped him entirely naked, covered him over with warm tar, then he put feathers over that and placed him on a cart and conducted him through Boston streets, quite up to the south end. He was guarded by thirty grenadiers, with fixed bayonets; twenty drums and fifes accompanied them, playing the "Rogues March," and the despicable Nesbit headed the procession with his sword drawn.

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