HENRY CLAY WATSON

THE OLD BELL OF INDEPENDENCE; OR, PHILADELPHIA IN 1776

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Содержание

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PREFACE

To awaken in the minds of all Americans that veneration of the patriots and heroes of the War of Independence, and that emulation of their noble example which is so necessary to the maintenance of our liberties, are the objects of this little work. Every day's developments illustrate the importance of these objects. In the enjoyment of the freedom and prosperity of our country, we are apt to under-rate the means by which that enjoyment was secured to us, and to forget the men who worked for that end. A knowledge of the toils and sufferings of the noble-hearted fathers of the Revolution is the best preventative, or curative, for this "falling off." War, clothed as it is, with horrors, is to be condemned, and the spirit which leads to it should be driven from the breasts of men. But generous devotion, strength of resolution, and far-reaching skill, are things to be commended and imitated wherever displayed. In these pages, will be found stories of the chief men of the Revolution, so connected, by the manner in which they are narrated, as to give a general interest to

them—"The Old Bell of Independence" being the rallying point of the veteran story-tellers.

INTRODUCTION

It was a season of unparalleled enthusiasm and rejoicing, when General Lafayette, the friend and supporter of American Independence, responded to the wishes of the people of the United States, and came to see their prosperity, and to hear their expressions of gratitude. The national heart beat joyfully in anticipation; and one long, loud, and free shout of welcome was heard throughout the land.

Arriving at New York in August, 1824, General Lafayette journeyed through the Eastern States, receiving such tokens of affection as the people had extended to no other man except Washington, and then returned southward. On the 28th of September, he entered Philadelphia, the birth-place of the Declaration of Independence, the greater part of the population coming out to receive and welcome him. A large procession was formed, and thirteen triumphal arches erected in the principal streets through which the procession passed.

After General Lafayette himself, the most remarkable objects in the procession were four large open cars, resembling tents, each containing forty veterans of the struggle for independence. No one could, without emotion, behold these winter-locked patriots, whose eyes, dimmed by age, poured forth tears of joy at their unexpected happiness in once more meeting an old commander, and joining in the expressions of gratitude to him.

After passing through the principal streets, General Lafayette was conducted into the hall of the State-House, where the old Continental Congress had assembled, and where the immortal Declaration of Independence was signed. Here the nation's guest was received formally on behalf of the citizens by the mayor, and then the people were admitted to take him by the hand. At night there was a splendid illumination; and crowds of people traversed the streets, singing and celebrating the exploits of the champion of liberty and the friend of America.

On one of the days succeeding Lafayette's grand entry into the city, he received, in the Hall of Independence, the veteran soldiers of the Revolution who had come to the city, and those who were residents. One by one these feeble old men came up and took the General by the hand, and to each he had some reminiscence to recall, or some congratulation to offer. Heroes of Brandy wine, Germantown, Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, and other fields, were there; some with scars to show, and all much suffering to relate. The old patriotic fire was kindled in their breasts, and beamed from their furrowed countenances, as memory flew back to the time that proved their truth and love of liberty. One had been under the command of the fiery Wayne, and shared his dangers with a spirit as dauntless; another had served with the cool and skilful Greene, and loved to recall some exploit in which the Quaker general had displayed his genius; another had followed the lead of Lafayette himself, when a mere youth, at Brandywine: everything conspired to render this

interview of the General and the veteran soldiers as touching and as interesting as any recorded by history, or invented by fiction.

After the reception of the veterans, one of them proposed to go up into the belfry, and see the old bell which proclaimed liberty "to all the land, and to all the nations thereof." Lafayette and a few others accompanied the proposal by expressing a wish to see that interesting relic. With great difficulty, some of the old men were conducted up to the belfry, and there they beheld the bell still swinging. Lafayette was much gratified at the sight, as it awakened his old enthusiasm to think of the period when John Adams and his bold brother patriots dared to assert the principles of civil liberty, and to proclaim the independence of their country. Old John Harmar, one of the veteran soldiers who had been in Philadelphia when the Declaration was proclaimed, and who again shook hands with his old brothers in arms, gave vent to his thoughts and feelings as he stood looking at the bell.

"Ah! that's the trumpet that told the Britishers a tale of vengeance! My memory's not so bad but I can recollect the day that old bell was rung for independence! This city presented a very different appearance in those days. It was a small town. Every body was expectin' that the king's troops would be comin' here soon, and would sack and burn the place: but the largest number of us were patriots, and knew the king was a tyrant; and so we didn't care much whether they came or not. How the people did crowd around this State-House on the day the Declaration was proclaimed! Bells were ringing all over town, and guns were

fired; but above 'em all could be heard the heavy, deep sound of this old bell, that rang as if it meant something! Ah! them was great times."

As old Harmar concluded these remarks, the old men standing near the bell nodded approvingly, and some echoed, "Them *was* great times!" in a tone which indicated that memory was endeavoring to conjure back the time of which they spoke. They then slowly turned to descend. Lafayette had preceded them with his few friends. "Stop!" said old Harmar; "Wilson, Morton, Smith, and you, Higgins, my son wants you to come home with me, and take dinner at his house. Come; I want to have some chat with you over old doings. I may never see you again after you leave Philadelphia."

The invitation, cordially given, was cordially accepted, and the party of old friends descended the stairs, and, arriving at the door, were assisted by the cheering crowd to get into their carriage, which then drove towards the residence of old Harmar's son. At that place we shall consider them as having arrived, and, after much welcoming, introducing, and other preparatory ceremonies, as seated at a long, well-supplied table, set in a large and pleasant dining-hall. Young Harmar, his wife, and the four children, were also accommodated at the same table, and a scene of conviviality and pleasure was presented such as is not often witnessed. The old men were very communicative and good-humored; and young Harmar and his family were free of questions concerning the great scenes through which they had

passed. But we will let the company speak for themselves.

STORY OF GENERAL WASHINGTON

"GRANDFATHER," said Thomas Jefferson Harmar, "won't you tell us something about General Washington?"

"I could tell you many a thing about that man, my child," replied old Harmar, "but I suppose people know everything concerning him by this time. You see, these history writers go about hunting up every incident relating to the war, now, and after a while they'll know more about it—or say they do—than the men who were actors in it."

"That's not improbable," said young Harmar. "These historians may not know as much of the real spirit of the people at that period, but that they should be better acquainted with the mass of facts relating to battles and to political affairs is perfectly natural." The old man demurred, however, and mumbled over, that nobody could know the real state of things who was not living among them at the time.

"But the little boy wants to hear a story about Washington," said Wilson. "Can't you tell him something about *the* man? I think I could. Any one who wants to appreciate the character of Washington, and the extent of his services during the Revolution, should know the history of the campaign of 1776, when every body was desponding, and thinking of giving up the good cause.

I tell you, if Washington had not been superior to all other men, that cause must have sunk into darkness."

"You say well," said Smith. "We, who were at Valley Forge, know something of his character."

"I remember an incident," said Wilson, "that will give you some idea, Mrs. Harmar, of the heart George Washington had in his bosom. I suppose Mr. Harmar has told you something of the sufferings of our men during the winter we lay at Valley Forge. It was a terrible season. It's hard to give a faint idea of it in words; but you may imagine a party of men, with ragged clothes and no shoes, huddled around a fire in a log hut—the snow about two feet deep on the ground, and the wind driving fierce and bitter through the chinks of the rude hovel. Many of the men had their feet frost-bitten, and there were no remedies to be had, like there is now-a-days. The sentinels suffered terribly, and looked more like ghosts than men, as they paced up and down before the lines of huts."

"I wonder the men didn't all desert," remarked Mrs. Harmar. "They must have been uncommon men."

"They were uncommon men, or, at least, they suffered in an uncommon cause," replied Wilson. "But about General Washington. He saw how the men were situated, and, I really believe, his heart bled for them. He would write to Congress of the state of affairs, and entreat that body to procure supplies; but, you see, Congress hadn't the power to comply. All it could do was to call on the States, and await the action of their Assemblies.

"Washington's head-quarters was near the camp, and he often came over to see the poor fellows, and to try to soothe and comfort them; and, I tell you, the men loved that man as if he had been their father, and would rather have died with him than have lived in luxury with the red-coat general.

"I recollect a scene I beheld in the next hut to the one in which I messed. An old friend, named Josiah Jones, was dying. He was lying on a scant straw bed, with nothing but rags to cover him. He had been sick for several days, but wouldn't go under the doctor's hands, as he always said it was like going into battle, certain of being killed. One day, when we had no notion of anything of the kind, Josiah called out to us, as we sat talking near his bed, that he was dying, and wanted us to pray for him. We were all anxious to do anything for the man, for we loved him as a brother; but as for praying, we didn't exactly know how to go about it. To get clear of the service, I ran to obtain the poor fellow a drink of water to moisten his parched lips.

"While the rest were standing about, not knowing what to do, some one heard the voice of General Washington in the next hut, where he was comforting some poor wretches who had their feet almost frozen off. Directly, he came to our door, and one of the men went and told him the state of things. Now, you see, a commander-in-chief might have been justified in being angry that the regulations for the sick had been disobeyed, and have turned away; but he was a nobler sort of man than could do that. He entered the hut, and went up to poor Josiah, and asked him

how he was. Josiah told him that he felt as if he was dying, and wanted some one to pray for him. Washington saw that a doctor could do the man no good, and he knelt on the ground by him and prayed. We all knelt down too; we couldn't help it. An old comrade was dying, away from his home and friends, and there was our general kneeling by him, with his face turned towards heaven, looking, I thought, like an angel's. Well, he prayed for Heaven to have mercy on the dying man's soul; to pardon his sins; and to take him to Himself: and then he prayed for us all. Before the prayer was concluded, Josiah's spirit had fled, and his body was cold and stiff. Washington felt the brow of the poor fellow, and, seeing that his life was out, gave the men directions how to dispose of the corpse, and then left us to visit the other parts of the camp."

"That was, indeed, noble conduct," said young Harmar. "Did he ever speak to you afterwards about violating the regulations of the army?"

"No," replied Wilson. "He knew that strict discipline could not be, and should not have been maintained in that camp. He was satisfied if we were true to the cause amid all our sufferings."

"Praying at the death-bed of a private," mused Smith aloud. "Well, I might have conjectured what he would do in such a case, from what I saw of him. I wonder if history ever spoke of a greater and better man?"

Young Mr. Harmar here felt inclined to launch out into an elaborate panegyric on the character of Washington, but

reflected that it might be out of place, and therefore contented himself with remarking, "We shall ne'er look upon his like again."

"He was a dear, good man," remarked Mrs. Harmar.

"Yes," said old Harmar, "General Washington was the main pillar of the Revolution. As a general, he was vigilant and skilful; but if he had not been anything more, we might have been defeated and crushed by the enemy. He had the love and confidence of the men, on account of his character as a man, and that enabled him to remain firm and full of hope when his countrymen saw nothing but a gloomy prospect."

THE SPY'S FATE

"Now I'll tell you a story that I have just called to mind," said old Harmar. "It's of a very different character, though, from the story of Washington. It's about a spy's fate."

"Where was the scene of it?" inquired Mrs. Harmar.

"Out here on the Schuylkill's banks, just after the British took possession of this city," replied old Harmar. "There was a man named James Sykes, who had a lime-kiln on the east bank of the river, and was manufacturing lime pretty extensively when the enemy came to this city. While Congress was sitting here, Sykes always professed to be a warm friend to the colonial cause; but there was always something suspicious about his movements, and his friends and neighbours did not put much faith in his professions. He would occasionally be out very late at night, and sometimes be gone from home for a week, and give very vague accounts of the business which had occupied him during his absence. Some of his neighbours suspected that he was acting as one of Sir William Howe's spies, but they could never get any positive proof of their suspicions.

"At length the enemy took possession of this city, and then Sykes began to show that he was not such a very warm friend of the right side. He went to the head-quarters of the British general frequently, and seemed to be on the best terms with the enemy. Well, it happened that one of his old neighbors,

named Jones, was the captain of one of the companies of our line; and he, somehow or other, obtained proof that Sykes was acting as a spy for the enemy. He informed General Wayne of the fact, and immediately proposed that he should be allowed to attempt his capture. Wayne consented, and Captain Jones set about preparing for the enterprise. Sykes was usually out at his lime-kiln, with some of his men, during the morning, and, as the guilty are ever suspicious, he increased the number of his assistants, to ensure himself against attack. Captain Jones took only twenty men from his company, and left our camp just before dark. The business was full of danger. The place where Jones expected to capture the spy was within a mile of a British out-post; and the greatest secrecy and rapidity of movement was necessary to prevent surprise by the enemy's scouting parties.

"About daylight, Jones and his party reached the wood near Sykes' lime-kiln, and halted to reconnoitre. Sykes and four of his men were at work at that early hour. The lime was burning, and some of the men were engaged in loading and unloading two carts which stood near the kiln. Captain Jones' plan was quickly formed. He sent one half his party around to cut off the escape of Sykes towards the city, and when he thought they had reached a favorable position sallied out towards the kiln. When he was about half-way to it, Sykes discovered the party, and, shouting to his men to follow, ran along the bank of the river to escape; but the other party cut off retreat, and Jones coming up rapidly, Sykes and his men were taken. Jones did not intend to detain

the workmen any longer than till he got out of the reach of the British, when he would not have cared for their giving the alarm. Sykes seemed to be very anxious to know why he was arrested in that manner; but Jones simply told him he would know when they got him to the American camp; and that, if Sykes had not thought of a reason for his arrest, he would not have attempted to run away. Well, the Americans hurried the prisoners towards the wood, but Jones soon descried a large party of British coming over a neighboring hill, and knew that his chance was a desperate one. Sykes also discovered the party of red-coats, and struggled hard to make his escape from the Americans. Jones wanted to bring him alive to the American camp, or he would have shot him down at once. Suddenly, Sykes broke away from his captors, and ran towards the lime-kiln. Several muskets were discharged, but all missed him. Then one of the privates, named Janvers, a daring fellow, rushed after the prisoner, and caught him just as he reached the kiln. There a fierce struggle ensued; but Sykes was cut in the shoulder, and, in attempting to throw his antagonist into the hot lime and fire, was hurled into it himself. Then Janvers hurried to the woods after his brave comrades. The British party was near enough to see the struggle at the limekiln, and came on rapidly in pursuit of our men. A few of the red-coats were ordered to examine the lime-kiln, to see if Sykes was alive and concealed; and they found his body burned almost to a crisp."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Harmar.

"Well," continued Old Harmar, "there was a long and doubtful

race between the two parties; but Jones succeeded in getting within the lines of the Americans without losing a man, and with his four prisoners in safe custody. These fellows were examined, but no evidence of their being spies and confidants of Sykes could be produced, and they were discharged with the promise of a terrible punishment if they were detected tampering with the enemy."

"Captain Jones was a daring fellow to venture so near the British lines, and with such a small party," observed Morton.

"In such an attempt, a small party was preferable. Its success depended upon secrecy and quickness of movements," said Wilson.

"It was a horrible death," remarked young Harmar. "Sykes, however, courted it by treachery to his countrymen."

STORY OF THE SERMON

"I believe this is the first time I've seen you since the disbanding of the army, Morton," said Wilson. "Time has been rather severe on us both since that time."

"Oh, we can't complain," replied Morton. "We can't complain. I never grumble at my age."

"Some men would have considered themselves fortunate to have seen what you have seen," said young Harmar. "I think I could bear your years, to have your experience."

"So do I," added Mrs. Harmar. She always agreed with her husband in whatever he asserted.

"Let me see," said old Harmar; "where did I first meet you, Higgins?

Oh! wasn't it just before the battle of Brandywine you joined the Pennsylvania line?"

"No," answered Smith for Higgins, who, just then, was endeavoring to make up for his want of teeth by the vigorous exertions of his jaws. "He joined at the same time I did, before the battle of Germantown."

"Yes, just before the battle of Germantown," added Higgins. "I was not at Brandywine."

"You wasn't? Then you missed seeing us retreat," said old Harraar. "But we did considerable fightin', howsomever. Mad Anthony was there, and he used to fight, you know—at least

the enemy thought so. I shall never forget the night before that battle."

"Why?" asked Higgins. "Was you on the watch?"

"No, not on that account; something very different. There was a sermon preached on the evenin' before that battle, such as can only be heard once."

"A sermon?" enquired Wilson.

"Yes; a sermon preached for our side by the Rev. Joab Prout. I told my son there about it, and he wrote it into a beautiful sketch for one of the papers. He's got a knack of words, and can tell about it much better than I can. Tell them about it, Jackson, just as you wrote it," said old Harmar.

"Certainly," replied young Harmar. "If I can recall it."

"Do," said Mrs. Harmer; and "Oh! do," added the children; and Mr. Jackson Harmar did—as follows:—"All day long, on the tenth of September, 1777, both armies were in the vicinity of each other, and frequent and desperate skirmishes took place between advanced parties, without bringing on a general action. At length, as the day closed, both armies encamped within sight of each other, anxiously awaiting the morrow, to decide the fate of the devoted city.

"The Americans lay behind Chadd's Ford, with the shallow waters of the Brandywine between them and their opponents; the line extending two miles along that stream.

"The sun was just sinking behind the dark hills of the west, gilding the fading heavens with an autumnal brightness, and

shedding a lurid glare upon the already drooping and discolored foliage of the surrounding forests. It was an hour of solemn calm. The cool evening breezes stole softly through the air, as if unwilling to disturb the repose of all around. The crystal waters of the creek murmured gently in their narrow bed, and the national standard flapped lazily from the tall flag-staff on its banks.

"In the American camp, interspersed between groups of tents and stacks of arms, might be seen little knots of weary soldiers seated on the ground, resting from the fatigues of the day, and talking in a low but animated tone of the coming contest.

"Suddenly the tattoo sounded,—not loud and shrill, as on ordinary occasions, but in a subdued and cautious manner, as if fearful of being heard by the British, whose white tents might be seen in the distance. Obedient to the signal, the greater part of the soldiers assembled in front of the marquee of the commander, near the centre of the encampment.

"All was hushed in expectation: soon the tall form of Washington, wrapped in his military cloak, and attended by a large body of officers, was seen advancing in their midst. All present respectfully saluted them, to which they bowed courteously, and then took their seats upon camp-stools set for them by a servant. The venerable Joab Prout, chaplain of the Pennsylvania line, then stood upon the stump of a tree, and commanded silence—for it was the hour of prayer.

"Here was a scene of moral grandeur unsurpassed by anything

in the annals of war. There, on that still, cool evening, when the sky was darkening into night, were assembled some eight thousand men; very many of whom would never look upon the glorious sunset again. From the humble cottages in the quiet valley of the Connecticut—from the statelier mansions of the sunny South—at the call of liberty, they had rushed to the tented field; and now, on the eve of battle, as brethren in heart and deed, had met together to implore the God of battles to smile upon their noble cause.

"Oh! it was a thrilling and an august sight! The mild and dignified Washington looked around him with proud emotion, and turned enquiringly to the fair young stranger, Lafayette, beside him, as if to ask, 'Can such men as these be vanquished?'

"The bold and fearless Wayne was there; the undaunted Pulaski, and the whole-hearted Kosciusko; and they bowed their heads in reverence to Him in whose presence they were worshipping.

"Never beneath the vaulted dome of the stately temple—never from the lips of the eloquent divine—was seen such a congregation, or was heard such a discourse, as on that September evening, from that humble old man, with his grey locks streaming in the wind.

"With a firm, clear voice, that re-echoed to the distant hills, he announced his text:—

'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

Then, straightening himself to his full height, and his eye

beaming with a holy feeling inspired by the time and place, he commenced:—

"'*They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'*

'Soldiers and Countrymen:

We have met this evening perhaps for the last time. We have shared the toil of the march, the peril of the fight, the dismay of the retreat—alike we have endured cold and hunger, the contumely of the internal foe, and outrage of the foreign oppressor. We have sat, night after, night, beside the same camp-fire, shared the same rough soldiers' fare; we have together heard the roll of the reveille, which called us to duty, or the beat of the tattoo, which gave the signal for the hardy sleep of the soldier, with the earth for his bed, the knapsack for his pillow.

'And now, soldiers and brethren, we have met in a peaceful valley, on the eve of battle, while the sunlight is dying away behind yonder heights—the sunlight that, to-morrow morn, will glimmer on scenes of blood. We have met, amid the whitening tents of our encampment,—in times of terror and of gloom have we gathered together—God grant it may not be for the last time!

'It is a solemn moment. Brethren, does not the solemn voice of nature seem to echo the sympathies of the hour? The flag of our country droops heavily from yonder staff; the breeze has died away along the green plain of Chadd's Ford—the plain that spreads before us, glistening in the sunlight; the heights of the Brandywine arise gloomy and grand beyond the waters of yonder stream, and all nature holds a pause of solemn silence, on the eve

of the uproar and bloodshed and strife of to-morrow.'

"The propriety of this language was manifest. Breathless attention was pictured upon every countenance, and the smallest whisper could be distinctly heard. Pausing a moment, as if running back, in his mind's eye, over the eventful past, he again repeated his text:—

"'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

'And have they not taken the sword?

'Let the desolated plain, the blood-soddened valley, the burnt farm-house, blackening in the sun, the sacked village, and the ravaged town, answer; let the whitening bones of the butchered farmer, strewn along the fields of his homestead, answer; let the starving mother, with the babe clinging to the withered breast, that can afford no sustenance, let her answer; with the death-rattle mingling with the murmuring tones that mark the last struggle for life—let the dying mother and her babe answer!

'It was but a day past and our land slept in peace. War was not here—wrong was not here. Fraud, and woe, and misery, and want, dwelt not among us. From the eternal solitude of the green woods arose the blue smoke of the settler's cabin, and golden fields of corn looked forth from amid the waste of the wilderness, and the glad music of human voices awoke the silence of the forest.

'Now! God of mercy, behold the change! Under the shadow of a pretext—under the sanctity of the name of God—invoking the Redeemer to their aid, do these foreign hirelings slay our people!

They throng our towns; they darken our plains; and now they encompass our posts on the lonely plain of Chadd's Ford.

"The effect was electric. The keen eye of the in-trepid Wayne flashed fire. The neighboring sentinels, who had paused to listen, quickened their pace, with a proud tread and a nervous feeling, impatient for vengeance on the vandal foe.

"Gathering strength once more, he checked the choking sensations his own recital had caused, and continued:

"'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

"Brethren, think me not unworthy of belief, when I tell you that the doom of the Britisher is near! Think me not vain, when I tell you that beyond the cloud that now enshrouds us, I see gathering, thick and fast, the darker cloud and the blacker storm of a Divine retribution!

'They may conquer us on the morrow! Might and wrong may prevail, and we may be driven from this field—but the hour of God's own vengeance will surely come!

'Ay, if in the vast solitudes of eternal space, if in the heart of the boundless universe, there throbs the being of an awful God, quick to avenge, and sure to punish guilt, then will the man, George of Brunswick, called king, feel in his brain and in his heart the vengeance of the Eternal Jehovah! A blight will be upon his life—a withered brain, an accurst intellect; a blight will be upon his children, and on his people. Great God! how dread the punishment!

'A crowded populace, peopling the dense towns where the

man of money thrives, while the labourer starves; want striding among the people in all its forms of terror; an ignorant and God-defying priesthood chuckling over the miseries of millions; a proud and merciless nobility adding wrong to wrong, and heaping insult upon robbery and fraud; royalty corrupt to the very heart; aristocracy rotten to the core; crime and want linked hand in hand, and tempting men to deeds of woe and death—these are a part of the doom and the retribution that shall come upon the English throne and the English people!'

"This was pronounced with a voice of such power, that its tones might have reached almost to the Briton's camp, and struck upon the ear of Howe as the prophetic inspiration of one whose keen eye had read from the dark tablets of futurity.

"Looking around upon the officers, he perceived that Washington and Lafayette had half risen from their seats, and were gazing spell-bound at him, as if to drink in every word he uttered.

"Taking advantage of the pervading feeling, he went on:—

"'Soldiers—I look around upon your familiar faces with a strange interest! To-morrow morning we will all go forth to battle—for need I tell you that your unworthy minister will march with you, invoking God's aid in the fight?—we will march forth to battle! Need I exhort you to fight the good fight, to fight for your homesteads, and for your wives and children?

'My friends, I might urge you to fight, by the galling memories of British wrong! Walton—I might tell you of your father

butchered in the silence of midnight on the plains of Trenton; I might picture his grey hairs dabbled in blood; I might ring his death-shriek in your ears. Shelmire—I might tell you of a mother butchered, and a sister outraged—the lonely farm-house, the night assault, the roof in flames, the shouts of the troopers, as they despatch their victim, the cries for mercy, the pleadings of innocence for pity. I might paint this all again, in the terrible colors of the vivid reality, if I thought your courage needed such wild excitement.

'But I know you are strong in the might of the Lord. You will forth to battle on the morrow with light hearts and determined spirits, though the solemn duty—the duty of avenging the dead—may rest heavy on your souls.

'And in the hour of battle, when all around is darkness, lit by the lurid cannon glare and the piercing musket flash—when the wounded strew the ground, and the dead litter your path—then remember, soldiers, that God is with you. The eternal God fights for you—He rides on the battle cloud, He sweeps onward with the march of the hurricane charge—God, the Awful and the Infinite, fights for you, and you will triumph.'

"Roused by this manly and pathetic appeal, a low murmur ran from man to man, as a heartfelt response; and the chieftains who were near the speaker, felt proud and happy in the command of such true hearts and tried blades. But darkness was enveloping all, and he hastened to conclude.

"'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

'You have taken the sword, but not in the spirit of wrong and ravage. You have taken the sword for your homes, for your wives, for your little ones. You have taken the sword for truth, for justice and right, and to you the promise is, Be of good cheer, for your foes have taken the sword in defiance of all that man holds dear, in blasphemy of God—they shall *perish by the sword*.

'And now, brethren and soldiers, I bid you all farewell. Many of us may fall in the fight of to-morrow—God rest the souls of the fallen; many of us may live to tell the story of the fight of to-morrow; and, in the memory of all, will ever rest and linger the quiet scene of this autumnal night.

'Solemn twilight advances over the valley; the woods on the opposite heights fling their long shadows over the green of the meadow; around us are the tents of the continental host, the suppressed bustle of the camp, the hurried tramp of the soldiers to and fro among the tents, the stillness and silence that marks the eve of battle.

'When we meet again, may the long shadows of twilight be flung over a peaceful land.

'God in heaven grant it.'

"And now the last ray of lingering light had departed, and they were left in darkness. Presuming it proper to dismiss his auditors, he proposed a parting prayer, and immediately every head was uncovered and bowed in reverence, while, with outstretched hands, that sincere old man in the homespun garb thus addressed the throne of grace.

"'Great Father, we bow before thee. We invoke thy blessing, we deprecate thy wrath, we return thee thanks for the past, we ask thy aid for the future. For we are in times of trouble, oh, Lord! and sore beset by foes, merciless and unpitying; the sword gleams over our land, and the dust of the soil is dampened with the blood of our neighbors and friends.

'Oh! God of mercy, we pray thy blessing on the American arms. Make the man of our hearts strong in thy wisdom; bless, we beseech, with renewed life and strength, our hope and thy instrument, even GEORGE WASHINGTON. Shower thy counsels on the honorable, the Continental Congress. Visit the tents of our host; comfort the soldier in his wounds and afflictions; nerve him for the hour of fight; prepare him for the hour of death.

'And in the hour of defeat, oh, God of Hosts, do thou be our stay; and in the hour of triumph be thou our guide.

'Teach us to be merciful. Though the memory of galling wrongs be at our hearts, knocking for admittance, that they may fill us with desires for revenge, yet let us, oh, Lord, spare the vanquished, though they never spared us in their hour of butchery and bloodshed. And, in the hour of death, do thou guide us into the abode prepared for the blest; so shall we return thanks unto thee, through Christ, our Redeemer.—GOD PROSPER THE CAUSE.—*Amen*"

During the recital of this interesting and thrilling incident of the Revolution, the veterans—even Higgins, too—laid down

their knives and forks, and listened as if carried back to the memorable eve of the battle of Brandywine, and filled with the hopes and fears of the period. At its conclusion, they expressed their approbation of the manner of the recital, and the beauty of the sermon.

"That minister was one of the kind that I like," said Wilson. "He could preach peace as long as peace was wise, and buckle on his armor and fight when it became his duty."

"Mr. Harmer handles his pen well," remarked Morton, "but such an incident would make any pen write well of itself. There's fire in it."

"Yes, a whole heap of fire," put in Mrs. Harmar, who thought she must make a remark, as she had been quieting the children while the latter part of the sermon and the remarks upon it were listened to by the others.

"But the Lord didn't assist us much in that next day's battle," said old Harmar. "We had hard fighting, and then were compelled to retreat."

"It was all for the best," said Wilson. "We shouldn't have known our enemies nor ourselves without losing that battle. The harder the struggle for liberty, the more we enjoy it when won."

"That's true," said young Harmar, "The freedom dearest bought is highest prized, and Americans have learned the value of that inestimable gem."

The dinner was, by this time, pretty well disposed of, and the party adjourned to the large parlor, where they were soon

comfortable seated. Mrs. Harmar would make one of the company, and the children would force their way in to see and hear the "sogers." The windows were up, and the gentle breeze of summer blew softly through the parlor, thus relieving the otherwise oppressive atmosphere.

But we must introduce the company to the reader. Old Hannar was seated on one end of the sofa, with one of the small children on his knee. He was a stout, hearty-looking man of about seventy, with silvery hair, and a face much embrowned by exposure and furrowed by time. The general expression of his features was a hearty good humor, as if perfectly satisfied with things around. On the other end of the sofa sat Mr. Higgins, a thin, small-featured, bald-headed man, looking much older than old Mr. Harmar. On the opposite sofa sat Mr. Morton and Mr. Wilson. The first was a large-bodied, full-faced man, slightly bald, with a scar across his forehead, from the right eye to the left side of his head. His appearance bespoke an active life, and a strong constitution; and his eye yet beamed with intelligence. Mr. Wilson was evidently about seventy-five, with a long, lank face, tall figure, and head scantily covered with grey hair. Mr. Smith sat in an easy arm-chair. His appearance was much the same as that of Mr. Higgins, though his face expressed more intelligence. He had a troublesome cough, and was evidently very weak. Mr. Jackson Harmar sat on a chair next to his father. He was about thirty-five, rather short and thin, with long brown hair, wild, blue eyes, in a "fine frenzy rolling," and a very literary

appearance generally. Mrs. Harraar sat near her husband, with two very mischievous little boys, apparently about six and eight years of age, by her side. She had a childish face, but might have been thought pretty by a loving and indulgent husband.

STORY OF THE PRAYER

"There is only one other scene during the struggle for our country's right," said young Harmar, "which I would compare with the one I have just narrated; and that is the scene in Congress —the old Continental Congress—during the first prayer by the Rev. Mr. Duche."

"I've heard something of that prayer," said Morton, "since the Revolution, but nothing that I could depend on."

"An account of the scene is given by John Adams, who was a chief actor in it," said young Harmar.

"Old John Adams?" enquired Higgins. "He was the man! He was the Washington of our politics during the war. He was the man!" and Higgins rubbed his hands together.

"Thomas Jefferson, take your foot off your brother's, and quit pinching him," interrupted Mrs. Harmar.

"I have Mr. Adams' account of that first prayer and its effects," said young Harmar, "and here it is." So saying, he pulled from his pocket a paper into which the account had been copied, and read:—

"'When the Congress met, Mr. Gushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay, of New York, and Mr. Rutledge, of South Carolina, because we were so divided in our religious sentiments, some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians, and some

Congregationalists, that we could not join in the same act of worship. Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said, 'that he was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from any gentleman of piety, and who was, at the same time, a friend of his country. He was a stranger in Philadelphia, but had heard that Mr. Duche (Dushay they pronounced it) deserved that character, and therefore he moved that Mr. Duche, an Episcopal clergyman, might be desired to read prayers to the Congress to-morrow morning.' The motion was seconded, and passed in the affirmative.—Mr. Randolph, our President, waited on Mr. Duche, and received for answer, that if his health would permit he certainly would. Accordingly, next morning he appeared with his clerk, and, in his pontificals, read several prayers in the established form, and then read the collect for the seventh day of September, which was the thirty-fifth psalm. You must remember, this was the next morning after we had heard the rumor of the horrible cannonade of Boston. *It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that psalm to be read on that morning*.

"'After this, Mr. Duche, unexpectedly to every body, struck out into an extemporary prayer which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better prayer, or one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper himself never prayed with such fervor, such correctness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime, for America, for Congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon every body here. I

must beg you to read that psalm. If there is any faith in the sortes Virgilianæ, or sortes Homericæ, or especially the sortes Biblicæ, it would be thought providential.'

"The thirty-fifth psalm was indeed appropriate to the news received, and the exigencies of the times. It commences:—

"'Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that fight against me.

'Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help.

'Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.'

"What a subject for contemplation does this picture present. The forty-four members of the first Congress, in their Hall, all bent before the mercy-seat, and asking Him that their enemies 'might be as chaff before the wind.' WASHINGTON was kneeling there; and Henry and Randolph, and Rutledge, and Lee, and Jay; and by their side there stood, bowed in reverence, the Puritan patriots of New England, who, at that moment, had reason to believe that an armed soldiery was wasting their humble households. It was believed that Boston had been bombarded and destroyed. They prayed fervently 'for America, for the Congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the town of Boston;' and who can realize the emotion with which they turned imploringly to Heaven for divine interposition and aid? 'It was enough to melt a heart of stone. I saw the tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave Quakers of Philadelphia.'"

"Yes," said Wilson, when young Harmar had concluded, "that was a scene equal, at least, to the one on the eve of Brandywine:

how finely old John Adams speaks about it!"

"That Dr. Duche forgot his connexion with the Church of England, and only thought of his country," remarked Morton. "He was a good man."

"Yes; and he prayed in the presence of as good a set of men as was ever assembled together," added Smith. "Them was men—those Congressmen. They didn't get eight dollars a day for making speeches."

"No," put in Higgins, "but they earned a great deal more. Some of 'em lost all the property they had, during the war."

"The spirit which animated our countrymen at that period was the noblest which could prompt the deeds of men," said young Harmar, growing quite eloquent. "From the men who emptied the tea into Boston harbor, to the statesman of the Continental Congress, all were filled with patriotism, and that's the most unselfish of human motives."

STORY OF LYDIA DARRAGH

"Mrs. Harmar, your sex nobly maintained their reputation for devotion and patriotism during the Revolution," said Wilson. "Did you ever hear how a Quaker lady, named Lydia Darragh, saved the army under Washington from being surprised?"

"No, never," replied Mrs. Harmar.

"No! Then, as a Philadelphia lady, you should know about it," said Wilson.

"The superior officers of the British army were accustomed to hold their consultations on all subjects of importance at the house of William and Lydia Darragh, members of the Society of Friends, immediately opposite to the quarters of the commander-in-chief, in Second street. It was in December, in the year that they occupied the city, that the adjutant-general of the army desired Lydia to have an apartment prepared for himself and friends, and to order her family early to bed; adding, when ready to depart, 'Notice shall be given to you to let us out, and to extinguish the fire and candles.' The manner of delivering this order, especially that part of it which commanded the early retirement of her family, strongly excited Lydia's curiosity, and determined her, if possible, to discover the mystery of their meeting. Approaching without shoes the room in which the conference was held, and placing her ear to the keyhole, she heard the order read for the troops to quit the city on the night of

the 4th, to attack the American army encamped at White Marsh. Returning immediately to her room, she laid herself down, but, in a little while, a loud knocking at the door, which for some time she pretended not to hear, proclaimed the intention of the party to retire. Having let them out, she again sought her bed, but not to sleep; the agitation of her mind prevented it. She thought only of the dangers that threatened the lives of thousands of her countrymen, and believing it to be in her power to avert the evil, determined, at all hazards, to apprize General Washington of his danger. Telling her husband, at early dawn, that flour was wanting for domestic purposes, and that she should go to Frankford to obtain it, she repaired to headquarters, got access to General Howe, and obtained permission to pass the British lines. Leaving her bag at the mill, Lydia now pressed forward towards the American army, and meeting Captain Allen M'Lean, an officer, from his superior intelligence and activity, selected by General Washington to gain intelligence, discovered to him the important secret, obtaining his promise not to jeopardize her safety by telling from whom he had obtained it. Captain M'Lean, with all speed, informed the commander-in-chief of his danger, who, of course, took every necessary step to baffle the contemplated enterprize, and to show the enemy that he was prepared to receive them. Lydia returned home with her flour, secretly watched the movements of the British, and saw them depart. Her anxiety during their absence was excessive, nor was it lessened when, on their return, the adjutant-general, summoning

her to his apartment and locking the door with an air of mystery, demanded 'Whether any of the family were up on the night that he had received company at her house?' She told him, that, without an exception, they had all retired at eight o'clock. 'You, I know, Lydia, were asleep, for I knocked at your door three times before you heard me, yet, although I am at a loss to conceive who gave the information of our intended attack to General Washington, it is certain we were betrayed; for, on arriving near his encampment, we found his cannon mounted, his troops under arms, and at every point so perfectly prepared to receive us, that we were compelled, like fools, to make a retrograde movement, without inflicting on our enemy any manner of injury whatever.'"

"Ha! ha! a neat stratagem, and a patriotic woman," exclaimed young Harmar.

"Talking of the services of the women during the war," said Higgins, "reminds me of Molly Macauly, or Sergeant Macauly, as we knew her while in the army. She was a Pennsylvanian, and was so enthusiastic in her patriotism, that she donned a man's dress, and joined the army, when she became a sergeant, and fought bravely in several battles and skirmishes. Nobody suspected that she was not what she seemed to be; for she was tall, stout, and rough-looking, and associated with men very freely. Molly had a custom of swinging her sabre over her head, and hurraing for Mad Anthony, as she called General Wayne. She was wounded at Brandywine, and, her sex being discovered, returned home."

"She was not the only woman in disguise in the army," said

old Harmar. "There was Elizabeth Canning, who was at Fort Washington, and, when her husband was killed, took his place at the gun, loading, priming, and firing with good effect, till she was wounded in the breast by a grape-shot. While our army lay at Valley Forge, several Pennsylvania women were detected in disguise, enduring all kinds of want, and with less murmuring than the men themselves. Oh, yes! the women were all right in those days, however they may have degenerated since."

"Come, no slander on the women of the present day," said Mrs. Harmar. "I've no doubt, take them all in all; they will not suffer in comparison with those of any age."

"Bravo! Mrs. Harmar," exclaimed Wilson.

"Women, now, are ready enough with disguises," remarked young Harmar.

"To be sure!" replied his wife, "and always were."

THE DEAD MAN'S LAKE

"Mr. Smith, can't we have a leaf from your experience in those trying times?" said old Harmar.

"Ah! sir, I would have much to tell if I had time to collect my memory—much to tell, sir. But though I saw a great deal in the Revolution, I heard much more."

"Tell us anything to pass time," said young Harmar. "I've heard my father speak of some bold exploits up in the vicinity of New York. The history of the Cowboys and Skinners always interested me."

"Ah! I've heard many a story of them," replied Smith. "I'll tell you of one old Jack Hanson told me—you recollect old Jack, don't you, Harmar? He was with us at Valley Forge."

"That I do," replied old Harmer. "He gave me a piece of his blanket, and an old shoe, when I believe I was freezing to death."

"Yes, he was ever a good-hearted fellow—Jack Hanson was. He's been dead now about ten years. Well, as I was saying, he told me a story about those Cowboys and Skinners which will bear telling again."

"It happened when the British were in possession of the city of New York. Many brave men did all that could be done to destroy the power and comfort of the king's representatives, and alarm them for their personal safety; and, to the greater part of them, the neighboring county of West Chester furnished both the

home, and a theatre of action. Their system of warfare partook of the semi-savage and partisan predatory character, and many fierce and desperate encounters took place between them and the outlawed hordes of desperadoes in the pay of the British.

"The refugees, banded together for the purpose of preying upon the patriots, and then retreating behind the shelter of the royal fortifications, were composed of the vilest miscreants that could be gathered from the dregs of any community, and were generally known by the slang name of 'Skinners.'

"To oppose these desperadoes, and protect their lives and property from insult, many of the whigs had united in small parties, and were styled by the Skinners, in derision, the 'Cow-boys.' One of the most active and energetic of these bands, ever ready for any species of patriotic duty, was led by Nicholas Odell. Nick, as he was familiarly termed, though entirely uneducated, was one of the shrewdest men to be found; for Nature had gifted him where cultivation was wanting, and he became, in consequence, a most formidable and dangerous enemy in the service he had chosen. But fifty men composed his entire force, and with these he did his country much service, and the enemy no little mischief.

"The line of the Bronx River was the route always kept in view by Nick and his men; and, at six several points, places of rendezvous were established, at which they were generally to be found when off duty, which was, indeed, seldom the case.

"One of these places was on the banks of that stream, where

the water was so wide and deep as to render it perilous for any but an expert and experienced swimmer to attempt its passage, and always placid, with a sort of oily surface looking like the backed waters of a mill-pond. The banks were covered with a thick undergrowth of vines, saplings, and trees in abundance, so that autumn did not, by taking away the leaves, expose the spot to the observation of the passer-by. Here a rude board shanty had been knocked up in a hurry, and was used to shelter the men from the intense cold of the winter nights. This episode in the stream Nick had named 'Dead Man's Lake,' in consequence of finding on its banks the body of a man who had been murdered and mutilated by his old enemies, the Skinners.

"One evening, in the depth of winter, Nick, who had been a long distance above White Plains, hastened back to the lake in order to intercept a body of Skinners, on their way from Connecticut to the city, with considerable booty taken from the inhabitants in the vicinity of the Sound. They numbered about eighty, under the control of a petty Scotch officer named McPherson. Nick had contrived to gain intelligence of their movements and access to their party, by means of John Valentine, one of his own scouts, who, by his direction, had met and joined the tories with a specious tale, and promised to lead them through the country so securely that none of the prowling rebels should encounter them.

"Previous to John's starting on his perilous adventure, it was agreed that Nick, with all his men, should remain the whole

night in question concealed at the lake, without entering the hut. John was then to bring the refugees to the spot, shelter them in the hut, and, at a favorable moment, he would sing out, 'Hurrah for Gin'ral Washington, and down with the red-coats!' when the Cow-boys were to rush in, and take them by surprise.

"Having reached the lake about nine o'clock in the evening, Nick proceeded to devise a plan for concealment, for he expected to wait several hours. The cold was intense, and, like all the servants of Congress, Nick and his men were but ill prepared to resist the inclemency of the weather.

"Nick was in perplexity; no plan could be devised with satisfaction to the majority, and they stood in absolute danger of perishing with cold. The debate on the subject was still in progress, when heavy flakes of snow began to fall briskly, with promising appearances of a long continuance. 'Good!' said Nick, half in soliloquy, as he viewed the feathery element, and a new idea seemed to strike him, 'I have hit it at last. Boys, no grumblin' or skulkin' now, for I won't have it. You must do as I am goin' to order, or we part company.'

"So saying, he directed the whole of his men to enter a swamp meadow which was behind the shanty, and had been rendered hard and porous by the weather. Here he directed them to spread their blankets, and lie down with the locks of their muskets between their knees, and the muzzle protected by a wooden stopper kept for the purpose. Nick enforced this command with an explanation of its advantages: the snow being dry, and not

subject to drift, would soon cover them, keeping them quite warm, and would also conceal them at their ease. The porous quality of the ground would enable them to distinguish the distant approach of the enemy, and therefore they could snatch a few moments sleep in the snow. To prevent its being fatal or injurious, he made each man, previous to lying down, drink freely of rye whiskey. Four long hours elapsed, by which time the hardy patriots were completely under the snow, being covered with nearly eight inches of it.

"The keenest eye, or acutest cunning, could not have detected in those undulating hillocks aught but the natural irregularities of swampy ground.

"At length, about two o'clock in the morning, John arrived with his *devoted* followers. They were right thankful for the shelter of the shanty, and McPherson swore he would report John's generous conduct at head-quarters, and procure him a deserved reward.

"'Wait,' said John; '*I have not done the half that I intend to do for you*.'

"Nick, whose *bed* was nearest the hovel, now arose, and placed himself against it, that he might be ready to act when John's signal was given. He first, however, awoke his men, without permitting them to rise, by the summary process of slightly pricking each one with the sharp point of a bayonet.

"The tories, stowed like sheep in the little hut, soon began to drink, and, as they did so, became very valorous and boastful.

McPherson, singularly communicative to John, detailed his atrocities on the route with savage exultation. He feared no assault—not he! He was strong enough to repel any handful of half-starved, skulking outlaws. If he caught any of the Cow-boys he would hang them to their own trees, and manure the soil with the blood of their women.

"John had crept to the door by degrees, and now stood with his hand upon the raised latchet. He applauded the officer's remarks, and was willing, he said, to aid him in the deed he contemplated. He then proposed a toast, and, filling a tin-cup with liquor, said in a loud voice, '*Hurrah for Ginral Washington, and down with the red-coats*!' The liquor was dashed in McPherson's face, and John vanished from the hut. Nick immediately summoned his men by a repetition of the toast, and the fifty hillocks of snow were suddenly changed, as if by magic, into as many armed and furious 'rebels.' Before the Skinners could recover from the momentary surprise into which this curious incident had thrown them, a volley of powder and shot had been fired into their midst. Dashing like a frightened hare through the open door, McPherson beheld his assailants. His fears magnified their numbers, and, conceiving there was no hope in *fight*, he summoned his men to follow him in *flight*.

"They madly rushed after him, and forcing their way through the dry limbs of brush that stuck up on the banks of the lake, gained the frozen surface. More than one half their number had taken this course, while the rest had either fallen victims

to the first fire, or taken to their heels towards the main road. Suddenly a terrible crash was heard, accompanied by a splash, and a hubbub of unearthly screams. The ice had broken, and 'Dead Man's Lake' was accomplishing a victory for the handful of American patriots who stood upon its banks.

"The result was, that over twenty of the Skinners were taken prisoners. Only half-a-dozen were killed by fire-arms. The lake was examined at sunrise, and fifteen bodies were drawn from its remorseless bosom. The remainder, McPherson among them, escaped."

"That Nick Odell was nearly equal to old Nick himself in stratagems," said Wilson, when Smith had concluded.

"It's a wonder the men didn't freeze to death under the snow," said Morton. "I think I should have been opposed to trying such a way of disposing of myself."

"Oh! there 's no doubt about its keeping you warm," said old Harmar.

"How can cold snow keep men warm?" enquired Thomas Jefferson Harmar.

"I suppose," answered Higgins, "that it's much like blowing your warm breath on anything hot to cool it."

As nobody seemed disposed to contradict this explanation, old Higgins took it for granted that he was correct; and Thomas Jefferson was satisfied.

STORY OF THE HALF-BREED

"Now," said young Harmar, who, as a literary gentleman, was anxious to collect as many incidents of the Revolution as he could from these old men; "now, Mr. Higgins, you must oblige us by recalling something of your experience."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.