

Barr Amelia E.

A Song of a Single Note: A Love Story



Amelia Barr

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PROLOGUE

"Love, its flutes will still be stringing,
Lovers still will sigh and kneel;
Freedom sets her trumpets ringing
To the clash of smiting steel."
So I weave of love and glory,
Homely toil, and martial show,
Fair romance from the grand story
Lived a century ago.

CHAPTER I. RED OR BLUE RIBBONS

It was the fourth year of the captivity of New York, and the beleaguered city, in spite of military pomp and display, could not hide the desolations incident to her warlike occupation. The beautiful trees and groves which once shaded her streets and adorned her suburbs had been cut down by the army sappers; her gardens and lawns upturned for entrenchments and indented by artillery wheels; and some of the best parts of the city blackened and mutilated by fire. Her churches had been turned into prisons and hospitals, and were centres of indescribable suffering and poisonous infection; while over the burnt district there had sprung up a town of tents inhabited by criminals and by miserable wretches whom starvation and despair had turned into highwaymen.

But these conditions were the work of man. Nature still lavished upon the captive city a glory of sunshine and blue skies, and winds, full of the freshness and sparkle of the great sea, blew through all her sickly streets. Wherever the gardens had not been destroyed, there was the scent of mays and laburnums, and the indescribable beauty of apple blossoms on the first day of their birth.

In front of one of these fortunate enclosures, belonging to a little house on Queen Street, an old gentleman was standing, looking wistfully in at a trellis of small red roses. He turned away with a sigh as a man dressed like a sailor touched him on the arm, saying, as he did so:

"Well, then, Elder, a good afternoon to you? I am just from Boston, and I have brought you a letter from your son."

"You, De Vries! I didna look for you just yet."

"You know how it is. I am a man of experience, and I had a good voyage both ways."

"And Robertson and Elliot and Ludlow will have a good percentage on your cargoes?"

"That is the way of business. It is as it ought to be. I do not defraud or condemn the Government. It is the young – who have no knowledge or experience – who do such things."

"What do you bring in, Captain?"

"Some provisions of all kinds; and I shall take back some merchandise of all kinds – for them who can not get it in any other way."

"To Boston again?"

"This time only to the Connecticut coast. The goods will easily go further. The trade is great. What then? I must waste no time; I have to live by my business."

"And I have nae doubt you think the 'business' on the King's service."

"Every respectable man is of that way of thinking. We carry no military stores. I am very precise about that. It is one of my principles. And what, then, would the merchants of New York do without this opening for trade? They would be ruined; and there would also be starvation. They who say different are fools; we give help and comfort to the royalists, and we distress the rebels, for we take from them all their ready money. If the trade was not 'on the King's service,' the Governor would not be in it."

"Even so! That circumstance shows it is not far out o' the way."

"'Out of the way!' What the deuce, Elder! I am a deacon in the Middle Kirk. My respectability and honesty cannot be concealed: any one can see them. Batavius de Vries would not steal a groschen; no, nor half of one!"

"Easy, easy, Captain! Why should you steal? It is far mair lucrative to cheat than to steal; and the first is in the way o' business – as you were remarking. But this or that, my good thanks for the letter you have brought me; and is there anything I can do in return for your civility?"

"If you will kindly call at my dwelling and tell Madame I am arrived here safe and sound; that would be a great satisfaction for us both."

"I pass your door, Captain, and I will tell Madame the good news. Nae doubt she will gie me a smile for it."

Then De Vries turned away with some remark about business, and Elder Semple stood still a moment, fingering the bulky letter which had been given him; and, as he did so, wondering what he should do, for "ill news comes natural these days," he thought, "and maybe I had better read it through, before I speak a word to Janet anent it. I'll step into the King's Arms and see what Alexander has to say."

When he entered the coffee-room he saw his son, Mr. Neil Semple, and Governor Robertson sitting at a table with some papers between them. Neil smiled gravely, and moved a chair into place for his father, and the Governor said pleasantly:

"How are you, Elder? It is a long time since I saw you."

"I am as well as can be expected, considering a' things, Governor; but what for will I be 'Elder,' when I have nae kirk to serve?"

"Is that my fault, Elder?"

"You might have spoke a word for the reopening of the kirk, and the return o' Dr. Rogers. Your affirmative would have gone a long way toward it. And the loyal Calvinists o' New York hae been too long kirkless. What for didn't you speak the word, Governor? What for?"

"Indeed, Elder, you know yourself that Dr. Rogers is a proved traitor. As a fundamental rule, a Calvinist is a democrat – exceptions, of course – like yourself and your worthy sons, but as a fundamental, natural democrats. There is the Church of England open for all services."

"Aye; and there is the Kirk o' Scotland closed for all services. What has the Kirk done against King George?"

"Must I remind you, Elder, that her ministers, almost without exception, are against the King? Did not this very Dr. Rogers pray in the pulpit for the success of the rebels? As for the Church of Scotland, she has been troubling kings, and encouraging rebellion ever since there was a Church of Scotland. What for? No reason at all, that I can see."

"Yes, she had reason enough. Scotsmen read their Bibles, and they thought it worth while to fight for the right to do so. There's your colleague, Judge Ludlow; his great-grandfather fought with Oliver Cromwell in England in a quarrel of the same kind. He should have said a word for us."

"Elder, it is undeniable that Dissent and Calvinism are opposed to royalty."

"The Kirk is not subject to Cæsar; she is a law unto hersel'; and the Methodists are dissenters, yet their chapel is open."

"The loyalty of John Wesley is beyond impeachment. He is a friend of the King."

"Yet his brother Charles was imprisoned for praying for the Pretender, and nae doubt at all, he himsel' would gladly have followed Prince Charlie."

"As the Semples and Gordons *did do*."

"To their everlasting glory and honor! God bless them!"

"Will your Excellency please to sign these papers?" interrupted Neil; and his calm ignoring of the brewing quarrel put a stop to it. The papers were signed, and the Governor rising, said, as he offered his hand to the Elder:

"Our sufferings and deprivations are unavoidable, sir. Is there any use in quarreling with the wheel that splashes us?"

"There is nane; yet, if men have grievances – "

"Grievances! That is a word that always pleases, and always cheats. There are no grievances between you and me, I hope."

"None to breed ill-will. Human nature is fallible, but as a rule, Tory doesna eat Tory."

"And as for the Whigs, Elder, you know the old fable of the wolf and the lamb. Judging from that past event, Tory and Whig may soon make an eternal peace."

He went out well pleased at the implication, and Neil, after a few moments' silence, said, "I am going to register these documents, sir, or I would walk home with you."

"Much obligated to you, Neil, but I can tak' very good care o' mysel'. And I have a letter from your brother Alexander. I must see what news he sends, before I tell your mother."

He was opening his letter as he spoke, carefully cutting round the large red seal, which bore the arms of the Semples, and which, therefore, he would have thought it a kind of sacrilege to mutilate. A cup of coffee had been brought to him, and he took one drink of it, and then no more; for everything was quickly forgotten or ignored in the intelligence he was receiving. That it was unexpected and astonishing was evident from his air of perplexity and from the emotion which quite unconsciously found relief in his constant ejaculation, "*Most extraordinary! Most extraordinary!*"

Finally, he folded up the epistle, threw a shilling on the table for his entertainment, and with more speed than was usual, took the road to the west of Broadway. He had been remarkable in days past for his erect carriage, but he walked now with his head bent and his eyes fixed on the ground. There was so much that he did not want to see, though he was naturally the most curious and observant of mortals. Fifteen minutes' walk brought him to the river side, and anon to a large house separated from his own by a meadow. There were horses tied to the fence and horses tethered in the garden; and in a summer-house under a huge linden tree, a party of soldiers drinking and playing dominoes. The front door was partly open, and a piece of faded red ribbon was nailed on its lintel. Semple knocked loudly with his walking-stick, and immediately a stout, rosy woman came toward him, wiping her hands on a clean towel as she did so.

"Well, then, Elder!" she cried, "you are a good sight! What is the matter, that you never come once to see us, this long time?"

"I come now to bring you good news Joanna – Madame, I should say."

"No, no! I make not so much ceremony. When you say 'Joanna' I think of the good days, before everybody was unfriends with each other."

"Well, then, Joanna, your husband is back again; as he says, safe and sound, and I promised him to let you know as I passed."

"But come in once, Elder – come in!"

"Some day – some day soon. I am in haste at this time – and you have much company, I see." He spoke with evident disapproval, and Joanna was at once on the defensive.

"I know not how to alter that. A good wife must do some little thing these hard times; for what is to come after them, who knows – and there are many boys and girls – but I am not discontented; I like to look at the bright side, and that is right, is it not?"

Semple had already turned away, and he only struck his cane on the flagged walk in answer. For while Joanna was speaking he had casually noticed the fluttering red ribbon above her head; and it had brought from the past a memory, unbidden and unexpected, which filled his eyes with the thin, cold tears of age, and made his heart tremble with a fear he would not allow himself to entertain.

He was so troubled that he had to consciously gather his forces together before he entered his own dwelling. It, at least, kept visible state and order; the garden, perhaps, showed less variety and wealth of flowers; but the quiet dignity of its handsomely furnished rooms was intact. In their usual parlor, which was at the back of the house, he found his wife. "You are late to-day, Alexander," she said pleasantly; "I was just waiting till I heard your footstep. Now I can make the tea."

"I'll be glad o' a cup, Janet. I'm fairly tired, my dearie."

"What kept you so far ahint your ordinar time? I thought it long waiting for you."

"Twa or three things kept me, that I am not accountable for. I was on the way hame, when Batavius De Vries spoke to me."

"He's back again, is he? Few words would do between you and him."

"He brought me a letter from our lad in Boston; and I thought I would go into the King's Arms and read it."

"You might have come hame."

"I might; but I thought if there was any bad news folded in the paper, I would just leave it outside our hame."

"There is naething wrang, then?"

"It is an astonishment – the lad has sold all he had and gone to Scotland. When he can find a small estate that suits him, he thinks o' buying it, and becoming 'Semple o' that Ilk.' Alexander aye had a hankering after land."

"He has the siller, I suppose; there is no land given awa in Scotland."

"Alexander wasn't born yesterday. He has been sending siller to England ever since the first whisper o' these troubles. Ten years ago, he told me the Stamp Act riots spelt Revolution and maybe Independence; and that in such case the best we could hope for would be a dozen or mair states, each with its ain rights and privileges and government; and a constant war between them. He is a far-seeing lad, is Alexander."

"I think little o' his far sight. There are others who see further and clearer: petty states and constant war! Na, na! *It's not so written.*"

"Perhaps he is right, Janet."

"Perhaps is a wide word, Alexander. Perhaps he is wrang. Has he sailed yet? And pray, what is to become of the little Maria?"

"He sailed a week since – and Maria is coming to us."

"Coming to us! And what will we do wi' the lassie?"

"We'll just hae to love and comfort her. In a way she has neither father nor mother – the one being in the grave and the other beyond seas. She may be a pleasure to our auld age; when she was here last she was a bonnie, lovesome little creature."

"That is mair than eight years ago, and she was eight years old then; she'll be sixteen and a half, or, perhaps, nearer seventeen now – you ken weel what to expect from lassies o' that indiscreet age; or, if you don't, you ought to."

"I know she is our ain grandbairn and that we be to give her love and all that love calls for. She was the very image o' yoursel' Janet, and her father was much set up o'er the extraordinar likeness."

"I thought she favored you, Alexander."

"A little – a little, perhaps – but not enough to spoil her. If she has kept the Gordon beauty, she will be a' the mair welcome to me. I have aye had a strong prejudice in its favor;" and he leaned forward and took Madame's small brown hand, and then there was a look and a smile between the old lovers that made all words impotent and unnecessary.

Such pauses are embarrassing; the lealest hearts must come back quickly to ordinary life, and as the Elder passed his cup for more tea, Madame asked: "What way is the lassie coming? By land or water?"

"She is coming by land, with John Bradley and his daughter."

"How's that?"

"Madame Charlton's school had to be closed, and Agnes Bradley was one of the scholars. Her father has gone to Boston to bring her hame, and Maria being her friend and schoolmate, Bradley promised Alexander to see her safe in our home and care. Doubtless, he is well able to keep his word. If the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief can do ought to mak' travel safe, John Bradley will hae their assistance; but I'm vexed to be put under an obligation to him. I would rather have sent Neil, or even gane mysel'."

"What ails you at John Bradley? He wears the red ribbon on his breast, and it blows o'er his shop door, and he is thick as thack with a' the dignities – civil and military."

"I don't like him, and I don't like his daughter being friends with my granddaughter."

"He serves our turn now, and once is nae custom."

"Let alone the fact that girls' friendships are naething but fine words and sugar candy. I shall put a stop to this one at the very outset."

"You'll do what, gudeman?"

"Put my commands on Maria. I shall tell her that beyond yea and nay, and a fine day, or the like o' that, she is to have no intercourse wi' John Bradley's daughter."

"You'll have revolution inside the house, as weel as outside. Let the girls alane. Some young men will come between them and do your business for you. You have managed your lads pretty well – wi' my help – but two schoolgirls in love wi' one anither! they will be aboon your thumb – ane o' them may keep you busy."

"I shall lay my commands on Maria."

"And if Maria tak's after the Gordons, she'll be far mair ready to give commands than to tak' them. Let be till she gets here. When did she leave Boston?"

"Mair than a week ago, but Sunday intromits, and Bradley, being what they call a local preacher would hae to exploit his new sermon and hold a class meeting or a love feast; forbye, he wouldna neglect ony bit o' business that came his way on the road. I shouldn't wonder if they were at Stamford last Sunday, and if so, they would be maist likely at East Chester to-night. They might be here to-morrow. I'll ask Neil to ride as far as the Halfway House; he will either find, or hear tell o' them there."

"What for should Neil tak' that trouble? You ken, as weel as I do, that if Bradley promised Maria's father to deliver her into your hand, at your ain house, he would do no other way. Say you were from hame, he would just keep the lassie till he could keep his promise. He is a very Pharisee anent such sma' matters. If you have finished your tea, gudeman, I will get the dishes put by."

They both rose at these words, Madame pulled a bell rope made of a band of embroidery, and a girl brought her a basin of hot water and two clean towels. Semple lit his long, clay pipe and went into the garden to see how the early peas were coming on, and to meditate on the events the day had brought to him. Madame also had her meditations, as she carefully washed the beautiful Derby china, and the two or three Apostle teaspoons, and put them away in the glass cupboard that was raised in one corner of the room. Her thoughts were complex, woven of love and hope and fear and regret. The advent of her granddaughter was not an unmixed delight; she was past sixty, not in perfect health, and she feared the care and guiding of a girl of scarce seventeen years old.

"Just the maist unreasonable time of any woman's life," she sighed. "At that age, they are sure they know a' things, and can judge a' things; and to doubt it is rank tyranny, and they are in a blaze at a word, for they have every feeling at fever heat. A body might as well try to reason wi' a baby or a bull, for they'll either cry or rage, till you give in to them. However, Maria has a deal o' Gordon in her, and they are sensible bodies – in the main. I'll even do as the auld song advises:

"Bide me yet, and bide me yet,
For I know not what will betide me yet."

When the room was in order, she threw a shawl round her and went to her husband. "I hae come to bring you inside, Elder," she said, "the night air is chilly and damp yet, and you arena growing younger."

"I walked down as far as the river bank, Janet," he answered, "and I see the boat is rocking at her pier. Neil should look after her."

"Neil is looking after another kind of a boat at present. I hope he will have as much sense as the rats, and leave a sinking ship in good time to save himsel'."

"Janet, you should be feared to say such like words! They are fairly wicked – and they gie me a sair heart."

"Oh, forgive me, Alexander! My thoughts will fly to my lips. I forget! I forget! I hae a sair heart, too" – and they went silently into the house with this shadow between them until Janet said:

"Let me help you off wi' your coat, dearie. Your soft, warm wrap is here waiting for you," and against her gentle words and touch he had no armor. His offense melted away, he let her help him to remove his heavy satin-lined coat, with its long stiffened skirts, and fold round his spare form the damasse wrap with its warm lining of flannel. Then, with a sigh of relief he sat down, loosened his neckband, handed Madame his laces, and called for a fresh pipe.

In the meantime Madame hung the coat carefully over a chair, and in flecking off a little dust from its richly trimmed lapel, she tossed aside with an unconscious contempt, the bit of scarlet ribbon at the buttonhole. "You are requiring a new ribbon, Alexander," she said. "If you must wear your colors on your auld breast, I would, at least, hae them fresh."

He either ignored, or did not choose to notice the spirit of her words; he took them at their face value, and answered: "You are right, Janet. I'll buy a half yard in the morning. I tell you, that one bit o' rusty, draggled red ribbon gave me a heart-ache this afternoon."

Madame did not make the expected inquiry, and after a glance into her face he continued: "It was at the Van Heemskirk's house. I was talking to Joanna, and I saw it o'er the door, and remembered the night my friend Joris nailed up the blue ribbon which Batavius has taken down. I could see him standing there, with his large face smiling and shining, and his great arms reaching upward, and I could hear the stroke o' the hammer that seemed to keep time to his words: '*Alexander myn jougen!*'" he said, 'for Freedom the color is always blue. Over my house door let it blow; yes, then, over my grave also, if God's will it be.' And I answered him, 'you are a fool, Joris, and you know not what you are saying or doing, and God help you when you do come to your senses.' Then he turned round with the hammer in his hand and looked at me – I shall never forget that look – and said 'a little piece of blue ribbon, Alexander, but for a man's life and liberty it stands, for dead already is that man who is not free.' Then he took me into the garden, and as we walked he could talk of naething else, 'men do not need in their coffins to lie stark,' he said, 'they may without that, be dead; walking about this city are many dead men.'"

"Joris Van Heemskirk is a good man. Wherever he is, I ken well, he is God's man," said Janet, "doing his duty simply and cheerfully."

"As he sees duty, Janet; I am sure o' that. And as he talked he kept touching the ribbon in his waistcoat, as if it was a sacred thing, and when I said something o' the kind, he answered me out o' the Holy Book, and bid me notice God himself had chosen blue and told Israel to wear it on the fringes o' their garments as a reminder o' their deliverance by Him. Then I couldna help speaking o' the Scotch Covenanters wearing the blue ribbon, and he followed wi' the Dutch Protestors, and I was able to cap the noble army wi' the English Puritans fighting under Cromwell for civil and religious liberty."

"And gudeman!" cried Janet, all in a tremble of enthusiasm, "General Washington is at this very time wearing a broad blue ribbon across his breast;" and there was such a light in her eyes, and such pride in her voice, the Elder could not say the words that were on his tongue; he magnanimously passed by her remark and returned to his friend, Joris Van Heemskirk. "Blue or red," he continued, "we had a wonderfu' hour, and when we came to part that night we had no need to take each other's hands; we had been walking hand-in-hand together like twa laddies, and we did not know it."

"You'll have many a happy day with your friend yet, gudeman; Joris Van Heemskirk will come hame again."

"He will hae a sair heart when he sees his hame, specially his garden."

"He will hae something in his heart to salve all losses and all wrongs; but I wonder Joanna doesna take better care o' her father's place."

"She canna work miracles. I thought when I got her there as tenant o' the King, she would keep a' things as they were left; but Batavius has six or eight soldiers boarding there – low fellows, non-commissioned officers and the like o' them – and the beautiful house is naething but barracks in their sight; and as for the garden, what do they care for boxwood and roses? They dinna see a

thing beyond their victuals, and liquor, and the cards and dominoes in their hands. Joanna has mair than she can manage."

"Didn't Batavius sell his house on the East river?"

"Of course he did – to the Government – made a good thing of it; then he got into his father-in-law's house as a tenant of the Government. I don't think he ever intends to move out of it. When the war is over he will buy it for a trifle, as confiscated property."

"He'll do naething o' the kind! He'll never, never, never buy it. You may tak' my solemn word for that, Alexander Semple."

"How do you ken so much, Janet?"

"The things we ken best, are the things we were never told. I will not die till I have seen Joris Van Heemskirk smoking his pipe with you on his ain hearth, and in his ain summer-house. He can paint some new mottoes o'er it then."

She was on the verge of crying, but she spoke with an irresistible faith, and in spite of his stubborn loyalty to King George, Semple could not put away the conviction that his wife's words were true. They had all the force of an intuition. He felt that the conversation could not be continued with Joris Van Heemskirk as its subject, and he said, "I wonder what is keeping Neil? He told me he would be hame early to-night."

"Then you saw him to-day?"

"He was in the King's Arms, when I went there to read my letter – he and Governor Robertson – and I had a few words wi' the Governor anent Dr. Rogers and the reopening of our kirk."

"You did well and right to speak to them. It is a sin and a shame in a Christian country to be kept out o' Sabbath ordinances."

"He told me we had the Church o' England to go to."

"Aye; and we hae the King o' England to serve."

"Here comes Neil, and I am glad o' it. Somehow, he makes things mair bearable."

The young man entered with a grave cheerfulness; he bowed to his father, kissed his mother, and then drew a chair to the cold hearth. In a few minutes he rang the bell, and when it was answered, bid the negro bring hot coals and kindle the fire.

"Neil, my dear lad," said the Elder, "are you remembering that wood is nearly ungetable – ten pounds or mair a cord? I hae but little left. I'm feared it won't see the war out."

"If wood is getable at any price, I am not willing to see mother and you shivering. Burn your wood as you need it, and trust for the future."

"I hae told your father the same thing often, Neil; careful, of course, we must be, but sparing is not caring. There was once a wife who always took what she wanted, and she always had enough." The fire blazed merrily, and Neil smiled, and the Elder stretched out his thin legs to the heat, and the whole feeling of the room was changed. Then Madame said:

"Neil, your brother Alexander has gane to Scotland."

"I expected him to take that step."

"And he is sending little Maria to us, until he gets a home for her."

"I should not think she will be much in the way, mother. She is only a child."

"She is nearly seventeen years old. She won't be much in my way; it is you that will hae to take her out – to military balls and the like."

"Nonsense! I can't have a child trailing after me in such places."

"Vera likely you will trail after her. You will be better doing that than after some o' the ladies o' Clinton's court."

"I can tell you, Neil," said Neil's father, "that it is a vera pleasant sensation, to hae a bonnie lassie on your arm wha is, in a manner, your ain. I ken naething in the world that gives a man such a superior feeling."

Neil looked at the speaker with a curious admiration. He could not help envying the old man who had yet an enthusiasm about lovely women.

"I fancy, sir," he answered, "that the women of your youth were a superior creation to those of the present day. I cannot imagine myself with any woman whose society would give me that sensation."

"Women are always the same, Neil – yesterday, to-day, and forever. What they are now, they were in Abraham's time, and they will be when time shall be nae langer. Is not that so, mother?"

"Maybe; but you'll tak' notice, they hae suited a' kinds o' men, in a' countries and in a' ages. I dare say our little Maria will hae her lovers as well as the lave o' them, and her uncle Neil will be to keep an eye on them. But I'm weary and sleepy, and if you men are going to talk the fire out I'll awa' to my room and my bed."

"I have something to say to father," answered Neil, "about the Government, and so –"

"Oh, the Government!" cried Madame, as she stood with her lighted candle in her hand at the open door; "dinna call it a government, Neil; call it a blunderment, or a plunderment, if you like, but the other name is out o' all befitting."

"Mother, wait a moment," said Neil. "You were saying that Maria would want to be taken to dances; I got an invitation to-day. What do you say to this for an introduction?" As he spoke he took out of his pocket a gilt-edged note tied with transverse bands of gold braid and narrow red ribbon. Madame watched him impatiently as he carefully and deliberately untied the bows, and his air of reverential regard put her in a little temper.

"Cut the strings and be done wi' it, Neil," she said crossly. "There is nae invite in the world worth such a to-do as you are making. And dinna forget, my lad, that you once nearly threw your life awa' for a bit o' orange ribbon! Maybe the red is just as dangerous."

Then Neil took the red ribbon between his finger and thumb, and dropping it into the fire looked at his mother with the denial in his face. "It is from Mrs. Percival," he said; and she nodded her understanding, but could not help giving him a last word ere she closed the door:

"If you hae a fancy for ribbons, Neil, tak' my advice, and get a blue one; a' the good men in the country are wearing blue."

CHAPTER II.

THE FAIR AND THE BRAVE

At breakfast next morning the conversation turned naturally upon the arrival of Maria Semple. The Elder showed far the most enthusiasm concerning it. He wondered, and calculated, and supposed, till he felt he had become tiresome and exhausted sympathy, and then he subsided into that painful attitude of disappointment and resignation, which is, alas, too often the experience of the aged? His companions were not in sympathy with him. Madame was telling herself she must not expect too much. Once she had set her heart upon a beautiful girl who was to become Neil's wife, and her love had been torn up by the roots: "maist women carry a cup of sorrow for some one to drink," she thought, "and I'm feared for them." As for Neil, he felt sure the girl was going to be a tie and a bore, and he considered his brother exceedingly selfish in throwing the care of his daughter upon his aged parents.

It was not a pleasant meal, but in good hearts depression and doubt find no abiding place. When Neil had gone to his affairs, the Elder looked at his wife, and she gave him his pipe with a smile, and talked to him about Maria as she put away her china. And she had hardly turned the key of the glass closet, when the knocker of the front door fell twice – two strokes, clear, separate, distinct. The Elder rose quickly and with much excitement. "That is Bradley's knock," he said; "I never heard it before, but it is just the way he would call any one."

He was going out of the room as he spoke, and Madame joined him. When they entered the hall the front door was open, and a short, stout man was standing on the threshold, holding a young girl by the hand. He delivered her to the Elder very much as he would have delivered a valuable package intrusted to his care, and then, as they stood a few moments in conversation, Maria darted forward, and with a little cry of joy nestled her head on her grandmother's breast. The confiding love of the action was irresistible. "You darling!" whispered the old lady with a kiss; "let me look at you!" And she put her at arm's length, and gazed at the pretty, dark face with its fine color, and fine eyes, charmingly set off by the scarlet hood of her traveling cloak.

"What do you think o' your granddaughter, Elder?" she asked, when he joined them, and her voice was trembling with love and pride.

"I think she is yoursel' o'er again; the vera same bonnie Janet Gordon I woo'd and loved in Strathallen nearly fifty years syne. Come and gie me twenty kisses, bairnie. You are a vera cordial o' gladness to our hearts."

Madame had swithered in her own mind before the arrival of Maria about the room she was to occupy – the little one in the wing, furnished in rush and checked blue and white linen; or the fine guest room over the best parlor. A few moments with her grandchild had decided her. "She shall hae the best we have," she concluded. "What for would I gie it to my cousin Gordon's wife, and lock my ain flesh and blood out o' it?" So she took Maria to her best guest chamber, and when the girl stood in the center of it and looked round with an exclamation of delight, she was well rewarded.

"This is the finest room I ever saw," said Maria. "I love splendid rooms, and mahogany makes any place handsome. And the looking glasses! O grandmother, I can see myself from top to toe!" and she flung aside her cloak, and surveyed her little figure in its brown camblet dress and long white stomacher, with great satisfaction.

"And where are your clothes, Maria?" asked Madame.

"I brought a small trunk with me, and Mr. Bradley will send it here this morning; the rest of my trunks were sent with Captain De Vries. I dare say they will be here soon."

"They are here already, De Vries arrived yesterday, but the rest o' your trunks, how many more have you, lassie?"

"Three large, and one little one. Father told me I was to get everything I wanted, and I wanted so many things. I got them all, grandmother – beautiful dresses, and mantillas, and pelerines; and dozens of pretty underwear. I have had four women sewing for me ever since last Christmas."

"But the expense o' it, Maria!"

"Mrs. Charlton said I had simply received the proper outfit for a young lady entering society."

"But whatever did your father say?"

"He whistled very softly. There are many ways of whistling, grandmother, and my father's whistle was his form of saying he was astonished."

"I hae no doubt he was astonished."

"I had to have summer and winter dresses, and ball dresses, and home dresses, and street dresses; and all the little things which Mrs. Charlton says are the great things. Father is very generous to me, and he has ordered Lambert and Co. to send me thirty pounds every month. He told me that food and wood and every necessity of life was very dear in New York, and that if I was a good girl I would do my full share in bearing the burden of life."

This was her pretty way of making it understood that she was to pay liberally for her board, and then, with a kiss, she added, "let us go downstairs. I want to see all the house, grandmother. It is like home, and I have had so little home. All my life nearly has been spent at school. Now I am come home."

They went down hand in hand, and found the Elder walking about in an excited manner. "I think I shall bide awa' from business to-day," he said; "I dinna feel like it. It isna every day a man gets a granddaughter."

"Tuts! Nonsense, Alexander! Go your ways to the store, then you can talk to your acquaintance o' your good fortune. Maria and I will hae boxes to unpack, and clothes to put away; and you might as weel call at De Vries, and tell him to get Miss Semple's trunks here without sauntering about them. Batavius is a slow creature. And Neil must hae the news also, so just be going as quick as you can, Alexander."

He was disappointed; he had hoped that Maria would beg him to stay at home, but he put on his long coat with affected cheerfulness, and with many little delays finally took the road. Then the two women went through the house together, and by that time Bradley had sent the small trunk, and they unpacked it, and talked about the goods, and about a variety of subjects that sprang naturally from the occupation.

All at once Madame remembered to ask Maria where she had spent the previous night, and the girl answered, "I slept at the Bradley's. It was quite twilight when we reached their house, and Mr. Bradley said this road was beset by thieves and bad people after dark, and he also thought you retired early and would not care to be disturbed."

"Vera considerate o' Mr. Bradley, I am sure; perhaps mair so than necessary. Maria, my dear, I hope you are not very friendly wi' his daughter."

"Not friendly with Agnes Bradley! Why, grandmother, I could not be happy without her! She has been my good angel for three years. When she came to Mrs. Charlton's I had no friends, for I had such a bad temper the girls called me 'Spitfire' and 'Vixen' and such names, and I was proud of it. Agnes has made me gentle and wishful to do right. Agnes is as nearly an angel as a woman can be."

"Fair nonsense, Maria! And I never was fond o' angelic women, they dinna belong to this world; and your grandfather dislikes John Bradley, he will not allow any friendship between you and Agnes Bradley. That is sure and certain."

"What has Mr. Bradley done wrong to grandfather?"

"Naething; naething at all! He just does not like him."

"I shall have to explain things to grandfather. He ought not to take dislikes to people without reason."

"There's no one can explain things to your grandfather that he does not want to understand. I know naething o' John Bradley, except that he is a Methodist, and that kind o' people are held in scorn."

"I think we can use up all our scorn on the Whigs, grandmother, and let the Methodists alone. Mr. Bradley is a Tory, and trusted and employed by the Government, and I am sure he preached a beautiful sermon last Sunday at Stamford."

"Your grandfather said he would preach at Stamford."

"He preached on the green outside the town. There were hundreds to listen to him. Agnes led the singing."

"Maria Semple! You don't mean to tell me you were at a field preaching!"

"It was a good preaching and –"

"The man is a saddle-maker! I hae seen him working, day in and day out, in his leather apron."

"St. Paul was a tent-maker; he made a boast of it, and as he was a sensible man, I have no doubt he wore an apron. He would not want to spoil his toga."

"*Hush! Hush!* You must not speak o' Saint Paul in that tempered and common way. The Apostles belong to the Kirk. Your father was brought up a good Presbyterian."

"Dear grandmother, I am the strictest kind of Presbyterian. I really went to hear Agnes. If you had seen her standing by her father's side on that green hill and heard her sing:

'Israel, what hast thou to dread?
Safe from all impending harms,
Round thee, and beneath thee, spread,
Are the everlasting arms.'

you would have caught up the song as hundreds did do, till it spread to the horizon, and rose to the sky, and was singing and praying both. People were crying with joy, and they did not know it."

"I would call her a dangerous kind o' girl. Has she any brothers or sisters?"

"Her brother went to an English school at the beginning of the war. He was to finish his education at Oxford. Annie Gardiner – one of the schoolgirls – told me so. He was her sweetheart. She has no sisters."

"Sweetheart?"

"Just boy and girl sweethearting. Agnes seldom spoke of him; sometimes she got letters from him."

"Has Agnes a sweetheart?"

"There was a young gentleman dressed like a sailor that called on her now and then. We thought he might be an American privateer."

"Then Agnes Bradley is for the Americans! Well, a good girl, like her, would be sure to take the right side. Nae doubt the hymn she sung referred to the American army."

"I am sure people thought so; indeed, I fear Agnes is a little bit of a rebel, but she has to keep her thoughts and feelings to herself."

"Plenty o' folks hae to do the same; thought may be free here, but speech is bond slave to His Majesty George o' Hanover, or England, or Brunswick, or what you like."

"Or America!"

"Nae, nae! You may make that last statement wi' great reservation, Maria. But we must make no statements that will vex your grandfather, for he is an auld man, and set in his ways, and he does not believe in being contradicted."

And at this moment they heard the Elder's voice and step. He came in so happily, and with such transparent excuses for his return home, that the women could not resist his humor. They pretended to be delighted; they said, "how nice it was that he had happened to arrive just as dinner was ready to

serve;" they even helped him to reasons that made his return opportune and fortunate. And Batavius arriving with the trunks immediately after the meal, Madame made unblushing statements about her dislike of the man, and her satisfaction in the Elder being at hand to prevent overcharges, and see to the boxes being properly taken upstairs.

Then Maria begged him to remain and look at her pretty things, and that was exactly what he wished to do; and so, what with exhibiting them, and trying some of them on, and sorting, and putting them into drawers and wardrobes, the afternoon slipped quickly away. The Elder had his pipe brought upstairs, and he sat down and smoked it on the fine sofa Mrs. Gordon had covered with her own needlework when she occupied the room; and no one checked him or made discouraging demurs. He had his full share of the happy hours; and he told himself so as the ladies were dressing; and he sat waiting for Neil, alone with his pleasant thoughts and anticipations.

"Auld age has its compensations," he reflected. "They wouldna hae let Neil sit and smoke amid their fallals; and it was the bonniest sight to watch them, to listen to their *Ohs!* and *Ahs!* and their selfish bits o' prattle, anent having what no ither woman was able, or likely to have. Women are queer creatures, but, Oh, dear me, what a weary world it would be without them!"

And when Maria came down stairs in a scarlet gown over a white silk petticoat, a string of gold beads round her neck, and her hair dressed high and fastened with a gold comb, he was charmed afresh. He rose with the gallantry of a young man, to get her a chair, but she made him sit down and brought a stool to his side, and nestled so close to him that he put his arm across her pretty shoulders. And it added greatly to his satisfaction that Neil came suddenly in, and discovered them in this affectionate attitude.

"One o' the compensations o' auld age," he said in happy explanation. "Here is your niece, Maria Semple, Neil; and proud you may be o' her!" – and Maria rose, and made her uncle a sweeping courtesy, and then offered him her hand and her cheek. The young man gave her a warm welcome, and yet at the same moment wondered what changes the little lady would bring to the house. For he had sense and experience enough to know that a girl so attractive would irresistibly draw events to her.

In two or three days the excitement of her advent was of necessity put under restraint. Age loves moderation in all things, and Maria began to feel the still, stately house less interesting than the schoolroom. Whigs and Tories, however unequally, divided that ground, and the two parties made that quarrel the outlet for all their more feminine dislikes. Her last weeks at school had also been weeks full of girlish triumphs; for she was not only receiving a new wardrobe of an elaborate kind, but she was permitted to choose it; to have interviews with mantua-makers and all kinds of tradespeople; and above all, she was going to New York. And New York at that time was invested with all the romance of a mediæval city. It was the center around which the chief events of the war revolved. Within her splendid mansions the officers of King George feasted, and danced, and planned warlike excursions; and in her harbor great fleets were anchored whose mission was to subjugate the whole Southern seaboard. This of itself was an interesting situation, but how much more so, when Whig and Tory alike knew, that just over the western shore every hilltop, and every lofty tree held an American sentinel, while Washington himself, amid the fastnesses of New Jersey, watched with unerring sagacity and untiring patience the slightest military movement on Manhattan Island.

Thus, the possibilities and probabilities of her expected change of life had made her the envy of romantic girls; for all of them, no matter what their political faith, had their own conception of the great things which might be achieved in a city full of military and naval officers. It was the subject on which conversation was always interesting, and often provocative; thus, in the very last talk she had with her schoolmates, one little Tory maid said:

"O, the dear officers! How delightful it will be to dance with brave men so magnificently dressed in scarlet and gold! How I wish that I was you, Maria!"

"O, the hateful creatures!" ejaculated another girl of different opinions. "I would not dance a step with one of them; but if I did, I should be saying to myself all the time: very soon my fine fellow, some brave man in homespun blue will kill you."

"If I was Maria," said another, "and had a British officer for my servant, I would coax him to tell me what General Clinton was going to do; and then I would send word to General Washington."

"O, you mean girl!" answered Maria, "would you be a spy?"

"Yes, I would."

"And so would I!"

"And I!"

"And I!"

"And I!" And then an equal chorus of "What a shame! Just like Whigs!"

Maria missed these encounters. She saw that her grandmother usually deprecated political conversation, and that her uncle and grandfather did not include her in the discussion of any public event. On the fourth day she began to feel herself of less importance than she approved; and then there followed naturally the demoralizing luxury of self-pity:

"Because I am a girl, and a very young girl, no one appears to think I have common sense. I am as loyal to the King as any one. I wish grandmother would speak out. I believe she is a Whig. Uncle Neil said he would take me to some entertainments; he has not done so. I am not tired – that is just an excuse – I want to go out and I want to see Agnes. I will not give up Agnes – no one, no one shall make me – she is part of my heart! No, I will not give up Agnes; her father may be a saddler – and a Methodist – I am above noticing such things. I will love who I like – about my friends I will not yield an inch – I will not!"

She was busy tatting to this quite unnecessary tirade of protestations and her grandmother noticed the passionate jerk of the shuttle emphasizing her thoughts. "What is vexing you, dearie?" she asked.

"Oh, I am wretched about Agnes," she answered. "I am afraid grandfather has been rude in some way."

"You needna be afraid on that ground, Maria; your grandfather is never rude where women are concerned."

"But he is unkind. If he was not, there could be no objections to my calling on Agnes."

"Is it not her place to call on you? She is at home – born and bred in New York – you are a stranger here. She is older than you are; she seems to have assumed some kind of care or oversight –."

"She has been my guardian angel."

"Then I think she ought to be looking after a desolate bairn like you; one would think you had neither kith nor kin near you, Maria." Madame spoke with an air of offense or injury, and as the words were uttered, the door was softly moved inward, and Agnes Bradley entered.

She courtesied to Madame, and then stretched out her hands to Maria. The girl rose with a cry of joy, and all her discontent was gone in a moment. Madame could not forget so easily; in fact, her sense of unkindness was intensified by the unlooked-for entrance of its cause. But there was no escaping the influence of Agnes. She brought the very atmosphere of peace into the room with her. In ten minutes she was sitting between Madame and Maria, and both appeared to be alike happy in her society. She did not speak of the war, or the soldiers, or the frightful price of food and fuel, or the wicked extravagance of the Tory ladies in dress and entertainments, or even of the unendurable impudence of the negro slaves. She talked of Maria, and of the studies she ought to continue, and of Madame's flowers and needlework, and a sweet feeling of rest from all the fretful life around was insensibly diffused. In a short time Madame felt herself to be under the same spell as her granddaughter, and she looked at the charmer with curious interest; she wondered what kind of personality this daughter of tranquility possessed.

A short scrutiny showed her a girl about nineteen years old, tall, but not very slender, with a great deal of pale brown hair above a broad forehead; with eyebrows thick and finely arched, and eyelids so transparent from constant contact with the soul that they seemed to have already become spiritual. Her eyes were dark grey, star-like, mystical, revealing – when they slowly dilated – one hardly knew what of the unseen and heavenly. Her face was oval and well shaped, but a little heavy except when the warm pallor of its complexion was suddenly transfigured from within; then showing a faint rose color quickly passing away. Her movements were all slow, but not ungraceful, and her soft voice had almost a caress in it. Yet it was not these things, one, or all of them, that made her so charming; it was the invisible beauty in the visible, that delighted.

Without question here was a woman who valued everything at its eternal worth; who in the midst of war, sheltered life in the peace of God; and in the presence of sorrow was glad with the gladness of the angels. An hour with Agnes Bradley made Madame think more highly of her granddaughter; for surely it was a kind of virtue in Maria to love the goodness she herself could not attain unto.

Nearly two hours passed quickly away. They walked in the garden and talked of seeds, and of the green things springing from them; and down at the lily bed by the river, Madame had a sudden memory of a young girl, who had one Spring afternoon gone down there to meet her fate; and she said to Agnes – with a note of resentment still in her voice:

"A lassie I once loved dearly, came here to gather lilies, and to listen to a lover she had nae business to listen to. She would sit doubtless on the vera step you are now sitting on, Maria; and she made sorrow and suffering enough for more than one good heart; forbye putting auld friends asunder, and breeding anger where there had always been love. I hope you'll never do the like, either o' you."

"Who was she, grandmother?"

"Her name was Katherine Van Heemskirk. You'll hae heard tell o' her, Miss Bradley?"

"I saw her several times when she was here four years ago. She is very beautiful."

Madame did not answer, and Maria stepped lower and gathered a few lilies that were yet in bloom, though the time of lilies was nearly over. But Agnes turned away with Madame, and both of them were silent; Madame because she could not trust herself to begin speech on this subject, and Agnes because she divined, that for some reason, silence was in this case better than the fittest words that could be spoken.

After a short pause, Agnes said, "My home is but a quarter of a mile from here, and it is already orderly and pleasant. Will you, Madame, kindly permit Maria to come often to see me! I will help her with her studies, and she might take the little boat at the end of your garden, and row herself along the water edge until she touches the pier in our garden."

"She had better walk."

In this way the permission was granted without reserves or conditions. Madame had not thought of making any, and as soon as she realized her implied approval, she was resolved to stand by it. "The lassie requires young people to consort wi'," she thought, "and better a young lass than a young lad; and if her grandfather says contrary, I must make him wiser."

With this concession the visit ended, but the girls went out of the parlor together, and stood talking for some time in the entrance hall. The parting moment, however, had to come, and Maria lifted her lips to her friend, and they were kissing each other good-bye, when Neil Semple and a young officer in the uniform of the Eighty-fourth Royal Highlanders opened the door. The picture of the two girls in their loving embrace was a momentary one, but it was flooded with the colored sunshine pouring on them from the long window of stained glass, and the men saw and acknowledged its beauty, with an involuntary exclamation of delight. Maria sheltered herself in a peal of laughter, and over the face of Agnes there came and went a quick transfiguring flush; but she instantly regained her mental poise, and with the composure of a goddess was walking toward the door, when Neil advanced, and assuming the duty of a host, walked with her down the flagged path to the garden gate.

Maria and the young soldier stood in the doorway watching them; and Madame at the parlor window did the same thing, with an indescribable amazement on her face.

"It isna believable!" she exclaimed. "Neil Semple, the vera proudest o' mortals walking wi' auld Bradley's daughter! his hat in his hand too! and bowing to her! bowing to his vera knee buckles! After this, the Stuarts may come hame again, or any other impossible thing happen. The world is turning tapsalterie, and I wonder whether I am Janet Sample, or some ither body."

But the world was all right in a few minutes; for then Neil entered the room with Maria and Captain Macpherson, and the mere sight of the young Highlandman brought oblivion of all annoyances. Madame's heart flew to her head whenever she saw the kilt and the plaid; she hastened to greet its wearer; she took his plumed bonnet from his hand, and said it was "just out o' calculation that he should go without breaking bread with them."

Captain Macpherson had no desire to go. He had seen and spoken with Maria, and she was worth staying for; besides which, a Scot in a strange land feels at home in a countryman's house. Macpherson quickly made himself so. He went with Neil to his room, and anon to the garden, and finally loosed the boat and rowed up the river, resting on the oars at the Bradley place, hoping for a glance at Agnes. But nothing was to be seen save the white house among the green trees, and the white shades gently stirring in the wind. The place was as still as a resting wheel, and the stillness infected the rowers; yet when Macpherson was in Semple's garden, the merry ring of his boyish laughter reached Madame and Maria in the house, and set their hearts beating with pleasure as they arranged the tea-table, and brought out little dishes of hoarded luxuries. And though Madame's chickens were worth three dollars each, she unhesitatingly sacrificed one to a national hero.

When the Elder came home he was equally pleased. He loved young people, and the boyish captain with his restless, brimming life, was an element that the whole house responded to. His heart had a little quake at the abundance of the meal, but it was only a momentary reserve, and he smiled as his eyes fell on the motto carved around the wooden bread-plate — "*Spare Not! Waste Not! Want Not!*"

Madame looked very happy and handsome sitting before her tray of pretty china, and the blended aromas of fine tea and hot bread, of broiled chicken, and Indian preserves and pickles were made still more appetizing by the soft wind blowing through the open window, the perfume of the lilacs and the southernwood. Madame had kept the place at her right hand for Macpherson; and Maria sat next to him with her grandfather on her right hand, so that Neil was at his mother's left hand. Between the two young men the old lady was radiantly happy; for Macpherson was such a guest as it is a delight to honor. He ate of all Madame had prepared for him, thoroughly enjoyed it, and frankly said so. And his chatter about the social entertainments given by Generals Clinton and Tryon, Robertson and Ludlow was very pleasant to the ladies. Neil never had anything to say about these affairs, except that they were "all alike, and all stupid, and all wickedly extravagant;" and such criticism was too general to be interesting.

Very different was Macpherson's description of the last ball at General Tryon's; he could tell all its details — the reception of the company with kettle drums and trumpets — the splendid furniture of his residence, its tapestries, carpets, and silk hangings — the music, the dancing, the feasting — the fine dressing of both men and women — all these things he described with delightful enthusiasm and a little pleasant mimicry. And when Madame asked after her acquaintances, Macpherson could tell her what poplins and lutestrings, and lace and jewels they wore. Moreover, he knew what grand dames crowded William Street in the mornings and afternoons, and what merchants had the largest display of the fashions and luxuries of Europe.

"John Ambler," he said, "is now showing a most extraordinary cargo of English silks and laces, and fine broadcloths, taken by one of Dirk Vandercliff's privateers. Really, Madame, the goods are worth looking at. I assure you our beauties lack nothing that Europe can produce."

"Yes, there is one thing the privateers canna furnish you, and that is fuel. You shivered all last winter in your splendid rooms," said the Elder.

"True," replied Macpherson. "The cold was frightful, and though General Clinton issued one proclamation after another to the farmers of Long Island to send in their wood, they did not do it."

"Why should they?" asked Madame.

"On the King's service, Madame," answered the young man with a final air.

"Vera good," retorted Madame; "but if the King wanted my forest trees for naething, I should say, 'your Majesty has plenty o' soldiers wi' little to do; let them go and cut what they want.' They wouldna waste it if they had it to cut. But the wastrie in everything is simply sinful, and I canna think where the Blacks and Vanderlanes, and all the other 'Vans' you name – and whom I never heard tell of in our kirk – get the money."

"Privateering!" said Macpherson with a gay laugh. "Who would not be a roving privateer? I have myself longings for the life. I have thoughts of joining Vandercliff's fleet."

"You are just leeing, young man," interrupted Madame. "It would be a thing impossible. The Macphersons have nae salt water in their blood. Could you fling awa' your tartans for a sailor's tarry coat and breeches? How would you look if you did? And you would feel worse than you looked."

Macpherson glanced at his garb with a smile of satisfaction. "I am a Macpherson," he answered, proudly, "and I would not change the colors of my regiment for a royal mantle; but privateering is no small temptation. On the deck of a privateer you may pick up gold and silver."

"That is not very far from the truth," said Neil. "In the first year of the war the rebel privateers took two hundred and fifty West Indiamen, valued at nearly two millions of pounds, and Mr. Morris complained that the Eastern states cared for nothing but privateering."

"Weel, Morris caught the fever himself," said the Elder. "I have been told he made nearly four hundred thousand dollars in the worst year the rebel army ever had."

"Do the rebels call that patriotism?" asked Macpherson.

"Yes," answered the Elder, "from a Whig point of view it is vera patriotic; what do you think, Neil?"

"If I was a Whig," answered Neil, "I should certainly own privateers. Without considering the personal advantage, privateering brings great riches into the country; it impoverishes the enemy, and it adds enormously to the popularity of the war. The men who have hitherto gone to the Arctic seas for whales, find more wealthy and congenial work in capturing English ships."

"And when men get money by wholesale high-seas robbery –"

"Privateering, Madame," corrected Macpherson.

"Weel, weel, give it any name you like – what I want to say is, that money got easy goes easy."

"In that, Madame, you are correct. While we were in Philadelphia that city was the scene of the maddest luxury. While the rebels were begging money from France to feed their starving army at Valley Forge, every kind of luxury and extravagance ran riot in Philadelphia. At one entertainment there was eight hundred pounds spent in pastry alone."

"Stop, Macpherson!" cried Madame, "I will not hear tell o' such wickedness," and she rose with the words, and the gentlemen went into the parlor to continue their conversation.

Madame had been pleased with her granddaughter's behavior. She had not tittered, nor been vulgarly shy or affected, nor had she intruded her opinions or feelings among those of her elders; and yet her self-possession, and her expressive face had been full of that charm which showed her to be an interested and a comprehending listener. Now, however, Madame wished her to talk, and she was annoyed when she did not do so. It was only natural that she should express some interest in the bright young soldier, and her silence concerning him Madame regarded as assumed indifference. At last she condescended to the leading question:

"What do you think o' Captain Macpherson, Maria?"

"I do not know, grandmother."

"He is a very handsome lad. It did my heart good to see his bright face."

"His face is covered with freckles."

"Freckles! Why not? He has been brought up in the wind and the sunshine, and not in a boarding-school, or a lady's parlor."

"Freckles are not handsome, however, grandmother."

Madame would not dally with half-admissions, and she retorted sharply:

"Freckles are the handsomest thing about a man; they are only the human sunshine tint; the vera same sunshine that colored the roses and ripened the wheat gave the lad the golden-brown freckles o' rich young life. Freckles! I consider them an improvement to any one. If you had a few yourself you would be the handsomer for them."

"Grandmother!"

"Yes, and your friend likewise. She has scarce a mite o' color o' any kind; a little o' the human sunshine tint – the red and gold on her cheeks – and she might be better looking."

"Better looking! Why, grandmother, Agnes was the beauty of the school."

"Schoolgirls are poor judges o' beauty. She has a wonderfu' pleasant way with her, but that isn't beauty."

"I thought you liked her, I am so sorry and disappointed."

"She is weel enough – in her way. There are plenty o' girls not as pleasant; but she is neither Venus, nor Helen o' Troy. I was speaking o' Captain Macpherson; when he stood in the garden with your uncle Neil, his hand on his sword and the wind blowing his golden hair –"

"Grandmother! His hair is red."

"It is naething o' the kind, Maria. It is a bonnie golden-brown. It may, perhaps, have a cast o' red, but only enough to give it color. And he has a kindly handsome face, sweet-eyed and fearless."

"I did not notice his eyes. He seems fearless, and he is certainly good-tempered. Have you known him a long time, grandmother?"

"I never saw him before this afternoon," the old lady answered wearily. She had become suddenly tired. Maria's want of enthusiasm chilled her. She could not tell whether the girl was sincere or not. Women generally have two estimates of the men they meet; one which they acknowledge, one which they keep to themselves.

When the gentlemen returned to the sitting-room a young negro was lighting the fire, and Macpherson looked at him with attention. "A finely built fellow," he said, when the slave had left the room; "such men ought to make good fighters." Then turning to Madame he added, "Captain de Lancey lost four men, and Mr. Bayard five men last week. They were sent across the river to cut wood and they managed to reach the rebel camp. We have knowledge that there is a full regiment of them there now."

"They are fighting for their personal freedom," said the Elder, "and who wouldna fight for that? Washington has promised it, if they fight to the end o' the war."

"They have a good record already," said Macpherson.

"I have nae doubt o' it," answered the Elder. "Fighting would come easier than wood cutting, no to speak o' the question o' freedom. I heard a sough o' rumor about them and the Hessians; true, or not, I can't say."

"It is true. They beat back the Hessians three times in one engagement."

"I'm glad o' it," said Madame, "slaves are good enough to fight hired human butchers."

"O, you know, Madame, the Hessians are mercenaries; they make arms a profession." He spoke with a languid air of defense; the Hessians were not of high consideration in his opinion, but Madame answered with unusual warmth:

"A profession! Well, it isn't a respectable one in their hands – men selling themselves to fight they care not whom, or for what cause. If a man fights for his country he is her soldier and her protector; if he sells himself to all and sundry, he is worth just what he sells himself for, and the black slave fighting for his freedom is a gentleman beside him." Then, before any one could answer her tart disparagement, she opened a little Indian box, and threw on the table a pack of cards.

"There's some paper kings for you to play wi'," she said, "and neither George nor Louis has a title to compare wi' them – kings and knaves! Ancient tyrants, and like ithers o' their kind, they would trick the warld awa' at every game but for some brave ace," and the ace of hearts happening to be in her hand she flung it defiantly down on the top of the pack; and that with an air of confidence and triumph that was very remarkable.

With the help of these royalties and some desultory conversation on the recent alliance of France with the rebels, the evening passed away. Madame sat quiet in the glow of the fire, and Maria, as Neil's partner, enlivened the game with many bewitching airs and graces she had not known she possessed, until this opportunity called them forth. And whatever Macpherson gained at cards he lost in another direction; for the little schoolgirl, he had at first believed himself to be patronizing, reversed the situation. He became embarrassed by a realization of her beauty and cleverness; and the sweet old story began to tell itself in his heart – the story that comes no one knows whence, and commences no one knows how. In that hour of winning and losing he first understood how charming Maria Semple was.

The new feeling troubled him; he wished to be alone with it, and the ardent pleasure of his arrival had cooled. The Elder and his wife were tired, and Neil seemed preoccupied and did not exert himself to restore the tone of the earlier hours; so the young officer felt it best to make his adieu. Then, the farewell in a measure renewed the joy of meeting; he was asked to come again, "to come whenever he wanted to come," said Madame, with a smile of motherly kindness. And when Maria, with a downward and upward glance laid her little hand in his, that incident made the moment wonderful, and he felt that not to come again would be a great misfortune.

Maria was going to her room soon afterward but Neil detained her. "Can you sit with me a little while, Maria?" he asked; "or are you also sleepy?"

"I am not the least weary, uncle; and I never was wider awake in my life. I will read to you or copy for you –"

"Come and talk to me. The fire still burns. It is a pity to leave its warmth. Sit down here. I have never had a conversation with you. I do not know my niece yet, and I want to know her."

Maria was much flattered. Neil's voice had a tone in it that she had never before heard. He brought her a shawl to throw around her shoulders, a footstool for her feet, and drawing a small sofa before the fire, seated himself by her side. Then he talked with her about her early life; about her father and mother, and Mrs. Charlton, and without asking one question about Agnes Bradley led her so naturally to the subject, and so completely round and through it, that he had learned in an hour all Maria could tell concerning the girl whose presence and appearance had that day so powerfully attracted him. He was annoyed when he heard her name, and annoyed at her pronounced Methodism, which was evidently of that early type, holding it a sin not to glory in the scorn of those who derided it. Yet he could not help being touched by Maria's enthusiastic description of the girl's sweet godliness.

"You know, uncle," she said, "Agnes's religion is not put on; it is part of Agnes; it is Agnes. Girls find one another out, but all the girls loved Agnes. We were ashamed to be ill-natured, or tell untruths, or do mean things when she was there. And if you heard her sing, uncle, you would feel as if the heavens had opened, and you could see angels."

Now there is no man living who does not at some time dream of a good woman – a woman much better than himself – upon his hearthstone. Neil felt in that hour this divine longing; and he knew also, that the thing had befallen him which he had vowed never would befall him again. Without resistance, without the desire to resist, he had let the vision of Agnes Bradley fill his imagination; he had welcomed it, and he knew that it would subjugate his heart – that it had already virtually done so. For Maria's descriptions of the pretty trivialities of their school life was music and wine to his soul. He was captivated by her innocent revelations, and the tall girl with her saintly pallor and star-like eyes was invisibly present to him. He had the visionary sense, the glory and the dream of love, and

he longed to realize this vision. Therefore he was delighted when he heard that Maria had permission to continue her studies under the direction of her friend. It was an open door to him.

It was at this point that Maria made her final admission: "I am obliged to tell you, uncle, that I am sure Agnes is a Whig." This damaging item in her idol's character Maria brought out with deprecating apologies and likelihood of change, "not a bad Whig, uncle; she is so gentle, and she hates war, and so she feels so sorry for the poor Americans who are suffering so much, because, you know, they think they are right. Then her father is a Tory, and she is very fond of her father, and very proud of him, and she will now be under his influence, and of course do what he tells her – only – only – "

"Only what, Maria? You think there is a difficulty; what is it?"

"Her lover. I am almost certain he is a rebel."

"Has she a lover? She is very young – you must be mistaken?" He spoke so sharply Maria hardly knew his voice, and she considered it best to hesitate a little, so she answered in a dubious manner:

"I suppose he is her lover. The girls all thought so. He sent her letters, and he sometimes came to see her; and then she seemed so happy."

"A young man?"

"Yes, a very young man."

"A soldier?"

"I think, more likely, he was a sailor. I never asked Agnes. You could not ask Agnes things, as you did other girls."

"I understand that."

"He wore plain clothes, but all of us were sure he was a sailor; and once we saw Agnes watching some ships as far as she could see them, and he had called on her that day."

Neil did not answer her conjecture. He rose and stood silently on the hearth, his dark eyes directed outward, as if he was calling up the vision of the sea, and the ships and the girl watching them. For the first time Maria realized the personal attractiveness of her uncle. "He is not old," she thought, "and he is handsomer than any one I ever saw. Why has he not got married before this?" And as she speculated on this question, Neil let his eyes fall upon the dead fire and in a melancholy voice said:

"Maria, my dear, it is very late, I did not remember – you have given me two pleasant hours. Good-night, child."

He spoke with restraint, coldly and wearily. He was not aware of it, for his mind was full of thoughts well-nigh unspeakable, and Maria felt their influence, though they had not been named. She went away depressed and silent, like one who has suddenly discovered they were no longer desired.

Neil speedily put out the lights, and went to the solitude his heart craved. He was not happy; but doubt and fear are love's first food. For another hour he sat motionless, wondering how this woman, whom he had not in any way summoned, had taken such possession of him. For not yet had it been revealed to him, that "love is always a great invisible presence," and that in his case, Agnes Bradley was but its material revelation.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE IN THE CAPTIVE CITY

At this time in New York, John Bradley Was a man of considerable importance. He was not only a native of the city, but many generations of Bradleys had been born, and lived, and died in the wide, low house close to the river bank, not far north of old Trinity. They were originally a Yorkshire family who had followed the great Oliver Cromwell from Marston Moor to Worcester, and who, having helped to build the Commonwealth of England, refused to accept the return of royalty. Even before Charles the Second assumed the crown, Ezra Bradley and his six sons had landed in New York. They were not rich, but they had gold sufficient to build a home, and to open near the fort a shop for the making and repairing of saddlery.

Ever since that time this trade had been the distinctive occupation of the family, and the John Bradley who represented it in the year 1779, had both an inherited and a trained capability in the craft. No one in all America could make a saddle comparable with Bradley's; the trees were of his own designing, and the leather work unequalled in strength and beauty. In addition to this important faculty, he was a veterinary surgeon of great skill, and possessed some occult way of managing ungovernable horses, which commended itself peculiarly to officers whose mounts were to be renewed frequently from any available source. And never had his business been so lucrative as at the present date, for New York was full of mounted military during the whole period of the war, and enormous prices were willingly paid for the fine saddlery turned out of the workshop of John Bradley.

Contrary to all the traditions of his family, he had positively taken the part of the King, and at the very commencement of the national quarrel had shown the red ribbon of loyalty to England. His wife dying at this time, he sent his daughter to a famous boarding-school in Boston, and his son to the great dissenting academy in Gloucester, England; then he closed his house and lived solitarily in very humble fashion above his workroom and shop. In this way, he believed himself to have provided for the absolute safety of his two children; the boy was out of the war circle; the thundering drum and screaming fife could not reach him in the cloistered rooms of the Doddridge School; and as for Agnes, Mrs. Charlton's house was as secure as a convent; he had no fear that either English or American soldiers would molest a dwelling full of schoolgirls. And John Bradley could keep the door of his mouth; and he believed that a man who could do that might pursue a trade so necessary as his, with an almost certain degree of safety.

In appearance he was a short, powerful-looking man with tranquil, meditating eyes and a great talent for silence; an armed soul dwelling in a strong body. Some minds reflect, shift, argue, and are like the surface of a lake; but John Bradley's mind was like stubborn clay; when once impressed it was sure to harden and preserve the imprint through his life, and perhaps the other one. His Methodism was of this character, and he never shirked conversation on this subject; he was as ready to tell his experience to General Howe or General Clinton as to the members of his own class meeting; for his heart was saturated with the energy of his faith; he had the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

On politics he would not talk; he said, "public affairs were in wiser hands than his, and that to serve God and be diligent in business, was the length and breadth of his commission." His shop was a place where many men and many minds met, and angry words were frequently thrown backward and forward there; yet his needle never paused an instant for them. Only once had he been known to interfere; it was on a day when one of De Lancey's troop drew his sword against a boyish English ensign almost at his side. He stopped them with his thread half drawn out, and said sternly:

"If you two fools are in a hurry for death, and the judgment after death, there are more likely places to kill each other than my shop," and the words were cold as ice and sharp as steel, and the men

went out rebuked and checked, and washed away their hot temper in wine instead of blood. For the vision of death, and the judgment after death, which Bradley's words and manner had evoked, was not to be faced at that hour. Yet, withal, Bradley was rather a common-looking man, ill-mannered and rough as hemp to the generality; but not so where childhood or calamity appealed to his strength or forbearance. In other respects, General Howe had, not inaptly, described him as "very unlike other men when at chapel, but not much so, when among horses in the stable, or selling saddles in the shop."

This was the man who came up from the waterside early one morning in the beginning of July, singing Dr. Watts' lyrical dream of heaven:

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign."

His voice was strong and melodious, and it was evident that Agnes had inherited her charming vocal power from him. He did not cease as he entered the house, but continued his hymn until he was in the little sitting-room, and Agnes finished the verse with him:

"And see the Canaan that we love,
With unbecclouded eyes."

He sat down to breakfast with the heavenly vision in his heart, and reluctantly let it pass away. But his spiritual nature had hands as well as wings, and he felt also the stress of the daily labor waiting him.

"The expedition leaves for the Connecticut coast to-day," he said. "General Clinton is determined to strike a blow at the people in New Haven, and Fairfield, and New London."

"Well, father? What do you say to that?"

"I say it is better they should be struck down than that they should lie down."

"Matthews has but just returned from ravaging the river counties of Virginia, and Clinton from Stony Point. Have they not made misery enough for a little while? Who is going with the Connecticut expedition?"

"Tryon, and he goes to do mischief with the joy of an ape."

"I heard trumpets sounding and men mustering, as I was dressing myself."

"Trumpets may sound, and not to victory, Agnes. Fire and pillage are cowardly arms; but I heard Tryon say, any stick was good enough to beat a dog with, and all who differ from Tryon are dogs. Vile work! Vile work! And yet all this does not keep New York from dancing and drinking, and racing, and gambling, and trading; nor yet New York women from painting and dressing themselves as if there were no such persons as King George and George Washington."

"Yes, father, a great many of our best families are very poor."

"Those not employed by the government, or those who are not contractors or privateers, are whipped and driven to the last pinch by poverty. Ah, Agnes, remember New York before this war began, its sunny streets shaded with trees, and its busy, happy citizens talking, laughing, smoking, trading, loving and living through every sense they had at the same time. Now there is nothing but covert ill-will and suspicion. Our violent passions have not cured our mean ones; to the common list of rogueries, we have only added those of contractors and commissioners."

"I think war is the most terrible calamity that can befall a people, father."

"The despair of subjugated souls would be worse."

"Do they never doubt you, father?"

"Howe never did. That amiable, indolent officer might have liked me all the more if he had doubted me. Clinton is a different man; and I think he may have thought my loyalty to royalty lukewarm, for he sent for me on the King's birthday, and after some talk about a horse and saddle,

he said, 'Mr. Bradley, it is the King's birthday; shall we drink his Majesty's health?' And I answered him, 'if it please you, General.' So he filled a glass with Portugal wine for me, and then filling one for himself raised it, and waited for me to speak. There were several officers present, and I lifted my glass and said, 'To King George the Third! God bless him, and make him and all his officers good John Wesley Methodists!'"

"Then, father?"

"Clinton put down his glass with a ringing guffaw, and the rest followed him. Only one bit of a beardless boy spoke, and he said: 'you think, Bradley, Methodism might make his Majesty a better king?' And I answered, 'I am not here to judge his Majesty's kingship. I think it would make him and all present, better and happier men.' I did not try to go away or shirk questions; I looked squarely in their faces until General Clinton said, 'Very good, Bradley. You will remember Saladin and the new saddle for him'; and I answered, 'I will see to it at once, General.' So I went out then, and I think they were not all sure of me; but they cannot do without me, and they know it is better to put their doubts out of inquiry. Wise men obey necessity, and that is true for them as well as for me. Agnes, I want to know something about that little girl of Semple's? I don't like her coming here day after day. She will be seeing or hearing something she ought not to see or hear. Women are dangerous in politics, for, as a rule, politics either find or leave them vixens."

"Maria is to be trusted."

"You can not be sure. She is passionate, and though a woman in a temper may not intend to burn any one, she pokes the fire and makes a blaze and sets others looking and wondering. I can tell you of many such women in New York; they think ill of their neighbor, and the thoughts get to their tongues, and before they know the mischief is done. Then, like the wolf in the fable, they thank God they are not ferocious. Oh, no! They have only loosed the dogs of war and left others to set them worrying."

"How you do run on, father! And not one word you have said fits the little Maria, no, nor any one of the Semples. Indeed, I am sure Madame is as true a patriot as you could find anywhere."

"The old man is as bitter a royalist as I could find anywhere."

"He is, however, a good old man. Last Monday night, when you had to go to the leaders' meeting, I walked home with Maria and stayed to tea there. And after tea Madame asked me to sing a hymn, and I sang the one you were singing this morning, and when I had finished, the Elder said, 'Now, then, we will supplement Isaac Watts with the Apostle John'; and he opened the Bible and read aloud John's vision of 'the land of pure delight' from the twenty-first of Revelation; then standing up, he asked us all to join in the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we stood up with him and said to 'Our Father which is in heaven,' the words he taught us. I felt it to be a very precious few minutes."

"I have nothing to say against such experiences, Agnes. If people would stick to what Christ says, there might be only one creed and one church; it is Peter and Paul that make disputing. But if you go to Semple's house do not stop after sunset. There are bad men about."

"Mr. Neil Semple walked home with me."

"Oh! Mr. Neil Semple! And what had he to say?"

"Very little. He praised my singing, he said it went to his heart; and he spoke about the moon, and the perfume of the locust flowers. I think that was all."

"The moon and the locust flowers! What does Mr. Neil Semple know about the moon and the locust flowers? And he spoke very little! He can talk fast enough when he is in court, and well paid for it. He is a proud man – ill-tempered, too, I should think."

"I am sure he is not ill-tempered. He is as sweet as a child to his father and mother; and Maria says many pleasant things about him."

"Let him pass for what he is worth; but remember always this thing, Agnes, I am trusting my life in your hands. If you inadvertently repeated even what I have said this morning, I should be hard put to answer it."

"You know well that I would die rather than reveal anything you said to me. My life for yours, father!"

"I trust you as my own soul. You are an inexpressible comfort to me. I can speak to you. I can open my heart to you. I can get relief and sympathy from you. Your coming home makes me a hundred-fold safer. If your brother with his hot temper and young imprudences had been here, no one knows what would have happened before this. I thank God continually that he is so far out of the way. Has he left school yet?"

"School does not close until June."

"Then he will go directly to Doctor Brudenel in London?"

"That was your instruction to him."

"When did you have a letter from him?"

"It is nearly a month since."

"When will you write to him next?"

"I write to him every opportunity I have."

"Does he need money? Young men are often extravagant."

"He has never named money to me. He is well and happy."

"Tell him he must not come home, not think of coming home till I give him permission. Tell him that his being away from home is my great comfort. Make that plain to him, Agnes, my great comfort. Tell him he must stay in London till a man can speak his mind safely in New York, whatever his mind may be."

"I will tell him all, father."

Then Bradley went to his shop and his daughter sat down to consider with herself. Many persons stimulate or regulate thought in movement and find a positive assistance to their mental powers in action of some kind, but Agnes had the reverse of this temperament. She needed quiet, so closing the door of her room she sat still, recalling, reviewing, and doing her best to anticipate events. There were certain things which must be revealed to Maria, wholly, or in part, if she continued to visit the house, and Agnes saw not how to prevent those visits. Nor did she wish to prevent them; she loved Maria and delighted in her companionship. They had many acquaintances and events in common to talk about, and she was also interested in Maria's life, which was very different to her own. She felt, too, that her influence was necessary and valuable to the young girl, suddenly thrown into the midst of what Agnes regarded as sinful and dangerous society. And then into this process of self-examination there drifted another form – the stately, rather sombre, but altogether kindly personality of Neil Semple. It was linked with Maria, she could not separate the two; and as intrusion involved some heart-searching she was not inclined to, she rather promptly decided the question without any further prudential considerations, and as she did so Maria called her.

She answered the call gladly. It was to her one of those leadings on which she spiritually relied, and her face was beaming with love and pleasure as she went down stairs to her friend. Maria was standing in the middle of the small parlor, most beautifully arrayed in an Indian muslin, white as snow and lustrously fine, as only Dacca looms could weave it. Her shoulders were covered with a little cape of the same material, ruffled and laced and fastened with pink ribbons, and on her head was a bewitching gypsy hat tied under her chin with bows of the same color. Her uncle stood at her side, smiling with grave tolerance at her girlish pride in her dress, and the pretty airs with which she exhibited it to Agnes.

"Am I not handsome?" she cried. "Am I not dressed in the most perfect taste? Why do you not say as Miss Robinson is sure to say – 'La, child, you are adorable!'"

Agnes fell quite naturally into her friend's excited mood, and in the happiest tone of admiring mimicry, repeated the words dictated. She made the most perfect contrast to Maria; her pale blue gown of simple material and simple fashion was without ornament of any kind, except its large falling

collar of white muslin embroidery, but the long, unbroken line of the skirt seemed to Neil Semple the most fitting, the only fitting, garment he had ever seen on any woman.

"Its modesty and simplicity is an instinct," he thought; "and I have this morning seen a woman clothed by her raiment. Now I understand the difference between being dressed and clothed. Maria is dressed, Agnes is clothed; her garments interpret her."

He was lifted up by his love for her; and her calico gown became a royal robe in his imagination. Every time he saw her she appeared to have been adorned for that time only. It was a delightful thing for him to watch her tenderness and pride in Maria. It was motherly and sisterly, and without a thought of envy, and he trembled with delight when she turned her sweet, affectionate face to his for sympathy in it. And really this morning Agnes might reasonably have given some of her admiring interest to Maria's escort. He was undeniably handsome. His suit of fine, dark cloth, his spotless lawn ruffles, his long, light sword, his black beaver in his hand, were but fitting adjuncts to a noble face, graven with many experiences and alight with the tender glow of love and the steady fire of intellectual power and purpose.

He did not stay at this time many minutes, but the girls watched him to the garden gate and shared the courtly salute of his adieu there. "Is he not the most graceful and beautiful of men?" asked Maria.

"Indeed he is very handsome," replied Agnes.

"There is not an officer in New York fit to latch his shoe buckles."

"Then why do you dress so splendidly, only to show yourself to them?"

"Well, Agnes, see how *they* dress. As we were coming here we met men in all the colors of the rainbow; they were rattling swords and spurs, and tossing their heads like war horses scenting the battle afar off."

"You are quoting the Bible, Maria."

"Uncle did it first. You don't suppose I thought of that. We passed a regiment of Hessians with their towering brass-fronted helmets, their yellow breeches, and black gaiters; really, Agnes, they were grand-looking men."

"Very," answered Agnes, scornfully. "I have seen them standing like automatons, taking both the commands and the canes of their officers. Very grand-looking indeed!"

"You need not be angry at the poor fellows. It must be very disagreeable for them to be caned in public and not dare to move an eyelash or utter a word of protest."

"Men that will suffer such things are no better than the beasts of the field; not as good, for the beasts do speak in their way with hoofs, or horns, or teeth, or claws, and that to some purpose, when their sense of justice is outraged."

"It is all military discipline, you know, Agnes. And you must allow, the regiments make fine appearances. I dare say these Hessians have to be caned – most men have, in one way or another. Uncle is coming back for me this afternoon. We are going to see the troops leaving; it will be a fine sight. I told uncle you might like to go with us, and he said he would ask you, but he did not."

"He had more grace granted him, Maria."

"I think he is a little afraid of you, Agnes."

"Nothing of the kind. He had sense enough to understand I would not go." Then, without further thought or preliminary she said: "Sit down here beside me, Maria, I have something very important to say to you. I know that I can perfectly trust you, but I want to hear you tell me so. Can you keep a secret inviolate and sure, Maria?"

"If the secret is yours, Agnes, neither in life nor in the hour of death would I tell it."

"If you were questioned –"

"I should be stupid and dumb; if it was your secret, fire could not burn it out of me."

"I believe you. Many times in Boston you must have known that a young man called on me. You may have seen his face."

"None of the girls saw his face but Sally Laws; we all knew that he called on you. I should recognize his figure and his walk anywhere, but his face I never saw. Sally said he was as handsome as Apollo."

"Such nonsense! He has an open, bright, strong countenance, but there is nothing Greek about him, nothing at all. He is an American, and he loves his native land, and would give his life for her freedom."

"And he will come here to see you now?"

"Yes, but my father must not know it."

"I thought you were always so against anything being done unknown to our parents. When I wanted to write good-bye to Teddy Bowen you would not let me."

"I expected you to remind me of this, and at present I can give you no explanation. But I tell you positively that I am doing right. Can you take my word for it?"

"I believe in you, Agnes, as if you were the Bible. I know you will only do right."

"All that you see or hear or are told about this person must be to you as if you had dreamed a dream, and you must forget that you ever had it."

"I have said that I would be faithful. Darling Agnes, you know that you may trust me."

"Just suppose that my friend should be seen, and that my father should be told," she was silent a moment in consideration of such an event, and Maria impulsively continued:

"In that case I would say it was my friend."

"That would not be the truth."

"But he might be my friend, we might have become friends, not as he is your friend, nothing like that, just a friend. Are you very fond of him, Agnes?"

"I love him as my own life."

"And he loves you in that way?"

"He loves me! Oh, yes, Maria, he loves me! even as I love him."

"Sweetest Agnes, thank you for telling me. I will see what you tell me to see, and hear what you tell me to hear; that, and that only. I will be as true to you as your own heart."

"I am sure you will. Some day you shall know all. Now, we will say no more until there is a reason; everything is so uncertain. Tell me about the rout last night."

"It was at Governor Robertson's. His daughter called and asked me to honor them with my company; and grandmother said I ought to go, and uncle Neil said I ought to go – so I went. There was a great time dressing me, but I made a fine appearance when it was done. I wore my silver-tissue gown, and grandmother loaned me her pearl necklace. She told me how many generations of Gordon ladies had worn it, and I felt uncanny as she clasped it round my throat. I wondered if they knew – "

"You should not wonder about such things. Did you dance much?"

"I had the honor to dance with many great people. Every gentleman danced one minuet with his partner, and then began cotillon and allemand dances; and there were some songs sung by Major André, and a fine supper at midnight. It was two o'clock when I got home."

"Tell me who you talked with."

"Oh, everybody, Agnes; but I liked most of all, the lady who stays with the Robertsons – Mrs. Gordon; her husband was with Burgoyne and is a prisoner yet. She was very pleasant to me; indeed, she told Uncle Neil 'I was the perfectest creature she had ever seen,' and that she was 'passionately taken with me.' She insisted that I should be brought to her, and talked to me about my dress and my lovers, and also about grandfather and grandmother."

"She lived with them once, and helped to make great sorrow in their house."

"I know. Grandmother does not forgive her."

"And your uncle?"

"He is very civil to her, for she is vastly the fashion. She played cards all the evening, and called me to her side more often than I liked. She said I brought her luck. I don't think she approved of my

dancing so often with Captain Macpherson. She asked questions about him, and smiled in a way that was not pleasant, and that made me praise the Highlander far more than I meant to, and she barely heard me to the end of my talk ere she turned back to her cards, and as she did so, said: 'What a paragon in tartan! Before this holy war there may have been such men, but if you are a good child pray that a husband may drop down from heaven for you; there are no good ones bred here now.' Then every one near began to protest, and she spread out her cards and cried, 'Who leads? Diamonds are trump.' When she called me next, she was sweeping the sovereigns into her reticule; and Governor Ludlow said she was Fortune's favorite, and uncle Neil said, 'I see, Madame, that you now play for gold,' and I think uncle meant something that she understood, for she looked queerly at him for a moment, and then answered, 'Yes I play for money now. I confess it. Why not? If you take away that excuse, the rest is sinning without temptation.' She is so well bred, Agnes, and she speaks with such an air, you are forced to notice and remember what she says."

Agnes was troubled to think of the innocent child in such society, and without obtruding counsel, yet never restraining it when needful, she did her best to keep Maria's conscience quick and her heart right. It was evident that she regarded the whole as a kind of show, whose color and sound and movement attracted her; yet even so, this show was full of temptation to a girl who had no heart care and no lack of anything necessary for the pride of life.

This afternoon the half-camp and half-garrison condition of New York was very conspicuous. All was military bustle and excitement; trumpets were calling, drums beating, and regiments parading the streets once devoted to peaceful commerce and domestic happiness. Royalist merchants stood in the doors of their shops exchanging snuff-box compliments and flattering prophecies concerning the expedition about to leave – prophecies which did not hide the brooding fear in their eyes or the desponding shake of the head when sure of a passer's sympathy. And a sensitive observer would have felt the gloom, the shame and sorrow that no one dared to express; for, just because no one dared to express it, the very stones of the streets found a voice that spoke to every heart. The bitterest royalist remembered. All the riot of military music could not drown the memory of sounds once far more familiar – the cheerful greeting of men in the market place, and all the busy, happy tumult of prosperous trade; the laughter and chatter of joyful women and children, and the music of the church bells above the pleasant streets.

Neil was silent and unhappy; Maria full of the excitement of the passing moment. They sat in the open window of Neil's office and watched company after company march to the warships in which they were to embark: Grenadiers of Auspach with their towering black caps and sombre military air; brass-fronted Hessians; gaudy Waldeckers; English corps glittering in scarlet pomp; and Highlanders loaded with weapons, but free and graceful in their flowing contour. On these latter especially, both Neil and Maria fixed their interest. Who can say how long national feeling, expatriated, may live? Neil leaped to his feet as the plaided men came in sight. Their bagpipes made him drunk with emotion; they played on his heartstrings and called up centuries of passionate feelings. He clasped his sword unconsciously; his hand trembled with that magnetic attraction for iron that soldiers know. At that moment he said proudly to his soul, "Thou also art of Scottish birth!" and a vision of hills and straths and of a tossing ocean filled his spiritual sight.

Maria's interest was of the present and was centered on the young captain walking at the head of his company; for Quentin Macpherson was a born soldier, and whatever he might lack in a ball-room, he lacked nothing at the head of his men. His red hair flowing from under his plaided bonnet was the martial color; it seemed proper to his stern face and to the musket and bayonet, the broadsword, dirk and pistols which he wore or carried with the ease and grace of long usage. He stepped so proudly to the strains of "Lochaber;" he looked so brave and so naturally full of authority that Maria was, for the moment, quite subjugated. She had told him on the previous night, at what place she was to view the embarkment; and she detected the first movement which showed him to be on the watch for her.

This fleeting pleasure of exhibiting himself at his best to the girl he loves, is a soldier's joy; and the girl is heartless who refuses him the small triumph. Maria was kind, and she shared the triumph with him; she knew that her white-robed figure was entrancing to the young captain, and she stood ready to rain down all of Beauty's influence upon his lifted face. Only a moment was granted them, but in that one moment of meeting eyes, Maria's handkerchief drifted out of her hand and Macpherson caught it on his lifted bayonet, kissed, and put it in his bosom. The incident was accomplished as rapidly and perfectly as events unpremeditated usually are; for they are managed by that Self that sometimes takes our affairs out of all other control and does perfectly, in an instant, what all our desiring and planning would have failed to do in any space of time.

Neil was much annoyed, and made a movement to stop the fluttering lawn.

"What have you done, Maria?" he asked angrily. "The Van der Donck's and half a dozen other women are watching you."

"I could not help it, Uncle Neil. I do not know how it happened. I never intended to let it fall. Honor bright! I did not."

And perhaps Neil understood, for he said no more on the subject as they walked silently home through the disenchanted city. All the bareness of its brutal usage was now poignantly evident, and the very atmosphere was heavy with an unconquerable melancholy. Some half-tipsy members of the De Lancey militia singing about "King George the Third" only added to the sense of some incongruous disaster. Everyone has felt the intolerable *ennui* which follows a noisy merry-making – the deserted disorder, the spilled wine, the disdained food, the withered flowers, the silenced jest, the giving over of all left to desecration and destruction – all this, and far more was concentrated in that wretched *ennui* of unhappy souls which filled the streets of New York that hot summer afternoon. For an intense dejection lay heavy on every heart. Like people with the same disease, men avoided and yet sought each other. They dared not say, they hardly dared to think, that their love for the King was dying of a disease that had no pity – that their idol had himself torn away the roots of their loyalty. But they closed their shops early, and retreated to the citadel of their homes. Melancholy, hopelessness, silence, infected the atmosphere and became epidemic, and men and women, sensitive to spiritual maladies, went into their chambers and shut their doors, but could not shut out the unseen contagion. It rained down on them in their sleep, and they dreamed of the calamities they feared.

It was on this afternoon that John Bradley received a new "call" and answered it. Affected deeply by the events of the day, he left his shop in the middle of the hot afternoon and went about some business which took him near the King's College Building, then crowded with American prisoners. As he came under the windows, he heard a thin, quavering voice singing lines very dear and familiar to him:

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

Then there was a pause and Bradley called aloud: "Brother, who are you?"

"William Watson," was the answer.

"I thought so. How are you?"

"Dying," then a pause, and a stronger voice added, "and in need of all things."

"Brother Watson, what do you want that I can get now?"

"Cold water to drink, and some fresh fruit," and then, as if further instructed the voice added, "when you can, a clean shirt to be buried in."

"Tell William he shall have them." His whole manner had changed. There was something he could do, and he went at once for the fruit and water. Fortunately, he knew the provost of this prison and had done him some favors, so he had no hesitation in asking him to see that the small comforts were given to William Watson.

"He was a member of my class meeting, Provost," said Bradley; "a Methodist leader must love his brother in Christ." Here Bradley's voice failed him and the Provost added, "I knew him too – he used to live in good style in Queen Street. I will see that he gets the fruit and water."

"And if you need anything for yourself in the way of saddlery, Provost, I will be glad to serve you."

"I was thinking of a new riding whip."

"I will bring you the best I have. One good turn deserves another."

Then, after a little further conversation he turned homeward, and men who met him on the way wondered what was the matter with John Bradley. For, without cessation, as he walked, he went over and over the same three words, "*Christ forgive me!*" And no one could smile at the monotonous iteration; the man was in too dead earnest; his face was too remorseful, his voice too tragic.

The next morning he was very early in Superintendent Ludlow's office. The great man of the Court of Police had not arrived, but Bradley waited until he came.

"You are an early visitor, Mr. Bradley," he said pleasantly.

"I have a favor to ask, Judge."

"Come in here then. What is it? You are no place or plunder hunter."

"Judge, a month ago you asked me to make you a saddle."

"And you would not do it. I remember."

"I could not – at least I thought I could not; now, if you will let me, I will make you the fittest saddle possible – it shall be my own work, every stitch of it."

"How much money do you want for such a saddle, Bradley?"

"I want no money at all. I want a very small favor from you."

"Nothing for the rebels, I hope. I cannot grant any favor in that direction."

"I want nothing for the rebels; I want one hour every Sunday afternoon in the College prison with my class members."

"Oh, I don't know, Bradley – "

"Yes, you know, Judge. You know, if I give you my promise, I will keep every letter of it."

"What is your promise?"

"I want only to pray with my brothers or to walk awhile with them as they go through the Valley of the Shadow. I promise you that no word of war, or defeat or victory; that no breath of any political opinion shall pass my lips. Nor will I listen to any such."

"Bradley, I don't think I can grant you this request. It would not be right."

"Judge, this is a thing within your power, and you must grant it. We shall stand together at the Judgment, and when the Lord Christ says, 'I was hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not:' don't let me be obliged to plead, 'Lord Christ, I would have fed, and clothed, and visited the sick and in prison, but this man barred my way.' Open the door, Judge, and it shall be well with you for it."

Then, without a word, Ludlow turned to his desk and wrote an order permitting John Bradley to visit his friends for one hour every Sunday afternoon; and as he did so, his face cleared, and when he signed his name he had the glow of a good deed in his heart, and he said:

"Never mind the saddle, Bradley. I don't want to be paid for this thing. You say William Watson is dying – poor Willie! We have fished together many a long summer day"; and he took a few gold pieces from his pocket and added, "they are for the old friend, not for the rebel. You understand. Good morning, sir."

"Good morning, Judge. I won't overstep your grant in any way. I know better."

From this interview he went direct to the prison and sent the gold to the dying man. And as he stood talking to the provost the dead cart came, and five nearly naked bodies were thrown into it, their faces being left uncovered for the provost's inspection. Bradley gazed on them with a hot heart; emaciated to the last point with fever and want, there was yet on every countenance the peace that to the living, passeth understanding. They had died in the night-watches, in the dark, without human help or sympathy, but doubtless sustained by Him whose name is *Wonderful!*

"All of them quite common men!" said the provost carelessly – "country rustics – plebeians!"

But when Bradley told his daughter of this visit, he added, passionately, "*Plebeians!* Well, then, Agnes, *Plebeians who found out the secret of a noble death!*"

Sweeter than Joy, tho' Joy might abide;
Dearer than Love, tho' Love might endure,
Is this thing, for a man to have died
For the wronged and the poor!

Let none be glad until all are free;
The song be still and the banner furled,
Till all have seen what the poets see
And foretell to the world!

CHAPTER IV.

A SONG OF A SINGLE NOTE

The next morning, very soon after breakfast, Maria came down stairs ready to visit her friend. She was dressed like a schoolgirl in a little frock of India chintz, her black hair combed backward and plaited in two long, loose braids. One morning she had tied these braids with red ribbon, and been scornfully criticised by her grandmother for "makin' a show of herself." The next morning she had tied them with blue, and been heart-pained by her grandfather's sigh and look of reproach; so this morning they were tied with ribbons as black as her hair, and as she turned herself before the long mirror she was pleased with the change.

"They make my braids look ever so much longer," she said with a pretty toss of her head; "and grandmother can not say I am making a show of myself. One must have ribbons of some color, and black is really distinguished. I suppose that is the reason Uncle Neil wears so much black cloth and velvet."

To these thoughts she ran gaily down stairs. The Elder was reading Rivington's *Royal Gazette*; Madame had a hank of wool over two chairs, and was slowly winding it. She looked at Maria with a little disappointment. Her hat was on her head, her books in her hand, and she understood where the girl was going; yet she asked: "Is it Agnes Bradley again, Maria?"

"Yes, grandmother. I said no lessons yesterday. We were watching the soldiers pass, and the people, and I was expecting Neil, and there seemed no use in beginning then. I told Agnes I would say extra lessons to-day."

"And I'm doubting, even with the 'extra,' if the lessons amount to much."

"Oh grandmother! I have learned a page of 'Magnall's Questions,' and studied a whole chapter in 'Goldsmith's History' about King John."

"King *who*?" asked Madame, suspiciously. "I never heard tell o' a King John. David, and Robert, and James I ken; but John! No, no, lassie! There's nae King John."

"Maria means John of England," explained the Elder. "He was a vera bad king."

"John of England, or George of England!" answered Madame disdainfully, "kings are much of a muchness. And if he was a bad king, he was a bad man, and ye ought to put your commandments on your granddaughter, Elder, to learn naething about such wicked men. Ye ken as well as I do, that the Almighty forbid the children o' Israel even to *inquire* anent the doings of thae sinners, the Canaanites. And it is bad enough to hae to thole the evil doings o' a living king, without inquiring after the crimes o' a dead one."

"I will give up my history if you wish it, grandmother. I care nothing about King John."

"Maria must learn what other people learn," said the Elder. "She has to live in the world, and she has sense enough to make her own reflections. Give me a kiss, dearie, and study King John if you like to, he was a bad man, and a bad king, but –"

"Others worse than him!" ejaculated Madame.

"Give me a kiss, darling grandmother, one for myself, and one for Agnes; she always asks for it."

"Oh, you flattering lassie!" But the old lady gave the two kisses, and with a sweeping courtesy, Maria closed the door and went humming down the garden walk: "*Who Saw Fair Pamela?*"

She had not gone far before she met Moselle, the only slave Bradley possessed. She was in her Sunday clothing, and she said Misse had given her a whole day's holiday. In that case Agnes would be alone, and Maria hastened her steps onward. The little house was as calm and peaceful looking as usual, the windows all open, the mignonette boxes on their sills in full bloom; the white shades gently stirring in the wind. The door was closed, but on the latch, and Maria turned the handle and went into the parlor. It was empty, but the ruffle Agnes was gathering was on the table, and Maria

took off her bonnet and laid it and her books down on the cushioned seat within the window recess. As she lifted her head an astonishing sight met her eyes. In the middle of the yard there was a very handsome young man. He was bareheaded, tall, and straight as a ramrod, and stood with one hand on his hip and his face lifted to the sunshine. Maria's heart beat quick, she lifted her bonnet and books, retreated to the front door, and called "Agnes" in a clear, eager voice.

In a moment or two, Agnes came in at the opposite door. "Maria!" she cried, "I am glad to see you. Is your uncle with you? No? That is well. Come with me to the kitchen. I have given Moselle a holiday. Maria, I have a friend – a very dear friend. I am cooking him some breakfast. Come and help me."

Agnes spoke in a hurried, excited manner very unusual to her, and as she did so, the two girls went into the little outside kitchen. The coffee was ready, the steak broiled, and as Agnes lifted the food she continued, "yes, I have a friend this morning. He is going to eat in the summer-house, and you will help me to wait upon him. Will you not, Maria? Oh, my dear, I am so happy!" And Maria, who remembered only too vividly the bare-headed youth she had seen for a moment, gladly accepted the office. A spirit of keen pleasure was in the dingy little kitchen, and the girls moved gaily to it. "You shall carry the coffee, and I will carry the steak," said Agnes; "the bread and the china are already placed." So laughing and chatting, and delighted with their service the two girls entered the summer-house.

"Harry," said Agnes, "this is my friend, Maria Semple; and Maria, this is Harry Deane." And Harry looked with frank eyes into Maria's eyes, and in a moment they knew each other. What was this strange impression made by a look? Not a word was spoken, but the soul salutation through meeting eyes was a far more overwhelming influence than any spoken word could have evoked. Then came the current forms of courtesy, and the happy tones of low laughter slipping in between the mingling of voices, or the soft tinkling of glass and china, and everyone knows that as soon as talking begins the divine gates close. It mattered not, Maria knew that something wonderful had happened to her; and never in all her subsequent life could she forget that breakfast under the clematis vines.

Swiftly the hot, still hours of the mid-day passed. The city was torpid in the quivering heat. There was no stir of traffic – no lumbering sound of loaded wagons – no noise of shouting drivers – no footsteps of hurrying men. The streets were almost empty; the very houses seemed asleep. Only the cicadas ran from hedge to hedge calling shrilly; or now and then a solitary trumpet stirred the drowsy air, or, in the vicinity of the prisons, the moaning of the dying men, made the silence terribly vocal.

"Let us go into the house," said Agnes, "it will be cooler there." And they took Maria's hands and went to the shaded parlor. Then Harry drew some cool water from the well, and as they drank it they remembered the men in the various prisons and their pitiful need of water at all times.

"They are the true heroes," said Agnes; "tortured by heat and by cold, by cruel hunger and more cruel thirst, in all extremities of pain and sorrow, they are paying their life blood, drop by drop, like coin, for our freedom."

"And when our freedom is won," answered Harry, "we will give to the dead their due. They, too, have saved us."

"Do you think, Harry, this French alliance is going to end the war?"

"Those who know best say it will. But these Frenchmen are giving Washington no end of trouble. They are mostly military adventurers. They worry Washington for promotion and for increase of pay; they have only their own interest in view. They scorn our privations and simplicity, and their demands can only be gratified at the expense of native officers whose rights they unjustly wish to invade. Yet I am told that without French money and French help we should have to give up the struggle. I don't believe it. Starving and demoralized as our army is, there are many who will never give up while Washington is alive to lead them."

"If I was a rebel," said Maria, "I should want our freedom won by our own hands only. The French are coming here at the last hour, and they will get all the credit. Do you think it is for love

of freedom they help the Americans? If so, why do they not give freedom to France? She has the most tyrannical and despotic of governments; Uncle Neil says so; and yet she pretends to thrill with indignation because England violates the liberties of her colonies. France had better mind her own affairs, or, as grandmother says, she will scald herself with other people's broth."

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