

MY LADY LAUGHTER

By
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A ROMANCE OF BOSTON
TOWN IN THE DAYS OF
THE GREAT SIEGE

By
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"Miss Petticoats" and "On Satan's Mount"

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MY LADY
LAUGHTER

A ROMANCE OF BOSWELL
TOWN IN THE DAYS OF
THE GREAT SIEGE

BY
D. W. CLARK
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My Lady Laughter



CHAPTER I

The Lion's Whelps

THE broad windows of the British Coffee House reflected with a golden blaze the rays of the wintry-red afternoon sun, which touched the royal banner of His Most Gracious Majesty, King George the Third, hanging over the door, and glinted on the bayonets of the two giant Grenadiers who stood, statue-like, at either side of the threshold. The bells of an occasional sledge tinkled on the crisp air, and the heavy shoes of the good Bostonians, soberly clad and with faces made stern by years of repression, creaked on the hard-trodden snow.

Now and again, by twos and threes, these solid citizens stopped before the Tory inn and listened to the sounds of merriment that came like muffled music from within, shook their heads significantly, and went their ways. Others less sedate loitered about, ready to make common holiday with whatever gaiety might be afoot, even though they had learned to hate the military force that was sponsor for to-day's *fête*.

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Was their sole recreation to be always the fiery pennings of Sam Adams and the vitriolic retorts of Daniel Leonard? Because they were Whigs could not their eyes enjoy a Tory show? And the Queen, a lovely lady and friendly to America, — so rumor said, — might they not help celebrate her birthday without incurring the displeasure of the mighty Committee of Safety, forsooth?

Thus reasoning — for the people of Boston had become used to reasoning about everything — they collected into a group and then into a crowd before the Coffee House, ready to show respect to the consort of the sovereign whom they still trusted, but equally ready to resent any affront to their patriotism on the part of the army of his despised ministry.

Down the street from the quarters of the Main Guard near the Town House, came with swinging strides a pair of scarlet-coated officers, their young faces finely set off by their full dress, powdered wigs and cocked hats. With supreme arrogance they pushed their way through the people, apparently caring no more for the muttered comments of some of the hot-heads in the crowd than for the disapproval of certain of their own well-flogged soldiers, who had suffered for thieving that very morning. They paused for a moment on the steps and looked over the mass of heads disdainfully.

“A sullen, rascally gang, these fellows of Boston, Jack,” said the taller and handsomer of the two. “Lord, what have they fed on to make

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'em such vinegar faces? Old Noll's psalm-singers must have been of just such a kidney — but they could fight, history saith. I wonder if these gentlemen and the rest of their precious brethren in the colonies could do as well."

His companion laughed heartily.

"Fight? And does Dick Charlton, of the King's Own Fourth, ask such a question? Egad, man, with five regiments of Briton born, — a vastly different breed from these transplanted whelps, d'ye understand, — we could march from one end of their starveling continent to t'other."

"Spoken like Capt. Jack Mowatt, pride of the Tenth, and a true son of Mars," replied Charlton, with the slightest touch of irony, for Mowatt's braggadocio was familiar to the army, "but don't be sure they won't make a proper fuss if ever they get to the right pitch. I've summered and wintered 'em, and believe me, Jack, they're not such curs as they're painted by our London wits. However, they won't trouble us this afternoon. Here come the Grenadiers."

The blare of music and the rataplan of drums was heard up King Street, and then there wheeled into view the splendid great figures of the Grenadier Guard, their tall forms made still more imposing by the lofty, steeple-like German hats they wore. They halted opposite the Coffee House, and with them the still larger company of sight-seers that had been attracted by the band.

Charlton's eyes rested with soldierly affection

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on the magnificent troop, typical of Britain's power, and yet, as he mused, like Britain perhaps too great to endure. A resounding slap on the shoulder brought him back to the birthday of the Queen.

"Come, man, enough of those over-grown fellows for to-day. We're late already. D'ye want to miss that rare new wine they call hock? Dietrich, the German major, had it brought over, and they say 'tis amazing like a woman, — of heavenly fragrance, but just enough bite to be most tantalizing. Come on; bid your sour-belly friends '*au revoir*,' as barber Piemont says."

The main room of the Coffee House was a warm picture of light and color and a babel of merry voices as the officers made their way to their places at table. Candles had been lighted, and their hundred points of light sparkled like near-by stars on the armor-trimmed walls and the silver-laden banquet board. Flunkies in gorgeous attire ran hither and thither, carrying food and wine. Fourscore officers in showy uniforms lined the tables, and Gage himself, pale and careworn, quaffed forgetfulness from his crystal glass. The feasting was nearly over. A huge boar's head, the former owner of which had been brought squealing over-seas from England to figure on this very platter, had just been borne in with ceremonial triumph.

"Good," said Mowatt, taking his seat and eyeing his porcine majesty approvingly, "we can eat little and drink much. Eh, Cuyler, and you, too, Aylesford?" — turning first to his

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neighbor and then to his friend Charlton with a bow, "You follow me with the bowl this afternoon, gentlemen, I presume."

"And *I'll* follow you to quarters to-morrow morning, when you're all begging for something to ease your heads, egad. And 'twill be a bit of bleeding this time, I warrant you, Jack."

Thus spoke, or rather shouted in a high-pitched voice that seemed perpetually on the point of dying away in a whistle, a stout, red-faced little man, his rusty hair tied in a natural queue, and his coat drawn over his plump figure as tight as the skin of a gooseberry. This was Dr. Gair, the surgeon of the 29th, famed throughout Torydom for his marvelous efficacy in dispelling the malign results of too-lavish conviviality, the guide, philosopher and friend of every roisterer, beloved by the whole army.

"Physician, heal thyself!" cried Charlton, raising aloft a tall glass of the pale amber wine of Germany which the younger man had already pronounced fit for Anacreon. "Drop that bumper of Madeira for thy gout's sake, and test this vintage of the Rhenish hills. There's not an ache in a tun of it."

"Bah," retorted the little surgeon, wrinkling his jolly face into what he doubtless intended to be a look of contempt. "You youngsters are following false gods. My heart and hand and throat shall ever cleave to the good old wines of our grandfathers, full of red blood and — why, bless my soul, bless my soul!"

He hastily put down his glass and gazed at a

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little balcony formed by the first landing of the broad oak staircase, behind whose balustrades sat a small party of men and women in the half shadow of the ample recess. For an instant he stood, irresolute, then rose abruptly from his chair.

“Yes, 'tis my old friend Giles Romney, King's Councillor and a true-blue Tory if there's one left in Boston. I must have speech with him.”

He left his place and rushed through the ranks of banqueters, a queer little apparition amid the blaze of stalwart red and gold. The next moment he dashed up the staircase with a clatter that was heard above all the din of revelry, and arrived flushed and wheezing at the landing, where the officer friends he had quitted so unceremoniously saw him vigorously pumping the hand of a tall, elderly man wearing an old-fashioned peruke and dressed in black satin.

Charlton turned languidly in his chair to find the cause of the surgeon's characteristic outburst. As he raised his eyes to the balcony a flush not born of vintages spread over his comely face, and his eyelids dropped.

Not so Mowatt's. That gay blade, having caught sight of a pretty girl among the visitors, gazed at her intently for a full minute. Then he proclaimed his discovery triumphantly:

“Egad, Dick, there's a rare bit of Boston baggage up aloft. Who is she? They say you know 'em all.”

“Which one?” asked his friend, with a quick glance at the damsel.

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“Which one? Can you ask which one, man, with that goddess looking down on us poor mortals? The one with the brown-red hair in curls and the white lace what-ye-call-it around her ravishing shoulders. The one with the lips that look pursed for a kiss, and the eyes that seem to smile ‘You sha’n’t, sir.’”

“The lady to whom you refer,” returned the lieutenant rather stiffly, “is Mistress Constance Drake, niece of the old gentleman there, Councillor Romney.”

“You know her?”

“Yes — that is, I’ve been presented.”

Mowatt chuckled expressively. “’Twon’t do, Master Dick,” said he. “There’s other knowledge of the fair Constance — egad, a name that fits her, I hope — than that you have gained by some formal ‘How-d’ye-do, your devoted servant, madam,’ in a drawing-room. Confess all, you rascal, or I’ll name you to the room; I will, ’pon honor.”

Charlton’s fine eyes flamed a bit, but he saw that his brother officer, now highly exhilarated by wine, would carry his threat to the end, or at least make a scene of some sort. Himself in vinously serene frame of mind, he felt no harm in telling what he knew of the beauty in the gallery.

“Well, Jack,” he began, “I first saw Mistress Drake at mess.”

“How? — at mess?”

“I was asked to dine at the great house on Winter Street last year —”

“With Percy?”

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“The same. ’Twas he who leased the house, you know, that he might have a place wherein to dine his fellow-officers, and rare good fare he provided, did Hugh. Well, after dinner, as I was walking alone in the big plot back of the house, I saw over in the adjoining garden the neatest, sweetest bit of young womankind since old Eve, training some flowers and teasing a big black cat at the same time. At last a long rose-bush spray that she was trying to nail up fell over the wooden paling on my side. You may imagine that I bestirred myself to help the damsel.

“‘Can I be of assistance to you?’ I asked, with my best Piccadilly air. She merely smiled and nodded her curly head.

“But I, lout that I was, kept my eyes so hard upon the roses in her face that I gave no heed to the bush, and as I handed it back to her, I tore a thorn-hole in my thumb that bled like the very devil.”

“And she expressed pretty concern and dressed the wound for you, I’ll be bound.”

“God’s truth, Jack, she did nothing of the sort. She laughed the most rippling, pearly, exasperating laugh man ever heard, and ran into the house. That was all for that day.”

“And — after?” asked Mowatt, his dark eyes fixed with curious intentness on Charlton’s face.

“Oh, after? No more satisfaction. I went again to dine with my Lord Percy, but saw nothing of my divinity of the garden. I thought I heard an echo of a girl’s laugh from old Rom-

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ney's house, but that was perhaps a trick of fancy. Since that time I have seen her at some of the loyal houses and have talked with her, too, but have ever met with smiles and raillery. If she *can* be serious, I know it not. So there's an end on't."

Mowatt, all levity again, clapped his friend on the shoulder: "Marvelous, and again most marvelous! Lieut. Dick Charlton captured by a saucy wench's laugh! What a text for a farce. Ecod, I'll send it to Burgoyne, for they say he has a pretty wit at writing that sort of thing. If I could but hear her, now, I might —"

"Hush thy nonsense, Jack. Gage is going to speak," warned Charlton.

In the stillness that fell upon the banquet hall as the commanding general arose, there came from the gallery a little peal of merriment as clear and musical as the tinkle of crystal. Something had amused Mistress Constance Drake.

Captain Mowatt grasped Charlton's arm, and leaned to the ear of his comrade.

"'S'truth, Dick," he whispered, "you're right; 'tis the sweetest challenge a woman e'er gave."

CHAPTER II

Toast and Prophecy

WHEN Dr. Gair had finished his lively welcome to Councillor Romney and his niece, he sat quiescent to regain the breath that his rapid ascent of the stairs had well-nigh expended.

"I scarce expected you here this afternoon, friend Romney," he said at length. "I know well enough that your neighbors will like you none the better for hearing that you were at the military dinner."

"A plague on them!" replied the old man testily. "They can do me no harm, and he who laughs last laughs best. I came here, sir, to drink the health of our gracious Queen Charlotte, and by the Lord Harry! I'd do it were the room packed with Whigs."

"And so you shall, sir," cried the surgeon, leaning over the balustrade, and shouting a wheezy command to a serving-man to bring port.

"And you, fair Connie," he went on, "you are here to show your good Tory colors, likewise?"

The girl laughed. She and the doctor were pleasant antagonists in the game of banter.

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"They say, do they not, that we women should never wear our hearts on our sleeve?"

"You'll ne'er betray yourself that way, young lady, don't fear, for I'll be sworn that you have no heart at all. But you, too, will drink to our Queen?"

"With all the heart that I haven't got. Yet this toast sounds not like that."

"No," returned Dr. Gair, gaily, "but 'tis one that includes all queens. And since 'tis 'The Ladies,' why, who should be getting up to respond but Dick Charlton? Happy dog! They all love him."

Constance noted with feminine approval the tall, slender figure and well-chiseled face of the lieutenant. He seemed the fitting centre of a brilliant picture, and the girl's artistic sense was pleased. Now he was speaking, and she found herself listening eagerly.

"Gentlemen," said he, "my poor tongue is too weak to sound the praises of the whole lovely sex. I am a soldier, as are we all, and blunt of speech. So in lieu of an oration that would but weary you and betray my own shortcomings, I propose the health of the loveliest of womankind, the most bewitching creature in the province."

Holding his wine-glass aloft, he raised his flushed, handsome face to the balcony and gazed straight into Constance's eyes.

"Her name; her name!" was shouted from place to place as the officers prepared to drink.

"I give you —"

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Constance's face was burning now, and she felt a wild desire to escape, but that, she knew, would make her situation the more embarrassing.

"Oh, he can never do it, he can never do it," she murmured in an agony of apprehension. Still she returned his gaze steadfastly. What he saw there must have shown him the needless cruelty of his intent.

"I give you My Lady—My Lady Laughter."

"Ha, ha, 'My Lady Laughter,'—the health of 'My Lady Laughter'—neatly put—drink deep to the wench," roared the soldiers in unsteady chorus, as glass rang upon glass, and swords clanged upon the chairs. They had their toast and they drank it royally, asking nothing further.

Had Charlton seen the look of gratitude in the girl's eyes, he would have had troubled dreams that night. But he gazed into the gallery no more.

"But—hic—who the—hic—devil is 'My Lady Laughter'?" asked Ensign Cuyler, not quite too gloriously drunk to forget that mystery still hung over Charlton's toast.

Mowatt, his neighbor, smiled sardonically. "When you're sober, Tom, ask Dick Charlton. Then if he wants to pink you, you'll be better able to care for your precious skin."

The toasts were now coming thick and fast, and were growing pronouncedly political. After each sentiment was drunk, the officers gave three huzzas, and a man was sent to the balcony

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overlooking the street to shout it to the Grenadiers. Then could be heard the braying of the band, made hoarse by the nipping frost, and at the end the long roll of the barrel-drums.

"The sixteenth of April, '46 — a like chastisement to all rebels," cried the master of ceremonies. The officers answered with a maudlin roar, for wine had been discarded for brandy.

"W'a's sisteenth April, for'-six?" asked the drunken Ensign Cuyler.

"Culloden, you dolt," growled Mowatt. "Defeat of the Young Pretender."

"Coursh; know all 'bout it. Three cheersh f'r 'Young Pr'tender.'"

No one heard this treasonable remark, for a new element had entered into the festivities. As the toast was greeted with the drum-beat outside, there came from the street a low, threatening sound like the murmur of a winter sea, and then, like the hissing of its foam, a long sibilant whose meaning was clear enough to the soldiers at the table.

"Ha! The rascals are pricked," cried Charlton. "Small wonder, if they have any manhood. Put ourselves in their places, Jack."

"Confusion to the American Army," came next, and again the threatening growl from the street, louder and more like the menace of an angry animal. Many a redcoat officer jumped to his feet, and many a right hand sought its sword-hilt.

Up in the landing of the stairway a girl listened to the tumult, with eyes dilated and a

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quick-beating heart. Half-timorous, yet as if fascinated by the execrations of the populace, she persuaded her uncle to follow her around the gallery to a front window from which she could see and hear.

A strapping Grenadier with bared head came upon the balcony and roared:

“The toast is: ‘Lord North—long life and success to him.’”

The strivings of the players, whose extended cheeks and bulging eyes gave testimony to their good intent, were wholly swallowed up in the vortex of shouts, groans, hoots and hisses. The drummers wagged their hands manfully, but no sounds came from their drumheads. The announcer’s face was distorted with rage.

“Lord North!” he bellowed again, when the uproar had in a measure subsided.

“Damn him!” came in immense volume from the throat of a herculean lout of a fellow standing just below the balcony. He waved his long arms as if beckoning to his comrades to join him in the sack of the Coffee House.

“And I say bless him!” roared the announcer.

“Damn him!” “To perdition with him!” “Hanging’s too good for him!” screamed the crowd. And this from the same men who a half-hour before had cheered the name of the King!

A thousand men and boys now surged through King Street, swaying this way and that with the characteristic motion of a mob. It needed but a wrathful push from any direction to become a

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mad torrent that must be dammed by steel. This was seen and comprehended by the commander of the Grenadiers, who gave orders to clear the street.

Sullenly, and with yells, jeers, and hisses, the crowd melted away before the ugly points of bayonets, that often pricked as well as threatened. Little by little the sounds of anger died upon the night air, and quiet ruled outside the Coffee House.

The girl at the window turned to her uncle with saddened face. "Uncle," she said simply, almost as a child, "I am afraid."

The confident old Tory's pride was up in arms on the instant.

"Nonsense, Connie," he returned, sharply, "is not the King's army, in this year of grace '75, strong enough to keep a mob in check? Never fear; we'll get home safely enough."

Constance looked at the kind-hearted old man with something far-away in her eyes.

"Oh, you do not see," she exclaimed earnestly. "Not for to-night do I fear, but for the days that are to come."

CHAPTER III

A Woman's Whim

NIGHT had come upon King Street as Constance and her uncle, the former again sparkling with the effervescence of youth, the latter still fuming against the madness of Whiggery, came from the Coffee House and started on their homeward way. The thoroughfare was almost unlighted, for a fine young moon was sailing the southern sky, and the thrifty town always took advantage of that illuminator. Here and there the glimmer from the shop of some belated merchant threw its feeble rays across the sidewalk, and a more powerful radiance came from the Main Guard's quarters; but after they had been passed, and the Town House rounded, the pair found Cornhill almost without signs of life.

"How quiet the town is, Uncle Giles," remarked the girl; "too quiet, I think. Oh, how I would like to see some of the bustle and light of London we are always hearing of — Vauxhall and Ranelagh and Piccadilly. Shall I ever get away from this dull and solemn place?"

"Quiet enough at this moment, Connie," returned the Councillor, ignoring his niece's question. "But 'tis a kind of quiet I have no faith

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in, egad. 'Tis most like those silly Sons of Liberty are even now crowded in some attic or tavern back-room plotting how they may disturb the peace. But we'll home and to bed. Your Aunt Tabitha will have expected us long since."

"Nay, uncle, not home; never home so early," exclaimed the girl with petulant pleading. Her piquant face, surrounded by her hood of dark velvet, took on its most imperious look.

Giles Romney raised his eyebrows.

"Not home? Pray where, then, Miss Impertinence?"

"Why, to — to Governor Gage's."

"To Governor Gage's — and wherefore?"

His "wherefore" the good old Tory always regarded as his trump card of impressiveness. If that failed, he knew all was lost.

"Wherefore, wherefore, wherefore," she chanted, mockingly. "You know wherefore perfectly well, you dear old uncle. 'Tis about the poor and their wretchedness that has made this winter so sad. You told me only last night that you would have speech with the Governor on the matter."

"But the General is not at the Province House; the banquet — or, at least, the drinking — is still afoot."

"The Governor took leave before we did," returned Constance, in triumph; "you'll trust my eyes for that, I'll be bound. Come; let us seek audience with him."

The Councillor made no reply, but as they walked along he alternately cursed his gout,

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which the wine had already begun to start into diabolical activity, and the Patriots of Boston, whom he could look upon only as reckless marplots. Often he preached to Connie until she knew his sentiments and arguments by heart. To-night he was in the mood again.

“Look at our wharves, and warehouses, and shops,” he growled, “all as dead as a graveyard, thanks to these agitators who prate about ‘liberty,’ forsooth, but want no good Loyalist to have any. They’re part calves, part fools, and the rest knaves, to bring the town to such a pass. O-o-oh, that damned toe! A little slower, Connie, girl, just a little slower.”

They had now reached Marlborough Street, and the tall brick mass of the handsome Province House loomed ahead in the moonlight. A little nearer and they could see a shimmer on the gilded Indian that surmounted the apex of the peaked cupola. Connie knew that her desired move in the game was at hand. As they passed the first of the small porter’s lodges in front of the mansion, Councillor Romney’s gout gave a preternaturally savage twinge, and he stopped under the shadow of a large tree and leaned heavily on his gold-headed cane. Then, like a pretty sprite, Constance glided away to the sentry at the gate, and came back with her face full of delight.

“He’s within, the Governor’s within, Uncle Giles,” she cried, “I have it from the sentry himself. Now, there’s no excuse for our not

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entering, is there? And you need the rest so much," she added, with wonderful compassion.

But the testy old gentleman was not yet conquered. "Nay, nay, Connie, 'tis useless. 'Twould ill befit me to call upon the Governor at this time of night without an appointment."

The minx laughed at her old uncle. "And you a King's councillor! Prithee, then, what's the use of being hooted in the streets by ragamuffin boys, if you are to be so wondrous humble at Province House? Nay, we are going in."

The Councillor had lost the game.

The sentry at the gate knew Romney, and admitted the pair without hesitation. The old gentleman stumped along the deep courtyard, dreading the stone steps that must be climbed before the door was gained, but with Constance's vigorous assistance these were surmounted, and they found themselves under the great porch with the fine Greek pillars that were the pride of the town.

At the door a solemn Scotch corporal barred progress and absolutely declined to listen to reason. Constance saluted with military precision and complete gravity, at which the soldier looked sheepish, but still refused to be persuaded.

"We would see the Governor, corporal," said the girl, sharply. "This is Councillor Romney and I am Mistress Constance Drake."

"I hae owders tae admeet nae mon the night," returned the guard, "an' I maun obey them."

"But I'm not a man," flashed Constance, gaily.

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The ghost of a smile just flickered in the corners of the Scot's thin mouth.

"By 'mon' was meant the human race, I hae noo doobt, an' ye belang tae that, dinna ye?"

"Y-e-es."

"Then ye canna come in."

"Well, you can at least call your superior officer, for him I would see at once." Connie spoke with great dignity now, and the corporal, a good-natured fellow enough, nodded and passed into the hall. Presently he returned, and then there followed a fine young officer, still in full uniform, his sword jangling as he walked.

"My Lord Rawdon?" exclaimed Constance, in pretty surprise, "why, I thought you had been detailed to the Castle."

The officer bowed with careful ceremony.

"I was; but only for a time. For the present, I am of the Governor's personal guard. But in what can I serve you, Mistress Drake?"

"We would have audience with the Governor."

"'Tis but a mere form, but I must carry your names to His Excellency. I will return instanter."

Again the clanking in and the clanking out.

"Governor Gage's compliments to Councillor Romney, and he will be pleased to see you, sir," said my Lord, with words for the stout old Tory, but eyes for the slender maid who stood beside him. And, in truth, a prettier picture did not hang within on the walls of old Province House, noted for its paintings of fair women.

Constance felt the insistent admiration in the

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look, but she met it serenely for a moment, then dropped her lids and sank into a low, billowing courtesy.

“We are your debtors, my Lord,” she half-whispered, sending him a flashing smile that quite enraptured the rather dull, but good-humored and susceptible officer. He hastened to escort them with elaborate politeness through the great doors and into the splendid colonial hall, where Constance marveled at its brilliantly papered walls and the huge staircase that rose majestically to the very top of the house. Before the entrance to a room half-way down the hall, Lord Rawdon stopped and waved the pair inside.

For an instant he stood watching Mistress Drake, feasting his eyes on the girlish grace with which she walked toward the Governor. Then he shrugged his shoulders resignedly and walked away.

“With such women, why should not the rascals fight?” was his thought.

CHAPTER IV

A Night Alarm

AS Constance and her uncle entered the audience-room, in which a painting of George III had the place of honor over an elaborately carved marble fireplace, they saw that Governor Gage was not alone, but was engaged in lively conversation with a lady. As Constance guessed, this was Mrs. Gage, a pleasant-faced woman, whose New York ancestry seemed at one time to be an element of hope for the colonists. She rose and, with her husband, came forward, smiling, to greet the visitors.

“Welcome to Province House, friend Romney, and you, too, Mistress Drake,” said Gage. “You find us with official duties thrown off for the nonce. Let me present you to Mistress Gage.”

This ceremony having been duly performed, the Councillor felt in duty bound to apologize for the somewhat unconventional call.

“I came here, sir, at the solicitation of my niece, who would not be denied,” he declared. “She would listen to nothing but that I plead with you for the King’s aid for the suffering poor of the town.”

“And never have the poor had fairer advo-

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cate," was the gallant reply. "Surely George himself might well listen to such a one. Pray sit, Councillor Romney, and we will talk the thing over. Mistress Gage will take your charming niece in charge, and give her such entertainment as the house affords."

The women withdrew to a far corner of the room. On a table a large portfolio was lying open.

"Here are the complete plates of the great Mr. Hogarth, the first, I believe, in Boston," said Mrs. Gage. "Some of them are not for maids like you, my dear, but those I will turn over quickly."

With an appearance of interest in the prints, Constance could catch snatches of the conversation of the men. She heard her uncle describing the sufferings of the poor, as seen and told by herself.

"She has a fancy for playing the Good Samaritan in some dull quarters of the town," concluded the Councillor.

"And it does her heart credit," replied Gage. "I know as well as you the hardships caused among the lower classes by the closing of the port, but they have only themselves to blame. Fools, Mr. Romney, fools, in time of prosperity, when trade was good, food cheap and taxes light, to court ruin for a theory."

"Well, they have their failings, like all of us," sighed the old man. "Let us not forget that they are warm-hearted and easily led in a matter

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where what they think their liberties are concerned."

"Easily led, in very truth," cried the General, hotly, "when such a dolt as this Samuel Adams, a man, egad, who's frittered away his own patrimony bit by bit, and whom they say is half-supported by Hancock, whose orations he writes, has a ring in all of their precious noses."

"He's a most magnetic orator," ventured Romney, in spite of himself inclined to pride in his forceful fellow-citizen; "I remember when—"

"That's it, talk!" replied Gage, "talk, nothing but talk! That's what bade fair to ruin these colonies. Talk and their eternal public meetings. Thanks to the regulations act, there'll be no more of them — at least, not in Boston, though, confound it, Romney, the upstarts hold their town meetings without the town!"

The Councillor twirled his gold-headed cane between thumb and forefinger thoughtfully.

"In truth, sir," he said, slowly, "I do regret that His Majesty's ministers have seen fit to check the right of free speech. You know, General, there's nothing like bottling up a brew to make it more potent."

"Ha, ha," laughed the General, loudly, "a very apt simile, egad. With the fortifications and the arriving soldiers these timorous, would-be rebels will be bottled up of a surety." Again he laughed, pleased with his own wit.

None of this latter talk had escaped Constance. "I wonder if it may not prove that the

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‘bottling up’ will be that of the Loyalists in Boston,” she ventured to Mrs. Gage, demurely.

That good lady looked up from “The Rake’s Progress” with a question in her mild blue eyes, but ere she could frame it in speech, the Governor went on.

“As for the poor, let Adams and Hancock and the addle-pated Otis and that ilk look to ’em. The King’s officers have other business than to furnish antidote for presumptuous folly.”

Constance’s dimpled chin lifted itself into the air and her brown eyes snapped. As the General left his chair and walked toward her, she, too, arose and met him half-way. The doughty soldier saw an expression on her pretty face that somehow brought him to a halt.

“Well, Mistress Drake,” he began, half-amused, half-impressed, “what have you to say to the folly of these rebels?”

“Nothing, sir. But *is* it folly to be hungry — to starve — women and little children? They are not politicians. The King can make no war on them.”

“The King,” returned Gage, solemnly and with a look of profound devotion at the comely young face of the portrait over the mantel, “the King makes war on no one here. He and his officers but enforce the law.”

“Your pardon, your Excellency, but is it law that the helpless shall suffer for the presumption of strong men?”

Councillor Romney’s face reddened with vexation. A chit of a girl, and a niece of his, for-

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sooth, dare fling back such a retort to the General of all the forces.

“Constance, girl,” he said, sharply, “I —”

“Let the girl go on. I am sure she has a tender heart, and we women cannot look on these things as lightly as you men.”

It was sweet-faced Mrs. Gage who interposed. Constance threw her a quick glance of gratitude, and the Governor looked indulgently at his wife. He was ever the lover, even in the midst of war's alarms.

“Yes, friend Romney, let Mistress Drake proceed,” he said. “We are apt to forget the humanities in the study of the realities.”

Then Constance, with charming earnestness, poured forth the story of her discoveries, her visits, her womanly but insufficient ministrations to those who were being ground between the millstone of the Tories and the Patriots. A colder heart than Gage's would have been touched at the recital.

“What would you have me do, Mistress Drake?” he asked, at length.

“Nothing but an act of common humanity. Have the condition of these people, too numerous for individual charity to relieve, looked to, and give of the government store. You and your soldiers have plenty.”

General Gage rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and a grim smile flitted across his face.

“Aye, we still have plenty,” he replied, “but to get it required almost as much labor as to quell the antics of your townspeople. Egad,

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sir," turning to old Romney, "it was only t'other day that a Menotomy farmer, whose potatoes an officer in charge of a foraging party tried to buy, swore he'd rot with 'em rather than sell them to a redcoat. Now, what think you of that for folly?"

"And what, sir, did the foragers do?" asked the Councillor.

"Emptied his bin," replied Gage, with a short laugh. Then noting Constance's scornful face he added: "Oh, we paid for them, young lady. Not your absurd market prices, perhaps, but good money. . . . But your pensioners shall be looked to. I'll do what I can. For proof that I am not a hard man, ask Mistress Gage there, and then give her a list of your proteges."

Constance made a little grimace of victory at her uncle. Then she thanked the Governor prettily and turned to the Governor's wife to give her the list. At the moment an orderly appeared in the doorway and saluted.

"Your errand, sir?" said Gage, in his cold, military voice.

"One John Mildmay has appealed to Major Courtney of the Main Guard for protection," was the answer.

"A councillor, is he not?" queried the Governor, turning to Romney.

"Yes, from Billerica. He has lodged here since his appointment."

"King's councillors are not popular in the country, I suspect," smiled the commander. "Well, what does he fear?"

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The orderly grinned.

"A night or two ago some townspeople tarred and feathered his house. To-night, after they were driven from the streets near the Coffee House, it seems some of the mob gathered before his door and dared him to come forth."

"And be tarred and feathered, too," grimly observed Gage. "Oh, well, let him have a corporal and a couple of men for a few nights."

The soldier saluted and walked briskly out. Old Romney grasped his cane more firmly and prepared for his hobbling march to his home.

"Shall I not furnish you an escort, friend Romney," suggested Gage, with perhaps as single an eye for the comfort of the pretty damsel as for the safety of the old man.

"Escort — pooh! Not for me, sir, not for me," was the rather haughty reply.

"But you are a King's councillor."

"Yes, and of Boston born and bred. There's no one here would raise his hand against me. They know I do what I think right and fear no one. . . . Please God that these troublous times may soon end."

"Amen to that," was Mrs. Gage's fervent commentary.

After leaving Province House and the cordial parting word of its occupants, Constance and the Councillor turned up Rawson's Lane. The moon had sunk low by this time and the narrow street was almost in darkness. As they passed Governor's Alley the girl's keener ears caught the

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sounds of some sort of human commotion in the distance ahead.

"Hark! What is that?" she whispered.

Her uncle ceased pounding the icy stones with his cane and listened. Then he snorted angrily:

"Humph! Some new devilry of the Sons of Liberty, I'll warrant. Mayhap they have got at old Mildmay again. But nothing to harm us, Connie, so let's be on."

The tumult increased, and at Longacre, near the Common, it suddenly became embodied in a struggling mass of dimly outlined red and black, in the vortex of which waved clenched fists, sticks and swords. Yells of derision, maudlin curses, and growls of anger filled the air.

Romney and the girl stepped into a convenient shadow and watched the miniature conflict. All at once the dark-coated forms made off in a body, laughing and shouting one of the patriotic songs of the day.

As the pair left their place of safety a couple of British officers swaggered down upon them. Constance's feminine instinct quickly took alarm.

"Let us turn, and go home the other way," she suggested.

"Nonsense, girl," returned the stout old Loyalist, "see you not they wear the King's uniform?"

At this the roisterers were upon them, leering insolently at the figure of Constance.

"Oho, Jack! whom have we skulking here?" said one.

"As I live, a petticoat, Aylesford," laughed

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Mowatt, his imagination flaring up on the instant.

“Trust you for that, egad,” returned his companion. “You’d spot one if ’twere dark as Erebus.”

“Aye, and having found this one on such a glorious night, I swear its owner must pay King’s ransom — a kiss. Come, pretty one, — for you are pretty, I swear, though I scarce see your face — a kiss.”

“By God, sir!” shouted old Romney, blazing with wrath as he stepped forward to protect his niece, “you disgrace the uniform you wear. Had I my sword I’d run your miserable body through.”

“Tut, tut, ancient sir,” sneered Mowatt, as he pushed the Councillor aside, “you excite yourself unduly. ’Tis but one little token of loyalty I demand of this lass, and that I must have.”

Constance neither screamed nor fainted as the fellow brought his hot and reeking mouth toward her own. Instead, she bestowed upon his face a blow that staggered him.

“’S’death,” he cried in a rage, “now she *shall* obey, or I’ll —”

“A truce to this folly, Jack,” exclaimed the more sober Aylesford; “let the maid be, lest we arouse the neighborhood. Come on, I say.”

“Not I,” shouted the maddened officer, “I’ll not be flouted by a Yankee jade. Here’s for my kiss.”

“Not yet, sir, I think.”

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None of the party had noticed the approach of a slender, boyish man in sober garb. Had Mowatt seen him in time, it may be doubted if that fiery officer had dropped upon the hard snow so suddenly, impelled thereto by a well-directed blow.

“John Brandon, I thank you, sir,” exclaimed old Romney, as he recognized his niece’s champion, “and so does Constance. We’re glad to see you again, eh, Constance, my dear?”

The girl nodded, and would have spoken had not Mowatt just then arisen with a fierce oath and, drawing his sword, made a rush at Brandon. It would surely have fared ill with the unarmed young man, had not a third officer, wrapped in a great-coat, stepped up to the group and seized the sword-arm of the infuriated captain, wrenching it violently, so that his weapon fell to the ground.

“Damme, sir,” roared Mowatt, “what the devil d’ye mean by this? Who are you?”

The newcomer lowered the high collar of his coat, and turned so that the now feeble moonlight shone full upon his face. It was a handsome and noble countenance, but something more than its mere physical beauty struck the two officers.

“My Lord Percy!” exclaimed Aylesford in great confusion.

“Percy!” echoed Mowatt, now thoroughly cowed and full of drunken apprehension. “My Lord, I — I —”

“Lieutenant Aylesford, put Captain Mowatt under arrest,” commanded the Earl sternly.

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“Take him to the main guard-house at once. I will attend to his case to-morrow. And I shall want a word with you, also, sir.”

Aylesford bowed and led his comrade away.

“I would I might fitly apologize for such conduct,” said Percy, turning to the Councillor. “I can only say that the petty insubordinations of an inactive army are most difficult to control. Nay, thank me not. What I have done was as necessary for our well-being as for yours. Now you must permit me to escort you to your home, Councillor Romney, for 'tis true, though I wish it were not, that some of our harum-scarums might find Mistress Drake too fair a temptation.”

Constance thanked John Brandon with sweet gravity, bade him good-night, and went her way under the powerful protection of Percy.

“Ah, well,” murmured the young man as he watched the party out of sight, “there are other duties that I *can* do.”

CHAPTER V

The Sons of Liberty

THE garret of Tom Dawes, the big adjutant of the Boston regiment, had long been a favorite meeting-place of the Sons of Liberty and their co-ordinate branches, the various caucus clubs of the town. Here had been nurtured the spirit of freedom, and here had the voices of the patriotic leaders rung with eloquent instruction and fiery appeal. No private house of all the town was so identified with the cause of the people.

To-night the garret was again serving its patriotic purpose. The long room, from which all partitions had been removed years ago, was blue with tobacco smoke, and the genial odor of flip was in the air.

A big table stretched down the middle of the room, and upon it pipes, pouches, books, papers, maps, inkhorns, quills, bowls, pitchers, glasses, and plates of biscuits and cheese mingled with a fine air of comradeship. The good Patriots were not insensible of the creature comforts, and many a jorum of toddy had its share in the plans against the oppression of the mother country.

The formalities of the meeting had not yet

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begun. Little detached groups were talking over the latest developments for and against the cause. The action of the Grenadiers in clearing the streets before the Coffee House that evening, as well as the offensive toasts, publicly announced, seemed the chief topics of discussion.

"I saw it all from my shop window," said a grimy-handed man, Edes, the printer. "I declare t'ye that I feared another massacre like that of '70."

"Aye, neighbor," said a shrill little voice belonging to a queer little man whose diminutive stature was accentuated by the loose, sailor-like clothes he wore, "that was a fearful night."

"You saw it, then?" inquired a youthful member of the club, dressed almost like a clergyman.

"Saw it, Master Brandon? I should think so, indeed, sir. Why, I was *in* it."

The young man's interest was aroused at once.

"May I ask that you tell us of it, Mr. Hewes," he said, somewhat diffidently. "I was but a boy at that time, and would greatly like to hear the account of an eye-witness."

Some of the others having added their request, Mr. George Robert Twelves Hewes not unwillingly cleared his throat for the recital. Hewes was a character in the town, one of those not uncommon men who seemed to have no other occupation but that of patriotism. He was reputed to be well in the secrets of the leaders, and it was whispered that he could worm more information from the British than any other person in Boston. Without education, he was

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intelligent, and, while vastly inquisitive, had discretion enough to save him from too obvious meddling.

“Well, Mr. Brandon and gentlemen,” he began, “you all know the results of that bloody event, and I’ll not weary ye with any story o’ that sort. But inasmuch as a deal has been already spoke and writ about what brought it about, and none of it accurate, as I believe, I’ll tell ye just how the trouble began.

“First and foremost, the whole thing started with a dun from a greasy barber’s boy.”

“A barber’s boy?” exclaimed John Brandon, and even some of the older men pricked up their ears.

George Robert Twelves Hewes looked about with pleasure at the mild sensation his statement had produced.

“Nothing less, sir, — or greater, I may say. You know Piemont, the French barber? Well, at that time he kept shop at the head of King Street on the north side, and there a parcel of the royal officers used to resort for their head-dressing. One of ’em had been there some months to dress by the quarter, and Piemont promised the bill to the boy who attended him if he behaved well. The quarter expired, but the boy couldn’t get his money, although he made many a dun for it.

“On the evening of the fifth of March, the boy found his man with a lot of the other rakehellies strutting before the Coffee House. He raised such a pother about his bill that the bloody-

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back lost his temper and cuffed him. At that a lot of the citizens gathered and began to revile the officers and threatened to mob 'em. So it grew until at last the troops fired on us at the Custom House, as ye all know."

"You saw Attucks, then?" queried Brandon.

"That I did. I was beside him until he fell. The big half-breed had a great cord-wood stick in his hands, and just before the volley that did for him he prodded a sentry with it and dared him to resent it.

"'You lobster,' he cried, 'I'll have one of your claws. I will, by God!'

"Pretty soon the Grannies fired, and Attucks and the others went down. The bullets whistled over my head, and had I been a taller man, egad, I'd not be telling you this."

Brandon followed the speaker with admiring eyes. He felt a vast respect for a man who had been under fire for what was to him the cause of liberty. Social and educational barriers vanished before a fact like that.

"And they say you were at the Tea Party, Mr. Hewes," he ventured again.

"No one should know *who* was of that party, schoolmaster," the little man replied, "but I may say —"

Whatever of interest that had been forthcoming was interrupted by a long single knock at the great door, followed by three or four taps in peculiar rotation. A man stepped through the half-gloom to the entrance and a short dialogue in strange language was exchanged. Then the

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door opened and a graceful figure entered and approached the long table.

"'Tis Dr. Warren, of the Committee of Safety," whispered Crafts, the painter, to Brandon.

The young man rejoiced that at last he was to meet the already famous physician and Patriot in the close communion of the club. He had known him as a chivalrous soul whom his friends adored for his fascinating manners, and whom his enemies feared for his eloquence and a sound judgment beyond his years. But now was to come comradeship.

"Now business will begin," remarked the impatient Edes.

Warren greeted his friends with his usual charming courtesy, and sat down at the head of the long table. As was the custom at the opening of all their meetings, a great Bible was uncovered and all filed past, each, with his hand on the book, taking the solemn vow of allegiance to the cause. Brandon was the last to pass.

"Ah, a new face," said Warren pleasantly.

"'Tis John Brandon," replied his next neighbor, "but lately come from the University at Cambridge to be usher at the Latin School."

Warren looked approvingly at the young recruit. Spite of his youth there was that in his face that spoke of calm courage and a determination that would carry him through any duty he might undertake.

"I welcome you, sir, to our band," said the

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doctor, grasping Brandon's hand cordially. "We have need of such men as you."

As the schoolmaster reached his retired seat, filled with delight, he found that Warren had arisen to address the meeting. With eager eyes and beating heart he followed the calm, magnetic voice of the leader.

"I counsel moderation, friends," began the speaker. "America must and will be free, but when the time comes to fight it must be as soldiers and men, not as a mob and brutes. English tyranny may not be the fault of royalty discredited by its ministers, but it is none the less tyranny. I regret the indignities shown hitherto respected citizens because they do not think as we do. The liberty for which we are ready to lay down our lives demands liberty for all to do as their conscience dictates. We must be patient with the councillors who have not resigned. The attack upon Councillor Mildmay will not win the doubting to our cause."

"But he said Boston should be laid in ashes," growled printer Edes, a man of extreme convictions, who believed that Warren, with all his virtues, was over pacific.

"And called the General Court fools," cried Joseph Field, a ship-master whose occupation was now gone and who bitterly resented being "cooped up on land," as he called it.

"Those are but the thoughtless boasts of passion," returned Warren calmly. "Let us set them an example of moderation."

John Brandon found himself at once on the

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side of the speaker, whose ardent patriotism, tempered with clear judgment, appealed to him strongly. And yet as he listened he could not help feeling a great desire to act, to do something at once that should attest his zeal. Yet how could he, a mere teacher of boys, prove his mettle in the great struggle? His hands gripped one another in a strong, nervous clasp.

“Our greatest hope,” continued Warren, “lies in the growth of the organization of the people in the country. You may not all know that early last fall ten thousand men were in arms between here and Sudbury, and that there was a plan at that time to muster forty or fifty thousand to march into Boston and rid it of the soldiers.”

“Ah,” cried Edes, “that was something like action. It irks me that it was not carried into effect.”

“The time was not ripe,” returned Warren, with a smile. “We must not strike the first blow. When it comes it must be dealt by the British aggressors. God and the right must fight on our side. The contest may be severe — the end will be glorious. We should not boast, but united and prepared as we are we have no reason to doubt of success, if we should be compelled to make the last appeal; but we mean not to make that appeal until justified in the sight of God and man.”

A profound stillness followed the eloquent close of Warren’s little address. Even the most rabid of the Patriots was for the time being

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thrilled into agreement with the policy of the wise leader. No one else cared to speak for a time, and when, after a round of Dawes' excellent flip, a song was proposed, and sung softly, these strains sunk deep into young Brandon's soul:

“Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all,
And rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call;
No tyrannous acts shall suppress your just claim,
Or stain with dishonor America's name.
In freedom we're born and in freedom we'll live.
Our purses are ready:
Steady, friends, steady,—
Not as slaves, but as freemen, our money we'll give.”

Scarcely had the last notes of the ditty died away when another knock, bolder than Warren's had been, was tattooed against the door. Again the mystic conversation, and then there came into view a short, chubby man of middle age, with a rubicund, genial face, whose rather bulbous nose seemed its most salient characteristic. A large cape-coat covered his figure down to the neat riding boots he wore, and his cocked hat was pulled well over his rather curly hair. To a man the company rose, and greeted him warmly, which spoke of the popularity of Master Paul Revere, the clever goldsmith and engraver, the sworn idol of the mechanics and artisans of Boston, and the confidential messenger of the patriotic leaders.

“Welcome, Master Revere,” cried half a dozen voices at once, and more hands than that reached out to grasp his. He tossed his hat carelessly on the table, unbuttoned his coat with

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great deliberation, then lifted a mug of flip to his lips and drank it off with gusto.

“Right glad am I to be with you again, friends, he said heartily. “It’s a long way I have traveled since last you saw me at a meeting. I trust I have been of service in the saddle. I have a Patriot horse, if ever there was one.”

“What of Portsmouth,” cried Edes, “and the bold deed of our neighbors in that Tory stronghold? Tell us of that.”

Revere seemed surprised. “You surely must have heard ere now, and during my later absence,” he said.

“Of the general events, yes,” interposed Warren, “and yet I think your personal observation of the matter would be worth the hearing.”

“As to that, I cannot say much,” rejoined Revere. “You know that a month ago my poor services were required to inform the Committee of Safety at Portsmouth that the government in England had prohibited the further importation of gunpowder and military stores by these colonies, and that a large garrison was to be sent at once to occupy Fort William and Mary at the mouth of the Piscataqua.

“Urgent haste was necessary, and I rode hard, reaching Portsmouth within the day. I lodged at the house of friend Langdon, a large and beautiful mansion that would scarce suffer in comparison with that of Mr. Hancock. That evening there was a meeting of the Sons of Liberty, and I told them of all that was afoot.

“Egad, gentlemen, they are a lively lot, those

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Portsmouth folk. Next morning a couple of hundred of them, led by Langdon, Pickering, and a wild Irishman named Sullivan, marched down to the fort and demanded the surrender of the place.

“In whose name, sir?” asked the commander very civilly, as well he might when he saw the number of men against his paltry garrison.

“In the name of the people of New Hampshire!” roared Sullivan, and that did for it. The commander and garrison gave themselves up as prisoners, while the citizens stripped the fort. They took a hundred barrels of powder, some fifteen hundred stand of small arms, and a few pieces of light cannon, and hauled them off into the country under the very nose of Governor Wentworth himself, who, they say, nearly burst a blood-vessel with rage. The booty is now safely hidden”—here he lowered his voice involuntarily — “at Durham, where lives Sullivan. Remember that, Warren; some day, mayhap, we shall need the stuff.”

For a moment Warren and Revere held a whispered conversation apart from the rest. Then the doctor made an announcement. “Friends,” said he, “there is need of a volunteer to hold himself in readiness to proceed within three days at the order of the Committee of Safety with important documents to be delivered to designated persons in various towns. It will be a delicate mission and, perhaps, dangerous. Let him who will undertake the duty arise.”

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Every man in the room sprang to his feet.

"Where all are patriots 'tis difficult to choose," observed Warren with a smile. "Therefore let lots be drawn."

"Are all here safe men?" asked Revere, as the slips of paper were being prepared, his shrewd blue eyes scanning the faces before him with keen scrutiny.

"Yes," replied Warren, with simple conviction. The goldsmith was satisfied, although he had been perforce trained to suspicion, and had also noted one or two men previously unknown to him as active Patriots.

The passing of ballots in a black wooden box was a time of highly nervous suspense to John Brandon. He took his bit of paper with feverish haste from its receptacle, and held it clenched in his hand.

All around him members were unfolding their slips, and still no man spoke. Brandon waited and waited, yet there came no exulting cry, "I am the man!" A great joy began to thrill his heart as he realized what that silence might mean. Slowly he unfolded his ballot, and then he knew.

"Thou art chosen," were the words he read.

He arose modestly in his place, but no words were necessary. All knew that the youngest and newest member of the club had won the prize. And through the handclasps of Warren and Revere, John Brandon received his new birthright of endeavor.

As he walked toward his home after the meet-

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ing, he found soberness mingled with his exultation. A new element entered into his thoughts — Constance. She was a Tory born and bred, he mused. What would she say if she knew of this night's work?

CHAPTER VI

Teacher and School Boy

JOHN BRANDON slept late next morning. His dreams had been troubled with burdens of impossible tasks to be performed for the Committee of Safety, and pictures of a fair maid in distresses from which he could not rescue her. He was glad, then, to awake to the consciousness of a gentle tapping at his door, and to hear his sister Barbara's soft voice calling to him.

"Whatever ails thee, John?" it said. "Breakfast waits, and there'll be little time for you to get to school."

He jumped from his bed and threw back the heavy shutters at the windows. Then his mood leaped to meet that of the glorious winter sun that seemed to transform the white town into a city of gold. He sang snatches of patriotic verses as he dressed, and afterward swung into the great kitchen, where the table was spread, with an almost martial air that much puzzled pretty, prim Barbara.

Brandon's newly found nature, though sudden in its manifestation, had been of slower growth. For years he had been a serious, studious youth, planning all things for the scholastic life. His father, Jedediah Brandon, had gratified his every

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wish along those lines, for he had both the means and the desire to give his son the education which he himself could not have. The old man was many things in the domestic economy of Boston, — tallow-chandler, glue-maker, soap-boiler, and tinker, — and all of them well. At the sign of the Bull's Head and Horns in his quaint, gambrel-roofed, diamond-paned house in Quaker Lane, he might be found any day busy with at least one of his several trades.

The son, having finished his college course creditably, became absorbed in his new duties at the Latin School, yet not so completely that the spirit of the new goddess — Liberty — did not steal into his heart and, by firing that, warm also his brain. Many physical facts, too, roused his young indignation: government by force as embodied in Gage, who had arrived the preceding spring; the blockade of the harbor; the almost incredible arrogance of the soldiers; the robbery of the charter by the Regulations Act, and, perhaps most potently exasperating of all, the erection of fortifications at either end of the town. The poverty of many of the people, new and strange for Boston, was a powerful appeal, and to cap all came the speeches of Sam Adams, Warren, and the others whom he had often heard. Now *he* was chosen for active service; he was to do, as well as talk and read; the world was brighter than it had ever been. Not even the face of Constance Drake, now and then arising from the shadows of the night before, could

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darken his mood. Fate would be, must be, kind in some mysterious way as yet undreamed.

"Prithee, John, what has befallen your appetite?" asked Barbara. "One would think you in love, but that how could love come to scholar Brandon?"

"Aye, but I *am* in love, Bab," cried her brother.

"In love? Why —"

"Of a truth — in love with the fairest goddess in the world."

"John, it cannot be —"

"Nay, nay, sister mine," he cried gaily, springing to his feet and clasping the girl in his arms, "the goddess I love is Liberty."

"Oh, fie!" replied the disappointed Barbara, "I had hoped —"

"And so had I, but this betters hope. Now to break the news of my betrothal to my father."

As the door closed behind him Barbara drew up gently from its warm nest in her bosom a miniature, which she looked upon for a moment, then kissed tenderly. A sound outside, and it was quickly down below the folds of her white neckerchief again.

John found his father in the little room where he took orders and transacted the financial side of his trades. The elder Brandon was a hook-nosed, thin-faced man of no great fluency of speech, but an oft-expressed theory that if every man followed the dictates of his own conscience the general result would do the world good. What passed between father and son was never

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recorded, nor was there any curiosity over the matter save on the part of Barbara, who hovered about hoping to catch some fragment of the dialogue, yet too honorable to permit herself any eavesdropping.

At last, when she had seen her brother leave the house and start briskly up the lane, she ventured to invade old Jedediah's sanctum.

"John will be late to the school, father," she said, looking up at the great gold-rimmed clock fastened over the desk.

"'Twill not matter much, I fancy," returned the old man shortly. "'Tis his last day."

"His last day?"

"Aye. I couldn't oppose him. Every man, young or old, for his own conscience, say I."

"What will he do?"

"His duty, I warrant. But there, there, Barbara, be about your housewifery."

"But father, I —"

"You'll know it all in good time, my girl, — soon enough, I'll warrant," he muttered under his breath. Then his daughter was vastly surprised to hear him sigh, for never before had she found him guilty of that weakness. And, wonder of wonders, in half an hour he locked the door of his little office, plunged into his great-coat and left the house "for a breath of fresh air," he said, although, in Barbara's recollection, he had never felt in need of that stimulant of Dame Nature before the hour for dinner. It was surely a morning of surprises.

Meanwhile, young Brandon had gone to the

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Latin School, and in a straightforward way told the master that, with official consent, his duties as usher were at an end. With kindly regret he was honorably dismissed at once; the grave teacher was a stanch Patriot, and felt somehow that the hour had struck for his youthful assistant.

Not far from the school Brandon met a rather oddly assorted pair. One was a negro of middle age quite gaudily dressed, and with his wool carefully powdered; the other a small boy whose coat-collar, grasped firmly by the darky, nearly hid his red and defiant face. It was Pompey, the school truant-seeker, haling one of his victims back to justice. For years Pompey had waxed fat and arrogant in his profession; what wonder when he looked about him and saw among the great men of the day many of those he had once seized as prisoners.

“Ah, Pompey,” said Brandon, in response to the elaborate hat-flourish of the dark messenger, “what’s amiss to-day with our young friend Thomas Dexter?”

The boy tried to speak for himself, but Pompey cut him short with his big voice.

“Well, sah, Mr. Brandon, sah,” said he, “I was gib de orders fer to go fotch Thomas to school when he don’t ’pear dar. So I goes down by Province House, sah, where I hears a tumult, an’ dar I sees dis yer boy runnin’ away from a sojer like Phœbus afore de mornin’ sun. But I chases him de way old Æneas chased de

wooden horse, and cotched him wid red hands. An' heah he is, sah, fo' yo' punishment."

Smiling in spite of himself at Pompey's perversions of the smattering of classical and mythological lore he had picked up about the school, and which he was passionately fond of airing, Brandon asked the boy for his version of the affair.

"You see, sir," replied the boy, his wish to justify himself overcoming his customary reverence for constituted authority, "some of the 'Grannies' have been hectoring us boys and spoiling our slides on the Common, as well as tripping us up. We couldn't stand it any longer, sir, and made up our minds to get even."

"And did you?"

"We-ell, yes, sir, I think we did. This morning we saw one of the 'Grannies' who'd been mean to us, at his post in front of Province House. When his back was turned, we tied a bit of strong cord across from a fence to a tree — perhaps you know the way, sir — and then we snowballed him. When he chased us he fell over the string, flat, and his musket went off, and — and they called out the guard. Then Pompey caught me."

Brandon felt his heart glow at the lad's recital. He would have patted him on the head had not the old scholasticism been still strong. As it was, he rescued him from Pompey, and ordered him to school with a word to the master.

"The next time you want to 'get even,'

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Thomas," he said, "take your chance when school isn't in session."

Pompey went away grumbling. He hated to be deprived of the sweet delight of making a spectacular entrance at the schoolroom with one of his quarries.

"Huh, Marse Brandon'll spile all de boys, fo' suah," he muttered; "dey'se wuss'n Scylla 'n' Ch'r'bdys already. Gorry mighty only knows what'll happen ef dese yer sojers stay much longer."

CHAPTER VII

At Dan MacAlpine's

AT the head of Quaker Lane, in the upper story of a deserted warehouse, was the "armory" of Corporal Dan MacAlpine, master of the gentlemanly art of sword-defense and rapier-play, and a veteran of the French and Indian wars. Since the occupation of Boston by the King's troops, the place had taken on a great air of prosperity, and many an honest pound had Corporal Dan stored away by freshening up the skill of the officers and teaching the rudiments of the use of swords to sundry young Bostonians. The elegant John Hancock had often crossed foils with the master of the place, and Warren and Revere had essayed to become adepts, though with indifferent success. Naturally, it was desirable that the two great elements in the town should not meet here, so MacAlpine had established the custom of Tory mornings and Whig afternoons.

This morning the passer-by might have realized from the clashing of steel that a spirited bout was going on in the loft. Had he entered and climbed the heavy oaken stairs he would have seen two men hard at it with foils, each moving hither and yon with easy grace and the

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rapidity of trained muscles. One was a thick-set individual of medium height, with a round, good-natured face, a snub-nose and thick, curly, grizzled hair. His antagonist was taller and slenderer, his grace of body well displayed by his laced shirt and military nether garments.

The younger man was the more aggressive fighter. His sword-play was rapid and almost excitable, while the other seemed almost immovable save for the slight twists of his right arm as he skilfully parried every thrust made by the officer. At last, with a smile on his broad face, he gave a sudden upward turn to his wrist, and in an instant the sword of the Englishman flew upward toward the rafters, then fell with a clatter on the floor.

"Egad," exclaimed the disarmed fencer, his face full of puzzled chagrin, "my wits must have been wool-gathering, Corporal."

"Niver moind, Liftinant Charlton," replied MacAlpine, soothingly, "ye've a foine wrist and a pretty knack at play. But that thwist has been too much for the bist of 'em. Oi raymimber, now, in Braddock's campaign —"

"Come, MacAlpine, you should at least spare the conquered," returned Charlton, stooping for his sword. "But why, in all our bouts this winter, have you never tried that — that 'thwist' before?"

"Because, sorr," — and the twinkle in the Irishman's soft blue eyes grew less merry, — "because Oi niver tache that to any man Oi have

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not larned to honor, and — Oi axes yer pardon, Liftinant — to admire as a frind.”

Charlton regarded him curiously for a moment, then stepped forward and extended his hand.

“I thank you, MacAlpine,” he said gravely. Then with his usual bonhomie: “But damme, man, I know no more of it now than I did. What is the trick, pray?”

“Yes, sorr, it *is* a thrick, daypindin’ on eye and judgmint. Oi’ll soon tache it ye. An Oitalian master-at-arms, the great Allegretti ye’ve doubtless heard of —”

“Taught it to you?”

“No; to me ould captain in the dhragoons, God rist his sowl.”

“Killed in action?”

“No, worrse luck. He died in bed like a man of pace — which he wasn’t — did Captain Terry — Terence Drake, sorr. Perhaps you’ve heard of him.”

Charlton shook his head slowly in a sort of indecision. “No, I think not, though in truth the name sounds familiar. Tell me of him.”

“Ah,” said the corporal, “there was an orfficer for ye! All shparkle and dash and fire, but sympathetic as an angel, sorr. Oirish to the backbone, a soldier ivery inch. Poor Captain Terry! Maybe ye’ve met his daughter, sorr?”

The officer started as if from a reverie. In truth he had heard little of MacAlpine’s eulogy. Something like a half-remembered strain of

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music had been floating through his mind. But now —

“Why — why, not Lady — I mean Mistress Constance Drake?”

“The identical same, Liftinant. Captain Terry quarthered in this town afther the defate of Braddock, and took Giles Romney’s young sister Cicely home to England as a bride.”

“And the mother — is she living?” asked Charlton gently.

“No, sorr. The same fever took ’em both to hivin together. They were niver mint to be parthed at all. . . . Confound the dust in me eye! Oi was his orderly and know whereof Oi spake.”

“The daughter,” said Charlton eagerly, “she was reared by her uncle, I take it.”

“As the apple of his eye. He’s proud and — and rough, perhaps, sorr, but he loves her and —”

“Egad, Corporal,” cried the lieutenant, “I believe I know why you left the army. It was to be near her.”

The fencing-master looked straight at his pupil. “She might need me if anything happened,” he replied simply.

Again did the handsome Englishman grasp the old soldier’s hand. Then he laughed gaily. “Heigho, sentiment’s not all with the writers of verses, MacAlpine,” he cried — “But what the deuce is that?”

The sound that had cut short the gallant lieutenant’s moralizing was the jangling of a chorus of small bells of all tones and conditions, from the raucous clangor of the guardian of wan-

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dering cows to the sweet song of a rope of sleigh-bells. It died away for a moment, then broke out by degrees and additions until it seemed as if the whole lower portion of Quaker Lane were trying to exorcise evil spirits.

MacAlpine grinned delightedly.

"It's a councillor, Oi'm thinkin', Liftinant."

"A councillor? You don't mean to tell me they're wearing bells."

"Oh, no, sorr, though they moight as well whin they go this way. Ye see, sorr, at the foot o' the lane there's a good bit o' Whig shop-keepers of wan sort an' anither. Naturally they're down on the councillors, so whin wan starts to walk through, somebody begins the tocsin and be the toime he gets in the middle, the whole lot are ringin' like the divil. It don't plase the Tories much, ye can belave."

"I should think not, indeed," said Charlton, loyally trying to be indignant, though perilously near to laughter. "A rather miserable life these councillors have, I swear."

He stepped to a window to see, idly wondering who had caused the outburst. "Egad, 'tis old Romney!" he exclaimed.

"Romney?" echoed the corporal, running to the window. "'Pon me sowl, it is himsilf, and Misthress Constance, too. There must be some mistake; they'd niver give *her* such a sirinade. There, the bells have shtopped. But where are ye goin', sorr?"

Charlton had beaten a hasty retreat to put on his coat and had taken up his cape and hat.

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"Ye'll not try the thwist to-day?"

"No, I — I must be away. I've an engagement — with Lord Percy."

"Won't it kape?" This with a true Milesian twinkle in the blue eyes.

"Keep? What do you mean?"

"Only that Misthress Constance is coming up, sorr, an' I thought —"

"What right had you to think? . . . But — what time is it?"

"Only half after elivin, sorr," said MacAlpine, consulting an enormous, spherical-faced silver watch, next to his favorite rapier the pride of his life.

"Ah, then, I believe I have half an hour to spare."

"Oi thought ye had, sorr." This with a fine air of conviction that the fencing-master well knew how to adopt on occasion.

CHAPTER VIII

A Story and a Sword

BY this time Councillor Romney was stamping into the long apartment, red-faced, with a temper keener than any of MacAlpine's swords. Constance followed, stepping daintily over the threshold and holding up her skirts with the most tantalizing incompleteness, so Charlton thought in his semi-retirement.

"Did ever anybody hear of such damned impertinence, sir?" stormed the Councillor. "To bell me as if I were a sheep! 'Tis infamous, Connie, I tell ye, infamous!"

"Yes, I know, uncle," the girl returned with a naughty assumption of sympathy, "'tis very wrong in them. But who's to tell them that you're only a lamb in councillor's clothing? — Oh, I did not know —"

Mistress Drake stopped very suddenly as she caught sight of Lieutenant Charlton, who stepped forward as if to come to closer quarters. But she merely courtesied and turned to examine some old prints hanging on the walls. Charlton flushed, but gave no other sign of his vexation.

Old Romney was still sputtering out his wrath and injured pride to MacAlpine.

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"Rights of the people!" he roared, "damme, sir, are the rights of the King to have no place?"

"Oi take no sides, sorr," replied the corporal. "Oi'll tache both parties what Oi can of me thrade. Oi only raypated what they say."

"Someone must make the laws and enforce them. If these Whigs had their way, there'd be no judges nor sheriffs."

"Nor army, either, egad," broke in Charlton.

Romney looked at the speaker, then at Mac-Alpine inquiringly. The latter introduced the pair.

"Glad to know you, sir," exclaimed old Romney cordially. "And you're right about the soldiers, at least those in red coats. Of those in blue these hot-heads are vain enough."

"Soldiers? You honor them too much, sir."

"No, Lieutenant Charlton, they *are* soldiers. The country round about swarms with them — well-dressed and equipped, and their officers veterans of the French and Indian wars."

"That's it — bush fighters. They'd never dare a stand-up battle — if they dare fight at all."

"Please God it may not come to that, sir," said the old man earnestly. "I — well, well, Connie; what is it, girl?"

This last in response to certain grimaces made by his niece behind the lieutenant's back.

"Oh, I see," he blundered on; "Lieutenant, I think my niece would like to meet you."

"Stupid!" was the word the red lips framed in silence. Then aloud: "Meet Lieutenant Charl-

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ton? We have already met, have we not, Lieutenant?"

The soldier bowed, and the girl courtesied with just a suspicion of over-elaboration.

"So-ho," cried Romney, boisterously, "sits the wind in that quarter? You youngsters are too speedy for us of the older generation. Met? How, pray?"

He looked from one to the other, as if seeking to unravel some puzzle. Constance laughed softly.

"Oh, we have some tastes in common — floriculture is one, is it not, Lieutenant Charlton?"

She held up a bewitching pink thumb and put it to her mouth with a wince of mock pain. Then, with an adorable toss of her ringletted head, she pirouetted away to open her batteries upon MacAlpine.

"I was in Lord Percy's garden," exclaimed Charlton, "and tried to be of some slight service to Mistress Drake's roses, which —"

"Her pride, sir, as they were her mother's."

They fell to talking on the military and political situation, the old Councillor full of delight in the airing of his opinions to at least one sympathetic listener. Charlton, for his part, was trying to determine whether the fact that he was a King's soldier, or that Romney was Constance's uncle, made him so good a listener, when a merry burst of laughter from the girl made both men look across the room.

"Ha, MacAlpine, at your quips again," cried the Councillor. "Come, man, let's have the

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jest. . . . He's an old friend of the family, Lieutenant," he said, in a lower tone, "almost, you might say, a foster-father to Constance. . . . The jest now, Corporal."

"Sure, sorr, Oi only raycalled a shtory her father used to tell," protested the swordsman.

"I'll warrant I've heard it then," returned Romney, "but out with it!"

"'Tis Connie's shtory, sorr — that is, she tells it betther than Oi."

"Well, Constance, girl, let's have it. The lieutenant may be entertained — and 'tis little enough entertainment we give the King's men in this town."

The girl frowned ever so slightly, and a glint of rebellion came into her eyes. But instantly memory softened her resolve. She smiled at Charlton in a way that set his blood tingling.

"Perchance I owe Lieutenant Charlton something for a — wound," she said prettily. "If the story be any recompense —"

"Balm, indeed, Mistress Drake."

"Then I will tell it. 'Tis but a simple thing, however, not to compare with the stories they say you officers tell at mess. This was how my father gave it — so Dan says, for I do not remember him: 'The fencing-master of the dragoons had spent some days in trying to instil the first principles of fence into an Irish recruit. Finally, after explaining a certain thrust, he said:

"Now, my lad, how would you use your weapon if your opponent feinted?"

"'Begorra,' cried Michael, his eyes flashing,

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'Oi'd have none of his thricks. Oi'd just tickle him wid the pint o' me shword to see if he was shamming.'"

"Capital!" cried the lieutenant, far more captivated by the vivacity of the reciter than by the tale itself, while MacAlpine roared as heartily as if he had not heard and told the story a hundred times himself. "But now I must take my leave, in truth I must, though I —"

"Come and see us, Lieutenant," said old Romney, heartily; "'tis but little luxury we can show you in these pinched times, but you will be welcome."

The soldier turned to see if he could read an indorsement in the girl's eyes, but she had already seized a foil from its rack and was thrusting carte and tierce at MacAlpine as if her life depended upon her energy. In self-defense the veteran was compelled to take a weapon, and the clang of steel on steel rang through the loft as Charlton passed through the door.

"Egad, she wears the royal colors," he said to himself, taking a last look at the cheeks of the pretty fencer.

The bout was brisk, but brief, for the Councillor was anxious to be away. As if now thinking of his errand for the first time, he unbuckled his sword and gave it to MacAlpine.

"Polish it up and make it fit for use," he said simply. "God knows I hate to say it, but I cannot go unarmed at night in Boston henceforth! Come, Connie, have done with your frolicking. We must be home."

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“Good-day, to you, Master MacAlpine,” said the girl. “At another time I will disarm you for a shilling.”

“An’ begorra, Oi don’t know but phwhat she moight, if she kapes at this pace,” mused the fencing-master, as he set to work on Romney’s sword.

A bounding step up the stairs interrupted his thoughts ere long, and then there appeared before him the slim, youthful figure of John Brandon. He threw down the sword and rose to greet his visitor.

“Why, Masther Brandon, ’tis ye yersilf, sure,” he exclaimed. “An’ phwat, pray, can Oi be afther doin’ for ye?”

“Teach me to fight.”

“To foight, whirra! ’Tis lucky it’s afther noon, thin, unless ye’re a Tory. . . . But Oi thought ye a man of pace and of books.”

“These are swirling times, MacAlpine,” returned Brandon, with a grave smile. “Men of books will be needed again after men of deeds have acted.”

“’Tis none of my business to know, perhaps,” said the corporal, kindly, “but Oi can bist tell your nade in me tachin’ if Oi undershtand on which side ye mane to foight.”

“On the side of right.”

“Then take off your coat, John Brandon,” exclaimed MacAlpine, as he took two swords from their resting-place, and put one in the school-master’s hand. “Oi’ll give ye of me best, an’ no man can say more.”

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For an hour thereafter, the ringing song of the steel was again heard. At the end of that time MacAlpine lowered his sword, breathing heavily.

“Oi niver thought to cry quits,” he exclaimed, “but no more for to-day. In the name o’ St. Patrick, phwhere do ye carry so much muscle in that slender body o’ yours?”

Brandon put on his coat and hat with quick, nervous motions. It surprised even him to find how precious had time become since the night before.

“Shall I learn well?” he asked.

“Larn, is it? Be the powers, it’ll not take me long to tache ye all Oi know, me boy.”

“That’s glorious news, Dan; I shall need it all, never fear. Now, I’ll home to dinner. I was a little later in coming than I had expected.”

“Had ye been earlier, John, ye’d most like found company here.”

“Company?”

“Yis; Councillor Romney and his niece. They did me the honor to pay ould Daniel a little visit. An’ Liftinant Charlton was here, too.”

“Constance Drake? Charlton?” repeated Brandon, his brow darkening. “Why, I — but I must be off, Dan. To-morrow at three, unless I should be called away. Good-day.”

The master-at-arms rubbed his wrists ruefully as he put away his sword. His ruddy face had lost its jovial expression and in his blue eyes there was a look of wistful regret.

“Oi’m growin’ ould, divil a doubt of it,” he

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thought. "These youngsters have thried me. Brandon's arm's like a rock. Foight, eh? There's a woman at the bottom of it, or me name's not MacAlpine. . . . Oho! Constance? Poor divil. If so, he's fightin' for the wrong side, I fear."

CHAPTER IX

On Common Ground

THE spring of '75 was long famed in the chronicles of old Boston for its graciously early approach and its lack of that coquettishness which it often displayed toward mankind. Even March brought none of its traditional lions, but granted warmth to the earth and blue and genial skies over all. The confident grass sent up its tender green; the brown buds on the trees began to swell with the exuberance of new life, and bluebirds flashed through the air, brilliant messengers of the coming riot of nature.

As a result of this indulgent mood, the Mall on the easterly side of the Common presented an unwonted picture. For the first time in many months it had resumed its old function as a strolling-place for the fashionables of the town, and a point of vantage for general sightseers of less pretensions. True enough it was that there was and had been little disposition for public gaiety, owing to the ever-oppressing occupation of the place by the British; but just now the wonderful advance of spring tempted all classes of people to walk abroad and display whatever seasonable finery might still be theirs.

So upon a certain bright afternoon in early

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March the Mall was well filled with those who walked to see and be seen. The women, especially of Tory families, were in their bravest silks and satins, while here and there one of the new head-dresses, in the London mode, towered above the level of the throng, like a huge gray bag topped with the most absurd of tiny hats. The brilliant uniforms of the English officers, rivalled by the parti-colored velvets and satins of a few of the "loyal gentlemen," as they called themselves, and the sober browns and drabs of the citizens at large, made up a flowing kaleidoscope of humanity that charmed more than one young and impressionable girl.

But that it was not all parade and show this afternoon was made evident by the frequent gathering of little groups along the Mall and the earnest, sometimes excited talk that arose from them. The people had grown accustomed to the stern routine of what was practically a beleaguered town, and to the redcoats, who had upset all laws and reduced competence to comparative poverty, and poverty to abject dependence. Upon the very Common could be seen the white tents of the King, and the fortifications that shielded his men from possible attack. This situation called for no new comment; rumors of what had and might happen were the chief stock-in-trade of the gossips.

In one characteristic knot of the more humble citizens little George Robert Twelves Hewes shone supreme. He assumed to know all that

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the Patriots were planning to do, and much that the British had in mind. Nor did his coterie, Jonathan Thomas, the barber, Peleg Perkins, the chaise-maker, and Francis Johonnot, the tailor, care to dispute his knowledge. They were just now bewailing their loss of trade by reason of the Port Bill and the Regulations Act, and were unanimous in foretelling ruin for themselves and their families unless some miracle should change the times.

“Well, friends,” said Hewes, with his oracular assurance, “you may as well prepare for worse. I have it authoritatively that the town is to be set on fire by order of the Provincial Congress. That’ll scatter the rake-hellies, or I’m not my mother’s son.”

“You may be right, Hewes,” said Perkins, gloomily, “nothing unfortunate is impossible now.”

“Impossible! Of course not, neighbor,” returned Hewes, indignantly. “When I say a thing, I — Ah, good-day to ye, sir.”

The salutation, with a wonderful change of voice, was for a slender, dapper man dressed in the height of fashionable luxury, who was sauntering by with a buxom young woman on his arm. His hair was powdered and tied in a long queue. His shirt was ruffled with costly lace at the bosom and over the hands, and gold buttons gleamed at each wrist. His coat, with its flaring skirts, was of the color of peach-bloom, and was lined with white silk. A figured waistcoat, black silk small-clothes with gold knee

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buckles, white silk stockings, and shoes with silver buckles, completed a costume that few in the colonies and none in Boston could match for splendor. He carried a magnificent gold-headed cane which he swung lightly as he walked.

Hewes' companions regarded their mentor with some astonishment.

"You know Master Hancock, then?" asked Johonnot.

"Know John Hancock? To be sure I do," returned Hewes, impressively. "Why, when I was a young lout I did him a service once and was asked to visit him. This I did next day, and was first shown the kitchen. But when Master Hancock found who I was, he took me to the dining-room. I was well frightened, I confess, but he soon put me at my ease, and we clinked a glass of Madeira together, though, Lord knows, I'd never done such a thing in my life before. On my leaving he pulled a crown from his pocket and gave it me, thanking me for my punctual attendance."

"Humph," growled Johonnot, "'tis very like Hancock; he gives largesses to win popularity, but he's a hard man for all that. He holds two of my notes, and I know what I'm talking about."

"As he holds notes of hundreds all over New England," assented Thomas. "'Tis money, money, money, with him, for all his show of generosity."

"I'm not arguing that matter," returned Hewes, judicially. "All I say is that I know

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him. And I'll tell you something that none of ye were aware of: John Hancock and Sam Adams were both at the Tea Party!"

"You're jesting, Neighbor Hewes," exclaimed Perkins.

"Not I. I helped destroy a chest with Hancock. I knew him by the ruffles sticking out from his Indian dress, but principally by his voice. He grunted like a redskin, and said, 'Me know you,' and I did the same. I tell ye, Hancock was there, and I'll swear to it."

"I'll not dispute ye," said Perkins, "though I thought not that Hancock was such a fire-eater. I've always maintained that he'd not go to war, if one should come."

"Nor I, neither," retorted Hewes, "but for a very good reason. I tried to enlist in the last war, but was refused because of my lack of inches, forsooth, as if mere height made a fighter. I went to a shoemaker's and got new taps put on my heels, stuffed my shoes with paper and rags, and tried again. I had just passed when some busybody of a sergeant asked me to take off my shoes, and — well, I had to stay at home. . . . Look at the height of those fellows, now; can they hit a mark any better than I, with all their inches?"

A little party of British officers was just idling by, ogling whatever pretty women they passed, and openly voicing their contempt for the American men. Among them were the redoubtable Captain Mowatt and Lieutenant Aylesford.

"S truth, the fellows are uncommonly wrought

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up," the latter was saying. "Think you it will be war, Jack?"

"War!" exclaimed Mowatt, with his as yet unquenchable scorn for the "Yankee rabble," "they've no thought of it. Mere bullying, that's all. If it came to blows, we'd have to run to catch 'em, egad."

"Well, mayhap," returned Aylesford, the less sanguine. "But a truce to talk on such a glorious afternoon, and with youth and beauty to tickle our senses. Let's watch the ladies, Jack. Here comes one pretty one, at least."

The pretty one was Mistress Constance Drake, as Aylesford very soon discovered, out for a stroll with her Uncle Giles and her Aunt Tabitha, a prim little woman, with a face as expressionless as a new cheese. Constance had on a dainty gown of pink figured silk, with ample panniers, just from London, and her hair was powdered. With a bewitching half-moon patch on her left cheek, she was a vision of loveliness that had caused more than one rake to turn his head that afternoon.

"Aha, one of the town beauties!" cried Mowatt, with a rude stare of admiration.

"Yes, and the daughter of a councillor," returned his companion. "And, Jack — your ear. 'Tis the girl you tried to kiss the night of the Queen's banquet."

"The devil it is," with another prolonged stare. "Ecod, I wish I had, though it had cost me my epaulettes."

As the two groups resumed their walk and

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passed one another, Constance noted Mowatt's undisguised look of appreciation. She saw in him, however, only an insolent soldier, typifying the attitude of a certain portion of the military toward the women of what they looked upon as a conquered race. The thought of the depths to which this spirit might descend made her shudder in spite of herself. Arm in arm as she was with her aunt, she thus attracted the attention of that good lady, who was all concern in a moment.

"Connie, dear, I fear you have a chill," said she. "I told you not to come without your mantle."

"Nonsense, Aunt Tabitha," cried the girl. "I am perfectly well, I assure you. You must not imagine such things. . . . But tell me, who is't with Mistress Hancock?"

"Hs-s-h; not so loud, dear," her aunt replied. "That is Mercy Warren!"

Constance looked at the rather plain-faced, dark-eyed lady with an altogether different interest. She had heard much of the brilliant and intellectual wife of James Warren, of Plymouth, — poet, playwright, and essayist. This sister of James Otis had early been attracted to the cause of liberty, and her influence with the noted patriots was remarkable. Around her Plymouth fireside often gathered the men who were becoming famous, and her advice and discretion were highly prized. She was by all odds the foremost woman of New England, and Con-

ON COMMON GROUND

stance, as she gazed, wondered what it could be like to mould men when one was a mere woman.

"And what kind fortune, may I ask, brings you to town away from peaceful Plymouth, madam?" a friend was saying.

"I am come on a visit to Dorothy — Mistress Hancock," was the reply, in a voice whose clear and cultured tones Constance noted with approval.

Just then Dorothy Hancock joined Constance.

"My dear, I want you to come home with me," said the youthful matron to the girl; "there will be some ladies I would have you meet, among them Mistress Warren, and other entertainers. Pray say you'll come."

Constance's indecision was for the moment heightened by the approach of Lieutenant Charlton and Ensign Cuyler, arm in arm. The former's fine face lighted with pleasure as he greeted the girl and presented his friend. That he had some other motive than the mere passing the time of day was apparent after a moment's desultory chat.

"I have a favor to ask, Mistress Drake," he said somewhat diffidently.

"A favor? Lieutenant Charlton need a favor from a Boston girl? Impossible!" cried Constance.

"Nevertheless true," the officer replied seriously.

"Then — well, name it, and we shall see."

"There's to be a maneuver of the troops and some target-shooting at the bottom of the Com-

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mon to-morrow. If you would permit me to be your escort for the occasion, I would be most grateful."

"Another lady, Mistress Barbara Brandon, goes with us," put in Cuyler.

Constance pursed her lips and scowled ever so prettily, as if deliberating some matter of state. Charlton was plainly uneasy, and she revelled in his anxiety.

"H'm; to-morrow," she murmured. "I know not exactly what my engagements are for to-morrow. Mayhap I — but I say neither yes nor no, Lieutenant Charlton; I give a — perhaps."

And with that word in its most tantalizing tone the soldier had to be content, and he went away promising that he would call at the Romney house next day to ascertain the mind of the fair Constance.

As the girl rejoined the party, she smiled to hear her aunt say to Mercy Warren:

"Nay, Mistress Warren, I am no partisan. Peace and comfort, to my mind, come before Whigs and Tories."

"The good soul," thought the girl, "she hardly knows that Boston is occupied by troops. Peace and comfort — those are her divinities."

Mistress Hancock now pressing her invitation once more, old Romney took a hand in the matter.

"Go, Connie, girl," he said, heartily; "a little gaiety will do ye good. And besides," he continued in a whisper, "there's a rumor abroad that the Whigs are planning to burn the town.

ON COMMON GROUND

Mayhap you can learn something of this at Master Hancock's."

"So you'd make your niece a spy, would you, Uncle?" cried Constance. "For shame, sir. Yet I'll go, nevertheless, and you shall take the consequences. . . . Mistress Hancock, I am at your service."

CHAPTER X

John Hancock, Gentleman

JOHN HANCOCK'S house was as ornate and luxurious as was his carefully cherished person. Stately and imposing without, by reason of its high-posted gate, its wall surmounted by a costly iron fence, its balcony and the elegantly decorated window leading to it, the mansion was still more distinguished within. At a time when chaste simplicity ruled even among the rich, Hancock's residence resembled the abode of a London man of fashion. In the parlors rare rugs lay upon floors of expensive woods; French hangings of damask covered the walls; splendid pieces of mahogany and ebony filled the eye by their artistic contours. The dining-room, where sixty guests might be assembled, was like the banquet hall of a prince in its display of crystal, silver, and gold. The stables, horses, and coaches were the best in the colony, and in every element that made for a lavish mode of life, the place had no rival in the old town. Here was the abode of one who by every taste and inclination should have been a Tory. That Hancock was on the Patriot side was one of those curious freaks of fate that seem to have been partly from human design.

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In one of the front parlors, Mistress Hancock, Mercy Warren, and Constance Drake were seated around a little pearl-inlaid table, upon which were tiny wine-glasses, sweet biscuit, and several china cups and saucers. Across the hall, ever tapping at the door of the room to which the master of the house had retired, they could see a constant stream of messengers and Patriot leaders coming for speech with the powerful man of money. Among the number Constance was amazed to find many whom she had always considered as being on the King's side; then for the first time did she begin to realize the strength of the latent rebellion against royalty. Here was pretty news for her uncle already.

The advent of Agnes, the negro serving-woman, resplendent in a yellow silk turban, and bearing a steaming teapot on a silver tray, reminded the girl that she was a guest and not a political observer. She flashed a quizzical smile at her friend, Dorothy, over the significant teapot.

“'Tis but a brew of dried raspberry leaves,” said the hostess, bravely, “and an indifferent drink for you, Connie, who have the real Bohea at home.”

Mercy Warren raised her eyebrows with a well-bred, intellectual sort of surprise. A tea-drinker received in the Hancock mansion? It almost passed belief.

“Yes,” continued Dorothy, “Mistress Drake,

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I fear, is to be numbered among our foes. Her uncle, Giles Romney, one of our leading merchants and most respected men, is still devoted to the King."

Constance threw an adorable smile, part defiance, part appeal, to the stern-faced blue-stockings across the table. Mercy Warren felt its warmth even through the icy resolve of her uncompromising patriotism.

"So devoted is Uncle Giles," cried the girl, "that whereas he never drank tea until you Whigs called it vile stuff and threw the chests overboard, he now must have it morning, noon, and night, and often between meals. There's nothing half-way about my uncle."

So saying she raised her fragile cup to her lips and took a swallow of the raspberry leaf brew. Despite the demands of good manners a little dainty quiver of disgust passed over her at the taste of the weird concoction.

"I told you it would irk you, Connie," said Mistress Hancock, "and no wonder. But *we* like it, do we not, Mercy?"

The poet bowed solemnly. She would have drunk wormwood with the utmost gusto had the cause demanded. To her earnest nature, food, drink, raiment, even life itself, were all measured by the standard of devotion to liberty. With her hostess the mainspring of action was the adoration of a man — John Hancock. But she was not too partisan to have a very warm affection for Constance, and, womanlike, she

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wished Mercy to approve of her bright and lovable friend.

“Constance is a Tory by education, so to speak, rather than by birth,” she said. “Her uncle, who has brought her up, has yet to see the true light, but her father, a gallant Irish officer, were he alive, would be on the right side. As for Connie —”

“She’s a fiery Tory whose head doesn’t bother itself about your prosy politics. Why cannot the different parties laugh and be friends?”

“My dear child,” replied Mistress Warren, her even, finely modulated voice taking on the tone of one reproving a small upstart, “we used to laugh with one another over our disagreements, but the time for that has passed long since. When we shall smile together again, God in his providence only knows.”

Constance felt the solemnity of the words, and the thoughts they suggested; indeed, were they not in effect her own on the night of the turmoil before the Coffee House? But the imp of the perverse would not let her bow before Mercy Warren’s mind at once.

“Why, Mistress Warren,” she replied, gaily, as she pretended to nibble at a biscuit, “you are very like Mistress Adams — Mistress Samuel Adams, I mean. She is ever as sober as a justice when politics are talked. She did not even see cause for laughter in the letter she had yesterday from her friend, Mistress Cowper, while I —” The burst of merriment that rang out caused the callers in the room opposite to won-

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der at the sudden levity in the house of Hancock.

“So amusing as that?” exclaimed Dorothy. “Pray tell us, then, at once, what ’twas in the letter.”

“Oh, I cannot say it as well as ’twas writ, but thus it ran: Some of the Whig ladies of Philadelphia have been so very bold and naughty as to copy the new London head-dress, the monstrous high tower we have seen here on a few of the officers’ wives. An’ ’twere the true badge of Toryism, their Whig cavaliers plead with them to desist, but the fashion-crazed ladies would not. Then the men got a fat negro wench, and clapped on her the full costume of the court with a head-dress taller than any yet seen. Her they put in a public place where the fashionables displayed *their* towering top-knots, and afterward paraded her through the principal streets. The airs and graces of the blackamoor so shamed the Whig ladies, so they say, that not a great head-dress has since been seen on ’em.”

Mercy Warren was charmed by the personality of the pretty story-teller, and the graceful pantomime with which she enlivened the anecdote. As ever, her thoughts turned toward the object of all her hopes.

“What an aid to the cause if she —” was her whispered comment.

Mistress Hancock nodded sapiently. Women, she well knew, played many a powerful role in the great game of the day. Youth, beauty, and brilliancy — a trinity that oft weighs more than

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wisdom — were here for the winning. But how?

Constance rose to take her leave.

“Before I go, Dorothy,” she said, radiantly, “I ought to tell you why I came to-day. Uncle Giles sent me as a spy.”

“A spy!” exclaimed Mistress Warren, as yet unused to this strange young woman. Dorothy Hancock smiled amiably.

“Prithee, do not be alarmed. I’m really quite a harmless spy. Uncle has heard that the ‘upstart rebels,’ as he calls them, are to burn the town about our ears, and he thought I might get the truth in this quarter.”

“Here is one who, I think, can assure you,” said Mistress Hancock, pride in the inflection of every word.

Constance turned to find that the resplendent master of the house had entered the room as she had been speaking. She noted with an undefined feeling of contempt that, since returning from his decorative walk abroad, he had made an entire change of raiment. A red velvet cap surmounted his well-shaped head, and he wore a blue damask house gown, a white silk embroidered waistcoat, and black satin smallclothes. His silver-buckled shoes had been changed for red morocco slippers which displayed his small and shapely feet to perfection. As he stood there bowing and smiling, one bejewelled hand placed advantageously over his heart, the girl was lost in amazement that such a figure should

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stand so high in the counsels of the King's enemies.

"An' it please you, sir," she said, with a low courtesy, "my Uncle Giles would fain know the truth, even if it be the worst."

Hancock looked upon the fair face most benignly. He scattered largess even in his words, when that were possible.

"I think I can safely announce, Mistress Drake," he observed, "that the Patriots will do no harm to Boston — while I am here."

Constance darted a keen glance at the complacent face, and then at the other ladies. A faint smile flickered across Mercy Warren's fine mouth, while Dorothy regarded her splendid lord with her usual reverence.

"How very stupid of uncle and of me," exclaimed the young girl with another and deeper courtesy; "we ought to have known."

"I am charmed to set you both at rest," rejoined Hancock; "would that all Tories were as easily satisfied — or Whigs, either, for that matter," he added, with a sigh. "My position is an expensive one, very. . . . Dorothy, my dear, I came hither for that latest memorandum of my debtors, for my collector, Bant. Have you seen it hereabouts?"

Mistress Hancock produced a formidable-looking paper from a desk and held it up for inspection.

"Ah, yes, the very one; thank you, my dear," said the master of the house. "I must send

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Bant out at once. Several of the notes I hold are overdue, and I must proceed against the makers. Money has not been coming in well of late. . . . Ladies, my duty." And the great man walked gracefully out into his private room.

A constant babe would be to her doctor
and Henry Warren, she was told, had written
her Hancock's apartment about the night of
it had been expected. She had not yet
the young scholar since the night of the
trapped British kiss, and she now returned with
a feeling of proud resentment that he had not
grasped himself of her mind's invitation to
and be thanked.
"I shall not thank him now, no indeed," she
thought. "After all, what did he do? He did
not even wear a sword, and yet for Henry he
might have been run through."
Henry, she reflected, had not been aware of
calling. Yet the father of her old friend, her
father. She would go home at once and bother
her head no more about it.
Yet earnestly enough she found herself linger-
ing at the lower step. She took a sudden interest
in the green tips of the tulip plants just peeping
above the warm earth. How very early they
were this year; they were surely worth a non-
want's study. Then a sudden deciding thought
came to her.
"He may be able to give me some of the news

CHAPTER XI

At Cross Purposes

AS Constance bade good-by to her hostess and Mercy Warren, she saw John Brandon enter Hancock's apartment ahead of others, as if he had been expected. She had not met with the young scholar since the night of the attempted British kiss, and she now realized with a feeling of proud resentment that he had never availed himself of her uncle's invitation to come and be thanked.

"I shall not thank him now, no, indeed," she thought. "After all what did he do? He did not even wear a sword, and but for Percy he might have been run through."

Percy, she reflected, had not been averse to calling. Yet the brother of her old friend, Barbara — She would go home at once and bother her head no more about it.

Yet curiously enough she found herself lingering at the lower step. She took a sudden interest in the green tips of the tulip plants just peeping above the warm earth. How very early they were this year; they were surely worth a moment's study. Then a sudden deciding thought came to her.

"He may be able to give me some of the news

AT CROSS PURPOSES

that uncle seeks. . . . Why is he here to see Hancock? Something about the school, I suppose."

Evidently, the errand was brief, for in a few minutes John Brandon came out and ran briskly down the steps.

"Why, good-day, Mistress Drake," he exclaimed, in great surprise, and made as if to pass her.

"Lackaday, Master Brandon," the girl retorted, "are you in such mortal haste?"

"No, perhaps not," he replied, smiling, "though in these days time moves fast."

"So it seems, when you have not enough to be civil."

Had John Brandon been as good a student of eyes as of books, he would have seen something that would have been a warning.

"Civil? I? Wherein have I offended Mistress Drake?" he asked, fatuously.

"Mistress Drake not at all," replied Constance icily, "but my Uncle Romney takes it ill that you did not come for his thanks for the — the little service you did him in Rawson's Lane."

"Service? 'Twas no more than a man must have done. And it valued nothing. But had I a sword that night, I'd have run the scoundrel through, cost what it might."

"Oho, Master John, talk you so fiercely of swords?" she cried, mockingly, yet beginning to feel admiration for the flash of the eye she had never seen before. "What should swords mean for him who instructs youth in the peaceful arts?"

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"There is no longer peace, Constance," he replied gravely, "and I am no more a teacher."

"No? I had not heard. Is the school closed?"

"Nay, but I — well, I am in other service."

A smile, half-pitying, curled her pretty lips. She pointed to the house.

"Not — not in that of the splendid creature yonder? Not in John Hancock's, whom for the life of me I could scarcely help my-lording?"

"No, not in his, yet in a sense for him."

"Not in his, yet — Ah, John, are you in league with these — these 'Patriots'?"

She ground her dainty heel impatiently into the sod. Something in the act, in the tone of her voice, suggested concern. For him? The thought filled him with rapture, even though he knew his path was not hers. Then, man-fashion, he blurted out the truth.

"Constance, what I do is not my secret, but no harm can come, save to me, to tell you that I serve the Patriot cause."

No man can stand forth and bravely tell a woman what he thinks will injure him in her regard without winning admiration for that very act. So with Constance. Never had the studious John Brandon seemed so important a character, so fine a type of young manhood. She wondered if the Patriot cause improved all its recruits thus. Even his face seemed handsome, so lighted up was it by the fire of a new-found career. This was a man to storm the citadel of a woman's heart, not a meek suppliant

AT CROSS PURPOSES

just emerging from his burial among his books. Had Brandon but known! But he, poor wretch, was only counting with sorrow the effect he thought his declaration must have had upon the little Tory. So the game of cross purposes went on.

“Well, sir, if you are plotting with the enemies of the King —”

“Not the King, Constance — his tyrant ministers.”

“Of the King,” she went on deliberately, “that is your personal peril, and, of course, not of moment to me. But” — and her voice suddenly shifted to tenderness — “must we forget our old friendship, can we blot out our childhood, simply because you are Whig and I am Tory? Nay, Master John, if your precious service demand that —”

“Constance!” cried the young man, his heart torn with conflicting emotions out of which grew one great, compelling desire to clasp her in his arms then and there in the public street. Something of this the girl divined.

“Have a care, sir,” she laughed, “others beside ourselves are walking abroad. And forget not that you are Whig and I am — for the King’s men. . . . By the by, the soldiers are to have a monstrous fine show on the Common to-morrow, as I suppose you know. You attend, mayhap?”

“Nay, Constance, I care not to see the sports of our oppressors. Besides, I have duties to perform.”

“Not if — if I go, too?”

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“Nay, I —”

“*With* you?” There was that in the voice that must have been in the tones of the Siren of old. John Brandon outdid Ulysses, for his ears were not stopped, yet he did not yield.

“I — I have my work,” he said stoutly.

The girl tossed her head airily. “So be it, Master Rebel,” she exclaimed. “If playing at war be more to your taste than giving your old playmate a bit of sightseeing in this hum-drum town, why should I complain?”

“But, Constance,” he pleaded, “you surely would not have me fail my duty?”

A little *moue*, too dainty for a sneer, lifted the corner of the rosy mouth.

“There are those whose duty,” she said, “does not quite forbid them to be gallant — e’en though *their* duty bids them wear sword and epaulet, which yours, it seems, does not.”

“Since you have so set your heart upon this,” he rejoined, heedless of the taunt, “I am very sorry that I —”

“Oh, I shall have no lack of escort — *safe* escort — of the King’s men.”

“The King’s men?”

“Aye; we shall be a merry party, Lieutenant Charlton and Ensign Cuyler and myself, and — and your sister Barbara.”

Brandon’s face grew stern. His beautiful, loved sister in such company! He was incredulous.

“Barbara?” he exclaimed. “Surely not.”

“And why, pray? Shall she sit in Quaker

AT CROSS PURPOSES

Lane and mope while her brother rides abroad — I believe you said you rode?”

“She — with them?” he said, almost as to himself. The possibilities of bitter complications loomed up before him in an instant.

Constance laughed mockingly.

“How like a man!” she cried. “Let him make up his mind of a sudden to some new whim, some freak of conduct, and ho, la! all his women kin must up and follow him, if only in their thoughts and moods.”

“You are unjust,” he replied angrily. “I only seek to do what is right and best for our country, for Boston, — for you.”

“For me, indeed? What would you do for me?”

“Anything; everything!”

She beamed upon the wretched fellow once more, and the spring sunshine was far outdone:

“Then be my escort to the field to-morrow.”

Darkness again. Why had she not asked him to die for her, to perform some prodigy of valor, to move the world — instead of harking back to this business of the morrow that was so small and so impossible?

“That I may not do,” he replied sadly. “I wait orders to-night to ride on the instant to —”

“Well, to where?”

She had caught up his hesitancy with a steely hardness that was more distressing to him than even her contempt could be. It suggested a barrier of mistrust that was worse than hate.

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Surely this being a Patriot tried men's souls — and hearts. But he replied steadily enough —

“That I cannot tell.”

“Because I am a Tory, I suppose,” she said, her chin in air. “Yet I am none the less Constance Drake.”

“The plans are not mine. And I have given my oath to secrecy.”

“’Tis of small concern to me,” she returned with her keen, delicate tone of scorn. “Good-day to you, Master — Rebel. My path lies this way, yours that.” And she turned and started briskly away.

“Constance,” he implored, “one moment.”

“Yes.”

“It pains me that I have offended you.”

“Offended? Me?” she replied gaily. “How could you offend me? I was but civil to you as was befitting to your sister's brother. Good-day.”

John Brandon looked after her for a moment, then turned resolutely and walked proudly away. And Constance, in turn, stopped and gazed at the well-set, manly figure of the ex-student. She raised her pretty shoulders ever so slightly.

“Heigho! Has this ‘patriotism’ made him quite the fool?” she said.

CHAPTER XII

Comedy and Tragedy

CONSTANCE DRAKE combed the pretty tangles of her brown-red hair next morning, with a vague unrest in her heart, she could not quite say what. Perhaps she had not slept as peacefully as her wont; perhaps — Ah! A gay bow of red ribbon she had worn but yesterday: there was the culprit, for in its brilliant hue lay the suggestion of Lieutenant Charlton's scarlet coat, and then the remembrance of her half-promise to go with him to the maneuvers on the Common, and her unsuccessful attempts to obtain John Brandon as an escort instead. In a pet she pounced upon the poor bit of finery and thrust it crumpled and disgraced into a drawer, as if she would imprison in its perfumed darkness all the vexations and misunderstandings of her little world.

Then she bethought herself that the weather might have turned capricious. She raised her window and looked abroad. The sun was warm and unclouded, the air balmy and the bluebirds rioting in the spring. There was little hope in this quarter.

"Yet I'll not go," she told herself emphatically more than once as she finished her toilet.

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At breakfast the girl found the Councillor in a state of mild perturbation. He disliked his tea, railed at the quality of his bacon, and greatly shocked good Tabitha by consigning a bit of slightly burned toast to a region where it must certainly get blackened entirely. Constance knew the signs.

"What's amiss, uncle?" she asked, in her straightforward way. "Surely, when you find breakfast so bad, there's other matter at the bottom of it."

"I dread the day," replied old Romney, shortly.

"Dread the day?"

"Aye. For, look ye, Monday next is the anniversary of what the rebels call the 'Massacre,' and this unusual display in the Saturday maneuvers is doubtless meant as a warning.

"Do they not need it?" asked Constance, wondering the while how John Brandon would look upon such means of intimidation.

"That they do," replied her uncle, "but the rascals have such tempers nowadays, that I fear 'twill provoke rather than overawe 'em."

Aunt Tabitha's placid face paled a little. "Maneuvers" was to the good lady a word of dread, though she could hardly have told why.

"You will not go abroad, Constance?" she ventured timorously.

"No, I think not. Not that I am afraid, though," exclaimed the girl warmly, her cheeks glowing. "'Tis that I—"

"Pray do not, child," urged her aunt, fearing

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

some very Constance-like change of decision. And then with a sigh: "Would these troublous times might end!"

"They will, madam," cried Romney, "when once the rebels raise hand against the King's colors. I tell ye—"

What further defiance Giles Romney had for his misguided townsmen was stopped by a knocking at the porch door, and the appearance a moment later of Barbara Brandon, plump and pretty and demure, looking amazingly sweet in her simple finery. Constance kissed her heartily, and carried her away to her own room instanter. There Barbara confessed that she was on her way to the drill.

"Fie upon you, Bab; are you, then, so anxious for the day — and the fine soldiers?"

Barbara's rosy cheeks deepened in color, and she nodded in embarrassed fashion.

"Ensign Cuyler is a brave fellow in his trappings," observed Constance, making a pretence of smoothing the coverlet of her billowy bed, but keeping the simple little visitor in range of a corner of her eye. This time she saw a very real blush on the round cheeks.

"Why — I — how?" stammered Barbara.

"He mentioned you but yesterday; told me you were to go to this — this show. Come, have you no tongue, child?"

It was her habit to regard her friend as youthful, and under her particular guardianship, although John Brandon's sister was some months older than she. But as age in young women is

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merely an expression of their experiences and temperaments, Mistress Drake was, in effect, Barbara's senior, and so acknowledged.

"I thought I'd come as early as I could," was all that Barbara found to say. But it was significant, since it carried with it the conviction that Constance was to accompany her.

"I'm sorry, Bab," said her friend, kindly, "but I scarcely feel like going forth to-day. The air, I fear me, is chill."

"Nay," replied Barbara, her blue eyes opening with surprise, "'tis like May. Come hither to the window and see."

"Is it? Very like, then. But I must not go."

"So said John. 'Tis strange," observed Mistress Brandon, with puzzled simplicity. But Constance swooped down upon her words as a hawk upon a chick.

"So said John! How mean you, child?"

"Yes, indeed, but this very morning he asked me to come and urge you not to go. There was danger, he said."

"Danger! With the King's army right at hand! 'Tis absurd."

"'Twas the soldiers he feared, methinks."

"So?" said Constance with a smile. Then:

"And he said I *must* not go?"

Barbara inclined her pretty, primly dressed head.

"Well, we shall see!"

Whereupon Mistress Drake threw open the door of her great closet, and disappeared within its depths for a moment, only to emerge with

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her handsomest gown and a mantle of fur-edged satin. Without a word she began rapidly to dress, humming a tune from the Vauxhall the while. Nor did Barbara break in upon her; the girl was too busy with her own thoughts.

The two a little later came forth from the Romney mansion, to the great distrust of Tabitha, who firmly believed that both might be killed before afternoon, and walked the few steps to the Common Mall, the observed and admired of Whig and Tory alike. For the most part, the townspeople, though they had turned out in force to see the display, were sullen and heavy-browed; yet, when two such spring divinities walked abroad, it was not in the heart of man to flout them.

On the Mall they found Lieutenant Charlton and Ensign Cuyler pacing up and down in their bravest array of red and gold, fine and handsome figures both. They were quickly appropriated and paired off, Cuyler and blushing, trembling, happy little Barbara behind the others. Even in her own delight the simple girl had room for joy in the fact that Constance, whom she could hear talking banter with Charlton, was in one of her brilliant and fascinating moods.

The regiments were now marching by on their way to the parade ground, and the martial music, the pageantry of military equipment and the sparkling air of a perfect spring day, were just the tonic for hearts young and old. To Constance came a certain exhilarating pleasure to think that she had defied sober, studious, re-

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bellious John Brandon, and was here in the centre of a gay scene with a courtly, solicitous officer as her personal property. Yet she would not for the world have given Charlton the pleasure of knowing that fact. Indeed, she took no pains to treat him with consideration.

"Why are you not on parade, too, Lieutenant Charlton?" she asked, as an especially gorgeous company marched past them.

"'Tis my furlough day," he replied. "Tomorrow Cuyler and I are of the guard."

"Ah! Then you are not for show, but for work. A nice distinction, sir."

At the bottom of the Common, they found interest centered in a large squad of men firing at a target set up in the water. The salient feature of the scene was a gigantic countryman who towered above the heads of the rest like a beanstalk above pea-plants. He was near the firing line, watching the shooting with apparent wonder. To him spoke Captain Jack Mowatt, in command of the party, with the evident intent of furnishing amusement for himself and his men.

"Well, friend, what think you of the shooting?" he asked, patronizingly.

"Fair enow, I guess," returned the rustic giant, producing a prodigious red kerchief and tweaking his nose vigorously. "Fair enow."

"Fair enow, you guess," mocked Mowatt, just as a soldier hit the target. "What d'ye think o' *that*? Who can beat that?"

"I kin, I guess," replied the countryman,

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chewing bovinely a wisp of straw held in the corner of his mouth.

Mowatt was nettled. "Here, lads," he cried, "here's a fellow who says he can beat you shooting. What think ye of it?"

The soldiers grinned, and moved forward to see what manner of man was this country colossus who ventured to so contemn the regulars.

"Well, sir," said Mowatt indulgently, "you shall show us how to shoot. Load him half a dozen of the best guns."

"Any gun'll do," observed the big man mildly, "but I rayther guess I'll load it myself."

Having arranged powder, ball-wadding and flint to his satisfaction, he raised the gun to his shoulder and squinted along its barrel for a brief second.

"Whar'll ye hev the bullet, Cap?" he asked.

"To the right of the bull's-eye," returned Mowatt.

Within an inch of the black centre of the target and on the side desired the lead tore its way into the wood. Mowatt gasped with astonishment, and the soldiers pressed closer.

"Where neaow?"

"To the left."

Again the wizard's lead flew to its place. A vast smile overspread the face of the giant.

"And whar' neaow?" he inquired of the almost paralyzed Mowatt.

"In the center, damn you!" returned the angry officer.

Straight into the dark circle sped the bullet.

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The countryman swept the gaping crowd with his expressionless eyes.

"The devil is in him," muttered Mowatt, a feeling of uneasiness coming over him. What if the others of this man's kind could shoot like that? He tried to turn it off with a jest.

"You're quite a big fellow," he said rather feebly.

"Likely," returned the farmer, "but mother says I was always undersized."

"Are there others where you come from as big as you, then?"

"I'm one of the smallest."

"That'll do, my man," warned Mowatt. "But how would you like to take the King's shilling — enlist, I mean?"

"Fight?"

"Aye."

"Guess I'd rayther not."

"Afraid, eh? 'Tis odd, for you surely can shoot."

"My young brother Seth, he don't think so."

"Indeed! Can *he* shoot?"

"Wall, neaow, Mister Captain, he kin throw up an apple and shoot the seeds aout one by one as it's a-comin' daown. Whiles as fer my oldest brother, Bill, he —"

At this, Constance, who had been a highly amused witness of the scene and the colloquy, burst out laughing, and the clear sound of her mirth turned Mowatt's attention in a moment. He recognized the girl of the banquet hall and

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the midnight escapade, and in still worse temper than before he muttered between his teeth:

“So 'tis you, my fine lady. I owe you still another grudge, beauty.”

Then he turned to vent his rage upon the smiling countryman.

“Who are you, fellow?” he demanded savagely, “and where are you from?”

“Wall, my name's Tobias Gookin, Mister Captain, called 'Long Toby' fer short, and I've come from Billerica to buy a gun. P'raps ye kin tell me whar' I'll get a good un cheap.”

“So you've come to buy a gun, eh?” sneered Mowatt.

“I hev.”

“Mayhap you're one of those skulking 'Minute-men'?”

“Mebbe,” returned Toby, placidly.

“Ah, you admit you're in arms against your sovereign, then?”

“I dunno nothin' 'baout sovereign, Mister, — but, mebbe.”

Mowatt, almost foaming at the mouth, beckoned to a couple of stalwart sergeants.

“Put this booby under arrest,” he ordered.

“Take him to the main guard and give him a dozen lashes.”

The soldiers seized “Long Toby,” and prepared to walk him away, when Constance, her eyes blazing and her heart beating violently, rushed forward and stood squarely before Mowatt in an attitude of defiance.

“You brute!” she cried, “release that man.

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He has done no wrong. You hectored him. I heard it all."

"He's the King's enemy. Away with him, men," roared Mowatt.

"Lookee, Jack," said Charlton, in an undertone, "you'd best not go on with this."

"Why do you interfere?" cried the captain.

"Because *he's a man*," retorted Constance for Charlton, whom she never had admired so much as now. "Countermand your cruel order or — or I'll straight to Lord Percy!"

"Ah, will you, Mistress Drake? So the wind lies in that quarter, eh?" sneered Mowatt, with a suggestive leer that would have drawn Charlton's sword from its scabbard had not Cuyler warned him from so grave a breach of discipline.

"Do as I command, damn you!" shouted the captain to the irresolute soldiers, who now began to move away with their prisoner.

"Will no one interfere?" begged the girl, tears of distress rushing to her eyes. Again Charlton's blood boiled, and he was on the point of performing some rash act, when "Long Toby's" voice arrested his attention.

"Don't ye worrit abaout me, ma'am," exclaimed that worthy. "I'm all right."

With that he dexterously twisted his arms from the hands of the soldiers, and started off on a lumbering but rapid run toward freedom.

"Make ready! Aim!" cried Mowatt.

Three soldiers raised their pieces.

"For God's sake, men," exclaimed Charlton,

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dashing between the girls and the musket barrels, "you'll hit the women!"

"Fire!"

A loud blast rang out, the united report of three guns. But not a hair of anyone's head was injured, for by some strange circumstance the shots all went high into the air and dropped harmlessly into the water beyond. And when the smoke had cleared away, "Long Toby" had disappeared behind a neighboring hillock.

On the way back to the Mall the quartette, laughing again and chatting gaily of the countryman's escapade and Mowatt's discomfiture, came close to a hollow square of soldiers. This novel disposition of troops attracted Constance's attention at once, and she spoke of it to Charlton, who tried in vain to divert her to other matters.

"But what is it for, Lieutenant Charlton?" she persisted.

"They are — are punishing a deserter, Mistress Drake," he replied gravely.

"Oh, then, I hear some officer reproving him," she went on brightly. A monotonous voice rose droningly above all other sounds, and then came the sad roll of muffled drums.

"I *must* have a peep," cried Constance, eagerly.

"Really I would not, Mistress Drake," urged Charlton, his face showing the anxiety he felt.

"And why not, pray?" she returned, impatiently. "Everyone appears to want to be my dictator to-day."

Another somber, tuneless roll of the drums was followed by the crackling of musket-shots,

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and six blue smoke-spirals rose and hovered over the hollow square.

“What’s that?” cried Constance, while Barbara’s plump face blanched. “They — they can’t have shot him?”

Charlton, truthful and honest gentleman as he was, felt that prevarication here would not be set down against him.

“There have been many deserters from the army of late,” he said, “and these shots were to — to frighten the soldiers.”

At that moment the square of troops parted, and before the awe-stricken eyes of the girls a solitary soldier left the firing line and, marching up to the prostrate figure of a man on the ground, placed his musket to its head and pulled the trigger.

“Oh!” cried Constance, dashing her hands to her eyes to shut out the fearful sight. Barbara’s senses reeled and she fell into the arms of Ensign Cuyler.

Once more those terrible, unearthly drum-beats, and slowly the soldiers filed past a blood-stained human clod stretched on the lid of a coffin beside an open grave.

“Take me home,” murmured Constance, weakly. “I — I do not care to remain longer abroad.”

CHAPTER XIII

The Birthday Party

MISTRESS DRAKE sat in the high-backed Romney pew in the King's Chapel with little mind for the service or the sermon of the Rev. John Troutbeck, the thin, acid-voiced assistant rector of the church. His monotonous reading of prayer called before her another monotone, out in the pure and exquisite air of the day before, and the terrible scene it preceded. Nor was her vision of that pitiful tragedy less clear by reason of the sight of the officer who had been in command of the firing squad sitting in another pew not far away, and of the dark, ill-favored face of Mowatt, whose name she did not yet know, but whom she had come to associate with evil.

She was glad when she found herself at home once more, well away from the dark chapel and its gloomy thoughts. Yet even here she was restless and *distracte*, walking idly from room to room, picking up a book here or a trinket there, and tossing both away with a total disregard for what might happen.

Even obtuse old Giles Romney noted at last that something was disturbing the course of Mistress Constance's thoughts. He laid on his

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knee the great volume of Bishop Berkeley's sermons he was reading, and peered at his niece over his round, iron-rimmed spectacles.

"What is't ails thee, Connie?" he asked kindly. His love for the girl was proof against even the vexation of interrupted reading. "Thou'rt as fidgety as a year-old colt. Mayhap one of the good bishop's sermons —"

"Nay, sermon me no sermon, uncle," replied Constance. "Have I not dulness enough, as 'tis? A pretty pass the town has come to, with no riding nor routs nor concerts nor — walking, almost, for us maids. Oh, I'm tired of it all! Why cannot we go away somewhere — to London, uncle, or to some place where the folk wear something but long faces? Here am I eighteen years —"

"Nineteen, e'enmost, Connie. To-morrow's your birthday, lass."

"Why, so 'tis. I had all but forgotten. . . . Well, then, to-morrow shall see a bit of gaiety in this stupid old house. I shall celebrate!"

The old man pushed his spectacles to the top of his ruddy forehead and gazed at his niece in consternation.

"Celebrate, Constance? And wherefore?"

"Because I will it, you dear old uncle; that is the 'wherefore.' I shall have a party. Let us see whom I shall bid come. There's Bab, of course, and Mistress Hancock and—"

"Nay, nay, no more of that folly, Constance. To-morrow they celebrate the anniversary of the shooting of the mob, and the town'll be in mourn-

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ing. Besides, there are to be services at the South Church."

"What is that to us? We are Tories."

"Aye, but they are our townsmen, and I'd not like to be wanting in respect."

"Oh, la la! Why, then, do they not respect me? To-day is their anniversary. Why did they not use it instead of trying to spoil my birthday with their tolling bells and their black faces? But they shan't spoil it! I will have my party. May I not, dear, *dear* uncle?"

She threw herself upon the Councillor's knees, and put her soft cheek against his rough one with a caressing pressure that made but a weakling of the old fellow. Then and there the party was assured.

A servant was sent for Barbara Brandon, who appeared in a marvelously short time, and who was deliciously shocked to find herself part of such a very worldly proceeding as arranging a list of invitations for a party. As for Constance, she sang blithe snatches of song to the great scandal of certain good citizens who were passing by, full of the sanctity of a Puritan Sabbath.

"And now," she said, frowning and biting the feathered tip of her quill, after the other messages had been duly disposed of, "now, methinks, your brother must have one — not that he would come —"

"He's not here," interrupted Barbara.

"But as a mere courtesy." She scribbled industriously for a minute, folded the sheet care-

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fully, and wrote "John Brandon" on its back with a flourish.

"There, Bab," she said, "you can take that home to him." And Barbara thrust it in her bosom, and that night laid it on her brother's table, little dreaming of the power the bit of paper was to have upon all their lives.

The afternoon of the party found a brilliant assemblage in the Romney mansion, with old Giles as a central figure dispensing the ample hospitality of the house with pompous delight, and actually boasting of his great idea in suggesting the *fête* to his niece.

Constance, bravely arrayed, as befitted a fine lady of nineteen, and flushed with pleasure and excitement, flitted from room to room and from group to group like a brilliant butterfly. Her friend Barbara, a dainty gray moth, looked on sedately and said little, until the arrival of Ensign Cuyler, when she found her tongue and even asked the handsome officer to a corner, where they sat for the most of the afternoon.

Among the earliest arrivals had been the Rev. John Troutbeck, of the King's Chapel, who at once hastened to Constance with his high-keyed, twanging congratulations. His watery little eyes looked the admiration he fain would have expressed.

"To what am I indebted for the honor of your company, sir?" the girl asked brusquely.

Old Romney for once saved the situation. "Egad, Constance," he interposed with a chuckle at her displeasure; "I met Master Troutbeck

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on the street, and, finding that your invitation must have miscarried, I invited him myself."

Constance shot an angry glance at her uncle, which in no wise disconcerted that worthy, for he had already fortified himself with some of his own good punch.

"I thank you, uncle," she said, tartly. "I — I shall not soon forget it."

So thankful was she when she was rescued from this church rook by the arrival of Lieutenant Charlton, that she greeted the officer with a fervor that caused his pulses to tingle.

But for him the few minutes during which he had her to himself were spoiled by the noisy political discussion between Rev. Mr. Troutbeck and Giles Romney. The raucous voice of the clergyman dominated everything, and made the gathering seem for the moment like a mass-meeting instead of a young girl's party.

"This is the foulest, subtlest and most venomous serpent ever issued from the egg of sedition," snarled the divine. "I saw the small seed when it was implanted; it was a grain of mustard. It has become a great tree."

"I suppose he means the Whig cause," whispered Constance to Dr. Gair, who had at the moment trotted in, very scant of breath, to pay his compliments.

The jolly surgeon nodded with a quick, springy jerk of his head that resembled the pecking of a bird at its food.

"The worst of the Tory side," said the girl thoughtfully, "is that it —" She did not finish;

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even the fortuitous guest in her home must be immune from criticism. But she threw a glance at the grandiloquent Troutbeck that belied her intent.

“That it attracts such men as that?” queried Charlton. “I quite agree with you, Mistress Drake. Our cause should have enlisted the Warrens and this Adams — they’re true, at any rate. Apropos, I saw you not at the South Church this morning.”

“Nay, I would not an’ I could, and I could not an’ I would. ’Twere no fit place, sure, for me, a fiery little Tory; but furthermore, I had business to perform. You were there, of course. Tell me what went forward.”

“’Twas a monstrous great crowd, Mistress Drake, and well behaved, too. In the pulpit was your town clerk, William Cooper, as moderator, and with him sat Mr. Samuel Adams.

“Dr. Warren, as you know, was the orator, and was late. Meanwhile, the townspeople had crowded in early, and when we officers came there were no seats for us. Seeing which Mr. Adams bade the citizens in front to vacate their places, and give ’em to us that we might the better hear — which was a mighty civil thing in him, I say. But even then some of us had to sit on the pulpit stairs.

“At last came their orator, through a window back of the pulpit. Egad, he had a long toga like that of the jolly old Romans I used to study about at Eton, and in his right hand he carried a fine kerchief, though for what I could not

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imagine. His left he continually thrust into his breeches pocket as he spoke."

"And how spake he?" asked Constance.

"Excellent well," returned Charlton, "and for most part wisely. But trouble almost came, nevertheless, for when he said something about the 'bloody massacre,' one of the officers on the stairs cried 'Fie, fie!'"

"'Twas Jack Mowatt," interposed My Lord Rawdon, who had slipped in unannounced, and joined the group.

"Very like," replied Charlton. "Well, upon that up jumps Mr. Adams in a rage, and cries: 'Who dares say that?' Then seeing Jack he shouts in that thunder voice of his: 'I will mark you, sir!'"

"'And I will mark *you*, sir,' returned Mowatt, in a devil of a pet. 'I shall be ready to meet your friends.'

"Mr. Adams, cool enough now, said he would go to General Gage, whereupon Jack told him that Gage had nothing to do with it, and there the matter dropped."

"And is that all, pray?" asked Constance.

"Almost," replied Charlton. "Except that just before the oration was ended that crack-brained Aylesford, who was sitting just under the pulpit, held up under Warren's face his hand full of pistol balls."

"Ah," said the girl, her lips parted, "and then what?"

"Why, only that the doctor smiled, quietly dropped his handkerchief over the bullets and

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went on with his address. Egad, it was the coolest, cleverest thing I have ever seen done. Indeed, I hold it up to the credit of the meeting in general that it kept its temper so well."

"But not well for the King's cause," said the snarling, rasping voice of Rev. Mr. Troutbeck.

"How mean you?" asked old Romney.

"There were three hundred soldiers in the meeting?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have it on excellent authority, that had aught been said against the King, an officer stood ready to throw an egg in Warren's face, which was to be a signal to draw swords and kill Hancock, Warren, Adams, and many more."

"'Tis a lie, an atrocious lie!" cried the clear-ringing tones of Constance. She, first of all, had roused from the stupor that had fallen upon the company as the appalling significance of Troutbeck's statement made itself felt. "'Tis cowardly; I'll not believe it!"

Mr. Troutbeck's sallow face grew into a flesh-tint, and the corners of his straight mouth twitched nervously. He would have ventured a reply to this extraordinary young woman, had he not been saved the trouble by the sound of another voice behind the group; a fine, manly, musical voice; a voice that had fascinated Dorothy Hancock, she had told Constance, as she heard it in the dawn giving orders to the troops — the voice of Lord Percy.

"Spoken bravely and truly, Mistress Drake. No more do I believe it." After a courtly

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bow to Constance, he addressed himself to the clergyman.

"Idle chatter of the camp, Mr. Troutbeck," he said sternly.

Constance's heart warmed toward the officer for his prompt suppression of the Rev. Mr. Troutbeck, who took himself and his slander into retirement. She could have embraced her supporter heartily, but contented herself with a courtesy and a winning welcome to her little festival.

"Speaking of absent company," said Giles Romney from a window, "here comes Sam Adams himself."

There was a general rush for points of observation, for there was magic in the powerful name, even to Tories.

"Why, I see no one," exclaimed Cuyler, in bewilderment. "What mean you, Councillor Romney?"

"Aha, my friend," replied the old man, highly pleased at his own perspicacity, "there are shouts from the Common. And see that dog? 'Tis Adams' Queue."

"A beautiful Newfoundland," explained Constance to Lord Percy, "and a monstrous knowing beast beside."

"Like master, like dog, eh?" queried Charlton.

"Aye, a rebel to his tail tip," returned Romney. "Egad, sir, he has such an antipathy to a British uniform that he's been cut and hacked all over by soldiers who've been compelled to beat off his attacks. See how he barks at every cheer."

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The shouting and the tumult grew clearer and louder, and presently the vanguard of the crowd turned into Winter Street, the huge black dog capering about the leaders with every evidence of delight.

"What is the confusion now?" asked Constance with a pout. Truly her party had been the sport of untoward circumstances from the beginning, and she was thoroughly vexed with the Patriots for this new interruption.

"Be not alarmed," said Percy, not quite understanding her. "The townspeople go to the Liberty Tree to hear a harangue by Adams."

"Here's 'Sam, the Malster,' now," cried Romney.

"Who?" asked Cuyler.

"Why, Adams. 'Twas his trade before he failed in't and became clerk o' the General Court. That's Sam i' the centre."

"That white-haired old man in the dark red cloak?" queried the ensign disappointedly. It was not at all the sort of fire-eating rebel he had pictured.

"And not so old, neither," returned Giles. "A little over fifty. He was gray at forty."

A great cheer, sensibly louder because it was before the dwelling of a Tory, marked the passing of the procession. Charlton turned to the prettier scene within, and especially to the bewitching divinity of the place, with a smile.

"The people appear to make a hero of this Adams, Mistress Drake," he said.

"Pray heaven, they make him not a martyr

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as well," was the earnest reply. Then catching the lieutenant's look of inquiry: "I know well his daughter and his son."

"His son?" asked Lord Percy, catching only at the last word.

"Yes, my lord, he studies medicine with Dr. Warren."

"H'm," observed the Earl drily, "and other things beside, I'll warrant."

"I know not that," said Constance, "but I do know that their home life is marvelous happy, though they're poor as church mice. Mr. Adams loves his children, and you should see them all frolicking together and hear them singing hymns and glees at the harpsichord. And—if you will believe it—Mr. Adams says grace at each meal, and has Bible-reading every night."

"Why should I not believe it?" queried Percy, with an amused air.

"Because you officers all think him such a bad man," the girl replied. "But one who loves his children and fears God cannot be altogether bad, can he?"

"No," replied the Earl gravely, "he cannot. Nor do I think him so. Were I an American—"

If the Rev. Mr. Troutbeck believed that he were about to get some new morsel for scandalous comment about Lord Percy—whom already the ultra-Tories accused of lukewarm adherence to their cause—he was without his reckoning, for the sentence died on the Earl's lips as he caught sight of a tall, stalwart, grizzled

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man with a keen, hawk-like face that well befitted his military bearing.

Old Romney bustled forth to welcome the visitor, smiling with pleasure. Having wrung his hand vigorously, he turned to the company with a flourish.

"Gentlemen, this is Brigadier Timothy Ruggles," he cried. "The best soldier in the colonies, and a Loyalist to his finger tips," he added in a lower tone to Lord Percy, whom he thereupon presented.

The old campaigner bowed, and enclosed Percy's slender hand in his enormous paw.

"Let others subscribe to the first part of friend Romney's introduction, as they like," he said. "I will gladly plead guilty to the second count. I cannot see men arming against my King without indignation. Sir, I am just in from Worcester, and should I tell you of what I have seen on the way, I fear you'd not believe me."

As he continued to speak in low tones to the Earl, Constance in a few words told Charlton something of the brigadier.

"He's accounted the finest military man in all America," she whispered. "In the French wars he was celebrated for his bravery and audacity, which they say stopped at nothing. Now he is a great lawyer and a keen wit. We are fortunate, sure, to have him on our side."

"I came along by the 'Liberty Tree,' at the market," he was saying, "a monstrous curious affair, decked out with streamers, placards, and a liberty cap on a pole. There Sam Adams was

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haranguing a crowd that every now and then shouted fit to split their weazands. I caught but a word or two, but God's truth, they were treason of the rankest sort."

"They dare not fight, however," rasped Rev. Mr. Troutbeck, who had emerged from his obscurity, fortified by sundry glasses of Giles Romney's prime punch. "They dare not, even if they know how."

Brigadier Ruggles' eyes flashed fire, and his mouth grew stern. Not to be insulted thus was he, a veteran of half a hundred battles and skirmishes. He knew his countrymen, if British officers and parsons did not.

"Fight, sirrah?" he roared, frightening nearly out of his remaining wits the half-drunken Troutbeck, "I've seen 'em fight on many a field. As the King's foes I despise them; in battle they are to be honored — and — feared."

Constance was not sorry to find that after a little more of politics, punch, and food her guests began to take their leave. Never had there been so strange a party in all Boston, she was resolved, with its interruptions and discussions and very unfeminine characteristics generally. Nor was she any the more appeased by the sight of pretty, simple Barbara hanging on the words of Ensign Cuyler with an adoration that boded ill for the little Whig. She would lecture her friend roundly for her indiscretion, she determined.

Lieutenant Charlton was the last to pay his parting *devoirs* to Constance.

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"You must come and see us soon again," said the girl, cordially. She sincerely liked his honesty, his courtesy, and his manliness, and for once there was no sting in her graciousness.

"I shall be most pleased to do so, Mistress Drake, and Councillor Romney," replied the happy officer, "if we do not have war."

"If we do not have war!" snorted the old Tory, fresh from the fuller recitals of Brigadier Ruggles. "Damme, sir, it *is* war!"

CHAPTER XIV

For a Sister's Sake

MARCH belied not its ancient reputation, and ere it had run its fickle course it gave Bostonians a swift transition from balmy air to raw sea-winds, and from ambitious grass-spears to sleet and storm. And as the blooming crocuses disappeared under their white mantle, so did the old-time blitheness of Constance Drake vanish in the presence of universal dulness and the sense of impending disaster. The girl had had no taste for going abroad, and none of the officers who had the *entrée* to her uncle's house had called, with the exception of Lieutenant Charlton, who came on the Sunday following her party, to say that he, with a few others, had been detailed to make a trip of reconnaissance to Worcester and the regions between.

This morning the sun had deigned to shed its beams on the just and unjust of Boston once more, and timid, rebuffed Spring seemed on the point of venturing forth again. But the golden light that poured into the prim Colonial parlor of the Romneys found no answering glow in the heart of Constance. She went about her pretty duties of dusting and setting all things right with none of her accustomed snatches of

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song; even Dickon, her bird, which she fed and watered aimlessly, provoked her by his apparent intent to burst his tiny throat with melody.

“How can you, Dickon, how *can* you?” she cried, shaking her turkey-wing duster at the poor little culprit, nearly frightening life from his small body. “Dost not know you’re not to sing when *I* cannot? Fie upon thee, for a shameless fellow.”

Dickon chirped feebly once or twice and gave his attention to the lump of sugar stuck between the bars of his cage.

“Heigho,” sighed Constance, turning to her tasks again, “the world’s upside down and I know not whether I am above or below. Would that Lieutenant Charlton might return or — or John Brandon, even. He might have interesting news.”

The approach of Giles Romney, red and puffing with some new cause of anger, surprised the girl away from further meditations on men. The old fellow seldom returned to his home thus early in the day, for although his business as an importer had vanished long since, he still made a practice of going to his warehouse.

“Well-a-day, Uncle Giles,” she cried, “and what brings you home at this early hour? Is there, perchance, some new alarm in the town?”

“Nay, Connie,” grumbled the old man, sliding carefully into a chair with special deference to his gouty toe, which had been showing an especially unspringlike disposition of late, “nay, but my clerk, Gideon White, has this very day

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packed up bag and baggage and betaken himself away."

"White?" laughed Constance. "That sober-sides quit his living? Why, you pay him for doing nothing."

"Aye, but he says he has a nobler duty than trade, and is going to join his two brothers at Lexington."

"What is he to do there?"

"Egad, he says he is to work for 'the cause.' Turn rebel, that means. The whole town's gone stark, staring mad. What with their meetings and hand-bills and secret drillings, the people are possessed of the devil. They —"

"Tell me the news if there be any," interrupted the impatient Constance.

"News? There's hogsheads of it. Every street corner tattler's full of it. The soldiers tarred and feathered a Billerica man — Thomas Ditson, they said his name was — because he tempted a soldier to desert."

"Shameful!" cried Connie.

"So I say," returned the obtuse old Councillor. "The King has trouble enough to keep his soldiers as it is. But the fools of officers, and Gage, too, are just as bad. There's a rumor that the order will be given to seize the powder and cannon at Concord."

"That would mean war, wouldn't it?" almost whispered the girl.

"War? No," snorted Romney, "but another massacre, probably. If the King could but know, there would be other measures, and

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other men. The army was sent here to keep peace, not to provoke the people!"

Constance gazed at her uncle in mute astonishment. Never had the old Tory spoken in such strain as this before, never had he even breathed criticism of the army.

The old man, too, felt that he was in an unusual mood, and hastened to qualify it.

"Oh, the people are just as bad," he declared, "but the soldiers, being under discipline, should know better. What in the name of heaven is the use of sending squads of troops out into the country to tip over stone walls?"

Thus having relieved his mind, Giles Romney hobbled off into his special sanctum and was seen no more till dinner-time.

Constance would have had a lonely forenoon of it, had not Barbara Brandon come tripping in a little later, as rosy as ever, but with a more serious face than was her wont.

"I came to return your novel, Connie," she said gravely. "I shouldn't have kept it so long, but Hannah Adams sought the loan of the book, and I knew you wouldn't mind — and she's just returned it."

Constance took the copy of "Pamela" and tossed it on a table. She was in little humor to respect even the great Mr. Richardson to-day.

"So ho, does prim Mistress Hannah Adams read novels?" she asked. "Well, how like you it?"

"Oh, much, but — but I couldn't finish it —

FOR A SISTER'S SAKE

it made me cry so," whereupon the little girl fell to sobbing in real earnest.

"Why, child, child!" exclaimed Constance in real distress. "Crying over a trumpery novel!" She took Barbara's plump hands from her pretty face and looked searchingly into her eyes. "No, no; it's for no book. . . . Mayhap you and Ensign Cuyler — you have quarreled?"

"Nay," protested Barbara through her tears, "indeed, you mistake. We're — we're very good friends — even if he does — wear — a — a red coat."

"So that's a fault, now? Well, what *is* the trouble, Barbara?"

"J-John —"

"John? Your brother? What of him?"

"I haven't seen him for two weeks," sobbed the girl, "and he was never away from home so long before."

Constance knitted her brows. "For two weeks? Let's see. Was it so long ago that I saw him at Colonel Hancock's?"

It was Barbara's turn to look with quick scrutiny at the face of her friend.

"You saw him?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, at Colonel Hancock's, the day before we went to the military show."

"I had forgotten. Well, that very morning — after I came here — he went from home, leaving me a few strangely worded lines — and not a word have I heard since."

"Did he say naught of his plans in the writing?"

MY LADY LAUGHTER

“No. But father says he went away on service for the Provincial Congress and the Committee of Safety.”

Constance's lip curled ever so slightly.

“Oh, he's safe enough, I'll warrant,” she said lightly. Then as Barbara's trembling lips gave sign of a new burst of tears, she added more kindly: “His powerful new friends will see that no harm comes to him.”

But the sister was not satisfied.

“Why, then, does he send no word? John was ne'er so thoughtless. Besides, Mr. Hewes had it from a countryman — Tobias Gookin — the same that flouted the captain at the target practice — that two men from town were killed or badly injured by a powder explosion near Menotomy.”

“Nay, come now,” returned Constance, at full cry in her role of comforter, “there are thousands of other men there, Barbara dear.”

“Mayhap there be, Connie,” said the disconsolate Barbara, “and I'd not think on't so, but, oh, last night I had such a fearsome dream!”

“A dream? Tell it me, dear.”

“I thought that John had been taken prisoner by the officers, and, for what I knew not, was condemned to die. I saw him tied across a cannon's mouth. I saw an officer stand beside the cannon with a lighted match in his hand. Oh, Constance, it was — it was — Ensign Cuyler!”

Constance was thrilled, spite of herself, yet to still the fresh storm of sobbing that shook Barbara's body, she said steadily:

FOR A SISTER'S SAKE

"There, there, Barbara, dreams are but the worries of the day carried on into the night."

"If I only knew that he was not killed!" cried the girl, beginning to dry her eyes.

"Would I could help you."

"But you can."

"Indeed? How?"

"You know Mistress Hancock well."

"Yes."

"And Mr. Hewes says her husband is in daily converse with messengers from all the country round."

"I see. You'd have me seek the truth from Dorothy. That I will, my dear, if it be any comfort to you. We'll be off at once."

On the way across the Common, Constance asked her inmost consciousness if any desire of her own to hear from the recreant John Brandon had quickened her impulse to help her little friend's disquiet. Then something indignantly denied the existence or possibility of any such motive. As the brother of Barbara Brandon he was worth an inquiry, but as no other.

Her vigorous pounding of the resplendent Hancock door-knocker brought forth the negro servant Agnes, clad in all her glory.

"Is Mistress Hancock at home?" asked Constance.

"No, Missy Drake, she ain't, I'se sorry to say. Missy Hancock and Missy Warren, dey bofe done gone to Howard's Meetin' House."

"Why, this is not the Lord's Day," returned Constance, with surprise.

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“Bress de Lord, no, missy, but 'tis a fas' day app'inted by de Provincel Corngris. Spec' dey mus' t'ink we'se livin' too high. Ho, ho, ho!”

“What shall we do?” asked Barbara blankly.

“Do? Why, *we'll* go to ‘Howard’s Meetin’ House,’ too, and get our news there.”

“But 'tis a Patriot service, and you —”

“And I am a Tory? Fie, Barbara Brandon! Doth not your own prosy minister say that ‘while the light holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return’? I shall neither harm the meeting, nor the meeting me.”

CHAPTER XV

The Voice of a Patriot

THE two girls found the vicinity of the West Church, where Parson Simeon Howard held forth at some length twice each Sunday, a scene of unusual activity. A steady stream of serious-minded people was rising up over the wooden steps of the meeting-house, while in the street and just before the building waited many men to see all that was on foot until word should come that the service was to begin. Among them was the omnipresent Hewes, who boasted that he had never missed a patriotic meeting in his life, and his chief cronies, Thomas, Perkins, and Johonnot.

“I tell ye, friends,” remarked little Hewes, always the oracle, “the people need none of this fasting, humiliation, and prayer.”

“Right,” growled Perkins, “we fast enough every day, say I, with food worth its weight in gold, and little to be had at that; we’ve lived on humiliation for a year, whiles as for prayer — well, the Lord helps them who help themselves, they say.”

“What should be to-day,” continued Hewes, “is an indignation meeting with a red-hot ad-

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dress from Sam Adams. That would stir the people up to doing something, I warrant ye."

"But I saw Master Adams enter the church not ten minutes ago," volunteered Johonnot.

"Aye, but he's not to speak, I hear. More's the pity, for I passed his house in Purchase Street after midnight this day, and there was a bright light in his study. 'Aha,' says I to myself, 'Sam is hard at work against the Tories.' Oh, what a speech that *would* 'a' been, if it'd only 'a' been one!"

"Master Adams was at the office of the *Gazette* last evening," put in Edes, the printer, who had joined the group by natural gravitation, "and he wrote something in such a prodigious heat that he spoilt four prime goose-quills. Warren and Revere dropped in, and when they had looked over his article, they all agreed not to publish it just yet. God knows when it *will* appear, for unless I miss my guess we'll not be able to print the *Gazette* very much longer."

Constance and Barbara reached the meeting-house just in time to pluck Dorothy Hancock's sleeve as the lady was about to enter. She looked at Giles Romney's niece with quizzical amusement.

"Good-morrow, Mistress Drake, and you, Mistress Brandon," she said ceremoniously. And then, in another tone: "Art fasting, Connie? Surely your uncle's larder must still be well supplied. Or have you come to place the efforts of our poor Master Howard against those of your eloquent Master Troutbeck?"

THE VOICE OF A PATRIOT

Constance made a grimace of disgust at the mention of the name.

“For neither of those reasons, Mistress Hancock,” she replied. “Nay, I am still a Tory; I hastened after you in behalf of Barbara here, who would have news of her absent brother John.”

Dorothy Hancock’s smile lighted up what was in repose a plain face. She looked at the girl keenly.

“Why, then, Constance,” she said, “methinks I am ever to be your intended fount of information. First to relieve your uncle, and now for — Barbara. But, indeed, I cannot tell you aught of John Brandon. After the meeting I will make inquiries from a source that I am sure will help you — and Barbara. Mayhap you will join Mistress Mercy Warren and myself in the hearing of the service?”

Constance looked dubious for a moment.

“Do, Connie,” pleaded Barbara. “I must stay by Mistress Hancock for the news she promises. Besides, you said but a little while ago that the meeting could not harm you.”

“Nor shall it,” replied the little Tory proudly. “We will bear Dorothy company. . . . What ails thee, child?” She felt Barbara, whose arm was locked in her own, give a little start.

“He — is there. Look.”

Constance’s eyes followed the index of the plump, pink finger, and saw Ensign Cuyler standing with other officers and a squad of men in front of a gay marquee that had been erected

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behind the church. Wondering what the intent of such an unusual proceeding might be, she dragged her friend from out the charmed range of vision and into the precincts of Parson Howard.

The bare, white interior, relieved only by the splendid, towering pulpit of mahogany, was filled to its utmost by a silent, grave, intense company of men and women, gathered to cry unto God for the forgiveness of their own sins and for the lightening of the burden that had fallen upon them. The grim silence of the place, the absence of the poetic accessories of her own faith, affected Constance strangely. As individuals she knew many of the Patriots well and regarded them quite in a matter-of-fact way; here for the first time she became part of a concrete massing of the powerful elements that made for liberty, and she began to wonder whether, after all, love for one's living, breathing, vital country were not of more importance than devotion to an abstract royalty she might never behold.

When the Rev. Simeon Howard rose for the "first prayer," he had no more earnest listener than this niece of Giles Romney, the Tory. It was a simple, eloquent calling for the blessing of God upon the people, and Constance could only think of Troutbeck and his nasal whining over the prayer-book in the King's Chapel. Surely Patriot preachers were better, at all events.

But the "Amen" of Master Howard's supplication had not come before a rolling of drums

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was set up outside and many fifes shrilled out "Yankee Doodle" with very suspicious vigor. The clergyman's voice rose in triumph over the din and he brought the prayer to an end.

Still, with unceasing iteration, the derisive tune came from the marquee, and the *brum-brum-brum* of the drums mocked at the sanctity of time and place. A stir and a murmur ran through the gathering. Black frowns and whispers of "shame!" testified to the anger of the people. There was no longer a doubt that the insult was deliberate, prearranged.

Constance's cheeks burned with the disgrace of it. To think that her own partisans — perhaps her own friends — would stoop to a thing like this!

The Rev. Mr. Howard began to read the Scriptures. He raised his voice to what seemed to him almost an unseemly pitch, but still the squeaking derision of the fifes and the sardonic rattling of the drums as "Yankee Doodle" — always "Yankee Doodle" — came from the British without.

The minister's eyes blazed with righteous indignation. He was a man of God, but not to be spit upon because of that. He closed the ponderous Bible with something very like a bang, and stood erect with arms folded, the very embodiment of outraged dignity and priestly wrath.

"Friends," he cried, in a voice that rang above and through the clatter, as an organ tone can conquer many violins, "the emissaries of Satan encompass us round about; but though they

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rage furiously together, their labor is vain. The peace and propriety of a religious service they can destroy, because 'twere unfit, in that, to attempt to overmatch their noise. But, thanks be to Almighty God, there is one voice here they cannot drown. They have brought politics to the threshold of our church. Very well, then, we take their gift, even though they be enemies, and bid it enter here. We will hear discussed the issues of this dark hour. I call upon Samuel Adams to come into this pulpit and address the people."

Spite of their habit of repression, spite of the fact that they were in a church, the good citizens assembled gave a ringing cheer, a cry that told of love and admiration and faith for the sturdily built man in dark red who walked, with quiet dignity, down one of the aisles and ascended the winding stairs of the great rostrum. As he turned and faced the people his usually mild blue eyes took on the color of steel, and his squarely molded features grew stern. With a quick, rather tremulous gesture, characteristic of him, he swept his abundant gray hair back from his broad and noble forehead, and gazed from side to side across the faces in the pews.

He began to speak slowly and rather calmly. The soldiers outside, astonished at the cheers within the church, had ceased their display of "Yankee Doodle" for a time, and some of the officers had come inside the vestibule to investigate the unusual occurrence. Then the news spread that Sam Adams was making a speech,

THE VOICE OF A PATRIOT

and more came into the church to hear this "man of the town-meeting."

As he went on, Adams' slight tremulousness of voice left him, and his tones, sonorous in volume and splendid in cadence, filled the edifice and floated out to citizens and soldiery.

Constance Drake listened as she had never listened to man before. What had she been doing all these years, she asked herself, that she had missed eloquence like this?

As Adams neared his peroration, the drums and fifes began again their "Yankee Doodle," and thenceforth struggled against the power of oratory to the end. But the thunderous voice of the man, as he poured forth all the fiery indignation there was in him, made the frantic exertions of the little band as nothing. Against the squeaking treble obligato, the rich and ponderous bass was the solo, heard through and above and beyond all other sounds.

"Merciful God," was the tremendous finale, "inspire thy people with wisdom and fortitude and direct them to gracious ends. In this extreme distress, when the plan of slavery seems nearly completed, oh, save our country from impending ruin! Let not the iron hand of tyranny ravish our laws and seize the badge of freedom, nor avowed corruption and the murderous rage of lawless power be ever seen on the sacred throne of justice!"

For an instant, after the last word had rolled from his throat, Adams stood like a statue, his right arm raised, and his hand pointed to that

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heaven whose aid he had just invoked. Not a sound marred the tremendous solemnity of the scene. The British drums had been stilled; over the people was a hush too sacred and powerful for applause. Only, as the compelling arm slowly lowered itself, and the stalwart figure relaxed, a deep, all-pervasive sigh came from many hearts.

Constance Drake found herself thrilling with something she could scarcely name. Half rebellious, she left the church with her friends, silent and preoccupied. As if fearful of herself, she told her own heart many times that she was a Tory and must so remain; yet no longer did she wonder at the audacity and steadfastness of the Patriots, no longer dare to think of them as a senseless rabble led by unscrupulous masters. She, too, had come under the spell of Samuel Adams.

CHAPTER XVI

A Scrap of Paper

NOT far from the church Constance and her friend espied Dorothy Hancock, who, accompanied by a pale, slender youth, something over his majority, had waited for the girls, mindful of her promise.

"Here is one," cried the fair wife of the Patriot exquisite, "who can give news of the absent brother."

Barbara, all smiles, turned toward the boy.

"Can you, then, Master Adams, tell me aught of my brother? He is not — not injured?"

"Not unless something has befallen him since morning," announced the young Samuel Adams. "He was with my father for a full hour, and when we started hither for the meeting he was talking for a moment at a window with my sister Hannah, who is a trifle indisposed and did not go abroad to-day."

"Oh, I thank you a thousand times," said Barbara, sweetly, "and you, too, Mistress Hancock. Good-morrow to you both."

"Now we shall see him — shall see him," she continued in a sort of ecstasy of joy. "Oh, Constance, are we not glad?"

"Very," replied Constance absently, as they

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walked along toward the fine square just above the church. She had hardly heard the question; in her mind were the echoes of Master Adams' words, "talking for a moment at a window with my sister."

In another moment she would have laughed at the absurdity of such a foolish refrain, had not the appearance of Samuel Adams, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Howard and others of the citizenry, stilled all her levity. He and his friends were walking slowly and were in earnest discussion. Again the girl was impressed by the stalwart figure, the fine face and the noble bearing, triumphant over the commonplace shabbiness of his dress. She remembered with something like self-pity that she had once looked upon attire as a very essential part of a man. Now, she thought of John Hancock, with his perfection of outward art, and more than ever did Samuel Adams seem to her to be one above his fellows.

Now the sound of a quick, firm step behind them, together with a certain military jingling, made Constance turn her head inquiringly. Barbara, schooled in the demure rules of the propriety of the age, looked straight ahead. But her friend knew well enough, from the look on her sweet face, that Mistress Brandon had divined with subtle feminine prescience that Ensign Cuyler was dashing along after them.

"Barbara," she said, sharply, grasping the girl's wrist, "you'll not speak to him."

A SCRAP OF PAPER

“To whom?” was the feeble pretence. It was wholly wasted.

“Remember he was among those — those profaners of God’s worship.”

“Yes, Constance, I know, but —”

“You *will* speak to him?”

“What — what can I do, if he speaks to me? And tell me, Connie,” she went on rather tartly, as if some new thought roused her from her supine gentleness, “why is’t that *you* speak so? The wearers of the King’s uniform are always welcome at your house.”

“Ah, but to-day it is different, after — and besides, you are not a Tory.”

“Nay, Constance,” was the simple answer, “I am but a woman.”

As if to stifle the realization that the little Puritan was fast learning to think and act for herself, Constance laughed, but there was no tune in the mirth.

“As you will, then,” she replied.

Nevertheless, her warning had some effect, for when the Ensign overtook and saluted the girls, there was something in the atmosphere that chilled him. He knew the cause well enough; indeed, the whole town was by this time ringing with the news of the soldiers’ affront to the Fast Day meeting.

“You’ll believe me,” he began earnestly, “that I had no share in that — that miserable business?”

“You — you were there,” replied Barbara stiffly.

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“As a chance spectator — no more, I swear it. And what’s more, I made protest against the outrage.”

“’Tis well you did, sir,” exclaimed Constance, with a wicked little smile and a significant glance at Barbara, “or I fancy your reception in a certain quarter would not be any too cordial. But we must hasten on.”

“Then with your gracious permission,” retorted the soldier, “I’ll be your body guard so far as Cornhill.”

And then, notwithstanding their differences in politics, it happened that the red-coated royal trooper chose to escort in particular the gray-clad Patriot maiden, while the brilliantly dressed Tory girl gradually fell behind. And so it was until Cuyler’s way separated from theirs, and the two linked arms once more.

“Well, Barbara,” said Constance, after they had proceeded in silence for some minutes, “have you quite forgotten the particular hero of our day — your brother?”

“Nay, how can you?” replied the girl, blushing guiltily. “Indeed, I must hurry home, for I’m yearning for a sight of him. Will you not come too?” she asked as Constance stopped at the corner of Winter Street.

Constance shook her head very energetically.

“I *thought* you, also, would be glad to see him,” was the rather plaintive appeal.

“I shall, indeed, — when he comes to see me.”

Barbara would have pressed the inquiry fur-

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ther, had not there suddenly appeared from behind a tree a gigantic figure whose looming proportions, so mysteriously brought into view, struck both girls with momentary astonishment.

“Well, well,” cried Constance, the first to recover her self-possession, “’tis our acquaintance of the target shooting.” Then she laughed merrily at the recollection. “You ran excellent well, sir.”

It was, indeed, “Long Toby” Gookin, a little less rustic in dress and a little more impressive in bearing than when he had disappeared from view behind the hill on the Common. He still chewed his wisp of straw, however, as if extracting wisdom and cunning from the little yellow stalk. He grinned responsively.

“Needs must run,” he said, slowly, “when the devil drives. But I’ll run arter ’em, yit, mebbe.”

“No need to run, I fancy,” returned Constance, “just shoot.”

“Mebbe I could do that, too, ef —”

The tall countryman did not finish, but the quick gleam of a new intelligence in his eye, and the sudden straightening of his huge form into commanding bulk, told the story well enough. . . . Nor was the hint lost on Constance. In another moment, however, his old drawl returned.

“Please, neaow, which of ye might be Miss Barbara Brandon?”

“Well, I might be,” replied Mistress Drake, “but she *is*,” pointing to her friend.

“Then I’ve a message for ye, miss.”

MY LADY LAUGHTER

“From John? Pray give it to me quickly!”

“I’ve naught to give — save from my tongue. Your brother sent me to your house. They said you’d soon be home, but I kinder guessed I’d find ye.”

“My brother sent you? Then he is not at home?”

“Guess not. Mebbe he’s a dozen miles yonder by now, if I’m any judge o’ horseflesh.”

“Why, what mean you?” asked Constance, with a sharp rapidity of which she was the next moment heartily ashamed.

“Wall, on’y thet Master Brandon come to taown in a drefle rush on urgent business, an’ hed to git right aout agin. Thet’s all.”

“But he had time to talk with Hannah Adams,” exclaimed Barbara, with quivering lip.

“I thought of that,” said her friend, drily.

“Neaow thet my errand’s done,” resumed “Long Toby,” addressing Constance, “may I speak a word wi’ ye?”

She nodded.

“Wall, I’m not sich a fool as not to know you saved my life t’other day. . . . Oh, yes, ye did. ’T ain’t wuth much neaow, except to me, mebbe. Some day it may be wuth more. Then, or neaow, it belongs to you, miss.”

Having thus delivered himself with extreme gravity and perfect honesty, the big fellow gave a queer jerky bow, and betook himself off with Brobdignagian strides.

Constance’s eyes followed him thoughtfully.

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“His gallantry is of novel stripe,” she said, “but perhaps ’tis as real as most, Barbara. . . . Why, what ails the child?”

The accumulated troubles and disappointments of the day were too much for the little girl, and she began to cry.

“There’s such goings on at our home. Father’s so mysterious and sometimes works all night, and John didn’t come home,” she whimpered.

“Come, come, Bab,” said Constance, stoutly, “he couldn’t see you, it seems. Where’s your patriotism now, if you can’t spare your brother from sight? And you a Daughter of Liberty, forsooth. . . . By the by, when do I understand they meet again?”

“T-to-morrow,” replied Barbara, stifling her sobs.

“If it will cheer you, I’ll go with you.”

“You?”

“Why not? I am welcome, it seems, at a fast meeting. Why not at a Patriot merrymaking, as you say this is to be?”

“We-ell,” said Barbara, rather dubiously, “if you really’d like to go, I’d surely like you to.”

“I would,” was the cheerful reply. “Now go home and rest a bit. Call for me to-morrow. You’ll find I can be very, *very* well behaved at a Whig festival.”

In her own room, Constance found herself again thinking of the church services and Samuel Adams’ turning of the disturbance to such brilliant account. Though she did not know it, it was his mastery over just such chance events

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that made him the great leader of men that he was. He never waited for opportunity to knock at his door, but followed the goddess in all her wandering ways, and seized her hand again and again.

Constance at last idly picked up the copy of "Pamela" that Barbara had so recently returned, and turned the leaves over without much thought of the story. Soon, from one of Mr. Richardson's most tearful chapters, there fluttered to the floor a piece of paper. Some writing upon it caused the girl to stoop and pick it up.

"Ah, Barbara's book-mark," she said. "Love verses, I'll be bound, with 'glove' and 'love' and 'sword' and 'word' for rhymes. . . . Nay, 'tis only a scrap — a note from her brother. 'Tis, then, no harm to read it. . . ."

. . . "do, for well I know she whom I love is a goddess. That I am unworthy I am only too conscious, but if devotion count for aught I may yet become so. It may be weeks e'er I see you again, but your face and your love, dear, will be ever bright within my heart.

"With dearest love,

"JOHN."

The girl stared at the signature, as if fascinated by the careful, scholarly flourish of the letters. Had the sinuous, writhing tail of the "J" been that of a snake there in the room, she could scarcely have been more transfixed with astonishment. She drew the paper nearer to her eyes as if she might see in the texture some solution of the mystery.

"That's not to a sister," she mused. "And

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'tis surely his hand. Besides, Cuyler's name's not John. 'Tis Thomas. . . . Barbara had loaned the book. . . . To Hannah Adams. . . . 'Tis to her John Brandon wrote, 'She whom I love is a goddess' — goddess, indeed! . . . 'Your face and your love, dear' — Faugh!"

And Mistress Drake threw poor "Pamela" in one direction and the bit of paper in another, and went and stood by her window looking out at her bare rose garden with a choking in her throat that was too dry for tears.

"What a fool I am," she told herself at last. "He's naught to me, or — or I to him. The Patriot's daughter is his natural mate. . . . Poor book," bending to take "Pamela" from the floor, "you have done no harm. And you, you tell-tale piece of paper, I'll put you back between the leaves. 'Twill be good discipline to read you when conceit gets the upper hand."

That afternoon, when Charlton, just back from his dangerous scouting, called at the Romney house, he found the bright divinity of the place in amazingly gracious and brilliant mood. And if he had rosy hopes of something dear and sweet to come, surely no one could blame him. With great reluctance he tore himself away to duty just before supper, to which he had been cordially invited.

The meal was, as usual nowadays, full of the discussion of the times. Constance related her experience at the morning services, and so vividly did she picture the scene that her uncle was deeply impressed.

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“By what you say of the meeting, Connie,” he said gravely, “I’m afraid this soldier folly will be a great help to the Patriots.”

“Patriots!” cried the girl, flaring into anger most unreasonably, and, to Giles Romney, most inexplicably, “I’m sick of the word. Rebels, fools, humbugs! And the women Patriots are the worst of ’em all. . . . I’m off to bed. Good-night.”

Thus freeing her mind, Mistress Constance stormed out of the room, closing the door behind her with unsparing strength.

Uncle Giles pushed up his spectacles, and tweaked his nose meditatively.

“What on earth is the matter with the girl?” he asked his wife.

“Well, Giles,” that excellent woman replied, “I take no sides in these terrible conditions, but as for Constance, if you want my opinion, ’tis this: The girl’s in love with a rebel.”

“A rebel? Nonsense, my dear. Why, didn’t she just now say —”

“Giles, you never did understand women,” was the gentle interruption.

CHAPTER XVII

The Spinners at Tea

THE house of the Rev. John Moorehead, minister of the church in Long Lane, was the scene of very unusual activity the following afternoon. Indeed, it may fairly be doubted if such an all-pervading air of femininity had ever before hovered over its large rooms and simple furnishings as upon this particular occasion. Good Dorcas Greene, the clergyman's faithful housekeeper, had been thrown into agonies of anxiety about it, and only hoped that the affair would go off well — but she was by no means sure. She would do her part, and the young ladies must do theirs. But if the affair passed without accident, or even scandal, she would thank her stars, indeed she would.

All this she expounded at some length to Rev. Mr. Moorehead, as breakfast was being eaten. The minister listened, but only smiled. A visitation such as he was about to receive had no terrors for him; in fact, he was rather looking forward to it, for he realized that a bevy of comely young women was as fair a sight as any that might offer in those troubled days.

The event that had so worried poor old Dorcas in anticipation was a meeting at the house of

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some fifty of the "Daughters of Liberty," come together to sing their patriotic anthems, to spin for the poor, and incidentally to revile tea — which every one of them adored. It was thoroughly understood beforehand that none but American products were to be eaten or drunk or even worn, which cut off many luxuries of person and of appetite. But the young women were every bit as stalwart in their patriotism as their brothers, and they gathered at the Moorehead house, clad in the sober cloths of home manufacture, as happily as if going to a splendid rout at Colonel Hancock's. Thus did conscience make heroines of them all.

And now behold in Parson Moorehead's large front parlor, doubled in length by the opening of folding doors between it and the room behind, two long rows of spinning wheels, fifty in all, with their great wooden wheels and their queer, sprawling caricatures of legs. And standing at each a damsel dressed in gray and white waited for the signal to begin. Half-way down the line and suspended from the ceiling was a white banner on which had been painted by Mr. Moorehead's pretty niece, Abigail, the words, "Love, Fraternity, and Application," the motto of the society.

And now behold, too, Constance Drake gazing upon this attractive picture with varying emotions. She had come as she had promised Barbara, to whom had been allotted the duty of getting ready the refreshments. Curiosity, ennuï, bravado — a dozen different motives had

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brought her along. And here she was in Tory finery, a bird of paradise among doves, for even Dorothy Hancock had made her dress conform to the rules of the "Daughters of Liberty," although she was not among the spinners. For once Constance felt apologetic for her London fabrics.

"Young ladies, you may begin," said the Rev. Mr. Moorehead, clapping his thin hands together and smiling paternally over his brood. Then arose on the air a soft whirring like the sound of the flight of myriads of tiny birds. Half a hundred right arms, neatly bared to the elbow, followed the circle of the wooden wheels, and as many left arms swayed backward and forward with that infinite grace of the olden time, as the soft, filmy cylinders of wool tightened and twisted and shrunk until the perfect yarn was wound upon the spindles. All this with merry laughter and chatter and bits of song, until the old house reëchoed to the cheerful sound even to the ridge-pole.

Constance viewed this Whiggish activity with amusement as soon as she subdued her feeling of aloofness, which was but temporary. She was an excellent spinner herself, and under the incentive of the moment she might have seized Barbara's inactive wheel and scandalized her Tory friends forever, had not the voice of her little friend called to her from the dining-room. There she found Mistress Brandon flitting about nervously, fearful that her housewifery might find itself lacking before so many young experts.

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“Oh, Connie,” she cried, from her dainty confusion of linen and plates and crystal, “if only you will go to the kitchen and look at the cake that’s in the oven, you will help me *so* much. Old Dorcas is a good soul, but she can never, never tell when a cake is done. And, while there, you might make the brew — Dorcas will tell you where the tea — that is, the raspberry leaf — is. Wilt do it, dear, even if you are — are —”

“Never mind what I am, child,” replied Constance cheerily. “I’m your bounden servant for to-day, Bab — yours and the others. I’ll go at once.”

“Oh, I thank you,” said Barbara gratefully, stooping to pick up a spoon that had dropped from its tray. As she did so, a gold-encircled miniature slipped from its nest in her soft, warm bosom and fell upon the carpet. Nor was the girl’s hand swift enough to rescue it, ere Constance’s sharp eyes had discovered the mischief.

“Oho, Mistress Bab, a miniature,” she cried. “And of whom, pray?”

Barbara blushed and fidgeted with the trinket, but made no reply.

“Come, come, girl, no secrets from me, an’ it please you. . . . But mayhap the face is ugly, and you like it to be unseen.”

“’Tis not,” said Barbara, flaring into indignation, “he is —”

“He?” with affected surprise.

“Yes, he, Constance dear, since you will know. See!”

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She held the painted bit of porcelain proudly up to Constance's inspection. And surely no one had ever called Ensign Cuyler ugly.

"Barbara Brandon," said her mentor, with what severity she could assume, "you are in love. Can you deny it?"

Barbara shook her head.

"And with a redcoat, one of the enemies of you and yours."

"Ye-es," replied the girl dolefully, giving sign of breaking down under her burden, "that's j-just the — trouble!"

And such a pathetic, sweetly appealing little figure she was, confessing her affection with a pride that was also akin to tears, that Constance could do nothing but clasp her warmly to her heart and keep her there for a moment.

"There, there, child," she said caressingly, "be not troubled. You've done no wrong, and — so they say — there's no politics in love."

"Is there not?" asked Barbara, gazing into her friend's eyes. "Is it really so?"

"Why — yes — I — but, mercy, I must to the kitchen, or your famous cake will be cinders in the oven."

No Dorcas being visible, Constance, after rescuing the cake in the nick of time, set about searching for the "tea." Into the buttery she went, peering this way and that into cupboards and over shelves, but no caddy could she discover. Then she became filled with that determination that comes to us all when the imp of the perverse seems to be mocking us.

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“Now, I *will* find it,” she exclaimed, “if I have to ransack every corner in the house.”

Saying which, she made a step-ladder of a chair and the pastry-bench and climbed along the upper shelves, groping for what might give tangible evidence of being a tea-caddy.

Victory! At last her fingers clasped a small tin box, inside of which something light rattled as she shook it. Hastily descending to the floor, she opened the lid and looked in. Strange-looking raspberry leaves, and a strange, though familiar odor arising from them. Strange, because the Rev. Mr. Moorehead was a very uncompromising Patriot, and this —

Constance sniffed at the herb decisively.

“’Tis *Bohea*,” she cried, with a burst of laughter. “Well, of all the —”

Stopping suddenly at the sound of footsteps, she saw before her old Dorcas Greene, the picture of shame-faced distress.

“Mercy on us, Mistress Drake,” exclaimed the perturbed housekeeper, “what have you there?”

“A most excellent China tea, I should say.”

“Aye, but —”

“I found it just now on the top shelf. There’s no dust on the cover, so it’s been used recently. Can it be that Mr. Moorehead —”

“Nay,” cried the horrified old woman, conscience rising strong within her, “’twas I — ’twas I who hid it there long ago, when Mr. Moorehead gave orders that no more tea be drunk in the house.”

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“But it *has* been drunk.”

“Only by me, and but a little now and then for my stomach’s sake. Oh, Mistress Drake, you’ll not betray me. I’m a poor old creetur, of weak will and wicked heart. Oh, oh, oh!”

Foreseeing tears, of which she thought she had had a surfeit of late, Constance hastened to reassure the old woman, who thereupon took courage and hurried away and back, fetching the right and proper brew.

Constance lifted the caddy to her nose.

“Faugh,” she cried, disdainfully. “Such trumpery! And they’ll drink with smiles though they know ’tis horrible. . . . But why should they drink it at all — the dears, who are working for the poor? Nay, Dorcas Greene, we’ll surprise ’em, you and I. They shall have a royal drink, for once, and, trust me, they’ll like it. See!”

And into the great china teapot she threw the Bohea with a generous hand and quickly poured the boiling water over it, laughing heartily at the awe-stricken face of the housekeeper.

“Oh, what have you done, what have you done?” moaned the old woman, her hands held in protest to heaven. “I must throw it away at once, I must, indeed, or there’ll be great scandal in the town.”

“Dorcas!” warned the girl, “I hear my conscience saying that I must tell Mr. Moorehead how ’twas the tea came to be saved. I think I ought to go now and find him.”

“Alackaday, Mistress Drake, come back,

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come back!" was the distressed appeal. Constance turned with a radiant smile of innocence.

"Ah, Dorcas," she said, "I thought you would relent. So now we'll serve the 'Daughters of Liberty' with a drink that will make 'em smack their lips again. And — hush — there is still some Bohea left for you. Hide it, and Mr. Moorehead shall never be the wiser, I promise you."

With Barbara's help, the tea-things were borne triumphantly to the parlor, and on sight of them the youthful deities of the spinning-wheel ceased their twirling with something like relief. Earnest laborers in the patriotic vineyard though they were, Parson Moorehead's system of keeping them all at work without a moment's intermission had proven a bit irksome for young blood. They gathered around the refreshment trays like magpies suddenly released, and then, each, with cup in hand, flocked to Constance, the jealous guardian of the teapot.

Soberly, as if officiating at the most solemn function, the girl poured the steaming, amber liquid into the cups, noting with inward delight, however, the subtle stir that seemed to enter the room as a delicious, long unsmelled aroma arose on the air. Pretty noses dilated, and pretty eyes looked puzzled. But no one spake her suspicion.

"Now, young ladies," said the Rev. Mr. Moorehead, with his best mixture of oratory and condescension, "now that our cups are filled with that beverage in which is no taint of

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tyranny, let us drink to our queen, the fair Goddess of Liberty. May her reign over us soon be undisputed by the claims of any other sovereign."

The good man put his cup to his lips and drank deeply; the members of his flock did likewise. Over the clergyman's face stole an expression of supreme content, the result of an unconscious cerebration set up at the command of a gratified stomach. But in another instant, as reason re-asserted itself, his features flexed with anger, and he threw what remained in his cup savagely on the floor.

"What chicanery is this?" he shouted. "Who has dared —"

The Daughters of Liberty, some almost in tears, others inclined to levity, and still others ignorant of what was amiss, followed his angry glance toward Constance Drake, who stood by her teapot, smiling and defiant.

"Oh, Connie," whispered the terrified Barbara to her friend, "was — was't you who did this thing?"

Constance raised her chin in air, tipping her curly head at the most charming angle imaginable. She looked calmly at her victims for a full half minute before she spoke.

"What matters how it came about, ladies, and — and Rev. Mr. Moorehead," she said gaily. "That shall ever be a mystery. Mayhap some goddess, more powerful than any, transformed the beverage in the pot; mayhap raspberry leaves have taken new form. Howe'er it be, history shall say that the Daughters of Lib-

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erty, at Mr. Moorehead's house on the seventeenth of March, 1775, drank Bohea as a toast to Liberty. My duty to you all; I must home to my uncle, who's but poorly." And with a most uncharitable outbreak of laughter, Mistress Drake flounced out of the room and was gone.

Poor Barbara followed and caught her.

"Oh, Constance," she cried, "whatever did you do such a madcap thing for? You've disgraced us all. Why, I cannot hold my head up in town after this."

"Never mind, child," returned her friend, kindly, "you'll not need to bother about your head. We are soon going to Uncle Giles' country place at Menotomy, and you may go, too. Now, run back and try to comfort your sinning sisters."

CHAPTER XVIII

On a Secret Mission

THE soft April moonlight sifted through the tender young foliage of the trees of Concord village upon the roof and sides of a fine Colonial double house situated a little beyond the main square on the road to the bridge leading to Acton. It revealed a picture as unusual to the quiet town as it was striking to the eye, for, spite of the lateness of the hour, bright lights gleamed from the windows, merging their rays into those of the moon with an almost uncanny effect. A half-dozen stout farmers, holding their flintlocks with something of military precision, paced back and forth before the house, challenging each and every one of the many messengers who drew rein or halted their steps from time to time, permitting no one whose credentials were not regular to cross the threshold.

In the clearer light of a little elevation behind the house, a still larger body of men lay silently encamped around a long, low, brick building, a small field-piece of brass gleaming coldly beside them.

The grave solemnity of all this, the coming and going of mounted men, the mysterious whis-

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perings to the guards, the sounds of earnest voices from within, and the something that made the very air tense around them, had its due effect upon a trio of men who had just arrived in Concord from Boston on foot, as their dusty boots and the wearied manner of two of them bore evidence. Only one, the gigantic Tobias Gookin, seemed to have thriven and grown more buoyant by the trip. All three stood aimlessly before the guarded house, making a virtue of necessity, for they had not been able to convince the men with muskets that they were of sufficient importance to be admitted to the councils of the great.

“Come neaow, Bill Fletcher,” argued “Long Toby,” with one of the guards, “I know yew, and yew know me’s well’s aour old cat knows her kittens. Jest yew lemme in fer a minute.”

“In Bill’rica I know ye,” returned the other, “but here — no, siree. Ye hain’t got any pass, Toby, and ye can’t go in; that settles it.”

“Ye see,” whispered the somewhat crestfallen giant to Johonnot and Thomas, who had come out with him on his promise to get them something to do for the cause, “ye see the Committee of Safety — or part of it, at least — is in thar, and they have to be durned keerful as to who gets to ’em. But jest ye wait awhile — that’s all I say — jest ye wait. I’ll show Bill Fletcher that he can’t run the hull o’ Christendom with his passes an’ guns.”

“I hear,” observed Johonnot, “that the clerk, John Pigeon, has got guards posted on all the

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roads hereabouts, besides the one we passed coming in."

"Yew bet he has," said Toby, enthusiastically, "an' furthermore there's a big army a-formin' this very minute all over New England. Outside of Boston, I hear, there's nothin' talked of but fight, an' fight 'twill be, fer that's what the last news from Parliament means, an' nuthin' less. They're callin' us 'rebels' already; that's fer our raisin' the five comp'nies of artillery an' payin' 'em fer bein' ready, I s'pose. See thet thar buildin' aout thar?"

The others followed the sweep of Gookin's tremendous arm till their eyes rested on the long brick building behind the house.

"Wall," continued Tobias, "in thet buildin' is a powerful lot o' muskets, an' powder, an' ball, an' four or five cannon ter boot. Naouw, what d'ye think those men are a-campin' raound thet place fur?"

"To protect the munitions, sure," replied Thomas, proud of his perspicacity.

"Yes, siree, but who from? I'll tell ye. A report reached here a few days ago that old Gage was a-comin' aout this way on a leetle walkin' trip, an' thet he mought gobble up them thar playthings. So Colonel Barrett, he jest got a lot o' the Minute Men together, an' thar's the result. Let the durned bloody backs come on; they'll git back ter Bosting withaout waitin' fer tea, ye kin jest bet."

Johonnot, who was getting rather grumpy at the sudden check to his desire for soldiery,

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sniffed a bit at this. He was staunchly a Patriot, but he was not inclined to allow Gookin to revel in omniscience unchallenged. Besides, he had his professional dignity as a tailor to uphold.

“They may be great soldiers, as you say, Toby,” he declared, “but they don’t look it. Why, there’s hardly one uniform to ten men, and even those are shabby. Now, I hold that uniforms —”

“Hold yer tongue, then, Johonnot,” commanded Gookin, roughly, “fer unless my gin’rally purty good eyes are lyin’, here comes somebody we very much want ter see.”

As he spoke, a horseman, leaning far forward, and covered with dust, dashed up and halted suddenly, nearly tramping down the group of friends. He leaped from his saddle, then stood at his fine animal’s head for a moment, patting its distended nostrils, careless of the foam that fell upon his white hands. Then he turned and beckoned Gookin to his side. For a moment they whispered together.

“Wait for me here, Toby,” he said, aloud. “My errand is brief.”

“Brandon!” exclaimed Thomas and Johonnot in unison, as the young man disappeared into the yellow flood of light that greeted him at the front door.

“Yes, Brandon,” said “Long Toby,” with great emphasis, “an’ let me tell yew, friends, he’s away up in the caouncils of ther great. *He’ll* see thet yew git sunthin’ ter dew ef I only ask him, an’ I rayther guess I will, seein’s yew’ve

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been so accommodatin' as ter walk way aout here."

When John Brandon reached the quiet inner room in which the Committee of Safety was met, he found four men gathered around a great table well lighted by candles. A portion of this was heaped with letters, notes, and dispatches, but its chief occupant was a large, roughly drawn map of New England, over which the hands of one of their number were playing with great rapidity, as he placed miniature chessman here, arranged groups of little bullets there, and disposed tiny heaps of black sand elsewhere, while the others, Richard Devens, Benjamin White, and Clerk Pigeon, looked on with craning necks and an occasional word of suggestion. It was a picture to stir young blood, and Brandon straightened with pride in the face of it.

"Gentlemen, your pleasure," he said, at last.

The strategist looked up from his engrossing game with a smile of welcome.

"Ah, Brandon," he exclaimed, "right glad am I to see you again. Well, what are we to expect?"

"Rhode Island's greeting, sir, is that she will do her full duty."

"And that means —?"

"That she will raise and equip fifteen hundred men to co-operate with the force of the other colonies."

"Please God they can raise powder as well," said Clerk Pigeon, fervently.

"Connecticut has been prompt, and New

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Hampshire is not behind," observed Devens. "If we must fight, it will be with a united people."

"Would that the union might be still more complete," mused the guardian of the map, "a union of independent states. . . . But the powder—that is the most urgent need. I understand, Brandon, that you —"

The sentence was finished in a whisper, and for a little the heads of the men almost touched one another as the secret colloquy went on.

"Let us send for the man," said Devens, at length.

A guard was called from the corridor, and presently Toby Gookin received the high honor of a summons to the council-room, to the great awe of Thomas and Johonnot, who felt at last that their guide was as powerful as he had claimed to be. Visions of high military preferment floated before their excited minds, and they spent the half-hour before the giant reappeared discussing the probabilities of war, for which they now fervently hoped.

"You'll not forget anything I've told you to tell my father?" they heard John Brandon say to Toby, as the two came down the steps.

"Yew kin depend on't that I'll not," answered Gookin, resolutely.

"I believe you, Tobias," returned Brandon, wringing the huge paw of the countryman as well as he could. "Now, then, if I live, I shall be on the turnpike road beyond the Neck on Monday next. Do not fail us, and, above all, be cautious. Good-night."

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The huge frame slouched away into the shadows of trees, and then vanished. Brandon turned to the two eager Patriots, who had viewed the sudden disappearance of their champion with some anxiety lest the expense of a night at the tavern in the neighboring green would be their immediate lot.

“Well, friends, what service can I do you?” he asked, with an indulgent smile. Truly the wearied pair were not imposing.

“John Brandon,” spoke up Johonnot, incisively, “there’s going to be trouble. We know it as well as you. We’re here to do something for the country, and by the eternal God we’ll not go away until we get the chance!”

“There’s where I stand, too,” cried Thomas.

All the amusement fled in one splendid instant from the young man’s face. *This* was what he had longed for, had prayed for — the firm, sincere determination on the part of men not hitherto known for heroism, that they would live and die for liberty. Instinctively he bared his head and held out his right hand.

“You are right, men,” he cried, exultingly, “there *are* things to do, and we want such as you to do them. Follow me!”

CHAPTER XIX

An Episode of the Turnpike

ON the turnpike road leading to Boston by way of the narrow and rather dreary strip of marshy and water-bordered land known as "The Neck," a coach, drawn by two horses, driven by a negro, was lumbering along under the genial sunshine of a mid-April day. The bright gleam of its yellow sides and the smart cracking of the whip in the hands of the dusky Jehu suggested a cheeriness that was, however, ill borne out by the growls of disgust and discomfort that from time to time proceeded from the open windows of the chariot. As the wheels struck an especially bad spot in a very bad road at best, a red and angry face popped out and then popped back again. And by that token all the world might have seen that Councillor Romney was returning to Boston in a state of marked ill-temper.

"Confound the fellow!" exclaimed the old man to Constance, who was his companion back from the country home at Menotomy. "Why can't he drive more carefully?"

"'Tis a rough road, you know, uncle," replied the girl, in the vain endeavor to soothe

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away the pangs of a gouty foot made manifest by every jarring of the clumsy vehicle.

"Aye," snorted the Councillor, as another jolt shook his long-suffering member, "but why need he strike *every* stone and hummock with a wheel? 'Tis as I feared; Pompey as a coachman is as useless as a land-lubber at a ship's wheel."

"But you bade him make haste, remember, uncle."

"And he only makes jolts," was the sardonic reply. "Well, what should a school nigger know of driving? At this rate 'twill be dark ere we reach home."

For some time neither spoke, unless an occasional poorly smothered oath from old Romney at his driver, his horses, his vehicle, and the road might have been called speaking. For her part, Constance pondered rather moodily on the change in their household affairs. Despite her expected satisfaction at leaving Boston, she now almost wished that this return to the Winter Street mansion were to be permanent, instead of a mere flying trip to gather up the odds and ends of their domestic outfit, forgotten in the confusion of yesterday's moving. But this, she decided, was folly, for Aunt Tabitha and the servants were fully installed at Menotomy, and the good lady was not one to retransfer her lares and penates without good and sufficient reason. But even though she remembered with delight the songs of birds and the pink and white glory of the apple trees she had just left behind, the

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girl felt a vague — and thus vexatious, for she liked her emotions to be clean-cut — foreboding against a return to the fragrant country.

With her mind in this condition, she was startled to hear her uncle break the silence with a sentiment so like her own.

“Why was ever I persuaded to leave the town?” he exclaimed, pettishly. “No good, I fear, will come of it.”

“Well, why not return?” suggested Constance.

“And be laughed at? They’d swear I was terrified by the rascals swaggering about the country taverns and reviling their King.”

“And were you?” was the mischievous question.

“Afraid? No!” roared the stout old fellow. “If they dare one overt act Gage will scatter them like wisps of straw. . . . Besides, I’ve harmed none of them, and, after all, we are fellow countrymen.”

“I’d trust to that, methinks, rather than to Gage,” was the significant retort. Old Giles looked at his niece keenly.

“What on earth does the girl mean?” he said.

“Only that, from what we’ve seen in the past few days, I fancy that those ‘wisps of straw’ are pretty numerous and united in respectable bundles.”

“They are —” began the Councillor with a fierceness that promised some particularly scathing judgment on the bands of Patriots they had passed on their way to and from Menotomy.

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It was promise merely, for at that exact moment, as the coach was swinging around a turn in the road, it gave a tremendous lurch, then a dismal creak, and, amid wild yells from Pompey and the snorting of the horses as they were pulled suddenly upon their haunches, the big vehicle swayed for a moment like a scow in a hurricane-sea and rolled upon its side into the ditch, a most undignified position for a councillor's coach to assume.

Constance shot forward into the opposite corner and landed squarely upon the well-meated frame of her uncle, who gave a gasp and a groan that frightened her exceedingly. But by the fervid "Blast the nigger! I knew he'd do it!" that rolled from the prostrate Councillor's mouth, she knew that no very dangerous result had attended the upset.

Far more terrifying now was the sound of a voice outside, and a familiar voice, too.

"Never mind the horses; look to the people in the coach," it said.

Now here was Mistress Constance Drake, the toast of the officers, the much-sought-after beauty of the Royalist set, quite topsy-turvy inside a coach, a delicious mass of disorganized furbelows, a bewitching study in silken hose and filmy lace adjuncts. Yet she distinctly rebelled against it all.

"Keep away," she cried. "Don't dare to look in the window until I — I —"

In another instant she had scrambled into decorum again, if not into dignity. Then as she

realized the absurdity of the situation, she broke into musical laughter, that sounded, however, anything but pleasant to the groaning old Councillor.

“Connie, Connie,” he wailed, “you’d laugh, I’m thinking, if you stood by your own open grave.”

“And why not, pray?” she retorted, tugging vainly at the coach door, “’twould be my last chance, mayhap.”

“Mistress Drake,” came a voice from without, “can we venture to be of assistance *now?*”

With another petulant wrench at the door handle, she cried, “We certainly are not anxious to remain here permanently.”

Then the attractive face of Lieutenant Charlton, none the less welcome because it was clouded by very real concern, appeared over the window. With the assistance of another officer, the door was pried open, and then out stepped Mistress Drake, rosy red and half inclined to mingle pouts with her smiles.

To get the more ponderous Uncle Giles extricated was a matter of greater difficulty. In fact, he was totally helpless, for his leg had been twisted under him when the crash came, and his knee-joint was sprained severely. Finally, he was dragged out by main force, uttering sentiments that made Constance stop her ears in pretty dismay, and was seated upon the earth by the roadside, a picture of rubicund and be-wigged misery.

Pompey, who had succeeded in detaching the

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horses from the coach, now came up, well-plastered with mud and full of apologies and explanations.

“Bress de Lawd, Marse Romney,” he cried, “dat you ain’t dead as Julia Cæsum. I ’spec’s you blame me, but wise old Socrytys hisself could nebber help it. Look!”

He pointed to a long, squat, four-wheeled cart drawn by a pair of strong horses, halted at almost right angles to the road.

“Dar, sah,” said Pompey, triumphantly, “to ’void collapsin’ wid dat waggin, I was ’bliged to fotch de arc of a circumflex, and dat’s what tipped ober de chariot. ’Twould ’a’ been wusser ef —”

“Shut up, you black ignoramus,” roared Romney, “and go and find out how I can be got home.”

Constance saw that the wagon was surrounded by redcoats, and that a small man, whose figure looked familiar, was engaged in a lively discussion with them.

“Now, perhaps, after the damage you’ve done,” he cried, “you’ll let us go on.”

“Not till we’ve stripped that load,” sneered an officer. “Fertilizer you call it, but strange to say, ’tother night just such a load as yours turned into musket-cartridges and balls at the mere touch of a bayonet.”

“But I assure you, sir,” resumed the shrill, high-pitched voice which Constance now recognized as belonging to little George Robert Twelves Hewes. The soldier cut him short with no other

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ceremony than that of drawing his sword, before which, however, Hewes did not give way an inch.

“If 'tis as you say,” declared the redcoat, “the search will do no harm. Sergeant, a half dozen men here!”

The troopers were just ready to reduce Mr. Hewes' wagon-load to its lowest terms, when a horseman came dashing down the turnpike, halting his steed between the coach and the group around the farm-cart.

“Halloa, what has happened?”

Only this query, and Constance knew without a look that the rider was John Brandon. She marveled at the chance — or was it design? — that had brought him thither; that they two were to meet again under circumstances that bade fair to be stormy, indeed.

At Brandon's words, another figure, tall, ungainly, and slouching, came from the farther side of the cart, and the girl with a half smile saw in it the rustic Toby Gookin who had once offered to place his life at her disposal. A doughty champion, indeed!

“Well, Toby,” demanded Brandon, sharply.

“Well, neaow,” replied the big countryman, with a voice that trembled amazingly, and knees that shook very unvaliantly, “yew see, sir, these — these soldier gentlemen, I guess, don't want us tew go further to-night. Neaow, ef Mr. Romney there —”

He pointed a colossal forefinger at the little group by the roadside, and Brandon, with a start

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that set his spirited horse a-dancing, saw—Constance.

Almost inevitably, it seemed, he rode up to the prostrate Romney and the pretty niece, who were now alone, as Charlton had been called to the soldiers. He would have spoken, had not Gookin followed him and seized him by the arm, something he said in an undertone to his leader, something that made the rider frown.

“I cannot do that,” Brandon said, “besides, ’twould do no good.”

“Remember, sir, it’s fer —” And again his words became inaudible.

Then Brandon’s form straightened, and he threw a glance at Mistress Drake that she could but think held something of appeal. Then he spoke firmly, but not to her.

“This is an outrage, officers. Methinks Councillor Romney has suffered enough already to-day, without this indignity to his farmers.”

Charlton and his subordinate officer looked at one another with perplexity in their eyes.

As for Constance, she flushed hotly, and would have flared out with some indignant protest, had not Brandon, leaning over his horse’s neck as if to arrange a portion of its bridle, brought his face close to hers.

“Constance,” he said, rapidly, “that wagon bears ammunition that, if seized, will be traced to my father. ’Tis for his sake.”

Then he was off to the other side of the road without a look. Charlton approached with the deference of soldierly gallantry.

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“Have we, indeed, been so unfortunate as to meddle with the property of the King’s Councillor?” he asked.

Old Romney, to whom the inquiry was directed, answered only by a louder groan than its predecessor. He was flat on his back now, and evidently suffering severely.

“My uncle is in great distress, as you see,” said Constance. “Mayhap, it would be increased if — if he knew — knew what is going on.”

“We ask pardon of him, through you,” continued Charlton, making a gesture to his brother officer. A sharp word of command, and the soldiers fell back from around the wagon.

“Now drive on,” ordered the lieutenant to Gookin. “You can pass the coach, I think.”

“Long Toby,” with elaborate grumbling and much clumsiness, got his horse in motion, and the wagon went creaking and lumbering by.

“’Tis a heavy load, neaow, miss,” said Tobias, as he passed, “but when properly distrib’ted, ’twill dew fine sarvice. G’lang, Castor; gid ap, Pollux.”

Never had Mistress Drake been so angry with herself, never so unutterably disgusted with her own weakness. Why should she, of all women in the world, be party to such a trick as this, such a scheme to aid the enemy and a man she was sure she hated? She turned toward the officers.

“I —” she begun, but that was all. Something in Brandon’s mute appeal was stronger than her will.

AN EPISODE OF THE TURNPIKE

“Will no one help me get my uncle home?” she cried, a moment later.

Quick as a flash, and with an alert grace that Constance could but admire, John Brandon was down from his horse, and by her side.

“The coach is beyond immediate repair,” he said, “but I will —”

“Don’t dare speak to me, sir,” whispered the girl, pale with suppressed passion, “or I will cap your little farce with tragedy. . . . Lieutenant Charlton, you may aid me in bringing my uncle to his home, if you will.”

The delighted officer was full of energy in a moment.

“My men shall make a litter of saplings and boughs for your uncle and yourself.”

“Thank you, but not for me,” returned Constance, with a radiant smile. “Your arm — if I may.”

John Brandon mounted his horse silently and rode slowly toward the farm-wagon now almost lost to view in the gathering dusk. Over the rider’s head, as he went on into the dull crimson of the dying day, appeared the molten glow of a star. But the picture held no beauty nor significance to the troubled girl. She stamped her foot with a little exclamation of petulance.

“What can I do? What annoys you, Mistress Drake?” asked Charlton.

“I could die with shame,” was the reply.

Charlton decided that she was vexed at the contretemps in the coach, and was casting about

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for some pretty words of comfort, when she broke out suddenly: "Pompey!"

"Yes, missy," returned the half-frightened, half-amused darky.

"You're a fool, Pompey!"

"Yes, missy."

"And as big a one as I."

"Yes, missy — no, missy — bress de Lawd, I dunno what I mean. I'se in a bigger mess dan Dedylus in his layberith."

CHAPTER XX

A Discovery and a Message

DR. GAIR shook his little round head ominously.

“The sprain, of itself, is not severe,” he said, “but its addition to the inflammation of his gouty affection is serious. Fever will set in and it would be dangerous to attempt to remove him for some days.”

The surgeon had met the cavalcade of red-coats, with their groaning burden in the litter, just as it entered the more thickly settled portion of the town, and had quickly given his professional opinion, ending the sentence with his customary shrill squeak. He jocularly proposed to prescribe for the coach, too, which Pompey and some of the soldiers had tied up with leathern straps and given sufficient strength to be dragged to town with no riders. Constance ordered the darky to haul the chariot to chaise-maker Peleg Perkins without more ado, and to tell Barbara Brandon, on the way, that she was wanted at the Romney mansion.

“And what am I to do for a servant?” the girl said, in some perplexity. “I must tend uncle, and cannot do the housework.”

Pompey was equal to the occasion, as usual.

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“Nebber trouble yo’self ’bout dat, missy,” said the black. “Dar’s Miss Aggernes, de Hancocks’ colored gal, who’s been lef’ behind by de fambly. I kin persuade her to come down here an’ wuk fer you, ’deed I kin, as easy as Nebbechudnezzar eat de lions.”

Next morning fever had attacked the Councillor, and Dr. Gair looked sober. Delirium had set in, and the old man was calling incessantly for his wife.

“She ought to be here, egad,” said the surgeon. “She’d do him more good than all my pills and boluses.”

“I will go for her myself,” answered Constance; “but there is no way to bring her till the coach is repaired late this afternoon.”

“*You go?*” asked the little man, pursing his lips in astonishment.

“Certainly. Why not?” was the calm reply.

“In these unsettled times?”

“After all, they are my countrymen out there, Doctor. They have never harmed me.”

“But the soldiers — they are not always —”

“If there is fear of them, it is greatest here, where they are most numerous, is it not?”

The doctor, being wise in his generation, saw a gleam in the girl’s eyes that told him of the futility of argument.

“Then, again,” continued Constance, “there is no one else to send without alarming Aunt Tabitha, whose nerves and health are none of the best. Nay, doctor, I am going!”

Constance, in the kitchen a little later pre-

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paring gruel, was startled to see Barbara burst into the room with an impetuosity quite foreign to her. Her cheeks were ruddier than ever, and her eyes sparkled prettily. She had just been home to bring some of her effects.

“Well, Barbara,” said her friend, “what new event?”

“John has returned, Constance.”

“Indeed!” This very calmly, and mingled almost with the humming of a tune as the girl stirred the milk in the porringer. Barbara looked very unhappy and her lip quivered.

“Yes,” she said. “I met him nearly at the South Meeting-house, and he wouldn’t even go home with me. He — he acts so strangely.”

“Strangely? How so, child?”

“He talks of his duty — of the cause —”

“‘The cause! His duty!’ Men always prate of these things most when they neglect their own.”

At that Barbara’s family pride took offence.

“I’m sure, Constance Drake, that John is right,” she exclaimed.

“So ho, little Spitfire! Then why do you talk so of him?”

“I’m afraid for him. He says he is sent here to help guard the people’s safety, and bade me send him word if I learned aught of the British movements. The country’s future might depend upon the knowledge.”

“Makes a cat’s-paw of you, eh? Why don’t he do his own work?” was the scornful query.

“He fears detention. That is why he doesn’t

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return home. Oh, dear, I wish something would mend these miserable times."

Constance's heart softened before the real and natural solicitude of her little friend.

"But how are you to reach him where he is to be?" she asked kindly.

"He is at Samuel Adams' house," said Barbara.

"Ah!" exclaimed Constance, nearly upsetting the basin of gruel with a nervous movement. Barbara looked at her anxiously.

"Why, what's amiss, Connie?" she questioned.

"I — I nearly burned myself with a spatter of gruel," was the reply.

"You see," Barbara went on, "the Adams house is empty; the family is all at Concord."

"Indeed? It is natural, though, that it should be your brother's headquarters."

"Yes — as he says, they'd never think of looking for him there."

"Why not? I would," was the tart rejoinder.

"You would — why, what do you mean?"

"Why, only that it would be natural to — but how can he — find out anything shut up there?"

"There are men out who will report to him. He's clever enough to arrange such things."

"I see," replied Constance, rather wearily, as if tired of the subject. "Well, I will take this gruel to uncle. Do you go up in my room and lie down."

An hour later, Constance found her friend tossing restlessly on her bed. As she looked

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down at the flushed face and noted the delicate blue circles that had of late crept under the eyes of the little girl, a great wave of tenderness came over her and she wondered if she were not too often impatient with her friend — her best friend, after all.

“Not asleep, dear?” she asked gently.

“No,” said Barbara, rather sadly. “I’m wide awake and very nervous.”

Constance smiled quizzically.

“I don’t suppose anything on earth would make you try a cup of — tea?” she asked.

“I’d like to, Connie, if the truth be told. I suppose it would be as very wrong — as very — nice. Have you anything I may read?”

“Have you read ‘Sir Charles Grandison’? ’Tis there on the table, then.”

Barbara got the volume and threw herself on the bed again.

“There, I’m comfortable,” she said, with a smile, “and perchance I’ll read myself to sleep. Stay, I have the wrong book. ’Tis ‘Pamela,’ and too sad. Halloa, what’s this? John’s writing! Had you a note from him?”

Constance flushed with shame and something like injured pride. “No,” she replied, shortly.

“‘Do, for well I know,’” read Barbara, aloud, “‘she whom I love is a goddess. That I am unworthy I am’ — why, ’tis part of that strange note about ‘his goddess, liberty,’ John wrote me the day he —”

“Wrote *you!*”

“Why, yes, of course,” replied the girl, wonder-

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ing at the resonant tone of delight, of surprise, of relief, even, in the voice of Mistress Drake.

And she was still more amazed as Mistress Drake flew to her bedside, knelt down and hugged her royally, and then cried with most illogical enthusiasm:

“Barbara, you’re a dear!”

She would have spent at least an hour asking about the looks and the doings of John Brandon, had not Agnes, the colored maid, knocked.

“Missy Drake, dar’s a sojer gemmen to see you,” the servant said.

“A soldier? I hate all soldiers! Tell him that, Agnes.”

“Very well, Missy Drake.”

“Constance!” warned Barbara.

“No, not that exactly. Tell him I’ll be down in a minute.” And with another ecstatic embrace of her friend, she ran downstairs, singing.

Lieutenant Charlton’s eyes were gladdened by the sight of the prettiest Constance he had yet beheld. He almost grudged the commonplaces of inquiry about Uncle Romney that seemed somehow to keep him from warmer words to the girl herself.

“To-morrow,” he thought, “may alter the fate of this country and its people. I must not speak now.”

But in his simple and honest way he offered to be of any assistance possible.

“After to-day I am not my own master,” he went on. “We go on active service to-night.”

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“On active service?” asked Constance, paling slightly. “War is then declared?”

“Oh, no! This is some expedition in force — to try and terrify the country people, I fancy.”

Like a flash Barbara’s words came to the girl: “John must know the British movements. The country’s future might depend upon the knowledge.” She commanded her voice to obey her will, as she said casually: “We shall be sorry to lose you, Lieutenant Charlton. Whither do you march?”

“That is not known, I fancy, save to Gage and Percy. There are many varying reports. In fact, only the higher officers know that there is to be an expedition at all.”

After the soldier had gone, Constance stood for a moment in deep thought.

“He said Gage and Percy knew,” she mused. “Percy? No. Gage? Yes, for he has a wife.”

She lost no time in reaching Province House, where she was fortunate in finding sweet Mistress Gage at home. To her she swiftly told of her uncle’s mishap, of the whereabouts of Aunt Tabitha, and of her own determination to set out that very afternoon to fetch her.

“Where is she, do you say?” inquired Mrs. Gage, thoughtfully.

“At Menotomy.”

“That is on the way to Concord, is it not?”

Constance nodded.

“Then, child,” was the solemn reply, “you must send another to bring your aunt to town.”

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“Why, I cannot, madame,” cried the girl. “She is in ill health, and —”

“But for your safety and hers you must — Come hither, child. Listen to me. The troops, in great numbers, march to-night for Concord. There may be—well, scenes no woman would see.”

What excuses she made to cut short her visit Constance never knew. She only realized that the news she sought was now singing in her brain, was keeping time to her rapid step, was filling her whole being with its import. She would give it to John Brandon, for he had *not* written to Hannah Adams. But how reach him? Arouse Barbara and send her off post haste with a message?

“No, that will not do,” she reasoned. “He would know *I* was the informant, and would seek my source of knowledge, and — and my reason.”

She was nearly home, when, in her great perplexity, she heard a whine and felt something cold against her hand, then something warm. She looked down to find the great liquid eyes of a Newfoundland dog gazing up at her.

“Why, Queue,” she exclaimed, “have they left *you* behind? Good dog! Now run along home. . . . Nay, Queue, come here again. Perhaps I can find you a bit of meat.”

The dog trotted gratefully into the Romney mansion, and was soon regaling himself with a choice bone. Constance, meantime, sat down at a desk to write. Then came the thought that this plan would defeat her purpose. Brandon would know her writing. But what to do, then?

Aimlessly looking out of the window, she saw

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Pompey pottering about in the garden. That dark worthy furnished a luminous inspiration to the girl. She called him within.

"Pompey," she asked, "can you write?"

The darky grinned with immense self-complacency.

"Yes, Missy Drake," he answered, "I writes pretty well fer a no 'count nigger."

"Then sit at that table," was the girl's command, "and take this quill."

After a brief and feverish search, Constance found a sheet of paper upon which her friend had scribbled to test a new pen. Tearing it across, she left one signature in bold letters: "Barbara Brandon."

"Write above this what I tell you, Pompey," she said.

"Yes, missy; all ready, missy," returned the negro, with a professional clearing of his throat, and such an elaborate flourish of the quill as threatened to daub Councillor Romney's imported library wall paper with ink.

"The British — B-r-i-t-i-s-h — have you got that?"

"Yes, Missy Drake, dat's all right, I 'specs; on'y ef yo'd please not purceed with quite such incessible speed, de writin' might be mo' like dat of de quality."

"Very well," smiled Constance. "Now continue: march to-night for Concord."

"De debble dey do!" exclaimed the darky, his eyes rolling with excitement. "Why, dat ar's —"

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“Oh, Pompey, Pompey,” exclaimed the girl, in mock dismay, “can’t you understand that I am merely testing your ability to write, and that I gave you the first thing that popped into my head? What a stupid!”

“’Scuse me, Missy Drake, ’scuse me,” returned the abashed Pompey. “Co’se I know’d ’twere on’y a make-believe, but it did sound so kinder belligerous dat I —”

“All right, Pompey; you have done well. You may go now.”

And now to send the message.

With a swift and strong movement the girl wrenched a book from its covers and slipped the paper between them. Then she tied all with thread and called Samuel Adams’ dog to her side. She fondled his fine head for a moment, and fastened the packet to his collar. Then Queue was most inhospitably and unceremoniously turned out of doors.

“Home, Queue!” commanded Constance.

Queue looked dubious. Thoughts of bones doubtless held strong place in his canine brain.

“Home, sir!” said the girl, stamping her foot. “Good Queue, handsome Queue, the safety of a people depends upon you. Straight home, now, and don’t stop till you get there!”

The dog wagged his tail and started off at a heavy, deliberate trot. Constance followed him with anxious eyes, but was relieved to see that when he reached the end of the street he took the right turn.

CHAPTER XXI

A Horse and Its Rider

CONSTANCE'S reproaches that she had left her uncle so long unattended were short-lived when she returned to his room and found him sleeping peacefully. She sat down by his bed, and was surprised to find herself almost trembling. She seemed to be a part of some great and mysterious stroke of fate whose coming would cast a chill over life. Then she tried to reassure herself.

"Pshaw!" she almost spoke, "what did I do, after all, but try and tell John Brandon something he wished to know? 'Tis dubious whether he even gets the message."

She wished she had employed some more certain messenger than poor Queue, and tried to picture to herself the result should the faithful dog forget. But in came bustling Dr. Gair, who, of course, woke the Councillor, and then banished the girl from the sick-room. He had a bit of news, also.

"You'll find Earl Percy in the drawing-room," he said. "I told him of your Uncle Giles' misfortune and he came along to present his regrets in person."

Constance went down, followed shortly by the

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surgeon. Percy, she thought, gave evidence of a nervousness she had not seen in him before, and both were relieved when Dr. Gair appeared.

“Your uncle is awake, and in less pain,” said he, “but his nerves are playing at skillets with him, Connie. His wife must be sent for — he worries about her.”

“The coach should be ready within a half hour,” replied Constance. “Then I shall start.”

“Where is Mrs. Romney?” asked the Earl.

“At my uncle’s country house at Menotomy, my Lord.”

Percy’s handsome face clouded. Had he been less a soldier, one would have called his look that of apprehension.

“Cannot some other be sent?” he asked, turning to the little doctor.

“My aunt is none too well,” declared the girl. “This news must be given gently. I only can do it.”

At that Dr. Gair burst out in wrath: “What in the name of common prudence prompted Giles Romney to go out into the country these troublous times?”

“My aunt’s health, sir. And besides, he said his property here is safe, while that at Menotomy —”

“How in conscience’s name did he expect to protect it — a lame man and two women!”

“Oh, he has no fear of the — the rebels.”

The word had to be forced through Constance’s teeth as if its utterance hurt. Another curious

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manifestation, she thought, of a day of mental extremes.

“No?” queried the Earl, in mild surprise. “Why, I should think —”

“You see, my Lord,” explained Gair, “he was widely known and immensely respected throughout the province, and his political views are regarded as honest devotion to principle.”

“Would as much could be said for all who side with the King,” replied Percy fervently.

“And then,” continued Mistress Drake, with something of her more customary spirit of perversity, “uncle fears for his country house rather because of the wearers of the red than of — of —”

Percy smiled at her embarrassment, which, he well understood, was because she feared to be thought discourteous to a guest. The smile, perhaps, made matters no better.

“You — you see,” she blurted, “the soldiers would not know to whom the property belonged.”

“And might not respect it an’ they did,” muttered the Earl.

“I suppose there’s no help for it, Mistress Drake,” sighed Dr. Gair. “You must go.”

“I do not suppose it would do to send her under armed escort?” suggested Percy.

“That would but provoke trouble,” replied the surgeon. “No, the girl’s plan is the best.”

Constance straightened proudly. This talk of danger and guards and her own inferred helplessness angered her not a little. It was time to put a stop to such nonsense.

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"I need no escort, thank you," she said soberly. "I know the way — and the trouble."

"I may still be of service," persisted the soldier. "At any moment orders from headquarters may close all egress by the road from town. I can at least write you a pass. May I sit here?"

He took a quill and began to write on a large sheet of paper.

"Who accompanies you?" he asked, raising his head. "But 'tis of no matter. . . . There, this will do. Read it, doctor; you know my eyes scarcely permit me to read a word I write."

Dr. Gair read the heavy, scrawling writing without more ado:

April 18, 1775.

All officers and sentries will pass Mistress Constance Drake and her party through all lines and outposts.

HUGH PERCY,

Acting Brigadier-General.

"And now, Mistress Drake," said the gallant commander, "having done you what little assistance I can, I will take my leave. My duty to your uncle, and tell him I trust we shall soon meet under better auspices."

Little time had Constance to reflect on the possible result of this visit, for the clatter of horses' hoofs and a creaking rumble that was not wholly reassuring announced that Pompey had driven up to the gate with the mended coach. She quickly took leave of Barbara, who was inclined to be hysterically mournful at the new departure, but who was speedily suppressed by

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orders to tend Giles Romney well and not to make a fool of herself.

"One would think," cried Constance gaily, "that I was going to the East Indies, instead of a few miles into the country to bring an elderly lady, a couple of servants, and some hat-boxes into this solemn old town."

Outside, she found Pompey grumbling at the manner in which Peleg Perkins had repaired the coach.

"He done said he couldn't do no better in de short length ob time he had 'warded to him," the negro exclaimed. "But I dunno, Missy Drake, I dunno."

"Well, Pompey, you *must* drive carefully, and that's all about it," was the severe reply.

"'Deed I will, then, missy. I'll dribe mo' carefuller dan Phurraoh's chariteers when dey got inter de Black Sea. Yo' kin 'pend on me."

As the equipage moved slowly along on its way to the Roxbury road, Constance's quickened perceptions noted something sinister in the military activity apparent on the part of the British. There was a deal of marching and forming of the soldiers on the Common, but it took place in silence. With the knowledge of coming movements deep in her heart, the girl saw the reason for the lack of the usual ostentation. What this quiet preparation might bring forth she would not, dared not, conjecture. She could only hope to reach her aunt in safety, and trust the rest to fate.

Out beyond the Neck and well along, with a

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swing to the right in order to cross the bridge that led to Cambridge, dusk came swiftly down upon the coach and its lone passenger. Even here there was something in the very air, she thought, that foretold a storm, not of nature, for the evening was clear and fine, but of human emotions and the passions evoked by arms. And as if to accentuate the process of her reflections, the rapid hoof-beats of a horse were heard behind, singing their song of energy and haste.

With mechanical curiosity she glanced from the coach window as the horseman passed and caught a glimpse of the figure of John Brandon bowed low over the neck of his steed.

"Could he have had my message?" she wondered. "If so, why is he thus late?"

Her mood of restless anxiety was intensified by the frequent halting of the horses by Pompey, and the negro's careful inspection of the coach. If only the wretched vehicle could be made to keep its strength for two hours more!

On they went, however, in safety, over the bridge and into Cambridge, past the brick buildings of the college, whose twinkling lights cheered the girl by their unconcerned serenity, and so out upon the road to Menotomy.

But not far from the village a groaning from under the coach body brought Pompey to the ground again.

"I'se 'feared ob dis yer contraption, Missy Drake," he grieved, "'deed I is. I doan' 'spec'

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it'll last more'n . . . Good lawdy, gemmens! what yo' want?"

His frightened question was directed toward a party of British officers who had ridden slowly toward them and now blocked the way.

It was Capt. Jack Mowatt's voice that replied, showing ill-temper in its tone, and insolent brusqueness in its command.

"Here, nigger," he said, "just you turn those horses of yours and drive back where you came from. There's to be no traveling this night, d'ye hear?"

At that Constance opened the coach door. "Why are you stopping us, may I ask?" she exclaimed, haughtily.

Mowatt bowed with ceremonial sarcasm. He hated this girl who had twice flouted him, and yet — and yet she was very fair and very desirable. A new plan suggested itself.

"Orders have been issued to permit no passing on these roads to-night, mistress," he replied. "But have no fear. I'll take you back to Boston. Your blackamoor shall ride one of his horses and lead the other. The coach we will roll into the ditch."

"And I?"

"Oh, you, my lady?" he returned, coolly, "you shall ride in front of me on my good horse."

"But I cannot," protested the girl, warmly, "I must go on. There are reasons."

"Very possibly, but our orders are strict, and there are no exceptions in favor of beautiful

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damsels in distress. . . . Come, nigger, unhitch those horses, or, egad, I'll spit you in a jiffy!"

Then a glorious recollection burst upon Constance's mind, as it had been the sun in the dark skies.

"But I have a pass!" she cried triumphantly.

"The lady says she has a pass, Mowatt," said another voice, which Constance knew at once for that of Charlton.

"Let her show it, then," growled Mowatt, angry at the interference.

"I will as soon as I can find it," said the girl, sweetly.

The lieutenant came forward as he recognized Mistress Drake, and apologized for the blockade.

"Oh!" cried Constance, with a sudden emphasis that made him start.

"Why, what —" he began.

"I know where the pass is. Please turn your head."

And having produced the paper from whence it were ungallant to inquire, she gave it to Charlton with a fine flourish.

"Quite regular," said the soldier, as he slowly read it in the uncertain light, and Mowatt, looking over his shoulder, was forced to conclude, with anger and disgust, that his game was up.

"I'll make some rebel sweat for this," was his charitable thought, as he galloped away.

Charlton lingered to offer such services as his duty would permit.

"Pray do not distress yourself about me, Lieutenant Charlton," replied Constance wick-

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edly, "the only trouble to me are the men who wear your uniform. Good-night."

So Charlton rode away in chagrin to turn at a cross-road a bit farther, and the coach lumbered once more into action with a much happier Pompey on the box. Visions of hanging, drawing, and quartering had been his during the parley, and now he could have sung for joy.

Perhaps Pompey's animation affected the quality of his driving, or perchance good Peleg Perkins' excitement over the activity of the soldiers in town had had a malign influence upon his ability as a repairer. Whatever the cause, just as the little village of Menotomy was reached, and there remained but two miles farther of the journey to Giles Romney's, the miserable equipage swayed, sagged, lurched, and came to an ignominious halt, its fore axle broken short off.

Constance scrambled out with marvelous alacrity, and gazed first at the wreck and then at the surroundings.

"Now, what are we to do, Pompey?" she cried, almost in tears with vexation.

"Well, missy, dar's ole Marse Wetherby's tarvern jess ahead on yo' right. 'Spec' yo' kin git lodgin' dar fer ternight."

The girl looked at the large, square building pointed out by Pompey. It was well lighted, and sounds of cheer came from its windows. All at once a door opened, and a blaze of red-coated humanity showed clear in the mellow radiance of the tap-room. Even at her distance,

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Constance retreated involuntarily with a thrill of unnamed dread.

"Ah, no," she murmured, "anywhere but there! . . . Let me think. . . . Why, yes, we are very near the home of my old nurse, Martha Winship. She and her goodman, Jonathan, will gladly give me shelter. Do you, Pompey, try to get the horses to drag that plaguey coach to their door-yard, and I will walk along beside you."

It was a hard task, but by dint of much encouragement on the part of Constance herself, the horses managed to drag the scraping, bumping vehicle along the road and up to the great elms in front of the Winship house, a quaint little pitch-roofed, moss-grown structure, a century old even then.

Pompey and the girl had nearly reached the door when they were startled by a riderless horse galloping madly by in the direction whence they had come. A great fear clutched at Constance's heart, a fear she struggled to deny, but which was intensified by Pompey's excited cry:

"Fo' de Lord, dat ar's Marse Brandon's hoss, Missy Drake. What kin er happened?"

"Mr. Brandon's? Impossible!"

"'Deed 'tis, chile; I knows dat hoss like er brother. He us'ter b'long ter Marse Hancock, but Marse Brandon's been a'ridin' him."

There was but one hope, and that was that Constance might have been mistaken, and that it was not Brandon who passed the coach an hour ago. She would put it to the test.

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"But how is it, Pompey, that his horse is way out here?" she asked.

"He done pass us galloping back in de road, Missy Drake. . . . Why, whateber's de matter?"

Constance reeled and would have gone prone upon the ground, had not the negro caught her in his strong arms and carried her to the Winships' door, which was partly open, and into a tiny hall dimly lighted by a single tallow dip on a little deal table.

The good Mistress Winship lost no time in coming to investigate the strange footsteps in her house. As she held up the candle and saw Mistress Drake leaning upon the burly figure of an elaborately decorated negro, she threw up her free hand in amazement.

"Why, 'tis Mistress Constance," she quavered, "and I do declare she's fainted!"

The girl opened her eyes slowly as the last word forced itself into her returning consciousness. She smiled almost pathetically at her old nurse.

"Fainted? I?" she said. "That would be a silly thing to do."

CHAPTER XXII

The Face on the Pillow

AFTER Mistress Drake had been provided with a cup of something that was very like genuine Bohea, and a dainty or two, which she tried to eat to please her old nurse, and had gone to the snug room allotted her, quiet spread its wings once more over the Winship household. The old couple settled down in their sitting-room, Martha knitting a pair of thick woolen stockings against next winter's cold, and Jonathan trying to read his well-thumbed copy of "Pilgrim's Progress."

But the head of the house found little of the usual fascination in the adventures of Mr. Great-heart and others of the Bunyan worthies, for every now and then he would lay down the book, go to the window, and peer out silently. Finally, he went into the kitchen, and soon the soft swishing of a rather unusual sound reached the alert ear of his wife.

"What on airth are you a-doin', Jonathan?" she asked, although she could see perfectly well.

"Jest polishing up my gun a bit."

"Mercy me! haint ye got that gun cleaned yet?"

"Yes, but 'tis a duty to *keep* it clean."

THE FACE ON THE PILLOW

At last, when there could be no more pretense that the gun needed any further ministrations, Jonathan lifted it toward its accustomed hooks on the wall, where also hung his cow-horn powder-flask, that shone almost like mother-of-pearl from the use of years.

"No, I won't nuther," lowering the weapon, and blowing carefully down its muzzle. And with that emphatic expression of his convictions and expectations, he strode into the front room and stood the gun in a corner — the corner nearest the door. Then he sat down to read, but again he felt that irresistible call to the window.

"Whatever *is* the matter?" exclaimed Martha, peering at her husband curiously. "You haint worrying 'bout 'Zekiel."

"No, not exactly, but I *am* anxious for brother's news."

"Mebbe there ain't none," suggested the wife.

Jonathan quit his restless pacing and looked Martha squarely in the face.

"I know there is —" he replied solemnly, "or will be — great news."

"To-night?"

"Yes. I feel it somehow. . . . Hush — what was that?"

"I didn't hear anything."

"There it is again. There's someone outside that door."

"Prob'ly the calf's got loose again," observed Martha, with real concern now.

"A calf don't knock at doors," was the scornful reply. "There. . . . D'ye hear?"

MY LADY LAUGHTER

“Aye,” whispered the old woman, “a knock, of a truth, and yet a most peculiar one. . . . Come in; come in.”

Jonathan reached the door with a few strides, and flung it wide open. There, leaning on the door-post, was the swaying figure of a young man, his hat gone, and his clothes in dire confusion.

“Well,” said the farmer, “what is it, friend?”

The figure tried pitifully to straighten itself, and a face ghastly pale in the uncertain light was turned toward the good man. Then a hoarse, broken voice attempted to answer.

“Can I — In God’s name, man, aid me to a horse!”

“A hoss? Well, neaow, ye might hire one at the tavern jest below.”

“Which — which way?” stammered the strange visitor.

He turned toward the darkness of the road, but staggered and fell across the doorstep.

“Is he drunk, think ye?” asked Martha.

“Drunk, no, mother,” replied Jonathan, testily, “he’s been injured, and his clothes are covered with mud. Been thrown from his hoss, I reckon. I’ll bring him in.”

Lifting the well-knit frame from the stones, old Winship carried his inert burden within and laid it gently on a bed in an inner room. Then, indeed, did Martha justify her fame as a nurse. With many an exclamation of sympathy she bustled about, bringing bandages and ointment, washed the blood from his forehead and

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dressed the ugly cut there with all of a mother's tenderness.

"It seems as if his face had a familiar look, but I can't remember," she muttered, as she went to the kitchen to brew a wonderful herb tea that was never known to fail to promote rest and sleep.

After a little the young man revived sufficiently to try to raise himself from the bed. The watchful old man held him back.

"Take off your hands," cried the patient, weakly. "Don't dare stop a messenger of the people!"

"Do be quiet, young man," expostulated Jonathan. "You are not fit —"

"I tell you, they'll be butchered in their beds if I fail them. Let me go, I say." And again he struggled until his weakness overcame him once more, and he fell back exhausted and silent. In this state he was induced to drink the potion, and after a brief period of incoherent rambling, in which he babbled of Barbara, the dog, the letter, Hancock and Adams, and the British soldiers, he sank away into a stupor.

"He evidently rode on patriotic service," said the wife, as she put out the kitchen candle and prepared for rest.

"Likely."

"Please God the work he was to do may find one to do it."

"Amen!" was the hearty response.

"Now, Jonathan, let's to bed. We've had enough turmoil for one evening."

MY LADY LAUGHTER

"Nay, Martha, I must remain up for 'Zekiel."

"Well, then, keep your clothes on, but for mercy's sake lie down on the bed. You're not so young as you were once, remember."

"Perchance not," replied the stalwart old fellow with a grim smile, "but just as strong, and just as ready for — for whatever happens. However, I'll as you say."

Then for a time peace ruled in the little abode of the Winships, now the custodian of more varied lives than it had held under its roof for many years.

"What's that?" whispered Martha, rousing catlike at the sound of an opening door and the heavy tread of feet in the hall.

"What's that?" she said again, louder.

Jonathan heard this time, and jumped, full panoplied as he was, to the floor. In another instant he was in the hall, to find his brother Ezekiel, his long hair streaming about his face, and a gun in his hands, panting as if from some tremendous exertion. Jonathan clutched the newcomer by the arms, and pushed him to the doorway where the moonlight could reveal his face.

"Well, 'Zekiel?" he demanded, almost harshly.

"The British regulars are marching, Jonathan!"

"For where?"

"Concord and the army stores, 'tis said."

"They may surprise Adams and Hancock and the committee."

THE FACE ON THE PILLOW

“Surprise?” was the exultant answer. “The surprise boot’ll be on t’other leg. Within an hour the country for miles round will be awake. Come!”

Without a word, Jonathan went and fetched his gun from its corner. Then he came to the doorway again, and the two brothers clasped hands like men swearing some great silent oath. Thus Martha found them.

“Well, what’s to do now?” she inquired, rather peevishly. “Can’t we even sleep o’ nights?”

“Not when our liberty is threatened, wife,” replied Jonathan, gravely.

“Will one of you explain — if ’tis not a riddle?”

“The British are marching!”

The good woman raised both hands heavenward. “How do you know?” she asked breathlessly.

“Everybody knows,” replied Ezekiel, with immense conviction. “They say Paul Revere brought the news to Rev. Mr. Clark’s house.”

“Where Samuel Adams and the committee lie,” explained Jonathan.

“Hark,” said Ezekiel, craning his head out of doors, “wasn’t that a church bell?”

“A church bell at this time o’ night!” protested Martha.

“I thought I heard it — listen. There it is again.”

“Nay, brother, I hear nothing,” said Jonathan. “But come, let’s be off.”

MY LADY LAUGHTER

Mistress Winship would hear none of it. She was a lover of liberty, but practical withal.

"Goin' off at this time o' night with nothin' in your gullets," she said severely. "You, at least, Jonathan Winship, shan't do it, no matter what your harum-scarum brother says. A pretty Patriot you'd be on an empty stomach."

This argument, being addressed to two men whose supper hour had long passed, was sufficiently potent, and Martha's brown-crust coffee and corpulent doughnuts went the way of all acceptable drink and food. Then the brothers lit their pipes for a smoke before going forth. They puffed away meditatively for a few moments, when Jonathan suddenly rose to his feet and held one hand, cup-like, behind his best ear.

"I knew ye'd be hearin' somethin' soon," said Ezekiel. "Is it bells?"

"No, listen."

"Ah . . . I hear it. . . It's *men!*"

"Moving men," returned Jonathan, with a thrill of ill-suppressed excitement in his voice. And then with stern command: "Put out that light."

Then darkness, save for the fitful rays of the moon flickering through the branches of the elms.

Now the sound was heavier and more monotonous — the steady tramp, tramp, tramp of trained soldiers, mingled with the clattering of the hoofs of an occasional horse. The men crept to the front windows and looked out.

In regular rows the red-coated men swept by,

THE FACE ON THE PILLOW

silent, almost stealthy, as if on some inglorious errand. No music kept tune to the clock-like mechanism of their feet, no loud commands were given, no waving banners flaunted on the night breeze.

All at once a column halted and a detachment made its way to the door of the Wetherby tavern. Whatever this move, it seemed fruitless, for in a little while the soldiers moved on again with their measured steps toward Lexington.

As soon as the last file of the British had vanished around a curve in the road, the brothers took up their flintlocks and left the house.

Martha picked up her knitting again, and tried to go on from the point at which she had ceased so abruptly not long before. But she could not work. Floating from many directions now came the nervous ringing of church bells, borne on a changing wind; the sound of horns, too, came to her ears, the shouts of men and the pounding of hoofs along the road. Lights passed to and fro in the tavern, and loud voices came from its open doors. And amid all these voices, hitherto unknown to the dawn, came the crowing of cocks, unconcerned ushers of a new day, and the barking of dogs, conscious that something was wrong with the world.

“Lord ha’ mercy on us all,” cried old Martha, fervently, “and especially on them that — Why, Connie, how you scart me!”

The girl stood in the doorway, pale and wan, a sad picture even in her beauty. She did not speak.

MY LADY LAUGHTER

"I was afeared you'd be disturbed, dearie," went on the nurse, gently.

"What is it?"

"The British soldiers have marched!"

"Ah! It *was* true, then?"

"What was true, girl?"

"Something I heard — that's all. Do they march for Concord?"

"So they say."

"A plan to teach respect for the King, mayhap."

"And to trap Samuel Adams and the others."

"*That* will fail," declared Constance proudly.

"I pray so, surely. Paul Revere came from Boston to warn them. He's a master rider, they say."

And then nothing would do but that the girl must have some of the rural refreshment with which Martha's men-folks had just been regaled. She ate and drank more from regard for the good old nurse than from hunger. Truth to tell, she was more concerned about her personal appearance than about her appetite.

"What a fright!" she exclaimed, catching sight of the really bewitching confusion of her bronze hair. "I must have a comb at once. Nay, Martha, you're busy; I'll get it myself, if you but tell me."

"Go right to my room," called out the old woman from her pots and kettles; "you'll find it atop of the chest of drawers."

Constance ran into the hall and grasped the

THE FACE ON THE PILLOW

latch of the first door she saw. Another instant—

But the solicitous Martha saw the girl from the kitchen.

“Nay, not that door, child,” she cried, “the next to it.”

While Mistress Drake was combing the fragrant tangles of her hair, Martha told of the wounded man. Oh, he was that young and handsome, and so sad-like in expression! Constance’s sympathies leaped up from her warm heart at the picture, and she was all for going to his room at once to see if something could not be done to help the patient. In fact, her impetuosity had led her again to the door-latch, and this time her fingers had lifted it.

“I wouldn’t if I were you, Miss Connie,” urged her nurse; “sleep is his best cure. By and by a sight of your pretty face will do him good, but let him rest now.”

Reluctantly the girl turned away, and soon after the two, wearied by their vigil, lay down in Mistress Winship’s room and slept.

It was in the broad daylight of a warm and exquisitely beautiful morning when they were roused by the return of Jonathan, almost bursting with excitement and eager to tell of the tremendous events of which he had heard and a part of which he had seen. The women listened intently enough, and one of them, who had never known warfare in the land, felt her very heart dilate and her pulses throb at the simple story of the old man.

MY LADY LAUGHTER

“The minute-men of Lexington,” he said, “had certain news of the approach of the red-coats at half-past four, although Revere had warned 'em at one. Drums were beat and alarm guns fired and Cap'n Parker's company was drawn up on the green nigh to the meetin'-house. There they stood when the British marched up.

“‘Stand firm, men,’ says Parker, ‘and don't fire at 'em until they fire at us. Then let 'em look out.’

“Upon that, the British officer shouts out: ‘Disperse, you pack of rebels; throw down your muskets!’

“But not a man of 'em budged, I was told.

“Then the officer gave the command to fire, but nobody fired.

“‘Fire, you damned dogs!’ says he in a rage, and then there came a volley, and some of our men went down.”

“And didn't — didn't *our men* fire back?” asked Constance, her eyes aflame.

“They jest did, Mistress Drake,” replied Jonathan, proudly, “and the bullets found their mark, too, for a lot of redcoats bit the dust right there.”

“And who — who did we lose, Jonathan?” queried Martha, sadly.

“There was another volley, 'tis said, and Jonas Parker was wounded. Then, as Parker's men gave way, some damned British brute stuck a bayonet into him and let out his heart's blood.”

THE FACE ON THE PILLOW

“Poor Jonas,” murmured Mistress Winship. “God help his old mother!”

“Others were killed, too,” resumed Jonathan, “before the redcoats give a cheer and started on towards Concord. We lost Isaac Muzzy, Robert Munroe, Jonathan Harrington, who died right on his own doorstep, right afore his wife’s eyes, and Samuel Hadley, besides others whose names I didn’t get.”

“Is it certain that the — the British fired first?” asked Constance, gravely.

“Nathan Hayes had it from Monroe direct.”

“The King’s men fired upon — upon our countrymen?”

The old man inclined his head.

“Then,” exclaimed the girl, steadily enough, spite of the indignation, the sense of outrage that had brought the color back to her cheeks, “those shots will be remembered and regretted.”

“Aye, they will,” said Jonathan. “Even now the whole country is alarmed, and men who can shoot are coming in from every part around. I’m told Sam Adams is off to Woburn to urge all speed by the minute-men there — and beyond. ‘Oh, what a glorious morning is this!’ he said to Hayes, when he heard that the British had fired first. I tell ye the bloody-backs will pay dearly for their work afore ever they get back to Boston to-night.”

“Where’s Zeke?” asked Martha, suddenly.

“I dunno, Martha; he went on Concord way after I left him in Lexington.”

MY LADY LAUGHTER

“God grant no harm comes to him,” was the old woman’s fervent prayer.

And then, practical soul that she was, she be-thought herself of the morning meal. “Where there’s fighting there must be food,” she declared sagely. “I’ll get some breakfast.”

Constance went to the back door, and looked out over the smiling fields and snowy orchards of the farms, her heart heavy at the contrast between the tender beauty of the spring and the hideous deeds that had reddened Lexington green. Even as she gazed in a sort of reverie, a hawk dropped like a plummet from his lazy circles in the air, seized upon a chick and was up again, the beating of his wings drowning the tiny shrilling of terror from the poor little downy ball. How strangely near was death this morning, she thought. Even nature, the beneficent, gave countenance to the destruction of the innocent. Then with startling vividness came that picture of the dead deserter on his coffin-lid in Boston Common, and she shuddered in the warm sunlight, and turned again into the house.

Passing the room where the wounded man lay, she saw that the door was ajar. Peering in she descried the tall form of Jonathan Winship, leaning over the bed in an attitude of kindly ministration. And the face upon the pillow was the face of John Brandon.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Battle of the Minute-Men

JOHN BRANDON was the man who lay prone and helpless in that inner room! What that meant to him and his cause, Constance tried to conjecture, but her shocked brain and unnerved body made connected thought difficult for her. Of this much she felt certain: he had been thrown from his horse, either in a fight or by some accident, but whether he had ever reached his intended destination or not, and what effect a possible failure would have upon his career, — these were the questions that ran like troops of vexatious imps through her mind.

But, after all, the man himself was there, and not dangerously hurt, so old Martha assured her. Let the others fight if it pleased them; within this little house peace had already come with its wondrous kiss.

It was now about ten o'clock, and, although Menotomy was as yet outside the circle of conflict, vague rumors of what was going forward in the direction of Concord came to the Winship house almost on the wings of the wind. Once or twice Constance thought she heard a dull booming from the northwest, as of cannonading. Horsemen galloping south flung a word or two

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as they passed, and Jonathan himself returned now and then from his little expeditions laden with reports that varied from truth to wild impossibility.

Shortly after noon, a company of minute-men from Needham, marching with all haste on the news of the British invasion, halted before the door to ask for water. They bore on their shoulders the flintlocks that had subdued the Indians, and the drum that told off their steps had beat at Louisburg. A sturdy lot they were, old and young, mostly garbed in the homespun of the farm, with here and there a blue dress of the militia.

Good Martha vowed that they should have more than water for the work before them, and, with Constance's help, cider and doughnuts were brought and set out on the big bench under the elms.

As they stood there eating and drinking hurriedly, the girl, whose ideas of military efficiency had hitherto been strongly influenced by the trappings of the regulars, could not but feel that these men were fighters even in their common apparel. They appealed to her as had the contrast between the gilded brilliancy of Gage and the sober simplicity of Samuel Adams. No men armed because of wages paid were these, but people of the soil springing up because their acres and their country were threatened with war.

As she mused, she saw, striding across the fields toward the little company, a huge, hulking

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figure whose size proclaimed unmistakably Toby Gookin. He carried a gun, and that and the new cocked hat on his head gave him a distinctly martial air, at which Constance smiled in spite of herself. As "Long Toby" had come from the direction of Lexington, he was at once surrounded by the Needham men, who begged for some accurate intelligence to clear the cobwebs rumor had been spinning in their brains.

"Well, friend," said their captain, "what news from beyond? Mayhap you have seen somewhat?"

"I hev," replied Tobias, without undue modesty, "an' I've heerd a hull lot more from them that hev. Ye knew 'baout Lexington, I 'spose?"

"Yes, that's clear enow," was the impatient reply, "but after that?"

"Wall, the redcoats, arter their bloody work on the green thar, went on to Concord, where they hoped to destroy the magazine at Colonel Barrett's."

"And did they?"

"Couldn't find it ter dee-stroy," chuckled Gookin. "But they did spile 'baout sixty bar'ls o' flour, smashed some cannon, cut down the liberty pole and sot the court-house afire. But it didn't burn, though, fer Mistress Moulton she put aout the flames a'most whiles they were lookin' at her. I tell ye, the women air jest as useful ez the men in this 'ere leetle trouble." And the big countryman cast what he imagined

MY LADY LAUGHTER

to be a roguish glance at Constance, who was drinking in his words with intense eagerness.

“Wall, hevin’ cut up didoes in Concord vil-
lage, the bloody-backs went on ter the North
bridge, which they wanted ter cross ter git ter the
ammunition on t’other side. But they didn’t
git no further than the furthest end.”

“How’s that?” asked a minute-man.

“Wall,” replied Gookin, smiling grimly, “thar
on t’other end was Major Buttrick with three
hundred o’ the militiay, an’ they kinder had ob-
jections. The British fired fust, and dropped
some of our men. Major Buttrick gin the order
ter fire, but the men were pesky slow.

““Fire, feller soldiers, fer God’s sake, fire!” he
yelled, and then they did fire, you bet, an’ the
reg’lars picked up their dead an’ buried ’em
right thar by the shore. Then they started with
the wounded back by the village.”

“Tell me, friend,” said the Needham cap-
tain, “who were killed — I suppose there must
ha’ been some killed.”

“There wuz,” answered Gookin, a flash of
wrath lighting his pale eyes; “damn the red-
coats, there wuz! Cap’n Isaac Davis, Abner
Hosmer, and Luther Blanchard, the fifer, all on
’em Acton men, won’t never fight no more. . . .
That was more’n three hours ago. The Brit-
ishers spent two hours collecting themselves
and caring for the wounded. An’ they’ve got
to fight ev’ry inch home — through woods an’
fields full o’ Patriots. . . . Friends, they’re comin’

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right by here, God knows how soon! Ye'll dew yer duty?"

With a resounding cheer, the devoted little band straggled on up the Lexington road, soon to mingle with that larger body of bush-ranging fighters who were to harass the enemy past all endurance.

Gookin lingered a moment, at Constance's invitation to refresh himself. He took a long draught of cider, but declined to eat.

"The leaders — Adams, Hancock — are they safe?" asked the girl. She had heard they were, but felt she must know the truth.

"Yes, mistress, quite safe," replied the giant. "They hed early warnin'. An' neaouw, by yer leave, I'll go on an' spread the news, an' — What's that?"

Constance listened, but it was a full minute before she heard what Gookin's quick ears had already detected. Faintly against the breeze came the squealing music of fifes and the rattle of drums. Then "Yankee Doodle" shaped itself in their perceptions.

Tobias raised himself to his full tremendous height, and gazed southward. At last, in a far turn of the road, he descried a moving, living wall of red, preceded by a figure on horseback. He had seen enough.

"Neaouw I guess I *will* be goin'," he declared, earnestly. "Jest yew git inter the haouse, an' yew'll be safe enow. They won't bother anybody *neaouw*. Good-day, mistress."

And with that, "Long Toby" loped heavily

MY LADY LAUGHTER

up and across the road and disappeared in a clump of woods. Constance withdrew to the front room as the clearer sound of the music gave her warning.

Soon the troops swept by on the double-quick in splendid order, and brilliant with their showy uniforms. They were Lord Percy's fine brigade, the very flower of the British in America, going to the relief of their fellow soldiers ahead. Constance could but admire the gallant figure on a white horse, the Earl's favorite, and wish that the handsome rider had another errand. She saw two field-pieces rumble by, and something in their bulldog look struck deeper dread to her heart than all the near two thousand muskets borne by the scarlet mass. She watched, as if fascinated, till only a cloud of dust in the northwest marked the passing of the brigade. Then she turned sadly from the window to see what she might find to do in the house.

And still John Brandon slept.

It was mid-afternoon when a strange activity along the road in the vicinity of the Winship dwelling attracted the girl's attention. Little squads of the country people seemed to spring up as if from the very earth, in the fields, behind bushes, and back of barns and sheds. Some of the more venturesome she saw hiding under the very stone walls that edged the road. Every man was armed in whatever fashion was possible to him, his powder-horn slung over his shoulder. It was the fringe of the Patriot host that stretched

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from Concord almost to Charlestown that day, lying in wait to sting and bite with the touch of death the enemy that had dared to penetrate its strongholds.

And now the prey was drawing near. From up the road came the confused sounds of the firing of small-arms; the shouts and cries of defiance and of agony; the scuffling of many feet as the red-coated veterans came on, on their rout back to Boston. Percy's brigade was trying to cover the retreat of Smith's force. With ranks torn, their dead left behind them, their less severely wounded dragged along by main strength, the troops had passed through a veritable hell of desultory but accurate fire. They would have still gone with cheers into a fight with an enemy they could see, but this horrible dropping of their comrades, like victims in the shambles of an unseen butcher, was more than flesh and blood could stand. Yet on they toiled, sweating, panting, cursing, now and again halting to fire a useless volley over the walls and bushes whence had sped some especially fearful messages of death. Come what might, they must get back to Boston before night.

What revenge was possible, that they took. Flaming barns and houses, slain cattle and horses, and dead men with no weapons in their hands, marked the progress of their retreat, which had now reached the Winships', and was already causing the women to shudder with terror even as they gazed spellbound from the windows.

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As the troops poured by, a detachment left the main body and stood at rest for a moment. Some of the men fell upon the ground like machines that had run down, their tongues hanging from their mouths in their distress. Others rushed to the tavern just ahead and surrounded it, firing into windows, doors, and woodwork indiscriminately.

Constance saw several men fleeing to safety behind the sheds and barns and across the fields; only one came in the direction of the house. With a thrill of terror, the girl recognized Jonathan Winship, and noted that he was unarmed.

Calmly the old man walked to his dooryard, then turned and faced the pursuing soldiers.

"Kill the damned rebel!" shouted the officer in command. "Fire!"

One awful volley, and Jonathan Winship fell forward, the blood spurting from gaping wounds in his breast. At the sight Martha covered her face with her hands and moaned.

The young girl rushed into the dooryard and stood before the soldiers. It was not horror that she felt now so much as fierce anger and a wild desire for retaliation. Yet duty to the dead was first.

"Carry that old man into his house," she commanded. "Your cowards' work is done; now perchance you will pay him some respect."

"Do as the girl bids," ordered the sergeant, gruffly, in answer to the inquiring looks of the men.

Two coarse troopers lifted the body with no

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gentle hand, and bore it into the stricken dwelling. There it was taken to its own chamber, and broken, tottering Martha was left alone with her dead.

All the womanly strength in Constance Drake's nature, all the hot hatred of cowardice that was her inheritance, all the passionate impulse to defend the weak against the strong, surged up from her heart at the putting to death of an unarmed old man on his own threshold, by hired soldiers of an invading foreign force. Even home had been no sanctuary against the lust of blood, for the man whose food the soldiers were now eating under the trees had been foully murdered, not in the heat of conflict, but in cold blood. If this were war, she thought, its pomp and glory and circumstance were but sham and mockery.

As she sat at a front window watching the soldiers, a door creaked behind her. Her eyes filled with tears, for she thought she would see Martha in her extremity of grief.

But there before her stood John Brandon, ghostly in his pallor, his eyes lustreless and sunken, his strange appearance heightened by the bandage about his forehead.

He gazed at her vacantly without a word of greeting. Nor did she speak his name. She could but stare at the apparition, fascinated by its weirdness.

"In God's name, what is the hour?" asked Brandon, at length, in a hollow voice that had no trace of familiar sound to the girl.

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“About half after two,” she replied, calmly.

“Constance!” he cried, with clearer tones, as something stirred in his memory. And then sinking back into his depths of lethargy he asked:

“And the day?”

“Wednesday.”

The poor fellow’s head fell upon his breast with apprehension.

“Then I may have been too late,” he muttered.

At the sound of a sharp command, “Squad, fall in!” from the road, Brandon raised his head swiftly, and what he saw from the window caused his eyes to flash fire.

“Redcoats! I *am* too late,” he exclaimed passionately. “They have been captured!”

“You mean Mr. Adams and —”

“And the others of the committee. . . . What do you know?”

“They are safe,” said Constance; “they were — warned in time.”

“Thank God for that!”

The rolling of a drum outside broke in upon the silent gratitude of both. And then came an incisive order:

“Sergeant, search that house!”

Brandon started, and looked at Constance appealingly.

“Has there been — is it war?” he asked.

She nodded gently, noting for the first time, as Brandon made a quick movement of his hand to his side, that he wore a sword. She sprang to him with an exclamation of dismay.

“If they find you here, it is death!”

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Weakly he tried to draw his weapon, but she placed a firm hand on his wrist.

"For my sake," she begged tenderly. He looked into her eyes for a moment, and then staggered to his room.

Barely had Constance closed the door, when the troops came swaggering into the long hall.

"Your pardon, miss," growled the sergeant, with a poor attempt at civility, "but we must search this house. . . . You two upstairs, and you two into these rooms here."

"Not in there," said the girl, solemnly, pointing to the door of Martha's room.

"And why not, pray?" sneered the officer.

"There is no one there but a woman and her dead," she replied.

The sergeant made an impatient gesture of command, and a soldier opened the door and looked in. He turned back at once with a nod.

"'Tis as she says, sergeant, the man shot outside the house."

"Very well. *That* door."

"Nay, I pray you, not this room," exclaimed Mistress Drake, standing on the threshold and spreading her arms across the panels with a superb movement of protection. "You will not do this, I am sure. 'Tis—'tis my room, sir."

"And what of that, miss?" was the cold and suspicious reply.

"Surely you must know. Perhaps you have a sister. . . . Ah, I see you have. How would you fancy her boudoir to be ransacked by—even by gallant soldiers?"

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“Sergeant,” said one of the men in an undertone, “the girl is daughter or niece to a King’s councillor in Boston.”

“’Twere the same were she the Queen’s first maid of honor. . . . Search that room!”

A burly soldier seized Constance’s hand and would have torn it from the latch had not a new voice suddenly broken in upon the confusion, with a clear tone of authority that set the blood leaping through the girl’s veins.

“Stand back, men!” it commanded. There was scarce need of sight to tell the fair guardian of the portal that again had Lieutenant Charlton come as by some higher design to be her friend and helper.

“I’ll vouch for this lady — Mistress Drake — sergeant,” said the lieutenant.

“Very well, sir,” was the reply, accompanied by a salute.

“Join your company with your men.” Again the sergeant brought his hand to his cheek, and the soldiers clattered out of the house.

“Well, Mistress Drake,” said Charlton, turning to the girl, with a bright smile, “what have you concealed there — the latest bonnet?”

“This is a sorry day for jesting, sir,” she replied sadly.

“You speak truly indeed. Yet but now —”

The sergeant’s sudden return checked the words in the lieutenant’s mouth.

“Beg pardon, lieutenant,” he began excitedly, “but there *is* someone in that room. One of my men saw him pass the window.”

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“Indeed! We’ll have him out. Allow me, Mistress Drake.”

As Charlton strode toward the fatal door, and stood as if waiting for her to step aside, Constance felt as if an iron hand had stricken her motionless. Yet her brain was strangely clear and alert, and urged her tongue to the work her frail woman’s hands could not do against these numbers.

A low whisper, that, to her fevered fancy, seemed to be from afar off, came from her almost motionless lips.

“It is — the — man — I — love.”

The glance of Charlton’s eyes, a look that neither then nor thereafter was she able to fathom, proved that he heard. But he made no sign, and, gently moving her from before the door, he entered the room. He came out with an air of slightly bored amusement.

“Your man must be so tired he dreams awake,” he said to the sergeant. “There’s no one in the room.”

“Very well, sir.” And out went the crest-fallen subaltern again.

“It was the only way,” whispered Charlton. “Those men are not under my command.”

“I — I am very grateful,” stammered Constance.

“There will soon be no danger,” continued the lieutenant. “Hark! They are going. And I must follow. ’Tis a dangerous country to-day, egad, for a coat of my color. Good-by, Mis-

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tress Drake. May we meet again under happier auspices."

Constance extended her hand, which he raised to his lips, with a mingling of gallantry and devotion. Then he strode down the hall toward the entrance door.

Constance was on the point of following him with a final word of gratitude, when the figure of John Brandon brushed past her. His drawn sword was in his hand.

At the girl's cry of warning, Charlton turned swiftly and drew his blade, standing on the defensive before the mad attack. Then, with a quick and certain move, he sent Brandon's sword spinning against the ceiling. As it came clanging to the floor, the infuriated young man seized it and again dashed forward to press the Englishman.

Constance threw herself recklessly between the two sword-points with a cry of horrified appeal.

"Oh, John, John, what would you do?" she begged, "he is our — *your* friend."

Slowly the meaning of her words lightened the darkened mind of her Patriot lover. He lowered his sword inch by inch, while the first touch of red flowed in upon his pale cheek. Charlton sheathed his weapon and turned to go.

"Good-day again, Mistress Drake," he said coldly, with a most punctilious bow, "I have already sufficiently forgot my duty for your sake."

Brandon stared after the retreating officer

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without a word, and as silently watched him join the other redcoats in the road, and saw the whole body of troops get into motion. Then he turned to Constance with a curious light on his face.

"That man loves you," he said, with quiet conviction.

The girl laughed a weak and ineffective laugh. "Does he, indeed?" she retorted. "You must be in his closest confidence, then, for he has never told even me."

The sound of firing down the road heralded a renewal of the maddening attack from ambush by the sharpshooting farmers.

John Brandon lifted his head at the little, snarling reports of the musketry, listened for a moment, then rushed toward the door.

"John, John!" cried Constance, trying in vain to stop him. He brushed her aside, roughly.

"It is for — for liberty," he shouted, "and I am a laggard!" So he was gone.

The girl sank slowly to her knees and lifted her hands in prayer.

CHAPTER XXIV

Giles Romney Sees the Light

L EFT alone in the Winship house with its silent dead and as silent guardian, Constance felt herself overborne by the accumulated horrors of the night and day. Now that John Brandon had flung himself from her presence in his fit of jealous rage, she seemed alone in all the world of dread which surrounded her. Yet was it jealousy that had caused those incoherent cries, that mad rush to arms? Was it not rather the struggling of a fixed idea to free itself from the stricken brain of a wounded man; the feverish desire to complete a service which he had undertaken in his right mind?

It was horrible to think of what might happen to him in his rash pursuit of an army. She turned to the door as if to follow and rescue him from himself, but he was no longer in sight, and the helplessness of her position was made manifest. Wearied and weak and sick at heart, she dragged herself back to her room and dropped into a low rocking-chair, trying to soothe her troubled brain by the gentle motion. But no peace came to her, save only, perhaps, the tenderness of yearning — new and sweet — for

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the man whose blood-stained head she would now gladly have caressed.

After a little, drowsiness stole over the girl, as she sat in her chair, and she might have slept on until the night, had not the boisterous return of Ezekiel Winship brought her back into her world of trouble and foreboding. Quickly she went out to meet him; she recoiled with something almost like fright at his appearance.

His hair was matted around his head, his face grimy with dirt and powder-stains, his shirt nearly in tatters, and his shoes white with dust. But withal, his countenance was beaming with delight, and he waved his gun, the stock of which had been shattered by a bullet, with the hilarity of a child possessed of a new toy.

“Sister Marthy,” he roared, “come here and give your brother Zeke a buss so’s yer can tell your grandchildren you kissed a minute-man on Concord day — the day the redcoats ran and liberty was born. Hurrah for the Provincial Congress and Joseph Warren! Hur —”

Slowly the door of his brother’s room opened, and he saw the face of his brother’s wife, pale, tragic, awful in its set look of despair. Even then he did not comprehend.

“What’s the matter, Marthy?” he asked, kindly. “You look as if you’d seen a ghost. Cheer, Marthy, cheer! Say, where’s Jonathan?”

No answering word came from the rigid woman; scarcely an enlightening motion. With her eyes, rather, she told the way to the room she had just left. A stony expression of horror

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settled upon the man's face as he looked and saw Something on the bed. Then both went in hand in hand, and Constance's final sight of them was as they knelt together beside the body of him they had loved.

In after years, when Constance used sometimes to tell of her part in the day of the battle of the minute-men, she could never quite remember how she left the house of the Winships, save that she knew that she ought no longer to intrude her own little griefs upon their overwhelming sorrow.

Somehow or other, she found herself, with her few small belongings, walking aimlessly past the stable yard of the tavern, when an uncertain sound called her back to the affairs of every-day life.

"Missy Constance," she seemed to hear in a very smothered and very abject voice that spoke of Ethiopian fright.

Again the call, and now it was plainly proceeding from the barn, where Pompey, from his snug retreat in the middle of a hay-mow, had spied his temporary mistress from a chink in the boarding. It was not without much urging and a positive assurance that the soldiers of each side had gone, that the fellow was induced to forsake his sanctuary and come forth into the light of day.

"Why, Pompey," said Constance, severely, though inclined to smile at his ridiculous ap-

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pearance, "hiding in the face of danger? I am surprised. I thought you a man of courage."

"So I is, missy, so I is, fer suah. I'se a reg'lar Tantalus fer bravery when de proper 'casion 'rises. But dis day I thinks ter myself, when I hears de guns a-firin', 'Pomp, yo' jest got ter sabe yo'self fer Missy Drake, so's ter git her back ter town all right. Yo' git inter dat ar hay-mow and stay dar till yo' sees her a-comin'.' So here I is."

"Very well, Pompey," was the indulgent reply, "since you are here for me, just get some sort of a conveyance as soon as you can, and hitch our horses into it. We must at once for my aunt and the servants."

It was growing toward dusk when the terrified Tabitha and the three domestics were loaded upon the ample farm wagon that the negro had, truth to tell, borrowed without the formality of asking permission, from the tavern sheds. Constance rapidly made known to her aunt the momentous events of the day, and told her, with reassuring words, of the illness of the Councillor. Then they drove on in silence, for Tabitha was never loquacious and the girl was too full of her own thoughts to speak.

Pompey, chastened by the alarming events of the day, drove as if his life were to be forfeit to any carelessness, and the wagon was firm and trustworthy. Once, they were challenged by some Patriot pickets just across the Charles, but were not detained, and the British outposts at the fortifications on the Neck held them a

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moment until Constance's pass, produced again from its pretty hiding-place, set them free.

But poor Pompey was destined to undergo the tortures of one more fright ere Boston was gained. Just before the British lines had been reached, a huge form sprang from the bushes and seized one of the plodding horses by its bridle.

"Go way from dose hosses, chile," cried the darky, his teeth chattering audibly.

"I mean no harm," was the gruff reply, "I seek but a word with Mistress Drake."

As the man left the horses and came nearer, Constance saw that he was the towering Toby Gookin.

"Well, sir!" she demanded, in no very amiable frame of mind.

"For your own ear, if you will please," said the tall countryman.

Then he spoke in an undertone: "He is safe. Master Brandon, I mean."

"And sent you to tell me so?" she asked, with rising indignation.

"Wall, not exactly, m'am," replied Toby, calmly. "Fact is, he do'n't say much — least-ways that's worth listenin' to."

"He is — ill?"

"The brain — a fever, they say."

"Oh!"

"But he is safe — well cared for, and will soon be well and strong again."

"I thank you, sir," said the girl simply. "I should have remembered his condition of this

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afternoon. If you are to have conference with him, say that I —” But the big man had already disappeared, and the message was unfinished.

Home again in the Winter Street mansion — and how fine and comfortable and wholly delightful it was, Constance now realized for the first time — they found Councillor Romney in better health, but wofully alarmed about their safety. The wildest of rumors had flown about the town all day long, the most disconcerting of which, to the warm-hearted old man, was that women and children had been massacred in cold blood — by which side it was not quite clear. For the possible destruction of his Menotomy property he cared nothing; he but longed to see his dear ones with him again. So when they walked into the house safe and sound, he quite broke down and shed tears of thanksgiving, which he presently tried to cough away, remarking that he had a trifling rheum that made his old eyes water.

Mistress Drake no longer attempted to deny that she was sleepy and tired and broken down. Indeed, she almost collapsed under the reaction, luxurious though it were, and going early to bed she slept dreamlessly until nearly noon next day, waking to find pretty Barbara watching her.

“I thought you’d never wake, Connie,” cried the girl, “yet I might have known how wearied you must have been, though truth to tell I know nothing of what happened to you. Now let me

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bring your breakfast, and then you shall give me word of everything that happened."

But, as she ate, Constance decided not to be fully frank with the little girl, especially in the matter of her brother John. It would be more kind to keep from her news that would only cause needless alarm; besides, she felt a curious reluctance to mention the young Patriot in the light of yesterday's revelation. Barbara, however, was so full of the larger events of the day, that no actual evasion was necessary.

"Oh, isn't it terrible, Constance?" exclaimed she. "Dr. Gair stopped for a few moments last night, and he says over seventy soldiers were killed, and more than twice as many wounded, with half a hundred prisoners. Think of it, Constance! Ensign Cuyler says —"

Constance smiled gently. "Then he was not —?"

"Oh, no," was the glad response, "he was with Percy to cover the retreat, Dr. Gair calls it, but Thomas — I mean Ensign Cuyler — says it was a flight."

"I should think that was about it," returned Mistress Drake, drily. "At least that part that came past my eyes greatly resembled a rout."

"Oh, Constance, then you saw it all? What was it like?"

"Like? Like something, please God, I hope never to look upon again. . . . There, there, let us change the subject, dear. I — I really believe that I must have nerves, after all."

Toward evening, Barbara went home, "in

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case John might possibly come," she told Constance, rather pathetically. Old Romney, by Dr. Gair's consent, was carried to the sitting-room couch, where he silently watched Constance's every move as she flitted about in the candle-light.

"If he ever recovers the use of his limb," the little surgeon had told Constance, "it will not be for many months. He must stay where he is — egad, even if the rebels smoke us out."

"Is there fear of that?" she asked quickly.

"Maybe. I find 'tis no mob the King has to deal with, but troops, girl, a bit ragged and unseasoned, but troops just the same."

When the kindly doctor had gone with a parting drollery for the Councillor, the girl and her uncle were alone for a time. The old man's thirst for news had not been sufficiently slaked, and Constance at last gave him his fill. When she had finished her nervous, throbbing, vital story, he closed his eyes.

"You say the regulars fired first?" he asked, at length, with great deliberation.

"Yes, uncle."

"You are sure?"

"I couldn't disbelieve men who were fighting for their homes."

"Constance, my girl," said her uncle, more impressively than she had ever heard him speak, "I'm an old man, and I have honored my King, and I've served him. But if his ministers and his troops forced this blood upon the people, I

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am afraid my hopes must rest with the country they have forced to revolution."

"Why, uncle!" was her startled comment. This was, by Tory standards, treason talk, and she rejoiced in her astonishment.

"There are knives that cut allegiance like pack-thread, Constance," he went on. "If what you say be true I fear the day will come — when I can no longer say — 'God — save — the King.'"

The old man's voice trembled as he concluded what was for him a long and eloquent speech. Constance threw herself on the floor beside his couch and stroked his forehead gently without a word. After a little, a fitful sleep came to him in which he muttered incoherent things about the army. There the girl sat, until Pompey and a house servant came to carry the master to bed.

On their way through the hall, supported by his men, the Councillor put out his hand feebly for his niece. She took it firmly in her warm, plump one and put up her red lips for a kiss.

As the old man stooped and smacked her with something of his customary heartiness, he whispered:

"They — they fought the regulars well, then?"

She nodded emphatically.

"And the troops fired first?"

Again the affirmation of the curly head.

"Then 'tis the opening chapter of the history of a nation!"

CHAPTER XXV

“*A Spy Indeed*”

FOR many days after her return to Boston, Constance was busily occupied — more, indeed, with the things that pertained to home than with the tumultuous progress of affairs in the town, where martial law had superseded all other authority, and where the tramping of armed men, the blare of the trumpet, and the booming of artillery had come to be every-day sounds. Giles Romney was worse in a curious sort of way, and the girl was tied closely to the old man, both because he wanted her above all others, and because she was fond and grateful.

“’Tis strange enow,” piped Dr. Gair one day, “this continued illness of your uncle. His injury and fever have yielded, but there is a curious depression for which I cannot account.”

“*You* could have explained it, I think,” said Constance, to the fair picture within the mahogany oval of her mirror at candle-light. “Poor uncle! His life-long pride in his King is struggling with his pity for his oppressed and stricken countrymen. Lackaday! How will it all end?”

How, indeed? Many another woman’s heart, Patriot and Loyalist, was asking over and over again the same sad question, as it saw and knew

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the monster of civil war rearing its head in the beautiful land. And though the British pride still scorned the word, there was no doubt that Tory Boston was in a state of siege. Although intercourse with the outlying country had been promptly cut off by Gage, thus entailing many hardships upon the citizens who remained, news had drifted in regularly, and there was no doubt that the colonies had sprung to arms, and that the first seat of the American army was Cambridge, whose spires could be seen just across the river.

And now a new weight was added to Constance's household burden. Her Aunt Tabitha fell nervously ill, and then the entire care of the household bore upon her young shoulders. It seemed to her that years had suddenly been put upon her age, and she found that the light heart of youth had grown almost heavy.

One day, Dr. Gair, who had proved himself a cheery friend as well as a faithful physician, said to her: "Connie, my dear, where is the color that used to flame here?" and he gently pinched her cheek. "And where are the smiles?"

The girl's lips trembled with the sweet wraith of the mirth that had once been their chief habit. But it was a smile, and the little surgeon applauded.

"Bravely done, my girl," he cried, "bravely done, as is all else you attempt. But it won't do at all, it won't do. . . . Do you know, I wonder, what my Lord Rawdon, Earl Percy, and others of the pride of our officers call you?"

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She opened her mouth to reply, but Dr. Gair did not wait.

“No, of course you don’t,” he rattled on. “Well, ’tis ‘My Lady Laughter.’”

“Why, I —” she murmured, gazing at him inquiringly.

“Ah, the roses peep out a bit at that, do they? Yes, thanks to Charlton and his toast, that’s what they —”

“So ’twas me he meant that night?” she said softly. Then she raised her eyes to the doctor again. “And did they — the officers — know?”

“Know? Of course. You were ‘My Lady Laughter’ to ’em when Percy first moved into Sir Francis Bernard’s house. But ’twill be so no more if you do not take better care of yourself.”

Indignation flashed into the girl’s heart, and she was at the point of protesting against the free and easy christening by the soldiers, but something told her to forbear. As the garrulous old fellow chattered on she remembered that, though her friend, he was an enemy to her country — her own country now, sealed to her by the shedding of blood.

But she took the doctor’s homily about exercise and recreation in good part, and really went abroad more, though there was little that was pleasing now in the sight of military activity. Occasionally she walked far afield, even out to the Neck, the natural outlet of the departing Patriot families, where their difficulties with the British guards sometimes took a humorous turn.

Just after Lexington, Gage had decreed, with

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his usual love for issuing manifestos, that such of the inhabitants as wished might leave the town, provided they deposited at Faneuil Hall all their firearms and weapons. So great was the anxiety of the citizens to quit beleaguered Boston, that in a single day thousands of guns and swords were stacked up within the building of Tory name but Patriot fame. But the Loyalists were thoroughly alarmed at this wholesale exodus of those who were to some extent their hostages of safety, and so importuned the commander that he modified his order, making it difficult for anyone to reach the country.

On one of her expeditions to the Neck, Constance had reached the limit of her walk, when she saw coming toward her a lady accompanied by a man servant.

"Why, 'tis Mistress Knox," she said to herself, "and fleeing the town. She'll never get by the soldiers should they know 'tis the wife of the Patriot general. I — I must help her."

As the lady and her domestic reached the point where the flanking earthworks had been thrown up, sentinels barred her way. Constance joined the group.

"Why, Mistress Auchmuty," she called very loudly. "Who would 'a' thought to see you here. And to think" — she sighed deeply — "that we Tory women must also be halted in our little rambles. Lackaday, it scarcely profits to be a Loyalist in these times."

Mistress Knox's stare of amazement endured for but a moment. Then her keen intelligence

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penetrated the pretense, and she answered in kind. Meantime, the inspecting officer was looking her over with great deliberation.

"What ails your cloak?" whispered the girl, rapidly. "Methinks it — it sticks out amazingly far on this side."

"Hush," was the reply; "'tis my husband's sword quilted into the lining."

For a moment Constance feared that her good offices were to be wholly thrown away. Then she knew that the officer must be taken prisoner, so that his eye might not detect that bulging of the cloak.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, with a tone of sudden pain. Perhaps there was a genuine smart, for she had pinched the tender ball of her thumb relentlessly, and a little swelling at once rose. And the look of child-like appeal in woman's guise that she threw the officer would have melted a far harder hearted man than he.

"Why, mistress," he said, drawing near the pretty sufferer — who also drew near him — "what is't ails thee?"

"A bee — or else a hornet — or perchance a wasp," she cried, piteously. "They sting wondrously, our Yankee wasps. See." And she laid her dainty hand full in his muscular one, showing the red and swollen wound.

"But I am keeping you from your duty," she exclaimed. "That lady —"

"The lady can go on," said the officer, making a gesture to one of the soldiers, whereupon Mis-

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tress Knox, sword and all, went her way without losing time.

When the girl deemed that her hand had done its duty, she withdrew it gently, and, with a pretty word or two of thanks for his solicitude, left the soldier in the road wondering at the ways of American maidens.

That afternoon, during a trip to her uncle's warehouse, Constance chanced to see the arrival of the *Cerberus* in the harbor, with reinforcements of troops and of generals — for no less than three eminent and lavishly bedecked officers stepped from the long boat at Mr. Hancock's wharf and were received with martial music and loud huzzas: Howe, Clinton and Burgoyne. They were good to look upon, surely, and the girl had heard of their prowess, yet she was by no means as awed as she had expected. She had seen scarlet and gold flying from russet brown, and the picture was yet vivid in her mind.

She had hurried from the scene to Province House to see Mrs. Gage, with a message from her aunt primarily, but also because she believed it would be well to keep in touch with the Governor's household, and finally because she liked the kind and gentle lady. But her visit was ill-timed, for no sooner had she arrived than the three generals, escorted hither by an imposing guard, also reached Province House, to make their official call on Gage. Constance made a rather hurried adieu, and slipped out to the hall in the midst of the ceremony.

“What, sir,” she heard one of the new ar-

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rivals, a pursy, red-faced, shrewd-eyed man, say to the Governor, "ten thousand peasants keep five thousand King's troops shut up? Now we're in, we'll soon find elbow-room." It was Burgoyne, the optimist, as always underrating opposition until proper realization was too late. Constance smiled as she heard it.

Suddenly she found the voices over her head as she stood at the doorsteps. Gage, Percy, and Burgoyne had passed from the large window and now stood on the roof of the portico. The Governor was armed with an immense spy-glass which he used as a pointer for the benefit of Burgoyne, who was viewing American shores for the first time. Especially did he call the newcomer's attention to Dorchester Heights, over to their right.

"Those heights, and those of Charlestown," said Percy, with a tone of immense conviction, "are the keynotes of the situation."

"What is your opinion?" asked Gage, turning to Burgoyne.

"Why do you say so, my Lord?" queried Burgoyne.

"Because," replied the Earl, "with the heights in our possession, the rebels would be unable to make a demonstration against the town."

"Lord Percy is right, General," said Burgoyne, earnestly, sweeping the arc of the horizon with the telescope.

"Then," declared the Governor, "the heights of Dorchester must be fortified, and speedily."

Other news, and not all so pleasant for the

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British, Constance heard in her tours through the town and from Pompey and Dr. Gair. She learned how the Patriots had gone to drive some stock from Hog and Noddles Island; how the British had sent a sloop and soldiers to prevent it; how the Americans under Putnam, and with Dr. Warren as a volunteer, had attacked and disabled the sloop in a two-days' battle, killing fifteen of the enemy and losing none themselves, and how a few days later they had swooped down upon Petticks and Deer islands, carrying off over a thousand sheep. Indeed, it needed not the wildly excited anecdotes of Pompey nor the curtly sarcastic recitals of the surgeon to purvey the news; the whole town rang with the dash and audacity of the Patriots, and the regulars, shut in and inactive, chafed at the ignominy.

One day, in the midst of all this uproar, Barbara Brandon came hastening to the Romney mansion with a new manifestation of that nervousness that had transformed her from the placid Puritan maid to the more appropriate product of the times. She was not communicative at first, and fidgeted with the knitting she had brought, until Constance's half-banter at last struck fire.

"You may as well tell, you know, Bab," said the girl, "for you will before you go. Out with it, child."

"I — I have heard from John, Connie," she blurted.

"So ho! That's what's made your soul al-

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most bubble out of your body? He is quite well again?"

Little Barbara looked at her friend with quick keenness. What was there in the tone that made the question seem momentous?

"Aye," she replied, proudly, "and he has a commission in the American army."

Constance's eyes flashed, whether with answering pride or some lingering bit of old-time Toryism she herself could scarcely have told.

"A commission? Who, pray, can give it?" she asked.

"The Continental Congress," said Barbara, with much dignity.

"Oho, I see. Well, who brought you news?"

"That I may not tell you."

"Secrets? From me? You?"

"I have none, dear, but this is another's."

"Of course, I know your brother would not trust me," was the rather bitter comment.

"'Tis not his fault exactly," returned the little girl so seriously that Constance dropped the subject.

"She will confide in me sooner or later," was her wise conclusion, and it was amply justified, for on the day that Gage issued his proclamation offering pardon to all "rebels" who should lay down their arms, excepting those arch-traitors, Hancock and Adams, Barbara came to see her friend in a more highly excited state than ever.

"You have seen the proclamation, Constance?" she asked impetuously.

"Yes," was the drily deliberate reply.

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“And its threats of punishment to Adams and Hancock!”

“Gage had better catch them first,” said Constance.

Little Bab sighed dolefully, and was so plainly cast into the depths of mental trouble, that Mistress Drake broke a resolution she had made, and asked her pointblank what was the matter. Then the girl broke down.

“Oh, Constance, I don’t know what to do,” she wailed; “they expect so much and I can do so little. You’ll not betray me, will you, if I tell you the truth?”

“No, Barbara,” was the earnest reply, “and maybe I can help you. What is it, dear? Tell me.”

Then Barbara threw down the gates of her reserve with evident gladness and related how Tobias Gookin had been in hiding at her father’s house ever since he had swum from Charlestown to Boston under cover of the excitement down the harbor, and how he would not leave until certain conditions had been carried out.

“What did he come for?” asked Constance, vastly interested.

“With a message to me.”

“From your brother?”

“Yes. Oh, dear! oh, dear! and that’s my trouble!”

“What is? Do explain, child.”

Then Barbara said that Gookin had delivered this message orally, for fear of the danger in writing: “Your woman’s wit, already proved,

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should be alert to warn us of the British plans. Gookin is faithful, and will bring your message.”

“Those were the very words, Connie; I know them better than my A, B, C’s. How can I do aught?”

“Have you tried Ensign Cuyler?”

“He knows nothing,” replied the girl, sadly.

“I scarcely think he’d fancy such an estimate.”

But Barbara’s mind was too intense upon other things to notice the bit of wicked levity.

“‘Long Toby’ says,” she continued —

“Who? Oh, yes, I know — Tobias Gookin. Well?”

“He says the Patriots fear the British fortifying of some hill —”

“A hill?” interrupted Constance.

Barbara nodded.

Mistress Drake bethought herself of the little scene on the portico of Province House, and the advice of Percy to General Burgoyne. As she glanced from one of the west windows she saw that a group of officers who had been dining with the Earl next door were on the point of leaving the house. The next move was very clear.

“Barbara,” said the girl, peremptorily, “do you go to my room and rest. I — well, I’ll try and do something — since your brother makes a spy of you.”

Then, with her most coquettish hat and a fetching smile, she sallied into the garden, where again her roses were in the full blush of beauty and fragrance. And walking among them she

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sang a light ditty or two, very cheerful and pleasant to hear.

So thought my Lord Percy as he sauntered forth from his house and approached the flower-laden fence that separated the two estates. And it was but natural that the two should talk pleasantly about the forwardness of the early summer, and other things that somehow led at last to the state of the town.

"This siege, as they call it," observed Constance, with a pretty frown, "is not amusing. I had thought it would have been raised e'er this."

"Others were of your mind," returned Percy, with a smile.

"If I were a man and a general —"

"Well, if you were — which Heaven forbid — what would you do, Mistress Drake?"

"I'd march some troops to yonder heights, and lodge them there secure. Then the — the rebels would have to fall back or cannon are no use."

"Even the women — or, at least, the clever women — see it," thought Percy, with a look of admiration at the beautiful flushed face and shining eyes. "Well," he said, "for the credit of the service, Mistress Drake, I may say your tactics are not unknown at headquarters."

"General Gage has — has considered such a plan?"

"Long ago. 'Tis the very rudiment of warfare, mistress."

"Well, then," asked the girl, earnestly, "why

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is it neglected and we poor creatures cooped up here like — like caged magpies.”

“Larks or nightingales, mistress, not magpies,” observed the Earl, with a courtly bow.

“As well magpies as larks, if caged,” she persisted, pouting.

“Reassure yourself,” replied Percy, heartily, “your plan of campaign is — well, not neglected. When you rise a week from to-day, look toward Dorchester Heights.”

With the excuse of household duties, Constance left her roses and her gallant informant, and sought out Barbara.

“Hurry home, Bab,” she said, “and tell your brother’s messenger, Gage will take Dorchester Heights on Sunday at the latest.”

The little girl’s eyes grew round with wonder.

“Why — how —” she began.

“No matter. Since your brother makes a spy of you, I, your friend, must help you out.”

“A spy? Why not?” she mused, after her friend’s hurried and joyous departure. “They are as necessary as soldiers. Besides, a woman cannot fight.”

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Saturday’s dawn was ushered in by the heavy booming of cannonading from the harbor. Constance, and Barbara, who had slept with her, awoke at the first solemn warning. The former jumped from the bed and ran to her window. The only living creature visible was Pompey in the garden below.

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"See what it is, Pompey," she commanded.

The dark Mercury lost no time, for in ten minutes more he was in the garden again calling up to the window: "Missy Constance, here's yer Fido's Acaters back ag'in."

"Yes, yes," Constance returned impatiently. "What is the cause of the firing?"

"Dose contraption rebels, missy, have done gone and built up a big fort on Bunker Hill, an' de cap'n ob de *Lively* he's a-tryin' —"

But his further words were wasted on the rose-scented air, for "missy" had leaped into her soft bed again and was hugging the astonished Barbara with all her might.

"Why, Constance," exclaimed the little girl, "I do believe you're *glad!*"

"Is it possible that you observe that? You must be a spy indeed!"

CHAPTER XXVI

The Battle of Bunker Hill

THE cannonading on the morning of this seventeenth of June was so heavy that the people of Boston, accustomed as they had grown to these major sounds of war, were roused from sleep and frightened not a little. It soon became known that the American troops had seized Breed's Hill in Charlestown, and it was by no means certain that they would not use whatever artillery they possessed against the Tory town.

Presently, however, the firing ceased for a time, only to break out again with greater ferocity from the six-gun battery on Copp's Hill, and from the warships in the harbor. Besides the *Somerset*, the *Cerberus*, the *Glasgow*, the *Lively*, the *Falcon*, and the *Symmetry*, there were several floating batteries, making in all a formidable armada. During the forenoon a flood tide enabled these batteries to be brought into favorable positions for attacking the Americans, toiling with frenzied haste on their hill entrenchments.

Meanwhile, the town rang with the fury of the preparation for battle. The rattling of artillery carriages, the galloping of horses, the

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shouts of officers, and the yelling of fifes made a fit accompaniment to the somber, hollow profundo of that terrible song on the water. But as yet no answering fire came from Breed's.

Constance Drake's household duties kept her indoors till noon. But she had been chafing like a panther under the confinement while the whole world was in a ferment outside, and as soon as her work was done, she announced her intention of going forth with Pompey and Barbara to the Beacon Hill, whither a great stream of men and women had been hurrying past the house.

"Lawk-a-mercy, child," cried Aunt Tabitha, in utter dismay, "stay within, I beg. Who knows but a shot might kill you where you stand? Say she shall not go, Giles."

"Nay, Tabitha," he replied, "if shots are to be flying, may we not get one here in the house? Would I myself could go, but since 'tis impossible, Connie shall be my eyes and ears against her return."

So the two girls, with their sable protector, hurried across the Common. On their way Constance was glad enough to fall in with Dan MacAlpine, whose blood had been fired by the stirring events of the morning, and in whose eyes the lust of warfare shone with a new brilliancy.

From the point of vantage that the old fencing-master picked for them, the little party could see the complete and splendid panorama of blue waters, green hills, sandy shores, and clustering housetops. On every roof, it seemed,

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were groups of human beings perched high to witness the awful game of blood that was inevitable. Fort Hill, too, was black with people. Down upon all shone a hot sun that sparkled upon the wavelets in the harbor like cut crystal.

Over on the Charlestown peninsula, green and smiling save for the houses that clustered along the southern shore under its hills, could be seen an activity like that of ants. On Breed's the brown clots of flying earth were spouting up with ceaseless energy, marking the spot where the Patriots were digging their earthworks.

MacAlpine pulled out the sections of his large telescope and pointed the instrument toward the top of the hill, where an occasional solid shot from a British gun was tearing up the slopes viciously.

"Be the powers, the Yankees are working like bavers, Misthress Constance," he exclaimed. "If the rid divils don't shtir their shtumps, there'll be an intrinchmint there that can't be carried, and that's all about it."

"The — the English will attack, you think?" asked Constance, excitedly. This grim and methodical work, this suspense of the noonday, this spectacular waiting of a people to see brothers in race slaughter one another, was hard to endure.

"Will they attack, say ye?" returned the fencer, emphatically. "They will thot, for they're all brave min together. An' whin they do —"

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“But where *are* they — the British, I mean?” persisted the girl.

“Down be the wharves whither Oi saw ’em marchin’ before Oi met ye. There was tin ould companies of Grenadiers, and the Fifth an’ Thirty-Eighth as well as the Fifty-Second an’ Forty-Third — a fine lot o’ souldiers. They sh’u’d be imbarkin’ be this. . . . Ah, look ye there!”

Constance followed the direction of the old soldier’s finger, and saw what made her pulses stir with emotion. For crawling lazily out over the shimmering water, as if from under the very roofs of the North End, poked the noses of several barges — three, four, then a dozen, looking like great red insects with their solid masses of scarlet. From some of those in the lead came the flash of brass field-pieces as they swerved in the rays of the sun, and along the sides of all the glitter of oars when they left the water with each completed stroke.

From the warships, two of which had just before silently pushed their way up the river between Boston and Charlestown, now burst a furious cannonading to protect the crossing and landing of the troops. Constance watched with fascinated eyes the flashes that leaped from the wooden walls, then the smoke that rose like a pall, almost blurring the sun. It was so amazing to her to hear the reports after — it seemed long after — the flame had told of the departure of each messenger of death. But on went the boats filled with soldiers, and there was no answering fire from the hills. Nothing was to be

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seen there but the unceasing toil with shovel and pick.

One by one the barges drew up on the shores of Moulton's Point, and one by one they cast forth their red-coated cargo, pushed back into the water and turned toward Boston for more troops. Gradually their thin red lines took shape along the point, their front toward Breed's Hill, and then there was a long halt.

"Why don't they go on?" asked simple Barbara, who was viewing all this pageantry with the childish delight of one who had never seen bloodshed.

"Arrah, lass, why don't they?" echoed MacAlpine. "Oi'll tell ye why. They're afeared to go there without more min. Ye'll see."

And before long they found that their mentor was right. Howe, by some wonderful prescience, felt that behind those rapidly mounting earthworks above him was a force to be reckoned with only by an awful outpouring of blood, and he had sent to Gage for reinforcements. But it was nearly an hour before they began to cross the stream.

"An' shpakin' of reinforcemints," resumed MacAlpine, "Oi wonder why the divil some don't come from the big ar-r-my at Cambridge for those byes on the hill. An' yet perhaps they expicted the redcoats — an' Oi'm no longer one of them, thank God — to land at Charlestown Neck, whin they w'u'd be betwane two fires, one from the raydoubt, an' one from the min from

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Cambridge. That must be it, bedad, and yit — Oi wish something w'u'd turn up."

But if there was inactivity with the troops, there was none with the artillery. Crashing with a hundred thunders, the bombardment against the Patriots went on from ships, flotillas, and land batteries. But only once was there a retaliation from those desperate workers across the water. Stung by an especially fierce fire, the American battery near the redoubt opened on Copp's Hill, and their aim was good in so far as the eminence itself was concerned. Seven or eight shots found a mark, one tearing through an old house, another wrecking a fence, and the rest ploughing viciously into the side of the hill. But the battery was unscathed.

"Not so bad, not so bad," cried MacAlpine, as if to encourage the distant gunners, "but, faith, it's nothin' to what the byes 'll do with their muskets, moind ye. . . . Ah, what's thot, now?"

The girls quickly saw what had attracted the old soldier's eye. Far out on the right wing of the scarlet lines near Moulton's Point there was a stir, a movement, and then a steady sweep of a smaller red strip along the shore of the Mystic. Old Dan's eyes flashed fire, and he seized his telescope.

"A flank movement, be jabers!" he shouted, while the people in the vicinity, Tories for the most part, with here and there a sprinkling of rather subdued Patriots and an invalided officer or two, stared at him in amazement. "Look out, ye byes on the hill; don't let thim do it."

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And then, as if his advice had been wafted over to the redoubt, a detachment of men with a couple of field-pieces was seen moving out from behind the breastworks and was lost to view behind the slope.

Not long after, a dark, irregular mass moving over Charlestown Neck was picked up by the fencing-teacher's glass, and he roared his information again for the benefit of his neighbors.

"Reinforcemints, be the powers," he cried, "an' it's toime, lads, it's toime. Come on, now, come on; niver ye moind the big guns. Ye're needed in the raydoubt."

And on they did come, royally and bravely, in the face of furious enfilading fire from the ships up the river. They lost their formation, but not their legs, and they ran recklessly on till they reached the hill. Constance learned afterwards it was the regiment of Col. John Stark.

And still the brilliant lines at Moulton's Point remained unbroken and the brown mounds on Breed's Hill grew with each succeeding minute. It was now nearly three o'clock and nothing had been done.

"Oh, will they never move?" exclaimed Constance. She was wearied and half sick from the suspense, and felt that something must soon happen or she would go mad.

And then came the expected, ushered in by a roar of artillery that made all the other war-sounds of the day feeble by comparison. From half a dozen different points cannon belched their iron spheres, each trained toward one cen-

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tral point — the zig-zag lines of dark earth that crowned the hill. A few puffs of heavy smoke from the redoubt told of defiance, but even they quickly subsided.

“Now, thin, Misthress Connie,” exclaimed MacAlpine, “the game’s begun. Here — the glass. Train it on the ridcoats, an’ follow thim along.”

The girl took the telescope, and leveled it at the regulars. Already the three red lines were slowly moving forward toward the hills. Through the lush grass of the hay-fields and over the fences they laboriously made their way, hampered by their laden knapsacks, their heavy uniforms, and the heat of the sun.

After a little, Constance saw the right wing swerve to the northwest — Howe’s command, as she later learned — while the left, under Pigot, wheeled slowly until its face was directed at the rude redoubt, still unfinished. The artillery ahead spat viciously for a little and then ceased. It could do no harm to the men on the crest of the hill. But the rolling thunder from the water never ceased.

On came the left wing, more rapidly now as the shorter grass of the slopes was reached, and with the beautiful precision of men trained in the fine-arts of war. Before Constance, as she swept her glass in unison with the scarlet ranks, arose thoughts of many a dress parade of these same men, and again of that ignominious flight along the bloody road from Lexington. She held her breath as up the hill, unchallenged,

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unmolested, unafraid, rolled the lines of King George the Third, king in America no longer.

At last the attacking troops were so near the redoubt that it seemed to the thrilled watchers as if but the width of a street were between them and it. And still no fire from the parapets!

"Bah!" exclaimed one of the wounded officers near by, "the rebels have deserted their works and crawled down the other side of the hill."

"Bah, ag'in, thin, liftinant," retorted MacAlpine, briskly, "they're washin' no powder, d'ye moind. The byes want thim so near that ivery shot'll count. . . . Ah-h!"

With the word, triumphant, vociferous, a tremendous and terrifying sheet of flame burst straight out from the earthworks, as if it were hungering to burn the very faces of its foes. The line staggered, shook itself, writhed like some great serpent in the throes of death, then re-formed, fired one volley, and sullenly crept back down the hill. To the high-strung girl who watched the tragedy came a great exultation, an overmastering pride in the prowess of her countrymen that even the sight of the little spots of red picked out against the prevailing green — men fallen dead in their tracks — could not efface.

"Be jabers, 'tis throe!" was MacAlpine's curious comment on the result of the onslaught.

"What's true?" asked someone.

"What Oi heard this blissed mornin'. 'Twas rayporthed that Warren said he was goin' to let no mother's son av 'em fire till they saw the

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whites o' the redcoats' eyes. An', faith, Oi think they obeyed him," he concluded grimly.

As the broken ranks of the regulars formed for another charge, a great pall of black smoke suddenly arose from the houses of Charlestown, clustered under the hill near the water. Shells from the British batteries on Copp's Hill had fired the village in one part, while marines from the *Somerset* had played the incendiary in another. The wind spread the flames rapidly, and the doom of the little town was sealed.

The breeze that fanned the flames helped the entrenched Patriots, in that it blew the smoke down upon the British soldiers, who were again in order and apparently waiting the command for a second advance.

And now the eager watchers on the Beacon Hill could descry, between the billows of smoke, another forward and upward swing of the long strips of red that, with magnificent courage and persistency, went against certain death. Again that awful withholding of the Patriots' shots until barely fifty yards were on the ground between the redoubt and its enemies, and again the cruel, devouring plane of fire that crisped and curled and flung back the redcoats like a blast from some titanic furnace. Down over the hill they went in greater disorder than before, leaving a harrowing number of dead and wounded on the upper field. So long was the delay this time that one of the spectators volunteered the opinion that the British had abandoned the attempt to take the works.

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“Not thim,” said MacAlpine grimly. “They’re divils for bullets, look ye, an’ bulldogs for hangin’ on. They’ll thry a third toime, at laste.”

The old fencer took the telescope from Constance’s wearied arms and swept the waters of the harbor and the Charles with careful scrutiny. He was looking for possible reinforcements from Boston, but none came. Only, as he gazed, he caught sight of a long boat driven at high speed.

“’Tis Clinton, faith,” he cried. “Oi can tell that by his flag in front. He’s for goin’ over to rally the rigulars and perhaps lead thim himself. Now, we’ll see some fun.”

Fun! thought Constance. Fun, with that fair hillside mottled with the blood of Englishmen, shed by the bullets of other Englishmen, only a little removed; fun, that would wet the cheeks of wives and mothers, and — yes, sweethearts — with tears for the slain! Fun, that would make a shambles of the town when the mangled were brought back! Alas, there was horror enough and to spare in the day’s doings, yet spite of all the girl could not control delight in the thought that the star of liberty was thus far in the ascendant.

The beginnings of the third struggle were now at hand. Through his glass old Dan could discern the casting aside of knapsacks, the shifting to column instead of company front, and the advance of the artillery around the northern side of the hill, where it began to pour a raking fire on the rear of the redoubt. Then on swept the more solid mass of men, for the most part

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less exposed than before, up the sides of the slope.

Some of the British from Howe's division swung swiftly from around the base of the hill, and joined the attack with fury. Up, up, pressed the scarlet columns till they were met by the inevitable impact of lead from the breastworks. But it seemed feebler this time, and the attacking force, though it swayed and staggered and almost lost its hold on the eminence, did not retreat. On it dashed, reinforced by the men behind, over the dead and the hurt, spreading wider and wider, till it seemed like a broad stream defying gravity and flowing up-hill against and over a dam, as its separate waves seized upon and lapped the parapets and crossed them.

Constance gave an acute cry of grief, disappointment, pity. Even though a great cloud of dust arose from the redoubt and hid the conflict from view, she knew that a terrible struggle of man against man, of musket-butt against bayonet, of shovel against sword, was in process in that pit of death. And at last, when the standard of King George threw its red folds into the breeze, and she could doubt no longer that the Patriot force had been driven from their works, she burst into tears.

"There, there, Miss Connie, don't take on so," said MacAlpine, soothingly. "The byes were o'ermatched and simply had to take French leave, that's all. Powther! Bayonets! How c'u'd they fight longer without aither? But

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Oi'll warrant ye they came off much better than the ridcoats."

"Aye, friend," exclaimed the wounded British officer, who still remained near the party, "one more such victory and we are undone."

In the stillness that ensued after a brief period of firing at the retreating Americans, a silence that was awful with its intensity after the tumult of the day, the girls crept home together, with white faces.

Barbara was the first to speak. "I — I wonder whether John was there," she said.

"Wherever he was, he was doing his duty, dear," was the answer.

CHAPTER XXVII

An Appeal for Aid

BOSTON that night was a town of terror for those of weak nerves, and sorrowful enough for the most unemotional. From sunset to sunrise the streets reëchoed constantly to the rumbling of carts, the rattling of chaises and the uncertain tramp of men bearing stretchers, all coming from the wharves laden with the soldiers who had helped win the redoubt on Bunker Hill — at what direful cost!

Past the Romney mansion some of the pitiful procession made its way during the night, and the cries of the wounded, jolted and swayed into torture, banished all sleep from Constance's bed. She arose in the morning, dispirited and weary, to face a day of torrid heat and scenes more harrowing than the sounds of the night had been. On almost every street were the visible proofs of the marksmanship of the Patriots, as the torn and maimed forms of British soldiers were borne to beds of refuge.

Constance heard that all the old hospitals had been overcrowded long since, and that the workhouse, the almshouse, and many warehouses had been filled. She knew that Colonel Hancock's elegant mansion and scarcely less imposing

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stable had been turned into hospitals, for she could see the little expeditions with the wounded going across to the noble estate.

In the afternoon, the girl ventured out for a breath of air on the Common, but here, too, was only sorrow and the tokens of death, for large squads of men were digging great trenches at the bottom of the enclosure, into which Constance saw tumbled, with little ceremony, some of yesterday's slain, to remain there unnamed forever.

In the public places the lamentations of the widowed were mingled with the wild cries of Rumor, giving voice to every kind of fanciful tale. It was heard that the fighting remnant of the British forces, that had encamped near Bunker Hill after the battle, had marched to Cambridge to wreak vengeance on the Americans for the terrible day's work, and again that the Patriot army — the bitterest Tory no longer hesitated to call it such — was on the way to Boston to destroy the demoralized troops who still held it. To give color to these stories came heavy cannonading on Sunday from the ships and batteries and from Bunker Hill. But the Continentals lay inactive out beyond the Necks of Charlestown and Roxbury, nursing their wounded, and pulling themselves together after their own baptism of blood.

On Monday morning, Constance sent Pompey, who had shown a curious predilection for the cellar of the stable during the last two days, in quest of Dan MacAlpine, and that stout old soldier was a grateful sight to the two girls when

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he stumped briskly into the house an hour later, bringing such news as he was able to procure.

“’Tis open war now betwane the choild and its mother,” he observed, “and naught but independince can iver make the young ’un frindly with the ould lady ag’in.”

“How do the—the British feel over the battle?” asked Constance.

“Like whipped min, bedad,” was the quick reply. “Sure, though they call it a victhry, ’tis plain to see they belave it was a defate. The officers are dumb, and the min hang their heads. An’ the nervousness of thim, faith, ’twould make ye laugh.”

“Laugh!” cried Barbara, her round eyes solemn with surprise. “How can one laugh in these dreadful times?”

“Oh, well, miss, an Oirishman can laugh at any toime, maybe. At any rate, Oi did last night up on the B’acon Hill. There were several British officers up there, and ivery now and thin they wud duck their heads as if something was goin’ to hit ’em. At lasht Oi asked one of thim what he was bowin’ so often for.

“‘Bullets, my mon,’ says he. ‘Ye can hear ’em singin’ all around here.’

“‘Be the powers,’ says Oi, ‘thin ’tis the first toime that iver June baytles were fired from guns,’ Oi says. And that’s what they were, as sure as me father was a Cork man.”

The fencing-master was pleased to see that his little story of an actual occurrence brought a smile to the lips of the daughter of his old com-

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mander. He would have ransacked his brain for another anecdote, and might have gone to the length of inventing one had not the arrival of Dr. Gair on horseback put an end to his laudable schemes.

The little surgeon was pale from lack of sleep and the once jolly face was drawn and careworn. Yet he dismounted nimbly and greeted the young women with cheery courtesy.

"Ah, MacAlpine, you here?" he cried, catching sight of the swordsman. "I suppose you are telling the young ladies of the results of the murderous day, eh?"

"Sich as Oi know," was the quiet reply.

"Fools, fools on both sides, MacAlpine. Foolhardiness, not war, eh?"

"Is — is it as bad as they say, Doctor?" queried Constance.

"I don't know what they say, but they can't put it any worse than it is. How do you account for it, MacAlpine? You've been a soldier. How were the troops — well, halted, by raw lads and old men, half armed, with no practise or discipline, commanded without order, and God knows by whom?"

The Irishman looked steadily at the Englishman with something of deep significance in his gaze. Then he answered in a low and reverent tone: "Perhaps, Dochter, there's somethin' in this beyant our knowledge."

"Eh?" said the little man, sharply, looking at the other's forehead as if attempting a diag-

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nosis of his thought. "Oh, yes, yes — perhaps you are right."

"You spoke of command, Dr. Gair," said Constance, "Who was the — the rebel leader? I have heard —"

"Several names?" interrupted the surgeon, with a smile. "No doubt, no doubt. There were generals in the field, Warren and Putnam and Pomeroy, but a colonel — Prescott they call him — was the actual chief."

At this point, Barbara, whose dainty fingers had been nervously twining themselves, projected herself into the conversation.

"Do they — know aught of the — the losses?" she asked diffidently.

"Oh! Lieutenant Cuyler is quite safe, I can assure you," replied the surgeon, with mischief in his eyes.

Barbara blushed, but did not quit the field. "Nay, Doctor, I mean of the — other side."

"Oh, your brother, Mistress Barbara. I crave your pardon, young lady. No. The mortality must have been tremendous, but save such of our prisoners as have died we know no names, save Warren."

"Dr. Joseph Warren?" asked Constance, quickly.

"Yes. A brave and able if misguided man. They say he fell at our last charge. As for our own losses, you probably have heard of the deaths of Pitcairn, Spendlove, Addison, and Sherwin. I fear we had in all over two hundred killed, and I know there are nearly a thousand

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wounded. From what we can learn, the rebels must have had one hundred and fifty killed. God knows 'twas a terrible day for both sides."

Constance was afraid that she could ill conceal her grief at the death of Warren, whom she now knew to be of such splendid use to the cause — her new cause, the cause of home against invading force. She was glad, therefore, when Dr. Gair called her apart.

"I've chattered here too long," was his method. "I'll for a look at your uncle with you, and then back to the hospital."

Beyond hearing of the others, he spoke what was on his mind. "Did you know that — a friend of yours — has been wounded — dangerously wounded?" he asked, gravely.

For a moment the sun seemed to have deserted the earth, as the girl clutched her breast and almost reeled. Then she straightened to hear the worst.

"Who?" she managed to utter, her lips pale as death.

"Who but Lieutenant Charlton?" replied the surgeon kindly, almost fancying he saw a look of relief sweep over Constance's face, but dismissing the thought as absurd.

"He — he is dangerously wounded, you say?"

"Yes. And his wounds are such that nothing but quiet and good care will save him."

"Is it as bad as that?" she queried with honest sorrow. Charlton had been a manly admirer, a sincere friend, and a real helper in time of dire need.

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"He was one of the last brought in," replied Dr. Gair, "in fact, he lay in a hollow, and it was late Sunday afternoon when he was found.

"How terrible!"

"The hospitals and every available place to be turned into a hospital are crowded, and — well, they are quartering some of the wounded at private houses. In short, would you not prefer that Lieutenant Charlton should be brought here rather than some stranger?"

"Of course I would," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A Copy of "Horace"

OUT in the garden, basking in the warmth of a genial September sun, sat Giles Romney, in an easy chair, his pet foot propped up on a little stool. He was rather at peace with the world this afternoon, for he was free from discomfort, the times were relatively quiet, and he had just heard from London that a business venture which had once seemed hopeless had turned out to be a lucrative success. So he read, and drowsed, and dreamed most comfortably, and, for a time, forgot the war and all that appertained to campaigning.

As he roused peacefully from a specially pleasant reverie, he became dimly conscious of something purple and pleasant to the smell dangling in front of his generous and ruddy nose. Grapes? But a queer place for grapes, because he knew that all the vines were at the far end of the garden. And yet — yes, it was a bunch of grapes. He knew grapes when he saw them, even though they appeared to be dangling from nothing and in mid-air.

"Who is it? Guess, and you shall have the first ripe bunch of the year. Nay, nay, sirrah, no peeping . . . who 'tis, I say!"

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“Who could it be,” he roared heartily, “but Connie — Connie the brave — Connie the bright — Connie the —”

“Connie the fiddledee! I’m not bright. ’Tis only affectation, and as for bravery, I’m affrighted of every shadow, lest it be a rebel, or — hush — a redcoat. I’m never sure which I fear the most.”

The girl laughed merrily at her jest, and her uncle smiled indulgently.

“I’m a poor old carcass at best, now, Connie,” he said, “but thanks to you, I’m a happier man than I would ’a’ thought possible under the circumstances.”

He reached out for the girl’s pretty hand and clasped it warmly, as she stooped and kissed his cheek. And what was this — moisture in the old fellow’s eyes?

“I haven’t said much, my girl,” he resumed, “but this long, fearful summer has been an awful strain, dearie. To see your aunt and you cooped up in this hole of a town, without decent food even.”

“I’m sure, uncle, we’ve fared very well,” said Constance, cheerfully.

But Giles Romney was not entirely cured of his habit of contradicting, and he flared up a bit at this.

“Fared well?” he echoed testily, “do you call no fresh meat for a for’night faring well? For my part, I’ve eaten so much salt provender that I can realize now how Lot’s wife must have felt.”

“You forget MacAlpine’s fish, uncle.”

A COPY OF "HORACE"

"True, Dan has been most thoughtful. But fish, even of his catching, is not pleasant as steady diet."

"But there are those who would be glad even of that," said Constance gravely.

"I suppose so. If we, with money, suffer so, God pity the poor!"

Across the girl's sunny face passed a cloud of sadness, and then was gone; she was young and full of hopes and the world of nature was fair. And here was a delicious bunch of grapes as yet uneaten.

"How dare you talk of hunger and food, sir," she cried, "when you have not touched one of these? No, no. You must not feed yourself. I shall limit you, lest you prove a glutton. Now, then, open your mouth."

So one by one the luscious dark globes were popped into their proper destination by the tips of Constance's rosy fingers, and the merry exercise was interrupted only by the appearance of Barbara Brandon at the garden gate.

"Good afternoon, Mistress Barbara," cried Giles, "you are just in time to see the animals fed."

"And," said Constance, as she thrust the last grape between her uncle's teeth, "just too late for — well, you know. Yes," she continued in a whisper, "he's just gone. He thought you were not coming."

"The roses still bloom in *your* cheeks, Barbara, I am glad to see," remarked the old man, kindly. "Any news of your brother?"

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“Not for nearly a month, at least not directly. Not since the last skirmish on the Neck.”

“Was that a month ago? But one skirmish is like all the rest to me, and mercy knows they’re common enough. . . . Yes, Pompey, I’ll go in now.”

As soon as the girls were left alone: “Well?” asked Constance significantly.

“Well?” echoed Barbara weakly.

“You’ve something to tell me. “Of course you have. You always have when you look as you do now. Oh, I know your downcast eyes and your folded fingers and your air of innocence. Out with it, Bab; I’m dying for news.”

“Well, then,” began the little girl, “did you know that the big tree opposite the market had been cut down?”

“The ‘Liberty Tree’?” exclaimed Constance, “why, what —” She paused as she felt a nudge from her friend, and a soft “S-s-h.” Of course, I know that,” with a swift change of tone, “that’s old news. ’Twas an ugly tree, anyway.”

Both girls had caught sight of Capt. Jack Mowatt’s sinister, wine-flushed face over the wall that separated their garden from Earl Percy’s, which doubtless accounted for their sudden determination to go indoors. Even the September sunlight seemed less mellow with that countenance in view.

Within, Barbara was for making upstairs at once to Constance’s room, but her friend detained her gently.

“Hadn’t you better go in and see Lieutenant

A COPY OF "HORACE"

Charlton?" she suggested. "You know you always do, and now that Ensign Cuyler happens to have gone — well, mightn't it be thought a bit peculiar?"

The pink spreading over the girl's cheeks told that the mischievous shot had landed fair, and without more words she tripped to the drawing-room, which had been given to the occupancy of the British officer, who was now just able to move about a little assisted by his body-servant. To-day, Barbara found him reclining on a couch near a window, impatiently drumming on the pane, and sighing over his lost activity. She cheered him as best she could, then went upstairs to join Constance.

The latter fairly flew at her little friend for sheer curiosity.

"The news, Barbara," she cried, "what was't delayed you?"

"Toby came in last night," was the portentous reply.

"Again? Then you have word from Jo — your brother?" Barbara nodded. "But you told uncle —"

"I saw some officers in Lord Percy's garden."

"And I *didn't*. You're developing, Bab. So Gookin brings you word. He is well?"

"Yes."

"That long-limbed rustic Patriot must be a phantom, he eludes sentries so cleverly."

"Not this time, Constance," was the sad reply.

"What do you mean?"

"A sentry fired at him last night."

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“Not — not killed?” demanded Constance.

“No, but helpless; a shattered bone. Father thinks it a miracle he was able to drag himself to us.”

“Poor, honest, brave fellow! He will recover?”

“Father says a few weeks will put him on his feet — if we can keep him hidden. But what will John think?”

“The truth, or something near to it,” was the confident answer. . . . “Nay, nay, don’t weep, dear.”

“Oh, but I — I feel so helpless,” stammered Barbara, her lips quivering, “I —”

Mistress Drake smiled brightly. Her role of comforter to the weaker girl had now become second nature to her.

“For a helpless girl,” she retorted, “you’re about the busiest one I know. Sheltering wounded Patriots, discovering eavesdroppers, and silencing my busy tongue. You helpless, indeed!”

“But I am,” persisted Bab; “who’s to do Toby’s work?”

“And what *is* Toby’s work this time?”

“He came for some plans and a book for John.”

“A book and plans. What are they?”

“The book is his ‘Horace.’”

“Trumpery!” cried Constance. “The plans are what really concern us.”

“Indeed, I’m sure he does want the book,”

A COPY OF "HORACE"

said Barbara, indignantly. "He always loved his 'Horace.'"

"H-m, no doubt," was Mistress Drake's comment; "but about the plans?"

"I don't know."

"Neither what they are nor where?"

"No."

"But Toby does?"

"I think so."

Just at this moment the tune of a rollicking Irish jig mingled itself with the click of the garden-gate. Constance ran to the window.

"Ah, good-day to ye, Dan MacAlpine," she cried heartily. "What do I see? Empty-handed? No fish for supper?"

"Whist, mavourneen," replied the former fencing-master; "can Oi catch fish in Quaker Lane? If Oi'm lucky Oi'll bait a hook to-morrow, though. No one can go a-fishin' without a pass, you know, and Oi've not had one lately. We'll soon have to give the countersoign ivery toime we brathe."

"Come within, Dan," said Constance. "Barbara and I will be down in a moment."

She turned to her friend again with all seriousness.

"You think those plans—and the 'Horace'—should reach your brother at once?" she asked.

"Toby says 'tis most important."

"Bring them here in the morning, and I will see that they reach your brother."

"Why—how?" was the astonished query.

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"No matter how. Indeed, I don't know myself." And Constance gaily seized Bab around the waist and dragged her to the stairway so rapidly that both narrowly escaped going down in a manner not approved by young women.

After a long and earnest conversation with Constance, from which Barbara was ruthlessly shut out, MacAlpine went off down Winter Street whistling the self-same jig, but in a slow and perplexed style. As he turned the corner he scratched his curly head vigorously.

"Well, O'll be jiggered for a hoss marine!" he said.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Fishing Trip

MACALPINE was early astir next morning, and the favorite corner of his "armory," sadly fallen from its high estate and great popularity, since now that war was on no one took fencing lessons any more, rang with bits of song and many muttered exclamations which would scarcely have been illuminating to an eavesdropper. His chief occupation seemed to be the filling of a couple of big baskets with rather curious things for a fishing trip. Two immense horse-pistols, a goodly supply of food, and a great jug of water were neatly stowed away, while something that looked like a curved saber was wrapped up in oilcloth.

These preparations were about completed when the little figure of George Robert Twelves Hewes appeared at the head of the stairway of the loft. That diminutive worthy had welcomed MacAlpine's suggestion that the two go a-fishing, for times were hard and an honest shilling very welcome. But he expressed himself oracularly, as usual, as dubious.

"Passes are monstrous hard to get, friend MacAlpine," he said, "and I fear you'll not be per-

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mitted to go out. Why, I myself was refused only two days ago."

"Begorra, if the admiral rayfuses me," said the veteran, "Oi'll go to Gage himsilf. As if an ould soldier musht shtarve to death for want av a few fish! Besoides, Oi niver found them rayfusin' a good fresh cod or two at the Governor's."

They proceeded to the wharf as if there were no doubt about the matter, and soon had everything prepared for the trip. Only as Hewes was about to stow his basket in the little cuddy-hole forward, all the pinky could boast in the way of a cabin, old Dan interfered.

"Not there, Hewes," he ordered.

"Why not?"

"Oh, Oi've jist a raisin," was the placid response. "Now, come with me to the admiral."

At Lord Howe's headquarters on Fort Hill, MacAlpine found no difficulty in getting admission to the office. The admiral, a portly, pompous man with a big, curling wig, a ruby nose and a keen eye, withal, was inclined to be good-humored, but he was none the less cautious.

"How many are going, MacAlpine?" he inquired, looking his visitor shrewdly in the eye.

"Three, yer Honor."

"And who will be skipper?"

"Your humble servant, sorr, — for want of a better."

"Very well, skipper MacAlpine; you know the rules and the fate of all deserters from the town. And now," he added, with a profound emphasis, "I know what you want — I see it in

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the twinkling of your eye, skipper; but mark what I tell you — if we catch you running off — look out, skipper, that's all, look out."

"Oi will, sorr — that is, sorr, Oi thank ye, sorr," replied MacAlpine, clutching his pass and hurrying out to conceal his exultation.

On their return to the boat Hewes rubbed his eyes. He felt sure, he said, that the baskets had been put in the standing-room of the boat, and that the hatchway to the cuddy-hole had been left open. Now all was different.

"You've been dramin', me boy, that's all," returned MacAlpine. "Now, let's make ready."

At this particular juncture a soldier came down the wharf and demanded to know what the two were doing in the boat.

"Goin' fishin', yer Honor."

"Your pass."

"Here, sorr."

"It reads for three," said the soldier, frowning.

"Does it, indade?" replied MacAlpine, innocently, taking the paper and turning it upside down and round and round. "Be the powers, so it does. Well, t'other fellow musht 'a' gone seasick a'ready."

The soldier grinned, and glancing casually over the boat as if inspecting her as a matter of duty, told the fishermen they might proceed, which they did with alacrity. The single sail was hoisted, and a light breeze catching it, the craft slid gently down the harbor.

In a few moments Hewes was transfixed with

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astonishment at the tiller by the sound of a very musical but somewhat muffled voice.

"May I come out?" it said, "'tis stiffling."

"Yis," replied MacAlpine, removing the hatchway, "but moind ye don't show yer head."

And then Hewes was still more astounded to behold the laughing face of Mistress Drake.

"Good morning, Mr. Hewes," cried the girl, merrily. "I'm afraid you don't fancy me for fishing company."

"'Tis not much fishing, I'm thinking, that we'll do this trip," replied the steersman, with the air of one who had suddenly seen a great light.

The wind freshened as the craft approached Deer Island, and the foam was beginning to break from her snub-nosed, tilting bow. And just below they saw that they had a small companion in the almost deserted harbor, for a boat was coming in rapidly on a tack against the wind.

"Who the divil's out in that gimcrack to-day?" queried MacAlpine, surprised. "They said at the admiral's that no other fishin' loicense had been given, and, faith, no one can be thryin' to run in from the outside towns. What make ye of it, Hewes?"

"By the shape of the sail I believe it's my friend Hartley, who keeps the hospital below. We'll get news of the British ships, which seem uncommon scarce hereabouts. I'll jibe, and we'll speak with him."

By dint of much shouting and waving of hats,

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the occupant of the incoming boat was made to slack sheet and heave to within hailing distance of the pinky. It was Hartley, as Hewes had said, coming up to town to get a fresh supply of medicines. They passed the time of day in somewhat nautical fashion, for Hewes had been to sea on several trips before the war.

"Where are the warships?" anxiously asked the pilot of the little party.

"Driven into Nantasket by last night's nor'easter, a roaring one enow," replied Hartley. "You can find them there if you want to take the trouble."

"Thank you, friend," said Hewes, drily, "we'll decide about that later. Good-day to you."

Then they bowled merrily on, chuckling at the happy dispensation that had forced the big wooden forts to seek shelter and give their puny craft such glorious right of way. Even the winds of heaven were with them, for the breeze had chopped around into the northwest and was blowing with well-tempered heartiness. Mac-Alpine whistled joyously, and Hewes piped up a tune with his shrill voice, while Constance peered out from her hiding-place and chafed at imprisonment on such a glorious day.

But just as the point of Deer Island was reached, all this jollity was quenched, for around the long finger of land suddenly loomed the masts and sides of a frigate, her port-holes open and her decks black with men. There was no escaping this watch-dog of the water, and Mac-

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Alpine ordered Hewes to round the point and push boldly by the warship. With a swift movement he clapped the hatchway on the cuddy-hole, and awaited developments.

The pinky was sailing grandly by the frigate, when an officer shouted: "Ahoy there, come alongside!"

MacAlpine made a hand-cup for his ear and cocked his head on one side.

"You heard what I said well enough," roared the captain of the *Somerset*; "come alongside!"

The old fencing-master bowed politely, and instructed Hewes to heave to. In a moment the pinky was under the sides of the frigate.

"Well, sirrah," said the officer, "what are you doing out here in that boat?"

"We're goin' fishin', sorr, if Oi might make so bould," replied Dan. "An' to prove it, here's the loicense, sealed, signed, and delivered this mornin' by Lord Howe himself, a foine an' dacint gintleman." And he held the paper up with both hands as high as he could.

"Very well, sir, I suppose that is regular," was the reply. "Call with your fish when you come back, mind that. I have a tooth for some good cod for supper."

"Oi will, sorr, Oi will, indade," said MacAlpine, earnestly, "whin Oi come back — which is domned uncertain," he added in a low voice to his companion in risk. "Now bring her to the wind ag'in, Hewes, and head her for Lynn loike the very divil."

The craft sprang forward under the impact

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of a strong northwester like a liberated animal dashing for its freedom. The water hissed in front of her and boiled in her wake, and she bounded on and away from the frigate at a splendid rate. The old soldier could restrain his exhilaration no longer. Tearing off the hatch-way he shouted permission to Constance to come out, then turned to Hewes with a great cry of triumph, reckless of what the consequences might be.

“Cheer, mon, cheer!” he cried, waving his cap defiantly at the enemy, while Constance, scrambling out, stood by his side, a charming picture with her simple, home-spun dress and her woolen cap that set off her curls to perfection.

“Cheer, both of yez!” roared the veteran again. And all three joined in a ringing outburst of patriotic fervor that was seized by the wind and borne away to sea toward the country whose power they were mocking.

A savage spit of fire, a puff of smoke, and a crashing “boom” from the frigate, showed that the little escapade had been discovered. Perhaps the pantomime of the cheering had betrayed them, perhaps someone had told the captain of the *Somerset* that people never sailed toward Lynn to go fishing for cod. At any rate, far to their starboard, something ploughed through the water, sending up a great geyser of salt foam that glittered radiantly for an instant in the sunlight.

“Beautiful,” cried the girl, her only thought

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for the charm of the spectacle. "If they would only fire again!"

"Niver moind axin' fer any repethitions o' thot, me lady," said MacAlpine. "Wan o' thim pretty little iron balls 'd sind us to glory, if their aim was too good."

But no more shots were sent after the run-aways, and when their safety was assured, MacAlpine turned to Constance with a smile.

"Oi hope you're satisfied with your expayriences," he remarked.

"I am, indeed. 'Tis such a lark, and such a joy to be free,—free even for a day."

"Fray? Oi thought when that skipper overhauled us that our fraydom would be in a ship's brig. But although we're on the wather, darlint, we're not out o' the woods yit. Why have you made me do this thing? Your uncle will niver forgive me."

"He'll not have anything to forgive, for he'll never know."

"Here's hopin' you're roight. Is *that* it?" he asked, pointing to a little parcel the girl was hugging to her breast. She nodded.

"Aye, 'tis Master Brandon's 'Horace,' and — and other things."

"'Tis the other things, Oi fancy, he really wants," observed MacAlpine, sagely.

But there was no falling of the wild exhilaration that Mistress Drake almost cried aloud to the blue heavens, as the pinky tore along close-hauled, springing and quivering over the blue waters. She sang for the very joy of living

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under such a sun; she chatted gaily with poor Hewes, taking that little man captive relentlessly. She bared her arm and plunged it into the swirling waves, throwing the spray quite into MacAlpine's face. She played the madcap to the full, because nothing less would satisfy her whim.

At last, old Dan, to whom this effervescence was grateful enough, said with a smile: "Connie, me darlint, niver have Oi seen you so loike your dear father, Captain Terry, heaven rist his sowl. And there's been so much misery of late. Phwat makes it, mavourneen?"

"I'm free, Dan, free!" was the excited reply. "Ever since that day at Lexington and the return to town I've felt like a caged bird beating its wings against the bars. To-day I'm in full flight in the sky, and my wings will bear me. Oh, it's delightful; I could hug you, Dan, were you near enough."

"Aisy enough to get so, dearie," laughed the pleased old soldier.

Then she fulfilled her promise.

Meanwhile they had come into the shallow little bay that made up to Lynn, and in due time, the pinky sidled up to one of the shaky wooden piers, and her passengers debarked, to become the centre of a vastly interested crowd.

George Robert Twelves Hewes arrogated to himself the pleasing task of dealing out the news from Boston, while MacAlpine and Constance went in search of some sort of conveyance. At last they found a sorry nag and a rough country

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wagon that the owner was willing to charter for practically its entire value, bestowing his blessing gratuitously, and, with Hewes deposited in the rear, drove out of the village at a pace that MacAlpine sought in vain to accelerate.

But the day was balmy and beautiful, the land glowing with the mellow richness of early autumn, and Constance Drake, though she chafed a bit at the jog-trot that kept her so long from the day's goal, drank in the wine of the air, and was as exuberant in a jolting cart upon the land as she had been in a bounding craft upon the sea.

They passed through several small towns without let or hindrance, always yielding up information by the way of Hewes at the watering troughs and taverns, and were now within a few miles of Cambridge, when just ahead they saw a Patriot patrol. With full confidence in the value of the sentiments of all three, Dan MacAlpine drove directly to the soldiers and hailed them cheerily.

"Not so fast, not so fast, friend," cried the sergeant, as the fencing-master was for driving by unconcernedly. "I fear you'll have to give an account o' yourselves. Where are you from?"

"Boston, sure," said MacAlpine, with a smile that only increased the soldier's suspicion.

"Boston!" he exclaimed incredulously. "Come, friend, I — but I'd better take you to the captain."

A little farther, by the side of the road, they

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saw a few tents, the camp of the outpost. Here they were halted, while old Dan was questioned apart by the officer in command, a well-set young fellow with a buff and blue uniform that mightily pleased Constance's sense of propriety. But the Irishman was not at all delighted, for he returned to the wagon with indignation writ large upon his ruddy face.

"The shpalpeens don't belave me. They say they musht take us to hidquarthers," he exclaimed ruefully.

"Fate is with us, Dan, to-day," cried the girl, clapping her hands. "That's just where we want to go."

And she beamed upon the handsome young officer as if he were the cause of all her satisfaction, giving him material for day dreams for some time thereafter.

CHAPTER XXX

A General and a Major

IT was a scene of enormous activity that Constance Drake and her two retainers — and all of them in quasi-captivity — passed through on their way to the army headquarters at Cambridge. Thousands of men toiled like russet ants at the long line of intrenchments from the college town to the Mystic River; horses and cattle for military uses ranged over the choicest farm lands in ruminative bliss; great gaps in the woodland told their story of sacrifice for campfires and earthworks, and many a private farmhouse, willingly transferred, took on a warlike aspect as befitting the quarters of American officers.

After the lines had been passed, a vastly entertaining region of camps was traversed. It was a motley collection of soldiers' dwellings, as variegated as the dress of the different sections of the army. There were tents of sailcloth and of brush, shacks of boards, huts of stone and of turf and even of brick. Some were apparently formed by a hurling together of their constituent parts, others were carefully and skilfully made with doors and windows cunningly wrought with wreaths and withes like big baskets. It

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was all very novel and very delightful to Mistress Drake, who at last felt sure that here was a soldiery among which womanhood was completely and happily safe.

At last they entered Cambridge, and drove slowly through the bustling village, the center of somewhat unwelcome attention. It was not every day that a cart containing three persons, one of them a very pretty young woman, went along the streets escorted by a guard, and the good people made the most of the sight. Constance reddened and fidgeted in her seat, but said nothing. She was reserving her vials of wrath for a more telling opportunity.

Passing the college buildings, the procession swung to the right and along the river road until it halted before a beautiful house, sitting somewhat back from the street, fronted by a neat garden, now a bit rusty with the age of autumn.

"Here we are at headquarters, miss," volunteered the escorting officer. "This house *was* the property of Col. John Vassall, but since the old Tory cut stick and away, why, what better than that we Americans should own it? 'Tis just now the residence of General Washington and General Lee."

"Ah! Then we shall see this — Mr. Washington?" asked the girl, with malice aforethought.

"You will have speech with General Lee, but you may only see *General* Washington, ma'am, for there he is riding away now."

Constance, even before his words, had noted,

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on a noble white horse, the tall and stalwart figure of a man in the full strength of life, a man whose heavily carved face and firm, long lips made him seem the incarnation of gravity and dignity.

This, then, was the famous Washington, who had won his spurs with Braddock and who was now regarded by the colonists as the Mahomet whose sword should cut out their way to liberty. He looked the role, she thought, and, with her strong feminine love for physical fitness, she observed with pleasure that he sat his horse with wonderful grace, and that his uniform — a blue coat with rich epaulettes, buff under-dress and a black cockade in his light hat — was of the richest material and skilfully made.

So fine a picture was he that she watched him out of sight, scarcely noting that her escort, who now seemed a very ordinary young man indeed, was talking with another high officer who had just come down the steps of old Tory Vassall.

But when she realized that their words and gestures were meant for her, she flushed with vexation.

“Hoity-toity!” she cried, “one would think that we were from another world or some monstrosity, the way they point and gape.”

“General Lee will speak with you,” said another officer, stepping to the wagon.

“I’ll speak to *him*,” she muttered to Mac-Alpine, as she leaped nimbly from the vehicle, scorning the soldier’s offer of assistance. Dan and Hewes followed her.

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For the first time she could see what manner of man was General Lee, upon the surface, at least, and she was not pleased at the result. His face seemed plain even to ugliness, and his dress was careless and slovenly. His manner was brusque, almost brutal, and his voice, as she found a moment later, seemed to rasp his very throat in its struggles to escape into the open.

“Well, who is the spokesman?” growled the General, with no other greeting.

MacAlpine and Hewes both opened their mouths to reply, but Mistress Drake opened hers the earlier.

“I, sir, am the *spokeswoman*,” she said jauntily.

“Ah, indeed? Well?”

“Oh, 'tis not well, though you're pleased to say so. To be made prisoners —”

“Is a necessity of the times, for which I am not responsible,” said he coldly. “Who are you?”

The girl courtesied in her best style.

“Constance Drake, at your service.”

“'Tis true, then, as I am told?” returned the General, in nowise softened.

“What, sir?”

“That you are the niece of the Tory Romney.”

“Yes.”

“And that this man is lately of his Majesty's army?”

“Lately, your Honor,” observed MacAlpine, cheerily, “but not very lately. Sivin —”

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"We'll have but one spokes — woman, if you please," commanded Lee.

"Orders, sorr," returned Dan, saluting stiffly.

"You see you are — well, suspicious characters," resumed the officer.

"'Tis all my fault, captain," began the girl, mournfully.

"*Gin'ral, darlint, gin'ral,*" whispered Mac-Alpine.

"I asked them to bring me, general."

"For what purpose?" Lee's eyes took on a steely tone, for he began to suspect he was being trifled with, a thing he could never brook.

"That I cannot tell, at least to none but you."

"To me? Oh, very well. Stand aside, gentlemen. . . . Now, mistress."

"I am the bearer of a book for Master John Brandon, sir," said the girl, looking modestly at the ground.

"A book?"

"A 'Horace,' sir."

"M'ph! Let me see it."

"I said I bore it to Master Brandon."

"It will never reach him — unless I see it first," was the grim reply, of whose sincerity there could be no mistake. So Constance realized, for she timidly produced the package from beneath her short cloak, and handed it to the general.

Here, two very remarkable things happened, to be stored away in Mistress Drake's memory: General Lee not only smiled, but he lowered his

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voice until it was actually gentle, as he read the name on the fly-leaf.

"Oh, that one," he said. "So you have come to see *him*? Is he your — sweetheart?"

"He has never told me so," was the demure reply.

"There's something else here beside a book," said the General, with a return to gruffness.

"Yes."

"Letters?"

"Plans, he said."

"Plans, eh? Of what? But no matter. Lieutenant, is Major Brandon on duty to-day?"

"I think not," replied the officer, who had approached at Lee's call.

"My compliments to him, and bid him report to me here."

As the subordinate went on his errand, even Lee perceived that this fair young courier from beleaguered Boston was travel-worn and tired, and he was gallant enough to invite her into the house.

"The women will find you some refreshments," he remarked. "We'll keep those men under guard, but they'll not refuse food, either, I'm thinking."

It was an hour later when Constance, refreshed and rested and buoyant again, was called into the handsome front room used by the officers as a council chamber. And there, talking with Lee, as if confidentially, certainly confidently, from his air and tone, stood Major

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John Brandon, in an immaculate uniform that made him a very different man.

He stepped forward as the girl entered, amazement and pleasure struggling for the mastery on his face.

"Constance!" he cried. "Is it possible?"

"H'm; you do know her, then," muttered Lee.

"Yes, yes. . . . But why —"

"Your messenger, sir," replied Constance, smiling bewitchingly. "Toby was injured. He seemed anxious, so I brought — this," giving the precious parcel into the right hands at last.

But still the young soldier was not quite sure that he was not dreaming in his tent.

"Why, I cannot believe—" he began weakly.

"That I would be so silly? I can scarcely credit it myself, now."

"Well, well," broke in General Lee, impatiently, "let's have it opened. Plans, I think you said, mistress, and — and —"

"Horace." This with the faintest glint of roguery in her eyes — too faint for the old soldier to comprehend.

"Oh yes, I remember," he replied stolidly.

Meanwhile, Major Brandon had opened the packet, and spread out its contents before the General.

"Here," he explained, "is a drawing of the Copp's Hill battery, and here —"

"Good, very good," said Lee. "I'll examine them at my leisure." And he walked off with the maps, leaving the two quite alone.

But of this happy fact, Brandon was at first

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oblivious, for he had come across a sealed paper bearing his own name on the back. This he opened with a puzzled air and read half aloud.

"I wish you could come to my party. I'm sorry I said what I did.

Constance."

Still in a mist, he turned the letter over and over, then looked carefully at the date. With a swift mental harking-back came realization so sweet that it lent to his face the most radiant smile Constance had ever seen upon man. He walked to where she stood, and held the sheet before her dancing eyes.

"You wrote that to me," he said softly, "two days after we parted at the edge of the Common!"

"It certainly *is* my writing," said Constance, all a-blush.

"Then you forgave?" was the triumphant question.

"For letting me act like a fool? I suppose I really shouldn't."

"But you *did!*"

She denied no more, nor yet repulsed certain advances laid down in the rules of the god of love, so that when bluff General Lee strode into the room a moment later, it happened that he saw an evolution not part of military tactics.

"What's this," he roared, "a Continental major surrendering to the enemy?"

"Oh, no, sir," replied the girl, redder than

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her reddest rose had ever been in the breath of June, "he has brought a Tory into camp."

But John Brandon must know how it had fared with this girl — his now, by divine right — and her people, and with rapid speech she told him of all that had happened, of her uncle's illness, and of his, and her own, loyalty to the cause of the land. At which he became all impatience and solicitude.

"Why, then," he cried, "you must leave the town and go far into the country."

"You forget uncle and Aunt Tabitha," she answered quietly. "They cannot go, and I must stay with them. Besides, I — I may be of use there — to the cause — to *you*."

The little party was escorted back to Lynn by Major Brandon, who had never yet had so pleasant a detail, and who felt very helpless and wretched when he saw their boat push off in the gathering dusk and head for Deer Island. But on his ride back to Cambridge all the dear joy of heart's possession overcame the sorrow of separation, and hope lighted his way as the stars.

Just outside Lynn, MacAlpine, with praiseworthy foresight, purchased a supply of fish from a man coming in. But they were not needed for strategic purposes, for, under cover of darkness, Hewes, who knew the harbor well, got safely home again.

And Mistress Drake, after the fatigue and excitement of a notable day, went to sleep with a well-thumbed copy of "Horace" under her pillow.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Riding-School

DECEMBER, and a still inactive town and campaign. Gage was back in England, at his own request, it is true, but a practically discredited and defeated commander. Lord Howe, whose rise to supreme power had encouraged the Tories with visions of the swift and certain punishment of the "rebels," had done little beyond strengthening the defenses and improving the quarters of his soldiers. It was soon evident that he was to be masterly only in defense, if at all.

Howe was a soldier, but a man of pleasure also, and the latter trait, when developed by surroundings, often weakened his natural vigor and interfered with decision. Like master, like man. His plainly seen desire to make winter in a garrison town as endurable as possible affected others and the rank and file, and liberty of conduct, even license, was the order of the long weeks.

Ensign Cuyler put the matter expressively enough to Barbara, whom he met one day — the type of many another day — on one of his visits to Charlton, who was still quartered with the Romneys.

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"If we cannot get out," he remarked astutely, "we are certainly not to be blamed for making the place where we must stay as endurable as possible."

"And are you doing it?" queried Constance, with a flashing smile that might have meant much or nothing. To-day she was playing duenna to the "young people."

"Well, we are doing the best we can," replied the young soldier, falling into the trap with beautiful unconsciousness. "But I'll confess that time does drag heavily on our hands sometimes."

Pretty Barbara looked up from her knitting with a quick glance that told him he had blundered. She pouted, too, but that was quite unnecessary.

"Of course, you see," Cuyler floundered on, "I — I can't be in pleasant company — here, for instance — all the time."

"Here, *for instance*," mocked ruthless Mistress Drake, with a laughing glance at Barbara's fingers, now plying her knitting needles with tremendous energy. That young lady was stung into a reply, but a very dignified one, withal.

"I presume, Constance," she said, "that Ensign Cuyler finds many attractions in the town of which we are ignorant."

"And of which, perhaps, it will be quite as well that we remain so, eh, Mr. Cuyler?" urged the charming mischief-maker.

"Indeed, Barbara," put in the embarrassed

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officer, "there is but little distraction, save in this house."

"Hear him, Bab," laughed her friend. "We drive him to distraction."

"Oh, Mistress Drake, I pray you!" appealed the overwhelmed Cuyler, looking into her merry eyes with pain in his own.

"Well, I'll be generous. Come, come, Bab, you know well enough Mr. Cuyler would be here all his spare time if he had any encouragement."

The prim little girl flushed angrily and the calm, cool depths of her nature were really stirred into hot activity. A little more of this, she decided, and she would go home at once.

"What do you mean, Constance Drake?" she demanded sharply.

"Just what I say," was the unruffled reply, "that if he had any encouragement — that is, from Lieutenant Charlton's need of him — he would be here all the time."

Barbara's retaliation was softly but very precisely spoken. She knew where her revenge lay, and she took it very sweetly.

"There would be more need of him," she said, "if *you* were not so attentive, dear."

Constance shot a curious glance at her little companion, a glance in which amusement, approbation, and vexation was blended. She walked to the window, and watched the snow-birds picking at the branches of the apple trees in the garden.

"I didn't think the puss had it in her," was

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her mental summing up of Barbara's feat. When she turned from the outside world she was not surprised to find Cuyler and the girl much nearer one another than they had been before. The knitting-work had fallen into Barbara's lap.

"Barbara tells me that you, too, have never seen our new riding-school — in the South Church, I mean," said the ensign.

"No, I haven't," replied Constance, with a touch of asperity. She had little sympathy for the warfare that had transformed a shrine of religious devotion into an exercise-ground for King's troopers. The surprise in the soldier's glance warned her that as an accredited Tory, and still the toast of British officers, she had her character to sustain. "What is it like?" she asked, with an appearance of kindly interest.

Cuyler, still rather puzzled, began a labored and grandiloquent description of the school, which Constance cut short remorselessly.

"I should like to see it," she cried. "'Tis a pleasant afternoon. Why not take us there?"

"I — I should be glad to do so, if —" and the ensign looked inquiringly at Barbara. The latter's face showed disapproval.

"You forget, Constance, that — that we used to go to meeting there."

"Does that make any difference?" was the half-scornful query. Then, seeing the tears in Bab's eyes, "Of course it does, Barbara." She ran to the girl and under cover of an effusive embrace whispered:

"Goose, it makes me ill with anger to think of

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it, but while I must be a Tory I must do as the Tories do. . . . Do ladies go there, Ensign Cuyler?"

"Certainly; often. Now I think on't, there's an exhibition there this afternoon."

Constance clapped her hands and pirouetted with a saucy semblance of a courtesy.

"We'll go," she cried, "if you'll take us. An exhibition, do you hear, Barbara!"

And she seized the little girl, who had never yet ceased to be surprised at her vagaries, swung her wildly around and out of the room, and half pushed her up the stairs, to the great damage of her carefully arranged hair, and confusion of her precise garments. Constance's arguments, upstairs, must have been effective, for presently both girls came down in walking clothes, accompanied by the negress Agnes, who remained loyal to her gay turbans in the coldest of weather.

As they walked to the church, the gaunt ruins of several houses, stripped for firewood, spoke eloquently of the siege.

"There are worse than these," observed Cuyler. "Samuel Adams' house has been practically demolished by the soldiers." Constance smiled, but reserved the right to unspoken disgust.

"They can't catch him, so they wreak their satisfaction on his house," she answered.

The South Church had not been altered outside in any special way, but its interior was so changed that Constance felt angrily that she had another score to pay against the invaders of her

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country. Gone were all the high-backed pews, wherein some of the town's greatest and best had worshiped; gone the tall pulpit from whence had come many a fiery rebuke of unbelief; gone all the atmosphere of sanctity in the new spirit of levity and carousal that had been poured into the place.

The floor was covered with gravel, bark, and chips, and over it tore the hoofs of spirited horses, some whirling in cavalry evolutions, others leaping a great bar that had been put up at one end. In a corner a band was playing lively tunes, and a crowd of the wives of officers and Boston Tories made gay one of the galleries with their handsome toilets. Another gallery had been turned into a refreshment room, where tea, sweet cakes, and liquors were dispensed by regiment sutlers.

"A carnival in the house of God," thought Constance, her lips curling with scorn at the sight, while Barbara looked down on the scene with wide-eyed amazement.

"Why, where are the pews?" she asked innocently.

"When they were taken out, many of them were burned," answered Cuyler uncomfortably. Redcoat as he was, he had sentiment enough to feel ashamed of the desecration.

But not so another officer who happened to stand behind the group. In a voice thickened by a sedulous attention to the spirituous portion of the refreshments, a voice that Constance knew for Mowatt's without the evidence of that soldier's sardonic face, he said:

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“One of ’em wasn’t burned, Cuyler, Deacon Hubbard’s — carved mahogany and silk — makes me a royal hog-stye.”

Cuyler turned on him with a look of almost threatening anger, and the fellow swaggered away.

A great bricked stove had been built on one side to warm the arena, and into its capacious throat, Constance noted, a man was pouring a curious sort of food from an irregular heap near by.

“Of course my eyes are playing me tricks,” she remarked, to Cuyler, “but that soldier seems to be feeding the fire with — *books*.”

“Your vision tells the truth,” replied the officer drily.

“Are they then so plentiful?”

“A certain library was found stored in the church, I believe.”

“’Tis the Rev. Thomas Prince’s, bequeathed to the church,” said Barbara mournfully. Constance said no more, but her feelings were told in a warm and sympathetic pressure of the hand under Bab’s gray mantle.

Some of the evolutions they saw, during their short stay in the gallery, well-performed and dashing, a sight they would have enjoyed in another place. They saw, too, a number of men with white sashes around their left arms, members of General Ruggles’ band of Loyal Americans, and others whose white cockades proclaimed of the Loyal Irish Volunteers, also

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formed of Bostonians. Mistress Drake's scorn of these gentlemen was intense.

"I honor the wearers of a red coat who do their duty," she exclaimed, her eyes flashing, "but these mongrel soldiers, who fight against their own people for pleasure, it seems — Pah!"

When the girls declared that they had seen enough, Cuyler was not sorry. In fact, the corner of the gallery they occupied had become a sort of magnetic ground for certain of the officers Constance knew, and it seemed to the ensign that all of them were rather more gaily cognizant of Barbara's presence than was at all expedient.

But as they were about to leave, a trio approached whom it was impossible for Cuyler to flout. In the van was puffy, puffing Doctor Gair, and with him the handsome, graceful Percy and the rubicund Burgoyne, in the full glory of his best regimentals.

"The General wanted to see you particularly," whispered the surgeon, with a sly wink at Constance. That young woman's natural curiosity was mingled with a sort of trepidation as she remembered her overhearing of the General's words as to the expediency of fortifying Dorchester Heights, words that had formed the basis of her warning to the Americans, who had so promptly spoiled the plan by the seizure of Breed's Hill. Yet in a moment she was smiling at her own fantastic fears, and she laughingly engaged the General in conversation with such

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zest that many an approving glance was shot from the floor to her point of vantage.

As Barbara and Cuyler joined the merry group, the little girl was astonished to hear talk of theatricals flying back and forth.

“Oh, yes,” Burgoyne was saying, “your Faneuil Hall made an excellent playhouse when we cleared out the stuff stored there.”

“Can it be possible,” observed Percy, “that fair Mistress Drake did not witness the performance by Burgoyne and his players of Voltaire’s ‘Zara’?”

Dr. Gair explained this seeming anomaly. “Her uncle’s illness,” he said, “has kept her close since the siege began. But he is now so much improved she can go abroad again.”

“Egad, I’m glad of that,” exclaimed Burgoyne, heartily, “for we’re to give another play soon, and perhaps, Mistress Drake, you —”

Barbara lost the rest, which she could easily guess, as she and Cuyler passed down the stairs and to the street, where they waited Constance’s pleasure like faithful vassals.

“‘My Lady Laughter,’ you say they call her?” cried Burgoyne to Percy, when the girl and Dr. Gair had gone. “Egad, man, she merits it.”

Cuyler and his pretty charges were not yet free of their day’s adventures, it seemed, for no sooner had they started home, when a tiny specimen of boyhood, darting from behind the church, ran plump into the officer and, by reason of the laws of reaction, fell in a pathetic little heap at his feet. Then, seeing the uniform he had un-

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wittingly assailed, he covered his face with his thin hands and wailed aloud:

“Don’t beat me, sir; I didn’t steal it, indeed I didn’t!”

“Steal what, boy?” asked the ensign.

The lad pointed to a basket which had fallen with him in his interrupted flight, and which somehow his small body had managed to conceal. In it were what appeared to be bits of food, wisps of straw, and wooden chips.

“What is it, child?” asked Constance, gently helping the little fellow to his legs.

“I found ’em all, ma’am, really I did.”

“By George, it’s — well, food!” exclaimed Cuyler.

“I believe I know —” said Barbara — “yes, ’tis Tommy Lane. Your grandmother — is she well?”

“I s’pose so,” was the plaintive reply, “if them’s well as is allus hungry.”

“Are *you* hungry, my lad?” asked Constance, gently. The pinched face told its story but too well.

“Me, miss? I’m not complaining.”

“But you *are* hungry?”

“Oh, I can get along, but grandma —” The small voice quavered, but the tears were manfully kept in check. Constance’s heart swelled with pity and something very near to self-reproach.

“So there is suffering — hunger — starvation — of course there must be — and I have not thought of it,” she said. Then she gave the

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youngster a coin and bade Agnes go to see what were the needs of the grandmother. As she watched his little legs trotting along beside the rotund negress, she sighed. But with that sigh came a great resolution.

"That poor boy!" she cried. "There is work for us to do, Bab, and we shall begin to-morrow. There's not much food at any price, but there's some, and we, at least, have money."

Home again, the girl sat down at her harpsichord, and played softly for a few moments a gentle old air of Purcell's. But somehow this bit of dainty melancholy soon lost itself in a gay rigadon that flew over the strings in mad fashion. Then the player brought all ten pretty fingers crashing down upon the fragile keys, and turned toward bewildered Bab with a burst of laughter that grew so intense that it seemed like hysteria.

"Whatever is the matter, Constance dear?" asked her sober companion.

"Just think of it," was the merry reply, "I've agreed to play a part at Faneuil Hall in Burgoyne's new comedy."

"You an *actress*?" exclaimed Barbara.

"Yes, stupid. Haven't I been one these six months past?"

CHAPTER XXXII

The Twelfth Night Masque

“**Y**ULE-TIDE was ne’er like this before, I’ll be sworn, since the Christmas season first began.”

Thus Giles Romney, in no very amiable temper, to his wife, Tabitha, as they sat before the generous warmth of a fine, great fireplace, on the day after the twenty-fifth of December.

The old man was now old in physical attributes, as well as in years. Illness, worry, uncertainty of the future, anxiety for his niece — all the thousand and one bitternesses that war brings as its hand-maidens, had stolen the color from his cheeks and lessened the bulk of his once stalwart frame.

His wife gazed at his changed face with eyes that moistened with the tenderness of solicitude. There is a sadness in woman’s age, but the sadness of æstheticism, almost, the mourning for vanished beauty; there is a deeper poignancy in the decay of a man, for when strength is laid low all seems lost. Something of this the gentle lady felt as she thought of the Giles Romney of her youth, the hearty young buck who carried her heart by storm, and had been almost as impetuous ever since — until now. But she re-

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plied quietly: "We, at least, Giles, have shelter, food, and light and warmth."

"Warmth? Umph!" growled her husband. "But what do you suppose we're burning now?"

"Indeed, I know not."

"Well," — and he struck at a log with the brass-mounted tongs, — "what do you fancy *this* may be, now? . . . 'Tis half the door-sill of Parson Moorehead's house. I'd rather go cold than burn it, but 'tis as well that I should burn it as these upstart British!"

"Sh! Giles. Mr. Charlton might —"

"Hear me? What if he did? I'm not afraid."

"He is our guest," was the gentle reproof.

"True, Tabitha. I had forgot."

Silence fell between the couple for many minutes as each gazed into the embers of Parson Moorehead's sill, as it slowly reached the end so many times foretold for the wicked by its erstwhile owner. Then, said the old man, brightening somewhat: "Where is Constance?"

"She has not yet returned from her trip among the poor."

"The poor? We're all poor in these days. The idea of spending Christmas Day among poverty and disease! 'Tis atrocious! The merriest day of all the year it used to be in Old England. The soldiers found it gay enough here, to judge by their noise."

"Would you rather Constance were like them than —?"

"No, wife, damme, no!" he replied, with much

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of his old fire. "The girl's right; she's right, God bless her!"

This benison reached its mark promptly, for Mistress Drake at the moment came bursting into the room, her cheeks rosy from her winter walk.

"Who was it said 'listeners never hear aught that's good of themselves'?" she cried, and ran to her uncle with a resounding kiss that pleased the old fellow mightily. Age might steal his garlands of youth, and trouble eat into his heart, but with these fresh and loving lips against his cheek, life was still to be desired.

"Constance, my dear," said her aunt, "Barbara has been waiting for you the past hour.

The girl ran quickly upstairs. She had not seen her little friend for several days, and when last they met she had fancied some change in her looks. The peach-bloom of the cheeks, had it not paled a bit? And were there not the suggestions of dark circles under the brown eyes? Yes, she was sure of it, now that she was face to face with her. She took the girl to her heart, in an embrace of affection and apprehension.

"Poor child," she thought, "even she feels the strain." Then she said aloud: "Now, let's sit down and have a good, long talk."

"I came to ask you to go home with me," replied Barbara.

"To go home with you? Certainly, although I'm something weary. I begin to believe I was never intended for a Good Samaritan, at least not an active one. But what's to do?"

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On the way to Quaker Lane, Barbara told her friend that she had come for her at the appeal of Toby Gookin, who, although healed of his wound, was still in hiding at her father's house. "And why he stays so long here is all very strange to me," she ended.

"Long Toby, eh?" said Constance. "Why, what can he want of *me*?"

"That's what I asked him, and he only said John would wish it."

"You have heard from — your brother?"

"Toby does frequently — by men who come to the house at night. But John never writes a word to me."

"He fears 'twould get you into trouble, dear," replied her friend comfortingly.

Piloted to the garret of the Brandon house by Barbara, who explained that Toby found it expedient to remain in strict seclusion during the daytime, Constance found the tall rustic reading a book. This in itself was rather surprising, but the change in his appearance and manners was perhaps still more so. Apparently, he had steeped himself in John Brandon's literature during his long visit, and the effect had been to remove some of the uncouthness of his former self. The girl noted that the volume he laid down at her arrival was a compilation of some of the "Spectator" papers, and she wondered if Sir Roger had been able to work this transformation unaided.

"Yew will excuse me, Mistress Drake, for troublin' you," he began, after Barbara had

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left them alone, "but it is necessary. It is in Major Brandon's name I do it."

"If I can be of any service —" began Constance.

"Yew can! I have stayed here for one purpose, —" here his voice sank into an intense whisper, — "it is to remove a secret store of paowder and ammuniton to withaout the taouwn where 'tis sorely needed. The attempt will be made on Twelfth Night, when, I am told, the soldiers and sailors make merry in celebration."

Twelfth Night! The girl recalled with vividness the licentious revelry of that celebration a year ago, when the town was in nominal peace. Now, with war, what might not it be?

"We shall take advantage of that night's uproar," Gookin went on, "to try and pass the lines with what is likely to be a paouwerful bulky load. No more farm wagons are likely tew git out naouw," he added, with a smile.

"As I helped you then," answered Constance, "so you can rely upon me now."

"I knew it," he said heartily. "We need money — a small amount — Mr. Brandon has, without my knowing it until now, spent his all, and — well, there hez been sufferin' here."

Constance looked at the giant with amazement and consternation.

"Suffering?" she cried. "Then that is what has made Barbara —"

"You hev noticed it, then? I fear that of late there has not been even enough to eat."

"Why was I not told?" she demanded in-

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dignantly. "They shall want for nothing. I will —"

"Might I suggest? . . . Could yew take Mistress Barbara and her father tew your uncle's house?"

"Yes, and you, too," she exclaimed.

But Gookin shook his head. "I am grateful to ye, miss, but I hoped they might go, to leave me here alone. 'Tis risky work and Major Brandon would never forgive me should harm come to his sister."

The removal of Barbara and her father, on pretext of an invitation to a visit, was speedily arranged, and Constance, taking some money from her own little hoard, sent it to Long Toby, by means of Pompey.

"Did you see him, Pompey?" the girl demanded on his return.

"'Deed I did, missy, an' he was as gracious to dis yer niggah as if I'd a been King Peterholomy on de trone ob de Egyptologists' dinahnasty."

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The intervening days before Twelfth Night were to Constance Drake a time of mental unrest very near to pain. She suffered ardently that species of torture that comes to one vitally interested in the outcome of some plan, and yet ignorant of its progress or its methods. What if Toby should fail? What if the carefully built structure of the Patriots should tumble about their heads in a terrible crash?

What if John Brandon — Toby had hinted

darkly that he might come to town to see the plot to its termination — what if he were to be taken? Ah, there was no doubt about what would happen then. Death! To a spy! Lord Howe had been very free with his talk of gibbets and executions, nor was it idle bombast, she knew.

A man had been hanged once, and she had unwittingly passed the gallows after dark. She had never forgotten the solemn horror of that sight, and now in her disordered visions she seemed to behold the slender body of John Brandon swaying gently from that fearsome loop that threw his head back so horribly, a black figure against the only less black night!

But the awaited day came at last, clear and not cold for the season. Constance resolved to stay indoors, for, after all, her further help might by some chance be needed, and here she could be reached by Gookin. To hide her nervousness, she remained with no one for any considerable time, but flitted through the house from drawing-room to kitchen and cellar to garret, a picture of charming impetuosity and girlish buoyancy. At least so thought Lieutenant Charlton, and his judgment in such matters was considered trustworthy.

Late in the afternoon evidences of the celebration began to show themselves. Bands of rollicking, half-tipsy soldiers roamed through the streets, occasionally demonstrating their brotherly love by indulging in rousing fist-fights.

One, of special liveliness, in front of the house, led old Romney to remark: "'Tis curious that

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the roistering at the breaking up of the Christmas season takes such brutal, silly form. But we must be ready for it. Have we plenty of small coins in the house?"

"More of them than aught else, I fancy, Giles," said his wife, with a fond smile.

"Well, let's have 'em ready, for the knaves will not neglect us, be sure of that."

With candle-light the mid-winter *fête* began in earnest. Before its visible forms reached the Romney mansion, there were sounds in the air that were not of the ordinary course of war. Cracked bugles blew terrific blasts; gongs beat their rasping roundelay, while the rattle of cow-bells and the crazy squealing of over-blown fifes joined in the mad chorus that raucously proclaimed to the inhabitants of Boston the fact that Christmas comes but once a year.

Soon a band of revellers turned up Winter Street, and the noise became so nerve-racking that old Giles, non-musical though he was, and not provided with sensitive ears, pressed his hands to his head in desperation, while Methuselah, the family cat, expanded his tail, wailed his displeasure, and vanished into the cellar.

This particular cortege was made up of two-score sailors from the transports in the harbor, dressed in white shirts ornamented with parti-colored ribbons, crossed with knots and garlands. They marched along on each side of a long rope, attached to which was an immense plow that bumped and careened over the hard ground in a very burlesque of husbandry. By their side

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capered a yelling pair of devils, man and woman, with a small imp whose duty it was to collect tribute from the houses they passed. Having reached the Romneys and obtained a liberal supply of small coins from the grinning and consequential Pompey, they passed and were soon mercifully lost to sight and sound.

Constance could find no heart for this sort of funning, and she had retreated to the rear of the house after a first sight of it. She could scarcely control her nerves for apprehension, and every unusual noise was like the call of fate, only to be proven nothing but part and parcel of the Englishmen's revels. But in a little while there was borne in upon her another uproar, that some instinct told her was at least worth investigating. She ran lightly to the spacious and comfortable front room at the left of the hall, which was still occupied by Lieutenant Charlton. The officer was sitting by a window, his elbow on the sill, and his head resting in the palm of his hand in an attitude of deep reverie. But he rose quickly at the sound of her footfalls, and bowed with his unfailing gallantry.

"What do you make this new tumult to be, Lieutenant Charlton?" asked the girl.

"'Tis another party of Yuletide beggars, Mistress Drake, I fancy."

"I thought it might —" she did not finish, and after a brief pause, the soldier said that which was near his heart.

"Well, Mistress Drake, to-morrow I suppose

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I shall say farewell to this household that has done so much for me."

"We are certainly glad you are well again," said the girl, still looking from the window.

"And so am I," was the manly reply. "Even if a soldier's quarters are not much like home."

"There, they are coming," she cried nervously, and Charlton could say no more. He leaned against the panes and tried to make out the cause of the fresh disturbance, but it was not until a group of torch-bearers danced into view that any clear conception of the new mummery could be had.

Then the two saw that another body of twenty or thirty men was hauling a long cart that seemed to have been a hayrack in its more palmy days, but whose sides were now covered with canvas upon which were daubed grotesque pictures intended to represent the regions of eternal heat. Shrieks and groans of the feigned damned rent the air, while a huge bell borne under a sort of shoulder-litter by eight men, tolled its dismal, incessant song of woe.

The attendant crowd sported the most diverse and absurd raiment ever seen. Bits of ancient uniforms were grotesquely mingled with rustic garments, while odds and ends of every description were used to produce an effect that was ludicrously kaleidoscopic. It was as if the inmates of some madhouse had been turned into a curiosity shop and then given their freedom.

"A motley crowd," observed Charlton, languidly, "grotesque, if not beautiful."

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But Constance made no reply. She was watching two figures that had left the cohort, as it halted before the house, and had come up the garden walk with jaunty step and shouts for alms. One, dressed as a devil, a tall and imposing denizen of the lower regions, had been chasing with a pitch-fork his companion, who, it was clear, was supposed to be a grotesque parody on the provincial soldier. To the girl there seemed a vague air of familiarity about the lofty imp, but she dismissed the thought as he pounded lustily on the door, shouting for tribute to the King of Twelfth Night.

"Give 'em something, Pompey," cried old Romney, from above stairs. But the negro was slow, and Barbara ran to the door with a few coins and laid them with some trepidation in the hands of the devil.

"Thankee, miss," said Satan loudly. Then in a whisper: "Miss Barbara, 'tis Toby. Wait here jest a bit and I'll send your brother to yew."

Then he vanished behind a corner of the house.

"'Tis all right," he said, to a figure awaiting him there. "Your sister waits for yew. I'll draw 'tention aout yender." And he pointed to the absurd crew in the street. As he did so, he raised his great body above the sill of the window, and Constance, startled by the apparition of Toby Gookin, could not refrain from uttering a little cry of surprise.

"Whatever is the matter?" asked Charlton, in alarm, rising to his feet.

THE TWELFTH NIGHT MASQUE

“Nothing — I —”

As she stepped backward quickly, her foot caught in the folds of her long skirt, and she would have fallen but for the sustaining arms of the soldier. For one brief moment she lay in his embrace helpless.

“She is there,” whispered Gookin, pointing to the window.

And John Brandon, gazing into the lighted room, saw all.

With a catching of the breath, he followed Toby to the door and clasped his sister’s hands in his own, telling her that all was well, and urging her to be of good cheer. A few more words and he rejoined the disguised Patriots and the rollicking cortege moved on with shouts and songs.

“It seems to me that wagon creaks and groans strangely for one without a load,” thought Charlton, as he was left alone. But he turned to his pipe and his dreams, now to be enriched by the remembrance of the brief glimpse of paradise during which he had held Constance Drake in his arms.

She herself had scarcely reached the top of the stairs, when Barbara came running after, her bosom heaving.

“Oh, Constance, Constance,” she cried, “I’ve seen John.”

“John? When? Where?”

“Just now — on the steps. He was one of the masqueraders.”

“Then, these are not sailors —”

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"No, they're his men. And they're taking something out of town."

"I see."

"And he thanked you, Constance."

Mistress Drake bit her lips with vexation and injured pride. "Merely sent his thanks," she thought.

"And he said such a strange thing."

"What was it, dear?"

"Oh, I can't tell. I can't!" protested the little girl.

"You *must*."

There was something in the command that even Barbara had never known before, and her feeble will yielded.

"He said: 'I thank her for her love for the cause, even though she has none for me.'"

"What?" was the astonished query. "You must be dreaming!"

"I'm not," said Barbara stoutly. "Those were his very words, although what they mean I'm sure I don't know."

"They mean, Barbara Brandon, that your brother is — a fool!" was the energetic response.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A "Yankee Girl"

SLEEP was long in coming to press down Constance Drake's eyelids that night. Over and over again the strange song of Barbara Brandon's words was sung in her heart, now as a mournful chant, again as a lively, but vexatious lilt, and still again as a dreamy, mystic sob of music. What did it mean?

How could the girl unravel the tangled skein of words and thoughts that were so at variance from that which ought to be? With the memory of those moments in the Vassall House at Cambridge, how could any man say such a thing? Why had she not asked Barbara again about the message? She would do so in the morning, she decided. And then, as the blood of pride warmed her cheek, she told her companionable pillow that never, never could she do so unwomanly an act.

"Have I no pride left," she asked, "no sense of shame? What right has he given me to question his acts? Why should I allow others, and least of all his sister, to see that I feel the affront he has put upon me?"

For there could be no doubt that it *was* an affront. The words, if spoken to her, she could

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have resolved into their elements of nonsense, or, at least, have sent the young man about his business with something to think upon. But that miserable sneaking away in the dark, with such a message to her through another's mouth — it was enough to anger a saint.

“Yes, it was an affront,” she said, aloud, “intended and unprovoked, for he never even asked to see me. He came to this house, to my house, and saw his sister and ignored me — after — after that day at Cambridge. It was cruel, cruel!”

And here befell a most unusual manifestation. Tears slowly forced themselves from around the sleepless eyes and trickled out upon the satin cheeks. Tears, from Mistress Constance Drake, the spoiled beauty, the be-praised and be-poemed. And for a man! Who of all the gay and gallant crowd of those who would be her courtiers, if they could, would credit it?

Suddenly, the girl sat bolt upright with the inspiring effect of a new thought. That day at Lexington, that injury to Brandon's head! Might not some new worry and a course of sleepless nights have turned his brain again, so that it was not the true John Brandon who spoke last night to Barbara? This was so soothing a speculation that it sent the girl to sleep and to dream. And behold, in the land of fantasy, Major John Brandon and the whole American army stood in front of the Romney house, thundered on the door, and called upon her to sur-

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render in the name of King George the Third and the Continental Congress.

But it was only Barbara Brandon, tapping outside her chamber.

"The sun's up, Connie," sang the little girl.

"So's the niece," cried Mistress Drake, throwing back her silken, wadded coverlid, and springing to the floor like a young wild thing. For a moment she shivered, as the chill air struck through her dainty linen robe, with its frills and laces.

"Ugh," she chattered, "it is cold enough this morning, I fancy, to remind us that it isn't spring hereabouts, no matter what a stray bird may say."

But she dashed courageously at the almost freezing water in her bowl, and glowed rosy as the last cobweb of the night was swept from her charming head. Then back again came the Brandon idea and the reiteration of it all. Of a sudden a deep and musical voice was heard outside her door.

"Good morning, Mistress Brandon," it said, "one has to be astir right early not to find you already up and smiling."

"Lieutenant Charlton, and he goes away to-day," thought Constance. With the thought came the recollection of last night's stumble and half-fall in the soldier's room. "I'll have to keep my footing better hereafter," she exclaimed, "for there'll be no one to catch me. How ridiculous I must have seemed." And,

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ever responsive to the comic side of things, she laughed heartily.

Old Giles Romney heard the peal of merriment down by his breakfast-room fireside, and it warmed his heart.

“What a girl!” he thought; “nothing can daunt her.”

But he did not see the swift cloud that crossed his niece’s face, like a shadow over a smiling lake. It was half-frightened, half-amazed; then the sun burst forth again, as the girl flew to her mirror and pointed a dimpled finger at the portrait there.

“*He* saw you — saw *us*,” she cried excitedly, “and he was jealous, jealous, jealous of me!”

She finished her dressing with an obligato of song, and went to the breakfast table in the merriest mood for many a day. The whole household seemed to fall under the girl’s spell, and the meal was eaten with a zest and gaiety quite unknown of recent months.

“Oh, I had forgot,” suddenly cried Constance.

“What, child?” asked her uncle indulgently.

“The play — ’tis to-morrow night, and to-day’s the rehearsal.”

“What play? Where?”

“At Faneuil Hall. ’Tis Burgoyne’s.”

“Burgoyne?” asked the old man, in some perplexity.

“Yes,” volunteered Lieutenant Charlton, “a farce called ‘The Blockade of Boston.’”

“Anything but farce, I should say,” observed Constance drily.

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"But Burgoyne has sailed," said Giles.

"Yes — to escape the critics, 'tis said. Tomorrow night, and rehearsal to-day. And I've not looked at my part. . . . Oh, 'tis but three lines. But my dress, *that* needs a deal of rehearsing."

"Constance, why are you concerned in this?" asked her uncle gravely, when the two were alone after breakfast. "'Tis scarcely a time for play-acting — and — with — with our enemies, too."

"If they were our friends, uncle," was the calm reply, "there would be no need. But our enemies, — shall we not cultivate them to the possible comfort of our friends and their own confounding, it may be?"

The old man half sighed, half smiled in his perplexity.

"I never did understand you, girl," he said, "any more than I did your father. But I love you as I did him. . . . But what do you mean — in plain English?"

"In plain — Yankee — I've found that even a non-combatant can be of use if she is — well, not unpopular, and is in the camp of the enemy."

Giles Romney rose from his chair, trembling upon his stick, and cast the look of a hawk upon the now serious girl from his still keen eyes.

"Connie, girl," he exclaimed, his voice quivering with emotion, "you don't mean that you are a s—"

A warm palm stayed the progress of the other letters from his mouth very effectually.

"Don't say it, uncle; 'tis not a nice word, and

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General Howe has some very settled ideas upon the subject. Now, you would not like to see your niece at the end of a —”

“Connie, Connie!” he cried, in real distress.

“Of a prison corridor,” she continued. “Nay, do not worry; ’tis not so bad as that. I may have been of some slight service to the cause, but I’ve done no more than exercise a woman’s privilege and carry gossip.”

And then nothing would answer but that Constance tell her uncle of all that she had been able to do and of the prospects for the Patriots so far as she knew them, to which recital he listened with all a boy’s ardor for a story of heroes. Yet, when his mind came back to the subject of the theatricals in Faneuil Hall, he was not quite satisfied.

“But, Constance,” he said, as the girl rose to go, “is this play affair quite — quite decorous?”

“I am told by those familiar with General Burgoyne’s previous theatricals that it is sure to be quite stupid.”

“Yes, yes; but for a lady —”

“Oh, all the officers’ wives who were not asked — and some who were — are furiously jealous because I was invited. And seriously, the best — *Tory* ladies of the camp take part in these theatricals.”

That assurance, and the further statement that places had positively been reserved for Tabitha and himself, nearly finished the old fellow’s qualms, and he passed the rest of the day in wondering at his niece’s infinite variety.

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Constance herself was busy with her costume, a simple white dress made a little more dashing by some fresh ribbons and bows. At last, with Barbara's help, it was put in order, and its wearer looked with satisfaction at her reflection in the long mirror.

"For you know, Bab," she remarked philosophically, "I'm to play a Yankee girl, and I must look my best, for the sake of the fair fame of the town."

Whereupon she smiled at her own curious conceit, and from smiling went to mirth of a broader and more rippling sort.

"Whatever are you laughing so for?" asked patient Barbara, who had asked the self-same question perhaps hundreds of times before.

"If they only knew how I shall love my part, they'd as soon invite a nest of hornets to join in their theatricals," said Mistress Drake.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Play at Faneuil Hall

AROUND the doors of Faneuil Hall on the following evening the knots of sightseers — for there were still those in old Boston who were quick to respond to the announcement of a spectacle — found much with which to regale themselves. Crowds of British officers in full uniform, Loyalist women in brave array of silks and satins, velvet cloaks and furred hoods, and town Tories in evening garb, were pouring into the narrow edifice and up over the stairways to the auditorium that had now become a theatre.

Outside there was as much brilliancy as the time would permit, for dozens of candle-lanterns had been fixed upon upright pieces of joist, while the flaming torches of some of the ultra-fashionables, aping the ways of London, threw a warm and jovial air over everything.

Sergeants acted as doorkeepers, and likewise passed out printed programmes which announced that the entertainment for the evening would consist of "The Busybody," and "The Blockade of Boston," a farce by General Burgoyne. It was also hoped by the Society for Promoting Theatrical Amusements, "that gentlemen of the army would not use their influence

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to disobey the order not to take money at the door," and it was further announced that the house had been "strictly surveyed by the management and tickets sold for the number it would contain, in order to prevent overcrowding."

That these precautions had been wisely taken was made evident soon after the doors had opened. A young and callow officer, who perchance had had more grog at the Coffee House hard by than was good for him, threw himself into the brilliant, chattering stream with the hope of being swept by the doorkeeper in the general rush, ticketless.

But a huge sergeant held the red bar of his brawny arm before him, respectfully but stoutly.

"Your ticket, sir," he demanded.

"Ticket, forsooth? Ah, to be sure. Why — curse these knavish pockets — I — I — egad, sirrah, I left it at barracks, dolt that I am. 'Tis all the same; permit me to enter."

"That, sir, may not be," replied the doorman, stolidly.

"Egad, 'tis here," cried the youngster, taking a gold-piece from his waistcoat, and pressing it into the palm of the sergeant. It was a heavy temptation, for the feeling of the metal would have won many a richer man, but, with a sigh, the soldier handed back the money, a true if nameless hero in those days when money meant so much.

"I am sorry, sir," he said, "but orders are orders, and I cannot let you by."

All this bit of by-play was thoroughly ab-

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sorbed by a special group of onlookers, among whom the small George Robert Twelves Hewes was the head and centre.

"Pshaw!" that little man exclaimed disdainfully, "he could 'a' got in easy enow, if he'd only known how."

"Indeed?" said a doubter, "and how would *you* have done, Mr. Hewes?"

"Just as I did once, and there were two of 'em."

"How was it? Tell us," was the cry.

"'Twas when they first put a guard at the wharves. I wanted to go down one night for — well, that's naught to do with it. Two big sentries barred my way.

"'The countersign!' they cried. I gave it to 'em."

"How did *you* know it?" asked the man who had been sceptical.

"I carried it with me — in the pocket of my coat. 'Twas a bottle of rum, and I had its mate in t'other pocket. Well, when I came back from the wharf they were very friendly. Next day I saw them flogged for sleeping at their post."

Into the very midst of the laughter that greeted this sally of Hewes', came the Romney party. As Constance found herself caught in the swirl of beauty and gallantry, fashion and laughter, she began to regret her agreement to be part of that which she now loathed.

"I'm almost sorry I agreed to come, nunky," she whispered.

"Let's turn back, child, then," he replied.

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“No. I’ve given my word and must see it through. Besides, the money goes to the widows and orphans of the soldiers, and they are not to blame for what the King does.”

“Let us say the King’s ministers, and not the King, Constance, till we know further,” was the old man’s gentle rebuke.

But here, in the lower hall, was Lord Percy, waiting to receive them, smiling and bowing, but to Constance alone.

“My aunt and my uncle, my Lord,” said the girl pointedly.

“A thousand pardons,” cried the officer; “my poor sight must bear the brunt for all such offenses.”

“But you saw *me*,” observed Constance, sweetly.

“That I swear I would do, though I were as blind as Æsop,” cried the Earl, with a fine flourish of his pearl snuff-box, as he deftly inserted a pinch of the brown powder into each nostril. “But let us upstairs and secure seats.”

Once within the atmosphere of powder and perfumes, surrounded by the hum of hundreds of tongues, gay, gossiping, witty, kindly or malicious as the case might be, part and parcel of this flouncing of skirts, this swaggering of swords, this fluttering of fans and swaying of feathers, Constance felt something of that sentiment which had flushed her cheeks at the sight of the riding-school in the South Church.

To be sure, there was here no actual desecration, and yet the insult was strong. To make a

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place for British farces of this room, dedicated by Samuel Adams himself to the cause of liberty, and after that the scene of so many of those spontaneous and audacious mass meetings of the foes of tyranny, seemed to her little less revolting than the mockery of a shrine. Yet she kept her heart from her sleeve, and chatted and jested, smiled and nodded, like a true little Tory.

Before they reached their seats, Dr. Gair, quite his gay and ruddy self again, came trotting up with felicitations for the girl's beauty and handsome toilet, as well as for the reappearance into society of Giles Romney.

"Glad to see you stirring out," he said. "'Tis good for you, friend Romney, and good for you, too, Mistress Connie. Roses you know—" and he pinched his own fat cheeks. "And how are you, Mistress Tabitha?"

"I should not complain, doctor, although I ought not to be out. . . . But I've never seen a play in my life," she added simply.

"They're not many this side the water," replied the surgeon. "But you've not missed much. The stage has degenerated of late years — vilely, vilely!"

Thus freeing his mind, and with a sigh for the glories of the stage in London, he followed the Romney party to their seats pointed out to them by my Lord Rawdon, who was acting as an usher, and from which Constance could see "The Busybody," and yet have easy access to the stage door when Burgoyne's farce, in which

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she and half a dozen Tory young women were to take part, should be in readiness.

No sooner were they in their places than the doctor nudged Constance with the familiarity of a bluff old friend. "I see you are to take part in Burgoyne's nonsense," he said. "He write a play, indeed! His tragedies are farces; his farces tragic."

"You '*see*,' Dr. Gair?" she replied, smiling. "Is it, then, chronicled in the journals?"

"I don't read them! But it is set down here. . . . Oh, they have all the fittings, play bills and all, except playwrights — and actors," he added to himself.

Now a string band struck up a sort of overture, in which "Rule Britannia" was the chief theme, and the buzzing of the fashionable insects almost ceased. Then, as the final flourish was given, the green baize curtain went creaking up, and the comedy of "The Busybody" was under way.

Just what this dramatic offering was all about, Constance could never quite remember. She was so occupied with her own thoughts, and with a sort of premature stage-fright, as she realized that in a few minutes she herself would be facing that crowd of foppish soldiers, with their oglings and something worse, that she scarce heard a word.

She also fell to wondering about the character of "The Blockade of Boston." What if, as was quite likely, there were in it insults to her country, and vile imputations upon her countrymen?

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That was something she had not reckoned with. Yet she did know that her share consisted of but the briefest of appearances on the stage and one or two speeches in concert with the other young ladies. And these remarks were, fortunately, quite colorless. Whatever happened, she would keep her head, and play her part as royally as any.

The shouts of applause, the clapping of hands, the pounding of swords, and the almost futile squeakings of the violins roused her to the knowledge that the first play was ended. Then all was life and bustle again, as the throng turned to the refreshment room, while a dozen attendants went the rounds for the trimming of the candles. Escorted by Charlton, and surrounded by a coterie of officers she knew, Mistress Drake was as gay and volatile and flippant as any Tory lady could possibly be expected to be, and Charlton might have fought half a dozen duels had he chosen to resent a trifle more the attentions his handsome charge drew to herself.

But this triumph was not for long, by reason of the approach of an officer whose pleasing duty it was to gather into one charming bevy the young women who were billed to appear in "The Blockade of Boston," and Mistress Drake went with them.

The audience seated itself again, and a slight hum of pleasurable expectancy arose as it awaited the supposedly humorous piece of Burgoyne. Here was to be some pointed fun at the expense of the rebels, and fun was at a premium

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in these days. So, made especially tolerant by certain of the refreshments, the crowd was quite ready to be amused.

And amused it was by the appearance of the first character to come upon the stage. This was a burlesque apparition of George Washington, dressed in uncouth and ill-fitting clothes, a vile travesty of a Continental uniform, wearing a huge red wig and carrying an absurd rusty sword. His attendant was a country lout, garbed in fantastic farm-clothes. His weapon was a ramshackle gun some seven or eight feet long, and every time he saluted his general he would trip himself up with it in a truly humorous way.

The mimic Washington's first utterance was a coarse guffaw, which was taken up by the audience and hurled from floor to ceiling in one roar of delight. Truly, General Burgoyne had begun passing well, and cries of approval almost obliterated the words the Patriot commander's lieutenant was trying to say to him.

At the moment quiet was restored and Washington opened his mouth to speak, a British sergeant, flushed and panting, strode down one of the aisles, then turned and faced the throng.

"The Yankees are attacking our works on Bunker Hill," he cried excitedly.

"Ha, ha!" — "Well devised," — "A pretty wit," were the comments of the audience, who saw in this realistic touch a highly diverting invention. The ladies laughed and snapped their fans, and the farce was about to proceed.

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Then up from the centre of the house jumped Lord Howe, his face pale and his mouth twitching. Those who looked upon him were sobered in an instant.

“Officers, to your alarm-posts!” he shouted.

In an instant the hall was transformed. Glittering redcoats arose in every part of the floor, and, heedless of the shrieks and swoonings of some of the more hysterical women, ploughed their way to the doors, and clanked down over the stairs in a furious hurry, while the Tory beaux were left to pilot the panic-stricken ladies from the hall as best they might.

Then the actors came tumbling out over the front of the stage, rubbing their powder and paint from their faces as they ran, and adding more than their proper quota to the din and confusion. It was a rout of satins, a stampede of laces, a mad rush to an unknown refuge against a peril no one really understood.

Soon Constance joined her people, as calm and unruffled as if she had been coming to tea at home. She reassured her terrified aunt, then turned to her uncle with a bitter smile.

“This diversion saved a scene of a different sort,” she said. “If I had ever gone on that stage I must have cried out and denounced them all. Now let us go home.”

Conditions in the street below, where Pompey met them with chattering teeth and cocked hat all awry, were exciting enough. Lights flashed to and fro, oaths and commands were mingled with the rattle of military equipments and the

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roll of drums, while from afar off came the spiteful pop-pop of musketry, the sign that something was amiss at the British outposts in Charlestown. It turned out to be but a puny and fleeting attack, but it had done its work well so far as the theatricals of Jan. 8, 1776, were concerned.

As the Romney party drew away from the radiance of the windows of the hall, Constance, who was bringing up the rear with Pompey, heard of a sudden a half-whispered, half-familiar voice.

“Do not be alarmed,” it said. “The attack is only a skirmish.”

She turned abruptly, but only in time to see a cloaked figure melting into the blackness.

“Who was that, Pompey?” she asked sharply.

“’Deed, I didn’t see nobody, missy,” replied the negro, his voice trembling, “Did you?”

“Certainly, and heard him too.”

“Well, I didn’t, missy. Mebbe I’se not takin’ as much notice as us’al. I guess I ain’t a Pigmylion o’ brav’ry.”

At home, Barbara, whom no cajoling nor even commanding had been sufficient to carry to the theatricals, was eager for the news.

“How was the play, Connie?” she asked, in her childlike fashion. “Did you enjoy it, and why —”

“It was a — a nightmare, Bab,” was the emphatic reply. “Don’t ever speak of it to me. . . . As we came home, Barbara, someone spoke to

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me in the darkness. . . . I think it was your brother."

"Very likely," said the little girl calmly.

"Very likely? Why, what do you mean?" asked Constance, tossing her head.

"Why, he said he might stay in town a few days."

CHAPTER XXXV

“Speak of Him no More”

THE sun that poured in at the windows of Dan MacAlpine’s fencing-loft next morning illumined a cheery sight, and served as a pleasant accompaniment to a merry sound. This latter was the whistling of the old soldier, which in a way set the tune for the strokes of the brush with which he was cleaning a red uniform of the British army. Seated upon a cedar chest, from which he had just taken the garments, he stroked the cloth tenderly, as if afraid of doing it injury, and yet briskly enough to remove the least suspicion of dust that might be hidden in its scarlet meshes.

With his grizzled hair tightly curled, his ruddy face shining with good-nature, and his lips pursed to the production of jig, rigadon, and an occasional slowing to minuet, he was a sight to drive away melancholy. Old Sol smiled at him through the panes, and went his way, satisfied.

“Whirra,” he cried to no one, “how monny toimes have Oi claned this same ould coat, d’ye think?” And receiving no reply, he brushed away and whistled more energetically than ever.

He had just arisen from the cedar chest, with

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the coat over his arm, when a lively rataplan was beaten on the door of the loft.

"Come in, God bless ye," he cried heartily, rather expecting Hewes or some other of his few Patriot cronies left in town. But no. What did enter with pretty gustiness was a delectable vision in dark red, with a fur hood from which looked out two sparkling eyes and glowed two rose-like cheeks, the result of a winter forenoon's brisk walk.

"Good-morrow, Dan," cried Mistress Drake, "but — but you are not ill?"

"Ill?" exclaimed the fencer, "ill, is it? Oi niver felt betther in me loife. What led ye to think Oi was ill, darlint?"

"That stupid Pompey told me he heard you were down with rheum, and I came here to see if I might not be of service."

"Bless yer heart, lass, for that same. But instid o' bein' down *with* a rheum Oi am up *in* me room — Howly Saint Patrick, forgive me for a bad jist. . . . But now ye're here, 'tis well sint ye are, well sint, indade."

And the old fellow winked, smiled, stuck his tongue in his cheek, and looked as much a picture of mystery as was possible with his frank face.

"Why 'well sent,' Dan?" asked Constance, as duly puzzled as he had intended she should be.

"Why? Oh, well, jist for a wee bit of a reason of me own, darlint, which Oi will now thry to bring forth."

So saying he walked to a certain portion of the

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floor, and tapped cabalistically upon it with his heel. Then, with a broad smile, he returned to put the red coat away in the cedar chest.

“Oh, Dan,” said Constance, with half-jesting reproach, “you treating a British uniform so monstrous carefully? Fie, sir!”

“Ah, Connie, girl,” he replied, “ye don’t know who’s ’tis, now, do ye?”

“Yours?”

“Go way wid yer blarney. Can’t ye say ’tis the uniform of a captain? Sure, Oi niver had a commission. . . . No, not moine, Connie, but once worn by wan very dear to me — one who knew *you*.”

“Not — not —”

“Yis, yer father’s own, darlint. An’ thot’s why ivery twicet a month Oi bring it out and say thot it’s put in proper shape. An’ so Oi’ll always do, though Oi doubt not ’tw’u’d be blue and buff were the captain here the day.”

Constance’s heart swelled with an emotion that was sweet and sad at once. Poignant grief she could not feel, but she realized that tender melancholy that comes to most human hearts at the sight of the long unseen things of childhood. And although memory failed her, she knew that once her baby head had rested on the breast of that old coat, and that strong arms within its drooping sleeves had enwrapt her safe from all harm.

She smiled through her tear-dimmed eyes.

“Was — *this* what you meant when you said

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I was 'well sent,' Dan?" she asked gently. He scratched his head confusedly.

"Not ixactly, darlint, though 'tis not so bad. No," he exclaimed with more boldness, as he heard a step on the stairs. "No, what Oi really mint, mavourneen, is—there." And he pointed dramatically and triumphantly to the open door.

In it stood John Brandon, in civilian dress again, looking taller and more graceful than ever before. Constance's blood began to dance in her veins, and she knew that her cheeks were betraying her emotion. Withal, she was very happy as she realized that here at last, in the clear morning sunshine, misunderstanding would vanish and the truth make them glad. She smiled, and held out her hand. Brandon walked slowly forward, and gravely took the dimpled fingers and raised them to his lips.

MacAlpine, his honest soul filled with delight, beamed upon the pair for a moment, then, with a shrug of his shoulders and something in the way of an excuse, betook himself down the stairs with a great clatter, and out of the street door, which he banged vigorously, to prove conclusively that he had left the building.

Constance's amusement at this transparent subterfuge danced from her laughing eyes.

"Isn't he good?" she exclaimed.

"Who?"

"Why, Dan, of course." "Stupid!" she whispered to herself.

Brandon did not smile as he replied: "Yes, very good. He is harboring me here at danger

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to himself. I fancy that none other in the town would do it. Most prefer to entertain *British* officers.”

“He is really gone,” said the girl brightly, and not without a certain feminine challenge, as she looked from the window.

“Methinks he should be,” replied Brandon drily, “after so much sign of it.”

Still his face was as grave as before, and he moved no nearer Mistress Drake. But she, filled with a tenderness so new that it was almost a pain, laid her hand gently upon his arm. He neither shrank from the touch, nor courted it.

“I — I have missed you much, John,” she said wistfully. And if ever a besotted man should have seen his heart’s desire in a woman’s eyes, John Brandon ought to have beheld just that.

“One would scarce have thought you would have had time for that, Mistress Drake,” he said, with a mirthless smile.

“How mean you?” she asked quickly, some of the beautiful light fading from her eyes.

“I mean that with a British officer in your house and Tory routs outside it, you could hardly have leisure for much thought of a humble soldier in the American army,” he said bitterly.

Piqued, but still willing to save the situation, even at the expense of her pride, Constance laughed gaily.

“John, John,” she cried, “you’re surely not so foolish as to think that I have any room in my heart for Tories or English officers or any other than — you must know —”

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"I know this," he broke in with sudden heat, "that I saw you in *his* arms on the night of the masque. Strange, that your heart and body should be so at variance!"

"Ah, as I thought," she exclaimed, smiling again at this verification of her reasoning; glad that a few words would now clear away every storm-cloud.

"As you thought," he echoed scornfully, his dark eyes blazing, "as you thought, so you acted. Oh, 'twas nothing new for you, I warrant. Have you not tended that fellow for months in your own home? Have you not mingled with the enemies of our country — eaten with them, laughed with them, prayed with them, most like?"

The girl's cheeks flushed and her mouth hardened. This, then, was the reward for unmaidenly advances, this the end of the dream that had been in her heart. She straightened proudly and looked Brandon full in the eye. And he, stubborn and resentful, gave back the gaze without a tremor.

"Methinks you have a short memory, Master John Brandon," said Constance coldly. "Have my messages, then, been of no use? Are my services to the cause to be flouted because, forsooth, you are in an ill-temper?"

"I am in no ill-temper, Constance," he returned doggedly, "nor am I disposed to deny the value of your messages. But your life here has given the lie to your professions, and if you are not a traitor, you are at least —"

“SPEAK OF HIM NO MORE”

“I am no traitor, John Brandon, and that you know,” she exclaimed, her breast heaving and her words pouring forth in a hot torrent that seemed, later, to have seared her very tongue. “For months I have had no thought but for the success of our common cause. I have played the eavesdropper, made myself a spy, placed myself and my good old uncle in peril. And for what? To have you, *you* of all men, stand up and put me to shame! Do I deserve it, John Brandon?”

“I saw you in his arms,” returned the young soldier, gravely, hopelessly.

“So? What if I could explain —”

“There is no explanation. I saw you in his arms. . . . Ah, yes,” he cried angrily, “I see what you would say. You were so eager for news to send to the Americans, that you must needs let a British officer embrace you in your role of spy. Excellent, indeed, but scarcely sufficient. You —”

The girl’s cheeks turned from scarlet to the color of ashes, with just two tiny spots of flame in the center. Her voice became passionless, icy, and what she said came like frozen rain.

“You need give yourself no trouble, Master Brandon, to imagine my defense. I need none, and if I did, *you* should not now have it. You do me the honor to prejudge me, to disbelieve me, to discredit my faith. You shall not repeat that, sir, for from this time —”

“I understand, Mistress Drake,” he interrupted, bowing stiffly. “’Twere better for both,

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methinks; I to my camp and my sword, you to your gaiety and your cavalier. I wish you happiness and bid you good-by."

"Good-by," returned the girl proudly. Whatever she felt, *he* should not see. She was a soldier's daughter, and there, still hanging over the cedar chest, was her father's uniform bidding her be strong.

So she watched the man, whose coming had so gladdened her heart, walk to the door and pass through, and heard his measured tread down the stairs with no visible signs of emotion. Only the quivering strength of the clasping of her hands behind her back expressed the resentment of her outraged pride, of her flouted and despised efforts toward the peace of love. Thus she stood for many minutes, staring into space, saying nothing, even to her own mentality; a beautiful statue transformed by a man's scorn.

She was aroused at last by the loud stamping up the stairs of MacAlpine, who had resolved to give the lovers fair warning and catch them in no embarrassing demeanor. He looked his astonishment at finding the girl alone.

"I am waiting for you to take me home," said Constance. "I sent Pompey on an errand before I came up."

The even, colorless, far-away tones of her voice struck the faithful old fellow with apprehension. He had known her in almost every mood, but never like this.

"Where's — where's Major Brandon?" he stammered.

“SPEAK OF HIM NO MORE”

At the name all the hot blood rushed back to Mistress Drake's cheeks; her figure became animated with passion that, pent up so long, now rushed to her brain and made a furious, raging goddess of her. Years after old Dan remembered that in all his life he had never seen so superbly handsome a creature as this young woman pouring out her resentment in his sunny fencing-loft.

“Where is Master Brandon?” she echoed. “Nay, he was here but a moment ago; but where he now is, or whither he goes, is no concern of mine, nor ever will be. Speak of him no more, if you love me, Dan. I shall have other things to think of now. . . . What is't they call me — the officers, I mean?”

“Sure, Oi think 'tis ‘My Lady Laughter,’ Miss Constance,” replied the nonplussed old soldier, “but —”

“But me no buts, Dan,” cried the girl, with almost savage gaiety, “'tis a monstrous pretty name, and pleases me well. And if they call me that, why that I must be. I will be ‘My Lady Laughter’ in sooth, Dan, from this time on. So long life to her ladyship!”

CHAPTER XXXVI

Aunt Tabitha's Chiding

“**W**ELL, wife, February adds to its reputation this year.”

Thus Giles Romney to Tabitha as they sat in the breakfast-room after the morning meal, and gazed out into a stormy day. A northeast gale was howling over the roof-tops of Boston, bringing with it great, slanting curtains of snow and sleet that nearly hid from view Lord Percy's house on the west. Nature was sullen and dark, and only the bright fire on the hearth — for Romney's money was still able to procure fuel — helped to warm the hearts of the old people.

Tabitha nodded assent to her lord's indictment of the weather.

“The month is half gone, and winter's nearly over,” she observed.

“And such a winter! The past twelvemonth has seemed like as many years. How will it end, wife, how will it end?”

“As Providence ordains, Giles. I know not. I am but a woman,” said Tabitha, demurely.

“Woman!” exclaimed Giles, with a snort, “and so is Howe a woman, or his troops would have sallied forth ere this.”

“For what?” was the gentle query.

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"To be defeated, sponged out — scattered!"

The good lady smiled at her crochet-work, her confidant in so many of these little dialogues with her peppery husband. "Then is it not lucky he is a woman?" she asked.

"For him, maybe, but not for those cooped up here against their will."

"My dear," mildly protested Tabitha, smoothing her gown complacently, "I'm sure we're very comfortable since the store-ships came with supplies. I should be very content if —" The calm voice died away, and into the placid eyes came a look as of some far-off vision. The old man glanced at her with quick scrutiny, for it was not often that she left any "if" unfulfilled.

"If what, wife?" he asked. . . . "Something has troubled you of late. What is it?"

Tabitha's fresh pink cheeks deepened a little in color, as she dropped her work, and clasped her delicate hands in her lap.

"I had thought not to trouble you, dear," she began, "but perhaps 'tis best we should consult together. . . . 'Tis of Constance I worry."

"Of Constance? Why, pray, of her?" was the surprised question.

"She is so strange, so distraught of late."

The sense of the superior masculine asserted itself strongly in old Giles. He laughed almost contemptuously and spoke with loud and hearty assurance. If this were all, he would soon set the matter right.

"Strange? Distraught?" he exclaimed. "Whatever put that into your head? Why, for

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the past month she has been the gayest of the gay."

"Yes, that is it," assented Tabitha calmly.

"You worry because she is gay? You women pass all reasoning."

"We pass men's reasoning, perhaps," with a significance that scarcely mended things.

"Umph!" growled Giles. "Then pray enlighten me. Connie is as merry as a lark, and you call her strange, distraught."

"Yes, because her gaiety is unreal."

"Stuff and nonsense! The girl's happy enough, I'll swear, except for wishing an end of the siege."

"'Tis not war or politics, Giles, that's eating her heart out," replied Tabitha, with something like real fire flashing from her blue eyes. She would be flouted so far, would Mistress Romney, and then let mankind beware.

"Eating her heart out! Stuff, wife, stuff! She could never deceive *me*."

And with that announcement, made in a tone that admitted of no further controversy, the old man hobbled off to his library in high dudgeon, to seek oblivion from all the ills of home and the times in "Tristram Shandy," which had come in from England by the latest packet.

Tabitha gazed into the glowing fire thoughtfully for several minutes after he had gone. At last a great resolution took form in her gentle breast.

"I'll speak to the girl to-day," she said to herself. "'Tis my duty."

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But no immediate opportunity for the sounding of Constance's heart presented itself, for the girl and Barbara were deep in the mysteries of remodeling a gown. From the next room came to Tabitha's keen ears the chatter and laughter of the two, in which Constance had by far the larger share. The wise old woman shook her head slowly.

"The mirth does not ring true," she murmured.

Anon the door opened, and Constance came into the room in search of a needle-case, but did not see her aunt. As she returned she left the door ajar, so that Tabitha could hear plainly the girls' talk.

"There, Bab," said her niece, "just a little higher in this shoulder and the bow there. . . . Yes, that's it. . . . Now, how do I look? Shall I pass muster?"

"I'm sure you'll be the — the —" There came the sound of a sob, and the closing of another door. Then Constance's voice again:

"Bab! Crying? She's gone. Well, I —" After that a long silence, broken only by the ticking of the quaint old clock on the mantel of the breakfast-room, and the feeble, disheartened chirp of the canary.

After a little, Tabitha, with a rather unusual look of firmness around her mouth, rose and went to the next room. There sat Constance, crouched on a low stool before a window, her face in her palms, gazing out into the storm. With her unfinished fineries upon her, she looked

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a strange contradiction of gaiety and gloom, typical, thought her aunt, of her present state of mind.

"Constance," said the old woman, gently.

With an impulsive gesture, half of surprise, half of pride, the girl raised her head and looked around. She smiled, but the result was as feeble as if the sun were to try to shine through the clouds of the northeast gale.

"Oh, 'tis you, Aunt Tabitha," she said. "'Tis a dreary day."

"You were not wont to care for weather, Connie."

"No more do I — save when it is likely to prevent callers."

"A caller, I fancy you mean," replied the aunt, with unmistakable significance. Constance gave her one swift scrutiny, then rose to unpin the satin girdle of her uncompleted gown. But she spoke no word.

"Lieutenant Charlton comes here very often, Constance," resumed Tabitha.

"Does he? We should all feel complimented." This with a fine air of indifference.

"Not all exactly. But you — Constance, I've not been much of a mother to you, but I'm all you've had."

"Ah, yes," cried the girl, melting to tenderness in an instant, and kissing her aunt heartily. "You have been all that is kind and good, and I shall not forget it."

"Well," went on the old woman, touched and pleased by this evidence of affection, "I

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don't like the role of meddler, but do you think you are treating this young man quite fairly?"

"Lieutenant Charlton?" asked Constance, though she knew the name was not needed.

Tabitha nodded gravely.

"Shall I not be civil?"

"Does civility demand that he should be encouraged into such a frequent visitor?" went on the old woman, relentlessly.

"I'm sure he is our friend, though an enemy — and — and — really I must see some one, and he was of our household so long."

Tabitha paused for a moment for strategical purposes. What if, after all, the girl cared for the English officer, a true gentleman, if ever there was one?

"Is it not possible," she resumed, "that you may lead him to believe, to hope that he may one day be — more than friend to you?"

"I had no such meaning," exclaimed Constance, flushing proudly, "but what if he does? Why should he not?"

"Why not, indeed," was the calm reply, "if you are heart free, Constance." And she looked into the girl's clear eyes as if they were the well-springs of truth in which all doubt should be cleared away. What she saw there told her that her words had gone home.

"Heart free?" repeated Constance, with a bitter little laugh. "Have I a heart, I wonder?"

"A very large and warm one, I should say. Come, come, Connie dear, I'm an old woman

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who loves you very much, and your sorrows are my sorrows."

The girl whirled about, shaking the pink folds of her satin gown to the floor, in a billowy mass. Standing revealed, fair and white and dainty, she might have looked like some refined goddess of mirth to other eyes than her aunt's.

"Sorrows, aunt?" she cried blithely. "I have sorrows? Am I not the synonym of gaiety in this luckless town? What have I and sorrow in common?" Then, at sight of Tabitha's look of pain, her tone changed. "Oh, I know you love me and mean but for the best. I am — well, not all I seem. But 'tis my own grief, dearest, I must fight it down alone. Besides, 'tis really of no deeper growth than a silly girl's regrets. As for Lieutenant Charlton — well, that is for the future."

"He loves you, Constance," said her aunt, with gentle solemnity.

"This is the second time I've heard that said," replied the girl.

"He has —"

"Nay. Another was free to say for him what you have said."

With the words there unrolled before her vision the blood-stained picture of that day of intensity in the farmhouse on the road to Lexington, when Brandon, by some intuition of a disordered brain, had penetrated to the secret of the gallant and chivalrous young officer, who, she dared not deny to herself, loved her well.

After her aunt had left her with kindly words

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of encouragement and sympathy, she sat down upon the stool again, and looked into the riot of snow and wind as if trying to pierce through that murky veil to her own future. Alas, was it not as full of gloom and depression as the storm itself?

She could see nothing clearly except that scene in MacAlpine's loft, and her heart glowed again with anger and resentment. That John Brandon had doubted her faith, her honor, even her truth, was unforgivable. Oh, if she could remember only that he had been in a jealous rage, how sweet it would be. But that other spectre, that ghost of distrust that had arisen, would persist in thrusting its hideous shape into her day-dream to make life itself almost a mockery.

As she sat thus eating her heart out, she was startled by the pressure of something moist and cold against her cheek. It was the muzzle of Queue, the dog once owned by Samuel Adams, but now a faithful satellite of the girl since she had taken pity upon his vagrant desolation and brought him home to peace and plenty. Now his brown eyes looked into hers with that amazing sympathy dumb creatures know, and his feathery tail waved his devotion. She threw her arms around his neck and hugged him warmly.

"Oh, Queue, good old Queue," she murmured, "*you* understand me, don't you?"

For answer Queue put one paw gravely upon his mistress's shoulder, and just touched her cheek with the tip of his tongue.

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“You know the truth, Queue,” she went on, “but do I know it myself, old doggie? At all events, I know more than ’tis kind to let Aunt Tabitha know.”

Queue pricked up his ears and turned his head to one side.

“But I must go to this ball, Queue, and with Lieutenant Charlton, because I’ve promised. And ’twill be distraction, too.”

A little gruff pretence at a bark told the girl that the dog appreciated the situation.

“And *he* may know, but without caring. Besides, am I not the gayest Tory of them all, and must I not keep it up?”

Queue gave a reluctant assent with a mournful whine that was more than his mistress’s nervous tension could endure. Again she threw her arms around his shaggy neck and buried her face upon his shoulder. And if he were surprised at the tears that moistened his hair, he gave no sign, but stood there loyally until the storm had passed.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MacAlpine is Won Over

IN a small hut before the headquarters of Washington at Cambridge, a tight little cabin warmed against the clear cold of a February afternoon by a good fire in a stone fireplace, two soldiers of the off-duty detail of the guard were making themselves comfortable and discussing the progress of the campaign. One was in the full possession of his conversational powers, for he was Jonathan Thomas, the barber, at the moment occupied in shaving his old neighbor and present fellow-soldier, Francis Johonnot, the tailor. The latter spoke whenever the lather was sufficiently cleared away from his mouth by Thomas's generous brush, and when occasion thus offered he generally had something definite to offer. At last, Jonathan plunged his brush into the shaving mug, and began to strop his razor lazily.

"Soldiering's not the exciting thing I used ter think, Johonnot," said he with a yawn.

"No?" spluttered his friend. "I suppose you thought all an army had to do was to shoot. It has to get ready. Oosh, oosh! Wipe that soap off my mouth."

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"We're always getting ready," growled the barber, heedless of the request.

"Don't fret. There'll be enough to do soon, I'll warrant."

Thomas flourished his blade perilously near the right ear of his victim, and began to scrape away on the stubbly cheek.

"What makes you think so?" he asked quizzically.

"Any fool might know it," mumbled Johannot.

"Oh, I see why now," was the sarcastic reply.

The tailor soldier suddenly sat upright in his chair, to the imminent danger of his nose, and waved the other away majestically. The handicap of lather and razor united was more than his sense of fair play could endure.

"If you kept your sleepy eyes open," he declaimed majestically, "you'd know something was on foot since Colonel Knox hauled the cannon and mortars from Crown Point and Ticonderoga. And powder is plentiful, too."

Then he lay back supinely and permitted the shaving to proceed.

The operation was nearly finished when Toby Gookin came ducking through the door in search of recreation during a half-hour's wait for Brandon, who was in the Vassall House with Washington. To him Thomas turned for information that might demolish his comrade's theories. The two were stanch and loyal friends, had fought side by side at Bunker Hill, and shared each other's troubles in all ways;

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but they were as argumentative as a couple of Puritan parsons, and delighted to defeat one another in the war of words.

"Johonnot says," appealed the barber, "the army is to do something at last, Toby. You must know, for you're orderly to an officer."

"Major Brandon keeps his own caounsel," replied the giant calmly. "But everyone may judge for himself."

"Not *everyone*," chirped Johonnot, with an expressive grin at Thomas.

"Well," drawled Thomas, wiping his razor and putting it back in its case, "for all we do, I might as well be shaving as soldiering."

Johonnot rose from his chair, and wiped his flaming face with a red bandanna. He now felt like a true soldier.

"There'll be fighting soon," he declared, martially, "else why these bales of hay and bandages and bateaux?"

"It may be as yew say," assented Toby.

"Major Brandon is well?" asked Thomas.

"Yes."

"Didn't I see him pass the window just before you came in?"

"If yew were lookin' out yew may have. He is at headquarters."

While this little comedy was being enacted, a far different scene was that in the fine council-room of the mansion. Several officers in undress uniform were gathered about a long table, at the head of which sat Washington, grave, unemotional, deliberate as ever. At the op-

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posite end was Major John Brandon, a little pile of papers neatly stacked before him, and his dark, inquiring eyes fixed on the commander-in-chief.

"Yes, Major Brandon," said Washington, "we shall fortify Dorchester Heights as soon as preparations can possibly be completed. The design is known only to a half dozen officers. The necessity that it remain a profound secret is evident."

Brandon nodded, as if to assure the General that that point was fully understood.

"As a part of the plan it is a necessity that we keep posted as to the slightest movement in Howe's army."

"As I have already said, General," was the firm reply, "I will try and make my way into town and will do my best."

"You recognize, sir, that discovery means death?" asked Washington, his deep voice taking on an added touch of solemnity.

"I do, sir," replied Brandon, looking straight at the commander. "I have run the risk before, and for a less vital object."

"You will make the attempt to enter town — when?"

"Just before light to-morrow, sir."

"To-morrow? Let's see," mused Washington. "Yes, 'tis the 22d — my birth anniversary. Well, good fortune favor you. General Lee will arrange the details."

With that, the conference was broken up, and the stalwart form of the chief moved with simple

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majesty from the room. Lee and Brandon remained to arrange for a means of communication should the major find himself unable to quit the town after once entering it. That matter apparently settled, he returned to his quarters with his giant orderly. Having spent an hour writing some letters, he handed them as a sacred trust to Gookin.

"I'm going to town to-night, Toby," he said, with a half-pathetic smile, "and somehow I feel that I shall fail this time."

"Don't, sir, don't," pleaded the orderly, his hand trembling in a very unsoldierly manner, as he took the packet. "I don't believe —"

"It may be all nonsense, but it *is* dangerous, you know."

"Wouldn't I dew, sir?" urged the good fellow. "Not as well, of course, — but then I'm not wuth as much as yew."

Brandon seized Toby's huge paw, and wrung it warmly. What were military rank and discipline at such a time as this? Two men's hearts were speaking to one another in the universal language of affection.

"Pshaw, Toby!" said the officer; "you've done more for the cause than I ever dream to do. You wouldn't rob me of my chance? Don't bother about what I say. Doubtless I'll get in and out as usual. I'm a bit unstrung to-night, that's all."

Two hours later Brandon and his tall shadow rode away toward Boston Neck in the oncoming darkness. At the last American outpost, in

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sound of the bugles of the British fortifications, the riders dismounted. There Brandon put his hand upon Gookin's shoulder, gently pressing him back.

"Can't I go too, sir?" begged Toby, piteously, his eyes filling.

"Two of us?" laughed Brandon. "'Twould be certain discovery. Besides, I want a faithful friend — outside. Now, good-night. Remember what I have told you."

"Good-night and good luck," said Gookin, and the great, honest-hearted man strained his eyes to follow the departing figure until it at last melted into the night and was seen no more.

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Daylight was brushing its stealthy way into Dan MacAlpine's plain little chamber when the fencing-master was aroused by an odd tapping at the lower door of his armory. Alert in an instant, for the times had taught him much, he hurried downstairs and cautiously opened the door. There he saw John Brandon in civilian dress, leaning unsteadily against the lintel, haggard and dishevelled, half-overcome by sleep.

"A bed, Dan, that's a good fellow," was his salutation. "And don't wake me if I sleep till night."

Indeed, it seemed to the solicitous MacAlpine that his friend might remain in bed indefinitely, for there was no sound from the little room all through the morning and afternoon hours. But just as the sun was setting, Major Brandon ap-

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peared in the loft, where old Dan, who had been the prey to one of his "onaisy" moods all day, and had taken out the uniform of his beloved Captain Terence for another inspection, was just folding up the red coat preparatory to putting it back in its cedar chest.

"Well, Dan," said his visitor merrily, "I must seem a churlish guest, but I was almost dead beat. The sentries were unusually active, and 'twas hard work."

"It musht 'a' been, sorr, accordin' to yer looks this mornin'," replied the old soldier drily. "But what ye're chafely in nade of at this prisint blissid moment is rations. Come downshtairs an' we'll have a bite together."

As Brandon ate after the manner of a hungry mortal, he plied his happy host with so many questions that consecutive answers were impossible. He must know of his father and sister, of the Romneys — but not specifically of a certain lady who dwelt with them, which omission Dan noted as "quare" — and of the movements of the British troops. But all that MacAlpine could say about the latter was that they seemed to be as inactive as an army of sloths, despite the arrival on the previous day of two transports laden with soldiers.

"Gin'ral Howe is a great mon for show, though," added the Irishman, with a laugh. "The min musht have their hair shmooth, and bedad, they pay more attintion to the powther on their hair than in their magazines."

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"You don't think, then, that they intend any offensive operations?"

"Offensive, is it? Nothin' more offensive than to pull down Pathriots' houses for firewood and use churches for shtables. Oi'll wager Gin'ral Howe niver goes to bed at noight without thankin' his lucky shtars that the Yankees are contint with kapin' him in instead of thryin' to droive him out."

"Yet repeated warning has reached Cambridge that the British intend a demonstration," persisted Brandon thoughtfully.

"Av what koind?"

"That's what I'm here to try and find out."

"Aha!" cried MacAlpine, with a long whistle, expressive of many things unsaid. "The devil ye are. . . . Will yez have some more o' the broth, sorr?"

"No, I thank you, Dan. Now, that it is dark, I must get out and — well, observe, Dan."

"Obsarve, is it? Be obsarved, more loikely. There's many ridcoats about to-noight, sorr."

"Why to-night?" asked Brandon, pricking up his ears.

"There's a big officers' ball at the Province House to-night, sorr. The Queen's ball."

"If I could go to that ball," muttered Brandon, under his breath.

"'Twill be a great affair, 'tis said."

"If I could only be there, Dan."

"You, sorr?" was the amazed query.

"The officers will be in liquor and loose-tongued."

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"Just so, sorr. Perhaps they will say something to Mishthress Constance."

"She — she goes to this ball, then?" The sound of the name was like a funeral knell, tolling the requiem of dead hopes. And yet it must not turn him from the path of duty.

"Yis, yer Honor," replied MacAlpine, "and Oi didn't know but —"

"MacAlpine, I'll be at that ball — the only uninvited guest."

Dan's ruddy face grew absolutely pale for a moment.

"You're foolin', sorr," he said weakly

"Indeed I'm not," was the cheery reply. "I mean it, and you must help me."

The old soldier tapped his forehead, with fine disregard for the courtesies, and communed with himself.

"He musht be mad," murmured MacAlpine.

"No, Dan, never more sane. New troops arrived yesterday, you say? They'll think me one of the newly come officers, for my face is not familiar to the redcoats. . . . That uniform, Captain Terence Drake's, should fit me."

"Shtark, shtaring mad," continued the old soldier, *sotto voce*. Then aloud: "That uniform? Oh no; Oi wouldn't dare, sorr. . . . Begobs, Oi musht save him somehow, if it has to be by lyin'," he added to himself.

Brandon drew himself up till he fairly towered over the short, square frame of his host, and put both hands firmly upon his shoulders.

"Look at me, Dan," said the major earnestly.

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“If Captain Terence were alive and here to-night, what would he say?”

For a moment the old soldier looked grave. Then a smile of pride, of affection, of triumph, spread over his face, and he caught John Brandon a tremendous thump upon the back.

“Captain Terence?” he roared, with enthusiasm. “Why, he’d say, ‘Take it, ye divil, an’ go an’ be hanged!’”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Queen's Ball

FROM cellar to tower the Province House was a blaze of light. In every great window rows of wax candles glittered like captive planets, and high on the cupola, where Shem Drowne's gilded Indian still watched over Boston, many lanterns had been strung in graceful festoons. Surely a brilliant and picturesque setting had been given the festivities in honor of Queen Charlotte, and, though the resplendent uniforms of the officers, who were now arriving in force, spoke of war, the rich and costly toilets of their wives, and of the Tory ladies of the town, seemed to have little in common with a siege and the privations of the poor.

From the glowing mansion came the laughter of gay men and women and the strains of the finest regimental band of the army. Out in the dark places of Roxbury and Charlestown men were pacing back and forth in the biting cold to watch a foe that was ever circling nearer and nearer; here was warmth and wine, beauty and badinage, and fate was defied.

Something of the irony of this came to the heart of Constance Drake as she approached Province House, escorted by Lieutenant Charl-

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ton, with Pompey and Agnes as attendant imps. She thought, too, of another visit she had made to the place after a British revelry of similar sort. More than a year had rolled away, and what had resulted? Nothing but futile bloodshed, the ultimate meaning of which she could hardly conjecture.

Constance and her little party were not early arrivals, for she had not begun to dress when Charlton called for her. Indeed, she had at first repented of her promise to attend the ball, feeling that she could play the farce no more, and only the emphatic advice of Aunt Tabitha, that she refrain from making a fool of a well-meaning young man, had induced her to go forth. And now here she was, a Patriot in soul, but a Tory by repute, ready to smile upon and dance with soldiers she hated, in honor of a queen who was as nothing to her.

"It is different now than it was then," she had told Barbara, when the latter suggested that she had none of her present compunctions when the theatricals were given in Faneuil Hall. To herself she had added: "Then I was obliged to pose for an object, now I have none. . . . But why not?" she thought, a moment later. "I am as devoted to the cause as ever. I may still learn important facts, and there surely are those who will know what use to make of such information besides John Brandon."

But now, as the pompous strains of the band came to her ears, and she found herself part of the throng of merry-makers at the portico of the

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mansion, her mercurial temperament bade all gloom depart.

"Mercy!" whispered her sense of humor. "Are you really going to enjoy yourself after all, Constance Drake?"

And truth to tell, the great ballroom, with its mirrored panels, its flashing gold, its multitude of elaborate candelabra and its festoons of flowers, completed the witchery over the girl's senses. Already a minuet was in progress, and the stately motions of the beautifully arrayed women and gorgeously uniformed men, the faint breath of perfumes, the delightful harmonies of the band, the atmosphere of luxury and fashion — all were seductive wooers of Mistress Drake's highly organized fancy, and she smiled and blushed and courtesied as she met her erstwhile acquaintances, feeling somehow that she herself, with her pale yellow brocaded satin, her double necklace of pearls, and her powdered hair-tower, in which stood three ostrich tips, was fit for the lovely setting of the night's *fête*. No need of the troop of courtly cavaliers that began to circle about her to tell her that now, if ever, she was beautiful and irresistible to that silly creature, man.

But as yet she was not disposed to try her pinions. Indeed, she wished at first to watch the others dance, and Charlton, by no means dismayed on that account, led her to a deep alcove at one side of the *salon*, screened, with the exception of a small entrance, by young ever-

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green trees brought from one of the harbor islands.

But the young officer's dreams of seclusion and the words of love he had determined to venture were rudely broken, for no sooner were the pair seated than sundry redcoats, with a prompt perspicacity that did their scouting qualities credit, began to besiege the green barrier. Dr. Gair entered without compunction, and after him came Ensign Cuyler (to get news of Barbara), Lord Rawdon, Aylesford, and two or three others, till the alcove resembled the court of a queen, and poor Charlton felt that they were all his rivals whom he could have sent to the Tower with pleasure.

Ere long up sailed Howe with Percy in his wake, and the others gave way a little before the great man. He was in high humor, and greeted Mistress Drake with the brusque effusiveness characteristic of him. But compliments had already begun to pall upon the girl; the personal side of the rout seemed to kill its artistic beauty, and she all at once felt a great desire to be gone and breathe the clear air of night once more. She had almost decided to exercise woman's divine right of fainting, when a word from Percy opened up another way.

"I have not yet seen you dance, Mistress Drake," suggested my Lord.

"No. I — I do not care for the music."

"The musicians do seem — dull," agreed Percy, and the others wagged their heads sagely, as if to say to each other: "Dull, indeed; deadly

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dull, egad," although not one of the company but had been praising the band.

"'Tis very dull, Mistress Drake," cried Howe, gallantly. "But we'll change all that, if you will dance. . . . Here, sir," he said to an orderly, "tell them to play 'Britons, Strike Home.'"

As the officer hurried away, Constance turned to Percy with flashing eye and radiant smile.

"The commander has made a mistake," she exclaimed.

The soldiers were all ears at once. Mistress Drake had said that the commander had made a mistake! Here was some clever sally, of course.

"Yes," continued Constance, brightly, "he should have said, 'Britons, *go home.*'"

For an instant a curious stillness fell upon the little alcove. Howe's red face turned redder yet, and he looked at the girl with amazement. But the innocent smile he found upon her lips turned the words from sarcasm to jest, and the bluff warrior smiled, too, while his officers tried to stifle their laughter at the expense of a superior.

"Very good, very good, indeed, Mistress Drake," said the bluff warrior gallantly; then as the music changed to the stirring air: "And may I have the honor of your first dance?"

Constance courtesied. "I am honored, indeed, General," she replied, "but I regret to say that my first dance was long since promised Lieutenant Charlton, who has waited quite enough already."

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Howe's vexation was now quite visible, for he frowned and took snuff with suspicious energy. But another glimpse of the sweet face and he melted again.

"You've made an excellent choice of partners, Mistress Drake," he said, "and, after all, perhaps my dancing days ought to be over."

And with that he moved away majestically, while Rawdon and some of the others looked after him with grins.

"Egad," said my Lord, gleefully, slapping his thigh, "she flouted him — the commander-in-chief!"

The court behind the evergreens was now dissolved as Constance and Charlton joined the dancers, the handsomest couple in all that company of fair women and comely men. How she got through the brisk measures she scarcely knew, for in the midst of the dance she saw far down at the edge of the ballroom a figure whose outlines filled her with wonder. It was so like — yet dressed in the uniform of a captain of British dragoons.

When the dance was over and she was seated the center of another coterie of officers, she saw the figure once more and felt a thrill of fear. Then up trotted Dr. Gair, and she knew that his shrewdness must be given no opportunity. So she began to laugh and jest.

"Connie, my girl," cried the surgeon, "you dance like — like an angel."

"Do they dance, too, then, Doctor, as well as play the music?"

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“And as for you, sir,” said the doctor to Charlton, “not long ago I’d have wagered my best surgical instrument you would never ‘toe’ it again.”

Constance laughed, and tapped the little surgeon with her fan.

“But he escaped you, after all, Doctor,” she retorted, and the rest tittered.

But for her the jest was lost on the instant in the great wave of emotion that rushed across her brain and for the moment blotted out everything else. The strange officer in the uniform of a captain of dragoons had drawn nearer and turned his face, and the face was that of John Brandon.

Constance knew that she started with amazement and that her eyes could not escape from the look the Patriot soldier gave her. But she did not know that Capt. Jack Mowatt, sober, for once, and the more dangerous for that, had seen the little quivering of the shoulders, and noted the gaze at the unknown. Nor did she think to wonder why he so suddenly hurried from the ballroom.

As the measured strains of the minuet began again, and the low courtesies, the courtly bowings, the delicate raising of hands and the stately tread were in full play, John Brandon crossed an end of the *salon* and made his way to the green alcove. This Constance noted, and knew that she must follow.

“I will not dance this, I think, Lieutenant

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Charlton," she said, as if weary. "Will you get me a negus and bring it to the recess yonder?"

Left there by her escort, she quickly looked about. No one was to be seen, but a window was open. Surely that was not so before. As she went to look from it John Brandon entered suddenly.

She made no outcry and stood immovable.

"How is it that you are here?" was all she said.

"I might retort in kind," he answered coldly, "had I the right to question you."

"This is no time for quibbling. Capture means death — in that uniform."

"'Twas your father's, Constance," he said, in a low tone.

"My father's!" she replied, thrilled to the soul. Then the horror would be the greater. "How did you obtain access here?"

"By that window."

"Now fly by it," she pleaded. This was no time for the nurture of animosities bred in misunderstanding.

"I intended to," he answered grimly, "but two soldiers have been placed between it and the gate by which I entered."

"You are suspected?"

"Yes, but they must not suspect you. As if they would," he added, with a laugh. The girl wrung her hands in a distress that should have touched his heart.

"Why have you done this?" she demanded harshly.

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"To see you —"

"Ah!"

"I might have said once. But now 'twas to — but you can guess."

"What can be done to save you?" she cried.

Brandon stood gazing at her with a strange light in his eyes. Around them floated the bewitching strains of the minuet, and through the interstices of the evergreens the flashes of red and the sheen of silken gowns wove themselves in and out like a mystic kaleidoscope. They two seemed far away, and yet helpless to escape the bonds of music and color.

"Nothing can save me," he replied, at length, "except a miracle. I should have been safe enough as an unknown officer of one of the newly come regiments, but one man knew my face."

"Mowatt!" she cried, in distraction. "Oh, John, and I —"

"You are distracted on my account," he said, with a smile. "'Tis not worth while. The fortunes of war come to us all in one way or another."

"*John!*"

In all his life Brandon had never heard his name uttered like this. Before its wistful appeal, its love-tenderness, its thrill of anxiety, all his reserve dropped like a worn-out mask, and he sprang forward with arms extended. Into their strong enclosure went the girl, with beating heart and dewy eyes, and laid her beau-

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tiful head upon the self-same bit of red cloth that it had nestled against in babyhood.

"Constance," said the soldier, in the low tone of deep emotions, "you cannot mean that you — love me still."

"You don't — deserve it — but —" And then there were no more words for a moment, because lips were upon lips and the language of hearts spoke for them.

But this bliss was short-lived, for over the shoulder of his beloved, and through a space in the trees, Brandon could see Lieutenant Charlton carefully picking his way through the crowd with a cup of negus in one hand.

"Charlton," exclaimed John. "I —"

"Oh, don't fear," smiled the girl, "I shall not trip on my skirt and fall into his arms again."

"Constance!" was the enraptured reply, as a wonderful light broke in upon his dark memories. She looked at him with mournful eyes.

"Poor fools that we are," she murmured, almost bitterly, "with death hovering above us."

"I'll fight for my life," he answered stoutly. "Perhaps I may yet escape. Promise me this: whatever happens to-night, do not seek to help me and do not recognize me under any conditions. Promise me and I'll use all my wits."

"I promise," she said simply, and they sealed the compact. Then as Charlton drew near, Brandon stepped behind the foliage in the embrasure of the window.

But now Mistress Drake was not in the mood for her negus; she would be pleased to dance,

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she said, and Charlton, puzzled but still enslaved, led her upon the floor and they took positions in the minuet. But her heart was never for an instant in the pretty ceremony; when she, with a score of other women, came by twos down through a pointed archway of flashing swords held aloft by the officers, it seemed but typical of the weapon of fate that was over the heads of herself and the soldier of her choice.

And then, just as the dance ceased, she saw him walking steadily across the floor to the refreshment room, followed by the keen and searching glances of Lord Percy and Mowatt, who passed so close to the girl that she could hear the Earl say: "It seems incredible, Captain, but you have a right to what you ask."

Although heartsick and weary of all the pageantry that so mocked her happiness, Constance felt that she must follow the game to its end and asked Charlton to take her to the refreshment room.

The place was thronged, a mass of brilliant color, flashing jewels, shimmering satins, and handsome faces. No less handsome than the rest, Constance thought with a thrill of pride, was the dark, serious countenance of her lover, whom she must not recognize even with the quiver of an eyelash.

He stood near Percy and some others by a table on which were a magnificent crystal punch-bowl and scores of beautiful glasses. The Earl had filled his, and held it aloft, while all around

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him up went scarlet arms in the strong thrust of loyalty.

"I propose the health of the King," cried my Lord. "Are all filled? . . . You, sir, will you not pledge us?" he asked of Brandon, whose right hand was empty.

As through the mist of a dream, Constance saw the American officer take the glass handed to him by a flunkey. She realized that he gripped it convulsively, and she noted, too, that his glance was upon Mowatt. She turned, and the smile of triumph she found upon the brutal captain's face told her that fate had raised its hammer to crush them both.

"To the King!" shouted Percy, and every man, save one, raised his glass.

"To the King! to the King!" roared the rest.

But John Brandon held his glass at his side. A low muttering arose, horrible to the ears of the girl. Lord Percy frowned.

"You do not drink, sir," he exclaimed sternly to Brandon. "To the King, I say!"

The American raised his glass slowly, and a pleasant smile lighted his face.

"I pledge you, Lord Percy, gladly," he began.

"What would he do?" murmured Constance.

"I pledge you gladly and freely the King's *health*," Brandon went on, his eyes sparkling, and his head thrown back with a superb gesture of defiance, "discomfiture to his ministers, and long life to George Washington, whose birthday this is!"

And with that challenge he drained the glass,

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then flung it to the floor, where it crashed into a hundred sparkling fragments. For one instant silence held the crowd in its mastery; then came a thunder of oaths, shouts, and feminine shrieks mingled with the clangor of swords rushing from their scabbards. Brandon's life might have paid the forfeit then and there, but that Percy raised his arm and demanded silence.

Brandon, still smiling, stood beside him in as careless an attitude as if he were some honored guest.

"You may place this man under arrest, Captain Mowatt," said the Earl, calmly.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Court Martial

FOR Constance there was no longer any possibility of remaining at the ball, which, after the startling episode in the refreshment room, went on with renewed gaiety.

Out in the moonlit street with Lieutenant Charlton, she walked silent and depressed, and the officer respected her mood — indeed, shared it, for he now felt that the words he would have spoken an hour earlier must remain forever unsaid. He did not venture to intrude into her distress until she herself gave utterance to it.

“What will they do with him?” she asked, in a tense, thrilling whisper. He knew full well, but could only temporize.

“What will they do with him?” she asked again, and stealing a glance at her face, he saw that the girl had died and that the mature woman had come into being. What the horrors of war had failed to do, this peril to one beloved had accomplished in an instant. He must answer — somehow.

“He — he will be asked to explain his presence in the town in — in that uniform,” he faltered.

“And if he cannot explain?” she pursued.

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“But he doubtless can,” replied the soldier, trying to assume a tone of confidence. “The very boldness of the deed may be its excuse. And, of course, if he came only to see you —”

She seized upon his words with pitiful eagerness. He felt the hand upon his arm tremble.

“Aye, that is it,” she cried. “For what other purpose could he have come? We had — had quarreled, and he sought me there for reconciliation.”

“Poor creature,” thought Charlton, “to be so easily deceived. But ’tis better so.”

“Can I do nothing — to-night I mean?” she continued.

Charlton shook his head gravely.

“And he must spend the night in prison?”

“Yes.”

“It is terrible. Lord Percy is my friend, cannot I see him and explain?”

“To-morrow, if you choose, Mistress Drake. To-night it would be worse than useless. It might even harm Major Brandon’s cause.”

He left her at the door of her uncle’s house, where Pompey, who alone of all the inmates was awake, admitted her. As he bade her good-night he spoke a word or two of hope and cheer.

Before her chamber door she found Queue stretched out in his accustomed place. He wagged his tail lazily and looked into her face with eloquent eyes. A great hunger for sympathy, for the companionship of some faithful, loving thing, came upon her, and she called the dog into her room.

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"I cannot be alone to-night, Queue," she said, and the animal licked her hand in appreciation of such unheard-of distinction.

But more was to follow. Plump down on the floor with all her ballroom finery, she drew the great dog's body close to her own, and made him the confidant of all the terrible anxiety that oppressed her.

"He must have come to see me, Queue," she said. "Even then he might have gone free had not my fears betrayed him to that suspicious officer — Mowatt! My fears of that man spoke truly. He was my enemy — *our* enemy."

Through the cloud of sorrow came a little ray of light, created by that word "our." Come what might, it was sweet to feel that the comradeship of love had arisen strong and eternal.

"Nothing can part us now," she murmured. "Nothing but — death. Death? No, no, not that — for a bit of lover's folly. I'll humble myself before them all — to Percy, to General Howe. We'll save him, Queue, we'll save him!"

And so, in alternate moods of despair and of hope, she poured out her heart to the dumb beast, till at last she slept, her head resting on the dog's shaggy body. The candle sputtered in its socket, and went out at last, and when the dawn turned the blackness of the room into dim gray, Queue turned his head once or twice to look at the drawn face he loved, but did not move until his mistress awoke.

The sun was high, and she started up with self-reproaches. So late, and so much to be

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done! Off came the ball-dress with feverish haste, and then a peep into her mirror. Oh, that pale, wan face; it would never do; this was the day she must look her best. She flung up her window and drank the frosty air in great gulps. She plunged her face into cold water, and rubbed the roses back.

Then she chose a dress which she knew suited her well, and hurried to the breakfast-table.

When old Romney came down, she took him aside and told him in a few vivid words what had happened. He gasped with astonishment and distress.

"In a British uniform, you say?" he asked.

"Yes, 'twas my father's."

"Your father's? Why, how —"

"One Dan MacAlpine had preserved. . . . Ah! now I know how to save him. Dan can tell why he took the uniform."

"Well, child, what of that?" queried Romney doubtfully.

"Why, don't you see?" she replied eagerly. "He must have told Dan that he wanted to come to the ball to see me. We shall save him, uncle, we shall save him!"

But the old man was still puzzled.

"To see you?" he asked. "Why need he go to the ball to see you?"

Constance blushed, but smiled for the first time in many hours.

"Oh, I remember, you do not know. We — we had a misunderstanding and — and he was anxious —"

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A great light now broke in upon Giles Romney.

"You — you love him, Constance," he cried, taking the girl by both arms and looking fairly into her eyes. "You love him!"

"Love him?" she echoed fervently her faith shining upon her brow. "Yes, I do love him. I shall tell them all so, and they will give him back to me."

"Poor child," thought the old man, as he watched her leave the house. He knew the hopelessness of her quest, a quest in which even beauty and charm could not prevail. He saw her go to the door of Lord Percy's house and raise the great brass knocker. A few moments later he noted that she descended the steps and walked hastily around the corner.

"Lord Percy has been gone an hour," the Earl's valet had told her. "There's a court martial this morning — a rebel spy caught last night at the ball, I believe."

With a horrible weight at her brain she made her way down Longacre, the awful refrain singing itself to her step: "A rebel spy, a rebel spy, a rebel spy."

It seemed an age until she reached the dignified wooden building where Lord Percy had his official headquarters, but at last she dragged herself up the steps and gave her name to the man on guard and ushered her into a small waiting-room.

For a half-hour that was absolutely unlike time in that there seemed to be no progress of

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moments, she sat there eating her heart out, hearing nothing but the dull droning of voices in an adjoining room. Then at last Percy came.

"My dear Mistress Drake," he exclaimed, "to what am I indebted for this honor?"

"I came to see you, my Lord," she replied, with a calmness that ever after seemed miraculous to her memory, "I came to see you to bespeak your influence for a prisoner."

"Ah, indeed," he said kindly, "I will do all that I can. Who is it whose condition has touched your tender sympathies?"

"The prisoner taken at last night's ball."

The Earl started, and looked at Constance through half-closed lids as if trying to better his poor sight in reading her face.

"Not — not Major Brandon?" he demanded.

"Yes, my Lord," was the earnest reply.

"Ah," Percy went on thoughtfully, "I had forgotten that he was a friend of your family." He paused, and Constance felt that she was expected to go on.

"I came to you, sir," she began, "as a — as another friend of my family, to explain last night's affair."

"To explain? I do not —"

"You do not see how I *can* explain?" she finished brightly. "'Tis simple. We — he and I are — well, you must understand. We had — quarreled, and before he went back to duty he resolved to see me and set matters straight again, and borrowed the uniform, my father's uniform."

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“Your father’s? Oh, yes, I remember.”

“Yes, my Lord, from Dan MacAlpine, my father’s orderly, who has cherished it as a keepsake these many years.”

“Poor girl!” thought the soldier, wondering how long she could keep up the sad little fiction.

“And I thought it best,” she went on, wistfully, “you should know, so that, should there be a trial, I —”

“There has been a trial, Mistress Drake,” was the solemn reply.

“Already? Then I may go to him at once?”

“I fear not.”

“What do you mean?” she cried wildly, a great darkness closing her about. “He — he is not —”

“I would you learned the truth from other lips than mine,” said Percy, his generous soul yearning toward the girl with a supreme pity.

“Learned what? He is — not — guilty?” Her question was full of pleading, as if by asking it she might alter the decrees of destiny. Lord Percy would have given his rank, almost, to escape being the executioner of hope, but there was naught to do but nod assent.

“And he is — to be imprisoned?” she queried pitifully.

“No, Mistress Drake.”

“Tell me — all, then,” she demanded, standing pale and straight before him. “See, I am brave, I can bear it.”

“The sentence was,” said the Earl, slowly, “that as he was an officer and a brave man, he should be shot at sunrise to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XL

A Conditional Pardon

GENTLY as Lord Percy had delivered his terrible message to Constance Drake, he felt that its dread meaning must at once overwhelm her mentally and physically, and he was ready to summon aid for the expected collapse. But she did not falter nor move.

There she stood, like some beautiful being turned to stone, her eyes staring at him dully, her hands tightly clasped. He would have thought she had not comprehended but for the leaden pallor that slowly crept over her face.

Under the strange scrutiny, the soldier grew nervous, and fingered his sword-hilt, as he tried to think what best to say to break this deadly oppressiveness. But the girl relieved him of that sorry task. Slowly, and as if each word were in a foreign tongue in which every sound must be studied, she broke the long silence.

“Condemned?” she said. “And upon what evidence?”

“His own — his admissions added to the self-evident facts. . . . Will you not sit down, and may — may I get you a glass of wine?”

She shook her head ever so slightly, and went on in the same strained, uncanny voice.

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"Thank you, I need nothing. But there was other evidence — mine."

"It is noble of you, my dear young lady, but I doubt if Major Brandon would accept such a sacrifice."

"A sacrifice? I do not understand."

"You mean, do you not, that you would assert that because of a — a quarrel —"

"A *lover's* quarrel," she amended, unshrinkingly. Before this gallant English soldier and gentleman the doors of her heart were thrown back in perfect trust. Something of this he felt, and he bowed with the conviction that here was one of the rarest compliments of his life.

"And because of that," he asked gently, "he came to the ball in disguise?"

"Yes."

"The shock and the strain have been severe; you do not realize what that would mean —"

"If it would mean his freedom, naught else would matter," she exclaimed almost jubilantly. "And it would mean his freedom — or at worst a brief imprisonment, would it not, my Lord?"

The wistfulness, the tender pleading in the question, the trembling of the lip, and the dewy brimming of the eyes told the Earl that here was but a woman after all. Chivalrous ever, he felt a special yearning toward the girl who had been his pleasant neighbor for many months. He placed a chair for her with mild command.

"Sit down, Mistress Drake," he said. "Rest assured I will do all I can and may."

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The smile that flitted across the lovely face, wan and pathetic though it was, amply repaid him.

"Thanks would be absurd, my Lord," said the girl, looking up at him gratefully, "but your words give me new life. You will not fail."

"Heaven knows I wish I felt so," he thought. But he said aloud: "This much I promise: Major Brandon shall not die to-morrow."

There was no word of reply, but only a groping for the soldier's hand, and a pressure from another that told him of a woman's thanks. Yet he could not let his rainbow of promise be too highly colored.

"I must give you no false hopes," he continued gravely. "'Twill be but a reprieve. As for the evidence that you offer so freely, there is no need, as yet, that you should give it."

"Why not?" she asked. "It might mean so much."

"Yes, as you say, it might mean so much. But I myself can state the facts. This may make your exposure to the unpleasant publicity of personal testimony unnecessary — or useless," he added, to his thoughts.

For the first time since Percy's pronouncement of John Brandon's fate, the pink blush of young womanhood stole back across the white cheeks and life shone warm in her eyes.

"If it is not necessary, of course I would not seek to testify," she said, "but I should feel no shame."

"Rest assured that I will do for you all that I

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would were you my own sister," said Percy. "Come to me on Monday next at about this hour."

"May I — may I see him?" she asked, rising from her chair.

"I think it were better not — for his sake," was the gentle reply. And he ushered the girl to the door with sincere courtesy.

He watched her up the street, then turned to his desk and papers with a sigh. "To be loved — like that —" he mused, "by such a woman — and to die. Poor girl! Poor Brandon!"

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The days that must pass before Monday should come with its momentous hours were hastened for Constance by the intense activity with which she threw herself into her home work and her little charities, and brightened by the gleams of hope that now and then thrust their gold through the gray. She said little to her family about Brandon's imprisonment, nor did they care to bring the matter up.

"I feel too deeply to talk about it," she told her uncle. "But I feel that he will be saved."

The old man shook his head, but not for her to see. It was no part of his kindly nature to sadden the heart of the girl he loved by the least scepticism. So he took snuff cheerily, and did his best to make her hope.

On Sunday the girl visited Dan MacAlpine, and talked over the situation long and earnestly. Barbara, too, was her confidant, and the two

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spent many wakeful hours in bed over the matter, with Constance as consoler, as ever.

In good time on Monday morning the ex-fencer appeared at the Romney mansion, arrayed in his choicest, and whistling as gaily as if there were no pain and sorrow in all the world. Then he tucked Constance under his arm with many a jovial word of encouragement, and off they went to Percy's headquarters.

They were admitted to the Earl's room without delay, and cordially greeted — or, at least, Constance was. As for old Dan, who stood at salute in regulation style, the officer gave him a look of inquiry that seemed to demand an explanation.

"This is Dan MacAlpine, my Lord," said Constance.

"Ah, I remember, the owner of the uniform. Is he to remain?"

"If you please. He is in my full confidence."

"Perhaps it is better so," replied the Earl, drawing forward a chair for Constance. "Now, I will be as brief as possible, for I realize that the strain must be very great. Major Brandon's sentence has been suspended —"

"Ah!" came from Constance's lips, as she arose by the very power of great joy. He held up a warning hand.

"But do not misunderstand me," he cautioned. "It is only a reprieve for one week from to-morrow morning."

"Then there is to be another trial?" she asked nervously, but still smiling.

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"No," he answered gravely. "It is not thought necessary. Your evidence has been considered. Taken alone it would have had weight, but there are other features that place Major Brandon's personal motives, excellent as they certainly are, entirely out of consideration."

"I — I do not understand," she faltered.

"I will be very frank and you must be very cool and brave if you — I may say we, are to save him."

At that she drew herself up with all her old spirit, and looked him resolutely in the face.

"I will be brave, and you can see that I am cool," she said.

"We have our spies, Mistress Drake," Percy began, "for they are as necessary in war as muskets or cannon, and the ignominy that attaches to the work of a military spy is purely for self-preservation, for were spying not made the least coveted part of war, its perils would be multiplied —"

An orderly came in, spoke a few words in an undertone, and was out again with the swiftness of the trained soldier.

"Our spies," continued the Earl, "know that Major Brandon has been in town on several occasions during the siege, and that he was sent here for a definite purpose this time. His desire to see you may have encouraged him to take the risk he did, but he was also here as a detailed representative of the opposing army — in plain words as a spy. . . . I am not disheartening you too much, Mistress Drake? Shall I go on?"

A CONDITIONAL PARDON

“Yes, yes. I must hear all,” was the calm reply, although the girl paled a little.

“Our men who bring this information also have the important news that the Americans are preparing for some weighty enterprise, but its nature is kept a profound secret. The soldiers and the officers of lesser rank do not know, for some of them have been — well, sounded. Is this all quite clear?”

“Yes, but I do not understand —”

“Its bearing on Major Brandon’s case?” asked the officer. “We shall reach that presently.”

He went to his desk and took from a pigeon-hole a folded paper tied with red tape. This he held out in his left hand, and tapped significantly with his right. Constance’s eyes followed him as if fascinated, and her breath came quicker.

“I have here,” said Percy, “a pardon for John Brandon, major, so-called, in the rebel army!”

Out flashed Constance’s hands as if to seize the document. Her breast heaved and her eyes glowed with gratitude, love, and triumph.

“A pardon!” she cried exultingly. “Oh, give it to me!”

“Do not excite yourself, I beg,” urged the soldier. “It is signed by General Howe, and needs but my signature to be complete. But before I, in justice to my oath to my King, can sign it, certain conditions must be fulfilled.”

“And they are?” she asked, breathlessly.

“These: if Major Brandon shall, before sunrise one week from to-morrow, give us informa-

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tion as to the intent of the forces under Washington, he will be reprieved again, and, when his information is proven to be true, he will be set free."

Constance sank into her chair slowly, all the radiance gone from her face. She opened her lips to speak, but Percy, with gentle courtesy, took the words from her mouth.

"I know what you would say, and I would not have you say otherwise. But life is very sweet, and, after all, his information would probably change nothing —"

"My Lord, all spies are not traitors as well," she said coldly.

"I have had the best of reason to know that," said the Earl. "But I have done the best, all that I could do. At worst the — the end is delayed, and, besides, this new situation will enable you to see the prisoner at any time you please."

"I may see him?"

"Certainly. It was thought that your influence — you see I still speak frankly — might shake his resolution."

The girl heard little of what the soldier was saying now. A week! That was the sum total of her happiness, for a week is eternity when death has been held at bay, and within it what fortunes of war might not be reversed? The Earl had hinted at some vaguely suspected American movement; fate might be kind, and send it soon. And then, prisoners had been rescued before — But she must listen.

"I need not say, perhaps," he was saying,

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“that this freedom to see Major Brandon is accorded only that you may induce him to — to, well, make the best of a bad situation.”

“I shall certainly encourage him to make the best of it,” she replied, and if Percy heard the significant little accent upon “best,” he gave no sign. Instead, he went to his desk, wrote briefly, and handed a bit of paper to the girl.

“This will admit you to Major Brandon at any time,” he said.

MacAlpine, who had been standing like a rotund graven image throughout the interview, saluted again.

“If you plaze, sorr,” he asked, “may someone, — me, perhaps, — go wid her?”

“It would be well if you were her escort,” said Percy, “but into the prison it is beyond my power to admit you.”

Constance and MacAlpine walked for some distance in silence. But one thought was uppermost in the girl’s mind. Presently she gave it voice.

“John would not speak, would he, Dan?”

“No, not if he knows. But perhaps he don’t know.”

“Then there is not even that hope.”

“Oh, Oi dunno,” was the cheerful reply. “If he knows nothin’, he can till anythin’ and mebbe it’ll come throe. If it do’n’t twill at laste gain toime, and whin there’s a noose in a rope and an army outside that moight cut it, toime is iv’rything.”

CHAPTER XLI

A Tender Temptation

TO see the man she loved! That was the pitifully joyous refrain that sang through Constance's being as she hastened home to think. It might be to-day — now — as the little slip in her bosom reminded her. But was it best? As she realized her own agitation, she decided that it was too soon. She was unnerved herself; she must not unnerve him.

“Besides,” she said to herself, “there must be some plan devised. . . . Plan? What plan can there be — I a helpless woman and he an imprisoned man. If only Toby Gookin were here.”

She told her uncle merely that a reprieve had been granted and that the young American would be saved. But that night, when there was no more spirit left in her, she broke down and became the weak, fearsome, pitiable girl again.

“Oh, Bab, Bab,” she cried, “’tis horrible, horrible!”

“But you just said that John was reprieved and would be soon set free,” protested Barbara.

“Did I? Why, of course I did, and I meant it, too. But there is a condition, dear.”

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“A condition?”

Then she told the story of John Brandon's temptation — how his life might be saved by himself, if only he would tell the English what they wished to know.

“And,” she concluded gravely, “unless he does tell the American plans before next Tuesday morning of next week, he will be —”

“He will be shot?” finished Barbara, her dimpled fingers clutching at the kerchief across her bosom. Constance nodded. Then, with a wild impulse of denial, she cried:

“Shot? No. He shall not be! He must save himself for my — for our sakes.”

“Indeed he must,” echoed Barbara decisively. “He must tell what they want to know.”

“Tell what he knows?” queried Constance, thoughtfully. “No, no, Bab, he cannot, he must not. That would make him a traitor.”

But the little girl was unconvinced.

“What is the war to his life, to our happiness?” she implored tearfully. “It would — kill me —”

“I know, I know,” cried the other hurriedly. “There must be a way. There shall be!”

But a night of planning, of wakeful debate as to ways and means, brought no solution of the dread problem.

“’Tis all my fault,” cried Constance, in an agony of self-reproach, as the two were dressing; “but for me and our silly quarrel he would not so have exposed himself. But for my foolish start of surprise Mowatt might never have felt his suspicions confirmed.”

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“Don’t, Connie, don’t,” cried her friend. “You were not to blame.”

“Yes, yes, I was. ’Twould never have happened else. O that I had not been born a woman!”

Barbara looked at the beautiful shoulders, pink as an apple blossom from the effects of their bath, and spite of her woe she smiled.

“I don’t think John would echo *that* wish, Connie,” she said demurely.

Mistress Drake gazed wonderingly at the girl for a moment, then lowered her eyes, as the warm blood dyed her cheeks with a color they had not known of late. The instinct of femininity came supreme and jubilant.

“I *am* a woman, Barbara,” she cried; “we are two women, and we must save him!”

Early that afternoon, with brave MacAlpine as a guard, the girl set out for John Brandon’s prison, urging herself to be strong, and yet wondering if love might not make her weak. It happened, strangely enough, she thought, that her soldier-lover had been placed in a small room in one of her uncle’s deserted warehouses, and that there was some comfort, at least, in being on familiar ground.

Outside the building a soldier in a sentry-box took Constance’s pass, and after a keen scrutiny of it summoned an officer of the guard, who led her along a winding corridor, at the end of which was a small room. Here a soldier, who was playing solitaire on a little table, jumped to his feet and saluted.

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"This lady has authority to see the pri — Major Brandon — alone," said the officer, significantly. The other saluted again, and as the footsteps of his superior echoed dismally down the corridor, he took a clanking bunch of keys from a hook, and held up a beckoning finger to Constance. He unlocked a door, seized a candle, and the two passed through; then he carefully locked it after him again. They were now in a dingy little hall at the end of which was another door.

"May I ask you to hold the candle, miss?" said the soldier, after a moment's inspection of the keys. "There are two keys to each of the doors, and that doesn't make it easier to find the right one."

It was on the point of Mistress Drake's tongue to tell the hulking fellow that she could have pointed out the right key on the instant, indeed, might have found it in the dark, for since childhood it had been her delight to pick her way about the warehouse with its fascinating rooms of teas, spices, and eastern products. She remembered that formerly there had been one set of keys for general use and another for emergencies in her uncle's desk. They were now evidently all on one bunch.

"Here it is," growled the man at last, thrusting a key into the lock, and turning it.

"Rap loudly when you wish to be let out," he said, and walked stolidly back.

Then Constance pushed open the door, and there was John Brandon sitting upon a stool

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reading a little black-bound book by the light that came from a tiny window over his head. Had this out-of-way corner of old Giles Romney's warehouse been devised for a prison cell, it could not have better filled its role.

In an instant, as the lovely face showed to his uplifted eyes, Brandon was on his feet, and straining the girl to his heart. And she — mindful of nothing for the moment but that love was brushing them both with its celestial wing — yielded herself to his arms as if naught else in the world could matter.

After the first outburst of passionate joy they talked of more earthly things, but for a long time shunned any direct reference to the extremity in which they were placed. Once Constance did bid her lover hope.

"Hope?" he cried radiantly. "I have love, which is brighter than all else. And what matters it now I know your heart is mine!"

"It matters a great deal, sir," she protested. "To find me and then to give me up so soon. Does not that matter?"

"Give you up?" he exclaimed wildly, "why, I — oh, I had forgot."

And silence came over them, as the bitter reality of the man's plight stood forth desolate and chilling. The girl clung to him shuddering, and he used the tenderest consolation he knew.

"But, dear," he said, gazing into her troubled eyes, "you look so pale — ill? This strain is too much for you."

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"Think not of me, but of yourself," she protested. "How are you to — to be saved?"

"Much may happen — before," he urged bravely.

"True," was her reply. And with that, and a parting kiss, she tried to be content.

On her way out she found herself thinking only of some means of escape for her soldier. She knew that his little grated window gave upon the water, but what hope was there in that direction, when the place was guarded, as it must be, to insure the safety of the stores of war in the warehouse? No, he could never break out and keep his life.

She visited Brandon on each of the next three days, finding the guard changed and a different officer in command daily. But, though she gave her prisoner the sweetest proofs of her love and devotion, and did her poor best to inspire hope, she spoke no word of what was burning in her soul.

"Have you told him?" Barbara would ask mournfully, at each return, and she would reply: "No, Bab; I could not."

Saturday came, and with it a warm and brilliant sun that seemed to thaw the reserve that held her tongue in check.

"John, do you love me?" she asked.

He would have given her the proof that lovers always deem so essential, but she raised a finger in protest.

"I know you do," she continued sweetly, "but best of all?"

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“Best of all, dearest.”

“Better than — your country?”

“My country? There is no comparison. The love is not the same,” he replied.

“And you would live for me?” she pleaded, taking his hands in hers and fondling them nervously.

“Life is far sweeter to me than ever, and you are part of it.”

“Yet you must — must die — in three days, unless —”

“Unless what, Constance?” he cried eagerly. “You have hope. What have you heard? I myself had hoped that —”

“What? What?” she implored.

“Oh, ’tis nothing, I fear; but despair seizes at straws.”

Whereupon all the pent-up passion, the hunger for his life that had so long consumed her, burst forth in wild, tumultuous torrent as she told her story and made her plea. When her emotion had spent itself, she gazed at him with shining eyes, but her heart sank to find no answering gleam in his. Surely he could not realize, she thought desperately.

“Do you understand, John?” she cried. “You have only to entrust, in confidence, to Percy the immediate intent of Washington’s campaign for which he is preparing, to be re-prieved — saved!”

But he shook his head sadly.

“Little woman, you know naught of war,” he said. “You think only of me. I cannot

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blame you, but what you ask would make me — a traitor.”

In an agony of dread and supplication she threw herself at his feet, clinging, pleading, cajoling, forcing herself to anger. But the calm eyes never wavered, looking upward at the daylight in the little window as if a bit of another world were framed in its narrow space. So, with poignant grief and pitiable reproaches, she left him to bitterness and despair.

On Sunday no creaking lock foretold the coming of his one happiness. Monday, too, had nearly gone, and still no Constance. In all his life two days had not dragged themselves into such an eternity of waiting.

“Is she offended at my refusal to yield honor to love?” he asked himself a thousand times, and as often answered “No. In after years she will approve. Did I consent she would regret it all her life. She cannot come. Either she has been refused permission or she is ill.”

Late that afternoon the rattling of keys outside his cell made the blood leap from his heart in a great throb of delight.

“’Tis she,” cried his inmost soul, as he rose and stretched forth his arms. The key rasped in the lock, and the door opened. Constance was not there.

“Egad, sir,” said a sneering voice, “you’re not very luxurious here, are you?”

Before the prisoner stood, instead of his sweetheart, the broad and clumsy frame of Capt. Jack Mowatt. One glance at his ill-made face

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showed that he was in a state of sardonic good-humor that was more exasperating than rage could possibly be. Yet Brandon found himself feeling no special resentment. After all, the Englishman had but done his duty in this event.

"Odd, isn't it," continued Mowatt, "that I should be assigned as your guard for the death-watch, so to say?"

Brandon smiled scornfully.

"Yes," he replied, "it *is* odd — unless you suggested it."

"No, no, 'pon honor," protested the other. "'Tis in regular course of duty. Damme if I'm not sorry for you — to die and leave such a pretty sweetheart be —"

"Silence, sirrah!" thundered Brandon, with such a menace in his face and attitude that Mowatt, who was unarmed, fell back a little. "Say what you will of me, gloat over me as you will, but as you are an officer and a man, leave women out of it."

"Oh, as you please," growled the officer. "You're too grouty for good company, and I'll leave you to your reflections and go back to pleasanter society."

CHAPTER XLII

Toby Gookin Brings News

JOHN BRANDON'S thought, as he found two days drag by with no sight of Constance, was correct: the girl was ill. The strain which she had so bravely borne for a week, together with her utter despair at her lover's refusal to purchase his life at the terms offered, had proven more than mind and body could endure, and she yielded to the awful tension.

When she awoke Sunday morning, she babbled in delirium, and Dr. Gair was called in hot haste.

"Intense nervous strain has overcome her. I fear brain fever," said the surgeon.

As the calm of evening fell upon the house, however, her feverish restlessness yielded to the doctor's potions, and she slept through the night. On Monday morning her mind had partially cleared of mist, but her body was bereft of all strength. Once or twice she tried to raise herself on her pillow, but fell back with a poor, faint smile of defeat. Thus she lay all day without a word or another movement, but always with that unearthly smile upon her face, as if she looked upon another and an enchanted world, but had no will to strive for it.

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“’Tis the worst symptom of all, Mistress Barbara,” said Dr. Gair, “this lassitude. If there is not a decided change for the better before another day I fear for her — fear very much.”

Distracted little Barbara watched through the weary hours at her friend’s bedside, giving her her medicine and the little nourishment she would take, with tender and loving care. At sunset, just as the room and the bed were touched by a golden radiance from the west, Barbara saw that her friend’s eyes were closed. Struck to the heart by something in the face she loved, she tiptoed across the floor and gazed upon the pillow. It was sleep! And, more wonderful still, two tears shimmered upon the long lashes.

“Poor girl, she has never cried in all these terrible days — till now,” said Barbara to herself. And she would have wept in sympathy but that there seemed something of better promise in the omen.

Later she was relieved by Aunt Tabitha, who told her that Thomas Cuyler, now lieutenant, was in the parlor below. Down she went with the prettiest of blushes, and excuses for her workaday garb.

The soldier had come to inquire after Mistress Drake’s health, he said, and very likely he had. But had any one taken the trouble, he would have seen that it took a full hour of time, and very pronounced proximity to Mistress Brandon, to learn the news.

When Barbara returned, her patient was still asleep. Darkness had come, and the girl

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lighted a candle, and by its feeble light tried to fix her mind upon a book. But ever across the pages seemed to glow the faces of her brother and another.

In the midst of one of these somber reveries, she heard a harsh whisper.

"What was that?" it said.

"She is beside herself again," thought Barbara, as she turned and saw Constance sitting bolt upright in bed.

"What is it, dear?" she asked gently, going to her charge and taking her hot hand with a caress. "Pray calm yourself."

"I *am* calm," replied Constance. "But why am I in bed? . . . There, do you hear nothing?"

"No, Constance, no."

"Have — have I been ill?" was the wondering question.

"Yes, dear."

"Has it been for long? My God, girl, don't look at me like that! What day is this?"

"Monday."

"And of the month?"

"March fourth."

"Then I am not too late," came like a pæan of thanksgiving. Barbara stared at her friend in silent wonderment, then started at the sudden exclamation:

"There! Don't you hear *that*?"

Yes, Barbara heard this time, and her face paled with fear. It was a soft scratching, as of some hard substance on glass.

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"'Tis at that window," said Constance. "Throw back the shutters and open it."

The girl obeyed the stronger will, as ever, though sorely alarmed at what might happen. Through the open window came a low voice.

"Don't be afear'd; 'tis me — Toby Gookin."

Never had words of human being sounded sweeter to the woman upon the bed.

"Gookin!" she cried joyously, while the blood leaped with new strength from her heart. "Then my dream was forerunner of the truth. Can you see him, Barbara?"

"No."

"I am on the scullery roof," came the soft voice again, "scratching the glass with a branch. Is all safe within?"

"Say 'yes,'" commanded Constance.

"But, Constance, you — in bed!"

"There is no time for prudishness. Say 'yes.'"

"Yes," whispered the little girl to the open window, noting with satisfaction the while that her patient had sunk back beneath the bed-clothes. "Can you reach the window?"

No answering word came from the outer air; an instant later a pair of huge hands grasped the window-sill and the face of the giant slowly appeared above it. Then Toby swung himself lightly into the room.

Barbara faced him with her finger upon her lip and a motherly little shake of her head.

"She is very ill," she said. "Do nothing to excite her."

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But Constance could speak for herself.

"You bring news?" she asked.

"Yes, and seek it," Toby replied. "Major Brandon is took, we've heard."

"It is true," was the solemn reply.

"Hez he be'n tried?"

"Yes — and sentenced to death at sunrise to-morrow."

"So soon? Then thar' is no hope of a rescue."

"What was your hope?" asked Constance, as calmly as if she were talking of some remote, impersonal thing. Barbara was amazed and almost offended. How could one be so unemotional at such a dreadful crisis.

"To-night — even now," replied Gookin, "Washington's troops under Thomas are marchin' to fortify the Heights of Dorchester and I had hoped —"

"They are to fortify Dorchester Heights?" cried the girl. "Then the campaign plan is—"

"Ter drop shot inter the taouwn till Howe finds it tew hot ter hold him. The cannonadin' of the past tew days was but a blind."

"Has there been cannonading?" asked the girl of Barbara. The latter nodded. "I did not hear it," said Constance. Then: "You are sure of this plan, Toby?"

"I saw two thousan' men marchin' fer the Heights," was the sturdy reply.

Mistress Drake kept her own counsel for a moment, then with an impulsive gesture of command asked Gookin to go to the next room and wait. No sooner had he betaken his great frame

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through the door, than Barbara's eyes almost popped out of her pretty head at what she saw. For there, her coverlets thrown back and her dainty feet and ankles all bare, sat Mistress Drake on the edge of the bed.

"Constance Drake, what would you do?" cried the terrified little nurse.

"Help me to stand," commanded the patient. "I'm monstrous weak, I find. No, stay. Is that a decanter of wine? Fill me a glass of it."

The girl did as she was bid, and Constance drained the glass of rich old port. In another moment she was on her feet, Barbara trying the while to press her back to the bed.

"Constance, what are you —"

"I am going to save John Brandon," was the triumphant cry, "and there's not a moment to be lost!"

CHAPTER XLIII

The End and the Means

UNDER the stout guardianship of Gookin, and leaning upon his muscular arm, Constance hurried toward the water-front. Behind majestically stalked Queue, the dog, looking neither to the right nor the left, and paying no attention to numerous cur friends who sought to inveigle him into a romp.

Constance plied the huge soldier with questions as to the details of the American plans of which he had previously given her a hint. The facts he gave she put carefully away into her memory with as much of military precision as she could give. No minutest bit, she thought, but might have its value.

When they were within sight of the warehouse-prison, the girl bade her tall escort turn back. The brave fellow demurred.

"I can't leave yew alone, miss. What would Major Brandon say?"

"As I do, that you are of more use to me free, and free you will not be if you are seen by the sentry."

"Thar's reason in that, miss," Toby agreed.

"Besides," Constance went on, "I'm safe enough. Queue here will look out for me, won't

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you, good dog?" and she patted the head of the wise animal, who licked her hand for reply.

Gookin smiled, in spite of himself.

"I've be'n told," said he, "that Samuel Adams' dog could not a-bear a redcoat, and had flown at sev'ral soldiers."

"True. But he has been here with me before, and all I have to say as we pass a sentry is 'friend, Queue, friend,' and the little fib saves trouble."

With this he left her, promising to be at Dan MacAlpine's in case of need, and his tall figure was instantly enwrapped in the shadows of the buildings.

At the entrance to the warehouse, a sentry she had not seen before challenged her. But her pass compelled him to call a superior officer, and for a moment the strong oaken door was left ajar. From within came the sound of a loud and coarsely thick voice.

"See what it is, sergeant," it said. "We can't be bothered. The game's too exciting."

"Mowatt," she whispered to herself, with a thrill of enmity and dread. "Of all men to be in command here to-night!"

But the sergeant who came out knew her and bowed respectfully.

"It's all regular, miss," he said. "I believe you know your way."

She nodded, and turned into the long, many-windowed corridor. The soldier on duty in the little room at the end was surly, sleepy, and half-drunk, but he admitted her without a word.

THE END AND THE MEANS

And then there came to John Brandon's senses the vision of an angel, which soon took the form of a woman of the earth, his own.

"Constance," he cried, as he folded her close, "are you sure 'tis you?" He held her away for a moment, and gazed full into her face, which in the dull, flickering candle-light looked more wan and pale than it really was. "Ah, I see, I was right. You have been ill."

"Yes, John, but time is too precious to talk of it. You know what night it is?"

"Am I likely to have forgotten it?" he asked solemnly.

"And what comes to-morrow?"

He gravely bowed his head.

"John," she whispered, with thrilling intensity, "Gookin succeeded in entering town to-night!"

The prisoner straightened into an attitude of joy, and his eyes flashed.

"Gookin?" he exclaimed, "then there is hope that —"

"No," she said gently, "there is no possibility of rescue — yet. There must be delay — to-morrow. You understand?"

"Yes — but how?" he urged.

"Moments are like hours to-night. I will explain quickly. Toby says he saw a detachment of Washington's army start for —"

"Dorchester Heights?" he supplemented instantly.

Her face lighted with triumph. "Then I was right. That *was* what you knew?" she said.

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"Yes, yes," he replied, with feverish haste.

"Then you must give this information to Percy."

She spoke with a fine air of conviction and authority, but he shook his head.

"It would be trea — Why, it is too late. They will know it soon themselves," he said.

"Yes, but not to-night. If you speak you will have fulfilled your part of the agreement with Percy, and he must — he will from personal friendliness — grant the reprieve."

The condemned man threw himself upon his stool and bowed his head sadly. His words came slowly, and with the blank tonelessness of despair.

"Don't you see, can't you realize that I cannot do this thing, much less now that the enterprise is almost accomplished?"

The girl looked at him steadily for a moment.

"You refuse, then?" she asked.

"I must, dear," he answered firmly.

She stepped to where he sat, and bent over and took his face in her hands. Then, full upon the lips, she kissed him.

"You are obstinate, heartless, unkind," she cried, "but — I love you all the more for it! I must save you — some other way."

And without another word she knocked loudly for the soldier on guard and was gone.

Out in the streets she hurried from the prison at such a pace that the wondering Queue had to break from his accustomed stride and trot slowly to keep his nose within reach of her hand.

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As she reached Queen Street, she was startled by a sudden burst of light far behind the Beacon Hill, followed by the sullen boom of an explosion. From beyond Charlestown Neck, and all along the region between that point and Cambridge, came other signs of a cannonade. She stopped suddenly, halted by a dreadful fear.

"Is it too late, as John said?" she asked herself. "Have they begun?"

She turned her eyes toward the south where lay the Dorchester Heights, and watched intently. No! Not a flame lighted the darkness that brooded over the place, not a sound from that quarter. The firing was surely a feint to attract attention elsewhere. With hope again high in her breast, she hastened toward Percy's quarters.

Within earshot of the house, she bade Queue lie down in a dark corner. The good dog looked at her as if to suggest that he might be needed elsewhere, but she shook her head. "We'll risk no trouble with soldiers here, old fellow," she said. "Lie there till I call you."

She found that Percy was within and that she might have speech with him. But she heard the voices of other officers with him, much to her chagrin.

"I will confess 'tis all a riddle to me," Lord Percy was saying as she entered, "but this useless cannonading means something more than a desire to burn powder. . . . Ah, Mistress Drake."

"I must speak with you, at once, alone," said the girl earnestly.

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The Earl bowed with his unfailing courtesy, and led the way to an adjoining room.

"I had expected you days ago, Mistress Drake," he said. "But the very lateness of this visit must mean —"

"I overheard your last words, my Lord," returned the girl. "This cannon ding *does* mean something."

"Undoubtedly, — but what? Has Major Brandon yielded to your solicitation?"

"I hastened here at the very first possible moment to tell you. The movement intended by Washington as the next step in his campaign is the fortifying of Dorchester Heights!"

"Whe-e-ew," whistled the Earl. "He *is* a general, then. But the details. Major Brandon will give them, I suppose?" and he caught up his cloak from a chair.

The movement was not lost upon Constance. In it she saw a deadly menace to all her plans, for a few words between Percy and John Brandon would upset everything. Suddenly she swayed as if about to fall.

"Your pardon, my Lord," she said weakly, "but I have been ill — and I am fatigued."

"Pray forgive me," he replied, with real solicitude. "This cannonading has quite upset us, and I did not think. Be seated, I beg."

"I — I have much more to tell," she began. Then, after a brief silence, she went on to give the soldier all the details as to the Dorchester Heights plan that she had had from innocent Toby Gookin.

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Percy listened as if spellbound.

“This is most valuable, Mistress Drake,” he exclaimed, when she had ended. “I shall report it at once to the council.”

The girl rose, and put an appealing hand lightly upon his arm.

“But, my Lord,” she protested gently, “Major Brandon; it is late and — and —”

“Yes, it is to-morrow that the sentence was to have been executed,” said the Earl kindly. “The pardon, of course, cannot be completed till we learn the truth. Oh, I do not doubt you, but all is fair in war, and I should not blame Major Brandon if — But there, I can at least set you at rest.”

Saying which, he went to his desk and wrote. Sanding the paper carefully, he handed it to the girl, and rang a bell.

“I — I cannot see the words,” said Constance wearily. Percy smiled.

“I’m an indifferent writer at best,” he replied, “and by candle-light the poorest. But, ’tis a reprieve in due form for two weeks. Before then all will be settled.”

“My compliments to Lieutenant Charlton,” he said to the orderly who answered his call, “and give him this at once.”

The soldier saluted gravely, but with an eye upon the beautiful woman, who, his quick instinct told him, was somehow concerned in the paper.

“May — may I accompany him?” Constance asked.

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“Why,—yes, ’tis but natural. Certainly,” he replied heartily. “Orderly, escort Mistress Drake to Lieutenant Charlton and then to Major Brandon’s — quarters.” He could not bring himself to use the harsher word before this distressed girl. “You will of course wish to convey the news yourself. Good-night.”

Across the little space between them Constance glided quickly, and took the Earl’s shapely hand in her own. With a sudden impulse of thanksgiving she raised it to her lips, then ran from the room. My Lord stood looking after her with thoughtful eyes.

“Would I had found a wife like that,” he murmured. “Pshaw! what am I saying?” And he strode off to the council.

Lieutenant Charlton himself answered the orderly’s knock, and glanced at the order.

“Very well,” he said shortly.

“It is quite — quite correct?” asked Constance.

“Yes, Mistress Drake. One moment, please,” he continued, as he drew her out of the orderly’s hearing. “Do not think that in any event I should have had any share in the intended — event to-morrow. ’Tis only my duty to see that this order is enforced.”

When the girl and the orderly reached the warehouse, it was Mowatt who admitted them and who conducted Constance through the corridor without a word. She hardly knew whether his silence or his speech were the more forbidding. But she dismissed him quickly from her

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thoughts as she sped along with her message of good cheer. To her surprise, she found that Queue had quietly followed her, no one having thought to say him nay.

The guard in the little room was drunker and more surly than before, but he also was more stupid, and he did not even notice the dog, whose mistress silently pointed to a place under the table, which place he took obediently after a furtive and ill-natured sniff at the man's legs.

With breathless joy, and an eagerness to escape all questioning, the girl told Brandon that death was to be cheated on the morrow, at least, and that a fortnight's reprieve had been given him.

"I cannot stop to tell you more, dearest," she said. "There is yet much to be done before you are safe, and I am almost exhausted."

After one passionate embrace, she knocked at the door, and was let out — very quickly, she noted. When she came to the candle-lit room, she saw that Mowatt was acting as turnkey. The drunken guard had gone.

She trembled with alarm, for on the brutal face of the captain was that which womanhood knows so well how to interpret. Summoning all her strength, she started for the door that led into the corridor. Mowatt seized one of her wrists and gripped it fiercely.

"Not so fast, Mistress Drake," he cried thickly. "I have a word to say to you."

"Well, sir, be brief," she commanded, facing him proudly, yet wishing not to anger him need-

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lessly. The officer leeringly swept her body with his eyes and smiled the smile of a satyr.

“So you come to visit your lover o’ nights, eh?” he exclaimed. “But ’tis his last night, and you’ll need another.”

“Please release me,” pleaded Constance. “You are hurting my wrist.”

For answer he pulled her beautiful head close to his own.

“I don’t want to hurt you, my dear — I want to — love you.”

With one sweep of his left arm, he knocked the candle from the table to the floor, where it sputtered for a moment and went out. Then in the darkness he seized her round, delicate body and pressed it close.

With an agonized struggle the girl writhed herself free from the hideous embrace, and groped her way to the door of John Brandon’s cell.

“Help, help!” she screamed, pounding upon it frantically. “Mowatt —”

Then her lips were closed by a heavy hand, as the furious soldier found her again. She could hear her lover within, tearing futilely at the lock and shouting threats of vengeance upon the man he prayed God for the instant power to kill. The bestial clasp tightened once more on her body. Oh, for death itself rather than this. . . . Was there no human power to save a defenceless woman?

But what was this rush of something through the dark? The launching of a great body

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through the air, brushing her very face in its course? The hoarse yell of agony from a man, and the awful growling, crunching, worrying of an animal upon something soft, yet bony?

“Queue! Oh, thank God, thank God!” cried the girl.

Mechanically, she picked up the bunch of keys that had fallen from Mowatt’s wrist to her feet. For a moment a wild thought came to her mind. But footsteps were heard down the corridor, and she shook her head.

“’Twould be useless,” she told herself. “The sentries would stop him. . . . But,” she thought, there are two keys to each of these doors. Perhaps they —”

Swiftly she broke the string that held the keys together, and thrust into her bosom the two peculiar ones she knew to be duplicates of others. By this time soldiers with lanterns burst into the little room, Charlton in the rear with an official paper in his hand. At the sight of Mowatt pinned to the floor by the huge dog, whose jaws still held his throat like a vice, he started back in amazement.

“In heaven’s name, what’s this, Mistress Drake?” he cried.

Constance smiled calmly.

“This — fellow insulted me,” she said, “and my dog — well, you see what happened. Come, Queue, home!”

CHAPTER XLIV

"You Alone Can Save Him"

AFTER a night of calm and dreamless sleep, the first for very many nights, Constance came down stairs with a light step and a heart almost at peace. In the hall she found her uncle with a face as radiant as that of the ruddy old moon in the great clock in the corner.

"Egad, Connie, they've done it, they've done it!" he cried, catching the girl in his arms and implanting a hearty smack first upon one cheek, then upon the other, and finally upon her rosy mouth. And with that he held her at arm's length and whirled her about, the while dancing from one foot to the other as he had not legged it these twenty years, singing a few bars of "Yankee Doodle" as an accompaniment to the wondrous proceeding.

After a bit of this, the astonished Constance was about to ask her uncle if he had suddenly gone insane, when her Aunt Tabitha bustled into the hall, her face also glowing with satisfaction. Then old Giles seized his wife's hand and made her take one of her niece's, and around went the three to the complete scandalizing of Methuselah, the cat, who watched this

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indecorous scene from a chair, his great yellow eyes expanding with wonderment.

At last a twinge of gout warned old Romney that his dancing days were long since over, and the whirling stopped abruptly. Constance regarded her uncle anxiously

“Now,” she said, “perhaps you’ll explain what all this — this —”

“This festivity means, eh?” interrupted the old fellow, cheerily. “Well, girl, if you’ll go upstairs and look Dorchester way you’ll find out. The boys have done it, bless ’em!”

“The Heights are — are fortified, then?”

“Fortified? They’re British-proof, girl. Washington’s men have done more in a night than Howe’s whole army could have done in a month.”

“What will happen now?” she asked seriously.

“Happen now?” snorted her uncle. “Howe will have to go out and clean off that hill, or quit the town forever.”

And so on, with much unseemly mirth and a deal of sarcastic advice to the absent General Howe, until Constance went to the breakfast room. It seemed to him that the girl was less responsive to his hilarious mood than might have been expected, and he said as much to Mistress Tabitha.

“Perhaps the girl, like me, has thought that this taking of the Heights of Dorchester is but the presage to the bombardment of the town,” she ventured gently.

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“How like you women,” growled Giles, as he put on his hat and coat, took his trusty cane and ambled out of doors to see if he could still find left some Bostonians who would exult with him, and care not a rap for the consequences.

Constance went forth to her daily visit to Brandon to find the streets full of excited people, and an air of grim terror over everything. Her first thought was to see the fortifications over on Dorchester Heights, and when she reached a spot where she had a clear view she stopped and gazed across the water. Her heart swelled with pride and joy as she saw the long lines of frowning earthworks crowning the eminence, with here and there the round mouth of cannon gaping from an embrasure. The town and the ships of war were at the mercy of the American army.

And the town knew it, for crowds of its citizens, as upon the day of the fight at Bunker Hill, had already sought out the high places and the housetops, expecting a repetition of the spectacle of that fight. Soldiers were marching to the water's edge, whence, report had it, they would embark at once and cross over for a night assault upon the works, after a rendezvous at Castle William.

But to the girl there was a still more important matter than this silent threat of death and destruction, and she turned toward the goal of all her hopes and prayers, buffeting the strong wind that had sprung up since early morning with a pure delight in conquering its opposition.

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She had almost reached the warehouse when she thought of Mowatt, and her cheeks flamed, even though there were none to see them. Might he not be there again, she wondered, and what could she do if he were?

“No, no, of course not,” she reassured herself. “None has been there two days in succession.”

The officer of the guard, to her great relief, happened to be Lieutenant Cuyler, who received her with diffident politeness.

“I am very sorry, Mistress Drake,” he said, “but you cannot see Major Brandon.”

“Why not?” she asked wonderingly. “You have my pass.”

“Believe me, my dear Mistress Drake, I would another had my duty to perform, but this pass has been revoked, and — you will pardon me, I know — I — I — have orders to retain it.”

“There must be some mistake,” cried the girl warmly. “Who gave the orders?”

“Lord Percy issued them, I believe.”

“Lord Percy? Ah, I understand. He is to be released, and I have no need for it. I’ll tell him at once.”

And away she went, disappointed, vexed, puzzled, but still with the hope she had expressed to Cuyler urging her feet to greater and greater speed. But the officer shook his head as she disappeared.

“I fear she is very far from the truth,” he said to himself.

At Percy’s quarters Lord Rawdon, who came forth to meet her, said that the Earl was at a

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council of war and could see no one. She would have waited, but the officer dissuaded her on the ground that it would be useless. So there was nothing to do but to go home, where she impatiently chafed through the weary hours, torn by anxiety.

Twice in the afternoon she went back to Percy's, accompanied by Dan MacAlpine. The second time they told her that the Earl had left town, as he was to command the embarking troops. Her face showed her pitiable discouragement, and Dan tried to cheer her.

"Divil a bit o' good it'll do thim to thry and rache Castle William in this wind," he remarked sagely, and, indeed, he was a good prophet, for the gale was now raging over the housetops and swirling around the corners as if it were in complete league with the Yankees, and were even making a crude attempt to whistle their now-popular national air. The harbor was feathered with white-caps, and the boats dared not set forth.

Next morning the wind yelled as vociferously as ever, and rain now fell in torrents, to the unutterable disgust of the British, who, through it all, could see that the enemy over on the hill was strengthening his position with more breast-works, guns, and men. The very devil was in league with the rebels, they said.

Thursday saw no slackening of the terrific storm, and MacAlpine, who had noted that Percy had at last returned to his quarters, hastened to the Romney mansion, drenched to the

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skin, to tell the news to Constance. She was for going at once to the Earl, but Dan added his protests to those of the family, and convinced her of the folly.

“You’d kitch yer death, darlint,” he averred. “Besoides, phwat’s the use? The officers have enough to think av to think how to get out av the trap they’re in without botherin’ with John Brandon.”

“But this suspense is terrible,” she moaned. “Besides, what will John think of me?”

The Irishman scratched his curly pate for a while, then chuckled loudly.

“Why don’t yer sind him a scrap av a letter?” he asked.

“I didn’t think of that,” replied the girl brightly. “I’ll begin at once. . . . But will they let me?”

“Let ye? Indade they’ll not, but Oi’ll take it to him.”

“Will they let *you*?”

“Begorra, Oi’ll not ask their lave. He’s in the spice room of the ould warehouse, ye tould me?”

She nodded.

“Well, Oi know it and its windy like me own armory. It’ll be hard luck but Oi can—foind a boat and a shtone —”

“And what then?” asked Constance, her eyes dancing with excitement.

“O’ll wrap the shtone in the note and if Oi can’t hit that windy Oi’m no Oirishman.”

“O, Dan!” and she hugged the old fellow

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as ecstatically as if he had already accomplished the feat, and had come back with news of it.

"But whist," he added, rubbing his chin dubiously, "perhaps ye'd betther write *two* notes. Oi moight not hit the firsht toime."

That night John Brandon was surprised to hear the soft splashing of oars under his little window, and startled a moment later to find that a small stone had come sailing through the small opening into his cell. But when he saw the bit of paper tied to it he knew and was rejoiced.

Early next morning the ex-fencer came to the Romney house, his round face beaming with satisfaction.

"Great news!" he cried. "The soldiers are goin' to git out!"

"Get out?" echoed Constance, excitedly. "You mean —"

"Yis, jist thot. Git out, run away, lave the town, — evacooate's the military term. Thot's the decision av the council av war. An' the Tories are in a terrible shtew about it."

Losing not a moment, Constance hurried away to find Lord Percy. The situation was more perplexing than ever, and must be cleared up. Here was her lover, whom suddenly she was forbidden to see, under a reprieve, it was true, but with a sentence of death still hanging over his head. What would be the effect of this evacuation upon him? Would his fate come suddenly or would he be set free? The terrible uncertainty nearly drove her mad as she almost ran through the streets.

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On every side were the evidences of Tory panic and the wild desire to save property. From out the well-known houses of Royalists men were hurling household goods upon the sidewalks, while their owners fretted and fumed in the vain attempt to hire transportation to the water-front. Shops were being dismantled and their contents piled high in the streets, where soldiers looted them to their hearts' content. Everywhere men were gathered in excited groups talking of the impending calamity, their eyes ever and anon turning to the silent guns on Dorchester Heights.

Distracted Constance found to her bitter grief that the Earl could not see her, but would grant her a few moments on Saturday, an hour before noon. At the appointed time she was in Percy's presence, her heart beating wildly, her eyes piteously sunken. The soldier kindly bade her sit.

“I have delayed seeing you, Mistress Drake,” he began, “in hope that I might have good news for you.”

“Yes,” she said, in a voice that was strange and hard.

“But tell me,” he continued, “whose scheme was it that won Major Brandon's reprieve? I feel sure it was not his.”

“Why, whose could it have been, but his?” she ventured blindly, wondering, fearing, almost beside herself at this new turn.

“Well, it might have been, — for instance, yours. . . . Your face tells me that I am right.

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But how, pray, did you secure the information all our men seemed powerless to obtain?"

"That I cannot say," the girl replied coldly. The tall form of brave Toby Gookin seemed almost beside her, telling her to be strong. Not for anything human would she betray his secret. The Earl looked at her curiously.

"Ah, very well," he replied. "'Twas only personal curiosity. Mistress Drake, — pardon me, but you are the bravest woman I ever knew, and I'll save Major Brandon — if I can."

"If you *can*?" she stammered, a dull horror clutching at her heart, all the little color of her face flying back in despair. "You who are so powerful?"

"But not all powerful," he said gently. "And just now the commander-in-chief and I — but let that pass. The council of officers has decided that Brandon's reprieve was secured by a mere trick, and that there is no obligation to complete the bargain made with you on his behalf."

"Then he — he must —" She could not complete the terrible sentence.

"Die? No. No, that has not been decreed. I have secured delay. Could it be proved that Brandon gave the information without knowing the time that the heights were to be fortified — But no, that would name him traitor."

A traitor! Ah, that was what John Brandon had not been and would not be, no, not for all the dear delights of life and love and happiness. She rose and held up her head proudly. She

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could almost glory in his death itself, with honor safe. But she must listen to Percy's words.

“Come to me, if you hear nothing from me, on Tuesday next,” he said. And she left his kindly presence with something like strength in her soul.

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Lord Percy was very grave when she was admitted to his office at the appointed time, and the girl's instincts took quick alarm. But she had become almost benumbed by the brooding horror of the many days of exaltation and depression, and now she felt that she could bear any stroke of fate with silence.

“I wish to be as kind as I can,” said the Earl, “but you must know the truth. The council of officers has outvoted me. The best I have been able to do is to secure the continuation of the reprieve I personally promised.”

“It is the worst, then?” she asked, without a trace of emotion in her voice. The soldier looked at her with the admiration he always felt for bravery, and noted that she stood up as straight as a young sapling. It grieved him to think that he must bring the storm that would bend and perhaps break it. But there was no escape.

“Yes,” he answered slowly. “He must die on the morning of the nineteenth. If we are ready to evacuate the town before that date, he will be taken aboard one of the ships.”

As he turned to his desk to write upon a slip

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of official paper, Constance felt that she was in his presence for the last time, that no more would he or could he offer help from his chivalrous and noble desire to make her happy. Her eyes filled as she looked at his fine head bent low to his pen. He arose and came to her.

"We shall sail on Friday if the wind serves," he said, "but not before. I can do but one thing more for you. This pass will admit you to say farewell. There can be but one interview. You must make the best use of it."

For a moment he was silent, wondering whether or not to go on. "Yes, 'tis best that I tell her," he thought.

"Mistress Drake," he said, his voice vibrant with unutterable sympathy, "it is well that you should know that this time his sentence is not to be shot, but to be —"

"Hanged!"

It was but the parody of a word, a ghastly whisper that a ghost might fitly have uttered. Percy could only bow his head in distress.

"Here is the pass," he said, after a little. "Heaven bless and comfort you. You alone can — *save* him."

She knelt at his feet like some pure young virgin before a figured saint, and seized his hand in both of hers. Then, pressing her lips upon it in an agony of gratitude, she rose and hurried from the room.

CHAPTER XLV

The Troops Depart

“**Y**OU alone can save him,” was the solemn refrain that chanted itself into Constance’s brain, that seemed sung by the March winds, that fitted the cries of pillagers as she hurried through the streets, seeing nothing, knowing nothing except that mournful song, until at last some magic brought her footsteps to the warehouse where her heart’s own lay in his hopeless cell. Then she suddenly realized the presence of the paper she held clutched tightly in her hand. But she shook her head.

“No, I must not use this now,” she murmured. “It would be useless until—”

And then that direful chant again, rising higher and higher in her very ears, till it seemed a challenge now, more than the refrain of despair.

“You alone *can* save him,” was its burden, with a new rhythm of possibility that made her fly rather than walk to the old armory of her faithful Dan MacAlpine. Her face seemed to him to have upon it a message of hope.

“He is saved, darlint?” asked the old soldier cheerily.

“Not yet, Dan, but he will be.”

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“Will be?” returned the other, caressing his chin. “Till me the daytails.”

“Toby—Gookin—he has not—not gone?” she exclaimed eagerly.

“Indade, no. . . . Toby, ye shpalpane, come forth. There’s a lady to see ye, sorr.”

And from an inner room the great figure of the friend of John Brandon emerged carefully. Then to the two breathless listeners Constance told of her last interview with Lord Percy, and of the paper he had given her. Old Dan’s jovial face grew sober as the story progressed, and he shook his head slowly. Gookin, deeply interested, hung upon every word with great alertness.

“Lord Percy’s last words were, ‘You alone can save him,’” the girl said, in conclusion.

The giant thrust his huge paws into his pockets and balanced from one foot to the other. Then he pursed his mouth as if to whistle, but thought better of it and swallowed nothing very visibly.

“I guess he’s right. Yew alone kin save him,—with us to help yew.”

“Begorra, if Oi’d said thot now,” cried Dan, “it wud ’a’ been all roight; but for a borrn Yankee, ‘You alone with us to help you,’ is quare, to say the laste.”

The girl smiled faintly. Then she turned to Gookin hopefully.

“What do you advise, my friend?” she asked.

“I guess I’d like to—think a little,” he replied. And think he did, if there was any virtue

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in a half-hour's pacing up and down with knitted brows, and chewing vigorously a bit of soft wood. When he ceased his walk, the three sat down and talked long and earnestly about his plan. The men escorted Constance to her home, then separated, going in different directions. Neither returned to MacAlpine's armory that night.

The next day Dan came to the Romney house and reported that although the British were rapidly getting ready to leave, the actual event could not yet be dated.

"Gin'ral Howe has a proclamation out to shtop plunderin'," he announced, "and says he'll hang any soldier caught, but they kape at it jist the same." Then to the girl he whispered: "Not yit, darlint," and hurried away. On Thursday afternoon he came in evident haste and asked to see Constance alone.

"Ye'd best go to him to-noight," he said. "A proclamation's to be made by crier in the mornin' to kape the payple indoors all day."

"You are sure that everything is —"

"Sure, Constance, sure. Long Toby's a wonder, and — but Oi must be goin', darlint."

The day wore to darkness at last, and Constance set out for the warehouse with the dog Queue. Happily she and her escort passed without interruption through the disordered streets. At the door her permit to enter was examined with such deliberation that her heart beat so fiercely that she thought her bosom must burst. After a long consultation, a higher

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officer admitted the trembling girl, and she was once more enfolded in the arms of her soldier lover. But she unflinchingly cut short his rhapsodies of joy at seeing her again.

"The time allowed me is limited," she declared, "and this is my last visit before— Oh, John, it is death if we fail!"

"If we fail? In what?" he asked, wonderingly. She gave no heed to the question, but brought two keys from their hiding-place in her bosom and put them into his hands.

"Can you hide these?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, but what are they for?"

"They unlock the two doors that lead from here."

"An escape?" he whispered. "But the sentry?"

"Turn your back, sir," she replied sternly. But curiosity was stronger than obedience, and he regarded her steadily. "Just a moment, please," she pleaded.

Then he yielded, and a strange sound as of rended garments followed. A moment more and Constance handed him a sword that he remembered to have seen at her uncle's long ago. He raised his eyebrows.

"For the sentry," she said grimly. "The example of the wife of one of your fellow-officers— Mrs. Knox— inspired me. Listen, now, and I will tell you the whole plan."

Just as she finished, the guard rapped at the door in token that the interview was over.

"You understand?" she asked, in a whisper

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that thrilled him to the soul. In it lay all the possibilities of happiness or —

“Perfectly,” he replied, and she was gone.

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Next morning, came a proclamation, as reported by Dan MacAlpine, that the citizens must keep within their homes until nightfall, that the troops might not be hindered in their embarkation. Constance thought it best not to venture forth, and so the day was passed in an agony of suspense. Had they done it or had they failed? she asked herself and Barbara a thousand times. At last, in the afternoon, came old Dan to answer her question.

“We were all ready,” he said, “but the wind sprung up shtrong from the aste, and they’ve abandoned their attmpt to imbark.”

On Saturday, Constance, feeling desperately that she must be out and moving or go mad brooding over the awful problem of life and death in which John Brandon was the central figure, spent most of the day in the streets.

The town was in an uproar. Drunken soldiers roamed about, plundering the small shops, smashing the windows of houses, and defacing the doors with mud and bayonet thrusts. Nor were they altogether partisan, for the bar of the British Coffee House was sacked as well as the cellars of the Whig taverns. Several fires were set, but were put out by the soberer element. Never had Boston witnessed such scenes of riot and debauchery.

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To the terrors of that night was added a bombardment by the British of Nook's Hill, an eminence nearer the town than Dorchester Heights, and which the Patriots had already begun to fortify. Yankee shells fell in the town, also, smashing and tearing through some of the houses.

Under cover of all this uproar and confusion, Constance fearlessly made her way to the vicinity of John Brandon's prison. She was nearly overcome by terror, however, when someone seized her from behind. Then came a dear, familiar, angelically reassuring voice: "'Tis only me, darlint. But this'll niver do. Come in here."

And the stout old fencer pushed the girl through the door of a building next to her uncle's warehouse. Then he closed it behind them.

"We don't dare show a loight," he whispered, "but Oi know the way loike a book."

And, indeed, he did, for in a moment more the two were standing by a window overlooking the water.

"Where are the men and Gookin?" asked Constance.

"Gookin's prowlin' around for news — the cliver shpalpane. The min are — here."

In the broad flare of light that came from the firing of a mortar on a floating battery not far from the wharf, the girl saw the shadowy figures of men at the end of the warehouse floor. MacAlpine chuckled gaily.

"There's tin of 'em," he said proudly, "not

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countin' me and Gookin, and wan who's on watch opposite the Romney warehouse. An' ivery mother's son av 'em can foight loike the divil."

Then he told her of the practical completion of all their plans, and how they but waited the word to act. Assuring her, in his hearty, honest way, that nothing had been left undone, he suggested that he accompany her home. But to this she would not listen. She could bear anything rather than the suspense of another night.

"Besides," she said, "the soldiers might come while you are gone, and then what would happen?"

"Ye're roight, mavourneen," he admitted. "Oi'll make ye a bit av a bed of blankets over in the corner yonder."

Reclining on her "bit of a bed," which she declared was better than one of down, Constance begged for more details of the plan of rescue. Then Dan told her how the instant an officer should reach the prison with an order for the men on guard there to proceed with their captive to the embarkation point, Brandon was to be warned by the setting adrift of a burning boat, the signal agreed upon.

He was then to use the two keys Constance had given him, and make his way to the watch-room, silencing the sentry, by death if need be. From that room he was to go to the second window in the corridor, from which the shutters had been unhinged on the outside. These would fall at sufficient pressure. This window

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looked upon a space between the Romney warehouse and the one in which they were, and the moment Brandon made his appearance, the well-armed little band of rescuers would rally for his defense.

"And a moighty foine plan it is, too," said MacAlpine, as he ended his recital.

"Pray heaven it may not fail," murmured the girl fervently. "But why do you wait?"

"Because, darlint, the confusion of the soldiers' dayparture will give us a betther chance."

She questioned him no more, and after a little the faithful fellow was delighted to see that sleep had fallen upon her tired eyes. She awoke with the sun, refreshed and comforted, although she had little appetite for the bread and cold meat MacAlpine forced upon her.

Soon Gookin came in with news shining in his face.

"They hev begun to embark," he whispered. "Let every man be ready!"

The rescuers seized their arms and formed themselves into a semblance of military order. Determined-looking fellows they were, Constance noted with satisfaction. She knew that this was to be no child's play, no game for men who were squeamish at the sight of blood. For a moment she wished that she were a man that she might strike a blow for the one she loved; then came the sweeter thought that she was a woman, waiting for the man who, God willing, was to be saved.

Some of the little band she knew, for several

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had been in the employ of her uncle. All had been detained in the town for one reason or another until it was too late to leave it; but they were none the less Patriots to the core.

For an hour or more they all waited in nearly absolute silence, the men giving the final touches to their weapons, and the girl praying for something, anything, to end the killing suspense.

Nine o'clock had come, when there sounded a tap at one of the windows. It was the signal of their sentry outside.

"An officer and a squad of men have turned the corner," he whispered.

At that old Dan dashed open a window over the water. Another man struck fire from flint into tinder, and touched the burning bit into a mass of inflammable stuff which still another thrust hastily out of the window.

"'Tis in the boat, hiven be praised!" exclaimed MacAlpine, sticking his head outside for a moment's observation. Then he slashed at a rope with his sword, and a dark, smoky something floated away with the gentle ebb of the tide.

"Now, darlint, don't ye move," warned the old fellow, in a hoarse whisper. "Good 'cess to us all; Oi'm off." And out of a window he leaped to join the rest of the band, who had preceded him by the same sort of exit.

Constance clenched her teeth and waited. She could hear the clatter of footsteps, the rattle of arms, the challenge of the sentry, but no sign came from the window where John Brandon should make his appearance. What if he had

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not seen the smoky signal? What if he had been overpowered, — killed? It was almost more than her brain could bear. She felt that she must cry out, must scream to her lover that his time for escape had come.

But all at once a strange stillness warned her of some new phase of the situation. She leaned far out and looked down the open space. At one end were the rescuers, doing nothing. MacAlpine and Gookin were talking together, their faces showing the anxiety they felt. Finally, at a sign from the giant, one of the men pried open the shutters from one of the prison windows, and after a little they came tumbling down into the arms of the others.

MacAlpine climbed up and looked into the window.

“He’s gone, as Oi’m an Oirishman,” he shouted, throwing caution to the winds. “Begorra, phwhat’s to be done now?”

“Follow me,” cried Gookin, waving his huge sword fiercely. “A rescue, a rescue!”

The Patriot band rushed pell-mell down the narrow courtyard, and were lost to view around the corner.

But that they had not rushed without result was clear to the agonized girl, for from the street came hoarse shouts, fierce oaths, the ring of steel and the sound of firearms. Death for someone, she knew, was in that terrifying uproar — but for whom? She could no longer bear up under her weight of foreboding, and sank in a helpless, senseless heap upon the floor.

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Back to earth she came, she knew not when, to find herself being raised by two strong, loving arms, and to see a dear face bending close to her own. That it was flushed, and stained, and scratched, she did not realize, nor would have cared in any event. It was the countenance of love, and that was heaven itself.

“You are safe?” she asked gently, after a long embrace.

MacAlpine answered for him.

“He’s as safe as a trivit, darlint. An’ the redcoats ’ll run all the way to Chapeside if there’s good walkin’.”

Then the girl laughed, a clear, pearly, mirthful laugh, the first that had come from her throat for many a day. She ran to Dan MacAlpine and kissed the delighted old fellow so heartily that he never forgot it, and then off to the front of the warehouse she must go, because she wanted to see the redcoats — *going out!* The others followed lest she become too bold.

Just as she reached the window a couple of MacAlpine’s men went by, carrying something toward the water. Old Dan nudged the young officer, who drew the girl away; but not before she had seen that the face of the dead man was that of Captain Jack Mowatt, “pride of the Tenth.” She shuddered, but no longer with dread.

But Dan MacAlpine was curious to know something he had not yet understood.

“Till me, John, — Oi mane Major,” he said, “phwhy didn’t ye kape to our plan, instead of

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foightin' yer way out, and jump through the windy here?"

"Because, Dan," was the quiet reply, "I found a grating on the inside."

The Irishman stroked his chin in profound thought. He frowned, he screwed up his lips, he half closed his eyes. Then a flicker of a smile began to creep over his rosy face, ending at last in a broad grin.

"Be the powers," he exclaimed, "Oi niver thought of that, now did Oi?"

CHAPTER XLVI

"All's Well"

WHEN dusk had come down over the town, the little party at the water-front thought it safe to venture forth, and thence to the Romney mansion they went, Constance leaning upon the arm of John Brandon with a wholly new air of dependence more sweet than anything she had ever felt.

There was a joyful reunion in the fine old house, to be sure, with a vociferous welcome from Queue and great hilarity on the part of Pompey, as well as the deeper gratitude of Giles Romney and his wife, who had not closed their eyes since Constance disappeared. Only pretty Barbara seemed out of tune with the delight of the rest.

"I know, you rogue," whispered Constance to her as she pinched her cheek. "Lieutenant Cuyler has gone with the rest of the invaders. Don't you worry. He'll be back again."

Barbara bridled and blushed.

"That he will," she replied stoutly. "As soon as the war is over, he says."

"Pray heaven that may be soon, Bab, for your sake — and the country's," said Mistress Drake fervently.

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On Wednesday came the main body of the American army, with a new flag flying, and all the fifes and drums playing "Yankee Doodle" as frantically as if the tune had never been heard in town before. The citizens greeted the American soldiers with sedate satisfaction.

"You don't seem any too glad to see us," said Jonathan Thomas, barber, to MacAlpine, as he deposited his gun on the paving in a temporary halt.

"Phwat do ye want us to do?" asked the fencer. "Dance a jig? *We've been suffering, d'ye moind.*"

But whatever the conservatism of the people of Boston, there was no gainsaying the jollity of the country folk and refugees who poured into town in the wake of the army, shouting, cheering, singing, parading the streets, making themselves at home in the houses of the Tories who had sailed away into exile with the defeated army, and thronging the taverns, where great tubs of punch were brewed and given to all who would drink. And this wild outburst of patriotic joy had its effect at last, and the whole of the sober seaport woke to the splendid fact that the foot of the oppressor had been lifted from its soil to return no more.

On the second night after the arrival of the American troops, the place blazed with a general illumination. On the hills roundabout huge bonfires threw up their tongues of flame in exultation, while rockets, beehives, and serpents flared in every quarter of the town. In the

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square near Faneuil Hall an enormous pyramid of lanthorns was erected, and around it the jubilant crowds gathered to hear the music of the bands and the speeches of some of the lesser lights of oratory.

Thither went John Brandon and Constance Drake, happy in the relief of Boston, but happier still in the rich promise of their love. And when, at last, midnight was announced by the taps of drums and the crowds began to disperse, they walked slowly toward old Romney’s hospitable dwelling, wishing it were miles away, that they might go on and on in the night. Yet they were silent in their great happiness until Brandon spoke what was nearest his soul.

“When shall it be, dearest?” he asked tenderly, clasping the little hand that lay so confidently upon his arm. “You know I shall soon be called away with the troops.”

“What, leave me again—and soon?” she cried.

“I must, dear,” he replied, with a thrill of exaltation in his voice, “’tis my duty. When will you be my wife?”

“October is a nice month, John,” she said demurely. How could he see that her eyes were dancing with fun?

“October!” he exclaimed in dismay, “why, I—”

Then she laughed outright with the merriest, sweetest inflection he had ever heard. Besides which, she gave his hand an adorable squeeze

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that made his pulse beat faster than did ever the approach of an enemy.

“Oh, well, you goose, how will to-morrow do?” she asked.

It would do; there was no doubt of that, for the sudden folding of the girl in his arms proved it.

“John, John, what would folks say if they should see us?” she protested.

“That I was the luckiest fellow in the world,” he replied proudly.

Then on they went through the now almost silent streets. Only the faint glow from the embers of one of the hill fires remained of all the earlier riot of light and flame. Suddenly, from a sentry posted not far away, came the cry, “All’s well.” Then from another and another, “All’s well,” fainter and fainter, till at last like the sound of a phantom voice, “A-a-ll’s w-e-e-ll,” quivered upon the air.

And that cry of faith and courage found answer in both their hearts.

THE END.

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