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MILADY
AT ARMS

Books by
Edith Bishop Sherman

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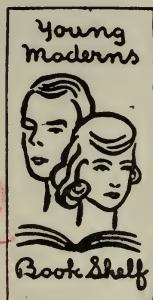
Sally

YOUNG MODERNS BOOKSHELF

MILADY AT ARMS

A Story of the Revolutionary Days

BY
EDITH BISHOP SHERMAN



ILLUSTRATED BY MARGUERITE DE ANGELI

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To the Memory of
FRANCIS JOSEPH PARSONS
WHO RESTORED THE OLD BALL HOUSE
IN MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

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Clemens 48



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MILADY
AT ARMS



MILADY AT ARMS

CHAPTER I

THE QUESTION O' SALLY

SALLY! Sal-lee!" Impatiently Mistress Todd's voice could be heard calling.

Just as impatiently, a slight young figure in torn linsey-woolsey frock stirred in the haymow, shrugged a rebellious shoulder, at last jumped to two bare feet, and stood hesitating.

"Sally! Sal-lee!" Now Mistress Todd's voice came whipping up the ladder hole of the hayloft straight at Sally's pink-tipped ears.

"Yes, mistress, coming! Coming!" she called back, making a little mouth to herself; but walking obediently, albeit reluctantly, toward the top of the ladder. Descending, at the ladder foot, she was caught and jerked around by a none too gentle hand to face Mistress Todd.

"Wilt tell me, girl, why ye needs must plague me thus, why I must search this farm o'er and me wi' so much to do?" demanded the irate dame. "Could ye not hear me the first time ever I called?"

Sally shook her head. "Nay," she answered with maddening gentleness.

Mistress Todd gave her a little shake. "Here I be wi' my week's baking on hand, forsooth, wi' a sick child to care for, the parson to come a-calling, as he hath sent word by Eleazer Lamson's boy—and you up here mooning i' the hayloft!" she bewailed. "Call yourself, too, an honorable lass! I vow, 'tis enow to try the patience o'— Aye, Mary, what be it now?"

She turned from Sally, who was hanging her head beneath the tirade, to question a tiny girl of five who had peeped into the door of the saddle room where they were standing.

"An it pleaseth ye, Moth-er," lisped the little girl, "the parthon hath arrived!"

Mistress Todd gave a tragic groan and glanced down miserably at her gown. "Lawk, whate'er possessed the man to come a-calling so early!" she ejaculated in a vexed tone. "Run along, Mary. Tell him I will come at once," she bade the child, in a soft voice of fond motherhood. "Now, ye, Sally," her tone changed to a sharper pitch, "run in and clean yourself. 'Tis a pity a great girl o' fourteen, almost fifteen, must look thus! Your hair, your gown, the straw on your skirt—where are your stockings?"

"I—I——" began Sally falteringly.

"Didst not understand ye were forbidden

to go wi'out them?" exclaimed Mistress Todd angrily.

"Aye." Sally pushed the tangled red-gold curls out of her eyes and glanced at the other appealingly. "But it be so warm this May day, and—and the grass was so soft and cool out in yon orchard; and then I came up to the hayloft, and 'twas so very nice—ye can't think, Mistress Todd," Sally's eyes grew dreamy, "so sweet the hay makes it up there, and the drone o' the bees coming in the open door, and the fluttering o' pigeons' wings, and the dusty cobwebs blowing at the windows like fairy lace—ah, 'twas nice!"

"Tush!" Mistress Todd, who had been listening in spite of herself, now turned away crossly. "Think ye I ha' time to stand here a-listening to your idle chatter, Sally? Hurry ye! Parson Chapman be here, as ye heard Mary say, and he may wish to see ye."

Sally stood silent a long moment after the lady had switched indignantly out of the barn. Then she sighed; and stepping out into the premature heat of the May afternoon, she followed Mistress Todd to the house.

Entering the buttery, a lean-to through which one had to pass to reach the kitchen door from the rear of the house, Sally paused in great distress. Parson Chapman was already seated in the kitchen, doubtless drinking the buttermilk offered him by his hostess after his long, hot ride from the settle-

ment at Orange; and how could Sally pass through to get to her room without being detected? She glanced down dismally at her torn frock. Oh, how Mistress Todd would scold were the minister to behold her thus! And yet the clean gown hanging neatly upon its peg in her room at the head of the stairs might as well have been hanging in New York Town for all its use to Sally!

She opened the door a crack and peeped into the big kitchen. In a straight line she could see Mistress Todd, occupying in her usual nervous fashion a straight ladder-backed chair, with one foot vigorously applied to a cradle rocker, for the baby was sick and fretting from his teeth, and her eyes fixed anxiously upon the door of the Dutch oven where her bread was baking. Between her mother and the buttery door sat Mary, a quiet, good child working upon a quaint sampler with precocious little fingers. Somewhere in the room, beyond Sally's vision, probably near the other door to catch any stray breeze that might come along, to offset the fierce heat of the baking oven, sat the minister. Sally could hear his deep voice with a silence every now and then punctuating his remarks when he raised the silver flagon to his lips.

Sally leaned in discouragement against a rude pine table used as a shelf for the pans of milk in winter time, but now occupied only by some sticks of charcoal with which Mary had been playing that

morning. Now the girl's fingers nervously crumbled the charcoal as she stood debating with herself, for the more she thought about her problem of obtaining that clean gown, the more perplexing it became. Finally, raising her hands and pushing back her curls, she made a despairing little gesture which, had she known of the great black smudge left upon her white forehead by her charcoal-grimed fingers, would have been even more despairing.

Presently, in the next room, Mistress Todd looked around impatiently. "Sally?" she repeated in answer to the minister's inquiry. "Forsooth, I called her! I cannot understand why she be not here!"

Sally, eying her desperately through the crack, scratched the tip of her nose meditatively—thereby leaving another smudge!—and wondered dismally what to do. Her glance fell at last upon the unconscious Mary and brightened with resolve. If she could attract the little girl's attention, get her into the buttery by surreptitious means, the child could be induced to fetch her gown. No sooner thought of than attempted! "Pst! S-ss-ss!" hissed Sally through the crack.

Mary stirred uneasily, looked up from her sampler. Her mother looked up more alertly.

"Mary!" Sally shrank back at the sharp voice. "Pardon me, sir! Mary, see an that old gander

be in the garden again! Methinks I heard him. Ye were saying, sir?" Mistress Todd turned back deprecatingly to the minister, whose voice had stopped abruptly at his hostess's exclamation.

Mary soon came running back into the kitchen through the door leading into the garden. "Nay, the old gander wath nowhere near!" she told her mother innocently, seating herself once more in her little chair and setting to work again upon her sampler.

Sally shook her head disgustedly. There was nothing to do now but try to get through the kitchen and up the stairs without being noticed, for she knew it would not be long before Mistress Todd would call her again.

Opening the buttery door inch by inch, she cautiously edged her way into the kitchen. Both Mistress Todd and the minister, who were facing each other, had their profiles toward her, while Mary was completely turned from her, with her back to the buttery door.

Sally plumped noiselessly down upon her hands and knees. Creeping across the kitchen, there would be the table and three chairs to hide her; and if Mistress Todd, observing her, would guess her dilemma and pay no attention to her as she crept toward the door which the lady faced, Mr. Chapman would be none the wiser. Sally could then descend bravely in clean gown, stockings, and

slippers, and be able to greet the gentleman not quite so handicapped as she was now.

But poor Sally reckoned without the harassed nerves that even then twitched Mistress Todd's thin shoulders, and she had no sooner reached a chair and started for the security of the table before making a last dash for the stair door than Mistress Todd, catching unexpected sight of her, uttered a loud shriek and threw up her hands.

Instantly, the Todd kitchen was in an uproar, Little Mary also uttered a shriek, and taking fright at her mother's start, ran to her and buried her round face in her mother's skirts. The baby, seizing any chance to burst into a roar, set up a series of howls not to be quieted by any mere rocking of his cradle. Master Chapman, springing to his feet and staring in dismay at the terrible bedlam, opened and shut his mouth rapidly many times before he was able to speak. At last he came toward his hostess with upraised hand.

"Madam," he shouted above the tumult, "what—why—what—prithee, what is it?"

Mistress Todd, having snatched her son out of his cradle, pointed a dramatic finger at the cause of all the excitement; and Parson Chapman, following her accusing finger, found his astonished gaze upon Sally. The girl, still upon her hands and knees, had been frozen into immobility by the riot of noise she had succeeded in arousing.

As the minister stared, however, she got slowly to her feet; and pushing back the curls from her grotesquely marked face, she stood in silent, overwhelming dismay.

“Wretched maid! There, there, son!” Mistress Todd’s voice alternately assailed Sally and sought to soothe the crying infant.

Little Mary now created a diversion by lifting her head to stare at Sally and then running over to her to clasp the young girl by the knees.

“Why, it’s only Thally, Moth-er!” she cried in reassuring tone. She looked up into the charcoal-smudged face. “Hast hurt thyself, Thally?” she asked in a pitying little voice.

“Nay—no hurt, I’ll warrant, the naughty wench!” interrupted Mistress Todd scornfully.

But here Parson Chapman interrupted in his turn. “Nay, dear Mistress Todd,” he implored, advancing to the girl’s side to look down at her with kind eyes, “I do protest the lass meant no harm an ye will gi’ her opportunity to explain! One can see that in the pretty face! How now, my dear,” he took one of Sally’s moist, hot hands in his own cool grasp, “why dost creep into the room to frighten the mistress so?”

“I—I—was trying to—to reach yon stairs without being seen, sir!” stammered poor Sally. “I was—was ’shamed, sir!” And she glanced down at her torn frock and bare feet with tears in her eyes.

Mistress Todd returned to her chair, a grim expression settling upon her countenance that served to confirm the good minister's suspicions of her attitude toward the little waif he had given into her charge a few years before. His face was very grave as he followed his hostess back to the center of the room. Reseating himself in the armchair from which he had started, while Sally and little Mary escaped up the stairs, he eyed the lady with sober gaze for a while.

"Mistress Todd, it hath been over three years since I came to ye and asked ye to take the young lass Sarah and care for her, hath it not?" he asked at last.

The lady nodded her head shortly. "Aye, 'twas in 1774, I mind," she confirmed him.

"Art tired o' the charge?" Unexpectedly brief, the minister looked at her searchingly. She raised frank eyes to meet his gaze.

"I will be honest wi' ye, sir—I *am* tired o' having Sally here!" she answered. "The lass be no help to me, as I had thought she would be—there be a queer strain to her. Seem's if her people before her were not brought up to work, for sometimes she acts as though I should be waiting on her, 'stead o' her on me! 'Tis all unconsciouslike; that's why I be thinking she comes o' queer stock. But she be lazy, unpractical, as ye have but now perceived. I am a worker, mysel', Parson Chapman, a hard

worker!" Mistress Todd sighed. "A farmer's life is no easy one, nor can a farmer's wife have much rest. But"—dryly—"my life has not been made an easier one wi' Sally around! My children be good children, prone to obedience. Not so Sally! She hath a fiery temper which punishment hath not seemed to quell!"

"Punishment—h'm!" The minister's tone was vague. "Hath tried a little love on the lass?" he asked smilingly.

Mistress Todd did not smile, however, as she shook her head vigorously. Her black eyes fairly snapped as she glanced past the minister at the stair door.

"Love, sir? Nay, I do admit there hath been no love lost between us! Indeed, I see nothing about the maid to call forth any!"

"And yet—she be a pretty lass," began the minister tactlessly.

Mistress Todd verbally swooped upon him. "Pretty?" Her tone was contemptuous. "Your pardon, Master Chapman, an I say that be just like a man! A pretty face doth ever appeal to your sex, sir! But a pretty face doth not always augur a pretty nature. Sally is not only hard to manage; but she will, in time, I doubt not at all, lead my Mary into paths I do not care to have her follow!"

"So?" The minister paused suggestively.

"So," answered the lady, "I do desire ye to release Samuel and me from our bond o' caring for the girl. An ye do not, we shall soon set her free, ourselves, and then——"

"There!" The minister softly struck his hands together and so did not hear the stair door open. "I did fear that was in your mind, Mistress Todd—that ye did wish to be rid o' the lass! That is why, then, when I left the Continental Army at Morris Town to shift for itself awhile—though Parson Johnes be there to more than fulfill my poor place, I came home, I say, to settle the question o' Sally!"

Sally stood still on the bottom step and stared. Only that morning had she wept over her dreary lot, and now here was Parson Chapman calling about *her!*

Mistress Todd, catching sight of her, frowned. "Come, close the door!" Her tone was querulous. Then, as the girl obeyed her and advanced into the kitchen, she nodded toward the front entrance. "Wait ye outside and see that Mary keeps out o' the hot sun," she ordered.

Master Chapman moved in his chair. "An so ye wish to be rid o' Sally," he resumed, after Mary and Sally had departed. "Had ye any other place in mind for her here on the Mountain or at the settlement to suggest?"

"None." The lady's tone was curt.

"And Master Todd is quite o' your mind, mis-

dress?" Parson Chapman's voice was as gentle as usual, but his eyes were very keen.

His parishioner flushed a little. "We-ell," she hesitated, "o' course he be not bothered by the maid all day long as I be. He—yes, I must admit it—he be fonder o' Sally than I; but, as I say, he is either working i' the fields or off soldiering and, not seeing much—not seeing overly much o' her, he—he—finds her agreeable when he comes home, and so—and—so——"

The minister, by his upflung hand, brought Mistress Todd's floundering to an abrupt termination. "And so the question o' Sally remains," he was commencing. When, all at once, the sunny doorway was darkened.

"Oh—oh, Parson Chapman!" Sally, gasping and staring, wide-eyed, stood upon the threshold pointing helplessly behind her. "Parson Chapman!"

Both minister and hostess sprang to their feet at the unmistakable note of alarm in the girl's voice.

"What is it, Sally?"

"The red-coats! The red-coats be a-coming!"

Parson Chapman, at this, snatched up his hat and, jamming it upon his head, was away through the open door like a flash.

"They be at the turn o' the road, sir!" screamed Sally after him, running down the garden walk.

Mistress Todd, within her orderly kitchen, wrung her hands, for she well knew what a British raid meant. While there might be no personal danger for any of them, although the colonists did not always find this to be the rule, their stores of grain and their stock would be taken mercilessly from them, without payment, and carried triumphantly back to New York or to Staten Island by the enemy.

“Is he upon his horse yet?” she asked hoarsely, her minister’s danger, for the nonce, overshadowing her own affairs. She did not stir from beside her chair.

Sally, outside the door, shaded her eyes and peered eagerly down the road. “Aye,” she called back, then, “he is mounted! Ah, the red-coats see him! There, now they hasten their steeds! Ride ye, Parson Chapman!” Sally danced up and down excitedly. “Ride ye! Ah, now he be going up the ridge! Why, what——” Her voice broke off sharply.

Mistress Todd, unable to bear the suspense, now came running to the door to stare over Sally’s shoulder, for the girl had retreated to the threshold. She saw a troop of British light horse go galloping past her house, raising a swirling cloud of red New Jersey dust as they went. Far up the road, where it ascended over a ridge, she saw her minister’s figure outlined against the background of mountain wood-

land. But instead of riding on over the ridge, he had drawn partial rein and was watching, in cool amusement, the enemy's approach. Then, as she gazed open-mouthed, he rose in his stirrups and gave a rousing cheer full in the face of the pursuing troop. His sonorous voice came faintly to Mistress Todd's ears.

"What did he say?" demanded that lady.

"He did cheer for freedom!" cried Sally, clapping her hands.

"Aye, that is what I thought!" nodded Mistress Todd, who ever hated to admit that she had missed anything. "Why, the red-coats," she craned her neck to stare, "the red-coats be drawing rein!"

As they gazed, open-mouthed, scarcely able to believe their eyes, it did seem to be a fact. The British soldiers were most assuredly slowing the headlong pace with which they had been pursuing that lonely figure, were coming to a wavering, indecisive standstill. Then, as both the feminine on-lookers stared and Parson Chapman, with a last triumphant wave of his hat, rode over the hill, the British horsemen turned and trotted back down the hill toward the Todd farmhouse.

Thundering past the gate, the officer in the lead chanced to glance into the shady yard with its stone well and its long well sweep. He drew rein and, turning in his saddle, shouted out a command. At once the troop halted; and, dismounting, they

tied their steeds to the fence and came toward the house.

"Madam," the officer in charge bowed civilly enough, "mayhap ye will gi' tired and thirsty men some o' your cold well water?"

"Aye." Mistress Todd dropped him a curtsey, hastily imitated by Sally. "I ha' ne'er yet refused beast or man a drink o' water," went on Mistress Todd tartly. "Sally, fetch the gourds!"

So Sally ran to fetch the wooden gourds which, turned and polished, were used as drinking mugs to save pewter and silver ones. As the men, breaking ranks at a command from the officer, gathered eagerly around the well, taking the gourds from her shy hands, she noticed that one of them, a handsome youth, started and stared at her when his eyes fell upon her. She flushed beneath his gaze, and her own sought the tips of her square-toed slippers as she turned to go into the house. One of the other men laughed boisterously, catching sight of this.

"How now, Lieutenant Lawrence, art day dreaming o' yon maid's curls?"

Sally paused for the other's answer. Lawrence reddened, even as Sally's hands flew instinctively to the auburn locks which, defying restraint, were tumbling out beneath her cap.

"Nay, I—I was but wondering," stammered the young Englishman. "The lass might be related to

my guardian, forsooth. She looks much like his two little daughters in England, who, I vow, do possess hair similar to this maid's—not quite so bright, mayhap. But 'tis the Holden red!"

"Aye?" But the other's tone was uninterested, and the subject was dropped.

Sally, more interested than she cared to show, lingered, however, slowly gathering up the gourds which the soldiers were now dropping upon the ground. And, presently, her quick ears caught the drift of an argument between the two older officers of the British troop.

"But, I tell ye, I think the rebel saw an American troop behind him!" one was insisting. "Think ye he would have dared to stop and cheer in our very faces as he did, otherwise?"

"'Twas but a clever ruse, sir, for these rebels dare anything, Major Lumm!" returned the other coolly. "With all due respect for your judgment, I do declare there were no rebel horsemen behind that man, and I think we should ha' pursued him! An there were help there in back o' him, why do we see naught o' them now?"

"Captain Stockton, ye forget yourself!" The man addressed as Lumm drew himself up haughtily, his face crimsoning. "I know that the rebel perceived help below the hill which we on our side could not see. And now, sir," he made an imperative

gesture as Captain Stockton regarded him sullenly, "tell the men to mount! It waxes late, and the sun be sinking behind this cursed mountain!"

As the other swung around to repeat the order, his eye fell upon Sally, who, as soon as she saw his darkening gaze, stooped innocently to retrieve a gourd which had fallen upon the grass. Straightening herself, however, she was alarmed to find the man still staring at her.

"What do ye here, young mistress?" With one quick step he was beside her, his hand closing around her slender wrist.

"Nay, I—I——" Sally's other hand, dropping the gourd, crept to her throat where the pulse could be seen beating in terror.

"What is it, Captain?" The superior officer's voice was careless.

Sally, glancing up into the face near her own, was conscious of instant dislike. It was such a thin, ferretlike face, with quick, darting eyes set closely together, and cruel, thin lips. "His face doth look like a hatchet-edge!" thought the girl helplessly.

Major Lumm now reached them, however, and made a negligent gesture that at once freed the girl. And now it was Stockton's turn to color, while his eyes darted a look at his superior officer that held ill-concealed venom.

Major Lumm turned indifferently upon his heel.

“An the girl happened near us, she meant no harm. Remember, we war not on women while I command!” he flung back to the other.

Captain Stockton, forced to follow him out to the horses, snapped out an order in an angry voice to the men resting upon the grass.

A clank of steel, a muffled sound of hoofs, and the long column of men was off, moving in a line northward upon the narrow road that, leading past the Todd farmhouse, went along the foot of the First Mountain to join the road to Orange. As they trotted off, the young British officer, Lawrence, twisted himself in his seat to catch a last glimpse of Sally. Oddly enough—for what could patriot maid have to do with enemy officer?—she was upon the doorstep, her gaze fixed upon him.

The next instant, as the troop of light horse swept past a stone wall which formed one of the boundaries of the Todd farm, there was the flash and the report of a musket. At once there was panic-stricken flight among the red-coats' horses. In vain, Major Lumm sawed upon his beast's reins—the brute, crazed by fright, took the bit between his teeth and bolted. The others, seeing their leader's apparent fright, followed headlong—all except Stockton. He, glancing back, saw young Lawrence reel in his saddle and slip to the dusty road, when his horse, riderless, galloped on with the rest.

Stockton drew rein and hesitated. He ought to go

back, he knew, and rescue the boy, for he was sure he was the only one who had seen him fall. Generally not a coward, the courage to go back and face that hidden musket behind the stone wall simply was not his. He skulked, pulling his horse to a standstill behind a great walnut tree that stood near the road. There he watched quietly; and after a little his watching was rewarded, for he saw a farmer, clad in homespun shirt and leather breeches, come out from behind the stone wall and walk toward that silent figure in the road. And Stockton knew that the farmer, in his excitement, had not seen him! His hand crept to his pistol, then he stifled an exclamation. It had fallen from its holster!

The farmer, musket in hand, stood over young Lawrence's motionless form. Slowly, slowly the musket muzzle was lowered. Stockton held his breath. Was the lad going to be murdered there before him, in cold blood? But as he watched, a slender figure came flying down the road from the farmhouse with outstretched hands and radiant hair gleaming in the last rays of the sun.

After a moment's apparent pleading upon the part of the little maid, the farmer stooped; and getting the wounded youth upon his back, with the girl's help, he staggered toward the farmhouse, with Sally—for it was Sally!—trudging along beside him, carrying the fatal musket.

CHAPTER II

THE RED-COAT

WHY, he is but a lad!" Master Todd halted in his anxious pacing up and down the kitchen as his wife uttered these words. "I know," he groaned. "I discovered that as soon as I had given him a look. Sally, here, thought I was going to murder him as he lay in the road; but I vow I was but gazing at the poor lad, horrified."

"Then ye did not mean to shoot him again!" Sally, replacing the flintlock in its rack upon the wall, turned to exclaim joyfully.

"Nay, lass!" Master Todd gazed at her reproachfully. "Hast e'er known me to wantonly destroy aught on earth?"

Sally shook her head. "Nay, sir," she answered faintly. But Master Todd, looking at her narrowly, saw the trembling of her lips.

"Yet ye do not understand how I could shoot him down from yon stone wall, be that it?" he asked.

"I—I——" Sally, flushing, shook her head and fell silent.

“Well, I will tell ye!” Master Todd made a violent gesture, his usually mild face turning a dull purple in color. “I shot at the red-coats as I would at so many wild beasts. What right ha’ they to invade our homes thus?”

“They but wanted water,” murmured Sally accusingly.

“Name me no buts, maid!” retorted Master Todd. “They but wanted water this time,” he added grimly. “What would they want the next time? Our homes, mayhap, our stock, our grain—the thieves!—that we work so hard to raise. Ruin follows upon the red o’ their uniforms, ruin and danger! And so I waited and—shot at the var-mints!”

“There, the wound is not so deep, Samuel! And I have it nicely bound. As soon as he recovers from the shock, ’twill not take the lad long to get upon his feet, though his arm, where the bullet clipped it, may be a little sore for a time.” Mistress Todd interrupted her husband by getting to her feet and picking up the basin of water from which she had been bathing the boy’s arm.

Master Todd strode over to the settle upon which he had placed the young British soldier when he had brought him into the kitchen. As he bent over the injured boy, the latter’s eyes flew open. Instant fear leaped into their brown depths, and he shrank away. But Master Todd patted

the sinewy hand that lay listless upon the red uniform. "Nay, lad, rest easy!" said the farmer cheerily. "When ye feel a little better, we will help ye up into a little room at the head o' yon stairs, and there ye can sleep and get well."

"Art going to gi' him Mary's and my room?" Sally drew near to ask eagerly.

"Aye, mayhap!"

Sally clapped her hands softly. "Oh, I be so very glad!" she cried in delight.

"Why, Sally!" Master Todd looked at her quizzically. "Art so eager to do the enemy a favor, then?"

Sally blushed and hung her head. "Why, i' sooth, I had forgotten he was an enemy," she faltered.

Mistress Todd, coming up behind them in time to hear their last words, laughed scornfully. "'Twas ever thus!" she observed dryly. "Let a lass ha' a pretty face or a lad broad shoulders, and everything be forgiven them, e'en treason!"

Her husband looked in uneasy silence from her tired, scowling face to Sally's flushed one, then sighed and went outdoors, as was his custom whenever he sensed something unpleasant in the air. He did not know of the minister's visit earlier in the afternoon, but he guessed that some disagreeable incident other than the red-coats' visit had upset his wife.

Silence lay heavy upon the kitchen at his exit. Mistress Todd, carrying a sleepy-eyed baby up to his trundle bed, then bade Sally, in her harsh manner, to "blaze" the fire and set the table for supper. And for a while only the latter's quick, light steps broke the stillness. Then the English boy spoke.

"Why did ye come to my rescue? I heard ye speaking, though my eyes were closed! Why did ye, hating red-coats as ye do?" he asked curiously, a hand pressed against the aching arm where Mistress Todd had ripped away the red uniform.

Sally, absent-mindedly placing gourds of cool milk upon the supper table, started as though the old grandfather's clock in the corner had spoken.

"Nay, I—I——" she began.

"Aye—aye——" imitated the boy teasingly. "We agree, then," he said laughingly, "that ye do hate red-coats?"

"Why, I—I——" Sally bit her lips, brought to an embarrassed standstill beside the supper table, one hand still holding little Mary's bib.

"Why, aye—aye——" mocked the boy. His dancing brown eyes looked at her merrily. "So ye said before. But *why*? After all, 'tis not fair to hate us all alike for wearing the same uniform!"

"But it is!" retorted Sally, with sudden spirit. She tossed Mary's bib upon the table and faced him. "'Tis the odious symbol of your allegiance to a fool—that uniform be!"

"Fool, mistress?" repeated young Lawrence. His tone was puzzled.

"George the Third!" Sally tossed her head daringly. "George the Third and his weak-minded Parliament!"

"Careful, mistress!" The boy half raised himself angrily from the settle, only to utter a little groan and sink back with a pale face. Sally forgot her indignation and ran to stand anxiously beside him. "It hurts!" he said pathetically, in a moment, pointing at his bandaged arm.

"I know!" Sally looked down at him with sympathetic eyes. "Once I ran a great thorn into my foot," she confessed. "'Twas dreadful, the pain was!"

"Did your mother bind it for ye as well as she did my arm?" he asked. "Her fingers be light and dextrous!"

Sally shook her head, the brightness fading from her face. "Mistress Todd be not my mother," she told him, low-voiced.

"Not your mother!" echoed the boy. "Ah, I see!" he smiled. "She is your aunt!"

"Nay." The girl shook her curls. "She is no relative at all, sir. She is my mistress. I have been bound out to her for seven years."

"A bond servant! You!" The boy looked at her in shocked amazement. "How happens that?" he inquired curiously, a moment later. "Ye do not look—look like—a—a——"

“Like a bond servant!” finished Sally proudly. “Nor do I always feel like one, sir—though the knowledge oft comes upon me like a whip!” There was a little silence. “I be an orphan; no one knows who were my parents,” she went on presently. “The only thing I ever heard was from an old woman, who kept me ’til I was ’most eleven. She said my parents went down wi’ a ship off Boston Town way and that her son, a sailor on the ship, did save me and bring me to her, a baby. He then went away again, and she ne’er saw him again—mayhap he was drowned, himself, afterward. Grannie Haggerty ne’er knew, although she may ha’ been lying, o’ course, for he might ha’ been in jail and she ashamed to tell me. The first I remember was a long, long journey from Boston Town to New York, wi’ Grannie Haggerty and me waking hungry, and I crying at night in strange stables where we slept i’ the hay. Grannie Haggerty was very poor. When she died they took me to a kind lady’s house, a Mistress Van Houten; and there her friend, Parson Chapman, visiting from Orange, saw me and took me home wi’ him. But his wife was dead, and so he bound me out to the Todds, and here I be!”

“But ha’ ye nought to tell your identity?” asked the boy sympathetically.

“Nay, nothing o’ value.” Sally looked somberly off into space. Her sensitive lips quivered. “Only

a little red shoe that old Grannie Haggerty told me was mine, though it may not ha' been, only something the old woman had stolen. She once muttered o' a gold chain around my neck, too, but it must have been sold when I was a baby, for I remember nothing of it. However, no one cares, so what matters it!" ended the girl bitterly. Suddenly she jumped at the sound of Mistress Todd's step upon the stairs.

"Sally!" snapped that lady, entering the kitchen and glancing at the unprepared supper table. "An ye ha' time for loitering, why is not supper ready?"

As Sally, flushed and humiliated, turned away, the young Englishman looked after her in pity.

When supper was over, Master Todd offered to help the boy up the steep, narrow stairs.

"Nay, sir," the latter smilingly refused his aid. "There be naught the matter wi' my legs, forsooth!"

As though struck by a sudden thought, at that, Master Todd looked at him keenly. "I ha' your promise not to escape an I do not bind ye, sir?" he asked.

The other hesitated. "Aye, sir," he said then, with a smile. "'Twill do my hurt no good to wander about a strange country at night. Aye, I promise—for to-night—well," as he saw Master Todd hesitate, "for three days. Will that do, sir?"

"Aye." Master Todd glanced at him shrewdly.

Lawrence, reading his captor's mind, thought, "By that time, he doth expect to ha' me lodged in some jail!"

Little Mary was placed beside her sleeping brother in the trundle bed, which had been pulled out from beneath her parents' four-poster; and Sally was left alone in the kitchen with a pile of blankets to be placed upon the settle. So slumber enveloped the Todd farmhouse, and all was quiet.

The next morning, Sally was up bright and early and, to her mistress's unexpressed pleasure, she had breakfast almost ready and warming upon the trivet—a small iron platform which, upon short legs, could be shoved near the fire—when that lady came down to the kitchen. All the praise Sally received, however, was an ungracious sniff and the remark, "Humph, I see ye *can* work an ye wish!"

But somehow, Sally, this morning, could not be cast down. It was too wonderful a day, with the dewy cobwebs sparkling upon the green grass just outside the kitchen door, and the birds singing their matin songs in the old orchard on the slope of the mountain side. Even the dark, gloomy swamp across the country lane, with its underbrush and its threat of snakes and beaver and other marsh life, did not seem quite so menacing as it usually did to the girl. It was as if the remembrance of the young Englishman's merry smile, his kind glance, had given her, somehow, hope. "Cheer-up! Cheer-

up!" cried a saucy robin, and "I will!" promised Sally.

After breakfast, she was sent up to the prisoner's room with a porringer of bread and milk. She found him up and dressed and gazing out the open casement. He turned with a smile to greet her: "Good-morrow, Mistress Sally! I was waiting to be summoned to breakfast!"

Sally placed the porringer upon the broad windowsill beside him and pointed to it gayly. "Your breakfast walked up to ye, instead! An ye wish more, ye ha' but to call me. I shall be working in the garden below," she told him smilingly.

The enemy! Yet his nut-brown face, almost as smooth as her own, his friendly brown eyes, even his unruly brown hair tied in its queue cried out to the lonely girl, offering comradeship—temporary, it is true; but quite sincere. How could she do otherwise, then, than return the smile with which he knelt beside her a little later as she weeded and seeded a vegetable bed and offered to help her? She shook her head, saying that the work might injure his arm. By mutual consent, neither referred to the manner in which it had been originally injured, both rather implying that he had fallen from his horse and so had hurt it thus. Only once did they near the dangerous topic of the war, and that was Sally's fault; for she tactlessly told him of a

neighbor's house which had been set on fire and burned by the Hessians a short while before.

"The beasts!" cried Sally, digging her slender fingers into the red earth resentfully. "'Tis so cruel to wantonly destroy homes!"

"Aye," observed the young Englishman. "But scarcely more cruel," he suggested smoothly, "than to shoot down men from behind a stone wall. It be, I think, even a little more honorable way o' conducting warfare than that!"

"Honorable, say ye!" Sally's glance and voice grew sharp. "Speak ye o' honor where Hessians who fight for hire be concerned? Or the English who pay them? What be wrong to defend one's home, e'en from behind a stone wall, when the enemy invade ye? Nay, ye wrong Master Todd—I know ye mean him!—when ye speak thus, sir! He be the kindest and most honorable o' men, when not driven beyond endurance, forsooth!"

"Mayhap ye be right," answered young Lawrence pacifically. He looked at her as she squatted in the sunshine, her swiftly moving fingers sorting out the tiny seeds in their packets of woven grass. Once more the sun, glinting on her hair, caught his eyes. "Holden red!" he muttered, as he had muttered the day before.

"What mean ye?" asked Sally now, curiously.

"Your hair—'tis almost the same color and

shade as my guardian's hair—Lord Holden! Indeed, his two little daughters have that same hair, also. Mayhap ye be related!" laughed Lawrence.

Sally's fresh laughter rang out also. "Of course we be related!" she mocked. "Hereafter ye will call me Milady, sir! See that ye do not forget!"

"Nay, but really——" began the boy.

"Nay, but really *not!*" retorted Sally roundly, getting up from her cramped knees and looking down at him, honest mirth in her eyes. "Lords and ladies are not apt to have homeless orphans floating around the world. And now," she walked around the garden bed to plump herself down upon its opposite side, "tell me about yourself. Are ye a lord, also?"

The boy, seated upon a three-legged stool with his back against an old cherry tree, shook his head. "Nay," he said briefly.

"Ah, why so sad about it?" remarked Sally, glancing up. "Well, Mary lass," she turned to look affectionately into the little face near her own, "what would ye, sweetheart?"

"Moth-er hath thaid I might ha' thom 'trawberries, Thally, an ye will giveth me thom," answered the little girl, rolling her eyes at the stranger.

He laughed and held out his hand; and, to Sally's surprise, the usually shy child walked into his arms. When she returned with a basket of straw-

berries, they were chatting and laughing like old friends.

"Mary hath told me much o' militia training," he said mischievously, as Sally held out the basket to them. Selecting some of the berries, he looked up at her innocently. "One learns much from children," he finished in a bland voice.

The enemy! Again the words seemed to leap at Sally. Yet such a nice one. She laughed as she went back to her vegetable bed; but Lawrence, noticing that she soon found means to get rid of little Mary, smiled to himself.

"Sally?" he said.

"Aye, sir?"

"Know ye naught o' your last name—truly?"

"Nay—I told ye—naught! Grannie Haggerty's son shipped out on another boat, ye see, so that I ne'er knew him! Or, at least, an he did not ship—I ne'er knew him, anyway."

"'Tis a pity," murmured the boy.

"Sir?" It was the girl's turn to question him.

"Aye, Sally?"

"Know ye naught o' your *first* name?" She glanced at him across the vegetable bed with dancing eyes.

Young Lawrence planked down the front legs of his stool, upon which he had been teetering, to stare at her, then, perceiving the twinkle in the girl's eyes, he laughed. "Fair enow!" he answered.

"Though I ask your pardon, Mistress Sally, an I did seem to cross-examine ye! Mine own name be Gerald Lawrence, mostly called Jerry, at your service!"

"Jerry!" Sally repeated it musingly. "Aye, I like it. It hath a nice, honest sound. One could trust the name o' Jerry, I think."

"Thank ye, Milady!" Young Lawrence got up and made her a courtly bow, then laughed gayly as he selected some more strawberries from the basket at his feet. "Master Todd's farm does not look as barren and lean as the Jersey farmers would have the British believe," he went on idly, resuming his seat, his eyes roving from orchard in magnificent bloom to the fields already green beyond the house.

The enemy! Sally sent him an oblique glance as she bent over her task. Could he be planning to report all that he saw with his alert black eyes, and would that report result in another disastrous raid by the Hessians or the British, with the Todd gatepost marked "R" for the word "rebel"? Her lips tightened as she went on with her work; and Jerry, glancing at the straight shoulders which fairly shouted defiance at him, smiled again to himself. Like most boys, he loved to tease. He did not pursue the subject, however. There was something rather pitiful about those slender shoulders, after all, so alone in the world, yet so eager to assume

the burdens of her neighbors, heavy burdens of patriotism and warfare!

It was on the evening of the second day that Jerry, seated at the supper table with the Todds, caught sight of the long, furtive face of Stockton gazing at him through an open window that he chanced to be alone in facing. Jerry's expression did not obviously change; but Stockton at once received the impression that he was to secrete himself somewhere near by until the boy found an opportunity to see him.

It was not long afterward, then, that Stockton, lurking behind a small building used by Mistress Todd as a dairy, heard the young Englishman exclaim loudly as he stepped, unhindered, out of the kitchen door: "I must get a breath o' this fine mountain air before I retire this night!"

Stockton moved forth from his hiding place as Jerry rapidly approached him. The moon had not yet risen, and they were safe from detection. "How now, Lieutenant Lawrence?" demanded Stockton brusquely, in greeting. "From all reports, ye are not seriously wounded. Art not tarrying overly long here, sir? Hast made no attempt at escape?"

"I have gi'en my word o' honor not to escape until after to-morrow, sir," answered Jerry respectfully. "Besides," he added with an amiable smile, "how could I hope to escape without a steed, sir?"

Stockton regarded him fixedly a moment. "Ye are quibbling, sir," he answered sternly. "As for word o' honor to a rebel—nonsense!"

Gerald drew himself up. "An Englishman does not break his parole, whether to rebel or other man!" he returned as sternly.

The darkness hid the black flush on Stockton's face; but it could not conceal the anger in his voice. "You English assume too much credit, Lieutenant Lawrence!" he exclaimed rudely. "Ye are apt to lord it o'er us who were born i' the colonies, I ha' noticed!"

Young Lawrence flushed with embarrassment. Why, this was dreadful! It was like boys' squabbling. "I am better than ye!" "Nay, I am better than ye!"

"In truth, sir, I meant no insult," he was commencing humbly when Stockton cut him short. And suddenly the boy knew that here stood an enemy of his for life!

"Silence, sir!" said Stockton. He glanced around him. "There be a horse hidden for ye i' yonder swamp, on the rise o' land just beyond the group o' birches up the road. Escape this night—the way seems clear—and report to your company!"

Jerry shook his head. "I will try to escape to-morrow night, sir," he responded quietly.

Stockton moved a step nearer. "Ye will escape this night," he hissed into his subordinate's face,

“or ye will be brought up for court-martial when ye do return, sir!”

Jerry paled. “Be that as it may, Captain Stockton, I cannot break my word!”

“Break thy word or be broken by court-martial!” answered the other in a level voice of deadly enmity. Turning upon his heel, he vanished into the night.

Sally, who had been sent to the dairy for a pitcher of fresh milk for the Todd baby, did not dare to move until Jerry had walked away also. Then, cramped by her tense position just inside the low window of the dairy, outside of which the two British officers had been talking, she stood up and, taking the pitcher in her hand, hurried to the door. What was her dismay, however, to see two dim figures sauntering toward her from the farmhouse. She had barely time to close the dairy door again very stealthily when Master Todd and a younger neighbor, Uzal Ball, came to a halt in precisely the same place Jerry and Stockton had stood, outside the dairy window. Sally unashamedly crept over closer to listen.

“Ye advise, then, to lodge the boy in jail, Uzal?” Master Todd was evidently continuing a conversation begun a little earlier, “I like not to do so. After all, he is very young, scarcely o’er eighteen, despite his height and breadth o’ shoulder. It means a tedious trial and mayhap e’en death. He *says*

that he comes from England. I ha' heard him talking to Sally." ("Oh, ye *have!*" thought Sally resentfully. "I wonder what else ye did hear?") "But the lad may be clever enow to realize what his sentence might be from the Council o' Safety, or he may have heard o' the orders His Excellency sent out regarding those Tories who ha' been caught trying to induce New Jersey farmers to join the loyalists—Skinner's "Greens" on Staten Island, ye mind, Uzal. An he be o' Tory family, therefore, it be to his interest to admit it not, e'en going so far as to make up imaginary relatives, a certain Lord Somebody or other!" ("Well, thought Sally explosively, "ye did indeed hear all, Master Todd, though I'll wager 'twas your wife told ye—it sounds like her! But I wonder—oh, I do wonder an Jerry *did* speak the truth about his guardian! He doth truly ha' more the manner o' our New Jersey farmer lads—so nice and—and—simple—than what one would expect from a boy associating wi' lords and ladies!") "Therefore, guessing his fate, I do hesitate to commit him to jail, Uzal. He be such a likable sort o' lad," finished Master Todd slowly.

As though his patience were exhausted, Uzal Ball uttered an exclamation. "Likable!" he repeated the word contemptuously. "An ye remember the color o' his uniform, Master Todd, I see not how

ye can speak thus o' the kind o' man who wears that uniform!"

"Then ye think——" began the farmer.

Uzal interrupted him almost fiercely. "I think he be an enemy, sir, and that ye ought to start early to-morrow morning wi' him and lodge him in the jail at the Town by the River," he said, striking a horny fist into the other fist.

Sally squinted one eye as she peered around a corner to look at Uzal. He was a fine-appearing man of about thirty, the second son of the Widow Ball, who lived upon the same road as the Todds, above the ridge and farther toward Millburn village. But now his face, despite its good looks, appeared hard and grim to the girl, and she shuddered as she thought of what Jerry's fate might be if Uzal, in his patriotic zeal, had aught to do with it.

"I see ye"—continued Uzal suddenly. Sally gave a terrified jump—"I see ye have made no preparations as yet, Master Todd, for taking the prisoner to the Town by the River." Sally, a few feet from the young man, separated only by a wooden wall, heaved a sigh of relief. "Would ye care for my assistance?"

As she waited for Master Todd's answer, Sally's thoughts ran like a mill race. How could she stand silently by and let these two men lead Jerry off to death, perhaps? The enemy, yes! But a friend, too,

with ideas of honor, a friend whom one could respect, and poor Sally had not had many friends in her life!

Meanwhile, Mistress Todd's shrill voice had been heard calling again and again from the buttery door. Sally clenched her hands. Would the two men ever be through with their conversation that she might make her escape? Her relief was proportionate when she heard Master Todd speak in a tone of finality.

"I cannot go early the morrow. I ha' my plowin' to do. But to-morrow, at sundown—could ye go, then? Ye could? Well, so be it, Uzal. G'-night to ye!"

Departing footsteps sent Sally peeping at the crack. Only Uzal's tall figure could be seen stalking toward the gate. Sally sighed to herself, then smiled to hear her sigh echoed unconsciously by Master Todd outside. But the next moment she uttered a low cry of terror, for her elbow, coming in contact with the milk pitcher she had placed too near the edge of a shelf, had flung it to the dairy floor. She raised her frightened glance to the window opening; and there, as she had feared, was Master Todd's face.

"That you, Sally?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Aye, sir." Carelessly the girl's voice came back to him from the darkness of the dairy. It was fortunate that the shadows hid her pallor. "Mis-

tress Todd sent me out to get some milk for baby. I dropped the pitcher; but it did not break."

"'Tis well." His tone was quite unsuspecting. "Best run along, though, else the mistress will be fretting."

Mistress Todd did indeed greet her with a flurry of vexed upbraiding. Sally, however, when she was through, turned indifferently away. Her whole mind was now bent upon warning Jerry.

Her opportunity came at bedtime. His face, sleepy and bewildered, appeared at the open window in answer to the handful of gravel the girl had tossed into his room to waken him.

"Away!" said Sally noiselessly. "Escape ye at once, Jerry! They plan to take ye away to-morrow eve at sundown!"

Without waiting for his reply, she turned and stole back to the kitchen door.

Despite her warning and to her secret disappointment, Jerry appeared as usual at the breakfast table. Mistress Todd greeted him cordially, for the lad had won her heart by his affectionate interest in her children. Even Master Todd vouchsafed him a smile, while little Mary ran around the table to climb upon his lap as he sat down. Only Sally, after her first amazed stare to see him still there, paid him no attention. Her cheeks red and her head high, she crouched before the breakfast fire and stirred the porridge, until Mistress Todd

sharply told her to be done before she spoiled it.

It was a busy Saturday morning which ensued. Sally's duty it was to make the butter, to dip the candles, to sand the floor for the Sabbath, and to clean the brass. Harassed, driven, the girl flew from one task to another, scarcely taking time to eat the dinner of boiled beef and young greens she had helped to prepare. It was about five o'clock that, as Sally knelt with a sharp stick drawing an elaborate pattern in the sand, Mistress Todd, pausing at the foot of the stair, asked carelessly if she had seen little Mary.

"Nay," answered the girl, "I have not seen her recently. Is she not wi' her father, mistress?"

"Mayhap." The mother's tone was calm.

Half an hour passed. Sally finished her task and went out of the house toward the brook that gurgled its way to the valley past the farm. There she bathed her dusty feet and played with a little turtle that went serenely upon its way over the miniature dam she had built in the brook to tease it.

"Hast seen Mary yet?" inquired Mistress Todd, glancing up from her knitting as Sally went through the kitchen. Answering in the negative, the girl passed on up the stairs.

It must have been a vague premonition that made her pause a little later at the head of the stairs before descending to the kitchen. Or perhaps it was the terrible note of alarm in Mistress Todd's

voice. Running down hastily, Sally found husband and wife staring at each other with ashen faces.

“Not—wi’—ye, Samuel?” repeated Mistress Todd gaspingly, sinking back upon the settle from which she had started up a moment previous. All her strength seemed to have left her.

“Nay!” Master Todd made a violent gesture of frightened reproach. “Why, Moll, I told ye I had the big south field to plow this day. Didst forget? Ye must have known I would ne’er take little Mary down there wi’ me, in this heat and all!”

Sally sprang to the door. “Mary! Mary!” she called desperately.

Mary’s father joined in the calling: “Mary! Mary!”

But it brought no response. There came no fat baby form in homespun running to greet them, and at last Master Todd turned back into the kitchen with a groan.

There was a step outside the door a moment or so later, however; but it was Uzal who appeared. “Well, neighbor, art ready?” he was commencing briskly, when something in their faces stopped him. He stared at them inquiringly.

“Go up and see an the lad be i’ his room, Sally,” bade Master Todd dully. “He must help search for us—the more we have, the better. We are worried about little Mary,” he turned to Uzal Ball, as the

girl flew to obey him. "She hath not been seen all afternoon. Well, Sally?"

Sally, at the foot of the stairs, made a vague gesture. "His room be empty," she said slowly. "He be gone!"

Uzal Ball brought his hand resoundingly down upon his thigh. "Why, o' course he be gone!" he exclaimed loudly. "The varlet hath doubtless escaped this day to the British lines, either to New York Town or to Staten Island, and taken little Mary wi' him for revenge!"

CHAPTER III

LITTLE MARY

THAT be it! He hath stolen Mary because o' my wounding him! The villain! I would I had killed him as he lay there i' the lane." Master Todd's face was distorted with rage.

"Samuel! Stolen my Mary! Stolen——" Mary's mother, who had started up at Master Todd's words, now fell back upon the settle as though death itself had struck her down. Uzal Ball sprang to aid his neighbor in restoring the poor woman. The two men chafed her hands and forehead, and finally Master Todd spoke over his shoulder: "Sally, some cold water, quick!"

There was no answer and impatiently he glanced around the room. The kitchen, save for themselves, was empty! Sally was gone! With an exclamation of anger, Master Todd fetched the cold water himself. There was no time, now, to discover Sally!

Sally had indeed fled. Seated upon old Dot, she had paused at the gate with but one idea in her head. She must find Jerry and make him restore little Mary to her parents. Frantically, she looked

up and down the silent road. No one was in sight, and there seemed to be no choice. Anyone escaping to the safety of the British stronghold on Staten Island would ride south on the Second Road—the lane past the Todd farm—to Elizabeth Town and the Point and thence across Kill von Kull. Yet a flight to New York and British protection there would lead one north on the Second Road to Orange Valley and so to Newark and across the swamps to Paulus Hook and the ferry.

Choosing the road to the settlement, Sally noticed a queer, unearthly light succeeding the late afternoon glow, the forerunner of a storm. The trees, which all day long had drooped motionless beneath the abnormal heat, were now tossing their branches in a moaning wind, and miniature whirlwinds tore up the thick dust that lay over road and underbrush alike. A zigzag of lightning tore across the sky upon her left, ripping open a great black cloud which had thrust its threatening head up over the mountain.

Sally shuddered. Almost more than anything else in the world was she afraid of a thunderstorm! More often than she cared to admit before the ridicule of Master Todd had she sought the protection of her feather bed during the frequent electrical storms which every summer were wont to play up and down the valley between Newark and the First Mountain. But now she gritted her teeth;

and bending her head before the little clouds of swirling dust, she urged old Dot to a faster and yet faster pace.

Master Tompkins's tavern at Freemantown, a few scattered farmhouses, with always the black swamp to her right and occasional spots of tall timber to her left as she rode along—this was what stormy darkness was swiftly eradicating from Sally's sight. She breathed a sigh as she turned at last on to the First Road. There were still four or five miles to Newark; but her journey ever seemed half accomplished, though in reality but a mile had been passed, when she reached this junction of the roads, where the Dark Lane, at this end of the Second Road, joined the First Road at what is now West Orange Center. The burial ground at her right now took the place of the great swamp, though the girl imagined she saw distant glimpses of the latter as she trotted along.

But now the storm was upon her! Furiously, with rain, hail, and much noise of wind and thunder, it broke with almost tropical violence after the day's heat. Sally was drenched to her skin at once, and as old Dot slipped and slid in the water-swept road, the girl realized miserably just how wild and impractical had been her impulse to find Jerry. No one passed her upon the road, for no one was abroad this dark night. Each isolated farmhouse, with its twinkling candle in the window, was an

invitation to stop and dry herself. It took all of her determination to urge poor old Dot on through the driving rain.

At last she reached the church. This was a plain stone structure built lengthwise to the road, with its steeple upon the eastern end. Sally pulled Dot up short before it and pondered desperately. Though there was no sign of let-up to the storm as yet, still it might clear in a short space of time, when it would be much easier to continue her quest. Meanwhile, any shelter would be welcome, especially one where she would not be eyed askance, asked to give an explanation of her presence, alone and unprotected, with perhaps an unceremonious return to Master Todd in the end. Yes, she thought, the church was just the place; though she felt wicked and sacrilegious in using it as a mere shelter. She could almost feel Parson Chapman's and Deacon Riggs's reproving eyes upon her as she stalked through the rain-drenched grass to the front door of the edifice. But the door was locked.

She turned away in keen disappointment. Darkness had now completely blotted out every visible thing; she could not even see old Dot at the edge of the road, standing with patient bowed head in the wet. There were the windows to try, two of them in front on each side of the door and some in the eastern end beneath the steeple, though she was doubtful about their having been left unlocked.

Still, it would do no harm to try them! But each window disappointed Sally afresh.

At last, turning the corner upon the eastern end, she remembered that there was a door there—a fact her anxiety had eradicated from her memory, though she had entered often enough on Sundays with Mistress Todd and the other women—that being their side, with the men seated upon the opposite side and the boys at the back of the church, with a tithing man to keep them in order. This door, to Sally's great joy, proved to be ajar, and she stepped inside.

A warm, musty odor came rushing to meet her, the church interior evidently having retained its heat from the day; and now Sally shrugged her wet, dripping shoulders, grateful for the warmth she had been protesting earlier. Opening a near-by pew door which, with outspread, groping hand she succeeded in locating, she stepped inside the pew and, seating herself upon the warm wooden bench, spread out her wet skirts to dry.

The intense darkness denied her gaze. But she did not need vision to know how the pulpit, bare save for its narrow bench built against the wall, its four wooden pegs above that bench, faced her, flanked right and left by Church officials' pews. The drumming of the rain upon the roof was like a bombardment, thrum, bang, boom! Then with a swish it stopped suddenly. And in the abrupt

silence the girl heard low, sinister voices whispering!

Now the darkness of the stormy night seemed to menace her. No longer was it a pretty curtain shutting out familiar scenes. Rather it was like a smothering black curtain, enfolding her, dulling the senses with which she would have striven to discern intangible danger.

She stirred restlessly. Her foot kicked the pew door. And with her unguarded movement the whispering ceased. In vain she peered in every direction—only shadows met her straining gaze. As she stared, however, her eyes became accustomed to the darkness and vague outlines sprang to meet her gaze. That was the pulpit, there, and there Squire Riggs's pew! Across from the latter's pew was that of Master Eleazer Lamson! One by one she identified the familiar pews, foot by foot her eyes travelled over the big bare room. Then, as she leaned forward, staring, a green-yellow glare of lightning etched each window into place and revealed all that her seeking vision had attempted to discover. She uttered an exclamation of fright and jumped to her feet. For, crouched beside the pulpit, upon the floor were Stockton and Jerry!

Apparently her entrance into the church had been unnoticed by the red-coats, engrossed as they had been in their own conversation. But now as they were shown to Sally, so her wide eyes and

slender, unkempt figure stood out in the lightning flash. Before she could do more than wrench the pew door open, she felt her arm seized, and she was a prisoner! Almost immediately, she knew that it was Stockton and not Gerald Lawrence who held her in his grip.

“Easy on the maid!” Jerry’s good-natured voice came from his place beside the pulpit. He had not stirred. Plainly he had been more than willing to give Sally a chance to escape back into the night whence she had come; but not so Stockton. He dragged her roughly out of the pew and thrust her up the aisle to Jerry.

“Wouldst have had the maid escape?” growled Stockton, when he had pushed poor Sally down upon a pulpit step and had seated himself beside her and retained a grasp upon her thin wrist.

“What harm an she had?” queried Jerry lightly. “I fain would not bother wi’ her!”

“Art a fool?” asked Stockton gruffly. “Ye do not know how much nor how little she hath o’erhead!”

“She hath proved herself our friend—did I not tell ye she gave me warning?” Young Lawrence’s voice grew a little sharper, and for a moment there was hostile silence between the two men.

Then Sally broke it. “Your friend!” she said in a low, bitter voice. “Aye, but how did ye reward me, Jerry Lawrence?”

Jerry got slowly to his feet and walked over to

her. "Well," he demanded, when Sally's lips closed over the hot words she longed to hurl at him, "well, how did I reward ye?"

"Ye know!"

"Nay, I prithee, tell me!"

"The maid be play-acting!" interrupted Stockton impatiently. "Come, let us decide what to do wi' her!"

"How did I reward ye?" Inexorably Jerry's voice repeated his question.

Stockton, ignored, fell to muttering.

"Ye rewarded me by stealing Mary Todd, that is what ye did!" burst out Sally. "A varlet thou art—a rogue, I dub ye! Ungrateful wretch! What did the poor Todds do to ye that ye should ha' taken little Mary wi' ye!"

"But wait!" Jerry's voice was bewildered. "I take Mary wi' me, ye say?"

"Aye, you!" Sally's voice was scornful. "Do not play-act in your turn and affect not to know her whereabouts, Master Lawrence!" she added. "Where is she? Where is little Mary?"

Before Stockton could guess her intention, Sally had slipped out of his grasp to go on to her knees before Jerry, who was standing stock still in the darkness before her. "Oh, please let me take Mary home!" implored the girl, a sob in her voice. "Surely the war be cruel enow without stealing her away from her home and her father and mother!"

Jerry made a strangled noise in his throat. "But I did not take her!" he shouted. "Say what ye will, believe what ye will, I did not take her!"

Sally sprang to her feet and shook his arm. "Then where is she?" she gasped. "Where is little Mary Todd?"

"I know not," answered the young British soldier sullenly. "The last I saw o' the child she was going across the road toward the swamp, after following me a short way up the lane, teasing me to take her. That was as I rode away—my parole ended—after finding the horse that Stockton, here, did——"

"Enough!" Stockton's voice was violent, and he rose in a threatening manner. "Lieutenant Lawrence, report to your company immediately!"

But Gerald Lawrence did not budge. He shook his head obstinately until he realized that in the darkness that was no answer. Then he spoke: "Nay, Captain Stockton, I cannot desert Sally! These people were kind to me, though they were my captors, sir! I must stay and help search for the child!"

"Ye would again run into danger, sir, in such a fashion!" returned Stockton contemptuously. "Ye ha' strange ideas o' honor, indeed! Did ye not escape when still on parole?"

"Nay, sir!" Jerry took an impetuous step in the other's direction, then stopped. Sally, standing

beside him, could feel the effort he made toward self-control. "Nay, sir, ye wrong me, I do protest," said the boy more quietly, then. "I ha' said that I waited until my parole had expired, about an hour before sundown!"

"Ah, Jerry," the light was suddenly breaking across Sally's mind, "was that why ye did not go last night after I had warned ye?"

"Aye, Sally," answered the boy gently.

"Very honorable, indeed!" sneered Stockton. His tone changed: "I had intended to let ye escape the reprimand ye so richly deserved for disobeying me, sir: but now I give ye fair warning, Lawrence, that this be insubordination for the second time in thus defying me, your superior officer. Wilt risk serious punishment on both charges, wi' death dealt ye by the rebels, mayhap, an ye return to be caught?"

"Aye, Captain Stockton," answered Jerry steadily.

Sally clasped her hands. "Then come!" she cried, starting forward impatiently. "Do not waste any more time an ye will help me to find Mary!"

"One moment!" Stockton's cold voice stopped her. "Ye realize, young mistress, ye be leading a man into sure death by asking him to return to the Orange Valley?"

Sally hesitated. There was something in Stockton's voice, much as she disliked the man, which

told her that in the letter of warfare he was right; yet her heart cried "Hurry!" and her heart guided her as usual.

"An Master Lawrence cares not for the danger he encounters, why should ye care, sir?" she asked impudently.

Fury shook Stockton's voice when he spoke. "Lieutenant Lawrence, ye are bent on defying my orders, sir?"

"Aye, Captain Stockton, until I find the child, little Mary Todd."

"Then I dub ye in revolt, sir, and must deal wi' ye accordingly!" So saying, Stockton drew out his pistol and fired point-blank.

At the flash, Sally shrieked; but the next instant she felt herself being hurried along toward the church door.

"Run ye, Sally!" gasped Jerry's breathless voice and grimly, bent only upon escape, she obeyed him.

A moment to unfasten old Dot, once that patient beast was reached, a second or so to mount, and she was off, followed by Jerry, who had miraculously found his horse in the darkness. The flare of lightning, now faint and far off, revealed to their backward glances the figure of Stockton in the open door of the church, shaking a malevolent fist after them.

For a while they galloped along in silence. The rain had stopped, as Sally had hoped, and now a

tiny star, like faint hope, had crept through a rift in the murky clouds. Soon there was another star and another. Then the moon sailed into glorious freedom, as the two turned their galloping steeds into the Second Road—no longer fittingly named the Dark Lane—and the whole world turned silver-white.

Sally shuddered as she glanced aside into the swamp shadows that even the most brilliant moon ray could not strip of their weird mystery.

“Think ye—think ye—there be quicksand i’ there?” stammered Jerry, noticing her sidelong glance.

“I know not, indeed,” returned Sally faintly. She looked into Jerry’s pale face as he drew abreast her horse, seated upon his own. “Oh, why did ye not stop Mary, an ye saw her going toward the swamp this afternoon?” she reproached him.

“Ye would turn a soldier’s duty into that o’ a nursemaid!” retorted the other bitterly. But Sally recognized the pain beneath his words. “How knew I she was not allowed across the road?” he groaned after a pause. “Poor little maid! She was but a babe, after all!”

Sally shut her teeth upon the edge of a sob. With work to do this night, she would not yield to weakness, she told herself fiercely. There would be plenty of time for weeping afterward if—— But her heart shrank away from the hideous possibil-

ities of little Mary Todd's disappearance; for besides the war, wild beasts still roamed the Newark Mountains, and always there was the danger of the swamp. "There must be no *if!* Mary Todd must be found!" Sally thought. However, her young face grew strained and white.

Approaching Ned Tompkins's inn at Freeman-town, Sally pulled old Dot to a standstill. "I think," she said slowly, "I will borrow a lanthorn."

Young Lawrence nodded. "Aye, 'tis wise. Best go in alone, though," he added, glancing down at his red uniform wearily.

How reluctant were Sally's feet as she went up the stepping stones to the inn's back door. Only Mistress Tompkins was in the big kitchen, though; and since she was deaf, she made out but half of what Sally tried to tell her. At last she gestured toward the lantern hanging upon its peg. "Take it," she said in the breathless voice of one who cannot hear. "I cannot understand why ye wish it," she smiled resignedly, "but I will trust ye, Sally!" Sweeping her a grateful curtsy, Sally seized the lantern and, removing its tallow candle, lighted the candle wick in the supper embers still glowing upon the hearth. Then nodding again gratefully, the girl rejoined Jerry outside.

At sight of his drooping figure, however, a pang of pity swept over Sally. For the first time that night she remembered that he had been wounded,

that he was in the land of his enemies, and that—more prosaic but equally important—like herself, he was doubtless supperless. She hesitated, for she was afraid of the risk of being detained by the tavern hostess; but finally setting the lantern down upon a stump in the yard, she turned and sped back to the kitchen door. With her hand upon the latch, though, she paused, startled. Loud voices were now exclaiming in the kitchen.

“Run away, ye say, Todd!” That was mine host’s voice.

“Aye,” answered a sad voice. “Run away! And we know not where to search for Mary, either! I ha’ been scouring the Mountain wi’out result this night! I fear, indeed, the young red-coat took her wi’ him for revenge!”

“The varlet!” growled Master Tompkins. “An we find him, we will make short work o’ stringing him up!”

He turned and shouted the tale into his wife’s deaf ear, so that in the ensuing confusion—for the poor lady got everything twisted—Sally escaped without detection. Dashing past the little shed at the rear of the house, the girl halted. It was the dairy, she knew, and she tried the door. Yes, it was open, and a little later Jerry was staring down with unbelieving eyes at the brimming gourd of milk Sally held up to him.

Then as the girl hastily, in a low voice, informed him of events within the tavern, he gulped down the milk gratefully. When he handed back the gourd, he looked and felt much better. Sally threw the gourd back into the inn yard, then quickly remounted old Dot.

“They ha’ not spied us because o’ the great trees sheltering us here and because we stopped at the rear door i’stead o’ the front one!” she exclaimed. “But we’d best away, Jerry!”

They were too late! Master Todd, followed by Uzal Ball, issuing from the tap-room door of the inn just as they started away in the bright moonlight, recognized both boy and girl. The men gave a loud shout and ran for their horses; but the others had a head start and galloped off.

“Hast any plan?” asked Jerry grimly, as they galloped neck to neck.

“Aye!” shouted Sally in his ear. “Follow me!”

And the next moment she pulled up. Jerry doing likewise, she guided them both aside and rode directly into the swamp. Splashing through standing water, with Jerry following closely, she drew up behind a thick screen of underbrush and saplings upon what seemed to be a tiny islet. When Master Todd and Uzal, galloping past them unsuspectingly—for Sally and Jerry, slipping aside, had been

hidden by a turn of the road as they had done so—to disappear up the road, Sally used her heels as spurs and regained the lane in short order to gallop in the opposite direction, toward home.

“Now,” she said, when Jerry had come up with her once more, “let us hurry!” She whispered suddenly: “Oh, what be the use o’ hurrying when it may be too late!”

“Courage!” returned Jerry. “The little Mary will yet be found safe!”

At last they reached the old stone wall whence had come the fatal shot from Master Todd’s musket. Across the way was another opening into the swamp which Sally knew. Once more she guided old Dot into water knee-deep to the horse, followed by Jerry. Once more they reached a strip of higher ground, above the water. And there, slipping off from old Dot, Sally tied her to a tree and helped Jerry tie his nag, also, for his abused and wounded arm was now paining him again—a fact he had tried to hide from the girl; but which her sharp scrutiny had detected and pitied. At last, free to set forth upon their search for the missing child, they faced each other.

“Hast any idea which direction Mary might ha’ taken?” asked Jerry in a hopeless manner.

Sally, shaking her head, jumped in nervous terror. Was that a snake she had stepped upon! Examination proved it to be but a stick. “Nay,” she said.

“We must keep to high land, an we can—though, i’ truth, I ha’ never heard o’ anyone finding quicksand here for certain, as they have i’ the Newark swamps! Give me the lanthorn, please!” she added, extending her hand.

“The lanthorn! Nay—I—I——” Jerry’s voice trailed off into silence.

“Ye must ha’ dropped it!” said Sally bitterly, after a little. “Nay, stay, I mind I left it myself upon that stump in the inn yard! Well,” she squared her shoulders in a debonair fashion, “an we come to the worst shadows we—we—will wait and—and—see what they be! Besides, the moonlight doth filter through enough to—to—let us see, most o’ the time!”

So, chatting forlornly, to keep up her show of bravery, Sally led the way into the depths of the swamp.

It was in vain! No sign was there of little Mary Todd anywhere! They fell to calling her name presently in a last hope that somewhere in that great, shadowy place she would hear and answer them. But again and again they listened, and nothing could be heard in response save perhaps the flight of a swamp rat or the scolding of a chipmunk upon a near-by stump.

It was their calling, as they neared the road once more, which was Sally’s undoing. Master Todd, passing by and hearing her voice, came bursting

through the underbrush, and when she would have run, caught her in an angry grasp.

"How now!" he exclaimed fiercely. "What foolishness be this, Sarah?"

Sally, glancing over her shoulder and seeing Jerry slip safely away behind the chipmunk's tree stump, allowed herself to be haled out of the swamp and hurried along the road toward the Todd farmhouse. "I—I—was—was looking i' the swamp for— for—little Mary," she explained at last, wearily, in answer to the indignant questions Master Todd kept shouting at her as he half dragged, half carried her along by her thin arm.

He seemed beside himself with fatigue and anxiety. His tone softened as he glanced down at the childish figure staggering along beside him, with downcast eyes and bowed head of auburn curls. "All this time, Sally?" he asked. Without waiting for a reply, to Sally's intense relief, for she had hesitated in answering him, not wishing to tell him an outright falsehood, Master Todd continued more gently: "Ye must be tired, then, lass! Best home wi' ye to bed!"

"But Mary!" cried the girl despairingly. She gave a little sob. "I could not sleep—I must help to find her!"

"I will keep up the search, Sally, never fear!" Grimly, determinedly, the father looked down at her out of eyes like sunken coals. "Ye had better

get some sleep, though, for to-morrow—to-morrow ye may ha' much to do." His voice broke and he turned away for an instant. Then, clearing his throat, he made a pretense of looking over his shoulder; and Sally, glancing up at him, saw a rough homespun sleeve drawn across his eyes. He immediately became very brisk and matter-of-fact, however. "Uzal!" he shouted into the night. "Bring the horses to the house, will ye?"

"Aye, Squire!" came back the answer.

"What made ye think o' looking i' the swamp, Sally?" asked Master Todd suddenly, jerking a thumb backward over his shoulder as they turned in at the farm gate.

"Why not there?" returned Sally evasively. "When one searches, one must look—everywhere!"

Her voice now broke in turn, and, stumbling, she would have fallen but for Master Todd's hand upon her arm. All at once she seemed pathetically little to him, and stooping, he picked her up and thus carried her into the house.

His wife, seeing him burdened, started up from the settle with wild hope in her eyes, then in the candlelight, perceiving it to be Sally, she burst into tears and sank back. Her attitude of utter hopelessness touched Sally, pierced through her dislike and resentment toward the other; and when she was placed gently upon her feet inside the door by Master Todd, the girl went over to place her hand

in pitying tenderness upon the poor woman's shoulder. The other did not move, however, did not utter a word. She merely sat there, staring stonily ahead of her at nothing, the great tears rolling silently down her cheeks.

"Well," it was Master Todd's husky voice which finally broke the stillness, "I shall go out again, Molly!" He waited a moment; but his wife did not speak or move, and he slowly withdrew into the night.

Scarcely had he gone, however, when he was back. There was a rush of feet in the doorway, a man's rapturous cry, and Master Todd burst in upon them again. "Mary is found!" He strode over to shake his wife, who looked up at him bewilderedly. "Ye hear, Moll! Our Mary!"

They all turned toward the door, and an instant later Jerry staggered across the threshold with little Mary in his arms. Swiftly, silently he leaped across the room and placed the chubby form in her mother's outstretched arms. He alone saw the terrible appeal in Mistress Todd's eyes. "Aye, she is alive!" he said simply.

CHAPTER IV

THE TOAST

THERE was a long moment of silence, during which Mistress Todd clasped her child to her heart and uttered crooning mother words, with her face buried in little Mary's curls. Then Samuel Todd turned slowly to Jerry and, putting his hand upon the boy's shoulder, spoke sorrowfully: "It is my duty to arrest ye, Lawrence! Ye are my prisoner!"

Jerry raised exhausted eyes to meet the tired ones of his captor and merely nodded, but Sally started forward wildly with clasped hands. "Ah, no, Master Todd!" she choked. "'Tis not fair when he came back from freedom at my appeal to help search for Mary!"

Master Todd, however, only shook his head silently and turned away. It was Jerry who answered the girl. "Do ye not know, mistress, there be naught fair about war?" he said bitterly.

At that, then, Master Todd swung around and looked at the young Englishman. "I cannot do it!" he said heavily. "I cannot arrest ye an ye came

back to search for my baby! There be freedom!" He pointed toward the open door. "Take it!"

Jerry and Sally looked at him almost unbelievably for a second; then the boy sprang toward the entrance like a bird whose cage door has been opened unexpectedly by a friendly hand. But upon the threshold he was stayed by Uzal Ball's tall figure. Face to face, the two glared at each other until Uzal put out a restraining hand.

"The prisoner!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Here be thy prisoner, Squire!" Then, as only silence answered him, he peered in puzzled surprise over Jerry's shoulder. "An ye do not wish to take charge, neighbor," he said dryly, "I shall take pleasure i' reporting his capture and delivering him to headquarters."

Sally glanced quickly at Master Todd. "Nay, let him not take charge o' Master Lawrence!" she implored. "Surely 'twould be better, an he *must* be arrested, for ye to report his arrest, Master Todd!"

"I want naught to do wi' it," answered that worn-out man impatiently. "Come, Moll," he turned toward his wife, "let us put wee Mary to bed!"

But Sally placed her hand beseechingly upon his arm. "He found Mary!" she reminded the father softly.

Master Todd hesitated, looked toward Uzal Ball at last. "I will report his arrest, Uzal," he said

decisively. Then, as the young man lingered doubtfully, he glanced at him from beneath drawn brows. "I will be responsible for Master Lawrence," he repeated in a tone not to be gainsaid, and Uzal was forced to release the hold he had kept all the while upon Jerry's wounded arm.

"Very well," said Uzal gruffly. "I will bid ye good-night, then, Squire," and, turning upon his heel, he stalked away.

"Why did ye wish me to be the one to arrest yon lad?" asked Master Todd, turning curiously to Sally when Uzal had disappeared into the night. "Come in, Lawrence, and close the door. I must again put ye upon your honor not to escape, an ye will so promise," he added gravely. "Best do so, for ye be in no condition to ride far this night."

Jerry, his hand clamped upon his wounded arm, which Uzal had hurt afresh, looked at Master Todd thoughtfully, then nodded his head.

Sally glanced from one to the other. "I wished ye to be the one to arrest Master Lawrence," she said boldly, "because ye can secure more favors for him an he be sent to prison than Uzal Ball can, by reason o' your greater age and your better position on the Mountain and at the settlement, sir."

Master Todd stared at her and followed his stare by an admiring chuckle. "Ram's horn—ye do be a smart lass for fair!" he exclaimed. He turned to young Lawrence for confirmation. "Can ye beat

that for shrewd thinking and planning, lad?" he demanded.

Jerry shook his head. He did not speak, however, and Master Todd now saw the clutching fingers upon his wounded arm and the lines of pain upon his face that showed white beneath the tan and dirt.

"Here be another patient, Moll!" called the farmer to his wife. Mistress Todd glanced up at her husband's approach. "Is the Mary-patient asleep?" he asked whimsically.

"Aye," the mother nodded. Rising, she carried the little girl up to her trundle bed and returned to set to work with kind fingers upon the young soldier's arm.

"Where found ye Mary?" she asked presently. Sally drew near for his answer.

"She was curled up inside a hollow tree-stump, so sound asleep she did not once hear us calling," answered Jerry. "That very same stump the saucy chipmunk sat upon and chattered at us, Sally," he glanced with an irrepressible grin at the girl. "The little maid must ha' found her hiding place before the storm, for she was dry as toast i' there!"

Both parents' eyes were very tender; but Mistress Todd said slowly: "We must watch the tiny lass after this 'til she be older, Samuel. They do say there be quicksand in the swamp. I know I've ever had a horror o' the place. And then, to think

that Mary——” She stopped with a shudder, her hand trembling as she bound some soft linen around Jerry’s bare arm.

“That be not so,” returned Master Todd. “’Tis only old women’s tales because the swamp be dark and gloomy.”

“Then ye think Mary was in no real danger?” asked Sally, almost disappointed.

“Nay, I said not that!” answered Master Todd gravely. “There was very real danger for a little one her size i’ the swamp. So we have ye to thank just the same, Lawrence.” He turned in a friendly way to the young Englishman. “And now let us to bed,” he ended, seeing that his wife had finished her task and that the boy was leaning back in his seat with closed eyes.

“Ease after pain—be there anything so wonderful!” murmured Jerry, following the others up to bed.

“Nothing—save freedom after imprisonment,” murmured Sally resentfully, who was at his heels upon her way upstairs for her blankets.

Jerry faced her in the narrow hallway; and finding that the others had closed their chamber door, he looked soberly at Sally over the lighted candle he was carrying. “I will hold the candle for ye to get your blankets out o’ yon chest,” he remarked in a loud voice for Mistress Todd’s benefit. Then, in a lower tone, he hurried on: “There be no reason ye

should harbor a grudge against Master Todd, Sally, for arresting me when Uzal Ball forced him to do so. These be war times, and I blame him not for what he did."

Sally, red-faced from stooping over the chest, straightened herself and looked at him scornfully. "Men be strange creatures!" she muttered, shaking her head, then. "Mayhap ye think 'tis fine to stay here and risk your life thus; but I wonder at ye, promising once more not to escape! Ye could ha' easily done so to-night and so reached Staten Island or New York Town once more."

Then Jerry said a strange thing, looking at her sidelong. "But New Jersey holds *you*, Sally!" he told her softly. Immediately, he blushed a bright scarlet in the candlelight and bolted into his room, leaving a bewildered Sally standing there, staring through the darkness toward his closed door.

The next day, Master Todd rode away with his prisoner, accompanied by Uzal Ball, who had appeared bright and early. Sally watched their departure with a heavy heart. In vain she kept reminding herself that not only was Gerald Lawrence almost a stranger to her, that five or six days ago she had not even known of his existence; but that he wore the enemy colors. He was her friend, despite all this! Almost the first real friend she had ever had in her lonely young life!

As a matter of fact, the English boy had en-

deared himself to the whole family, so much so that Master Todd even now would have allowed him to take his freedom were it not for the watchful presence of Uzal Ball. He knew, however, that everyone had to think of himself during these dark days of the Revolution, and anyone who showed favoritism or partiality to the enemy was apt to become a marked man and eyed with suspicion later on. Already Master Todd could feel the hostility in Uzal's manner, his alert glance often upon both him and the prisoner.

There were many Tory families living in Orange at this time—although many left, after their homes had become confiscated, and emigrated to Nova Scotia—and these people were both feared and hated by their Whig neighbors. Samuel Todd had no desire to join their ranks, of course, so that he made an especial effort to be cordial to Uzal, showing by his manner and his words that more and more he was determined that Jerry should not escape!

But human plans are uncertain, at best, and it was not long after her husband's departure that Mistress Todd called faintly from within the kitchen to Sally, standing drearily at the door. Turning reluctantly away, the girl blinked at the sudden transition from bright sunshine to the gloom of the big room. When her vision steadied, though, she ran forward to kneel beside Mistress

Todd, whom she was shocked to find outstretched upon the floor at the foot of the stairs.

“What is it?” gasped Sally in horrified amazement. “Surely ye did not fall down the stairs! Nay, I did not hear ye!”

“I slipped,” groaned Mistress Todd. She pulled herself to a sitting posture with great difficulty, aided awkwardly by Sally; but when she moved her foot, she uttered a sharp cry and turned pale.

“What can I do!” implored Sally, pale also from sympathy.

“Is Samuel out o’ sight?” moaned Mistress Todd.

“Just barely!” Sally brightened. “Shall I get old Dot and overtake him?” she asked eagerly.

“Aye, an ye can!” Mistress Todd nodded. “No, sweetheart, Mother cannot get up—see, her poor foot be hurt!” she added tenderly to little Mary, who had crept over to pat her mother.

Sally, flying toward the barn to saddle old Dot, was ashamed of herself for her joy. But any unplanned happening which broke the monotony of farm life could not help but be welcome, and her lips were parted in a smile as she rode forth from the Todd gate and turned her horse’s head northward upon the Second Road.

She caught up with the men and their prisoner at Master Tompkins’s inn. They all turned sur-

prised eyes upon her as, breathless and with radiant cheeks, she galloped up to them.

“Mistress Todd!” gasped Sally, enjoying the dramatic side of this incident immensely, I regret to say.

“Aye—what be the matter now?” Master Todd’s voice was startled.

“She hath fallen down the stairs, sir—is still upon the kitchen floor, for I could not move her!” answered Sally, excitedly waving her hands, her eyes stealing involuntarily to Jerry’s grave young face.

“Hurt badly, Sally? Is she unconscious?” exclaimed Master Todd.

“Nay, not unconscious. I think it is her ankle,” Sally told him. “Mayhap ’tis but a strain!” she added comfortingly.

“Whate’er it be, I must return, Uzal,” Master Todd announced at once. “Wilt bring this list o’ tools from Beach and Hews’ shop? I need some o’ the articles to mend my plow wi’—I cannot get my planting done until I get them.”

“Nay, Squire Todd,” Uzal shook his head. “I may not return for two or three days. I must stay on business for my mother.”

“What! Ye do not return this night!” Master Todd’s face fell.

Sally leaned forward in her saddle, feeling that

now was her chance. "I be dressed and ready, sir. Why not allow me to purchase the articles ye need and return wi' them this afternoon?" she suggested respectfully, her heart beating with hope.

Master Todd hesitated. Then, to the girl's joy, he nodded. "Ye be as good as a boy, Sally," he said approvingly. "'Twill help me, indeed, an ye bring home the things. Uzal, there, hath the list—I gave it him wi' my money to put i' his saddlebag. He will gi' it ye when ye reach the Town by the River, wi' the necessary shillings. He was to ha' purchased the articles while I lodged Master Lawrence, here, wi' the authorities." Master Todd held out his hand to Jerry. "No hard feelings, sir," he said wistfully. "We must each do our duty, ye mind."

Sally, glancing at the young red-coat, thought him more sober than she had ever seen him. But later, trotting along the quiet lanes, he seemed to recover his spirits and chatted away gayly with the girl until they began to pass the ruins Cornwallis had left behind him upon the outskirts of Newark—burned farmhouses and barns and devastated farms—a few months before, during the fateful year of 1776. As he rode silently along behind them, Uzal Ball's face grew a little more grim and set when they came upon the places which had once been happy homes; and gradually Jerry, feeling the burning glances Uzal cast upon him, fell silent

again. At last the boy turned in his saddle and stared at Uzal self-consciously.

"I gather ye blame the enemy for all this, sir!" he burst out.

"British or Hessian or Tory—the rascality be the same, sir!" retorted Uzal sourly. "Ye see what doth confront Newark farmers—aye, and us at the Mountain, too—after a raid carried out by ye and your ilk!"

Sally, acutely uncomfortable, stared from one angry face to another. Much as she hated the red-coats, she constantly forgot the color of Jerry's uniform until reminded, as now, by some blunt words or happening. But she liked Uzal accordingly!

All fell silent as their horses climbed the last ridge before Newark, leaving behind them the fields and the scattered ruins of farmhouses. This ridge, now known as High Street, formed the western boundary of the Town by the River, as Newark was then called. Only one or two homes had been built along this ridge—its main attraction was a pretty woodland path known as "Lovers' Lane," where sweethearts, at that time, were wont to stroll and admire the little hamlet below them. They had only to raise their eyes to obtain a fine view of the surrounding country—Staten Island, lying to the south, Newark Bay, and the two ribbons which were the Passaic and the Hackensack

rivers—or, as they were then called, the Pesayak and the Second rivers. The heights of Bergen hid the mighty Hudson River; only from the vantage point of the First Mountain above what is now Orange and Montclair could be discerned New York Town, and then only on clear days. Newark itself was only a small village of one hundred and forty houses during the American Revolution, with less than a thousand inhabitants. Most of the houses were built along a broad lane, magnificently called Broad Street, with a few other lanes running parallel upon each side and a few more crossing it at right angles—leading from the Mountain or the river. All of the public buildings—the court house, the churches (two of them), the jail, the taverns, and the few shops were located upon Broad Street. There, too, was the space of ground devoted to military training, now known as Military Park. And there, placed, for some obscure reason, ten or twelve feet below the road's level, in the center of the village at the junction of Broad Street and Market Street, was the town pump. This was a rendezvous for stout matrons and buxom maid-servants, though the steps leading down to it were apt to be coated with ice in winter and wet and muddy in summer.

Sally, however, desperately thirsty after her long, hot ride, eyed it longingly as they trotted up Market Street toward it. Uzal turned so decidedly

south on Broad Street that she dared not ask permission to dismount and obtain her drink and delay the party by five or ten minutes. Being feminine, though, she achieved her end.

“Good-bye, Jerry,” she said soberly, pulling upon old Dot’s reins until she had fallen behind. Jerry, glancing around, also dropped behind.

“Fare ye well, Sally,” he answered as soberly. Then, without another word, he suddenly wheeled his horse and shot off in the opposite direction. Uzal, at that, glanced around, gave a shout that brought people running in every direction.

“Stop him! Stop the red-coat!” yelled Uzal.

There were one or two futile attempts to do so; but Jerry, by that time, was riding too hard to be stopped—it would have been almost certain death beneath his horse’s feet to try to do so. Therefore, everyone was perfectly willing that Uzal, alone, should strike his heels into his horse’s sides and start after the escaped prisoner. This he did, to disappear in a cloud of dust. One or two men, having procured horses, followed hastily, disappeared in their turn. But Jerry, riding low in his saddle, was no longer in sight even when the dust had slowly settled and the others were mere specks upon the horizon.

Sally, all this time, had been sitting with her mouth open. She had not forseen Jerry’s attempt at escape in the least—indeed, she was as honestly

surprised as anyone, although, she thought dismally, she would have a hard time to convince Uzal that she and Jerry had not somehow managed to plan this together, on their way to Newark. But all she had really dropped behind the others for was a drink of water. Now, slipping from her horse and pushing through the crowd who would have questioned her, she went down the steps to the pump place. Seeing, then, her quiet determination not to be questioned, the crowd melted away. Soon Broad Street was as sleepily still as it had been before the three newcomers had disturbed its peace.

Sally reflectively pumped herself a delicious gourdful of clear water. Seeing old Dot's head peering wistfully over the rail down at her, she held up her gourd laughingly. "Here's to ye, old horse!" she toasted gayly; and as though to aid in furnishing festivity, the sound of fife and drum came to her wondering ears.

Sally listened. Then, dropping the gourd, she ran up the steps and stared in the direction of the music; and as she gazed came once more the hated, flaunting sight of red uniforms. The British!

As though by magic, the lanes were now absolutely deserted. Not an inhabitant was to be seen! Sally, pale-cheeked from fright, gazed around her. Should she run across the lane to the corner house where the Allings lived? She decided not, for the distance of a few hundred feet looked endless to her.

Descending to the depths of the pump-stand once more, she stood there, wondering if she were out of the range of bullets; then, remembering old Dot, she anxiously reascended the steps. The red-coats were nearer now. Sally's calm was not increased by seeing John Alling creep forth from his house and secrete himself in a position, musket in hand, grim of face, visible to her but not visible to the approaching British infantry. So there was death to be dealt that day!

Sally watched Major Alling with fascinated eyes. She almost forgot the enemy behind her as she stared at him. How white was his face, how steady the sunburned hands as he raised his musket slowly to his shoulder. But now there was a flash, a bang, a cry! Sally whirled around in time to see one of the red-coats down the street throw up his hands, stagger, and fall.

Instantly, then, the air seemed to be full of whistling bullets. Sally, standing rooted to her place upon the steps above the pump, saw John Alling leave his position and boldly escape to the orchard behind the house.

Suddenly a voice shouted above the tumult of cries and shots: "Run, John!"

It was an aged man seated in an upper window of the Alling house. Sally recognized John Alling's grandfather. Now the enemy had reached the town center and a red-coat, looking inquiringly

toward his superior officer, raised his musket to direct it at the sturdy old gentleman.

"Shall I shoot the old fool?" he asked.

With more humanity than others had shown during these Newark raids, the British officer shook his head. "He's too old to do us any harm," he replied.

All at once his eyes fell upon Sally's horrified face, peering out at him from beneath the railing, and he gave a violent start. "By the grace o' Peter!" he ejaculated. "What be ye doing here, mistress?"

Sally, however, instead of answering him, ran up the rest of the steps to the street level and around the railing to where old Dot lay rolling upon the ground. The poor beast had been mortally wounded by a stray bullet!

"Oh, Dot! Oh, Dot!" moaned the girl, the tears streaming down her cheeks as she tried to clasp the old horse's head. "Art indeed hurt so badly?"

The British officer, having recalled his men from their futile chase of Alling, turned back to Sally. Old Dot now lay motionless in the lane, and the girl was staring down at her sadly.

"This thy horse?" he asked abruptly.

Before Sally could answer, a new voice spoke sardonically. "Nay, 'tis her master's horse. But I advise ye to arrest this bond servant for loitering

here under suspicious circumstances and for persuading a British soldier to desert his officer and his duty," drawled Captain Stockton.

As Sally stared at him, the other officer hesitated. "Mayhap ye be right, sir," he said slowly. "Still, I do dislike to take the maid back wi' us to New York Town. Marshal Cunningham be not noted for his gentleness."

"The charge be a serious one," answered Stockton ironically. "I do advise ye to heed me, sir! I am the officer who prefers the charge."

The other, at that, snapped his fingers without more ado at two soldiers who, running up to him and saluting, stood at attention. "Escort this maid when we return to New York," he ordered, and turned upon his heel.

Poor Sally! Now she understood the real malevolence that was in that gesture with which Stockton had shaken his fist at Jerry and her the night before!

It was a long, silent trip across the swamps, across the ferries, up over Bergen Heights, and down to Paulus Hook, that Sally took that night. Her captors were not unkind to her, save once when they had halted and Sally would have slipped down from in back of the stolid red-coat she was riding with and flitted away into the shadows. The flutter of her light dress, however, caught Stockton's eye,

and he dragged her back, jerking her upon her horse again with a sharp reprimand to the soldier who had allowed her to escape.

At Paulus Hook, Sally glanced with a gasp of dismay at the periauger, a two-masted vessel with narrow beam and lee-boards. But, almost before she knew it, they had crossed the dark, choppy stretch of water that was the Hudson River and were in New York. There she was hurried along between the soldiers and placed in the New Gaol for the night; and the next morning she was taken before Marshal Cunningham, that tyrant who had sentenced Nathan Hale to a miserable death and had deliberately torn up Hale's last letter to his sweetheart before the doomed man's face.

"Well, this the lass?" asked Cunningham, his face expressionless as he gazed over a table, behind which he sat, at Sally. The girl, glancing around, perceived that she was alone, save for Stockton, standing beside the marshal's table.

"Aye, sir!" Stockton nodded.

"The one whose master did arrest Lieutenant Lawrence?" pursued Cunningham, his little eyes glancing at Sally and then away.

"Aye, sir!"

"The lass who persuaded the young fool to forsake his duty?"

"Aye, sir!"

"Well, Captain Stockton, what punishment do

ye suggest?" demanded Marshal Cunningham.

The other cleared his throat. "I would suggest that the lass be held pending the release o' Lawrence by the rebels. And should they not release him, that the maid be punished for their misdeeds—and her own—and the rebels told o't," answered Stockton smoothly. "Mayhap a few months i' the Long Room might teach her not to interfere wi' a British soldier and officer i' the pursuit o' his duty. There be other means also."

"But——" said Sally.

"Silence!" thundered Stockton.

"But Lieutenant Lawrence——" began Sally again. She shrank back at the threatening gesture Stockton made toward her.

All this time Cunningham was staring out of the window at the stretch of green before the New Gaol, where the Sons of Liberty had erected their liberty poles as fast as he had torn them down. He scowled, suddenly remembering the wound he had suffered there, when he had vowed to make every rebel pay for it.

"And your punishment for the maid, Captain Stockton?" he asked coldly.

"That the girl *be branded on the arm!*"

CHAPTER V

SALLY GOES A-WALKING

THE dingy room grew dim before Sally's eyes. She had the feeling of being in a dreadful nightmare. Surely she must waken presently in her own little room beneath the eaves at Master Todd's with Mary's warm, chubby body nestling against her in the big feather bed they shared. But Cunningham's harsh voice brought her back to grim realities. She opened her eyes to stare at the two men who could so callously consider such a punishment as Stockton had suggested for her.

"Captain Stockton," said Cunningham tonelessly, "ye be not practical, sir. General Howe would not permit such a course as ye ha' devised."

Stockton gnawed his fingernails for a thoughtful moment. "Ye do admit my idea be a good one, Marshal Cunningham?" he asked presently.

The other nodded morosely. "Aye, the idea be good enough. The rebels must be taught a lesson. I know that General Howe had destined young Lawrence for a promotion soon. The rebels be both daring and presumptuous in thus detaining him in their midst," he responded in a level voice.

"But, sir——" began Sally desperately, for the third time.

"Will ye be silent, mistress!" Stockton hurled the words at her and Sally gave up her attempt to tell them that Jerry had escaped from his captors.

A pointed silence then ensued. Finally Stockton moved restlessly. "Would ye consent to the maid being placed i' the stocks?" he asked, casting a shifty side glance upon the other.

Cunningham shook his head. "Captain Stockton, it seems not feasible to exhibit the girl in any public manner. General Howe will not permit it, I tell ye!"

"What would ye suggest, then?" snarled Stockton at last, glancing maliciously at Sally, who, white-cheeked and silent, now, from sheer horror, stood gazing helplessly at Cunningham and him.

Cunningham pondered. "The rebels must be taught a lesson; but not by maltreating this maid—*publicly!*" he said, emphasizing the last word of his sentence in a sinister fashion that made Sally's blood run cold.

Stockton looked at him quickly. "I understand," he said then, with a cruel smile. "The rebels will be notified; but New York Town will know—nothing. Is that it, sir?"

"Exactly." Cunningham waved his hand negligently and stifled a yawn. "Ho, there, guard!"

he called. When the soldier who had accompanied Sally hither reëntered the room to stand at ram-rodlike attention, the marshal addressed him. "Remove this maid to the Long Room," he ordered, "and return here for further instructions."

Sally closed her eyes again, shuddering. She had heard of the Long Room, so called from its dimensions. It was an apartment set aside in one of the New York prisons—the Bridewell—for female culprits. The prison itself was a new one, built but a few years before, in 1775, because of overcrowded conditions in the New Gaol; and being unfurnished in many respects, especially as to windows through which the winter's cold could sweep, it had caused much suffering to those unfortunates who had been confined there. The Bridewell was a small stone structure; and like the New Gaol, it faced the Fields, that stretch of land noted before the war as a common outdoor gathering place for the citizens of New York. The Long Room was partitioned across its center, the rear half being reserved for Negro women and the front half for white; but except for the occasional patriot, like Sally, who was confined in it by underhanded means, the prisoners were of the lowest class, criminal rather than political, and woe to the person of refinement who was detained among them! No wonder poor Sally tried now to thrust away the repulsive pictures her active mind immediately conjured up before her!

Her guard poked her in the side with the butt of his musket. "Forward!" he ordered roughly.

Sally faced the door and moved forward upon leaden feet. Her eyes were open and set and staring. But halfway across the room the heavy door into the hall was thrust violently open and a soldier stepped inside. "General Howe!" he bawled, and stood aside, petrified into immobility after he had presented arms.

The two men behind the table barely had time to exchange guilty glances when a fine-looking man in full-dress uniform, followed by a gay party of ladies and gentlemen, swept across the threshold. Sally, meeting the former face to face, stopped automatically until he had stepped around her, then continued upon her unseeing way to the door. Both Stockton and Cunningham saluted; and the marshal, assuming an air of delighted surprise, moved to meet his superior.

"How now, Marshal Cunningham!" greeted Howe, his keen glance taking in every detail of the scene. He stepped behind the table into Cunningham's place and nodded sharply. "Halt the maid!" he snapped.

The guard touched Sally upon the shoulder and she stopped.

"Ye were engaged wi' this girl?" asked the British general.

"She is a Newark maid, a servant i' a rebel fam-

ily, and brought to New York Town, sir, on the charge——”

General Howe held up his hand, and Cunningham subsided into silence. Howe turned to the group of visitors standing in the corner, who were looking on with curious eyes. “Ye wished to visit the New Gaol and the Bridewell,” said Howe smilingly to them. “Observe how they exist and how we conduct our business. Bring the girl before me!” He turned commandingly to Stockton.

Stockton, saluting, hesitated only for the fraction of a second, and then, moving forward, he placed his hand upon Sally’s arm. Shuddering a little, she turned slowly around and fixed her vacant gaze upon him. “General Howe would speak wi’ ye!” he told her politely; then he added beneath his breath: “Beware!”

Sally, however, looked at him uncomprehendingly as, obedient to his touch, she returned to her place before the table. There, slender and drooping, she stood with her hopeless eyes fixed upon the floor. Stockton saluted again and moved over to stand beside Cunningham, who was gazing on the proceedings with a cynical smile. The others present, silent and interested, watched.

“What are the charges lodged against the prisoner?” asked Howe. He interrupted himself by motioning to one of the ladies, a beautiful woman in the laces and satins of a belle, to come forward

from the group and stand beside him. "Ye were especially interested, Lady Holden," he said, smiling at her gallantly, as she responded. "I wish ye to have full opportunity to witness our justice."

Lady Holden! Through her daze of misery and fright the name came to the prisoner like a thunderbolt. Sally raised her eyes, and as she did so, a gentleman disengaged himself also from the group of visitors and came forward. "I protest, my wife cannot ha' all the honor thus, sir!" he observed jokingly. But Lady Holden, with a dainty gesture of her white hand, hushed him, and the business of the Court proceeded.

When General Howe had been made acquainted with the charges brought against Sally, he frowned. "How do ye identify this girl?" he asked Stockton curtly.

"By her hair, sir. She hath auburn hair, as ye can see, an she remove the bonnet she doth wear!" answered Stockton promptly, with an air of candour.

"Remove your bonnet!" said General Howe to Sally.

Raising a trembling hand, the girl untied her bonnet strings and jerked the ugly thing from her head. As she did so, her thick mop of curls came tumbling down around her face, and a little murmur of admiration swept through the room. Even Howe's face, for he was ever susceptible to feminine beauty, was softened as he regarded her.

Sally, however, was not looking at him. Her eyes, wide, staring, were fixed upon Lady Holden's face as that gentlewoman stared back at her. All at once the lady reeled and would have fallen but for her husband's outflung hand.

"The heat!" he murmured hastily; and stooping, he caught up his wife's slight figure in his arms and left the room.

General Howe, quite upset, brought the proceedings to an abrupt close. "The maid is discharged for lack o' evidence," he said sternly. "Set her free!" And he left the room, followed by his guests.

Free! Sally, upon the somber threshold of the New Gaol, stood undecided for a moment, staring across the Fields. Far down the street she could see the procession of sedan chairs in which General Howe and his party were being conveyed home. She wondered vaguely in which one sat Lady Holden, felt again that thrill of inexplicable and overwhelming intimacy which had swept over her when her eyes had met the lady's, and she started down the street instinctively in the direction taken by the sedan chairs. She had no plan for returning to Newark, as yet. Her thoughts were still in a tumult, and she hurried along Broadway blindly.

But as Sally proceeded down the wide lane that was filled with an afternoon throng, her steps slowed to a saunter. The sedan chairs, carried by

swift slaves, had long since disappeared; and now, interested and excited, Sally became engrossed in the busy street scenes all about her.

Broadway was then, as now, the principal thoroughfare in New York. But then wealth had erected beautiful residences along each side of it, and it was not until she came to the ruins of Trinity Church, burned the year before, that a blank space occurred in the blocks which the girl trod.

Each fine home had its stone stoop built before its entrance. Here were gathered the ladies of the household, ostensibly out to enjoy the air, really to bow prettily to the British officers who passed by. There were few carriages, many sedan chairs, and now and then an officer on horseback dashed up or down the street. No signs here of lack or hardship of warfare! Sally, remembering the homespun gowns, the busy hands at home incessantly knitting stockings for the soldiers, looked in amazement at the gay satins and silks of the New York ladies.

But now, as she walked along, she became aware, disagreeably, of someone at her side. Even before she had glanced up, she knew that she would see the furtive face, the cruel eyes of Stockton. She stopped angrily and, regardless of passers-by, faced him with hostile words. "Why do ye follow me?" she demanded. "General Howe ordered that I be set free. I call not this freedom—to be followed thus!"

Seizing her elbow with iron fingers, Stockton forced her to walk on beside him, so that to the average gaze they might have been like any other strolling couple, out sauntering for pleasure.

“See ye aught o’ friends?” whispered Stockton threateningly. “Be silent, or it will be the worse for ye, mistress!”

Sally, staring about her despairingly, looked in vain for a friendly face. No one paid the least attention to her. Hard faces, careless faces, selfish faces—each seemed busy with its own petty concerns, and the girl tramped on beside Stockton, not daring to call for help.

So they passed down Broadway and turned east toward the river at last. Here the houses were not quite so elegant. Side streets of more modest residences opened off from the thoroughfare Stockton had chosen. But here, too, were groups of ladies surrounded by the red uniforms of British officers. One lady, seated alone and knitting comfortably, attracted Sally’s attention as they went by her stoop. Something familiar about the kind, plain, sensible face, the stout figure, called out to the girl. Then, suddenly, she remembered. The lady was Mistress Van Houten, and here the house where Sally had tarried before going out to the Mountain settlement with Parson Chapman more than three years ago.

Sally stopped, and Stockton had to stop, too. But before he could grasp her intention, the girl had broken away from him, and, darting back with a little cry, she ran up the steps of Mistress Van Houten's stoop, to throw herself down upon her knees before that astonished lady.

"Save me, madam!" choked Sally. "This man be persecuting me!"

Stockton took off his hat and, bowing low, approached with an oily smile. "The lass be demented, madam," he said, waving a sorrowful hand, supposing that Sally had appealed to a stranger for help. "I be taking her to my sister's. 'Tis a very sad case! Come, we must go, my dear!"

He reckoned, however, without the lady's shrewd Dutch mind and her very excellent memory. As he put out his hand to take Sally's arm, Mistress Van Houten stared at him with cold eyes and rose suddenly to her feet.

"Begone, sir! I know ye do not speak the truth!" she answered sternly. "I know this child's history and exactly where she belongs. Go into the house, Sally! I ha' bid you begone, sir! Why do ye still tarry? 'Tis a low pursuit for an officer o' His Majesty's army to stoop to! But quite worthy an ally o' Cunningham, as I do now recognize ye to be!"

"'Tis rather dangerous to air one's opinion o'

Marshal Cunningham, madam," returned Stockton threateningly.

"Aye?" responded the lady in a sarcastic voice. "Mayhap the fact o' friendship wi' Lord Howe and General Clinton might offset the danger, sir!"

Stockton started. He knew that friendships existed between the British commanders and certain New York families; and staring fiercely into the lady's calm eyes, he now decided to play the game safely. So, with another sweep of his hat, he bowed low. "Madam, your pardon an I ha' offended ye!" he craved with a surliness he tried in vain to change into suavity. "I will leave the maid, then, i' your charge for a while, an ye desire."

"I do so desire," answered Mistress Van Houten decidedly. She stood awaiting Stockton's departure, then, with such an obvious show of patience that he was forced to bow again and reluctantly turn away. Mistress Van Houten watched him until she was convinced that he meant no treachery for the nonce.

Sally, meanwhile, standing bashfully in the center of the long, narrow parlor, was looking about her with reminiscent eyes. It was a plain, cheerful room like its mistress, bright with chintz hangings and chintz-covered furniture and gay wall paper with scenes of waterfalls and castles and friendly forests upon it. The fragrance of pansies and heliotrope came from boxes in the open windows, while

in an adjoining room a green-and-red cockatoo squawked upon his perch, making a vivid splash of color in the late afternoon sunshine.

It was the cockatoo that she remembered the most distinctly, perhaps, for it had been the cockatoo which had engrossed the little frightened maid's attention those three long years ago when the poverty and death of Grannie Haggerty had set her drifting in the cruel world until, out of the torrid waters of neglect, Parson Chapman had lifted her to this haven that was his friend's home, before removing her to his own home in New Jersey.

Now Sally felt the same trust and liking for Mistress Van Houten that had enveloped her before, when that lady entered her parlor hurriedly and seated herself in a wing chair. She motioned Sally to draw near and, while the girl told her story, kept uttering little clucking cries of pity and horror. When the tale was ended, she closed her eyes and pondered, while Sally watched her anxiously. Suddenly Mistress Van Houten's eyes flew open, and she fixed them keenly upon the girl's wistful face.

"'Tis plain to be seen, Sally, that Parson Chapman did make a mistake when he placed ye in Mistress Todd's family. It can be seen that she hath no patience wi' ye, and dear knows," a smile spread over the lady's face, "dear knows a girl o' your age doth take much patience!"

"I see not why," began Sally, rather nettled.

Mistress Van Houten held up her hand humorously. "Spare me, I prithee!" she said in a good-natured voice. "Enough when I say 'tis so, my lass. Mayhap the lady is not to be over-envied, either! However, it be now our concern to get ye back safely to New Jersey once more!"

Rising from her chair, she passed out of a rear door into a little narrow hallway; and going to the top of the basement stairs, she called to someone below: "Cudje! Cudje!"

"Yas'm, Missy! Ah'm jes' cleanin' the brasses like yo' done tole me to!"

"Let the brasses wait, now, Cudje, and come upstairs. I wish ye!"

"Yas'm!"

Returning to the parlor, Mistress Van Houten placed her stout, middle-aged figure once more in her wing chair and awaited her Negro slave's appearance. Soon his shuffling step sounded upon the stairs, and a few moments later he was standing in front of her, showing the whites of his eyes as he rolled them curiously in Sally's direction. Sally, gazing at him in return, beheld an old colored man of uncertain years, clad in the knee breeches and the waistcoat of his dead master, for Mistress Van Houten was of thrifty Dutch extraction and saw no reason for purchasing lackey's uniform when she had a whole chestful of clothes upstairs. The only

drawback was that Master Van Houten had been both tall and broad, while Cudje was neither, so that now the master's waistcoat flopped somewhere about Cudje's legs. The colored man's enormous dignity overcame this slight defect, however, and he now stood waiting for his mistress to speak.

"Cudje," Mistress Van Houten looked up at him appealingly, "canst think o' any way to get little Mistress Sally here, back to Newark?"

Cudje turned in the girl's direction and bowed beamingly. "Ef it ain't li'l Missy Sally! Ah done declare to ma'sef when Ah come in dis hyar room dat's who it was, but——"

"But she hath grown a bit since Parson Chapman brought her here, eh, Cudje?" interrupted his mistress tolerantly.

"Yas'm!" Cudje's white teeth showed in another grin.

"Well, canst think o' any way for her to return?" Mistress Van Houten turned to explain to Sally, who, seated upon the edge of her chair, was watching them anxiously: "Cudje does most o' my marketing at the docks and comes into contact wi' many Jersey farmers. I thought he might know o' someone."

"I do, Missy," said Cudje simply. "Mas'r Crane do be returning early i' the mawnin' to Newark on his boat. Ef li'l Missy likes to go that way——"

He paused and looked inquiringly at Sally, who nodded slowly.

“The very thing!” exclaimed her hostess. “Run ye and make arrangements, Cudje. But, mind ye—a shilling, no more! Tell Master Crane only a shilling!” When the aged darky had hurriedly departed, she turned complacently to Sally. “I knew Cudje could help us. He hath been such a comfort since Hans departed this life!”

The next morning found Sally wending her way toward the dock where Cudje told her lay Master Crane’s little schooner. The old darky, who escorted her, was garrulous, as usual; but the young girl was silent and downcast. Scarcely admitting it to herself, she had been hoping against hope almost up to the last moment of being bidden farewell by Mistress Van Houten that, after hearing her pathetic tale, the wealthy, childless widow might offer to relieve the Todds of their unwelcome burden. Life in the quiet, orderly city house might have been very pleasant, thought Sally wistfully, tramping along in the gray dawn. She would have missed the companionship of little Mary, of course; but perhaps Mistress Van Houten would have allowed the child to come in for a visit. Sally pictured showing the wide-eyed little girl the sights and wonders of New York Town and going home afterward to have goodies in the pleasant room of the green-and-red cockatoo.

Sally's heart sank. Home! That was what she had never known in all her life! Grannie Haggerty's poor, bare room might have been home had the old woman shown more than the grudging care she had bestowed upon the little unwelcome waif brought to her by her son. The farmhouse at the foot of the Newark Mountains might have been home to Sally had Mistress Todd welcomed her a little more heartily to it three years ago! As it was, the girl felt, and truly, that she had never shared anyone's home. And now, lonely and desolate, she was being shunted back to a place where no one really wanted her. She would not admit that she had been watching every moment since leaving the New Gaol yesterday afternoon for Jerry's smiling face, that she hated to go back to New Jersey because it probably no longer contained him!

Cudje broke into Sally's sad little reverie with a cheerful chuckle. "Thar she be, Missy—Mas'r Crane's boat! Hi, thar, Mas'r Crane!"

A tall, broad-shouldered man looked up, and, perceiving him, Sally's heart sank. It was Jeremiah Crane, one of the rabid Tories of New Jersey. His welcoming smile also died away into a dour look as he recognized the girl in turn, and he looked threateningly at Cudje.

"Ye gave me to understand 'twas one o' Mistress Van Houten's own family who desired to go to Newark," he said in an ugly tone.

"So 'tis, Mas'r," answered Cudje ingratiatingly.

"How so?" demanded the other with a frown.

"I know this lass—she belongs i' that rebel Todd's family at the Mountain."

"She's been a-visitin' Mistress Van Houten, a gues' dere, which be all de same as part o' the fambly," interrupted Cudje. "See here, Mas'r Crane, you-all doan' like ma tryin' t' get a passenger fo' yo' schoonah, jes' say so! Ah hab plenty othah people Ah kin go fo' passage and fo' marketin'!"

At this, Master Crane suddenly realized that he was speaking to a representative of one of his best customers, for Mistress Van Houten both loved to eat and loved to entertain her friends. His manner underwent an abrupt change. "Oh, of course, Cudje, of course," he said, with pseudo heartiness. "I was but surprised, for I thought 'twould be Mistress Van Houten herself, mayhap!"

"Aye, sir," answered Cudje affably. He turned to Sally and took off the ridiculously large hat which had been his late master's. "Good luck, li'l' Missy," he said simply. His kind brown eyes followed the young girl when she went up the schooner's gang-plank, and he sighed. He, too, had been hoping that his mistress might think to offer Sally a home; but apparently the thought had not occurred to her; and so the dull house was not to retain the gleam of sunshine that was Sally's hair, nor the lilting melody that was her happy laughter.

As for Sally, she stood in the stern of the little schooner a few moments later, when its sails captured the morning breeze that sent it dancing out from shore, and gazed back at Cudje, waving to her in friendly farewell from the dock. Responding, her glance shifted carelessly to a group of passengers being discharged from a craft made fast to the dock behind the Negro. There were some British soldiers and a few prisoners walking in their midst, with their hands tied behind their backs. The girl started. *Was one of those prisoners Master Todd?*

CHAPTER VI

THE HONORED GUEST

SALLY could not be sure she had seen Master Todd, however, and, even as she stared, the space increased between ship and dock, so that, all too soon only the flaunting red of the soldiers' uniforms could be distinguished; and then even the color of the uniforms merged into the background, and Sally, sighing, turned away.

But, in spite of herself, her spirits rose as the small schooner, propelled by a friendly breeze, slipped through green water. She cried out in delight at the picture the wooded hills of Staten Island made in the clear morning light, at the lovely New Jersey shore, at the white sea gulls wheeling and circling overhead. It was enough to be young, after all, thought the girl exultantly! What matter how dreary the past, how dark and foreboding the future. Here she was with the salt tang of the sea blowing to her nostrils, a little caressing wind lifting the curls upon her neck!

Master Crane busied himself sullenly about the deck of his boat and did not come near Sally at all through the trip. When they were made fast at the

Newark dock in the early afternoon, he merely nodded to her to go ashore, which she was glad enough to do. Toryism and cruelty were too closely associated in her mind for her not to have been upon her guard all morning.

Hungry and tired, she tramped slowly up the lane from the river, and sometime later she was peering in at the kitchen door of the Rising Sun Tavern.

Mistress Banks, the host's wife, was in charge of the many pots and kettles swung upon a huge crane in the great fireplace, and an odor of cooking onions and roasting meat greeted the newcomer as she paused shyly. Mistress Banks gave a nervous start at sight of the girl's shadow thrown suddenly across the sanded floor; but her face cleared at actual sight of Sally.

"Why, come ye in, my dear," she bade Sally kindly. "Mind the meat, Sam!" She turned to the little Negro boy, who bent to his task of turning the spit before the fire, after staring at Sally. "Hast but come to Newark?" went on the tavern hostess with an inquiring look. "Martha!" she lifted her voice imperatively. "Art ever returning to the kitchen? I cannot attend these pots forever!"

A buxom Negro woman came waddling in from the tap room in answer. "Ah was jes' servin' Captain Camp," she explained, giggling. "I done heah him tell some othah men dat His Excellency had

give him a cannon to 'fend Newark wi' when de red-coats make their 'tack again. No mo' bein' unprepared like day befo' yestiddy! Captain Camp done told 'em a girl was carried off to New Yawk Town, too, by de red-coats. Ain't that dreadful! You, Sam, tend to yo' bizness—you heah me?—else dat meat ain't goin' tas' lak nuffin at all!" And she turned upon her son, who had been staring up at her pop-eyed, with a threatening elbow.

"Never mind Sam," bade her mistress impatiently. "Come ye here to the fire and attend to your own business, Martha! Now, Sally, let us go out and cool off!" Sighing, Mistress Banks led the way to a bench outside the kitchen door, and, seating herself there, patted it invitingly. "Sit down and tell me news o' my good friend, Molly Todd! Long hath it been since I saw her! One would think we were forty i'stead o' four miles from the Mountain! But what news o' all the settlement? Have the British raids extended inland at all? And how be Samuel Todd and little Mary and the baby?" Her torrent of questions ceasing, Mistress Banks fixed inquiring eyes upon Sally's face.

"Indeed," the girl burst out, seating herself upon the edge of the bench, "I was going to ask ye!"

The older woman stared. "What mean ye?"

"I mean that I am that girl Martha did but now tell ye of! For, the other day, when the red-coats came to Newark, they did take me back wi' them

to New York Town on a trumped-up charge, where I was confined in the New Gaol and afterward sentenced to the Long Room for a few months," Sally told her, nervously bursting into tears.

"The Long Room!" echoed Mistress Banks in a horrified voice. She glanced around her uneasily, almost as though she were afraid that the red-coats might return and seize her, too. She also had heard tales of the Long Room, not too pleasant! "Heaven help ye, Sally!" she exclaimed fervently. "Nay, but do not weep, lass! Ye be safe now!"

"Aye," nodded the girl, smiling through her tears. She wiped them away with a corner of her kerchief. "I do not know why I weep, now," she confessed. "'Tis silly o' me, indeed—but—but, oh, it was most dreadful!" Sally shuddered again. "Like a bad dream, Mistress Banks! 'Twas Marshal Cunningham who sentenced me!"

"Not the one who was so cruel to that poor lad, Nathan Hale?" ejaculated the tavern hostess. "Nay, I cannot blame ye for feeling overwrought, e'en now, my dear! But tell me about it!"

"'Twas General Howe who finally ordered me set free," said Sally. But now that she had an opportunity to tell of her adventures, she found herself too tired to do so. She soon fell into silence and Mistress Banks, surmising her hunger, called to Martha to bring out some bread and cold meat.

"I was going to make ye wait for supper, which

will soon be ready," said the lady, smiling, "but I fear for the consequences an I do! However, do not eat overly much, Sally, for yon roast doth smell good to my nostrils."

"'Tis not lamb, is it?" asked Sally, munching.

Mistress Banks shook her head quickly. "Nay," she answered reproachfully. "Ye know the committee hath forbidden any lamb to be used—or mutton! The wool is too badly needed for our soldiers. I' truth, there be a heavy fine for any caught and convicted o' cooking lamb, e'en though the lamb be their own!"

"That is right and as it should be," answered Sally decidedly, shaking the crumbs from her lap. "For it seems not too much to ask, when our men i' the army e'en give up more than that!"

"Aye," agreed Mistress Banks, sighing. "Yet, methinks nothing can quite take the place o' roast lamb, wi' a smart mint sauce!" And the good lady sighed again.

Sally smiled. "Do ye know o' anyone returning this day to the Mountain?" she asked abruptly, changing the subject, for food, to Sally, as yet, was merely something with which one satisfied hunger and nothing to rhapsodize over.

Mistress Banks nodded briskly. "Aye," she answered. "Uzal Ball hath been i' town. I be sure he returns to the Mountain this very afternoon. He

sent word by Master Banks that he would be here for supper, Sally, so ye can go home wi' him."

"I came wi' Uzal," said Sally, "but I thought he would have returned ere this!"

"He did not get through his mother's business, he said last even. Odds crow," Mistress Banks sighed enviously, "I wish I were as well fixed as the Widow Ball at the Mountain on the ridge road! Her house and her lands and her sons! Oh, well!"

"Did—did Uzal say aught concerning the prisoner he brought wi' him to the authorities here?" asked Sally in a hesitant voice.

"A young red-coat?"

"Aye."

"Why, he did escape! He was to ha' been lodged here in the jail and held till the New Jersey Council o' Safety met i' Morris Town later, when he was to ha' been removed thence. But he did escape," answered Mistress Banks comfortably. "But there be Uzal Ball, now! Let us go to meet him. Hi, hi! Ooh-hoo! Uzal!" Waving her hand in friendly greeting, Mistress Banks got to her feet and went to meet the young man coming up the slight eminence the tavern was placed upon.

Sally, following more slowly, turned her face and pretended to be looking beyond the inn at the Passaic River which was visible from the Rising Sun Tavern. She was more loath to meet Uzal than

she cared to admit; for, though Jerry's escape and her own kidnaping was no fault of hers, she did not know how he might regard it. Mistress Banks prepared the way, however, by pouring out Sally's recent experience in a pitying voice, so that, when the girl arrived near enough to make her curtsy, he bowed gravely and commiserated with her.

"'Tis too bad ye have had such a misadventure, Sally," he said slowly. "I was surprised, of a truth, to find ye gone when I returned to the town center the other day after chasing that—renegade!" Uzal's face darkened. There was a slight pause. "Deacon Alling saw ye taken by the red-coats and told me o't," he went on stiffly. "It seems to me," the young man looked at her half smilingly, then half accusingly, "it be ever your fortune of late—or misfortune—to be i' the midst o' any excitement offered hereabouts."

"But I be tired o't, believe me or not, Uzal," protested the girl wearily. "I long for peace! Oh, will this war ever cease!" Yet, in her heart of hearts, Sally knew that she would not want the old monotony again, having once tasted the heady excitement of life as presented by 1777.

Sally's nose, upon her first entering the inn kitchen that afternoon, had not played her false, as was attested by the excellent supper she and Uzal and the host, James Banks, enjoyed later in a corner of the big room with Mistress Banks. The latter,

a droll twinkle in her eyes, kept heaping the girl's trencher with food, until Sally had to cry for mercy, and even Uzal became jovial, for him, and protested that they might as well call it a feast day and be done with it.

Soon afterward, Uzal procured a horse for her to take the place of old Dot and they set forth upon their return journey to the Mountain.

"Tell Molly Todd my latchstring hangs out for her—'tis long since she and the children were here!" called out Mistress Banks, waving a cordial farewell to them from the doorway.

Trotting up hill and down dale, through woodland and past swamp, toward the setting sun, Sally was glad enough of Uzal's company as the dusk came, with its frightening suggestion of highwaymen and lurking red-coats and Tories. When at last they reached the Todd gate, she looked up at him with grateful eyes as she slipped off her horse.

"Ye ha' been good to me, Uzal," she said, really sincere in her thanks. "Will ye not come in?"

"Aye, for a moment, to see that all goes well here," answered the young man, glancing at the pretty face beneath the straying auburn curls, for Sally had loosened her bonnet strings and allowed it to fall back upon her shoulder, to gain coolness. The girl, looking back at him, turned away self-consciously, for she was not used to admiration; and now Uzal, securing the two horses and following

her up through the garden to the kitchen door, liked her all the better for the half-shy, absolute artlessness of her manner and the lovely childhood which was still Sally's greatest charm.

It was rather a shock to the young man, therefore, to enter the Todd kitchen and walk full upon a bitter scene of violent upbraidings and reproaches with which Mistress Todd, lying helpless upon the settle, was assailing the girl. Sally, who was made for love and kindness, to have to listen to this!

"Ye gallivantin' hussy—wi' me lying bound here to this settle wi' my foot and no one to care for the children! Ye shall rue this day, indeed, and——"

"One moment, mistress, I prithee!" Uzal's grave voice broke unexpectedly into the dame's furious tirade. Mistress Todd, who had not seen him enter behind her little bond maid, started and then blushed. "One moment!" repeated Uzal. "Art aware that Sally, here, was kidnaped by the red-coats i' the Town by the River and taken to New York and there confined in the New Gaol?"

Sally, who had been standing silent and overwhelmed since her entrance, raised grateful eyes to his; but Uzal kept his gaze sternly upon Mistress Todd, for he had been rudely amazed by that lady's outbreak. Suddenly, however, to his terrible embarrassment, overcome by her chagrin and mortification, as well as by the real anxiety she had undergone, she burst into tears.

“Nay,” she sobbed. “But—but—I d-do be aware o’ the fact that—that Samuel hath been taken by a band o’ Tories who came from Elizabeth Town, and that I have been lying here, helpless and alone, since last night, wi’ only little Mary to care for me and the baby!”

“Is’t true, indeed!”

“Master Todd taken!”

The two exclamations blended in shocked surprise. Then Sally added slowly, “It *was* Master Todd I saw being marched away between the red-coats upon the New York dock!”

Both Uzal and Mistress Todd turned to the girl in excitement, the latter wiping her eyes and sighing. “In New York Town!” The wife paled. “Ah, that means the Sugar House prison or worse, one o’ their horrible, vile prison ships! Oh, Samuel! Samuel! I may never see thee again!” And once more she buried her face in her hands.

Uzal turned to her masterfully. “Nay, ye must not worry!” he advised. “We shall soon have Master Todd restored to our community!”

“I do hope so, Uzal!” Encouraged, Mistress Todd wiped her eyes again.

“Well, I will put the horse away i’ the barn for the night and stop for him the next time I go to town,” said Uzal after a silence.

“What mean ye?” Mistress Todd looked at him, astonished. “The horse?” She shifted her glance

to Sally's face and found confusion registered there. "Where is old Dot?" she asked sharply.

Sally returned her gaze steadily. "Old Dot was killed by the red-coats," she answered.

Mistress Todd's mouth narrowed into a thin, bitter line. "Always," she observed in a furious, trembling voice, "ye seem to bring trouble to me! I wish I had never seen ye, wretched maid!"

There was a tense silence, during which Sally's young face whitened until Uzal was really concerned at her pallor. She remained still, however, and he was forced to admire the girl's self-control. "Good blood doth somehow run i' the maid's veins," he thought involuntarily. "No fishwife or barmaid could e'er ha' mothered or grandmothered her!" Aloud he said, with an aspect of haste: "Mistress Todd, had we not better decide what ye must do? Surely ye cannot plan to remain here upon the farm, helpless as ye are!"

Mistress Todd looked at him, diverted at once. "I do not know what to do," she admitted. "Were I sure Samuel would not long be detained——"

Uzal shook his head. "'Tis better not to plan upon the event of an early release for Master Todd. Rather plan otherwise and then be happily disappointed," he interrupted. "What say ye to a visit wi' Mistress Banks at the Rising Sun Tavern i' Newark? When we left, she sent a most cordial invitation to ye by us."

"The very thing!" Mistress Todd brightened.

"I will stop, an ye wish, for ye on the morrow, then," continued Uzal. "And we can make such arrangements as ye care to about the farm, here. Mayhap run it on shares, or as ye decide—for the term o' Master Todd's absence. 'Tis a pity to waste all his good planting for lack o' care. I be sure my mother would wish David and me to help a neighbor thus."

"That would do nicely, Uzal, and thank ye, indeed. I will be ready on the morrow, also," responded Mistress Todd.

Uzal glanced questioningly at Sally. "And——" He paused, embarrassed.

Mistress Todd, whose eyes had followed shrewdly his glance, spoke with instant sharpness: "Indeed, I will not bother Mistress Banks by taking Sally! The maid will have to shift for herself awhile. She seems," the lady sneered, "to be well able to do this!"

Uzal turned to Sally. "Would ye like to come and visit my mother for a while, wi' Mistress Todd's permission?" he asked simply.

Sally could not speak. She merely raised brimming eyes to his and nodded, and so the matter was settled.

The next morning, as he had promised, Uzal drew up before the Todd farmhouse with his cart and horses. In the bustle of getting the children

ready and the little cowhide trunk packed, Sally had no time to think of herself. Many times she flew back and forth between cart and house; and at last the travelers were ready. When Uzal carried Mistress Todd out and placed her in a chair he had arranged in the back of the cart, Sally followed with the baby and, kissing him tenderly, put him in his mother's waiting arms. Then she hugged little Mary and swung her up into the straw-covered bottom of the cart.

"Good-bye, mistress," she said hesitatingly to the children's mother.

Mistress Todd nodded briefly. "Farewell to ye," she said in a cold voice.

Sally, left alone, flew about her task of "straightening up," trying to forget the little deserted feeling she had, the feeling of having been cast adrift in merciless fashion, without thought or care of her uncertain future. "The maid will have to shift for herself!" kept recurring to her, keeping miserable rhythm to the swing of her broom, to the swish of her dustcloth, to the ticking of the old clock in the corner. "How could she?" wondered Sally passionately. "Could she not ha' imagined little Mary i' my place! Oh, my mother, are ye not somewhere i' this great world? Are ye not wondering about me? Be there not somebody who cares?" And poor Sally wept some very bitter tears into

the kettle she was scouring. But it did no good to weep, as Sally, glancing at the waning sunlight, discovered. It only delayed and lengthened household tasks which had to be accomplished before she, too, could depart. So she wiped her eyes determinedly and pushed back her curls and presently a thrush, singing in a lilac bush near the kitchen door, heard his song echoed inside—waveringly, at first, then with gathering courage and determined joyfulness, and at last the hurt was washed from the young girl's heart with melody.

It had been arranged that Sally was to walk to the Widow Ball's house, a distance of a mile or two beyond the Todd farm, in the direction of Millburn village. Thus it was toward the south that Sally turned her face when, leaving a house clean and sweet-smelling behind her, she stepped out and locked the kitchen door behind her, hiding the enormous key beneath a flat stone by the well—toward the south and along a lane quiet with sun-flecked shadows and fragrant from the wild honeysuckle that grew along the road edge.

Approaching the Widow Ball's place, Sally looked curiously at the old stone house which had been finished in 1743, after much time and labor spent in preparing the stone, while the owners, Timothy and Esther Ball, lived in a log cabin on adjoining property. Now the date, 1743, with the

initials "T & E" over it, was inscribed upon a stone in the front chimney above the peak of the roof.

Mistress Esther Ball, a fine-looking woman a little past middle age, was seated upon the two-storied roofed porch when Sally, passing beneath the shade of the great walnut tree that stood between the road and the house, came up the sloping lawn toward her.

"Welcome, my child," she said in a full, gracious voice, rising to take the girl's heavy reticule from her and leading her into the shade of the porch. Sally was about to reply when a young man, about twenty-one years old, came strolling out the kitchen door, whereupon she turned red and shy, for she did not know David Ball as well as his brother.

"Ah, David," said his mother, smiling at the girl's ill-concealed confusion and thinking how pretty she was, with the flush in her cheeks and the thick curls framing her face. "Ye be just in time! Wilt take Sally's bag up to my chamber? Then she can sit down here wi' me on the porch and rest after her long, hot walk. I did not know," she turned kindly to the girl, "I did not know David was to be at leisure this noon, else I would have had him ride to fetch ye."

"Nay, I liked the walk," laughed Sally, more comfortable now that David's merry black eyes

were gone, for she had heard of his propensities for teasing and had viewed with alarm his unexpected appearance. "What a marvelous nice place this be," ventured the girl, with shy admiration.

Mistress Ball smiled pleasedly, then sighed. "Indeed, Timothy and I thought so, when first we built upon this spot. That was long ago, when the Mountain was wild, indeed, and friendly Indians used to come to our door." She sank into her porch chair and gazed out reminiscently over the lovely scene.

"Ah, tell me!" begged Sally. And the rest of the afternoon was spent upon the wide porch, with the fingers of both hostess and young guest busy with knitting needles, while story after story was told to eager Sally—the story of pioneer life upon this distant Mountain plantation, the story of fighting against wild beasts and rigorous winters and, most exciting of all, the story of the cyclone which had swept the valley below the First Mountain on June 22, 1756.

"Twenty-one years ago!" exclaimed Sally, in an awed voice.

"Twenty-one years ago." nodded Mistress Ball, "but remembered still as the worst storm we ha' ever had. It came about four o'clock i' the afternoon—folk thought it was a thunder shower, as was to be expected wi' the heat and the season. But it was wind—coming from the southwest to leave a

trail of destruction behind it. Houses and barns were flung about or carried a long distance, as though they had been chips. I mind Samuel Pierson's barn and mill house and the barn o' Justice Crane, as well as a new house built by Master Dodd and two widows named Ward—all destroyed!"

Sally, glancing out across the peaceful lawn, tried to visualize the scene of loss and horror, gave it up with a shake of her head. But after a while, glancing down the road again, she uttered an interested exclamation and leaned forward in her chair.

"Yonder come horsemen!" she said wonderingly. "Who think ye they be?"

Mistress Ball adjusted the steel spectacles upon her nose. "Nay," she answered uncertainly, "I cannot see that far. I know not who they be, unless 'tis Uzal and a friend, returning quicker than 'twould seem possible from the Town by the River."

Suddenly, Sally, who had kept her eyes glued upon the approaching riders, whirled around. "They wear uniforms!" she cried. "'Tis the buff and blue o' His Excellency's soldiers!"

But now Mistress Ball could recognize the horsemen. She rose to her feet with a gasp. "Ye speak truly, little maid!" she said, with a thrill in her voice. "*It be His Excellency, himself!*" And with

queenlike dignity she advanced with an air of gracious welcome to the edge of the porch.

Sally, following, glanced at Mistress Ball's calm face and wondered how she could be so composed. She, herself, fairly trembled from excitement and amazement, standing there watching the tall figure of the American commander in chief dismount and advance toward them, leaving the younger, shorter man who was with him to secure their horses to the great walnut tree.

"How now, Cousin!" greeted General Washington. ("*Cousin!*" thought Sally with a mental gasp.) "Colonel Hamilton nor I could pass without stopping to pay our respects!" Gravely, he bent over Mistress Ball's extended hand, as she curtsied to him.

• Sally, curtsying, too, agitatedly backed toward the porch bench, found to her confusion that that was where His Excellency was about to seat himself, backed to another chair and discovered that Colonel Hamilton had selected *that!* Then, looking wildly around, she was about to fly into the house, overcome by confusion, when she heard Mistress Ball's sweet voice call her.

"Sally! Will ye not seat yourselves," smilingly, "and let Sally, here, bring ye some buttermilk, gentlemen?"

This considerate dismissal touched the girl's heart, sore from humiliation at her own awkward-

ness. Seldom, indeed, had such gentleness been shown her! She shuddered to think what would have been Mistress Todd's look and manner upon like occasion! So that, when she emerged a little later, with the scarlet faded from her round cheeks and the humiliation from her heart, Sally looked at her hostess with passionate gratitude over the tray she carried and felt that she could have died to serve her—instead of merely dispensing butter-milk to her guests!

Colonel Hamilton turned eagerly to accept the silver flagon of cool liquid which Sally handed him. He rose, then, with punctilious politeness until the girl, overcome anew by such deference, retired bashfully once more to the kitchen, where she might watch the famous men in peace through the door crack.

Rachel, Mistress Ball's daughter, was studying the larder supplies with anxious eyes, planning for supper, with Sally suggesting and reassuring, when Uzal, returned from the Town by the River, entered the kitchen an hour later.

“Plan your meal to be served up in the parlor, Ray,” he said, with a nod toward the short flight of stairs which led to apartments above. “We are about to bring His Excellency's horse *into the kitchen for hiding* so that in case of alarm he will be safe.”

It was while she was crouching over the fire, then,

attending to the simmering pots, that Sally heard an odd noise, a crunching, munching sort of sound. She looked up curiously, to behold His Excellency's horse impolitely chewing off mouthfuls of the Widow Ball's wooden window ledge! She stifled a laugh and said nothing, although Colonel Hamilton and David kept glancing at her merry eyes as though they longed to ask the cause and share her mirth, all through supper.

They were seated comfortably around the candlelit table when David, who had gone outside to stand guard, burst into the parlor. "Fly!" he gasped. "The Tories! They ha' heard o' His Excellency's presence here! Young Zenas Williams, who heard his brother James plot wi' the Tories, but now hath arrived. He doth say that James be leading them hither on the ridge road from the settlement!"

Swiftly General Washington bowed over the Widow Ball's hand and was gone. There was a clatter of hoofs from the kitchen below, a low command, and then a dark figure issuing from the door near the chimney leaped upon another dark form and was off.

"Not this night, James Williams, do ye capture the hope o' these United Colonies!" exclaimed David exultantly, when Colonel Hamilton, bidding them adieu, had hastily followed his chief and had galloped off toward the village of Millburn and on

to Morris Town. "'Twill take more than a youth o' your ilk to do so and—and——"

"Please heaven, there be no such person i' the world!" finished Sally saucily. "But lawk-a-me, how hungry His Excellency's horse *was!*" And she pointed out to the astonished Ball family, as they followed her curiously into the kitchen, the chewed-off window ledge!

CHAPTER VII

A DARK GOWN AND A BLACK NIGHT

SALLY was singing. And Uzal Ball, listening outside his mother's kitchen window, was smiling with pleasure. For Sally's voice rose like a lark, higher, higher, until the clear sweetness of it seemed to fly into his very self and tug at his heartstrings. Suddenly, however, the song stopped with an abruptness that left Uzal a-gaping, when a very human ejaculation of dismay following the song sent him hurriedly stealing away, with a furtive, foolish glance around to see that no one had observed his foolishness.

He flushed a deep, angry crimson when, raising his head, he saw David teasingly grinning down at him from the half-story landing of a flight of outside stairs. Neither brother said a word. Only Uzal knew that David was thinking: "Ha—he be sweet upon the little maid!" And Uzal was furious accordingly, for who likes to be observed paying unconscious court! Especially when one is a rather sour, dour young man of settled bachelorhood.

Meanwhile, Sally was staring down sadly at a

great rent in her gown. And when Mistress Ball entered the kitchen a few minutes later, a stifled little sob made her look toward a dark corner of the big room.

"How now, my dear?" She stopped short upon her way to the cupboard. "Tears i' your eyes?"

"Aye." Sally dashed them away, however. "See what I did but now, Mistress Ball! And—and—the Williams sewing bee this very afternoon as ever is! I know not, forsooth, what I shall do!" Her lips trembled again. "This be mine only gown!"

Mistress Ball examined the long, jagged tear in her skirt that Sally held up for tremulous inspection. "However did ye do it, my child?" she asked. "Why, this be fit only for the rag bag, I'm thinking. Your best gown, ye say?"

"Aye." Again Sally nodded her head forlornly. "And what Mistress Todd will say when she doth return, I know not!"

"Humph—Mistress Todd should ha' provided gowns not quite so near the worn-out stage," thought Mistress Ball. But aloud she repeated: "How did ye tear it, lass?"

"On the fire-iron yonder," Sally told her, nodding toward the andirons. "I bent over to reach the back log—methought it was smouldering overly much—and snip! I heard my gown go as I straightened up. Oh, me, was ever maid so unfortunate!"

'Tis plain to be seen I must gi' up going to the sewing bee!"

"Nay—wait!" Mistress Ball spoke absently, her eyes fixed upon a dower chest which stood beneath a window. She moved over to it and threw up the chest lid. "Wait!" Her voice was muffled, now, as she bent over the chest. "Mayhap we can find something here for ye!"

With rising hope, Sally watched her. She caught delightful glimpses of gay satins, of lovely velvets, of many ribbons wound neatly in rolls. Anything, it seemed, might come forth from that chest! And like an eager Cinderella, she stood there in her old torn gown while Mistress Ball, fairy godmotherlike, delved and pulled at a generation's outgrown clothing. At last, with a little triumphant exclamation, the lady's searching fingers found what they sought, and, straightening herself, she turned around.

But, oh, how Sally's heart dropped with disappointment, like dead ashes putting out the tiny flame of joy which had commenced to flicker there! The gift gown was a drab one, indeed, in her young eyes, of a strange shade of plum-colored silk! A dark, *elderly* kind of gown!

Mistress Ball nodded at her smilingly as she held the gown up. "Take off thy torn gown and try this on!" she commanded kindly. "'Tis an outgrown one o' daughter Ray's, and I ha' thought,

I know not how many times, to gi' it to ye, Sally."

A few minutes later, Sally drew a long, tremulous breath. "How do I look?" she asked hopelessly.

"Ye look rarely lovely!" cried Mistress Ball, with sparkling eyes. "And it fits ye as though made for ye! Look ye here, Ray," she turned to glance laughingly at her daughter as the latter entered the kitchen, "and see how didst look five years ago!"

Rachel Ball came over to place her hand affectionately upon her mother's shoulder as the latter sank heavily into an armchair. "Nay," she answered smilingly, "the gown ne'er became me as it does Sally! 'Tis made for the child!" She looked toward the door. "Is it not, Uzal?" she asked laughingly.

Sally glanced up quickly. What a pity, she thought dismally, that Uzal should see her thus—for she had noticed and naïvely liked the admiration she had caught in the young man's unguarded eyes once or twice. But Sally's glance turned to a stare, for admiration was written boldly upon Uzal's face, was reflected in Mistress Ball's and Rachel's faces as well.

"Ye look rarely nice, Sally," was all Uzal said, however, before he turned upon his heel and abruptly disappeared.

And Sally wonderingly advanced to an old mirror to look at herself. There, before it, however, she remained so long that Mistress Ball and Rachel exchanged a glance.

“How do ye like the gown, lass?” asked Rachel tolerantly.

Sally started, gave a little gasp. “Like it!” she cried. “Why—why—it *doth* become me well, after all!”

Rachel commenced to laugh. “Did—did—ye think we were but fooling ye, Sally?” she stammered. “Trying to rid ourselves o’ ancient duds and rags!” And she burst into renewed laughter at the artless admission in Sally’s words.

But Sally, preening herself, turning this way and that as she struggled to glimpse herself at every angle, only smiled vaguely. “I wish,” she sighed presently, “we were going to a ball i’stead o’ a sewing bee!”

“Why, Sally?” asked Mistress Ball, shaking her head at Rachel.

“Because it be such a lovely gown,” said Sally simply.

Rachel tossed her head. “Ye do look nice, Sally,” she said, “but I fear ye would feel amiss at a ball, for I do assure ye, the plain little gown, while it doth become your hair and eyes, would look very, very plain, indeed, beside the other ladies’ attire!” And Rachel tried not to look too superior, for she had once visited some wealthy cousins in Philadelphia, and there had caught a view of life quite different from the plain one of her parents, a life filled with routs and parties and fine clothes, where

hardships were unknown and work only something to discuss lightly, lazily over the teacups. Yet, since the war, there existed no sterner patriot than Rachel Ball, no one more self-denying for freedom's cause.

How could Sally eat her dinner, then, when she knew there hung, freshly pressed, that charming gown upon its wooden peg upstairs! More than once David glanced teasingly across the table at her beatific face and at last burst out: "What has happened to Sally? Hast heard from thy long-lost parents, lass? Art going to leave us for——" He stopped at his mother's chiding look.

"Nay, be not foolish, lad," said Mistress Ball reproachfully, glancing at Sally's drooping face. "We are but looking forward to this afternoon's sewing bee at Mistress Mary Williams's."

At that, Uzal raised his eyes from his trencher. "Watch thy words i' *that* household," he said dourly. "'Tis a hotbed o' Tories, there."

"Think ye so, Uzal?" answered his mother in a surprised voice. "Why, we are going to knit for the Continental soldiers, forsooth! And sew, too. Oh, I know young James be Tory; but he be only a foolish lad, not knowing his own mind as yet—adventuresome rather than bitter—as shown when he led the Tories after His Excellency that day some months ago."

"Mayhap ye will knit for the Continentals,"

retorted Uzal in a grim voice, "but I doubt an any o' Washington's men e'er see your stockings! All the Williamses be a blot on this patriotic community o' ours—and that be a fact!"

"Nay, I feel sure that ye wrong them," protested Mistress Ball, who was ever disposed toward lenience, while the others remained silent, interested listeners.

Uzal shoved his chair back violently from the table. "I tell ye, Mother, I do know the Williamses—Benjamin and Nathaniel and their families do be traitors to the Colonies' cause," he began in a loud angry voice, rising stormily to his feet. "Why name me nays? Old Amos Williams was as hot-headed and as bigoted a Tory afore he died as e'er saw this Mountain and his two sons be just like him. Why," Uzal thumped the table and Sally stared at the dancing dinner dishes, "they do say that Benjamin Williams hath e'en been seen wearing one o' Skinner's green uniforms o'er on Staten Island—though now the sneak be back on his farm, pretending loyalty. The Committee do be watching him, though," Uzal looked at them all significantly, "and when the Amnesty Act doth expire, that gentleman may have a different tune to sing—or lose his land!"

Mistress Ball, gazing at her usually silent son, saw that he was really wrought up over the matter, as attested by his trembling hands.

“There, there, Uzal, it may be so,” she said pacifically, “and we all do promise ye,” she looked smilingly at Rachel and Sally, “to watch our tongues and not betray any patriot or war secrets this afternoon.”

“Now ye do make fun o’ me,” said Uzal sullenly. He started for the door, stopped upon the kitchen threshold. “But I give ye serious warning, all——”

Here Rachel interrupted her brother impatiently. “Oh, get along wi’ ye!” she exclaimed. “Wi’ your warnings and your worryings! Mother and I be discreet enow—we have not lived i’ the same house wi’ you since the war started not to be!—as for Sally, I know o’ no more fiery patriot than she!” She smiled at the girl. Then, as Uzal disappeared, Rachel looked at her mother. “In truth, I find Uzal becoming more fanatical every day!” she complained. “’Tis getting to be most unpleasant!”

“Patience, Rachel, my child,” urged Mistress Ball. “Uzal hath seen much o’ the sad side o’ this war. Whereas you and I,” she sighed, “what know we! We have been more fortunate and more protected than most! But Mistress Williams——” she paused for a thoughtful instant, pondered, brightened—“nay, I feel sure she be a true patriot and that Uzal be wrong!”

“Aye—mayhap about her,” Rachel took the tablecloth to the door and shook it invitingly at some bright-eyed robins hopping upon the lawn,

“but Uzal be right about her husband and the Committee, Ma—Master Hedden’s daughter—o’ the Town by the River—she did tell me Samuel Williams was under watch! Master Hedden hath been appointed to enforce the oath o’ allegiance, ye mind!”

“Is’t true, indeed!” Mistress Ball’s voice was shocked. “Well, mayhap ’tis best to be watchful o’ our tongues this day. Ye, too, Sally,” she turned to the listening girl, “for we do not know friend from foe this hard year!”

But that afternoon, looking around the Williamses’ big, pleasant kitchen where Mistress Mary’s guests—a dozen or so neighbor women—had informally gathered, Sally thought there could be no doubt that all were friends. Such a hum of voices, such merry laughter, such a click of knitting needles that flashed in the sunshine stealing in through tiny-paned windows, for pleasure gatherings were few and far between, nowadays, and everyone was determined to get the most fun possible out of this. The dusk came early to that house, however—soon shadows were stealing out from every corner, for, built long ago, in 1730, by old Amos Williams, it nestled so near to the foot of the First Mountain, and had so few windows in its thick stone walls—glass was too expensive!—that the sunshine departed early, and even the brightest day found the house interior gloomy and dark.

Friends! Yet, even as she thought this, Sally saw James Williams, Mistress Mary's second son, a fine-looking boy of eighteen or so, glance in as he passed the kitchen door and eye his mother's guests with an obvious sneer!

As he disappeared swiftly and silently, the girl thought involuntarily of Uzal Ball's words at dinner time. But the next instant she was remorseful and ashamed, for a gentle hand was placed upon her shoulder as she sat knitting in her modest corner and Mistress Williams's sweet face smiled down at her.

"Sally, my dear, Mistress Ball hath been telling me o' thy misadventures and thy homelessness. I knew, of course, that Master Todd had been taken away by the red-coats and that Mistress Todd had gone to Newark, but I did not think o' ye," began Mistress Mary, seating herself upon a chair next to Sally, which someone had vacated. She spoke in a low voice. "I ha' been wondering—how would ye like to visit here at the Corners for a while? Methinks 'twould be most pleasant for us, my child."

"Why——" Sally stopped and bit her lips. Visit at Tory Corners, as the ground around bitter old Amos's farm had been called! Uzal's words came to mind. "A hotbed o' Tories!" But, after all, why not, the girl asked herself? The old longing came surging over her, the old rebellion. Drifting! Being

shifted around to suit others' whims! Sally's eyes were rather bitter as she looked up at Mistress Williams. "I gather Mistress Ball be going away?" she said coolly.

Mistress Mary's sweet face flushed at the shrewd guess. "Aye," she said gently. "Although I would have invited ye anyway, Sally!"

There was a little sensitive silence, while about them surged and eddied the bantering, the chatter, the light laughter. "Mistress Ball hath but now been worrying about ye, Sally," went on Mistress Williams at last. She rose to her feet and stood hesitating. "She did plan to take Rachel and David wi' her, and Uzal will be busy i' Newark, so ye see ——" Her voice broke off again.

Sally's heart was heavy, indeed. Yet, she told herself fiercely, that she had no right to complain, that these good people were taking care of her as best they could, planning for her, arranging for her. It was not their fault that she had no mother, no home!

But across the room her kind friend was watching her. Mistress Ball read aright the quick fluttering of Sally's eyelashes, the sudden hurt coloring of her mobile face, and before the girl could open her lips again, she was at her side.

"Nay, Mary," said Mistress Ball, as Sally rose to offer her chair, "I fear my little Sally doth misconstrue the situation, that she feels we want her

no longer wi' us and are finding my Morris Town visit but a pretext to get rid o' her!"

"Why, how knew ye that?" Sally gazed at Mistress Ball in astonishment, then bit her lips in confusion.

"Ye see!" Mistress Ball turned with an eloquent gesture to her friend, Mary Williams.

"Ah, now that be too bad!" exclaimed that lady kindly. "For Sally doth indeed misjudge ye! Sally, my dear," she turned softly to the young girl, "wilt believe me when I tell ye I heard Mistress Ball plan this trip to Morris Town months ago—why, 'twas last spring, I mind, sometime in March or April—long before ye went to her house, forsooth! So that I know, of a certainty, 'tis no sudden whim, just to get rid o' ye as ye do believe! Will ye not believe me?" asked Mary Williams gently.

How Mistress Todd would have tossed her head and sneered at the trouble these two kind-hearted women were taking to convince a little bond maid that no hurt had been intended, that she was truly welcome in their homes! Perhaps a sudden thought of that irascible dame had something to do with Sally's surrender, with the fervor with which she kissed each soft, middle-aged cheek as she realized how truly good and kind they were to her. For a child is like a flower, quickly responsive to the sunshine of understanding kindness.

"Ah, I do believe ye!" said Sally gratefully.

“And,” she turned smilingly to Mistress Williams, who, watching her with anxious eyes, now returned the girl’s smile happily, “I shall be glad to stay awhile wi’ ye! Until Mistress Ball’s return from Morris Town! Or”—a shade passed over Sally’s face—“at least until Mistress Todd’s return from the Town by the River, an she returns before!”

As the girl moved away, Mistress Williams turned to her friend. “Someone should speak to Parson Chapman about Sally,” she said in a low tone, but decisively. “She did not look happy at mention o’ her mistress’s name! And I, for one, think Mistress Todd the wrong person to be in charge o’ the poor little maid!”

“I think Parson Chapman knows the situation,” returned the other lady. “I’ fact, I feel sure he does, for he was much concerned and went straight from my house one day last May to Mistress Todd. I never heard what decision was reached, for much happened immediately thereafter. Through Uzal, whom Master Todd told, I learned that Parson Chapman barely escaped capture by a band of red-coats that day, that he got away only by a ruse—that is, daring to stop upon a hilltop and cheer for freedom i’ the faces o’ the oncoming red-coats, so that they, thinking from his daring that, concealed from them beyond the hilltop, were a troop o’ Continentals, did gi’ o’er the chase.” Mistress Ball laughed. “Sally said that they turned and fled

back down the hill, so sure they were o' American help coming to aid the parson!"

As Mistress Ball paused, Sally, who had turned back to listen assentingly, happened to let her gaze fall upon a mirror so placed upon the kitchen wall as to reflect beyond the open door. There, reflected in the mirror, the girl saw two listening faces! They were those of Master Williams and his son James!

Back flooded Uzal Ball's words, "A hotbed of Tories!" With a quick, furtive tug at Mistress Ball's gown, Sally nodded toward the mirror; but before the other became cognizant of her meaning, the listening faces had vanished. And Sally knew that either Master Williams or James had seen her warning.

"I wish," thought the girl nervously, "I had not said I would stay here, for Uzal be right, I fear. Why, I know not an e'en Mistress Williams be patriot now, for how can she be an her husband be Tory! Yet she does not look like a deceiving person!" And doubtfully, miserably, Sally glanced at her hostess's open, guileless face. The next instant her doubt and bewilderment were further increased by Mistress Williams advancing briskly to a table where the woolen stockings were commencing to pile up, and placing her hand upon them.

"Esther!" she called above the din of conversation. Mistress Ball turned smilingly in her direc-

tion. "Wilt see that these stockings reach headquarters?" continued Mistress Williams. "I mind that Uzal be in communication wi' His Excellency and ha' thought he might take charge o' them for us, as well as the shirts that are ready."

As Mistress Ball nodded, Sally thought explosively: "There, that erases Uzal's surmises that the stockings would ne'er reach our men. Indeed," the girl giggled to herself, "the joke be upon him, since he be the very one selected by Mistress Williams to prove himself wrong!"

Yet, the next instant, doubt returned with the thought that here was but a clever ruse upon Mistress Williams's part to turn suspicion away from her family and herself! And when, later, the simple refreshments of buttermilk and pound cake were served, Sally, during the confusion of changing groups and shifting of chairs, while half-knitted stockings were laid aside and "housewives" were returned to capacious petticoat bags—drawstring bags suspended from a belt and worn beneath the gowns next to the petticoats—Sally, I say, found an opportunity to whisper her suspicions to Mistress Ball, telling her what she had seen in the mirror.

The latter shook her head in troubled puzzlement. "Nay, I do not know!" she whispered back. "Keep ears and eyes open, Sally. Ye may ha' much to report to the Council o' Safety when it meets!"

“But that seems traitorous!” objected the girl. “To eat o’ a neighbor’s bread and then betray him!”

“Think rather ’tis traitorous to turn against one’s country,” whispered Mistress Ball, and for a grim moment she showed relationship to her stern son, Uzal. “Nay, ha’ no scruples, my child. As long as there be wealthy Tory families i’ New Jersey to feed and help the enemy, just so long this most dreadful war will be prolonged! The quicker all Tories be discovered and banished—aye, though they be our best friends”—and the tears started involuntarily to Mistress Ball’s eyes, to be surreptitiously wiped away—“the better ’twill be! Do ye not see that, Sally?”

“Aye,” sighed the girl. “Yet, methinks Uzal be right and misfortune e’er finds me out! For I like not to stay here wi’ the feeling o’ mayhap turning traitor to this family!”

More and more she had that feeling of reluctance, as the afternoon waned at last, and she watched Mistress Williams happily bidding a cordial farewell to her guests, congratulating each one upon the amount of work she had done for a noble cause. More and more bitterly Sally asked herself why fate had chosen her to play so mean a part.

It was while she was standing beside Mistress Williams upon the doorstep, holding the Williams baby in her arms—for Sally could never see a baby

without picking it up!—that she saw Mistress Ball stop David, who had come for her, and turn upon her pillion seat to beckon.

“Wilt see what Esther doth desire?” asked Mistress Williams. “Here, I will take little Nathaniel an ye will run down to her, Sally!”

When the girl, upon swift young feet, had reached the road and Mistress Ball’s side, that lady looked down at her as though she had reached a sudden decision.

“Sally,” she said in a low tone, “despite what ye ha’ told me this afternoon, I believe Mistress Williams to be patriot. I ha’ been troubled o’er the matter—I do own it—and I thought I would not gi’ the message to her which Mistress Keturah Harrison did ask me to deliver. But now,” she straightened herself determinedly, “I do believe her to be patriot. So will ye tell her that the women meet to-morrow at Mistress Harrison’s to make bullets i’ her cornfield?”

“Aye.” Sally nodded her head. “An ye believe it to be safe! Yet——”

Mistress Ball looked at her with sudden sternness. “Is it not enow that I say I ha’ decided, Sally?” Then her frown melted at the quick flush on the girl’s cheeks. “Nay, ye be yet too young to judge what be best! Leave that to older heads. And now, good-bye, my dear—all right, David—I will not see ye to-morrow, for I may depart at

once. But mayhap Mistress Williams will permit ye to accompany her to Mistress Harrison's!"

And the good lady's voice rose as her son touched his horse with his heels, to move away at a trot. Sally, seeing the look of wicked amusement upon his face, knew that he had enjoyed making his mother gasp out her words as she was jounced along. "What a tease he be!" she thought indulgently. "I verily believe age will not cure him, either! But I think I like Uzal the better—old sobersides that he be!"

"Did Mistress Ball leave a message for me?" inquired Mistress Williams curiously, when Sally, returning, took the baby from her arms and hugged the little fellow silently to her. Sally nodded. Then in a low voice she gave Mistress Ball's message to the other.

"Eh?" Mistress Williams put out a restraining hand toward little Nathaniel, who had commenced to crow and jump in Sally's arms. "Nay, I cannot hear, sweetheart!" she admonished the little fellow tenderly. "Now, what said ye, Sally?"

"I said," repeated Sally, in a louder voice, "that Mistress Harrison doth desire your company to-morrow morn—that the women are to meet to help wi' the bullet moulding and——"

The girl stopped suddenly. This time there could be no doubt that someone was eavesdropping. For facing her hostess upon the threshold, Sally

could see once more into the kitchen mirror—this time with her position reversed and the mirror reflecting those who stood inside—and she plainly saw James Williams in the firelight, standing motionless in an attitude of acute listening!

“Aye—wi’ the bullet-moulding and what, Sally?” Mistress Williams glanced at her in mild surprise. “Did not Mistress Ball say at what time?”

“She said to come early,” Sally told her reluctantly. She paused again as James Williams appeared in the doorway, stepped aside for him to pass.

Mistress Williams hailed James as he started to walk away. “Nay, where be going, son?” she called reproachfully. “’Tis supper time, know ye not? Come back, James!” Her voice sharpened into domination as the lad, his back turned, hesitated. “Did ye hear me? I said to come back! Do not go, now, for I need your help wi’ little Nat! Sally and I wish to prepare supper.”

James returned to the doorstep with obvious reluctance. “Nay, let Zenas care for him!” he urged sullenly. “That lazy varlet can take care o’ the baby as well as I—I ha’ business to be done.”

“What better business than helping your mother, James?” asked Mistress Williams still more reproachfully. “As for Zenas—lazy varlet, indeed! He be still absent upon a long, hot errand for me! Nay, James, he be e’er the one to help—not ye!”

“Well, where be Amos?” asked James grumpily, taking his baby brother from Sally’s arms. The little fellow crowed with delight as he felt James’s strong arms around him, and the older brother’s handsome, impatient face softened. The next instant, meeting Sally’s eyes, he reddened and turned sullen again. “Where be Amos, forsooth?” he repeated. “Just because the rogue be older than I, he be e’er the one to avoid work!”

“Poor James—ye be abused, indeed!” laughed Mistress Williams serenely. “Amos be down at the mill, helping your uncle Ben.” She turned and led the way into the kitchen, followed by Sally. “James doth protest,” she confided to the girl, “yet it seems to happen that he be seldom called upon for household tasks!”

“Mayhap that be why he protests,” observed Sally, smiling. “He be not used to it!”

“Mayhap,” responded Mistress Williams. She stopped all at once in surprise. “Why, Nathaniel, dear, you home! I did not hear ye come in at the other door!”

Nathaniel Williams raised placid eyes to hers. He was snugly ensconced on a settle whose high back, Sally was swift to note, prevented him from being seen by anyone standing upon the doorstep. Now he took a quiet puff upon his long-stemmed Flemish pipe before he answered, almost as though he were choosing his words. Yet, the girl asked her-

self, why he should choose his words, unless—a guilty feeling of having been suspected of eavesdropping might be present, for suspicion breeds suspicion. Did he suspect that *she* was spying! A little cold shiver ran up Sally's spine as she curtsied to him and set about preparing the supper table. But his words dispelled her distrust, momentarily, at least.

"I heard your words to James," said Master Williams mildly. "I will take care o' the baby an ye wish, Mary—an the lad desires to go about his own work."

"Nay," rejoined Mistress Williams, stooping to "blaze" the fire with a pair of bellows. "Ye be too lenient wi' him, Nat! I have said he must take care o' the baby, and take care o' him he shall!" She straightened herself to eye her husband combatively. Then, at his bowed head, as though he were trying to weather her unexpected sharpness, she burst into sweet-tempered laughter. "Nay, ye do not need to look so downhearted, Nat! 'Tis not you I be scolding—save, mayhap, for your interference."

"I but meant to be kind," began Nathaniel Williams hastily. Then he too burst into laughter, glancing at Sally, who was sympathetically smiling at them from the table. "Am I not an abused husband, forsooth!" he chuckled to the girl. "See ye how my wife doth browbeat me, Sally!"

Sally shook her head. "Nay, ye look not too abused, sir!" she said, with a giggle.

One by one the Williams children, gathered in the big kitchen, responded hungrily when summoned to the long supper table. All were fine-looking, from twenty-year-old Amos to little Nathaniel, now gurgling sleepily to himself in his cradle beside his mother, whose foot, as she sat at the table, continually rocked him.

Conversation turned, of course, upon Mistress Williams's sewing bee. "Didst have a good time at thy party, Mary?" asked Master Williams tenderly. It was plain to be seen that he was fond of his wife and proud of her competent ways and independent manner. Eating their suppers, the young people listened silently, for these were the days when children were to be seen but not heard—that is, generally.

Mistress Williams sighed. "I be tired!" she acknowledged. "But I am glad I had them here, for we did finish five shirts, Nat, and six pairs o' woolen stockings for our men at Morris Town."

"*Our* men!" burst out young James, as a shade passed over his father's face. "Nay, Mother, why will ye be so perverse! Everyone knows the Colonists are fools for going against His Majesty!"

"James! I like not your words to me!"

"James, leave the table, sir!"

At his parents' exclamations, the boy, red and angry, shoved back his stool from the supper table with a clatter that woke little Nathaniel. Snatching his hat from its wooden peg behind the door, James tramped out of the door, leaving an uncomfortable silence behind him. Sally, embarrassed, kept her eyes upon her plate until Mistress Williams, with an obvious effort, commenced to speak cheerfully, when the girl answered eagerly. But Master Williams remained silent and depressed and soon retired to his chamber, saying that he was tired and was going to bed.

It was after the dishes were washed and wiped and the children had gone to bed, too, that Mistress Williams came to Sally, as she was putting the cat out. "Sally," she whispered seriously, "think ye, mayhap, ye could find James and gi' him this porringer o' bread and milk! He be out there i' the garden sulking, I make no doubt—and—and—" her motherly voice faltered—"I be feared he be hungry. His father gave him no chance to finish his supper."

Sally glanced distastefully out into the dense darkness of the garden; but she took the porringer in her hands. "I can but try, dear mistress," she answered cheerfully. She was about to step down from the threshold when Amos spoke unexpectedly behind his mother.

"Why worry ye about James?" asked Amos philosophically. "He does not deserve supper! But, indeed, Mother, ye take him and his words too seriously! To-night, I mean! He doth but like to hear his own tongue clacking!"

"Mayhap," answered Mistress Williams, in a troubled fashion. She motioned to Sally, who had hesitated. "But try and find him, anyway, my dear. 'Twill ease my mind to know the perverse lad hath had his supper."

"Well," said Amos, yawning, "I be off to bed. Good-night!"

"Good-night, my son." Mistress Williams looked after her tall, quiet, eldest son affectionately. "Careful o' the candle, Amos," she added warningly. "And place it where it will not waken Zenas—the poor fellow hath had a hard day!"

"Aye, Mother!" Amos turned sleepily toward the loft stairs. But in a moment he was back. "Did Sally put Noggins out?" he asked. "I was minded to take the cat upstairs wi' me—the rats be so thick up there! Sometimes," he hesitated, "I think 'tis not wise to keep the grain bin up there, for it doth call the rats and mice."

"But, Amos, your grandfather built it that way—it seems not quite right to change it after all these many years!" protested his mother. "Besides," she urged, "'tis so handy to ha' the spout for drawing off the grain right here i' the house,

without going outdoors for it, especially when the snow do be on the ground!"

"Mayhap," answered Amos indifferently. "Here, Noggins, Noggins—to me, cat!"

"Hush!" warned Mistress Williams. "Ye will waken the baby!"

"'Tis right!" Amos grinned, "I cannot remember we ha' a baby i' the house! All right, Ma—to bed!" And he shuffled off good-naturedly.

Meanwhile, Sally walked slowly forward into the thick shadows of the garden. Gaining confidence as she went, however, she told herself that she did not mind the absence of moonlight, for she was sure that James would be loitering somewhere along the bank of Wigwam Brook, the stream which, cutting Nathaniel Williams's property in half, yet added value to it by irrigating it. Contrary to her expectations, James was not to be found. It was only when she had slowly turned around to go back that Sally, the porringer still held in her two hands, was stopped by low voices.

"So the women are to make bullets, eh!" said someone. There was a little silence, while Sally held her breath, then the voice proceeded reflectively: "Mistress Harrison's? That be at the turn o' Northfield Road?"

"Aye, just before the road lifts o'er the Mountain," answered James's voice.

"And who did tell your mother, ye say?"

“A maid—Mistress Todd’s Sally!”

“Mistress Todd’s Sally, eh? And who may she be?”

“Nay, sir, this be beside the question! I will bid ye good-night—I am hungry—I must go before the kitchen door be locked!”

“Not so fast!” A deeper note had crept into the deep voice. “Cannot ye go wi’out your supper for once? Why, this be war! Wait! Ye have not explained your tardiness! Ye did not keep your appointment, sir! I was here at sundown, as agreed. Where were ye?”

Sullenness crept into James’s voice. Sally could imagine the angry red of his countenance. “I was—detained, sir.”

“Ah, by the pretty Sally, mayhap!” Sly amusement was in the other voice now.

“Nay, sir!” burst out James angrily. “I was detained by my mother, an ye must know!”

“Well, well, give o’er, lad! I was but jesting!”

“I like not such jests!” returned James’s voice furiously. “As for the maid, I cannot bear her, forsooth—she be an ugly wench wi’ red hair—I do dislike red hair!—and she be a bond maid besides!”

There was a loud guffaw of laughter, tardily suppressed. But Sally stood stiff and angry, her lips drawn to a thin, haughty line. He did despise red hair, forsooth! Very well, let him go without his

supper! No auburn-haired damsel should serve him *that* night!

And very noiselessly, very carefully, she carried the porringer back to Mistress Williams, who was waiting anxiously upon the doorstep.

"I did not see James!" said Sally calmly, which, of course, was the truth. "He must have come in and gone up to bed while we were busy wi' the dishes, mistress! Or mayhap he went over to Master Benjamin Williams to sleep."

Mistress Williams sighed. "Aye, perchance he did go to his Uncle Ben's wi' his tantrum!" she agreed. "Poor James, I fear for his future, wi' his hot temper!"

Sadly, she swung the heavy kitchen door shut. Sally, with grim satisfaction, watched her bolt and bar it, well knowing that James would not dare awaken anyone to give him entrance.

"Let him stay out!" she thought. "Red hair, indeed!"

CHAPTER VIII

BULLET MOULDING

THE next morning, that of September eleventh, Mistress Williams had breakfast upon the table bright and early. It was a hot, breathless morning that made everyone inclined to lie abed, hating the thought of the exertion necessary to dress; but despite that, Mistress Williams moved bustlingly about the kitchen between fireplace and table and showed not a whit of mercy to her family or herself.

“Nay, Mother, what be thy hurry?” grumbled Master Williams, coming in with two foaming milk pails, followed by Amos and James, likewise laden.

Mistress Williams sent a keen glance at the latter across the table as she dished out, with rapid and skilful spoon, the cornmeal mush into nine wooden trenchers.

“Why did ye not tell your parents ye were planning to sleep over at Uncle Ben’s last night, James?” she demanded sternly.

“Nay, I did not go to Uncle Ben’s!” answered James in evident astonishment.

“Ye did not! Why, Sally said——” His mother paused to stare at him perplexedly.

“What did Sally know o’t!” returned James. He turned grimly to the scarlet-cheeked girl. “So ’tis you, mistress, I ha’ to thank for being locked out o’ mine own house!” he said in a sarcastic voice.

“Nay, James, remember thy manners! Sally be not to blame, forsooth, only thyself, for staying out betimes!” interposed Mistress Williams. Then, as Sally seated herself silently at the breakfast table, her hostess resumed her serving and glanced amusedly from girl to boy. It was obvious to her maternal eye that Sally, offended by something James had said or done, had played a trick upon him.

“And doubtless the young rogue well deserved it!” thought his mother, smiling to herself.

Aloud, she asked innocently: “How did ye reach your bed, James?”

“I climbed Granddad’s grapevine,” returned James sullenly, referring to the strong and ancient vine, planted years ago, in 1730, when old Amos had finished his stone house and had moved in with his family. Now the vine grew against the house walls, forming a most convenient flight of leaf-lined steps.

Sally sat in troubled silence, consuming her portion of mush and milk. Behind her troubled expression, however, lay more than girlish resent-

ment. For, despite Uzal's warning, she had been shocked by the treachery James had revealed to her ears last night. She turned the matter over and over in her mind, wondering how to proceed. Mistress Harrison, she knew, would have everything ready, for the women to go ahead with the bullet moulding by this time—the fire would be built, with a slave to watch over it and smother its telltale smoke, in the cornfield, the kettle of lead would be slung into place over the blaze. What should she do? Should she tell Mistress Williams of her son's treachery? But if Mistress Williams were not loyal, either, doubtless she would find means to keep Sally at home and so the rest of the women would be unwarned. No, better to let the morning proceed as planned and say nothing. Then, if the Hessians or red-coats did appear, the other women could secure Mistress Williams, if she evinced any disloyalty, and hide in the cornfield until the raiding party had passed on.

So Sally, that morning, washed and scrubbed and toiled in the big, hot kitchen. It did not occur to her that, as a guest, she might be privileged to wander out into the cool of the garden and on to the bank of Wigwam Brook, there to sit with idle, folded hands. The fact that she was Mistress Todd's bond maid had nothing to do with it, for not one of the girls, daughters upon even the richest, largest plantation, visiting another family,

would have done aught but similar to what Sally did. Girls in those days were taught to work, rich or poor, at the Mountain settlement and indeed, had the examples of their busy, hard-working mothers ever before them.

At last, washed and dressed, Sally and Mistress Williams were ready to depart.

"An I dared, I would have left little Nat with Brother Ben's family next door," said the latter as, warm and red-faced, she sat with the baby screaming upon her knee, highly indignant at being garbed by his mother for traveling.

"Dared?" repeated Sally.

"Aye—I mean, they do not agree with my political views, so I like not to ask favors of them!" returned Mistress Williams. "There, there, sweetheart, ye will like going by-by!"

Sally, ready first, held out her arms for the baby and, regardless of the heat, danced around the kitchen with the little soft body held tightly in her slender arms.

"By-by!" she chanted. "See, Nat, there be the horses!" She stopped before the open door that little Nathaniel might catch a view of the horses which were being led up and down by Zenas, the steady fifteen-year-old who was his mother's main prop. "Ye cannot guess how I do miss the Todd baby!" said Sally shyly, as she and her hostess went toward the road a little later.

"Of course ye do!" said Mistress Williams quickly and sympathetically. She leaned forward, after mounting to her pillion seat behind Zenas, to take the heavy baby Sally lifted to her.

Untying the horse Zenas had tethered for her, Sally mounted and followed Mistress Williams and her sons. And as she went, the girl studied those straight, square shoulders ahead of her, that high-held head, and became wretchedly perplexed. Surely such quick, sweet sympathy, such a noble carriage could not belong to a traitor! And yet, was it possible for a family to be so utterly diverse in their attitude toward the cruel war?

Once gathered at the log cabin belonging to Simeon Harrison and his wife Keturah, the patriotic women of the Mountain settlement set out quickly through the orchard and the cornfields to work. No time was there now to harbor suspicion. Mistress Harrison told each worker what to do as they walked along, some carrying the articles they were donating to be melted into bullets. Sally exclaimed when she saw a lovely pair of silver candle-holders in one of the women's hands.

"Nay, Mistress Munn, art going to melt thy candle-holders!" she exclaimed.

Mistress Munn nodded. She was the wife of the innkeeper, Samuel Munn, whose inn, across from

the training ground, was headquarters for all of the townsmen, and who, himself, a fine, jovial, well-liked man, was a keen patriot.

“What care I for the candle-holders!” returned Mistress Munn, now, gently. “Think ye, Sally, they be half so dear to me as the cause for which they are to be melted? I only wish I had fifty times as many articles to gi’!”

Sally sighed. She wished she had even a pair of candle-holders to donate! Her thin arms tightened around little Nathaniel, whom she was carrying out to the field for Mistress Williams.

“At least I can do that much for my country,” she thought. “Save one o’ its workers for her real work this day!”

Mistress Munn noticed the girl’s sigh and looked at the heavy baby she was carrying. “Let me carry him, Sally, and do ye carry the candle-holders!” she offered kindly, mistaking the meaning of that sigh. “Indeed, he is a heavy burden for such a slender maid to carry!”

“Nay!” Breathlessly, Sally shook her head. It was truly hard work walking slowly through the hot fields, dodging the protruding spears of the corn stalks, stumbling over the ripening pumpkins that lay between the corn rows; but not for worlds would she surrender her fat, precious burden. Then, too: “Ye see—it—it makes me feel as though I be-

longed somewhere when I ha' a baby i' my arms," said Sally shyly.

"'Tis true, a baby doth gi' one that feeling!" Mistress Munn returned understandingly. "Poor little maid!" she added to herself. And late that night she related the pathetic little remark to her husband, whose kind face softened as he listened.

"Aye," he nodded, and his voice was full of sympathy. "I do fear the poor little lass hath ne'er known a home, for Mistress Todd, from what I ha' heard, did not make her welcome and doth possess a shrew's tongue!"

But that was much later. Now, Mistress Munn was about to insist that Sally let her carry the child, for the girl's face was crimson and her breath came in great panting gasps, when a negress came hurrying back through the fields to meet Sally.

"Missy Keturah, she done tole me to ca'y the baby fo' you-all," she reported.

"Aye, Sally, let Chloe do so, for I think she is to take care o' the little fellow for Mistress Williams and ye are to return to the kitchen to wait on guard, as soon as ever ye see where we are to do our work out here," interposed Mistress Munn. So Sally placed little Nathaniel in the slave's outstretched arms and followed Mistress Munn.

Arrived at the selected site, the girl found there a busy scene. For a little space around, the corn

In the center two fires had been built, with workers ready to fan and spread the smoke, while over the fires were slung the great iron kettles. The bullet moulds of iron were lying near by, ready for the molten liquid which would presently be ladled into them. The gaze of the women, Sally noticed, kept seeking the tops of the waving corn stalks high above them, as though they were watching for the enemy; but the place was well chosen, for the side of the Mountain protected them from those passing by in the road, the cornfield having been set forth upon a slope above the road.

At length, Mistress Harrison, glancing up, motioned to Sally. "Wilt run back to the cabin and tell Zeke to fetch me that fourth set o' bullet moulds? Methought we would not need it, but"—the lady's gaze rested calculatingly upon the two kettles, an expression of elation appeared upon her face—"I be pleased to find we do! Good neighbors," Sally heard her say to the rest as she hurried away, "this will be a goodly supply o' gun provender when next the alarm reaches our Newark Mountain! And that, Captain Thomas Williams hath informed me, may be any time soon!"

"Aye," came Mistress Mary Williams's sweet voice. "So Cousin Tom did inform me, too. The enemy on Staten Island doth wax ever more and more bold!"

The feminine voices died away as Sally's light

feet carried her farther and farther from them, back to the Harrison cabin. Unconsciously, as the sun beat down upon her, her pace slackened. It was hot! Every pebble she trod seemed to burn through the thin soles of her square-toed slippers. It was hot and she lingered more and more, reaching the cool of the orchard, to pause there for a moment and fan her burning face! But this served her well. For otherwise, she might have run full into the arms of a troop of red-coats who had dismounted before the cabin and were scanning it sharply as they secured their horses to some chestnut trees beside the road.

Quick as a wink, Sally snatched up her apron and commenced to pick some green apples from the low branches of a tree near her, carefully keeping that tree between her and the enemy. Then, leisurely, as though that had been her errand, with the corners of her apron held up to form a bag for the apples, she approached the cabin from the rear and entered its back door as two figures appeared at the opposite door from the front. One of them she recognized at once. It was young James Williams! The other, a handsome young fellow in his red uniform, was a stranger. James greeted Sally sullenly.

“You here!” he remarked, with a sneer.

“Did ye not see me leave?” asked Sally coldly. She dumped the apples upon a well-scrubbed table

and commenced to sort them over, calmly humming to herself.

"I thought ye were to be our servant, mistress, and now I find ye here working for Mistress Harrison! Truly, ye be a will o' the wisp!" went on James hastily.

"Your *servant!*" Touched upon the raw, Sally forgot her apples and whirled around to face James with blazing eyes. "Nay, I be no one's servant, sir!"

"What relationship do ye bear Mistress Todd, then?" retorted James insolently. But before Sally could answer, the young British officer came forward from the door.

"Nay," he said hastily, "I came not to hear ye quarrel wi' a hapless maid, sir! Cease, then, I prithee! Young mistress," he doffed his high hat respectfully and turned to Sally, "I have had information which doth lead me to suspect that treasonable actions against his gracious Majesty be transpiring in this vicinity. Can ye tell me whether one Mistress Williams be here?"

"Aye," broke in James with a frown, "where be my mother? We would speak to her!"

"Why did ye not speak to her this morning?" asked Sally coolly, her eyes upon James.

"No affair o' yours!" James reddened with more than the heat. "Come—where be my mother?"

Sally hesitated. Then, "She is not here!" she told him quietly.

"Ye do lie!" said James hotly. "I heard ye, myself——" He stopped and bit his lips, and the British officer glanced at him in unconcealed disgust.

"Aye," returned Sally, smiling, "I knew ye did hear me!"

"How knew ye?" His curiosity overcame his judgment and James glared at her.

"I saw ye—in your kitchen mirror—last night—*eavesdropping!*" said Sally. There was a little pause, then she added nonchalantly, turning back to her apples, "No use to seek her here, I tell ye! Neither your mother nor her friends be here!"

There was a little baffled silence. The two young men glanced around the quiet, empty, orderly kitchen. Even the fire was out and no sign was there of melting lead for bullets, to say nothing of a gathering of patriotic women, whom both James and the red-coat had expected to surprise at work. Finally, James glanced at the other.

"What would ye?" he asked sullenly.

"A fine help ye be to the King, sir," returned the young officer bitterly, evidently thinking of the long, supperless hours he had spent the preceding evening for nothing. "However, we will search the place!"

"'Twill do ye no good," interposed Sally hastily.

The red-coat turned and eyed her thoughtfully. "It doth seem to me, young mistress, ye appear too eager to be rid o' us!" he observed keenly.

Sally, seeing her mistake, assumed a calmness she was far from feeling and watched them ransack the house. All went well, despite her nervous forebodings that Zenas might happen back to the house, that Mistress Harrison might send someone else, Zeke not appearing, for the bullet mould, that a telltale glimpse of smoke from the distant cornfield might rise above the intervening orchard and meet the enemies' eyes when they loitered near the tiny-paned window. But all went well until she heard an exclamation, when, turning away from the window whither she had strolled to satisfy herself upon the last-named point, she saw James holding up his baby brother's cape.

"Ah!" he said triumphantly. "My mother hath been here! Tell me, wench," he turned roughly to Sally, "where she be!"

"Oh, la!" Sally looked at him amusedly. "No one hath said your mother was not here at all this morning, James. How think ye I got here? Why, you, yourself, must have seen us leave wi' little Nathaniel!"

"Nay," blurted out James, "I had to leave afore ye did!"

"So?" Sally smiled at his angry stupidity. "Well—all I shall say be this—your mother be not here now!"

James uttered a snort of rage, drew out his hunting knife, and with it in his hand, went through the

cabin once more, while the red-coat walked around the house outside. At last he brought up before Sally again.

“What did ye expect?” she asked tantalizingly. “Thought ye your mother would attack ye that ye needed the knife?”

James turned purple. “How knew I that no rebel might be in hiding!” he shouted. “They be the kind who hide behind their womenfolk!” he added.

Now it was Sally’s turn to flare up. “That be a lie, James Williams, and ye know it!” she cried. “What about our splendid victory at Trenton last Christmas, forsooth! And on January third last at Princeton? I’ truth, it seemed to me our men were not so afraid!”

“Here, here!” The red-coat eyed the two irate young people from the door. “Well, the place be empty, sir, so far as I can see,” he added grimly to James, who could only look back at him in crest-fallen silence. “I do hope,” he added, turning away, “that the rest o’ your information be more accurate. The rebels most certainly chose some other place for their work than this!”

“Nay,” grumbled James, flinging a last malignant glance at Sally as he followed the other, “how was I to know an they changed their plans! At any rate,” he added indiscreetly, “I be sure about Uzal Ball! That rebel be home this day—for he does not

leave until to-morrow for the Town by the River!"

"Will ye hush!" Angrily the British officer turned upon James.

There was a little silence, broken only by the crunch of their boot soles upon the garden path as they went toward their horses. Then Sally, standing unobserved within the door, heard James speak in a quick, sharp voice.

"I tell ye," he declared, "the maid yonder doth know where these women be! She it was who did gi' the message to my mother! Why not *make* her tell?"

Sally clutched dizzily at the wall behind her. The words "that the girl *be branded i' the arm!*" flashed terrifyingly through her mind. Was she to be tortured here, now, and forced to betray her friends? The British officer's next words, however, dispelled her newborn fears. Apparently, more than Jerry Lawrence in the King's army knew humanity. Not all were of Stockton's or Cunningham's caliber!

"We war not on women or children under my command!" he returned coldly. And Sally, in tremendous relief, saw both James and him rejoin the company of waiting horsemen, mount their horses hurriedly, and ride away in the direction whence they had come, toward the Town by the River, finally disappearing around a bend in the road.

Sally, apparently loitering idly out into the garden, watched with keen eyes the swirling clouds of dust settle back into place. Even after peace returned to the country road she made no hasty movement, for fear of Tory gaze from some quiet underbrush. As she plucked a late rose here, a marigold there, however, her thoughts were darting this way and that, planning, planning. She must save Uzal Ball from capture, not only for the sake of the kindness he had shown toward her, but because of his mother, who had taken the homeless little orphan into her house and made her welcome! But how was this warning to be gotten to Uzal, with the red-coats already upon their way thither!

There was but one way, Sally decided—she must go across the mountain path through the forest, many feet above the Second Road, many feet above the mountain plantations, and she must go a-horse-back, despite the fact that the trail was only a narrow, dangerous footpath, for there was no time to be lost.

“No time to be lost; but where are the horses?” For the first time Sally thought of the horses and realized the amazing precaution Zenas had taken in hiding them, thus displaying an exceedingly wise head upon his young shoulders. For had the red-coats discovered the horses, all would have been lost!

Fortune now seemed to favor the girl. At that

moment, raising her eyes, she saw Zenas himself coming through the orchard toward her. Breathlessly she met him halfway, telling him of the British raid.

"Canst get my horse to me up on the road above the cornfield?" she begged, when Zenas had told her, in turn, how he had hidden all of the visiting steeds in the cornfields. "An there be traitors lurking near, they will be confused an we separate," she added shrewdly. "So I will walk up by the road and meet ye at the furtherest corner o' the field, Zenas."

"Aye, Sally," nodded the boy, turning to retrace his footsteps. Suddenly he stopped short, whirled around. "Was it—it—James who led the raiders?" he demanded bitterly.

Sally hated to tell him, but she finally nodded. Deep, angry color surged into the younger brother's face.

"The traitorous varlet!" he burst forth. "Indeed, my mother shall——" He paused at Sally's head-shake.

"It does no good to feel so, Zenas," she said sadly. "It must be neighbor against neighbor, it seems! Will ye not run, now, and get my horse to me—for, indeed, an I do not hurry, poor Uzal will be i' the hands of the red-coats! I must ride to warn him!"

"Nay!" The boy shook his head. "I did not know

Uzal was i' danger! But an he be—let me go, Sally. 'Tis man's work riding across the face o' this Mountain!"

"Why thought ye I wanted my horse?" asked Sally sharply, her patience tried by Zenas's tarrying, even while she was grateful to him for his offer. "Nay, I be the one to go, lad! Ye are your mother's mainstay, while I—I would not be greatly missed an things went wrong." Her voice faltered. Then she lifted her head gallantly. "So hurry, Zenas," she finished, smiling. She turned away, then, only to be recalled by the boy's voice.

"I know ye do think I be wasting time, Sally," he said apologetically, "but I wanted to tell ye that 'tis nearing noon and I feel sure the red-coats, an they go by the Second Road, as they will, will stop at Ned Tompkins's Tavern at Freemantown for dinner."

"And that will gi' me more time," ended Sally, brightening. "Aye, 'tis true, Zenas, and relieves my desperate haste. Yet must I hurry, for the way be hard!" And she started toward the road. "James doth love to eat," she glanced back over her shoulder to say, "and he will, no doubt, delay the rest. Yet——" She stepped out into the country lane with an eloquent gesture of her hands, and Zenas, laughing, turned and hastened back through the orchard.

But the road was dusty and hot. Sally, trudging

along, wished that she had at least taken time to visit the well; tantalizing visions of a cool, brimming gourd of water danced before her. But, too, there were other hallucinations, induced by the heat. Mistress Ball's face, for instance, convulsed with terror and grief, seemed to peer at her from every dust-covered bush. The stern white face of Uzal Ball, too, seemed to be staring at her from every glimmering, sun-glinting rock. Unconsciously, poor Sally goaded herself along by these images of her brain, so that by the time she found herself arrived at the designated spot, at the end of the field, she was glad enough to sink down upon a piece of trap rock and mop her streaming face.

It was not long then, before Zenas's faithful, sturdy figure could be seen clambering out between the corn stalks, leading Sally's horse stumblingly along behind him. Sally watched them apathetically.

But all at once she stiffened into attention. Her keen ears had caught the suggestion of a sound upon the road below her. She waited breathlessly. It came nearer, yet nearer, revolved into the muffled hammer of a horse's hoofs, at last, rising and falling upon the dust of the lane.

Sally sprang to her feet, her face toward Zenas. She must warn him! Her horse must not be seized by some renegade red-coat or wandering Hessian

as the newcomer might very possibly be! Or by some Tory, who would be only too glad to delay her rescuing mission and so effect Uzal's capture by the British troops!

Her heart in her throat, Sally forced herself not to shout to Zenas. Somehow, she must make him look in her direction that she might warn him silently to hide the horse once more. For it was almost certain that he would reach her at that precise moment which would bring the unknown traveler to the same place. Waiting there, she kept sharp, sidelong watch upon the turn of the road below her. Was it friend or foe approaching?

CHAPTER IX

AT MUNN'S TAVERN

A MOMENT later, as though feeling the urge of her strong, if silent, appeal to him, young Zenas Williams raised his eyes to her pleading gaze. Instantly, Sally's hands were fluttering in a wild gesture imploring retreat and the boy was quick to seize her meaning. A little later only the waving corn stalks of the field could be seen above the sharp ascent of the Mountain road to Northfield—only the corn stalks and Sally, once more seated demurely upon her rock by the wayside, fanning herself lazily with a corner of her apron!

Clickety-clack! Clickety-clack! As she listened tensely, the horse's trot dwindled to a walk, the walk to the amble of a tired beast, and when at last the steed and his rider did appear, they were approaching so slowly that both were easily recognizable. Sally, gazing eagerly, forgot her nonchalance and leaped to her feet. For the rider was Uzal Ball, himself!

She ran out into the road, appearing so unexpectedly as to cause Uzal's horse to shy violently.

He was too good a rider to be unseated, and the road was too steep for the beast to bolt after his first nervous start; but the gaze which Uzal was at last able to fix upon Sally's flushed, excited face was a reproving one.

"Nay, Sally, was it necessary to scare my horse into galloping all yon way to Northfield?" he inquired severely. He drew firm rein and, remaining seated, stared down at her in puzzled surprise. "I thought ye were at Mistress Williams's?"

"I was—until this morn," explained the girl hastily. "Nay, Uzal, be not angry! I be here to warn ye!" Here a swift vision of Gerald Lawrence, of what he would have done under similar circumstances, of his grave courtesy, his instant dismounting, hat in hand, involuntarily crossed her mind. Never would she have had to stop and apologize to Jerry for having appeared unexpectedly, nervous horse or no! "I—I was about to ride across the Mountain path," faltered Sally, "to tell ye to fly!"

"Fly!" Now it was Uzal's turn to start. He stared down at her almost angrily. "What mean ye?" he demanded in a harsh voice.

"I mean," said Sally breathlessly, her hands clasped, "I mean that James Williams and a company o' cavalry be even now on their way across the Second Road to take ye prisoner for your activities against their odious King!"

"I—a prisoner?" Uzal repeated it almost stupidly.

"Aye, Uzal, aye!" Sally's copper-colored head nodded excitedly. "Oh, what good fortune to meet ye thus and that James Williams and his friends are to be cheated o' their prey! Ye must not return home, Uzal!"

"But I was not returning home!" protested Uzal, in an offended voice. "I was on my way to Morris Town!"

"So much the better!" cried Sally. "Continue thy journey—'tis the very thing! For the British will doubtless return to Staten Island e'er long, and James Williams may not find it so easy to secure aid for his schemes next time, forsooth!"

Dumbly, Uzal touched his hat brim, then, and digging his heels into his nag's sides, he started off, leaving Sally to gaze after him. But he had not gone far when he drew sudden rein, turned his horse around, and trotted back to her.

"I—I—believe I owe ye thanks, Sally," he muttered curtly, then. "'Twas kind o' ye to ha' thought o' warning me—going through the forest and all! I—I be grateful to ye!"

"Nay, Uzal, 'twas naught!" Sally shrugged a debonair shoulder.

But suddenly Uzal looked at her almost suspiciously, as though struck by a thought. "Ye were truly going to warn me, Sally? This be not a jest?" he asked doubtfully.

“Aye.”

“Then where be thy horse?”

Sally laughed. “Ye demand proof, Uzal?” Pointing toward the spot where Zenas had disappeared, she called to the boy: “Ho, Zenas!”

Promptly, in answer, the lad scrambled forth between the corn, dragging Sally’s horse after him, by its halter.

“Nay,” said Uzal quickly, with bent brows. “I—I was but puzzled! I—I—meant not to show doubt o’ ye! I—I—saw no horse, and—and—I——”

“I understand,” said the girl with deliberate kindness. “Indeed, I do not blame ye for being mystified, since thy house be a long ways from here, and walking, I could not ha’ warned ye in time!” Again, involuntarily, the thought of Jerry’s undoubting gratefulness swept Sally’s mind; but she told herself Uzal had been bred in a sterner, more practical way—it was not his fault that everything must be explained in detail to him. She turned to Zenas, who had reached them. “We are saved the trouble o’ warning Master Ball, ye see! And he be saving himself a vastly unpleasant journey to New York Town by starting forth to Morris Town.”

Uzal turned to Zenas, who gave him back his greeting gloomily. It was almost as though the boy were regretting so tame an ending to what had promised to be an adventure.

"Well," sighed Uzal, touching his hat brim with two stiff fingers, "I will e'en bid ye farewell! I shall come for ye, Sally, when my mother doth return from Morris Town. Stay ye, then, wi' Mistress Williams, as arranged."

As the boy and girl stood in the road, gazing after the awkward figure making slow progress upon its horse, Zenas suddenly muttered something.

"What said ye?" Sally turned to look inquiringly at him.

"I said," repeated Zenas, spinning upon his heel and starting downhill, leading Sally's horse, "I said, methought 'twas a vast amount o' work for a mite o' thanks, Sally!"

"He gave me thanks, Zenas," returned Sally quickly, following the boy and the horse.

"Did he, indeed?" Zenas flung her a grumpy look over his shoulder. "'Twas not so hearty as some, mayhap!"

"Ah, ye be hungry and much too warm!" laughed Sally. "'Tis not Uzal, but ye who be at fault, my lad!"

All the same, however, in her heart of hearts, Sally could not help but think, too, that Uzal had not been properly appreciative of the service she had been willing to bestow upon him, could not help but compare him to Jerry Lawrence. As a matter of fact, she really wronged poor, inarticulate Uzal, who could gaze with dumb, longing eyes at

the beauty of the skies, of the birds, of Sally, and yet not be able to put to words the song they created in his soul.

It was long past noon before the bullet-makers had finished their task and returned to Mistress Harrison's. Sally had busied herself preparing dinner, assisted by Chloe and another slave, so that the weary women, coming in from the corn-field, were greeted by the sight of hot viands set forth upon a long table which Zenas had made with planks under some great chestnut trees.

"Ye be a good little housewife, Sally," said Mistress Keturah beamingly, "to go ahead thus for me!"

Mistress Williams turned away from the four-poster bed upon which she had laid the little sleeping Nathaniel. "Zenas tells me there was a raiding party come this morn?" she said, half questioningly.

Sally stared hard at the boy, who had followed his mother into the cabin. "Aye," she answered evasively, trying to catch Zenas's eye.

"How did the news o' our bullet-making reach the enemy, suppose ye?" interrupted Mistress Harrison. But the next instant, to Sally's enormous relief, the hostess grasped Mistress Williams by the arm playfully. "Hear ye! The rest be calling to us. Best hurry or I vow those hungry women will leave us naught to eat!" And, giggling like two

girls, the middle-aged friends hurried out of the cabin door without waiting for an answer to Mistress Harrison's question.

Sally flew at Zenas, when he would have followed. "An ye mention that raiding party again, Zenas Williams," she whispered fiercely in his ear, "I will—I will—nay, I don't know what I will do! Put salt in thy mug o' milk, mayhap, or persuade thy mother to gi' ye no more pence for spending, as she sometimes does!"

With belligerent folded arms, Sally stood before Zenas, still barring his way. "Nay," she went on hotly, "I would not ha' your mother know for aught 'twas James who led the enemy hence! 'Twould break Mistress Williams's heart, I fear."

"Hearts be tougher than that, Sally," responded the boy sagely. He looked at her in sudden grimness. "Ye do not gi' my mother credit for the good sense she doth possess! Do ye not suppose she knows James, aye, and Amos, too, do be on Tory side, and mayhap my father! It matters not to her—she be patriot, and that be enough."

Sally thought remorsefully of her suspicions toward Mistress Williams. "Think ye your father truly be Tory, too?" she asked hesitatingly. "He hath not really said, ye mind—at least, not since I ha' been wi' ye!"

"But he is!" said Zenas, in a low voice. "Only my mother and I—we be patriots!"

“Zenas”—Sally’s hands dropped to her sides; she moved a step nearer to him—“how could James, think ye, betray to the enemy his own mother?”

Zenas shrugged his shoulders at the horror in the girl’s voice. “Nay, he doubtless had bond that Mother would not be hurt, and”—the boy snapped his fingers—“what cared he what happened to the rest o’ the women?”

Sally groaned softly. “Neighbor against neighbor! Think ye, Zenas, many o’ the women he would betray to the cruelty o’ the red-coats he hath known since childhood! How terrible!”

But Zenas suddenly grinned, rolling his eyes toward the door. “Not half so terrible,” he said, “as missing our dinner. Nay”—he stepped past Sally determinedly—“an ye do not wish to eat, I prithee let me go, for I be ravenous as a wolf! I see Mother hath saved a place for us, one on each side o’ her!” And his sturdy legs bore him out the cabin door toward the dinner table.

Sally, following more slowly, pondered the fine courage and the bravery of Mistress Mary Williams. It seemed more than human to be able to bear with such sweet patience the trouble this fateful year of 1777 had brought to her and was doomed, still more, to bring!

But if trouble or care were present at that gay gathering of patriot women that noon, not a whit

of it was displayed. It was not until Mistress Harrison rose to her feet, rapping upon the table plank for silence as she slowly looked around her, that tongues ceased to wag and the laughter was stilled. But now grave attention was given to her words.

"Neighbors," she said, "we ha' done a good morning's work; but now the question comes—what shall be done wi' the product o' our hands? Since Mistress Ball do be absent, whom do ye appoint to take charge o' the bullets and whence wish ye them taken?"

There was a murmur of voices until Mistress Harrison held up her hand again.

"Ye all be interested in our 'Jersey Blues'," she said. "Someone hath suggested that the bullets be given to them, in charge o' their captain, Eliakim Littell. Is that agreeable?"

At that, the ladies nodded their heads and Zenas sprang to his feet.

"Let me be the one to fetch the bullets!" he pleaded.

Mistress Harrison looked at him thoughtfully before she answered, then she nodded. "You be o'er young, lad; but I doubt not ye could do it, an your mother will consent." Mistress Williams nodded silently, and her friend continued: "But there be more bullets than ye can carry on one horse, Zenas. Alas!" She turned suddenly and despairingly to the rest of the company. "We are

indeed short o' men! Simeon be far too busy i' the fields to help us, and I know, of a certainty, most o' your husbands be likewise occupied, or else wi' His Excellency. This business o' being soldier and farmer, wi' fighting to be accomplished and the harvest to be sown and garnered at home, makes it doubly hard for our brave men. I' good sooth, did they not ha' the added incentive o' fighting for their very homes, methinks they could not win o'er such great odds!"

Silence settled down over the long table. Each woman's face as she sat beside it listening, with clenched hands in her lap or lying upon the board before her, was a study in determination and grim patience. Each face, young or middle-aged, showed pathetically the hardships and burdens she was sharing, the burden of supporting an uncertain cause, the burden of physical hard work, most of all, the burden of anxiety regarding some dear one's safety.

At last the silence was broken by Sally. All this time, with flushed cheeks and beating heart, she had been sitting motionless beside Mistress Williams. Now she sprang to her feet, one slender brown hand against her heart as she looked pleadingly first at Mistress Williams and Mistress Harrison, then at the others.

"Will ye not allow me to help Zenas carry the

bullets to the Town by the River?" she asked in a low voice.

The ladies glanced at each other. Sally could see assent upon most of their faces. Here, their expressions seemed to say, is one who has no family ties to prevent her from going, who would not be as sorely missed, if worst should come to worst, as the others! This hurt poor Sally, even while she realized that these honest-faced women were only dumbly expressing the truth—that the very lack of a home and family made her an invaluable messenger.

"Aye, Sally," said Mistress Williams finally, in response to an inquiring look bent upon her by Keturah Harrison. "Ye may help Zenas and then return wi' him to my house, for, while there be ever danger i' this war time, I see no added risk for ye to go now. Good dames," she got to her tired feet and turned to the others, "I must back to mine own work, which waits for me as it does for ye, I ha' no doubt! Let us adjourn, then, and bid our hostess thanks for this meal. An it be decided where we shall meet next time, I gather word will be brought, as before." And the gathering broke up with that murmur of voices ever attendant upon a feminine gathering.

It was mid-afternoon before Zenas had finished his work and, with slave help, had slung the heavy saddlebags over his and Sally's horses, and they

were off. Hot, hot the sun beat down. They soon passed that junction of the Second Road—sometimes called the Dark Lane—with the First Road, which is now West Orange Center, soon passed the Old Burial Ground and were well on their way to the settlement.

Sally drew her ugly sunbonnet forward over her eyes for, although the sun was at her back, the dazzling glare on dusty road and on the gravestones in the Burial Ground blinded her. Zenas continually removed his three-cornered hat to wipe his streaming brow. They rode silently, for it was too warm to make conversation. It was only when they were passing the church that Sally, glancing side-long past the scoop of her sunbonnet, uttered an exclamation, then turned her face quickly forward again.

“Do not look, Zenas,” she said in a low voice to the boy, who had fallen back beside her, “lest ye alarm them! This very moment methought I saw James peering at me from the door o’ yon church!”

“James!” muttered Zenas skeptically. “Nay, what would he here, Sally? He is on his way to the Ball House!”

“Indeed, I am positive ’twas James!” said Sally. “He was talking to that villain Stockton—the one who took me to New York, ye mind, as prisoner!” She shuddered nervously. “Let us trot!” she implored.

Zenas, who had turned in his saddle in spite of the girl's protest, now drew an excited breath and dug his heels into his horse's sides.

"Aye, 'tis James! And he hath leaped upon a horse—aye, and t'other! Ride ye, Sally!" cried Zenas. "Ride ye as the wind, for they come!"

Now the two horses galloped neck to neck. They were handicapped by the heavy saddlebags which thumped them at every foot—not only them, but which flopped and bumped against the riders' legs, as well.

"N-nay, Ze-Zenas!" gasped Sally at last. "We cannot stand this—this pace long! Let us turn in at Master Munn's Tav-tavern! James will not—not dare to follow us, for he—he knows Master Munn be—be—patriot!"

She reckoned without James Williams's impetuous nature, however. Barely had Sally and Zenas reached the training ground, across from which stood Samuel Munn's Tavern; barely had they drawn rein so abruptly that their steeds were thrown almost upon their haunches, to ride around the inn to the stable yard, than James dashed through the gate, followed by the thin, wiry figure of Stockton, who was minus a uniform. Straight up to the great inn barn rode James, where he dismounted and called to Zenas.

The latter, pressing back into the shadows inside the stable, whither he and Sally had hastily

led their horses, gestured to the girl not to stir or answer.

“Ho, Zenas!” called James, with all the authority of an older brother to a younger one. “Come forth, ye young fool—I saw ye enter here!”

“Art sure?” Stockton, upon his horse, pursed his lips dubiously, eying the barn door with blinking gaze, for the lowering sun shone full into his close-set eyes. Sally, returning his gaze from the depths of the dusky barn interior, knew that he could not see her, blinded as he was. “Art sure, sir? I see them not!”

“Ye saw them turn in here, did ye not?” asked James angrily. He turned back to the stable door. “Ye will be brought forth, then?” he taunted. And coming straightway into the barn, dragged a bitterly protesting Zenas out into the sunlight, followed slowly by Sally, leading the horses, for, still upon her own, she had leaned over to capture the reins of Zenas’s horse.

“Now!” James let go of the younger boy’s collar so roughly that the other staggered, would have fallen had he not brought up reeling against Sally’s horse. “What mischief be ye brewing, young jackanapes, eh?”

Sally spoke up. “Why do ye pursue us?” she demanded hotly. “We be but on an errand for your mother!”

“Ho, who gave ye privilege to speak, milady?”

inquired James. "Shut thy trap and do not interfere where ye are not asked!"

"Quarreling wi' the wench gets us naught," interposed Stockton sourly, who preferred to do the quarreling himself. He pointed at Sally. "What hath she there, tied to her saddle?"

Sally started, tried to conceal her chagrin; but James's quick eyes caught it. "Ah, trouble here!" he exclaimed in a voice of triumph. "Methought that ye were in too much o' a hurry, Zenas!"

Striding toward Sally's horse, with obvious intention of rifling the saddlebags to determine their contents, he was interrupted by a young whirlwind. It was Zenas!

"Touch—touch yon bags, will ye!" snarled Zenas. Sally, staring, clasped her hands as the two lads went to the ground, to roll over and over, each trying to gain the mastery of the other. Grave as the situation was, though, Sally could scarcely control hysterical laughter, for poor Zenas looked like nothing more than a bantam rooster, with his angry red face, his three-cornered hat flung into the dirt and his queue unloosed to stand on end like a cock's comb. "I'll—I'll teach ye! I'll teach ye!" he kept panting.

But, despite his courage, the odds were against the plucky fellow. Even as Stockton hastily was dismounting to participate in the already uneven battle, James deftly caught his brother's body in a

scissors clinch between his knees and then rolled him over to twist his hands behind him and so jerk him to his feet, to hold him thus captive.

Sally leaned forward upon her horse. "Brave James!" she applauded sarcastically. Then her voice changed. "Are ye not ashamed to badger poor Zenas thus?" she cried. "For all ye know, your mother may ha' sent us wi' grain for poor ill Granny White near the Dark Woods, and ye fain would play the hero and—and—keep the poor old woman from her meal! Fie upon ye!"

James, at that, faltered. "Grain?" he muttered. "Grain for Granny White?" He suddenly laughed. "Ye will have to think o' a better story than that, milady, for I took her grain to Granny White for Mother, myself, day before yesterday!"

Sally's gaze shifted, then she shook her head. "Nay," she was commencing, desperately, "me-thinks 'twas not for Granny White, after all! It was for——"

"Samuel Munn, doubtless!" interrupted James ironically. "Since the fat innkeeper doth need it so badly!" He frowned, all at once. "Get down, wench," he ordered surlily, "and try no more tricks upon me! What said ye, sir?" Still holding Zenas's hands behind him, James turned at the Tory's exclamation.

"I said," repeated Stockton, startled out of his

usual superciliousness, as his fingers busily prodded the saddlebags on Zenas's horse, "methinks I feel bullets!"

"Bullets!" James turned upon Sally, as she reluctantly slid down from her horse. "So," he jeered, "that was what my mother was about this morn, after all! Bullet moulding, eh? Well, we be the gainers for it." And his young mouth became set and grim.

Sally glanced around the deserted stable yard helplessly, and Zenas groaned. Then, all at once, the girl screamed for help.

James only grinned. "Ye gain nothing by screeching!" he mocked. "Think ye we did not know Samuel Munn was absent before we followed ye here? Take us for boobies, mistress?"

But again Sally's cries shattered the sunlit stillness of the inn yard. "Help! Help!" Then Stockton's hand was clamped over the girl's mouth.

"Odd's fiends!" James had torn a piece of hemp from his pocket and was busily binding his brother's hands behind him. He glanced up impatiently at Stockton. "Could ye not keep her quiet, sir?" he snapped. "Not that it will do ye any good an ye yell!" he added to Sally.

But all at once his jaw dropped. For out of the kitchen door came pelting Samuel Munn and a stout hostler, as well. And Stockton and James

were caught in their own net, for the innkeeper posted the other man, armed with a heavy club, at the stable gate.

“Now, good sirs, canst tell the reason o’ this disturbance?” said Master Munn, advancing to them.

James Williams turned to him sullenly. “There be no need for interference here, Master Munn,” he said coolly. “My mother bade me after Zenas, here, who, stealing some o’ her best silver and much else besides, was making toward the Town by the River wi’ this wench—the Todds’ bond maid! My friend and I did pursue them at my mother’s request. That be all, sir! Naught for outsiders’ business, as ye can see!”

Samuel Munn scratched a puzzled head. “Well,” he was beginning undecidedly when Zenas, who had been too astounded to speak, advanced with blazing eyes.

“That be a lie!” cried Zenas. “My mother be sending Sally and me——” Here his gaze fell upon Sally, who shook her head at him violently. He faltered. “We be going at my mother’s behest, sir. I swear to that! I cry your aid, good Master Munn!”

The innkeeper scratched his head again. “Nay, I be no hand for mysteries,” he was beginning irritably, when his glance chanced to rest upon Stockton. Even as the tavern master gazed, the Tory’s malignant eyes shot a look of hatred at the hostler

who was posted at the stable gate. Master Munn's own glance grew keen and watchful.

"Yonder fellow hath not an honest look," he was thinking, when Sally broke away from Stockton's restraining grasp. Running forward, she pulled Master Munn aside.

"Ye do know me, sir," she said hurriedly. "These"—her voice dropped so that her listener had to bend his head to catch her words—"these bags contain bullets for Captain Littell o' the 'Jersey Blues,' sir. Your own wife did help to mould them, sir! Oh, cannot ye detain these Tories and gi' us aid?"

At that, Samuel Munn nodded. His kind, jolly face had instantly sobered. And now Sally, glancing up at him imploringly, saw that she had not appealed in vain, for here was a true patriot.

"Ho, 'Sias, watch yon gate!" His sinewy hand fell heavily upon James Williams's shoulder, and he turned to Stockton. But he turned too late! That gentleman had leaped to his horse and was off, past the astonished 'Sias who, instead of offering resistance, could only stand with mouth agape and eyes popping, staring after the horse which had so nearly ridden him down and was now disappearing in a cloud of dust toward Newark.

"Zounds take the man for a fool!" For a moment Sally thought Master Munn was going to have a fit of apoplexy, so deeply purple did he turn. But

the next moment he gave a roar of laughter and pointed helplessly at the comical figure of 'Sias, although his hand did not loosen hold on James. "Hist!" gurgled and choked Master Munn. "Now will ye hear what 'Sias *would* have done had he had the chance!" And amid fresh roars of laughter from his master, 'Sias's voice, indeed, could be heard droning on and on about his own prowess and lack of opportunity to prove it, as he shook his heavy club and gestured largely.

Sally, however, turned forlorn eyes upon mine host. "Well," she said unhappily, "this does indeed add trouble to our journey, for while that man be loose, sir, there be danger!"

Master Munn, at that, sobered. "How so, Sally?" he asked kindly.

"Cannot ye see?" Sally made a helpless gesture. "Wi' that man escaped, there can be no doubt that he will wait along the road, some place, and surprise us, wi' danger to our burden!"

"Nay, Sally, ye did not think I would let ye and Zenas go on alone after failing ye thus!" Master Munn, as he spoke, swung James around by the collar, marched him across the tavern yard to the stable, where, opening a small door which led into a saddle room, he thrust the unwilling captive inside. "There!" exclaimed Master Munn, securing the door from the outside. "Let young Williams ponder his politics, now!"

"But the window!" pointed out Sally.

"Nay, the window be tightly wedged shut!" Master Munn turned inquiringly toward Zenas, ambled back to him.

"Ho, mean ye to let me stay wi' my hands bound?" grumbled the boy.

"Poor Zenas!" Sally flew ahead of Master Munn to tug and yank at the stout knot James had tied the hemp into around his brother's wrists.

"Nay, thy pretty fingers be too frail! Let me!" And with one slash of his hunting knife, Master Munn had the knot cut. Then, as Zenas rubbed the red marks from his wrists, he nodded at both him and Sally. "Wait for me yonder," he said. "I will but find my coat and meet ye there. Ho, 'Sias, mine horse, fellow—around at t'other door!"

Sally, once more upon her horse, watched Zenas sympathetically as he chafed his wrists which, even in the short time they had been bound, had become swollen. "'Tis the fortunes o' war, Zenas," she said at last. "Next time may be thy turn!"

"I'll fortunes o' war him!" ejaculated Zenas angrily. "The varlet! Where did Master Munn put him?" he added questioningly.

"I' the stable room," said Sally.

"I—I wonder an he will be safe?"

"What mean ye?" asked Sally wonderingly. "He cannot escape."

Zenas flushed. "I mean—think ye no one will

come along and—and hurt him?” he continued nervously. “I would not want any patriot to hang”—Zenas gulped—“to hang James for treason!”

Sally paled. “Nay, I know not! Let us ask Master Munn to let him go!” And she started to climb down from her horse. Just at that moment, however, Master Munn issued from the tap-room door of his inn, and she called anxiously to him. He listened to her stammering fears and then chuckled.

“A fine pair o’ war birds ye be!” he said. “What would ye? Give James back the freedom he hath but now misused against ye?”

“We-ell,” Sally was commencing. But Samuel Munn shook his head.

“Nay, ha’ no fears!” he told them. “James be in no danger at all, and ’twill do him no harm to sit i’ the saddle room for a while after the mean trick he played upon ye, Zenas! Too many admirers o’ good Mistress Mary Williams be i’ this settlement for aught o’ harm to come to one o’ her sons, Tory though he be! Nay, let him be! Who knows,” mine host stopped to chuckle, “who knows, James may come out o’ yon a good patriot!”

“Ye do not know James!” declared James’s brother grimly, however. “He be that stubborn that confinement will only make him more bitter Tory!”

“Mayhap!” Master Munn shrugged indifferent shoulders. “But we will let him cool his heels, ne’er-

theless! I ha' told 'Sias, an we be not back this even, to ope the door at dark, in time for him to find his way home to supper!"

He turned toward his horse, which 'Sias at that moment led up, when Sally, whose idle gaze had been fixed upon the road toward the Mountain, uttered an exclamation.

Master Munn paused with one foot in the stirrup, turned toward her. "Eh?" he asked.

"Yon comes a rider i' desperate hurry!" cried Sally, pointing excitedly in the direction she was staring. Everyone's eyes turned to follow her pointing finger, and Master Munn stepped to the ground and went around his horse to the center of the road. "He rides hard!" he ejaculated. And stepped back out of the way as the horse and rider reached the waiting group and the former was reined in so hard he went up on his hind legs.

"A warning!" cried the militiaman, whom Sally now recognized to be one of the Todds' neighbors. "Report to your company, sir, at once, and spread ye this message as ye go! The enemy be reported as landing at Elizabeth Town Point and also as approaching up the Hackensack from Staten Island! There be rumors o' battle at the Town by the River soon! Haste ye!" And, with a forward leap, the messenger was off again upon his heaving horse, soon disappearing down the road.

Samuel Munn turned a sobered face upon the

two young folk who stared back at him. "This gives a different aspect, again," he said seriously. "I cannot go wi' ye, for both 'Sias and I must report to our militia company at once. Best return wi' your burdens to the Mountain and there seek counsel wi' the women who sent ye! 'Twill not be safe for ye to go to Newark, now!"

With a grave nod, the tavern keeper returned to the door, where waited a maid with his powder horn and musket. Then, with 'Sias at his side, also equipped, he set forth upon a run, motioning to the maid to take care of his horse.

Zenas and Sally looked at each other. "This be a fine kettle o' fish!" said the boy, at last. "But we had best do as he bade us, Sally. Let us return the bullets to Mistress Harrison for safe keeping!"

But Sally shook her head. "Never!" she cried passionately. "Think ye we are going to admit failure by such a deed? Nay, let us on to the Town by the River! An the enemy come, all the more need for these bullets we bring to the 'Jersey Blues'!"

And picking up her horse's reins, Sally set out at a brisk trot toward the Town by the River.

CHAPTER X

SALLY RIDES TO ARMS

ZENAS, after his first stare, trotted after Sally, and because his horse was of finer breed—a riding mare belonging to his mother—he soon passed the girl and turned to grin at her over his shoulder.

“What makes ye so slow, mistress?” he mocked. “Methinks ye will arrive at Newark next week instead o’ this day!”

Sally smiled back at him. Her cheeks blazed beneath the sunbonnet, which seemed to scoop all the heat there was as she rode along. “Oh, Zenas,” she eyed with longing gaze the cool depths of a woodland they were passing, “an we could only stop and rest!”

But the boy shook his head. “Nay, ye be the very one who did say to go wi’ the bullets! So, say I, the sooner we get them to our men, the better!”

“Ye be right,” sighed Sally. Yet the great copper ball of the sun seemed to be burning a hole straight through her shoulders, the feel of her horse’s heaving sides grew to be more and more unbearable, until at last she called to Zenas: “I—nay,

Zenas, I cannot see! The road be turning black before me!" And Zenas looked back in time to see the girl slump forward in her saddle, a pathetic, unconscious burden.

It was not many minutes later that Sally opened her eyes and felt wonderingly of her dripping face. She was lying upon some soft turf beside the road, whither Zenas had managed to half drag, half carry her. Zenas himself, a frightened pallor showing beneath the tan and freckles of his face, was kneeling beside her, the water, which he had obtained from a near-by brook, still brimming in his three-cornered hat.

"Ye did—did swoon, Sally!" he stammered.

"Nay, 'twas the heat," murmured the girl. She struggled to a sitting posture. "Where be the horses?" she asked anxiously.

"Right here behind ye," said Zenas reassuringly. "It must have been the heat, Sally, as ye say. Then, too, ye did work hard this morn i' Mistress Harrison's kitchen, preparing the noon meal."

"But I always work hard," protested Sally wonderingly. "Indeed, 'tis not like me to ha' the megrims—only fine ladies ha' the megrims, Zenas!"

"Mayhap ye be a fine lady and know it not, Sally," returned Zenas, grinning, his fright at Sally's sudden collapse beginning to leave him. He looked at her soberly, then. "Think ye ye will be able to continue the journey?" he asked worriedly.

Sally got slowly to her feet, clenched her teeth at the sudden dizziness which at once swooped upon her. "Aye," she said, breathing hard. "I will go on!" And, with the boy's help, she remounted her horse, grasping his mane when the dizziness threatened her once more. But gradually it wore off, for the brief rest had done her good.

Now, however, the sun began to descend in the western sky, dropping more swiftly as it neared the line of the Mountain ridge. Sally, glancing back, drew a tremulous breath at the glorious beauty of that sunset glow—great purple clouds were banking up, pierced with crimson and golden rays. Zenas, looking back at it, thought only with relief that it would grow cooler; but Sally caught, somehow, the meaning of that beauty, the heavenly promise of to-morrow; some poet ancestor must have given her understanding. She said nothing, though, and the two tired horses plodded along, past the occasional farm, past enemy-wrought ruins, through brief, refreshing bits of forest land.

But as they neared the Town by the River—indeed, long before they began to climb the last hill along whose ridge lies the present High Street, they commenced to meet people fleeing toward the safety of the Mountain. The refugees were mostly women and children and old men, some on foot, some riding horseback; but all burdened with household treasures which they would not leave to

the vandal hands of the British. Zenas stopped the first few and was informed in trembling accents that the enemy were truly gathering on the east bank of the Passaic River for an obvious attack upon Newark.

“And they do say ’tis General Clinton himself who comes to direct this attack,” said the old man who had answered the boy’s hasty questions. “It be a terrible thing,” he went on simply, “to have to leave one’s home thus! The old need their own things around them; but we, who live here i’ this New Jersey which seems so easy for the enemy to harass and raid—we may return and find all o’ our things burned or destroyed or stolen! Three times ha’ my daughter and her little ones”—he motioned to the drooping woman upon a horse near by—“and I been forced to flee to the safety o’ the Newark Mountains, wi’ her husband away fighting!”

“Best haste, then,” Zenas told him warningly, “for, an the enemy do come to Newark from Elizabeth Town, they may march by way o’ the Second Road and so meet ye, after all!”

“They will not meet us,” responded the old man grimly, “for we shall hide i’ the underbrush, an we hear marching feet!” But, all the same, he trembled with anxiety as he hastened back to his daughter’s side; and it was not long before, leading the horse upon which perched three tow-headed children, with his daughter’s horse following—and both Sally

and Zenas noticed, with pity, the tiny new-born baby she was carrying in her arms—they set forth upon the road again.

But they were not the only pitiful groups, for the lame and the halt and the blind came with ever-increasing numbers. Again and again did Zenas and Sally have to draw rein upon the narrow lane and remain at one side to allow such to pass, for they would have been ridden down in their infirmities. Grim silence was upon most of them, though a few lamented here and there. But the same determination was evinced by all, the determination to gain the protection of the First and Second Mountains, beyond which the enemy, save a few spies and Tories, never did pass, during the term of the war.

Dusk came on apace. This, however, did not prevent Sally from recognizing at last a certain thin, shrewish-looking figure among the refugees, riding jerkily along on a familiar horse. "Mistress Todd!" she ejaculated. And wished at once she had held her peace.

It was too late. Mistress Todd drew rein in amazement and peered at the girl over her baby son's head, whom she carried in her arms as she rode.

"How now, Sally?" she snapped. "What do ye here?"

Sally nodded to Mistress Banks, who rode just

behind her friend, with Mary Todd upon the saddle before her. "I—I——" began Sally stammeringly, hating herself for that terrible self-consciousness which ever descended upon her at sight of her mistress.

"Well?" Mistress Todd gazed sharply from Sally to Zenas, whose bland, undisturbed look met hers without flinching. Suddenly, the lady rode her horse closer to the girl. "Well?" she asked impatiently again.

"Sally doth mean to say that she be riding wi' me on an errand for my mother," said Zenas coolly.

"I asked not your explanation, Zenas Williams!" Mistress Todd turned to eye him up and down. Then her compelling glance sought Sally's face, into which the desperate color had flooded. "Well, girl, answer me! What do ye here?"

"I—I——" gulped Sally. Her voice died away helplessly.

Before the indignant Zenas could once more interfere, Mistress Banks's good-natured voice came from behind them. "Nay, Molly, the girl doubtless hath business here. Let her be on her way and we on ours, for I like not tarrying o'erlong!"

"Business, indeed!" exclaimed Mistress Todd angrily. "Nay, what could a bond wench like her ha' to do i' Newark at such a time! Turn thy horse around, girl! I like not this sudden shift o' mistresses! I left ye i' charge o' Mistress Ball! Why

should Mistress *Williams* be ordering ye off on her affairs wi' this son o' hers? Humph! 'Tis a strange mix-up, indeed, forsooth!"

"But—but—I can explain!" said Sally, not daring to tell her mistress that she had left her in charge of no one at all—that she, Sally, would have fared ill had not Uzal Ball offered her his mother's hospitality. But Zenas suddenly spoke.

"An ye like not the plans made for Sally, mistress, why did ye not stay at home, yourself, and keep her beneath your own eye?" he asked bluntly.

This time it was Mistress Todd's turn to blush. Furious red surged into her narrow face, furious anger into her voice.

"None o' thy tongue, Zenas Williams!" she answered, thin-lipped. "Sally, ye heard me bid ye turn your horse around and return to the Mountain! Why do ye not obey?"

"The enemy's bivouac lights are across the river, e'en now!" exclaimed Mistress Banks. "We ha' not occupied our tavern for days, now—it be too near the river for comfort! But Master Banks would not let us remain i' Newark, Sally—not e'en though we had sought refuge at a friend's house high on the ridge. So best obey and come wi' us, lass!"

But Sally, to Zenas's secret relief, shook her head firmly. "Nay, Mistress Banks, thank ye kindly; but I cannot!" she responded respectfully. "I ha' something o' importance to deliver at the

Town, and so I must go on!" She turned to Mistress Todd imploringly. "Oh, ha' ye not heard from dear, kind Master Todd at all yet? I do long for news o' him! Hath he not been released?"

"Ye know an he were released, we would ha' come home straightway," the wife told her sourly. "Only a fool would ask that question! But I can guess ye are but trying to change the subject—ye do not really care about Master Todd!"

The hurt tears started into the girl's eyes. "Ye judge me harshly, mistress," she said brokenly. "Indeed, I do care, for ever he was good and kind to me!"

Mistress Todd sniffed at the implied reproach. "Well," she demanded irately, "art going to return or not?"

"Nay, mistress!"

"Humph, ye would offer open defiance, then? What think ye Parson Chapman would say to that?"

"He would commend Sally for her bravery!" burst out Zenas, who had been burning to get back into the conversation. Now he rode his horse between mistress and maid. "Ride on, Sally!" he ordered.

But Sally shook her head forlornly. "I cannot leave wi'out giving little Mary just one kiss, Zenas!" she returned, guiding her horse to Mistress Banks's side, while Mary's mother watched

her with a sneer, only half concealed by the oncoming darkness. "But, stay—what be the matter wi' Mary?" added Sally, in alarm, as the child neither stirred nor extended eager, chubby arms in the loving greeting she always had for Sally.

"Nay, she only be asleep!" said Mistress Banks, smiling at the terror in the older girl's voice. "Ye do be nervous, for this little maid cares not whether she be in a trundle bed or on horseback! She doth play so hard through the day, 'tis no easy matter to waken her after supper!"

"And the baby?" Sally looked yearningly at the motionless bundle in Mistress Todd's arms; but she did not offer to go near.

Again it was Mistress Banks who answered, for Mistress Todd maintained a morose silence. "Aye, he be fat and well, Sally—thriving apace," she said reassuringly. "Sally," she bent toward the girl confidentially, "why do ye not confide your business wi' Mistress Todd—explain the reason for your strange errand to the Town by the River at this dangerous time? Mayhap, then, her advice to ye would be to go, i'stead o' ordering your return!"

Mistress Todd shook her head angrily before the girl could answer. "Nay, knowing the wench as I do, I can assure ye that she be on fool's errand! Nothing she can say will alter mine opinion, so let us continue our own journey! We be but wasting time and breath, here!" And clucking to her horse,

ignoring both girl and boy who watched her, she rode off into the darkness, followed by her kind-hearted friend, who gave them each farewell greeting before she left.

Sally sighed. "I wonder an she be right?" she said, half to herself. "I wonder an I be wrong to disobey her thus, in not returning to the Mountain!"

Zenas started his horse and Sally, perforce, followed. "Nay," he said sturdily, "ye be right, for our men need the bullets, Sally! Why bother your head o'er her words?"

"But, still, Zenas, she doth be my mistress!" said Sally slowly. "The terms o' the bond hath said that!"

"Ye be wrong, Sally," replied Zenas, "for she did forfeit that authority when she deserted ye. Rest easy on that score, for I do feel sure that Parson Chapman will so agree and dub ye not in wicked rebellion! Nay, rather he will admire ye, Sally—he is not named the 'fighting Parson' for naught—well he knows how bullets be ever needed by our men!"

So reassured, Sally trotted down the hill after her companion. "Where be we going, Zenas?" she asked presently.

Dark and silent, the little hamlet lay at their feet. No cheerful lights flickered in kitchen windows, no lanterns swung like fireflies to and fro

across the village lanes, for no one was left to carry them, or, if they were left, they were hiding in darkened homes.

Zenas drew rein at the Four Corners—where the Broad Lane was crossed by the Market Road—and looked about him dubiously. “I know not,” he answered, then. “An I could only find out where Captain Littell be!”

“But, Zenas, he doth live i’ Springfield—what would he here i’ Newark?” remonstrated Sally.

“I know he lives i’ Springfield; but Mistress Harrison assured me the ‘Blues’ did ha’ their headquarters here i’ Newark.” Zenas straightened his shoulders. “Let us go to the Rising Sun Tavern and see!”

“Mistress Banks said they were not living there now—that they had removed to another house,” objected Sally.

Zenas made an impatient sound, to be described only as a snort. “What ails ye, Sally?” he demanded irritably. “Such a wet blanket I ne’er saw!”

Sally sighed. “I must be tired,” she said. “I wish this errand were well accomplished and we able to sleep somewhere!”

“Never fear,” replied Zenas confidently, turning his horse toward the tavern he had mentioned, “we shall be successful. Once we deliver these bullets to Captain Littell, he will find us quarters!”

The tired boy and girl proceeded in silence, then, for the short distance to the tavern. It was just as Zenas, drawing rein before the dark, cheerless-looking building, was about to slip off from his horse, that a low, husky voice spoke from the shadows. "Halt, who goes there?"

Zenas stiffened, one foot still caught in the stirrup. "I, Zenas Williams," he answered tremulously.

"Advance, Zenas Williams, and gi' the password!"

Silence. Then Sally, from her horse, spoke impulsively: "Nay, we ha' no knowledge o' the password!" She shrank back as a tall figure approached her, musket over his shoulder.

"Who be ye, young mistress, and what be doing here i' this town?" asked the stranger sternly. "Know ye not the women have been ordered by Captain Camp to leave?"

"Aye."

"Then what do ye here?"

"That," said Sally in a stubborn voice, "I cannot tell ye until——" Her sentence ended in a gasp, for all at once she found herself snatched from her horse and placed roughly upon her feet.

"Ye gi' me defiance, mistress?" growled the big man, who stood over her.

Sally threw back her shoulders and adjusted her disarranged gown which his uncouth jerking

her from her steed had almost torn. "Nay," she said quietly, "I gi' ye no defiance. I merely did say we knew not the password; but I would not tell ye, ne'ertheless, my errand here until——"

"Call ye not that defiance? Ye——"

"Nay—how know I ye be not an enemy!" cried Sally indignantly. "Take me to your commanding officer at once, sir!"

"Zounds, ye lack not insolence, mistress!" The big man's voice was full of amazement. "I think ——"

A new voice spoke suddenly from the darkness behind them. "It matters not what ye think, sir! I will do the thinking! Why did ye not report to me, at once, the arrival of these newcomers?" As a commanding figure came forward swiftly, the man beside Sally saluted and stepped back. But the other addressed him imperatively. "Who are these?"

"I was but trying to discover, Captain Camp," the man whom Zenas and Sally now knew to be the sentry was beginning in an injured tone. He was interrupted by the girl.

"Not Captain Nathaniel Camp to whom His Excellency did gi' the cannon wi' which to defend Newark!" she cried, whirling toward the officer.

"E'en so." Captain Camp stooped to peer into her eager face. "But I know ye not, little mistress," he added kindly.

Sally dimpled in the darkness. "'Tis not surprising, sir," she replied. "For I know ye only from what I heard the cook, Martha, at this tavern did tell Mistress Banks one day. She had just waited on ye, and ye had told some friends of General Washington's gift. Oh, Zenas," the girl turned relievedly to him, "I be sure Captain Camp will know o' Captain Littell's whereabouts!"

"Captain Littell?" repeated the officer in a surprised tone. "Why, he is in yonder tavern. Stay, we will go thither!" And he led the way toward the somber doorway of the darkened building before which they had been standing.

But once inside the tap room, Sally looked around her in surprise. The room was cheerful with candle-light, though rather warm and breathless, for every exit had been well covered with some dark, heavy stuff, that not a single candle ray might escape. Three or four men, in uniforms of blue, obviously home-made, were seated at a corner table, poring over a map, and they looked up in astonishment at the entrance of Sally. Captain Camp beckoned to one, who rose courteously and came toward them.

"Captain Littell," said Nathaniel Camp, "here be a young maid and lad who would speak wi' ye!"

Captain Littell bowed gravely in return for the curtsey Sally dropped him. "Aye?" he asked, in a low, deep voice.

Sally took a step toward him. "We bring ye bullets, sir, from the Mountain settlement," she said.

"Bullets!" Sally wondered if she interpreted aright the glance he gave to Captain Camp. Did it contain relief? "Ye bring us bullets?" he repeated slowly, as the men at the table raised their heads and turned toward them.

"Aye, sir," nodded the girl, as Zenas stood silent and shy behind her. "The women o' the Mountain and thereabouts did meet at Mistress Keturah Harrison's and mould 'em, sir!"

"Where are the bullets, young mistress?" asked Captain Littell.

"We did leave them i' the saddlebags on the horses, sir—outside," answered Sally, jerking a thumb over her shoulder.

Captain Littell turned to his associate. "Will ye ha' the saddlebags removed hither, sir?" he requested.

Captain Camp strode out of the room, careful to slip quickly through the door so that no light might go with him. But in a moment he was back, an odd expression upon his face.

"Nay, there are no horses in front o' this tavern," he said, looking searchingly at Sally and Zenas.

Sally's jaw dropped. "No horses, sir?" Her hands flew to her heart. "Why, where are our horses?" she gasped.

Zenas turned toward the door; but before he could lift the latch, he was arrested by Captain Littell's stern voice. "Stay, sir—methinks this doth need explaining, sir!"

Zenas turned back and looked at him wildly. "But the bul—bullets! Someone hath stolen the bullets, sir! E'en now the varlet may escape!"

"Still, matters do need explaining," answered Captain Littell coolly. "How know we ye came on horses? How know we this be no British ruse to ascertain for themselves our headquarters, here?"

Sally wrung her hands. "Oh, sir, this be no British ruse, I do vow! And precious time goes! Stay," a sudden thought struck her, "the sentry can vouch for our coming on horses!" She held up her gown. "He almost tore my frock when he jerked me from my horse!"

Captain Camp stepped to the door, slipped through a narrow entrance, and returned shortly with the sentry, a tall, stupid-looking man when he came forward into the candlelight.

"Horses, sir?" he repeated in answer to Captain Littell's sharp question.

"Aye—did ye take this young lady from her horse, as she doth accuse?"

Zenas started forward impetuously, his shyness vanishing. "Nay, sir," he reiterated, "e'en now the varlet who stole our horses doth escape! I tell ye, Captain Littell, I did secure the horses to two

trees before I followed Captain Camp into this tavern! Let me go forth and search. Mayhap," hopefulness would not be killed in the boy's voice, "mayhap they did not find the right trees!"

"Silence, sir!" said Captain Littell sternly. "That be nonsensical! Now, Crane—didst see aught o' horses?"

Crane! Sally started at the name. As though by magic, the smell of the sea came to her nostrils, once more she stood upon the deck of a small schooner, with the white sea gulls wheeling and circling overhead, with the distant view of green-hilled Staten Island delighting her as they sailed for Newark Bay, *with a sullen Tory behind her*, who did not come near her that livelong trip! *Crane!* Sally's eyes met the small, close-set ones of the sentry, and she knew him!

"Nay, Captain Littell," said the sentry, Crane, calmly. "This maid and boy came afoot. *There were no horses, sir!*"

CHAPTER XI

THE FIGHT BY THE RIVER

OUT of a shocked silence, Sally spoke. "That man doth lie!" she cried. "I dub him Tory, sir!"

No one answered her. Captain Camp and Captain Littell merely looked at her, and Sally's chin sank upon her breast, all her confidence blasted by the suspicion so evident in their gaze and in the steady gaze of the men seated at the table behind them. But, standing there, she felt all at once that she could not, must not fail those brave, patriotic women who had trusted her. She raised her blue eyes and started forward again, her hands clasped imploringly.

"Oh, sirs, will ye not let Zenas, here, go wi' escort and see an the horses be *really* gone?" she pleaded. "Indeed," the tears started into her tired eyes, "we did work very hard to deliver the bullets and—and—the ladies—Mistress Harrison and all—will be marvelously disappointed an ye do not receive them safely! Oh, Zenas," she turned to the boy who, silent and overwhelmed, stood beside her, staring dumbly at the doubting faces

before him, "have ye not somewhat on ye to identify ye to these gentlemen? As for me," she made a weary, sad little gesture, "I—I—know not mine own identity, sirs—only that I be Master Todd's bond maid, Sally!"

Zenas turned to her quickly. "Nay, ye must not mind, Sally," he said, honest sympathy in his voice, "for some day I feel sure ye will find trace o' kin! As for me, sirs," he straightened his broad young shoulders, "I be Zenas Williams, sirs—son o' Nathaniel and Mary Williams o' the Mountain!"

Something about his manly way of looking the others straight in the eye was obviously dispelling doubt when mention of his father's name brought a dark frown to Captain Littell's brow. He motioned his companion aside, and, as they bent their heads together, both Zenas and Sally heard the words, "Loyalist—watched by the Committee," before the patriots turned back.

But now anger engulfed Sally. Was that morning's hard work to benefit only the enemy, after all? Had that long, hot ride been taken in vain?

"I tell ye, sirs," she burst out passionately, "this sentry be Tory! Why, he——"

She was interrupted by a startled exclamation from Captain Camp. "Where did Crane go?"

Both Sally and Zenas whirled around. But the space behind them was empty! The sentry, when

the militia officers had momentarily turned their backs, had vanished without a sound!

"This," said Captain Camp, "gives a different aspect to your words, mistress!" His voice ceased abruptly as he brushed past her, to disappear likewise.

The rest of the men made hasty exits, too. And Sally and Zenas were left alone in the big candlelit room.

She looked at him, then. "'Twas Stockton, think ye not, who did follow us somehow and took the bullets?" she inquired. "I feel sure o't, the varlet!" And she clenched her little fists.

The boy nodded. "Aye, I, too, thought o' him at once!" He looked at her soberly. "What are we to do now, Sally?"

Sally moved toward the door. "Find the bullets," she was commencing valiantly, when voices just outside made her turn swiftly away. "The other door—the kitchen one! 'Tis best we leave before they return!"

But the kitchen door, to her dismay, refused to budge when she lifted the latch. Zenas, at her heels, gave a groan. "We be too late!" he muttered.

"That other door!" Sally flew across the sanded floor of the tap room and darted around the high counter to feel, with trembling fingers, along some dark wainscoting which adorned the wall behind it.

“What door?” asked Zenas, following. His breath came in an involuntary gasp as the latch of the one leading outdoors rattled behind him. The next instant, however, with a low cry of triumph, Sally found a hidden spring, a narrow door, cleverly concealed in the wainscoting, swung inward, and she and Zenas stepped through the opening into a dark passage. They were just in time, for a second later Captains Camp and Littell, with their companions, reëntered the kitchen.

“Know—know ye whither this doth lead, Sally?” stammered Zenas, groping.

“Hush!” Sally’s voice came to him in a stern whisper as the candlelight was abruptly blotted out by the closing of the little door. “Here!” She felt for and caught hold of his outstretched hand. “Come ye this way, Zenas!”

The boy stumbled cautiously after her. “Not so fast, prithee!” he whispered. “I—I—feel as though every step I—took would send me headlong into some dark hole!”

“That’s because ye do not know this passage!” returned Sally, with a stifled giggle. “I do assure ye ’tis naught but a perfectly safe, ordinary hall which takes us past the kitchen into the tavern garden—no mysterious secret passage this, for all that queer little door i’ the wainscot! Ye see, I came this way one time when Mistress Todd did visit here and Mistress Banks, caught in an ancient gown by some

fine ladies, did fly through that door and I after her! I had forgotten it; but suddenly, as I turned away from the kitchen door, I did mind me o't! There!" Zenas felt a draught upon his hot face as Sally pulled him gently forward. "Watch thy step—see—place one foot thus!—Down! Now," she drew a long breath and released his hand, "here we be, free once more, Zenas!"

Zenas stared about him; but the darkness, without moon or stars, was still so dense that he could see nothing. "What be planning to do now, Sally?" His voice was almost plaintive. And truly, Sally and he might well feel discouraged, for setting forth on such a night in search of the stolen bullets seemed futile, indeed.

But Sally refused to be discouraged. "I am positive it was the villain Stockton," she said soberly, starting up the road toward the river. "And he would try to convey his plunder across to the enemy. Let us then to the Passaic! Only," she clutched Zenas's arm as he caught up to her, "we must be wary! Either patriots or enemy would hinder us until we secure the bullets once more, Zenas!" And she broke into a little run, tired as she was.

Zenas strode along beside her. "Ye feel the responsibility too keenly," he said, protesting. "My mother and the rest will not blame ye as bitterly as ye seem to fear, an we fail, Sally!"

"But the militia need the bullets," the girl told him solemnly. "I know I saw joy upon Captain Littell's face at mention o' them!"

"Think ye 'tis true the enemy be encamped across the river?" asked Zenas hoarsely.

"Aye," said Sally. And suddenly she caught him by the arm, to point ahead of her excitedly. "See!" she exclaimed beneath her breath. "Do ye not see bivouac fires?"

The boy stared into the darkness. "Nay," he was commencing, when he interrupted himself to nod excitedly. "Aye, aye, Sally, in good sooth I do! Marry, 'tis true, then! Ah, Sally, I fear for Newark and Aquackanonck and all this countryside an General Clinton hath come wi' his trained troops!"

For a little while after they had reached the river bank, the boy and the girl stood motionless, staring across the black, flowing water of the Passaic River. Vague gleams punctured the darkness; but they might have been home lights or even the candle lanterns carried by the fisher folk who lived in huts along the river edge. Sally shook a dubious head after a while.

"Nay, I feel not sure 'tis enemy lights, after all," she said.

"Mayhap ye feel not sure about the bullets having been stolen, also," answered Zenas sarcastically. He was about to continue, when Sally pinched his arm.

"Hist!" she whispered, glancing uneasily over her shoulder. "Dost not hear aught?"

Zenas listened intently. "Nay," he answered, then. "Ye do imagine noises, Sally!"

But the girl, all at once, dragged him back softly into some underbrush.

"Ye must ha' Indian blood i' ye, Sally, for I hear naught," Zenas was beginning, when a little hand was clamped over his mouth and he subsided into injured silence. As he crouched there, however, he, too, caught the sound of approaching footsteps, and as Sally's hand was removed from his lips, he tensed into an attitude as motionless as the girl's. Then, as they watched, two swift, silent forms came out of the night, passed them like shadows and descended the short, sharp bank to the river edge.

Now, however, came the sound of low, rough voices, subdued cautiously. Zenas threw himself noiselessly upon his stomach and Sally unthinkingly imitated him. Together, they inched forward toward the bank until the voices below them became audible and they could hear what was said.

"Where be the boat? I see it not!"

"Zounds, I left it here, hidden i' the grass!"

"Well, it be not here now!"

"Nay, hast not looked for it! Ye be too lazy, I say!"

"Ha! not looked, say ye! And lazy, say ye! I'

faith, I think ye do lie an ye tell me ye hid a boat here i' the grass!"

"Have a care, sir! No one dubs me liar and lives!"

"Well, 'tis not here—ye agreed to have the boat ready, Crane! Where is it?"

"I tell ye, Captain Stockton, I did conceal it here!"

"Nay!"

"Aye!"

As the two exclamations mingled, there was a snarl, the thump of dropped burdens, and before Sally or Zenas could do more than draw excited breaths, there had commenced a vicious struggle in the darkness beneath them! At last there was the clank of steel upon steel!

"Ye will—ye cowardly knave! Draw thy hunting knife, will ye?"

"Ye skulker i' the dark—take that! And that!"

And now came a dreadful groan, the sound of someone falling, the further sound of a hurried plunge into the river—then someone swam away!

Sally, too horrified to move at first, lay where she had crept. Then, "Zenas!" she whispered, between stiff lips. "Zenas!"

"Aye, Sally?" Scarcely less horrified, his voice came to her from near by.

Sally gulped. "Think ye—think ye—the man be—be dead!" she stammered.

Zenas cleared his throat; but for all that his voice, when he spoke, was rough-edged. "Nay, I—I—know not!" And a little silence came upon them. Then Zenas spoke again. "Who was the man who did fall?" he whispered.

Sally shook her head, realized that Zenas could not see her in the darkness, and answered aloud: "Methinks it was Master Crane, though I could not tell."

"Why say ye that?" asked Zenas wonderingly.

"Only save that Stockton be so much a rogue!" she whispered back. She pulled herself to her knees upon the warm earth, got stiffly to her feet.

"Where be going?" inquired Zenas, springing hastily to his feet also.

"Down the bank to see what happened," Sally told him laconically, suiting action to words.

"Stay!"

"What!" Sally halted abruptly, tried to see the boy's face as he stood above her. "Why bid me stay, Zenas?" she demanded.

Zenas scrambled down to her. "Nay, this be no place for a maid," he said anxiously. "And no sight awaits ye that ye should see!"

"Tush!" said Sally roundly. "Not that I *can* see, dark as it be! This be war, though, Zenas—and I be no city maid, ready to swoon at sight o' blood!"

"Ye did swoon this day," began Zenas.

“Nay,” returned Sally angrily, “that was the heat, forsooth! A kind of sunstroke! Make way, Zenas!”

“I—I—would not Sally! Ye will be sorry, I fear!”

But Sally trod past him on determined feet, and the boy followed her reluctantly to a narrow, level place beside the river. He found her kneeling beside an outstretched form.

“’Tis Master Crane,” Sally told him in a low voice. “And he breathes, Zenas! I——” She stopped, pondered. When she spoke again, her voice was troubled. “I think it our duty to inform Captain Littell and so obtain help for this man, enemy though he be, Zenas.”

“Nay, Sally!” The boy whispered impetuously. “He be an enemy! Let him die!”

“Is that your mother’s teachings, Zenas Williams!” Sally’s voice was stern. “Enemy or no, we cannot let him die. Now,” she sprang to her feet, “shall I return to the Rising Sun Tavern or will ye, Zenas?”

The boy hesitated. “I will go,” he said sullenly, then.

Left alone beside that silent figure, Sally looked around her fearfully. There was the sound of the river, flowing toward Newark Bay, there were the vague gleams across the water which might mean the enemy, there were mysterious night noises in

trees and bushes and the long, dank grass upon the bank above her. Sally shuddered, put out her hands frantically to stay Zenas's going. "Stay!" she wanted to say. "I will return—anything, even detention by the patriots—anything be better than staying here i' this lonely, forsaken spot wi'—*that* at my feet!" But no sound left her lips and Zenas, not seeing her imploring gesture, had disappeared.

It was not long, however, before he was back. "Sally!" came his excited whisper.

"Aye?" She crept toward the bank.

"Did ye hear me stumble but now? I was angry—but—but 'twas the saddlebags o'er which I stumbled!"

"The saddlebags?" amazedly. "Oh, Zenas, the saddlebags wi' the bullets?"

"Aye!" Zenas laughed exultantly. "Aye—the varlets must have dropped them over here beside the bank before they fought!"

"Hush!" cautioned Sally. She stooped and prodded the bags which lay as though flung against the sandy bank. "Aye," and now her voice, too, was triumphant, "'tis the bullets! Our luck be changed! And now there be no danger o' Captain Littell confining ye on suspicion an ye return to the tavern, for we have proven our story!"

"I' that case, Sally, ye go i' my place! And I will stay here wi' the Tory!" urged Zenas, with that

rare thoughtfulness which made him his mother's right-hand man.

"But you like not to stay here alone," began Sally doubtfully, longing to go, yet hating to be selfish.

Zenas squared his shoulders in the dark. "Go ye, Sally! And ask Captain Littell to send aid for this man. I will await ye here!" he said sturdily.

Sally, despite her knowledge of her good fortune, looked rather timidly around the tap room of the Rising Sun Tavern when, some moments later, she lifted the latch and pushed open the door. Summoning her courage, however, she advanced toward the table around which the militiamen had gathered. It was Captain Littell who, regarding her smiling face from beneath frowning, puzzled brows, spoke grimly.

"Whence came ye, young mistress? And why did ye run away?"

Sally smiled more confidently than she felt. "'Twould take o'erlong to tell ye, sir," she answered, in a hurried manner. "I returned to tell ye that the sentry, Master Crane, be lying, dangerously wounded, down by the river edge and—and—that the saddlebags be found!"

"Crane wounded!"

"How happened it, young maid?"

"The saddlebags found! Ye mean—the ones wi' the bullets therein?"

Sally shook her head. "Nay, I know not how Master Crane did receive his hurt—'twas i' the dark! The other Tory—a Captain Stockton—did fight wi' him, and he fell, wounded—then Stockton swam away!"

"Stockton escaped across the river, ye mean?" snapped Captain Littell.

"Aye, sir!"

There was a brief silence, then the soldier spoke again. "Where be these mysterious saddlebags?"

Sally looked at him for a moment, resenting his brusqueness, then she nodded in the direction of the river. "They be lying on the banks o' the Passaic, sir," she told him quietly.

"Zounds!" Captain Camp started to his feet. "There be danger, then, o' the enemy finding them. Boats be not so rare, and the alarm—an the other Tory escaped—must ha' been given. We had best haste, sir!"

But Captain Littell made a negative gesture. "Wait!" he said tersely. "Are ye mad, then, to risk capture? This may be but a Tory ruse! How know ye this maid be not Tory, sent hither by those i' authority? Nay, let us not run ourselves into a trap!"

Sally started forward urgently. "Ah, delay not!" she cried. "E'en now Master Crane may be dying for lack o' aid! And, too, there be danger o' the enemy returning and finding the bullets! Oh, sir,"

she turned to Captain Littell, "do ye not recognize truth when ye hear it? Indeed and indeed I be no enemy spy! I have told ye I be none but Master Todd's Sally! Why, ye must know him—Samuel Todd o' the Mountain!"

"Aye, we know Samuel Todd," answered Captain Camp heavily, when Sally's broken, pleading voice had died into silence. "But I remember not his having any bond maid."

Now the girl's voice grew once more defiant. She eyed the group of stern-countenanced men facing her in the candlelight, with desperate, scornful gaze. "I have been wi' Master Todd three years—up to the very week he was taken prisoner to New York Town. Why, Parson Chapman did place me wi' the Todds! I be telling the truth, good sirs!"

"Her voice, methinks, rings true!" said one of the men, then. "Why not allow us to proceed to the river with due caution, sir? An the enemy unexpectedly attacks, we can use this girl as a shield and they will not dare fire upon one o' their own!"

"Very well—let us go!" And Captain Littell led the way from the tavern.

Once again Sally trod the way to the river, this time, however, with a hurt and angry heart. The more she saw of the patriots, she told herself bitterly, the better she liked at least one of the enemy. And a picture of Jerry Lawrence's gentle,

chivalrous, merry-eyed face rose before her. But Sally, in her hurt, did not give them the sympathy due these New Jersey militiamen. They were under the strain of imminent battle, with the knowledge that the morrow night might bring disaster upon their hearths and homes, for they must fight against unbelievable odds. It was almost certain that they, comparatively untrained militia troops, without the help of the Regulars, as the Continental soldiers under command of General Washington were called, would have to face the trained troops of His Majesty's army before another sun set. So it can be seen readily enough why Captain Camp and Captain Littell felt that they must use every precaution to guard against being surprised by a wily enemy.

Sally, however, saw only ruthless and needless suspicion directed against herself, and tramped along, therefore, with weariness and grief heavy upon her.

Contrary to Captain Littell's fears, they reached the river bank without misadventures and were met by Zenas. "Master Crane still lives, sir," he told Captain Camp earnestly. "And here be the bullets!" And right proudly he led the older man to the place where the saddlebags had been flung.

The rest of the men, who had been lingering cautiously upon the road, alert fingers upon pistol triggers, now advanced at a command from their captain.

“Take ye this man back to the tavern, and we shall see about his removal to the church later, when Dr. Burnet hath had chance to attend him,” he ordered.

It was a hard task to carry the heavy, inert form up the sliding gravel which formed the river bank; but at last it was accomplished. When, finally, their slow steps had died away in the darkness, when both Captain Littell and Captain Camp had stooped to feel and prod with inquisitive fingers the precious saddlebags, the former straightened himself and turned to Sally, who had been standing silently by.

“Young mistress,” he said, in a low voice, “I do indeed cry abject pardon! Some day ye will understand my rude hesitation and unkind suspicion o’ ye—not now, for ye be both young and angry!—but some day! And then ye will forgive mine apparent iniquity!”

Sally had the quick, generous temperament which ever seems to accompany the flaming color of her hair. “Indeed,” she said, extending her hand impulsively, “I do forgive ye now, sir! I know ’tis war!” And the next instant she blushed brightly, for in the dark her hand had been raised respectfully to the lips of as noble a gentleman as ever wore Jersey Blue.

It was a weary wait there by the river until a small detachment of militia, sent back by Captain

Camp, who had returned to the tavern, appeared to take charge of the saddlebags; but wait they did, for even Sally was determined that no one should get possession again of those bullets! Indeed, stumbling back to the inn, she tried to keep abreast of the men who bent their shoulders beneath the saddlebags, in order to keep her watchful gaze upon them—tried and lagged this way and that, finally bringing up, reeling from fatigue, against Captain Littell, who merely smiled as he slipped a kind, fatherly arm beneath her elbow and commenced a low-voiced, cheerful conversation that Sally but half heard. At length, between long intervals, she heard a few words.

“What?” she murmured sleepily.

“I asked how I might make amends to ye?” repeated Captain Littell, smiling again.

“Oh, sir,” said poor Sally, “I—I rose at dawn, and—and now it must e’en be nine o’clock! An ye indeed wish—to—make amends—think ye—ho, hum!—think ye—couldst find a place for me—to slee-eeep!” And a gigantic yawn cut her words quite in two.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE HAYLOFT

SALLY! *Sally!*” Sally stirred, opened her eyes, and found Zenas standing beside her, tugging excitedly at a fold of her gown. Raising herself upon a stiffened elbow, she stared around her in sleep-drugged bewilderment.

“Where am I?” she asked.

“Here i’ the tap room, on the settle!” Zenas told her impatiently. “Do ye not remember, Sally? The officers did give ye their coats last night and ye lay down here and went to sleep—and I on another settle yonder! But now,” the boy’s voice deepened, “’tis dawn, Sally—and the enemy hath indeed been discovered across the river, gathering i’ great numbers for an attack upon the Town!”

“Aye?” Sally sprang to the floor; but she staggered sleepily and dragged the back of her hand across her eyes. For a moment, as on that dreadful morning in Marshal Cunningham’s office, months ago, everything seemed dreamlike—the gray, reluctant light stealing churlishly through the tap-room windows, the furniture standing ghostlike about,

Zenas, she, herself—the Todds' bond maid, here under strange circumstances—all seemed fragments of an overwrought imagination! Surely, she told herself, as she had told herself on that long-ago morning, she must waken soon!

Zenas's voice brought her back to the exigencies of the moment. "Captain Camp hath ordered our retreat, Sally," he said hurriedly. "He says we must return to the Mountain at once!"

"Oh," said Sally. She looked at him disappointedly. "Of course, I want to be safe, Zenas," she went on naively, "but I did indeed want to see some o' the fighting, an fighting there is going to be! Must we go at once?"

Zenas nodded. "At once!" he repeated.

"Well," Sally sighed, "well, where be the horses, then, Zenas?"

"Horses?" Zenas opened his eyes. "Why, I ne'er thought o' horses, Sally." He admitted it ruefully. "Nay, I have not seen any this morn! We shall e'en have to walk, I fear!"

A voice spoke from the doorway in displeased surprise. "What, still lingering i' this dangerous vicinity?" asked Captain Camp. "Haste ye, young folk; this be too near the river to tarry o'erlong!"

Sally approached him with a curtsy. "We have no horses, Captain Camp," she told him in a respectful little voice. "And—and—'tis a long walk back to the Mountain!"

“No horses?” Captain Camp frowned. “Well,” he made a dismissing gesture, “ye must ne’ertheless leave the Town, mistress, before the fighting commences. Walk toward Caleb Wheeler’s house—he doth have a horse or two to spare—he hath offered me the use o’ them, an needful. An no one be home—indeed, ’tis doubtful, now, for his family be fled to the Mountain and he will be wi’ his company—go straight around to his barn and there borrow two steeds and depart at once!”

“Ye mean Captain Wheeler, who did complete that fine new house last year on the market lane?” inquired Sally.

Nathaniel Camp nodded impatiently. “Aye, mistress. Haste ye, now!”

Sally made another curtsey; but Captain Camp, approached by a dispatch rider at that moment, was already immersed deep in the papers handed to him and did not even nod farewell.

As they stepped out into the misty dawn, the girl drew a deep breath and gazed around her. How queer that such beauty of landscape should be but the calm before the storm, for the trees were etched against their hazy background with an almost unearthly beauty, and the silver fog that blew in from the river seemed to enfold her like peace itself!

She and Zenas paused at the tavern well long enough to splash some cold water over their hands and faces and to drink deep of it. Then, glancing

nervously toward the Passaic, half dreading, half wishing that the mist might lift, they started off, trudging down the Broad Lane.

"Think ye 'tis really true that the enemy be so close to Newark?" asked the girl. "I cannot see how our men tell, when the fog hides all!"

"The fog came only with daybreak," Zenas told her, hurrying along. "All the hours since a little past midnight have the British and Hessian and Tories been gathering up the river beyond Newark—coming up the Hackensack River to Dow's Ferry. I heard one Master Caleb Bruen—who had just returned from a scouting expedition—make his report to Captain Camp. I was behind a wood pile when they paused before it. Master Bruen said that General Clinton had already established his headquarters on the bank o' the Passaic River at Master John Schuyler's house. Ye know the ford a little north o' that mansion? Well, 'tis thought they will attack from that point. All night long have they been marching along Schuyler's Road—the one he had built to his copper mines from the Hackensack River about twelve years ago!"

Sally, half running along beside Zenas, kept turning her eyes in the direction of the river, wishing, now, that the mist would lift. But it remained thick and obscure until they had turned

down the market lane and had reached the north-east corner of what is now Mulberry Street; but what was called the East Back Lane in those days. There they were greeted by the loud crowing of a cock and the first rays of the sun piercing the mist. Sally, coming to an involuntary stop, watched with suspended breath. Slowly, slowly the haze was burned off until the sun, golden-red and glorious, smiled at her over the top of Master Wheeler's fine, new house. Then she gave a sigh and turned to Zenas—to find him leaning against a tree, actually almost asleep upon his feet.

“Come, Zenas,” said Sally decidedly, making for the large barn visible at the rear of Master Wheeler's property.

Zenas followed her more slowly, still with his eyes blinking. “Forsooth, 'twas poor rest upon that tavern settle!” he yawned.

“Nay, I found my settle comfortable enow!” returned Sally, glancing up at the drawn blinds of the house and thinking how deserted and forlorn it looked in the morning sunshine.

“Ye had the officers' coats to lie on,” Zenas reminded her, yawning again.

“Aye, 'tis true,” acknowledged Sally. A moment later she said, “Hush!” And with a sudden nervous clasp of Zenas's arm, she came to an abrupt standstill.

“What!” exclaimed Zenas, startled momentarily out of his drowsiness. “I hear naught, Sally!” He looked around him.

“There!” whispered Sally, pointing toward a grape arbor which stood between their destination and them. “That red—thing moving yonder!” She clutched poor Zenas’s arm with pinching and painful intensity. Zenas winced.

“Nay, I see naught!” he insisted, peering obligingly, however, in the direction Sally was staring. “Let go, Sally!” The next moment he burst into laughter, for around the end of the arbor stepped—a rooster! It had been his red comb which Sally had glimpsed moving among the grape leaves!

Sally moved forward, her head held high and her cheeks encarmined. “I see naught comical,” she remarked loftily, and maintained a dignified silence until they had reached the barn, although Zenas, at her heels, went from one explosive spasm of laughter to another.

But once inside the dark, cool stable interior, both girl and boy, after going from one stall to another, stared in perplexity at each other. Not a horse was left in the barn!

“Now here be a pretty kettle o’ fish!” said Zenas, in doleful tones. “Master Wheeler’s family must have taken the horses when they fled. ’Twill be a long, hot walk, forsooth, back to the Mountain!”

Absently, Sally seated herself upon the upturned

end of a small keg standing near by. "Stay—let us think!" she murmured, yawning. "Surely there must be some other way an we only can think o't!"

Silence descended. Sally, sitting there upon her keg, chin resting upon pink palms, thought she pondered—and actually heard the clucking of hens outside the barn door, actually noticed the coolness of the morning air as it melted into the newborn sunshine, really saw the beauty of an ancient apple-tree branch, with a bird's nest swaying in the fork of it—and nodded, nodded. Coming to herself with a start, she found that she had very nearly nodded herself off from her keg. She looked around for Zenas; but no Zenas was to be found. Where had he gone?

Jumping to her feet, she ran to the door and stared in every direction. The neighborhood was deserted. Turning back, then, in puzzled anxiety, Sally's glance happened to fall upon the hayloft ladder, and a look of enlightenment spread over her face. Swiftly she bundled her skirts beneath her arm and climbed. The first object her seeking gaze rested upon, at the ladder top, was Zenas, a veritable Boy Blue, fast asleep in the hay!

It was marvelously sweet and surprisingly cool up there in the hayloft. The sun had not yet managed to dispel the coolness engendered by night by shining fervently upon the roof of hand-

hewn cedar shingles. Later in the day, perhaps, it would be breathlessly warm beneath that sloping roof; but not yet!

Sally stepped out upon the broad, hay-strewn floor. More than half of the storage space was piled with hay—a lovely brown mountain of it. She tiptoed over to Zenas and shook him.

“Boo!” she exclaimed playfully.

But poor Zenas was too utterly weary to answer even boo! He only stirred and sighed and, having shifted his position, sank back again into slumber so deep that Sally stood looking down at him, disliking to waken him.

“Surely it cannot hurt an we linger for a brief nap—’tis so rarely lovely up here!” Her wistful glance found a hollow in the hay, as though created for a couch, and she sauntered toward it. Somehow, then, she found herself sinking down into the hay, found herself snuggling sleepily. “It—cannot—matter, an—we only—rest—a short while!” she told herself, weakly yielding, knowing well that she and Zenas should have been far on their way to the Mountain by now. Both boy and girl paid for their disobedience, however, as we shall see!

It seemed to Sally, for whom, as for Zenas, the night’s rest had not been sufficiently sound to restore vigor exhausted by the previous day’s exertions, that she had barely closed her eyes when

a great boom shook the barn walls. She scrambled to her feet and found Zenas, erect upon his, facing her horrifiedly. A rattle, probably musket shot, sounded below, then came another boom, jarring, ominous! And Zenas stifled a groan.

“What ha’ we done!” he whispered. “The enemy hath come and we still be here! Why did ye not waken me?”

Sally stood in frozen terror. “Think ye—think ye ’tis the enemy?” she whispered back.

Zenas, in spite of his fright, glanced at her disgustedly. “Who else?” His whisper was disdainful. “Think ye the militia are but amusing themselves? Nay, Sally, be not overly foolish! The enemy are come, and we”—he made a precocious gesture of fatality—“are caught like rats i’ a trap, for I doubt an the red-coats be prepared to show mercy!”

“Quick—let us try to escape!” Sally started impetuously toward the ladder hole.

Zenas caught her by the arm. “And be shot by stray bullets?” he asked her grimly. “Nay, ’tis safer here. Mayhap,” he looked at her almost hopefully, “the enemy will pass by!”

Sally blanched as another volley of musket shot broke out, this time obviously nearer. “Zenas—I—I—cannot stay here, i’ this trap!” She jerked her arm from Zenas’s detaining grasp and started for the ladder hole again. But the next instant she was back, her face dead white, her eyes staring. “The

red-coats be below i' the barn!" she whispered below her breath. "Oh, Zenas, must we die like this?"

Strangely enough, it was the boy who took charge in this crisis. "Run to the end of the hay-mow—back, where ye cannot be seen, Sally—and burrow in! I will do the same at this end! Perchance we may escape! Only, go far in, for swords are long, *and—and bayonets jab deep!*"

Ah, now how Sally wished that they had done as Captain Camp had ordered, had not weakly yielded to weariness! If only they were tramping toward the Mountain now! For even had they met the enemy, they might have hidden in the underbrush, as the old refugee had advised, and so escaped! Sally's breath came in great panting gasps—were they to be stuck like squealing pigs? She clenched her teeth to keep from nervous screaming, shrinking as steps upon the ladder could be heard, ascending. Almost as though she were staring at them, with her mind's eye she could see a file of British soldiers clamber up into the hay-loft, to stand with bayonets held in position and an officer following them with drawn sword. But the words which she heard uttered were not imaginary!

"Search the haymow!" came the order in a deep, cold voice. "An rebels be concealed there, we will gie them all they might desire! Attention—*bayonets!*"

Then sounded footsteps, the rustle of hay being swept aside. Sally, burrowing frantically, discovered a prayer upon her lips! Could see, without looking at them, the gleaming bayonets jabbing in and out of the hay! She gasped, because for an instant she felt the sleeve of her gown caught and held, felt her skirt caught and held, and feeling gingerly *she found two slits in the cloth!* And then she knew no more. Sheer, exquisite terror had mercifully robbed her of her senses!

When she recovered her consciousness, a far-away voice was calling her by name. *Sally! Sally!* She gasped, began to push wildly at the imprisoning hay, reached the edge of the haymow, staggered out to air and freedom. Zenas was upon his knees, facing her, pulling in a queer, weak, uncertain manner at the hay, muttering her name. *Sally! Sally!* The girl, staring down at him, thought for an awful moment that he had gone daft from horror.

“Here—here I be, Zenas!” she stammered.

The boy started, glanced up at her wild-eyed, and the next instant had fallen forward into the hay, sobbing. This frightened Sally almost as much as his apparent daftness; but she stood gently by, and presently Zenas’s hysterical sobbing ceased and, shamefaced, he sat erect and searched for his kerchief.

“Are—ye—not—not dead, then, Sally!” he

asked foolishly. Then he was laughing with the girl at his silly question, both rather hysterical, still, from their dreadful experience.

But gradually their overwrought mirth was quieted and their young faces became grave as, comparing rents where the enemy's bayonets had punctured their clothing, they each found it to be a miracle that the other still lived. Zenas, as a matter of fact, had been slightly cut upon the arm; but it was a minor injury, in view of what might have happened!

"How think ye we e'er escaped!" he exclaimed, as he bound his small wound with a kerchief Sally had pulled from her petticoat bag, to hand him.

"Only by the grace o' God, Zenas!" responded Sally. And for a moment there was brief silence as two young hearts sent up very grateful little prayers of thanksgiving, indeed. Then Sally looked at him. "Nay, let me tie the kerchief, butter fingers!" she said.

Zenas had once more sunk upon the hay, and Sally was kneeling before him, her glorious mop of curls falling forward over her face as she bent to tie the rude bandage, when a new voice spoke from the ladder hole. Both sprang to their feet to face the newcomer, terror evident in their eyes as a loathed red uniform was perceived. But the man who advanced toward them smiled and shook his

head as Zenas stepped protectingly in front of Sally.

“*Non, non*—ze cause for ze fright—eet is not needful!” he exclaimed. “I come wiz ze—peace—*dans le main*—in my hand, m’sieur!”

Sally peeped out from behind Zenas. “Ye—ye—mean—ye be o’ the enemy, yet not one o’ them, truly?” she faltered. She gestured below. “Any—any more red-coats down there?” Both she and Zenas held their breath for the stranger’s answer. When the young Frenchman shook his head, Sally heaved an audible sigh of relief. “Marry, ’tis well! Now, prithee continue, sir!”

“That ees all, mademoiselle!” smiled the young man, with a graceful shrug. “My seem-pa-thee—he ees not wiz ze British! I cannot fight ze so nice Americans now zat I know ze nobility o’ zeir cause!”

“Why, then, do ye not fight wi’ them?” asked Sally bluntly. “The patriots, I mean!”

But the young Frenchman stood silent, and Sally and Zenas fell into conversation. Suddenly, the girl felt a touch upon her sleeve, and, turning, she found the foreigner staring wide-eyed at the bayonet rents in sleeve and gown.

“Surely—you were not in ze hay—just now!” he exclaimed, in a horror-stricken tone. “I thought ze British were—were looking for men rebels!”

“The word ‘rebels’ be sufficient!” Sally told him grimly. “Methinks they care not whether rebels be men or not! Were ye wi’ the red-coats who but now searched the hay?”

“*Oui, oui!*” nodded the Frenchman. “I returned,” he went on simply, “for I did not wish to keel the inhabitants who fought only to protect ze—homes!”

“Did ye come Hackensack way?” asked Sally.

The Frenchman shook his head. “I come by ze Elizabeth Town Point—many o’ us! We do ze march to Newark, arriving at noon!”

“’Tis past noon now?” asked Zenas in surprise, speaking for the first time.

“*Oui, oui*—yes, long past!” exclaimed the other. He looked around him. “May I secrete myself in ze hay?” he asked plaintively. “I—I do not wish to fight—I onlee wish to hide until I can escape to France!”

“Why not?” asked Zenas, looking at Sally. “Poor varlet! An Master Wheeler were here, I feel sure he would bid him remain and e’en help him to return to France!”

“Of course,” nodded Sally, with eager sympathy. “Tell him to stay, Zenas!”

So Zenas turned to the young man, who, bowing, had already seated himself with a sigh upon the hay and had removed the high, awkward hat which was part of the British uniform.

“Stay ye here,” said Zenas earnestly, “and we will tell Master Wheeler, an we see him, o’ thy plight, and he will help ye!”

“*Mais oui*—but yes, I intend to remain,” answered the other, with an air of surprise. He rose politely, however, and made a deep bow as the two young people departed, Sally turning to drop him a curtsey at the ladder hole.

“Little I thought,” murmured the girl, glancing back up the ladder at Zenas when she had reached the ground floor of the barn once more, “little I thought when I climbed so blithely this morn those ladder rungs what dreadful experience awaited me!”

“Nay, let us forget about it!” said Zenas, shuddering despite the hot sunlight which slanted in at the open door.

Emerging, they stared about them. All around were evidences of enemy occupation. Windows had been wantonly broken, furniture, some of which had been carried away, had been dumped out in a heap and set fire to and was now but a smouldering pile of ashes. Walking along the market lane toward the Four Corners, Sally saw three or four still forms upon the ground, some clad in the hated red, and shiveringly averted her eyes. There was still the sound of musketry to the west and north, with an occasional boom from a cannon which must have been near the river front, and

when she and Zenas had reached the Broad Lane, they perceived a moving body of men marching northward, the red of their uniforms bright as a danger signal. Zenas declared he saw cattle, too, being driven away by the British!

The girl sat down wearily upon the top step of the pump stairs. "Oh, Zenas," she groaned softly, "I be that hungry, methinks I shall fade into thin air, an we do not eat soon!"

Zenas looked hopelessly about him. "I ha' pence i' my pocket; but I do doubt an any shop be open! Stay!" His face brightened with resolve. "I will go to yon house and beg for food!"

"To Master Alling's house?" Sally looked after him. "Aye, they will give ye food!"

Zenas disappeared around the rear of the house. Presently, to Sally's joy, he returned with a loaf of bread beneath his arm, like a young Benjamin Franklin, and carrying a tankard of milk in each hand.

"No one home," he announced gleefully. "So I did help myself!"

"But there comes the owner now!" Sally, who had been gazing idly up the Market Lane, suddenly told him, pointing.

"Nay, he will not care, for this be war," Zenas was beginning, when Sally gave a cry.

"A red-coat! A red-coat!" she shrieked, dancing

up and down and pointing toward an outhouse at the rear of Master Alling's property. The band of militia, marching down the Market Lane, broke into a run at a command from their leader. Zenas, tankards in hand, stared open-mouthed.

"Nay, ye dream, Sally," he muttered; but Sally would not be stilled.

"A red-coat! A red-coat!" she kept screaming. And when the militiamen had reached her, they, too, saw a flash of red as someone dodged behind a tree.

"Gadzooks, not one but two!" shouted the leader, John Alling. "After them, men!" And then commenced a wild chase, indeed. In and out of prim, fenced-in yards, doubling, redoubling from tree to tree, the hunted red-coats ran. Sally, mad with excitement, followed, and thought she saw Stockton's face glaring at her as he ran. Now, doubly determined the red-coats should not escape, she pursued the militia, coming to a panting stop outside the churchyard whither the hunted men had run. Savage joy engulfed her when she saw the patriots closing in upon the panting, desperate red-coats, who had taken refuge behind a gravestone.

"Caught i' a trap!" she exulted. "Caught i' a trap as bad as our haymow!"

At last, as was inevitable, the enemy were se-

cured! And when this was done, Sally joined in the small, feeble cheer which came from some wounded who had appeared in the church door, attracted by the commotion outside their windows.

But suddenly the girl's hands dropped to her sides and she stared. For the first red-coat who was being hustled toward her roughly by two militiamen was a stranger and the second, stumbling along with his hands tied behind him, his face streaked with dirt and blood from a blow, was *Jerry Lawrence!* He looked up and recognized her. The grim look of accusation upon his thin young face was succeeded by a look so unbelieving, so sorrowful, that Sally shrank back.

"Ah, Sally, Sally!" he groaned, as he was unceremoniously shoved past her, "was it indeed ye who betrayed us?"

That was all. The little moment was gone. Tramp, tramp went the marching feet, and Sally, the tears rolling unnoticed down her cheeks, was left staring after that haggard figure, staggering along with its hands tied behind its back.

"Well," said Zenas's voice behind the girl, "that be two less o' the varlets, forsooth! 'Tis good ye did perceive them, Sally! Here, let us sit down here on the church steps and eat!"

Sally shook her head. "Nay," she said in a low voice, "I—I—be not hungry!"

"But ye said," began Zenas in an amazed voice.

Sally whirled upon him angrily. "I said I was not hungry! Eat an ye will—I cannot!" And to Zenas's stupefied surprise, she turned and followed, at a distance, the militamen and their prisoners toward the town jail.

CHAPTER XIII

SALLY'S LONGING

BUT Zenas soon recovered from his surprise. Hastily gulping down the contents of one tankard of milk, he placed the other where it would not be spilled, and a loaf of bread still beneath his arm, ran after Sally. He caught up to the silently weeping girl before the jail.

“Now, Sally, for love o’ heaven, tell me what ails ye?” he demanded in an amazed voice, planting himself squarely in front of her so that she had to come to a standstill.

Sally shook her head. “Ye—ye would not—not understand!”

Zenas made an impatient sound. “Stop weeping! How know ye I wouldn’t understand unless ye do tell me!” he exclaimed. “Come—was one o’ the red-coats a Tory friend o’ thine!”

Sally nodded speechlessly.

“And ye be sorry ye did betray him—be that it?” went on the boy shrewdly.

Again Sally nodded. A little silence lay between them.

"Ye remember ye told me 'twas not Uzal Ball's lack o' graciousness, but mine own hunger and the heat was the matter wi' me yesterday noon?" said Zenas at last, his absent gaze fixed upon a point over Sally's head.

She looked at him quickly, then she began to blush. Zenas brought a keen gaze to bear upon her lowered eyelids and crimsoned cheeks and smiled to himself as Sally turned slowly away and commenced to retrace her steps toward the church.

"But that was diff-different," sniffed Sally, "for ye had no real trouble to bear while I—while I——" Her voice faded as she paused again, overcome.

Zenas stood waiting patiently until the girl dried her tears again. "Was the red-coat one o' our neighbors?" he asked sympathetically.

"Nay—he was no Tory!" answered Sally faintly. "He was that British lad whom ye mind Squire Todd did shoot last May, the one who did escape from Uzal the day o' the enemy raid on Newark, when Jerry had recovered and Uzal was fetching him to Town to lodge him in the jail, here."

"Aye, I remember," Zenas nodded. "Well, feel not thus badly—'tis the fortunes o' war, and ye did not know 'twas him!" he added consolingly.

"He knows not that!" To Zenas's exasperation—for he was tired and hungry, too—a fresh burst of

tears o'ertook Sally. "He doth think I betrayed him!"

"How can he?" Zenas really tried hard to be patient. "Nay, Sally, be not foolish—the lad will work out matters i' his own mind presently and acquit ye o' treachery to him! Now—sit ye down and drink this milk," he pushed her gently down upon the church step, which they had reached by this time. "And eat some o' this bread, and I wager ye will feel ten times better!" And he handed her a hunk of the bread which he had broken.

Presently, Sally set down the tankard she had emptied and shook her head at the second piece of bread Zenas was holding out to her. "Nay, I have had enow, thank ye, Zenas!" she said gratefully. She rose and made smooth her curls and shook out the little apron she wore. "I do feel much better," she added.

"I knew ye would," Zenas was commencing, when Sally caught hold of his arm.

"See, there be Master Alling now, wi' his men!" she exclaimed, pointing down the lane. The detachment of militia had emerged from the jail, obviously having deposited the prisoners within, and were marching toward the two young people. "Zenas," said Sally hurriedly, "I have but now thought—mayhap Master Alling hath horses!"

"Aye!" exclaimed Zenas eagerly. "Would ye," he hesitated, "would ye dare to ask him for 'em?"

“Why not?” responded Sally. She waited beside the road until the little band of militia had reached her, then she walked quickly out to the center of the lane, and Major Alling halted his men.

“Aye, young mistress?” he asked kindly. “Wouldst speak to me?”

Sally nodded. “Good sir,” she said, in a low voice, “this lad and I be from the Newark Mountain. We brought some bullets to Town yesterday——”

“Aye, Captain Camp did so inform me,” interrupted John Alling. He regarded her with interest. “So ye were the brave lad and lass who did come wi’ those much-needed bullets!” His kind look included Zenas, who had approached and who now flushed and shuffled his feet embarrassedly at such direct praise. “What can I do for ye?” The young man turned back to Sally.

“We have no horses with which to return to the Mountain—our horses, as ye know, mayhap, also—were stolen last night. Captain Camp sent us down to Master Wheeler’s house this morn, there to borrow horses, and there were none left i’ his stable—doubtless his family took them when they fled—and that reminds me——”

Major Alling looked at Sally with curiosity. “Aye?” he prompted.

Sally turned and looked thoughtfully at Zenas instead of replying. “Shall I inform him about—you know?” she asked meaningly.

Zenas nodded. "Aye—for he will, no doubt, see Master Wheeler before we do!"

Sally turned back to John Alling. "There be a deserter from the British Army hidden i' Master Wheeler's barn, sir," she said, dropping her voice that the other militiamen might not hear. "Will ye so inform Master Wheeler an ye do see him? This man be a Frenchman, sir, who said he could not fight against the patriots when he found how noble was their cause. So he hid, that he might escape to France."

Major Alling's frank face, which had darkened at the words "deserter from the British Army," now cleared in approval.

"Aye," he said heartily, "I will so inform Master Wheeler o' his unexpected guest! And now," he looked at Sally questioningly, "ye do want to borrow some horses in order to reach the Mountain? Did I understand ye aright?"

"Aye, sir, an it please ye!"

Major Alling pondered for a moment. "I think I can accommodate ye," he announced, then. "I have, hidden, some horses that my aged grandfather might escape, an he chose, i' case o' enemy attack this day. But the old gentleman staunchly refused to leave and worried about the horses being left i' danger here. So 'twould help us both an ye were to ride them away to the Mountain and there keep them until I come for them." He smiled at the

look of frank relief upon the young faces before him and turned to one of his men. "Ezra," he ordered, "do ye go wi' this lad and show him where our horses be hid, then report to me at the Rising Sun Tavern. Company, attention! Forward, march!"

The young man whom Major Alling had detailed to help them led Zenas and Sally toward the Alling homestead as the company of militia marched on up the Broad Lane. His eyes, which were twinkling blue ones, twinkled still more as he glanced down at Zenas, for the boy was stalking solemnly along, carrying the tankards stiffly before him.

"What ha' ye there?" asked the militiaman good-naturedly.

Zenas flushed and glanced appealingly at Sally, who came to his rescue.

"They be tankards—don't drop 'em, Zenas—they be tankards, sir, belonging to Master Alling," she explained gravely. "Zenas—we—er—borrowed them wi' some milk and some bread, which he—we—found i' Master Alling's kitchen!"

To their surprise and embarrassment, the young man Ezra burst into laughter. "Ecod," he cried, when he could speak, "this be a rare joke on the old grandsire, who doth pride himself upon both his keen hearing and his caution in barring the house during enemy raid! So ye did walk straightway in through unbarred door, eh! The old gentleman was doubtless upstairs at some window on eager

watch! Beshrew me, won't he be chagrined when I tell him, for he hath ever declared he be as alert as any!"

"Nay, do not tell him!" begged Sally. "'Twill only hurt his pride and do no good! Mayhap he did leave the door ope for Master Alling—which only shows his love for his grandson and needs no rebuking! Besides," she blushed, "it did—did help us out mightily, for—for we were nigh to starvation, it did seem to us!"

So the young man promised, and an old gentleman was saved from hurt.

As Sally waited before the house, while Zenas and Ezra went to secure the horses, she could plainly hear sounds of battle coming from the river-front and from the ravines north of the village. There was a queer contrast in this distant din and noise of strife and the peace which brooded over this part of the little hamlet, for the Broad Lane at this point was deserted, as were sundry cross lanes, while those still forms, at which Sally had previously shuddered, had been carried away. The air of peace was further enhanced by the sight of Major Alling's aged grandfather sitting at his upper window, dreaming in the afternoon sunshine. And yet the devastation wrought by the British belied this false calm and security, and Sally, hearing the distant boom of cannon, knew that the brave New Jersey militia were swarming down

from the hills and marching in from the backwoods, still fighting desperately to preserve the integrity of their homes.

But now there were voices approaching, and Sally saw Zenas and Ezra coming toward her, leading two handsome horses.

"'Tis indeed a happy thought—your taking the horses," said the latter, helping Sally to mount, "for there be no knowing an the enemy will return or not! Though 'tis extremely doubtful—for they are making for the ford near Master Schuyler's house on the opposite bank o' the Passaic," he added.

"Didst see the cattle the British were driving?" asked Sally eagerly.

"The British took not only about four hundred head o' cattle, including milch cows, but upward o' four hundred head o' sheep, as well as some horses," the young man told her ruefully. "They must have raided well the countryside as they came from Elizabeth Town!"

"Is't true, indeed!" exclaimed Sally, in a distressed tone. "Oh, the poor patriot farmers. I fear there be a most dreadful winter ahead o' them!"

"Aye!" Ezra shook his head mournfully. "Well, fare ye well! A safe journey home to ye!" And doffing his tri-cornered hat in good-humored valedictory, the young militiaman started off up the Broad Lane after his company.

All along the highway, as Zenas and Sally proceeded toward the Mountain settlement, they were constantly stopped by folk who ran out into their path, pathetically eager for news of the battle at Newark. Sally saw many of the refugees they had noticed the previous night among them and came at last upon the old gentleman who had fled with his daughter and her little children.

“What news? What news?” he inquired, feebly hastening out to them from the roadside, his grandchild having run to report to him of their approach.

“Little can we give ye, sir,” answered Sally pitifully. “Only that the enemy did march through the Town by the River, having arrived there about noon, driving four hundred head o’ cattle and four hundred head o’ sheep, wi’ some horses which they gathered as they came from Elizabeth Town!”

“The varlets!” A bright blaze of anger flung a red banner in the old man’s parchment cheeks. “Robbing us that they may live i’ luxury! Thankee, miss,” he added, as Sally touched her horse and trotted on after Zenas.

Again and again were the young riders detained—almost every farmhouse having its quota of eager watchers out to stop travelers from Newark—and when they came at last to Samuel Munn’s Tavern, they were both tired and hungry. It was just as Sally drew rein before the tavern that the same thought struck her that flashed into Zenas’s

mind. With a simultaneous movement, they slid down from their horses and fled toward the stable-yard.

"Think ye—James will be dead o' starvation?" gasped out Sally, flying along beside Zenas, her eyes wide with horror and remorse.

"Nay—not so—soon!" stammered Zenas. Then, suddenly, he chuckled. "But oh, won't he be *mad!*"

James may have been angry; but not at that moment, for when they drew the bar and flung open the door to the saddle room, it was empty!

Sally and Zenas stared at each other. "Why, James be gone!" said Sally stupidly. "At least—at least—we know he hath not starved to death! Come," she turned wearily away, "let us back to the horses, Zenas!"

"Why not stop here for supper?" suggested Zenas wistfully.

Sally shook her head. "Nay," she answered firmly, turning with decided steps toward the stable-yard entrance, "your mother would not like it an she knew we had tarried thus near home!"

Zenas, who had been lingering, and casting hungry glances toward the kitchen door of the inn, now straightened his tired shoulders at mention of his mother, as Sally knew he would. "Ye be right," he said hurriedly. "Let us go on! I——"

Sally, glancing up in surprise as Zenas's voice,

stopped, followed his gaze to the kitchen door. There stood James Williams, grinning complacently at them, an appetizing chicken bone, temptingly browned and carrying much meat, prominently displayed in either hand! As they stared, he slowly raised one of the bones to his mouth and, sneering at them over it, took off a great bite. Behind him showed the smiling face of the kitchen wench belonging to the inn.

“Ha!” mumbled James, taking another great bite. “Don’t ye wish ye were me!”

“How came ye free?” asked Zenas bluntly, trying not to eye too longingly the chicken bones. Despite himself, however, his gaze sought and envied each great bite James took.

James smiled maddeningly. “Don’t ye wish ye did know?” he taunted.

“Where be Mistress Munn?” demanded Sally.

James’s glance darkened. “What business o’ yours?” he returned rudely.

“She be away—that be certain,” observed Sally, looking significantly at the tavern maid, who flushed and disappeared. “Come”—Sally turned indifferently away—“let us go, Zenas! Naught is gained save discord by remaining here!”

But Zenas shook his head. “I mean to have some o’ that chicken!” he answered determinedly. “James need not think he can taunt us thus!” And as he moved toward the tavern door, Sally stopped

to watch, her own mouth watering, for their fare of bread and milk had been slim, indeed, for the two healthy young folk.

It was hopeless, however. The teasing James maliciously allowed his younger brother almost to reach the kitchen door, when suddenly he slammed it shut in Zenas's very face. And then, from within, Sally and Zenas could hear howls of laughter at the boy's discomfiture, the tavern maid joining in loudly.

Hot tears of anger came into Sally's eyes; but she raised her chin and turned haughtily away once more. "Come ye, Zenas!" she said disdainfully. "Ye will get naught from that fine pair!" And she swept on toward the horses, disregarding the grinning faces which now peered out of the tavern windows.

The rest of the journey back to the Williams's farm was a silent one, for Sally's remorseful thought ever returned to that friend whom she had unconsciously betrayed. As she rode along, anxious wondering furrowed her brow. What would happen to Jerry Lawrence now? Would the patriots, incensed over the invasion of their homes, the stealing of their cattle and sheep, hurry to the jail in the Town by the River and there wreak their vengeance upon the red-coats confined there? Or would those red-coats be treated as military prisoners, granted a military trial, and so escape the wrath of the mob?

The two young travelers were stopped three or four times more and begged to tell of the battle, before they reached home. Sally, looking down into the harrowed, anxious eyes of the women as they demanded news of loved ones, sighed when, at her headshake, they turned and went silently back, children clinging to their skirts, to their doorsteps, resuming their bitter watch, waiting—waiting for the footsteps which might never sound again upon those thresholds. This was the fate of many of those brave Colonial women—the loss of husband or father or brother—for each time the enemy descended upon war-worn New Jersey some patriot paid toll with his life.

At last the girl and boy came within sight of the Williams's farmhouse. Gaunt and forbidding, like the grim old Tory who had built it, its stone front seemed to glower at them suspiciously as they trotted up the road on their horses toward it. Dusk had already descended the slope of the Mountain, beneath the gloom of which the old house stood stark and drear. And somehow the dreariness of that old house seemed to enter into Sally's heart, making her feel outcast, lonely. Somehow, it seemed to say to her, "Why do ye return here? This be not your home—these people not your people!"

Slipping from her horse, as she and Zenas drew rein before the kitchen door, she stood with bright

head a-droop. Even the appearance of Mistress Williams, her face fairly aglow with happiness, in response to a lusty call from Zenas, did not comfort Sally. For Mistress Mary brushed past her unheedingly as she ran to kiss and hug her boy! Sally watched with trembling lips the greeting between the two. The old ache, forgotten in the excitement of the past few days, came back to her. Oh, to have a mother put her arms around one like that, to kiss one so tenderly, so lovingly! Would she, Sally, bond maid to the Todds, never know that happiness?

The next instant the girl felt a warm, soft embrace around her. "Welcome back, Sally!" said Mistress Williams, smiling down at her. "Welcome back, my dear!"

But though the dear lady's kiss upon Sally's brow was sincere and affectionate, the girl realized—and tried not to envy him!—that Zenas had received the real welcome home!

CHAPTER XIV

THE HEROINE OF THE MOUNTAIN

SALLY was standing a-tiptoe, lighting the candles in their tin holders on the high shelf over the Williamses' fireplace, when a sarcastic voice spoke behind her.

"I' good sooth, mistress, art still here? I wonder at ye!"

Sally blew out the wood chip which she had been using as a taper and turned around coolly. "I wonder at ye daring to return!" she answered.

"How so, mistress?" James Williams, hands in coat pockets, teetered back and forth upon the threshold and eyed her with a look in which teasing and maliciousness were equally blended.

"Think ye a traitor to his mother should be welcome?" demanded the girl hotly, her own gaze dark and wide with accusation.

James, however, merely grinned. "Tush!" he said, lazily removing and hanging up his hat upon its wooden peg behind the door. "Where be my mother?" he asked.

Instead of answering, Sally went over to the spinning wheel which stood in the corner and

started its spokes revolving. James's glance darkened at her deliberate insolence, and he was about to stalk over to her, to reprimand, when his mother entered the kitchen from an adjoining bedroom.

"Hush! Best not to start the wheel until little Nat doth fall asleep, he be so wakeful wi' his teeth, Sally!" she said, her fingers to her lips. She glanced at James in surprise; but gave him a cordial kiss when he loungingly approached her. "What, ye home, my dear! Where hast kept thyself since yesterday?"

"I—had business," James told her, after a slight hesitation. "Business i' which my father was interested," he added, well knowing how to close his mother's mouth.

True to James's shrewd surmise, a slight shade passed over Mistress Williams's sweet face, and she did not pursue the subject. Instead, she went over to the fireplace, where she took the bellows and, getting down stiffly upon her knees, prepared to "blaze" the fire for supper. Sally, who had stopped the whirr of the spinning wheel, now came forward quickly.

"Do ye let me 'blaze' the fire!" she begged. "And you do something I cannot!"

James now disappeared and Zenas, coming in slowly and wearily from outdoors, took his place,

"So tired, dear?" asked Mistress Williams, presently hearing him sigh. She looked up sym-

pathetically from the porridge she was stirring over the fire Sally had succeeded in blowing to a splendid glow. The girl sat back upon her heels and stared dreamily into the dancing flames wondering, as usual, about Jerry—how he was faring, what he was doing, what would become of him?

“Tired, Mother—aye, and hungry!” said Zenas. He sank upon the fireside settle to watch his mother.

“Hungry?” repeated Mistress Williams. She looked dubiously from the porridge pot to Zenas. “I know,” she went on, her face brightening. “I’ll make waffles for ye, Zenas! The very thing! Fetch me the flour bag and two eggs, Sally,” she directed, rising to take down the long-handled waffle iron from where it hung beside the Dutch oven door. “And get some butter from the spring house,” she added, calling softly after the girl as Sally sprang up and flew to do her bidding.

Soon the big kitchen began to be filled with the appetizing odor of baking waffles, and the pile of golden, fluffy things began to tower upon the platter Mistress Williams had placed in the warming oven before the fire.

“Hast syrup, Ma?” asked Zenas, getting up to draw his three-legged stool to the supper table, which Sally had set. “Waffles be naught without syrup!”

“Aye, some maple syrup which I did save from

last winter against this treat, lad," answered his mother, transferring an enormous pile of the waffles on to Zenas's plate, which she had warmed for him, and placing it before him. "I did think mayhap I should ha' sent the syrup to the soldiers at Morris Town," she went on apologetically, "but 'twas not enow for many, so I saved it!"

"And glad enow we are ye did, Ma," said Zenas, with a twinkle, taking the syrup pitcher his mother had handed to him and letting the yellow-brown liquid splash down upon the cakes.

"Do ye sit down, too, Sally," directed Mistress Williams kindly, "for ye be as hungry as Zenas, here, I have no doubt!"

"Hungrier!" laughed Sally, obeying her. "Oh, I I was but jesting, Zenas, truly! Stop, that be enow!" she added, as the boy unselfishly gave her the larger half of his pile of waffles.

"There be more to come," said Mistress Williams, smiling. "I wonder where the children are?" She glanced at the clock in the corner.

"Ye wait, Sally," promised Zenas, attacking his cakes with a two-pronged fork. "Ye will indeed want more! The children, Ma?" He glanced over at his mother, who, seated upon a stool, was watching the waffle iron. "Oh, they will be along presently."

There was silence for a while, as Mistress Williams skillfully ejected the delicious morsels from

the waffle iron, greased it, poured in more batter, and, snapping the cover, replaced the iron in the fire, seemingly all with one swift motion. Then candles flickered as the door opened and closed and Master Williams stood before it. His tired, worried face brightened as he took in the cheerful picture—Zenas and Sally chatting and eating at the table, his wife upon her low stool, watching with such an intent gaze the waffle iron! He took off his hat slowly, came forward to kiss his wife, and to place, for an instant, a fatherly hand upon Zenas's shoulder.

“How now, my lad?” he said affectionately, smiling across the table at Sally, “didst have a successful journey to the Town by the River? Mother said ye were going wi' Sally. Ye ha' much to tell us o' the battle and all, this even, I make no doubt.”

Involuntarily, the eyes of the girl and the boy met across their now empty waffle plates. “Aye, sir—there be much o' interest to narrate,” answered Zenas respectfully, then. But Sally, her gaze dropping to the jagged rents in sleeve and skirt, knew that one interesting incident would not be told.

Master Williams seated himself upon the settle and sighed as he passed his hand across his brow. “Bad news, wife,” he muttered. “The battle still rages to the north o' Newark, for the militia are determined that the British shall not pass beyond.

An the British did sweep back this way, o'er-powering the rebels, there be no telling what might happen." His troubled glance traveled around the ancient kitchen, whose beams had stood for so many years. "Troops mad wi' victory oft do not know friend from foe! And e'en the rebels gain the victory, still, sentiment be roused against us who remain loyal to His Majesty—they will resent us as they resent the men who they claim have invaded their homes! While the Amnesty Act hath expired, now, and there be danger—there be danger!"

Mistress Williams, who had been listening silently, rose from her place and, platter of waffles in hand, nodded toward the table.

"Come, Nathaniel," she said, in her cheerful voice, "'twill do ye no good to worry! Live life as ye go along, say I, and fret not about the morrow! An there was aught we could do, then I believe i' being up and doing! But when all we can do is to wait, then let us not fret and grumble wi' the waiting!"

Master Williams looked at her with a smile. "Why, ye be right, wife," he answered heartily, rising and following her to the table as he spoke. "What ha' we here—waffles? Nay, this be an unexpected treat!"

"E'en save us some o' the treat!" drawled a voice, with some insolence, as the door opened and

James reëntered the kitchen, followed by Amos, half scuffling as they made for their seats, and the younger Williams children streamed along after them.

“Sóftly, boys, softly!” exclaimed Master Williams. He glanced at them leniently, however, and as he passed the platter of waffles to them, his glance met that of his wife. “I mind me when the boys were little—always scuffling they were, then, too!” he remarked. “Do ye remember, Mary?”

“Aye, Nathaniel, I—remember!” she answered, with a half catch in her breath. Sally, looking at her obliquely just then, wondered if she imagined the tears she thought she saw in the mother’s eyes, then concluded that she had, as Mistress Williams turned with some playful question to Amos.

Zenas looked resentfully at the pile of waffles James dumped from the platter on to his pewter plate. “I cannot see how ye would be hungry, i’ sooth, James!” he observed pointedly. “Those gorged wi’ chicken should want naught else!”

James merely grinned at him maliciously and reached for the syrup pitcher. Mistress Williams, observing that the waffle platter was empty, started to rise from the table, although her own plate was untouched as yet; but Sally forestalled her.

“Nay,” exclaimed the girl, “let me bake more waffles! See—e’en now have I finished. And ye

must be weary after baking so many!" She flew across to the fireplace at the housewife's grateful nod, and had just greased the iron, had just beaten the batter ready for pouring, when there came the sound of sudden tumult outside the door and a loud knock.

Mistress Williams turned a pale face toward her husband. "Nathaniel!" she half whispered. Forks were dropped along the table as his children turned their faces toward Master Williams.

He opened his lips to speak; but no sound came forth. From where she knelt upon the hearth, Sally could see that his jaw muscles had tightened and his eyes were starting from his head for the instant. A great panic came upon her, and the batter she was about to pour dribbled aimlessly into the fire from her iron spoon as she sank back upon her heels. Was she to witness tragedy, here? For she realized that Master Williams had been living on borrowed time, so far as the patriots were concerned, since he had not taken the oath of allegiance.

Once more came the imperative knocking—rat-a-tat-tat! rat-a-tat-tat! And this time Master Williams nodded to Amos.

"Answer!" he ordered sharply.

As Amos threw open the door, then, there came a surge of excited people into the room, a clamor of voices and discordant calls.

"Hi, Tory—clear out!"

"Aye, ye must go, Williams!"

"'Tis good time, beshrew me an it isn't!"

"What, art lingering here wi' thy fat acres and thy grist mill and all?"

"Tory dog, say I! We want not such as ye i' this neighborhood!"

Master Williams rose slowly to his feet. There was a stunned look upon his face now, as he recognized near neighbors and good friends among that angry gathering. His wife, too, stumbled to her feet, felt her way slowly past her children to place her hand upon his arm. When she had done so, some of the eyes softened as they gazed at her sweet pale face.

"Why come ye here i' this manner, neighbors?" asked Nathaniel Williams. Amos and James, who had remained seated, now rose and ranged themselves one on either side of their parents, and so faced the mob.

One man, evidently selected spokesman, advanced. "Williams," he said coldly, "we ha' not come—*this time*—to do thy person bodily injury! But we have come to see why ye do remain here! The Amnesty Act hath long since expired and having no word o' your swearing allegiance to our cause, we know ye to be Tory. Why, then, are ye here? We demand your banishment and your lands confiscate to the State! E'en this day hath your king sent his troops into our fair land of New

Jersey"—he made a passionate gesture, while his voice grew more and more bitter—"which they did despoil and yet are despoiling! They stole our horses and cattle and sheep and e'en such grain as we have harvested! We hate and loathe that king and all who sympathize with him! So," he fixed a burning gaze upon Master Williams's set face, "we would be rid o' ye and your ilk! And now we are come to see why ye do tarry i' our midst!"

"Neighbors," began Nathaniel Williams. He stopped, choked, made a piteous, pleading movement with his hands. "I will begone!" he said, when only stern silence answered him, "I do—promise—ye—I will begone!"

There was a tense stillness; then, someone starting for the open door, everyone followed like sheep until only the spokesman lingered upon the threshold.

He looked grimly at Master Williams. "Be warned!" he said tersely, "and e'er to-morrow comes, begone!" Then he, too, disappeared into the night, and Zenas ran to close the door.

As soon as they were alone, Mistress Williams broke down. "Ah, Nathaniel," she cried, sinking down upon a stool and covering her eyes with her hands, "I did warn ye, too! why did ye not take the oath—that little oath which might have kept ye safely at home!"

But Master Williams shook his head firmly.

“That oath to save my property?” he asked scornfully.

Mistress Williams looked up in sudden spirit. “To save your life!” she retorted bitterly. “To keep ye at home! Your brother Benjamin did swear!”

Her husband maintained silence, and in his silence Mistress Williams read contemptuous disapproval of his brother’s hypocrisy. She bowed her head and wept silently for a while. But, presently, she dried her eyes, and when her husband, seating himself upon the settle, pulled her tenderly over beside him, she went obediently and leaned her head upon his shoulder.

“Mary,” he said, “ye have been a true wife to me for twenty-two years. I mind ye as a bride i’ your walking-out gown!” He sighed and Mistress Mary’s eyes filled with tears. “But now,” he went on abruptly, “ha’ we come to the parting o’ our ways, for I—for I—” his voice faltered,—“I am going to New York Town to join His Majesty’s army,” he finished huskily.

As Sally stared in incredulous surprise, wondering if she could have heard aright, she saw Mistress Williams slowly raise her head, slowly glance down at the toil-worn hands lying limply clasped in her lap.

“And I shall stay here wi’ the children,” she said, in a low voice. “For I believe right to be on our

side—on the patriot side. Parson Chapman said it, and I do believe it! Go, if you must, Nathaniel—I'll stay here!"

"I shall not urge ye to come wi' me," said Nathaniel Williams in a troubled tone. "But how will ye manage, Mary?"

"Wi' Amos's help—he be a grown man, ye forget, Nathaniel—and wi' James's help," began his wife. But Amos shook his head.

"Nay, Mother, I believe as doth my father, that 'tis disloyal to go against the King," he said quietly. "So must I go wi' him to New York Town to enlist also i' the King's army."

Sally, watching silently from the corner whither she had retreated, saw Mistress Williams's lips tighten, saw her gather together her courage. "Then, wi' James's help," she commenced again.

This time it was James who interrupted. "Nay," he cried quickly, impetuously, "the patriots be fools! I would not stay and fight a losing fight, as it must be. I, too, am going wi' our father!"

"He thinks the fun will be wi' his father and the work wi' his mother!" thought Sally contemptuously, and, glancing across the kitchen, she read the same thought in Zenas's eyes.

Mistress Williams's chin went up. "Then wi' Zenas's help," she said steadily, "and the help o' my brother Dr. Mathias, and o' your cousin Tom, who both be good Whigs, I shall manage some way.

We shall not lack, for wi' your coopering business and the mills, both grist and saw, and wi' this farm, we shall ha' plenty!"

"The forfeit!" groaned Master Williams, his face buried in his hands.

"We shall cross that bridge when we come to it," responded Mistress Williams. There was a little silence, and, during it, Sally saw Zenas creep to his mother, saw her head go down for an instant upon his arm as he stood protectingly beside her. But the next instant Mistress Williams arose so briskly and spoke so cheerfully that one, not knowing, would have thought that part of her family were going for a pleasure journey, instead of setting forth never to return.

"Come, now, there be plenty and more to do, an ye leave this night! Amos, do ye look o'er your and James's linen and clothing and bring it to me for laundering and mending. James, do ye find the saddlebags. Bring them hither! Zenas, ye may bring in several buckets o' water from the brook—aye, and mend the fire, too! Nathaniel!" She turned to her husband, who still sat with his head in his hands. "Nathaniel!" she repeated, and when he raised his face and looked at her blankly, she smiled at him with tender eyes. "Do ye look o'er your papers and set all i' order, dear! Sally, look not so downhearted, lass—do ye clear the table and get the dishes out o' our way. For we ha' work—work,"

she raised her arms toward the ceiling and her voice broke, "thank Heaven we ha' work," she finished brokenly, "to do this night!"

Sally ran over, to drop to her knees before the other. "Oh, ye be brave," she said, with a little sob, pressing the calloused hand to her cheek. "Ye be so brave, dear mistress!"

But a little frown broke upon Mistress Williams's pale, heroic face. It was as if she could not stand sympathy just then. "No time, now, for aught but work, Sally," she said briefly, snatching her hand away and leaving the kitchen hurriedly.

Sally, hurt to the quick, was stumbling to her feet when Zenas paused behind her. "Nay, can ye not see she can bear no more!" he whispered wisely. And the girl, glancing at him, nodded and went about her work.

And how they did work that night! For long hours was the fire kept roaring, with great steaming kettles of water, slung from the crane over it, constantly being emptied, constantly being re-filled. Hour after hour, Mistress Williams and Sally washed and ironed and packed and then, long past midnight, Mistress Williams kindled a fire in the Dutch oven, declaring she could not let her menfolk go without providing them dainties for their journey.

Once Sally saw the poor woman fairly reel from fatigue and sorrow, and almost stupefied, herself,

from lack of sleep, watched Mistress Williams drag the back of her hand dazedly across her forehead as she stood at one end of the long table thumping a flatiron to and fro. Sally staggered over to her.

“Nay, let me iron awhile! See I am not a bit weary!” she said, trying to straighten her tired young shoulders.

But Mistress Williams shook her head. “Nay,” she said resolutely. “I will finish! Do ye rest awhile, Sally, till the bake oven be ready, then will I call ye!” She glanced at her husband sorting over papers, tearing up others, writing, at the other end of the table. “Can ye not rest awhile, too, Nathaniel?” she asked wistfully.

But Nathaniel Williams shook his head and turned in his armchair to look at her. The candle flame between them gave her face an unearthly beauty, and he sighed, then smiled at her. “I must leave my affairs all i’ order, Mary!” he said. “At least,” he sighed again sadly. “I can do that much for ye!”

“Ye be a good man,” returned his wife affectionately, ironing with meticulous care the ruffles upon his best shirt. “An only ye could see the nobility o’ our patriot cause and so remain at home wi’ us!”

But, at that, a cloud passed over his face. “Nay,” he said, “let us not spend our last hours together wi’ argument!” he protested. And there was a brief silence.

Sally, seated upon the settle before the fire, thought she had been watching the flames for but a moment or two when Mistress Williams's low voice spoke in her ear.

"Come, Sally, an ye do wish to help me wi' the pies and a cake," whispered Mistress Williams. "Hush'ee though!" She looked warningly at the girl as Sally started to her feet, and the girl, glancing around, saw Master Williams's gray head supported upon his arms as he slumbered among his papers. The candle, which the girl thought she had noticed but a moment before as being straight and tall, flickered just then and gutted out, burnt to its very end.

Calmly, Mistress Williams took down another candle and, lighting it at the fire, replaced the first quietly, so as not to disturb her husband. Sally, busy now mixing pie crust at the table, saw his wife's hand flutter above the sleeping man's head, flutter and then drop to her side.

"Where be the boys?" whispered Sally.

Mistress Williams came to the table and, taking a cake bowl in her hand, seated herself upon a stool and commenced to stir up the pound cake she had previously gotten together in it.

"I' bed," she answered, "I sent them hours ago, Sally."

"Did I sleep long?" asked the girl, yawning.

"About two hours," answered Mistress Williams,

with a smile. "Poor Sally," she added, "'tis a marvelous cruel way to treat ye! But ye can rest the morrow!" A quick, painful sigh escaped her. "Rest—to-morrow!" she repeated, evidently thinking of the agony of sorrow which should be hers when the first shock of parting should be ended and she had time for rest—or grief!

For a little while, then, silence ensued in the big kitchen—the strange silence preceding the dawn, when the ticking of the clock, the sound of the fire can be so thunderously loud. At last Master Williams stirred, sighed, awoke, to look in profound amazement at his wife sitting there stirring together a cake in the middle of the night. Then remembrance rushed upon him, and he winced, sighed again, got heavily to his feet.

"Do'ee go to bed for a while, Nat," urged his wife.

Sally, watching her, thought again how magnificent she was in her unselfish devotion, in her standing aside and letting her husband decide for himself this problem which had come upon them. How few women would do the same under similar circumstances, how few could resist pleading their own desires!

The girl, glancing at her ever and anon, as Master Williams yielded to his wife's pleading and dragged himself off to bed, was overwhelmed by remorse as she thought of her unjust suspicions

toward this noble woman. How could anyone be more patriotic than she! Certainly, no one in that valley or upon that mountain!

It was the final hours, just before daylight, which were hardest for Sally. Stupidly, she opened the oven door, standing ready with her shovel to drag out crisp, browned pies and cakes, to place them for cooling upon the hearth away from the fire.

She could scarcely believe it was dawn when the candles flickered out and the few windows began to show silver-white in the smoke-darkened walls. Yawning, hardly knowing what she was doing, Sally set the table for an early breakfast and watched Mistress Williams preparing the breakfast porridge.

“Best call the boys!” said their mother finally. “Or, stay”—she gave the porridge spoon into Sally’s limp hand—“I will call them. ’Tis—’tis for the last time—I shall—call—my boys!” And choking, she hurried from the room.

Sally stirred the porridge mechanically. It was almost as though death had entered this house! Truly, the war had sundered this family as completely as death! Truly, it was now neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend, family against family! And Sally, sighing and stirring, nodded as she stirred.

CHAPTER XV

THE VENDUE

THE day of the vendue dawned bright and clear—a beautiful one in early autumn. For weeks, now, the question had been discussed throughout the Mountain settlement and on the adjoining plantations: Should not Mistress Williams, patriot though she declared herself to be and patriot though all knew her to be—should she not be forced to give up her fine farm, her mills, her coopering business, and be forced to flee with her husband and sons? Should not all this property go to enrich the State, whose coffers were empty, as had all the possessions left by other loyalists who, like Master Williams, refused to take the oath and had been banished? Early and late had this matter been topic for conversation, most of the people, to do them justice, declaring that, under the circumstances, it was only fair to allow Mistress Williams to retain what had been left her by her husband at his flight.

Mistress Williams, herself, had maintained an air of placid confidence in public, as though there was

no question to be made of the subject. No one knew, of course, what long night hours she might spend in prayer or in weeping; but certainly each morning she had emerged from her room with little Nathaniel in her arms, to face her world with cheerfulness upon her face.

It was only at first that Sally saw that her superhuman bravery was really the bravery of utter despair. For upon that fatal morning when her sons had told her farewell, when Master Williams had strained her to his heart and, mounting his horse, had ridden away without one backward glance, Mistress Williams had stood as though turned to stone upon the doorstep, her hands pressed against her heart, her eyes strange and staring until at last, with a pitiful gesture, Zenas had managed to get her back into the kitchen and had made her drink the hot milk Sally had ready, and so, gradually, had won her back to normal actions.

But that had been only at first. From that day on, Mistress Williams had gone forward with both dignity and courage. Sally had an idea both had been augmented by a certain momentous conversation that Mistress Williams had had one day with Master Joseph Hedden, who, as president of the Appraisement Committee, had ridden out from the Town by the River to confer with her. He had told her calmly that, according to law, which was no respecter of persons, the property must be confis-

cated. But as for the vendue, that was another affair altogether!

“What do ye mean, Master Hedden?” Mistress Williams had asked, her toil-worn hands clasped in her lap. She had leaned forward anxiously to ask this; and behind her, upon a three-legged stool, Sally had leaned forward anxiously, too, for the girl knew that, if poor Mistress Williams lost her property, she would be cast upon her relatives, with her children, for never, never would she willingly flee to the protection of the British, as her husband had done.

“I mean,” Master Hedden had told her gravely, “that, considering the circumstances, an no one bids against ye, you will be allowed to buy back all of your property, dear mistress, for the bare costs of the vendue.”

“And that is?” Mistress Williams had queried hopefully.

“That will be about five pounds!”

Twenty-five dollars! Of course, that was absurd, in the face of the valuable property involved. At last Mistress Williams, who had been staring straight ahead of her with relief plainly written upon her face, turned and looked at her caller gratefully.

“You are kind, indeed, sir, to tell me so soon,” she said quietly. “I—I can stand aught that befalls an I know I shall not be dependent at this time o’ my life!”

“Madam,” Master Hedden had answered, rising to go, “ye have worked hard to acquire this fortune. As hard, I warrant, as your husband. Why, then, should ye not be permitted to retain it?” He held out his hand to her.

“Not all may think as ye!” Mistress Williams had answered sadly, rising and taking his hand to curtsy. But Sally could see that this talk had been a great help to her during the weeks which followed.

Everyone flew around this morning of the vendue. Sally, who had gone back to the Balls upon Mistress Ball’s due return from Morris Town, had been loaned for the occasion, as it were, and had ridden over the day before to help Mistress Williams in any way she could.

“Now, Baby,” implored Sally, kneeling beside the cradle where lay a screaming, kicking little tyrant, “do let Sally put on your clean gown! So many people do be coming this morn, and ye—oh, please, sweetheart!”

Mistress Williams, entering hurriedly, still trying to clasp with nervous shaking fingers the brooch at her kerchief crossing, approached the cradle.

“There, Sally,” she said, “I will dress little Nat. Do ye finish wi’ the kitchen. Where be Zenas?”

“Zenas be out wi’ the horses. Master Alling did ride up from the Town by the River to obtain the horses he let us have, ye remember, and partly, I think, he wanted to attend the sale,” responded

Sally, rising to her feet and fastening the brooch for Mistress Williams.

Mistress Williams fixed puzzled eyes upon her face. "Horses he let ye have?" she repeated.

"Aye, the day o' that battle at Newark," nodded Sally.

"Oh, of course!" Mistress Williams stood silent a moment, a shade crossing her face. "Sally," she said in a low tone. The girl turned at the anxiety in her voice. "Sally, think ye—think ye there be—anyone planning to bid against us?"

Sally shook a decided head. "Nay," she said gently, "ye ha' been too brave all these weeks, dear mistress, to worry at this late hour!"

The other closed her eyes wearily. "I know," she said, in a smothered voice, "I know—I ha' been brave *on the outside!* I have tried to show my confidence i' the God o' Right by not fretting. But, suppose—oh, suppose, mayhap, some unknown enemy be present! What defense ha' I against his bidding? Why, he might ruin me! And then shall I be cast out, penniless." She fixed burning, restless eyes upon Sally. "Ye do not know how horrible," she continued, "how awful it be to be dependent upon relatives!"

Sally backed away suddenly. "Say ye that to *me?*" she answered, with a slight bitter laugh. "To me, who have known naught but dependence! And that not upon relatives, who at least have the same

blood i' their veins; but upon strangers—some o' whom have not—cared!”

“Ah, poor child, I did hurt ye!” cried Mistress Williams remorsefully. She followed Sally to the corner whither the girl had retreated in sudden passionate weeping. Tears were in the lady's eyes, too, as she bent and kissed the other. “Truly, I did not mean to hurt ye!” she apologized gently. “Indeed I did not!”

Sally dried her eyes. “I know ye did not,” she answered. “And why I weep when I ha' such friends as ye and Mistress Ball, I know not. Mayhap,” she stared off into space with brooding gaze, “'tis because I have known peace wi' you and do dread a return to what lay before!”

“Aye?” Mistress Williams watched her with quiet eyes, in which compassion lay deep.

“I mean,” said Sally stormily, “I mean that, much as I do long to see Master Todd again, much as I long to know that he be safe and not dying, mayhap, upon some enemy prison ship—I could live forever, without one regret, an I never saw—Mistress Todd again!”

“Poor child!” murmured Mistress Williams, tucking up the riotous curls beneath Sally's cap as she spoke. She had forgotten her own anxieties in those of Sally's. But all at once the clamor of her little son broke out again. Ignored, he had fallen to placidly sucking his thumb. Now, however, sud-

denly realizing his neglect, he broke into a series of terrific howls which brought his mother to his side in short order.

"There, there!" she exclaimed, picking him up. She laughed as she looked into his puckered, crimsoned little face, and laughed still more when, catching sight of Sally, he commenced to gurgle and babble her name, with the tears still wet upon his smiling cheeks.

Sally, smiling back, felt better in spite of herself, and soon was moving briskly about her work. It was early still, yet neighbors might soon be gathering, and it were well to have everything in perfect order.

Presently Zenas, followed by Master Alling, entered the kitchen. Mistress Williams, hastily replacing the baby, now cleanly garbed, in his cradle, and giving him a rag doll to play with, rose and dropped a curtsy to match the one Sally smilingly bestowed upon the young man.

"So ye were the kind gentleman, forsooth, who helped out my young folk that day i' Newark," she said graciously, advancing to him.

"Nay," he protested laughingly, bending over the hand she extended him. "'Twas the young folk who helped me, madam! Though the British did not return to the Town that day, they might have, and though they did not find my horses the first time, the second time they e'en might have! So, ye

see!" And he gave such an eloquent shrug and laughed so merrily, they all joined in.

But now a shadow darkened the door, and Sally, glancing up, uttered a low cry, for she had the strange hallucination that Stockton was standing there, staring at her. It was only an ancient bel-dame, however, bent forward beneath the weight of her years upon a cane she tapped before her and gazing curiously around her from the depths of the enormous poke bonnet she wore.

"Be this the place advertised for sale?" she cackled, in a high, quavering voice.

While Zenas muttered at himself for not having closed the door after him, Mistress Williams drew herself up proudly. Then she noticed the other's years and refrained from the sharp reply which trembled upon her tongue.

"Aye, mistress," she answered civilly.

"Mind ye an, perchance, I take a look around?" pursued the aged hag, obviously preparing to advance into the kitchen.

"Why——" began Mistress Williams dubiously.

But Sally took an impulsive step forward. "Nay!" she exclaimed, glancing from Mistress Williams to the old woman. "Why should she be allowed to poke and pry, dear mistress? She doth not understand the terms of this vendue, forsooth! May I explain them to her?" Then at Mistress Williams's nod, the girl turned swiftly to the old

woman, only to fall back amazed. For she thought she saw venomous fire and youth staring at her from the depths of the poke bonnet. The next instant the old dame's eyes were studiously regarding the pattern of the sanded floor and Sally, telling herself that she had imagined too much, once more advanced a step. "Ye do not understand, grandame," she said, briskly kind. "This farm be forfeit to the law, 'tis true. Yet is the owner only to bid—no one else! There is to be offered no opposition to that one bid!"

"How so?" demanded the old woman sourly. "Be this not a public vendue, whereto all ha' been invited by public notice? Then 'tis not likely the owner, who hath been liable under the law, will be allowed to retain it!"

"Still," said Sally hotly, all of her brisk, cool kindness vanishing at this unexpected opposition, thinking that never in all her life had she seen quite such a disagreeable old lady, "still 'tis understood, I tell ye, grandame, there is to be no other bid than hers!"

"Well, we shall see, we shall see," muttered the old woman. And turning abruptly away, she hobbled off. Sally, watching her from the door, gave indignant report of her movements.

"Why," cried Sally, "she be examining every bush and tree as though she were expecting to

purchase this place! Now she be looking, with an air o' ownership, across the garden! Now she be peering down the well! Now she be hobbling toward the barn!"

"Say ye so!" Zenas turned toward the door. "She may be a thief, for a' we know. I'll go wi' her—prying old fingers could steal and hide beneath that ragged cape much o' value that be lying loose around the barn!"

They all laughed at Zenas's angry bounce as he departed; but soon Sally saw soberness returning to Mistress Williams's countenance. "I wish this vendue were well over," she sighed nervously, smoothing down her gown with trembling fingers. "This incident but shows how we be at the mercy o' any who come!"

"Fear not, mistress!" said John Alling sympathetically. "For every enemy—though I doubt the existence o' one for such a sweet lady—ye will ha' twenty friends present this morn!"

Mistress Williams acknowledged his compliment with a faint smile. "Still, sir," she sighed, "I wish it were already night, wi' the vendue well o'er!"

Sally, who had moved over to the window after Zenas had closed the door behind him, now turned to them. "People be driving in from every direction," she announced, excitement in her voice. "'Tis just as though a signal had been given! Oh,

such a throng! I suppose in the direction o' the settlement the turn o' the road hath hidden them till now!"

Mistress Williams gave a nervous shudder. "Say ye so—they do come?" she exclaimed, in a high-pitched voice which showed the strain she had been enduring. "Is't that late already?" And her glance traveled distastefully to the corner clock.

"Yet were ye wishing the vendue well o'er!" John Alling laughed softly at her inconsistency, trying to cheer her. He turned as Joseph Hedden entered the kitchen.

"Good-morrow, all," said Master Hedden cheerfully. He advanced and took the cold hand Mistress Williams tremulously extended to him. "What!" he exclaimed, keen eyes upon hers. "Not fretting, mistress, I hope! Tut! Tut!" He clucked his tongue chidingly. "After what I did tell ye?"

"I know," she answered, coloring faintly. "Yet suppose——"

"Suppose naught!" returned Master Hedden roundly. "Ye ha' many friends out yon, madam!"

"E'en what I was telling her!" interrupted John Alling reassuringly.

"Ye all be good to me!" said Mistress Williams simply. She gave a quick, labored sigh. "And truly will I try—not to fret!" Her voice died away upon the last three words and only Sally, who stood

behind her, saw her hands clench for a moment in the folds of her gown. The next moment Mistress Williams turned a bright face toward her. "Shall we go forth, Sally, and greet our good friends?" she suggested. "Fetch me my cardinal from yonder peg, and do ye don your cape, my dear, for 'tis sharp out. The hoar frost lay thick upon the ground this early morn!"

Sally, about to follow Mistress Williams out into the garden, whither a throng had gathered, as she had reported, was stopped by a straight-shouldered, fine-looking man, uniformed in blue, who came briskly up the stepping stones toward her.

"Why, Captain Littell!" exclaimed the girl in friendly greeting. "Is't you, indeed!"

"So ye do remember me," returned the leader of the Jersey Blues, with a pleased smile. "Aye," he continued, "methought this vendue should be attended by some o' our men!" And Sally, following his significant glance, saw a number of blue-uniformed men strolling through the crowd.

"Why——" began Sally, her eyes upon the muskets carelessly displayed upon blue-clad arms.

"E'en so," smiled Captain Littell. "Is Major Alling within?" he added quietly, nodding toward the kitchen door.

"Wi' Master Hedden," Sally told him. Then she flew after Mistress Williams, new-found hope and relief in her girlish breast.

Mistress Williams was talking to her friend, Esther Ball, and to Uzal Ball when Sally came hurrying up, and turned in some surprise to glance at the girl's shining eyes and rosy cheeks. Her own gaze traveled to Uzal's face, and though she found pleasure there, when she looked back at Sally, she knew at once that that young bachelor was not the cause of the girl's obvious delight. Indeed, Sally paid not the slightest attention to him as she stood with clasped hands before them, her eager gaze upon Mistress Williams.

"Why, Sally lass," said Mistress Ball indulgently, "hast no words for Uzal or me this morn?"

Sally, at that, took and squeezed the hand her friend held out to her and dropped Uzal a hasty curtsy, then turned once more to Mistress Williams.

"Well, speak, child!" laughed that lady. "'Tis plain ye be dying to tell me something! Is't aught o' great importance?" And she exchanged a confidential glance with Mistress Ball.

"Oh, dear mistress," gasped Sally, "Captain Littell hath e'en now arrived!"

"Captain Littell?" A puzzled look dawned upon Mistress Williams's face. She shook her head in impatient denial of knowledge of his identity.

"Captain Littell o' the 'Jersey Blues,'" explained Uzal, at this point. He looked meaningfully at her. "Why, then, wi' his men—and here be one,

now!—circulating the throng, there will be none who dare to bid against ye!”

“Aye?” Mistress Williams gazed eagerly after the blue-clad figure which, musket in elbow-crook, had just brushed past her. She turned relievedly to Sally. “Ye be right,” she said smilingly. “’Tis good news, indeed, ye do bring me!”

Now there was stir among the crowd. Everyone commenced to move toward the kitchen door as it opened, and Master Hedden, followed by John Alling and Captain Littell, came out and established himself upon the doorstep. There was a suppressed murmur of excitement through the gathering. Sally, who stood to one side, in the foreground, with Mistress Williams and her friend and Uzal, glanced inquiringly around for Zenas; but she did not see him until the vendue was formally declared open by Master Hedden. Then she saw the boy at a distance, stalking after that same ancient hag who had appeared in the kitchen door and who now hurried from the direction of the barn with surprising agility and speed for one so old. Reaching the throng, the old woman melted into its outskirts, and Zenas, glimpsing Sally’s beckoning finger, came around the edge of the crowd and stood, his arms belligerently folded, beside his mother.

Sally longed to whisper in his ear, so set and grim was his pale young face; but she did not dare,

in the foreground as she was. Too many curious eyes were upon her to make her aught but self-conscious and afraid to speak.

Master Hedden first read the proclamation known as the Amnesty Act, which had been passed by the Legislature on June 5, 1777. This act, as has been explained, provided forgiveness to all those who would swear allegiance to the patriot cause before it expired.

“And now,” Joseph Hedden looked slowly around him, “ye have been advised by public notice that this land, belonging to one Nathaniel Williams, hath been forfeit to the State, inasmuch as the owner thereof did not swear to the prescribed oath, did, instead, flee this State o’ New Jersey and take refuge wi’ the enemy i’ New York Town. Therefore, I declare this man’s property be confiscated and open now to bids i’ course o’ vendue!”

Silence. Throughout that throng of at least five hundred people it might be said that almost one could have heard a leaf dropping to the earth. Involuntarily, eyes rolled toward those muskets displayed here and there, and no one spoke a word. Mistress Williams stood with tense mouth, and eyes burning in her white face. At last Master Hedden looked toward her inquiringly.

“As president o’ the Appraisement Committee, I do stand here ready to receive bids,” he suggested.

Zenas nudged his mother. “Speak, Ma!” he whis-

pered hoarsely. "Master Hedden be a-waiting ye!"

Still silence dwelt upon that crowd. More silence. Until, all at once, a high, quavering old voice cackled out, at the rear of the gathering. "I do bid——"

There was an outburst of laughter. A slight turmoil occurred in that vicinity. And the shrill old voice was stilled so abruptly that one might have imagined that a hand, emerging from a blue sleeve, had been clamped none too gently over the aged one's mouth. In the pause which followed, Master Hedden again looked toward Mistress Williams. And this time, her head held high, Nathaniel Williams's wife stepped forward and in a low but perfectly clear voice, offered the sum of five pounds for all that confiscated property!

Master Hedden accepted this offer so quickly that it might have been viewed with suspicion, had there not been quite so many blue uniforms about. As it was, the ancient beldame, who had been laughingly hustled off the grounds by two of the "Jersey Blues," could be heard muttering and grumbling to herself as she hobbled off down the road. However, had those same "Blues" followed her far, they might have been both surprised and interested, for entering a certain ravine, the old woman presently came out a young man, who briskly started off again toward the Mountain settlement!

But now the muskets, which had been so prominently displayed, were slung up out of the way and the vendue turned into an outdoor reception, with Mistress Williams holding gracious levee upon her doorstep.

When the final guest had departed—all save Mistress Ball and Uzal—Mary Williams turned to the bright young face at her elbow.

“Ah, Sally,” she sighed, catching the girl’s mittened hands in hers, “I know not what I shall do wi’out ye! ’Twill be a lonely house wi’out Sally!”

Mistress Ball looked at her reproachfully. “But think how drear our house would be wi’out the maid!” she said.

Sally stood looking dubiously from one to another. Were they making fun of her? Then, suddenly—and her heart sung with the knowledge!—she understood that she had been missed, indeed—and that now she was wanted! *Wanted!* She who had eaten the ungracious bread of begrudging hospitality!

“And ye ha’ young people left i’ your house!” went on Mistress Ball gently. “Nay, Mary, lure the maid not away from me!”

“Aye, ’tis true! Yet shall we all miss ye! Farewell, Sally!” sighed Mistress Williams, while Zenas said a bashful farewell over his mother’s shoulder.

“Farewell, dear mistress!” answered Sally, wondering why she felt so much like weeping, when she

should have felt like singing, like shouting, with that wonderful knowledge that she was wanted—somewhere!

So, turning, she walked away between Uzal and his mother, very slim, very pretty—and still very young! So young that she rushed back to throw affectionate arms around Mistress Williams's neck, to implant a kiss upon the astonished and rather resentful Zenas's cheek, and rush away again!

CHAPTER XVI

TO MORRIS TOWN

ONE morning Sally sat up and looked about her blinkingly. Where was she? This was not her little room beneath the eaves at Master Todd's! Nor was it the room she had shared with one of the younger Williams children at the Tory Corners house! Then remembrance rushed upon her, and she lay down again with a smile.

She was in the built-in bed between the chimney and the wall which she had been sharing with Mistress Ball in the long room directly over the kitchen of the Ball house. The bed was like a modern Pullman car berth, partitioned off from the rest of the bedchamber by wood and entered through a narrow door which could be latched behind the occupants. A tiny window, directly over the kitchen door, through which General Washington had escaped with his horse the May evening of Sally's arrival, gave both light and air to the queer cubbyhole, while the great chimney at the girl's feet in winter time might have been very pleasant with its heat, but this rather warm autumn morning

was quite superfluous, for Indian summer had come upon New Jersey.

Presently, a noise in the room outside the built-in bed seemed to indicate that Sally had overslept. She sat up and, pushing open the door, laughingly thrust out her nightcapped head. It was Rachel Ball, busily mopping up the wide, uneven floor boards, who greeted her.

"Overslept?" repeated Rachel, in answer to Sally's sleepy question. "Well, not much, my dear. 'Tis six o'clock, of course; but Mother and Uzal got up extra early—four o'clock—for Uzal be going to Morris Town this day."

"Aye?" Sally sprang out and began to dress, shivering a little when the morning breeze struck her through a window Rachel had opened to air the room.

"Aye," returned Rachel idly, eyeing the glorious mop of curls Sally kept thrusting impatiently up beneath her nightcap. "What hair ye have! 'Tis really a most unusual shade, Sally!"

"The Holden red!" quoted Sally ironically.

"What?" Rachel glanced at her, wrung out her wet floor cloth, and swished it briskly over the floor.

"Nothing!" exclaimed Sally hastily. "I was but jesting! Go on, Ray!"

"H'm, where was I?" Rachel bent her brow.

"Ye said Uzal was going to Morris Town," Sally reminded her.

“Oh, aye! Well, that case o’ the red-coat comes up before the Council o’ Safety to-day; ye know, the young red-coat who escaped and was caught i’ Newark not many weeks ago. Since Master Todd be not yet home, Sheriff Carmichael hath requested Uzal to appear as a witness against the youth. And so——”

But here Rachel stopped short and stared. Sally had scrambled into her gown and had shot out of the door and down the three steps into the central hall and thence down the porch steps like a rabbit trying to escape the swoop of a hawk. Her clear young voice presently floated up to Rachel Ball’s listening ears.

“Uzal! Oh, Uzal, take me wi’ ye to Morris Town!”

“Well”—Rachel shook her head critically—“I must say the lass lacks not boldness, forsooth!”

Downstairs, beneath the big walnut tree, Uzal, already mounted upon his horse, though still conversing with his mother, looked with amused eyes at Sally’s dishevelled figure flying toward him. The Widow Ball turned in surprise and some displeasure.

“Why, Sally, whate’er put such an idea i’ your head?” she said reprovingly.

But Uzal came unexpectedly to Sally’s help. “Let her come, Mother! The company will be pleasant for me, and I will vouch her safe return!

Besides, now that I think o't, she might be needed as a witness, though the sheriff did not mention bringing her," he said.

Mistress Ball hesitated as she glanced at Sally's beseeching face. "But the lass has had no breakfast!" she protested.

Sally clasped her hands. "Give me but a little bread—'twill be more than enough!" she pleaded, and at last Mistress Ball, who had the kindest heart in the world, nodded her head.

"Best take your cape, Sally. We may return late, and these nights sometimes turn cool!" advised Uzal then. "I will go and saddle another horse while ye make ready!"

Half an hour later, they were trotting out of Millburn village, well on their way along the narrow bridle path to what is Morris turnpike at this present day. Now, when they reached it, they found it to be a country road much like the lane which led past the Ball house; but it was wider than the bridle path through the Short Hills and here they could trot side by side. Along they went, up over the Sow's Back at Summit, the ridge Washington used as a signalling station for the Continental Army, through Chatham village, over the Bottle Hill at Madison, and so on into Morris Town.

Wending their way into that lovely village, nestled among its hills, Uzal guided his horse di-

rectly to the Arnold Tavern, which had been used by General Washington for his headquarters during the previous winter. Sally, waiting outside upon her horse while Uzal entered the inn, glanced up curiously at the windows of the room used by His Excellency as a bedroom. This room, as well as a second small room he used as his office, adjoined the long assembly room over the inn kitchen—the assembly room which was to be used afterward, during the army's second winter quartering at Morris Town, for the fêtes and routs planned by the gay young French and American officers stationed there.

Presently, Uzal emerged from the tavern and pointed at the windows at which Sally had been gazing. "Did ye know that, i' that modest little room, His Excellency was lying sick almost unto death last winter?" he asked. "He was so ill that 'twas rumored he had selected his successor, General Greene, when Madame Washington arrived and nursed him back to health!"

"What a good wife she must be, despite her wealth!" exclaimed Sally, staring back over her shoulder at the tavern as they trotted away toward the Morris Town green.

"Wealth has naught to do wi' it," answered Uzal, smiling. "Mayhap ye will ha' opportunity to peep into those rooms later, Sally, which some

day will be famous, for I ha' made arrangements to return there for dinner wi' Master Arnold."

"Oh, that will be fun!" Sally gave an excited little bounce in her saddle. She was destined, however, as we shall see, not to visit the little tavern rooms that day.

Drawing rein before the court house upon the village green, Uzal alighted from his horse. "Ye might walk about the green while I be inside, Sally," he suggested.

Sally looked at him in keen disappointment. "Am I not going inside?" she inquired dismally.

Uzal could not resist a smile at her doleful face. "Not yet," he consoled her. "I must first see an ye can be admitted."

Sally had scarcely turned away when he came to the court-house door and beckoned to her. As soon as she came up to him, having turned back and discovered his crooked finger, he spoke dryly: "'Tis well I brought ye. Your name be upon the list o' witnesses against the red-coat, Sally. My friend John Martin, who be door man here, did show me."

"Against Jerry?" Sally stopped short upon her way into the court house and looked up innocently at her escort. "Why, Uzal, be *that* why ye came to Morris Town?"

"Aye." Uzal looked at her keenly, but her face

showed only bland surprise. Taking her by the arm, the young man led her past the doorkeeper into the court room where, seating herself upon the edge of the chair, Sally gazed about her curiously.

Five men were seated in the big room, while a sixth, clad in the uniform of a Continental officer, was upon his feet, speaking, obviously summing up orders just given verbally to him by the chairman of the council.

“This being correct, Governor Livingston, Mr. Condict, gentlemen, I bid ye good-morning,” finished the officer. He bowed and was gone, and the governor, who had come from Elizabeth Town to preside at this meeting, turned to the newcomers and bowed sternly in response to Uzal, who rose to his feet and bowed respectfully in his direction.

“Master Uzal Ball”—the governor glanced down at a paper lying before him upon the table—“wilt kindly relate the circumstances surrounding the arrest o’ one Gerald Lawrence listed here as Tory spy serving i’ His Majesty’s Army?”

Uzal did so, in simple, straightforward language which Sally could not help noticing impressed his hearers. He did not, however, correct the impression that Jerry was a Tory and a spy!

“Thank you, sir,” said Governor Livingston, when Uzal came to a stop. “Now, mistress, please tell me what ye know o’ the case. Ye are listed as

bond maid, serving i' Master Todd's family at the time o' this Tory's first arrest. Is this true?"

"Aye, sir, true enough concerning me," responded Sally in her low, clear voice, "but not true regarding Master Lawrence!" She raised her head and looked steadily at the governor. Uzal suppressed an exclamation and half arose to his feet. As the others glanced curiously at him, he flushed a dull red and reseated himself. Sally was conscious of his burning glance upon her during the rest of her recital; but she kept on, speaking slowly and distinctly and trying to marshal her facts to bring about belief in her statements, for Jerry was her friend and Jerry must not go to the sordid death of a hangman's noose on Morris Town green. "Not true about Master Lawrence, sir! He is an Englishman, sir, enlisted overseas, the ward o' Lord Holden, according to his own statement, and entitled, since he wore his uniform and was arrested as a British officer, to being treated as prisoner o' war, not as a Tory or a spy, sir!"

Governor Livingston adjusted the spectacles he wore and stared down at the paper before him. "Why, this be strange!" he exclaimed. "Here be Gerald Lawrence, Tory, and committed to the jail as such. Who escorted the prisoner to the Town by the River? Did you, Master Ball? This be your name I think, signed to these papers."

"I did escort the prisoner to Newark, in lieu o'

Master Todd, who, an I remember, had to return home unexpectedly because o' an accident to his wife. But I did not commit him to jail, sir, for he escaped. Afterward, he was recaptured—'twas the battle at Newark when he was arrested by one Master Alling, sir. He was listed as Tory afterward, at my request, for I believe him to be Tory! As for his fabulous tale o' being a ward o' Lord Holden's, sir—ha, that be rich, indeed! He be naught but a spy, sir, and——” But here Uzal, who had leaped to his feet and ranted this out in a loud voice, was interrupted by the governor.

“I believe I ha' asked ye but the one question, which ye did answer, Master Ball,” he said ironically. “What ye believe, sir, does not concern any o' this council. Have the prisoner brought before us, Master Martin, so that we may form our own beliefs!” He turned to the doorkeeper; but before Master Martin could move, Uzal's voice rang out triumphantly.

“The prisoner be lying ill unto death wi' the plague,” he said.

Governor Livingston frowned. “He hath the smallpox?” he questioned.

Uzal nodded. “Aye, sir.”

“Where is he confined?”

“I' the Presbyterian church, sir, which the army ha' been using as a hospital for the plague wi' Parson Johnnes's permission,” answered Uzal.

“How knew ye o’t?” Governor Livingston looked at the young farmer quite sharply over his spectacles.

Uzal flushed, but answered readily enough. “Master Arnold told me, sir, o’ the facts. I cannot say how he knew, but gossip ever makes its rounds, sir.”

Governor Livingston tapped the table as he pondered, then he glanced dryly at his colleagues. “Gentlemen, ’tis strange ways we receive our information at times. Tap-room gossip is not always o’ the brew! I suggest that Master Martin be sent to verify this news o’ the prisoner and later report to us. Also report why we were not sooner informed o’ this Lawrence’s illness.” He looked inquiringly at the others, who nodded. “Then, gentlemen, we are adjourned for the noon hour and will convene this afternoon at two. Master Ball, you and the young lady also are requested to appear here at that hour.” And Governor Livingston arose from behind his table with an air of relief.

Sally glanced more than once at Uzal’s dark, set face as they mounted their horses and rode back to the Arnold Tavern. She was sincerely sorry to have offended the young man, both on his mother’s account and on his, for he had been very kind to the little bond maid during the time she had been staying at the Ball house. But her whole sense of justice cried out against what he had tried to do.

She tried hard, as she rode along beside Uzal Ball, to believe that he had performed this wrong from a mistaken sense of patriotism, that he had actually believed Gerald Lawrence to have been lying when telling of his guardian, Lord Holden. Yet Sally was going to try her best to keep Uzal from performing a crime in the guise of patriotic zeal, the crime of convicting Jerry Lawrence of being a traitor against a country whose citizenship he had never claimed.

Uzal spoke shortly to her when they drew rein before the Arnold Tavern. "Stay upon your steed, Sally. I be going in to countermand my order for dinner here and go over to Dickerson's Tavern. Governor Livingston is to dine here and 'twould not be pleasant to remain, under the present circumstances."

Plainly Uzal was smarting beneath a sense of hurt, because his word had been doubted by the governor. As for Sally, the meager breakfast she had partaken of had left her ravenously hungry, and she could only hope that Captain Dickerson's cook would not keep them waiting long.

As they turned their horses' heads toward Dickerson's, on what is now Spring Street at the corner of Water Street, Sally looked with interested eyes at the fine-appearing inn, with its many large windows across the front of the building, with its beautiful door and the inevitable Colonial decoration of side lights and fan-shaped

glass over the door, and with the iron railings that ran across the large stone stoop, forcing one to use the steps which had been built at one side of the stoop. A large well, with the picturesque well sweep of those days, together with the great chimneys of the inn, completed this picture of snug prosperity in 1777.

Inside the inn there was an air of cool peace in contrast to the bright sunshine and busy scene outside, and presently the unexpected guests were summoned to a bountifully spread dinner which satisfied even Sally's sharp appetite.

Captain Dickerson, a fine-looking man of about fifty-three, a member of the Provincial Congress in 1776, was present. Stealing furtive glances at him from beneath her long lashes, Sally was at last surprised in one, and she blushed when he smiled. Uzal spoke at that moment, however, and the host shifted his gaze to the young man.

"I understand," said Uzal, "that your company—the Fifth Company, Third Battalion, was it not?—was the one whose men reënlisted in a body that time last year when so many men declined to reënlist?"

Captain Dickerson smiled at this heavy compliment; but he acknowledged it with only a slight bow and then went on modestly to speak of other matters. Sally, noting how this was lost upon Uzal, who tried persistently to bring back the sub-

ject, thinking to please the other, thought at once of Jerry Lawrence and his quick, delicate perception. She sighed as she thought sadly of the young Englishman lying so sick at this moment among strangers!

Raising her glance, her eyes rested inadvertently upon a lackey who had entered just then and was bending over Captain Dickerson to deliver a message. Sally stared. There was something familiar about that back! Then, as the man turned around, their eyes met. It was Stockton!

At once the Tory leaped toward the window, but Sally was at his heels. Seizing his coat, she cried out to the astonished Captain Dickerson, who was staring at this strange behavior of his servant. It took only a second for Uzal and the host to recover their wits; but during that second Stockton slipped out of the sleeves of the coat Sally was grasping and, leaping through the open window, was away.

"A spy!" gasped Sally, half crying. "A Tory spy, sir! Oh, why," she wrung her hands bitterly, "why did not someone stop him!"

At that moment a shot down the village lane rang out. The girl's hands dropped slowly to her sides. The two men stared at each other. Then Captain Dickerson stepped to the window and looked out. "Mistress," he said then, turning around, "there is no spy left now, to our knowledge, i' Morris

Town! Someone other than yourself must have suspected this servant's identity!"

"Ye mean——" Sally's face whitened with horror. What the other meant seemed impossible in the sweet, bright sunshine! It could not possibly be true!

"I mean the man ye dubbed a spy has gone to his final accounting," returned Captain Dickerson soberly. "He has but now been shot by an American soldier. Wilt look?" And he stepped aside for Sally to see.

"Nay!" Sally covered her face with her hands and shrank away. "Oh, this dreadful war!" she half sobbed.

Uzal moved forward impatiently. "There be better causes for weeping than the death o' a Tory spy, Sally," he said harshly. "Come, we must be returning to the court house!"

This dreadful war! All of its somber gloom seemed invested in the court room when Sally and Uzal resumed their places there. Clouds in the blue sky through the small, many-paned windows were blotting out the sunshine; and as Governor Livingston came in and took his chair to resume the trial, a quick patter of raindrops beat in a little gust against the window glass.

Soon the name of Gerald Lawrence was called out, and the doorkeeper stepped to the front. "I beg leave to report to your honor that the state-

ment that Gerald Lawrence be confined to the hospital wi' the plague be true, sir," he said, in a level voice.

"Then he is not able to appear before this council?" Governor Livingston scowled.

The doorkeeper shook his head. "He is dying, sir!"

There was a shocked moment of silence. Sally's eyes crept across a crack in the ceiling—what a crooked crack it was! Jerry was dying! Through a daze the words came to her. Jerry was dying—her friend! This dreadful war! All the sunshine was blotted out! But, no, that was the weather—just a shower—the sun would come out again, if not today, then to-morrow. But, *Jerry*—why, she might never see that nice smile again, that flash of white teeth and the merry brown eyes! It was Jerry, her friend, who the doorkeeper had said was dying! She turned a blank gaze upon Governor Livingston, rose mechanically to her feet when the governor briefly dismissed them, and thanked Uzal for coming from the Mountain settlement to testify.

Uzal, silently helping her upon her horse after carefully cloaking her, felt a little pang of pity at sight of her pale, set young face. She was young, after all, prone to make mistakes. His pity melted the bitterness he had felt toward her for trying to testify for instead of against the young red-coat! After all, he thought, the lad had not been half bad.

He was pleasant enough, though—and here Uzal's lips thinned fanatically—he should be restrained, of course. And Sally, warm-hearted, impetuous, was only to blame as a friendly little kitten might be blamed, not sternly, certainly not punished.

So, as they plodded through Morris Town on horseback, with the rain beating down upon them, Uzal was careful to converse lightly, to point out all the places of interest. That was Parson Johnnes's house—yes, that fine-looking one—and there the orchard where he had held services for the soldiers outdoors behind his house while his church was being used as a hospital for their fellows. And here was the home o' Parson Johnnes's daughter, now Mistress Theodocia Ford, the widow o' that wonderful officer Colonel Jacob Ford. All the winter of 1777, General Washington's bodyguard had been stationed in her mansion, fairly near to the Arnold Tavern.

Sally raised her somber glance to the Ford mansion as they passed it. It was a fine big house, typical of that period with its great chimneys upon each end and its wide center door indicative of the wide central hallway inside. It stood upon an eminence with beautiful grounds surrounding it.

But Sally's glance did not linger. Once more she fell to picturing poor Jerry lying upon a pallet, upon the floor of the Presbyterian church; and she neither noticed nor cared what Uzal was say-

ing. What was it all about, she asked herself again? Her best friend dying without friends and poorly cared for, and a Tory spy shot before her eyes!

It was a long, tiresome trip back to the Mountain. The rain did not add to the travelers' comfort, and even the horses ambled along, mile after mile, in a discouraged manner. Uzal, never talkative at best, soon gave up his concerned efforts to arouse and interest Sally, and sank into a silence as deep as her own.

At last the gleam of candlelight through his own windows drew an exclamation from him. Pointing to a couple of horses tied to the walnut tree in front of the house, he spoke: "There must be visitors here, Sally, so come, arouse yourself. Let them not see ye wi' the megrims, thus!"

"Aye, Uzal!" Sally sighed forlornly, slipped cheerlessly down her horse's side. But when she entered the kitchen door and saw the visitors gathered around Mistress Ball's supper table, her expression of gloom lifted and she went forward almost with her own happy air. "Why, Parson Chapman, 'tis you! And you, Mistress Van Houten!" She curtsied in surprise to the latter.

"Good-even, Sally!" said Mistress Van Houten kindly.

Parson Chapman held out his hand to the girl, who placed her own shyly within it. "Sally," he

began abruptly. "How would ye like to go back wi' Mistress Van Houten?"

"This night?" questioned Sally, in amazement.

"Nay," interrupted the Widow Ball hospitably, "ye must not think o' returning this rainy night!"

But Parson Chapman shook his head. "We thank ye very kindly, Mistress Ball," he responded. "We must return to the Town by the River. Ah, Uzal!" The minister broke off to greet the young man who had entered gravely, at that moment, after having put his horses away in the barn. "Nay, we cannot tarry, rain or no rain. I have an engagement to-morrow, as hath Mistress Van Houten. We do not mind the rain, and I promised Mistress Todd to return to her friend's house in Newark. We," he smiled broadly, glancing mysteriously at Sally, "we have business wi' the lady."

Rachel Ball leaned forward with a pretty gesture of excitement. "Nay, Parson Chapman, ye be too cruel to arouse our curiosity thus!" she protested with a charming pout.

Everyone glanced from the minister to Sally and back again. Even David Ball grinned with excited interest, while Uzal kept his steady gaze upon Parson Chapman's face.

"Shall I tell?" queried the minister, enjoying the fun as much as anyone. He paused tantalizingly, after Mistress Van Houten had nodded

laughingly. "'Tis this!" said Parson Chapman at last. "Mistress Todd this night is to bestow her freedom upon Sally here! We are to meet in an hour or so's time to sign the articles!"

"Free!" Sally clasped her hands, staring at the minister. Slowly her eyes filled with tears. "Why, then—why, then—I shall be like other maids! I shall—shall be—like—other maids!" she said.

CHAPTER XVII

THE QUESTION O' SALLY IS ANSWERED

THERE!" said Mistress Todd, shaking the sand off the drying ink. She held out to Parson Chapman the paper she had but now signed. "Ye have your freedom, Sally." She turned to glance sarcastically at the girl. "See an ye be any better off for it!"

There was silence in the kitchen of the house where Mistress Todd, with Mistress Banks and the children, had been living since the battle of Newark. Everyone gazed at the young girl who, cheeks flushed, eyes downcast, was standing beside the table where her former mistress was seated. Sally raised her eyes, more violet than blue from deep excitement, to look at the older woman in the candlelight. "I will try to be the better for it, mistress," she answered as though she were giving her promise.

Mistress Van Houten, who had been watching her sympathetically, now turned inquiringly to the minister. "Art sure this paper be all right, sir?" she asked in a doubtful voice. "Should not Squire Todd ha' signed it, also?"

Parson Chapman shook his head. "Under the circumstances, I believe Mistress Todd's signature to be all that's necessary." Suddenly the minister broke off, as he glanced at the kitchen door. When he continued, it was in a voice of mingled amazement and excitement. "Only—an ye doubt the paper's legality—here be Squire Todd to sign it, too!"

At that, everyone wheeled toward the door which the minister had chanced to be alone in facing. There was a wild cry of "Samuel!" and Mistress Todd was in her husband's arms, sobbing out her welcome upon his shoulder.

Then what a bedlam ensued! Master Todd was led in and seated in a chair of honor which the host hastily pulled forward. Everyone talked and laughed at once; and in the midst of it all, the stair door opened and little Mary, wide-eyed and wondering, entered. An instant later, she was upon her father's knee, hugging and kissing him, and the confusion commenced all over again and continued until Parson Chapman laughingly held up his hand.

"Much as I do dislike to interrupt this rejoicing," he said, smiling broadly, "I would ask Master Todd to sign these articles for Sally; for we must away to Paulus Hook, where Mistress Van Houten wishes to embark to New York Town this night."

"Articles for Sally?" Master Todd repeated it

in surprise. He took the paper which Parson Chapman handed to him and, setting down little Mary, rose and went to the place beside the table which the minister indicated. "Why, art freein' Sally?" he asked, seating himself and reading the paper hastily by the light of the candle. He glanced at his wife, who nodded.

"Aye," answered Mistress Todd. "Ah, Samuel," her voice faltered, and, coming to his side, she placed her hand upon his shoulder, "I was fearful ye were ne'er returning to us, and I did think to sell the farm and rid myself o' all responsibilities."

"I escaped the prison ship yesterday," Master Todd looked grimly around the circle of interested faces. "At times, I, too, was fearful o' not returning, Molly!" He paused, sighed. "However," he went on briskly, "that be past, thank Heaven. And so now ye would leave us, Sally?"

"Aye, sir! Mistress Van Houten did ask me to come to her, and since I was but visiting the Widow Ball while Mistress Todd tarried here, I did accept her kind invitation."

"And now I be home, ye still are o' the same mind o' freeing Sally, Moll?" Squire Todd turned to his wife.

"I am, Samuel," Mistress Todd spoke emphatically. "Oil and water will not mix. Just so, Sally and I will be better apart."

"So be it!" Squire Todd reached for the quill

pen and placed his signature with a flourish above that of his wife. Rising, then, he returned to his former seat, little Mary following him like a small shadow, while the minister, with a sigh, picked up the paper.

“Not all experiments do turn out well,” he said slowly. He handed the paper containing her freedom to Sally. “When I placed ye at the Mountain, I did it thinking ’twas for your best, my child.”

“I know, Master Chapman.” Claspings the precious paper to her heart, Sally looked at the minister gratefully. “Ever ye have been good to me, sir! And you, Master Todd! And you, little Mary!” She looked at them each in turn.

Mistress Todd, ignored unconsciously, tossed her head and stepped to Mistress Banks’s side. “Past favors are easily forgotten!” she sniffed. But Mistress Banks, gazing at her friend with wise, affectionate eyes, only smiled gently and said not a word.

The night waxed late when Sally, with Parson Chapman and Mistress Van Houten, set forth upon horseback, followed by a chorus of farewells from the lighted door. Sally sighed a little, thinking of those other farewells a few hours previous which had come to her as she left the Ball house. Uzal, alone, had said nothing, only his eyes had mutely bid her good-bye over his mother’s head as he had stood behind the latter.

For long years afterward, the girl remembered that strange night trip across the two ferries on the Passaic and the Hackensack rivers—obtained through the influence of Parson Chapman, for it was a stern rule of the ferryman to make daylight trips only—across the great swamps, with their salt-marsh odors and their gloomy cedar woods, up over Bergen Heights and down to Paulus Hook and the ferry there. When at last they reached the inn at Paulus Hook and discovered that the ferryman was out fishing and would not return for another hour or so, according to his wife, Parson Chapman left them and went back to Newark; and Sally, gazing up into his kind face, knew that she was saying good-bye to one of her best friends. Suddenly she gathered courage to ask him something which she had been mulling over in her mind, wondering if she dared mention the subject.

“Oh, sir,” she whispered, glancing cautiously toward Mistress Van Houten, whose back was turned as she stared out across the dark water of the mighty Hudson River, “oh, sir, an ye ever meet the—the red-coat concerning whom Uzal Ball did tell o’ this night, will ye—wilt write me o’t?”

Parson Chapman slapped his thigh. “Why, Sally, I did forget!” he exclaimed with a rueful laugh. “Had ye not mentioned the subject, I would ne’er ha’ told ye that, as I was leaving Master Hedden’s, when ye rode on, this even, a post rider did arrive

from Morris Town wi' a message to Master Hedden. I questioned the rider concerning the young British prisoner—for I thought his case a very sad one, indeed—and the rider happened to know of him and told me——”

“Aye, told you?” Sally moistened her dry lips.

“He told me the young man would live,” proclaimed Master Chapman triumphantly. “He had passed the crisis o’ the plague this day and was on the mend. But why”—the good minister paused and looked down teasingly into the eager face—“art so interested i’ the *red* uniform? Dost not like blue and buff much better?”

“We-ell,” Sally hesitated, “mayhap—the—the war will some day end—and—uniforms will go out o’ fashion, sir!”

Mistress Van Houten, turning back from her contemplation of the few scattered lights that proclaimed the existence of New York Town, wondered at the minister’s sudden amused laugh as he bowed to Sally and herself and, leaping upon his horse, rode away.

Sally and the lady were met by a sleepy-eyed, yawning Cudje when they finally ascended the steps of Mistress Van Houten’s New York house. Cudje grinned, however, and reached for Sally’s heavy reticule.

Leading the way into a fine, big bedroom at the rear of the second floor, Mistress Van Houten

turned to Sally. "Would ye like to sleep down here this night, my dear?" she asked. "I expect company to occupy this room to-morrow night—a real lord and lady, Sally, my child, who are coming to dinner wi' General Clinton, then. The general will return home; but the others will remain, for milady is an old school friend o' mine, whom I have not seen this many years, until her husband was sent across by His Majesty to bring terms to the colonists. She and I went to school together in England, though I was born over here."

"Ye"—Sally placed her reticule upon a chair and looked at her hostess squarely—"ye are not a Tory, mistress?"

"Nay," answered the other carelessly. "'Tis only old friendship which bids me have these people. General Clinton was a good friend o' Hans's once. But what say ye about the room? There be a smaller one on the next floor, whither ye will have to retire often, whenever we have company."

"I will stay here this night, for Cudje has made ready the bed here," returned the girl quietly, nodding toward the old man who had turned back the bed covers.

She smiled in answer to her hostess's good-night; but, when she was alone, her smile faded. Once more she had changed her place of abode and not yet come home! Overwhelmed by the feeling of

transitoriness, of loneliness, of not belonging, poor Sally sank to her knees beside the bed and buried her bright head in its quilts. There she remained very still for a long, long time, with only the irritated squawk of the cockatoo, who had been awakened by Cudje's bedtime candle, breaking the silence from below.

Sally deliberately primped that next evening before Mistress Van Houten's mirror. Enemy or no enemy, she meant to look her very best; for she had a plan under her red-gold curls by which she hoped to achieve wonderful things. And some plans, some feminine instinct told her, are ever helped by pleasing attire and bright eyes and curls that tumble riotously about the cheek. She turned self-consciously, when the door opened and Mistress Van Houten entered the room hurriedly. "Will I do?" she asked demurely.

Mistress Van Houten's gaze brightened. "Splendidly!" she exclaimed. "Is it not lucky that I had some o' the gowns outgrown by Hans's niece left in my chest? I know not how many times I ha' started to give them away, and always something inside whispered, 'Wait!'" She paused and stared at the dainty, brilliant little figure in blue satin gown and lace overskirt. "Ye will make a nice sixth guest this even, my child—I needed a sixth!" she finished, with a kind smile. To herself she

thought: "Ah, ye are a beauty, Sally; but ye will find it out soon enow wi'out my telling ye so."

As though Sally had not primped for hours to further that deep-laid plan of hers!

About five o'clock, the girl, peeping out from behind the curtains of Mistress Van Houten's parlor, felt her heart beat as a fine coach drove up and stopped before the house to allow a lady and three gentlemen to descend from it. Something about the lady's tall, slender figure caught the girl's attention, and she wrinkled her brow in remembering. Where had she seen that high-held head, those lovely sloping shoulders! Then, as the lady turned and, led by a gentleman, came up the steps, Sally started. It was Lady Holden! And the auburn-haired gentleman, following with a handsome man in uniform, was most certainly her husband, Lord Holden!

Mistress Van Houten hurried into the parlor just as Cudje, clad for once in a new uniform, shuffled toward the door. Mistress Van Houten's kind face was flushed and moist, and she raised trembling hands to pat her lace cap. "Is't on straight—my cap, Sally?" she whispered, ducking her head to gaze frantically into a near-by mirror. "I had to o'ersee the pigeon pastries—Clara would ha' spoiled 'em by serving 'em cold."

"Your cap *was* all right—here, let me arrange

it!" said Sally, hiding her own excitement beneath a show of severity. Her deft fingers busied with the folds of lace upon Mistress Van Houten's bobbing, anxious head. Thus it was that Lady Holden, entering the parlor as Cudje majestically threw open the door, beheld her hostess's broad back turned to her and beyond, nervously staring, two great blue eyes in a white face beneath a mass of glorious red-gold curls. For an instant, as upon that other occasion, one May day, in Marshal Cunningham's office, a queer, intangible shock seemed to pass between woman and maid, then Mistress Van Houten, whirling around, gathered her old friend into an affectionate embrace, and Sally shrank back.

"Ah, madam," General Clinton now came forward gallantly to present his hostess with a fine nosegay in a paper-lace holder, "we are a lucky crowd this even, an my nose does me no wrong, for I'm sure I smell pigeon pasties."

They all laughed as Lord Holden and the third gentleman, Major André, the aide and good friend of General Clinton, paid their respects in turn to Mistress Van Houten and bowed courteously in response to Sally's respectful, trembling curtsey. Then Mistress Van Houten led the girl toward Lady Holden, who had seated herself languidly upon the sofa.

"This be Sally, Margot," said Mistress Van Houten, smiling at the girl.

Lady Holden leaned forward to scan the girl's face. "Sally—what?" she asked in a strange kind of breathless voice.

"Just Sally," answered the girl, low-toned and glancing in embarrassment at the others. But the other guests were conversing among themselves. Mistress Van Houten had turned away, and Lady Holden and Sally were alone.

Suddenly the former seized Sally's face between two cold hands, looked fiercely into her eyes and, releasing her, sank back with a hopeless gesture. "Trevor!" she called, drops of moisture starting out upon her forehead.

Hardly had his wife breathed his name when Lord Holden was at her side.

"Trevor!" Lady Holden took his hand and held it tightly clasped in hers as she looked up at him pleadingly. "Find—out—about—this girl! Ah, she might be"—her face whitened as she saw the angry frown come into his blue eyes—"ye never can tell!—she might be—Constance!"

"Nay, Margot!" Lord Holden looked down at her sternly. "Ye know what ye promised me when I said ye might come to America wi' me! I ha' no time to follow silly notions o' yours!"

"But that May day—" Lady Holden spoke

with difficulty—"ye know I told ye that May day about this girl. Ah, Trevor, it might be!"

"Tut, tut!" Lord Holden moved to one side as Cudje passed him to draw the shades and to light the wall sconces. The flickering candle gleams threw grim shadows over his face as he gazed down angrily at his wife, after noticing that the other occupants of Mistress Van Houten's parlor were looking at them in astonishment. "I told ye, Margot, that I would not fall victim to your foolishness more! How many times ha' ye sworn ye ha' found Baby Constance! How many times ha' we been mocked! Nay, she did perish that wild night, and——"

"An ye please, my lord," Sally interrupted him quietly, "are ye related, by chance, to Gerald Lawrence?"

"He is my ward." Lord Holden looked at her keenly.

"Then why ha' ye made no attempt to free him?" asked the girl bluntly. "Know ye not the New Jersey Council o' Safety are but waiting for him to recover from a bad case o' smallpox to try him for treason to his country, when he may hang?"

"What!" Lord and Lady Holden uttered the exclamation together. "Why, Marshal Cunningham assured me that he was working upon his exchange," added his lordship. He turned in agitation

to General Clinton. "Is that not so, sir?" he demanded.

General Clinton strode forward. "What know ye o' this matter, little mistress?" he asked.

"I will tell ye, sir," said Sally, and plunged forthwith into the tale of Jerry Lawrence's first appearance at the Mountain, of his being wounded, of Stockton's treachery and her own kidnapping, of Stockton's hatred of Jerry, of Jerry's escape and his subsequent recapture. She ended upon the high note of Stockton's death and Jerry's danger, while the pigeon pasties, to the hostess's dismay, cooled upon the dinner table in the next room and were removed by the interested Cudje to be reheated.

"See that the lass's story be investigated, and push the matter o' young Lawrence's exchange," ordered General Clinton at last; and, taking out his snuffbox, he turned suggestively toward the dining room.

Her plan had worked! Yet, glancing at the set, unhappy face of Lady Holden who, though she sat at the table, neither ate nor drank, Sally felt no elation. What was there, anyway, in the atmosphere that evening which made everyone tense and restless? The pigeon pasties were at length carried back to the kitchen almost untasted, and soon afterward General Clinton and Major André excused themselves and hurried away to more congenial quarters.

“And now, Margot, ye do indeed look weary!” Mistress Van Houten gazed with concern at her friend. “Would ye not like to retire?”

Before Lady Holden could answer, Sally uttered an exclamation and darted upstairs. She had forgotten to remove her reticule from the guest room that afternoon, after having dressed. Cudje, however, had spied it upon the chest where the girl had placed it and was carrying it out, swinging from his arm, when Sally, bursting in upon him, ran headlong into him. The old bag, as might have been expected, and as Sally had always feared, being worn and full to overflowing, burst in protest at such rough treatment; and Lady Holden, entering a few moments later, found the girl upon her hands and knees, aided by the apologetic Cudje, trying hastily to retrieve the poor little possessions she hated to have exposed to public gaze. Sally’s face was crimson and embarrassed—such scuffed slippers, such a shabby gown, such faded ribbon! She gathered them all into a ball and stuffed them back as well as she could into the aged bag and rose to her feet, much like a belated Cinderella who, still garbed in her party gown, hears the clock strike twelve and sees her gown turn visibly to rags.

“Ah, too bad!” said Lady Holden sympathetically, stooping to pick up an object at her feet. When she straightened up, her face wore a frightened expression. Sally, following the direction of

the other's bent gaze, saw that Lady Holden held a little red shoe!

Lord Holden, who had entered at that moment, snatched the shoe out of his wife's hand and turned almost threateningly to the girl. "To whom—doth—this—belong?" he stammered hoarsely.

"Mine!" answered Sally. She stared from one to the other. "Mine—when—I was little!"

Lady Holden, at that, uttered a strangled cry.

"Why, my baby! My baby!" she sobbed. And turning, Sally walked straight into her mother's arms.

The story really ends here, don't you think? But one September day a ship stole out of the New York harbor at dawn. The British agents, sent over by His Majesty to offer the colonists new terms and rights only to be spurned by the United Colonies, were returning to England.

Gaily the ocean danced and seemed to smile back at her from beneath the stern, over the railing of which the Lady Constance Holden was pensively gazing.

But Sally was not allowed to dream there alone. Soon a tall, thin figure approached, and, propping his arms upon the railing, Jerry smiled down into her vacant eyes.

"Sally," he began.

Lady Constance held up her hand, then suddenly dimpled.

“Jerry, ye be the only one, now, who calls me Sally! Prithee, promise ye will always call me that!”

“An ye like,” said Jerry, nodding.

There was a little silence, during which the girl’s eyes followed some white sea gulls.

“Why the doldrums?” asked Jerry, watching her and wondering if it were from the sky or the water that Sally got the blue of her long-lashed eyes. “Ye look as though ye were gazing back at your last friend, instead o’ going—home!”

“Home!” The girl gazed unseeingly ahead of her. “Tell me,” she whispered then, “what home looks like, Jerry!”

Jerry fell into her mood. “Your home, Sally, is in a great park, wi’ high trimmed hedges all about it, a fine place wi’ spacious lawns and gardens and tall, stately trees. And i’ the loveliest garden o’ all there is a little lake on which glide long-necked swans, while, across the near-by terraces, ye may see peacocks strutting.”

“Jerry,” Sally turned to him abruptly from her daydreams, “’tis all so strange and new to me. Only you, who knew me at the Mountain, can realize how strange it all be, like—like—a fairy story. This calling me milady—why, half the time, I know not they mean me!”

“Always,” said Jerry softly, “I ha’ called ye——” He stopped self-consciously, for boyhood lay not far behind him.

"Always what?" begged Sally eagerly. "Ah, tell me, Jerry!"

"Well, when I was i' Morris Town, your image came to me out o' the darkness and the pain, Sally—you, wi' your bright hair and your blue eyes and your eager, helpful ways; and I called ye"—he stopped again—"I called ye milady at arms, Sally, because ever ye seemed to be i' the midst o' war's alarms, riding to someone's rescue!"

"Did you, Jerry? But here I be, turning traitor! No longer do I ride at arms!" Sally's lips trembled. "I belong back there wi' my country!"

"Nay—for 'twas an accident your being there at all, Sally—your ship going down that time and Granny What's-Her-Name's son saving ye!" said the boy simply. "Some day, an ye like," his eyes twinkled, "we will return and visit the new country—together!"

"I wonder what the Todds are doing now?" mused Sally. She had not heard Jerry's last words, and he did not repeat them, merely stood watching her grave young face. "And the Balls and the Williamses? But I forget, ye did not know the Williamses!"

"The Todds? Well, 'tis breakfast time on that Mountain, Sally, and breakfast time, by my appetite, right here on board ship. Let us go down!"

Halfway across the deck, Sally stopped and pointed. "Look! Look!" she cried in an awed voice.

As they both gazed, a magnificent light overspread sky and sea. A great red ball of fire showed a glimmering, shimmering edge above the horizon. It was the sun, giving them a hint of a glorious day, with yesterday's sorrows already forgotten and to-morrow but another radiant promise!

But they were young, and the sun was—only the sun, so, "I'll beat ye down to the cabin!" shrieked Sally suddenly.

"I'll wager ye do not!" shouted Jerry firmly.

And laughing, screaming, shoving, pellmell they tumbled down the narrow stairs into the ship's cabin.

"Come, children!" said Lady Holden, her mother smile welcoming them both. "Breakfast be ready! Sit ye down and eat, for dinner be more than four long hours away, and there is to be no piecing between meals!"

THE END







