

*The Trail
of the
King's Men*

Mabel Dunham

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Title: The Trail of the King's Men

Date of first publication: 1931

Author: Mabel Dunham (1881-1957)

Date first posted: May 16, 2026

Date last updated: May 16, 2026

Faded Page eBook #20260527

This eBook was produced by: John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

*The Trail
of the King's Men*

By

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THE RYERSON PRESS
TORONTO

Novels by the same author

THE TRAIL OF THE CONESTOGA
TOWARD SODOM

Printed and Bound in Canada
by
THE RYERSON PRESS
TORONTO

DEDICATED TO

HAZEL, MARY AND DONALD
DUNHAM

WHOSE LOYALIST ANCESTORS
CAME TO THE ST. JOHN RIVER
ON A REFUGEE SHIP IN 1783

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The Trail of the King's Men

Chapter I

YOUTH GOES ABROAD

Sir William Johnson, of Johnson Hall, in the valley of the Mohawk, had long determined that his only son, John, should one day go to England "to wear off," as he said, "the rusticity of a country education."

And now at last the opportunity had come. Lord Adam Gordon, an English gentleman of excellent standing at His Majesty's court, had been a guest at Johnson Hall for several months, eliciting from Sir William certain desired information on general conditions existing in the American colonies and the prospects for further colonization. Quite incidentally, he had been investigating the possibility of a governorship for himself. With his head full of statistics and his heart full of hope, he was ready now to return to England. Sir William's suggestion that young John should accompany him pleased Lord Adam very much. It would mean a desirable companion for him on the journey and, in all probability, the luxury of a black slave to boot. Besides, Lord Adam had been a very appreciative guest and he was glad to be able to play the host in return. It would be not only his duty but his great pleasure to introduce to the court and to English society the beau of America.

John Johnson was not to be a burden on Lord Adam. Certainly not. Much of his time was to be spent in carrying out his father's numerous behests. England was full of Sir William's friends and business acquaintances, and he had many relatives in Ireland. The baronet's greatest regret was that his roots had become so entangled in the New World that there remained for him little prospect of going back himself to visit his friends and to see "the auld sod."

Above all else, young John must pay his respects to Lady Warren, his father's aunt by marriage. She was a weeping widow now, and she would expect the boy to commiserate with her over her great loss. The mortal remains of Admiral Sir Peter Warren were buried under a formidable monument in the great abbey, as the token of a nation's thanks. It would please her ladyship to recall the many benefactions to Sir William Johnson when he was a raw Irish lad with nothing in the world but a bit of a smile and a magic-working uncle. The Warren daughters had all married well—nobility, according to reports. John must meet these cousins, but he must be careful not to let them patronize him. The Johnsons could stand on their own feet, Sir William used to remark with much satisfaction. No need of scraping and bowing to anybody.

His Majesty King George the Third was the one and only exception to the rule. Sir William always bent a courteous knee to his sovereign, and so must John. His presentation at court was to be made the occasion for expressing to the king at first hand the loyal devotion of the Johnson family in his dominions over the seas. "Bless His Majesty and bless my dear son, John," Sir William frequently exclaimed, with much fervour. "What wouldn't I give, Lord Adam, to be standing, as those two young men are, at sunrise, on the brink of life and opportunity, one in the old world and the other in the new?"

Sir William was essentially a business man. He did not intend that John should spend all his time and substance with the frills and furbelows of society. Far from it. He was to be his father's agent on many and varied enterprises. Lady Crosby, widow of the governor, must be called upon and consulted with great diplomacy about the disposition of certain lands she had entrusted to Sir William's care. A missionary must be secured for the Mohawks at the Upper Castle, a good man, at a reasonable salary. Furniture from some baronial hall must be bought, even at an extravagant price, that Johnson Hall might be suitably furnished. And here was Sir William's opportunity to gratify his more trivial wants, a pair of spectacles from a celebrated London oculist and a supply of best-quality snuff.

The time came when Lord Adam and his protégé, accompanied by two slaves, left Johnson Hall in the land of the Mohawks and drifted down the tribal river to Albany, and down the Hudson to New York. There they were to board a ship which, having tossed them on the bosom of the Atlantic for weeks on end, would land them finally, perhaps, at Southampton on the south of England.

The plan included a stop of several days in New York city, where Lord Adam was to renew acquaintances formed before he went to Johnson Hall, and John was to meet his father's friends and make them his own.

There was no uncertainty in Sir William's plans about whom John was to meet in New York. He had presumed upon a long-standing friendship with the Honourable John Watts, President of the Council of New York, to acquaint him with the arrival of the travellers and to bespeak for them a kind reception. "My son, John," he had added in the postscript to his letter, "is twenty-four and still a bachelor. Since he is my only son, this fact causes me some concern. Commend me to your estimable wife, to whom I am sending the promised seeds for her garden, and to your daughters, who must be approaching a marriageable age. I shall appreciate to the full any favours which you may be able to show my son."

The Honourable John Watts promptly tore off this postscript and poked it into the deepest recesses of his innermost pocket. Then he called Tony, his negro coachman, jumped into his carriage and went home to tell his wife the news.

Mrs. Watts was greatly surprised to see her husband in the middle of the afternoon. "Anything wrong, John?" she called out from her chair at the window.

"No, nothing," he answered, "At least, nothing much."

"You are excited. You are sure you are not ill?" She came to inspect him.

"Don't be foolish, Anne," said the Honourable John, "I'm all right, of course. I only wanted to tell you that—that I have this day received a letter by packet."

"There is nothing unusual about that, surely."

"It is from my friend, Sir William Johnson."

"Indeed? That reminds me, he has never sent the seeds which he promised me more than a year ago."

"Sir William is not a man to forget his promises," her husband assured her. "He is sending them by the hand of his son, John, whom we may expect in a few days by sloop from Albany."

Mrs. Watts glared at the Honourable John over her spectacles. "You mean he is coming here?" she said. "You invited him without consulting me?"

“Calm yourself, my dear Anne. He is coming without invitation.”

“He is very presumptuous.”

“To pay the merest call, Anne, a week at the most. Lord Adam Gordon, who charmed us all when he was here in the spring, is with him. They are on their way to England, it seems. Business, I suppose, and perhaps a little pleasure. Sir William is astute enough. He has some motive back of this.”

“Astute is too mild a word,” interposed his wife, “I’d say he is crafty as the devil.”

“Perhaps so,” replied Mr. Watts. “At any rate, he sees some advantage for his son in this journey, or for himself. John must be old enough now to be thinking about providing himself with a suitable partner for life.”

“In England?”

The woman looked at him with such penetration that the President of the Council of New York squirmed and stood before her like a schoolboy caught in a misdemeanour. “Let me see the letter,” she ordered.

The Honourable John produced it and watched her read it.

“He says nothing here about seeds,” she observed at length. “Where is the rest of the letter—the part you tore off?”

The Honourable John fumbled in his pockets, but to no effect. “I must have lost it,” he said, lamely.

“In a very safe place,” commented Mrs. Watts, with asperity. “Now I have the explanation of your excitement. Which one of the girls do you propose to offer on the Johnson marriage altar? Tell me that.”

“The young man may have some preference in the matter,” Mr. Watts made bold to answer.

“And I intend to have something to say,” announced Mrs. Watts, glaring at her husband with cool deliberation. “John Johnson may live to be a hundred but he will never marry a daughter of mine. I, at least, have not taken leave of my senses.”

A quarrel was imminent, unless the woman’s wrath could be appeased. “My wife and my daughters are the queens of New York society,” replied the husband, with consummate tact, “but John Johnson is the most eligible young man in all the Province of New York. At twenty-four he has wealth and preferment beyond all computation. Some day he will inherit the baronetcy.”

“That does not alter my decision,” said the haughty woman, tossing her head and walking out of the room.

“Stop, Anne,” ordered the Honourable John. “I will have you understand once and for all that I am the master of this house. Sir William Johnson is my friend of long standing. His son must be shown every courtesy here.”

“Your wife is a De Lancey,” was the stinging retort. “She does not need lessons in deportment. The women of my family are always ladies and perfect hostesses.”

“Thank you, Anne. But let me ask you one question. Your sister, Sue, was a De Lancey, too, was she not? Did she stoop so low, did she lose all social prestige when she married Sir William’s uncle, Admiral Sir Peter Warren?”

Mrs. Watts had turned and was standing in the doorway, her eyes flashing with indignation. “Don’t be silly, John,” she said. “Surely even you can see that there is a vast difference between the great admiral who married my sister, and his nephew, Sir William Johnson, whose son you want to marry. Sir Peter was a hero. A grateful nation has honoured him with burial in Westminster Abbey. Sir William is living at New York’s back door with a Mohawk squaw, whom he hasn’t the decency to make his wife.”

“That’s not fair, Anne,” protested Mr. Watts. “By Indian law and custom she is his wife.”

“Since when do we live under the laws and customs of the Mohawks?”

“There is no Indian blood in John. You know that, Anne. His mother was as fair as the fairest De Lancey. A beautiful woman, Sir William wrote me.”

“A redemptionist,” sneered Mrs. Watts, full of the pride of her aristocratic family, “The servant class. You can’t tell me anything about John’s mother. She was the daughter of a German missionary and her name was Catherine Weisentruber, or Weisenburg, or something like that. Dreadfully low class. Sir William married her on her death-bed to make her three children legitimate. My daughter marry her son? Never. If you have no pride, John Watts, I have.”

“Nevertheless, her son is to be our guest,” replied the Honourable John, “and as such he must be well treated.”

“Must I tell you again that I shall not fall short of my duty as hostess?” replied Mrs. Watts over her shoulder.

When the sloop from Albany rode into the King's wharf at New York, the Honourable John Watts was there to meet it—had been standing there, in fact, for more than an hour, while Tony leaned against the door of the stately Watts carriage, balancing his weight first on one foot and then on the other.

The host sighted his guests long before they had landed. There was no mistaking Lord Adam's genial smile. Almost paternally he beamed upon the young man at his side—John Johnson, without a doubt, a tall, slight lad, handsome as Apollo himself, with that ruddy complexion which comes from radiant health and much outdoor activity.

From the first hand-clasp Mr. Watts warmed to Sir William's son. "So here you are at last, my boy," he said. "I bid you the heartiest welcome I know. Most happy to see you again, Lord Adam."

"Thanks," said the older man. "Sir William has asked me to convey to you his respects. He has told me how close is the friendship between you."

Mr. Watts was so pleased that he shook his hand again. "Ours is a friendship," he said, "over which the limitations of time and space have no control."

"I hope you will extend it to his son," ventured John.

"With all my heart," replied Mr. Watts, clasping the young man's hand now with deep emotion. "The carriage is over here. Come, Tony, take us home. You may come back later for Mr. Johnson's men and the luggage."

The blacks had been grinning at each other, their white teeth and eyes gleaming with interest and pleasure, but at the call of his master, Tony sprang to attention. He knew his cue and he strode at once into the centre of the stage. Never had his green livery looked more handsome. With a profuse bow and an expansive grin, he opened the door of the stately coach, decorated with Watts and De Lancey crests, then, having helped the gentlemen into their places, he climbed up into his own loftier seat and slapped the reins on the horses' backs. He drove the lordly equipage down the Broad Way, past Trinity Church, around the Bowling Green, then through Whitehall into Dock Street. When he came to a pretentious gate, the posts of which were ornamented with armorial bearings, he turned in and halted before a large, three-storied mansion, whose colonial splendour was partially hidden from view in a forest of trees.

"Watts Manor," cried the host, preparing to alight. "Gentlemen, you are most welcome."

Mrs. Watts greeted her guests with true De Lancey dignity. She declared she was most happy to meet Lord Adam again, and she let him kiss the tips of her tapering fingers. Had he enjoyed his summer in the bush?

“Perfectly, Mrs. Watts.”

“And you are still a bachelor?”

“Fifty, and I haven’t found her yet.”

“Lord Adam has intimated to me the possibility of a governorship,” said Mr. Watts.

“What? For you?” cried his wife.

“No, for himself.”

“Indeed?” exclaimed the lady. “New York? Are we to have you over at the fort as our neighbour?”

“Unfortunately, no,” replied Lord Adam. “The fates seem to be decreeing that Boston is to have the honour of my residence.”

“Boston!” Mrs. Watts laughed merrily. “They will lead you a dance up there. They say the arch-fiend himself has gone to live in Boston.”

“It seems to me His Satanic Majesty spends a good deal of his time upsetting things here in New York,” commented Mr. Watts. “But, my dear Anne, you have not yet met our other guest, John Johnson.”

“How do you do, Mr. Johnson?” said the lady. She smiled very politely and offered the young man the courtesy of her hand.

John Johnson knew the conventions in spite of the rusticity of his education. He bowed low before his hostess and touched the dainty fingertips with his lips. He murmured something about having had the pleasure of meeting her before.

“I am afraid I do not remember,” she replied.

The remark was not conducive to further conversation, but John remembered his father’s warning not to allow himself to be ruffled in case “Lady Watts” should assume her wonted air of superiority. He replied that his father had brought him to New York as a child to visit his Uncle and Aunt Warren on the eve of their departure for England.

“That must be all of twenty years ago,” thought Mr. Watts. “You will go to see your Aunt Warren, I suppose, when you get across?”

“Oh, yes,” replied John. “My father is sending her a multitude of messages and presents.”

“It is kind of you to visit the De Lanceys before you go,” said Mrs. Watts, sweetly. “If it is not presuming, I hope we may include ours with his.”

“Presuming!” exploded Lord Adam Gordon. “You don’t know the Johnsons, surely, Mrs. Watts. They are happy only when they are doing something for somebody. They did everything for me, the veriest stranger. For you, belonging, as you do, to the same family—”

“Not exactly,” corrected Mrs. Watts.

“But I thought there was some relationship.”

“We have mutual relatives, that is all,” Mrs. Watts informed him. Then, turning to John, she said: “Your Aunt Warren will have much to ask you about the De Lanceys. You may tell her that since the death of our brother, the Governor, about six years ago, Oliver and Peter are trying to uphold the family traditions here in New York.”

John smiled to himself, wondering if he was supposed to picture the late Governor holding a De Lancey court in the high heavens.

“Lady Warren is the eldest of the De Lanceys, Lord Adam,” said Mr. Watts, nervously, for he realized that he was treading on dangerous ground. “My wife is the youngest.”

“Indeed?”

“And the De Lanceys enjoy an enviable reputation,” the Honourable John went on.

“For what?” asked Lord Adam. He looked straight at Mrs. Watts.

“That is not for me to say,” replied the lady.

“For—eh—for—” stammered Mr. Watts. “Well, just a reputation, I should say.”

“For cordial hospitality,” said John Johnson, coming gallantly to the rescue. “I have often heard my father speak of his happy relations with members of the family.”

“Quite right, Mr. Johnson,” cried Mr. Watts, with all the enthusiasm of a great relief. “That is exactly what I was going to say.”

“John has an Irish tongue in his head,” observed Lord Adam.

“And a grateful heart somewhere in the region of his stomach,” added the young man, bowing with exaggerated profundity.

“I am afraid our guests are hungry,” said Mr. Watts, joining in the pleasantries.

“Dinner is served,” announced Mrs. Watts, “and the De Lancey reputation is saved.”

Chapter II

OLD COLONY DAYS

Mrs. Watts had decided that John Johnson must not be allowed to go to England until he had seen the baronial hall which Sir Peter Warren had built at Greenwich in the days of his greatest affluence. "It was Lady Warren's favourite residence," she said, "and you must be able to talk to her about it."

"I shall be glad to refresh my memory of the place," replied John. "Unless I am greatly mistaken, that is the house to which my father took me."

"All the more reason for you to see it," said Mrs. Watts.

So Tony was summoned and he drove the men to Greenwich.

There John saw again the mansion-house of his childish memory. It was scarcely as large as he had pictured it, but pretentious enough, for all that, standing, as it did, on elevated ground a few hundred yards from the river.

"The view from the verandah here is marvellous," said Mr. Watts. "To the west lie the Jersey highlands and to the south an expanse of water stretching clear down to the distant hills of Staten Island."

John declared that he remembered the scene very well. He went so far as to say that he recognized the identical chair in which Sir Peter used to sit while he smoked his long Dutch pipe after dinner and supped his mug of rum. All about them were the gardens, as they used to be, and the well-cut lawns dotted with handsome trees, "It was all very lovely," he said, "and a most wonderful setting for the most fabulous stories ever told."

"With the sea in the background, I'll be bound," said Lord Adam. "Did you ever hear tell of an Englishman who could spin a yarn without putting the sea into it?"

"Sir Peter was Irish," Mr. Watts reminded him, "but he loved the sea for all that. His stories were all staged on the water, true stories every one of them. Actual experiences, they were, with his good ship, the *Laureston*, always somewhere in the offing. And they gripped you, his stories did, more than any mere yarn spun out of a fertile imagination."

“That’s perfectly true,” corroborated John Johnson. “I remember how I used to sit here hour after hour with my eyes fairly popping out of my head. Such marvellous tales I have never heard before or since. When Uncle had dropped off to sleep, I used to sit looking out over the water, lost in wonder. Then Aunt Warren would get out her harpsichord and play on it ever so softly, and when Uncle had stirred, she would join him on the verandah and together they would stand with locked arms, gazing across the river at the glorious sunset beyond the foothills of the Palisades yonder. Father and I would go and stand beside them. I think I have never looked upon a more beautiful landscape—at least, not outside the valley of the Mohawk.”

Lord Adam Gordon was not only amazed at the size and elegance of new-world estates but exceedingly curious about their owners. “This Sir Peter interests me,” he said. “Do tell me about some of his exploits.”

There was so much to tell, Mr. Watts declared, that he scarcely knew where to begin. “If ever a man was born under a lucky star,” he said, “that man was Sir Peter. You know he was Commodore of the British fleet in America. With his squadron of sixteen ships, he captured no less than twenty-four prizes off Martinique in less than six months. He told me so himself. One of them alone carried plate valued at two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.”

“Half of that would do me a lifetime,” said Lord Adam. “Are you sure that you are not pulling a long bow?”

“No exaggeration at all, I assure you,” said Mr. Watts. “I am in a position to know, for he brought his treasure to New York, and our firm, Stephen De Lancey and Company, acted as his agents.”

“Oho! So you made a fortune out of it, too?”

“What else would you expect? Sir Peter had enough left. It was with his winnings at sea that he built this house. If he ran low in money, all he had to do was to drop across to the Leeward Islands and pick up a Spanish galleon. Presto! The masons and the carpenters got their pay.”

“To me it sounds like a fairy tale,” said Lord Adam Gordon.

“The city of New York was the fairy,” said Mr. Watts. “It voted him all this land in recognition of his victory at Louisburg, and very soon his slaves were busy making these splendid gardens. In Sir Peter’s time they were the finest in all the Province of New York.”

“I’ll wager my last shilling he was a popular man,” said Lord Adam, who had great difficulty in believing that this story was a piece of

authenticated biography.

“Popular? I should say he was. What man of wealth does not get a good boost in society? Sir Peter cut a great figure in New York about 1744, running up and down the river in his *Laureston* with all her flags unfurled. His twenty-four prizes made a wonderful show. Nobody was surprised when he married Sue De Lancey, my wife’s sister, joining his fortune to hers. In a single year those two spent more money on luxuries than would feed the twenty thousand people of New York for twice that time. But it is all over now. Death is a great leveller. Sir Peter’s glory has crumbled to dust. Even his house needs painting.”

John Johnson ventured to remark that the distinction of having a monument in the great abbey still remained. He was looking forward to seeing it.

“It is only one of many I shall show you,” said Lord Adam Gordon. “Over the water we have smaller estates but a longer history, stretching back for centuries into the storied past. You colonials can scarcely grasp the real glory of Britain—that intangible glory, I mean, which money cannot buy.”

“Well said, Lord Adam,” cried Mr. Watts. “We set too much store on the material things of life. We sell our very souls for gold. We feed on—well, here I am philosophizing when—”

“When we are as hungry as wood-choppers,” said Lord Adam, with a boisterous laugh. “Isn’t it soon time to eat? Mrs. Watts will not thank us for coming late to her meals.”

“Tut, tut!” said Mr. Watts. “Any woman will forgive a man who brings a good appetite to her table. Here, Tony, waken up. See how soon you can get us back to Watts Manor.”

John Johnson was hungry enough, too, but not for something to eat so much as for the society of young people of his own age. A very human young man, indeed. The young people at Watts Manor, for what reason he knew not, paid him scant attention. He had seen very little of Robert and Jack. He knew there were daughters, Anne, who was said to have flouted an heir to a belted earl and lived to regret it, and Susan, whose tender love-bud had not yet been nipped by the frost. Two days had passed without so much as a glimpse of either of them. He saw only the younger children, three mischievous youngsters with their bibs tucked under their chins. They did not interest him.

“Our daughters are visiting at their Uncle Oliver’s,” Mrs. Watts explained at the breakfast table the third day.

“It is—it is most unfortunate,” stammered her husband, unnecessarily.

“I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting them when I return from England,” said John, politely.

“It’s too bad, too bad,” Mr. Watts blundered on, realizing the danger and yet making directly for it. “They are not coming home until after your ship sails. The girls, I mean, Anne and Susan.”

“We might be persuaded to postpone our sailing,” suggested Lord Adam, his eyes fairly dancing with suppressed merriment. “There will be no fair damsel waiting at the wharf to welcome me. We are still heart-free, Mrs. Watts, both of us. A pair of lonely bachelors. What do you say, John? Shall we stay?”

The young man bit his lip. “I’m much too eager to see the glories of your England,” he said at length, and turned away. When he had Lord Adam alone, he told him he thought it was “a raw, English joke, bejabbers,” whereupon Lord Adam laughed until he was well-nigh convulsed.

Mrs. Watts kept her thoughts to herself. She knew what she was doing. What was more, she intended to carry out her plan to have John spend the morning with the children. Steve was delegated to pilot him about Fort George and the water-front, and the girls were to tell him about the recent Stamp Act disturbances.

John gave himself up rather reluctantly, it must be confessed, to the children, and they started off, four abreast, in the direction of the fort. But while the girls continued to walk demurely one on either side of their guest, the boy, Steve, soon wandered away, scouting in and out among the trees on the roadside, playing Mohawk, a new game invented from scraps of lurid information gleaned from the conversations of his elders. He was Chief Black Cloud of the Mohawks, in case anybody should ask. That explained the chicken feathers which crowned his head and the red paint which made him look so ferocious. His war kettle was on. His braves were practising the war dance in the back-yards of the neighbourhood. After dinner, they were going to take up their tomahawks, and have a bloody battle and lots of fun.

“What doing?” asked the ten-year-old Peggy, with large, blue, innocent eyes.

“Scalping folks, of course. We’d scalp you, too, only you’re a girl, and Mohawk’s no game for fraidy-cats.”

“We might be squaws,” suggested Peggy, timidly. “Mightn’t we, Mr. Johnson?”

“If you are willing to stay at home and do the work,” replied John. “I suppose I’ll have to invest a few shillings in persuading Big Chief Black Cloud to bury his hatchet and smoke the pipe of peace.”

But Steve had set his face against peace at any price. He ran away to avoid the contamination of the bribe.

“Boys are funny,” observed Polly, the elder girl, a sprightly creature just entering her teens.

“In what way?”

“Well, for one thing, you can’t depend on them, never. See how Steve’s run away and left you alone with us squaws.”

“I don’t mind in the least,” declared John. “I rather like squaws.”

“We’ll have to show you the fort,” continued Polly, smiling exquisitely. “Let’s go and see the governor’s new coach that he got because they burned his old one for him.”

“Who burned his coach, did you say?”

“Why, the people did. They were all excited about the stamps, you know. Oh, more than excited, ever so much more. They were real mad.”

“Furious,” said Peggy, suggesting the most turbulent word she knew. “The governor said they had to use them, the stamps, I mean, and they burned his coach to prove that they didn’t have to. Let’s go and call on the governor.”

Polly shook her head, forbiddingly. “Mother told us not to,” she said. “Mr. Johnson will see him to-night at the ball. His hair is all white like silver. The governor’s, I mean. Father calls him Old Silverlocks, and that’s why. But he won’t let us call him that, even behind his back. He’s real old, the governor is. Older than you are.”

John smiled. He was not so interested at the moment in comparative ages as he was curious about the possibility of certain two young ladies attending the governor’s ball. “Do you think your sisters will be there?” he asked Polly.

“Where?”

“Why, at the ball.”

Polly stared at him. "Who told you about the ball?" she asked.

"You did. You said I'd see the governor there."

"So I did," said Polly, overcome with confusion. "It just slipped out. Mother told me not to talk about it. Anne and Susan will be mad when they hear about it. Father wants them to go but mother doesn't, so, of course, they can't. But I mustn't tell you any more." She pressed her chubby hand over her rosebud mouth and prided herself that she was obeying her mother's injunctions.

With wavering interest, John Johnson allowed himself to be shown about the century-old Dutch fort, named for the husband of Queen Anne. He saw, but scarcely noticed, the strong walls and the four bastions flaunting defiance to every wind that blew. He was not at all displeased when it was discovered that the iron gates were closed and guarded by soldiers in the king's uniform.

Polly, however, was genuinely disappointed. "I wanted to show you the house inside the fort," she said, "and the garden and the chapel where all the soldiers kneel down and pray for their enemies."

"While the enemy is outside stealing their horses," said John, much amused. "The stables are outside the fort."

Polly looked at him quizzically. "That wouldn't be fair," she said.

"All is fair in love and war," quoted John. What a delightfully entertaining girl this Polly was proving to be!

They strolled about the Bowling Green, past the beautiful residences on the Broad Way, then sauntered back to the sea-wall and watched the angry waves lash themselves in fury at the foot of the battlement. Across the expanse of water they saw land which John surmised must be Staten Island.

"I always thought that was England," said Peggy.

"England?" scoffed Polly. "It takes weeks and weeks to go to England, doesn't it, Mr. Johnson?"

"Seven weeks, if the weather is good," replied John. "If it is stormy, the chances are we may never get there at all."

"But you are not afraid, are you?" said Polly, beaming on her hero with ardent admiration. "You're not afraid of anything, are you, Mr. Johnson?"

With an utter disregard for the truth, John said he wasn't.

Turning towards home, they saw Steve playing with a six-year-old, flaxen-haired elf of a child, who looked as though she might have been a daughter of the angels in heaven. She was tossing pebbles over the cliff and listening to the splash their falling made in the water far below. The child was determined to look over the edge of the precipice, but the strong arm of her nursemaid was a deterring anchor.

“Margaret!” cried the girls gleefully and simultaneously. “The little pet!”

They proceeded to drag John over to see the adorable creature.

“Won’t you please hurry, Mr. Johnson?” begged Peggy.

“She’s a naughty girl this morning, that’s what she is,” said the distraught nursemaid. “I can’t do nothin’ with her. She’s made up her mind to tumble over. If she don’t, she’ll lose her temper something awful, and if she does I’ll lose my job.”

John Johnson laughed and commended the servant for her vigilance.

“Look at her lovely eyes,” cried Polly. “They are as blue as the sky.”

“We’re going to fight about her,” Steve informed them.

“She’s a girl. She can’t play Mohawk,” said Peggy.

“Oh, go on,” answered Steve. “She’s not my sister.”

“When is the fight?” asked John Johnson.

“This afternoon. Margaret’s ours, but the Onondagas want her,” Steve explained. “They’re not going to get her, though.”

Little Margaret did not realize that she was to be so soon the cause of a redman’s feud. She had a handful of pebbles, which she had gathered to throw over into the echoing void, and she was off to the precipice.

John ran after her, caught her in his arms, and held her so that she might toss the stones and watch them fall to the shore below. He picked up several heavier ones and threw them, too, while Margaret screamed with delight and clapped her tiny hands.

“There’ll be no holdin’ her to-morrow, sir,” said the nursemaid, with disapproval in her voice and protest on her face. “Everybody spoils her. She is a bad, bad girl.”

“Sing ‘Charlie is my darling,’ Margaret,” Peggy besought the naughty child.

“Sing it for Mr. Johnson,” said Polly. “He let you throw the stones.”

Whether she would or would not caused Margaret some weighty deliberation.

“That’s a Jacobite song,” said John. “Where did she hear it?”

“I learned it to her,” confessed the maid. “My father was a Jacobite, sir, but I’m for King George. I ain’t no traitor, sir. I don’t mix with the rabble that cries down His Majesty. The Major says they don’t know no better. Ignorant people never do, sir. They—”

John interrupted her to inquire who the Major might be.

“Major Moncrieffe, sir, Margaret’s pa. I work for Mrs. Moncrieffe, I do. They are high-up people like yourself, sir.”

John Johnson did not need to be told who the Moncrieffes were. He knew the Major as his father’s friend and occasional correspondent.

Meanwhile, Margaret had made up her mind to be agreeable, if only to give the lie to her maligning nursemaid. She stood before her admiring audience, curtesied, sang her little solo in the prettiest little voice imaginable, then curtesied again and ran away to gather more stones.

“She’s that—that contrary,” sputtered the servant above the applause. “When she grows up she’ll be a wicked, wicked woman.”

“I hope not,” said John.

“The worst thing about her is that she ain’t afraid of nobody,” the woman went on. “It don’t do children no good to always get their own way, sir. It spoils ’em, that’s what it does.”

“She will not always get her own way,” prophesied John. “Nobody ever does. Will you sing for us again some day, Margaret? We are going now.”

The child did not answer. It may be that she did not hear, for she was busy pelting stones at her accusing nursemaid.

They left her in a tantrum.

“I’d let the Onondagas have her, if they want her,” whispered John to the young Mohawk chieftain, as they made their way to Watts Manor.

Steve cast on him a look of withering scorn. “What? Give her up to those savages?” he cried tragically. “If they get her, it will be over my—”

“Under your scalp, you mean,” said John, with a chuckle.

It was noon when they returned to Watts Manor. All afternoon John Johnson lived in anticipation of the social event of the evening, for he soon

learned that Polly's unguarded reference to it had not stirred up false hopes. There was to be a dinner and a dance in the great hall above the King's Arms on the Broad Way, and the host was to be no less a personage than Governor Colden.

"We are to be the guests of honour," Lord Adam informed him.

"We?"

"Well, you, principally. The son and heir of the great Sir William Johnson is to be fêted on the eve of his departure for England. Twelve tables of guests are going to show their friendship for the father by drinking a toast to the son."

"All New York will be there," said Mrs. Watts. "The De Lanceys, the Livingstones, the Schuylers and the Van Cortlandts, not to mention Roger Morris and the other members of the Council of New York. The Moncrieffes are invited, too, and dozens of Sir William's business friends and acquaintances. It will be a big affair."

"There would be a great many more," added Mr. Watts, "if we could arrange it as we should like. There is no dining-room in New York large enough to seat Sir William's friends and admirers."

John Johnson went to the dinner with much expectation but, unfortunately, the occasion was not characterized by that spirit of kindly fellowship which is the mark of a successful dinner party. Two political rivals had been inadvertently placed at the same table, an argument had been started, and soon the most scathing invectives were being hurled across the board.

"What's wrong?" the governor asked one of the waiters.

"The usual thing, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"The king, the Stamp Act and the spirit of democracy, your honour," was the reply.

"Tell them it is my wish that they forget their differences here," said the governor. Turning again to his guests, he said: "I can't see why we should have all this hubbub. The Stamp Act has been repealed, the spirit of democracy is abroad in the land, and the king is on his throne across the water."

“A toast to His Majesty,” cried Lord Adam Gordon at what proved to be an opportune moment. “The King! Ladies and gentlemen, I rise to propose a toast to the king.”

As one man, the people stood, drank the toast, and sang with gusto the national anthem. Peace and harmony reigned again.

“Thank you, Lord Adam,” said Governor Colden. “Your tact will stand you in good stead when you come to be the Governor of Massachusetts. Sorry, Mr. Johnson, but these are stormy days. What does your father think about the political situation? He says very little in his letters.”

“He sees in it grave cause for alarm,” replied John.

“So do we all. But in what way?”

John Johnson paused for a moment, and then said: “I have heard my father say that it was a sorry day for England when she drove France out of America.”

“He means at Quebec, I suppose?”

“Yes.”

“But no man ever fought more valiantly against the French than Sir William,” the governor reminded him.

“That all the world knows well,” said John. “But France kept the colonies in hot water so that they had to look to the mother country for help. We no longer need the protection of England. Father thinks that is the cause of the unrest. He is afraid the time will come when the colonies will demand their independence.”

“Independence!” ejaculated a score of guests at once.

“Did you say independence?” said the governor.

“That is what father said,” maintained John. “He thinks the fate of all America hangs upon the shoulders of one man, the Governor of Canada.”

“The Governor of Canada!” exclaimed a number of incredulous voices. “What has the Governor of Canada got to do with it?”

“What’s his name?” some one asked.

“Sir Guy Carleton,” said Governor Colden.

“Yes, that’s it,” said John Johnson. “Father says that unless he is very loyal and very strong, Canada and Nova Scotia, too, will be drawn into the

general revolt. If that should happen, the time may come when England will be driven out of the western world.”

“God strengthen the arms of Sir Guy Carleton,” said the governor, fervently.

“Independence!” blustered the Honourable John Watts. “Rank matricide, that’s what I call it.”

“Let’s not think about it,” said Lord Adam Gordon. “It won’t be in our day, that’s certain. Time for another toast to His Majesty. The King, ladies and gentlemen. The King!”

They sprang again to their feet and quaffed the sparkling Madeira so generously provided.

The tables were cleared and the dancing began. It continued with much revelry until the unholy hour of midnight. When the street-crier was calling his “Twelve o’clock and all’s well,” the last departing guest was being rolled into his carriage. Half an hour later, New York society was fast asleep in their beds.

In the afternoon of the next day, the good ship *Prince George* sailed for England, with two distinguished passengers on board. A great crowd had gathered on the wharf to see them off. Some pressed forward to wish them *bon voyage*, but others stood on the fringe of the crowd, whispering such choice bits of gossip as had come to their ears regarding Governor Colden’s grand dinner party.

The travellers were off at last. Soon the ship was turning its nose to the east. A cheering shout from the wharf, a flutter of handkerchiefs, the dispersing crowd. The outline of the city began to grow dim against the western sky. Fort George was only a speck on the horizon. The Narrows passed, they were out on the bosom of the Atlantic.

Chapter III

THE NEW DEMOCRACY

Two years later, Sir William Johnson wrote to the Honourable John Watts to say that his son, John, was returning to America heart-free—at least, unwed. He was scheduled to sail from Southampton about the middle of September, with Captain Miller, on his ship, *The Edward*, and would arrive in New York in time to avoid the autumnal equinox.

A previous letter had brought the information that John had made a good impression at His Majesty's Court. The King had been so pleased with the young American that he had knighted him without delay. He was Sir John Johnson now, the first native-born American to have so great an honour conferred upon him. His father was proud as a peacock about it.

Sir John's coming was causing the Honourable John Watts some concern. Times had changed in New York during the two years of the young man's absence. He would be struck with the great contrast between life in the court circle of London and the miserable state to which new-world society had been reduced. The spirit of democracy was rampant everywhere. Like a wedge, it had cleft long-established friendships and day by day the cleavages were deepening and widening. With the wealthy and influential families taking sides and hurling at each other such scornful epithets as "Whig" and "Tory," there seemed little hope of according Sir John Johnson the sort of welcome he might reasonably expect.

While the Watts family scorned the new trend of society, they stood in awe of it. No longer did they dare to display evidences of their exalted station in life. They had removed the coats-of-arms from their gateway, knowing full well that, if they did not do so, some one with less right would. Their stately coach stood under lock and key in the driving-shed, and the Honourable John's plain, business turn-out served now for the most formal occasions. Tony, the coachman, had laid aside his handsome green livery—and his pride, following a deluge of over-matured eggs—and went about, as every one else did, in a shapeless suit of grey homespun. This was the new-world democracy to which Sir John Johnson would have to be introduced.

Mr. Watts was at the wharf when *The Edward* came in. He looked in vain for the handsome Sir John Johnson, but he saw his two slaves, who

upheld something between them that resembled a wretched, bedraggled ghost. “What! So this is how I find you?” he cried. “A little seasick, eh?”

“I nearly died,” came the answer. The black men confirmed their master’s statement. He had not been out of his bunk for weeks, and there wasn’t anything he could keep on his stomach.

“Cheer up, it’s all over now,” replied Mr. Watts. “I’ve seen them so bad they had to be carried off. You’ll soon be yourself again. Lean on me, my boy.”

Mr. Watts helped the blacks conduct Sir John to the carriage and Tony made him as comfortable as he could.

“I must apologize for this conveyance,” said the host, “but it is all I have to offer you.”

“Coach being painted?”

Mr. Watts smiled blandly. “The coach, my dear fellow, has all but passed out of our lives,” he said. “It has gone the way of my broadcloth suit and Tony’s embroidered livery. Times have changed since you saw us last. There now, I almost forgot to congratulate you on your new title.”

“Don’t mention it, Mr. Watts. I am sorry, sir, if reverses have come to you. It is news to me. You do not seem to be worrying, though.”

“What good would that do?” said Mr. Watts. “One minute I want to laugh, and the next I’m all for screaming. Sometimes I think I’m going mad.”

Sir John looked at him in amazement.

“It isn’t poverty that ails us, John,” said Mr. Watts.

“Then what in heaven’s name is it?”

“It’s this infernal spirit of democracy that compels us to make galoots of ourselves because some crazy fool said that Jack is as good as his master. Did you ever hear such nonsense? Yet that’s the little speech that has made New York so hilariously insane.”

Sir John laughed, too. It was too ridiculous, he said, to be driven to Watts Manor by a coachman in grey homespun.

“And in such a rig,” said Mr. Watts. “Do you know what I call it?”

“I couldn’t even guess.”

“My leathern conveniency.”

“So it is, to be sure,” said Sir John, laughing heartily.

“We must not make too light of it, though,” said Mr. Watts. “The time may come when we shall have to walk. Things are going to get worse before they get better.”

“You don’t mean it, surely?”

“But I do. This is no joke.”

“Well, I can walk, too, if I must,” declared Sir John. “I am no weakling, or I could not have survived those last terrible weeks on the ocean. The captain said it was the worst passage he had ever experienced.”

“He must have been a good captain,” observed Mr. Watts.

“To bring us safely home, you mean?”

“No, to provide his passengers with so great a boast.”

“You needn’t poke fun at me, Mr. Watts,” said Sir John. “This one was really the worst passage any captain ever had. There was one catastrophe after another all the way over. Clear enough when we left Southampton, but a fog came up the first night out and we ran headlong into a freighter bound for Jamaica. Man! what a crash that was. We sent her to the bottom with all on board, and our ship was so disabled that we had to put back to port and refit.”

“That was what made you so late, of course.”

“Well, partly. But when we started again, something went wrong with the compass, and we travelled leagues out of our way. For days we thought we were lost. It was then that my stomach turned. I’ve never been so sick in my life.”

“Tut, tut! It’s all over now,” Mr. Watts reminded him, “And here we are at Watts Manor.”

Mrs. Watts met him at the door. She offered Sir John her felicitations and her welcome. Seasick, was he? Then he must have a cup of tea.

“It will settle your stomach, Sir John,” said Mr. Watts.

“Never mind the title, Mr. Watts. Call me plain John, do,” said the young man. “We must conform to the spirit of the times.”

“You’ll have the tea?”

“Yes, I’ll try a cup, if you please, Mrs. Watts.”

She brought the tea on a silver tray and in a pot decorated with the De Lancey arms. "I warn you, it's contraband," she said.

"What? The silver or the teapot?"

"No, the tea."

"All the better," laughed Sir John. "I'll drink it to His Majesty's health and to his triumph over this infernal spirit of democracy."

"And how did you find my dear sister, Lady Warren?" asked the lady.

"In excellent spirits, madam. She sent you her love and some presents, which I shall give you as soon as my trunks are opened."

Mr. Watts inquired about Lord Adam Gordon. "What is the news about him? His last letter was full of matrimony."

"It would be," said Sir John, depositing his cup on the table.

"Who is the lady?"

"The Dowager Duchess of Athone."

"Have you met her?"

"I should say so," said Sir John. "I was groomsman at the wedding. I had dinner with them the day before I sailed."

"I thought he was a confirmed bachelor," said Mrs. Watts.

"He has become an affirmed benedict," replied John, "The Duchess is a charming woman, and Lord Adam is without doubt the happiest man in England. When he becomes the Governor of Massachusetts, his cup of joy will overflow."

Mrs. Watts shrugged her shapely shoulders. "It will probably boil over," she said, "not with joy, but with the ingredients of the witches' cauldron."

"So Boston is affected, too, with this confounded spirit of democracy?"

"It is even madder than New York, if that were possible," said Mr. Watts, in confirmation. "If Lord Adam is wise, he will do his honeymooning in England. I hope Lady Warren is not thinking of coming over now."

"No, she is happy with her daughters and her friends. What is the news of father, Mr. Watts? It is months since I heard from him. Any word lately?"

"I had a letter about two weeks ago."

"And—?"

“He is much the same. He thought of going to spend a week or two at some healing springs the Indians told him about.”

“Saratoga?”

“Yes, that’s the name. He still has a great deal of pain in his thigh.”

Sir John sighed. He said he often wondered if that wound wouldn’t kill him in the end.

“Shot, wasn’t he?” said Mrs. Warren.

“Surely you have not forgotten, Anne, how Sir William drove back the French at Lake George?”

“But that was years ago.”

“In 1755,” Sir John informed her. “That’s when they gave him the title and a bag of gold, but they didn’t take the bullet out of his hip. Every year the pain grows more intense. His Majesty knew all about father.”

“Indeed!” Mrs. Watts was evidently impressed.

“He sent him this as a mark of appreciation of father’s great services. I carry it with me for safety.” As he spoke, Sir John drew from an inner pocket a huge gold watch and handed it to Mr. Watts. It must have weighed from five to six ounces and measured an inch and a half in thickness. The dial had two circles of numerals, one Roman, the other, Arabic. “Made by the King’s goldsmith,” he added.

Mr. Watts soon found the mark, “You could not have brought your father anything that would please him half so much,” he said.

Mrs. Watts examined it, too, with some interest, then returned it to Sir John without remark. “Do let me give you a cup of tea,” she said. “I am afraid I have been very negligent.”

“No more tea, thank you, Mrs. Watts. I think I shall retire now, if I may. I am still very weak.”

“By all means, Sir John,” said the lady. “I’ll send up your dinner. Don’t bother to come down until you have completely recovered.”

“I think I’ll stay till morning,” said Sir John. “I’ll be down for breakfast, though.”

But the young gentleman had no intention of resting until the morning. He was merely using a little strategy to bring about the consummation of what had become a burning desire. He had a suspicion that the elusive Anne

and Susan were in the house and he was determined that no power on earth was going to prevent him from meeting them. If he wanted to rest, it was only that he might be the more entrancing in the company of the gentle young ladies. Vainglorious young man!

He chose well the time of his reappearance—the evening hour, when the family had gathered about the fireplace in the living-room before retiring.

Mrs. Watts started with apprehension when she saw him. “I did not expect you,” she said, “at least not before breakfast. You said—”

Sir John swept the circle with his eyes. Yes, they were there. He could see their bright faces shining in the light of the coals on the hearth.

The Honourable John Watts sprang up and grasped the young man’s hand with unrestrained cordiality. He, too, was gloating over the disposition of the fates. “You are feeling better?” he said.

“Much better,” replied Sir John, “I haven’t caught the contagion.”

“You mean—?”

“The spirit of democracy, to be sure. I think I must be immune.”

He heard the girls titter, and he felt he had made a good beginning.

The children came up shyly, one by one, to shake hands with him. Peggy ventured to remind him of their walk around Fort George.

“I remember it very well,” said Sir John. “How is that naughty Margaret Moncrieffe?”

“Naughtier than ever,” declared Peggy, laughing. “But you should ask Steve. He knows more about her than I do.”

Steve blushed to the roots of his hair, protesting that Margaret was nothing to him.

“I’m sure Steve is much more interested in the Mohawks,” said Sir John, to the boy’s infinite relief.

Mrs. Watts came forward again to explain the absence of her son, Robert. He was married, she said.

“Married? Anybody I know?”

“Lord Stirling’s daughter,” was the reply. “A good enough family, but no money.”

“And Whigs,” added Mr. Watts, as if that were the last straw that would break the reputation of any family. “Here’s Polly. She’s taller, don’t you think, John?”

Polly turned upon him so suddenly that he was all but overcome with the glory of her presence. There she was, a vision of health and beauty in a tight-fitting bodice, a long, full skirt and a pair of dainty, silk slippers, a child no longer.

Sir John’s heart palpitated so unexpectedly and with such vigour that he all but lost his wonderful self-possession. He bowed low over their clasped hands, pressing his lips to her finger-tips. He flushed crimson with the thrill of the tenderest of emotions.

Polly’s face was suffused with a gloriously radiant smile. “You are just the same,” she said.

“Why, what did you expect?”

“A halo about your head.”

Sir John experienced another delightful thrill which, unfortunately, confused him so much that he could think of nothing further to say.

“I want you to meet our daughters, Anne and Susan,” said Mrs. Watts, placing an arm around each of the two beautiful girls and drawing them within the range of the young man’s strange absorption.

“Yes, we want you to meet the girls,” echoed Mr. Watts, rubbing his hands together in the agony of a nervous tension. “They were away from home when you were here two years ago.”

Mrs. Watts recalled that they had been on a visit to their Uncle Oliver.

Sir John smiled to himself. For all he cared they might be with their Uncle Oliver at that very moment. He had met Anne and Susan at last, but only to discover that their elusiveness had been their greatest charm. Compared with Polly—well, there was no comparison at all. While Anne and Susan sat cold and unresponsive as sphinxes, Polly’s whole being warmed and glowed to his. It was Polly he wanted. Polly! In all the court of England, in all the colonies of America, there was no one could hold a candle to the lovely Polly Watts.

The father of the girls sought to relieve his nervousness somewhat by introducing a political topic of conversation. That was a world in which he felt entirely at home. He was interested in the speeches in the House of Commons. Had John heard any of them?

“I heard the whole colonial question argued pro and con,” was the reply.

“Pitt’s speeches, too?”

“I think I can hear them yet. You know, he suffers from gout, and he speaks from his crutches. His words were like balls of fire shot from an angry volcano. ‘Taxation and representation are inseparable,’ I heard him say. ‘That is an eternal law of nature.’”

“But it isn’t representation they want at all,” said Mr. Watts. “All they are after is an excuse for not paying their taxes.”

“So it seems to me,” said Sir John. “They don’t want to hear anything about the debt England has incurred in defence of the colonies. They have an obligation to the mother country but they meet it by renouncing Britain’s authority, by insulting her officers and by breaking into open rebellion.”

“Come now,” cried Mrs. Watts. “Must we talk politics? Couldn’t we have a little hop? I’ll play for you.” She opened her spinet. At the sound of the music the young people sprang to their feet and formed a circle.

“I can’t dance. My feet are too big,” said Mr. Watts, obviously annoyed. “I can’t see what is wrong with a little discussion on the questions of the day.”

“But we need you, father,” remonstrated Polly. “I’ve counted.”

They pulled him into the ring and the dance continued up and down and in and out until Mr. Watts begged for mercy.

“Mercy? I should say so,” cried Sir John. “I’m ready to drop, too. But wait until to-morrow evening and I’ll dance you all down.”

It was Sir John’s intention to spend a week in New York before returning to his distant home in the valley of the Mohawk. He had not forgotten that his two brothers-in-law, Guy Johnson and Daniel Claus, had asked him to bring to them from New York an organ and certain other pieces of furniture for their new homes. That was something that could not be done in an afternoon’s shopping. He realized, too, that if he could ever hope to reinstate himself with his numerous nieces and nephews, with his father’s half-breed family, and with the slaves, black, white and red, he must return to Johnson Hall well laden with presents and tokens. It was a big order, but his pockets were deep and his credit was good.

It happened that the sloop *Bridget*, which plied up and down the Hudson, was in port when *The Edward* landed. As soon as Captain Sinclair heard that Sir John had actually arrived, he sent him his congratulations and his

respects, intimating that it would give him much pleasure to postpone his sailing indefinitely if only he might have the honour of conveying Sir John and his two negroes and all his foreign baggage up the river to Albany.

“Captain Sinclair is very kind,” Sir John replied. “Tell him I’ll go on Thursday.”

The message was no more than delivered when a runner brought to Watts Manor a letter which upset all Sir John’s well-laid plans. Bad news from the land of the Mohawks! Colonel Guy Johnson had broken his leg. It was a nasty fracture and no doctor in Albany felt competent to set it. The Honourable John Watts was enjoined to engage the best surgeon in New York at his own price, and Sir John must be told to hurry home the minute he arrived. Sir William was evidently greatly distressed.

“I’ll start this very evening,” said Sir John. “Tell Captain Sinclair, somebody.”

“Wait till to-morrow,” advised Mr. Watts. “It will take time to get the doctor. Such a misfortune to befall honest Guy!”

“My sister Mary will be beside herself with anxiety,” said Sir John. “She is such a bundle of nerves at any time.”

“I’ll go and engage the doctor.” Mr. Watts put on his hat.

“Promise him whatever he asks. Poor Guy!”

Mr. Watts stepped into his “leathern conveniency,” then turned back again and said, reassuringly: “Guy will come around all right again, John, I am sure. The worst fracture is only a fracture. It will heal in time.”

“Yes, but father will be so worried. He depends so much on Guy. And father is not well.”

“No, he is not well,” said Mr. Watts. “Perhaps I ought to have told you —”

Sir John started. “What? Father’s not worse?”

“No, it’s Guy’s boy.”

“His boy? Which one?”

“The eldest. He’s gone. Fever. I thought it would spoil your visit if I told you before you were leaving.”

His sister’s troubles touched Sir John’s tender heart. “I should be there with them,” he said. “Poor Mary! Poor father!”

“I’ll go now and see the doctor,” replied Mr. Watts.

Mrs. Watts came up at this juncture to offer a word of consolation. “After all, the little fellow is far better off, John,” she told him. “I can see nothing but trouble ahead of us all. Such terrible times as we live in! And everybody says it is going to be worse before it is better.”

“Nothing could be worse than it is,” muttered Sir John, refusing to be comforted.

Captain Sinclair sent word that he would be ready to sail at daybreak, provided everything could be loaded that evening. So Tony and the Johnson slaves were ordered to transfer all Sir John’s luggage across the city from the ocean to the river wharf, and to be quick about it. Everything must be on board the *Bridget* before dark.

Mr. Watts had been able to persuade the best surgeon in New York. He would meet Sir John on the deck of the *Bridget*, bag and baggage, at six o’clock in the morning.

“That’s much too early,” said Mrs. Watts. “Why don’t you make it seven?”

“No hour is too early after a sleepless night,” said Sir John. “The doctor is sure to be an hour or two late. The greater your hurry, the slower the doctor.”

For once, the great surgeon was on time. He introduced himself to Sir John at the appointed hour.

“Had much success with fractures?” Sir John asked him.

“Well, I don’t want to boast—”

“He’s marvellous,” interposed Mr. Watts. “Guy will be around on his pins again before you can say John Robinson.”

“Then you’re my man. Let’s get started. Where’s the captain?”

Sir John turned and saw not Captain Sinclair but a set of glimmering teeth in the middle of a broad, black, expectant grin. “Oh, there you are, Tony,” he said.

“Sorry to hear you have trouble, my lord.”

Mr. Watts smiled. “Call him Sir John to his face, Tony, and worship him to your heart’s content behind his back,” he advised.

“I’d like to take you with me, Tony,” said Sir John. “I need a boy like you.”

Tony looked from one gentleman to the other, a puzzled expression taking the place of the grin. “Is yours a coach, sir?” he said.

“What do you mean?”

“Or just a leathern conveniency?”

“A gilded coach emblazoned with the Johnson crest and a green livery for the coachman,” Sir John promised him. “No rotten eggs, either, Tony. There’s no disloyalty in the Mohawk valley.”

The bright eyes fairly danced for the moment, then suddenly grew grave and thoughtful. “I can’t go, anyway,” he said. “Massa he done need me so.”

“You are a good boy, Tony,” said Sir John. “Here’s a crown for you. Take good care of your master.”

The *Bridget’s* sails were set; only the gang-plank remained to be pulled in. All aboard!

They were really moving at last. The Honourable John Watts stood on the wharf saying his farewell. “Come again, John. Come any time. I confess I love you as a son.”

Sir John leaned over the railing and replied: “Thank you, Mr. Watts. I have a father of my own but—but I shouldn’t mind having you for a father-in-law.”

Zounds! What was that he said? Mr. Watts was too amazed to reply. Was it a joke, a mistake, or had the most eligible bachelor in America actually declared himself?

The *Bridget* had pushed out into the water. No time now for explanations, but the fluttering handkerchiefs might surely be construed to mean a mutual understanding and a wedding in high society in the not-too-distant future.

Chapter IV

IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

With Colonel Guy Johnson convalescing and with Sir John re-established in the community, Sir William's variable health improved. He was good for another twenty years, his doctor declared, if only he could be persuaded to use a little discretion and not overwork.

This idea of overwork amused the baronet very much. It wasn't work, he contended, but idleness and ennui that brought their victims to an early grave. So, with all the energy of his young manhood, he undertook new and more difficult tasks. At the same time, strange to relate, he encouraged his son to loll about in the lap of luxury, without ambition or enterprise. "My son, Sir John," was above and beyond all rules, it would appear. He was to be privileged to do battle with life from the shoulders of his adoring father.

To Sir John, with a flair for English society, life in the backwoods had lost much of its charm. What a humdrum existence it was, after all. The palatial estates of the family, of which he had boasted so proudly when he was abroad, now appeared to his critical eye gauche and overdone almost to the point of vulgarity. Never before had he noticed how provincial and how intolerant were the people he met every day. Even his sisters showed a deplorable lack of grace and dignity, while his father appeared little short of ridiculous with his Mohawk consort and a troop of half-breed children. Such a situation would be impossible in England. Sir John found himself standing aloof, viewing his environment with a superiority which left him somewhat lonely and unpopular.

"It's time you got married," his sister Mary told him one day when he had indulged in a little adverse criticism of the gardens at Guy Park.

"Pray how would my marriage improve your sense of landscape?" Sir John replied. "The only place for these hollyhocks is back in that corner beside the house. They'll be a sight here when they come to bloom. In England—"

"In America we put them in the middle of the patch, if we want to," retorted Mary. "Let your wife plant them at Fort Johnson to suit you, but please stop harping at me."

“Hoity-toity,” cried Sir John. “If they are all like you, Fort Johnson will go begging a long time for a mistress.”

“I agree with Mary,” called Colonel Guy from the verandah, where he sat nursing his damaged leg. “It is a shame you are not married, John. You’re old enough, I’m sure.”

“I’m too old,” was the gloomy reply. “That’s the trouble.”

“Cheer up, Methusaleh,” replied Guy. “If you can’t find somebody who will marry you and your title, something’s gone wrong with the ladies, surely. They must have changed a lot since I was on the matrimonial market.”

He got the same advice at Claus House when he happened to drop a complaint of the monotony of life at Fort Johnson.

“That’s easily remedied,” observed Daniel Claus. “Get married, man, if you want noise and tumult. I speak from a rich experience.”

Sir John hastened to explain that it wasn’t excitement of that sort he craved.

“You don’t know what’s good for you,” his sister Nancy chimed in. “These bachelors! They are so selfish, so helpless, so utterly useless. I have no patience with them. That’s just what you are going to be like before long.”

“Then you advise marriage,” said Sir John, as if playing with the idea. “That’s sisterly advice—”

“To be followed with brotherly profit,” said Mary, terminating both the sentence and the conversation.

Sir William broached the matter which lay so near to his heart in a more serious vein. He led up to the subject with a series of remarks and observations which culminated in: “I hope, my son, that it will not be long before you take that most important step in a young man’s life.”

“No hurry, surely, father, if you mean matrimony.”

“I shall not die happy, John, until I hold your son and our heir upon my knee.”

“But, father, you are only fifty-three. There is plenty of time.”

“I am older than my years,” said Sir William. “My thigh—”

“Doctor Daly says you are good for twenty years,” the young man reminded him.

“Doctor Daly is an old fool,” blustered Sir William. “What he doesn’t know about my anatomy would fill a library. He’s nothing but an old woman and he treats me like a child. I won’t stand it.” He went off on a tirade about the good Doctor Daly, but Sir John did not even hear, for his thoughts had wandered off on a pleasurable excursion to New York.

Winter only accentuated the monotony of life on the Johnson estates. Sir John was excessively bored by it. He longed for spring and as soon as the ice had gone down the river he trumped up an excuse to go to the city. He reminded his father of Mr. Watts’ great concern for Guy’s health, and he suggested that the many kindnesses that gentleman had shown the family entitled him to the courtesy of a full account of Guy’s remarkable recovery.

“Foine!” cried Sir William, with enthusiasm. The next minute he was throwing cold water on the idea by remarking that the surgeon would long since have told him all.

“But the later reports—”

“I have been writing to Mr. Watts from time to time. I have told him everything there is to tell.”

Sir John looked somewhat crestfallen, but resolute withal. “You have, sir?” he said.

“Yes, everything.”

“But I have been thinking—the kindness of Mrs. Watts—it would be only polite to—”

“To go on a further visit?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And receive more kindnesses from the Honourable Mrs. Watts?”

“It would be merely a call, sir,” said Sir John, lamely enough.

“A bright idea, John,” ejaculated Sir William, suddenly and joyously. “I’d give my eye teeth that I lost twenty-odd years ago to go with you. You might pay your respects to her ladyship and give me a chance to entertain the young ladies. I still have a cock’s eye for the females, as all the gossips know.”

“I wish you would go with me, father.”

“Tut! Tut!” replied Sir William, with a chuckle. “Sure and it’s faint-heart that wants company when he goes a-courting. Get it all settled, son, and I’ll go down and dance at the wedding.”

So Sir John was off to New York with his father’s most hearty approval.

It was Captain Sinclair’s custom to winter in Albany with his family. This afforded him an opportunity to repair his boat, rigging it with fresh sails and tackling, so that he might be ready to commence another season of river trips as soon as navigation opened in the spring. Sir John knew this. He was counting on the captain to take him down to New York with the *Bridget* on her first trip south.

Captain Sinclair was delighted to have so distinguished a passenger. The Johnsons were aristocrats of the first water, and they paid well. The association of the family name with his boat augured well for the *Bridget*. It put her in a class by herself, the queen of all the river boats, and it gave her captain an enviable reputation for being more or less familiar with the comings and goings of the landed gentry.

The captain was, however, far from being familiar with the Johnsons. But he had a lively curiosity about the family and their activities, which only their aloofness had prevented him from gratifying. Sir John was on this occasion unusually genial, though the chances were that he might never be again. The captain saw his opportunity and seized it. “Going down to New York?” he asked. It was an obvious question, for they were at that moment within ten miles of the city.

Sir John replied that he hoped to enjoy a bit of the social whirl. “It has been such a long winter,” he said.

The captain noted that it had not taken Sir John long to get around to the weather, but he was determined to try again. This time he asked a more pertinent question. “Where are you living now? At Johnson Hall?”

“No, Fort Johnson.”

“Alone?”

“Well, not exactly. I have a housekeeper, of course, and the servants.”

“Ever get lonesome?”

“Sometimes.”

The captain screwed up his courage and made a very presumptuous remark. “You’d better get married.”

Sir John smiled sardonically. "That seems to be a rather general opinion," he observed.

"Funny thing about advice," soliloquized the captain. "It's like castor-oil. If you don't take it, it don't do you no good. But there's nothin' worse than a bachelor, sir, unless it is an old maid."

"Or an unhappy married couple," added Sir John, as if he might have some pronounced ideas on that subject. "You had better keep your castor-oil, captain. I'm in no hurry to marry. Good-night."

So that was as far as the captain got with his interrogations, for Sir John moved off in the direction of his state-room. The next morning the *Bridget* had docked at the river wharf in New York.

Sir John had determined not to be a guest at Watts Manor on this occasion but to put up at the King's Arms. There he engaged the best rooms available, and set his slave to work unpacking his bags and rearranging the furniture to suit him.

Sir John was satisfied that he had made no mistake about the tavern. It was the very thing to suit his purpose. It had a splendid location, facing, as it did, the Bowling Green and the fashionable row of houses on the lower Broad Way, and it was only three blocks distant from the lovely Polly Watts. There he could be as gay and as independent as he pleased. Let the silly agitators think and say what they would.

In the afternoon he sauntered over to Watts Manor. He had come, he said, to pay his father's respects and his own. How had the Watts family survived the dreadful winter?

"Tolerably well," replied the Honourable John, noticeably flustered. He had not forgotten the significant remark this same young man had made when he last parted with him. "Are your people all well?"

"As usual, sir," replied Sir John.

"And the colonel?"

"Guy, you mean?"

"Yes."

"In excellent health, I am glad to say."

"His accident hasn't left him lame?"

Sir John suddenly remembered that the chief object of this visit of his to New York was to give Mr. Watts a detailed report of his cousin's illness and convalescence, but for the life of him he couldn't think of the details. He racked his brain for them, but all in vain.

"He doesn't limp, then?"

"Not at all, sir. I saw him just before I left."

By this time Mr. Watts had regained his composure sufficiently to inquire how Sir John had reached New York.

"I came this morning with Captain Sinclair and the *Bridget*," replied the young man. "First trip this spring. I'll be over at the King's Arms for a week or two."

"At the King's Arms!" exclaimed Mrs. Watts, when she heard it. "There is room for you at Watts Manor, Sir John. I'll send Tony to bring your belongings over."

"Thank you, Mrs. Watts," said Sir John, "but it is quite impossible. I am here on a number of commissions for my father, and I have business that could not be transacted in your home."

"In our home?"

"Well, in any private home. I am sorry that I shall be prevented from enjoying your well-known hospitality on this occasion. I hope your daughters are well, Mrs. Watts."

Mr. Watts pricked up his ears at that. "You must come and see them—all of us, I mean—whenever you can," he said.

"Come to-morrow for dinner," invited Mrs. Watts. "Would seven o'clock suit you?"

"Admirably, thank you," replied Sir John, "but I'll come a little earlier, if I may, before it gets dark. Perhaps you would allow the children to go with me to inspect the new monument to the King on the Bowling Green."

It was agreed. He was to come at six.

All the next day the young man tramped the streets of the city, pretending to be much occupied with a multiplicity of business affairs, but thinking only of what might be awaiting him in the evening. At five o'clock he was dressed in his finest broadcloth suit, with his eyes on the slow-moving hands of his watch. As the appointed time drew near, he put on his fur coat, buttoned it up to his chin and went out into the street. He had

passed Watts Manor several times before he could make up his mind to announce his coming.

Polly was waiting at the door. Her heart gave a great thump at the sight of him. She greeted him effusively, clapping her hands childishly, and hailing him as Prince Charming.

Sir John was at his ease in a moment. Fairy tales, was it? Well, he had not forgotten his. Did she elect to be Sleeping Beauty or Little Red Riding Hood or the fairy godmother?

“Oh, I’m the old woman who lived in a shoe,” she answered, gaily.

“I’d say you were the queen of hearts,” he told her. He caught both her hands and held them firmly in his own.

“If you look at me like that I’ll call you Bluebeard,” she said, drawing her hands away.

Mrs. Watts shot a distressed look at her husband. “She’s like you, John,” she said. “So irresponsible! She’s always saying the wrong thing at the right time.”

“I’m sorry,” said Mr. Watts, apologizing for Polly and himself in a single breath. “But she is only a child. She’ll soon learn to keep her silly notions to herself.”

“I hope so. Anne and Susan are so restrained, so dignified.”

“They are De Lanceys,” Mr. Watts reminded her.

“Yes, fortunately.”

The children went off to the Bowling Green to see the equestrian statue recently erected in honour of the King. Polly was springing along as if on thin air beside Sir John, while Peggy and Steve trudged along more stolidly behind, still wrangling over their latest dispute.

It was a cold, raw day in early spring and the wind was blowing a terrible gale from across the harbour. Sir John drew his coat up around his neck, and looked at Polly. “You don’t seem to mind it,” he said.

“What?”

“Why, the wind.”

“That’s because I am so warm inside,” she said. “I’m bubbling over with joy. But you come from up there so near the north pole that I should think you’d be used to wind and cold.”

“I live only a hundred miles or so nearer the pole than you do, Polly,” said Sir John. He caught her arm, presumably to help her face the wind.

“A hundred miles, is it? Fort Johnson must be at the end of the world.”

“How would you like to go there some time and see for yourself?” he asked.

“Not while you are in New York,” she answered, with all the innocence of youth and all the cajolery of a woman of the world.

“I’d go with you, of course. I’d want to introduce you to my father.”

“Oh, I’d love to go,” she cried, ecstatically. She paused a moment and added: “I’d love to meet your father.”

Her words were none too flattering to the ardent wooer, but he caught a glimmer of hope in the glorious smile which suffused the girl’s blushing face.

“Perhaps when we go, you will decide to stay,” he said, significantly.

Polly looked at him, quizzically. “Stay?” she said. “What? With your father?”

“No, with me, of course. You would be Lady Johnson—”

Polly murmured a stifled exclamation and began suddenly to walk very fast.

“It would be a great game?” said Sir John, reassuringly.

“A game?”

“Sure and it would. Everybody says life is a game, but it’s no fun playing it alone. You are the queen of hearts and I—”

“The king of clubs, perhaps,” suggested Polly.

After that he held her closer, and their voices dropped to whispers.

“Something funny’s going on, Peggy,” Steve cried out with all the joyousness attending a new discovery. “I wasn’t listening but I heard a little.”

“I heard them say it was a game,” said Peggy.

“Polly’s blushing like red plush,” announced Steve. “Say, Sis, what’s this you are playing, eh?”

“Mohawk,” Sir John answered for her.

“No, it isn’t. I know how to play Mohawk.”

“But it is, Steve,” protested Sir John. “The son of the great Mohawk chief, Warraghuay, is asking Polly to be his squaw.”

“That’s a whopper,” young Steve sang out. “You can’t fool me so easy. We know your game, don’t we, Peggy?”

“Sure we do.”

The lovers walked on, hoping to silence the youngsters by paying them scant attention.

“It’s sweetheart!” shouted Steve, loud enough for the passers-by over on the Broad Way to hear. “I know all about that game. It’s what people play when they are going to get married.”

“I know something else about it,” said Peggy.

“What?”

“After you’re married it turns into a fight,” said she, adding a note of warning, which Polly did not so much as hear.

The lovers had reached the iron fence that surrounded the statue. They were looking through it quite nonchalantly and examining the leaden figure of the King. It was very like His Majesty, Sir John said, evidently the work of a good sculptor. He pointed out to the children its many good points. All the way home he told them stories about the King and the court and the wonderful statues he had seen in Westminster Abbey and in the museums of England.

The dinner was not an unqualified success. It started off with a potential matrimonial wrangle, following the Honourable John’s innocent inquiry as to the whereabouts of the girls.

“You mean Anne and Susan?” said Mrs. Watts. “They are spending the day over at Oliver’s.”

“But on such an occasion—”

“It was quite necessary that they should go,” maintained Mrs. Watts.

“Necessary to your plans, yes.”

Mrs. Watts did not answer. She turned to Sir John and said, sweetly: “I am afraid you have not seen much of our daughters.”

“I do not seem to have timed my visits well, Mrs. Watts,” said Sir John, politely. It was not what he should like to have said.

Jack came in late and gulped down his food in silence and without apology; Polly had lost her usual vivacity, and Sir John was unaccountably preoccupied. The children were monopolizing the conversation. It was enough to make Mrs. Watts bite her lip with annoyance. Why couldn't this troublesome youth stay at home in the Mohawk valley and marry some woman of his own class, as his father had done. Why must he try to foist himself upon the De Lanceys?

Mr. Watts, on the other hand, was overcome with chagrin at the shabby treatment his wife had given the most eligible bachelor in America. It was maddening to realize that, under the mask of De Lancey civility, she was glorying in her pride and exulting in her cunning. She was keeping the mere letter of her promise. Her daughters were as safe from Johnson influence as if she had secured them behind the grey walls of a nunnery!

"Come into my study, John," said the discomfited host. "I am sorry the girls are not here—but—a man has to play his wife's hand pretty much."

"I suppose so, sir."

"For my part, I am most anxious to have you meet my daughters."

"But I did meet them," Sir John reminded him. "I spent an evening with them when I came back from England. Surely you remember, sir, how we danced the reel."

"Still, even young people do not make many advances of friendship in a single evening," said Mr. Watts.

"No."

The Honourable John remembered the significant remark that this young man had made over the railing of the *Bridget*. If he was ever to be Sir John Johnson's father-in-law—well, it was his move. He ventured to remark that Anne was a very beautiful girl.

"She is lovely beyond any words of mine to express," said Sir John, rapturously.

It was Anne, then. But what if his wife should persist in her efforts to arrange an alliance for her with her old admirer, the widower, Captain Kennedy, heir to a dukedom? He took the precaution to mention that eventuality.

"His Grace may have her and welcome," said Sir John, with a sardonic smile.

Ah, it was Susan, then. Fortunately, Mrs. Watts had not yet seriously begun to provide for her future. "Susan, our second daughter, has a reputation for brains," he said. "My mother was a very brilliant woman."

"May the good Lord preserve me from a blue-stocking," exclaimed Sir John, fervently.

Mr. Watts was as startled as he was puzzled. "I don't—I don't quite understand," he stammered. "From something you said down at the wharf, I thought—"

"You thought I wanted to marry one of your daughters?"

"To be candid, I did."

"And so I do, Mr. Watts," said Sir John. "It's Polly I want, sir."

"Polly!" Mr. Watts started, but whether it was from relief or merely from surprise he could not have said. "Polly?"

"Yes, Polly. I love her to distraction, sir."

"But she is much too young. Scarcely sixteen."

"I can wait, Mr. Watts. All I want now is your permission to win her, if I can."

"Come to think of it, I shouldn't be surprised if you have already won her," said the prospective father-in-law. "I am afraid I am an old blockhead. To think this was going on under my nose, and I didn't even see it. But we never thought of Polly, John."

"Mrs. Watts will be surprised."

"And angry. I will not try to hide that fact from you, my boy."

Sir John smiled grimly. "The fact is, Mr. Watts, I have not thought of Mrs. Watts as a possible stumbling-block in the way of our happiness."

"You don't know Mrs. Watts, John."

"In our family father's word is law. I am not used to the interference of women. It is of you, and not of Mrs. Watts, that I ask the hand of your daughter in marriage."

Mr. Watts gasped. It was a happy solution, if he could be high-handed enough to go through with it. For once, he would assert himself. He gave his sanction without reservation, and cemented it with a hearty hand-shake.

"It is a mutual understanding, then," said Sir John.

“Yes,” he answered, “a man’s affair.”

Mrs. Watts’ indignation knew no bounds when she heard the news. What! a daughter of the De Lanceys stoop to ally herself with copper-coloured savages! It was preposterous.

Mr. Watts met the emergency with quiet dignity. “I will have you know,” he said, “that Polly is the daughter of the Honourable John Watts, President of the Council of New York, who will himself give her in marriage as it pleases him.”

“I wash my hands of the whole affair,” said Mrs. Watts, haughtily. “But I warn you, nothing good will come of it. I’d as soon see her married to a clodhopper.”

“I shall assume all responsibility, Anne,” said the Honourable John. “You have told me more than once that Polly is a Watts.”

“Yes, unfortunately.”

The Johnsons were delighted with Sir John’s matrimonial prospects. Sir William was hilariously happy. The dream of his life was to be fulfilled, for he had planned an alliance with the Watts family long before Johnny was out of his trundle-bed. But when a second letter from New York conveyed the intelligence that the future Lady Johnson was not yet sixteen, he was much annoyed. “Incredible!” he cried. “What a blunder Johnny has made! He should have taken the eldest. Faith, and why didn’t I go with him and have a finger in the match-making?”

But Sir John would not allow that he had made a mistake, not he. “Age, or at least the lack of it, is an objection which time will remedy,” he wrote Sir William. “Say no more, dear father, at least until with your own eyes you have seen the lovely Polly Watts.”

Chapter V

SOME VISITS AND A WEDDING

Sir John Johnson spent the next three years flitting back and forth between the Mohawk valley and New York. Listless, indifferent and haughty in the north country, his city friends found him quite the reverse. He lounged about in his luxurious quarters at the King's Arms, entertained young men of his own station in life, frequented the theatres and the coffee-houses and squandered both time and money on the lovely Polly Watts and her charmingly exclusive circle. A happy existence, this, and a tiresome journey which took him back betimes to Fort Johnson.

When William Tryon came from North Carolina to become the new governor of the Province of New York, Sir John had become the idol of society in the great city and an eager participant in its frivolities. At his first opportunity, he had called at the Provincial residence to offer to the governor his father's congratulations and his own, and he had established himself forthwith as a friend of the governor's family. This pleased Sir William very much and reconciled him to the continued absence of his son.

Sir William had, it must be confessed, an ulterior motive in establishing a contact with Governor Tryon. He needed him to further a certain project that had sprung from his own fertile brain. By some means he must contrive to have the governor visit Johnson Hall. It occurred to him that Sir John might be not only the plausible excuse for the invitation but the friend at court to urge its acceptance.

As it happened, the governor needed little persuasion. He had heard much of Sir William and he was glad for an opportunity to satisfy his curiosity about him. He told Sir John that he and Lady Tryon would make the trip to Johnson Hall the following summer, if a suitable escort could be found.

Sir John immediately offered himself as the escort. It was a long journey, undertaken in the heat of midsummer, but covered in such easy stages that it proved altogether delightful. When they reached their destination, Sir William was there to welcome them, as he alone could, and by his side stood Miss Molly, his Mohawk consort, who did the honours of the house with

grace and dignity. An interesting week, one quite unique in their official experience, was in store for the governor and his lady.

Sir William saw in this visit the fruition of his hopes. Very soon he found an occasion to acquaint the governor with his difficulties and discouragements, as well as with his hopes for the future. As for his accomplishments—

“They speak for themselves,” said the governor. “I came here expecting to find—I scarcely know what I expected, but certainly not such a thriving village as surrounds you here. What do you call the place?”

“Johnstown, your Excellency.”

“Quite appropriately, I am sure. But, tell me, what do the people do for a living?”

“They work for the Hall,” Sir William told him. “This household which I support needs tailors and cobblers, gardeners and mechanics and blacksmiths.”

“We passed a substantial-looking church and school,” said Governor Tryon.

“Built last year,” replied Sir William. “Did you notice the court-house across the way? It is not yet finished, but when it is, it will be fully equipped and adequate in every way for the prosecution of the law, yes, even to the pillory and stocks on the public square.”

“And who pays for all these buildings, Sir William?”

That was, of course, the question the baronet was waiting for him to ask.

“They fall like the gentle rain from heaven, sir,” he replied.

“And are twice blessed, blessing him that gives and those who receive,” answered Governor Tryon, continuing the strain of the quotation. “I have heard much of you, Sir William, and of your wonderful achievements, but I know now that the half has never been told.”

“Say nothing till to-morrow, I beg of you,” said Sir William. “I am arranging for you and Lady Tryon to see the village then at close range. The people want to do you honour, sir.”

The gilded coach was brought out the next afternoon for the great occasion, and in it the governor and the baronet and their ladies made their tour of inspection of the village. The townswomen were out in full force, dressed in their best and attended by their children. They saluted the

dignitaries with great gusto and evinced much pride in the village and its institutions. The men had formed into battalions and were parading up and down the streets to the sound of the fife and drum. Fourteen hundred militia stood at attention before their colonel and the governor of the province, and when their homage had been duly acknowledged, they rent the air with three rousing cheers and a reverberating tiger.

“Marvellous!” exclaimed the governor. “Your achievements, Sir William, are almost incredible.”

“This work of colonization is most important,” replied Sir William. “At the present time I am thinking of bringing out a colony from the auld sod.”

“Good.”

“I am planning to settle them on fertile lands to the north of the valley. You must realize, sir, how badly America needs settlers.”

“Yes, and settling,” replied Governor Tryon, with a grim smile. “I congratulate you, Sir William, on the contentment and well-fed happiness of your people. What I have seen to-day delights me as much as it surprises me. It is so different from the city. There the people haunt the streets by day and by night, hungry and frenzied about liberty poles and the tax on tea. I am at my wits’ end to know what to do with them.”

“We have no ghoulish rebels in the north country,” said Sir William, with pardonable pride. “Our people honour the King and respect his representatives. If there are wrongs to be righted, we put our trust in legislation.”

Sir William’s secret hopes were duly gratified, for before he retired that evening Governor Tryon had made certain promises which, when ratified, would strengthen the arms of the Johnson family. A new county was to be formed and named for the governor, and Johnstown was to be its county seat. Sir William was to be advanced another step in military rank, and his son, Sir John, his sons-in-law, Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson, and his friend, John Butler, were to be made judges and champions of the law. So did Governor Tryon reward loyalty and hospitality.

The genial host beamed his satisfaction. By means of a little discreet and well-directed hospitality he had pulled himself up another rung on the ladder of fame.

“When may we expect you at Government House, Sir William?” said the governor, as his week of holiday was drawing to a close. “Do you never go to New York?”

“Seldom, sir,” replied the baronet. “But I hope to go down for a certain social event next June.”

“Your son’s wedding?”

“I have promised myself to see him married.”

“Then you must come to see us.”

“I shall give myself the pleasure of calling upon your Excellency then,” he promised.

“Splendid! We shall look for you.”

The governor’s lady bade Miss Molly farewell with much appreciation of her many kindnesses but with no invitation to return the visit. “After all, distinctions must be drawn somewhere,” she explained to her husband later.

Since Colonel Guy Johnson happened to be going to New York as a new member of the Colonial Assembly, which was about to convene, it fell to his lot to escort the governor’s party back to the city. This he did so acceptably that the Tryons gave a dinner in his honour the next week and introduced him to the charmed circle which usually revolved about his brother-in-law and cousin, Sir John.

There he met for the first time the lovely Polly Watts, and straightway pronounced her the most adorable creature in all the Province of New York. “John is a lucky dog,” he told her, his admiration shining in his limpid eyes.

Polly only enhanced her beauty by blushing prettily.

“I wonder if I might ask a favour of one who is so soon to belong to the family—”

“You have only to suggest it,” replied Polly, sweetly.

“I have brought with me to the city my daughter Patty, who is eight, and her cousin, Catty Claus, who is nine years old.”

“Where are they?”

“I have entered them at Miss Bayoux’s School for Females. Would you have time—?”

“I’ll go and see them to-morrow,” said Polly. “The poor darlings! I know how they are feeling. I went to that same school myself.”

“So I have heard,” replied Guy. “I think that is probably the chief reason they are there.”

Polly went to see the children, of course, the very next day, smuggling in with her a box of the most delicious cookies that ever tickled a schoolgirl's palate. She found the girls in the identical room which she herself had occupied only a few years before. "I'm Polly Watts," she said, simply. "I thought I'd like to come and see you."

"Polly Watts!" cried Catty Claus. "We know who you are!"

"Of course you do."

"But you're not old enough to be our aunt," said Patty Johnson. She was sure there must be some mistake.

"For the present we are just friends," said Polly. She went and sat on the bed—never sat anywhere else in that room, she said—and she regaled them with the pranks she and Peggy had played when they had occupied that same room in their own schooldays.

"Who's Peggy?"

"My little sister."

"Is she little like us?"

"Oh, no. She's nearly sixteen, but when we were at school she was only ten."

"And she carried a whole pie out of the dining-room?" said Catty, with wonder in her eyes.

"Don't you get enough to eat here?" asked Patty, looking ominous.

"Oh, dear, yes. Loads," said Polly. "It was just a lark, you see. There she was, crawling along on her knees, holding her precious pie in her hands, when Miss Bayoux came along."

"Oh! Oh!" shrieked Catty, with sheer excitement.

"Where were you?" Patty wanted to know.

"Safe here in the room with a dishful of pickles."

"And did Miss Bayoux stumble over her?" asked Catty, sitting on the edge of her chair.

"Nearly. She saw her in the very nick of time."

"What did she say?" demanded both girls at once.

"Nothing. She brought her to the room and then, of course, she caught me with the pickles."

“Oh! Oh!”

“And for a whole month all the pies and pickles we got were sent us in mercy from home. But it was such jolly good fun that we didn’t mind a bit. Miss Bayoux didn’t hold it against us, either, for when we left she told us she was sorry we were going, because we were such perfect ladies.” Polly laughed at the recollection of it. “So, girls, take my advice. Don’t sit and twiddle your thumbs. Teachers don’t like that kind, really, even if they say they do.”

“They’ll like Catty,” said Patty. “She’s awfully bad.”

“Grandpa says one is as bad as the other,” retorted Catty. “He says we’re chips off the old block.”

“Meaning himself,” interjected Patty.

“The old block is only one of the funny names he calls himself,” Catty went on. “You ought to know grandpa, Miss Polly.”

“I will some day, I hope,” the adorable creature replied.

“I’m ever so glad,” said Catty, smiling significantly.

“So am I,” said Patty. “What’s that bell ringing for?”

“It’s to warn me that it’s time to go,” said Polly.

“Must you go so soon?” said one.

“Come again, won’t you?” said the other. “We’ll die cooped up in this place if you don’t.”

Polly promised. “Next week at this time,” she said, “I’ll take you over to Watts Manor. That’s where I live.”

The children clapped their hands and uttered exclamations of delight.

“That is, if Miss Bayoux says you are good girls,” she added. “Remember, no stealing food from the dining-room. Here’s a box of cookies to keep you out of temptation.”

Seven long days the children lived in anticipation of the great event. Polly was punctual, almost to the minute. When Miss Bayoux had given her consent, she led the children out to a queer little old carriage and tucked them in, one on either side of her. She was their fairy godmother, she said, and they were not to laugh at her “leathern conveniency,” for it came from fairyland, too. Tony, the coachman, with those snapping black eyes, wasn’t a slave at all, but a pixie, and they had better be careful how they treated him.

“Oh, it’s such fun,” cried Patty, gleefully.

“Take us to fairyland, do,” begged Catty.

Polly leaned forward and tapped Tony on the shoulder. “Fairyland,” she said, with a twinkle in her eye. “The longest way ’round, but see that you get there before midnight.”

Tony grinned. He was used to Miss Polly and her ways. After driving up and down the streets of New York for half an hour, he brought his charges to the front door of Watts Manor on the very stroke of three.

“Safe,” said Polly, as Tony helped the children out. “One minute late and the leathern conveniency would have been a pumpkin shell.”

“’T seems to me it’s lak that now, Miss Polly,” said Tony.

“Thank you, Pixie,” said the children, politely.

“Now, follow me,” cried Polly. “I’m going to take you upstairs and down a long hall to a room where the fairies work.”

They followed her in silence, full of the sheer delight which mystery incites in the very young. Every creak of the stairs had its meaning; the hall was dark and full of unseen goblins. They were glad enough when Polly, having tapped three times at a door at the end of the hallway, led them into a well-lit room.

Then the faces of the children fell. It didn’t come up to their idea of fairyland. Instead of trees and grass and flowers, there were four cheerless walls and a number of bare tables laden with rolls of white cotton. A black mammy sat sewing at an endless length of the snowy-white material and crooning to herself as she sewed. But who ever heard of a black fairy?

“Where’s Prue, Mammy?” asked Polly. “Prue is my maid,” she whispered to the children. “She looks after the fairies for me.”

At the moment, Prue emerged from a closet. “Here I am, Miss Polly,” she answered. “I have just packed the new comforter in the chest.”

“The fairies made it, you know,” Polly informed the children. “Would you mind very much, Prue, showing us the things. These girls are Sir John’s nieces. I brought them over from Miss Bayoux’s school.”

The light was beginning to dawn on Patty’s intelligence. “I know,” she exclaimed, suddenly. “It’s the things you are going to have when you get married.”

“Is it your trousseau, Miss Polly?” asked Catty, her eyes sparkling in anticipation. “Are you going to show it all to us?”

“Of course I am.”

Prue was pulling out the drawers of a highboy and Polly unfolded the great white sheets and pillow-cases, the table-cloths and fancy household linen, pointing out, as she did, the dainty, fairy stitches. She showed them endless quilts, patched with various designs, and hand-woven rugs of every shape and size. They were all very beautiful and very wonderful, and when they had no longer any words to express their delight, Prue folded them up and packed them away again.

“And what are you going to wear?” asked Catty.

“Oh, the most beautiful frock you ever saw, my dear,” said Polly. “The purest white, with a long lace veil that was my grandmother’s.”

“I wish I could see it,” said Patty, wistfully.

“Oh, do show them to us, sweet Miss Polly,” begged Catty.

Polly smiled and, walking over to another highboy on the opposite side of the room, she pulled out a drawer.

“Oh, don’t, Miss Polly, don’t,” cried Prue, in great alarm.

Polly hesitated.

“It’s bad luck, Miss Polly. Oh, please don’t show it to them.”

“Bad luck?” said Polly. “What’s bad luck, you foolish Prue?”

“To show the wedding-dress.”

The maid was evidently genuinely alarmed, but Polly only laughed and said, “A bit of your silly, New England superstition, Prue.”

“But, Miss Polly, I had an aunt once that showed hers—and—and—”

“Well, what happened?”

“She died.”

“So shall I some day,” averred Polly. “So shall we all.” She gave another tug at the drawer.

“I think I’m afraid,” said Catty. “What if something terrible should happen?”

“If we could only peek at it,” suggested Patty. “There couldn’t be any harm in that.”

“Nonsense!” said Polly. “I’m going to show it to you properly. It’s only one of Prue’s foolish superstitions. She’s full of them. She wouldn’t walk under a ladder and she believes in witches.”

“Witches? What’s that?” said Patty.

“Fairies,” said Catty.

“Indeed they’re not,” Polly informed them. “Fairies are good, but witches are bad—bad—bad!”

She had tugged away at the drawer until she had opened it. She lifted from out the layers of paper, which enfolded it, a dress of shimmering, white satin, bedecked with glittering jewels.

The children stood speechless with admiration, their eyes large as saucers.

“I’m going to put it on,” announced Polly.

“Oh, don’t! Miss Polly, don’t,” pleaded the agitated maid. “You will live to regret it, if you do.”

Polly paid no attention. She slipped out of the dress she was wearing and put on the gorgeous wedding garment. Then she reached into the drawer and pulled out the veil of heavy, rich lace.

“Oh, not that, Miss Polly, I beg of you,” cried Prue, helpless now in her great concern. “On my knees, I beg you, don’t wear the veil.”

“You foolish Prue,” said Polly. She pushed her gently aside and strutted up and down the room, arrayed in all her finery.

The black mammy threw aside her sewing and pranced around after her, trying in vain to pick up her train.

“She’s the queen of the fairies,” cried Patty, fairly dancing with ecstasy.

“Oh, Miss Polly, you make me think of something,” said Catty.

“Something lovely, I hope.”

“Yes, ever so lovely—the peacocks at Johnson Hall.”

Polly laughed merrily. “So I’m a Johnson peacock,” she said. “Then watch, Catty. I’m going to fold up all my fine feathers, like the peacocks do,

and Prue is going to gather them up and put them away until the time comes for the real parade on the wedding-day.”

The date for the great event had been set for the last day of June. The cream of New York society were preparing to celebrate it. The invitation list had grown to an enormous length. Within the sacred walls of Old Trinity would be gathered on that day the wealth and culture of the city, with Governor Tryon and his lady sitting proudly aloof in their elevated pew and shedding over all the benignity of their presence. The haughty De Lanceys would be there, the Livingstones, the Van Cortlandts and the Schuylers, forgetting for a few brief hours their politics and joining in good wishes for the happy pair.

Many would be there, too, without invitation. The curious populace would throng the doorway, as usual, jostling each other outside the pale in a vain effort to catch a glimpse of the fashionable world within and straining their ears to hear the whispered vows which were to transform the lovely Polly Watts into a lady of rank and title. That would be something for them to remember and talk about all their lives.

One guest, at least, there would be who would share with the bride and groom the general interest—Sir William Johnson. His name and fame had travelled far. It was he who had held the French at bay on the stormy frontier and conquered the savage Iroquois. A thousand bonfires on the hilltops had proclaimed him a hero. Yes, and ten thousand gossiping tongues had given spice and zest to the stories they told of him. At last New York was going to have an opportunity of a lifetime to see this demigod, this human paradox who could consort with a Mohawk squaw and yet hold a proud position among aristocrats.

Two days before the wedding, it was noised about that Sir William was not coming. The Honourable John Watts was in receipt of a letter stating that the baronet was far from well and his doctor did not think it would be well to risk the inconveniences of so long a journey.

Sir John declared it was the Indians that kept him. He was forever sacrificing himself for their good. “He thinks more of them than he does of you and me, Polly,” he said.

“Hush, John,” admonished his lovely bride-to-be. “We are certainly disappointed, but there are others. You know, Dr. Auchmoty said that his pleasure in marrying us would be doubled by the prospect of seeing your father.”

“Governor Tryon, too,” said Sir John. “Father promised to visit him at this time.”

“Shall we postpone the wedding, John?”

“Postpone the wedding?”

“Yes, until your father can come.”

“Dear heart, no,” said Sir John. “Haven’t I waited long enough for you already? Guy must sign the register as witness in father’s stead. If father won’t come, we must get along without him.”

“John!” exclaimed Polly, with disapproval. “You are much too hasty in judging your father. He would come, if he could.”

“Of course he would,” replied Sir John. “In my heart of hearts I know that. It will break his heart that he cannot see me married.”

“He will be even more disappointed than we are, John.”

“That’s true, Polly. Sometimes I am afraid he is not going to live very long.”

“We’ll not borrow trouble until after the wedding,” said Polly. “I want you and everybody else to be as happy as I am.”

When the eventful day dawned it was dark and lowering, with intermittent sprinkles of rain. It would clear by noon, everybody hoped. But at noon, when all the guests had assembled in the church and stood waiting for the bride to appear, such a terrible wind blew up that the old church seemed to rock on its foundations. A sudden darkness fell like a pall over the gay throng. While Polly was walking up the aisle on the arm of her father, the storm broke in a flood of torrential rain. Flashes of violent lightning were followed by crashes of reverberating thunder. What with the elements and the alarm they caused, nobody could hear a word of the service.

“This is dreadful,” whispered Peggy Watts, the bridesmaid, to Colonel Guy Johnson on their way to sign the register. “I’m trembling from head to foot. It’s such a bad omen.”

“Nonsense, Peggy,” said Colonel Guy, in his blunt, blustering way. “It’s nothing but a superstition—old woman’s talk.”

“But true for all that,” maintained Peggy, stoutly. “I am afraid for Polly. After the wedding-dress, too—”

“What about the wedding-dress?”

“She showed it to Patty and Catty,” Peggy told him, with awed voice. “She even put the veil on.”

“Well, what of that?”

“It’s bad luck,” declared Peggy. “Oh, I wish—I almost wish Polly hadn’t married Sir John at all.”

“That is evidently very far from Polly’s own wishes,” said Colonel Guy, as they joined the bride and groom, radiant with happiness. “My best wishes to you, Sir John and Lady Johnson.”

Peggy’s nerves were quite overwrought. She threw her arms around her sister’s neck and burst into tears. “Oh, Polly, Polly!” she sobbed. “I’m such a fool, but I can’t help it. I hope everything is going to be all right. You’re not sorry you did it, dear?”

Polly patted her shoulder affectionately. “Sorry?” she said, trying to laugh, while the tears gushed from her own eyes. “Peg, you dear old superstitious goose! You are twice as bad as Prue. Of course everything is going to be all right, isn’t it, John?”

“We’re not afraid of the weather,” said Sir John. “And, Polly, you are going to be as happy as I can make you.”

“The Mohawk valley is a long way from home,” Colonel Guy reminded the little bride.

“Home for me will be wherever John is,” was the wifely reply. “I will follow him, if necessary, to the ends of the earth.”

“I don’t expect to be much of a wanderer now,” said Sir John. “A little love-nest at Fort Johnson is all the adventure I offer you.”

“With plenty of billing and cooing,” requisitioned Polly.

“Plenty of bickering, too,” Colonel Guy promised them. “I’ve gone through the mill and I know. Married life isn’t all honey. Let there be no delusion about that. Well, Peggy, why so pensive? Wondering when your turn will come, I’ll wager.”

“Certainly not,” replied Peggy, a trifle curtly. “I can’t get this terrible storm out of my mind. Oh, Polly, I do hope you will be happy.”

Everybody in the church and, later, at Watts Manor, was thinking and talking about the weather. There hadn’t been such a cloud-burst in twenty years, the older people declared, shaking their heads ominously. The rain

that had drenched the guests and drowned the glamour of the wedding must surely presage some evil.

Mr. Watts was determined to be cheerful in spite of omens. He had provided a sumptuous banquet and plenty of guests to fill the house with laughter and song. In rich Madeira they toasted the bridal pair, prophesying for them a lifetime of happiness.

It was late in the afternoon when Polly went upstairs to exchange her shimmering wedding-dress for her travelling apparel. But she was soon recalled. "The sun!" cried the excited guests. "Oh, Polly, the sun is shining at last. You must come down and stand in it. Do hurry."

So Polly tripped downstairs again and stood for a few moments in the sunshine of her departing wedding-day. Sir John's arm encircled her waist and their friends crowded around with beaming, confident faces to wish them joy.

The bridal party was starting out that very evening on their long journey to Fort Johnson. The *Bridget* was scheduled to sail at daybreak and it was imperative that both passengers and luggage should be on board before dark. For hours, a corps of slaves had been plying back and forth between Watts Manor and the King's wharf, groaning under the weight of heavy burdens. They were of the opinion that there wasn't going to be much left at Watts Manor when Miss Polly got her trousseau out.

For months Steve Watts had secretly decided that this was to be his opportunity to visit the glamorous valley of the Mohawk. He had laid his plans deep and well, only to discover that the family were so little concerned about his comings and goings that they offered no opposition in the matter.

"Yes, let him go," his mother advised. "Polly will need some one to look to."

"She will have her husband," Sir John reminded her, in an aggrieved tone.

"Her husband is much too conspicuous a figure by far to be overlooked, in case this rebellion spreads," the woman observed.

"Why worry about the rebellion, mother?" Polly wanted to know. "Father always says the trouble is going to blow over."

"Your father is an idealist," Mrs. Watts had replied. "I know him better than you do. He never could keep both feet on the ground at the same time. I say Steve is to go. I'd feel safer about you, Polly."

When it came to the last moments of farewell, Mrs. Watts was as irreconcilable and as cheerless as ever. She was sure she would never see Polly again. She had a strange premonition of a horrible calamity that was going to arise somehow out of the seething political cauldron. At her age she couldn't stand very much.

"But, mother," said Polly, "you are only fifty-two."

"I feel like a hundred," was her reply. "Calamities, as you should know, are no respecters of persons. I'm so glad you'll have Prue with you, Polly. You need a woman you can trust. Men are like so many broken reeds when things go wrong, and the women up-country are—"

"Do try to be more cheerful, Anne, for Polly's sake," admonished her husband.

"Am I to go on saying things are all right when I know very well that they are all wrong?" persisted Mrs. Watts. "I tell you again, and I tell you, too, Polly, before you go, that there's something terrible hanging over us all, like those awful thunderclouds on this awful day, and, when it breaks, whatever it is, it will crush us to the ground, and some of us will never rise again."

"Hush, Anne!" Mr. Watts besought her. "You have had a bad dream, and dreams, you know, go by contraries."

"If the heavens fall here in New York, come up to Fort Johnson until the sun shines again," said Sir John. "There is no disloyalty in the Mohawk valley."

"There's Mohawks!" shrieked the woman.

Sir John caught Polly's hand and drew her gently towards the door.

"If you're not good to her—"

The door closed with a bang and the sting of the threat was lost.

"Good-bye, Mr. Watts, and many thanks."

"Good-bye, my son."

"Good-bye, father."

"Good-bye, my own dear Polly. The light has gone out of our house now that you are gone."

A few hurried embraces, a few stifled sighs, a flutter of handkerchiefs and the dark. The Johnsons were en route to Fort Johnson.

Chapter VI

THE HOMECOMING

So the lovely Polly Watts turned her back upon the city of her birth and of her youth and set out for that distant unknown land which was to be henceforth her home.

She belonged to the Johnsons now, and in the very nature of things she was destined to become a very consequential figure in that illustrious family. "Lady Johnson of Fort Johnson" sounded very well indeed in the ears of a young woman not yet out of her teens.

To tell the truth, the Johnsons awed her somewhat. None of them was young and foolish like herself, except, of course, the children. The great, historic Sir William was to be respected and obeyed, but certainly not to be familiarized and enjoyed. Her sisters-in-law were women of mature years, thirty and over, and sure to be critical of their brother's girl-wife. Even Sir John could be serious and absent-minded at times.

"If they don't like me, John," she ventured to say one day, "I shall be very sad."

"Then you will be very blithe and gay, mavourneen," he promised her. "They will be sure to fall in love with my Polly on the spot."

Captain Sinclair found Sir John's bride altogether charming. He boasted that he was at least in part responsible for having made the match.

"How do you make that out?" Sir John asked him.

"Once when you were going down to New York with me, years ago, I advised you to get married. Soon after that, I heard that you were engaged. You took my advice, sir."

"It was everybody's advice I took, captain," said Sir John, laughing. "All my friends seemed determined to push me over the brink into the sea of matrimony."

Polly said that her experience with advice had been quite the reverse. "It's like preserves," she said, "Everybody's is so different."

“Any preserves for Lady Johnson, captain?” said Sir John, vastly amused.

“Let her be natural,” replied the captain, sober as an oracle. “Let her not try to be and act like somebody else thinks she should. Let her follow her own best inclinations.”

“Delightful!” cried Polly. “Did you hear that, John? You must let me have my own way.”

“I will, if it happens to coincide with mine, I promise you.”

“That isn’t what I really meant to say, Lady Johnson,” said the captain. “I was thinking about your new title mostly. I believe you are the first Lady Johnson.”

Sir John assured him that she was the very first.

“Well, don’t set yourself up above folks because you happen to be Lady Johnson. Don’t be a snob, that’s what I want to say. Remember, we are all human, rich and poor alike, and some that’s up are going to be down before long, you mark my words—”

“Hold on, captain,” Sir John broke in. “We’ve heard enough of that talk down in New York. You are not one of those long-jawed, chip-on-the-shoulder Whigs, are you?”

“Not yet, sir, but I’m headed that way,” replied the captain.

“Well, see that you round-about-face before it is too late,” said Sir John, taking Polly’s arm and moving off. “Confounded idiot!” she heard him mutter. “Doesn’t he know enough to keep his fingers out of that fire.”

In spite of this unexpected flare-up, the days of the journey passed very pleasantly on the *Bridget*. Very leisurely, too, with frequent tarryings at the villages for provisions and passengers, delightful delays, which the adventure-loving Steve turned to his own advantage in little expeditions of exploration and flirtation. There were some sincere regrets when the *Bridget* docked at Albany at noon on the third day.

Albany was not altogether new to Polly, though her recollections of it were very indistinct. Her mother had brought her there once as a child on a visit to the home of the Schuylers. She could conjure up a picture of Aunt Schuyler, as her mother always called her, a grey-haired lady, seated in a rocking-chair, in a large house surrounded by a beautiful garden.

“Oh, John, I have a bright idea,” exclaimed Polly, as they stood watching the boatmen dock the *Bridget*.

“All your ideas are bright, my dear,” replied Sir John, gallantly.

“But this one is the brightest I have had for days. Listen! How long will it take your men to unload our baggage and reload them on the barge that is to take us up the Mohawk?”

“Oh, the better part of a day,” he told her.

“Then we’ll have time to drive around the town?”

“Yes, plenty. Besides, you must see Albany. The Johnsons are well-known here. Father sometimes comes here dressed in his paint and feathers to attend council fires as Warraghuay, a chief of the Mohawks. I’ll hire a carriage and we’ll drive around.”

“That would be lovely,” said Polly, without enthusiasm. “But I was thinking I’d like to call on Aunt Schuyler.”

Sir John’s face clouded. “The Schuylers?” he said. “Oh, certainly, if you wish it.”

That was all there was to it. Not another word about the carriage or the promised drive.

Polly was wondering what to make of the sudden change in her husband when a liveried coachman came down to the wharf and announced in a loud voice that he had a letter for Lady Johnson.

“I will take it,” said Sir John. He passed the letter to Polly.

“It’s from Aunt Schuyler,” said Polly, when she broke the seal and glanced over the contents of the message. “She’s giving a garden party. This afternoon, it is. Oh, John, I’m so excited.”

“A garden party, did you say?”

“Yes, and in our honour, too. Isn’t that lovely of her? We are going to be introduced to Albany society. What ever shall I wear?”

“Our clothes are all packed away,” said Sir John, without a vestige of regret in his voice.

“Well, they’ll have to be unpacked,” said Polly. “Prue, you must find for me my very best frocks, six or seven of them, at least. Aunt Schuyler says we are not to think of continuing our journey up the Mohawk for two or three days.”

“Father is expecting us in Johnstown,” Sir John reminded her.

Polly pretended she did not hear. “It’s so charming of her,” she went on. “Mother used to say she was her favourite aunt. Two or three days in Albany! Isn’t it thrilling?”

Sir John stood by, glum as a galley slave. “I have made arrangements to start up the Mohawk this evening,” he said.

“But you can cancel them,” said Polly. “It’s your own boat, isn’t it? It can wait until we are ready to go.”

“Yes, but—”

“Don’t you want to go, John?”

He confessed that he didn’t.

“But there will be invitations and they will all be out. She knew when the *Bridget* would be in. She said so in the letter. We must go, John. Can’t you see that we must? We can’t inconvenience and insult people that way.”

“We’ll go to the garden party,” Sir John finally conceded. “But we must come down to the boat to-night.”

“But we can’t start in the dark, anyway,” Polly reminded him. “We’ll have to wait till morning.”

“Then we’ll be ready when morning comes,” said Sir John, with such a note of finality in his voice that Polly dared say no more.

The Schuylers were the soul of hospitality. Aunt Schuyler received both bride and groom with open arms and wished them a thousand years of happiness. How had they left her friends in New York, particularly the Watts family?

“We left them all well,” said Polly, blithely, “all except Steve.”

“Steve? What’s the matter with him?”

“Nothing, only we didn’t leave him at all, Aunt Schuyler. He’s tagging along up here with us. He is our chaperone.”

“Why, Polly, you don’t need a chaperone now?”

“Oh, no. That’s only our little joke.”

“Here, Steve,” said Sir John. “Tell your Aunt Schuyler what a craving you have for adventure and how you admire the Mohawks.”

Steve had no more than made his bow when Colonel Philip Schuyler entered the room. His mother soon relegated him to Sir John and Steve, while she continued to interrogate Polly. She talked so fast that she did not notice, as Polly did, that the men were strangely uncommunicative. Sir John yawned and went finally to look out of the window until he found company more to his liking.

The garden party was an unqualified success. The weather was ideal, fair and warm. On the spacious grounds of the old colonial house were gathered the elite of Albany society, the men in their frilled waistcoats and the ladies in their gayest summer frocks, with parasols to match—a colourful sight. In the very heart of the group stood the lovely bride, with Sir John hovering protectingly near her, the hub around which all the jollity and gaiety of the party revolved.

Polly's heart had warmed at once to the people of Albany. When they had returned to the wharf that night, she ventured to tell Sir John that she wished she could spend two or three days at the Schuylers.

“We were there plenty long enough,” replied Sir John, grumpy as could be.

“Didn't you like Colonel Philip, John?” asked Polly. “You were very distant to him, I thought.”

“No more than he was to me,” answered Sir John, with a shrug of his shoulders. “Don't bother your pretty head, Polly, about men's affairs. All you need to know is that father and the colonel have not been friends for years.”

“What a pity,” said Polly, regretfully.

At daybreak the next morning, the Johnsons began what proved to be a very tedious journey up the Mohawk. They found themselves in a huge, flat-bottomed boat, which had to be propelled now with heavy poles in the hands of the crew, and again with ropes, which a corps of shoremen attached to the stalwart trees and secured with sailor's knots. The process was slow, and it would have been tiresome enough but for the interest which Polly and Steve showed in the various operations and in the reverberating yells and picturesque language of the sweltering, smelly, half-naked workmen.

Sir John paid little attention to the activities of the crew. He was better pleased when Polly came and stood beside him while they gazed upon the far-famed scenery of the glorious Mohawk valley; upon the forests of beech and maple, stretching as far as the eye could see, with the beautiful river

gliding like a silver thread between; upon the hilltops far away, clothed in dark evergreen, standing like sentinels guarding the river's peace. This was the scene which evoked within the young man's breast feelings akin to reverence. "Surely this is God's own country," he said, "the gem of His wonderful creation."

Polly corroborated the statement. She declared she could not hope to see anything more beautiful this side of heaven.

Sir John was overjoyed at this unexpected burst of enthusiasm. Give her time, and his Polly would learn to love, as all the Johnsons did, the rarer air, the primitive beauty and the quiet serenity of their northland home.

In time, they came to the precincts of Guy Park, the residence of Colonel Guy Johnson. Sir John pointed out the handsome structure, built of grey limestone and surrounded by spacious gardens, all ablaze with the glory of their July bloom. Even the hollyhocks, whose location he had once criticized, seemed to nod a welcome.

There was nobody at home at Guy Park. Mrs. Johnson and the children had gone over to Fort Johnson, the boatmen ascertained. So the sloop was pushed out again into the water and pulled a few miles farther up the river.

They soon entered the very heart of the Johnson country. In the distance could be seen, through the intervening trees, glimpses of the pretentious mansion-house where the Claus family lived. A few miles farther and Sir John pointed out a handsome stone building which he said was "home."

"Fort Johnson?" asked Polly. "Oh, John, is that Fort Johnson?"

It was, indeed. Polly scarcely saw the building itself. She was looking through the thick walls of the fort and picturing, as only people blessed with a lively imagination can, an open fireplace in front of which sat a happy couple surrounded by a group of angel-faced children. The fire was glowing brightly, lighting up not only the room and the faces of its occupants but shedding a halo of glory over all their unknown future.

"Bedad! there's father!" cried Sir John, with sudden delight. "Look, Polly. Do you see him?"

And so Polly, awakening again to the consciousness of her physical sight, caught her first glimpse of the great Sir William Johnson. He was a commanding figure standing there in the sun, erect and pompous in his gilded army uniform and powdered wig. Genial withal, if Polly was any judge of character, and possessed of a personality of marvellous strength and charm. There could be no doubt, at least, of his whole-hearted welcome.

The sloop had been sighted. That was very evident from the troop of merry-makers of a younger generation who began to pour out of the house and scamper down towards the river. Some of them were mere children, and all of them began to laugh and gesticulate and shout incomprehensible messages, all of which Sir John and Polly, and even Steve, essayed to answer, with like futility. The warmth of their mutual greetings was felt, though their words were not understood.

A corps of slaves ran down to the shore to help with the landing. With much noise and confusion, the sloop was secured to the wharf. The crew began to unload the heavy boxes. They did not stop until they had delivered Sir John and his bride and all their baggage at Fort Johnson.

“Welcome home!” cried Sir William, limping up hurriedly that he might be the first to greet the happy pair in whom his own fondest hopes were centred. “I have lived all my life for this very hour. Friends, the long-expected Lady Johnson is here. Three cheers for the bride and groom!”

While the crowd shouted their throats hoarse, Sir William was shaking his son’s hand with great gusto and implanting a generous token of his forthcoming affection on both of Polly’s burning cheeks. He was no novice at bussing, either, as everybody knew.

“Oh! Oh!” cried Polly, a little taken back, but not altogether displeased.

Sir William only laughed. He folded her paternally in his arms and kissed her again, before handing her over to the eager crowd.

Every one had a turn then, from Sir John’s matronly sisters to the tiniest child. Catty and Patty were there, clapping their chubby hands and calling her Aunt Polly. And Steve they called Uncle Steve—married into the family, too, they said. Last of all came the neighbours and friends of the family, joining in the felicitations.

“If I hadn’t one of my own, I’d be tempted to steal her,” said Colonel John Butler, presuming upon his long-established friendship with Sir William to perpetrate one of his senile jokes.

“Let that man beware who tries to separate me from the lovely Polly Watts,” said Sir John, and every one knew he meant it.

“Polly Johnson, you mean,” corrected his sisters.

“No, Lady Johnson,” said Sir William. “The first titled lady in the family, and the sweetest, the daintiest, the prettiest lady in all the land.” He tiptoed up to Polly, executed a courtly bow and pressed his ardent lips to the

slender, snow-white fingers. “The queen of the Johnson court!” he cried. “Make way for her ladyship.”

So, with Sir William holding one hand and Sir John the other, while she blushed like a peony, Polly was conducted up the pathway to the house.

In the dining-room had been spread a table, groaning with delicacies. A wedding breakfast, Sir William persisted in calling it, though it was late afternoon, because, he said, a new day had dawned at Fort Johnson and in all their lives. Polly was the rising sun who would one day flood the whole valley of the Mohawk with glory.

“What do you think of your new family, Polly?” asked Sir John, when all the guests had departed and he and his lovely bride sat alone in the twilight of their first day in their new home. “Do you think you can live with them?”

“I couldn’t live without them,” replied Polly, whole-heartedly. “I feel as if I had belonged to them, and to you, for at least a thousand years.”

Chapter VII

JOHNSTOWN WELCOMES THE BRIDAL PARTY

Two days later Sir John took Polly and Steve to pay their first visit to Sir William in his palatial home at Johnson Hall.

Not even to the court of King George could they have journeyed with greater pomp and circumstance. No “leathern conveniency” there, no Tony in shabby homespun that bagged at the knees, but a gorgeous, gilded coach, bearing the Johnson arms and driven by a dignified coachman, trim in an embroidered green livery. Here was elegance and luxury beyond all comprehension.

“I feel like Cinderella driving in her magic carriage to meet Prince Charming,” said Polly.

“Do you call Sir William Prince Charming?” said Steve, who usually heard that appellation applied to Sir John.

“Why, of course.”

“And what do you call John?”

“The fairy godmother who holds a charm over me,” replied Polly, smiling blandly and patting her husband’s coat-sleeve.

“Didn’t Cinderella meet with some misfortune?” said Sir John. “Left alone outside the door, wasn’t she?”

“Yes, but you wouldn’t leave me alone, would you, John?” said Polly, a trifle sentimentally.

“When the hour of fate sounds, even your fairy godmother may be powerless to help you,” he replied.

“Why, John, what ever do you mean? You frighten me.”

“I didn’t mean to do that, Polly. Let’s talk about something else.”

“It’s all your own fault, Polly,” observed Steve. “Don’t you know that no man likes to be called a silly, old, toothless hag of a fairy godmother, least of all Sir John Johnson of Fort Johnson?”

“Forgive me, my own Prince Charming,” said Polly, with mock penitence, and her husband’s smile chased all the gloom away.

It was nine miles from Fort Johnson to Johnson Hall. The coach excited the liveliest excitement as it rolled along its way—not the vehicle itself, to be sure, so much as the occupants. The men in the fields stopped their work, pulled off their hats to show their respect, or tossed them in the air with a joyous shout. “That’s Sir John and his bride,” they remarked. The women held their toddling children in their arms and pointed out the new Lady Johnson, whose coming had brought a new interest into all their lives.

They entered Johnstown by William Street, named for the magnanimous founder of the village.

“Are we coming to Johnson Hall?” asked Steve.

“Not yet,” replied Sir John. “We must see Johnstown first. That building to our right is the court-house.”

“It is very new,” remarked Polly.

“Just completed,” Sir John told her. “Incidentally, it is the only brick structure of any size between Albany and the Pacific.”

“Really?”

“Did Sir William build it?” asked Steve, scarcely able to credit the statement.

“Certainly. Over here to our left is the church where father and all Johnstown go every Sunday. He built that, too.”

“You mean with his own money?” asked the incredulous Steve.

“Of course. That low, oblong building with the gabled roof is the first free and non-sectarian school in all the Province of New York.”

Steve was gaping by this time. “I think Sir William is the fairy godfather, after all,” he remarked to Polly.

“The public stocks and the whipping-post are only a stone’s throw from the school,” observed Polly. “Sir William seems to believe in teaching people early the folly of wrong-doing.”

“Trust father for that,” said Sir John. “As a good landlord he recognizes his responsibility to his tenants. Naturally, he leaves to the teacher the actual work of disciplining the children. You must see our Mike Wall, Polly. He is a character. Irish as a peat-bog.”

“And devoted to his countrymen, the Johnsons, I have no doubt,” said Polly, with a laugh. “Do you know, John, I sometimes detect a little of the brogue in you, for all you try to be so English.”

“But this Mike Wall,” said Sir John, overlooking the rather disconcerting reference to his innate provincialism. “He thinks father created not only the schoolhouse and the village but the entire universe, the sun, the moon and the starry firmament. He thinks he is the axis upon which the activities of the great world revolve.”

“Oh, John, he doesn’t,” protested Polly. “You are laughing at me.”

“Nothing of the kind, my dear Polly. You should see him shoulder his shillalah and show how the great Sir William Johnson drove the French from Lake George.”

“The children get the impression that he did it single-handed, I suppose,” said Steve.

“To be sure. But, best of all, Mike loves to tell how a certain great British general climbed the rocky heights at Quebec in the dead of night, fought a terrible battle on the Plains of Abraham and took the mighty fortress. I have seen him parade up and down the street to show how it was done.”

“He means Wolfe, of course,” said Steve, to whom that story was very familiar.

“No, he doesn’t. According to this teacher of ours, it was father.”

“Sir William Johnson?”

“Oh, I know he never saw Quebec, but you couldn’t make Mike Wall believe that. He thinks Sir William Johnson is the undaunted and the dauntless hero of all history.”

“What a remarkable teacher he must be!” said Polly.

“I’ll tell the coachman to pull up under the trees,” said Sir John. “Perhaps we can get a good look at him.”

It was high noon, as it happened. Most of the children had bolted out of the schoolhouse door and were scampering off home for dinner, but some who lived too far away sat munching from their lunch-pails in the shade. Mike Wall was nowhere in evidence.

Polly’s eyes had wandered far afield. They were fixed on a lad of fifteen or thereabouts, who was privileged to enjoy neither lunch nor shade. He was

sitting alone and dejected in the broiling sun, with his feet securely fastened in the public stocks. She pointed him out to the others.

“Jacob Sammons,” said Sir John. “He’s been playing hookey, like as not.”

“I don’t blame him. It’s so hot,” condoned Polly. “Why must they have school at all in the summertime?”

“So as to remember what they learned in the winter,” replied Sir John, with a laugh.

At that moment the door of the schoolhouse creaked on its hinges and opened. A half-breed boy in his early teens came out and strolled over to the stocks.

“That’s George,” Sir John whispered. “Miss Molly’s son.”

“And Sir William’s?”

“Of course.”

Polly’s eyes never left the youngster. She saw him stride up in front of the unfortunate prisoner; she heard him break into a peal of derisive laughter.

“Teacher’s pet!” shrieked Jacob Sammons. His voice was full of contempt, and his face was clouded with an ugly scowl.

“Is that so?” Miss Molly’s son replied. A wicked grin played over his features. Presently he picked up a long stick and he pointed it at the helpless Jacob.

A terrible yell rent the air and brought the lunch-eaters to see what was going on.

“He’s tickling his feet,” cried Polly, with a catch in her breath.

“Stop it!” Jacob Sammons was shrieking. “You bastard!” He was gesticulating wildly with his arms. His face was purple with heat and rage.

“Such a heathenish trick,” said Polly. “Oh, John, do make him stop it.”

Sir John had already opened the carriage door, but he closed it again when he saw the teacher running to the scene of the excitement, waving his shillalah in stormy protest.

George Johnson soon lost himself conveniently in a crowd that had gathered.

“He called him nasty names,” one of the children informed Mr. Wall. “I heard him, please, sir.”

“Who called whom nasty names? That’s what I want to know,” thundered the pedagogue.

“Please, sir, Jacob Sammons did,” the informant continued.

“What did he say?”

“He said George Johnson was a—”

“Well, what?”

“Please, sir, I don’t like to say it. It was a nasty word.”

“Out with it.”

A less sensitive child volunteered the information.

Mr. Wall scowled. Waving his weapon peremptorily and turning to the culprit, he said, sternly: “Jacob Sammons, my foine lad, when will you learn how to trate your betters?”

“When I have betters to trate,” retorted the boy.

A gasp went around the circle of spectators. Such defiance they had never heard, no, not even from Jacob Sammons.

“Now that was a rale pretty speech,” said the teacher. “It will cost you another hour in your present uncomfortable position.”

Jacob Sammons made an ugly grimace and shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

“He called me teacher’s pet, too,” said George Johnson, emerging from the crowd, when he learned that Mr. Wall was less censorious than his own conscience.

At the sight of the young half-breed, the teacher tucked the badge of his authority under his arm and smiled blandly. “Why shouldn’t you be the teacher’s pet?” he said. “Do you think I’ve forgot who butters my bread?”

Quite imperceptibly, Sir John had joined the group around the stocks. A word from him and Mr. Wall was ready to make concessions. Jacob Sammons was to go home for dinner, a temporary release. With his own hands the teacher loosened the stocks which held the boy’s ankles.

“Thank you, sir,” said Jacob, mollified. He performed a perfunctory bow before the master.

“Tak the other fut, you rascal,” ordered Mr. Wall with such ferocity that Jacob, becoming confused, flourished the wrong foot a second time.

“The other fut, I tell you,” roared the teacher. “Don’t you learn any manners at home?”

Jacob was incensed, insulted, but he managed to scrape correctly this time and Mr. Wall dismissed him with: “That’ll doh.”

The crowd dispersed as quickly as it had gathered. Sir John returned to the carriage, which proceeded at once on its way to Johnson Hall.

Polly could not forget the episode. She asked her husband what Sir William would think about it, if he knew.

“I am more concerned about what the Sammons tribe will say,” replied Sir John. “I have heard that they have begun to call themselves patriots.”

“That means, of course, that they are rebels,” said Steve Watts. “I believe I once heard a boast that there was no disloyalty in the Mohawk valley.”

Sir John was visibly nettled. “It’s a snake in the grass,” he said. “The Johnsons will soon trample it to death, I promise you. Fortunately, we control the situation here.”

They were through the village by this time. Before them stood the great baronial hall, obscured from view by a colony of cottages, where lived the mechanics, the tailors, the cobblers, the blacksmiths, the gardeners and such other craftsmen as were in the direct employ of the “royal” household. The occupants were all out in the street cheering the bridal pair and straining their eyes for a good look at the new Lady Johnson, who was destined to be a very dominant personality in their little backwoods world.

Beyond the cottages and through the trees, Polly had her first uninterrupted view of Johnson Hall. She saw a stately, dignified, two-storied colonial edifice, which looked quite as pretentious as her own home or any other of the great mansion-houses in New York. It was built, apparently, of stone, though Sir John assured that what appeared stone was in reality great blocks of wood.

Sir William was at the door, claiming their attention with the cordiality of his welcome.

“We’re not too late, are we, father?” asked Sir John.

The genial host folded his guests in his outstretched arms. “Not at all,” he said. “But the fatted calf is on the table. Come, let us eat and be merry.”

“Is John the prodigal, or am I?” Polly wanted to know.

Sir William’s eyes twinkled. “Who was it left his aged father and took his journey into that far country which is the great city of New York?” he said.

Sir John joined in the merriment by dropping immediately to his knees and confessing, with mock humility: “Father, I have sinned.”

Sir William was greatly amused. “We enjoy life at Johnson Hall, Polly,” he said. “Glad to see you, Steve. Come in, all of you. I want you to meet my — my housekeeper, Miss Molly Brant.”

Sir William’s Mohawk consort stood just inside the door, her pleasant face wreathed in welcoming smiles. No cringing subservience there, nothing but unobtrusive dignity. She extended a cordial hand and expressed her good wishes in faultless English.

“Thanks, Miss Molly,” said Sir John. “Lady Johnson and I appreciate your kindness very much.”

It was considerate of Sir John to include Polly’s thanks with his own, since his bride was speechless with confusion. But long before the visit was over, Polly found an opportunity to slip her own dainty, lily-white hand into the Mohawk woman’s larger, brown one, and to whisper: “Thank you, Miss Molly.” And so she found favour in the sight of “the brown Lady Johnson.”

The dinner party was by no means a family affair. The more, the merrier was Sir William’s motto. He was never happy unless he was surrounded by a troop of boon companions, whom he maintained in splendour at Johnson Hall. Lafferty, the lawyer, had been summoned, inky-fingered, from his desk to the feast. The jovial Dr. Daly, whose office it was to dispense laughter as the wine of life, came as a matter of course. A few neighbours completed the party, Walter Butler, the colonel’s son, with his Mohawk wife, niece to Miss Molly, and the bachelor, Sheriff White.

“What a jolly party!” exclaimed Polly, from her seat at Sir William’s right.

“There’s pickles and cheese to come, my dear,” the genial host answered, “not to speak of a few bottles of Madeira in the cellar.”

“I was thinking of the people,” Polly told him.

“I am not so polite,” replied the baronet. “When I am at table, I think of my stomach.”

Such a clatter as there was of dishes and cutlery, and such a din of merry voices. The servants, black, white and brown, were as hilarious as the guests, and twice as numerous. Sir William himself was jubilant. His exuberance knew no bounds.

“Careful!” warned Dr. Daly, down the length of the table.

“Tut! Tut!” scoffed Sir William. “Would you have me hang crêpe on my arm when we do honour to Lady Johnson? Why, doctor, the dream of my life is coming true. Bring on more wine, Pontioch, the Madeira I have been saving for this happy day.”

Pontioch, a sprightly, well-disposed lad of mixed negro and Indian blood, had anticipated the order. He was already filling the glasses with the sparkling liquor.

“A toast to Lady Johnson!” cried the host. “The first and only Lady Johnson! Let everybody drink.”

It was the first toast of many. Sir William’s cellar upheld its reputation that day. The health and happiness of the bridal pair were pledged to the last hour of life.

“Where’s Billy?” cried Sir William, at length. “Get your fiddle, old boy. A dance! Partners, everybody!”

Billy proved to be a dwarf of some thirty summers, a master of the violin and a side-splitting comedian. A few strokes on the cat-gut and he had the guests tripping in and out of the circle at his command, and chattering and laughing like a troop of children on the trail of the pied piper, Sir William throwing his feet with the rest, in spite of his limp. But Dr. Daly soon interposed, insisting that the cotillion be changed to a march. He succeeded finally in bringing the function to a close with the sombre strains of “God Save the King.”

The guests departed to their homes, but the party from Fort Johnson remained to see the gardens. Sir William sauntered with them about the grounds, delighting in their genuine admiration of his flowers and shrubs. He led them along the course of the winding Cayudutta Creek, whose banks were dotted with the shacks of his slaves, and finally he brought them back to the spacious lawn in front of the house.

“It is quiet enough here now,” remarked Sir John, “but you must see it some time when a hundred dusky, painted, whooping warriors have taken possession of it.”

“The Mohawks light their council fires here,” explained Sir William, “and transact the business of their nation.”

“What is that queer little stone building over yonder?” asked Polly. “Has that something to do with the Indians?”

“It’s a blockhouse.”

“A fort,” explained Sir John.

“But there are two of them, one on either side of the house.”

“They are both forts,” said Sir William, “In miniature, of course. One is Lafferty’s office and the other is mine. There is no door in either of them, except the one which leads by an underground passage into the cellar of Johnson Hall.”

“And those queer, oblong openings under the roof,” said Steve, “what are they?”

“Musket-holes. In times of peace it is a wise man who prepares for war.”

Polly shook her head. “I see forts everywhere I go,” she said, “and forts mean war. If I had my way, I’d tear them all down so that people would have to live in peace.”

It was such a foolish, feminine idea that the men all laughed.

“Father is the great Chief Warraghuay,” said Sir John. “He controls the Indians as nobody else can.”

“So you told me that day you and Polly played sweetheart on the Bowling Green,” said Steve.

“Mohawk, you mean.”

“It was a great game, whatever you call it,” Polly said, with a reminiscent laugh. “It was a happy day for me when the son of the great Chief Warraghuay asked me to be his paleface squaw.”

“Let me tell you, Polly,” said Sir William, growing serious for a change. “Life is a great game all the way through, but you’ll have your ups and downs, the same as everybody else, even if you are Lady Johnson. But if you keep a stiff upper lip and go straight ahead, you are bound to come out on top in the end.”

While Polly was contemplating this unexpected bit of sage advice, a fragment of some angelic melody seemed to drop upon them from somewhere beyond the skies. She looked up, mystified.

“It’s a Mohawk lullaby,” Sir William told her. “Miss Molly is upstairs putting her baby to sleep. Have you ever seen an Indian cradle, Polly?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“If there is any doubt about it, you haven’t. The Mohawk mother straps her baby to a straight, narrow board and props it up against a wall for the night.”

“Sometimes they hang them in the branches of a tree,” added Sir John.

“Do the poor things sleep?”

“Like logs,” declared Sir William. “Spare your pity, Polly. It is good for them. It makes them tall and lithe and erect.”

“Well, at least, something does,” said Polly. “Your Mohawks are like gods in stature and their country is like heaven.”

“It’s paradise up here, so it is,” cried Sir William, highly elated at Polly’s unstinted praise. He knew, now, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that his son had made no mistake in the choice of his bride.

If Sir John did not participate in the eulogies of the Indians and their beautiful valley, it was because he was thinking about an incident of the morning, which had rankled throughout the festivities of the day. “Old man Sammons stared at us very insolently when we passed him to-day on the way over,” he said. “He did not even uncover.”

Sir William frowned. “What of it?” he said. “Who knows but he had a toothache or a bunion? Your husband, Polly, wears too high a hat.”

Sir John was rebuked, but determined to hold his ground. “That whole family is showing symptoms of a certain malignant disease which is rampant in Boston and New York,” he said.

“I can’t believe that my friend, Sammons, is disloyal,” Sir William said. “You are too serious by far, my son. Learn to laugh more. Laughter aids digestion and it keeps the women in good humour. If Sammons insulted you, cast your wounded feelings into the sea of forgetfulness, as the Indians say.”

Sir John kept his peace. To outward appearances, at least, his father must be always right.

Chapter VIII

A LESSON IN HISTORY

Polly had not been very long at Fort Johnson before Sir John proposed to take her and Steve up the river to Fort Hunter.

“To see what?” asked Steve.

“Joseph Brant, for one thing.”

“Joseph Brant? Then he isn’t a myth?”

“Far from it, as you will understand when you see him.”

“Is he really Miss Molly’s brother?” asked Polly.

“Yes, but younger—my age. We were born in the same year.”

“The servants have been telling me how he drinks the broth of rattlesnakes to make him brave,” said Steve.

“Rattlesnakes!” Polly rolled her lovely eyes.

Sir John laughed. “All I can say is that it is not his regular diet,” he said. “But I want you to see the fort, too. It is very interesting and quite historical.”

Steve’s interest flagged. He never cared for history, he said.

“What’s the matter with it?”

“Dry as chips.”

“At school, yes,” conceded Sir John, “but not at Fort Hunter, I promise you.”

“Don’t let Steve get you into an argument, John,” said Polly. “We are all going, and I’ll decide whether it is interesting or not.”

Fort Hunter stood on the opposite, that is to say, the southern, bank of the Mohawk River, about two miles west of Fort Johnson, at the mouth of the Schoharie Creek. Leaving the coach on the northern shore, the Johnsons and Steve Watts boarded the ferry and got their first view of the stronghold from midstream. It was low and squat, not more than twelve or fifteen feet in height, but covering a wide area, and it was surrounded and obscured by a

menacing row of palisades. At the four corners of the fort, like so many beasts showing their teeth, towered as many blockhouses, equipped with yawning rows of projecting cannon.

“It is ugly enough,” commented Steve. “How did it get its name?”

“It was called after the governor, Robert Hunter,” Sir John was able to tell him. “He came here from England years ago, somewhere about 1710, I think, and built the fort. There is the most thrilling story about those early days. Father will tell you about it. It’s ancient history now, of course. Imagine, 1710!”

“Do tell us the story, John,” begged Polly.

“I’m afraid I’ve forgotten it,” said Sir John. “You must ask father.”

“Tell us the part you remember,” said young Steve.

Sir John smiled and promised to try. “It was in the reign of good Queen Anne,” he said, “when the French of Canada were vying with the British of the colonies for the control of the Mohawks. At that time there lived somewhere near here a certain man they called Old Peter Schuyler—”

“Any relation to Aunt Schuyler?” interrupted Polly.

“Her father-in-law, I think. Anyway, he was a crafty old fellow and a bigwig with the Indians. Well, Old Peter had a brilliant idea. He took five of the leading Mohawk chiefs and sachems across the great water—”

“You mean the river?”

“Oh, dear, no. The ocean. That’s what the Indians call the Atlantic. It was part of his plan to show them England, you see. His real reason for doing all this was to win their confidence and get their support against the French.”

“And did he succeed?” asked Polly and Steve, simultaneously.

“Beyond the shadow of a doubt,” said Sir John. “I can imagine how those poor heathens opened their eyes when they saw London and the court. I know because it almost made me gasp.”

“Did he take the Indians to the court? Surely not to meet the King?”

“Not the King, Steve,” said Sir John, “but the Queen. I told you it was in the days of good Queen Anne.”

“And how did they act?”

“The Queen stretched out her hand and they kissed it. They gave her presents and they said in their picturesque language that they wanted to be bound to the English by the silver chains of an everlasting friendship.”

“Good for Old Peter!” ejaculated Steve Watts. “I never read that in a history book.”

“Perhaps you will some day,” said Sir John. “It is a great story, isn’t it? But I have told you only half of it. The Queen had to do something to show her pleasure, so she promised to build for them a fort that they might defend themselves against their mutual enemy, the French. Rather subtle, wasn’t it?”

“And this is the fort?”

“Yes. It was built two years later—that was in 1712. You will find the date carved over the main door when we go in later. First of all, I want to take you yonder to the manse.” He pointed to a two-storied stone dwelling several hundred feet distant.

“If there is a manse, there surely must be a church,” said Polly, looking about on all sides. “I don’t see it.”

“You must have patience, my dear Polly,” said Sir John. “I promise that you shall see it in due time. We are going now to pay our respects to the missionary.”

At closer range the manse proved to be itself something of a fortress, with walls fully three feet thick, huge, armoured doors and narrow, deep windows, secured against all comers by heavy iron bars. Steve’s quick eye soon detected under the projection of the roof a row of musket holes, not unlike those he had seen in Sir William’s blockhouses.

“The glass and the chimney, and the bricks, too, for that matter, came from Holland,” Sir John informed them. “If you examine the date on the arch over the door, you will find that the house is over sixty years old.”

The missionary, hearing voices, came to the door to meet them. He was a huge man, six feet two in his socks, and almost as broad as the doorway. His face was rugged and red, but it wore a kindly smile. Sir John introduced him as the Reverend Mr. Stuart.

“I believe I have the honour of knowing your father, Lady Johnson,” he said.

“Indeed? Then Steve and I are doubly glad to meet you, sir,” said Polly.

“Met him years ago in New York before I ever came up the river,” he went on. “Since that time I have neither seen nor heard very much of the great world.”

“How long have you been here, sir?” asked Steve.

“Nearly three years. I preached my first sermon in the chapel here on Christmas Day in 1770. Of course, I had Joseph’s help. He is my interpreter, you know.”

“You mean Joseph Brant?”

“Yes. The Indians call him Thayendanega. There were over two hundred people present. I didn’t know a single word of their language and they didn’t know mine. I have learned much in three years, but to this day I do not trust myself to read the liturgy or to administer the sacraments except in English. I think I must be either too old or too stupid to acquire a new tongue.”

Sir John suggested that as soon as he had mastered the Mohawk language he would be off to Trinity Church, New York, where so many of his predecessors had gone.

Mr. Stuart laughed pleasantly. “We never know what the future holds in store for us,” he said. “It is well that we do not, I think. By God’s good grace we live only one day at a time. I shall be happy if He sees fit to let me spend the rest of my days with these Mohawk people, opening to them His word and teaching them how to pray. There is much that I can accomplish yet, if Joseph will stay with me.”

“He thinks the world of you,” said Sir John.

“Your father never showed his good judgment to better advantage than when he sent that young brave away to be educated.”

“Father’s greatest regret,” said Sir John, “is that the Mohawks would not let him stay longer.”

“Why wouldn’t they, John?” asked Polly, with a growing interest in the great Mohawk.

“Afraid he would get too much education. They had an idea that learning would make him weak like the palefaces and turn his mind from such manly pursuits as hunting and fishing.”

“I cannot help but sympathize with them in their attitude, at least to some extent,” said the missionary. “To our shame be it said that the Indians

learn from the palefaces much that is low and debasing. But Joseph is one in a thousand. He has renounced his old life and taken our holy religion. The energy he used to spend on the warpath he now devotes to worship and to the training of his people in peaceful occupations. At this very moment he is at his desk translating the Gospel according to St. Matthew.”

“I should like Lady Johnson to see him,” said Sir John. “Perhaps he would take us to the chapel and show us the treasures of the Mohawks.”

So Joseph was called and presented. There never was a man of any race or colour who could match this Mohawk in dignity and manly bearing. His poise and self-possession were at once a surprise and a delight. His language was faultless; his personality, cultivated and refined. It would give him much pleasure, he said, to show Lady Johnson and her brother the treasures of which he was the trusted custodian.

“Then we shall go over to the chapel at once,” said the missionary. “A little recess will do Joseph good. He works too hard. But it is not every day that we have such distinguished visitors.”

“Where is the chapel?” said Steve. Unless his eyes were deceiving him, there was no such edifice within the radius of a mile.

“Queen Anne’s chapel is standing within a hundred feet of you at this very moment,” replied Sir John, gleefully.

“Then we must both be blind,” said Polly, equally mystified.

“We can’t expect you to see through wood and stone,” remarked the missionary.

“Then it must be tucked away somewhere within the four walls of Fort Hunter,” reasoned Polly.

“Inside Fort Hunter!” exclaimed Steve.

“I thought that would surprise you both,” said Sir John. “It was this way. Queen Anne’s chapel was part of the good Queen’s gift to the Mohawk people, and it had to be protected.”

“Have you been in it?”

“Oh, often. Both of my sisters were married there. Nancy to Daniel Claus, when it was exactly fifty years old, and Mary to Cousin Guy the next summer.”

“And your father before them?” It was out before Steve realized that in his quest for information he had propounded a question which might cause

some embarrassment.

But Sir John was not in the least perturbed. "Father told me once that he was never married there, but he is sure he ought to have been two or three times," he said. "You know father, Mr. Stuart. He must always have his little joke. Somehow, this chapel always seems to belong to the Johnsons much more than some of the others that father built. Lady Johnson and I are coming over to service, if we may."

"And if I may—" added Steve.

"I shall be glad to see all of you," said the missionary.

Upon entering the fort, they saw Queen Anne's chapel, a limestone structure about twenty-five feet square, surmounted by a quaint little belfry. Steve took a childish delight in ringing the bell, while Joseph Brant opened the chapel door with a key which he wore on a chain around his neck.

"Joseph is the guardian of the Mohawk treasures," the missionary explained. "No one may so much as enter this sacred edifice without his permission. It is a great honour that his nation has bestowed upon him."

There seemed, to outward appearances, nothing remarkable about the chapel. Toward the west stood the pulpit, with its sounding-board and reading-desk for the use of the missionary. Directly opposite were the seats for the audience, two canopied, upholstered pews on an elevated platform, one for the "royal" family, that is to say, the Johnsons, and the other for the missionary's household. On the lower floor were rows of movable benches, hard and bare, and between them and the pulpit stood a little, old, wheezy organ which, Sir John took pains to inform them, was an instrument of rare quality and the first of its kind in all the wilderness west of Albany.

While Polly sat on a rickety stool and ran her fingers over the keys, Joseph Brant went to the altar-table and, turning a little silver key, he opened a large, wooden box which stood on it. He began to spread the contents out to view.

"He is ready now to show you the treasures," intimated Mr. Stuart at the opportune time.

Polly turned to the altar and her astonished eyes beheld the table covered with cloth and napkins of finest damask. Over a chair was spread an embroidered altar cloth, a handsome surplice and two small, tasselled cushions. On the floor had been thrown a valuable rug. From the bottom of the box, as it seemed, Joseph was lifting heavier contents. He placed on the table a silver communion service of eight pieces, chaste in pattern and

beautiful in design. There were flagons and chalices and alms-basins, a royal gift, inscribed by the royal silversmith to read: "The gift of Her Majesty Queen Anne, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland and of her plantations in North America, Queen of the Indian Chapel of the Mohawk." Last of all, he drew out a large leather-bound, silver-clasped Bible and a number of prayer-books.

"There is a candelabrum which goes with the silver," said the missionary. "We keep it at the manse because it fits a little too snugly into the box. It is a magnificent piece of nine sockets, forming a triangle surmounted by a cross."

"It is all very, very beautiful," said Polly, ecstatically. "I am sure Trinity Church at home can boast of no such a service. The needlework is exquisite. May I touch it, Joseph?"

"If you like, you may help me put them all back into the box, Lady Johnson," replied the guardian of the treasures.

"That is a privilege he grants to very few," commented Mr. Stuart, with a friendly nod to Polly.

Young Steve was not so interested in silver and embroidery as he was in the fort and its equipment. He wanted to examine the muskets—went so far, in fact, as to wish for war so that he might try them out.

"Why didn't you stay in New York, then," said Sir John, "where war seems to be somewhere just over the brink?"

"Who wants a war with words and pop-guns?" sniffed the young barbarian.

"A hammer for a tomahawk, a tuft of horsehair for a scalp and a paint-pail to carry the blood, that's your measure, young man," laughed Sir John. "You see, I have not forgotten your childish manoeuvres around Fort George."

"I'm a man now," said Steve, drawing himself up to his full height.

"When your whiskers grow, you'll learn that real men hate war," said Sir John.

"What about Sir William?" retorted the youngster.

"Father? He hates the very sound of the word. You ought to see him gather the Indians about him and tell them to throw their hatred into the

bottomless pit of an everlasting forgetfulness. He smokes with them the pipe of peace. You should study government, Steve. That's the coming thing."

"Faugh!" scoffed the young man, "politics are even deader than history."

"Ever hear of the confederacy of Six Nations?" asked Sir John.

"Can't say I have."

"The French call them the Iroquois."

"You mean the Mohawks?"

"The Mohawks are only one of the Nations of the great confederacy," Sir John told him. "Besides them there are the Onondagas, the Oneidas, the Cayugas and the Senecas. That's five. Then the Tuscaroras came and spread their blankets and made six. Did you ever hear of Hiawatha, Steve?"

"No. Who was he?"

"A man of peace who lived centuries ago."

"An Indian?"

"Yes, a Mohawk. But you are not interested in history."

"Well—tell me about this—what's his name?"

"Hiawatha. It was he who persuaded the Five Nations to form a confederacy. It all happened over there on Tribe's Hill. He bound the nations together with belts of wampum. They cast a chain of five links and grounded it deep in the everlasting hills."

Steve stood and stared at him. "What ever are you talking about?" he said.

"It's all a picture, you know," said Sir John. "That's the way the Indians talk. You'll get used to it in time. We had better find the others, don't you think?"

"No hurry," was the not-altogether-unexpected reply. "Won't you go on with the story, please?"

"Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, once a year, when they saw a cloud of blue smoke rising from the top of Tribe's Hill over there, the war chiefs of the nations came and met under a pine tree whose peak is in the clouds. There they built a long-house with five hearths and with doors that open to the sunrise and to the sunset. To this day they meet there every summer, 'to brighten their chain,' as they say, meaning to renew their covenant. There

they discuss the problems of the nations and before they separate they smoke together the pipe of peace.”

Young Steve could scarcely believe his ears. “That’s a pretty yarn you are spinning me,” he said.

“It’s no yarn at all.”

“It can’t be true.”

“But it is.”

“Do you mean to tell me that these savages actually have a parliament?”

“I do,” affirmed Sir John, emphatically. “It is a superior one, at that.”

“Do you ever go? Would you take me?”

“One question at a time, young man,” said Sir John, with a smile. “I couldn’t manage Tribe’s Hill, but if you keep your eyes and ears open, you will be sure to see a Mohawk parliament in session at Johnson Hall some day.”

The conversation might have continued for some time had not the missionary called from the door of the chapel to say that Lady Johnson would like to go over to Tiononderoga, if the gentlemen would go, too.

“Where does she want to go?” asked Steve.

“To Tiononderoga, an Indian village a quarter of a mile away,” replied Sir John. “We’ll go, certainly. What an opportunity to introduce our city people to the long-house!” When Steve looked puzzled, he added: “A formal call at an Indian castle. Keep your eyes open.”

All in vain did Steve look for a castle with towers and turrets at Tiononderoga. He saw only three or four elongated shacks which looked as though a strong wind might bring them crashing to the ground. “Are those long-houses?” he asked.

“Yes. How would you like to live in one?”

Steve indulged in an expressive grimace.

“We are going to call on Captain John Deserontyou at his castle,” said Sir John. “I think I see him at the door.”

The portal of the strange specimen of architecture to which they directed their steps was made of clumsily-hewn timbers, scarcely more than split logs, which had been crudely joined and set up on end. Deep in its recess sat, or rather squatted, a thick-set Indian, smoking a clay pipe. He grunted at

the sight of the visitors, then slowly pulled himself together and scrambled to his feet, smiling expansively when he saw the missionary.

“I have brought you distinguished visitors to-day, Captain John,” said Mr. Stuart. “Sir John and Lady Johnson and Mr. Stephen Watts of New York.”

Captain John took his pipe from his mouth with some reluctance and said they were welcome. But that was as far as it went. He stood looking them over with a coldly critical eye.

“Lady Johnson has never seen a Mohawk castle,” hinted the missionary. When that proved insufficient, he added: “Would you like to show her yours?”

Captain John put his pipe back between his teeth, kicked the door open unceremoniously, and entered his castle, followed by his guests.

Inside, it was dark and dismal, for lack of windows. Long piles of poorly-stacked wood were thrown up against the walls. A dim fire burned in one corner and, directly above it, had been suspended from a beam in the ceiling a huge iron pot. The atmosphere was gloomy with smoke and heavy with strange, unappetizing odours.

“This is the kitchen,” explained the missionary. “It is used by all the people who live in the long-house.”

Polly was glad enough to be ushered out of the kitchen and into a great enclosure beyond, where the air was more to her liking. She found herself in a great space which must have measured at least fifty feet long and twenty wide, with no floor but the earth, and no covering but the skies. A troop of dirty, half-naked children stopped their game to stare at the intruders.

Sir John reached into his pocket, pulled out a handful of coins and, tossing them into the crowd, stood by to watch the scramble.

“They are just like other children,” said Polly.

“With one difference,” whispered Steve. “The dirt does not show.”

The children came up shyly one by one to show the missionary their treasures. He patted their little, black heads with genuine affection and made them laugh with his pretty speeches.

At the same time, he contrived to direct Polly’s attention to the stall-like compartments which surrounded the enclosure. Each of them was floored

with rough lumber and boarded up on all sides but the front. "That is where they sleep," he told her. "One for each family."

"Six families—" said Steve, with a whistle, when he had counted the compartments.

Polly did not think they looked like very restful habitations, for the sheets of bark which formed the roofs were supported solely, and none too securely, by poles, and the whole structure creaked with every wind that blew. There were no beds and but little other furniture—nothing but rolls of filthy blankets, a few boards, on which the babies were strapped for the night, and several shelves of fly-specked provisions.

"That should be in the cellar," Polly ventured to remark, casting a censorious eye at the food.

"We are not palefaces," said Captain Deserontyou somewhat coldly. "We live like our fathers."

The women, it seemed, were out working in the fields. Their men were off hunting. Under those circumstances, there seemed to be no reason for the whites to prolong unduly their visit with the laconic Captain John. They left him a few minutes later, squatting again before the castle door, his head wreathed in clouds of blue smoke.

"What does it all mean?" said Polly, as they returned to the fort. "Why do all those families live together?"

"It is the custom," replied Mr. Stuart. "The women are all sisters."

"And why isn't Captain John off hunting with the others?" Steve wanted to know. "Is he too fat?"

"Probably because he is too lazy," the missionary thought. "Captain John is a great man among the Indians. He does pretty much as he pleases."

All the way home Polly and Steve plied Sir John with questions about Joseph Brant and Captain John and about the characteristics of their race. He told them how appreciative the Indians were of kindness, how faithful they were to their promises. "You may not think it," he said, "but they are proud, too, proud as—"

"As the De Lanceys," Polly finished it for him.

"Impossible," said Sir John with a laugh. "But they tell a wonderful version of the story of creation which stamps even the De Lanceys with the badge of inferiority."

“Do tell it to us, John,” said Polly.

So Sir John related how the Great Spirit Manitou set out to make man by taking a piece of clay, moulding it into a perfect shape and putting it in his great oven to bake. “But, alas,” he said, “he forgot to watch it and the man came out black and ugly. The great Spirit was disappointed, but he tried again. This time he took the clay out before it was thoroughly baked, and so the man was pale, and weak, and quite unworthy of his creation. A third time he took clay, moulded it and placed it in his oven. He watched it until it was perfectly browned, and when he took it out he was satisfied at last, for the object of his creation was a perfect man—the American Indian.”

“Such wonderful stories as you do tell!” said Steve.

Sir John took a delight in reminding him that they were history.

“I never dreamed it could be so interesting,” replied the boy.

“Such a delightful afternoon as we have had!” Polly chimed in. “I wouldn’t have missed it for anything. But do you know, John, I can’t agree with that Indian version of creation. The most perfect man I know hasn’t a drop of Indian blood in his veins.”

“Some more sweethearting,” said Steve, with a grin, “I suppose she means you, John.”

Chapter IX

THE MIGHTY OAK FALLS

During the following winter and spring, intelligences came to Johnson Hall which caused Sir William the utmost concern. The people of Boston and New York and of many another town on the sea-coast were getting out of bounds. Seized with an uncontrollable frenzy, they were threatening to turn not only their own cities but the whole of the western world upside down. A paltry two-penny tax on tea had driven them mad. A band of ruffians in feathers and war-paint—Mohawks, so-called—had dumped a large consignment of the commodity into Boston Bay, causing thereby so much hilarious satisfaction that the drama was repeated two months later in New York. Mohawks, indeed! Not while Sir William drew the breath of life would his Indians be guilty of such unrestrained acts of violence.

From the same coast towns came the alarming news that the most outrageous indignities were being heaped upon the heads of government and recognized authority. Effigies of prominent officials were being paraded through the streets, hanging by the neck from gibbets and surrounded by a boisterous, jeering, violent mob. Everywhere there was noise and rioting. The press fairly bubbled with excitement. Governor Tryon had been burnt out of house and home in the dead of night, his furniture destroyed, his papers strewn to the winds, and his position made so uncomfortable that he finally took ship for England, declaring that not even a saint from heaven could stand such hoodlum treatment. The rioters tramped the streets, shouting their derision of the governor, calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, and proclaiming their patriotism. Patriotism, forsooth! Sir William could see nothing to it but rank sedition.

Great Britain was hard put to it in those days, and the situation in Canada was only another thorn in her bleeding flesh. Sir William knew conditions in the New World as did few of his time. He knew that Canada comprised little more than the cities of Quebec and Montreal, and the land surrounding and connecting these two towns, and that its population was predominatingly French. He had always distrusted the French as a suave, intriguing, priest-ridden people, and he had enjoyed vexing them and holding them at the point of his bayonet. The fall of Quebec he regarded as a somewhat precarious victory, which was bound to usher in a host of

diplomatic problems and dangerous precedents. He viewed with apprehension the proposed extension of Canada's borders to the Ohio and the Mississippi to include, as it would, vast lands belonging to the Six Nations Indians. For Guy Carleton, the new Governor of Canada, he entertained by turns hopes and fears. He was a key-man, if ever there had been such an individual in the history of the American colonies. Upon his statesmanship, Sir William became more and more convinced as time went by, would hang in no small measure the destinies of British in the new world.

"We are living in a strenuous age," the baronet told his friends. "It is in times like these that the history of all ages is made."

Right at home, in the Mohawk valley, even on the Johnson estates, there was much to engage Sir William's attention. He had thrown all his boundless energy into the founding of Johnstown, erecting its public buildings at his private expense. But he had come to realize that what he had done was not enough. Johnstown needed an agricultural background. It must have people to till the land and support the growing population of his village. But where to get them? That was the question.

His neighbours used to say of Sir William that he was as honest as a saint but as shrewd as the devil. Give him time and he would be sure to find some honourable way to bring to fruition his deep-laid schemes. For this problem, too, he would find a solution that would be both advantageous to his own interests and satisfactory to the world at large.

"Lafferty," he said one day, "We'll have to import some farmers next."

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"But where are we going to get them?"

"That's just the question, sir."

"You old blockhead! Can't you see that we must get them from the old country?"

Lafferty was not in the least offended. "That had occurred to me," he said, probably untruthfully, since he was not prepared to elaborate the idea.

"You see, Lafferty," Sir William went on. "I must contrive to be a sort of feudal lord to these farmers. As I am bound to His Majesty the King by the feudal tenure of a yearly rental of two shillings and sixpence for every hundred acres of my patrimony, so these tenants must be bound to me by easy leases. You follow me?"

“Oh, yes, indeed, sir. That is quite right.”

“You see, I must keep these people under my thumb,” continued the baronet. “That’s why we must have old-world immigrants. It would be a tremendous advantage to have them foreigners in a strange land. The less they have in common with the other landed gentry round about, the better I’ll be pleased. Different language, different customs, different religion. Do you hear, Lafferty?”

“Oh, yes, Sir William. That would strengthen your hands materially.”

“Now where do you suppose I’m going to get what I want?”

A bright idea seized the lawyer. “As one Irishman to another, I suggest the Emerald Isle,” he said, with much animation.

“You’re a fool, Lafferty,” blustered Sir William. “That would never do. Old man Sammons would be hobnobbing with them in less time than it would take to shake a stick. Instead of a band of retainers, I’d have a regiment of so-called patriots on my hands.”

“So you would, to be sure. What you don’t think of, Sir William!”

“I didn’t have to think much before I knew I’d leave the Irish sitting on the other side of the pond, that’s certain,” Sir William said, preening himself under his lawyer’s flattery. “But, listen, Lafferty. If I could get a few Highlanders—Gaelic, you know—I’d hit the nail on the head. Now why didn’t you think of that?”

“I did, sir,” replied the lawyer.

“Then why in creation didn’t you say so?”

“Because you thought of it first,” said Lafferty, whereupon the baronet called him a stupid goose and forgave him freely.

Sir William had agents in the Highlands of Scotland in short order. In the county of Glengarry they found the very people Johnstown needed, a remnant of the MacDonnel clan, Gaelic to the core and Romanist to a man. Dissatisfied with conditions in their own land, these people were glad enough to have their transportation paid to the New World of promise. They knew something of Sir William by reason of a somewhat distant blood relationship. His proposition sounded well in their ears. All aboard for America!

In the spring, a thousand stalwart Highlanders took Johnstown by storm, swaggering arrogantly down its quiet streets to the drone of the bagpipes and

flaunting in the eyes of the scandalized community their belted claymores, their plaited skirts and their bare knees. They had not only Johnstown but Albany and the whole valley of the Mohawk agog with curiosity and excitement.

Sir William was so delighted that he settled them magnanimously on lands to the north of Johnson Hall, in a community which he named Kingsborough. He lost no time in cultivating the friendship of the newcomers by offering them his counsel and his patronage and by teaching them the ways of the new world in matters as divergent as agriculture and Indian war dances. So ardently did he woo them that, almost before they realized it, the thousand Highlanders were all scraping and bowing before their feudal lord, Sir William Johnson of Johnson Hall. Once more the baronet had succeeded.

It had long been the boast of the Johnsons that there was not, and that there never could be, any disloyalty in their locality. The ugly serpent which for years had been wriggling its way openly in and out of Boston society, did not dare to lift its venomous head in the new County of Tryon, named for the governor and loyal to all the traditions of his office. If Sir William heard rumours of sedition emanating from the Sammons family, he could afford to smile indulgently. Old Sammons knew, as did every one else, that all Sir William had to do was to blink an eyelash and all the disturbers of constituted authority would find themselves ensconced in the chilly atmosphere of the Johnstown jail—a prospect which could not help but dampen the ardour of the most zealous “patriot.”

The Indians were Sir William’s chief concern. The Iroquois, he knew, were by nature vacillating and petulant. Whatever happened, they must not be shaken in their allegiance; their trust in the great King across the water must not be shattered, no, nor undermined. There was no danger while he lived, but if he—if his hip—or his dysentery—who was there who could step into his shoes and walk with confidence and in security in his footsteps?

Repeated rumours of the trouble that was brewing had come to the ears of the Mohawks, but they refused to credit the reports. War with the oily Frenchmen of Canada they could understand. But between Englishmen? Never! Were they not of one blood? Did they not speak the same language? Were they not all called by the holy name of Christian? A war between brothers? Then let the palefaces boast no more of their superiority. The Mohawks would wash their hands forever of the white man’s quarrels.

But Sir William set out to win his Indians over to a decided stand for the King's party. He pleaded with them to brighten the silver chain which bound the Six Nations by a thousand links to His Majesty. With long speeches, prefaced, punctuated and concluded with belts of wampum, he entreated them not to allow their old-time allegiance to rust because of indifference, lest it break and plunge them into an abyss of utter ruin.

July of that year was extremely hot, especially during the first two weeks, but no untoward weather ever deterred Sir William in the performance of his duty or lessened his zeal for any cause he had espoused. Day after day he sat in council with the Mohawks at Johnson Hall in all the heat of an insufferable, midsummer sun. He wasn't going to give anybody an opportunity to say with truth that he had been recreant in his duty.

Dr. Daly fumed with rage, protesting that it was nothing short of suicide for a sick man to sit day after day in that broiling sun. But Sir William brushed him aside, as one might brush a fly buzzing inanely about the head. The doctor wasn't living who was going to stand between him and his obvious task.

One morning Sir William awoke with a spasm of excruciating pain.

Dr. Daly was summoned in haste. "You'll have to stay in bed for a few days, sir," said he, chuckling inwardly over this turn of events. "The rest will do you good."

Sir William shot a searching, anxious look at the doctor. "I'm not—I'm not at the end of my tether?" he asked.

"Not if you obey my orders. You'll have to stay right in bed, sir."

"How long?"

"Till I give you permission to get up. Take forty winks for a change."

"But I can't, Daly, you stupid idiot. You know I can't. You'd think I was a gentleman of leisure."

"You ought to be, sir, at your age and in your station in life," the doctor made bold to suggest.

"What! Would you have me throw up the reins and let the horses run away?" shouted the baronet, becoming irascible now in the face of opposition.

Miss Molly came, demanding to know what all the commotion was about.

“It’s nothing,” Dr. Daly assured her. “Darken the room. Sir William must sleep.”

“I’ll not have any man in my employ tell me when I must sleep,” cried Sir William, flinging back the bedclothes in a towering rage. “Daly, I tell you again, you are a confounded ass.” He made an effort to get out of bed, but he fell back helplessly upon the pillows.

“We’ll leave him alone, Miss Molly,” whispered the doctor, drawing the door gently to. “He’ll drop off now in a few minutes.”

“You don’t mean—he’s not going to die, is he?”

“Certainly not,” replied Dr. Daly. “You must not think that, Miss Molly. He will be all right in a few days. I’ll just go now and get some medicine for him.”

Before the doctor returned with the potion, Sir William had dragged his way to the dining-room. He was seated in front of an appetizing breakfast which Pontioch had prepared for him. He carried a spoonful of food to his mouth, but a great lump formed in his throat and he could not swallow. He pushed back the plate and stared at it. “Pontioch!” he called, at last.

“Yes, massa, here I am.”

“Where, Pontioch? Where?”

“Here, sir.” He touched the baronet’s hand.

“Of course you are, Pontioch. I see you now. This room is too dark. The curtains are too heavy.”

“I’ll pull them aside,” said the faithful slave, suiting his action to his words.

“Pontioch!”

“Yes, massa.”

“Go to my office and fetch me that packet. Hurry.”

“Which packet, massa?”

“The one the messenger brought last night. The one with the big, red seal.”

Pontioch knew which one that was. He would get it. “Sure, massa.”

“And be quick.”

He brought a huge envelope with a broken red seal and placed it in Sir William's hands.

"You're a good boy, Pontioch. Pontioch! Pontioch, where are you?"

"Here, massa."

"So you are. You are one of the best friends I have, Pontioch."

"Yes, massa."

"When you see Dr. Daly, tell him he's not worth the salt he eats. Wanted me to take forty winks before breakfast—me that's over from the auld sod, where nobody ever heard of forty winks."

"He don't know you, massa, like I do."

"Of course he doesn't. Go and get my armchair, Pontioch—the one in the library—and carry it out to the council meeting."

Pontioch thought it was time to demur. "You'll not be goin' out there, massa," he said.

"Where else would I be going?" cried Sir William, flying into a temper. "To a fancy ball, I suppose, with my country's fate hanging in the balance. You're another idiot, Pontioch. This house is full of them. Take the chair out, I say."

"You are sick, massa."

"So is the Province of New York, and with a worse malady than mine. Do as I tell you. I'll see who is master in this house."

Pontioch went for the chair and carried it out to the council meeting. Then he helped his master down the steps and across the lawn. Seeing Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson at a distance, he strolled over to them and warned them that Sir William was not as well as usual.

The meeting was resumed for another day, with the baronet in his place of honour, apparently in good health and spirits. When Sir William spoke it was always with the fire of an Indian orator, his eyes sparkling with animation and his frame quivering with the intensity of his emotions. But this morning an unusual earnestness possessed him. He had something to show them. With a dramatic gesture he held up the packet with its huge, red seal. He called upon his audience to listen while he read a letter from the great King to his faithful allies of the Mohawk. It contained the same old admonition. They must unearth the chain of their old friendship and burnish

it to shine as never before. They must bind themselves anew to the English across the water.

The Mohawks listened in profound silence. Their reply was most non-committal, only this—they would take what the great King had said “into their innermost minds.”

After all, that was the best Sir William could hope for. He had learned by experience that the Indian mind is capable of reaching a decision only after prolonged and profound deliberation. He was not disappointed.

Presently the dinner bell sounded. Sir William pulled out his watch to confirm the hour, but all he could see was a blur. He called Joseph Brant to him and said: “See what time it is by my watch, Joseph. Something has come over my eyes.”

“It’s twelve o’clock, sir.”

“Is it? I am very proud of my watch, Joseph. His Majesty the King sent it to me as a gift by the hand of my son, John.”

“Yes, I remember, sir,” said the Mohawk. “You have every reason to prize it.”

Sir William passed his hand lovingly over the case, and then he said: “Never again will it tell me the time of day. Your eyes are young, Joseph. Take it as a gift from your King and from me.”

“You mean me to have it, sir?” cried Joseph, overcome with surprise and delight.

“I can’t take it with me,” said Sir William. “It belongs to this world. Take it, Joseph. I want you to have it.”

Joseph pocketed the watch without so much as looking at it. The pallor of his benefactor’s face startled, frightened him. Could it be possible that—that he wasn’t going to live?

Sir William tried to rise from his chair, but he staggered, clutched at nothing and dropped back again into it. Joseph Brant bent over him, folded him into his brawny arms and carried him, the greatest man the Mohawks had ever known, weak and helpless now as a child, into the library at Johnson Hall. Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson followed in great alarm.

“He’s dead! My William’s dead!” moaned Miss Molly, when she saw the procession.

“Get the doctor, Molly,” commanded Joseph. While she hastened to obey, he opened Sir William’s shirt at the neck and felt his heart. “He’s alive,” he announced to Dr. Daly when he arrived.

“Send for Sir John at once,” ordered the doctor. “Hurry, somebody.”

“Is he going to die, doctor?” This from the sobbing Miss Molly.

“Billy! quick!” cried Guy Johnson. “To Fort Johnson for your life. Tell Sir John—”

Billy was off before he got the message. He knew only too well what he had to tell Sir John.

Dr. Daly had taken command. He ordered the crowding servants from the room. Only Pontioch might remain, since he refused to leave. “Hold him, Pontioch,” the doctor said, “and stop your snivelling. Lower! Are you crazy?”

“He’s dead! My William’s dead!” Miss Molly’s moaning was like a funeral dirge.

“His heart is still beating. Has somebody gone for Sir John?”

Every eye in the room was fixed upon the dying man. There he lay in the arms of faithful Pontioch, inert and motionless, not a flicker of consciousness in his vacant eyes.

Was that a groan? Suddenly his arm jerked. There was a flash of recognition in his eyes. It was as if he said he knew why they were all there hanging on his every breath? He knew he was dying and they were all watching to see him do it.

“Feeling a little better, sir?” said the doctor, cheerfully enough, even in the presence of death itself. He knew that Sir William would have it so.

The dying man’s eyes wandered around the room and rested on Joseph Brant. Faintly, he breathed his name.

Joseph fell to his knees at his patron’s side. He caught the clammy, limp hand of the baronet and held it gently between his, expressing in that simple gesture all the pent-up emotion of his being.

Sir William’s lips moved, or seemed to move. Joseph had to strain his ears to catch the feeble words. “Control your people, Joseph,” the faint voice said. “I am going away.” Then he lapsed again into unconsciousness in faithful Pontioch’s arms.

The silence that fell over the room was broken by the barking of a dog.

“Even Collie moans for him,” cried Miss Molly, clinging to Joseph in the trying hour.

“It’s Sir John,” said Joseph.

“Thank God!” said Dr. Daly, fervently.

“Is he still living?” whispered the great Mohawk.

“His heart is still beating.”

In another moment Sir John had entered the death chamber. He drew near and bent low over the prostrate form. “Father,” he called, wistfully. There was no answer, no sign of recognition. “Don’t you know me, father. It’s Johnny.”

But the sightless eyes stared on into vacancy.

“The end is very near,” whispered the doctor.

Even as he spoke, the spirit of Sir William slipped gently away into that distant, unknown land—or is it nearer than we think?—where life begins anew.

Sir John was overwhelmed with grief. Gone! and without a last farewell. He had tried so hard to reach Johnson Hall in time, he told the doctor. “My mare dropped dead on the road within a mile of the Hall.”

“And from there?”

“I took a horse from a pasture field, an old plug that couldn’t even trot. I’d give everything I have if only I had been here sooner.”

“Death waits for no man,” said Guy Johnson.

“We can be thankful, at least, that it was not unexpected,” remarked Daniel Claus.

Sir John would not let that go unchallenged. “It is always unexpected when it comes,” he said.

The funeral was held a week later. The news of the baronet’s death had spread like wildfire throughout the valley of the Mohawk. Nearly two thousand people gathered at Johnson Hall to pay their respects to the dead and to offer condolences to the bereaved. Men of position and influence bore the pall—Stephen De Lancey, Polly’s uncle, Governor Franklin of New Jersey, natural son of the famous Benjamin, and several judges of the supreme court of New York. A simple ritual was read in the little stone

church at Johnstown and all that was mortal of the great man was placed in a vault which he himself had built for the very purpose under the altar.

The Indians did not forget that Sir William had been Warraghuay, their great, paleface chief. They asked that the vault should remain unsealed until they had performed their tribal service of condolence. The following day they gathered to observe the obsequies. Wrapped in their heaviest mourning shrouds, they stood hour after hour with bowed heads, sweltering in the hot sun. Their grief was as uncontrolled as their loss was irreparable. All night long they lingered about the little church, weeping and wailing, a doleful sound. Morning found them still irreconcilable but hungry. Presently the chief of the Oneidas lifted his head and his voice. With belts of wampum he cleared their vision, wiping away all their tears. Very reverently he approached the corpse, covered it with a double belt, then sealed the vault with six rows of wampum. They must mourn no more, he said, lest they offend the great spirit whom not even their paleface chief would dare to disobey.

With Sir William's demise, life took on a different aspect as far as the Indians were concerned. In accordance with the baronet's wishes, which represented also their own preferences, Colonel Guy Johnson stepped at once into his uncle's shoes as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and Joseph Brant was named his secretary. That meant that, henceforth, the council fires would burn no more at Johnson Hall, but twelve miles farther down the river at Guy Park. The Indians called their new chief Uraghquadirha, or Rays-of-the-sun-enlightening-the-earth, because, they said, a new day had dawned.

By the terms of Sir William's last will and testament, the lion's share of his estate fell to his son. Sir John was to have all the wealth and social prestige which his father had got unto himself throughout his lifetime. He was to be the head of the family now, and the lord of Johnson Hall. In less than a month, the disconsolate Miss Molly and her family had retired to Fort Johnson and Sir John and Polly entered upon their heritage. At Johnson Hall, too, a new day had dawned.

Sir John's son and heir was born that autumn, a healthy youngster, lovely as his lovely mother.

"If only father had lived to see this day," said Sir John. He knew that the fruition of all his father's hopes were wrapped up in that little bundle of humanity.

"We must call him William, for his grandfather," said Polly.

The suggestion pleased Sir John immensely. It was like Polly to think of that. “You will live now to all posterity, my lovely Polly,” he said, “the first Lady Johnson and mother of a long line of baronets.”

Polly placed her hand gently over his mouth. “Hush, John,” she said. “If I were a beggar, I’d still be happy so long as I could be your wife.”

Chapter X

THE LIBERTY POLE

The same year in which Sir William Johnson died, the British Parliament enacted legislation especially designed to conciliate the conquered French population of Canada. Their civil laws were to be retained and their religion respected. At the same time, their borders were to be extended to include a vast area of hinterland which lay north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi.

The Act provided the new-world politicians with a subject for animated discussion. The people of New England were none too pleased about it. Already nettled, as they were, they made of it another bone of contention with the mother country. They did not relish the idea of having at their back door a huge territory administered by agents responsible only to the Crown. That smacked too much of autocracy to suit the leaders of the new democracy. And they hated the Roman Catholic faith. Why should they tolerate in this new world a religion which had deluged Europe in blood and spread impiety, bigotry, persecution and rebellion throughout the world? They could see no object in passing such a Bill, unless it was to menace the liberties of the English colonies and to limit their expansion. One more insult flung into their teeth by the Motherland across the water!

The Indians were even more disturbed about the Act than the whites, and with greater reason, for the lands which the British Parliament gave so generously to Canada had been from time immemorial the hunting-ground of the Iroquois and their allies. What right had even the great King to give to others what belonged to them alone? They came to Guy Park to ask their new superintendent this very pertinent question.

Colonel Guy Johnson felt that it was up to him to appease the Indians at any cost. Sir William would have found a way out of the difficulty, and so must he. So he reminded them that almost a century had passed since they had of their own free will given over all their lands to the protection of the British.

“To the British, yes,” the sachems agreed, “but not to those foxes, the French.”

“The French are the friends of the British now,” Colonel Guy tried to explain to them.

But the Indians shook their heads. That was too much to ask them to believe.

“They have smoked the pipe of peace,” he maintained.

“But hatred smoulders in their hearts,” the Indians replied. “We do not trust the French. The great King must give us back our lands. They were not his to give away.”

Colonel Guy was hard pressed to find a satisfactory answer. “The great King will pay you for your lands,” he ventured, at length. “He will make the French pay you for them.”

“We cast your money over our shoulders,” was the scornful reply. “Give us back our hunting-grounds.”

“You shall have them!” declared Colonel Guy Johnson, as if suddenly fired with a great resolution. “Brighten the chain of our friendship. Turn a deaf ear to all those who would speak evil of the great King. Listen to me. Hear what I say. I promise you that every foot of land between the Ohio and the Mississippi shall be given back to you. You shall keep your lands for an everlasting possession. I speak for the great King.”

Exclamations of assent and approval greeted this promise. That was what they wanted—their hunting-grounds. After some deliberation, they sealed the agreement solemnly with belts of wampum. Binding themselves afresh to the great King by a burnished chain, they put all their trust in their new superintendent and in his Mohawk secretary, Thayendanegea, whom the English called Joseph Brant. Everything would surely come out right in the end.

However good may have been Colonel Guy Johnson’s intentions, it was not long before he was as full of misgivings about the hunting-grounds as he was of excuses for his empty promise. It was impossible to conjecture what the future held for anybody, he feared. He had a strange premonition that the time was coming, and coming soon, when those who wanted their rights would have to fight for them, and if the Indians ever regained full possession of their lands, they would pay dearly for them with their own life-blood.

The pushing spirit of democracy had been making alarming strides in the valley of the Mohawk. At the German Flats, up-country, the people had had the presumption to erect a liberty pole and to dance themselves into a frenzy around it. True, Sheriff White had swooped down upon them and had cut

down the offending pole with the authority of the law, but in so doing he added red-hot coals to the fire of revenge which smouldered in the hearts of the people. It was going to break out into flame some day, that fire, and sweep the country like a scourge, defying both law and the makers of law. Then let the King's men flee to the mountain-tops!

The Johnsons were keeping their ears to the ground and preparing to act with decision as soon as any emergency might arise. They determined to take their stand when certain of the community began boldly to urge that Tryon County should send representatives to the second Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia. They must voice their disapproval at once and leave no ground for uncertainty.

As it happened, a meeting of county officials had been called at the Johnstown court-house. That was to be made the occasion of their protest. The Johnsons got their heads together and drew up a scathing declaration against the Congress, denouncing it as an outrage to civilized society and disputing the legality of its meetings. This they took to the court-house, and having obtained the signature of the officers of the court, they posted it conspicuously and in the spirit of challenge on the door of the building.

That was the torch which kindled into a blaze the sullen, but none the less combustible, rancour in the hearts of the Sammons family and other disaffected citizens. Their blood was up at once. Flaunting defiance in the very faces of the haughty Johnsons and their satellites, they retaliated by repudiating the law and disclaiming the dispensers of justice. "Down with the Tories!" they cried. "We, the people, are a law unto ourselves. Who made the Johnsons our overlords?"

The insurrection swept the countryside like a consuming fire. Three hundred indignant, excited, resolute people gathered at the home of John Vedder, at Caughnawaga, a few days later, to assert their defiance by the erection of a liberty pole. They cut down a tall, slight tree, stripped it of its bark and planted it in high glee. "Down with tyranny!" they cried. "Long live liberty! We'll soon show the bluebloods what we think of the Continental Congress."

"Jack's as good as his master," sang out Jacob Fonda, airing an expression which he had picked up on the streets of Johnstown.

"A good deal better, I'd say," answered John Vedder, the host, slapping him rudely on the back.

"Three cheers for the Continental Congress!" shouted Sampson Sammons, leading the acclaim himself with raucous voice, and capping it

with a boisterous tiger.

How they gloried in the rarer atmosphere of liberty which surrounded the tree! Mothers held their infants aloft in their arms, that they might fill their lungs with the pure, free air. A group of youthful merry-makers pushed their way in and out of the crowd, jolting and joking and enjoying to the full their new-found freedom. "Make way for the Spirit of American Democracy!" they cried. "Make way!" Even their bearded fathers stepped aside obediently. This day belonged to youth and liberty. Let them be unrestrained.

A sudden hush fell over the crowd. In the distance a clatter of horses' hoofs. The Johnsons! Not a mother's son of them but knew it instinctively. Presto! Change! Hilarity gave way to apprehension and defiance wilted into the customary subservience.

The Johnsons rode up, resplendent in their military uniforms. Even their attendants assumed a martial air.

"Pleased to see you, gentlemen," said John Vedder, remembering his manners and doffing his deferential cap. His sweeping courtesy included not only Sir John and Colonel Guy Johnson but Colonel Daniel Claus, young Steve Watts, the Butlers, father and son, and others, including a score of kilted Highlanders and a sprinkling of the Johnson slaves.

"A liberty pole! I suspected it," said Colonel Guy Johnson, fairly choking with rage. "You fools! You idiots! What do you mean?"

The frightened mothers folded their little ones in their arms, while the toddlers clung to their skirts. The men kept their eyes fixed on the enraged Guy Johnson.

"Read them a lecture, Guy," Sir John was saying. "Tell them we will not tolerate such nonsense."

"That I will," said Colonel Guy. "I'll—The rascals!—I'll tell them this liberty pole business has got to stop." He threw his rein to Sir John and strode pompously to the house. Having hoisted himself to a place of vantage on the verandah, he flourished his riding-whip, snapping it in the faces of the people. Every eye was fixed upon him.

"Speech!" cried young Steve Watts, amused at the dramatic pose of the orator, who was, he suspected, much too angry to be capable of a single intelligible sentence.

Colonel Guy was passionate and uncontrolled at that moment, but he finally succeeded in emitting a tirade of disjointed invective in a high-pitched voice, which went over the heads of most of his audience. "Yon beanstalk," he shouted, "what good will it ever do you? Have you all gone mad, that you dance around it like lunatics? Hop for a thousand years, if you like, but you can never overthrow His Majesty the King. A single British ship would sink the finest navy you traitors could ever float."

His audience glowered but said never a word.

"The Indians are with us," continued the colonel. "They are the King's men. I have them in my power. If need be, I shall not hesitate to turn them loose on the King's enemies."

This threat evoked a general protest, but no one had the courage to express it.

"Every fort from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi is held by the British," the orator went on to say. "You are only ramming your heads against a stone wall. Colonies are the spoiled children of empires." He swung his arm in a dramatic sweep and held it imperiously on high, whip in hand, while he shouted: "Long live the King!"

Sir John and his party cheered him to the echo, but the people grouped about the liberty tree stood staring stolidly and sullenly at each other.

At last the spirit of protest found its voice. "What about Canada?" shouted some one from the crowd.

Colonel Guy swung around and demanded to know who had asked that question.

"I did."

"It's Sampson Sammons over there." John Vedder pointed him out.

"Oh, Sammons," said Colonel Guy. "Well, I am pleased to be able to inform you, sir, that Canada is loyal." He was by no means certain of this statement, but none the less emphatic on that account.

A titter ran around the crowd. That Sammons! They might have known that he would hit the nail on the head. There wasn't a man among them but would bet dollars to doughnuts that Canada was far from loyal. Canada was French, and France, they knew, was Britain's ancient foe. By all the laws of human nature, blood was thicker than the terms of any conciliatory treaty.

Colonel Guy knew what they were thinking. He determined to substantiate his statement. "Sir Guy Carleton is Governor of Canada," he said. "He's from the auld sod. Every Irishman that's worth a half-boiled tater is with the King."

"You're a liar!" shouted young Jacob Sammons, with rising blood.

"They're Irish, too, the Sammonses," whispered the agitated crowd. "They don't have to take that."

"Those that are not King's men are traitors," shouted Colonel Guy, flinging the alternative in the face of the insolent youngster.

"You're a traitor yourself," challenged Jacob.

With that, Colonel Guy jumped over the railing of the porch and made for his assailant. "I'll make him swallow his teeth who calls me a liar and a traitor," he thundered.

The crowd parted before him, cowering with fear, but there were some who stood their ground, muttering: "We are patriots."

Young Sammons met the colonel with a glare of defiance. He dared him to lay hands on him.

Johnson took the dare. He seized the youngster by the throat and shook him with every ounce of strength he had. "Take it back, you villain," he ordered, with a dreadful oath. "Take it back, I say. You traitor!"

But Jacob Sammons happened to be the kind of fellow who, having taken up his cudgels, did not cast them aside until the row was over. He doubled up his fist and struck the colonel a telling blow under the jaw.

"Give him another," cheered the crowd.

Jacob did not need this injunction. The fight was on with a vengeance. Blows and curses were exchanged and intermingled. Now one and now the other was on top. The crowd stood by, cheering weakly whenever Jacob triumphed, but no one offered to take any active part in the struggle.

The episode ended suddenly enough when the colonel picked up his loaded whip, which had fallen to the ground during the encounter, and struck the boy on the head with the butt of it. The next moment Jacob fell full-length and unconscious at his feet.

Murmurs of horror were heard on every side. Some muttered "Coward!" under their breath.

Colonel Guy slipped away and joined his friends in uniform. "I laid him out properly," he told Sir John.

"Who was it? I couldn't see."

"That upstart of a Jacob Sammons."

"A pack of traitors," Sir John called the family. He ordered Pontioch and the other servants to cut down the pole at once and not to leave Vedder's until the last vestige of it had been burned to ashes. The Highlanders were to stand on guard and intervene in case any opposition was offered. "It will be a good lesson to the whole community," he said, as he and his party rode away. "We'll tolerate no liberty pole in the land of the Mohawk."

When Jacob Sammons came to himself he found the mongrel Pontioch sitting astride his body and leering into his face. Strengthened by the fury of his rage, he threw him off and offered to fight.

But Pontioch took to his heels and ran for his life. "I don't want nothin' to do with the likes of you," he jeered at his pursuers. "Traitors, that's what you all are."

Traitors! There it was again, this time from the mouth of a slave.

The incident was regarded as an insult to the respectable, middle-class citizens of Tryon County. Traitors, indeed! They who boasted that they were the only true patriots! The Johnsons were going to smart for this some day.

Chapter XI

A SHERIFF CALLED TO JUDGMENT

A week or two later, Sampson Sammons dropped in at the Vedder home at Caughnawaga and asked his friend, John, what he thought about the news.

“What news?” said Vedder.

“Why, the arrest. Don’t tell me you haven’t heard of it.”

“But I haven’t.”

“It’s Jacob.”

“Him again? Can’t they pick on somebody else for a change? Rough on the Irish, I’ll say.”

“It’s Jacob Fonda this time,” said Sammons.

“Fonda! Why, he’s as harmless as a turtledove.”

He was, to be sure, but he had been talking too fast.

“They’ll have us shot for thinking soon,” commented Vedder. “What has he been saying?”

“Well, he was settin’ out on his porch last night, smokin’ his pipe, like he always does. Along comes Walter Butler, wishing him a polite good evenin’. They got to talkin’, as neighbours will, and—”

“Didn’t he recognize the devil?”

“’Tseems not. You know how innocent and unsuspectin’ Jacob is. He never thought about what he was sayin’. Anyway, he up and told Walter that he knowed how Old George went mad.”

“And how was it, did he say?”

“From tryin’ to figger out how the apple got inside the dumplin’, at least that’s what Jacob says. Then up jumps Walter and gallops off to Johnstown.”

“To tell the sheriff?”

“Yes, siree, and the sheriff sends two of them skirt-slingers from Scotland, and they claps a pair of handcuffs on the old man, and they’ve got him now, locked up in the Johnstown jail.”

“For sayin’ a man went mad worryin’ about a dumplin’? What difference did it make if he did?”

“But it wasn’t just a man, you know, John,” Sammons pointed out. “It was Old George, the King. The sheriff says that’s s’dition and s’dition has got to be stopped.”

“We’ll stop him,” said John Vedder, with clenched fists. “The sheriff is in with the Johnsons thicker than thieves. He looks down on us all. Them Tories has got their heads in England and their bodies in America, and their necks has got to be stretched before we can have any peace.”

“The sheriff ought to be in jail himself,” fumed Sammons. “I’ll see that he gets there before many days, too, if I have to swing for it.”

“Let’s go and get Fonda out first,” said Vedder.

That was precisely what he had come to suggest, Sammons said.

That very night fifty men, headed by Sampson Sammons and John Vedder, stormed the Johnstown jail, overpowered the guard and released Fonda. They led the old man out into the open, put him in the centre of their circle and making of him a human liberty pole, they danced about him like madmen. The night air echoed and re-echoed with the delirium of their joy.

“Now for the sheriff,” cried Sampson Sammons, when their enthusiasm had reached its peak.

“It’s an unearthly hour,” interposed some one. “He’ll be asleep in his feather-bed. Better wait till morning.”

“No! No!” said Sammons, with a wicked grin. “Night’s the time for such a job.”

“We’ll fetch him down in his night-shirt,” screamed the crowd, in high anticipation of an amusing exploit.

Midnight and after, as it was, they ran over to Mattice’s Tavern, where the sheriff boarded. The place was in darkness and silent as death itself.

“Does anybody know his room?” asked John Vedder.

“There! Up there!” a dozen eager voices were ready with the information. The crowd gathered in front of the second-story window which they indicated.

“Sheriff White!” Sammons called out in a deep, stentorian voice. “You are called to judgment. Sheriff White! Oyez! Oyez!”

“And you’ll come if you’re wise,” added Vedder. “Yes, siree, we’re going to put you in the witness box to answer for your sins.”

The crowd took up the hue, shouting themselves hoarse and demanding that the sheriff come down and surrender himself in his night-clothes.

“It’s a charivari, sheriff,” said a wag.

“We’re going to let you ride the goat,” said another, with a loud guffaw.

Every eye was fixed on the sheriff’s window. Presently the curtain moved and slowly parted. A head was thrust out cautiously through the aperture.

The crowd cheered and fairly hugged themselves and each other with delight.

“Go back and get your wig,” shouted a mocker. “We’ll wait till you put on your dignity.”

The sheriff’s head was dishevelled enough, but he was only half awake and exceedingly disgruntled at the irregular proceedings. So it had come to this, had it? A sheriff threatened by a vulgar mob in the dead of night!

“Hurry up, sheriff,” the shout went up. “We’re waitin’.”

“Is that you, Sammons?” cried White, at last, fixing his eye upon the dark figure of the man who was obviously the leader of the riot.

A dozen voices answered: “Yes.”

The sheriff’s face blanched. He drew his head back into the room and reached for the loaded pistol which he kept beneath his pillow at night. He parted the curtains again. Bang! He had aimed at the ringleader.

Sammons staggered and uttered a terrible oath, but he did not fall.

A volley of answering shots was peppered at the window. One of the bullets struck the sheriff in the breast. He dropped into a chair and howled with rage.

In a moment the crowd had worked itself up into a frenzy. The sheriff’s shot, as it happened, had whizzed past Sammons’ ear and lodged in a post. No blood had been shed, but the infuriated mob howled like a pack of bloodthirsty wolves. As one man, they rushed to the door of the tavern, vowing that they would tear the sheriff limb from limb, if it took all night to do it.

The door was strong as iron and bolted with a chain, but they battered at it until they broke it in. They would have rushed the stairs but for a throng of indignant, clamorous, night-robed guests who were under the misapprehension that they had all narrowly escaped being murdered in their beds.

“It’s not you we want,” Sammons kept protesting. “We’re after Sheriff White.”

“It’s his carcass we want,” shouted his followers.

“We’re goin’ to put him in jail instead of Jacob Fonda,” Sammons went on to explain. “We—”

That was as far as he got, for suddenly a terrible explosion rang out on the midnight air, shaking the very foundations of the tavern, the startled crowd averred. The men stood staring at each other as if petrified.

“What ever was that?” the frightened guests asked the landlord.

“Cannon,” was the laconic reply. Apparently, he was possessed of a rare intuition.

“But where?”

“At the Hall, of course. Where else would it be?”

“But—” It was utterly incomprehensible.

“I sent word to Sir John,” the landlord explained. “You didn’t think I was fool enough, did you, to let a pack of hoodlums tear the house down over our heads? Clear off, you traitors, if you don’t want to spend the night in jail. I’ll show you that there are still laws that must be obeyed in Tryon County.”

Speechless with surprise and fright, the mob slunk back to Caughnawaga under cover of darkness. They did not need to be told that with that single blast Sir John Johnson had summoned from their sleep five hundred retainers who would take the sheriff to Johnson Hall under armed escort.

With the morning, their courage had revived. Before ten o’clock, a deputation of six hundred citizens waited upon the lord of Johnson Hall and demanded the immediate surrender of Sheriff White.

Sir John treated them with dignified civility. “I cannot grant you your request, gentlemen,” he said. “The sheriff has done only his duty as an officer of the King.”

Sampson Sammons, who led the deputation, glowered. "We, the people, will depose him," he said.

A scornful smile curled the baronet's lip. "The dismissal of a sheriff is the sole prerogative of the Crown, or of some authorized representative of the Crown," he informed them.

"But we do not recognize the Crown," protested Sammons. "We, the people, are king. In our sovereign right we will depose the sheriff and choose one more to our liking."

"Governor Tryon would only reinstate him," replied Sir John, with a complacent smile.

"White will never again perform the duties of the office, I promise you," answered Sammons, heatedly. "If he ever enters the court-house again, we will hound him out of Johnstown."

After that, the sheriff did not dare to show his face in the village without a substantial guard. He was persecuted and tormented, driven from pillar to post and so mercilessly threatened that, finally, in utter despair, he hit the Canada trail and was never seen or heard of in those parts again.

Chapter XII

THE RETREAT

Life in Tryon County was becoming increasingly intolerable to the King's men. The whole countryside was seething with sedition, which, like some loathsome disease in the body politic, was undermining all respect for order and legal authority. Every day conditions were growing worse—must grow worse, many claimed, before they could be better. Many a distracted official declared that he had a mind to throw his knapsack over his shoulder and follow the sheriff to parts unknown. Anywhere, they said, rather than Tryon County.

The Johnsons determined that they must prepare for the worst. They fortified Johnson Hall and Guy Park and stationed guards on every avenue of approach. They went so far as to search horsemen who passed to and fro on the King's highway, oftentimes finding messages which they used for personal gain as well as for the advancement of the loyalist cause. In the capacity of Colonel of the County Militia, Sir John frequently mustered his retainers at strategic points for drill and review, and he managed thereby to give young Steve Watts valuable training as a junior officer. To some extent, also, he terrorized the rebels.

In the course of time, however, Colonel Guy Johnson became sullen and despondent. Things were not going to his liking. He rode over to Johnson Hall one day to unburden himself to Sir John. "This Superintendency of Indian Affairs is no easy post," he assured him. "I don't want to drag the Indians into the fuss."

"Neither do I," said Sir John, "but if we don't, the traitors will. We can't help ourselves. We must use every means to keep the Indians with us. How does Little Abraham stand now?"

"Neutral."

"You must win him over."

"He told the magistrates in Albany and Schenectady that he won't promise what will happen if they lay hands on me."

"So far, so good."

“The rebels are after me.”

Sir John laughed outright. He pooh-poohed the idea that Guy was in any special danger.

“But I am, I tell you,” said the colonel, very earnestly. “I am a marked man.”

“An obsession. Forget it. You are in no more danger than I am.”

“We are both standing on the crater of a volcano,” maintained Colonel Guy. “You seem to be going about with your eyes shut. I might as well tell you that I have written to Sir Guy Carleton—”

“In heaven’s name, what for?”

“To ask his advice about going to Canada until this rumpus is over.”

“To Canada! You don’t mean it?”

“But I do. Carleton advises it.”

“Do you mean that you are going to run away?”

“Certainly. Why not? It is only until this fuss is over. Claus is going, too, and the Butlers. I wish you would come with us.”

“Never!” said Sir John, in no uncertain tone. “My place is at Johnson Hall. Steve and I will stand by our guns, eh, Steve? We’ll fight the demons till the ammunition gives out.”

“Then turn on them with the butts of our blunderbusses,” said Steve. “I’m with you to the finish, John.”

“Bravo, Steve! But, Guy, what’s going to happen to the Indians if you run off to Canada? I’m sure my hands are full enough now.”

“They’re going with me,” said Colonel Guy. “At least, most of the Mohawks are. Thayendanegea, you know, is determined to sink or swim with the King’s men.”

“As your secretary, his duty is with you.”

“He is not the only one. I have just returned from a council meeting at Albany. The Indians have planted a big tree and fastened to it the chain of the everlasting friendship with the British. They have extinguished their council fires—”

“What! the fire that has burned for more than a hundred years? Extinguished? What would father say to that?”

“Sir William lived in different times,” said the colonel. “If he were living now, he would do as I have done. What else is there to do? Three hundred braves are going with me, and more will follow later.”

“What about Mary and the family?”

“They will go, too, of course.”

“Does Mary consent?”

“I have not asked her. What else can she do?”

“But to Canada, Guy? That’s too much for any woman, and Mary is not strong. She can’t travel hundreds of miles by roads that are little better than Indian trails.”

Colonel Guy wavered for a moment. “It is a long way,” he said. “Claus and the Butlers are talking about going to Niagara. That is not so far. Mary might go with them.”

“Surely Claus isn’t thinking about taking Nancy?”

“That is his intention.”

“You are all mad,” said Sir John, heatedly. “Go yourselves, if you have a mind to, but leave my sisters to me. They are not accustomed to privations. It would kill them.”

“I will have you know, my dear cousin, that Claus and I have a greater regard for the safety of our wives than you have for yours,” was the caustic reply.

Sir John bit his lip and said no more.

Young Steve Watts had overheard the conversation and was filled with apprehension about Polly. “She’s not in any danger, is she, John?” he asked.

“We are all in constant peril, Steve,” said Sir John. “These are terrible times. But I can see no reason why we should take to our heels and run.”

“Of course not,” replied Steve, “But if anything should happen to Polly —”

Sir John lost his temper at the very thought of it. “If those villains harm so much as a single hair of her lovely head, I’ll turn the universe upside down,” he said.

Hurried preparations began forthwith for what Colonel Guy was pleased to call “the retreat.” Fort Johnson was the meeting-place. The flitting was to take place in the early morning, with the minimum of impedimenta and with

no undue excitement. It was most important that no opposition to the movement should be stirred up, lest the news should reach the ears of the magistrates at Albany and Schenectady.

Over at Fort Hunter the proposed flight was causing the Indians much concern. If Thayendanegea was going away, who was to be the guardian of Queen Anne's communion silver in his absence? Captain John Deseronty would have been the natural substitute, but he had announced that he was going, too.

"Take it with you, Thayendanegea," advised the women.

Thayendanegea would not listen to such an impracticable idea. "I have much to do before I return," he said. "Our superintendent talks of going across the water to see the great King. If he does, he will need his secretary."

"What, Thayendanegea, will you go, too, across the water?"

"If the opportunity comes. I must tell the great King that the lands he gave to Canada belong to us. He must give us back our hunting-grounds."

"You are right, Oh, Thayendanegea," said the women. "Let him smoke the pipe of peace with his paleface brothers, our neighbours, so that we may kindle again the council fires of our nation which have burned at Albany since the beginning of time. You must tell him so, Oh Thayendanegea."

"All that will I tell him and more," said the great Mohawk. "As to the silver—"

Yes, the silver. After all, that was the question of the hour.

"I will not sleep to-night," said Thayendanegea, "nor shall Captain John. As soon as the sun is hidden behind the curtain of the west we shall go into the chapel and take the box from off the altar. The Great Spirit will lead us to a spot which we alone shall know. There shall we bury it deep in the ground."

"You are right, Thayendanegea," acclaimed the women. "You are always right. Bury it deep. Leave no mark, no sign, so that you alone may find it."

"If the Great Spirit shall call me away so that I come not back," said Thayendanegea, a trifle sadly, "Captain John shall be its guardian until the council fires of our nation burn again in the land of our fathers."

In the dead of night the two Mohawk chieftains took the box from off the altar and carried it far beyond the precincts of the fort. And there,

somewhere, with reverent hands, they dug a grave and buried their nation's treasure.

"I make you joint guardian of the silver," said Thayendanegea, clasping Captain John's hand. "We must keep our secret until happier days. Let us go now into the great world of many dangers."

"Let us go," answered Captain John.

They struck off then through the woods to the river and when the first ray of dawn streaked the eastern sky, they came to the gate of Fort Johnson, ready for their great adventure.

The Johnsons were stirring, too, even at that early hour. They succeeded in getting away to a good start and, contrary to Colonel Guy's expectation, without much noise. It was a motley throng, a few aristocrats with their families and a retinue of servants, the great Mohawk with several hundred dusky warriors and "the brown Lady Johnson" with her numerous family. Alas! What changes time had wrought! Here they were fleeing for their lives who scarcely a year before had lived in peace and security under the protection of the great Sir William Johnson, lord supreme of the Mohawk valley.

Up the King's highway they proceeded without haste and by easy stages. It might have been a pleasure jaunt but for the absence of pleasure. The children were cross and crabbed; their elders were weary with travel and nervous with anxiety. Was the terrible journey ever going to end?

At Oswego, Colonel Guy ordered a halt partly in order to hold a conference with the Indians of the locality, but mostly as a concession to Mary, his wife. She was so utterly exhausted as to cause the entire party the greatest alarm.

"The trouble is she's been thinking too much," her husband told Nancy Claus. "Ever since we left Fort Johnson she has been talking about her father."

"I've been thinking about him, too," said Nancy softly. "Haven't you, Guy?"

"Yes, yes. Come to think of it, it was just a year ago to-day."

"The eleventh of July," said Daniel Claus. "That was an awful day."

"This is a dozen times worse," declared Guy.

"I'm glad father didn't live to see it," said Nancy.

“If he had lived, we shouldn’t be here,” said Guy, with conviction. “I tell you, Nancy, your father was one man in ten thousand, and we are weaklings.”

“I always thought you had a rather exalted opinion of your own ability, Guy.”

“No man gets very far who considers himself a dolt,” the colonel replied, “but, compared with him who has gone, I am nothing but a two-legged grasshopper.”

Mary was lying in the next room asleep, presumably, but at that moment she uttered a shriek that brought them all in haste to her bedside. One look at her face and they knew the worst. She was dying. Overcome with grief, they dropped to their knees. They besought her to speak to them, to open her eyes once again, to give some sign. But there was no response. All they could do was to watch in helpless silence until the end came.

Guy was full of remorse. “I have killed her,” he sobbed. “Oh, Mary, forgive me.” He bent down and kissed the lifeless lips.

“It wasn’t you, Guy,” said Nancy Claus. “It was these awful times. She’s better off than we are, I’m sure.”

“To think it had to be the eleventh of July,” said Colonel Claus. “Come, Guy, you must be brave. Pull yourself together, if only for the sake of the children.”

The question was where they were going to bury her. “I can’t think of leaving her here,” said Guy.

“You can’t take her back to Guy Park, nor on to Montreal, that’s certain,” said Daniel Claus.

“We’ll take her with us to Niagara,” declared Nancy. “The Indians will carry her coffin on their shoulders.”

So it came about that Mary Johnson of Guy Park, younger and favourite daughter of the great Sir William, was laid to rest after many days in an unknown grave in a foreign land.

Guy Johnson did not go with the corpse to Niagara. He stood in silence watching the strange cortège as far as his eyes could see. Some day he would go to see where they had laid her, but for the present there remained only the duty of the hour. He left Oswego that same day for Montreal, accompanied by Joseph Brant, his Mohawk secretary. After a conference with Governor Carleton of Canada, they took ship for England. King George

and the Lords of the Realm were going to get some first-hand information on the sad condition of affairs in the valley of the Mohawk.

Meanwhile, Sir John Johnson stayed on at Johnson Hall, determined to keep his finger on the pulse of the political situation and to protect to the best of his ability the Johnson estates and the family interests. With every fresh alarm he strengthened his fortifications and doubled his guards. The enemy were crowding in upon him. He did not know whom he could trust, surrounded as he was by a horde of madmen who, craving license, yelled for liberty. What they really wanted, he knew, was Johnson Hall.

One day the sentry discovered a negro trying to gain an entrance to the Hall by scaling the fortifications. He was promptly apprehended, searched and cross-examined. To all their questions he had one answer: "I want to see Miss Polly."

"There is no Miss Polly here," the guards assured him.

"Lock him up in the Johnstown jail as a spy," ordered their officer.

"But I've done got news for Miss Polly," protested the negro.

The baffled officer hailed Pontioch and asked him if he could make out what the man was trying to say.

"He means Miss Molly," Pontioch was sure. "She's off to Canada."

"It's Miss Polly," the troublesome fellow insisted. "Her that's married to Sir John."

"Lady Johnson!" exclaimed Pontioch. "Sure enough, her name is Polly. Massa calls her that sometimes."

"The white Lady Johnson, eh, not the brown?" said the officer, with a smile. "What's your name, nigger?"

"Tony."

"Where from?"

"Noo York. Sir John he done tole me I could drive his gold coach an—"

"It's a fine new livery you want," said Pontioch, grinning.

"A green one. That's what he done tole me."

Pontioch held his sides for laughter. "You'll be mighty lucky, nigger, if you get drivin' 'roun' Johnstown in a wheel-barrow," he intimated.

"Take him to Sir John, Pontioch," ordered the captain of the guard.

Half an hour later, Tony was ushered, footsore and weary, into the presence of the baronet. Steve, as it happened, was with Sir John and Polly was within call. With one accord they greeted him like a long-lost friend, as, indeed, he was.

Tony was for the moment speechless with happiness. He fell at Polly's feet, kissing the silver buckles on her satin shoes. "Oh, Miss Polly!" he murmured. "Lovely Miss Polly."

"You must call her Lady Johnson, Tony," said Sir John. He did not approve of unnecessary familiarity with his servants and slaves.

"Lady Johnson, sir," said Tony, rising to his feet and bowing low before the baronet. But the next minute it was "Miss Polly" again, and Steve was "Massa Steve."

"How did you get here?" they all asked him.

"Walked. I mean, I ran."

"Folks all well?"

A cloud passed over the negro's beaming face. Tears came to his eyes and coursed down his cheeks.

"Something's wrong!" cried Polly. "Is father sick?"

Tony gulped down a lump in his throat and said: "Massa he's done gone _"

"He's not dead, Tony?"

Tony couldn't find the words to tell her.

"Is it mother?" said Steve, anxiously.

Still Tony stood before them, speechless with emotion.

The three glanced at each other with apprehension.

"Come, Tony," said Sir John, a trifle impatiently. "Which is it?"

"It's—it's all two, both o' them," said Tony.

"They're dead?"

"No! no! Miss Polly. They done went away."

"They went away!" exclaimed Sir John. "Do you mean they are coming up here to Johnstown?"

“There’s no disloyalty in the Mohawk valley,” ventured Steve, imitating to perfection Sir John’s old-time boast.

“Steve, this is no time for that,” said Polly, looking daggers at her brother. “Where are they now, Tony?”

“We’ll go and get them,” said Steve, penitently.

Tony shook his head. They couldn’t, he said, for they were in England.

“In England?”

“Anyway, they started.”

“Why the deuce—”

“Hush, John,” ordered Polly. “Let me question him. What ever did they do that for, Tony?”

“’Cause they had to. They done made ’em do it, the rebels did. Locked ’em out of their own house. Called ’em names and spit on ’em.”

Steve suddenly turned white with rage.

“May the villains receive a punishment equal to a perpetual itching without the benefit of scratching,” said Sir John. “They didn’t tar and feather them, did they, or ride them on a rail?”

“It was comin’ to that, sir,” said Tony. “Nobody has no more respeck for nobody no more, Miss Polly. Not in Noo York. Decent people can’t live there no more.”

“Is hell let loose?” cried Steve, with rising passion. “Turned them out of their own house and spat on them, did they? Well, I’ll show them that I can spit, too.”

“Steve,” admonished Polly, “don’t be vulgar.”

“When you’re out to do dirty work, Polly, it’s best to leave your Sunday gloves at home,” said the young man. “I’m off to New York at sunrise tomorrow.”

Chapter XIII

THE FOURTEENTH COLONY—A BARRIER AND A REFUGE

Steve had no sooner left Johnson Hall than Polly began to be lonesome for him. Her circle of intimates had dwindled now to Prue and the children. Sir John she scarcely saw. There were days when he was so engrossed with affairs of state that he had his meals served in his office. If Polly chanced to see him at all, she was sure to find him depressed by the bad news his messengers brought him.

“The Continental Congress has met again in Philadelphia,” he told her one day. “They are getting as bold as brass.”

“And what did they do?” she asked.

“Do? Why, they made Mr. George Washington commander of what they call the colonial forces. As for your patriot cousin—”

“You mean Philip Schuyler, I know,” said Polly. “What a depth of meaning you put into that word patriot, John!”

“They have made him Commander-in-chief of the Congressional troops in Eastern New York. Sounds like a big job, doesn’t it? He has instructions to keep an eye on me.”

“On you?”

“Yes. It looks as though we are to have a little game of cat and mouse. As soon as he gets me in a corner he is to pounce on me. It’s enough to make poor old father turn in his grave.”

“Of course it is, John. It’s simply preposterous.”

“They have designs on Canada and Nova Scotia, too. They’ve been drawing up proclamations and urging them to send delegates to the next Continental Congress.”

“Continental Congress is a rather expansive term, isn’t it, John?” said Polly. “There isn’t any danger that Canada and Nova Scotia will join the rebels, is there?”

“That I cannot say. I know very little about either of them. The Canadians, of course, are French, but they have a governor who has a mind of his own.”

“He knows how and when to speak it, too, if all reports are true. You mean Carleton, I know.”

“Yes, Sir Guy Carleton. Did I ever tell you, Polly, that he was a very close friend of that man Wolfe who died on the Plains of Abraham when he took Quebec and won Canada for the British? He was with Wolfe when the end came.”

“Is that possible? No wonder he does not feel disposed to give the Colony up without a struggle.”

In due course, Canada received its invitation to send delegates to Congress. Messengers brought to Johnson Hall a very graphic account of their reception by Sir Guy Carleton. Sir John was greatly encouraged by their story. “They say he turned white with rage when the deputation handed him the papers,” he told Polly. “He flung their precious document on the floor and ground it beneath his heel. He told them what he thought of them. He didn’t leave them in doubt.”

Polly clapped her hands in childish glee. “What did he say, John?” she cried. “Oh, do tell me what he said.”

“He struck from the shoulder, you may be sure,” replied Sir John, with infinite satisfaction. “‘Continental Congress!’ he shouted. ‘I will have you know that Canada on this continent will have none of your disloyalty.’ Those were his very words, Polly. Then he drew his sword and brandished it.” Sir John was even more excited about it than Sir Guy Carleton could possibly have been.

“Bravo, Sir Guy!” exclaimed Polly, exultantly. “They know now that Canada will have nothing to do with them. And so they can’t have a Continental Congress, after all.”

“That will not prevent them from calling their meeting by that all-embracing name,” said Sir John, spitefully. “You don’t know them as I do, my dear. They think they hold a charter to the whole continent.”

And so, indeed, it appeared. Congress, when it met, assumed that it was a continental organization and determined to make short work of Sir Guy Carleton and his colony. It appointed a special committee to examine into the whole civil and military state of the northern province. Were they to understand the absence of delegates to mean that the Canadians were so

blinded, so down-trodden by tyranny and oppression that they were not even conscious of the dawning of a new day? If so, they must be roused out of their lethargy. They must be compelled to be free.

Three men were appointed to perform this act of mercy, under the direction of the indomitable and versatile Benjamin Franklin. A little diplomacy was all that was needed, a printing press to reach the educated classes and a priest to charm the French noblesse through the influence of the clergy. A few months of their propaganda and the benighted Canadians would open their eyes to the light. Carleton would be surprised enough when he wakened up to find that the wind had suddenly veered.

Sir John Johnson had been much alarmed about the outcome of this project, but the reports his scouts brought him from time to time soon set his fears at rest.

From the first, the Commission had been received with cool suspicion in Montreal. Although they had sent a courier ahead to announce their arrival, there were no preparations made for the grand reception they had expected. The stupid cabby declined their crisp “continental” bills and demanded Canadian silver; the people jabbered their unintelligible lingo to their faces. Neither Franklin’s glib tongue nor the padre’s flattery could incite any burning desire for the new brand of American liberty they advocated with such fervour. The dolts were content, it seemed, with what they had.

“And how long is this unappreciated missionary service to continue?” asked Polly.

“Oh, they’ve been back home for weeks,” said Sir John. “They took to their heels and ran, when word came that a British man-of-war had landed at Quebec.”

“Our troubles will have a happy ending, too,” prophesied Polly. “There’ll be a man-of-war for us, too, John, some day. It hurts me to see you so worried.”

If Polly had only known it, Sir John’s worries, and her own, were only beginning, and there wasn’t so much as a tug in the offing to defend them!

The new Commander-in-Chief of the Congressional Troops had boasted that he was going to make American liberty a continental affair. He had set aside fifteen hundred pounds to buy over the Indians, so that he expected no further trouble from that source. As for the phlegmatic Canadians, they were certainly not to be allowed to stand in the way of his plans. If they could not be persuaded by gentler means to thirst for freedom, they must be led by the

halter to the trough and made to drink. Canada must be conquered at once, he decided. She was helpless, as everybody knew, and the warpath from Albany to Montreal, by way of Lake Champlain, lay open. Carleton had only four hundred regulars and the recently-subdued French population. This was the hour to strike.

“A poor lookout for Canada,” Sir John told Polly. “Three thousand men will overrun the whole Province of Canada. Montgomery is to be in command. He is a genial fellow and he knows the country. He, too, was with Wolfe at Quebec.”

That surprised Polly. She wondered if he would know Sir Guy Carleton.

“In all probability they fought side by side at Quebec,” Sir John thought.

“And now it will be face to face,” said Polly. “What a terrible thing war is!”

The news, when it came, was bad. Montreal had fallen, also St. John’s and Three Rivers. The invaders held both banks of the St. Lawrence and every fort along the frontier. Quebec alone was left to the British.

“Isn’t there any hope?” said Polly, her pale face reflecting her husband’s desolation.

“One chance in ten thousand,” he answered.

But even that last hope vanished when he heard that Benedict Arnold, a dashing young officer of much promise, was leading an army up the Kennebec River against the great citadel. Arnold knew Quebec. He had bought horses there and he had many business friends within the walls of the city. He made it his boast that his very name would turn the keys in the locks of the fortress.

But it did not happen so. Arnold scaled the heights, stood on the Plains of Abraham, and bellowed his wonder-working name. But his friends answered with sneers. The capture of Quebec had to be postponed.

Meanwhile, Carleton was hurrying to the rescue of the city. Paddling past the enemy’s guard at St. John’s with muffled oars in the dead of night, he reached Quebec and took command. Arnold and Montgomery made their attack by concerted action, one from the north and the other from the south. A blinding snow-storm helped the Canadians, a predisposition of Providence, it was claimed. Arnold was wounded in the leg and forced to retreat, and Montgomery was found lying full-length, frozen stiff in death.

The invasion of Canada had failed. Carleton had made good his single chance in a thousand. He had saved Canada to the British.

“My respect for that man grows every day,” Sir John told Polly, when they had the good news. “He held the fate of Canada in his hands, if any man ever did. One false move and, with the fall of Quebec, the whole colony would have been lost. Magnanimous, too. He buried Montgomery with all honours inside the walls of the city because he, too, had served under Wolfe. Bravo, Carleton! I say, I’m going to meet that man some day. A toast, Polly, to Carleton and to the King!”

“And three cheers for Canada!” said Polly, gaily. “There’s a rift in the clouds at last, John. The clearing is just ahead, I am sure.”

“Sorry to disillusion you, my dear,” replied the baronet, “but I’m afraid it is only a lull in the storm.”

“You are too pessimistic by far, John.”

The baronet was prepared to back up his contention with evidence. “Schuyler is a sly fox, but an obedient officer,” he said.

“That is to say—?”

“That he’s been watching me. To-day he intercepted a letter from Claus.”

“Was it important?”

“How am I to know since I did not see the letter? But he probably learned something of interest and profit.”

As the days went by, it became increasingly evident that General Schuyler was focusing his attention on Sir John Johnson. He despatched a letter one day to the proud lord of Johnson Hall.

“It was courteous enough,” Sir John told Polly, when he had read it, “but that is about all I can say for it.”

“What does he want?”

“Questions, nothing but questions. You’d think he had a right to ask them. Will I help him form the people of the village and the Highlanders into companies for their country’s good? I have half a notion to tell him I will before long, without his help.”

“You mean—?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I mean. Here’s another of his presumptions. Will I allow the Committee of Safety, just appointed, the use of the county

court-house and jail in the urgent service of the hour?"

"What are you going to say to that?"

"There is only one answer. I shall tell him very emphatically that, sooner than lift my hand against my King or give my assistance to any organization that opposes his authority, I will suffer my head to be cut off. As for the court-house and the jail, I will not deny the use of them for the purposes for which they were built, but they are my property until I receive for them the seven hundred pounds they cost my father."

"But you will be courteous, too, John? You will not lose your temper?"

"Of course not. That is one of the rules of the game."

A few days later Sir John came upon the alarming intelligence that General Schuyler had mustered seven hundred men at Albany and was marching them up the river. They had come as far as Schenectady and had stopped to confer with Little Abraham, Chief of the Lower Castle of Mohawks, before entering neutral Indian ground. Little Abraham was persuaded to allow Schuyler and his army to go as far as Guy Park. There Sir John met them, accompanied by a few Highlanders and other loyalists.

At the beginning of the conference, General Schuyler made it very plain that he wanted no bloodshed. With the next breath, he demanded the immediate surrender of all the arms, stores and ammunition secreted at Johnson Hall and in the possession of the Highlanders. He tried to extract from Sir John a promise that he would remain on his own estates and not act inimically to the patriot cause. The Highlanders were to pledge their neutrality with six hostages. It amounted to a dictation of terms.

Sir John smiled blandly, though his blood boiled. He asked for a day to consider his answer.

"Then meet me here again to-morrow at the same hour," said General Schuyler.

Sir John went home and related his experiences to Polly.

"Patriot cause!" exclaimed the indignant little lady. "Doesn't he realize that he is a rebel? They are all rebels who war against the King. They don't know what patriotism is. We are the patriots, I say."

"And he doesn't want any bloodshed," said Sir John, imitating the calm dignity of his father's old-time political rival. "He wants that clearly understood."

“Then why don’t you demand that he surrender his guns and his powder?” said Polly, excitedly. “Make him go back to Albany and swear allegiance to his King. If he does that, there will be no bloodshed.”

“I must be very cautious,” said Sir John.

“Cautious!” cried Polly, in derision. “Does that mean that you intend to accept his terms, that you are going to lie down and let him trample you? If you haven’t any red blood in your veins, I have.”

“Do calm yourself, Polly,” said Sir John. “I cannot accept his terms, of course, no matter what happens, but I must not rush into danger. There are others to be considered besides myself.”

“You mean me?”

“And the children.”

“I am with you to the last, John,” said the loyal wife. “No harm can come to us, surely, if we do what we know is right.”

“The trouble is, Schuyler, too, thinks he is doing what he knows to be right,” said Sir John. “There seems to be nothing left for us but to fight it out.”

“Like the Kilkenny cats,” added Polly, with a shudder.

The next day Sir John and the Highlanders went again to Guy Park. They were prepared to make concessions. The Scotsmen agreed to lay down their arms, except their dirks, but they refused absolutely to give hostages. Sir John declined to surrender any personal arms or ammunition. As for military stores belonging to the Crown, he hadn’t any. He stood upon his rights as a free citizen to go when and where he pleased.

General Schuyler scowled. “I regret to find you so arrogant, so stubborn,” he said. “I had hoped to find you more amenable to the great cause of liberty.”

“You will find me true to the highest traditions of my family,” replied the baronet, haughtily. “My father—”

“There is no need to mention him,” interposed Schuyler, with rising anger. “Must I remind you that I have the whip-hand in the Mohawk valley now? The heyday of the Johnsons has passed.”

The general had spoken the truth, as Sir John and his party soon learned. The conference ended without an open brawl. The Johnson party had little more than set out, however, when they became suspicious that they were

being followed. At Caughnawaga, four miles from Johnson Hall, they learned that three thousand bloodthirsty champions of liberty were on their heels, whooping like savages and boasting that they were going to batter Johnson Hall to the ground and take Sir John back to Albany in chains.

Sir John blazed with indignation, but he became genuinely alarmed when he thought of Polly and the children. Swallowing his pride, he sent word to Schuyler that he had reconsidered the matter. He would promise not to leave his estates, if he had the assurance that no violence should be done to him, or to his family, or to his property.

Sir John was allowed to go home without fear of molestation, and the mob groaned with disappointment.

Several days later, Schuyler went to Johnson Hall, demanding of Sir John and the Highlanders the surrender of all their arms.

“You shall have everything,” said Sir John, with cool civility.

“And I insist upon absolute neutrality.”

“You have already tied my hands,” said Sir John, sulkily enough.

“You must promise to do nothing.”

“Well—I promise.”

With these assurances General Schuyler returned to Albany in high glee, bragging that he had at last tamed the Johnson cub. He stationed Colonel Herkimer at Johnstown with orders to effect the complete disarmament of the people.

Herkimer lost no time in showing his authority. He paraded his troops on the ice of the Mohawk River to intimidate the people, disbanding them later and sending them helter-skelter throughout the land to look for stores and arms. He marvelled at how little they found.

The presence of Herkimer and his troops on his paternal estates enraged Sir John and stirred him to action. Under cover of his promise of neutrality, he began to repair by stealth the fortifications at Johnson Hall and to drill his tenants after dark inside the wall. He was still the lion’s cub, he told his men, and sooner or later that man Schuyler was going to find out how he could scratch.

The Highlanders said they had claws, too, and they didn’t see any reason for trying to conceal the fact. Defiantly they refused to give up their dirks. With droning bagpipes and with their knees bared to the January blasts, they

continued to parade through the streets of Johnstown and their own village of Kingsborough. Scots wha hae!

Congress soon decided to silence and subdue the King's men on the Johnson estates. They ordered Schuyler to send an army up the river to arrest the leaders and bring them in chains to Albany.

Sir John, fortunately, was forewarned. "They're after me, Polly," he said, when he had read the friendly message. "They're bringing handcuffs this time."

"But they said they wouldn't, didn't they?"

"Yes. But these are times when promises are written in the sands of the seashore. I promised, too, Polly, and did not fulfil."

"When are they coming?"

"Before night."

"They'll not find you."

Sir John was off, telling Pontioch to sound the alarm that was to warn the Scotsmen. The cannon boomed. Hundreds of Highlanders came running to hear the news. "Arrest us?" they cried. "We'll throw them into Johnstown jail and let them rot."

"Nonsense," said Sir John. "They'll get us this time. We can't fight ten to one."

"You'll not fight at all," said Polly, with decision.

"No white flag! No surrender!" said the Highlanders. "You don't know us, Lady Johnson."

"You're all going to Canada," Polly announced.

"To Canada!" It was a new idea. The men stared at each other.

"I can't leave you, Polly," said Sir John.

"You must," the little lady told him. "You are not safe this side of Montreal."

"If we go, you are not safe here," declared Sir John, apprehensively.

"Listen, John," said Polly. "I can't go, nor can any of the women. But you men must."

"How can we, Polly? Don't you see that we can't?"

“I see that you must,” Polly told him, with rare resolution. “It won’t be for long.”

She had her way in the end. The Scotsmen returned to their homes to prepare for flight.

Sir John lingered near her, still protesting.

“Don’t be a fool, John,” she admonished.

“I’ll wade through rivers of blood to come to you again, my lovely Polly,” said Sir John.

“If you don’t hurry, we’ll all be swimming here in pools of our own life-blood,” she warned him. “Your life won’t be worth much if they catch you. Oh, John, please hurry. Put on Pontioch’s clothes and see that you have shoes that don’t hurt your feet.”

He went upstairs at last to dress.

The servants crowded the doors, gaping.

“Here, Pontioch,” cried Polly, “gather up your master’s papers and put them in the big iron chest. Sir William’s chest, you know. Yes, the one in the library. Billy will help you. Prue, tell the cook—”

“Polly!” It was Sir John back again, protesting that he could not leave her.

The servants were sweeping into the great iron chest all the papers they found on their master’s desk.

“Idiots!” thundered Sir John. “Throw that stuff into the fire. Save only the valuables.” He opened his desk, drawer by drawer, and threw into the huge receptacle deeds of lands, state documents and personal agreements. The secret cabinets were emptied in a confused, conglomerate mess. “What’s to be done with it now, Polly?”

“Fetch the shovels, Tony,” ordered the little woman. “We’ll bury it. Tear up the board walk in the garden and dig a hole. A big one. Bury it deep and be sure you leave no tracks.”

“Yes, Miss Polly.”

“Then there’s the plate—” said the baronet.

“John, I beg of you, go and dress. I’ll take care of the plate. Gather up all the silver you can find, Pontioch, and bury it, too, but don’t tell me where. With your master in Canada, we shall not be entertaining for a while.”

Pontioch could be depended upon to the last extremity. He sent a retinue of slaves to the cellar loaded with valuables to their chins and then, alone, in a secret vault which Sir William had once shown him, he buried the Johnson treasures.

The cannon boomed again, this time as a signal for the flight.

Sir John ran down the great mahogany staircase clothed in servant garb. "My sweet wife," he cried, embracing Polly, very tenderly, "You think only of me."

"Will you think sometimes of me?" she murmured. Then, imagining she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs in the distance, she pushed him from her in wild alarm.

Not until he was out of sight did Polly sink into a chair and give vent to her surging emotions in a torrent of tears.

"Oh, my lady," said her distracted maid, "if only you hadn't married him!"

"You don't understand, Prue," said Polly, very softly. "I never knew till this minute how much I love him."

Similar scenes were enacted in hundreds of Johnstown and Kingsborough homes. The strongest and bravest of their men had said their anxious, hurried farewells and started off on a mad race for life and liberty. Sir John Johnson and four hundred of his retainers were off for Canada.

Of the route they knew practically nothing. They dared not go by the much-travelled Lake Champlain road, for they were not at all certain that the King's men controlled it. Their only safety lay deep in the forests that separated the St. Lawrence from the headwaters of the Hudson, from Sacandaga River over towards Lake Pleasant, thence along the south shore of Raquette Lake, through the passes of the Adirondacks to Lake Nahasane, then north through an interminable forest, dense and dark, down the Raquette River and the St. Lawrence to Montreal. It was unfrequented territory all the way, with only Indian trails to follow.

What those men endured on that long, adventurous journey no one will ever fully know. There were nineteen long days of ravenous hunger, with little to eat but leeks and the tender, young leaves of the beech trees. Footsore and weary, they stumbled along. Some fell by the wayside in utter exhaustion, knowing full well that wild beasts were lurking to devour their flesh, and sun and rain would blanch their scattered bones—a gruesome thought. Others struggled on with dogged determination, spurred on by a

languishing hope. How much longer could they stick it out, they wondered. Did Canada really exist? Were they ever going to get there, or anywhere?

To the surprise and delight of all his companions, Sir John proved to be a marvel of strength and endurance. But for him, many more would have succumbed to despair. Failure never crossed his mind. He was full of hope and encouragement. Eventually, he believed, their weary feet would stand in the streets of Montreal and their hands would clasp the welcoming hand of Sir Guy Carleton, the champion of British dominion in the New World.

But one day even Sir John's buoyant hope seemed to have reached its ebb. It had been raining and the men were drenched to their skins. After nearly three weeks of the vicissitudes of their journey, this seemed about all they could endure. Then, quite unexpectedly, they came upon a band of friendly Indians—Mohawks, who had settled years before near the village of St. Regis and come under the influence of the Jesuits. They remembered Sir William Johnson very well, and there was nothing they would not do for his son. Montreal, they said, was not far away. Their braves would go into the woods to bring in the stragglers, and after a few days of rest and refreshment, they would give them safe conduct to Montreal.

So it came about that when Sir Guy Carleton re-entered Montreal after the evacuation of the invaders, he found a rather disreputable creature ensconced in his office. The man's boots were ragged and dirty, his coat rain-soaked and bedraggled, but his bearing was graceful and dignified. With well-modulated voice, he asked if he had the honour of addressing Sir Guy Carleton.

"That, sir, is my name and office," replied the governor, cordially. "And where did you hail from, my friend?"

"From Johnson Hall."

"What? You are Sir John Johnson?"

"I used to be," said the baronet, trying to laugh. "At present, the evidence all goes to show that I am nothing but an itinerating—well, a common tramp."

The governor seized his hand and shook it vehemently. "Welcome to Canada, Sir John," he said. "Your plight has only proved your devotion to His Majesty. I have heard much of you. Sit down here and tell me about your misfortunes."

Nothing else mattered very much, it seemed, but Polly. He had left her in danger.

“I am told the Lady Johnson is a daughter of the Honourable John Watts, President of the Council of New York. He will see to it—”

“He can’t defend even his own rights,” Sir John told him. “He has been packed off to England. His estates have been confiscated. The whole family is on the rack.”

“Is that possible? Still, General Schuyler is her cousin, I believe.”

“He is at the same time a life-long enemy of the Johnsons,” said Sir John, gloomily enough. “My wife, sir, is very young and altogether lovely —”

“Then you have nothing to fear,” said Sir Guy Carleton, cheerily. “Beauty commands the admiration of the world.”

“And admiration leads to covetousness,” added Sir John, despondently. “Indeed, sir, I have everything to fear.”

Chapter XIV

TERROR REIGNS AT JOHNSON HALL

It was not without reason that Sir John feared for Polly's safety. There she was, a delicate, genteel young woman, scarcely twenty-three, with the burden of the Johnson estates and a household of terrified, irresponsible slaves on her shoulders and with her two helpless children to think and care for. A big enough task at any time, but with an infuriated mob at the door she was undone, unless Providence came to her rescue.

Colonel Dayton was the officer in charge of the expedition sent to capture Sir John and the leaders of the Highlanders. He had descended upon Johnson Hall the very evening of the great flight and called loudly for the baronet.

"He is not at home," Polly answered, as casually as she could.

The officer glowered. "You mean?—Did you say he was not at home?"

"No, he is not here," reaffirmed Polly, still feigning innocence. "Is there any message I could give him?"

"None that is safe in your hands, young woman," said Colonel Dayton, grumpily, "Where is Lady Johnson?"

"I am Lady Johnson, sir."

Colonel Dayton stared at her. "You?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is your husband?"

"That I cannot tell you."

"You refuse to answer me?"

"Sir, I do not know."

"When do you expect him back?"

"He did not say when he would return."

"Lady Johnson," shouted the officer, "have done with your nonsense. If you cannot tell me where your husband is or when he will return, I shall

have to wait here until he does.”

“As you like,” said Polly, assuming an air of indifference.

“I shall trouble you for the keys to this house.”

Polly gasped. “You’re—you’re not going to stay here?” she said.

That was evidently the man’s intention, though he declined to answer the question. He summoned Pontioch, who had taken up a position of defence at the door, trembling in his boots. “Hi, there, you mongrel,” he cried. “Where does your master keep his plate?”

“Dunno,” replied Pontioch, taking his cue from his mistress and grinning expansively.

“Massa done took it with him,” affirmed Tony, in all seriousness, from the rear.

“How do you know he did?”

“’Cause I seen him go. He put it in his sack.”

Colonel Dayton knew better, or thought he did. Since he saw about him no evidence of the extravagant wealth of plate which had helped to substantiate the Johnson reputation, he decided to institute a search. A hundred of his men scoured the house until dark but found nothing. All the next day they searched, but with no results.

“I have half a mind to torture the insolent liars,” muttered Colonel Dayton. How was he to know whether the valuables were hidden in the house or safe with the runaway owner?

“Massa done took them along,” persisted Tony, with such apparent sincerity that the officer was inclined to take his word for it.

“Where are his papers?” he demanded next.

Tony turned the question over to Pontioch, to whom, he said, his master entrusted such matters.

“That’s where he keeps ’em, sir,” said Pontioch, pointing to the large, walnut desk in the library. “There’s secret drawers in there.”

The lock was broken, but there was nothing in the desk, nor even in the secret drawers, but a few scattered papers and a general confusion.

Colonel Dayton was choking with rage. He was going to have those papers if he had to move heaven and earth to get them. “Where are they?” he howled.

“Dunno,” replied Pontioch, refusing to be ruffled. “He always keeps ’em in that desk. Ain’t they there?”

“You know very well they’re not,” thundered the officer. “Can’t you see?”

“Oh, I know,” Tony spoke up. “Massa he done took ’em with him.” Not the faintest suspicion of a smile crossed his face.

“He took them with him, did he? What did he do that for?”

“’Cause he wanted somethin’ to read on the way.”

That was too much for any man to swallow. Colonel Dayton turned white with rage. The very slaves were poking fun at him. “I have a good notion to set the house on fire,” he threatened, glowering at Polly.

“You might live to regret it,” she observed, with much composure.

“You seem to forget, Lady Johnson, that you are no longer mistress of Johnson Hall,” he said.

“Indeed, sir, I am at a loss to understand what you mean.”

“I mean that you are my prisoner and that your fate, your very life, depends upon the information you give me about your renegade husband.”

“Renegade?” cried Polly, ready to spring at him and claw his ugly face. “That, surely, is not the correct word, Colonel Dayton. My husband is no deserter. He has never wavered in his devotion to the King.”

“He has run away from his country,” he taunted.

“He will return,” Polly assured him.

“He’s comin’ back to-night,” said Tony. “He tole me so.”

Colonel Dayton turned his back and deaf ears to the prevaricating Tony. “If you value your liberty, Lady Johnson,” he said, “tell me where your husband is.”

“You threaten me?”

“I ask you where he is.”

“Must I tell you again I do not know?”

“He left—”

“In something of a hurry.”

“Then we shall wait for his return,” said Colonel Dayton. “Fortunately, we are in no hurry, Lady Johnson.”

For three weeks and more he waited, living in affluence at Johnson Hall and billeting his army on the settlement. Three weeks of vandalism they proved to be, for, like a heathen horde, his men swept down upon the beautiful new buildings which were the pride of the people. The court-house and the school were defaced and mutilated; the little stone church was desecrated. A band of adventuresome marauders boasted that they would unearth Sir William’s leaden casket to make bullets with which to shoot Sir John and his Highlanders. The homes of the people were ruthlessly plundered, while horses and cattle and fowl vied with each other in shrieks of unavailing protest. Chickens were roasted alive to add zest to the proceedings. Only the women and children were silent, overcome with fright. They realized that they had been brought suddenly face to face with a fate which might prove to be even more horrible than death itself.

At Fort Hunter the Indians were in a panic. Not only were they tormented and harassed almost beyond endurance, but their missionary, the Reverend John Stuart, had been threatened with violence if he persisted in offering the usual prayers for the King at the regular chapel services.

The missionary was summoned to Johnson Hall to answer for his conduct to Colonel Dayton.

“You have been ordered to omit from your ritual the prayers for the King?” the colonel said.

“I have.”

“And you have refused?”

“Certainly. I am under orders of the Church of England.”

“And my authority—”

“I do not acknowledge it even in temporal matters.”

“You shall answer for this some day, Mr. Stuart,” said Colonel Dayton.

Altogether, it was a hopeless situation, so far as Colonel Dayton could see. The people of Johnstown and Kingsborough were openly insolent and defiant. He found it next to impossible to tie any of them down to promises of neutrality. Prayers were said openly for the King Sunday after Sunday in the churches. Even the servants at Johnson Hall held him and his men up to ridicule. He had half a mind to burn Johnson Hall to the ground and return to Albany.

“Indeed?” said Polly, trying not to be too impolite. “When do you intend to leave?”

Colonel Dayton glared at her. The insolent creature! “In two days at the latest,” he said, coolly. “Be ready to go by that time.”

“To go!” cried Polly. “What do you mean?”

“What I say,” answered Colonel Dayton. “Be ready to go by to-morrow at noon.”

“To go where, sir?”

“To Albany.”

Polly flushed with anger. She drew herself up haughtily and gave him a sarcastic answer: “As it happens, I have no desire to go to Albany.”

“From now on, Lady Johnson, your comings and goings do not rest with your desires,” said the officer, loftily.

“But I cannot leave the children!”

“You need not. Have them ready at that time, or go without them.”

“But—”

“No objections, if you please, Lady Johnson. I am disposed to be more generous than you deserve. I will allow you Prue, your maid, and one manservant. I leave the choice to you.”

“But—”

“I tell you again, I will have no objections,” he said and turning on his heel, he walked away.

Polly dropped into the nearest chair and gave vent to her tears. Leave Johnson Hall? A prisoner? “Oh, John, John,” she sobbed. “Won’t you come back to me? Tell me what to do.”

There was no assuring answer. No sympathizing touch met her outstretched hand. Where was John? Dead, perhaps, or separated from her forever. Could it be possible that she would never see him again? Must she go through this trial and through the long, dark avenue of the years—alone? Poor, disconsolate Polly!

The next day, promptly at twelve o’clock noon, an officer of the Continental Army drove up to the front door of Johnson Hall in a heavy, lumbering draught wagon. Into it he packed, without ceremony, Lady Johnson and her children, together with Prue, her maid, and Tony, her man-

servant. There they were all set down together in a heap of straw and surrounded by their luggage, exemplifying, no doubt, the popular adage about Jack and his master. A jerk at the reins and they were bumping down the King's highway; a sudden jolt and they were dumped out at the house of their detention in Albany.

It was a dark day for the loyalists of the Mohawk valley when Johnson Hall fell into the greedy hands of the enemy. With Sir John in flight for his life and Lady Johnson carried off against her will, they stopped to ask themselves what it meant. Could it be possible that the rebels were going to win out in the end?

Late that fall three hundred more Highlanders set out for Canada. They, too, found out how long and how wearisome was the journey which led through densest wilderness to Montreal. Their priest, Father McKenna, went with them. They suffered untold privations from hunger and exposure, subsisting for days at a time on the roots and bark of trees and on the flesh of horses and dogs. But in the end they arrived. Sir John Johnson and the Vicar-general of their church met them, and promised to help them bring over their wives and their families and to secure suitable lands in the vicinity of Montreal for a future habitation.

Sir John was white with rage when he learned from the Highlanders of the fate that had befallen Polly. From that day he became cold, uncommunicative, suspicious, vindictive, nursing a blind hatred towards his enemies and holding a grudge against heaven itself. Never in all the history of the world had mortal man suffered such outrage. Was there a God in heaven, or yet an ounce of justice in all the balances of the world? Then must his arm be strengthened to rescue Johnson Hall and his lovely Polly. His blood was up. Let those who would oppose him beware!

Chapter XV

THERE WERE SPIES IN NEW YORK

While Sir John Johnson sat brooding over his wrongs in Montreal, Steve Watts was being carried about in a whirl of excitement and intrigue. It was all very terrible, but very wonderful, very thrilling. This was the adventure he craved.

Not without difficulty had he succeeded in worming his way into the very kernel of the western hemisphere—New York. No sooner had he left Johnson Hall than he learned to his dismay that the rebels were gaining both territory and influence in the land, and he had to resort to all sorts of subterfuges in order that he might proceed unmolested upon his way. He travelled by night, sleeping in haylofts by day. If he was challenged, he swore roundly that he was a patriot, as, indeed, he was, according to his own interpretation of the term.

The great city was at that time in possession of General George Washington, who had made Watts Manor his headquarters. Steve's young blood boiled when he thought of the indignities which had been heaped upon the heads of his parents. Exiled to England that the rebel leader might sit at their hearth and enjoy the comforts of their luxurious home!

Not only Watts Manor but many another aristocratic home had been wrested from its rightful owner, plundered and given over to rebel officers. Respectable citizens who would not stoop to what they believed to be treason were dispossessed of all they had, jeered at in the street and spat upon. If they dared to show resentment, they were ridden ignominiously about the public squares on rails, or tarred and feathered, or held up to some other form of public ridicule. A band of ruffians who called themselves the Sons of Liberty were terrorizing the loyal citizens, and inciting the rebels to greater activity. It was they who had erected a huge pole on the common, from the top of which waved, not the red flag of Britain, but a banner emblazoned with the city's new motto: Liberty and Prosperity.

Steve soon learned to his chagrin that seeds of sedition planted in his own family by some enemy hand had taken root, and brought forth the tares of rebellion. It was almost incredible, but true, nevertheless, that with his parents grieving over their country's wrongs and in flight for their lives,

Robert Watts had married into an influential Whig family and was joining in the great chorus that shouted for liberty. Like many another proud family, the Watts house was divided against itself on the greatest issue of many a day.

Homeless and dejected over this and other disheartening discoveries, Steve Watts walked the streets of New York until dark. It was only three short years since he had left the city, but what changes even that short time had wrought! The place seemed emptied of his old-time friends and crowded with a noisy, pushing mob that represented the antithesis of law, order and culture. It was quite a different New York to which he had come back.

As yet he had found no place to sleep. It was eight o'clock, or thereabouts, when he found himself standing in front of a tavern on the Broad Way and peering through the lighted window at a white cloth on the dining-room table. Then he realized for the first time that he was hungry. He stepped towards the door. Dared he enter?

The burly proprietor filled the doorway with his corpulence. "It's a fine day," he remarked, stepping aside for the prospective visitor.

"It was," said Steve, affably, "and the sun went down red. Are you the proprietor?"

"Yes. Corbie is my name." He looked Steve up and down and then invited him in to have a mug of ale.

"Madeira, if you please," said Steve, "and something to eat. I have not had a bite since noon."

Corbie covered his guest with another searching gaze and led the way to the dining-room. Madeira! That smacked of the aristocracy, but his clothing was altogether plebeian. How was Corbie to know that it belonged to one of the servants at Johnson Hall? "Come very far?" he asked the stranger, hoping to satisfy his lively curiosity.

"From up north," answered Steve, evasively. "Have you a room for me?"

"Sorry, sir, but everything's full up," said Corbie. "You're not a stranger here, I take it?"

"I might as well be," Steve told him. "New York has changed a hundred years since I saw it last."

"And when was that?"

"Three years ago. Even the flag is different now."

The proprietor nodded and allowed himself another inquisitive scrutiny of the young man. "If you want to see the old Jack," he said, "you'll have to go down to Fort George, and look across the harbour."

"At Staten Island, you mean?"

"Yes. Half New York is over there."

"The better half, I'll warrant. The cream," said Steve, with indiscreet bravado.

"You mean—you mean the Tories, sir?"

"I mean the King's men. What are they doing there?"

"Waitin' for help from across the water."

"From England?"

"Yes, sir."

"I noticed a handsome boat skulking about in the harbour this afternoon. Whose is it?"

"Do you mean the *Duchess of Gordon*?"

"Yes, that's the name."

"The governor's frigate, sir," Corbie informed him. "Tryon is back from England. He is keeping his eye on Fort George."

"And is he over on the island? The governor, I mean."

"Yes, for the time being."

"Who holds the fort?"

"Soldiers."

"But who is in command? They say Washington is off to the Congress in Philadelphia."

"General Putnam is commanding, sir," said Corbie. "He lives at No. 1 Broad Way."

Steve grunted. That was too much. "If my uncle knew that he would turn in his grave," he said.

"Your uncle?" said Corbie, determined now to gratify his gnawing curiosity at any cost. "Who might that be, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

“A man named Peter Warren,” Steve told him. “He lived there at one time.”

“Sir Peter Warren!” cried Corbie, exultantly. “I know now who you are, sir. You’re Colonel Watts’ son. Mr. Steve, I’ll be bound. Your mother was a De Lancey, sister to Lady Warren.”

Steve had been to this point quite secure in his incognito, but he acknowledged his identity without demurring. “You must tell me,” he said, “how you knew me?”

“I was at the wedding, sir,” Corbie said. “I saw your sister married to Sir John Johnson. You were there.”

“So I was, to be sure,” said Steve, “and in the limelight. My sister, Anne, is married to Captain Kennedy, who ought to be living at this very moment at No. 1 Broad Way, if things were not so rotten in the State of Denmark.”

“They were turned out of house and home, they were,” said Corbie, with rising passion. “Of course, she is your sister. I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Where is she now? Do you know?”

“In England, I hope. Your family has been hard hit, sir. You’ll stay here to-night. I’ll have a bed ready for you before you can say Jack Robinson.”

“Then you are not one of those leather-lunged champions of the great cause of an extinct liberty,” said Steve, laughing at his own bitter sarcasm.

Corbie raised his forefinger and winked an eye. “It’s hardly safe to ask such questions,” he said, “but if you want to know—”

“You’re a spy!” cried Steve, joyously, “and I’ve had the good fortune to step right into a mixing-bowl of adventure. I’m with you, Corbie.”

They shook hands solemnly, pledging themselves to a silent but well-understood pact.

Before Steve Watts closed his eyes in sleep that night he had learned much about Corbie’s Tavern which was known only to a small circle of trusted accomplices. It was a rendezvous for the King’s men and a means by which they could keep in daily communication with the *Duchess of Gordon*. Corbie showed him a secret staircase built in behind the chimney and connected, he said, with an underground passage, which led by a dark and devious route to the water’s edge. Through this passageway and into the inner court of the tavern the governor’s aide-de-camp would grope his way in the dead of night, would listen to the tales of a corps of informants, would

pay for their news in golden guineas, and then return by the same dark route to the governor's frigate.

"And if you get caught?" said Steve.

"We take the consequences. It's the devil's own job, but somebody must do it."

"Right you are," said Steve. "I feel my horns sprouting."

"There'll be some fun this very night," said Corbie. "Yesterday I had news from Margaret—"

"Margaret?"

"She works with us. She tells me the tavern is to be raided to-night."

"Good!" cried Steve, his enthusiasm waning ever so little, "But who is this Margaret?"

"Margaret Moncrieffe, the major's daughter."

"Where is she?"

"Over at Putnam's. She pulls the wool over the general's eyes. Lives like one of the family, she does; sits on the old man's knee, pulls his whiskers and calls him her lovey-dovey grandpa."

Steve's face expressed in no uncertain terms his disapproval of such carryings on. "How did she get there?" he asked.

"It's all in the game," Corbie explained. "Major Moncrieffe wrote Putnam that his motherless little girl was pining for New York. Oh, such a flattering letter it was."

"And is Mrs. Moncrieffe really dead?"

"Yes, I think so. At any rate, old Putnam's heart was touched and he invited Margaret into the bosom of his family. Do you happen to know the girl?"

"Many a day we played together on the Bowling Green," answered Steve.

"Sweethearts, perhaps?"

"Well—I don't like it, Corbie. She's playing with fire, and sooner or later she is going to be burned."

"She takes her chances with the rest of us," replied the proprietor. "Don't take what I said about old Putnam too seriously. She is only making a fool of

him. It's news she's after, not his kisses. When she gets wind of something, she writes a note and sends it to us."

"But how?"

"By the hand of a man named Hickey."

"Who's he?"

"Another of her admirers," said Corbie, with a poke in Steve's ribs. "The town is full of them, sir. She writes her note, weights it with a stone and throws it over the cliff to the tune of 'Charlie is My Darling.' Hickey picks it up and brings it over here."

"And you send it on to Governor Tryon?"

"That's it. Yesterday the word was that we are suspected. They're setting a trap for us. It's to spring to-night, but they haven't caught us napping. Keep your eye open for a private of the Continental Army. He's due to drop in here some time to-night, but he'll not be half as drunk as he will pretend. Here he is now. Look at the pretty boy."

Steve was all attention. He saw a handsome young soldier reel into the room and drop into a chair in the corner of the bar-room.

"My soul and body!" cried one of the frequenters of the tavern. "It's Seth Parker. Drunk as a lord he is, and him only a private."

"Take him home to his mother," Corbie called out. "I'll have no drunks in here spewing over my floors."

That was the cue the crowd was waiting for. They rushed at young Parker, pulled him in a dozen directions until he screamed for mercy. Then up stepped a burly fellow who struck the youngster over the head, knocking him unconscious with a single blow. Laughing coarsely, he picked up the limp figure, threw him over his shoulder, as he might handle a bag of flour, and disappeared down the secret stairway, followed by the huzzahs of his friends. Half an hour later, the governor's aide-de-camp entered the room by the same route. He congratulated the men on their strategy, announced that Seth Parker was safe in the hold of the *Duchess of Gordon*, and proceeded to hold the usual parley.

Steve did not sleep for hours that night and when he did finally lapse into unconsciousness towards morning, he was rudely awakened by the shrill call of a military bugle. He jumped up and looked out of the window. More excitement! There stood a squad of Continentals, with fixed bayonets, while their leader was engaged in a spirited altercation with Mr. Corbie. "Where is

the young private who came to this tavern last night?" he was demanding at the top of his voice.

"What are you talking about?" Corbie replied, looking rotund and important in the doorway. "You are making enough noise to rouse the dead."

"Make way," ordered the officer, giving Corbie a push that landed him in the middle of the room. "I will rouse the dead. Search the place!" he added, turning to his men.

Mr. Corbie's dignity and temper had been upset. "By what right do you search a respectable tavern?" he demanded. "It's an outrage. Go one step farther and I'll have the law on you."

The threat availed nothing. The squad entered the public-house and turned every room in it upside down. But not a trace of the missing boy did they discover. It was passing strange. They scratched their heads, held whispered consultations, and finally marched away, utterly baffled, and none too pleased about it, either.

Corbie and his men exulted over their victory in their night-shirts. They had been tumbled out of their beds, but they had won in the battle of wits. "So they wanted Seth Parker," they said, with boisterous laughter. "The old stairway is good for a few more rebels."

"Say, boys, I have an idea," cried Corbie, when the jubilation was at its height. "Listen!"

"Quiet, you fools!" bellowed the monster who had overpowered Seth Parker. "Something wonderful has happened. Brother Corbie's got an idea."

The proprietor did not appreciate the burst of applause with which these remarks were greeted, but he was careful not to show any resentment. "It's a good idea," he maintained. "It came to me all of a sudden."

"He grew it in his own head," joked one of the crowd.

Corbie almost despaired of getting a hearing, and when his opportunity came at last, he scarcely knew how to express his brilliant idea. "We'll take him down the stairway, too," he kept repeating, his eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"Of course we will," the crowd answered. "That upstart of a lieutenant."

Corbie shook his head. "No! No! I mean the big chief, Mr. George Washington."

"Hurrah!" shrieked a bedlam of voices. "Now you're talking, Corbie."

The plot was hatched in whispers. They would watch for the general on his return to the city. By hook or by crook they would kidnap him and slide him down the banister into the hold of the *Duchess of Gordon*. Over on Staten Island he would swing for his treason. Then the people would come to their senses and peace would reign again.

But these deep-laid plans were frustrated when Private Seth Parker, lying as if dead in the hold of the governor's frigate, opened his eyes and, coming to himself, decided to match his wits against those of his enemies. Fortunately for him, the officers paid no attention to him and continued to discuss their plans in his hearing. As he grew stronger, he was able to break loose from the chains that bound him. He succeeded in slipping into the water unseen and unheard, and he swam for his life to Staten Island. The following night a friend rowed him to the mainland under cover of darkness. He found Aaron Burr, by whose order he had been sent to Corbie's Inn, and he announced to him boldly and baldly that Margaret Moncrieffe was a spy.

"Impossible!" said Aaron Burr. It was well known that there was no one in all New York who had fallen so prostrate before Margaret's charms as this same gallant, young officer. "Impossible, Parker. There must be some mistake."

"I know what I am talking about, sir," said the young private, bold with earnestness. "She's a spy. She sends messages to Corbie's. I heard the devils say so. They didn't know I had come to. They never bothered to look at me."

"But—"

"I know it, sir. Corbie's another, and so is the mayor of the city. There's a nest of them. They're all in touch with the governor."

Aaron Burr's face clouded for a moment, then cleared with a sudden resolution. "Go to General Putnam's headquarters, Seth," he said. "Go and guard the door."

All was quiet at No. 1 Broad Way when Aaron Burr arrived. General Putnam was busy in his office, the maid said, and Miss Moncrieffe was in her room.

"What is she doing?"

"Painting."

"I'll run up and see her." He tiptoed past the general's office, up the stair and down the corridor to the room occupied by his enchantress. He entered without the ceremony of knocking.

“Aaron! You here?” cried Margaret, flushing with pleasure and alarm. “You startled me.” She ran to him and threw her lovely arms about his neck.

“What are you doing, little one?” asked Burr, trying to appear at his ease.

“Painting,” said Margaret, sweetly. “I’ll put my pictures away now that you are here.”

“Let me see them first, Margaret,” said her lover. He brushed the girl and her allurements to one side and swept the pictures into the bag he had provided for just such an emergency. Before Margaret realized what had happened, he was out of the room and down the corridor and stairs, past the general’s office and through the front door into the Broad Way.

A shudder of terror shook Margaret’s slender frame. Caught and she knew it! She reached for her pistols, crammed them into her bag, snatched up her hat and put it on. Running down the corridor in the opposite direction, she let herself out by an unused rear staircase into the driveway.

Luck was with her. She had eluded the guard. But what to do now? Where to turn? Her heart pounded; her knees wobbled.

She was almost beside herself with anxiety when she noticed a young man over by the King’s statue on the Bowling Green. He was staring at her. Terrified, she turned her face from him.

“Margaret!”

She turned and looked again.

“It’s Steve. Don’t you know me, Margaret?”

“Steve!” she cried, with frantic joy. “Oh, Steve, I’m caught. He’s got my pictures, my maps, you know.”

“Who has?”

“Aaron Burr. They’ll kill me.”

“No they won’t,” said Steve, reassuringly. “I knew this would happen some day. I’ve stood here for weeks, waiting.”

“If I could get to Corbie’s—”

“They’re watching the place.”

“Or to Forbes, the gunsmith, or to the mayor. They are King’s men.”

“Come with me, Margaret. I know a safe place.”

He took her to Old Trinity. They entered the church with as little concern, apparently, as if they were going to say their prayers. When the doors were closed behind them, Steve called loudly until the sexton came. "This is the lady I told you about," said Steve. "Major Moncrieffe's daughter."

The sexton was a loyalist. He knew the major and there was nothing he would not do for his daughter. The belfry was safe enough, he said, though it might lack something in the way of comfort.

"The belfry!" cried Margaret. "Do you mean I've got to climb up there?"

"We've carried a bed up for you, miss. We've tried to make it as comfortable as we could."

"The air is good, Margaret, and you can look down through the slats and see what is going on in the street. It might be a good deal worse. It is safe, at least."

Margaret was encouraged to climb the long, dark, winding stair which brought her at last to a tiny room beside the church bell. Tears stood in her eyes when she saw the simple provisions Steve had made for her comfort. "You'll stay here with me, won't you, Steve?" she said, clinging to him like a frightened child.

"Listen, Margaret," said Steve, "You must be brave. I can't stay with you. I must know what the people are saying in the streets."

"And you'll get word to father, Steve?" she said, releasing him.

"As soon as I can."

"Warn Hickey, too. Don't forget Hickey."

Steve Watts and the old sexton groped their way downstairs, and left the girl alone.

The noise of their heavy boots clattering on the steps had scarcely died away when Margaret was startled by shouts in the street below. She peered out between the slats. Something was happening. Crowds of people were running about excitedly here and there, looking like animated pawns on a chessboard. They were turning and pointing toward the fort. Margaret held her breath. She did not blink an eyelash. She heard and saw a noisy rabble come thronging up the Broad Way, headed by two Continental soldiers. They were half pushing, half dragging between them a man in chains. It was Hickey! Hickey, her accomplice! The crowd surged about him, cheering diabolically. "On to the common!" they yelled. "Up goes Hickey!"

Margaret shook in every limb. Flinging herself upon the bed, she sobbed as if her heart would break. Was that what she, too, must face some day?

She was red-eyed and inconsolable at dusk when Steve brought her something to eat. "What did they do to him?" she asked. "Did they hang him?"

"Something like that."

"Tell me everything, Steve," she said. "Don't lie to me. I want to know the worst."

"They took him to the common and strung him up on a tree. There were twenty thousand people there to see them do it."

"Did you see it, too, Steve?"

"I was in the crowd. I wanted to hear what they were saying about you."

"And what did you hear?"

"You are safe, Margaret, for the present. Seth Parker swears you did not leave the house and they can't find you in it."

"I got out through a back door that nobody ever uses."

"You had planned it so?"

"Yes, weeks ago. If I hadn't— Oh, Steve, how am I going to get out of this place? It is infested with rats and bats."

"The prospects are bad," he told her. "Corbie's Inn is in the hands of the enemy. I don't know how I am to get word to your father."

"Did they hang Corbie, too?"

"No. They have taken him and some others to a jail in Connecticut. They'll probably find plenty of rats there."

"Where are you going to stay to-night, Steve? You can't go to Corbie's."

"I'll sleep on the bottom step of your stairway, my pretty Margaret," he said. "If any one disturbs you, he will have to climb over my dead body."

It was only a matter of a few days when Washington returned to New York and took over the command. As was his custom, he planned to attend public worship on Sunday, but he took the precaution to send an aide-de-camp to Dr. Auchmoty, the rector at Trinity, with the request that prayers for the King be omitted on that occasion. The rector, as it happened, was

indisposed and the message was given to the Reverend Charles Inglis, his assistant.

Inglis was in no mood to be dictated to in this manner. He drew himself up haughtily and said to the aide-de-camp: "You may tell Mr. George Washington that he may shut up all the churches in New England but he cannot compel their ministers to depart from their duty."

"You mean, sir, that you refuse the General's request? You mean that you intend to say prayers for the King?"

"If I am shot for it," was the reply. "I will not allow any man to stand between me and my vows."

The officer saluted and departed without another word.

Sunday morning dawned ominously. There was trouble in the very air. Washington decided that he would forego his devotions for that day, but a regiment of soldiers, under the command of Lord Stirling, determined to make the service a memorable one. So when the great bell sounded the call to worship, a hundred and fifty armed men, with fixed bayonets, entered the sanctuary to the tune of "Yankee Doodle," from the fifes and drums of their regimental band. They blocked the aisles so that the civilians could get neither in nor out. The congregation was in consternation. Several women fainted. A pious warden was heard to exclaim that the Lord only knew what was going to happen.

The sexton moved about as obsequiously as he could. One minute he was offering seats to the invading horde; the next he was carrying valuable altar furniture to the vestry for safety. With a woman hidden in the belfry and this godless horde in the nave, he was nearly beside himself.

At the proper time, the Reverend Charles Inglis entered the chancel, clothed in his ecclesiastical vestments, and began the service. With firm and unequivocal voice he read the litany and listened to the feeble responses.

Would he or would he not? That was the question which was distracting the people's thoughts from the service. A solemn hush pervaded the House of God as the fateful moment drew near.

"And especially do we pray for our rightful sovereign, His Majesty King George." The words rang out clear as a bell.

That was what the mob wanted. With fife and drum they blared out their protest, profaning the holy place with their military doggerel. Two officers rushed into the chancel, seized the clergyman in his robes and forced him

into his vestry. Cries of indignation were heard on every hand. More women fainted. The soldiers filed out, singing and gloating over their triumph. In and out and all about the church pandemonium reigned.

Steve Watts had been seated well up to the front of the church. His face blanched with anger at the unholy proceedings. "This must stop," he shouted impetuously. "Have you forgotten that this is the House of God?"

"Take him, too," cried one of the soldiers. "He's a Tory and a son of a Tory."

They laid hands on him and would have packed him off, too, without much ado, had not his Whig brother, Robert, intervened. "You fool," he said. "Can't you keep your mouth shut?"

"Can't you?" retorted Steve.

"I'll answer for him," said Robert. As a son-in-law to Lord Stirling, he carried no little weight with the Continental Army.

For Margaret's sake, Steve decided to take his brother's advice and keep out of trouble. Speechless, he stood and watched the infuriated mob push the minister and all his ceremonial dignity into a dirty, farm wagon. He saw it go lumbering down the street to the water's edge.

"What are they going to do to him?" Steve could not refrain from inquiring.

"Take him to his friends over on the island, where he can pray all day for Old George," was the reply.

"He'll need it, Old George will, the reprobate, the tyrant!" cried a chorus of voices.

On the fourth of July that year, Congress at Philadelphia made its Declaration of Independence, though Washington and his men in New York knew nothing of it until six days later. The news was a signal for a frenzy of jubilation. Regimental bands paraded the streets, followed by throngs of excited people shouting and singing their patriot songs. They were free at last, a nation now in their own right. Three cheers for the United States of America! Lynching was too good for Old George. Down with all tyrants and Tories!

Steve Watts was keeping his ears and eyes wide open. He heard Washington's aide-de-camp read the great declaration to the people; he heard their answering shouts of acclamation. He saw the freedom-mad people surge down the Broad Way to the Bowling Green; he saw them

surround the King's equestrian statue, tear it down from its pedestal and demolish it. It would make bullets to silence the King's men, they said, amid shouts of derisive laughter. He saw others invade the court-house and tear the British lion and unicorn from off the seat of justice and burn the King's picture in the streets. Every mark of British authority was scrapped. They were done now with all that. Time had turned a new page in their history. It was ushering in a new era, the most spectacular in all the history of the world. Long live the Republic!

Steve went one day to the church tower and found that Margaret was no longer there. A dozen Continental soldiers had come, the sexton said, and carried her off, he knew not where.

“Did she leave no message?” asked the young man, wistfully.

“None. She was gone before I knew it.”

For days Steve walked about the streets, hoping to pick up some news of the girl for whom his very soul was hungering. Once he heard that Washington had had her hanged as a spy. The next day it was reported that, fearing to do so, he had sent her in chains to the naval station at West Point. When he went to West Point, he was told that she had never left New York. He finally contented himself with despatching letters to men in authority everywhere, imploring mercy for Margaret, if she should come under their jurisdiction. But never once did he receive an answer. His little sweetheart had dropped out of his life and he was left alone with his memories.

Chapter XVI

FIRE AND DESOLATION

At last the long-expected British reinforcements arrived, and joining Governor Tryon and the King's men on Staten Island, they lost no time in storming the city. So successful were they that by August the red flag of Britain floated again over the Battery and the royal arms were rehung in the public buildings. New York was British once more.

There was no room now for Washington and his men in the city, and they soon beat a hasty retreat. Fully a third of the population followed forlornly in their train, laying their homes and their property on the altar of sacrifice for the great cause of liberty and democracy. Alas! too soon had they exulted over the declaration of their independence.

Like desperate men they fled and, fleeing, they hurled into the faces of their pursuers that most destructible vitriol known to man—fire. In less than an hour the entire western end of the city was a roaring furnace. The flames leaped from house to house, devouring everything in their path. Hundreds of homes were razed to the ground.

Trinity Church stood in the wake of the oncoming avalanche of fire. Nothing could save it. When it emerged from the crucible it was nothing but a mass of charred ruins, a pitiable sight. The charity schools, supported by the church, were utterly ruined, and the orphans left homeless in a cold and uncharitable world. The rectory, too, was consumed, including Dr. Auchmoty's priceless library, an irreparable loss. Everything was licked up by the flames. Clouds of black smoke protested to heaven, but still the fire rolled on in its untrammelled rampage down the Broad Way.

The citizens rushed about with buckets of water. Every wagon that had escaped from the burning was pressed into service. How the people worked, sacrificing limb and life itself, their eyes blinded with smoke and their hearts sick with the realization of their losses. When at last they had the fire under control, a bitter cry of execration rose to heaven. Whoever was responsible for that blaze was a damnable traitor, Whig or Tory!

Steve Watts had been among the first to join the volunteer fire brigade, and he threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of rescue. If he saw a widow in distress, or a poor shop-keeper whose wares were in danger, he

was their friend. Little children who had lost their way in the confusion sobbed their troubles on his shoulder. He knew how to sympathize. Had not misfortune hounded him, too, out of house and home?

Watts Manor was in the devastated area, having emerged from the burning in a heap of smouldering ruin. Steve was heartsick when, after fighting for an hour to save it, he saw it totter and fall. Another link with the past had been snapped. His feet were slipping, it seemed, from the social environment of his early life and carrying him into a new world where nothing that he and his aristocratic family had set store by throughout the years either mattered now or counted.

During the hours of that dreadful day, the image of Margaret Moncrieffe glowed as never before in Steve's young heart. Had the rebels left her in New York? Was he ever going to see her again?

When evening came, Steve decided to find Major Moncrieffe, if he could, and tell him Margaret's story. But no sooner had he started off for the Battery than a friendly hand clapped him on the shoulder and a familiar voice wished him as hearty a good evening as the occasion warranted.

"Good evening," returned Steve. He turned about, half expecting to see the portly figure of the major, who was in his thoughts, but beholding instead a handsome figure, trimly clad in a long riding-coat and looking as immaculate as if there had been no holocaust for at least a year.

"Don't you know me, Steve?"

"If you are not Colonel Guy Johnson you must be his ghost," cried Steve, joyously.

"I'm much too healthy for a sprite," laughed the colonel.

"But I thought you were miles away, in Canada."

"So I was, but I didn't stay there long. We went on to England, Brant and I."

"England?"

"Yes. Back only a few weeks. We landed farther north. Joseph worked his way up to Canada and I came on here."

Steve's first thought was for his parents in England. He wondered if Guy had seen them.

"Unfortunately, no," was the reply. "The news I had of them was none too good. Your mother—"

“She is dead?”

“She lived only a few months after she left New York.”

“And father?”

“He has worried one foot into the grave. These are terrible times, my boy!”

Steve could not answer for the moment. He was trying to swallow the lump in his throat.

“How did Watts Manor come through the fire?” asked the colonel, hoping to change, if not to improve, the subject.

“Charred and utterly ruined, like my own life,” said Steve, yielding for the moment to a profound despair. “All my loved ones are being snatched from me one by one. You have heard about Margaret, of course.”

“Margaret Moncrieffe?”

“Yes. They’ve caught her.”

“So I’ve heard. She certainly had the men of New York dancing in circles about her for a while. Aaron Burr and General Putnam—”

Steve was not in the mood to listen to an enumeration of Margaret’s admirers. It sufficed that to him she was altogether lovely.

“I believe the little minx has had you tripping, too, Steve,” said Colonel Guy, with a boisterous laugh. “I have heard on good authority that Washington has married her off to one of his tin-soldier aide-de-camps.”

Steve stood staring at him with blank incredulity.

“She’s a worthless baggage,” the colonel went unheeding on. “A regular hussy. She would sell herself body and soul to the highest bidder.”

“That’s a libel!” thundered Steve. “A contemptible lie!”

Colonel Johnson was ready to take it all back. He was only going, he said, by what he had heard.

“That’s how a good dog comes by a bad name,” Steve told him, with some resentment.

“Let’s forget about it,” said the colonel. “I wouldn’t hurt your feelings for the world, Steve. Upon my soul, I never dreamed you cared for the girl. What is the latest news from the Mohawk valley?”

Steve confessed that he didn't know any. He hadn't heard a word from the Mohawk valley since he left.

"And when was that?"

"A week or so after you did."

"Man alive!" cried Colonel Johnson. "Do you mean to tell me that you don't know what they've done to John?"

"No. What?"

"They've chased him out of Johnson Hall. He's made tracks for Canada. He had a messenger meet our boat to tell us."

"Is Polly with him?"

"Not yet, I'm afraid. She is still a prisoner."

"You don't mean that the devils—?"

"Yes. They've got her."

"Where?"

"At Fishkill. She was in Albany for a while, and there she would be yet if that confounded John Taylor, who calls himself the President of the Committee of Safety, hadn't discovered that she had too many friends there."

"And what is the offence they charge her with?" asked Steve.

"Loyalism. Nothing but loyalism. As you may have noticed, Steve, that has come to be a crime for which there is no pardon. She's not in chains, the message said, but under constant guard."

"And the children?"

"They are with her. You know, there are three now."

"Three? Heavens!"

"The baby is not two months old."

"To think that I left her," said Steve, remorsefully. "Three children! Three little, helpless children! What servants has she?"

"Her maid and a black man. One I didn't know."

"Tony?"

"Yes, that's the name."

“He was my father’s slave and he came to Johnson Hall the day before I left,” Steve explained. “Polly is safe enough with him.”

“So John seems to think,” said the colonel. He went on to tell about several unsuccessful attempts Sir John had made to rescue Polly and the children. His innumerable and imperative protests to Schuyler and Washington had been unheeded. Polly was still a prisoner.

“Where is John now?” asked Steve.

“Somewhere up the Hudson.”

“Then I’m off to find him. I’ll go to-morrow—no, to-night,” said Steve, with decision. “If there is any such thing as liberty in this liberty-cursed land, our Polly is going to have it.”

Colonel Guy vowed that he would go with him, if he could. Albeit, the Johnson interests kept him in New York, he claimed. “I’m going to manage the theatre here to keep myself and others amused in these dark days,” he said, “but all the while I’ll be pulling wires, mark my words. The Johnsons are going to fall on their feet when this war is over. Got a roof over your head to-night, my boy?”

“Only the blue vaulted sky,” was the reply, “and half of New York for bedfellows.”

“Then good-night and good luck,” said the colonel. He pressed into the boy’s hand something which he said was the best friend a man ever had when he is in need.

So Steve started off on his perilous journey up the Hudson with a roll of Johnson’s paper money pinned inside his shirt and a dozen Continental coins jingling in his pocket.

Chapter XVII

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

Polly was chafing terribly during the long period of her imprisonment. It had been bad enough at Albany, where she was surrounded by friends who went out of their way to show her kindnesses and to keep communication open between her and her husband. But at out-of-the-way Fishkill, with winter well advanced, life was nothing short of intolerable. "I can't bear it much longer," she told Prue over and over again. "It is three months now since I have seen anything of the outside world, and I declare it seems a year. I'm beginning to hate the very sight of you, Prue."

"The guards are so strict," said Prue, "so oppressively attentive. Nothing escapes them. When I shook the table-cloth at the door yesterday, they came up and examined the crumbs."

"I shall write another letter to Mr. George Washington," Polly decided. "He must listen to me. I am going to demand my liberty."

"You have done so before," Prue reminded her.

"But I'll tell him I can't breathe here. I'll go insane. I'll murder some one."

"Do restrain yourself, my dear lady," admonished Prue. "If only for the sake of your darling children, you must not talk so."

"What do you think the guard told me to-day, that ugly, black monster. He said Sir William died by his own hand—poison."

"That was not true."

"It was a lie, Prue, a dastardly lie. We all know that. He tried to make me believe that Sir William was in sympathy with the rebels and that he drank poison because he was afraid to take an open stand."

"Imagine Sir William afraid of anything," exclaimed Prue, trying to laugh. "It is plain to be seen that he didn't know him as we did."

Polly lapsed then into one of her frequent silences. She sat staring into vacancy. Presently she roused herself and said: "Listen, Prue, I'm going to tell you something important."

“Yes, my lady.”

“If—if anything should happen to me—sometimes I think, Prue, that I am not long for this world.”

“My dear lady, I beg of you, do not talk so.”

“I must. Listen, Prue. If you find me dead some morning, promise that you will look for Sir John until you find him. Tell him that I loved him to the last, and if I had my liberty, I would follow him, east or west, north or south, to the ends of the world.”

“I promise, my lady. Do lie down. You are not well.”

But Polly had a mind of her own, and she did not want to lie down. She wanted to talk about her husband. Always her husband. So Prue had to sit and listen once more to what she was beginning to fear might be the ravings of a diseased mind. “He is one man in a thousand, Prue. You could never make me believe that I should not have married him. That storm on our wedding-day was only a coincidence. Our misfortunes are not the result of my indiscretion. What difference could it possibly make that I wore my veil before the wedding-day? I don’t believe in your silly superstitions. Do you think I shall ever see my lovely wedding-dress again?”

“I hope so, my lady. Do lie down for a while.”

“What’s the use? I can’t sleep.”

“Close your eyes and let me stroke your forehead. You need sleep.”

But Polly sat bolt upright and stared again into space. “Where’s Tony?” she asked, at length.

Prue went to the door and called the slave. He entered presently, cap in hand, and with a heavy woollen scarf bundled about his neck.

“Tony.”

“Yes, Miss Polly.”

“What have you been doing?”

“I done split some wood, Miss Polly.”

“You are a good boy, Tony. You will keep us from freezing. Where’s the guard?”

“He’s walkin’ up and down watchin’ me.”

“Go and tell him to come here at once. I want to speak to him.”

The officer took his own time about coming. Polly had almost given up hope of seeing him when the brawny fellow she particularly disliked entered the room and grunted.

“I sent for you two hours ago,” said Polly, with dignity.

“And I came when it suited my convenience,” he answered. “You mustn’t think I’ve got to jump at your beck and call.”

“You must do what I wish,” challenged Polly.

“Only if you want the things you can have,” he told her, with an insolent grin.

“I have not overstepped yet,” she said, “and I shall not now. To-morrow at three I want my sleigh, and it is your duty to let Tony get it for me.”

“And what do you want with your sleigh?” he asked, after some deliberation.

“I am going to relieve the monotony of this wretched existence by taking my family for a sleigh-ride.”

The guard pondered his answer. “You have my permission to go,” he said, grudgingly.

“You will notice that I did not ask it,” Polly reminded him. “Your Mr. Washington has not yet proved so hard-hearted as to deny me the luxury of a sleigh-ride.”

What Polly said was true enough. In a generous moment Washington had sanctioned the bringing of a sleigh from Johnson Hall for Polly’s convenience. The guard dared not refuse her the use of it. But the lady’s haughty bearing irritated him. He could not refrain from remarking that she had better mind her p’s and q’s.

“Or what?”

“Or your doom is sealed. If Johnnie Johnson ever comes within ten miles of you with his gang of murderers—well, I leave you to guess what might happen.”

“How, sir?” cried Polly, highly incensed. “What do you mean? How can you hold me responsible for what another does, even my husband?”

“You know right well what I mean,” replied the guard. “Perhaps you want me to say it plainer. Very well, I warn you. If your traitor husband

allows his savages to go on scalping our people, you cannot blame us for shooting you.”

“Shooting!” shrieked Polly. “You will murder me?”

“Hush, my lady,” said Prue, almost as terrified as her mistress.

“Your case is different from most,” the guard continued. “Your husband has a strange power over the Indians. We don’t want to hurt you, but we must protect our people from the savages.”

“And you hold me as a sort of hostage?”

“Yes. We allow you many liberties, but I warn you again that if you make any attempt to escape to your profligate husband, down go the screws on you.”

“By what authority do you speak of my husband, Sir John Johnson, as you do?” Polly demanded.

“By the right of his unsavoury reputation,” replied the guard, leering at her. “You surely do not pretend to be ignorant of the fact that he supports another woman in Schenectady?”

“It’s a lie!”

“If you want her name, I can give it.”

“Well?”

“Clara Putnam.”

“His housekeeper,” Polly breathed a sigh of relief. “I have heard my husband speak of her. She left Fort Johnson before I came.”

“She is the mother of two children,” said the guard, significantly.

“It’s a lie!” shrieked Polly. “If my husband heard you say that, he would shoot you.”

“That would not alter the truth,” replied the guard, with a sarcastic smile. “It would rather confirm it.”

Polly would have sprung at the impudent fellow like a wild-cat but Prue restrained her. “Please, sir, you must go,” she told the guard. “My lady is far from strong, and you have upset her. I will not answer for what Sir John will do when he hears of this.”

“That is the least of my worries,” the officer retorted over the military decorations on his shoulder.

Polly blazed with indignation. Never in all her life had she been so grossly insulted. The guard was little more than out of the room when she had made up her mind what to do about it. "This is our last day here, Prue," she said, with burning cheeks. "To-morrow we make a bolt for New York and liberty. They will not take me alive."

"It's January, my lady," objected Prue, "the middle of winter."

"That makes no difference."

"The baby is not two months old. Oh, my lady, you couldn't do it. You are not strong enough."

"My resolution will give strength to my muscles," said Polly, with decision. "Nothing that you can ever say, Prue, will change my mind. You won't leave me?"

"No, my lady, I would walk with you into the mouth of a cannon."

"You are a treasure, Prue. We start to-morrow morning before daybreak. Tony will get out the sleigh and drive towards the river. He will not go far before he will overtake two country wenches."

"But how do you know—?"

"Because we are to be the wenches, you silly Prue. We can use those old clothes we found in the cellar and we'll have bundles on our backs. I'll carry the baby and you will take little Anne. Willie will have to run along as well as he can between us."

"But if the guard should hear—if he should suspect?"

"Nonsense!" said Polly. "Tony will be discreet. If he is questioned, he can easily invent some excuse."

"There is always the doctor," said Prue.

"The very thing!" cried Polly. "What could be more natural than that I should fall violently ill as a result of his insolence and need a doctor? By the time the old dunderhead begins to smell a rat, we'll be miles on our way."

It was agreed. Tony was so anxious to play well his part that he was not going to sleep a wink that blessed night. As for Prue, she would be busy enough rigging up two gawky costumes from the materials she could find in the house. She would call her mistress in good time.

Unfortunately, the weather turned against them. A terrific storm blew up in the middle of the night. Towards morning it was still blustery and

frightfully raw and damp. But Polly was not to be shaken in her resolution on that account. Long before daybreak the little band of refugees had crept out of their prison into the darkness. The two women trudged along through snow ankle-deep, stooping beneath the weight of the animated bundles on their backs. Each carried over her arm a small basket filled with miscellaneous necessities, and, between them, they dragged little Willie, scarcely three years old, bribed into acquiescence with the promise of a sugar-stick. With an east wind blowing the falling snow full in their faces, it was not easy going.

There was no danger that Tony would fail them. They heard him coming, driving with moderation behind them. He stopped suddenly and invited them to get into the sleigh, Willie in front beside him and the women in the back seat. For fear they were being watched, he let them clamber in as best they might. Then he jerked the reins and urged the horses on. This was no ordinary journey he told his team by means of an occasional tickling of his whip. He was giving them a chance to show their mettle.

When they had travelled many miles from the place of their detention, they came to Grove House, a wayside tavern. Here Polly called a halt. It was time they all had something to eat, she thought.

Tony shook his head. He advised against entering the tavern.

“But we must, Tony,” said Polly. “The children are crying. We are all hungry and cold.”

“I’m sure I am,” put in Prue.

“They’re not after us, are they?”

“Not as I can see, Miss Polly.”

“Then we are all going in.”

They entered the tavern and ate greedily all that was set before them, being careful not to excite suspicion because of haste. They talked very little but strained their ears to catch what others were saying at the farther end of the room.

Especially were they interested in two Continental soldiers who were discussing the war in subdued voices at the other end of the long table. What were they fighting about, anyway, one was asking.

“For our country, of course,” said the basso, “at least, I am.”

“Country! Fiddlesticks!” hooted the tenor. “Say, tell me, as one private to another, is it because of the oppression of the British?”

“Oppression? I never felt it.”

“Was it the Stamp Act, then?”

“I never saw a stamp. Neither did you, I wager.”

“The tea, perhaps?”

“I don’t drink it. My taste is for beer.”

“But you’re not fighting just for the fun of it.”

“You can bet your life I’m not. After all, I guess it was Old George. He sort of got under my skin when he said we couldn’t govern ourselves. Says I, we’ll show you, old man.”

“Old George didn’t bother me at all,” said the basso. “It was the Johnsons that set my teeth on edge. The big-bugs! Too bad Johnnie slipped away from us.”

“Where is Lady Johnson now?” asked the tenor.

“Over at Fishkill. My cousin is one of her guards. Johnnie’s just over the Hudson, scheming to get to her. They’re keeping a sharp lookout for him, Jim says.”

“With Lady Johnson a prisoner, his hands are tied, I guess.”

“Of course. If he ever gets her away, there’ll be the devil to pay.”

Polly’s face flushed. She gave the signal for departure, paid the bill and went out into the storm. The knowledge that Sir John was just over the river and planning her release filled her with hope and encouragement. But this was neither the time nor the place to talk about the joyful news.

Tony had stabled the horses in the shelter of an old cattle shed. He now came forward with the proposal that they leave the sleigh and walk.

“Walk!” exclaimed Polly.

“I think we had better run,” said Prue.

“The horses are worn out, Miss Polly. They can’t go no moh,” Tony explained.

“What about our wraps?”

“If we walk, we’ll not need them,” said Polly. “Besides, it might be well if we could manage to give the impression that we intend to return. There will be questions asked at the tavern.”

“That’s right, Miss Polly,” said Tony.

So they relinquished the sleigh and set out on foot. They could not but make haste slowly, retarded, as they were, by wind and snow. Each adult carried a human burden, for whose safety they were all even more anxious than for their own. Tony went ahead, breaking the way with short, well-measured steps, and the women lagged behind, struggling heroically with their long, bedraggled skirts. Not for cold nor for hunger did they even dare to stop. Avoiding the houses, they kept to the open fields. Hour after hour they plodded along until, at last, the shadows of evening began to fall.

For some time Polly had been showing evidences of extreme fatigue. Prue had been watching her closely, and when she spied a little cottage all but hidden to view in a snowbank, she hailed Tony and told him to find out what prospects it offered for a night’s rest.

“They might be rebels,” suggested Tony.

“We must take the chance,” decided Prue. “Lady Johnson is exhausted. She must not go a step farther.”

Tony did as he was told. He came back with the joyful news that for a few pennies the people offered a good meal and comfortable beds for the women and children.

“What about you, Tony?” said Polly.

“They said I could sleep in the hay-loft.”

“Then give them dollars instead of pennies,” said Polly, reaching into her long, plebeian petticoat pocket for her purse.

“Better keep to pennies,” advised Prue. “We must avoid suspicion.”

That night was a godsend to the weary, dispirited fugitives. The cottagers were very kind and not too inquisitive. They helped them dry their clothes by the fire and they offered them their homely remedies to ward off the danger of colds. Fortunately, the children slept well, so that their elders were not deprived of a refreshing rest.

Polly was dreadfully fagged, but hopeful. From conversation with the women of the house she had picked up the cheering intelligence that the Hudson River was just two miles farther east and directly beyond it were the

British lines. "And my dear husband," the little woman added, in an aside to Prue.

They came down in the morning to a wholesome breakfast of porridge, toast and coffee. But while they were in the midst of the enjoyment of it, a loud knock was heard at the door and a Continental soldier pushed his way into the room. He announced that he was looking for some people who had left their sleigh at Grove House.

Polly's heart stood still.

"Are you a friend of liberty?" the soldier asked, addressing her.

"Oh, yes," said Polly, without a tremor of embarrassment. "All our friends are patriots."

"Where did they leave the sleigh?" asked Prue, with perfect dissimulation.

"At Grove House, I said. One of the folks was Lady Johnson."

"Not Lady Johnson of Johnson Hall?" said Polly.

"Yes, her. She's a grand lady, they say."

"And they sent you woman-hunting?"

"I'm not any too pleased about it, either," said the soldier. "If any of those stupid fellows who are taking Old George's pay instead of fighting for their country, want to have their sweeties with them, why, I say, let 'em have the keep of 'em."

"And so do I," said Polly, agreeing with all her heart.

The soldier snatched a piece of toast from the table and left the room as unceremoniously as he had entered it.

"I hope he catches her," said the cottager's wife. "Them Johnsons are terrible Tories."

"If all the stories we hear about them are true," said Polly, "the country is well rid of them."

There was no more breakfast eaten. Prue left her slice of toast on the table and went upstairs to dress the children. But Polly stood at the window and watched the soldier. She saw him retrace his steps to the road and turn west. West! They had another chance!

When Tony heard the news he was for getting off with all speed. Only two miles more and they were safe!

They made their departure with great caution, tramping along very circumspectly until they were out of sight of the cottage, and then breaking into a precipitous run. Their very lives were at stake. Running and stumbling, they came at last with great joy to the river.

But, alas, they met there the greatest difficulty they had yet encountered. The January thaw which had tempered the weather had also made a barricade of the river. The Hudson was in flood. Great cakes of ice were swirling about in the current of the swollen stream, jostling against each other in a mad rampage. Only midstream did the water go on its way unimpeded. The farther shore seemed as remote and as unattainable as the continent of Europe.

This was too much. Tears gushed to Polly's eyes. Prue could only sympathize. The children added to the gloom with their whimpering and complaining.

Tony had walked a short distance along the shore. He came back with the report that he had seen two men struggling in a row-boat midstream.

"Call to them," said Polly, ready to grasp at the merest straw. "Tell them they must take us across."

Tony did not wait to be told a second time. He was off and away, leaping over the great fissures, bounding from one ice-floe to another until he got within shouting distance of the men.

No! They had something else to do, they said.

Tony's heart sank. He dared not take that answer to his mistress. He begged the boatmen to reconsider the matter; he entreated them; he appealed to their chivalry. Two women and three children were at their mercy. He offered them whatever they had a mind to ask.

Very reluctantly, they consented at last, and Tony hurried back to shore to tell the good news.

The question was, how were they to get across to the boat.

"We'll have to walk," said Polly. "What else is there to do?"

"But the ice is moving," cried Prue. "We can't do it."

"You saw Tony do it, didn't you?" said Polly.

"But with babies in our arms —"

“For their sakes, as well as for our own, we must get across. Do you want to go back to Fishkill, or worse? You are not going to desert me, Prue.”

“No, my lady.”

“If you have any superstitions that suit this occasion, forget them.”

“Yes, my lady.”

“Pray, Prue, pray as you never prayed before in all your life. Come now, follow me.”

So, taking their own lives and the destinies of the three precious children in their hands, they set out on the awful adventure, knowing not what minute any one of them might slip, or sidestep, and be plunged into the angry river.

They came without mishap to the spot where the boat was anchored in an eddy of water. It was rank suicide, the boatmen muttered, when they saw them. Eight people in their little tub, and three of them worse than helpless. They were not going to be held accountable, if anything should happen.

“I’ll take all the responsibility,” Polly hastened to assure them. “All I ask is that you do your best.”

The boatmen packed them in as well as they could, then pushed out into the current. They pulled and tugged with might and main until they got them over to the floating cakes of ice on the other bank of the river. Thank heaven that job was done, they said. It was tempting Providence, if they knew anything.

“Safe at last!” cried Polly, when they all stood once more on a field of ice. “I can’t thank you enough, kind sirs.” She reached into her pocket for her purse and threw it and all its contents into the boat.

“Tories!” muttered one of the men when he had picked it up. “No common country wench ever—”

“Man alive, if that wasn’t Lady Johnson, I’ll eat my shirt!” cried the other. “There was a man at my house lookin’ for her last night.”

“Jove! so it was!” said the first. “We’d better keep our mouths shut about this. Look, they have reached the land!”

It was a short mile from the eastern bank of the river to the first line of sentries. But what a mile! Utterly exhausted as the women were, they had to plough their way through snow that was deep and damp and soft. Their skirts dragged terribly. Anne and Willie kept howling out their impatience,

but the baby— Polly hugged it to her breast passionately. She was afraid it wasn't sleep—

From the moment the fugitives landed on the eastern bank of the river, their every movement had been carefully scrutinized. A group of Mohawks had followed them from a place of vantage, though all unseen, with the battery of their eyes. Spies, they suspected, disguised as females. They were ready for them.

But when they discovered that they were really women, travel-wearied and faint from exposure, they hurried to their aid, wrapped them in furs and carried them within the British lines on improvised litters of blankets. Lady Johnson, was it? Sir John must be informed at once. A messenger was despatched with all haste. They carried the litters to a near-by farmhouse to await his coming.

Tony refused to be separated from his beloved mistress. "He's comin', Miss Polly," he whispered, with tears of joy coursing down his cheeks, "he's comin' with all the legs he has."

Polly smiled faintly, cast one hopeful glance in the direction of the camp and turned to the farmer's wife who attended her. "The baby—is she still alive?" she asked, anxiously.

"Oh, yes," was the hopeful reply. "She'll soon be all right now."

"Bring her to me."

The woman obeyed. Polly noticed at once that the child's breathing was weak and irregular. Could it be—?

"Let me take her, do," begged the woman. "You are not strong enough to hold her."

But Polly clutched her baby to her breast. Prue got up and crawled over to the bedside of her mistress. They both knew instinctively that the end was near. They felt the little frame tremble with a terrible convulsion. The eyeballs rolled, then stared on into vacancy, sightless for ever. Polly uttered a pitiful cry of anguish and fell back unconscious into the arms of her faithful maid.

"Oh, my dear lady!" cried Prue. "Is she going, too?"

Tony stood motionless at the window, peering across acres of trackless snow. Suddenly he uttered a shout of joy. "It's him!" He declared he saw two men leave the camp, riding madly towards the farmhouse. "It's him and Massa Steve," he repeated.

“Hush!” commanded Prue, with a frown.

“Tell her Sir John’s coming,” said Tony, refusing to be silenced. “That’ll make her open her eyes.”

Sir John was in the room the next moment, leaning over the bed and calling his lovely Polly back to life. “Speak to me, my darling,” he said. “It’s your own John, my precious one.”

“This is dreadful, Mr. Steve,” said Prue. “It was too much for her.”

They stood about the bed, speechless and all but hopeless. Then, suddenly, almost unexpectedly, Polly opened her eyes and looked about the room. “She’s dead,” she moaned. “My baby’s dead.”

“But you are alive, my lovely Polly,” said Sir John, caressing her softly.

“And we’re all here,” said Steve, coming within the range of her vision.

She knew them then. She smiled at them individually. She would soon be well, she said.

“Here’s some soup,” said the farmer’s wife, pushing her way up to the bedside. “This will do her more good than all your talking.”

Certainly, a few spoonfuls of nourishment revived Polly beyond all belief. Two hours later, they were able to carry her to the quarters of the commander of the camp, and after many days of careful nursing, she was restored to her usual health.

The nameless babe was buried in a nameless grave. A week later, Anne’s appetite began to fail. Her lungs were congested, the doctor said. There was little hope. Two days more she, too, had slipped away to join her little sister in that far-away land from which no traveller ever returns.

By this time Sir John was consumed with revenge and full of threatenings. “Such wrongs as I have suffered shall not go unavenged, I promise you,” he told his young brother-in-law.

“I am with you,” replied Steve. “We’ll unleash the hounds of war.”

But not a word of this to Polly. She had had worries enough. Sir John asked her one day if she wouldn’t like to go to England.

“To stay?”

“No, just for a visit with your father. This is no life for you. You need a change, and he will be glad to see you.”

“You’ll go, too, of course?”

“I couldn’t, Polly. My duty is here.”

“Then, so is mine,” she decided.

But they persuaded her finally to go. She could not live on indefinitely in the camp, and Canada was out of the question. She was to take with her little William, her only child now, Prue, her faithful maid, and Tony, her devoted slave. Sir John accompanied them to New York and put them all in care of the captain on a ship bound for England. Colonel Guy Johnson came, too, to see them off and to wish them *bon voyage*. They would have a grand reunion, he promised them, when they all got back to Johnson Hall.

“What if anything should happen to you, John?” said Polly, when the time had come for her last farewell.

“Then you will have one consolation, my own Polly,” he said, “that your husband did not fail in his duty. To death, he was loyal to his King.”

Chapter XVIII

REVENGE, DEFEAT AND DESPAIR

If loyalty to the British crown was indeed a crime, there was in all America no criminal so vile as Sir John Johnson, his villainy being in direct ratio to his position and influence. He had been tried without a witness at the bar of public opinion; he had been condemned and compelled to pay the utmost forfeit of rebel law. All he had was confiscated to the state. His proud baronial hall had been sold under the hammer, and the proceeds used to swell the treasury of the revolution. His handsome furniture, his household slaves, all his personal belongings, even to the family Bible, had passed into other hands, and were scattered far and wide. Attainted by treason, as he was, his very life and person was at stake.

The glory had departed from Johnson Hall. It was nothing now but a common tenement-house, controlled by enemies of the rightful owners, divided into apartments and leased to blatant advocates of the new democracy. The estate had been farmed out to various tenants, of whom Sampson Sammons' son, Frederick, was the chief. He tilled the Johnson fields by day, but returned at night to sleep under the paternal roof. So he buttered his own bread, and served at the same time the great cause of the revolution.

Sir John fumed whenever he thought about the untoward fate that had befallen his old home, and he swore by all that was holy and just and right that he would regain it. Down with the robbers who had made of his life a dismal waste while they licked their gluttonous chops over his patrimony! No quarter to the rebels who, branding him a traitor, disowned their sovereign and did violence to all that stood for law and order!

No sooner was Polly safe on her way to England than Sir John threw himself heart and soul into the war. With the consent of Sir Guy Carleton, Governor of Canada, he organized his own battalion—the Royal Greens—recruited from the loyalist families of the Mohawk valley, many of whom had suffered, as he himself had, untold misery and indignity. Steve Watts was with him wholefooted. Five hundred men volunteered at the first call. From Niagara came the Butlers, father and son, Daniel Claus, his brother-in-law, and many others. The Highlanders flocked in great numbers to his standard. Not a man in all his following but was smarting under his losses

and burning with revenge. They all wanted a part in striking a death-blow into the very vitals of the revolution.

The Mohawks were first and last the allies of the Johnsons. True, Thayendanegea had quarrelled with Colonel Guy over the management of Indian affairs, but he could never forget the dying admonition of his great patron. "Control your people, Joseph," Sir William had said. "I am going away." Throughout the years those words would ring in his ears, binding him by the silver cords of a grateful memory to the Johnsons and to the British. He put all his trust in Sir John and in his promise to preserve inviolate the lands of the Mohawks already secured by a hundred British treaties.

During the spring and summer of that year waged the bitterest of civil wars. Families were divided and flocking to the standards of Whig and Tory, brother struck at brother with cruel hatred. British and Continentals grappled for supremacy, forgetting that they were of one blood and bound together by a common language and by the same glorious traditions. Brothers, they were, among the peoples of the world.

For the most part, the odds were against the Continentals. The British were sweeping everything before them in the east, and the news of their victories inspired in the hearts of the loyalists hopes of ultimate triumph. Sir John was beginning to look forward to the consummation of his fondest dreams. With the rebellion crushed, the restoration of his rights and property were assured. Everything would come out all right in the end.

Then came a sudden turn in the tide of affairs. Sir John was at Oriskany, a little village in the Upper Mohawk, when the crisis came. A company of militia, comprising many of the Whigs from Tryon County, among others the Sammons family, had been sent to relieve the garrison at Fort Schuyler. Sir John had heard of it. He summoned Steve Watts and ordered him to go with a marksman's division of Royal Greens to intercept them on the way. Colonel John Butler and his Rangers and Thayendanegea, with his doughtiest warriors, joined the expedition. If there was going to be a neighbourhood quarrel, they wanted to be in it.

The Loyalists were confident of victory. They took up a position on high land, beyond a deep-wooded ravine, and lay waiting in ambush for their victims. It was morning, but dark and sultry and lowering, the sort of day that suited a ghastly deed.

On came the Continentals, marching unsuspecting into the hidden noose. At a signal from the great Mohawk, they found themselves hemmed in on all

sides. A blood-curdling whoop! A volley of deadly rifle balls! They were in for it. The loyalists fell upon their baggage-wagons like a pack of ravenous wolves. Friends of a lifetime leaped at each other like demons, struggling man with man and fist to fist. Spears and hatchets clashed. Men became bloodthirsty monsters. All hell was let loose.

The gathering storm burst over the heads of the devil-possessioned men but the roar of its thunder did not stifle the screams of the dying; its torrents of rain did not drench the pools of blood. The God of nature could not cover the shame of mortals. On went the slaughter!

When Jacob Sammons spied Steve Watts, he uttered a murderous cry: "Kill him! Hold! Let me do it myself."

A dozen bullets whizzed by Steve's ears in the twinkling of an eye. Then one lodged in his leg just above his knee, tearing him frightfully. The next moment a bayonet jabbed him in the nape of his neck. He staggered and fell prone on the ground.

"He felt that one," cried Jacob Sammons, gleefully. "Give him another for safety." From his own gun he discharged a rapid succession of bullets.

Poor Steve Watts lay for hours, unconscious in a pool of his own life-blood. No one to close his sightless eyes or to shed a sympathizing tear. Bayonets and knives clashed over his prostrate form. On went the butchery of war.

The sound of distant firing, and that alone, prevented the extermination of the men of Tryon County. The alarm was given that Sir John's camp was being assailed. Colonel Butler took command and gathering together what was left of the loyalist forces, he hurried to the aid of his friend.

Too late! The rebels at Fort Schuyler had made a sudden sally, driving Sir John and his men in confusion across the river and rushing back to the protection of the fort. They were ready for Colonel Butler when he came, and they chased him on the heels of Sir John. They made a good job of it, too. When they went back to the fort, it was to chuckle over the plight of the Tories and the disconsolate moaning of the Indians.

Sir John was a picture of utter dejection when Colonel Butler met him, "Where's Steve?" he asked, anxiously.

"On the field."

"Dead?"

Colonel Butler could not speak. He merely nodded.

“You left him there?”

“I had to. The slaughter was terrible.”

“And Joseph?”

“Safe. He took to the woods with a few of his Indians.”

“For that, at least, let us be thankful,” said Sir John, devoutly. “This is the darkest day the world has ever seen. The devils came at me so unexpectedly that I hadn’t time to put on my coat. I couldn’t get my men in order. There was nothing for them but flight. Even the Indians were surprised. We all had to leave everything and run for our lives.”

“You saved nothing, then?”

“Not even my luggage—my papers. Full of information, confound it, Butler. Clothing, blankets, wagon-loads of spoil, everything is lost. Worst of all, five British standards.”

“How they will gloat over them,” said Colonel Butler, grimly.

Then Sir John gave expression to the despondency that shrouded his soul. “My hopes have collapsed like a house demolished by the fortunes of war,” he said. “Steve is gone. I’m afraid this is the beginning of the end.”

“Nonsense!” replied the colonel, determined to put on a brave face. “The darkest clouds come just before the dawn. The British are winning in the east. We are only a little band of refugees. It’s the regulars that count.”

But Sir John had lost all confidence in the British regulars, and especially in the officer who commanded them. “What does Burgoyne know about warfare on the frontier?” he wanted to know. “A conceited coxcomb, that’s what he is. We can tell him nothing. He holds us all in contempt. Sooner or later, he will ruin us. If we can’t fight our own battles, Butler, we are lost.”

“You’ll feel better to-morrow, Sir John,” prophesied Colonel Butler.

But when the morrow dawned, Sir John was more pessimistic than ever. The shouts of the enemy exulting over their victory wakened him out of his troubled sleep. He got up and looked at Fort Schuyler towering in mocking triumph across the river. The flag of Congress was flying from its tallest bastion—not the Stars and Stripes, which had been adopted as the flag of the republic, but an improvised pennant, a tattered remnant of a discarded shirt, too dirty to be altogether white, a strip of blue, ripped from a soldier’s faded jacket, and a blaze of red, snipped, probably, from some woman’s flannel

petticoat. Beneath this contemptible ensign hung five beautiful British standards. The spectacle filled Sir John with mortification and shame. He flushed crimson when he saw the garrison mount the parapets and wave their arms like madmen. They were adding insult to injury by their shouts that echoed and re-echoed through the forests with the paeans of their victory.

Sir John had made up his mind not to strike camp until he had found Steve's body and given it decent burial. Before he closed his eyes in sleep on that awful night, he had sent out a group of Indian warriors to search the battlefield. They returned in the morning with weird tales of the horrible scenes they had witnessed—men locked in each other's arms in deadly embrace, their bodies torn limb from limb by wild beasts and their bones left to bleach in the sun. But Major Watts' body, no, they did not see it.

"Are you sure he was dead?" Sir John questioned Colonel Butler.

"I saw him fall with my own eyes. I saw him again when I left the field."

Sir John turned again to the Indians. "Scour the countryside," he ordered. "Do not come back without his body. I will not leave Oriskany without it."

Three days later, Major Steve Watts himself came hobbling into Sir John's camp, leaning heavily on the arm of one of the scouts.

"Steve!" cried Sir John, startled as if he had seen a ghost.

"Hello, John," he greeted him. "Did I give you much of a scare?"

"Tell me what happened, Steve."

"They thought I would die, so they left me. I begged them to kill me, but it was crueller to let me live."

"But you didn't die. Thank the good Lord, you didn't die."

"Not quite," said Steve, with a smile. "I crawled over to a creek and bathed my wounds. It was the water that saved me. Then I crawled a little farther and hid behind a loose board on an old bridge. I stayed there until I saw this Mohawk. He brought me something to eat and all but carried me here."

"Your leg, Steve—is it bad?"

"A week or two at the most and I'll be on the warpath again," he said.

Sir John noticed, however, that, even as he spoke, he winced with pain. Steve could not pull the wool over his eyes with this bravado. "We are

leaving this very day for Schenectady,” he announced.

“Why Schenectady?”

“Because I’m going to have that leg of yours examined by the best doctor in all the valley of the Mohawk.”

Four Indians carried Steve to Schenectady. Sir John attended them, on horseback.

The great doctor shook his head ominously when he had examined the leg. “It will have to come off,” he said.

Steve demurred at first, but in the end he surrendered himself to his cruel fate. He knew only too well that with the loss of his leg he must relinquish all hope of further adventures in the frontiers of the new world. When he was strong enough to undertake the journey, Sir John packed him off to England to begin a new chapter in his life’s story. Never again did he return to the stirring scenes of his youth.

Chapter XIX

HIDDEN TREASURES UNEARTHED

Steve's misfortunes and his subsequent departure for England left Sir John jaded and depressed. The joy of living had gone out of his life. At thirty-six his hair was streaked with grey and he walked as with the burden of his years. The British were fighting now in a losing cause, Burgoyne had been ambushed and the flower of his army put to the sword. There was nothing left to the King's men but the consciousness of having been true to their convictions and loyal to the King.

Since there was little hope of regaining Johnson Hall, Sir John turned his thoughts to Montreal as a future home. For Sir Guy Carleton, the Governor of Canada, he had a profound admiration. Lady Carleton was the daughter of an earl and young enough to be her husband's daughter, a delightful friend and companion for Polly. But even while he was meditating on this idea, the Carletons were recalled to England, and another rosy hope was nipped in the bud.

Lord Haldimand was the next governor of Canada. He did everything in his power to induce Sir John to settle in Montreal. Hearing the story of the hurried burial of the baronet's valuables at Johnson Hall, he offered to send a company of fifty men to recover them by stealth and thus retrieve what they could of the family fortune.

Sir John knew that some of his slaves were still at Johnson Hall. He knew, too, that Frederick Sammons, their new master, had tried every device short of torture to make them divulge the whereabouts of the hidden Johnson treasures, but to no avail. The family plate and Sir William's old iron chest, buried beneath the sidewalk in Polly's flower-garden, were safe in their keeping. They were only waiting until the wheels of fortune should turn again so that they might restore them unharmed to their rightful owner.

Sir John decided at length to unearth at least his papers. With an escort of fifty men, he came one dark night to Johnson Hall and tapped on the door of Pontioch's cabin. He called him gently by name.

Pontioch was up at once and alert. He showed his master the very planks under which the chest had been buried; he helped the men dig it up. Heavy, yes, as lead. Glad he didn't have to carry it to Montreal! He waited until the

men had started back, with the old iron chest perched up on the shoulders of four of their number, then he tumbled back between the warm covers and snored. There was some disorder in the garden next morning. Questions were asked and Frederick Sammons swore until the air was blue. But Pontioch only chuckled to himself and blamed it on the Indians.

Sir John was heart-broken when he opened the chest. Unfortunately, it had not been properly closed, and the papers were mouldy and so rotten that they crumpled to his touch. Quite illegible, all of them. Another loss of at least twenty thousand pounds, and no hope of redeeming a shilling of it! Would there be anything left of his inheritance, he wondered, when misfortune had wearied of pursuing him?

The war dragged on and on. Border raids between Canada and New York caused terrible loss of life and property. Thayendanegea became the scourge, and his scalping warriors the terror of the countryside. Sir John's name was anathema. His scouting parties spread waste and devastation everywhere. They burned the grain in the fields, they fired the homes of their old-time neighbours and carried off their sons as prisoners of war. Massacres had come to be the order of the day. The Republicans retaliated in kind. It was tit for tat. All the venomous savagery that rankles in human hearts was stirred into the awful cauldron of internecine war.

By May of 1780, Sir John Johnson knew that there remained for him not the remotest possibility of regaining Johnson Hall. He then determined to get his plate, secreted—Pontioch only knew where—in the cellar of his old home, and to send it to Polly, in England, for safe-keeping until the dawning of a happier day. He arrived at Johnson Hall one Sunday in the early dawning, with a motley throng of supporters whom he had brought from Canada by way of Lake Champlain. They wakened everybody with their noise.

“We've come for the plate this time, Pontioch,” said Sir John, when his father's favourite slave came running to meet him, trying to scrape and bow and hitch up his trousers at the same time.

“Yes, massa. It's in the cellah.”

“Get it ready for me. I am going now, but I will return. I want to take it with me to Canada.”

“To Canada?” Pontioch's eyes grew large as saucers. “You're not going to stay there, sir?”

Sir John did not answer. He was marching his band of hot-bloods off in the direction of the Sammons home. "Be sure you get my friend who has so lately set himself up as Duke Frederick at Johnson Hall," he was telling his lieutenant. "Ask him if he would be so kind as to give a poor tramp a crust of bread."

"I'll make it hot for him, I promise you," replied Lieutenant Sutherland.

"And don't let the young upstart, Jacob, get away," he added. "I have a few scores to settle with him."

It happened to be Tom, the youngest of the Sammons boys, whom they encountered first. He had got up very early and had stepped out-of-doors, half-dressed, to have a look at the weather. He heard a heavy step behind him and saw a glitter of steel. Heaven help him! A strong hand clutched his shoulder and held him as in a vice. "What are you doing here so early in the morning?" a strange, gruff voice asked him.

"I—I was just going to feed my horses," said Tom, frightened out of his seven senses.

"Where do you work?"

"At Johnson Hall."

"With your brother?"

"Yes, with Fred."

"This Fred, where is he?"

"Upstairs in bed."

"Call him."

That was quite unnecessary. Fred and Jacob had both heard the noise, pulled on their clothes and reached for their guns.

"Come down and surrender if you know what's good for you," shouted the lieutenant.

Jacob poked a tousled head out of the window. "Any Indians?" he called. "If you have, we'll not be taken alive."

"No Indians," Sutherland assured him.

Discretion seemed the better part of valour. The father and the two sons came shambling down the stairs to surrender, while a sentinel covered them with his gun. Mrs. Sammons and her daughter, Sally, stood by, speechless with terror.

“Now, men, into the house and see what you can find,” shouted Lieutenant Sutherland.

The elder Sammons demurred. What authority had they to plunder his house? He protested his rights as a citizen.

“Whose rights were respected when you plundered Johnson Hall?” said Sir John, announcing himself at that moment.

“You are not a citizen, Sir John,” ventured the old man.

“I suppose you would call me—”

“A traitor, sir.”

Sir John turned to Lieutenant Sutherland. “We’ll take the men as prisoners of war,” he said.

“Where are we going?” asked Jacob. “To Canada?”

“To the north pole,” said the lieutenant, laughing.

Mrs. Sammons shrieked.

Two soldiers came forward with the handcuffs.

“I can’t go without my clothes,” blubbered Tom.

“You have enough on,” the sentinel told him.

“Shoes,” he said, pointing to his bare feet.

The sentinel paid no attention, but when young Tom tried to edge away from him, he struck him forcibly in the middle of the back. Sally sprang forward at that, threw herself across the barrel of the fellow’s gun and, falling, pulled it with her to the floor.

“What’s going on there?” thundered Sutherland.

“He was going to kill Tom,” averred Sally.

“Nonsense. Nobody’s going to murder the boy,” said the officer. “Go and get your shoes, Tom, and whatever else you need. It may be a long time before you see home and mother again.”

Outdoors, the men were chaining “Papa” Sammons to a negro captive. What a fine yoke of oxen they were going to have to drive to Canada! No need of worrying now about who was to carry the Johnson plate.

Sir John shook his head when he saw the spectacle. “Loose him,” he ordered. “March him with the boys between files of soldiers.” Then he

turned to his lieutenant and said: "Burn the house to the ground."

Sally and her mother burst audibly into tears.

"We did not burn Johnson Hall," protested Sampson Sammons.

Sir John's face was resolute and immovable. The men applied the torches. With grim satisfaction he stood and watched the blaze.

"Have you no heart at all," Fred Sammons flung at him.

"None but is broken by my misfortunes," answered Sir John. "Don't forget the horses, Lieutenant Sutherland."

They took seven beasts from the stalls, mounted them and galloped away to Johnson Hall.

Sir John had decided to spend the night at his old home before relinquishing it forever. He ate his supper alone in the dining-room, a cheerless repast. He might as well have been at the village tavern. The chairs were old and rickety, the table linen cheap and dirty, the walls appallingly bare, and the whole place forsaken and down-at-the-heels. He grasped the baluster and pulled himself up the elegant mahogany staircase, disfigured now, he discovered, by the hackings of some enemy hatchet. He crawled into a lonely bed. Not a wink did he sleep all night long. Before him passed the long procession of his memories, some sad, some gay. He saw Sir William, hale and hearty in his prime, surrounded by Miss Molly and their boisterous, half-breed family. A Mohawk council was in session under the trees, with Little Abraham and a hundred of his Mohawks squatting in a circle. Thayendanegea had dropped in to see his sister and to pay a friendly call. Ah, there was Polly, his lovely bride, the joy of his life. A family party was in progress. Billy was fiddling while Guy, his sisters, Daniel Claus, the Butlers, and a roomful of people were laughing and gliding about here and there to the music. The children were chattering on the stair. Then suddenly their gay voices died away into a funeral dirge. The angel of death! Alas! It was the prop of the house he wanted. The glory of the Johnsons faded then. Misfortune followed on the heels of misfortune, scattering the survivors, homeless and destitute, to the four corners of the earth and throwing the doors of his baronial hall open to the Sammons family and the common horde. Little wonder that he was bitter and resentful.

In the morning Sir John ordered that Tom Sammons be released and sent back to his mother and sister.

Sampson Sammons immediately made a plea for his own freedom. "See what you have done, Sir John," he said. "You have taken your old neighbour

prisoner.”

“Your rebel horde took Lady Johnson prisoner,” replied Sir John, passionately. “You took the lives of two of my children.”

“You burned my house and left my wife without a roof,” Sammons went on. “Everywhere you go, you leave desolation.”

“Did not you and your friends burn Claus House?” said Sir John. “My sister had to travel to Niagara before she found a roof for her head. My other sister lies yonder in her grave.”

“I have always treated you well,” the old man pleaded. “I used my influence with General Schuyler to get you your liberty. You agreed to remain neutral. Then you broke your parole and ran away to Canada. You enrolled yourself in the service of the King. You have raised a regiment of traitors and you have come to rob us and to burn our houses to the ground.”

“You see only your own misfortunes,” Sir John told him. “Try and see my point of view. I have lost everything.”

“If your father had lived, Sir John, this would not have happened,” Sammons went on. “He would not have turned against his country, as you have done.”

“I say he would not have turned against his King, as you have done,” replied Sir John, with well-placed emphasis. “My father was no rebel. He would turn in his grave if I should fail in my duty to my King.”

Sampson Sammons shook his head sagely. “You are an impetuous youth,” he said. “By your foolishness you have lost everything.”

“I do not want them if I must buy them with my loyalty,” said Sir John, spiritedly. “A price is on my head, but, that you may know I have still a heart, I give you your freedom.”

“Give me back my horses, too,” the man demanded, without so much as a word of thanks.

“I will, if they are not by this time in the possession of the Indians,” promised Sir John.

A span of horses was found and returned to him. Sampson Sammons and his son mounted them and rode back to the smouldering ruins of their old home.

Dinner over, preparations were made for the return to Canada.

Pontioch came then and told Sir John that he had unearthed the silver. It was standing ready for him on the floor of the cellar.

Sir John called Lieutenant Sutherland to his side. "Distribute all that is left of my inheritance to forty of the men," he said. "They will carry it to Canada in their knapsacks. Let the quartermaster keep the records."

The lieutenant saluted and retired.

"And now, Pontioch, how shall I reward you?" said the baronet, turning to the faithful slave. "Can you think of anything you would like?"

"Please, sir—" Pontioch kept twirling his cap in his hands.

"Yes, Pontioch, I am listening."

"Would you—would you lemme go along to Canada?"

"With all my heart," said Sir John, touched by this unexpected evidence of devotion. "Tell Billy to get his fiddle and come, too, and any of the others."

"We'd all of us follow you to the ends of the earth," said Pontioch, grinning.

The days of Sir John's visitation were times of crisis and decision in Tryon County. The loyalists had been for some time face to face with two alternatives, to take up arms for Congress or to go in chains to Albany. The fear of confiscation of their property hung over their heads like a threatening cloud. Sir John presented a third proposition, Canada and the great unknown. For women whose husbands were already across the border, here was an opportunity to join them. For others, it was more or less a leap in the dark.

The party of fugitives were not allowed to depart unmolested. A division of Republican troops followed hard on their heels, recovering the Sammons brothers and other prisoners of war who had escaped, but never quite succeeding in preventing the loyalists in their flight.

As soon as Sir John reached Montreal, he packed his plate in boxes and freighted it to Polly in England. But the vessel foundered in the gulf and went to the bottom. So the last of the Johnson treasures were lost to the luckless family forever.

Chapter XX

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT BUT CANADA

Three years later the peace, so long delayed, was signed at Versailles, perpetrated, as everybody knew, by the crafty Benjamin Franklin, plenipotentiary of the thirteen revolting colonies and darling of the French court. The British commissioners were disposed to be generous, but, knowing nothing of the geography of the new world, they were hoodwinked into being prodigal. They bestowed gratuitously on the new republic rich lands of the valley of the Ohio which belonged by right to Canada; they broke a hundred treaties with the Indians, throwing into the bargain hunting-grounds which had been the inheritance of the red men long before the advent of the palefaces, lands secured to them by a century of British treaties. It was a marvel that they did not sign away the whole Province of Canada. Providence, surely, must have intervened.

Franklin had several axes to grind. First of all, he hated the French of Canada. He had not forgotten the insults the gibberers had hurled at him when he went to Montreal eight years before with offers of his new brand of liberty. But even more than the French, he hated the loyalists. He swore roundly every time he thought of his only son, at one time Governor of New Jersey, hobnobbing now with the British in New York city, a Tory of the Tories, and President of the Honourable Board of Associated Loyalists. Compensate the loyalists? Never.

The treaty gave the loyalists nothing but promises, mere scraps of paper, for the fulfilment of the few concessions which were made was left to their enemies. Loyalist petitions for adjustments of property claims were ignored or refused. There was always some loop-hole found to crawl through. Congress salved its guilty conscience by recommending to the various states a tolerant spirit and a generous clemency in dealing with the loyalists, and they let it go at that.

Loyalist indignation broke out everywhere in the form of public protest, but nowhere did it blaze with such fury as in the British city of New York. The decision of Congress synchronized with the King's birthday and suggested new methods in the celebration of the holiday. Instead of extolling the virtues of the King, men stood on soapboxes in the parks of the city and declaimed against Congress.

“No power to restore our lands,” one heated orator shouted. “Who was it gave them power to take them away from us?”

Ah, that was the rub.

“Most of all I blame the commissioners,” yelled the fellow on the next stand. “By their cowardice and their ignorance they have betrayed us. They gave us a kick because we refused to be rebels. Where in all ancient or modern history can be found an instance of so shameful a desertion of men who have sacrificed all to their duty? Say, you people, can you think of a single one?”

“The English buy their treaties,” a bystander offered as his contribution to the discussion.

“They make us pay for them,” shouted another voice from the audience.

Twenty rods away, another crowd had gathered, chiefly to watch the gesticulations of a would-be leader of public opinion. “Not a single foot of that land between the Ohio and Lake Erie ever formed a part of the rebel territory,” he was saying. “They didn’t win it. They got it as a present on a silver salver.” He carried an imaginary tray from left to right and all but lost his balance in the effort. “But what did we get?”

“A cold shoulder,” came the answer.

“A slap in the face,” ventured another.

“Say, folks, tell me this. Have we held this city for seven years to give it up now without a struggle? Must we go down on our marrow-bones and say we’re sorry?” He prayed with his hands but the box was too wobbly to venture dropping to his knees. “Must we say we’ll be good from now on? Are you going to give in to Congress, folks?”

“No! No!”

“A thousand times, no,” came from another quarter.

“Then what in the name of thunder are we going to do? Here we are, turned out of house and home.” He showed them how the doors were opening and the occupants were being ejected. “Confiscations are still going on. Not a day but people come to the city from up the river with tales of the most inhuman persecutions. I have a friend who had to stand by and see his father locked up in a burning house. This, mind you, in the sacred name of liberty! I tell you, friends, we are smack up against a blank wall. We can’t even collect our debts. We are hounded by demons more savage than the Indians and more devilish than the devil himself.”

“You’re right, old boy,” sang out a passing soldier. “But let me tell you all that arm-waving don’t do a particle of good. It’s old John Bull we’ve got to fight. He threw the gunpowder into the tea-caddy.”

“Go on with you,” laughed his companion. “What do you care about the tea-caddy? Don’t you know it was beer you’ve been drinkin’?”

“Laugh at me, if you like,” was the rejoinder. “I tell you we are ruined.” He tore the buttons from the lapel of his coat and stamped them dramatically under his feet. “There’s nothing left for us but Canada.”

“Canada!” twitted his companion. “Oh, that’s a lovely country. Winter nine months of the year.”

“Hard work and a little arm-waving would keep you from freezing,” said the original entertainer, thereby provoking such a round of laughter that the crowd was ready to give three cheers for the King and disperse in better humour.

A single ray of hope brightened the gloomy situation in which the loyalists of the city found themselves. Sir Guy Carleton, one-time Governor of Canada, had been sent to New York as Commander of the Militia. The people knew right well that it was his resolute stand against disloyalty in the early stages of the revolution that had saved Canada, the fourteenth colony, from being forced into the rebellion.

Carleton was not a man of war. It was his great ambition to be instrumental in winning back the thirteen colonies by means of generous concessions to the arms of the mother country. That ambition was doomed by the nefarious terms of the treaty. Carleton resigned his post immediately as a protest, but he was persuaded to remain in New York until the evacuation of the city had been fully accomplished.

The task proved to be much more exacting and far-reaching than he had anticipated. Distressed loyalists kept pouring into the city day by day. Many had walked most of the way, as their bruised feet and bedraggled finery testified. Some were people of high position and station in life, people who cultivated beauty, dignity and refinement in their domestic life and looked with proud disdain upon the pushing, vulgar crowd that haggled over a paltry two-penny tax on tea. To them democracy meant something coarse and rough, and independence the severing of connection with all those things of which the colonists should have been most proud. But there were many others who, knowing little of wealth and culture, lived by the brawn of their muscles. In their hearts, too, glowed a loyal devotion to the King and

all that he stood for. Carleton had them all on his hands. They were all looking to him to transport them out of the United States.

A number of doors were open to the loyalists. England, to be sure, but that was only for those who lacked the spirit of adventure and who could at the same time afford the luxury of the long sea-voyage. To the south were the torrid West Indies, and to the north the Island of St. John and Nova Scotia, which some wag had dubbed Nova Scarcity.

It was to Nova Scotia that Carleton turned first. He asked Governor Parr if he had any lands which the loyalists might occupy. "Many of these people are of the first families," he wrote, "and born to the fairest possessions. I beg of you, therefore, that you will have them properly considered."

Governor Parr gave his somewhat reluctant consent. Already thousands of these first-family citizens had poured into his province from Boston and settled at Halifax and Shelburne. He had a strong suspicion that, although they boasted a large number of Harvard graduates, they might be rather ignorant of the ruder arts of pioneering and agriculture. Some day they would be a problem on his hands.

The first fleet of ships sailed from New York towards the end of April and arrived at Halifax before the middle of May. It was an experience that none of the passengers could ever forget. Three thousand people, of all ages and social circumstances, forced to pig together in mere tubs of boats utterly inadequate to their needs! And this was the first lap of their great adventure!

New York scarcely missed them. In a few days their places were taken by twice their number of even more destitute refugees. What was Carleton to do with them? More mouths to feed, but less food. Ragged, disheartened people thronged the city streets. The churches and public buildings were crowded to overflowing. Sanitary conditions could not have been worse. Fever stalked about like a foul-breathed monster. Every morning the death-carts clattered over the cobblestones of the streets, carrying hundreds to their graves in shallow pits at the water's edge.

Conditions were at their worst when the British authorities ordered Carleton to evacuate the city without delay.

"What's to be done about the loyalists?" asked Roger Morris, his right-hand man.

"I intend to take them with me," said Carleton.

"The order does not read so."

“Then I will read them into the order,” said Carleton, with a smile. “You remember what Nelson did at Trafalgar. I have neither telescope nor a blind eye, but I intend to read my own interpretation into my orders.”

“But we have no ships.”

“Then we shall wait until we have,” said Carleton. “I shall spend what money I can lay my hands on and then—”

“Ask for approval, I suppose.”

“Yes, and more money. They’ve got to give it to me, Morris. I can’t see the people suffer. It may be winter before we get away from here.”

Congress was at that very moment conspiring to get rid of Carleton and his crowd most expeditiously. They demanded that they leave at once.

Carleton replied very courteously, but with much decision, that he was anxious enough to go, but he had to consider the matter of the transport of the people.

“But the peace made no provision for the transport of any civilians,” Congress argued.

“I hold a different view,” replied Carleton, with great dignity and reserve. “I regard it as a point of honour that no troops shall embark until the last loyalist who claims my protection is safe on board a British ship. I am not so devoid of the feelings of humanity as to leave them a prey to the violence they think they have so much cause to apprehend.”

The greatest problem was to find suitable destinations for the refugees. Care had to be taken not to overcrowd in any one place, thereby increasing the difficulties of the people rather than lessening them. When Carleton was wondering where next to turn, Providence came to his aid, directing a certain Captain Grass to his office.

“You want to see me?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Your name?”

“Captain Michael Grass.”

“Where from?”

“About twenty miles up the North River, sir. Some traitor is working my farm. I came to ask you if you have ever thought of Canada as a refuge for the loyalists.”

Carleton looked at him. “Canada?” he said. “You mean Quebec? Montreal?”

“No sir. Catarqui, up the river. I was there for two years, during the French war, a prisoner at Fort Frontenac.”

“It must be two hundred miles from Montreal.”

“About that, sir. It’s where Lake Ontario narrows into the St. Lawrence River.”

“You’ve been there, you say. What sort of country is it? Can people live there?”

Captain Grass was sure they could. He had never seen a finer country.

Sir Guy was much impressed with the man, as well as with the information he brought. He asked him if he would undertake to lead to Fort Frontenac at Catarqui as many loyalists as might choose to accompany him. “I will arrange for your transport,” he said, “and for your rations until such time as you are able to provide for yourselves. What do you say?”

Captain Grass hesitated, but three days later he accepted the challenge. Notices were posted immediately in the streets and interested refugees were asked to enrol their names. The response was heartiest from the artisan class. Seven vessels and a man-of-war were provided for them.

Carleton himself went down to the dock to see them off. He summoned the officers and gave them his parting commission. “It is your duty,” he said, “to provide an asylum for your distressed countrymen. Your task is arduous. Execute it as men of honour. The season for fighting is over. Remember that forgiveness belongs to the injured. They never pardon who have done the wrong. Bury your animosities and try to forget your sorrows. Your ship is ready. God bless you one and all.”

A few days later, another party was organized to go to Canada under a certain Captain Van Alstine, a rotund and swarthy Dutchman who had his own difficulties with the English language. He had gathered together many refugees from the inland colonies, a number of fugitive slaves and the families of some army men. They pushed out into the water with a fleet of seven sails, protected by the brig, Hope, of forty guns. They left their past behind them and turned their faces eagerly towards the new day.

General Washington grew more and more impatient with what he considered unwarranted delay. He asked Carleton to name an outside date for the evacuation of the city.

Politely but firmly Carleton replied: "I cannot even guess when the last ship will be loaded, but I am resolved to remain until it is. The more uncontrolled is the violence of your people, sir, the more refugees you drive to my protection and the longer will be the delay."

Time dragged on week after week until the twenty-fifth of November, when the last claimant to British protection was safe on the deck of a British ship. Then the last British drum beat its farewell on the Battery and the last red-coats filed into the waiting boats. Twelve thousand people, troops and civilians, embarked on that single day without irregularity or misdemeanour of any kind. Washington and his army marched in immediately and took possession of the city.

Sir Guy Carleton, having creditably completed his great task of transporting a hundred thousand loyalists to new homes, returned to England, where he was created Lord Dorchester in recognition of his services. He carried with him to the old land, from the summit of the great monument on the New York Common, the bust of his friend, Sir James Wolfe, who gave his life on Abraham's Plains to establish British dominion in the new world.

Loyalism did not die out in New York with the departure of the British ships. There were many who decided to hold their tongues and retain their possessions. Many of them had to submit all winter to the taunts and jeers of their tormentors in the coffee-houses and on the streets. They dared not protest even when the watchmen on their rounds shouted their names on the midnight air, condemning them as vile hypocrites and enemies of freedom. They had to swallow it all with their pride.

The Sons of Liberty met at their favourite coffee-house in the spring to discuss their attitude to the loyalists. Why should they be compelled to live and mingle with the wretched Tories any longer? Was their democracy safe while the faces of so many wealthy and influential loyalists were to be seen on the streets of New York? Were not the Tories responsible for the charred and ruined condition of the city and for the set-back it had sustained in commerce? It was high time, they thought, that the undesirables should be forced to Canada or to—well, nobody cared much where.

Certain obnoxious faces disappeared at that time from the city streets. The stage-coaches carried loads of loyalists out of the town. Those who decided to sacrifice patriotism to convenience and stay at their posts were subjected to further ridicule. The newspapers reported the prevalence of a terrible epidemic—Independence Fever—and recorded from time to time

the names of those who had fallen prey to it. The tailors claimed to be all but ruined, since so many gentlemen of fashion had become economical turncoats. Some were nicknamed Vicars of Bray, others endured boycott and various types of mild persecution, which grew less toothsome with the years until at last the terrible stigma was forgotten or overlooked.

The United States as a whole settled down finally to a smug complacency. Britain's back had been broken, the people said. Bereft of the greatest of her colonies, she had nothing to look forward to now but political old age with its attendant infirmities and decrepitude. Her sun had set forever in the west.

Chapter XXI

NEW HOMES IN THE NORTH

As pilgrims of an earlier day turned their backs on old England and sought the shores of America, so did these loyal-hearted, pioneering souls, cut adrift by the revolution, turn their faces towards an unknown future. But these were not secured by charter from their sovereign. They were exiled and execrated, stripped of every earthly possession and left on the wayside of life wounded and bleeding. No harvest thanksgiving for them, with groaning tables and flowing bowl. Theirs the daily round of trouble, anxiety and stark necessity. Deserted by those for whom they had sacrificed everything, there was nothing left for them but beggary.

They knocked first of all at Nova Scotia's door. She was a friendly neighbour, opening both her purse and her heart. Stodgy old Halifax bustled with unusual activity. When their houses were filled, the people carried in the cabooses from their ships and set them down in the city streets. There was noise and confusion everywhere. Hysteria, too, whenever a new contingent came in. Men and women threw themselves on their knees and kissed the dear earth. With tears coursing down their cheeks, they clutched the flag of England to their breasts. Praise the good Lord, they were safe at last on British soil!

The River St. John drained what was at that time an outlying and uninhabited region of the Province of Nova Scotia. It was there that three thousand refugees from New York were sent early in the spring. They trusted in the glowing reports they had had of that country, but their hearts sank when they saw only a bare, barren rock, dotted here and there with a few straggling evergreens, and when they heard only the lapping of the restless waves upon the shore. Against the dull, grey, afternoon sky they thought they saw the turrets of a rugged fort towering over a forest of trees. With the meteor flag of England flying at their mastheads, their boats entered the harbour. A salute of guns boomed from the still-observed fort and died away in hollow echoes. The very atmosphere of the place was cold and inhospitable. Night settled down with a drizzling rain. No disembarking from the sickening vomit of their berthless boats that night—nor indeed, for many a day, until the men could clear away the brushwood near the shore

and put up their tents. The middle of May came and still no summer in sight. Many of their number lost hope long before they had set foot on the land.

Refugees poured into the harbour of St. John all that summer. Some pressed through the rocky defile of the river and lost themselves in the interior; others preferred to remain close to the water. More than two thousand shacks were built at the mouth of the river before the owners had any legal claim to the land upon which they stood. Before they knew it, a city had sprung up out of the wilderness like some huge mushroom, embracing not only their humble homes, but a modest church, called New Trinity, in memory of other days.

Those who were apportioned to Upper Canada faced even greater difficulties. The Grass and Van Alstine parties were the better part of a year on the way; a month at sea, weathering frightful gales, a tiresome winter in barracks among the French population, and, finally, in the spring, the great push up the river. Running into rapids a little beyond Montreal, they were forced to stop and build a fleet of flat-bottomed boats, clumsy affairs and so heavy that the men had to wade to their waists in water where the current was strongest and haul them upstream with ropes. This, in the fashionable, tight knee-breeches of the day, for all the clothes they had were on their backs. Three weeks more of strenuous rowing brought them to their destination at the beautiful Bay of Quinte, just beyond Cataraqui and Fort Frontenac. There they pitched their tents.

They met others in that far-away, northern land who had come by strange routes, people who had tramped every foot of the way from New York State, from Pennsylvania, from beyond even that, bringing with them only what they carried in their improvised knapsacks, a piece or two of family pewter, perhaps, a cherished book or a box of jewels. Some roamed about forlornly in embroidered coats and satin waistcoats with garter bows dangling to their ankles; others looked sage and solemn in grey homespun. Their clothes did not matter. Heart responded to heart. With one purpose they had come, even as Abraham of old came from out of the land of the Chaldees, not knowing whither he went.

Britain did not fail them in the end. Awake at last to the extremity of the loyalists, she was willing and anxious to make full compensation. Substantial grants were made of lands and of the commodities of life. Millions of acres of virgin soil were surveyed and divided by lot to the needy people. Lumber and stock were furnished; tools and agricultural implements provided. For three years the British parliament bought the necessary food and clothing. It cost the Motherland millions upon millions

of pounds to keep faith with the saving remnant of their American colonies and to settle them comfortably in their new homes.

The Mohawks were mollified when they learned that they were to be included in the grants. A tract of land was bought for them from the Mississaugas, near the Bay of Quinte. There they came in canoes from down the river, arriving in May, a month before the whites. Captain John Deserontyou was their leader and the custodian of the precious communion silver, buried for eight long years at Fort Hunter. All that time he had had it in his keeping. He had it with him now, safe in its box in the bottom of his canoe. It was covering him at that very moment with its glory.

Captain John knew well the land to which he was leading his people. With a shout of triumph, he sprang to the shore. Removing the box and beaching his canoe, he waited for the crowd to assemble. He was determined to make this an occasion long to be remembered. When every eye was fixed upon him, he opened the box and taking from it the altar cloth, dark and smelly now with mould, he spread it over the upturned canoe and placed on it, in full view of all the people, the eight pieces of Queen Anne's priceless communion service. The crowd listened in reverent silence while he recited a few favourite prayers and then they sang a hymn. The next day they planted a wooden cross to mark their landing-place, and farther inland they raised a staff from the top of which they unfurled to the breeze the red flag of Britain. So did the red men show their devotion to the King and to the King of Kings.

Thayendanegea came in due time to visit his friends and to tell them, as tactfully as he could, that he had changed his mind about settling at the Bay of Quinte. The Governor had secured for the Mohawks a wonderful tract of land, he said, extending for six miles on either side of the Grand River from its source to its mouth.

Deserontyou began to sulk at once. "The Grand River?" he said. "Where's that?"

"Halfway between Niagara and Detroit," said Thayendanegea. "Our allies of the Six Nations do not want us to move so far away. The Senecas want us to be near them in case of war."

"I am not going," said Deserontyou, moodily. "Too near the United States. Those people are like the worm that cuts off the corn in the ear."

By every means he knew, Thayendanegea tried to persuade him, but without effect. Finally he asked the Rev. John Stuart to use his influence.

“It is foolish, Captain John,” said the reverend gentleman, “to remain a handful of people separated from the nation. Most of the people will follow Thayendanegea.”

Deserontyou grunted, characteristically. “It makes no difference to me that a few Mohawks are bending their thoughts to another place,” he said. “I will stay here.”

Then Sir John Johnson tried his powers of persuasion. “I am afraid, Captain John, it is only to gratify your vanity that you refuse,” he said. “Surely you will not let a petty jealousy stand in the way of your nation’s good.”

“Let Thayendanegea think and say what he pleases,” replied the obdurate man. “I could never live at peace so near the United States. I want to live as far from it as I can. I will stay here.”

So it came about that some of the Mohawks continued to live on the shores of the Bay of Quinte. Captain John made a great impression on the Mississaugas by his boasting and by his efforts to include them in the government grants of food and implements. More than once did Sir John Johnson have to remonstrate with him to curb his munificence.

Thayendanegea and his supporters went to the Grand River, taking with them the Bible and half of the Mohawk communion silver. Far in the interior of Upper Canada, where as yet the foot of the white man had never trod, they built their long-house and founded a settlement. Brant’s Ford, the people of a later day called it.

In times of peace the great Mohawk turned his thoughts again to religion and to the welfare of his people. He had conceived the idea of building a church. When he went to England to plead once more the cause of the Indians, he brought back with him sufficient funds to build not only a church but a school and a grist-mill as well. Already he had bought, in England, the great bell that was to call the people to worship, and he used it to visualize to his people his great scheme. The men responded nobly. The lumber had to be hauled all the way from the head of Lake Ontario, through thirty miles of densest forest. There were many difficulties to encounter but at last they finished their task. The buildings stood before them as a lasting monument to their industry and enterprise.

A simple ceremony was to mark the opening of the first Christian Church in all the wilderness of Upper Canada. The Reverend John Stuart travelled three hundred miles to consecrate it, and Sir John Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was the guest of the day. The altar table

was spread with purest linen and on it stood the four pieces that remained to them of the Mohawk communion silver. In the chancel beyond hung the commandments in Mohawk; Queen Anne's huge Bible lay on the pulpit; the bell chimed in the belfry. Thayendanegea and his people were very happy.

"What do you propose to do next, Joseph?" asked Mr. Stuart when the service was over.

"This is only the beginning," was the reply. "There are many things that I must teach my people."

"You will take up again your great work of translation, I hope."

"Yes. I must do that. My people cannot read the English Bible. They get their ideas of Christianity from the lives of the Christians they see."

"A poor text-book, I'm afraid," said the clergyman.

Thayendanegea smiled sadly and continued: "Only yesterday one of my braves said to me: 'Brother, what good has it done? The palefaces quarrel, they cheat, they lie, they drink strong waters, they desecrate the Sabbath. Do they learn all that from their Bibles?'"

"And what did you tell him, Joseph?"

"That the mind of the white man is shallow, that he cannot think deeply and that he forgets much."

"It is true," said Mr. Stuart, thoughtfully.

Sir John Johnson came up presently and asked Thayendanegea if he was enjoying his new life better than those days when together they ravaged the lands of their enemies.

The Indian stood a moment in saddest contemplation. "If I could, I would forget the war," he said, at length. "I cannot think that the Great Spirit made man to destroy man. War breaks the divine law and debases man. It divides and separates, but in unity and harmony is strength and progress."

It was not exactly the answer Sir John expected. "You can't blame a man for defending his property and the lives of his wife and children," he said, ready for an argument.

"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you," quoted the great Mohawk, "and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also."

Sir John turned on his heel and walked slowly away.

Lean years followed. One in particular was called the hungry year. The people had to struggle for the barest existence. Crops failed in the lake region when the three periods of government rations had just expired. They were face to face with starvation. Entire families lived for weeks on boiled oats, and men sold their farms for a mess of pottage, a little flour or a basin of coarse bran. Some subsisted on the buds of trees. Game was plentiful enough, but powder and shot were at a premium. Gaunt men crept about with long poles, trying to knock down wild birds from the trees, or angled all day with awkward, homemade hooks and came home at night with a few chub or perch. Beef bones were passed from house to house. The weak and the aged toppled into their graves, glad enough to be gone. Life was no longer worth the living.

These privations were, however, not an unmixed evil, for they fostered a healthy spirit of comradeship. There were community raising bees and chopping frolics, and when bountiful harvests came again, there were husking bees and jolly barn dances. Necessity turned strange neighbours into friends. It kept them all on the same humble social footing.

Of course, Sir John Johnson was never reduced to such extremities. Although he had lost, by his own computation, a hundred thousand guineas and suffered a heavy diminution in his pay at the close of the war, he was still able to put up a very good front. No one had received such liberal concessions from the government as he. He lived in Montreal, in a handsome house, which he called Mount Johnson, and he associated only with the governor and his circle. He was still the aristocrat.

Polly came out to him again to be the joy of his life. For many years she dispensed generous hospitality to her new friends. It displeased her when Sir John made disparaging remarks, apologizing for their "simple" home and the "humble plane" on which they were forced to live. Material things meant little to her so long as she had again her beloved husband. "Let us think no more of the past, dear John," she would say. "There is always the future to look forward to."

But Sir John could see nothing but old age and the cessation of happiness in the future. It might have been so different but for the war—always the dreadful nightmare of the war.

"I sometimes think it was a blessing in disguise," Polly ventured to remark one day.

"What was?"

"Why, the war."

“And how do you make that out, little woman?”

Polly pouted very prettily and said: “You always make fun of my political ideas, John.”

“I promise to listen sober as a bencher,” he promised her.

She told him then what was in her thoughts. “I think we are facing a great change in this new world,” she said. “Upper Canada and the Maritime Provinces will grow in numbers and influence. It is only natural to suppose that in time they will join—”

“Never!” cried Sir John, excitedly. “That is what some fools are predicting. We’ll never join the United States.”

“Of course we won’t,” said Polly, quietly.

“Then why did you say so?”

“I didn’t. If you hadn’t interrupted me, you dear, old, spiteful thing, you would know that I wasn’t even thinking about the United States. I was going to suggest that the British provinces may unite some day to form a British confederacy!”

“A British confederacy! That’s an idea!” cried Sir John. He caught Polly in his arms and kissed her where she stood. “A brilliant idea, my lovely Polly. Bejabers, we’ll beat the rebels yet!”

Thayendanegea did not live always at Brant’s Ford. He spent his declining years at Brant House, near the head of Lake Ontario, on an estate of thirty-four hundred acres which came to him from the British government as a reward for his valuable services in the war and for his staunch adherence to the British. There he lived like some princeling, attended by a retinue of thirty negro servants and a number of gay British officers in scarlet coats and powdered wigs. It was there he died. His body was carried by faithful friends thirty miles through the bush to his church on the Grand River. The bell, which had begun to sound when the cortège left Brant House, tolled mournfully on until the last sad rites had been performed.

Sir John lived for twenty years longer, the last of his father’s family. It was midwinter when his great call came. At the news of his death, the St. Regis Indians journeyed to Montreal to make their lamentation. This was the man their fathers had helped in his first mad flight to Canada, more than fifty years before; this, the son of their great white chief, Warraghuay. It was Polly’s wish that they should be accorded every honour and allowed to take part in the funeral services. Their chief made an eloquent oration and

performed the ceremony of condolence. For hours he and his men stood beside the grave, mourning loudly for their dead brother.

Polly mourned, too, for many years, but alone and in silence. Lovely in youth, she was lovelier in age. She never bemoaned the misfortunes of her life. No regrets ever passed her lips; no malice dwelt in her heart. "We did what we knew was right," she used to say, "and that is all that really matters."

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Trail of the King's Men* by Mabel Dunham]