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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The author has often been asked if there were any foundation in real life for the delineation of the principal character in this book. He can give no clearer answer to the question than by laying before his readers a simple statement of the facts connected with its original publication.

Many years since, the writer of this volume was at the residence of an illustrious man, who had been employed in various situations of high trust during the darkest days of the American Revolution. The discourse turned upon the effects which great political excitement produces on character, and the purifying consequences of a love of country, when that sentiment is powerfully and generally awakened in a people. He who, from his years, his services, and his knowledge of men, was best qualified to take the lead in such a conversation, was the principal speaker. After dwelling on the marked manner in which the great struggle of the nation, during the war of 1775, had given a new and honorable direction to the thoughts and practices of multitudes whose time had formerly been engrossed by the most vulgar concerns of life, he illustrated his opinions by relating an anecdote, the truth of which he could attest as a personal witness.

The dispute between England and the United States of America, though not strictly a family quarrel, had many of the features of a civil war. The people of the latter were never properly and constitutionally subject to the people of

the former, but the inhabitants of both countries owed allegiance to a common king. The Americans, as a nation, disavowed this allegiance, and the English choosing to support their sovereign in the attempt to regain his power, most of the feelings of an internal struggle were involved in the conflict. A large proportion of the emigrants from Europe, then established in the colonies, took part with the crown; and there were many districts in which their influence, united to that of the Americans who refused to lay aside their allegiance, gave a decided preponderance to the royal cause. America was then too young, and too much in need of every heart and hand, to regard these partial divisions, small as they were in actual amount, with indifference. The evil was greatly increased by the activity of the English in profiting by these internal dissensions; and it became doubly serious when it was found that attempts were made to raise various corps of provincial troops, who were to be banded with those from Europe, to reduce the young republic to subjection. Congress named an especial and a secret committee, therefore, for the express purpose of defeating this object. Of this committee Mr.——, the narrator of the anecdote, was chairman.

In the discharge of the novel duties which now devolved on him, Mr.—— had occasion to employ an agent whose services differed but little from those of a common spy. This man, as will easily be understood, belonged to a condition in life which rendered him the least reluctant to appear in so equivocal a character. He was poor, ignorant, so far as the usual instruction was concerned; but cool, shrewd, and fearless by nature. It was his office to learn in what part of the country the agents of the crown were making their efforts to embody men, to repair to the place, enlist, appear zealous in the cause he affected to serve, and otherwise to get possession of as many of the secrets of the enemy as possible. The last he of course communicated to his employers, who took all the means in their power to

counteract the plans of the English, and frequently with success.

It will readily be conceived that a service like this was attended with great personal hazard. In addition to the danger of discovery, there was the daily risk of falling into the hands of the Americans themselves, who invariably visited sins of this nature more severely on the natives of the country than on the Europeans who fell into their hands. In fact, the agent of Mr. —— was several times arrested by the local authorities; and, in one instance, he was actually condemned by his exasperated countrymen to the gallows. Speedy and private orders to the jailer alone saved him from an ignominious death. He was permitted to escape; and this seeming and indeed actual peril was of great aid in supporting his assumed character among the English. By the Americans, in his little sphere, he was denounced as a bold and inveterate Tory. In this manner he continued to serve his country in secret during the early years of the struggle, hourly environed by danger, and the constant subject of unmerited opprobrium.

In the year —-, Mr. —— was named to a high and honorable employment at a European court. Before vacating his seat in Congress, he reported to that body an outline of the circumstances related, necessarily suppressing the name of his agent, and demanding an appropriation in behalf of a man who had been of so much use, at so great risk. A suitable sum was voted; and its delivery was confided to the chairman of the secret committee.

Mr. —— took the necessary means to summon his agent to a personal interview. They met in a wood at midnight. Here Mr. —— complimented his companion on his fidelity and adroitness; explained the necessity of their communications being closed; and finally tendered the money. The other drew back, and declined receiving it. "The country has need of all its means," he said; "as for myself, I can work, or gain a livelihood in various ways." Persuasion was useless,

for patriotism was uppermost in the heart of this remarkable individual; and Mr. —— departed, bearing with him the gold he had brought, and a deep respect for the man who had so long hazarded his life, unrequited, for the cause they served in common.

The writer is under an impression that, at a later day, the agent of Mr. —— consented to receive a remuneration for what he had done; but it was not until his country was entirely in a condition to bestow it.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that an anecdote like this, simply but forcibly told by one of its principal actors, made a deep impression on all who heard it. Many years later, circumstances, which it is unnecessary to relate, and of an entirely adventitious nature, induced the writer to publish a novel, which proved to be, what he little foresaw at the time, the first of a tolerably long series. The same adventitious causes which gave birth to the book determined its scene and its general character. The former was laid in a foreign country; and the latter embraced a crude effort to describe foreign manners. When this tale was published, it became matter of reproach among the author's friends, that he, an American in heart as in birth, should give to the world a work which aided perhaps, in some slight degree, to feed the imaginations of the young and unpracticed among his own countrymen, by pictures drawn from a state of society so different from that to which he belonged. The writer, while he knew how much of what he had done was purely accidental, felt the reproach to be one that, in a measure, was just. As the only atonement in his power, he determined to inflict a second book, whose subject should admit of no cavil, not only on the world, but on himself. He chose patriotism for his theme; and to those who read this introduction and the book itself, it is scarcely necessary to add, that he took the hero of the anecdote just related as the best illustration of his subject.

Since the original publication of The Spy , there have appeared several accounts of different persons who are supposed to have been in the author's mind while writing the book. As Mr. —— did not mention the name of his agent, the writer never knew any more of his identity with this or that individual, than has been here explained. Both Washington and Sir Henry Clinton had an unusual number of secret emissaries; in a war that partook so much of a domestic character, and in which the contending parties were people of the same blood and language, it could scarcely be otherwise.

The style of the book has been revised by the author in this edition. In this respect, he has endeavored to make it more worthy of the favor with which it has been received; though he is compelled to admit there are faults so interwoven with the structure of the tale that, as in the case of a decayed edifice, it would cost perhaps less to reconstruct than to repair. Five-and-twenty years have been as ages with most things connected with America. Among other advantages, that of her literature has not been the least. So little was expected from the publication of an original work of this description, at the time it was written, that the first volume of The Spy was actually printed several months, before the author felt a sufficient inducement to write a line of the second. The efforts expended on a hopeless task are rarely worthy of him who makes them, however low it may be necessary to rate the standard of his general merit. One other anecdote connected with the history of this book may give the reader some idea of the hopes of an American author, in the first quarter of the present century. As the second volume was slowly printing, from manuscript that was barely dry when it went into the compositor's hands, the publisher intimated that the work might grow to a length that would consume the profits. To set his mind at rest, the last chapter was actually written, printed, and paged, several weeks before the chapters which precede it

were even thought of. This circumstance, while it cannot excuse, may serve to explain the manner in which the actors are hurried off the scene.

A great change has come over the country since this book was originally written. The nation is passing from the gristle into the bone, and the common mind is beginning to keep even pace with the growth of the body politic. The march from Vera Cruz to Mexico was made under the orders of that gallant soldier who, a quarter of a century before, was mentioned with honor, in the last chapter of this very book. Glorious as was that march, and brilliant as were its results in a military point of view, a stride was then made by the nation, in a moral sense, that has hastened it by an age, in its progress toward real independence and high political influence. The guns that filled the valley of the Aztecs with their thunder, have been heard in echoes on the other side of the Atlantic, producing equally hope or apprehension.

There is now no enemy to fear, but the one that resides within. By accustoming ourselves to regard even the people as erring beings, and by using the restraints that wisdom has adduced from experience, there is much reason to hope that the same Providence which has so well aided us in our infancy, may continue to smile on our manhood.

CHAPTER I

And though amidst the calm of thought entire,
Some high and haughty features might betray
A soul impetuous once—'twas earthly fire
That fled composure's intellectual ray,
As Etna's fires grow dim before the rising day.
—Gertrude of Wyoming.

It was near the close of the year 1780 that a solitary traveler was seen pursuing his way through one of the numerous little valleys of Westchester. [Footnote: As each state of the American Union has its own counties, it often happens that there are several which bear the same name. The scene of this tale is in New York, whose county of Westchester is the nearest adjoining to the city.] The easterly wind, with its chilling dampness and increasing violence, gave unerring notice of the approach of a storm, which, as usual, might be expected to continue for several days; and the experienced eye of the traveler was turned in vain, through the darkness of the evening, in quest of some convenient shelter, in which, for the term of his confinement by the rain that already began to mix with the atmosphere in a thick mist, he might obtain such accommodations as his purposes required. Nothing whatever offered but the small and inconvenient tenements of the lower order of the inhabitants, with whom, in that immediate neighborhood, he did not think it either safe or

politic to trust himself.

The county of Westchester, after the British had obtained possession of the island of New York, [Footnote: The city of New York is situated on an island called Manhattan: but it is at one point separated from the county of Westchester by a creek of only a few feet in width. The bridge at this spot is called King's Bridge. It was the scene of many skirmishes during the war, and is alluded to in this tale. Every Manhattanese knows the difference between "Manhattan Island" and the "island of Manhattan." The first is applied to a small District in the vicinity of Corlaer's Hook, while the last embraces the Whole island; or the city and county of New York as it is termed in the laws.] became common ground, in which both parties continued to act for the remainder of the war of the Revolution. A large proportion of its inhabitants, either restrained by their attachments, or influenced by their fears, affected a neutrality they did not feel. The lower towns were, of course, more particularly under the dominion of the crown, while the upper, finding a security from the vicinity of the continental troops, were bold in asserting their revolutionary opinions, and their right to govern themselves. Great numbers, however, wore masks, which even to this day have not been thrown aside; and many an individual has gone down to the tomb, stigmatized as a foe to the rights of his countrymen, while, in secret, he has been the useful agent of the leaders of the Revolution; and, on the other hand, could the hidden repositories of divers flaming patriots have been opened to the light of day, royal protections would have been discovered concealed under piles of British gold.

At the sound of the tread of the noble horse ridden by the traveler, the mistress of the farmhouse he was passing at the time might be seen cautiously opening the door of the building to examine the stranger; and perhaps, with an averted face communicating the result of her observations to her husband, who, in the rear of the building, was

prepared to seek, if necessary, his ordinary place of concealment in the adjacent woods. The valley was situated about midway in the length of the county, and was sufficiently near to both armies to make the restitution of stolen goods no uncommon occurrence in that vicinity. It is true, the same articles were not always regained; but a summary substitute was generally resorted to, in the absence of legal justice, which restored to the loser the amount of his loss, and frequently with no inconsiderable addition for the temporary use of his property. In short, the law was momentarily extinct in that particular district, and justice was administered subject to the bias of personal interests and the passions of the strongest.

The passage of a stranger, with an appearance of somewhat doubtful character, and mounted on an animal which, although unfurnished with any of the ordinary trappings of war, partook largely of the bold and upright carriage that distinguished his rider, gave rise to many surmises among the gazing inmates of the different habitations; and in some instances, where conscience was more than ordinarily awake, to no little alarm.

Tired with the exercise of a day of unusual fatigue, and anxious to obtain a speedy shelter from the increasing violence of the storm, that now began to change its character to large drops of driving rain, the traveler determined, as a matter of necessity, to make an application for admission to the next dwelling that offered. An opportunity was not long wanting; and, riding through a pair of neglected bars, he knocked loudly at the outer door of a building of a very humble exterior, without quitting his saddle. A female of middle age, with an outward bearing but little more prepossessing than that of her dwelling, appeared to answer the summons. The startled woman half closed her door again in affright, as she saw, by the glare of a large wood fire, a mounted man so unexpectedly near its threshold; and an expression of terror mingled with her

natural curiosity, as she required his pleasure.
Although the door was too nearly closed to admit of a minute scrutiny of the accommodations within, enough had been seen to cause the horseman to endeavor, once more, to penetrate the gloom, with longing eyes, in search of a more promising roof, before, with an ill-concealed reluctance, he stated his necessities and wishes. His request was listened to with evident unwillingness, and, while yet unfinished, it was eagerly interrupted by the reply:
"I can't say I like to give lodgings to a stranger in these ticklish times," said the female, in a pert, sharp key. "I'm nothing but a forlorn lone body; or, what's the same thing, there's nobody but the old gentleman at home; but a half mile farther up the road is a house where you can get entertainment, and that for nothing. I am sure 'twill be much convenienter to them, and more agreeable to me—because, as I said before, Harvey is away; I wish he'd take advice, and leave off wandering; he's well to do in the world by this time; and he ought to leave off his uncertain courses, and settle himself, handsomely, in life, like other men of his years and property. But Harvey Birch will have his own way, and die vagabond after all!"
The horseman did not wait to hear more than the advice to pursue his course up the road; but he had slowly turned his horse towards the bars, and was gathering the folds of an ample cloak around his manly form, preparatory to facing the storm again, when something in the speech of the female suddenly arrested the movement.
"Is this, then, the dwelling of Harvey Birch?" he inquired, in an involuntary manner, apparently checking himself, as he was about to utter more.
"Why, one can hardly say it is his dwelling," replied the other, drawing a hurried breath, like one eager to answer; "he is never in it, or so seldom, that I hardly remember his face, when he does think it worth his while to show it to his

poor old father and me. But it matters little to me, I'm sure, if he ever comes back again, or not;—turn in the first gate on your left;—no, I care but little, for my part, whether Harvey ever shows his face again or not—not I"—and she closed the door abruptly on the horseman, who gladly extended his ride a half mile farther, to obtain lodgings which promised both more comfort and greater security. Sufficient light yet remained to enable the traveler to distinguish the improvements [Footnote: Improvements is used by the Americans to express every degree of change in converting land from its state of wilderness to that of cultivation. In this meaning of the word, it is an improvement to fell the trees; and it is valued precisely by the supposed amount of the cost.] which had been made in the cultivation, and in the general appearance of the grounds around the building to which he was now approaching. The house was of stone, long, low, and with a small wing at each extremity. A piazza, extending along the front, with neatly turned pillars of wood, together with the good order and preservation of the fences and outbuildings, gave the place an air altogether superior to the common farmhouses of the country. After leading his horse behind an angle of the wall, where it was in some degree protected from the wind and rain, the traveler threw his valise over his arm, and knocked loudly at the entrance of the building for admission. An aged black soon appeared; and without seeming to think it necessary, under the circumstances, to consult his superiors,—first taking one prying look at the applicant, by the light of the candle in his hand,—he acceded to the request for accommodations. The traveler was shown into an extremely neat parlor, where a fire had been lighted to cheer the dullness of an easterly storm and an October evening. After giving the valise into the keeping of his civil attendant, and politely repeating his request to the old gentleman, who arose to receive him, and paying his compliments to the three ladies who were seated at

work with their needles, the stranger commenced laying aside some of the outer garments which he had worn in his ride.

On taking an extra handkerchief from his neck, and removing a cloak of blue cloth, with a surtout of the same material, he exhibited to the scrutiny of the observant family party, a tall and extremely graceful person, of apparently fifty years of age. His countenance evinced a settled composure and dignity; his nose was straight, and approaching to Grecian; his eye, of a gray color, was quiet, thoughtful, and rather melancholy; the mouth and lower part of his face being expressive of decision and much character. His dress, being suited to the road, was simple and plain, but such as was worn by the higher class of his countrymen; he wore his own hair, dressed in a manner that gave a military air to his appearance, and which was rather heightened by his erect and conspicuously graceful carriage. His whole appearance was so impressive and so decidedly that of a gentleman, that as he finished laying aside the garments, the ladies arose from their seats, and, together with the master of the house, they received anew, and returned the complimentary greetings which were again offered.

The host was by several years the senior of the traveler, and by his manner, dress, and everything around him, showed he had seen much of life and the best society. The ladies were, a maiden of forty, and two much younger, who did not seem, indeed, to have reached half those years. The bloom of the elder of these ladies had vanished, but her eyes and fine hair gave an extremely agreeable expression to her countenance; and there was a softness and an affability in her deportment, that added a charm many more juvenile faces do not possess. The sisters, for such the resemblance between the younger females denoted them to be, were in all the pride of youth, and the roses, so eminently the property of the Westchester fair, glowed on

their cheeks, and lighted their deep blue eyes with that luster which gives so much pleasure to the beholder, and which indicates so much internal innocence and peace. There was much of that feminine delicacy in the appearance of the three, which distinguishes the sex in this country; and, like the gentleman, their demeanor proved them to be women of the higher order of life.

After handing a glass of excellent Madeira to his guest, Mr. Wharton, for so was the owner of this retired estate called, resumed his seat by the fire, with another in his own hand. For a moment he paused, as if debating with his politeness, but at length threw an inquiring glance on the stranger, as he inquired,—

"To whose health am I to have the honor of drinking?"

The traveler had also seated himself, and he sat unconsciously gazing on the fire, while Mr. Wharton spoke; turning his eyes slowly on his host with a look of close observation, he replied, while a faint tinge gathered on his features,—

"Mr. Harper."

"Mr. Harper," resumed the other, with the formal precision of that day, "I have the honor to drink your health, and to hope you will sustain no injury from the rain to which you have been exposed."

Mr. Harper bowed in silence to the compliment, and he soon resumed the meditations from which he had been interrupted, and for which the long ride he had that day made, in the wind, might seem a very natural apology. The young ladies had again taken their seats beside the workstand, while their aunt, Miss Jeanette Peyton, withdrew to superintend the preparations necessary to appease the hunger of their unexpected visitor. A short silence prevailed, during which Mr. Harper was apparently enjoying the change in his situation, when Mr. Wharton again broke it, by inquiring whether smoke was disagreeable to his companion; to which, receiving an

answer in the negative, he immediately resumed the pipe which had been laid aside at the entrance of the traveler. There was an evident desire on the part of the host to enter into conversation, but either from an apprehension of treading on dangerous ground, or an unwillingness to intrude upon the rather studied taciturnity of his guest, he several times hesitated, before he could venture to make any further remark. At length, a movement from Mr. Harper, as he raised his eyes to the party in the room, encouraged him to proceed.

"I find it very difficult," said Mr. Wharton, cautiously avoiding at first, such subjects as he wished to introduce, "to procure that quality of tobacco for my evenings' amusement to which I have been accustomed."

"I should think the shops in New York might furnish the best in the country," calmly rejoined the other.

"Why—yes," returned the host in rather a hesitating manner, lifting his eyes to the face of Harper, and lowering them quickly under his steady look, "there must be plenty in town; but the war has made communication with the city, however innocent, too dangerous to be risked for so trifling an article as tobacco."

The box from which Mr. Wharton had just taken a supply for his pipe was lying open, within a few inches of the elbow of Harper, who took a small quantity from its contents, and applied it to his tongue, in a manner perfectly natural, but one that filled his companion with alarm. Without, however, observing that the quality was of the most approved kind, the traveler relieved his host by relapsing again into his meditations. Mr. Wharton now felt unwilling to lose the advantage he had gained, and, making an effort of more than usual vigor, he continued,—

"I wish from the bottom of my heart, this unnatural struggle was over, that we might again meet our friends and relatives in peace and love."

"It is much to be desired," said Harper, emphatically, again

raising his eyes to the countenance of his host.
"I hear of no movement of consequence, since the arrival of our new allies," said Mr. Wharton, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and turning his back to the other under the pretense of receiving a coal from his youngest daughter.
"None have yet reached the public, I believe."
"Is it thought any important steps are about to be taken?" continued Mr. Wharton, still occupied with his daughter, yet suspending his employment, in expectation of a reply.
"Is it intimated any are in agitation?"
"Oh! nothing in particular; but it is natural to expect some new enterprise from so powerful a force as that under Rochambeau."
Harper made an assenting inclination with his head, but no other reply, to this remark; while Mr. Wharton, after lighting his pipe, resumed the subject.
"They appear more active in the south; Gates and Cornwallis seem willing to bring the war to an issue there."
The brow of Harper contracted, and a deeper shade of melancholy crossed his features; his eye kindled with a transient beam of fire, that spoke a latent source of deep feeling. The admiring gaze of the younger of the sisters had barely time to read its expression, before it passed away, leaving in its room the acquired composure which marked the countenance of the stranger, and that impressive dignity which so conspicuously denotes the empire of reason.
The elder sister made one or two movements in her chair, before she ventured to say, in a tone which partook in no small measure of triumph,—
"General Gates has been less fortunate with the earl, than with General
Burgoyne."

"But General Gates is an Englishman, Sarah," cried the younger lady, with quickness; then, coloring to the eyes at her own boldness, she employed herself in tumbling over the contents of her work basket, silently hoping the remark would be unnoticed.

The traveler had turned his face from one sister to the other, as they had spoken in succession, and an almost imperceptible movement of the muscles of his mouth betrayed a new emotion, as he playfully inquired of the younger,—

"May I venture to ask what inference you would draw from that fact?"

Frances blushed yet deeper at this direct appeal to her opinions upon a subject on which she had incautiously spoken in the presence of a stranger; but finding an answer necessary, after some little hesitation, and with a good deal of stammering in her manner, she replied,—

"Only—only—sir—my sister and myself sometimes differ in our opinions of the prowess of the British." A smile of much meaning played on a face of infantile innocency, as she concluded.

"On what particular points of their prowess do you differ?" continued Harper, meeting her look of animation with a smile of almost paternal softness.

"Sarah thinks the British are never beaten, while I do not put so much faith in their invincibility."

The traveler listened to her with that pleased indulgence, with which virtuous age loves to contemplate the ardor of youthful innocence; but making no reply, he turned to the fire, and continued for some time gazing on its embers, in silence.

Mr. Wharton had in vain endeavored to pierce the disguise of his guest's political feelings; but, while there was nothing forbidding in his countenance, there was nothing communicative; on the contrary it was strikingly reserved; and the master of the house arose, in profound ignorance

of what, in those days, was the most material point in the character of his guest, to lead the way into another room, and to the supper table. Mr. Harper offered his hand to Sarah Wharton, and they entered the room together; while Frances followed, greatly at a loss to know whether she had not wounded the feelings of her father's inmate.

The storm began to rage with great violence without; and the dashing rain on the sides of the building awakened that silent sense of enjoyment, which is excited by such sounds in a room of quiet comfort and warmth, when a loud summons at the outer door again called the faithful black to the portal. In a minute the servant returned, and informed his master that another traveler, overtaken by the storm, desired to be admitted to the house for a shelter through the night.

At the first sounds of the impatient summons of this new applicant, Mr. Wharton had risen from his seat in evident uneasiness; and with eyes glancing with quickness from his guest to the door of the room, he seemed to be expecting something to proceed from this second interruption, connected with the stranger who had occasioned the first. He scarcely had time to bid the black, with a faint voice, to show this second comer in, before the door was thrown hastily open, and the stranger himself entered the apartment. He paused a moment, as the person of Harper met his view, and then, in a more formal manner, repeated the request he had before made through the servant. Mr. Wharton and his family disliked the appearance of this new visitor excessively; but the inclemency of the weather, and the uncertainty of the consequences, if he were refused the desired lodgings, compelled the old gentleman to give a reluctant acquiescence.

Some of the dishes were replaced by the orders of Miss Peyton, and the weather-beaten intruder was invited to partake of the remains of the repast, from which the party had just risen. Throwing aside a rough greatcoat, he very

composedly took the offered chair, and unceremoniously proceeded to allay the cravings of an appetite which appeared by no means delicate. But at every mouthful he would turn an unquiet eye on Harper, who studied his appearance with a closeness of investigation that was very embarrassing to its subject. At length, pouring out a glass of wine, the newcomer nodded significantly to his examiner, previously to swallowing the liquor, and said, with something of bitterness in his manner,—

"I drink to our better acquaintance, sir; I believe this is the first time we have met, though your attention would seem to say otherwise."

The quality of the wine seemed greatly to his fancy, for, on replacing the glass upon the table, he gave his lips a smack, that resounded through the room; and, taking up the bottle, he held it between himself and the light, for a moment, in silent contemplation of its clear and brilliant color.

"I think we have never met before, sir," replied Harper with a slight smile on his features, as he observed the move ments of the other; but appearing satisfied with his scrutiny, he turned to Sarah Wharton, who sat next him, and carelessly remarked,—

"You doubtless find your present abode solitary, after being accustomed to the gayeties of the city."

"Oh! excessively so," said Sarah hastily. "I do wish, with my father, that this cruel war was at an end, that we might return to our friends once more."

"And you, Miss Frances, do you long as ardently for peace as your sister?"

"On many accounts I certainly do," returned the other, venturing to steal a timid glance at her interrogator; and, meeting the same benevolent expression of feeling as before, she continued, as her own face lighted into one of its animated and bright smiles of intelligence, "but not at the expense of the rights of my countrymen."

"Rights!" repeated her sister, impatiently; "whose rights can be stronger than those of a sovereign: and what duty is clearer, than to obey those who have a natural right to command?"
"None, certainly," said Frances, laughing with great pleasantry; and, taking the hand of her sister affectionately within both of her own, she added, with a smile directed towards Harper,—
"I gave you to understand that my sister and myself differed in our political opinions; but we have an impartial umpire in my father, who loves his own countrymen, and he loves the British,—so he takes sides with neither."
"Yes," said Mr. Wharton, in a little alarm, eying first one guest, and then the other; "I have near friends in both armies, and I dread a victory by either, as a source of certain private misfortune."
"I take it, you have little reason to apprehend much from the Yankees, in that way," interrupted the guest at the table, coolly helping himself to another glass, from the bottle he had admired.
"His majesty may have more experienced troops than the continentals," answered the host fearfully, "but the Americans have met with distinguished success."
Harper disregarded the observations of both; and, rising, he desired to be shown to his place of rest. A small boy was directed to guide him to his room; and wishing a courteous good-night to the whole party, the traveler withdrew. The knife and fork fell from the hands of the unwelcome intruder, as the door closed on the retiring figure of Harper; he arose slowly from his seat; listening attentively, he approached the door of the room—opened it—seemed to attend to the retreating footsteps of the other—and, amidst the panic and astonishment of his companions, he closed it again. In an instant, the red wig which concealed his black locks, the large patch which hid half his face from observation, the stoop that had made him appear fifty years

of age, disappeared.
"My father!-my dear father!"—cried the handsome young man; "and you, my dearest sisters and aunt!—have I at last met you again?"
"Heaven bless you, my Henry, my son!" exclaimed the astonished but delighted parent; while his sisters sank on his shoulders, dissolved in tears.
The faithful old black, who had been reared from infancy in the house of his master, and who, as if in mockery of his degraded state, had been complimented with the name of Caesar, was the only other witness of this unexpected discovery of the son of Mr. Wharton. After receiving the extended hand of his young master, and imprinting on it a fervent kiss, Caesar withdrew. The boy did not reenter the room; and the black himself, after some time, returned, just as the young British captain was exclaiming,—
"But who is this Mr. Harper?—is he likely to betray me?"
"No, no, no, Massa Harry," cried the negro, shaking his gray head confidently; "I been to see—Massa Harper on he knee—pray to God—no gemman who pray to God tell of good son, come to see old fader—Skinner do that—no Christian!"
This poor opinion of the Skinners was not confined to Mr. Caesar Thompson, as he called himself—but Caesar Wharton, as he was styled by the little world to which he was known. The convenience, and perhaps the necessities, of the leaders of the American arms, in the neighborhood of New York, had induced them to employ certain subordinate agents, of extremely irregular habits, in executing their lesser plans of annoying the enemy. It was not a moment for fastidious inquiries into abuses of any description, and oppression and injustice were the natural consequences of the possession of a military power that was uncurbed by the restraints of civil authority. In time, a distinct order of the community was formed, whose sole occupation appears to have been that of relieving their fellow citizens from any

little excess of temporal prosperity they might be thought to enjoy, under the pretense of patriotism and the love of liberty.

Occasionally, the aid of military authority was not wanting, in enforcing these arbitrary distributions of worldly goods; and a petty holder of a commission in the state militia was to be seen giving the sanction of something like legality to acts of the most unlicensed robbery, and, not infrequently, of bloodshed.

On the part of the British, the stimulus of loyalty was by no means suffered to sleep, where so fruitful a field offered on which it might be expended. But their freebooters were enrolled, and their efforts more systematized. Long experience had taught their leaders the efficacy of concentrated force; and, unless tradition does great injustice to their exploits, the result did no little credit to their foresight. The corps—we presume, from their known affection to that useful animal—had received the quaint appellation of "Cowboys."

Caesar was, however, far too loyal to associate men who held the commission of George III, with the irregular warriors, whose excesses he had so often witnessed, and from whose rapacity, neither his poverty nor his bondage had suffered even him to escape uninjured. The Cowboys, therefore, did not receive their proper portion of the black's censure, when he said, no Christian, nothing but a "Skinner," could betray a pious child, while honoring his father with a visit so full of peril.

CHAPTER II

And many a halcyon day he lived to see
Unbroken, but by one misfortune dire,
When fate had reft his mutual heart—but she
Was gone-and Gertrude climbed a widowed father's knee.
—Gertrude of Wyoming.

The father of Mr. Wharton was a native of England, and of a family whose parliamentary interest had enabled them to provide for a younger son in the colony of New York. The young man, like hundreds of others in this situation, had settled permanently in the country. He married; and the sole issue of his connection had been sent early in life to receive the benefits of the English schools. After taking his degrees at one of the universities of the mother country, the youth had been suffered to acquire a knowledge of life with the advantages of European society. But the death of his father recalled him, after passing two years in this manner, to the possession of an honorable name, and a very ample estate.

It was much the fashion of that day to place the youth of certain families in the army and navy of England, as the regular stepping-stones to preferment. Most of the higher offices in the colonies were filled by men who had made arms their profession; and it was even no uncommon sight to see a veteran warrior laying aside the sword to assume the ermine on the benches of the highest judicial authority.

In conformity with this system, the senior Mr. Wharton had intended his son for a soldier; but a natural imbecility of character in his child interfered with his wishes.

A twelvemonth had been spent by the young man in weighing the comparative advantages of the different classes of troops, when the death of his father occurred. The ease of his situation, and the attentions lavished upon a youth in the actual enjoyment of one of the largest estates in the colonies, interfered greatly with his ambitious projects. Love decided the matter; and Mr. Wharton, in becoming a husband, ceased to think of becoming a soldier. For many years he continued happy in his family, and sufficiently respected by his countrymen, as a man of integrity and consequence, when all his enjoyments vanished, as it were, at a blow. His only son, the youth introduced in the preceding chapter, had entered the army, and had arrived in his native country, but a short time before the commencement of hostilities, with the reinforcements the ministry had thought it prudent to throw into the disaffected parts of North America. His daughters were just growing into life, and their education required all the advantages the city could afford. His wife had been for some years in declining health, and had barely time to fold her son to her bosom, and rejoice in the reunion of her family, before the Revolution burst forth, in a continued blaze, from Georgia to Massachusetts. The shock was too much for the feeble condition of the mother, who saw her child called to the field to combat against the members of her own family in the South, and she sank under the blow.

There was no part of the continent where the manners of England and its aristocratical notions of blood and alliances, prevailed with more force than in a certain circle immediately around the metropolis of New York. The customs of the early Dutch inhabitants had, indeed, blended in some measures, with the English manners; but

still the latter prevailed. This attachment to Great Britain was increased by the frequent intermarriages of the officers of the mother country with the wealthier and most powerful families of the vicinity, until, at the commencement of hostilities, their united influence had very nearly thrown the colony into the scale on the side of the crown. A few, however, of the leading families espoused the cause of the people; and a sufficient stand was made against the efforts of the ministerial party, to organize, and, aided by the army of the confederation, to maintain an independent republican form of government.

The city of New York and the adjacent territory were alone exempted from the rule of the new commonwealth; while the royal authority extended no further than its dignity could be supported by the presence of an army. In this condition of things, the loyalists of influence adopted such measures as best accorded with their different characters and situations. Many bore arms in support of the crown, and, by their bravery and exertions, endeavored to secure what they deemed to be the rights of their prince, and their own estates from the effects of the law of attainder. Others left the country; seeking in that place they emphatically called home, an asylum, as they fondly hoped, for a season only, against the confusion and dangers of war. A third, and a more wary portion, remained in the place of their nativity, with a prudent regard to their ample possessions, and, perhaps, influenced by their attachments to the scenes of their youth. Mr. Wharton was of this description. After making a provision against future contingencies, by secretly transmitting the whole of his money to the British funds, this gentleman determined to continue in the theater of strife, and to maintain so strict a neutrality as to insure the safety of his large estate, whichever party succeeded. He was apparently engrossed in the education of his daughters, when a relation, high in office in the new state, intimated that a residence in what was now a British camp

differed but little, in the eyes of his countrymen, from a residence in the British capital. Mr. Wharton soon saw this was an unpardonable offense in the existing state of things, and he instantly determined to remove the difficulty, by retiring to the country. He possessed a residence in the county of Westchester; and having been for many years in the habit of withdrawing thither during the heats of the summer months, it was kept furnished and ready for his accommodation. His eldest daughter was already admitted into the society of women; but Frances, the younger, required a year or two more of the usual cultivation, to appear with proper éclat ; at least so thought Miss Jeanette Peyton; and as this lady, a younger sister of their deceased mother, had left her paternal home, in the colony of Virginia, with the devotedness and affection peculiar to her sex, to superintend the welfare of her orphan nieces, Mr. Wharton felt that her opinions were entitled to respect. In conformity to her advice, therefore, the feelings of the parent were made to yield to the welfare of his children.

Mr. Wharton withdrew to the Locusts, with a heart rent with the pain of separating from all that was left him of a wife he had adored, but in obedience to a constitutional prudence that pleaded loudly in behalf of his worldly goods. His handsome town residence was inhabited, in the meanwhile, by his daughters and their aunt. The regiment to which Captain Wharton belonged formed part of the permanent garrison of the city; and the knowledge of the presence of his son was no little relief to the father, in his unceasing meditations on his absent daughters. But Captain Wharton was a young man and a soldier; his estimate of character was not always the wisest; and his propensities led him to imagine that a red coat never concealed a dishonorable heart.

The house of Mr. Wharton became a fashionable lounge to the officers of the royal army, as did that of every other family that was thought worthy of their notice. The

consequences of this association were, to some few of the visited, fortunate; to more, injurious, by exciting expectations which were never to be realized, and, unhappily, to no small number ruinous. The known wealth of the father and, possibly, the presence of a high-spirited brother, forbade any apprehension of the latter danger to the young ladies: but it was impossible that all the admiration bestowed on the fine figure and lovely face of Sarah Wharton should be thrown away. Her person was formed with the early maturity of the climate, and a strict cultivation of the graces had made her decidedly the belle of the city. No one promised to dispute with her this female sovereignty, unless it might be her younger sister. Frances, however, wanted some months to the charmed age of sixteen; and the idea of competition was far from the minds of either of the affectionate girls. Indeed, next to the conversation of Colonel Wellmere, the greatest pleasure of Sarah was in contemplating the budding beauties of the little Hebe, who played around her with all the innocency of youth, with all the enthusiasm of her ardent temper, and with no little of the archness of her native humor. Whether or not it was owing to the fact that Frances received none of the compliments which fell to the lot of her elder sister, in the often repeated discussions on the merits of the war, between the military beaux who frequented the house, it is certain their effects on the sisters were exactly opposite. It was much the fashion then for the British officers to speak slightingly of their enemies; and Sarah took all the idle vaporing of her danglers to be truths. The first political opinions which reached the ears of Frances were coupled with sneers on the conduct of her countrymen. At first she believed them; but there was occasionally a general, who was obliged to do justice to his enemy in order to obtain justice for himself; and Frances became somewhat skeptical on the subject of the inefficiency of her countrymen. Colonel Wellmere was among those who