

But Esther must have admiration from her audience, even if it were only her sister. It was as the breath of life to her.

"Why do you stand staring at me like an owl?" she said, pouting. "You have grown so strange since our troubles are ended, and we have begun to enjoy ourselves, I sometimes think that you do not love me any more. You might kiss me, and seem glad that I am so happy." And the ready, easy tears of girlhood sprang up in the hazel eyes. No tears shone in Rachel's as she drew her sister to her and kissed her once.

"God bless you, and make you his happiness," she whispered; then in her ordinary voice, "I must go back to our mother," she said.

Again Esther pouted. She felt as though Rachel were taking such an important event too quietly, and longed for an appreciative listener to whom to retail De La Tour's ardent speeches. She had so often fancied the first love words she would listen to, and lo, they were even more charming than in her dreams.

Not that in those dreams she had ever contemplated yielding to the first wooer. She had seen herself cruel and capricious, driving many to despair before she honored one with her hand. But she had counted without the charm of De La Tour's words, the power of his strong personality over her weaker nature; had counted, too, without the vanity which made so keen the enjoyment of her conquest. How sweet it was to see kneeling at her feet, entreating for her love as for his life, the stateliest gentleman in the place, one famous for his noble French name, and large southern estates, lost by his loyalty, as well as for the reckless daring and cool skill of his military deeds. De La Tour's Horse were dreaded all through the Carolinas, and the perils which their fame had brought upon their leader, both at Yorktown and New York, before reaching the haven of the loyal colonies, had further added to the romance of his name. What wonder that for such a lover a girl should give up the dreams of conquest, and be happy in his adoration.

And so Esther and De La Tour were betrothed, and her parents rejoiced that their spoiled darling had found one to care for her whom they could so well trust. Unworldly as they were, they knew that the greatness of De La Tour's sacrifices for loyalty gave him claims which the British government must recognize, and those were the days of rosy visions among the Loyalists. There was nothing that England would not do for those who had lost so much for her. The Americans would be forced to give back their estates, they would be paid full compensation for them, they would receive large grants of land or money, these were some of the visions that consoled the sufferers. And so all were hopeful, and the good old doctor blessed his child in a tremulous voice, and Madam Emslie roused herself from the stillness of weakness to smile upon her daughter's happiness, and to De La Tour the summer days passed in a Paradise, and if Madam Emslie grew daily weaker, and Rachel paler and sadder, he saw it not, for his whole soul was wrapped in the charms of the girl, glorified by him with the halo of idealism.

But hours and days pass alike to the happiness of satisfied love or the languor of a fading life, and before the September winds were aroused the day had come when De La Tour was to sail with the homeward-bound fleet.

Esther wept passionately for the loss of her lover, and it seemed well-nigh impossible for De La Tour to tear himself away from her. Twice he rushed back, distracted with emotion. "You will guard her for me," he said, as he wrung Rachel's hand, and she, pale as himself, answered, "With my life." On an overclouded, windy evening, the two girls stood on the harbor shore to see the ships sail seaward.

One by one they passed, their white sails phantom-like in the twilight. At last "Look up, Esther!" Rachel cried; "here is the *Bulldog*, and see that handkerchief waving. It is he; wave your's now."

"I cannot," Esther sobbed. "It seems like the end," and her hand hung at her side.

"So it is! You must wave it! He is sure to watch for it!" and seizing her sister's handkerchief fluttered it in the air, her eyes strained to watch the white speck that wafted loving greetings—but not to her.

The white speck faded, the evening shadows wrapped the ship. Rachel's eyes ached in their effort to follow it into the twilight.

"Look, Esther! It is nearly gone!" but Esther bobbed with her face hidden against her sister.

"Let us go home," she said; "it is so dreary here by the sea."

With one long seaward glance Rachel turned to go, but as they gained the footpath Esther paused.

"See," she said, "that next ship is the *Defiance*. Sir Geoffrey Palmer is on board. I wonder if he sees us."

Without a sign that she had heard Esther speak Rachel passed on, and Esther followed her.

It often happens that any one change occurring amongst a group seems but the warning of others to follow. So now with De La Tour's departure. If that in itself had not broken up their pleasant summer customs it was aided by the absence of the officers who had worshipped at the shrine of the sisters, gone too in the English fleet.

As though these various losses were not hard enough on Esther after the summer triumphs, it was just then that Harry chose to go and take possession of his grant of land at Annapolis. He was not a very valued slave, indeed had hardly been counted as a slave at all of late, and had grown restive under the change; but he could have been easily called back, and it was like his stupidity to go away just then.

However, he was gone, and it was only part of the general dreariness in these autumn days, when the town was crowded with destitute refugees, and

the doctor stretched the capabilities of their home to the utmost, and Rachel passed every moment that she could spare away from her mother's bedside amongst the sufferers. Many a sigh did Esther cast back to the summer's junketings. No more such pleasures now, for Doctor Emslie, with that singleness of heart which ever marked him, expected the family time and money to be lavished on those who needed help even more than they had themselves three months ago. To do her justice, although Esther sighed after lost pleasures, she was as tender hearted as Rachel towards the sick mothers and fretful children, and worked as hard to relieve their wants.

The girls worked bravely, but with the first snows came a time when their mother needed all their cares, and before Christmas the feeble flame of life had flickered out, and they were motherless. "Your father is growing old, and Esther is but a child; you will care for them, Rachel," she had whispered with failing breath; and Rachel had answered steadily, "Do not fear, sweetheart; God will help me to care for them."

A year later and the December snows were whirling around a lonely farmhouse that stood in one of the fertile Annapolis valleys, not far from the village of that name which the Loyalists had a year ago begun to build.

Nova Scotian ideas are not as a rule progressive, and yet we would probably think that little farmhouse of a hundred years ago a rather crazy structure, though Harry Parker had been a proud man on the day when he saw it finished. His pride and delight were mainly in the fact that it was the future home of his uncle and cousins. Dr. Emslie, with the true priestly spirit which ever distinguished him, had felt his heart glow at the tidings of the spiritual privations endured by the Loyalists in their new homes. Old friends and neighbors called for him to come to them. Halifax contained but sad associations. Why should they not go and make a home for Harry on his new farm? And so for the last three months they had all dwelt in the little farmhouse, and while the old man rode over the countryside on his bony white mare to visit his scattered flock, while Harry worked with might and main to gather in his first crops, the sisters were busy indoors with household tasks, the autumn days too short for all that had to be accomplished to make their winter comfort. It was the first snowstorm, and already the drifts were piling in fantastic curves around the log fences, while the darkness gathered apace, and the north wind moaned drearily around the house. The long, low room, half kitchen half living room, was made cheerful by the great fire of logs blazing on its open hearth.

Harry had just brought in a fresh armful of logs; which, skillfully piled on, had sent the orange flames roaring higher in search of fresh prey. This done, he stood to watch his work and to talk with Esther, who knelt before the fire, busy roasting an apple which she had hung from a string.

"You will surely give me half of it, cousin?" he said.

"What for? For nearly roasting me out?" she asked, with a pettish gesture, and yet an upward smile.

Rachel heard their voices, as she stood at the window, peering out into the white desolation. All the afternoon she had been spinning, but as with the twilight the storm increased, she pushed aside her wheel and wandered from window to window.

"Cousin Harry," she said at last, "it is strange my father does not come. It is growing dark, and the snow gets deeper and deeper. I wish he were here."

Harry turned from the bright firelit face to soothe Rachel.

"He could hardly have been here before now, if he has ridden to the Wetmore's farm. And he may have stayed there late, for the messenger said that the good man could scarcely last out the day."

Rachel sighed. "Another life that the war has shortened. Yes, my father ever loved him, and would be with him to the end. But I wish that he might come before darkness sets in."

As in answer to her wish, at that moment the gaunt white horse and the rider in the well known blue cloak appeared, pushing their weary way through the drifts. Rachel left the room to meet her father, and in a few moments was back again, a letter in her hand.

"Here, Esther. My father has brought you a letter from De La Tour."

In those days any letter was a rare event, how much more so one from a lover over the seas.

Esther sprang to her feet, and, seizing it, tore it open, dimpling and blushing over it, as she once had for De La Tour's love words.

"Is he well?" Rachel asked at length, an eager suspense in her eyes.

"Oh, yes; at least he seems so," half absently, then in a brighter voice, "the dear fellow, what sweet things he says. Listen, Rachel: 'Day and night the sweetest of faces is ever before me; the brown eyes shine upon me like radiant stars; the lips curve in that smile unequalled by Venus herself; they seem to whisper words of tenderness—'"

"That were best kept for yourself," said Rachel, impatiently.

Esther started at the harshness of her tone.

"That is always the way when I want to tell you what he has said. You are very unsympathetic."

The door opened, and their father and Harry entered.

"Well, and what has the wanderer to say for himself?" Harry asked in his cheery fashion.

"I have read all the nice parts. The rest is but a lot of stupid politics. Here, Rachel, read it to them," and, tossing the letter to her sister, Esther dropped to her seat before the fire.

A swift, sudden flush crossed Rachel's face as, taking the letter, she leant down so that the firelight shone on its closely-written pages, and read aloud. It was written in the form of a diary, tracing the course of events