

GERALD DE LACEY'S DAUGHTER

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF COLONIAL DAYS

BY ANNA T. SADDLER CHAPTER XII THE KERMESSE

The town was all agog over the Kermesse, which was to be held that year upon the Common. Booths were being erected for the display of almost every imaginable variety of wares.

The arrival of the Kermesse which stirred the sleepy Dutch town to its depths. There was no family of prominence which had not visitors for the Kermesse, and a round of gaieties, quite apart from the weekly assemblies, kept the young people in the highest of spirits.

Everyone met everyone else at the Kermesse, and gay groups wandered among the stalls, watched the various trials of skill, the wrestling and the jumping, visited the Punch and Judy show, or admired the splendid specimens of cattle.

The wares of the Wilden attracted perhaps the greatest number of buyers. All their products were in demand: their pottery, their embroidered moccasins, the sand for floors, the baskets of numerous shapes, the cat's tails, and the shells, which latter would be formed into brooms or mats; the bay-berries from the wax of which candles were made, the older and stronger on sea-grass, and above all, the assortment of fresh fish, which the latest arrivals had brought with them—lampreys and eels and sunfish, white and yellow perch, sturgeon, bream, cod and sea-bass, with salmon that would have tempted the appetite of an anchorite.

Evelyn de Lacey and merry party of young girls escorted by their beaux had come hither. Pieter Schuyler was in close attendance, overjoyed at the opportunity thus afforded. His honest, manly countenance, deeply bronzed by the sun, was radiant. He was in the best of spirits, and entered with zest into the laughter and jests, though he had been quick to notice the shadow of anxiety and sadness that hung about the girl like a cloud over the sunshine of that pleasant morning.

Lord Bellomont, who had just returned from Massachusetts with Her Excellency and members of his Household, made his appearance early in the day to declare the Kermesse opened. He was attended by many officers from the garrison and the warship, together with the chief of the train bands, the mayor and civic functionaries. After he had withdrawn, my Lady remained on, with but one of her ladies and Captain Prosser Williams in attendance. She had a whim to wander at will about the place, and, meeting Evelyn at one of the stalls, attached her to her party.

"Where have you been hiding this long time that I have not seen you?" In answer Evelyn informed her that she had remained a good deal in the house because of Madam Van Cortlandt's loneliness after the marriage of her granddaughter.

"Do not let her tie you to her apron strings too much," my Lady cried petulantly. "The young were never meant to be weighed down by the heaviness of the old."

To this Evelyn made no reply, as the speech jarred upon her. "And your father?" continued my Lady inquiringly.

beware, for presently, if it serves his turn, he will tell the same story to my Lord Bellomont or to my brother, Mr. Nanfan, which will be equally perilous. It was wise of Mr. de Lacey to leave Manhattan. I would that you also," she spoke with a little worried pucker of the brows, "were out of harm's way till these troublous days are past."

The solicitude implied by the words, and the tone in which they were uttered, touched Evelyn. For the first time she believed that this woman, despite the wagging of inimical tongues, was not altogether heartless, frivolous and false. But as with faltering voice, in which were evident the sorrows and anxieties of these many days, Evelyn tried to thank her, Lady Bellomont added hurriedly:

"Who that enemy is I need scarce say. Little doubt but your keen wit has already discovered him. And have a care, be wary," she cautioned, "he is both powerful and dangerous."

But here Lady Bellomont's attention was claimed by various notables of the place, who crowded assiduously about her, preventing her from enjoying, as she claimed, that hour of freedom. Evelyn took the opportunity to slip away; she looked around for Pieter who had been her escort, but he had disappeared. She was anxious to collect her thoughts and work out in her mind this new problem that had presented itself.

What, if Her Ladyship, whom so many accused of being capricious and spiteful, should change from that attitude of kindness, and make public the information that had been so mischievously offered her, as if to pave the way for the other stroke that was to come? She drew close about her the cardinal (or great cloak) which she had brought with her, since the day was chilly, as if thus to shut out those cares and troubles which were gathering thickly about her. How could she be sure that her father was safe, even if he had reached that temporary haven in the town of Salem? For was not that also under the government of Lord Bellomont, and was not a set of fanatics at the head of affairs there, to whom persecution seemed as the breath of their nostrils? And if safety could not be assured there, even to one living in obscurity, what was to be the outcome? Maryland, late the home of religious liberty for all men, the sanctuary of the New World, was now rendered likewise perilous for Catholics, who had granted that liberty. The infamous Code and his faction were still in power, and Governor Seymour was a deadly hater of the old faith and its adherents.

Leaving her gay companions, Evelyn turned her steps towards that portion of the Common where the Wilden offered their wares, and the old squaw, who had an almost maternal affection for her, noted at once the cloud upon her brow and the signs of weariness and trouble in her aspect.

"Our pale-face sister mourns," she said, "and her heart is more troubled than the sea when the storm wind blows over it. But her red-skin brothers and sisters are with her in her trouble. The Silver Covenant binds them, and they will never forsake her."

The assurance was strangely comforting to Evelyn in the desolation that seemed to close round her with a presage of coming disaster. She basked, as it were, in the warmth of those friendly beings, who gathered about displaying their wares for her to admire and pressing tokens upon her. While thus standing in their midst, she saw with a shiver of apprehension the tall figure of Captain Prosser Williams. He had been following her with his eyes all that morning, and had come at last to the resolve that there and then he would force her to listen to his suit. If her reply were favorable, well and good. Matters might then go on as they were, and her father proceed to Barbadoes—or to Hades—for all he cared. But if it were otherwise, if she dared to refuse an offer which seemed to him so great a misdeed, he would make her his wife in spite of them all and in her own despite. In the last resort she would be obliged to choose between Jack Ketch and himself. With very little ceremony then, he approached her. As time went on he was more furious, when he thought of the escape of her father, and determined not to spare her.

"You had best come away from here," he said almost roughly. "Your association with these people exposes you to great risks, and one of these days it will cost you dear."

Evelyn was disposed to refuse at first, raising her head haughtily and drawing back a pace or two. The remembrance of her father, however, as well as of those other interests which might be at stake and of errors warning to her not to antagonize the man, caused her to follow his lead, albeit with a disdain which she strove to cover by a half-laughing pout.

"What have the Wilden done to you, Captain Williams," queried she, with apparent amusement, "that you are so fierce against them?" "It is not a question of these savages at all," he answered, with a

gesture of contempt in their direction. "To my mind they are but dirty, ill-smelling, greasy beasts, little removed from the brute creation."

Evelyn flushed up, but made no reply. Some brutes, she reflected, did not wear feathers in their heads, nor paint themselves red. She walked away in the direction which Williams indicated. Although she believed him to be her mortal foe, she realized the importance of keeping as long as possible on a footing of amity, or at least of conventional civility, with him. She scarcely noticed that he was leading her to a retired spot, behind some of the stalls where a group of trees formed a kind of rural arbor. There was a rustic bench there upon which, with but little ceremony, he invited her to be seated. As he himself remained standing for the moment, Evelyn mastered her repugnance towards the man sufficiently to speak.

"I thought," she said, for the silence had begun to be oppressive, "that you were in attendance on my Lady Bellomont."

Prosser Williams gave a short laugh. "I have purposely lost my Lady Bellomont in the crowd, and she will not be sorry. I have more important matters of my own to attend to than playing lackey to any fine lady."

Evelyn might have retorted that to her mind it was the role for which he was peculiarly fitted, but she wisely forbore. Sounds from that gay and animated scene reached her ears. She could hear the familiar intonations of friendly voices, and catch glimpses of costumes which she knew to have been prepared for this week of festivities. As Captain Williams remained silent, Evelyn asked presently with wondering eyes that had something of mockery in them, and with a satirical little smile about the lips, that enraged the unwelcome suitor:

"Is your business then so very important?" "Yes, to me," he answered curtly, "and to you also."

"To me," echoed Evelyn, raising her eyebrows and eyes in scorn. "I scarcely think," with cool emphasis on the words, "that any business of Captain Prosser Williams can be of importance to me."

"Then I shall endeavor to convince you of your mistake. I shall not waste time in preliminaries, and I suppose it is idle to talk of love to a young lady of your loftiness, who fancies herself secure upon a pedestal above ordinary mortals."

Evelyn laughed outright as if he spoke in jest, though in truth her heart sank at the realization of the crisis thus suddenly forced upon her.

"Yes," she remarked casually, "it would be, as you say, quite idle to enlarge upon such a subject. I assure you it is very far removed from my thoughts."

"Well, it is not removed from mine," retorted Prosser Williams hotly, "and I shall take this opportunity of telling you that, upon your present conduct and your answer to the question I am about to put, will depend your own safety and that of others."

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PIPES

It was St. Patrick's Day in the morning, and Kathleen, just home from early Mass tidied up the studio, and then sat down by the window to her St. Patrick's Day pipes, the sale of which was intended to buy bread and butter for herself and widowed mother. As she patted and rolled the clay in her deft fingers she suddenly burst into song. Swifter and swifter flew her fingers as her heart poured forth the "Praise to St. Patrick." When she had finished a great clapping outside made her look round. There were the "Hibernian boys" decked in green by hundreds. They were evidently collecting for parade, and attracted by the singer, had waited patiently. Kathleen, seeing such a display of green, seized her flag and waving it out the window, cried, "Boys, I wish ye the top of the mornin'!"

"Kathleen, Kathleen!" called her mother. "Whatever are you up to now?" "The street resounded with cheers for St. Patrick and the singer, and the voice of Kathleen, the Hibernian fell into line. One of them, in full uniform, came into the house.

"Pardon me, young lady, but our boys would like that hymn for their concert tonight. Could you—that is, would you—sing it for them? I am president of the Hibernian Club," giving her mother his card.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Hogan, but I would rather not," as visions of Kathleen in a faded gown rose before her eyes.

"Kathleen's eyes were dancing. She still kept patting the clay in her hands. "How is that?" holding up a shamrock pipe.

"You don't mean to say you make those ugly things by just patting them?" "There's a great deal in a Pat, Mr. Hogan," said Kathleen, smiling up at the giant.

"That depends on who gives it, I suppose." "Or wears it, eh? See, I have two hundred shamrock pipes. I'll sell them to the boys for \$1 apiece, but to a 'Prot' for \$5."

"Allow me to be a 'Prot' said Mr. Hogan, picking up one of the pipes and depositing a crisp five on the table.

"Oh no," cried Kathleen. But he was out and on the march. Needless to say, "all the boys" were admonished to buy a handsome shamrock pipe, and before evening most of the two hundred were gone.

At 10 o'clock Kathleen received a note from the rector of St. Patrick's requesting her to sing "All Praise to St. Patrick," at the close of High Mass. The "boys," he said, were very anxious for it. Kathleen was rather excited. She had never sung anywhere except in the convent chapel at home. She looked down ruefully at her fast fading shamrock. When she and her mother were driving for the church a carriage started up to their door. A trim footman stepped down, and bowing to them, opened the carriage door. He then handed a bunch of fresh shamrock to Kathleen.

"This is some mistake," Kathleen said. "I am very sorry, Mr. Hogan, but I would rather not," as visions of Kathleen in a faded gown rose before her eyes.

"I sang it," answered Kathleen sadly. "You! Why, you are only a child!" "I am eighteen, Father."

"And you really sang that! Why your true voice so carried me back to the dear old County of Tyrone. Again I was hunting the cuckoo's nest in the black, sodden bog. Again I lay on the bank of the Mourne and heard the lark singing for all Ireland. Again a barefooted boy, I ran along the ditches, spying out the wren's little nest, or mimicked the corncrake in the hawthorn."

"Tears were in his eyes. "You have made even me young again. Will you sing it after Vespers this afternoon?" "With pleasure, Father."

And all the Hibernians were there and after Benediction Mr. Hogan drove home with Mrs. and Miss O'Brien, and on one St. Patrick's Day in the evening Kathleen became Mrs. Hogan—M. de Paul in the Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

"All praise to St. Patrick!" quavered on the listening air as Patrick gave a last loving pat to the teaming earth he had heaped over one of his choice bulbs.

"All praise to St. Patrick who brought to our mountains The gift of God's faith, the sweet light of his love."

"Patrick!" Mrs. O'Donnell stood in her beautiful old garden directing the work. "Patrick," she said crossly, "those weeds must be taken up today. You are a lazy, good for nothing fellow. I have been telling you to weed the garden for the last week, and it is not done yet."

Unbounded surprise showed in the old man's gentle blue eyes. "Sure, ma'am," he said, "it's the first time I've heard you mention it." "Well, weed it today," answered Mrs. O'Donnell, "and don't be so imprudent."

"Mrs. O'Donnell, ma'am," the old man's voice was pathetic. "you don't mean to weed it today? Sure, 'tis the birthday of the glorious saint himself. You can't have forgotten it, ma'am?" "Well, what of it?" snapped Mrs. O'Donnell. "weed the garden and then do whatever you please."

And turning, she moved up the path towards the house, a deep frown on her fine old face. The soft light died out of the gardener's eyes. "Sure," he said to himself sadly as he watched his mistress, "its changed the mistress is these years since Master Donald's gone away."

tears were in her own eyes. She felt strangely lonely. If her father were only here!

"Excuse me, miss," said an altar boy, "Father wishes to see you in the sacristy."

Kathleen followed him silently. At the foot of the choir steps was Mr. Hogan, smiling brightly. But her smile was all gone, and only a little we before face looked up at the giant Hibernian. It was very strange yet somehow it made his heart go thump way down to see her sad. She must have felt all that, then, she thought. There were traces of tears in his own eyes; tears he had tried to wink back but in vain. Why they came was a mystery to him. Was it the fact that he and his brother Hibernians were, in reality nothing but exiles—exiled from the bright "sunny shore," the dear old Ireland?

"My dear child, this is some mistake. I sent for Miss O'Brien, who sang 'All Praise to St. Patrick,'" said the rector.

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