

STRAY LEAVES FROM AN OLD JOURNAL.*

BY H. V. G.

JUNE, 1775.—Time flies so swiftly in this pleasant mansion, that truly I can scarce keep a reckoning of the days. My brother R., who has always a scrap of old poetry at his tongue's end, might well quote:

"The cheating old churl for naught will stay,
On unclipped wing he aye flies away."

But, as my uncle says, these are very grave times, and even in this retired place, every day brings some startling intelligence, which for a time pales the cheek, and brings us all together to wonder and speculate,—perhaps to rejoice or mourn. For instance, we were dancing merrily in the great hall one evening, when an express arrived in foaming haste, bringing news of the sudden fight on Bunker's Hill,—the clearest demonstration which has yet been made of public indignation,—and truly, though our brave men were forced to retreat before such numbers of the king's best troops, it was a retreat which may well be called a glorious victory. No more dancing was there that night, it may be well believed; but we sat down, each of us busy with our own thoughts, and many a tear dropped silently from the brave men who fell that day in their country's cause.

The next day was the Sabbath, a day very strictly observed by all the household, more especially by my good aunt, who would in no way cast discredit on her puritan ancestry by any worldliness of word or action. But the news of the preceding day lay fresh in my mind, and I could not keep my thoughts from wandering to my dear home, and to the good city of which I felt so proud, and the friends who might now be in peril there, so that more than once I was fain to bite my lips to keep back the words which were rising to them. Once,—and it was just as my uncle closed the big Bible from which he had been reading aloud one of the patriotic Psalms of David,—my thoughts catching fire from the holy zeal of the psalmist, and very perversely receiving his language as a glorification of our own arms—I broke out into a sudden penegyric of all brave and noble deeds, beginning at Lexington; and where I should have ended no one can tell; but, to my infinite confusion, I met my aunt W.'s eye fixed on me with such a chiding and astonished expres-

sion, that I stopped short and felt my face burning with confusion. Venturing, however, to steal a glance at the good President, to see how he felt affected towards me, I was not a little re-assured by observing the corners of his mouth twitch convulsively, as if striving to suppress a smile, while he sought to conceal it by raising one hand to adjust his wig, and with the other he fastened the silver clasps of the old family Bible, all the while casting a sidelong look at my aunt, as if fearful she should detect his lenity.

Soon after, the bell from the primitive old meeting house rung out on the sweet morning air, calling worshippers far and near to the house of prayer. It was at no great distance, and we set out to walk there. First went my uncle, his erect stately figure set off to advantage in a snuff colored coat with long lappets, a fine embroidered waistcoat of white satin, and plush breeches, fastened at the knees with gold buckles. The frills on his bosom and wrists were delicately plaited, his white silk stockings displayed very comely legs, and his shoes were adorned with gold buckles of the largest size. He carried a gold headed cane in one hand, and a cocked hat rested on his powdered wig. My aunt, not a whit less stately, was arrayed in a dove colored taffety, furbelowed with pinked flounces of the same, and the skirt opened in front, showing a petticoat of quilted satin. The pinked ruffles of the sleeves fell below the elbow, and her arms, still round and fair, were shaded by black picnic mittens. A black satin cardinal fell over her shoulders, and her head gear was of the latest fashion. She carried a large fan with carved ivory sticks, which sometimes served as a sun shade, when that luminary shone too saucily in her face. Her hand rested with much ceremony on the President's arm, and the long toes and high heels of her walking slippers, kept perfect measure with his slow and dignified step. The rest of us followed, two and two, in the order of seniority, and the utmost gravity and decorum were enjoined on every member of the household. The servants followed at a respectful distance. Most of them were freed blacks, and the females showed their love of contrasts by the bright tints which they chose to set off the hue of their ebony complexions.