

GERALD DE LACEY'S DAUGHTER

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF COLONIAL DAYS

BY ANNA T. SADDLER

BOOK II

CHAPTER XI.—CONTINUED

When the warrant had been read, Mr. de Lacey looked up into the face of Henricus Laurens, whom he had so often met in the amenities of social intercourse, and said, with a whimsical smile crossed his face:

"Another messenger has been before you, sir, whom I must preferably obey."

Not understanding his meaning, Myneer began to bluster, and called to his side the constable who had accompanied him:

"Do you not perceive," said Mr. de Lacey, quietly, "that I have received my death-wound?"

Henricus Laurens was startled out of all his composure. It was an event which he had never for a moment anticipated. He turned furiously upon Greatbatch, but Mr. de Lacey was speaking again:

"Since I cannot survive I implore you, whatever your opinions and prejudices, as an honorable man, as the husband of Evelyn's dearest friend, to do what I am unable to do and protect my daughter."

"But," stammered Laurens, disconcerted still more by that appeal, "she too is included in these charges. She had made herself amenable to the law."

"If you cannot protect her from the law," said the wounded man, solemnly, "I conjure you, at least, to protect her by the law from the clutches of a villainian."

It is possible that some light was thrown into the perplexity and confusion of the young man's mind by the remark, which he found to be startling in the extreme. But, telling himself that it was the vain fear of an idolizing father, an attempt to injure an enemy, or perhaps supposing that he referred to Greatbatch, he answered stolidly:

"The law will afford her all needful protection."

"To its tender mercies and yours, sir," Mr. de Lacey said in a faintly ironical tone, "I commend her."

His weakness seemed to be increasing and, believing that death was imminent, he raised his voice, so as to be heard by all about:

"I would have those present to know that I die, as I have lived, in the Catholic and Roman faith. In that cause I am content to have lost my life."

By a final effort he added:

"God save King James, whom I hold to be the true and lawful sovereign of England!"

Myneer Laurens grew red with anger, while the dying man, his voice sinking to a whisper, fell to praying that, since through evil laws no priest could be had to shrive him, the merciful Saviour would absolve him from all his sins and bring him to the eternal happiness.

Presently a difference of opinion arose amongst the chief actors in that drama, which had assumed so tragical a character. Captain Prosser Williams, though annoyed at the occurrence which might provoke remonstrance and awaken public sympathy for the de Lacey, was nevertheless secretly delighted that another obstacle was about to be removed from his path. Conferring apart with the smuggler, he soundly rated him for his "clumsiness," and held the approaching death of Mr. de Lacey as another weapon above his head. Greatbatch, on his part, assumed a surly demeanor and threatened to sail away with the "Hesperia" and wash his hands of the whole business. Captain Prosser Williams, however, prevailed on him to remove the young lady to his brigantine without delay, before she should become aware of her father's condition.

At this juncture Myneer Laurens unexpectedly interfered. Whether stricken with remorse or anxious to make a good appearance in the eyes of the constable and other witnesses, he declared that common decency demanded that he be permitted to attend upon her dying father, after which the law might take its course. Prosser Williams inwardly cursed his associate, who, in his quality of magistrate and member of the Council, could not be disregarded. Controlling his anger, he protested that he had merely wished to spare Mistress de Lacey so painful an ordeal.

"It cannot be spared her," retorted Henricus Laurens, curtly, and at his mandate the door of the cabin was opened and the young girl came forth. It had been the brutality of Greatbatch, coupled with insulting remarks which he had let fall concerning the fine gentleman who was anxious to carry her away, that had caused Mr. de Lacey to unsheathe his sword and make this unavailing attempt to defend his daughter.

Captain Prosser Williams drew far back into the shadows when Evelyn came forth from the cabin. The light of the lantern showed her face deadly pale, her eyes haggard, and her beauty temporarily obscured. But there was no outcry, no word of complaint or reproach as she threw herself on her knees beside her father, holding his hand already cold in approaching death and talking to him in heartbroken whispers. For one glance at his face had sufficed, and she knew the dreadful trial that was in store for her. By a swift movement she unsheathed from her neck a small crucifix and held it before the fast glazing eyes, and, forgetting

even her sorrow, murmured prayers and the Sacred Names that alone can give hope to the dying Christian. Her father, who had repeated clearly and distinctly each act of contrition or supplication, said suddenly:

"But last evening, my Evelyn, we read in the 'Imitation' of the 'bright day of eternity.' It is dawning for me."

He sob broke from Evelyn and a wailing heart-stricken cry:

"My father, oh! my father!"

The agony of that cry seemed to trouble him, but he spoke again, more faintly:

"In that day we shall meet. Pray for me in the time of my purgation. To God I commend you. Oh, Jesu, mercy! God be merciful!"

He said no further word, for with one convulsive movement his gallant spirit fled. In the gloom of night that had fallen on the face of the waters, Death, the most thrillingly dramatic end to every enterprise, had thus cut short the tangled thread of a human life. Evelyn de Lacey momentarily forgot her surroundings, and even the blow that had fallen, in the one absorbing desire to help her dead father with her prayers and accompany his beloved soul to the very judgment seat of the Most High. Aweid into inaction, now stirred or made any attempt to interfere with her in those first few moments. Even Prosser Williams curbed his impatience, and waited in a silence broken only by the lap of waves, the scream of a sea-bird or the flapping of the sail in the freshening breeze. The salt air of the ocean blew into their faces, and there was a desolating sound of almost human anguish in the wind. Then all at once they were aroused from their lethargy by other sounds, which stirred them all to action, and awakened as if from slumber those on board the "Hesperia." Greatbatch with an oath flung himself into the waiting boat, and hastened towards the brigantine. For, coming like a phantom ship out of the darkness, the "Mermaid," Rogers' Master, drawn near. Greatbatch and his crew, at first believed to be one of the French privateers, which were ever lurking about the coast, and made such preparations as they might for defence. But, taken by surprise, the advantage was all with the assailant. A short, sharp conflict took place, which was heard on the Brooklyn shore and reverberated through the heights above. Its echoes even reached as far as Manhattan, and set the townspeople to wondering.

On board the sloop still remained Evelyn, praying by the side of her father, whose eyes she had closed and whose features had taken on the majesty of death. There also remained Henricus Laurens and the constable, whose attention was completely absorbed by what was going on aboard the "Hesperia," and Captain Prosser Williams, who was filled with anxiety for the success of his schemes and with the fear that Evelyn might still escape him. An expedient suddenly occurred to him upon which he proceeded to act. He released Captain Jenkins and his men, with the assistance of Myneer Laurens and the constable, and commanded them to set sail and make all possible haste to reach Manhattan. The skipper, who was indignant at the treatment that had been meted out to him and was loud in his denunciation of the murder that had been committed on board the sloop, still saw some reason in Captain Williams' expressed desire to save the lady any further unpleasantness and to put her ashore as speedily as possible with the body of her father.

"It's one of those damned Frenchmen," Prosser Williams remarked, "which is trying to overhaul the 'Hesperia.'"

"And a good thing, too, if she sank her to the bottom," muttered Captain Jenkins, revengefully.

"Well," suggested the other, "you do not want him to get the 'Anna Maria' into the bargain."

"No, that I don't," cried the skipper, who was leaning over the rail and peering into the darkness. Then he cried suddenly and joyfully:

"By the Lord Harry, it's Rogers and the 'Mermaid,' and Jenkins will stand beside him against the pirate."

While they still remained in parley, a boat put forth from the "Mermaid," and the sloop's side, Captain Prosser Williams and three or four sturdy members of the crew. In his rage and despair, Prosser Williams seemed to lose all control of himself. He raged and stormed, and, seizing Evelyn in his arms, strove to force her over the vessel's side into one of the boats with some wild idea of landing her upon Nutton Island. He loudly called upon his associates to aid him, and prevent the escape of a dangerous prisoner. But, even had they been willing to engage in so desperate an undertaking, it was too late. The rescue-party were already on board the "Anna Maria," and a blow from Captain Ferrers' sword caused Prosser Williams' arm to fall powerless to his side. It was a dramatic moment when the two officers of Lord Bellomont's household looked each other in the face, with such sentiments as may readily be imagined. It was only the calmer counsels of Pieter Schuyler that prevented Ferrers from inflicting that and there upon his fellow-officer such chastisement as he felt to be richly deserved. And so ended Prosser Williams' last effort, and in sudden rage and despair he had to witness the removal of Evelyn and the dead body of Mr. de Lacey to the "Mermaid," while he and his asso-

ciates were left to return to the "Hesperia" and its crestfallen commander, Greatbatch.

CHAPTER XIII
AN ALLY WON

Madam Van Cortlandt sat in that self-same room from which Evelyn de Lacey had fled from the inquisitorial search of Captain Tobias Ferrers and his company of train-bands, and the old clock was ticking away the moments of a rainy noon. The mistress of the house had been very busy of late, for it was the time of the year when much household work had to be done, always under her personal supervision. Butter had been made and packed away in firkins in the buttery below stairs. Salt beef and pork, and fish salted or smoked by a process taught the white settlers by the Indians, had been stored away in the deep, dark cellars under the house. The capacious bins had been stocked with an abundant supply of such vegetables as would keep during the winter season. And now Madam Van Cortlandt, who was feeling the weight of her years, was disposed for rest. Her mind and heart, however, were sorely troubled by the recent events in the public and political life of her beloved Colony of New York, and by those troubles which had befallen Evelyn de Lacey and her father.

She had often recalled the father's last visit, and the sentiments of regard and respect with which he had inspired her. She was fully acquainted with the part which Captain Prosser Williams had played in the troubles of father and daughter, and of his late dastardly attempt, which had resulted so tragically.

As she sat thus thinking of all those things, her knitting, needles lying idle in her lap and the tears dimming her eyes so that she had to remove the spectacles from her nose and wipe them, the door opened. The old woman's face brightened when she saw that it was Polly. Almost, immediately though, she noted that the bright face was clouded, and that it had already lost its look of joyousness and youth. In fact, there had been that day one of those many stormy scenes between husband and wife, concerning the part which Henricus Laurens had played in the de Lacey's misfortunes, and which only of late had come to the knowledge of Polly. Even before her marriage she had been aware that her future husband was arrogant and domineering by nature and inclined to the narrowest fanaticism, but, after the manner of young girls, she had trusted that her own over him would be sufficient to soften and subdue the asperities of his character. Her few months of married life had dispelled many illusions, but she had been altogether unprepared for his conduct towards her best friend and the torrent of coarse invective which he had poured forth against the de Lacey, her own family and friends, and even against herself.

She was fairly boiling over with indignation, but she knew that it was little use complaining to her wise and experienced grandmother, who on other occasions had merely bade her to restrain her tongue from words which she would afterwards regret. The constraint which she put upon herself raised a slight but perceptible barrier between the two women, which each keenly felt.

The thought of Evelyn came upon Polly with such force as almost to move her to tears. She recalled her now-brilliant, beautiful, sharing all her enjoyments in a loving companionship that had never been clouded by the shadow of a quarrel. The memory of that friend combined with the dreary sound of the rain on the garden walks and the pavement tended still more to depress her spirits.

Taking up her knitting again as an excuse for not seeming to observe Polly's troubled face, Madam Van Cortlandt began to talk of Evelyn in her place of exile, down in the Spanish Colony of St. Augustine, whither she had been conveyed safely by Captain Rogers in "The Mermaid," and whence she had written one or two heartbroken letters. Polly with some abruptness confided to her grandmother her idea of making a personal appeal to Lady Bellomont to use her influence in securing the pardon of her friend and permission for her to return to Manhattan.

With passionate determination she overruled such objections as Madam Van Cortlandt put forth on the score of her husband's probable opposition to the scheme, and the old lady was but too glad to snatch at that forlorn hope of securing Evelyn's return to Manhattan and the termination of all her woes. She stood therefore at the window and watched her granddaughter proceeding on her mission, despite the heavy rain, towards that mansion which Pieter Schuyler, "the headstrong Peter" of the Dutch, had so many years before erected. There was something wishful in her expression, and her eyes once more filled with tears. For her mind was full of sad and troubled thoughts.

Polly had no difficulty whatever in securing admission to the gubernatorial dwelling and the presence of Lady Bellomont. For the latter had an extreme curiosity to know more about Evelyn de Lacey and her father, of whom she had heard but fleeting rumors. She guessed at once that the visit of young Vrow Laurens at that juncture could be connected with nothing else. The Countess of Bellomont sat in a boudoir which she had fitted up for herself, and wherein she had gathered odd trinkets of many sorts. An odor

of perfume, distinct but delicate, mingled with the salt breeze from the Bay. My lady was in a house gown of pale pink, over which she wore a scarf of blue, with a profusion of costly lace. It was a costume which emphasized that curious blending of the young and the old in her appearance. The face showed numerous lines, fine and almost imperceptible at a distance; the eyes deep-set and dark-circled, had an indescribable weariness in their expression. She was devoured with ennui, despite the excitement which raged within and without the mansion, but of which she caught only faint echoes. She knew that Lord Bellomont had been in outrageous humor, which might have been in itself a distraction, if he had not absented himself for the great part of every day. She, therefore, greeted the visitor very graciously, since her presence was a relief from intolerable boredom. With an interest which effectually aroused her, she listened to the various adventures of Evelyn, and expressed the greatest sympathy for her sad case. She promised to use what influence she had, though doubtful of results.

"The moment," she said, "is inopportune. The Earl has but lately returned from his government of New England, and is sadly perturbed over many disquieting occurrences. Yet I am willing to do my utmost."

Deeply musing, she set turning the jewelled ring upon her finger, so that the emerald, sapphire, ruby and diamond, which met there, caught each a different light.

"I have been unable," she said, "to discover the whereabouts of Captain Ferrers. When I have inquired, I have been met with doubtful glances and a determination not to speak. As for Captain Prosser Williams—"

"Oh, that thrice detestable being!" cried Polly, impulsively.

My lady smiled, though she said warningly:

"Speak not your mind so freely, if you are bent upon a mission of diplomacy. I am told that he is confined to his quarters in a raging fever. Otherwise I might have heard more. As I am informed, His Excellency paid him a visit immediately on his return and since then—"

She paused abruptly, for she did not care to add—since Vrow Laurens might be of a less discreet temper than her friend Mistress de Lacey—that My Lord came thence in a white fury, execrating all concerned in the late affair. After raging and storming, he had been closeted with John Nanfan, Weaver and others of the most fanatical faction, a council to which Myneer Laurens had been admitted. There had been a rumor, too, that the arrest of Pieter Schuyler was hotly debated, as well as that of Rogers and others, who had been privy to what Lord Bellomont described as an audacious defiance of the law. But the skipper had merely extended his cruise in southern waters, and Pieter Schuyler had not been arrested but had been warned to leave the colony for a time, until the pleasure of His Excellency should be known. As the Countess was well aware, her husband had been exceedingly disturbed about a petition, and not the first one, which had been sent to England from many prominent members of the colony, protesting against his arbitrary proceedings and the restrictions he had imposed upon trade. In consequence he had received from the King an intimation that his mode of action would have the result of driving many men of note away from New York, and that it must be discontinued. The reprimand was galling in the extreme to his proud and overbearing nature, and this, with attacks of the gout from which he periodically suffered, had improved his temper.

Altogether, Lady Bellomont felt that it was a singularly inopportune moment to proffer to His Excellency a request in favor of a girl against whom he had been prejudiced from the first. Still the Governor's wife was deeply concerned to hear of Mr. de Lacey's death and the loneliness of Evelyn in her exile. She looked very grave when her visitor informed her that the common report of the town was that Captain Ferrers had been arrested and thrown into one of the dungeons of the Fort for his gallant intervention in favor of the father and daughter. She shook her head doubtfully, as she remembered that startling intelligence.

"If he has done so much," she said, "to his favorite officer, what can we expect on behalf of one whom he chooses to consider as a dangerous enemy to the State and a Papist?"

She presently dismissed her visitor, with a promise to do all that she could for Mistress de Lacey, in whose welfare she was deeply interested, but that she must bide her time. In bidding Polly farewell, she said:

"You and I and all her friends should rather rejoice that Mistress de Lacey is in a safe refuge, far from the malignity of her enemies. We should rather strive to keep her there, than to bring her back to those unhappy colonies where strife of faction is forever raging. For myself, I am weary of it all. But you may count always upon my friendly interest in that charming girl."

And with that Evelyn's friend was necessarily content for the present.

TO BE CONTINUED

To rejoice in another's prosperity is to give content to your own lot; to mitigate another's grief is to alleviate or dispel your own.

ROSES OF TODAY

Grandmother Dillon sighed and shook her head. After a bit she laid down the shawl she was knitting and sat with folded hands, looking out across the square. It was not the smooth stretches of grass that met her eyes, however, but a piece of muddy road, the rain coming down, and two young people splashing gaily along under an umbrella.

"Happy? A should think so—mud and all!" she murmured, a tender, reminiscent smile in her bright, unfaded eyes. "And Hen had nothing but his two good hands and a will to do—and we got along."

"I don't know as I'd like to see our little Rose work as hard as I did—she's so dainty, and fine, and flower-like, just like her namesake."

Grandmother picked up her knitting again, and slowly a quiet smile began to creep back into her eyes. "Why that's exactly what Hen used to say to me. 'Just like your namesake, Rosie, just like your pretty namesake'—I can hear him still—"

"I don't know as I'd like to see our little Rose work as hard as I did—she's so dainty, and fine, and flower-like, just like her namesake."

Grandmother held her knitting suspended tensely in the air for a moment, then she lowered it into her lap, shaking her head uncertainly.

"I don't know," she murmured sadly, "but what she likes the rides best after all. Well, maybe it's natural. . . . In my day it was the man himself that counted the most, but I suppose it's different now—"

With Reginald Harrington as her escort Rose had a very delightful time that night. There was no doubt of it, he was a perfect escort. From flowers—always roses—to the final good night he was all attention in his courteous assured way. Handsome, rich, agreeable, what more could a girl ask in a cavalier? Rose often put the question to herself with a curious detached interest, and never found any satisfaction in the answer, for somehow, just at that moment Henry's face and not Reginald's would come up before her.

"As though he had anything to do with it!" she would remind herself crossly. "It isn't as if he—as if—"

And the conclusion of her thoughts made her crosser than ever. "It's nothing to him whom I marry!"

And yet a feeling within her contradicted this statement. There had been times when something in Henry's eyes had unconsciously told her a different tale; but—and there was the rub—it was only his eyes that had spoken, never his lips. For to all intents and purposes Henry was not a suitor for Rose's favor, and Reginald was.

Henry was an intimate footing at the Dillon home, owing to the fact that he, orphaned at an early age, had been reared by Grandmother Dillon's eldest son, John Dillon, had a large family, and what he could give to Henry in the way of help, he gave gladly; but it was not much. So the young lad was obliged to educate himself, and now at twenty-eight he was just about getting a fair start in life. It was when Henry left the farm to work his way through college that his more intimate friendship with the city Dillon began. Quiet, gentle, unobtrusively gay and kind, he had come to be regarded as almost a member of the family, envied for his proximity to Rose, to whom all the young men of her set paid eager court. That is, until Reginald Harrington with his conquering, careless ways had succeeded in keeping them all at a distance.

But Henry's position was not one to be envied. Too honorable to take advantage of his intimacy with the family to win from Rose a regard he dare not claim—for what had he, still a poor man at twenty-eight to offer the petted daughter of a wealthy home?—he was obliged to eat his heart in secret, and see another man about to walk off with the prize he coveted. There were times though when he rated himself bitterly for standing back.

"I have my profession," he would argue hotly. "I intend to make my way to the top—"

And then a vision of the top, so far off and seemingly so unattainable compared to his rival's wealth and standing, would cause a bitterer gloominess of despair. "It's no use," gloomily. "Any girl in her senses would think twice before she would turn down a likable chap like Harrington for you. Well," grimly, "I suppose I'll have to get used to it."

But he was not getting used to it very rapidly. And Rose, mistaking his attitude, and sore-hearted over the apparent loss of her one-time champion and champion, was seen more and more with Reginald Harrington. Soon whispers of an engagement were circulated.

Grandmother was very quiet those days. She had always loved Henry from the time of his lonely, pathetic early days at her son's, where she herself then lived. The tie between them was very close, and she alone suspected his love for Rose, hoping always that the girl might turn to him. She did not care for Reginald, with his assured, aggressive ways. Too bossy, she thought. "It's the gentleness in a man that pays best in the long run," she used to say, with the wisdom bought by experience. And latterly she took to noticing how pale Henry looked.

"Don't you feel well, Henry?" she asked him one Friday evening as they all sat around the big living room. Rose glanced at him quickly.

"Perfectly, Grandmother," Henry answered easily, though he flushed a little.

"I think he looks well," was Rose's comment, seeing only the flush. "Not but what he's grown terribly

spare. He's lost weight, and his eyes are sunken. I don't believe I'll take it after all—not now, anyhow."

Grandmother remarked, mollified by the pretty picture, "Henry always likes you in pink," guilelessly.

"Oh!" Rose frowned a little, casting back a defiant look at the eyes in the mirror. "I—I don't believe I'll take it after all—not now, anyhow."

Grandmother's hurt, surprised look. "You keep it for me, Gran dear. You see," airily, "I was going to wear my white tonight, but I just happened to remember that Reg likes me best in blue. 'Oh,' as the tinkle of a bell was heard, 'there's the telephone I'll be in and straighten the drawer after awhile, Grandmother.' And she was out of the room as swiftly as she had come in."

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