

GERALD DE LACEY'S DAUGHTER

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF COLONIAL DAYS

BY ANNA T. SADDLER BOOK II CHAPTER V A CLUE DISCOVERED

It was a noticeable fact that, since her advent in the attic, joy seemed to have changed. Her cognomen was more than ever a misnomer. She seemed more dark and sullen than before, and regarded every word said to her young mistress with scarcely veiled suspicion. Outside the house, in her own home and elsewhere, she had heard whispers of various kinds concerning the de Lacey and especially Evelyn. The latter's reserved demeanor and her aloofness from the townspeople excited their ire, while the girl's proficiency in household arts, which she declared unnatural in one so young, provoked their jealousy. A fertile source of suspicion was her knowledge of the medicinal and other virtues of plants, a knowledge which she had gained in the first instance from Kierstedt, the celebrated Colonial doctor, and in the second place from the Wilden, who had shown her how to prepare Senecioil for cuts and bruises and a variety of herb brews and other remedies. She was thus able to treat with surprising skill the minor ills of humanity. She freely placed all her knowledge at the service of her poorer neighbors in Salem, as in Manhattan, and it became the common opinion amongst them that this young maid was as good as any doctor. They did not scruple to avail themselves of her services, which of course were offered gratuitously, and they freely acknowledged the efficacy of her remedies. But, behind her back, they shook their heads and whispered. There was something suspicious in the possession of such knowledge, coupled with a marvellous personal beauty, which was but heightened by the simplicity of her Puritan attire.

Another circumstance which served to swell the tide of unpopularity that was threatening to submerge Evelyn, was her friendliness with the neighboring tribes. Amongst them, as with the Wilden at home, she became an honored guest, earning their goodwill with trifling gifts, or ministering to them in their illnesses. Like the good Indians, they lavished on her words of admiring endearment, and used the most extravagant epithets in describing her beauty. Many of them believed that it was a Manitou or spirit which inhabited the frail and beautiful form. And especially was this the case when, having discovered by cautious inquiries that numbers of the Indians were Catholics who had been won to the true faith by missionaries from Maryland or Canada, she spoke to them of religion, heard their Catechism, and instructed the children, regardless of the fact that she was thus impugning her liberty and perhaps her life, as she had done in New York. She strove in every way to continue the work of the missionaries, baptizing those in danger of death, and making a certain number of converts amongst the pagan Indians. Always she impressed upon them the need of secrecy and caution in speaking of religious matters or of her ministrations amongst them, and they faithfully obeyed her admonitions.

They gave in return their gifts of bead-work, baskets of perfumed grasses, berries and fish, and they taught her secret arts of forest lore, or perfected her in those she had already learned from her old-time friends, the Manhattans and Rockaways. The bronze colored faces, the beady black eyes which softened at sight of her, were for a more kindly and homelike expression than the countenances of the grim Puritans who surrounded her, and as when she sank instinctively into many traits of character which she had learned to admire. If but the light of the true faith had been given, some of them would, as she said to her father, have made splendid Christians.

"If their eyes were not so perpetually turned to the powers of darkness," responded her father. "It chanced that, when she had thus become the centre of much surmise and of more or less ill-natured gossip, a shopkeeper of the village, Ebenezer Cooke, who had a certain prominence in local affairs, wrote a letter to his sister in Manhattan, and this sister was no other than Vrow de Vries. The latter resembled her Dutch mother, who had been fat, indolent and finally bed-ridden, while Ebenezer Cooke, an exact image of his late father, was tall, thin and lantern-jawed. Of extraordinary activity and going much abroad amongst the people, he was unlike his sister in having a rare gift of loquacity and an ear wide open for gossip.

So the letter that he wrote contained an account of this girl, whose beauty he described with perfect impartiality, being a widower and having no female relations. He dwelt in glowing language on her accomplishments, which had aroused suspicion that the devil himself might have a hand in her affairs. He further declared that she had come to Salem but recently, having from no one knew where. The name by which she was there known was assuredly not Evelyn de Lacey, but the keen instinct of jealousy caused the fat woman, seated in her armchair with her inevitable knitting in

her hands, to surmise that the person so described was no other than the fugitive from Manhattan. The knowledge occasioned her a curious exultation. She blinked at the letter, which she laid beside her on the table, as though it were a living thing. She mistook her lips, as if tasting some delectable morsel. And then she began to think in her slow fashion to which of the two men who she knew would value the information, she should impart it. The result of her cogitations was that she sent one of the slaves with a message to Captain Prosser Williams. For he, in following the scent upon which he had been put by Mynheer Laurens, had visited her more than once, had won his way into her good graces chiefly by his depreciation of the much-praised Mistress de Lacey. While she waited for an answer to her summons, she reflected with complacency that the letter had come at an opportune time, when Mynheer was absent for a couple of days on business in the Jerseys. For he would have been certain to oppose any action by her in the matter.

When the message was brought to Captain Williams, he was smoking with some other members of the Household staff and officers from the Fort, who were seated around various little tables at the game of lansquenet. Captain Ferrers, who had been playing at a somewhat distant table, noticed that, on receiving the note which he instantly read, Captain Williams, keen gambler though he was, got up with a hasty apology and left the room. Now between these two men there had recently been less cordiality than ever, for Captain Ferrers, well aware of his associate's connection with the persecution of the de Lacey, found it hard to preserve towards him even the ordinary conventional civility which prudence required. On this occasion it immediately occurred to him that the note thus received might be in some way connected with the fugitives. He was instantly on his alert, and withdrawing as soon as possible from that assemblage in the officers' room at Whitehall, he took his way, though vaguely and without any definite idea as to what he could do, along that familiar street which led to the de Lacey's deserted dwelling.

Ferrers had expected to see a light in one of the windows, which would be a sign that the wanderers had returned. But he laughed at himself as he walked on. The house lay there, still and deserted, and even the once luxuriant garden, now bare in great part of its flowers and foliage, presented a scene of chill desolation. He stood leaning upon the gate, with a heartache so poignant that it seemed to him that he must again undertake any risk that journey to Salem. He had never seen before how low Love, that smiling youth, could bend and tear one with the fierce agony of a separation that might be of indefinite duration. As he stood thus, he was aware of a voice that appeared familiar, though it reached him from a certain distance. He presently traced it, with a start of surprise, to the de Vries mansion, from the drawing-room of which gleamed lights and the pleasant glow of the fire on the hearth. Without any definite intention, he passed on in that direction. That glow of light from the mansion and that sound of a masculine voice struck him as somewhat odd, since he was aware that the head of the house was absent from the town.

As the voice he had heard approached the open door, and a step came crunching down the gravelled walk, Egbert Ferrers drew back into the shadow of the stone wall, for the voice was that of Captain Prosser Williams, and he clearly perceived by the light of the lantern upon the pole the face and figure of his fellow-officer. The latter stood still an instant, looking about him and drawing on a pair of gloves, and it seemed to the observer that the pale face wore a look of exultation. After a brief pause, Captain Williams walked hastily on, apparently taking his homeward way to the gubernatorial mansion.

Captain Williams was, indeed, exultant, for he had had a wholly satisfactory interview with his ally, who, unexpected as it was, had proved more powerful than all the rest. He had found her sitting unwontedly erect in her chair, with a color approaching to a purplish crimson in each heavy cheek and a light in her dull eyes. Thus transformed, it appeared to the visitor that she had something more distinctly human about her, as though a jelly-fish had suddenly shown signs of life. Hardly had they exchanged the conventional greetings, on the part of Prosser Williams with a little more than his usual scant measure of civility, when the woman snatched a letter from the table beside her and thrust it into his hand.

"Read that," she said. He eyed her curiously a moment before he unfolded the paper, which had been previously unloosed from its silken fastenings.

"It is then of moment?" he inquired. But Vrow de Vries merely repeated, with feverish excitement: "Read! Read!" In his eagerness to obey her, the young man let fall his cloak and displayed his rich doublet of brocade, his collar of fine lace and curled tawny hair, falling low on his shoulders. Somehow his attire, his general air of fashion and the quality of his clothes seemed out of place in that drawing room and in marked contrast to the woman in the chair before him. As he read, the pale face flushed, the eyes became more eager,

and the young man drew in his breath more sharply: "Most excellent Vrow," he cried, "this is indeed great tidings."

For he had immediately drawn from that letter the same conclusion as herself. "You think then that it is she?" inquired the mistress of the house anxiously, flushing with delight at the cordiality of her visitor's tone. "Of a surety it is," assented Captain Williams emphatically. "There can be none other in these colonies who would fit that description—none other who is so adorable. He spoke thus, forgetful for the moment of prudence and of the bond of mutual hatred that united him with the fat woman in the chair. In an instant he perceived his mistake; the bubbling laughter disappeared from the woman's lips, her triple chin, which had descended into the folds of her neck, grimly resumed its position, and the fire that flashed from the beady eyes was baleful.

"You too," she cried, "whom I have credited with sense and judgment!" "You have not credited me with blindness," the young officer said defiantly. "And blind I should be, if I did not perceive her exterior gifts."

"But you have told me," argued Vrow de Vries, eyeing him resentfully, "that you hate her."

"And I have told you the truth," the Captain replied, "for in very truth I do, and more than you can ever understand. But hatred does not close the eyes of a man to beauty."

He sat down again and said in a different tone: "If you will but give me this letter, good Vrow, you shall be fully satisfied that my hatred exceeds yours, as the sun does the pine-torch. I will track her to Salem, and then we shall see, you and I, how little that same beauty will avail her."

Vrow de Vries was satisfied though she would have preferred that this member of His Excellency's Household, whose visits for many weeks had been the stimulus of her dull life, should have unreservedly agreed with her as to the small claims of Mistress de Lacey to admiration. But here she felt was genuine hatred; nor did she pause to ask herself how it had been excited, nor guess how quickly it might melt away, if the conflicting passion of the man's love had been reciprocated.

"I will give you the letter," she said, slowly and deliberately, "and leave the matter in your hands. My husband will do naught, since it is his policy to meddle in no wise with the affairs of others. Therefore, this matter must be kept secret from him."

Prosser Williams readily promised and, having possessed himself of the letter, sighed with relief to reflect that his visits to that house and that uninteresting creature were nearly over, since her usefulness as an ally was gone. Nevertheless, he sat back in his chair a moment and watched her.

"Of late," resumed the woman passionately, the dull, crimson flush deepening in her cheeks and rising from cheek to forehead, "our disputes concerning this girl have been many and violent. I have pointed out to Mynheer that she is an outlaw, an enemy to the State, and to the Protestant religion and the King's Majesty. He laughed at the contention that a young maid like that could be dangerous to any one save impressionable young men. He hath flouted me, or roundly taken me to task for meddling with affairs which in no wise concern us. He hath praised her beauty, as well as her courage and her spirit, though he will not tell me when he hath seen these latter proved, and all that the more to anger me."

She stopped, almost choking with passion, as she remembered the bitter things which her husband had said. She had received indeed an unwonted amount of verbal abuse from Mynheer, because she had spoken her mind concerning their late neighbor in the presence of Captain Prosser Williams and young Mynheer Laurens.

"Oh, it is clear to me," she cried, "that she has thrown an eye at him, and has bewitched him."

"Bewitched!" That word cast a flood of light into Prosser Williams' mind. He thought he saw a new way out of his difficulty. Instead of a vexatious process of law, warrants and other procedure which would be necessary to get possession of the girl there in another colony, and which would bring odium on himself with Lady Belomont and many others as the prime mover in Evelyn's arrest, there was a far simpler process. It would leave the matter entirely in his hands, and enable him to play the part of rescuer, and otherwise to comport himself so as to earn the good opinion of the girl herself, and incidentally of many others to boot. He determined, without saying a word to any one, to leave directly for Salem. But he did not confide this intention to Vrow de Vries. Merely warning her to observe the utmost secrecy as to the letter and his visits to her house, he bade her a hasty good-evening and went out into the darkness, all unconscious that he had been observed by Captain Ferrers. He felt as though he were walking on air. He took the very stars to witness his triumph and the malignant joy that possessed him at the belief that Evelyn de Lacey was now in his power. Mingled with his burning desire for revenge, because he had been previously scorned and outwitted, was a longing to see her again

and to hear once more the tones of her voice—so a longing which was scarcely surpassed even by that of his brother-officer. And hope surged up within him that, alone and friendless in that place of exile, she might be induced to hear reason and listen to his suit. He vowed to himself by those pale stars above his head, shining beside the white radiance of the Milky Way, that if she would not accept him willingly, he would attain his end by force.

But he had to think the matter out carefully. He had in the first instance to devise some excuse for asking an extended leave. There was always the plea of urgent business, and he had seldom asked for such favors. But he had also to consider that the late fury against witches, which under the administration of Governor Phipps had stirred the Colony of Massachusetts and convulsed Salem village was at an end. There had been a reaction. Men in high places, municipal officials and the like, were ashamed of the part that they had played in the late trials, and remorseful at the lives that had been sacrificed and upon many innocent persons. He argued, however, that the few years that had elapsed since the era of the witchcraft excitement had not materially changed the temper of the people's minds. There must still be a sufficient number of persons firmly imbued with the lately universal belief that the devil operated through human creatures. Gloomy superstition was not lurking yet in the farm-houses, in laborers' cottages, and in the breasts even of ministers of the Gospel, who had made themselves so prominent before. Even the reaction that had ensued had had time to spend its force, so that he counted much on being able to stir up the smouldering embers of a fire which had destroyed its victims on Witches' Hill. In fact he inferred from the tenor of the letter from Salem that the belief in sorcery, in the evil eye and the like, was still a force to be reckoned with at the scene of those tragic events. He was fully determined to make the venture, and he planned out every detail, in so far as he could, before reaching Whitehall.

Meanwhile Captain Ferrers, more than ever convinced that his brother-officer was meditating some new villainy against Evelyn and had possibly discovered her hiding place, was filled with an agitation difficult to control. Uncertain what to do, he walked on in the same aimless fashion to the tavern of Dor Halle, hoping that he might pick up some information there. Captain Greatbatch was in the tavern, as he was sure to be, whenever the brigantine "Hesperia," was in port. Captain Ferrers was aware that this smuggler, for one reason or another, was in constant communication with Captain Prosser Williams. He had not yet heard the current report that Williams was protecting Greatbatch, and through his influence, saving him from the clutches of the law and allowing him a certain latitude in carrying on his nefarious practices.

Captain Ferrers entered almost unnoticed in the wake of a bluff sea captain whom he presently heard Greatbatch introducing to some others as the captain of "The Prosperity." He sat down quietly at a table, and ordered a glass of Madeira. This was brought to him with a plate of Deventer cookies. He broke and ate one of these almost mechanically, and slowly sipped his wine, while his ears were open to the talk at the other table. He had very little hope of solving the mystery there. Yet he knew that Greatbatch was more or less incautious in his cups, and he waited in expectation of some chance word that might give him the clue to Captain Williams' movements. Now, though Captain Greatbatch was as usual well-primed with his favorite portion of rum, he talked for some time was purely of seafaring matters. Nor did he so much as mention the name of Prosser Williams. The old sea-dog's rough voice rose higher and higher in argument or dispute, but he uttered no word of information that could in any way be useful to the listener.

Added with himself for the reason of an impulse which had led him thither, instead of following Captain Williams back to his quarters, he was about to rise and pay his reckoning when he heard the name of Mynheer de Vries. Greatbatch's voice had sunk to a lower pitch, and the talk had become plainly confidential. Suddenly, however, he raised it as in argument, and Captain Ferrers heard him say: "This would be aristocrat who mingles with the gentles, and who has for his wife the daughter of a shopkeeper in Salem."

The word acted upon Captain Ferrers with the force of a shock. Vrow de Vries had her family connections in Salem, and Captain Williams had been paying her a visit in the absence of her husband. All was now clear to him, as though revealed by a lightning flash. The woman had been giving intelligence of the presence of the de Lacey in Salem to their bitter enemy. What the motive of Vrow de Vries might be he did not stop to ask himself, but he rose and almost mechanically paid his score, exchanged a word or two with the landlord, and sped out of the tavern.

Only the next morning Ferrers learned that Captain Williams had asked for and obtained leave of absence. There was no immediate action that he could take. It would be almost impossible for him to obtain leave at the very moment

when his associate on the staff had left town. His one resource was to confer with Pieter Schuyler, who announced his intention of proceeding immediately to the Massachusetts village, whence he would keep Captain Ferrers informed of the other's movements, and take what steps were possible to warn and to protect the girl. The two men likewise had a conference with Madam Van Cortlandt, as they relied considerably upon her advice. Captain Ferrers, with a real anguish in his heart, at being thus chained to the spot, made Pieter Schuyler promise that, if his assistance were needed or if any plan were decided upon, he should be summoned, and then, leave or no leave, he would go at once.

TO BE CONTINUED

A VITAL PRINCIPLE

It was a little town in the heart of the Pennsylvania mountains. Their thickly wooded slopes rose above it on all sides, and two streams, the Lehigh and the Delaware, wound on either side and met at a certain junction. At night the trains came thundering over bridges winding through the valley, waking the echoes in the hills and glittering like fiery meteors through the night. On the outskirts of the town were mills, factories and iron works, which sent up their flame and smoke like beacons, into the atmosphere.

It was in one of these shops that Daniel McGrath had obtained employment, which was both difficult and even perilous, since lives were sacrificed by the slightest imprudence.

He was six feet in height, correspondingly broad in the shoulders and with an arm that was a terror to the evil disposed. All kinds of stories, in fact, were current of the strength and courage of big Dan McGrath. Moreover, he could sing a song and crack a joke with any one. So that he was, in general, popular with his fellow workmen until a certain number began to have a distinct grievance against him.

And this was that he steadfastly refused to join in the Saturday night orgies at a local tavern; or even to take a friendly glass on the way home from work. For though he had never been unduly addicted to strong drink, Dan had taken the pledge, at the close of a mission in Ireland, on the very same occasion, that he had registered himself as an Associate of the League of the Sacred Heart, and had been ever since faithful to its practices, notably the monthly Communion.

Nor was he at all slow to tell his hearers the reasons for these various refusals of his. He liked, in fact, to dilate upon the benefits which had accrued to him from taking the pledge and to explain that he did not wish to be seen in taverns at all, let alone on the Saturday nights, as he wanted to be up early on Sunday for Mass.

The first time he gave such a reason a shout of laughter went up from the group of workmen, by whom he was surrounded. It was believed to be a rich jest that McGrath was "getting off" at the expense of the poor, simple people, a mere handful in that town, who frequented Father Brady's church, which had lately reared its head on one of the thoroughfares.

Dan was a good fellow puzzled by the laughter which he had unwittingly provoked, but just at that moment the whistle blew and the men hustled into their outer garments and snatched their hats. The great building was deserted in a moment. The engines and the boiler still kept up their unceasing din, and the great fires in the smelting furnaces continued to roar, as the sign of perpetual vitality.

Dan passed one of these latter on his outward way, and pausing to regard it for a moment, he bethought himself of a saying of his sturdy peasant mother, when looking into flames: "Lord, save us from the fire of hell!"

Then he passed out into the sunshine of that glorious day, mild for the season, but the pleasant coolness of which was grateful after the stifling atmosphere within. Dan took off his cap and wiped his heated face and let the breeze from the mountains blow down through his thick hair.

He observed the scene before him with the keen appreciation of a Celt for the beautiful. He saw the two streams, still unchecked by the frost, flowing liquid silver, just touched with the mid-day gold, between the hills, frowning and majestic, with their trees bare of foliage, and rising in graceful outlines against the skyline, and catching marvelous effects of sunlight on the brownness of their trunks.

"Glorious to God! but 'tis the fine country all out," the Irishman murmured, as he proceeded at a brisk pace to a neighboring lunch room, where an enterprising woman undertook to give their midday meal to the mill hands.

When it was gradually borne in upon his fellow workmen that McGrath meant no joke at all by the frank confession that he went regularly to the "Romish Church" and that he allowed that church going to influence his conduct there was a better sort of astonishment. Even the general were disposed to look distrustfully at "the Romanist"; for their experience with that class of the population had been small.

The worst sort of men, on the other hand, whose Saturday night and other orgies had brutalized

them, began to entertain a truly diabolical hatred for their simple and unoffending comrade. Also they were disposed to count upon that hitherto imperturbable good temper, which had been proof against jests and taunts of all kinds.

On one occasion, however, when a certain little clique, led by a particularly low and aggressive fellow who had been the leading spirit in the antagonism that began to prevail against poor Dan, went a little further than usual, the weather in the foundry became overclouded, not to say stormy. This like Whately passed from the usual sneers and jests, directed against the Irishman himself, all of which were taken in good part, to vulgar and ridiculous attacks on his holiest mysteries.

Dan's face changed at once, and his voice became stern and peremptory, as he cried:

"Hold on there, Ike. I don't allow any man to talk like that in my presence." But the fellow, conscious of the grinning approval of his own particular clique, went still farther, winding up his ribald talk with a remark concerning the Blessed Virgin.

Instantly Dan's brawny arm was raised and with the single exclamation of "You dirty blackguard!" he dealt the offender a resounding slap on the cheek, that could be heard above the roar of the machinery.

Ike's eyes blazed with fury, though, being a sinking coward at heart, he dared not retaliate. Instantly there was an uproar among the men. A certain number were in sympathy with the sentiments the ruffian had expressed. Some others could scarcely make out, at first, what the tumult was about, and still another few stood abashed and uncertain. These latter were Catholics, a small and weak minority. For even those among them who practised their religion had hitherto said little about it in that atmosphere which they knew to be hostile, and they were not known to belong to the despised religion.

There was a confusion of sounds, through which could be distinguished the lowest epithets applied to the "Papist," varied by expressions uncomplimentary to the Pope.

Dan standing at bay, his eyes gleaming out from his slackened face and his powerful fists clenched defiantly, cried out:

"Come on, then, every mother's son of you! I'm ready for ye." Though many sprang towards him threatening with cries of "knock out the bloody Romanist," there was a certain proportion of the more decent men who felt a thrill of admiration for that sturdy upholder of the faith that was in him.

Of course, in the majority of cases it was simply admiration of his courage, his strength and, as it were, the hero look of him; yet there were a few who could go deeper and catch some glimpses of the vital principle that had been the mainspring of his action, the reverence and the loyalty that had uplifted the poor toiler to a high spiritual plane.

The Catholics, too, felt some stirrings of shame and an awakening of that faith which had burned so brightly in their forefathers. Admiration for Dan was mingled with indignation and disgust for his opponent. Many of them were glad to remember afterwards that they had rallied to his side before the next act in that inspiring little drama.

In the uproar and the buzz of talk that had followed upon McGrath's action the men had not noticed that the superintendent with two of the directors and large shareholders in the iron works had stepped unnoticed into the room. They had, too, been standing outside in the corridor for a few moments, and so had been witnesses of all that had occurred.

"Who is that man?" inquired the oldest of the visitors, a leading capitalist of the State and director not only in that company but in several others.

The superintendent to whom the inquiry had been addressed, promptly answered: "An Irishman named McGrath." "By George!" exclaimed the younger of the two visitors, "he would make an ideal Hercules or a statue of some revenging god."

"Can you put a stop to this tumult?" asked the man who had spoken first of the superintendent. The latter, who was not a little mortified that such an occurrence should have disturbed at such an inopportune moment that perfect order which he boasted of being able to keep in the foundry, sharply rang a bell.

The effect was magical. There was an almost instantaneous silence. The men who had been scrambling over one another, shouting and gesticulating, turned their eyes from the still militant Dan to the three men who were standing in the center of the room.

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