

from day to day, and as she read she passed over places where De La Tour had broken away from the life around him to dwell on his love, and longing for his absent sweetheart, to recall tender memories and dream of a future together.

"I do my best to pass the days of waiting, which go so slowly, by visiting the sights of the town. Yesterday I saw Westminster Hall, and visited Vauxhall Gardens, dining with a fellow refugee, the poor wretch worse provided than myself for waiting. To-day I dined with Governor Hutchinson in company with other Massachusetts refugees. Several of them had heard of our betrothal, and warmed my heart by speaking of your good father's virtues. Afterwards we walked in Hyde Park. A whole army of sufferers for loyalty are here, lamenting their own and their country's fate. Nothing in this country pleases them. The fires are not to be compared to our American ones of oak and walnut. 'Would that I were away,' I heard one poor fellow say."

Then came a later date. "I have been to Windsor and have seen the procession of peers for the Duchess of Kingston's trial. At the New England Coffee House I hear all the news. Alas! all there are sad enough at the banishment and confiscation acts. They end all chances of seeing the old home again, and to many a poor wretch mean despair. I am far better off than most, for Lord North has interested himself for me, and I am already in receipt of my military half pay. They offered me a captain's commission in the regulars, but my one object is to make a home for my bride, and I could not condemn her to share the hardships of a soldier's life. I have good hopes of a sufficient grant of money to start us in comfort on the grounds allotted to me at Shelburne—this new town for whose future there are such brave prophecies."

Later on, his courage seeming to fail, he wrote: "The tidings and rumors from America are most agitating; one's heart sickens with hopes and fears. To-day it was rumored that Washington was dead. Alas! it was untrue. I cannot but be mortified to hear Englishmen talk of Americans as a sort of sorfs. I am wearied of sights, and sick at heart of a sojourn among those doubly foreigners to me. New refugees daily arrive to recount their sufferings. Many of my friends have sunk under their privations, and are dead. I long to be away, and yet dare not go. If it were not for the need to be on the spot to use what influence I have, I would be off to my mother in Jersey. I am thankful that she has found a haven amongst French faces. She says that there she means to end her days, and that sometime I must come to show her my bride."

The letter ended with: "Do not think me cowardly, sweetheart, for thus complaining at the fate which keeps me away from you. I try to keep a brave face to fate, and look to the spring to bring me back to you. Tell Rachel that I will know how to thank her for the care that she takes of my treasure, and bid Harry not forget his old comrade. My duty to your honored father."

Rachel stopped, and for a moment the crackling of the fire was the only sound. The hearts of all were full, save perhaps Esther's, who gazed into the fire with an absent smile. It was not hard heartedness that caused her to dwell on De La Tour's devotion to her, instead of his and his friends' sorrows. Growing up amongst the miseries of civil war, the things that had eaten their way into Rachel's soul had only taught her pleasure-loving nature to grasp at every possible alleviation. It was not her fault that she was born for joy not sorrow, and that she instinctively grasped at the flowers of life and shunned the shadows.

Harry viciously kicked a half burnt log as he muttered: "'Tis a cursed shame to think of so many brave fellows eating their hearts out over there, when we might all of us have taken ship and gone back to strike one more blow for king and country. Let the Britishers give up! Defeat did not mean to them what it meant to us! We might have struck one blow after they had fled."

Rachel flashed responsive to the fire of his words. "Oh," she said, clasping her hands, "how glorious to have succeeded where all England's power had failed."

But the old man sighed and shook his head.

"Idle words, my children. Would ye accuse Lord Cornwallis and Sir Harry Clinton of abandoning our cause while there was one hope left? They are wise and good soldiers, and ye fought your best like brave men under them. Now 'tis your part as brave men to accept the reward of the God of battles, and to face with courage your new life in a new land. And 'tis the women's part, my daughter, to cheer the men with their patience, and not to join them in useless repining."

"Yes, father," said Rachel, submissively; and as she moved towards the dark corner where stood her spinning-wheel, no one saw that the tears were running down her face.

The winter snows had melted from around the farmhouse, and the spring had broken over the fair valleys where the Acadian farmers had once lived and worked, before De La Tour came, eager for a sight of Esther's face e'er starting to prepare their new home.

Then, as the full glory of the ripened summer was on the wane, came the wedding day, and in the splendor of a September morning, Rachel stood dressing her sister for the ceremony. No bridal tears or pallor were about Esther, never was she more radiant than now, as she stood before her mirror. Her eyes shone like stars, a soft colour glowed in her cheeks.

"It is a pleasure to have such stuff near one," she said gaily, as the rustling folds of her wedding gown fell into place around the supple young figure, and, truly, most women would have delighted to touch softly the

precious glistening stuff. The gown had been brought from England by De La Tour, a gift from his mother to the bride. The pointed bodice and looped up overskirt were of a silvery brocade, too light for grey, too soft for white, spotted with miniature bunches of pink roses. The petticoat was of quilted rose-coloured silk, the elbow frills and dainty kerchief of the finest Mechlin. Not a perfection was wanting, from the long loose gloves to the white satin shoes.

Never before had Esther worn such a dress, and often during the past three months had she pulled aside the silver paper wrappings to gaze on her treasure, and to dream of the day when she should wear it. At last it was here, and she stood arrayed in all her bridal splendor. Long and dreamily she gazed at herself in the glass, then a triumphant smile broke out.

"He will be satisfied with my looks, I think, Rachel."

"He would be hard to please, else," answered Rachel, smoothing down the shining folds.

She was very white this morning, and dark circles under them gave her eyes a feverish glow.

"Oh, Rachel, I am so happy. I never thought one could be so happy,"

Esther cried, flinging her arms around her sister's neck.

For a moment the two girls clung together, a tumult of feeling in each breast. Sisterly love was perhaps then first with both. Up to now their lives had been lived so closely together, henceforth they were to go on apart.

"May to-day be the beginning of many happy ones, sweetheart. There are few women so loved as you are," Rachel whispered, tenderly.

Esther loosed her arms, the depth of feeling had passed.

"We must not crush our finery," she said, with a laugh. "Will you lace my bodice for me, and pull the tucker up on the shoulders. Oh!" with a little shriek, "how deathly cold your hands are. What is the matter with you?" and she stared at her sister, startled.

"My hands are always cold when I am tired, you ought to know that. And I suppose I tired myself yesterday over the wedding feast."

"You look tired enough," Esther said, discontentedly. "You are as white as can be, and will do no justice to your pretty dress. Though perhaps you will be rosy enough when the Shelburne gallants appear," she added, guily.

Rachel smiled a wan smile, but answered nothing. The bodice was laced, the toilette finished to the last dainty touch.

"Sister," said Esther, "there is ten o'clock striking. They can hardly be here for another hour, and we have nothing to do save wait all that time. How still the house is. I wish at least that Harry were here to see me in my finery. He would be better than none."

But Harry had ridden forth on the preceding day with some young fellows of the neighborhood, old New England friends, to meet De La Tour and the gallant cavalcade that rode with him from Shelburne, sup with them, and ride together their last stage on the wedding morning. No lack was there of courtly gallants in the new Loyalist town of Shelburne, men who for King George had abandoned riches and power, and the very pick of these were to ride forth with De La Tour, the noted leader of the South Carolina lancers.

To the waiting girls, the noontide stillness seemed unusual and oppressive. Esther tried to busy herself with laying out the riding pelisse in which she was to set out for her new home. Rachel leant out of the casement, the soft breeze playing around her head like a caress, her ruby red satin gown seeming to draw up the color from the stiff rows of hollyhocks below. Thus she was the first to hear the shrill cry of Juba, the negro boy, perched on the fence.

"Here they come, missus; here they come."

A whirl of dust, a clatter of hoofs, but surely 'tis but one horse and rider. Straining her ears for further sounds, she saw Harry Parker sweep round the turn of the road, and it hardly needed the sight of his upturned face, white, haggard, wild as one distraught, to tell her that the woeful dreams of the night before, the morning's haunting prevision of disaster were somehow realized. She drew her head in and faced her sister.

"Here is Harry," she said quietly, "ridden on, no doubt, to tell us that the others are in sight. No, you must not come down," as Esther made a movement towards the door. "You must not be there when they come. My father or De La Tour must come and fetch you. Wait while I speak to Harry and warn my father."

"But I want to show myself to Harry," Esther began, but Rachel passed from the room so swiftly, that as Harry dismounted, he saw her standing in the doorway, a strange figure in the morning sunshine, in her rich red draperies, and with her white set face.

"Is he dead," she whispered, as he came up to her. And poor Harry, expecting only to break in upon mirth and good cheer, stared amazed at this prevision of disaster.

"Why?" he stammered.

"My dream last night told me that sorrow had come. I saw his face." Her wild eyes told the horror at her heart.

"Is he dead?" she asked again. And with a grasp like steel upon his wrist, she drew Harry into the living room. He dropped into a chair, and leant his head upon his crossed arms.

"No, he is not dead," he said moodily. "At least, not unless he has managed to make an end of himself since I left. They had taken his sword and pistols from him before then."

Rachel staggered against the wall. "For the love of God, tell me all," she cried wildly.

Harry sat upright with the energy of despair. "Yes, I must tell you,