

L. M. CRIST'S SONS, Publishers.

ESTABLISHED 1855.

ELLEN CAMPBELL

OR

KING'S MOUNTAIN

Written for the Yorkville Enquirer, by Mrs. Mary A. Ewart.

CHAPTER IX.

Of many an ill untold, unung,
That will not—may not, find a tongue.

It was early morning when Bessie Craig stood, with her sun bonnet in her hand, in the porch of their little cottage.

"Indeed, father, I don't like to leave you," said she. "Supposing harm should befall you, I would never forgive myself for the desertion."

"God's goodness and my grey hairs will preserve me, lassie," replied the old man; "and up at the mansion." "Yes, but father, God's goodness can't preserve me, too; and the mansion did not preserve Miss Ellen from fear the other night."

"I know that, Bessie," replied the old man, sighing; "but still I'm thinking they'll be apt to show you more respect if you were up there, though it's little to any one now." "Tory troopers are to ride with your aunt father after all."

"I will go, if you bid me, father, but I'd rather be with you," replied the dutiful girl, as she clasped the old man's arm.

"As you will Bessie. After a while only you kills and who makes all else again; and though I ken it so well, and ken that He who keeps the young ravens will guard my little Bessie, still my faith is trembling tonight, and I fear for you my bairn."

"You have heard so many bloody tales lately, dear father, of those wicked troopers, that you are uneasy; but Col. Campbell will soon drive them from our country, and we will have peace once more."

"Peace, peace," said old Andrew. "God grant it! Sometimes I fear we will never see it again."

"You desponding, father! Why I thought nothing could shake your trust in the holy cause. Why you'll have your little Bessie scolding you for want of faith. Go down and see the minister while you know a talk with him always does you good, and you will come back cheered."

"I believe I will, Bessie, for whether this falling faith is a sign that the silver cord will soon be loosed and the golden bowl broken, or no, I canna say; but this I know that He who so long has granted me living grace will also grant me dying grace; and I will do as you say."

"I'll be with you, dear father, and the old man went away murmuring a little child shall lead you; unless ye become as a little child, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

Little Bessie was too light-hearted a maiden to remain long sad, and too buoyant a body to remain long idle; she was drawing her spindle to its long buzzing music, with many a plaintive ditty of olden time. It was easy to read the memories that filled her innocent heart as she sang:

"A soldier once I loved, forgot him shall I never,"

And the more tender love that breathed from her lips in

"The dearest lad that ever blest a woman's eye."

Bessie was never lonely. Her wheel and her merry heart were an antidote against all ennui, as well as against all care; and beside that wheel, her busy fingers wove many a bright hope for the future, with Ellick Bowen to share it and peace to bless them both. So absorbed was she in her pleasant fancies, that she did not notice the frequent passing of many persons on the hither-to quiet road, and it was not till her attention was aroused by a gruff call for water, that she discovered some unusual occurrence was afoot.

Small troops were hurrying down the road as if by reconnoitering, while here and there a weary traveler plodded on as if he dared not rest. To Bessie's inquiries she received a coarse reply, or a profane oath, and closing the door of the cottage she awaited, with considerable anxiety, the return of her father. It was not long ere he came, the hurried manner of his riding testifying to his anxiety. Hastily dismounting, he drew his horse within the shadow of trees, and hurried into his dwelling. The news he brought was startling. Ferguson, in his rapid retreat, had crossed the Cherokee Ford, and was making for King's Mountain, where he intended to take a position to give battle. The rabble of the army, who followed it for the purposes of plunder, were scattering through the country to await the decision of the battle. The soldiery had been guilty of the most wanton cruelties and depredations. A party of them, the night previous, entered Mr. Adams' house and wantonly burned all the Bibles and Psalms books they could find, swearing that Presbyterian covenants were the inciters of the rebellion, and he might thank the luck that spared them from throwing him on the burning pile.

"Oh, father!" cried Bessie, horror struck at the sacrifice, "if God's word is not sacred, what will these people respect?"

"Nothing, lassie, nothing, there's no age nor condition beyond their cruelty, and I hear you devil, Ferris has got Mr. Willoughby's plate safe in the British camp."

"Why that is downright robbery," cried Bessie.

"And what do they care for that? If they do not value human life, they will hardly respect human rights. Jack Adair's wife, down on the creek, refused to tell some of the party where the cattle were, resolving they should not go to feed the British, and they ripped her open on her own door steps, and the dead mother fell on the balms that were crying around her knee."

"Horrible, horrible!" said Bessie, covering her face with her hands.

"Yes, and what I'm to do with you, chiel, I canna say. My heart faints at the thought of the terror to which you will be exposed."

"I will not leave you, father," said Bessie, firmly.

"Deed, Bessie, I dinna want to do; but I'm thinking you'll be better at the Mansion House."

"It is useless to persuade me, father. You see yourself they are not free from the insults of these lawless men, and I am as safe here with you as I am anywhere. I cannot go. Do not grieve me by asking, dear father," said little Bessie, in her coaxing way.

"As you like lassie. Dear knows I canna find it in my heart to send you from me now."

Bessie's mind busied herself about her usual household duties, and though interrupted frequently by rude guests, still the day promised to pass without other danger than the terror these coarse visitors inspired. Late in the evening, Andrew gathered, from the remarks of the passers, that the Americans were in hot pursuit, and would likely come up with the enemy on the following day.

"It is positive madness," said one, "to attempt forcing Ferguson from that position. He commands the whole hill, and each column of the Whigs, as it advances, will be swept by his guns till not a man remains. He's got a body of regulars there, too, that would face a thousand devils if they were commanded to do it. I tell you, there's small chance for those hunting-shirt fellows below. Why Ferguson could crush them by only rolling the stones down."

Such conversations, and the like, were not calculated to quiet Andrew's mind; yet just as little did they intimidate hopeful little Bessie. With a quiet smile and many an inward prayer, for such she was, she went to bed, and the pursuit of her duties. As evening advanced the confusion became greater, and the rabid rattle and obscene songs of the brutal rabble, more than once started and shocked Bessie's ears. Still she bravely kept up her courage, and setting the table for the evening meal, prepared it with the usual tidy despatch.

"I am afraid you have no better father," said Bessie, who had twice called the old man before he had answered.

"Yes, lassie, dear, better and more comfortable since the morn," replied the old man. "If I get a night's rest, with God's blessing, I will be the same as ever, and may He bless and keep us," said he, as he reverently bowed his head, and the customary blessings on the food provided. They had scarcely sat down ere he door was rudely thrown open and a party of troopers, headed by Ferris, entered.

"Just in time," said he, with a coarse oath. "Come, Bessie," said he, familiarly laying his hand on her shoulder, "let us see how you get on, girl; the best the world will afford."

Now Bessie was neither patient nor prudent, and quick to resent such conduct and language from the man whom she hated above all others in the world, she replied:

"I'll never wait on you, Reuben Ferris, nor any like you; but I know you'll take what you want. There are the keys; wait on yourself, and throwing them on the table, she entered her own room and closed the door.

"A spy like you," said one of the men. "Let her alone," said Ferris. "I'll deal with her presently."

"I trust, sirs," said Andrew, in pale alarm at Bessie's imprudent words and the swaggering impudence of the party, "that you will think nothing of the holy speech of a silly lassie. You are hasty to whatever my poor house affords, and I will wait upon you better than a foolish girl."

"I'll swear if it ain't the deaf Scotchman, Tom! You can hear well enough now, you grey-headed hypocrite," said a trooper, with a oath.

"What is that Tom?" asked Ferris in surprise, at the indignant astonishment of his companions.

"We came here, the night of your big expedition against Major Davie up at the Mansion House," laughed Tom, "with whom and his companions, Ferris' bungling business was a standing joke. He was the old slammer so deaf and Balm singing, as not to be able to hear anything we said to him. You have recovered wonderfully since that time, friend."

"Yes, and I'll be sworn he was the very man that carried the news to the Whig camp," said Ferris, in gathering wrath.

"If I thought so, I'd make him dance on nothing, pretty soon," said the trooper a reckless and cruel bully, who was a match for Ferris in every crime. "But no, it could not have been, for there was no one here but himself."

"No one but himself? Where was Bessie?" said Ferris, with his keen eyes fixed on the man.

"His child? Oh! she had gone to see a friend," said the trooper, who could not understand the gathering cloud on Ferris' brow.

"She had, had she?" thundered Ferris. "Now," said Ferris, with a terrible oath, "she will pay dearly for that visit. Tell me where she went," cried he, starting up and grasping the throat of Andrew, "or I'll choke every drop of blood out of you."

There was a low gurgling sound, and Ferris, not aware himself, in his fury of the giant grip that was suffocating the old man, was started by a piercing shriek, and Bessie, who had been an anxious listener to the foregoing conversation, rushed from the adjoining room and threw her arms around her father. With a furious curse, the wretch dashed the old man from his hand, and dragging the girl from the now insensible body, thundered out—

"So it was you, my little Miss, that done Bowen the good deed of carrying tales to him, was it?"

"My father, my dear father," cried the girl, wrenching herself from the ruffian's grasp; and kneeling by the side of the still prostrate form, called on him in piercing tones to speak to her. He was not dead, but partially strangled and stunned. He slowly opened his eyes, and with difficulty raised himself from the floor.

"Are you hurt, father dear?" cried Bessie, as she bent over him in tearful anxiety.

"I canna say, my child. I feel very strange—here—" said he, hesitatingly, pressing his hand to his head. "I think, chiel, I have had a stroke," and he looked into her face in pitiful distress.

"Shut up that confounded blubbering and tell me if it was you who carried tales to the rebel Bowen," said Ferris, for a moment intimidated at the girl's grief; but again furious at the memory of that night's disappointment.

"Ellick Bowen is no rebel, Reuben Ferris, and if you want to know who spied for your murderous plan, I'll tell you. I did, and I'd do it again and again, to disappoint such Tory cowards as you who are only fit to fight old men and frighten women."

It was a brave speech, but a sadly imprudent one. Ferris' hitherto noisy threats grew deep, and his smothered wrath made his thickened utterance barely intelligible. Words of concentrated passion burst from his lips, which little Bessie replied to in scornful recklessness; then a sneering familiarity with the ground and the danger to observe was as hateful as it was despicable; there were words and tones which caused the maiden in terror and bitter shame to hide her head on the old man's bosom, followed by brutal insults, which were met by passionate tears and vain pleadings; there was the tremulous voice of an old man pleading, as only a father could, for an only child, and that child, a young girl, with my arms in blows; there was a struggle, a groan, a woman's shriek of mortal terror, of bitter agony, a hoarse laugh, a ribald jest; then darkness and silence, and gloom gathered around the dwelling so long the abode of innocence and peace; stars looked down on a ruined garden, trampled by rough and unheeding feet; the little gate swung back from its hinges, and a desolation never stamped upon the hither-to lovely spot.

CHAPTER X.

So fought, so oh! such a fairly won,
'Till none till now. SHAKESPEARE.

"Tell Miss Ellen to come to me immediately," said Mr. Adams, as he stepped, for a moment, at the door of the Mansion House.

"What is the matter, Mr. Adams?" said Ellen, in alarm, as she answered the hasty summons.

"Bessie, Bessie Craig is dying. Can you go to her?"

"What do you tell me? Bessie, Bessie dying? Oh! it cannot be."

"It is too true, God bless you, if you can, for her father is helpless from paralysis, brought on, I suppose, by the dreadful stroke."

"Oh! this is dreadful," cried Ellen; "but what is the matter? She is quite well when I last saw her but a day ago."

"I cannot tell. I only fear it is the foulest murder that ever was perpetrated. The old man cannot speak. I found him bound in a chair, in his own house, and beseeching at his feet, her dress almost torn from her body, and bathed in blood, from the rupture of a blood vessel. I presume, for I saw no wound. She either would not or could not speak to me, but clung to her father, and hiding her face on his knee, moaned as if in pain."

"I tried to get something out of Andrew, but he only muttered, 'Tories,' and pointed to Bessie."

"Good Heavens!" cried Ellen, in pallid terror; "this is too terrible to realize; but I will go to her—will go at once. Oh! the cruel, cruel hand that could have injured that innocent girl. What fiend could have done this?"

"I much believe it was that Ferris. He incited a party against me, that came and burnt the most of my library last night, swearing my rebellious principles made me the rebel I was, and threatening to take my life for that sermon at the church the other day. I judged from what I heard that Ferris was up here, robbing Mr. Willoughby of what he could lay his hands on."

"He was; and knowing the character of the man, my uncle saved himself from insult, perhaps from injury, by making a complete surrender. He and his myrridons swept everything. They literally robbed us of all. I judged from what I heard that Ferris was up here, robbing Mr. Willoughby of what he could lay his hands on."

"I do not think there will be any danger. The Tories are now all collected in Ferguson's camp; and even if they were not, every principle of humanity calls for assistance at the home head."

"Are you going back? If so," said Ellen, "I will go with you."

"No," replied the minister, compressing his lips, while a frown gathered on his usually placid brow, "my duty is yonder, today," pointing to the heights of King's Mountain.

"If such scenes as you I left behind could not arm every man, priest or layman—then would I say that charity had died in the human heart, and we deserve to be butchered, insulted and dishonored. I know not how I shall tell poor Bowen. It will go high to madden him."

Ellen turned tearfully away as the picture of Bessie, in the pride of her young beauty and timid love, rose before her, and bidding the minister good speed, with many an inward prayer for a blessing upon their arms, with many an anxious thought for one whom she well knew would be in the thickest of the day's battle, she turned, with a sad heart, to fulfill a woman's and sister's duties to little Bessie Craig.

As the minister rode along, he met with many of the neighboring people hastening to the scene of combat. Some riding bare-back, with dangling trace chains, roused by some fresh tale of terror in the excitement of the coming battle, to strike a blow for vengeance and freedom. As they rode along, they uttered profane, testified to the passions that were stirring their nature. No, the feeling was too deep and holy for the outbreak of speech. Occasionally, a tale of butchery would be told, but in low tones that spoke deeply of smothered passion, or hissing out, would come in spasmodic utterance, a story of dishonor and a speech the men could understand.

wrong that whitened the pallid cheeks to a still more deathly hue, and forced the blood from lips bitten in strong determination to repress the fury of passion. And with their burning eyes fastened on the bristling crest of the British encampment, they pressed on. The man of God, the minister of peace, roused to holy vengeance; the grey haired father made childless by British butchery; the stalwart man enduring his wrongs with heroic fortitude; the headstrong boy forced to premature manhood, quenching his tears and nursing his heart by memories that curdled the blood to look back upon; all, in a silence more ominous than words, hastened to the patriot's camp. As they reached it, an order was passed rapidly along the line, agreed as it was appropriate, it signified well with the character of the determined leaders of that day's action—

"The up overcoats; pick touch holes; prime afresh, and be ready to fight."

The party now entering, were warmly welcomed; their familiarity with the ground and the danger to observe was as helpful as it was despicable; there were words and tones which caused the maiden in terror and bitter shame to hide her head on the old man's bosom, followed by brutal insults, which were met by passionate tears and vain pleadings; there was the tremulous voice of an old man pleading, as only a father could, for an only child, and that child, a young girl, with my arms in blows; there was a struggle, a groan, a woman's shriek of mortal terror, of bitter agony, a hoarse laugh, a ribald jest; then darkness and silence, and gloom gathered around the dwelling so long the abode of innocence and peace; stars looked down on a ruined garden, trampled by rough and unheeding feet; the little gate swung back from its hinges, and a desolation never stamped upon the hither-to lovely spot.

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