

A Tale of the Revolution

“I am now going to relate a story, consisting partly of misfortune and partly of love.”—*Boccaccio*

The time at which our story commences was about the middle of the War of Independence, and the incidents are laid in the valley of R——, a beautiful and romantic spot.

The day was retreating to the west, and evening seemed preparing to cast her gloom around, for as yet it was scarce possible to say that the brightness had diminished; the hour appeared as though a thin cloud had mellowed the light which hung in the valley, yet the glowing appearance of the forest on the western hills, showed where the sun was sinking—a few clouds, that had been floating to and fro in the Heavens during some hours past, were gradually melting away and leaving the wide blue arch pure and unobscured; throughout the valley all was silent and calm; a Mill was there, but its noise which had echoed amongst the rocks during the fore part of the day, was now hushed and still, and the slight murmur of the water from the dam alone could be heard; this was a beautiful sheet of water on which the dark shadows from the neighboring hills were fast gathering. A solitary urchin stood on a rock projecting into it, and was winding up his fishing line and preparing to depart. Built in a fine situation, on the slope of the mountain, was a comfortable looking stone house, o’ertopped by many aged Sycamore-trees, under one of which was a bench, and here reclined a man who constituted, with the fisher, the only animated objects of the scene. The appearance of this person did not at all coincide with the beauty and calmness of the spot; he was of short stature, but the stoutness of his person compensated for his want of height; strength was indicated in every limb, and his expanded chest and broad shoulders, made it too evident to escape observation; his round face was pitted deeply with the Small Pox, and was destitute of those marks by which we are innately taught to expect talent, worth or honor; although their opposites were not *pourtrayed*, yet the expression of his features seemed to bid us not to be astonished at finding them. He was habited in a suit of dark grey clothes, and wore a black handkerchief around his neck. Ever and anon he cast his piercing grey eyes with anxious look towards the road which wound down the hill at the Northern end of the valley. When evening had a little more advanced, and the uneasiness of the person just described apparently increased, a chair was seen descending into the valley, along the narrow road. It was not long before the steady pace of the sturdy horse had brought it and its passengers close to the Mill; these were a middle aged man of meagre habit, and of no very pleasing appearance, and a beautiful girl, who seemed now to be about 20, resplendent in charms; her beautiful chestnut hair was crossed over her fine white forehead, and a pair of lively blue eyes beneath, bespoke a pure and cultivated mind; the person we first mentioned, and who was called Magoffin, seemed much pleased with the arrival of his visitors, or at least his stern features seemed to express as much satisfaction and joy as was compatible with their peculiar cast. “You are welcome, Pattison,” said he—“and you too, Miss Ellen, I rejoice to see in my lonely valley.” “Lonely indeed, Sir,” was the answer, “though absence of company is sometimes an advantage.” “Sometimes,” said Magoffin, with an angry look, and turned on his heel to address Mr. Pattison and assist him to alight, for a severe lameness rendered this somewhat difficult.—As Ellen entered the dwelling, a feeling of grief, to which her young heart was not a stranger, pervaded her bosom; the only female she found in the house was its keeper, an old woman, whose son assisted at the Mill, and these together with the owner constituted the whole family. Ellen desired to be shown a room, and when there a deep sigh escaped her as she seated herself on the bed. A feeling of dislike

towards Magoffin was one of the most powerful which the calm breast of the maiden had yet entertained, and at each of his frequent visits at her uncle's, (for Mr. Pattison stood in that degree related to her,) she felt it increase; what then were her sensations when her uncle gave her to understand that she was the cause of these visits; that she had attracted the notice of a man she despised, but of one whom Mr. Pattison considered as in every respect a suitable partner for her through life? Each day he spoke in favor of Magoffin;—money was his ruling passion, avarice held firm sway in his breast, and he dwelt with complacency on the wealth of the suitor, whose riches he said were not confined to his Mill and Farm. The hopes of the Americans for the reestablishment of their Independence, were now at their lowest ebb, by reason of the ill success of the last campaign; Pattison rejoiced at it, and Magoffin with him, and the former told Ellen of vast sums her suitor would realize on that event; but this to her was worst of all, for she had imbibed largely of revolutionary feelings, and nightly put up her prayers for the safety and success of Washington and her country's army. And there was one other who shared her prayers; she had neither father nor mother, nor knew she of a single relative except her uncle, who but illy supplied the place of a fond parent; it was not for a relation she petitioned Heaven, 'twas for a lover, a soldier in the army of Independence. She had given her heart to one whom she thought in every respect worthy of it, and who increased in worth when contrasted with Magoffin. Alfred Clendinning she knew was brave, noble, generous, possessing a mind more cultivated than ordinary, and from a close observation of his rival, she thought she detected a want of all these qualities. Alfred was not poor, but her uncle viewed him in no friendly light, and forbade him his house.—Ellen descended to supper, and afterwards was compelled to endure the company of Magoffin for an hour, when her uncle told her they wished to be alone, and she gladly availed herself of the leave thus given, to seek the shelter of her room; the old house-keeper lighted her up, and to her she put some casual questions concerning Magoffin, for she felt there was something concealed in his mode of life—the old woman was talkative, and no ways backward in communicating information, but she had not much to give; she said, however, that he was often absent from the house for whole days and nights together, without saying whither he was gone, and that several times there had been parties of men in the valley at night, who would carry off the flour from the Mill—once or twice a gentleman had stopped all night at their house, and then they were sure to set talking till the break of day. Ellen reclined on her bed whilst a thousand thoughts passed over her mind. In the mean time, Magoffin and his guest were seated in the room below and were in a busy conference; before them was a table covered with papers and letters, the contents of which busied them both; from time to time a large silver watch that lay on the table was consulted in considerable anxiety.—“The Major delays long,” at length Magoffin observed—“If those curst rebel horse are out, he brings an escort, I suppose?” said Pattison. “Aye, some dragoons to see him safe.” “I wish he were here,” rejoined the visitor. “General Arnold is anxious to conclude the treaty, and tonight may ensure the downfall of the union; my powers are ample, and our reward will be so too; you know my offer, give me Ellen, and I relinquish one half of my share to you.” “Ellen, as I have already said, is yours; I have brought her with me, that here retired from the world, she may become your bride, where all opposition would be vain, for I have found her stubborn and perverse.”—“Alfred Clendinning has caused this, but he shall rue having crossed my path,” said Magoffin, and gathered his eyebrows into a determined frown; at that moment the distant sound of firearms was heard.—“Hark!” said he, “by heavens 'tis the pistols of the dragoons!”—“For God's sake,” said Pattison, “be cautious, these papers may ruin us; confound the chance that brought the Rebels on the hills at this time of night—they're at it still!” and the quick successive shots were distinctly heard.

Whilst all this was passing below, Ellen had remained in a deep anxiety of thought in her chamber; the beauty of the night had brought her to the window, and she hung with delight on the scene before her; the moon was waning away, her full broad disc had disappeared, and a crescent of silver light now hung over the valley; in the lower portion of this, dark trees and hills soon broke the view, but above the light rested on the expanded water and showed an extent of clear land for some distance; here and there the dark shadows of hills and trees were visible, contrasting with the brightness around, and assuming grotesque forms, sometimes huge and undefined, and again showing the appearance of strange castles or armed giants, whilst the woods which resounded at intervals with the voice of the night-frog and katy-did, was here and there burnished with long rays of brightness; a portion of the road too, was visible as it descended the hill at the extreme end of the valley; and as she gazed towards it, for a moment she was startled, for she thought she perceived a dark body move along—but 'twas gone, and her eye which hung on the spot could discover nothing more; her attention wandered, and in an instant the bright flashings of fire were visible in the woods below, and the report of firearms struck on her startled ear; she bent from her casement with deep interest, every thing else seemed hushed, and between the successive discharges of firearms, she heard the noise of the distant turmoil; she saw lights moving about the little Mill, half hid by huge trees and ponderous rocks, among which each moment streaks of fire and the report of arms were discerned, for this seemed to be the centre of commotion, and she heard the noise of the bullets dropping into water between her and it; the moon did not give light enough to dissipate the gloom which hung round, but now a brightness darted o'er the water and through the darkness, and the next moment the straw roof of the Mill flashed upwards in a column of vivid flame; far and wide its light spread through the valley and up the hills, and showed every leaf hanging on the trees, and lighted every fissure in the surrounding rocks; a shout from the combatants arose with it, and as it passed she heard the sound of horses' hoofs approaching at utmost speed.—The blaze made it light as day, and she saw an officer on a gallant charger dash across the bridge at the lower end of the dam; he seemed to support himself on the saddle by the mane of his horse, over which he had apparently lost all command, whilst the light flashed on his uniform and played on the bright scabbard that dangled at his side, and increased the terror of his frightened animal. The rider had lost his cap and was evidently wounded, and now the rapid speed of his horse had brought him to the house, when a gate opposed a barrier to his further progress. As though suddenly recovering his lost courage the steed stood still, but the officer was too far spent to resist the shock thus given him, and he was thrown stunned at the door. Magoffin had been securing the papers in much anxiety, and now and then throwing a hurried glance towards the fight—but when the event we have just spoken of occurred, he thrust the papers into a side pocket, rushed out, and seized the horse—"Farwell, Pattison," he cried, "our stars are unlucky, I know it by the burning of the Mill; the papers are safe"—and throwing wide the gate, he sprang into the saddle, and was lost in the trees below. Pattison seemed confounded, and waited trembling the issue of the fight. Ellen was alone, and her fortitude was fast sinking, but now she saw at the door a fellow-being wounded, and perhaps expiring; this was enough to prompt her to exertion, and she descended from her chamber to succour the unfortunate. As that beautiful gem of the east which sparkles in its own native glory, is recognized in the absence of light, so the heart of woman in the hour of misery and woe is known by its kindness and beneficence. Ellen felt all a woman's care for the wounded man; by the assistance of the miller-boy she had him brought into the parlor, and now she saw that he was rather advanced in years, tall, and of manly make, and of a foreign aspect; he was clothed in an American uniform, which showed him to be of rank; his right arm was wounded, and he was

bathed in blood, and senseless from the effect of the fall and bleeding. The house-keeper slowly went away to get some nostrum for his use; the miller went to the wood to gaze at the fight and burning Mill, where her uncle already was; whilst Ellen bent over the wounded man, whose head she held, and from whose large forehead she wiped away the blood, and parted the clotted locks of long dark hair. As she stooped over him, a thought dawned on her mind that she had seen that countenance before; she drew a miniature from her bosom; the features there were those of a lady on one side, and on the other a young man, but though altered by years the resemblance was powerful, and she had been told they represented her deceased parents; a thousand feelings possessed her, and she hung trembling o'er the stranger, who was beginning to revive. At once some soldiers galloped to the door, and an officer with his sword in hand entered the room, whilst two soldiers led in Mr. Pattison; when the young soldier saw a lady he doffed his cap, looked a moment, and sprang forward, and a glance showed Ellen 'twas Alfred Clendinning.—“Ellen, dear Ellen,” was his salutation, “ever good and kind, how am I surprised to find you here! and my brave commander?”—“Alfred,” said Ellen, raising her eyes suffused with tears, “what a time is this, with the dying I fear before me.” “I hope not! but stay,” said the soldier, and issued in a loud voice, orders to search every where for the traitor Magoffin, whom the soldiers said they could not discover—Ellen, however, told Alfred of his departure, and some of the party dashed on in the hopeless pursuit. The soldiers guarded Pattison in the next room, on suspicion of a connection with Magoffin, and the rest of the party soon arrived with the wounded and prisoners. Colonel Vincent, (for so was the wounded officer called,) had now recovered from his lethargic state; he reclined on a couch provided for him, but his eyes left not Ellen's face for a moment; at length with a strong emotion, he grasped her hand, “Tell me,” he said, “who are you?” the miniature hanging around her neck caught his eye, he gazed; “It is! it must be so! tell me, tell me, who you are; are not those features the counterpart of those?” said he, pointing from Ellen to the female miniature, “and my own features, are they not here portrayed?” gazing at the reverse, “for God's sake speak!”—Ellen trembled! “They are indeed,” burst from her lips, “but I, I am an orphan; my uncle”—“Where, where is he?” “In the next room,” said the Lieut. “Bring him in!”—Alfred flew to obey the order—in a moment he returned with Pattison;—on recollecting himself, his fright had left him; he knew Magoffin had secured all the papers that could criminate him; the idea of safety gave him courage, and he advanced with undaunted front, but had the thunder of heaven burst over his head, and the fires of a volcano hissed at his feet, he could not have crouched with more dismay than when he met the gaze of Colonel Vincent; one glance sufficed—the Colonel was on his feet, fire flashed in his eye, and his bright sword gleamed above his head—“Meet the reward of thy villainy! meet the punishment of the villain!” His right arm unheeding its wound, was raised aloft, but a feeble hand stayed its course; Ellen clung to it, and the sword fell harmless. His hand sought hers—“Speak, miscreant! need I ask it?—but speak!” Pattison's breast heaved, and in a hollow tone he said, “She is your daughter!” and Ellen was clasped in the arms of a noble father.

* * * * *

That night Ellen heard from her father the story of his wrongs—his parents had left the United States to live in the West Indies; here he was born, settled in business, and married the girl of his choice, with whom he was happy and content. In the course of business he became acquainted with Pattison, an adventurer, poor, and friendless; he had taken him into his employ, into his house, and had extended him the hand of friendship and love—from nothing he had raised him to

a respectable station and good prospects. When Ellen was two years old, and everything seemed going on well, an insurrection broke out amongst the negro slaves, and the yellow fever at the same time made its appearance. Mr. Vincent was sufficiently rich; he had for some time contemplated returning to the land of his fathers, and for this purpose had considerably abridged his business, although doing it at this period to some disadvantage; he, however, sold all his property, and chartering a vessel prepared to start for the United States; when, however, all was ready for the departure, his heart was torn with anguish, for his wife was taken with the fever. To detain the vessel was impossible; for they had already embarked, when sickness seized on the frame of her he so dearly loved, and she begged to be put on shore. He reposed every confidence in Pattison, but who then passed as Mr. Brown; to his charge he gave his fortune and his child, for death in all probability waited for it if taken to land. Receiving an acknowledgement from Brown for the amount under his charge, he left the ship—and from that day forward had never heard from his unprincipled miscreant. In a few days after being on shore his wife died, and he became the object of an attack of the same disease—after a tedious illness he recovered, and almost destitute, embraced the first offer for the United States, which was by an English brig; but the third day out, a French frigate, which nation was at war with England, captured them, and he was taken to France. After many long years of suffering and delay he reached America again, but all his exertions were unable to discover the residence of Brown.—When the war broke out he entered the army, and had thus by chance, in an attempt to capture a traitor, discovered the object of the researches of past years—the papers he had taken so long before were still in his possession, treasured with anxious care. Ellen sighed and wept during her father's recital, and morn was breaking ere they parted. The proof against Pattison, for treason, was not sufficient to convict him; he returned his ill-gotten wealth to its right owner, and went away, a wretch despised by all, though it is believed that, like the traitor Arnold, for whom he was negotiating, he was enabled to live by British Gold. Lieut. Clendinning behaved gallantly during the war under her father's command, and Ellen eventually became his bride, and formed the source of his happiness, and soothed the declining years of her veteran father.

The Casket, January 1825